

The Statesman

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Hi Sr. Net P...A

[Editorial]

Royal arrogance

207/12/2005

Nepal headed for the brink

The Nepalese may have to prepare for worse if King Gyanendra hangs tough on Maoists. Like it or not, a truce with the Maoists is crucial. Had the Royal administration sufficiently appreciated their September gesture of a unilateral ceasefire — now into its fourth month — perhaps by now there would have been some progress towards peace. But the administration refuses to respond, arguing that “it is not the government that provoked the insurgency, so there is no question of reciprocation”. Again, as if to ridicule the rebels’ self-imposed restraint, the government wants them to contest the February 2006 municipal elections. All this only serves to strengthen the suspicion that King Gyanendra is deliberately allowing the Maoists to continue their armed struggle so as to perpetuate his authoritarian rule. But if, after the expiry of the truce early next month, a fresh wave of violence erupts, the King will be solely responsible. Having fought doggedly for the past decade, it would be naïve to expect the rebels to cede so easily. The recent arrival of Chinese arms and ammunition may have boosted the Royal Nepalese Army’s morale but the administration must realise that no insurgency-infected country has ever been able to win over its rebels by force of arms. This lesson should not be lost on them. Last week’s cold-blooded murder of 11 innocents by a drunken soldier at a tourist spot near Kathmandu reflects the army’s mood — loyal to the monarch.

The King’s tightening grip on the media and the cold-shouldering of political parties does not point to his commitment to multi-party democracy. The February civic elections, which all parties have boycotted, will be an acid test for his administration. Even if he somehow manipulates its success, who will contest the 2007 general elections?

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The strategy with the slogan of democracy

What India did, to instigate, train, arm, and unleash the Tamil Tigers, took them to the brink of success.

By Dr. Raman Raj Misra

Lenin had worked with other political parties and collectively they had also made a Constitution through a Constitutional Assembly.

What Lenin and his party, the Bolsheviks, did with that first post-monarchic Constitution of Russia is history. History has lessons for those who understand them. The Maoists and other communists of Nepal admire and follow Lenin, together with Marx and Mao. They are knowledgeable about the process of communist revolutions and know the tactics employed in such revolutions are to be emulated as divine revelations.

Hence after following Mao's tactics for ten years, Lenin's tactics of getting other parties to enhance one's cause and to make an urban entry, using other parties as a shield or cover is a plausible thing to do. In consonance with the ethos of the current uni-polar world, a cover is also needed. The slogan of democracy is appropriate. Communists advocating democracy seems to be a very effective and convincing cover and not at all contradictory.

Here, in Nepal, we have the Indian geopolitical factor in operation also. What India did, to instigate, train, arm, and unleash the Tamil Tigers, took them to the brink of success. It had created a condition to intervene militarily to "save" the Sri Lankan government. Such actions had enabled India to obtain geopolitical concessions, particularly on conditions and terms of the use of seaports of Sri Lanka. Such tactics maybe points for analysis or to draw parallels. Use and utility of the slogan of democracy that had been propagated through Lhendup Dorjees (Quislings) has been well documented in the case of the demise of Sikkim as a country in the early seventies. Sikkimese people had been made to believe that they would have their own republican country. They ended up being residents of a province of a republic. It was a successful tactic. Successful tactics are fit to be replicated.

Given such parallels of the communist revolutions, and the geopolitics of India and the current political developments in Nepal, speculation maybe worth making as to the geopolitical strategy and tactics through the use of the slogans of democracy.

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- 12-point understanding
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Full Text of King's
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King's address to the
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DISCUSSION

TOPIC Is an election to a constituent assembly, as agreed by the seven-party alliance and Maoists in their 12-point understanding, the solution to the country's current crisis? (click)
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And what the Communists may do, as well as, to what extent they maybe allowed to continue doing whatever they think they are doing may also deserve speculations. The compliant political parties, including the communists, maybe instrumental in keeping Nepal simmering, but they may not be allowed to make Nepal boil over. In fact geopolitically, facilitating the compliant parties to push Nepal up to the boiling point could produce the opportune moment for direct and overt intervention to "save Nepal and democracy." The following speculative points could well be the twelve-point geopolitical tactics being directed against Nepal currently.

1. Withhold arms to the Nepali Security Forces that never had an offensive capacity and requisite intelligence network.
2. Convince the other countries to do so, of course, for the "love of democracy". While at the same time, exonerate the lack of democracy in Bhutan and the Maldives and ignore such lack of democracy in other neighbouring countries. Western countries do also have selective and location specific "love for democracy", so can India. So it is not a problem to get the West to concur with such geopolitical tactics, if used with the slogan of democracy.
3. Put pressure on the Maoists to halt aggressive attacks and work with other compliant political parties. After all, the Maoists too are geopolitically dependent on an India-locked country, and have become visibly compliant. So Indo-compliant and Indo-dependent parties working together can produce the desired geopolitical synergy not obtained when they were instructed to function separately.
4. So instruct the other Indo-dependent political parties to go along the Maoist lines. This is necessary, as democratic parties do not have the capacity and the required popular base to stand on their own without going along with the communists.
5. Spread propaganda that reciprocation of ceasefire by the security forces without offensive capacity lacking total outreach in the country is needed for "Peace". Divert public and international attention from the fact that declaring a unilateral ceasefire has not been the same as implementing the ceasefire.
6. Exacerbate the chaos also in the secure urban areas by instigation, encouragement and financing of agitations with the slogan of democracy. The morale of the defenders against insurgency and instigated agitations has to be shaken.
7. With even the defensive capacity of the security forces reduced (due to arms embargo) and rising tempo of chaos in urban areas, intervene at an appropriate time (as in Sri Lanka) to "rescue" Nepal from violence and to purportedly "deliver peace and democracy."
8. Obtain the agreement and support of Western countries like

Britain and others, who have already outsourced their Nepal foreign policy to Delhi. The required propaganda to sway world opinion can easily be produced by lucrative financing of journalists.

9. Squash the Maoists after their utility is over, if they are not compliant as in the present.

10. Install a puppet regime, without the mandate of the people of Nepal. And make the Nepali intellectuals believe that Nepal has no national interests to preserve and protect, so as to ensure that no nationalist institution or groups will ever assert themselves again - ever.

11. Obtain due geopolitical spoils from the "Quisling" government.

12. Enhance and consolidate one's regional hegemony. The slogan of "Peace and democracy" can be immensely helpful in such an enterprise. Project oneself as the protector of democracy and one does get the right not only to intervene and subjugate, but also, if need be, to make pre-emptive strikes on mere suspicion or false information.

Hopefully, speculations such as these are totally wrong.

Hopefully, India will be magnanimous as she has never been with all her neighbours in the past fifty-five years. Hopefully, there will not be such a thing called geopolitics and attempts at hegemony, subjugation or annexation. Hopefully, the slogans of democracy will translate into our political reality.

Hopefully, Communism, as an ideology, has been miraculously transformed into the ideology of democracy as hoped for by the European Union and Britain. Hopefully, the speeches of our communists talking about democracy as a stage or a means to eventually obtain a totalitarian, communist State are just idle talks.

Hopefully, the same old inept, myopic and corrupt "democratic" political leaders will be able to deliver and operate a true and complete democracy. Hopefully, we will not have to suffer in the special democratic period (with no specified time limit), which the Western countries call "a transitional phase."

Hopefully, even if we do have to suffer in such a democratic, "transitional phase", as envisaged by the westerners, we will patiently endure such sufferings and will be overjoyed to "take up the cross and follow them." After all, who does not wish or hope to have a heaven on earth?

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11/10
32/12
Wise King
Jigme Wangchuk
Hi Sr
D-9-24

It rarely happens that the ruler of a country decides to give up office when no constituency of importance demands this. But King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan has repeatedly shown he is no ordinary ruler. His concern for ecology and the environment and his commitment to sustainable development set him apart from others. Earlier this year, he proposed a new Constitution that vests sovereignty in the people and assigns the monarchy only a constitutional role. This framework, if approved by a national referendum, will transform the Himalayan kingdom into a parliamentary democracy by 2008. Over the past few weeks, the King has travelled across the country, explaining the impending political changes to the people of Bhutan. What is remarkable is the way he has initiated and speeded up progressive political change that will take away much of his power. Just across the border in Nepal, King Gyanendra has worked with equally remarkable swiftness to achieve the opposite. King Jigme's latest decision, to abdicate the throne in 2008 in favour of his eldest son, is surprising, if exemplary. Going by the draft Constitution that stipulates a retirement age for the monarch, 50-year-old King Jigme could have gone on for 15 years more. Once he opted to do away with the monarchy's absolute powers, everything else followed naturally.

India might have been expected to be concerned over these fast-paced developments in a country with which it has a special relationship. It has certainly struck the right note by congratulating King Jigme on his "statesmanship and wisdom." It is impossible not to see in this refreshing posture a political message for King Gyanendra. India plays a big role in the affairs of little Bhutan. In addition to being the biggest trade partner, it is the largest donor, funding numerous development projects. It also provides training to the Royal Bhutan Army. But despite its strategic clout, New Delhi has been wise enough to keep Bhutan's sovereignty in view at all times. Faced with the problem of United Liberation Front of Asom militants finding safe haven in Bhutanese territory, New Delhi, to its credit, used diplomacy to persuade Thimpu to take effective action. The effort took nearly a decade. But it paid off in 2003 when the Bhutanese army cracked down on the militant camps on its side of the border. India has played an advisory role in the making of the draft Constitution. It is difficult to foresee all the consequences of Bhutan's democratic transformation over the next decade. But what New Delhi must do is clear. While scrupulously respecting Bhutan's sovereignty in all respects, it must reshape its role as a quiet promoter of its democratic experiment.

30 DEC 2005

THE HIND

Bhutan's monarch: A democrat bows out

The King of Bhutan has announced that his kingdom is embracing democracy and in that process – a step by step approach that he has cautiously followed for over 10 years – a new Constitution will usher in a two-party system. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk plans to retire from the monarchy, abdicating in favour of his eldest son, the Crown Prince. This is no fairytale and, has often been remarked upon, as the exact opposite of what King Gyanendra in neighbouring Nepal is doing – bulldozing democrats and taking the Opposition head on, including the Maoists, and moving his nation towards a deep and perilous abyss.

Bhutan is much younger than Nepal, as a nation, as a monarchy and in the development of its constitutional and democratic processes – its had at least two sessions with democracy, between the 1950s and today, and these have not been happy. In each case, the royalists have abrogated the powers of the democratically elected with tragic consequences for the country; the first royal putsch pushed Nepal into a state of malgovernance and poverty, resulting in dependency on international financial institutions and bilateral aid.

The second has divided it between the King and the people. As far as Bhutan is concerned, King Jigme's departure from the throne is bound to have far-reaching consequences. He is a ruler who is beloved of his people and whose control of his kingdom and administration of the land were well-regarded.

There were two phases which may not reflect too well on him: one is the campaign against Bhutanese of Nepalese origin driven out in the 1990s into India and Nepal and who continue to languish in a number of refugee camps run by the UNHCR; the second was allowing three North-east insurgent groups to set up bases in Bhutan's southern flanks for nearly a decade before he led a military drive in December 2003 which scattered these armed organisations.

But he remains unique in a number of ways, not least his conceptualisation of Gross National Happiness as an esoteric goal pursued by his government and presented at international forums as a genuine aspiration as posited against Gross National Product.

His persistence in pursuing a constitutional path which leads to democracy, however flawed, and his leadership of the Royal Bhutan Army, where he commands fierce loyalty, remain strong legacies. It is to be seen how Bhutan fares under a new leadership and with a population which increasingly seeks to connect with the outside world. How will a two-party system handle growing aspirations and needs?

The current King has set the bar high and is leaving a secure foundation for his son and his people.

There is one issue, however, which impacts on New Delhi's relations with Thimpu and that is the Indo-Bhutan Treaty which governs relations between our countries. There is one clause which is iniquitous and needs to be revoked, without delay, the one which gives India control of its small neighbour's foreign policy. No nation can allow such a position to

continue to prevail in this day and age.

It is in our mutual interest to reshape the treaty in consultation with each other and delete such offensive clauses.

Wake up call for Dhaka

BANGLADESH now too seems to be waking up to its responsibilities. Senior officials in the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party now agree that it is important to tackle terrorism without quarter, instead of taking the soft approach that the BNP appears to have popularised in the past years toward Islamic radicals. The statement of a senior Bangladeshi minister this week that his government is determined to bring for-

judges as part of a campaign to bring in Islamic courts.

These concerns about Dhaka were expressed at a recent workshop on security issues in New Delhi. One of the issues which came up time and again was "What do we do about Bangladesh" and the surge of Islamic radicalism there. To which one can say: strengthen the democrats and civil society groups, support Bangladesh economically and return those Bangladeshi gentlemen whose presence in India is regarded as inimical to Indo-Bangladesh relations and are seen as mafia thugs.

A knowledgeable participant at the conference spoke of how Bangla *bhai* and "terrorists" had lived in India, in pockets under their influence, on the West Bengal-Bangladesh border. Surely, the writ of the Indian State is not so weak – a State that has outlasted numerous insurgencies and wars – that it is unaware or unable to have taken firm action against such groups? Or is it that it was not really interested?

Naga parleys

DESPITE the posturing, Indian government discussions with Th. Muivah and his 15-person team of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim lasted just one session of four hours at Bangkok. Among the issues which came up were reported ceasefire violation problems where the NSCN (I-M) was at the receiving end. There were also concerns expressed about the difficulties that the NSCN was facing in Manipur, where, of course, as we know, there is no ceasefire. There was a lunch the following day hosted by Mr Muivah at a hotel where Oscar Fernandes, the leader of the Indian team, played on his mouth organ. The next round of talks, where music may not play, are scheduled in January and the ceasefire is due to expire on 31 January, not that anyone believes it will.

Prior to the meeting, the NSCN received a setback. Contrary to its hopes and one news report, the legendary Thinosilie, who was the senior Naga General who led Muivah and a group of 100 Nagas to Yunnan province in 1964, the first such team to make contact with the Chinese and eventually get training, turned down an invitation to join the NSCN leadership. He will continue to lead his small group of the Naga National Council. Gen Thinosilie, who Mr Muivah respects, went especially to Bangkok with a small group of Nagas to tell the I-M leader that he needed to make peace with his Naga foes and rivals and develop a consensual approach to the talks with New Delhi. He also cautioned against revocation of the ceasefire.

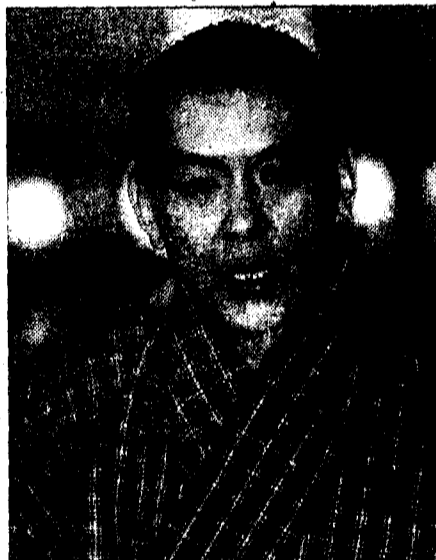
Ulfa says that it is prepared to resort to violence if the Government of India does not hold talks soon with it or its designated group. This goes against what the public wants and Dr Indira Goswami, for long its interlocutor, says the group and the government would be conducting a "monumental blunder" by not moving forward.

Here's raising a toast to genuine progress in peace talks in 2006!

NORTH by NORTH EAST



SANJOY HAZARIEA



Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuk: Unique in many ways.

ward legislation that will crack down on radical groups but also go after those who are funding, harbouring and otherwise supporting them.

This is a significant view but one that will be watched in details and, unsurprisingly, with a great deal of scepticism in India because Dhaka, especially the BNP which is allied with the Jamaat and is virulently anti-India, has shown little interest in responding to the concerns of New Delhi and other neighbours over the past years. Repeated calls in India, by political leaders, scholars and others, about the growing bane of fundamentalism and secure places for their supporters, have been brushed aside. Till now.

There, too, have been expressions of anxiety by the international community, including the USA, about the growth of terrorism, whether it is the Afghanistan returnees like "Bangla bhai" and those who have hurled themselves as suicide bombers against the secular justice system which exists in that country, killing many

23 DEC 2006

Maoists threaten to spoil Nepal polls

23/12/06
खिरी नेपाल

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, Dec. 22: The Maoist rebels in Nepal today headed for a direct confrontation with the royalist government by announcing their decision to disrupt the municipal elections to be held in early February.

Nepal's mainstream political parties also vowed to derail

the elections.

In a statement, Maoist chief Pushpa Kumar Dahal alias Prachanda and ideologue Baburam Bhattarai jointly said the rebels would single out all candidates participating in the civic polls for "special action".

They said their party was constrained to announce its agitation programme as the

government had shut all doors for a peaceful solution.

"By closing all doors for a peaceful and political resolution, the government has pushed people towards a situation of do or die," the leaders said.

They have directed their cadre to launch a campaign from December 22 to mobilise public support against the civic polls, followed by mass

gatherings and meetings.

The Maoists also threatened to call a six-day general strike from February 5 to 11 to block the polls.

Nepal's mainstream political outfits said the polls were aimed only at legitimising the rule of King Gyanendra.

"We'll demonstrate around the polling centres by mobilising people to stop the voting,"

said Jhal Nath Khanal, a Communist Party of Nepal-UML leader. "We'll create such a difficult situation that the elections cannot be conducted without the arrest of hundreds of thousands of people."

Gyanendra ordered polls for 58 municipal Assemblies across the country, saying this could lead to national elections in 2007.

King hits the road

Tells people how democracy would function

DRIMI Chaudhuri

Thimpu (Bhutan), December 22

EVEN AS people around the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan are yet to get over King Jigme Singye Wangchuk's announcement to abdicate by 2008, the king and other senior officials have set out to explain the workings of a parliamentary democracy to citizens across the nation.

The administrative headquarters — nestled in the lower valley of Thimpu — which houses different ministries, are almost deserted. Most members of the council of ministers are traveling all over the country — interacting with people in different dzongkhag or districts — explaining how the democratic system would work in Bhutan.

"The king has deputed different ministers to cover different parts of the country although he would make an appearance in each of these places over the next two years," a civil servant from Bhutan said. Chief justice Lyanpo Sonam Togyue and some senior officials will accompany the king, said Phontsu Wangdi, news editor of *Kuensel*.

"The king, at present, is in eastern Bhutan, interacting with people across the dzongkhags of Mongar, Lhuentse, Trashigang



Jigme Singye Wangchuk

and Trashi Yangste," he said.

The electoral process, mechanism of the election commission, the party system and what role the people would play are some of the important points that would be raised during the interactive sessions, he added.

According to Puneet Agarwal — the first secretary at the Indian Embassy in Thimpu — administrative procedures are already being taken to follow King Wangchuk's announcement, in which he stated that over the next two years the poll panel would educate the people in the process of parliamentary democracy.

"The government will undertake electoral practice sessions

across the 20 dzongkhags so that the people understood the process of voting and can put it into use properly, when the time arrives," Agarwal said.

Work for the drafting of the Constitution is being given priority. It would be taken to the length and breadth of the nation for the populace to know, Phontsu further said. "The Constitution will be introduced soon. Its second draft is already in circulation. Formation of the election commission is expected to be completed during the forthcoming National Assembly in May next year," he said.

Phontsu, however, said that the ideals of democracy, halloved across the world, are not appealing to the Bhutanese population because of a stable and pro-people monarchy. "They need to be explained how the process works because they never desired a democratic government, unlike in Nepal, where the demand for democracy is growing every day," he said.

Talking about the reluctance, Phontsu said following the king's historic announcement at Trashi Yangtse on December 17, a crowd of over 8,000 people, including farmers, herders, priests, teachers, students and local civil servants fell into shocked silence.

23 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Chinese army troops into Bhutan

Soldiers build roads and bridges, alarmed Thimpu sounds New Delhi

Hi SA - Bhutan

PRAMOD Giri
Siliguri, December 20

THE CHINESE are moving south. They are already in Bhutan — building motorable roads and bridges deep inside the country and causing concern in both Thimpu and New Delhi.

Tibetans often enter the country to harvest cordyceps, a fungal species that has medicinal properties and fetches \$7,000 a kg in the market.

But Bhutan, which has a 470-km unfenced border with China, has taken a serious view of the

Red Army's presence in its territory and considers it a violation of the 1998 Sino-Bhutanese border treaty of peace and tranquillity.

It all began on November 13-14 when more than 200 Chinese soldiers entered the country's northern districts, including Paro, and marched 20 km inland, citing melting glaciers and heavy snowfall in Tibet.

They also infiltrated such remote places as Haa, Boomtang and Wangdi Phudrang, which have no human habitation.

The issue came up in Bhutan's National Assembly and its fore-

ign minister Khandu Wangchuk has promised the House that the matter would be taken up with the Chinese authorities.

The country, which shares a special relationship and a 605-km border with India, has also informed the Indian home ministry.

But the Chinese have already completed construction of pucca bridges in Paro and Haa districts, prompting concern among people's representatives from Paro, Haa, Laya, Lunana, Zhemgang and Thimphu.

Secretary of international boundaries, Dasho Pema Wang-

chuk, took up the issue with the Chinese delegation led by deputy director-general of the Asian department in the China's ministry of foreign affairs when they met recently.

"But the Chinese told the Bhutanees that they were over-reacting and that the roads were being built as part of the economic development programmes for western China," an Indian intelligence officer said.

"India and Bhutan enjoy a special relationship, and the current developments have come as a matter of serious concern for India,"

the official added. That the concern was not confined to government circles in Thimpu and Delhi was clear from a recent article in Bhutanese newspaper *Kuensel*, which said "There are chances that the Chinese might build more roads further into our territory and gradually claim the land as theirs since they have their roads on our territory."

But why this incursion? Sources said China had been pressing Bhutan to let it open its embassy in Thimpu, and the cross-border forays could be a ploy to arm-twist Bhutan into agreeing.

Enter the dragon

Fact of the matter: Red Army soldiers building roads and bridges deep inside Bhutan

Thimpu's concern: it violates 1998 Sino-Bhutanese border treaty of peace, could be part of expansionist design

New Delhi's fear: Country has special ties and a 605-km border with Bhutan. Chinese presence might pose strategic threat

High School **Democracy gets royal sanction** *21/12/05 MT-6*

KING JIGME Singye Wangchuk's announcement that he would abdicate as soon as Bhutan holds its first democratic elections in 2008 gives a big boost to the democratic experiment already underway in the Himalayan kingdom. The king declared that his son would succeed him as leader of Bhutan. The king has been ruling along with the government, an assembly and a royal advisory council since giving up absolute power in 1998. Last March, Bhutan even released a draft Constitution that specifies the role of the monarchy, the duty of the citizens and political parties, fundamental rights of its citizens and some unique provisions to express the will of the people, like a national referendum.

Being one of the last few monarchies around, Bhutan's democratic transition will be keenly watched by the rest of the world. What's so remarkable is that the king has chosen the democratic path voluntarily, and not to pre-empt the possibility of riots or overthrows. Bhutan doesn't have any major law and order problems or political or economic unrest

like, say, neighbouring Nepal where the monarchy is under siege, and there's nothing to really force the king to adopt parliamentary democracy. But then it's hardly surprising for a ruler like Jigme Singye — who famously prefers 'gross national happiness' to gross national product — to try to end his country's isolation in a globalised world by opting for democracy and modernisation.

It probably also makes strategic sense for the tiny kingdom — hemmed in by an unpredictable China and a restive Nepal, and militant organisations like the Ulfa and Bodo posing a serious threat to its security — to have an inclusive government running the country. Bhutan is ideally suited for grassroots democracy, thanks to its small population. The draft Constitution apparently takes this into account while outlining a representative democracy — right from village councils at the bottom to the National Assembly and cabinet at the top. But that said, special care should also be taken to accommodate the Nepalese in Bhutan who form a quarter of the population.

21 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Royal arrogance

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Nepal headed for the brink

The Nepalese may have to prepare for worse if King Gyanendra hangs tough on Maoists. Like it or not, a truce with the Maoists is crucial. Had the Royal administration sufficiently appreciated their September gesture of a unilateral ceasefire — now into its fourth month — perhaps by now there would have been some progress towards peace. But the administration refuses to respond, arguing that “it is not the government that provoked the insurgency, so there is no question of reciprocation”. Again, as if to ridicule the rebels’ self-imposed restraint, the government wants them to contest the February 2006 municipal elections. All this only serves to strengthen the suspicion that King Gyanendra is deliberately allowing the Maoists to continue their armed struggle so as to perpetuate his authoritarian rule. But if, after the expiry of the truce early next month, a fresh wave of violence erupts, the King will be solely responsible. Having fought doggedly for the past decade, it would be naïve to expect the rebels to cede so easily. The recent arrival of Chinese arms and ammunition may have boosted the Royal Nepalese Army’s morale but the administration must realise that no insurgency-infected country has ever been able to win over its rebels by force of arms. This lesson should not be lost on them. Last week’s cold-blooded murder of 11 innocents by a drunken soldier at a tourist spot near Kathmandu reflects the army’s mood — loyal to the monarch.

The King’s tightening grip on the media and the cold-shouldering of political parties does not point to his commitment to multi-party democracy. The February civic elections, which all parties have boycotted, will be an acid test for his administration. Even if he somehow manipulates its success, who will contest the 2007 general elections?

20 DEC 2005

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India kept out of loop on Bhutan

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, December 19

INDIA ON Monday welcomed the "far-reaching vision" of Bhutanese monarch King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, but diplomatic sources were "wary" of "all the ramifications of the announcement".

The 50-year-old king announced in Trashiyangtse village on Saturday that he would abdicate the throne in 2008 in favour of his son Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk. Addressing a group of farmers and monks, he also announced holding Bhutan's first national elections that year. The king would then be just a constitutional monarch.

Not used to the concept of a monarch anxious to hand over power, sources said India had not been officially informed of the king's de-

cision to abdicate the throne prior to the announcement, but was aware of the impending elections.

Praising the monarch's wide-ranging contributions to Bhutan's evolution, MEA spokesman Navtej Sarna said: "India, as always, wishes the people and the Government of Bhutan continued peace and stability, and the fulfillment of their aspirations as they embark towards the new Constitutional system."

Bhutanese diplomats said they too had no prior notice and added that they were "shocked" by the announcement. However, the 25-year-old crown prince is held in "very high esteem", they said.

The Eton and Oxford-educated crown prince, the eldest of the king's five sons and five daughters, was installed as Choetse Penlop and heir to the Golden Throne on October 21, 2004.



Reign of the King

- **1972** Jigme Singye Wangchuk takes over at the age of 16
- **1974** Bhutan gets own monetary system, new currency
- **1999** TV makes entry; first internet cafe opens in 2000
- **2004** First country to ban sales of tobacco products

The crown prince is now Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan.

The transition began four years ago when King Jigme handed over powers of daily governance to a council of ministers and empowered the National Assembly to force a

royal abdication if the motion was backed by three-quarters of its membership.

Earlier this year, Bhutan unveiled a 34-point Constitution, which has been sent to around 530,000 citizens for their views. It is almost certain to be ratified after a referendum.

King's decision evokes mixed response

PRAMOD Giri
Siliguri, December 19

EVEN AS the Bhutanese are clueless about why their King Jigme Singye Wangchuk suddenly decided to relinquish in favour of his Oxford-educated 25-year-old son Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk, there has been mixed response from among Indian leaders and more than one lakh Bhutanese who have been living as refugees in Nepal since 1992.

King Sigmey Singye Wangchuk's announcement on December 17, Bhutan's National Day, to step down when the Himalayan Kingdom holds its first national democratic election in 2008 has been welcomed by the president of Indo-Bhutan Friendship Society, Satya Prakash Malaviya, a former Union minister of India.

Speaking to Hindustan Times, Malaviya hailed the King's move and said, "I hope that the King would adhere to his words." He also appealed to the King to repatriate more than one lakh Bhutanese

CHANGING FACE OF BHUTAN



refugees to their homes with honour and dignity.

Rongthong Kinley Dorji, chairman of Druk National Congress whose extradition move by Bhutan is being opposed by Indo-Friendship Society gave a guarded statement: "This time we are hopeful that the King would keep his word and give up his power as he has announced."

Talking to Hindustan Times from Delhi, Dorji, who was jailed in

1997 for one year in Delhi and currently under Delhi police's surveillance said, "It needs to be seen under what circumstances the King announced to relinquish his power as the situation inside Bhutan is not good." It is also to be seen what system of rule the King is serious about, said Dorji, also a Bhutanese refugee. A former chairman of United Front for Democracy in Bhutan, Dorji was arrested in Delhi in 1997.

But, his extradition to Bhutan could not be materialised as the move was opposed by Indo-Bhutan Friendship Society and a large number of Indian leaders.

Mohan Tamang, president of Democratic Youths of Bhutan, said, "It is to be seen whether the king would keep his word this time." Welcoming the move, Tamang said the King couldn't keep his word in early Nineties when he said he would relinquish his power if he failed to solve the refugee problem in three years.

Other sections of the Bhutanese refugees view the King's move as

an outcome of the international pressure to make democratic moves inside Bhutan. Bhutan Crown prince Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk is the son from Queen Ashi Tshering Yangdön Wangchuk, the third of the King's four wives. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk married four sisters in 1979 and has ten children.

Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk was born on February 21 1980 and did his M. Phil in politics at Magdalen College, Oxford, UK in 2003.

On December 17 the king said: "It is my wish and prayer that during the reign of Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk, the Palden Drukpa will remain strong and glorious, that our country will achieve greater prosperity with the sun of peace and happiness shining on our people, that all the national objectives of the country and the hopes and aspirations of our people will be fulfilled, and the Bhutanese people will enjoy a greater level of contentment and happiness."

20 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Why wait for a revolution, asks Bhutan's King

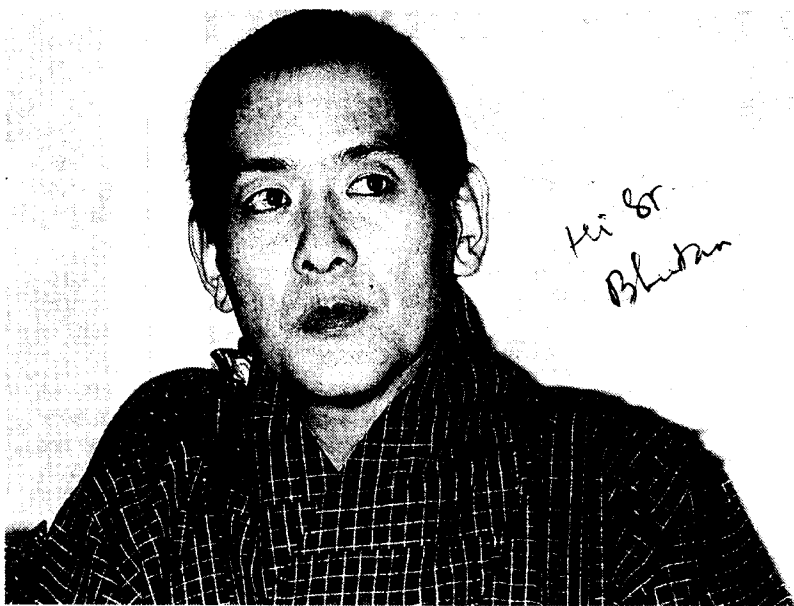
Country scheduled to hold general elections in 2008

TRASHIYANGTSE (BHUTAN): The King of the remote Himalayan country of Bhutan has announced that he will abdicate in 2008, when the country is scheduled to hold elections under its first Constitution.

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck (50), told a crowd of 8,000 yak-herders, monks, farmers and students at this remote village that he would start handing responsibility to the Crown Prince immediately.

"I would also like our people to know that the Chhoetse Penlop (Crown Prince) will be enthroned as the Fifth Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) in 2008," the King told the audience according to a transcript posted in the national newspaper *Kuensel*.

"As it is necessary and important for a King to gain as much experience as possible to serve his country to his fullest capacity, I will be delegating my responsibilities to the Chhoetse Penlop before 2008."



Bhutan King, Jigme Singye Wangchuk

Change in power structure

The 25-year-old Crown Prince DASHO Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck is the eldest of the King's five sons and five daughters. He is a keen basketball player like his father.

The monarchy in Bhutan, known as the Land of the Thunder Dragon, will be 100 years old in 2008 with the current King taking the throne at age 17 in 1972.

But its absolute power in the largely Buddhist nation of almost 600,000 people will be curtailed as the country moves to adopt a Constitution and elect its first Prime Minister in 2008.

The Government has already said it plans to appoint an Election Commissioner before the end of 2005 to draw up constituency boundaries and hold mock

voting sessions for the people, a majority of whom have never even heard of general elections.

The King has toured the country since November to discuss the changes with citizens after he unveiled a draft Constitution earlier this year that requires Bhutanese Kings to retire at the age of 65.

Many Bhutanese have been indifferent to the move to democracy and expressed fears that it could lead to corruption akin to other South Asian countries, according to local analysts. But the King said now was the best time to move on.

"The best time to change a political system is when the country enjoys stability and peace," he told the crowd in Trashiyangtse, three days' drive from the capital Thimphu. "Why wait for a revolu-

tion? Why crown an heir only when the nation is in mourning for a late King?"

The proposed Parliament would include a 75-member National Assembly and a 25-member National Council with the King as head of state, although he could be impeached by a vote of two-thirds of the legislature.

Himalayan states in South Asia have a long history of monarchy though Bhutan is the last of them to attempt the move to democracy.

The King developed an economic philosophy to measure "gross national happiness" over gross domestic product that has drawn attention worldwide.

The King, who has four wives, lives in a log cabin on the edge of the capital. — AFP

HD-14 ✓
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Hi Sr.
Bhutan

19 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

Bhutan King to step down, polls in 2008 to usher in democracy

KRITTIVAS MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 16

BHUTAN'S King is to hand power to his son and stage the tiny Himalayan kingdom's first democratic elections in 2008, the state-run *Kuensel* newspaper reported on Sunday.

In March, the Buddhist kingdom published a draft constitution that aimed to set up a two-party democracy after nearly a century of absolute monarchy put in place with British support in 1907.

"I would like our people to know that the first national election to elect a government under a system of parliamentary democracy will take place in 2008," the newspaper quoted King Jigme Singye Wangchuck as telling a public rally in the town of Trashigang.

Wangchuck said his son, Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, would take over from him in 2008.

"It is my wish and prayer

that during the reign of Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Palden Drukpa (Bhutan) will remain strong and glorious ... and the hopes and aspirations of our people will be fulfilled," Wangchuck was quoted as saying.

Seven years ago,

Wangchuck, who became King in 1972 at the age of 16 on his father's death, took a major step on the road to political reform by devolving power to a council of ministers.

In 2001, he initiated the drafting of a new constitution to eventually replace a half-century-old royal decree under which Bhutan has been run.

The draft calls for a two-chamber parliament—a 75-member National Assembly and a 25-member National Council.

The King would remain head of state, but parliament would have the power to impeach him on a two-third vote. —Reuters



He's for change

Nepal strike clashes

Kathmandu, Dec. 16 (Reuters): Nepali police fired tear gas to break up protests by rock-throwing students during a general strike in Kathmandu today to protest the killing of 11 civilians by a soldier near the capital, witnesses said.

Shops and schools were shut and public transport off the roads in the city, which

mainly heeded the strike call by political parties as anger remained high following the incident around midnight on Wednesday when the soldier fired on a crowd of villagers who had gathered at a temple to mark the full moon.

The soldier, who had an argument with the villagers, also died in the shootout in the tourist town of Nagarkot, near Kathmandu, but the circumstances of his death were not clear.

Witnesses said students,

trying to enforce the strike by blocking roads, threw rocks at hundreds of riot policemen who retaliated by firing tear gas. There were no reports of serious injuries.

"It is quite tense," Kathmandu resident Saroj Khanal said, referring to the heart of the city, the scene of the protests. "King Gyanendra must take the moral responsibility for the killing," said Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of the Nepali Congress party.

17 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Nepal soldier kills 11 in a fit of rage

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, Dec. 15: Hundreds of people took to the streets in noisy protests today after a Nepali soldier killed 11 and wounded 19 following an argument, the army and witnesses said.

According to the army, the soldier also died in the incident which took place yesterday near the resort town of

Nagarkot, 30 km from Kathmandu. Some news reports suggested that he may have committed suicide.

The killing sent shock waves through the ranks of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and the pro-monarchy government.

The seven-party political alliance announced a Kathmandu bandh tomorrow in protest against the killings at a

massive meeting here this afternoon. The strike call came as thousands of people marched through the streets of Kathmandu in a protest against the king which turned into a show of solidarity for the relatives of those killed.

According to witnesses, the massacre followed a scuffle between the RNA soldier, Basudev Thapa, and villagers, mostly tribals belonging to the Tamang community, who had gathered to mark the full moon last night at the Kalika Devi temple in Nagarkot.

The altercation was sparked after the alleged harassment of young women at the temple by RNA soldiers. An eyewitness said Thapa first used a knife against the villagers.

However, realising that he was outnumbered, Thapa fired at them with his service rifle, killing 12.

"I heard the sound of bullets as I was preparing to sleep. I was terribly scared," Sohan Shrestha, who had come to collect the body of his son, said at the hospital, tears rolling down his cheeks.

"The army has taken the incident very seriously and an investigation has been ordered," the army said in a statement.

State television said the government would pay for hospital treatment and pay \$2,000 in compensation for each of the dead.

15 DEC 2005

THE HILGRAPH

100 held in Nepal on Rights Day

AGENCE France-Presse
Kathmandu, December 10

NEPALESE POLICE fired water cannons on Saturday and arrested more than 100 pro-democracy demonstrators who rallied in the heart of Kathmandu where protests were banned after King Gyanendra seized power, witnesses said.

The demonstrators, shouting "Down With the King" and "We Want Democracy", had gathered in the capital for a demonstration to call for a return to democracy and to mark International Human Rights Day.

Police could not be reached for comment on the number detained but witnesses said more than 100 were taken away.

The demonstration near the royal palace was organised by the Citizen's Movement for Democracy and Peace.

Last February Gyanendra seized power, insisting the move was necessary to suppress a deadly Maoist re-

volt in the poverty-racked nation.

Despite restrictions imposed afterwards on civil liberties in the Himalayan kingdom, there have been widespread demonstrations against the king's action.

Last month seven mainstream opposition parties announced they would team up with the Maoists in a bid to restore democracy and end the king's absolute rule as long as the rebels lay down their arms. The royalist government has called the move an "unholy alliance."

The international community has been urging the king to restore democracy in Nepal. Gyanendra was last week snubbed during his South Africa visit by former South African President Nelson Mandela when the Nobel Peace Prize winner refused to meet him despite hectic lobbying. The king, along with Queen Komal, did however manage to meet South African President Thabo Mbeki. But, Mandela declined saying he had no time.



Riot policemen detain Krishna Pahadi, founding Chairman of Human Rights and Peace Society (right) and other pro-democracy activists on Saturday.

11 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

HINDU
5/22

Democracy may save the king

Page 9
Nepal

EVENTS IN Nepal last week suggest that the Himalayan kingdom's tripolar power struggle may become a bipolar one. The alliance of opposing political parties and Maoists is, while always a likelihood, worrying for King Gyanendra. It spells a surprise bid to restore multi-party democracy in Nepal. Further, it follows the king's unsuccessful bid to sell African leaders the royal take on the imbroglio in Nepal. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela even refused to meet him.

The agreement puts the king between a rock and a hard place because — taken at face value — it represents a major climbdown for the Maoists from their earlier stance of settling for nothing short of the abolition of monarchy. The king can neither afford to acknowledge this — thus yielding the political high ground to the rebels — nor can he afford to ignore it, as that'd imply he's not really keen on a solution. It's probably to exploit this situation that the Maoists have extended their unilateral ceasefire so as

to sway international opinion against the king. Maoist rebellion in the country had earlier given him a good alibi to suspend civil rights and assume unprecedented powers to deal with protestors and rebels through the army. But this was done at the cost of dismissing democratically elected multi-party governments. Going by the tens of thousands of people who staged demonstrations against the king in Kathmandu last Friday, he could be running out of options. For immediate political reverses apart, these developments potentially threaten the very institution of the monarchy, which is being increasingly seen as a hindrance to restoring democracy in Nepal.

Perhaps the best bet for Gyanendra would be to clear the way for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, and have the world acknowledge him as a constitutional monarch. Which, of course, would mean spelling out precisely how he plans to reinstate democratic rule in his country.

Thousands rally against King in Kathmandu

Maoists Extend Ceasefire By One Month

Kathmandu: Tens of thousands of anti-royal protesters took to the streets Friday in the Nepali capital as King Gyanendra returned from an overseas visit.

A brief clash between demonstrators and monar-

chords to witnesses.

Leaders of the NCP-ML addressed the crowds, calling for a return to democracy.

Meanwhile, Maoist insurgents said on Friday they had extended a unilateral ceasefire by one

"We believe this decision will pave the way to strengthen the movement of democracy and peace against the autocratic rule and give new direction to find a political way out," Prachanda said.

There have been isolated clashes between the Maoists and the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) during the ceasefire which the Maoist leader blamed on the army.

"The security forces tried hard to break the ceasefire," Prachanda said. Human rights activists welcomed the Maoists' decision to prolong their ceasefire.

"By extending the ceasefire, the rebels have shown that they are committed to the 12-point agreement they reached with the political parties of Nepal last month," said Subodh Pyakurel, a human rights activist. On Thursday, UN human rights chief Louise Arbour warned that Nepal faced the threat of a full-scale armed conflict, and called on authorities to join a ceasefire with Maoist rebels and allow free assembly.

"A mutual ceasefire between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the government of King Gyanendra, and steps towards lasting peace, are crucial to bring to an end a period of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by both the Maoists and the State," Arbour said. Agencies



Friday's rally marks the first of a month-long series of anti-King protests planned by the opposition parties

chists erupted and dozens were injured. Police could not be reached to say how many arrests were made during the protests.

Friday's protest marks the first of a month-long series of anti-royal protests planned by the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-ML) and six other opposition parties. Organisers had predicted a turnout of 60,000 people.

Communist demonstrators shouted anti-royal slogans and waved black flags at the car ferrying Prince Paras, the heir to the Nepali throne, to the airport to meet his father, ac-

month after joining political efforts to restore democracy in Nepal following a power grab by King Gyanendra.

"Despite the provocative attitude of the government forces, our party has decided to extend the ceasefire by one month, taking into account the demands of the national and international communities for democracy," said rebel leader Prachanda in a statement sent to AFP.

A three-month unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists, who have been fighting for a communist republic since 1996, was due to end on Friday.

Dozens injured as Leftists, royalists clash in Nepal

Maoists announce extension of unilateral ceasefire by a month



NO MEEK SUBJECTS: Leftist activists take out a march in Kathmandu on Friday, demanding restoration of democracy in the country. — PHOTO: AP

KATHMANDU: Activists of the Nepal Communist Party (UML) clashed with royalists during a massive anti-King rally called by the party to demand restoration of democracy, leaving dozens of persons injured here on Friday.

Nearly 50,000 people gathered at Nayabaneshwor for the rally, dubbed as a show of strength by the largest Left party in Nepal, chanting anti-King Gyanendra and pro-democracy slogans.

During the protest, UML activists clashed with royalists who were on their way to Tribhuvan airport to receive King Gyanendra who was returning after a three-week tour of Africa and Bangladesh.

Crown Prince Paras was also on his way towards the airport to

receive the King when the incident occurred. But his vehicle was not damaged when the two sides threw stones against each other, eye witnesses said.

Police baton-charged the crowd to control the situation.

"Return people's rights"

Addressing the rally, its general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and popular leader Bamdev Gautam asked the King to return democratic rights and sovereign power to the people.

"The UML is ready to go for a democratic republic through Constituent Assembly polls," they said and warned of intensifying the anti-King agitation.

Meanwhile, the Maoist rebels announced they had extended their unilateral ceasefire across

the kingdom by a month. "Despite the provocative attitude of the Government forces, our party has decided to extend the ceasefire by one month, taking into account the demands of the national and international communities for democracy," said rebel leader Prachanda in a statement.

The three-month unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists, who have been fighting for a Communist republic since 1996, ended on Friday.

Prachanda blamed isolated clashes between the Maoists and the Nepalese army during the ceasefire on the armed forces. "The security forces tried hard to break the ceasefire," he said.

Human rights activists welcomed the Maoists' decision to

prolong their ceasefire. "By extending the ceasefire, the rebels have shown that they are committed to the 12-point agreement they reached with the political parties of Nepal last month," said Subodh Pyakurel, a human rights activist.

Global condemnation

On Thursday, U.N. human rights chief Louise Arbour warned that Nepal faced the threat of a full-scale armed conflict, and called on authorities to join a ceasefire with Maoist rebels. The violence and the royal takeover has brought global condemnation for both sides as well as reviews of military and humanitarian aid from several countries, including the U.S., Britain and India. — PTI, AFP

UN asks Maoists to extend ceasefire

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LW
for maoist in Nepal

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Dec. 1. — With the three-month ceasefire called by the Maoists coming to an end tomorrow and the rebels still not having announced their next plan of action, the United Nations has asked the guerrillas to extend the truce and King Gyanendra to extend an olive branch.

Adding to the plea made by UN secretary-general Mr Kofi Annan earlier this month, today, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Louise Arbour

issued a statement from her office in Geneva, expressing serious concern that after a three-month lull, full-scale armed conflict could break out again.

"A mutual ceasefire between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the government of King Gyanendra and steps towards lasting peace are crucial to bring to an end a period of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by both the Maoists and the state", Ms Arbour said.

Ms Arbour, who signed an agreement with King Gyanendra's government

this year to open an office in Kathmandu to monitor rights violations, also asked the underground insurgents to work with her office to ensure that their cadres respected the party top brass' pledge to the major opposition parties that they would respect human rights and the rule of law.

Ms Arbour also voiced concern about increasing violations of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly by the government. "Following the promulgation of a Media Ordinance which is in breach of international

human rights standards and remains under challenge in Nepal's Supreme Court, radio stations have been raided, equipment seized and persons arrested with no apparent legal basis", she said. "Local administration and the security forces have extended banned areas and obstructed freedom of movement in order to inhibit peaceful demonstrations".

Asking the judiciary to act independently and upholding Nepal's international human rights obligations, she also asked government and security

forces to respect the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly.

Maoist resolution

The leader of Maoists has vowed "to fulfill people's desire for peace and democracy" in spite of the killing of two senior members in an aerial operation by the Royal Nepalese army just ahead of the expiry of the rebels' unilateral ceasefire. In a statement issued here, Maoist chief Prachanda said: "We will not be deterred from our historic responsibility despite provocation from

the present autocratic regime. We will move ahead in order to fulfill people's desire for peace and democracy."

He claimed that former central member and division commander of the Maoists' People's Liberation Army Kim Bahadur Thapa and a battalion vice-commander nicknamed Nramam have been killed when a Nepalese Army chopper opened fire on a rebel gathering on Tuesday in Salyan district. The killing came just two days ahead of the expiry of the Maoists' three-month ceasefire adds PTI.

Nepal braces for political showdown

RASHMI Saksena
Kathmandu, November 30

KING GYANENDRA'S government and the pro-democracy parties in Nepal appear to be headed for a confrontation. One of the most prominent political parties in Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), on Wednesday decided to defy the restrictive orders clamped on December 2, the day the party is to hold its biggest public meeting in Kathmandu in recent years.

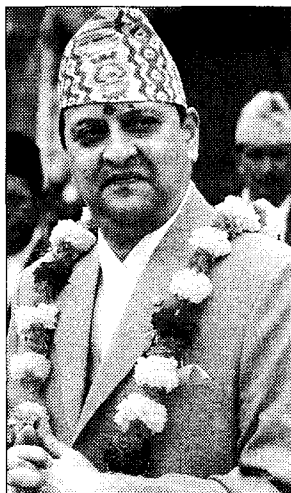
Significantly, King Gyanendra returns to Nepal on December 2 after being abroad for almost a fortnight. Nepal's officialdom is preparing to accord a warm welcome to the King with plans to erect decorated gates and arches.

In a press release issued on Wednesday, the CPN-UML urged the people to come in full strength to the meeting and show their support for the restoration of democracy in the country.

Announcing its decision to defy the restrictive orders issued late on Wednesday night, the party said that the present government had no legal right to issue such an order, as the government itself had no legal validity. The government, by issuing orders for the New Bannesswer area, the venue for CPN-UML's rally, is trying to prevent the rally, the release added.

Civil liberties group Society for Peace and Development has also issued a strongly worded statement warning the government from preventing the CPN-UML sponsored "peaceful rally". It has urged the government to withdraw its "barbaric" order as it will only "provoke the people and instigate violence".

The pro-democracy par-



King Gyanendra
Rough ride ahead

ties have been holding public meetings in various districts of Nepal since mid-November after an alliance of seven parties reached a broad agreement with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) to work together to pressurise the King to become a ceremonial head instead of the Chief Executive and restore Parliament.

This is the first time during this phase that the government has slapped restrictive orders on a public meeting is announced. However, leaders of the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress allege that the security forces have placed obstacles on the movement of men and vehicles headed towards their meetings.

This is the first time post the 12-point agreement, that one of the big political parties has announced a public rally in Kathmandu. After holding rallies independently, the political parties have decided to launch a joint "peaceful mass agitation for restoration of democracy" all over the country. The agreement as well as the agitation is seen as a key push towards democracy.

01 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

The King and We

Squeeze Nepal's ruler.
Trump the China card

THE continuing Chinese arms supply to Kathmandu is more than a tactical threat to India's attempt at promoting democracy and stability in Nepal. It is about a real and present danger that threatens Delhi's primacy in the subcontinent. The time is running out for the UPA government to get its Nepal act together and compel King Gyanendra to pay the costs of the China card he has chosen to play against India. Much like his father, Mahendra, who cozied up to Beijing in the early 1960s amidst rising Sino-Indian tensions, the present monarch thinks he can hustle India into legitimising his power grab. Unable to engineer a split in the coalition between India and the Anglo-American powers, King Gyanendra has put all his eggs in the China basket. This was evident at the regional summit earlier this month in Dhaka, when Nepal became the most vocal supporter of immediate Chinese affiliation with SAARC.

Under the cover of the rhetoric on "non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbours", China has exploited every recent opportunity to undermine India's influence in the region. Given the host of problems between India and its neighbours, Beijing has been having a great political run in the sub-

continent in recent years. It has become a political free rider, focused entirely on expanding its profile without any commitment to peace and stability in the subcontinent. If India does not quickly trump King Gyanendra's China card, its standing in the region would rapidly diminish. Until now, both Washington and London have deferred to Indian leadership on Nepal; but if Indian policy remains paralysed by the fear of offending either King Gyanendra or Beijing, the other powers might want to go their own way.

Having recently stepped up the pressure on King Gyanendra, by bringing the Maoists and the political parties in Nepal together, the government must now find ways to squeeze him further. While China has made big advances in Nepal in recent years, the kingdom's economic geography is inextricably intertwined with that of India. Virtually Nepal's entire trade transits through India. So do its hydrocarbon supplies. Delhi is not short of options in getting King Gyanendra to meet the Indian demand for an early end to his unconstitutional personal rule over Nepal. What Delhi needs is a credible strategy of coercive diplomacy, aimed at reviving the political process in Nepal; and the gumption to carry it through.

28 NOV 2001

China gifts truckloads of arms to Nepal

Press Trust of India



KATH-
MANDU,
Nov. 25. —

China has supplied truckloads of arms to Nepal to help its ill-equipped army in its fight against Maoists. The weapons were brought into Nepal in 18 trucks — 12 on Tuesday and six on Wednesday — via the Kodari Highway, the *Kantipur* daily reported today, quoting unnamed sources.

The trucks were escorted by the Chinese People's Army up to the Nepal-Tibet border while Royal Nepal Army personnel brought them inside the Nepalese territory, the report said.

RNA officials have not yet confirmed receiving arms from China. "I don't have any information about the arms delivery," RNA spokesman Mr Deepak Gurung said. China had pledged to provide Rs 72 million military aid to the RNA during Chief of Army Staff Gen. PJ Thapa's visit to Beijing in October. On his return from China, he said the aid would be used to strengthen the RNA.

NEPAL 18 trucks came with arms for RNA this week via Kodari

India says no, China sends arms to Nepal

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, NOV 25

WITH an Indian embargo on arms supply in place, King Gyanendra's government has begun turning to China for weapons. At least 18 trucks of unspecified arms and ammunition from China arrived in Nepal this week.

Eyewitness accounts said a huge force of the Royal Nepal Army escorted 18 trucks—12 were spotted on Tuesday and another six on Wednesday—as they entered the kingdom via the Kodari Highway, the only road-link with China. RNA Brig Gen Deepak Gurung declined comment, neither confirming nor denying the reports.

The King's government has made it clear to India—it has

been the RNA's traditional supplier—that Nepal will turn to other countries for weapons if the arms embargo, enforced after the King's takeover, is not lifted.

The arrival of Chinese arms means that Beijing has ignored moves by US, EU and India to bring pressure on the King by choking arms supplies. These countries have taken the stand that the weapons may be used against pro-democracy forces.

Procurement of arms from China by Nepal in the mid-80s had infuriated India which retaliated with an 18-month blockade that had fuelled anti-King sentiments, translating into a people's movement for democracy in 1990.

The Chinese decision to supply arms to Nepal follows a series of high level visits by officials to Beijing.



His China card

INDIA

25 NOV 2005

Nepal to review democracy agreement

Kathmandu: Nepal's monarchist government is reviewing an agreement between communist rebels and seven major political parties intended to force King Gyanendra to restore democracy, the home minister said on Wednesday.

The Maoist rebels and the political alliance issued a statement on Tuesday announcing they had reached a crucial understanding to intensify movement against the king, who seized absolute power in February.

"We are reviewing the agreement in detail. We will be consulting it with our cabinet colleagues before issuing any statement or comment," said Home Minister Dan Bahadur Shahi.

The rebels and parties announced their deal as the king toured Africa, from where he was expected to return

early next month. The 12-point agreement did not explain how the rebels and parties planned to step up their campaign against the government. But the political parties made it clear they do not support the communist rebels' violent campaign and that the agreement does not constitute an alliance.

"We are not forming any alliance or coalition with them (Maoists). We will be fighting the monarchy from separate fronts," Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress, the largest political party in Nepal, said on Tuesday. The rebels, who claim to be inspired by Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong, have been fighting since

1996 in an attempt to topple Nepal's monarchy.

Top political leaders including Koirala flew to New Delhi last week, apparently to meet rebel leaders, but announced the agreement only on Tuesday. "It is our clear understanding that unless the autocratic rule is ended and full democracy is restored, there will be no peace or progress in the country," the agreement said.



King Gyanendra

Under the agreement, the two sides would reinstate a parliament, form a government, and conduct elections to establish a special assembly that would draft a new constitution. AP

Nepal parties, Maoists turn heat on King

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The talks between the Maoist rebels in Nepal and the main opposition Seven-Party Alliance, which includes the Nepali Congress and the United Marxist-Leninist, have qualitatively increased the pressure on King Gyanendra in two ways. For one, Gyanendra has used the divisions between the Maoists and the opposition parties on key constitutional issues to maintain his grip on power.

However, his tactical freedom of manoeuvre will now be reduced since the rebels and the Seven-Party Alliance have considerably narrowed their differences on such crucial aspects of the future polity as the establishment of a titular monarchy, the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new basic law for Nepal and the laying down of weapons by the Maoists under UN supervision. The decision of the opposition parties to boycott the municipal elections called by Gyanendra in Feb 2006 and the move of the Maoists to



NEWS ANALYSIS

extend their unilateral ceasefire until early Jan next year should also be interpreted as part of the ongoing attempts to forge a common stand to turn up the heat on the King.

For another, the position of Gyanendra has been weakened as a result of the behind-the-scenes role played by India and the US to encourage the dialogue between the Maoists and the mainline political parties. The indirect efforts of New Delhi and Washington to explore the possibility of a negotiated breakthrough in Nepal have been prompted by rising concerns of a political vacuum in the country and Gyanendra's

increasingly tenuous hold on power.

Apart from these factors, Gyanendra's position has been undermined by growing economic problems, social disparities and the political realities at the grass-roots level.

Even so, the King is unlikely to make substantive concessions unless he is forced to do so. A great deal will therefore depend on the extent of the pressure exerted on him by India and the US. Besides, despite the current rapprochement between the Maoists and the Seven-Party Alliance, both sides will be suspicious of each other's long-term political goals and efforts to broaden the cadre-base.

After all, in the ultimate analysis, they will be competing for a larger slice of the same political cake. In addition, much will hinge on the degree to which the Seven-Party Alliance, which has found it difficult to hold large demonstrations on account of the restrictions imposed by Gyanendra, is able to mobilise public opinion.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 NOV 2005

Nepal Maoists set terms for peace

Sudeshna Sarkar
in Kathmandu

Nov. 20. — Nepal's Maoist guerrillas have agreed to lay down arms and accept supervision of their activities by the United Nations or an equally credible third party if elections are held for a new constitution that will clip the powers of the king. "The Maoists have agreed to an elected multi-party democratic system of governance and to accept the presence of other parties with different ideologies," a senior Opposition leader said.

Mr Bam Dev Gautam and Mr KP Oli, leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) who recently held talks with the

seven parties are that human rights and citizens' rights will not be violated and the media will be given full freedom. They have also agreed to the holding of free and fair elections for the Constituent Assembly and abide by the outcome even if it goes against them.

But despite the progress in peace talks, a question mark continues to hang over the unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists which expires on 2 December.

While the parties said they were trying to persuade the Maoists to extend the truce, the guerrillas were angry over the state's reaction to the truce. Over 50 people have been killed by security forces during this period.



A file photograph of a Maoist training camp in Nepal.

underground rebels, said the guerrillas would place their arms and soldiers under the UN's supervision or monitoring by a reliable third party if elections were held to choose a Constituent Assembly that would write a new constitution for Nepal. However, the rebels have

a proviso: they would return to armed struggle if the government or any of the other actors involved tried to "betray" them.

Opposition leaders feel the proposal will not find acceptance by the government headed by King Gyanendra because a new constitution would endan-

ger the monarchy itself. It could abolish monarchy and turn Nepal into a republic or it would severely clip the powers of the palace, providing for a ceremonial monarch.

The other commitments made by the rebels during their talks with the Opposition coalition of

DEAL ■ Agree to campaign for King as titular head; Maoists say will disarm under UN watch

Nepal Maoists join hands with parties

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, NOVEMBER 18

IN a key push towards democracy in Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), spearheading a decade-long insurgency to turn Hindu Nepal into a Communist republic, has reached an understanding with an alliance of seven political parties.

Highly placed sources said that the broad understanding—coming after a week which saw several senior leaders and diplomats in New Delhi—is a “peaceful” agitation for full democracy that could mean accommodating a ceremonial or truly constitutional monarchy and a “joint movement” to elect a constituent assembly. To this effect, the Maoists are learnt to have agreed to disarm under

Sleepless in New Delhi

The understanding comes after a week of senior leaders from Nepal being in New Delhi:

- Communist leader Madhav Nepal in Delhi
- G P Koirala reached Delhi on Nov 10
- PM Manmohan Singh met King in Dhaka on Nov 13
- Maoist leaders Prachanda and Bhattarai in Delhi
- US Ambassador to Nepal in Delhi says Maoists have to disarm
- Indian Ambassador S S Mukherjee also present

UN supervision.

Details of next steps are likely to be made public only after the King makes his position clear on “ceremonial or truly constitutional role” offered to him.

The King is on a trip abroad and is scheduled to return home on December 2 unless developments back home compel him to cut it short.

Education Minister Radha Krishna Mainali, himself a Naxalite leader in Nepal in the '60s, warned that the leaders who have spoken to Maoists could be held under anti-terrorist acts, but it was not clear whether the statement was made on behalf of the King.

According to PTI, Mainali told reporters yesterday: “The frantic visit of some prominent political leaders and diplomats to the Indian capital Delhi is an unfortunate development and the consultation would not yield any good result.”

For, the understanding comes at a time when two most prominent pro-democracy leaders, G P Koirala of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

To dethrone Nepal king Gyanendra, Maoists tie up with parties

Nepali Congress and Madhav Kumar Nepal of Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), to India ostensibly for their health check-up.

Their visit coincided with the presence of US Ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty and Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee.

It is reliably learnt that Koirala and Nepal also met Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai in Delhi. There has been no official word yet on the meetings as well as the understanding.

When contacted in New Delhi today, before he left for Kathmandu, CPN's Nepal told *The Indian Express*: “We have to talk, we don't have to meet in India to talk. We can meet them (the Maoists) in Nepal itself.” Nepal and another CPN-UML leader K P Sharma Oli returned to Kathmandu while Koirala is still in Delhi.

The seven parties, which have been agitating in Nepal, had earlier authorised Koirala and Nepal to reach any agreement with the Maoists to steer the country out of the current political stalemate.

Ambassador Moriarty said that Washington had no objection to political parties talking to the Maoists but their return to the political mainstream was contingent on them giving up violence.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 NOV 2005

US heat on Nepal King

'Gyanendra must act swiftly on promises'

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, November 17

WITH NEPAL playing the 'China card,' India and the US are pressing King Gyanendra to "reach out" to the political parties and make the "tough choices" required to return to mul-

TIME TO ACT

■ Prolonged absence of democracy will lead to further deterioration of security

■ Tough choices will have to be made and swift action taken

■ Maoist takeover in Nepal will be 'disastrous' not only for India but will also be a problem for China

tioned Gyanendra that prolonged absence of democracy would lead to further deterioration of security there. American Ambassador to Nepal James F. Moriarty said on Thursday that Gyanendra had "some tough choices to make" and needed to act swiftly on his assurances.

A Maoist takeover in Nepal, he said, would be "disastrous", not only for India's security but would also "be a problem for China" which "has a strong sense of history" and would not want to jeopardise its growing relations with India by throwing in its lot with the King. No

ti-party democracy in the Himalayan kingdom.

Not only would that make it easier for him to deal with the Maoist insurgency, but it would also help preserve the unifying force of the monarchy, threatened by a growing republican movement. Almost 10 months after he assumed absolute power, the US and India have cau-



one in the region would want an unstable Nepal. Moriarty, who came to New Delhi on Wednesday to discuss the situation in Nepal with foreign secretary Shyam Saran, said the continued suspension of military supplies to Nepal was the strongest "lever" India, the US and UK held to "gently persuade" Gyanendra to reach out to the political parties. He said suspending military supplies to Kathmandu had "hurt" the Royal Nepal Army's ability to tackle insurgents.

Saran briefed Moriarty on his meetings with Nepalese political leaders, including Madhav Nepal and G.P. Koirala. Political parties have made overtures to the Maoists, but will not have alliances with them until they abjure violence. Saran said Manmohan Singh, during his meeting with Gyanendra in Dhaka, reiterated India's position that reviving multi-party democracy was vital for handling Maoist insurgency, and urged him to "reach out to people" through the parties.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 NOV 2005

In Nepal, a constitutional monarchy has become a dictatorship

Loss of the spirit

RAJEEV DHAVAN

18
17/4

There is a constitutional crisis in Nepal. Following the end of rule of the Ranas in 1950-51, Nepal experimented with many constitutions, largely owing to the refusal of the king to give up power. The constitution of 1959 was subverted in 1960 when King Mahendra seized control. The *panchayat*-based constitution of 1962 limped on until the national constitutional referendum of 1980. King Birendra agreed to 'direct' elections, provided it was not on a party basis. Following protests, the constitution of 1990 came into being, leading to elections in 1991, 1994 and 1999. By 2000, there had been nine governments in 10 years. On June 4, 2001, the palace shootings led to the installation of King Gyanendra.

Meanwhile, the Maoists had begun an insurrection around 1995, seeking a people's republic to replace the constitutional monarchy. In November 2001, an emergency was declared which was extended, resulting in political confrontation and the dissolution of parliament of 2002. Since then, no elections have taken place.

From late 2002, King Gyanendra has played musical chairs in appointing and dismissing prime ministers at will. With no parliamentary elections and none but the people and media to oppose him, the king converted a constitutional monarchy into an unconstitutional dictatorship. An emergency was declared on February 1, 2005 and withdrawn. Faced with criticism, ordinances against the media have been introduced. Non-governmental organizations are threatened with suppression. Human rights violations have increased. The constitutionality of some of these changes is being considered by the supreme court.

The king claims to act under the constitution. Such a claim is incredible. Large parts of the constitution lie in ruins. Constitutions consist of political texts (which determine how democratic power is to be exercised) and justice texts (which reinforce the rule of law, fundamental rights and the custodianship of the judiciary). In Nepal, the political texts have been subverted and the justice texts suffer diminution. There is no parliament. The last elections were held in 1999. It is now five years since parliament was dissolved in 2002. Faced with this, the supreme court evaded deciding on the issue of dissolution in 2002 instead of adding to its precedent in the Manmohan Adhikari case of 1995. It refused to entertain the bid to restore the old parliament in January 2005. The king refused to order the election of a new one. The political texts

lie dead. The justice texts are inanimately refusing to rise to the situation.

The king now both reigns and rules — claiming legal sustenance from those parts of the constitution which he likes. The cardinal principle of the parliamentary government is that the king must rule with a prime minister and cabinet [Nepal constitution: Article 35(3)]. This does not suit the king. But he seeks recourse in certain other articles to autocratize his power. The king claims that, even without parlia-

principled implied limitations, can any limited power claimed by the king be unlimited?

With this we turn to constitutions in crisis. A lot of constitutions fail — either partly or wholly. In fact, in the last 60 years, very few constitutions have remained unscathed. But this does not mean that constitutionalism fails. There are three possible results. The first is that constitutional failure signifies a revolutionary change and creates a void to start afresh. This void theory was supported by Pakistan's

before, turn to the third path of what I call "constitutional legality". When a constitution fails, we must turn to the principles underlying the constitution to devise a system of constitutional governance. This is precisely what the amending power of the Nepal constitution underlines in Article 116 by referring to the spirit of the constitution.

In a talk to the Nepalese Bar Association on November 6, 2005, I compared a modern constitution with its multiple protections to the famous military formation of a *chakravyuha* in the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*, where one wall rises to the defence when the preceding one falls. So, in the Nepal crisis, the king has been trying to take over, threaten, manipulate, and overawe the other protecting walls of the constitution, including the corruption commission, the constitutional council, the human rights commission, the media, NGOs and so on. But the judiciary must stand up to the situation. To restore the constitution (a) a cabinet must advise the king, (b) all laws must conform to the bill of rights, (c) new laws must not be promulgated except when necessary, (d) elections must be announced (e) ordinances in excess of provisions must be limited or struck down, (f) a political dialogue with all, including the Maoists, must be sustained even in the face of American pressure that the political parties must not ally with Maoists, (g) the judiciary must not be compromised, (h) an independent NHRC must be reconstituted, (i) there can be no arbitrary detention and (j) the media and NGOs must be protected. The king must respect the principles underlying the constitution from which he claims to draw his power. All these form the principles of constitutional legality in the interregnum. They should be recognized and implemented by the supreme court as drawn from the constitution itself (Article 116 read with the preamble).

No doubt, Nepal is in a state of insurrection. But counter-terrorism cannot include a royalist subversion of democracy without reserve. The Maoists are willing to talk. They want a new constituent assembly. But talks may reveal that changes can be made by a new parliament through the power of amendment. These are matters that do not brook avoidance. But Nepal is subject to some indifference from India, undefined pressure from China and a new version of the Bush doctrine from America. The people of Nepal will overcome. Even if, in Yeats's phrase, "...the best lack conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity", Nepal's constitutionalism deserves better.



ment and the political process, he is the custodian to "preserve and protect the constitution by keeping in view the best interest and welfare of the people of Nepal" [Article 7(3)]. But does this give him absolute power indefinitely? Once past this hurdle, the king claims use of the emergency power (Article 115) and the ordinance making power (Article 72) without reference to the discipline of the constitution. Any further usurpation of constitutional authority is claimed from the power to remove difficulties (Article 127).

But can the power to remove difficulties be greater than the constitution itself? It should be noted that the highest power in the constitution is to amend the constitution, which in Nepal (Article 116) is subject to the "spirit of the preamble", which enumerates parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy, liberty equality, justice and the rule of law. If the highest power in the Nepal constitution is subject to

Counter-terrorism cannot include a royalist subversion of democracy

courts in Dosso's case in 1958. The second approach is to recognize constitutional failure but to limit the executive power to exercise power consistent with necessity. This was the improved view of the Pakistani courts in Asma Jalani (1969) and other cases. There are also intermediate formulations from Ghana (1966) and Nigeria (1969).

But all these approaches create a "usurpers' jurisprudence". In the case of Rhodesia, the British Privy Council, pronouncing from a distance, called Ian Smith's regime unconstitutional in 1969. But it could not enforce its orders anywhere — except in England. We must, there-

A royal pain

Maoist threat must be met politically

King Gyanendra is becoming increasingly incorrigible. ~~Ben~~ **K**on authoritarian control and oblivious to the widespread criticism of his continued defiance of the people's will, his "Ordinance amending some Nepal Acts related to Media-2062" last month has all but suppressed freedom of expression, and NGO activities have, from this month, been curbed. At the recent Saarc forum, he spoke of improved security prompting him to announce municipal polls in February 2006 and general elections in April 2007, the intention behind which can be questioned. King Gyanendra seems least concerned that political parties' non-participation will make such exercises farcical. The determination with which he rushes on suggests he will bypass them and encourage his supporters to form parties and contest the poll. Admittedly law and order have shown some signs of improvement following Maoists' declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, but it is anybody's guess what will happen after the three-month term expires. The government has not responded positively to Maoist overtures and is busy building up arms supplies from "friendly" countries in the obvious belief that the truce is not meaningful unless the rebels give up arms. And this could mean another spilling of blood.

But the crux is the Maoist uprising, and this deserves priority. In which regard the comment by the US envoy to Nepal that political parties should not forge an alliance with Maoists in their fight with the King is typical of American thinking. Nepalese Maoists were forced to take up arms as a result of administrative apathy, prolonged neglect and lack of development in the interiors and the threat they pose must be met politically. They abducted former Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand's son, owner of a sugar mill, after the cane-growers complained to them of nonpayment of Rs (N/C) 30 million. After his family promised to clear the dues, he was let off. In Nepal, poverty is the mother of intervention.

Hands-off^W warning in morality mirror

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka, Nov. 12: When the middle classes talk of morality, the age-old advice is to keep your hand on your wallet and hold on to it. But when an absolute monarch talks of morality, there are no clear recommendations about any emergency action.

An almost belligerent and high-sounding King of Nepal, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, today held up the mirror of morality to India, reminding it of the five principles of peaceful coexistence (Panchsheel). The veiled warning was to lay off the internal affairs of the Himalayan kingdom.

This was a remarkable feat, considering that he is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh tomorrow. The only inference that can be drawn by India is that he is in no mood to listen to any homilies from it about restoring democracy.

The grim-looking king made no bones about what he meant when he told the Saarc summit: "We believe that scrupulous observance by all countries in the region of the five principles of peaceful coexistence will contribute to developing a healthy pattern of inter-state relationship."

The five principles are: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful



Gyanendra. (Reuters)

co-existence.

They were first enunciated by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in his talk to the Indian delegation at the start of the negotiations on relations between China and India on the Tibet issue. In June 1954, the five principles were included in the joint communiqué issued by Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru. Since then, they have been adopted in many other international documents. Today, it was the Nepal monarch's turn to remind India of Panchsheel.

The body language between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the king was anything but good. Singh, who was seated next to the king on the dais, kept leaning away, as if zealously guarding his personal space. The two avoided looking at each other, with not even a smile being exchanged.

But there could be no doubt that King Gyanendra was talking to India. He took another leaf out of India's pronouncements on terrorism and argued against having dual standards about terrorism.

So he said, not unlike India used to argue about the US: "It is this double standard and selective approach that is assum-

ing a dangerous character rather than terrorism itself. We cannot make a distinction between good and bad terrorism; terrorism is terrorism."

Defending the royal coup of February 1, which converted his rule into an executive monarchy, he insisted: "The February 1 step in Nepal was necessitated by ground realities and had "not come at the cost of democracy".

"We remind the international community of the pre-February 1 situation in Nepal. Our friends and well-wishers were warning us of the danger of Nepal turning into a failed state."

"Failed State"? Was that not the term Singh had used for some of India's neighbours only yesterday? Surely, that was months after February 1.

The king avoided uttering the term "Maoist" throughout his painfully long speech, preferring to subsume them under the catch-all word "terrorists". At a time when the Maoists are in negotiation with the democratic parties in Nepal to chalk out a roadmap for restoring multiparty democracy and set up a constituent assembly, King Gyanendra insisted that they wanted to overthrow "a constitutional order" and replace it with "a rejected ideology of a one-party communist dictatorship".

Seeking to link Nepal Maoists with those professing similar ideology in India, the king presented the grim scenario of "terrorism in Nepal" affecting "the whole of South Asia".

Gyanendra imposes curbs on NGOs

Stateman News Service

SC strengthens king's hand

KATHMANDU, Nov. 11. — After imposing curbs on the media and civil servants, Nepal's government under King Gyanendra now enforced fresh restraints on NGOs, triggering protests, arrests and fears by rights activists that they would trigger a "humanitarian crisis" in the kingdom.

More than 3,000 NGOs and 200 INGOs, some of whom have been the most vocal participants in the pro-democracy struggle opposing the royal coup in February and have been exposing human rights violations by the state, would be affected by the controversial new code of conduct that prevents them from disclosing the information they receive and requires government approval to start projects with foreign aid. They are also required to present progress and financial reports to the government and dissociate themselves from political parties.

Avowing to defy the ordinance, dozens of NGOs took out a protest march in the capital today and in all the five development regions of Nepal, burning

KATHMANDU, Nov. 11. — Nepal's Supreme Court today rejected a petition by media organisations for a stay on King Gyanendra's draconian media ordinance that banned FM radios from broadcasting news and put severe restrictions on press. But the three-member Special Bench headed by Supreme Court chief justice Mr Dilip Kumar Poudyal asked to give top priority to the case while rejecting the writ petition filed by the Kantipur Publication, owner of the popular Kantipur FM, and eight other professional organisations including the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).

The verdict paved way for the government to tighten screw on free media, said sources at the FNJ. FNJ president Mr Bishnu Nisthuri said the journalists will hold a massive rally on Sunday in Kathmandu against the Ordinance. All professional organisations including civil society members, university teachers and trade union activists have extended their support. Nepal Bar Association president Mr Sambhu Thapa said the verdict was against the people's right to information guaranteed by the constitution. The black Media Ordinance introduced recently has provisions of harsh punishment for journalists and aims to curb press freedom. It bans FM news broadcast, puts severe restrictions on press freedom and has provision to jail and fine journalists who violate it. The government last month carried out a mid-night raid at the office of the Kantipur FM station in Jawlakhel in Kathmandu, implementing the ordinance. — PTI

copies of the controversial ordinance. Media reports said five protesters were arrested in Raj Biraj in Saptari district for torching copes of the ordinance. "The government is trying to turn us into its agents," said Dr Arjun Karki, president of NGO Federation, that has nearly 2600 associations under its umbrella. "It is an act to deter the civil society that has been agitating for democracy.

However, it will create a humanitarian crisis since it is the NGOs who deliver development and humanitarian aid to the rural areas where the government has not been able to reach."

As King Gyanendra headed for the Saarc Summit, ignoring the NGOs' protests, there were more protests before the UN headquarters in Kathmandu protestors sat on an indefinite dharna.

“The struggle against King Gyanendra should be made bipolar”

Himalayan
89-12-2011
11-12-11
7/11 ✓

Calling for the establishment of complete democracy, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary **Madhav Nepal** says King Gyanendra's talk of elections is a trap. Excerpts from a recent interview:

Amit Baruah

What are the prospects of an early return to democracy in Nepal?

It is very difficult to answer your question even though we are trying our best to create a congenial climate where we can establish complete democracy. For this purpose, we are mobilising the people. We have launched a new people's awareness campaign and we have mobilised our own party cadres all over the country in 75 districts and 4,000 villages. There will be mass meetings in villages and bazaars. On November 11, we are planning district-level demonstrations and from November 19 we are planning regional-level protest programmes, where at least 50,000 people will participate in each programme. The culmination of all this will be a massive protest in Kathmandu on February 19 [2006] – that is our proposal, our party's proposal. We would also like to gather more international support for our cause so that the King [Gyanendra] is isolated from all quarters. The more we can mobilise, the sooner we can restore democracy.

King Gyanendra recently promised elections in two years. Do you believe him?

The King has tried to hold elections four times during the tenure of four Prime Ministers ... but it did not prove possible. The intentions of the King are not good; he wants to deceive the international community and give false hope to the world that he is for democracy. But he has *mala fide* intentions. He is really not keen to restore democracy because the announcement of holding elections is just a trap. He [the King] wants to legitimise his own autocratic regime, strengthen his power and prolong his rule as long as possible. In the absence of democratic space and [a] peaceful environment, any talk of elections is just wishful thinking, a ploy of monarchist forces.

The seven-party alliance for the restoration of democracy had announced its intentions of engaging the Maoists. How far have you been successful in this?

We are trying to communicate with the Maoists and have put three issues before



Madhav Nepal: “We need sympathy, solidarity, and support from the people of India.” – PHOTO: R.V.MOORTHY

them. First, they must commit themselves to multiparty democracy; second, they must behave in a democratic way and not harass the general people and political opponents; and, third, they must give an assurance that they will surrender their arms to the international community or under the super-

vision of the United Nations when there is a political settlement.

I have heard that at a recent Central Committee meeting they [the Maoists] have addressed all these issues and responded positively, but the details are still to come in. If they are responding positively, it is a good

sign. We will again hold talks with them to bring them [into] a peaceful, political process and concentrate on the fight against the absolute monarchy so that the present triangular fight can be turned into a bipolar one.

Could there be a common, minimum position between the political parties and the Maoists?

The common programme is that we must do away with constitutional monarchy and establish complete democracy because the 1991 version [of democracy] was a limited one.

To achieve this, we must have elections for a constituent assembly. We must have an understanding on all these basic elements and also review our past performance during the 12 years political parties were in power. Some serious mistakes were made and these need to be corrected ...

You met a cross-section of political leaders during your visit to New Delhi. What do you expect from India?

What we need is sympathy, solidarity and support from the people, authorities, leaders and a cross-section of the Indian population. They should not, in any way, take steps that will bolster the morale of the absolutist monarchy.

Are you getting that support?

More or less. But, at times, there are anxieties whether that [support] would be continued or not. To secure this [Indian support], we would like all possible help from the press and other sections of society.

What are the things that you would not like the Government of India to do?

No steps that strengthen the monarchy should be taken. Supply of arms [by India to Nepal] is one of the things [that shouldn't be done]. It is very clear that the [Maoist] insurgency cannot be addressed by military means.

So, if the Maoist problem is a political one, then it should be handled in a political way. We need to find a political solution to the problem. For this, we are doing our best to restore the capabilities of the political parties.

AMIT BARUAH

07 NOV 2005

China offer stumps Nepal Marxist

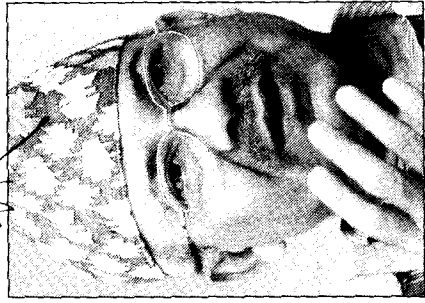
BHARAT BHUSHAN

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Madhav Kumar Nepal, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), has described the Chinese military overtures to Kathmandu as "strange" and suggested that they would be "against the people of Nepal and their democratic aspirations".

He seemed at a loss to understand how "China which has a long history of fighting against feudalism and sympathising with democratic movements internationally" should offer to provide military assistance to the "autocratic regime" in Kathmandu.

"We would like to appeal to China as well as other countries that at a time when the political parties are preparing to launch a peaceful agitation against this totalitarian regime, they should not provide any military assistance to the king. Such military assistance will be used against the people. No one should show themselves to be against the people of Nepal or go against their aspirations," he said.

Madhav Nepal pointed out that King Gyanendra had



Madhav Nepal.

(Picture by Jagan Negi)

failed to tackle the Maoist insurgency politically. "We, in the political parties, have taken the initiative for a dialogue with the Maoists so that they can adopt a peaceful political path," he said.

He claimed that last week's formal talks between the Maoist leaders and his party's representative Bamdev Gautam in Rolpa had been "very positive".

The Maoists have apparently conveyed to him that in a recent central committee meeting, they had taken three crucial decisions.

They adopted a resolution

the disarming and decommissioning of arms," he said.

The communist leader argued that a government of political reconciliation with the Maoists was possible in Nepal.

Either the platform of a restored Parliament or an all-party conference could be used to form an interim government that would have full executive and legislative powers.

The 1990 Constitution could be adopted with some modifications as an interim option until a new statute was framed, he suggested.

The next series of steps in the road to democracy, the communist leader said, would be: elections to the Constituent Assembly; putting Maoist arms under international or UN supervision while restricting the Royal Nepal Army to the barracks; the interim government to conduct elections with the help of civilian security forces and the international community; rehabilitation of victims of the armed conflict; and putting in place a system of governance based on restructuring of the state and political institutions making them more inclusive and accountable.

"The mistakes of gover-

nance in the past need to be pinpointed, accepted and corrected in the days to come. A system of accountability, transparency and corruption control needs to be put in place," Madhav Nepal said.

He dismissed King Gyanendra's announcement of municipal and parliamentary "pools" as "a cunning plan to create confusion in the minds of the international community and the Nepalese people".

"Under an autocracy, how is it possible to hold a democratic poll or ensure a democratic outcome? It is a ploy to prolong the illegitimate rule of the king and the world should recognise it as such," Madhav Nepal said.

About the future of monarchy in Nepal, he said neither absolute monarchy, nor its Nepalese variant of monarchy with limited democracy, nor even restoring the status quo of constitutional monarchy was possible any longer.

"The only choice before the people is ceremonial monarchy with the army under the executive and Parliament being supreme, or a Republic. Our party has decided that we are for a Democratic Republic," he declared.

20 OCT 2005

Nepal Opp joins forces with media

28/10
Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Oct. 27.
— Nepal's seven major parliamentary parties have called a bandh in Kathmandu Valley tomorrow to protest against a succession of attacks by King Gyanendra's government on the media, culminating in a 24-hour ultimatum to the largest private radio station in the kingdom.

Kantipur FM, run by Kantipur, the largest media house in Nepal, came under direct attack by the government after a controversial media ordinance passed by Gyanendra earlier this month prohibiting FM stations from airing news in spite of the issue being sub judice.

Fearing the state would try to close down the station, Nepal's parties as well as human rights activists, journalists and lawyers formed a human chain around the office to thwart such an attempt. The media war in Nepal is fast becoming internationalised with India and the USA having already expressed concern at the decree.

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2005

MILITARY AID FOR KATHMANDU, MORE HEARTACHE FOR DELHI

China bats for Nepal

26/10 5:22
K. S. - Nepal
W

Sudeshna Sarkar in Kathmandu

Oct. 25. — The rift between India and Nepal widened today with Nepal's army chief, Gen. Pyar Jung Thapa, returning from a week-long visit to China with Beijing's promise to provide 8 million yuan (\$9,88,862) to Kathmandu as military assistance. Gen. Thapa was also reported by Kantipur TV channel as saying the aid would be coming next year as well.

Though the quantum of assistance is not significant, the timing is. It signifies that China is standing by King Gyanendra's government at a time when the international community is asking the king to restore democracy to the country and resume his role of a constitutional monarch. Three of Nepal's major military assistance donors — India, the USA and UK — have suspended lethal military aid to Nepal since February, when King Gyanendra seized power with the help of the country's army. Since February, China has supplied the

Royal Nepalese Army with five armoured carriers and is reported to have signed an agreement to sell two aircraft to Nepal and gift one.

The Chinese aid follows Nepalese foreign minister Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey's visit to China in August when Beijing announced an additional aid of \$12.43 million, giving Nepal a free hand to spend the money any way it wanted to. Mr Pandey is currently visiting Russia and will proceed to Pakistan from there. The two visits are likely to yield fresh agreements. India, on the other hand, had snubbed Mr Pandey when he landed in New Delhi on his way to Russia, sending a joint secretary to receive him at the airport.

However, the most important fallout of the Chinese aid could be a 1988-like situation. In 1987, after Nepal purchased anti-aircraft guns from China, India closed its transit routes, virtually blockading Nepal for 15 months. The Nepalese army tried to underplay the Chinese assistance, though. "It was a routine visit result-

ing in a routine agreement," Royal Nepalese Army spokesman Brigadier General Dipak Gurung said.

SC pulls up govt on media curbs

The Supreme Court of Nepal has asked the government to furnish written replies over the controversial media ordinance issued by King Gyanendra and a midnight raid on a private radio station, adds PTI.

Chief Justice Mr Dilip Kumar Poudel yesterday issued the show-cause notice with a deadline of 15 days in response to a writ filed by eight professional groups and the Kantipur FM, which was raided by police on Friday, against the ordinance banning news transmission by FM channels.

However, the court did not issue a stay order as sought by the petitioners. The decision on whether or not to issue a stay order would be made only after a hearing on 30 October, said the single Bench headed by the Chief Justice.

THREAT TO NEPAL

Socio-Political Roots Of Maoist Insurgency

By J R MUKHERJEE

22/10
Nepal, sandwiched between India and China has a population of 27,070,666. The vast majority of its population is very young. The main ethnic groups are Brahmin, Chettri, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Tharu and others. Its religious profile is — 86.2 per cent Hindu, 7.8 per cent Buddhist, 3.8 per cent Islam and others 2.2 per cent.

Nepal is a very poor state with 42 per cent of its population living below the poverty line. Its main source of income has been through tourism. Nepal is aided internationally to the extent of 60 per cent of its development budget and about 28 per cent of its total budget. Insurgency has hit Nepal's economy very badly as it is totally dependent on tourism. Although its per capita income is \$244, 42 per cent of the population earns less than \$100 per year.

Social indicators

Poverty reduction is Nepal's overriding development challenge. Many of its social indicators are among the lowest worldwide. Nearly 40 per cent of its population lack access to basic healthcare and education. Eighty per cent of its citizens rely on subsistence agriculture, but only 20 per cent of Nepal's rugged terrain is arable. Population pressure on natural resources is increasing. Overpopulation is already straining the "carrying capacity" of the middle hill areas, particularly the Kathmandu Valley, resulting in the depletion of forest cover for crops, fuel, and fodder and contributing to erosion and flooding.

The way of life is still essentially feudal, and the caste system with all its ills related to deprivation of lower castes very strongly prevalent. Discrimination against lower castes is especially common in the rural areas, even though the Government has outlawed untouchability. Economic, social and educational advancement continues to follow traditional patterns, geographic location, and caste. Better education and higher levels of prosperity, especially in the Kathmandu Valley, are slowly reducing caste distinctions and increasing opportunities for lower socio-economic groups. Reports indicate that there is rampant corruption. Consequently money allocated

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for development never reaches the interior areas.

In 1951 the monarch ended the century-old system of rule by hereditary premiers and instituted a cabinet system of government. In 1961, King Mahendra, overthrew Nepal's first-ever elec-

had unstable coalition governments. The next five years saw five successive governments. Maoist insurgency meanwhile commenced in 1996 and threw the country into turmoil. Although the Nepali Congress won a clear majority in the parlia-



ted government, banned political parties and instituted the panchayat system of government. In 1990, Leftist parties under a United Left Front joined forces with the Nepali Congress Party to launch strikes and demonstrations in the major cities of Nepal, pressing for a return to democracy. The King capitulated, dissolved the panchayat system, lifted the ban on political parties, and released all political prisoners. An interim government was sworn in, with a cabinet made up of members of the Nepali Congress Party, the Communist Parties of Nepal, royal appointees, and independents.

Hung Parliament

In the 1991 elections the Nepali Congress won and formed the government. The 1994 election defeat of the Nepali Congress Party by the United Marxist and Leninist Party (UML) resulted in a hung Parliament, with a minority government. The extreme Leftist faction was excluded from participation. This communist party faction then withdrew from the political process and vowed a Maoist revolution modelled on Peru's Shining Path. Disagreements within the Leftist coalition led to not only the exit from the government but also the vertical division of the UML party into the Maoists and the non-maoists. This was reportedly the starting point for Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

Since then Nepal repeatedly

had unstable coalition governments. The next five years saw five successive governments. Maoist insurgency meanwhile commenced in 1996 and threw the country into turmoil. Although the Nepali Congress won a clear majority in the parliamentary elections, held in 1999, the pattern of short-lived governments persisted. Royal family rivalries compounded the problem. In June 2001 the Crown Prince Dipendra massacred 10 members of the royal family including the King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah and his queen and then took his own life. The government and the Maoists declared a ceasefire on 23 July 2001 and held three rounds of talks in August, September and November. Following the third rounds of talks on 23 November, the Maoists broke the ceasefire with attacks on police, Army, and Armed Police Force personnel in several districts. Nepal's new King Gyanendra approved the state of emergency in November 2001. He also allowed Nepal's army to join the fight against the Maoists for the first time in the six year insurgency.

Until late 2002, the Nepalese government and the Maoists were making some progress in talks. Three demands were put forward by the Maoists: the monarchy must be abolished; there must be an election for a constituent assembly which should write a new constitution; and, in order to have these elections, the present government must resign and an all-party interim government should administer the elections.

The government rejected these demands and insisted the Maoists must first renounce violence. The Maoists accused the government

of not being serious about the talks, broke the ceasefire and resumed their attacks.

On 4 October 2002, Nepal's King Gyanendra dismissed the country's government saying it failed to deal with the Maoist rebellion and put off general elections that were scheduled for November. On 29 January, 2003, the government announced a cease-fire with armed insurgents of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The ceasefire was called after government officials agreed to meet three conditions: not to refer to Maoists as terrorists, remove rewards for their arrest, and withdraw Interpol arrest warrants for their leaders. Peace talks between the government and the Maoists were held in April and May 2003.

Army operations

In June 2003, as a result of political negotiations, Prime Minister Deuba and the Maoist leader Pradyumna Thapa Prime Minister. The ceasefire collapsed in August 2003. The Army's counter-insurgency operations against the Maoists were meanwhile gaining ground. The sudden imposition of emergency by the King reportedly based on reports of the Maoists preparing to launch fresh offensives, on 1 February 2005, along with dismissal of the government, confinement of all political leaders, censorship, shutting off the country for a day resulted in the world responding in dismay.

As a result of pressure reportedly from the Indian Government, Indian political parties and the international community there is a possibility of talks and an alliance between the Maoists and the seven-party democratic alliance. The communist movement in Nepal in the past was a Left-intellectual movement. The participating intellectuals in this movement had comprised the upper caste (Brahmin-Chhetri-Newar-BCN). Past movements were basically the movements against BCN ruling elite by the BCN non-ruling elite.

The communist movement has now polarised into Maoist and non-Maoist blocs. Maoist insurgency reportedly started in 1996 has gained momentum. It was launched by leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal (alias Prachanda) and Baburam Bhattarai, as a People's War. The rebel group loosely models itself on the teachings of Mao Zedong.

Team named for Maoist talks

JHEMANTH

Kathmandu, Oct. 19: As the Nepal government began preparing for February's municipal elections, the seven-party Opposition alliance formed a high-level committee to start talks with the Maoist rebels.

Alliance sources told **The Telegraph** that a two-member committee headed by Nepali Congress supremo and former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala would soon begin talks with Maoist supremo Prachanda and ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, both of whom are currently underground.

The other member of the committee is United Marxist Leninist (UML) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

The sources said that top



Girija Prasad Koirala in Kathmandu. (Reuters)

alliance leaders met here this morning at the office of the Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party and decided to speed up the dialogue process with the rebels.

"The meeting decided to go ahead with the dialogue despite threats from the government", the sources added.

Soon after meeting, the alliance released a statement announcing its plans to boycott the municipal elections totally.

"The municipal elections are a conspiracy to prolong the autocratic rule of the monarch", the statement said, adding that all talk about parliamentary polls are meaningless.

The alliance called upon the people to defeat all conspiracies hatched by the incumbent regime and hoped that they would rally around the political parties which are fighting for restoration of democracy.

The alliance also condemned the recently promulgated media ordinance and expressed solidarity with journalists and other professional organisations in their protests against the stringent laws. It said the seven parties would resume their protest programmes after the Tihar festival.

The meeting was attended by Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Amik Serchan of Janamorcha Nepal, Narayan Man Bijukchhe of Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party, Hriday Tripathi of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi) and Krishna Das Shrestha of the United Left Front Nepal.

The Election Commission has urged political parties to register within 30 days if they intend to participate in the municipal elections, which will be held on February 8, 2006.

Addressing a media gathering, Chief Election Commissioner Keshav Raj Rajbhandari said that an official notification would be made public in tomorrow's gazette.

THE TELEGRAPH

ROYAL FIAT ■ When elections come, it will be after eight year gap

Nepal to get polls in 2007

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, OCTOBER 12

In what appears a realisation, if belated, that dictatorial ambition cannot, in the 21st century, acquire legitimacy either at home or abroad, Nepal's King Gyanendra announced on Wednesday that the country would see general elections by April 2007—after a gap of nearly eight years. The reactivation of the democratic process would mean the king's

shedding executive powers by mid-April 2007, almost ten months before his three-year deadline which he set at the time of the February 1 coup.

Nepal's political parties have yet to respond to the announcement in which the king appealed to them to participate in the democratic process. Calling on the political parties to join the elections, Gyanendra said, "Even those who have gone the wrong way, should not further delay joining the democrati-

cally competitive process." He added: "Those who have faith in multi-party democracy should participate in the municipal elections," which Nepal's pro-democracy parties have decided to boycott.

The king even approached the international community—which has strongly indicated its disapproval of the royal take-over—to contribute actively to make the election a success.

In his customary address to the nation on the occasion

of Vijaya Dashami, Gyanendra also made it clear that the political turmoil in Nepal was to be sorted out without any outside intervention—thus issuing a firm 'No' to human rights organisations which have been demanding UN mediation in a still-elusive peace process.

Nor was there any indication that the royal regime was considering a positive reciprocation of the Maoists' unilateral cease fire, which has been, in effect since September 3.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Nepal on the brink

High
reput

FOR Nepal there can be no going back. February's royal coup, growing pro-democracy agitation and unilateral Maoist ceasefire are bringing the nine-year conflict to a head. Rapid developments of the recent past have left the 237-year-old monarchy staring into the abyss. Whatever the days ahead may bring, Nepal's future cannot lie in a return to an earlier status quo.

It may yet be that Nepal manages to arrive at a new distribution of power peacefully: that the king sees sense and offers concessions, that the political parties build both policies and public support, that the Maoists deliver on their promise to become good mainstream democrats. But to assume any or all of these will happen easily is to be over-optimistic. The powerful political dynamics that have been unleashed are more likely to usher in dangerous contingencies for which no one, domestically or internationally, is well prepared. Apart, of course, from the Maoists.

How has a situation that many read as a bloody but nonetheless stable stalemate started unravelling so quickly? First, any sense of stalemate was illusory. The Maoists may not have decisively won but they have consistently been gaining political ground. It is no coincidence that the sea-change in popular mood over the last few years, most dramatically illustrated by the tilt of conservative mainstream parties to republicanism, has been almost entirely in the Maoists' favour. The inability of successive governments to respond to the rebel challenge has now been exposed.

Second, many crucial actors have been blinded by wishful thinking. Otherwise sensible observers in Kathmandu reassure themselves that the Maoists will collapse. The outside world has been little better: perhaps only now, as it faces a possible collapse of royal authority, is New Delhi shaking itself out of complacency towards the precarious state of its closest neighbour. America has braved isolation with its warnings of imminent Maoist victory, but its own policy of bolstering



Its political leaders do not have much time left to come up with a plan

12/10
RHODERICK CHALMERS

an ineffective military loyal to an adventurist king has only hastened the slide. Third, and most crucially, history may well remember King Gyanendra as the catalyst that sparked the final denouement of Nepal's painful drama. Among supporters of constitutional monarchy, the fear that the king himself is hastening his dynasty's demise is palpable. As those close to the palace prepare their fall-back plans, move their assets out of Nepal and furnish their second homes abroad, a sense of quiet panic is spreading. Even the king's closest advisers have started dropping hints that they are urging moderation and cannot be held responsible for the February gambit. It seems only those at the heart of Narayanhiti Palace are still refusing

offering a full reciprocation.

"If the king were sensible..." is the hypothetical preface to almost every effort at second-guessing the palace's next moves. But the monarch's actions to date — from crushing relatively harmless mainstream dissent to presiding over an economic deterioration that is alienating the business community and international backers — leave even sympathetic observers with little hope. Others want the king to stick to his hard line so that the end is hastened. There is a further, more bitter, irony to come. Party leaders have only reluctantly turned against the monarchy. "None of us really wanted to embrace republicanism," a standing committee member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified

A transition to an all-party interim government, backed by a democratically accountable military, is the sensible ideal. But if the army ties itself to the palace, the prospects are bleak

to acknowledge the urgent need to step back from the brink.

If the king does indeed insist on seeing his gamble out to the bitter end, there is little doubt which way it will go. The irony is that had he played his cards more astutely, he could almost certainly have won the international community over in the wake of his power-grab. He might even have been able to deliver some token achievements to a population yearning for peace and progress, and disillusioned with the shortcomings of elected administrations. With imagination, the palace could have turned the Maoist ceasefire to its advantage, claiming credit for having pressured the rebels into the truce and being magnanimous in victory by

Marxist Leninist) told me recently, "but we couldn't resist the pressure from society any longer." He could have been speaking for any of the mainstream leaders who have doggedly clung to the hope that they could return to the comfortable accommodation with the palace that had served them well enough for the first dozen years of democracy.

The king himself recently compared palace-party relations with the quarrels between a husband and wife. According to a Nepali proverb, marital tiffs are like a blaze in the straw: they flare up dramatically but burn themselves out quickly. But the metaphor is better framed as one of domestic violence: the long-suffering parties have been assaulted once too often and may re-

sist the urge to kiss and make up. The parties also have other suitors now in the Maoists. Political leaders have ridden on a brief surge in popularity and profile. Their new-found republican rhetoric if not heartfelt at least appeals to a growing section of opinion-formers and more radical young supporters. But there is also a quietly gnawing fear that in a fit of careless enthusiasm, they may have unleashed forces beyond their control. That republicanism is a fine principle but that defending their own non-violent democratic principles in the face of a disciplined insurgency may be difficult if the bulwark of the monarchy is removed. The Maoists may lack popular support but they have not lost momentum. If the monarchy is seriously weakened, the army's behaviour will initially decide the course Nepal takes. A measured transition to an all-party interim government, backed by a democratically accountable military, is the sensible ideal. But if the army insists on tying itself to the palace, the prospects are bleak. Without political leadership it cannot maintain order, and brutally repressive moves would fuel discontent in the restive lower ranks hoping for a ceasefire.

The Maoists stand ready to fill any power vacuum, though they would be canny enough to preserve at least a pluralist facade. They may yet be brought into non-violent mainstream politics but only if the moderate forces are backed unequivocally by the outside world. And only if someone else has a better strategy than they do. For the time being, they are in the driver's seat.

Nepal's political leaders and external friends do not have much time left to come up with a plan. Pushing for a bilateral ceasefire would be a start: it might not resolve the central power struggle but would at least act as a brake on the accelerating slide towards further violence and instability.

The writer is a visiting fellow, Nepal's Tribhuvan University and deputy director of the International Crisis Group's South Asia Project

NO SHANGRI-LA

Bhutan His Majesty
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It could be tempting to romanticize it as the fall of the world's last Shangri-La. It is also possible to create an idyllic picture of the magnificent king of a magic kingdom voluntarily giving away all his powers to the people. But Bhutan's emergence into the age of democracy is no such idyll. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk is more a realist than the hero of an old-world political romance. The draft constitution that he has now announced is actually the culmination of a modernizing process he had set in motion in 1999. The constitution provides for political parties and parliamentary elections in a country that had long viewed democracy and mass politics with a mix of suspicion, contempt and even fear. *G. B.*

Although democracy was still a distant dream, the king spoke the language of a modernizer ever since his ascension in 1972. True, the language sometimes smacked of Bhutan's Buddhist mysticism. It was the king who started a debate when he said that the kingdom should aspire for gross national happiness rather than the more mundane gross national product. It could have been ignored as a casual remark, but not in Bhutan. That is why scholars at an international conference in Thimphu last February came up with sixty-odd papers on the real import of GNH. There have been more tangible forms, though, of the closed country opening to the modern world. In 1999, the king issued the *kasho* or the royal edict by which he surrendered many of his powers to his council of ministers. It was also the year in which television and the internet came to Bhutan. In 2001, the king set up a committee, headed by the chief justice, to draft the constitution, which will be approved at the next session of the national assembly in July.

However, reforms, political or economic, are never uninterrupted dream runs. When it comes, the new age will have to grapple with the grinding poverty in which most of the Bhutanese live. It will also have to find new ways to deal with the question of ethnic minorities, especially the Nepali-speaking people. It has to settle with Nepal the issue of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who have been living in camps within Nepal for nearly a decade. As a country that is largely dependent on foreign aid, Bhutan has to win back the confidence of the donor countries which have accused it of human rights abuses against the refugees and turned off the tap. The democratic way could help Thimphu overcome some of these problems. But there could also be new problems that come with democracy. Thimphu will not have to look far for such omens. In neighbouring Nepal, the change from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy has resulted in conflicts that the country has not been able to resolve in the past 15 years. But these are small prices to pay for freedom and modernity.

Protests against King spread to Nepal districts

Palace hints at replacing the democratic Constitution

KATHMANDU: Over 200 protestors of the seven-party Movement for Restoration of Democracy were arrested on Tuesday as they held demonstrations outside the Nepalese capital for the first time, amid speculation that King Gyanendra may consolidate his power by going further from his takeover.

"The seven agitating parties held simultaneous protests in districts outside Kathmandu for the first time" on Tuesday, Nepalese Congress leader Shobhakar Parajuli said in a statement, adding the police arrested over 200 demonstrators and their leaders in most of the districts. In all, protests were held in 72 of the 75 districts.

Call to intensify stir

Meanwhile, leading human rights activists and civil society members have called political parties to intensify their movement after the King said that foreign money was fuelling "unwanted activity" in Kathmandu, apparently referring to the seven-party agitation which is centred in the capital.

"Since people were already moving forward in a peaceful movement for democratic republic, political parties should not launch their movement in a feeble-minded way," leading human rights activist Krishna Pahari told a massive gathering of 20,000 people near here on Monday.

Challenging the King to give proof about foreign money playing any role in the on-going agitation, Mr. Pahari demanded that all money deposited in foreign banks be made public and brought back to the country. He said the King's remarks were nothing but grumbling against



BANNER OF REVOLT: Activists belonging to the seven major political parties raise anti-King slogans in Kathmandu on Tuesday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

the national and international communities which have not supported the royal takeover.

Urging political parties to launch aggressive programmes, civil society activist Devendra Raj Pandey warned parties against signing any agreement with the King undermining the people's interest.

Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Durga Shrestha has said that the King was set to move forward and not retract his February 1 takeover. While giving directives to office chiefs in Parsa district, Shrestha

on Sunday asked them to carry out their works confidently as the King was not likely to retract. There is also speculation that the present democratic Constitution might be replaced by an autocratic one, providing more power to the King.

The King's Deputy Tulsi Giri said last week that the present Constitution is an obstacle for the King in achieving his objectives. He said the Government could not take action against certain newspapers writing against it because of the Constitution.

Hundreds kidnapped

Communist rebels have abducted hundreds of villagers, students and teachers, apparently hauling them off for a few days to attend rallies and indoctrination sessions in remote areas of the mountain kingdom, the army said on Tuesday.

The fate of those abducted was not clear, but victims of such kidnappings are usually released after spending a few days being lectured about the rebels' struggle to overthrow the monarchy.

- PTI, AP

Time of reckoning for King

The defence by the Nepal Foreign Minister of his country's "model of democracy" at the United Nations General Assembly was a pathetic attempt at justifying King Gyanendra's reactionary coup of February 1. As Ramesh Nath Pandey, standing in for the monarch at the U.N. summit, theorised that there was no "one-size fit-all" democracy and every country needed to choose the type of governance suited to its history and culture, the world saw exactly how this translates in Nepal — a fierce police crackdown on journalists demanding restoration of a free press. But clearly, King Gyanendra is now under siege. His hope of driving a wedge in the seven-party alliance against him has not been realised. The autocrat who dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government saying it was inept and unable to tackle the Maoist insurgency has shown himself to be no better. Since the beginning of September, a civil disobedience movement by the alliance and other pro-democratic forces has paralysed Kathmandu — sending out the message to the King that the political parties, far from submitting subject-like to his game plan, will make even day-to-day governance impossible.

But the most significant development is that political parties that swore by the co-existence of a constitutional monarchy with multi-party parliamentary democracy, as laid down by the 1990 Constitution, are now beginning to ask if even a stripped down monarchy is necessary, given the King's unwillingness to abide by his constitutionally prescribed role. At its convention earlier this month, the Nepal Congress formally articulated this shift by dropping from the party constitution its longstanding commitment to a constitutional monarchy. Even though Nepal's biggest party has not formally committed itself to a republic, the change represents a big setback for King Gyanendra. This, and the campaign for a republic by the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), Nepal's second largest party, are strong indications that the political parties are closing ranks with the Maoists, whose declared aim is to abolish the monarchy. The prospect of the two forces joining hands has strengthened after the Maoists announced, on September 3, a unilateral three-month ceasefire. By declaring war on Parliament, multi-party democracy, and the press, King Gyanendra has crassly scripted calls for the exit of Nepal's 267-year-old monarchy. Internationally isolated — he is at odds with India, the United States, Britain, and the European Union — and under siege at home, the only sensible option for the King is to roll back the confrontation and accept, even at this late hour, that he is nothing more than a constitutional monarch.

SEP 100 THE P...CL

Nepal mulls elections within two years

United Nations: Seven months after Nepal's king seized absolute power, a government minister announced that the country will hold municipal elections by April 2006 and national elections within two years.

Nepali foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey told the UN General Assembly on Wednesday that King Gyanendra's commitment to multiparty democracy "is unflinching and total."

In a speech to the General Assembly's annual meeting, Pandey said the king "is determined to re-energise multiparty democratic institutions by restoring sustainable peace, and making democracy meaningful, matured, cultured and refined."

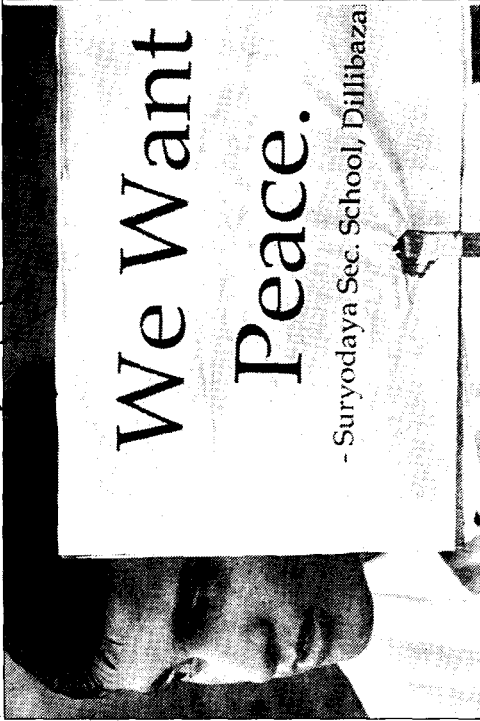
"To this end, we will be holding

step forward in re-energising the democratic institutions through free and fair elections," Pandey said.

Activists have been holding daily rallies in Kathmandu since September 4 to protest Gyanendra's seizure of power. An alliance of seven main political parties is demanding the king hand power back to an elected government.

Pandey urged countries and organisations that support democracy "to come forward and help us to conduct free and fair elections."

In his speech, Pandey said people have the right to choose the system of democratic government that is best suitable to the country's "needs and aspirations." Agencies



A Nepali student at a peace rally in Kathmandu municipal elections by April 2006, to be followed by national elections in 2007. This will be an important

Maoists kidnap 2,300 civilians

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, Sept. 22: Maoist rebels abducted 2,300 civilians — most of them teachers and students — from remote villages in Achham district, western Nepal, during the last seven days.

According to reports reaching here from Mangalsen, headquarters of Achham district, the Maoists started the abductions last Saturday to indoctrinate the teachers and students with their rebel ideology. This is the largest Maoist operation since they declared a ceasefire on September 3.

The report, quoting the locals, said the Maoists abducted students and teachers from 30 schools located in remote village development councils of Achham district, including Yalsa, Bayalpata, Barala, Binayak, Dhaku, Durmakada and Hirma. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

According to the families

of the kidnapped teachers and students, the rebels also abducted one person from every family in the 40 councils of Achham district.

The locals were threatened with dire consequences if they did not comply with the rebel orders.

While the district administration's office confirmed the mass abductions, the victims' families appealed to human rights activists and journalists in Mangalsen to ensure the safety of their family members.

The abductions come at a time when local NGOs have launched a "School Children Zone of Peace" campaign in Achham district with the Unicef's collaboration.

Municipal polls

Nepal's Election Commission said today it had begun preparing for municipal elections to be held in the revolt-racked nation by April next year, adds Reuters.

Earlier this year, King Gyanendra, who sacked the government and seized absolute power in February, had announced plans to hold elections in 58 municipalities by April 2006.

The impoverished Himalayan kingdom has been in turmoil since the king's power grab.

He said he had acted to quell a Maoist revolt in which more than 12,500 people have died since 1996.

"We have already prepared the voters' lists in municipalities and the announcement of the dates for the elections is expected soon," Tej Muni Bajracharya, a commission spokesman, said. "The municipal elections will be held within April."

He said voting would be held in phases to allow security personnel to move across the mountainous nation. Bajracharya said it was not clear when parliamentary elections would be held.

2 SEP 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Nepal slipping out of King's feeble hands

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, September 20

KING GYANENDRA, under increasing pressure from the international community for his assumption of absolute power in Nepal, appears to be losing his feeble grip on the Himalayan Kingdom. The King has doggedly refused Indian advice to restore multi-party democracy and New Delhi is not really concerned that the monarchy's grip appears to be slipping fast.

With pro-democracy activists being regularly beaten up in Kathmandu, where the writ of the Royal Nepal Army is strongest, the United Nations stepped up its criticism of the monarch's handling of the situation. Concerned over the clampdown on pro-democracy demonstrations, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a statement on Tuesday, accused the Royal government of violating international human rights norms by using "excessive force" against its people and denying them freedom of assembly.

A report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), submitted last week, said Gyanendra had "failed" to restore political stability or tackle the Maoist threat, a view the Indian government shares. According to the ICG report, "The seven months since the royal coup have seen security slacken under a royal government with no plans for peace and democracy."

Claiming that the Maoists "seized the initiative by announcing a unilateral three-month ceasefire" (on September 3), the report suggests that attempts at reconciliation between the monarchy and political parties need to be abandoned.

"The international community needs to recognise that its calls for palace/ political party reconciliation as the sole path towards stability are unrealistic. New lines need to be explored, beginning with support for the ceasefire and the tentative dialogue underway between the parties and the Maoists," the report recommends. It says: "There is no prospect of a stable balance of power between palace and parties. The monarchy retains control of state instruments but it has alienated other allies."

21 SEP 1990

THE HOUSTON TIMES

Nepal frees 14 scribes, detains 1 for rebel links

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Kathmandu: Nepalese police released 14 journalists they had detained in western Nepal, a communist rebel stronghold, but another reporter faced possible charges of links to the guerrillas, officials said on Monday.

Harihar Singh Rathor, a correspondent for Nepal's largest newspaper, Kantipur, was detained on Sunday along with 14 other journalists in the small mountain town of Dailekh, about 500 km northwest of Kathmandu.

Media rights activists secured the release of the other 14, who left the town on Monday morning. But Rathor said he was ordered to stay in the town, with guards outside his house. The detained journalists said they had been threatened by government troops who were unhappy with their coverage of military operations against the guerrillas, who have a strong presence in the Dailekh area.

Hundreds of journalists have been detained or arrested since February, when King Gyanendra fired the government and took power. About half a dozen reporters remain in jail.

A government official in Dailekh said Rathor could face charges that he has links with the rebels, who have been declared terrorists by the government. The official, who demanded anonymity, did not explain why Rathor was singled out. He has reported on the rebels for several years, has good sources among them and has travelled deep into their territory.

Under anti-terrorism laws, troops have authority to detain for up to a year anyone they suspect of having links to the rebels. Kantipur's editor, Narayan Wagle, said he and members of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists were on the way to Dailekh to try to get Rathor released. The rebels began fighting in 1996 to abolish Nepal's constitutional monarchy and set up a communist state. AP

THE HINDU

Democracy activists arrested in Nepal

U.S. to continue arms embargo

KATHMANDU: More than 200 leaders and activists of the seven political parties here were arrested during a protest rally on Tuesday.

Madhav Kumar Nepal, Bamdev Gautam of CPN UML, Ram Chandra Poudel, Mahantha Thakur, Sushil Koirala of the Nepali Congress, Gopal Man Shrestha of Nepali Congress (Democratic) and Amik Sherchan of the Peoples' Front were among the leaders arrested. The protest rallies were led by the senior leaders of the seven political parties alliance from three different places.

Anti-King slogans

Police intervened and arrested the leaders while they were

trying to enter a restricted area. The protesters were raising anti-King and anti-Government slogans and demanding the establishment of total democracy.

The Government had also mobilised armed police for controlling the protest. Unlike other days, tear gas and water canons had not been used on the demonstrators.

Meanwhile, more than one dozen students were injured in a clash with the police during a demonstration in front of their campus.

The United States said it would continue its embargo on supply of arms to Nepal, imposed after King Gyanendra assumed absolute power in February. — UNI, PTI

Maoists kidnap over 100 school children in Nepal

Kathmandu: Maoist rebels have abducted more than 100 students from various schools of Myagdi district in western Nepal, police said on Saturday.

The students, forcibly abducted from about a dozen schools on Thursday, were taken to some undisclosed destination, police said. The rebels did not give any reason for abducting the students, local teachers said. The incident comes a week after the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire.

Meanwhile, Manfred Nowak, Special Rapporteur of UN Commission on Human Rights on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment or Punishment, arrived in Kathmandu on Saturday to assess the rights situation in Nepal.

Nowak will meet government officials including the attorney general, representatives of the Royal Nepalese Army, Armed Police Force, Nepal Police, National Human Rights Commission and other rights activists in order to gather first-hand information, according to a press statement issued by the

UN Information Centre in Nepal.

He has been authorised to visit detention centres and meet detainees personally during his seven-day stay in Nepal. He is also scheduled to travel to districts outside Kathmandu to take stock of the situation.

The Special Rapporteur will submit a comprehensive report on the visit to Commission on Human Rights at its annual 62nd Session in 2006.

Meanwhile, claiming that the media in Nepal was facing a grave crisis, an apex body of scribes here

has appealed to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to include the issue of "suppression" of press freedom in the country on the agenda of the 60th UN General Assembly session next week.

"Press freedom, right to information and freedom of expression in Nepal are in serious danger and thus deserve to be a special agenda in the upcoming UN General Assembly," an appeal by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists said. Describing the situation in Nepal

as one that could turn into "world's greatest human rights and humanitarian crisis," FNJ president Bishnu Nishthuri said the intention of the government to silence the media and any voice of dissent shows no signs of change.

Media persons, especially after the February one royal coup, risk being targeted for their critical coverage of national issues. As many as 200 scribes were detained by the

Royal government and four of them were still in jail. FNJ has collected over a hundred thousand signatures

against "suppression" of press freedom in Nepal and to urge for the inclusion of the crisis as a special agenda in the UNGA session, it said. Dozens of newspapers have been closed and the rest are under censorship while all independent FM stations have been barred from broadcasting news and news-related programmes, FNJ said in the plea. The government has also blocked the media's access to information, advertisement and distribution, it added. P11

TROUBLED KINGDOM

THE HINDU

May rethink ceasefire, say Maoists

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, SEPTEMBER 9

EVEN as the Nepal government set pre-conditions for reciprocating a three-month Maoist ceasefire declared last week, rebel chief Prachanda issued an Internet statement on Friday, warning that the ceasefire could be withdrawn at any time if the government continued attacks on the rebels.

Prachanda's statement cited such incidents as the arrest of three members of the Maoist-affiliated Tharuwan Muktimorcha in Banke district, and an attack on guerrillas in Jajarkot district.

The Royal Nepalese Army alleges that the Maoists have not stopped acts of violence and terror despite the ceasefire announcement.

Home Minister Dan Bahadur Sahi said the Maoists should stop their terrorist activities, hand over arms and come to the dialogue table for negotiations, before the government reciprocates the ceasefire.

It is the Maoists who instigated violence, not the gov-

India's ambassador meets Koirala

KATHMANDU: Indian ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee met Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala on Thursday, party sources said. The current political situation mainly figured during discussions with the 83-year-old leader who was slightly injured in a scuffle with the police during a pro-democracy rally here last week.

Early this week, Mukherjee also met Nepal Communist Party-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. India has recently said that it has taken note of the political developments in Nepal, including the Maoist ceasefire.

—PTI

ernment, he told the Nepalese vernacular weekly *Bimarsha*.

He also said that the guerrillas had yet to inform the government about the ceasefire. Security forces would not be called back to the barracks, he said.

"If the terrorists say they are going for ceasefire and the government should not arrest them, should we let them off scot free?" Sahi asked. —PTI

Nepal protesters clash with police

Kathmandu, Sept. 7
(Reuters): Police fired water cannon and tear gas and used rattan sticks to break up pro-democracy rallies today against King Gyanendra, who sacked the government and took total power in February.

Protesters shouting: "We don't want autocracy. Democracy can't be destroyed!" threw rocks and bricks at riot police battling to prevent activists from seven main political parties entering the city centre, where anti-king rallies are banned.

Police said 50 protesters had been detained and eight people, including a policeman, hurt. At the same time, authorities said, hundreds of other protesters detained in anti-Gyanendra rallies since the weekend had been freed.

The king says he took power because the government had failed to quell a Maoist revolt.

The latest protests came as Maoist leader Prachanda, in an interview with pro-rebel weekly *Janadesh*, said his group was open to talks with the government if it matched their weekend truce and let Nepalese decide their future.

"We are never against talks aimed at giving power to the people," the elusive rebel leader said. Prachanda, who announced a three-month ceasefire on Saturday, said an early meeting was unlikely.

The rebels broke ceasefires in 2001 and 2003 after talks foundered on their demand for polls for an assembly to draft a new constitution to decide the future of the world's only Hindu monarchy.

Nepal King to skip UN meet



Protesters throw stones at riot police during a demonstration in a restricted area of Kathmandu on Tuesday. — AFP

KATHMANDU, Sept. 6. — Amidst increasing protests here demanding restoration of democracy, King Gyanendra has cancelled his visit to New York to attend the UN General Assembly scheduled for later this month. Foreign minister Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey is now expected to lead the delegation to the UN, sources said today.

The cancellation of the King's visit came amidst intensified protests here by seven-party alliance demanding restoration of democracy in Nepal. The alliance, in a petition to the UN GS Mr Kofi Annan, had demanded that the King be barred from addressing the general assembly. Protestors are daily defying the government's ban by entering restricted areas in Kathmandu for the last three days, despite heavy deployment of riot police. Thousands of protesters clashed with police here for the third day today. About 50 persons were arrested and several others were hurt in a clash with riot police. — PTI

Dozens injured in Nepal stir

Seven-party alliance continues anti-King protests

KATHMANDU: Dozens of persons, including seven journalists, were injured as police baton charged and threw tear gas shells on activists of a seven-party alliance holding an anti-King demonstration in the Nepalese capital for the third consecutive day on Tuesday.

Over 80 demonstrators were also arrested during the three-hour push-and-pull between the riot police and the agitators at New Road, an area restricted for holding rallies and demonstrations, in central Kathmandu, eye witnesses said.

Despite heavy police presence, the demonstrators belonging to the seven agitating parties virtually captured the New Road area for three hours, they said.

Those arrested included Nepali Congres (NC) general secretary Shushil Koirala, NC leader and former Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka and Nepal Communist Party-UML central member Rajendra Shrestha.

Seven journalists were among dozens of people injured as police baton charged and threw tear gas shells on the demonstrators. The scribes were reporting the incident when they received injuries.

A group of scribes later organised a meeting on the middle of New Road condemning the police action targeting journalists who were covering the agitation.



UNFLAGGING ZEAL: A protester being arrested during a rally in Kathmandu on Tuesday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

The demonstrators raised anti-King slogans and demanded restoration of civil rights and multiparty democracy.

The seven-party alliance has been demanding full-fledged democracy and denouncing February 1 take over of full powers by King Gyanendra.

Kathmandu sceptical

Expressing scepticism over the ceasefire announced by Maoists, Nepal's Government has said similar proclamations in the past have not paved the way for lasting peace.

"The declaration of a unilater-

al ceasefire declared by the Maoists a few days ago has drawn the attention of the Government. based on the past experiences, the Government is yet to be assured of such a declaration," said a statement issued by Information Minister Tanka Dhakal.

"As per the past experiences, when repeated announcements of the cessation of terrorist activities failed to pave the way for permanent, there is no reason to be assured, he said. Mr. Dhakal said the Government was fully committed to enforce the rules and regulations. — PTI

Third time lucky?

51 b Nepal truce of significance 69

Hopefully Nepali Congress chief GP Koirala, who was arrested for defying the ban on demonstrations, will be released or else it will be seen as further evidence of King Gyanendra's determination to suppress justifiable dissent. It could be nervous reaction to the NC's decision to drop from its statute the reference to "constitutional monarchy" — obviously done to guard against the King's attempts at outlawing a democratic system and perpetuating his authority. Surprisingly, this is in sharp contrast to Koirala's statement that "those who opposed the monarch will be opposed by the soil" and came significantly after he was re-elected party chief. That the party had to change the rules to accommodate him for the third term is indication of a void. After the 2002 split when Sher Bahadur Deuba headed another faction, the NC did not have a second line of leadership. The induction of his daughter, Sujata Koirala, and some members of his family means more will be heard about them. Even at 84, Koirala still has a firm grip on the organisation and is unlikely to opt out of politics, certainly not at this crucial juncture when the 60-year-old party is in direct confrontation with the King.

Nepal Maoists' declaration of a unilateral ceasefire for three months and the NC's deletion of "constitutional monarchy" may not have any connection, but there is a significance. Perhaps the Maoists thought the NC decision was in accord with their expectations of a republican set-up. Radical left insurgents have reinforced their image of being flexible to talks and joining the political stream. Koirala must change his stand not to give too much prominence to rebels. He thinks they can be isolated if the people and the political parties forge unity. But who are the people? The Maoists hold sway over a large part of the country and their rebellion is the prime cause of the chaos. It is naive to think of restoring peace without their participation and it is just as well that the political parties have welcomed the ceasefire — the third in four years. Hopefully, luck lies around the corner.

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Pressure mounting, King may skip UNGA meeting

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, SEPTEMBER 5

UNDER pressure at home and abroad, King Gyanendra is said to have cancelled his trip to New York where the UN General Assembly meets later this month.

A highly placed government source confirmed that "the visit has been put on hold" but was unable to say whether it had been cancelled altogether. "You will get to know in due course of time," the source said.

The decision to cancel the visit was apparently taken last night after the King consulted two vice-chairpersons of the council of ministers, Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista, and foreign minister Rameshnath Pande, the King's trusted aide who had promised to secure international support for the royal takeover of the kingdom on February 1.

It's not yet clear who would



'His visit has been put on hold'

be heading the Nepalese delegation to the UNGA but there are indications that Bista may represent the royal government. The King was supposed to leave Kathmandu on September 9 for Germany and was

to address the UNGA on September 16.

The decision to scrap the visit comes at a time when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Pressure mounting, King may skip UNGA

Maoist insurgents have announced a unilateral ceasefire, hoping to come to some sort of an understanding with pro-democracy parties.

Seven pro-democracy political parties and the Citizens for Peace and Democracy, a mass organisation, had written recently to the UN Secretary General that the King did not represent Nepal and its people.

Maoists are showing signs of tactical compromise

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The Maoist rebels in Nepal, who have waged a guerrilla war since 1996, have a four-fold objective in announcing a unilateral ceasefire for three months. First, the timing of the announcement is scarcely coincidental coming as it does a few days after the Nepali Congress stated that it will maintain a neutral position on the key Maoist demand for the abolition of the monarchy.

This being so, the Maoist leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) is tacitly signalling his willingness to intensify efforts to try and work out a tactical understanding with the seven-party opposition alliance (which includes the Nepali Congress and the communist United Marxist-Leninist) as a means of stepping up the pressure on King Gyanendra to make significant concessions.

Second, Prachanda seems to calculate that the ceasefire could prompt Nepal's principal backers—India, the US and Britain—to use their economic and diplomatic leverage to urge Gyanendra to demonstrate greater flexibility.

Third, the decade-long conflict has created a sense of war weariness at the grassroots level in large parts of the country which the Maoists cannot afford to



The Maoists cannot ignore the sense of war weariness at the grassroots level in large parts of the country

ignore. It is therefore not surprising that the rebels have timed their ceasefire to cover the Dussehra-Diwali period which is the main festival season in the country. Finally, even if the ceasefire does not yield tangible political gains for the Maoists, the rebels will use the period to regroup, consolidate their positions and buildup their resources.

Any optimism generated by the ceasefire declaration should be tempered with considerable caution. After all, given the animosity and suspicion that exists between the Maoists and the security forces, there is no guarantee that the ceasefire will hold. A great deal will also hinge on whether the Maoists and

the seven-party alliance are able to forge an agreement on key issues. These include the future of the monarchy, the implementation of wide ranging land reforms and the Maoist call for the election of an assembly which would frame a new constitution for Nepal. Gyanendra

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will make overtures to the seven-party alliance in an attempt to make it harder for the Maoists to reach a deal with the political parties.

However, Gyanendra will not find it easy to do so because of the differences he has with the alliance on several vital questions, including, the restoration of multi-party democracy, guarantees of fundamental rights and social legislation.

নেপালে নতন মোড

নেপালে পর-পর কয়েকটি তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ঘটনা ঘটিয়া গিয়াছে। নেপালের বৃহত্তম রাজনৈতিক সংগঠন নেপালি কংগ্রেস স্বীয় সংবিধান হইতে সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্রের অনুচ্ছেদটি রদ করিয়াছে, দলের প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী গিরিজাপ্রসাদ কৈরলা পুনরায় দলনেতা নির্বাচিত হইয়া ৮২ বছর বয়সেও রাজতন্ত্রের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ আন্দোলনে পথে নামিয়া গ্রেফতার হইয়াছেন এবং মাওবাদীরা তিন মাসের যুদ্ধ-বিরতি ঘোষণা করিয়াছে। আপাতদৃষ্টিতে সম্পর্কহীন ঠিকিলেও এই পরিস্থিতি সামগ্রিক ভাবে নেপালরাজ জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের উপর প্রবল চাপ সৃষ্টি করিতে বাধ্য। কারণ দেশের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম রাজনৈতিক দল কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (সংযুক্ত মা-লে) কোনও সময়েই রাজতন্ত্রকে দেশের নবীন গণতন্ত্রের বিকাশের পক্ষে অপরিহার্য গণ্য করে নাই। আর মাওবাদীরা তো সরাসরি কমিউনিস্ট প্রজাতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্যই সশস্ত্র সংগ্রামে লিপ্ত। নেপালি কংগ্রেসের তরফে সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্রকে দেশে গণতন্ত্রের বিকাশের পক্ষে সহায়ক গণ্য না করাটা রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের পক্ষে এক বিরাট ধাক্কা। কেননা ইহার অর্থ, নেপালি কংগ্রেসও আর রাজাকে জাতীয় ঐক্য ও সংহতির প্রতীক বলিয়া স্বীকার করে না।

যে ভাবে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়ায় অন্তর্ঘাত ঘটাইয়া নির্বাচিত সরকার ও আইনসভাকে বরখাস্ত করিয়া প্রাসাদ-অনুগামী রাজনৈতিক ও আমলাদের হাতে শাসনভার সঁপিয়াছেন, গণতান্ত্রিক রাজনৈতিক ক্রিয়া ও সংগঠনের উপর নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করিয়াছেন, সংবাদপত্রের স্বাধীনতা ও মৌলিক নাগরিক অধিকার খর্ব করিয়াছেন এবং রাজনৈতিকদের বিনা বিচারে আটক রাখিয়াছেন, সেই তিক্ত অভিজ্ঞতার মধ্য দিয়া নেপালি কংগ্রেসের প্রবীণ নেতারা সম্ভবত বুঝিয়াছেন যে, রাজা যিনিই হোন, প্রয়াত বীরেন্দ্র বা বর্তমান জ্ঞানেন্দ্র, যথার্থ গণতন্ত্রের বিকাশের পথে তিনি সহায়ক না হইয়া অন্তরায়ই হইবেন। গণতন্ত্রের অভিষেক ও বিবর্তন যদি ব্যক্তি-রাজার সদিচ্ছা ও শুভেচ্ছানির্ভর হয়, তবে রাজা বিগড়াইয়া গেলেই বা 'ভুল লোক' রাজাসনে বসিলেই প্রজাতন্ত্রের ভবিষ্যৎ অন্ধকার। নেপালের মার্ক্সবাদী কমিউনিস্টরা এ ব্যাপারে আগেই সেয়ানা হইয়া গিয়াছেন। মাওবাদীরা প্রথমাবধি রাজতন্ত্রের উচ্ছেদকে প্রজাতন্ত্রের মুখ্য শর্ত মানিয়াই অগ্রসর। এই সবে ফলে কি নেপালের রাজনৈতিক চিত্রনাট্যে রাজপ্রাসাদের ভূমিকা ক্রমেই বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা হারাইতেছে না? রাজা যত দিন নির্বাচিত প্রতিনিধিদের শাসন করার নৈতিকতা উপভোগ করেন, তত দিনই শাসক হিসাবে তাহার বৈধতা। জ্ঞানেন্দ্র দ্রুত সেই নৈতিকতা হারাইতেছেন।

এই অবস্থায় মাওবাদীদের একতরফা যুদ্ধ-বিরতি ঘোষণাও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। এই ঘোষণার পিছনেও সম্ভবত নেপালি কংগ্রেসের একটি দৃঢ় সিদ্ধান্তের ক্রিয়া আছে, যেখানে হিংসা ত্যাগ অর্থাৎ অস্ত্র সংবরণ না করিলে মাওবাদীদের সহিত কোনও যৌথ আন্দোলনের প্রশ্ন উড়াইয়া দেওয়া হয়। গণতন্ত্র ফিরাইবার আন্দোলনে যোগ দানের আকাঙ্ক্ষা ব্যক্ত করিয়া মাওবাদী নেতা কমরেড প্রচণ্ড যে প্রস্তাব পেশ করেন, তাহার জবাবেই নেপালি কংগ্রেস ও অন্য গণতান্ত্রিক দল এই সিদ্ধান্ত লয়। ইহা যে মাওবাদী নেতৃত্বের উপরেও মনস্তাত্ত্বিক চাপ সৃষ্টিতে সফল, তাহা স্পষ্ট। মাওবাদীরা বিস্তীর্ণ গ্রামাঞ্চলে প্রভাব বিস্তারে সফল, কিন্তু গণতন্ত্র ফিরাইবার গণতান্ত্রিক আন্দোলন হইতে বাদ পড়ায় তাহারা বিচ্ছিন্নতাবোধে ভুগিতেছে। দেশের রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলনের মূল শরিক হওয়ার ব্যাকুলতা তাহাদেরও কম নয়। সে জন্যই আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণের স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত প্রস্তাব, আর তাহার জবাবে হিংসা পরিহার করার শর্তারোপ। সত্য, মাওবাদীরা হিংসা বর্জনের প্রতিশ্রুতি দেয় নাই, কিন্তু তিন মাসের যুদ্ধ-বিরতিও এক ধরনের অস্ত্রসংবরণ। এই অবকাশে গণতান্ত্রিক আন্দোলন আরও জোরদার করার সুযোগ থাকে। সুযোগ থাকে মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনারও। নেপালের গণতন্ত্রীদেব খেয়াল রাখা দরকার, রাজা যাহাতে মাওবাদী বিদ্রোহ দমনের অছিলায় গণতন্ত্র পুনরুদ্ধার আন্দোলন দমন করিতে না পারে। একই সঙ্গে রাজা বনাম মাওবাদী দ্বন্দ্ব ও তাহার মীমাংসা যেন মুখ্য জাতীয় এজেন্ডা হইয়া উঠিতে না পারে। দেশের দরিদ্রতম অংশের সহিত মাওবাদীদের জনসংযোগই কিন্তু বেশি, যে অংশকে বাদ দিয়া গণতন্ত্রের অভিষেক খণ্ডিত থাকিতে বাধ্য।

Koirala injured during protest

Riot police use batons, teargas to break up massive protest against King

KATHMANDU: The former Nepalese Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, and several other top political figures were on Sunday arrested while taking out a procession here defying a ban even as dozens were injured when police used force to disperse the gathering.

Police in riot gear fired several rounds of tear gas shells and used bamboo batons to disperse hundreds of party workers, who were proceeding towards the main city centre shouting pro-democracy and anti-King slogans.

Scuffle with police

Eighty three-year-old Koirala, who was last week elected president of the Nepali Congress, was slightly injured in the scuffle with police and fell unconscious. He was rushed to a hospital and his condition is not serious, party sources said.

Several political leaders and over 150 party workers were detained while at least a dozen activists were injured in the clashes, which came a day after Maoist rebels announced a three-month unilateral ceasefire.

The arrested leaders include Nepal Communist Party-UML standing committee members Ishwor Pokharel and Bam Dev Gautam, Nepali Congress general secretary Shushila Koirala, central committee members Ramchandra Poudyal and Balbanadur Rai and United Left Front leader CP Mainali.

An NC spokesman Arjun



BATTLE CRY: Riot police officers detain a protester during a demonstration against King Gyanendra in Kathmandu on Sunday. — PHOTO: AP

Narsingh and central member Ramsharan Mahat were also arrested during the demonstrations.

The demonstration began from Basantpur area and was heading towards the main city centre, where the royal government had banned processions.

Thousands participated in the procession and a few hundred of them managed to break the police cordon, leading to scuffle with the security personnel.

Agitation programme

Police then used batons and tear gas to push back the

protestors, injuring several of them. Meanwhile, Mr. Koirala was freed later in the evening and police took him to his residence at Maharajgunj, the sources said.

The procession was part of the agitational programmes drawn up by the seven-party alliance, which is spearhead-

ing a campaign against King Gyanendra for restoration of democracy and civil rights in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Alliance sources, however, said the demonstration was peaceful and condemned the police action.

They also vowed to continue their agitation. — PTI

Koirala detained in anti-King protests

GOPAL SHARMA
KATHMANDU, SEPTEMBER 4

FORMER Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was detained on Sunday along with dozens of other activists when police used tear gas to disperse a crowd at a pro-democracy rally, witnesses and party officials said.

The 82-year-old Koirala, who has led the Himalayan kingdom's oldest political party, the Nepali Congress, since 1997, was taken to a nearby detention centre.

"Koirala fainted while being dragged away by police," the party said in a statement. An aide to Koirala said the leader



Koirala being taken into custody on Sunday. Reuters

was later driven to his home in an upmarket area of the Nepali capital by police.

"Koirala fainted for about 10 minutes. He is now in a normal condition and resting," Bal Krishna Dahal said.

Other protesters, including former ministers, were taken away in iron-meshed police vans. Party officials said more than 160 people were arrested and dozens injured in a baton charge by police.

A Home Ministry official said 50 people had been detained. Koirala had vowed on Friday to intensify anti-king protests, a day after he won a third term as chief of the party.

Rebel chief Prachanda, in a surprise move to win the support of the main political parties opposed to Gyanendra's seizure of power, said on Saturday that the rebels would be in defensive positions during the ceasefire. The palace has yet to comment on the truce, but the *Himalayan Times* daily on Sunday quoted senior ministers as saying that the royalist government was considering the rebel announcement.

—Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

0 5 SEP 2005

Police detain Nepal ex-PM

ASSOCIATED Press
Kathmandu, September 4

POLICE FIRED tear gas and used bamboo batons to stop thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators from marching into the capital's center Sunday, arresting a former prime minister and dozens of other protesters.

About 5,000 people chanting "We want democracy" marched to protest King Gyanendra's dissolution of parliament and institution of direct rule in the Himalayan kingdom February 1. They tried to march into central Katmandu, where protests are banned, but were driven off by the police.

Girija Prasad Koirala, a former prime minister and president of the Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party, was among those detained. Koirala, 80, briefly lost consciousness during a scuffle with police. Authorities took him to Teaching Hospital, where doctors said his injuries were not serious.

"We condemn the use of such force on a peaceful protest. We will continue to our protests until democracy is restored," said Arjun Narsingh, spokesman for Nepali Congress.



Girija Prasad Koirala, center, at the demonstration on Sunday.

Leaders and supporters of seven major political parties gathered in the Basantapur neighborhood and began marching toward the main market area when riot police charged them. A few hundred protesters managed to break the police line but were quickly pushed back as several rounds of tear gas were fired at them. Some injured protesters were treated at Bir Hospital. One of them, Madhav Poudel, said

that police had beaten him with batons and that many marchers suffered injuries.

There have been several protests since February 1 demanding that democracy be restored. King Gyanendra said he was compelled to assume absolute power to quell a communist insurgency that has claimed more than 11,500 lives in nine years and to end government corruption.

Handwritten notes and a stamp are visible at the bottom of the page. The stamp reads "ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED".

'Dragged', Koirala faints at protest

Kathmandu, Sept. 4 (Reuters): Former Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was detained today along with dozens of other political activists when police used tear gas to disperse a crowd at a pro-democracy demonstration, witnesses said.

The 82-year-old Koirala, who has led the Himalayan kingdom's oldest political party, the Nepali Congress, since 1997, was taken to a near-by detention centre.

"Koirala fainted while being dragged away by police," the party said in a statement. Other protesters, including former ministers, were taken away in iron-meshed police vans.

Party officials said more than 150 people were arrested and dozens injured in a baton charge by police. A home ministry official said 50 people were detained.

Koirala had vowed on Friday to intensify anti-king protests, a day after he won a third term as chief of the party.

In February, Gyanendra fired the government and

Former PM detained with other democracy activists, palace yet to comment on Maoist truce

The Congress party is leading pro-democracy protests organised by seven main parties to press Gyanendra to restore political freedom.

The latest trouble came a day after the declaration of a three-month unilateral truce by Maoist rebels fighting to overthrow the king.

Rebel chief Prachanda, in a surprise move to win the support of the main political parties opposed to Gyanendra's seizure of power, said yesterday the rebels would be in defensive positions during the ceasefire.

The palace has yet to comment on the truce, but the *Himalayan Times* daily today quoted senior ministers as saying that the royalist government was considering the rebel announcement.

"See what will happen," information and communications minister Tanka Dhakal told the newspaper.

Nepal's feisty independent media, facing restrictions since Gyanendra took power, prominently displayed news of the truce and asked the government to reciprocate.



Nepali Congress leader and former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (centre) grapples with police in Kathmandu. (Reuters)

seized power in a surprise move that also included the detention of politicians and suspension of civil liberties.

Gyanendra has said his power grab was prompted by the failure of squabbling parties to quell a revolt by Maoist rebels which has wrecked the aid-dependent economy and kept tourists away from the rugged, scenic nation.

Today, protesters shouted "Long live democracy" and "We will bring back democracy".

Maoists call ceasefire

Sudeshna Sarkar/SNS

KATHMANDU, Sept. 3. — Father's Day celebrations received a fresh impetus in Nepal today with the Maoists declaring a unilateral ceasefire with immediate effect.

In a surprise move, Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda, chairman of the banned Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) issued a statement from underground, saying the truce was intended to show that his outfit was serious about finding a democratic and political solution to the nine-year-old crisis. He also hoped it would create an atmosphere conducive to peace and encourage Nepal's political parties, powers outside Nepal as well as the UN to hold talks. However, the Maoist supremo added that while the "People's Army" would not initiate any offensive, it would take up arms if needed to defend itself against attacks by security forces.

This is the third ceasefire declared by the rebels in the course of a nine-



The ceasefire comes as the Nepal government is sending a delegation to attend the UN General Assembly session.

year insurgency that has killed more than 12,500 people. On both earlier occasions, the rebels were the ones to break off peace negotiations and launch fresh attacks against security forces and government installations. While the government has accused them of using the truces to recruit and arm cadres, the rebels counter-charge the government of trying to encircle them and wipe out the movement. The first truce, called in August 2001, lasted for

four months, the second, called in January 2003, ended in August.

The ceasefire comes as the Nepal government is sending a delegation on Friday to attend the UN General Assembly in New York. The offer is timed to put additional international pressure on King Gyanendra, who will head the team, to start dialogue with the Opposition parties. There was no immediate reaction from the government to the truce offer.

Cabinet ministers, when contacted, declined to comment, saying they had received no official intimation about the ceasefire. While the army too remained unavailable for comments, the Opposition parties said they would formulate a reaction after a mass meeting in the capital today. An Opposition coalition has begun preliminary talks with the rebels to stage a united front against Gyanendra and his power takeover in February. The parties' insistence that they can have no truck with the rebels till they give up violence is likely to be a factor for the truce.

04 SEP 2001

THE STATESMAN

Maoist leader hopes for broad front against King

Political leaders welcome rebel ceasefire, army remains mum

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Maoist rebels on Saturday announced a unilateral three-month ceasefire starting immediately in an effort to aid talks with political parties in the Himalayan nation.

Maoist leader Prachanda said he hoped the truce would create a "conducive atmosphere" for talks with the parties on forming a united Opposition against the February seizure of direct power by King Gyanendra.

"During this period, our People's Liberation Army will not launch an offensive," Mr. Prachanda said in a faxed statement. "But if there are any attacks on our side by the army, we will violently retaliate."

The Royal Nepalese Army, which backed King Gyanendra's takeover, declined to comment on the rebels' truce declaration.

Rights violations

Nepal's leading political party, the Nepali Congress, welcomed the ceasefire and said it endorsed a peaceful settlement of the militancy.

"I think if the Maoists join the struggle of the parties for democratic rights, it will lead to a strong alliance against the King and definitely strengthen their movement."

Confederation of Nepalese Industry vice-president Rajendra Khetan called the truce dec-



HOLDING THEIR FIRE: Maoist leaders (from left) Baburam Bhattarai, Hishila Yami, Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda at a village in Rolpa district of Nepal in this May 2002 file picture. — PHOTO: AFP

laration "a welcome step".

The nearly decade-old insurgency has seen major human rights violations by both the army and the rebels, human rights groups say. The violence has

brought international condemnation for both sides as well as reviews of military and humanitarian assistance to Nepal from several countries, including the United States, Britain and India.

In response, the Government in April invited the U.N. to appoint a high commissioner for human rights to investigate complaints, a step also welcomed by the Maoists. — AFP

02 FEB 2002

Koirala to step up anti-King campaign

REUTERS
KATHMANDU, SEPTEMBER 2

A DAY after he won a third term as chief of the Nepali Congress, former Prime Minister of Nepal Girija Prasad Koirala on Friday vowed to intensify the protests against the monarch in the Himalayan kingdom. "Our goal is establishment of full democracy and end of absolute monarchy," Koirala told party workers.

"I urge all colleagues to intensify the ongoing struggle for the restoration of democ-

racy," he said. The 82-year-old Koirala, who has led the Nepal Congress, the oldest party in the kingdom, since 1997, defeated junior colleague Nara Hari Acharya 1,215 votes to 165 late on Thursday. "The voters have used their conscience. I accept the outcome and wish Koirala success," Acharya said.

The centrist Nepali Congress party led a pro-democracy movement in 1990 that ended decades of absolute monarchy. But in February, King Gyanendra fired the government and

seized power in a surprise move that also included the detention of politicians and suspension of civil liberties.

Following this, Nepali Congress dropped its 60-year-old written pledge to uphold constitutional monarchy in a nation where many people consider the king as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Hindu god of protection.

Meanwhile, following the withdrawal of a threat by Maoist rebels linked to the All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) against con-

sumer goods manufacturer Unilever, its Nepal plant was reopened on Friday.

The plant in Hetauda was closed two weeks back apprehending fears of an attack by rebels. The ANTUF has been demanding higher wages for factory workers and reinstatement of some sacked staff.

"We resumed work today," a company official said. Nepali media quoted the trade union group as saying it had withdrawn the threat after the plant management agreed to some of their demands. —Reuters

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In Nepal, Koiralas come first

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Sept. 2. — Like the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, the Koiralas of Nepal once again demonstrated their dominance of the kingdom's political scene as Mr Girija Prasad Koirala created history by getting elected the chief of Nepal's oldest and biggest party for a record third term and four more members of the Koirala clan, including his daughter Ms Sujata Koirala, made it to the top decision-making body of the party.

Mr Koirala, still the most charismatic politician in Nepal at age 84, and a four-time former Prime Minister, was elected president of his Nepali Congress party at its 11th general convention that ended here today. Though the party

statute allows a member to head the party only twice in a row, Koirala loyalists amended the rule to let the patriarch lead the 60-year-old party for three more years. The development may yet deal a blow to King Gyanendra, whose government "fears Mr Koirala the most".

Besides electing Mr Koirala by giving him 1,215 votes when his lone challenger, Mr Narahari Acharya, polled only 165, the Nepali Congress also elected to its 18-member central working committee four more Koirala family members — his daughter Sujata, better known as Manisha Koirala's aunt, his nephew Dr Shashank Koirala, an eminent physician who is the son of Mr Koirala's brother, BP Koirala, Mr Sushil Koirala, Mr Koirala's cousin, and Ms Shailaja



Mr Girija Prasad Koirala

Acharya, Mr Koirala's niece by marriage.

Ms Acharya, a former deputy Prime Minister, who had planned to contest the top post had Mr Koirala stepped down, resigned, though, within hours of being elected, citing differences with the

party. In the convention, the Nepali Congress took the historic decision to sever its ties with monarchy and to remove the word from its statute. Ms Acharya was pressing for continued allegiance to constitutional monarchy, saying, the party would otherwise end up helping Maoists.

Unilever opens

Unilever Nepal, a joint venture in which Hindustan Lever of India holds a 80 per cent stake, reopened its factory in central Nepal today following mediation by a leading business lobby and human rights groups. The multinational closed its factory in Makwanpur district on 17 August after the Maoist trade union had sent it a 15-point charter of demands and an indefinite closure if compliance was not secured.

Koirala vows to step up campaign

Goal is to end absolute monarchy, says former Premier

KATHMANDU: The former Nepalese Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, vowed on Friday to intensify anti-King protests, a day after he won a third term as chief of the Himalayan kingdom's oldest political party, the Nepali Congress.

"Our goal is the establishment of full democracy and end absolute monarchy," Mr. Koirala told party workers. "I urge all colleagues to intensify the ongoing struggle for the restoration of democracy," he said.

The 82-year-old Koirala, who has led the party since 1997, defeated junior colleague Nara Hari Acharya 1,215 votes to 165 late on Thursday.

"The voters have used their conscience. I accept the outcome and wish Koirala success," Mr. Acharya told Reuters.

The centrist Nepali Congress party led a pro-democracy movement in 1990 that ended decades of absolute monarchy.

But in February, King Gyanendra fired the Government



FIRM STAND: President of Nepali Congress Party Girija Prasad Koirala (centre) at a party general convention in Kathmandu on Friday. — PHOTO: AFP

and seized power in a surprise move that also included the detention of politicians and suspension of civil liberties.

The Congress Party is leading pro-democracy protests organised by seven main parties to press King Gyanendra to restore political freedom. Before the

party vote Mr. Koirala, a four-time Premier, was under pressure to step down in favour of younger blood.

The Koirala family has produced three Prime Ministers and led the party for most of the past 60 years since its founding. — Reuters

Nepal govt in talks warning

Kathmandu, Aug. 24
(Reuters): Nepal's royalist government urged opposition parties today to call off proposed talks with Maoist rebels, saying they were playing into the hands of the guerrillas to sow fresh divisions in the troubled kingdom.

The warning came a day after the country's seven mainstream parties said they were preparing to talk with the rebels to launch joint protests against King Gyanendra, who seized power in a royal coup in February by sacking the coalition government.

"There is no use for such talks. It is not proper ... and such a meeting cannot be in the interest of the country," information and communications minister Tanka Dhakal said.

He said the rebels were trying to create a rift between the parties and the government, installed after Gyanendra took power on February 1.

"This is part of their game. Democratic forces must not get into that game," said Dhakal.

The seven political parties that have been protesting against Gyanendra's power grab agreed yesterday to meet the rebels after guerrilla leader Prachanda accepted their demand to stop killing unarmed civilians and end extortion.

25 AUG 2005

Parties in U-turn over Maoist talks

Kathmandu, Aug. 23
(Reuters): Nepal's main political parties today said they were preparing to talk to Maoist rebels to plan joint protests against King Gyanendra, reversing an earlier decision to shun the guerrillas.

The decision by the seven parties came after Maoist leader Prachanda agreed last month to key conditions set by them.

Prachanda promised that the rebels would not target unarmed civilians and would stop extortion and he urged the parties to name negotiators for talks on a united campaign against the king.

"The parties will set up a team for meeting the Maoists in due course," Gopal Man Shrestha, chief of the third biggest group, the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party, said.

Mobile phones

Nepal's government today allowed resumption of pre-paid cellular phone services that had been shut down since Gyanendra seized power. Government-run Nepal Telecom —

24 AUG 2005 THE TELEGRAPH

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Costly closure

Nepal Maoists hurting their own

high
reput

King Gyanendra must take the blame for the closure of Unilever's factories in Nepal. Not only has he prolonged the political uncertainty, his seemingly arrogant refusal to involve the Maoists in talks is also giving rise to an anarchic situation in the industrial field. This puts a question mark on the future of thousands of workers. The establishment was forced to take the extreme step following the Maoists' 15-point charter of demands that includes reinstatement of employees laid off during the slack business period, expulsion of foreign workers and a 25 per cent hike in salary every two years. No establishment can afford to survive if it gives in to such pressure. It is just as well that Unilever Nepal has put its foot down. This is not the first time the company, a subsidiary of Hindustan Lever, has suffered for lack of security. Last February its supply of raw materials and distribution of products were affected when Maoists blockaded the main highway to India in protest against Gyanendra assuming executive powers. To buy peace, most companies have yielded to Maoist extortion demands, of which there is no end.

In August 2004 Maoist threats led to closure of 47 establishments and hotels, British as well as Indo-Nepalese joint ventures, rendering about 100,000 workers idle for days and loss of revenue to the government. The standoff ended within days of then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's return from a visit to Delhi when he conceded the Maoist demands for release of two of their leaders and also agreed to disclose the whereabouts of a number of their missing comrades. The Nepal government is duty bound to protect Indian business interests under the 1950 Treaty and the Maoists must realise their action is only hurting their own people. Jobs are difficult to come by in Nepal and hopefully the rebels will realise the error of their ways.

20 AUG 2004

THE STATESMAN

Unilever Nepal closes down following Maoist threat

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Sudeshna Sarkar in Kathmandu

Aug. 17. — The fate of more than 15,000 workers and Nepal's reputation as a destination for foreign investors stood at stake as Unilever Nepal, an 80 per cent subsidiary of India's Hindustan Lever, indefinitely closed down its factory in central Nepal from Wednesday following a threat by Maoist insurgents and the expiry of the deadline given by the rebels for meeting their demands.

While the factory in Basamadi in Makwanpur district, west of Kathmandu, remained closed, the management remained huddled in tense consultations at the corporate headquarters in the capital till late in the day, discussing their future course of action. While the multinational's top brass confirmed the closure, they declined to comment further, saying it was too premature.

Industrial sources said the 13-year-old firm, one of the biggest firms in the country, was compelled to take the drastic step

after negotiations with the insurgents failed. Last month, the trade union of the Maoists, the All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) had faxed an ultimatum to the authorities in Makwanpur, asking them to meet 15 demands or face "sangharsh" (violent clash).

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said it was in close touch with Unilever Nepal but declined to comment on the measures it was taking to safeguard the security of the company. Nepal Independent Chemical and Iron Employees' Union, the official trade union of Unilever Nepal, had approached the National Human Rights Organisation and other rights organisations earlier this week to ask them to mediate with the Maoists and avert a closure.

A senior commerce official said Unilever Nepal's closure gave the lie to King Gyanendra and the new regime's repeated claims that the security situation in the country had improved remarkably after the king seized power in February.

Nepal, China sign cooperation pacts

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing held talks with his Nepalese counterpart Ramesh Nath Pandey here on Monday, with the pair inking a series of cooperation agreements, state media reported. During their meeting Mr. Li told his guest that the Chinese Government appreciates Kathmandu's firm support for China on Tibet, Taiwan and human rights issues, the Xinhua news agency said. Mr. Li, who visited Nepal in March, also said China would continue to support Nepal's endeavours at safeguarding "its sovereignty and national stability." China-Nepal relations improved after Kathmandu closed all offices related to Tibetan refugees in January, a move welcomed by Beijing which objected to the offices operating in the name of the Dalai Lama. After the talks, the two Ministers signed a series of cooperation agreements on economy, trade and visa issues, Xinhua said. — AFP

Nepal puts rebel blood on Indian rifles

OUR BUREAU AND AGENCIES

Kathmandu/New Delhi, Aug. 12: Nepal's embattled royal army today blamed faulty Indian assault rifles for the reverses it took when Maoist rebels overran a base 600 km to the west of Kathmandu, killed at least 43 soldiers and civilians and took another 40 hostage this week.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) claimed it had killed 159 soldiers of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in Kalikot district. Only last week, Indian defence minister Pranab Mukherjee had publicly questioned the RNA's ability to quell the Maoist insurgency.

RNA spokesman Brigadier-General Deepak Gurung said in Kathmandu today



VITAL STATS

- The INSAS 5.56 is manufactured in Ichhapore near Calcutta. It is adapted from the Kalashnikov AK-47
- It comes in two versions — fixed butt and folding butt. It can fire up to 650 rounds a minute
- In the Kargil war, there were complaints from soldiers that the rifle/carbine jammed during continuous firing at high altitudes. Since then, the rifle has undergone corrections
- The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) says the guns get "too hot" and "malfunctions". The INSAS uses 5.56-calibre ammunition and the RNA is running short of it. Also, there are doubts on the RNA's maintenance of the guns

that the INSAS assault rifle, with which the soldiers were defending themselves against the Maoists, "became too hot" and "malfunctioned" during the battle that lasted about 10 hours.

as those reported by Nepal's army.

The INSAS, short for Indian National Small Arms System, is manufactured at the ordnance factory in Ichhapore near Calcutta and is gradually becoming the mainstay of the Indian Army's infantry units.

"Soldiers complained that the INSAS rifles did not function properly during the fighting, which lasted for a long time," Gurung told a news conference in Kathmandu when asked why army casualties were so high.

"Maybe the weapons were using were not designed for a long fight. They malfunctioned," he said. There were also fewer troops at the base, as it was a road construction project and not a fighting base, he added.

When asked for his reaction to Mukherjee's remarks, Gurung said: "I don't have the authority to say why Mukherjee said what he did. I can only say that the weapons the army was fighting with were Indian."

Since the February 1 royal coup, India, which was practically grooming Nepal's army under arms assistance pacts, has allegedly stopped sending lethal weapons.

Kathmandu has told Delhi that it needs arms and ammunition desperately and has asked for an immediate supply of 72 lakh rounds of ammunition for its INSAS 5.56 and outdated 7.62 combat rifles.

The RNA's infantry arsenal is estimated to comprise about 24,000 Indian-supplied rifles.

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12/00
Killing credo
Gyanendra needs education
12/00

“Kill now, think later” seems to be the credo that governs both the Royal Nepalese Army and Maoist guerrillas, neither side showing repentance in killing their own. Even after King Gyanendra assumed executive powers last February there has been no let-up in bloodshed. The mindless obstinacy on either side precludes any solution in the foreseeable future. In the latest series of violence, the rebels claim to have killed 159 army personnel and captured 50, with their own casualties put at 26, by far the most serious loss to the government. But the authorities admit to having lost only 40 soldiers and 50 are missing. The raid on an army base in one of the most backward areas appears to be well-planned with a view to capturing sticks of dynamite used to blast hillsides for road construction. For fear of being targeted, local contractors are chary of undertaking the risk. The Maoist war against the establishment since February 1996 has already killed more than 12,000 people, policemen and soldiers included.

No one expects King Gyanendra to hand over power now that he has asserted himself firmly by winning friends and bringing back some old loyalists. Maoists, estimated to be in control of two-thirds of the country, are unlikely to submit this advantage. Paradoxically, the political parties' inability to unite lends legitimacy to the autocratic regime. In such a situation, a ceasefire is a priority. The most important thing now is to stop the killing. But for the alleged “cold blooded massacre” of 19 villagers at Doramba in eastern Nepal by the army in August 2003, when the truce was in force, perhaps there would not have been a breakdown of peace talks.

12 AUG 2002 THE SUNDAY TIMES

Army bodybags pile up in Nepal clash

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Kathmandu, Aug. 9 (Reuters): Nepal's army said today it had found the bodies of 40 soldiers killed fighting Maoist rebels while 76 other troops were still missing two days after a fierce gun battle in the west of the country.

It was the army's highest casualty toll in a single engagement since King Gyanendra sacked the Prime Minister and took power in February saying political leaders had failed to quell the bloody revolt.

The bodies were found after hundreds of troops were rushed in teeming monsoon rain to hunt for soldiers missing after the fighting in the remote Kalikot district, 600 km from Kathmandu. "Forty of our men have achieved martyrdom," an army officer said. "They captured some of them, lined them up and shot them in the head. They even cut off private parts of some soldiers."

"This is a criminal act. This is cold-blooded murder and it shows that Maoists are violating international human rights and humanitarian law," he said.

The rebels said yesterday they had killed 159 troops and captured another 50 in the fire-fight that began late on Sunday. The army rejected the claim. No independent verification was possible because the fighting took place in a re-

remote village with poor communication links. Both sides routinely overstate enemy casualties and under-report their own losses.

The fighting began after hundreds of guerrillas attacked an army camp set up to construct a road linking Surkhet town with the back-

ward region of Karnali that borders Tibet.

"The base which was overrun is under our control now. Road construction will resume within a few days," the army officer said, adding that soldiers would continue looking for their missing colleagues.

66 die as Maoists raid Nepal army base

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Aug. 9. — Maoist guerrillas struck an army camp in remote mid-western Nepal on Sunday night, triggering a fierce battle which killed at least 66 people.

The army in Kathmandu said today that 40 soldiers had died in the clash that continued till Monday morning with over 50 soldiers still missing. The army has been deployed in Karnali to build the 221-km Surkhet-Jumla highway that will connect the region to the

rest of the country. This is the biggest reversal suffered by the army since King Gyanendra took over. While the army said it was yet to get the full details of the fight in the Pili camp in Kalikot, Karnali, considered the most backward area in Nepal, the rebels put out a statement immediately after the incident. Issued in the name of Prabhakar, the self-styled commander of the "western division" of the underground "People's Liberation Army", the statement circulated last night said 26 fighters had been killed in the raid, including an important

military chief, "Battalion Commissar comrade Lokesh" aka Sharad Avasthi. The underground leader also claimed that 159 Royal Nepalese Army soldiers had been killed and over 50 taken "prisoners of war". The attack gave a boost to the rebels who replenished their arsenal with a large number of bombs kept in the camp to blast rocks for road construction, light machine guns, Insas rifles and ammunition. Till yesterday the army admitted the death of only one soldier and discounted the Maoist claims as propaganda.

THE STATESMAN

King must go, says leader appealing for global support

Rebel's route to democracy

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Somewhere in Nepal, Aug. 5: Dressed in a blue-grey collarless, short-sleeved shirt and light brown trousers, Baburam Bhattarai seems lean and fit. His demeanour is that of an intellectual at ease with himself. With a gentle sweep of his hand he waves away his comrades who have gathered around us in the house where we are meeting. It has taken two months of negotiations with intermediaries to meet the ideologue of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

Bhattarai has been hard-selling a roadmap for a democratic republic to the parliamentary political parties in Nepal as well as to Indian political leaders and the international community. He claims that a breakthrough has been achieved in the informal talks with the Nepali political parties. A formal dialogue is next.

"The question in Nepal is the completion of democratic

MIND OF THE MAOIST

processes which started half a century ago but time and again, the king scuttled it by usurping all powers and centralising them in himself. Our main agenda now is to do away with the monarchy and institutionalise the democratic republic," he said.

"The king has to go." For this "common minimum agenda", he said, his party is trying to unite with the parliamentary political parties and seek the "goodwill of the international community — particularly of our neighbours — China and India".

"In case they are not reconciled to doing away with the monarchy immediately, then let us go through the process of a constituent assembly which will institutionalise that process. This is the second option we are exploring with them," Bhattarai added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

Rebel's route to democracy

► FROM PAGE 1

Prachanda (aka Pushpa Kamal Dahal), the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Bhattarai said, had made a public statement that the Maoists were willing to show "maximum flexibility".

When the incongruity of the Maoists carrying arms while the political parties remain unarmed during the constituent assembly elections is pointed out to him, Bhattarai said: "We are ready to discuss with them whatever political commitment they want and finalise the arrangement for the management of the armed forces."

Would this not mean "managing" both the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA)?

"The royal army is the biggest obstacle in the way of the democratic process in Nepal. The main strength of the king is the royal army — otherwise he does not have any support among the masses. It does not have a national character. So this army has to be dissolved. If the political parties are not agreeable to this in the beginning, let us have a ceasefire. This could be under international monitoring — most preferably United Nations or otherwise any other neutral power which is acceptable to our immediate neighbours — India, China and the others."

However, Bhattarai pointed out that there would be no surrender of arms by the PLA as "both sides will retain arms but they will be managed by a



Bhattarai

neutral power".

To the suggestion that the ceasefire monitoring could be done by India, Bhattarai felt that while India would have a major say in this, "as far as direct involvement is concerned, I think that will not be beneficial to India also. Given the geo-strategic position of Nep-

al between India and China and now with the US intervening in this region, if India involves itself directly, it would further complicate matters".

He instead suggested that India "should show goodwill and support some neutral power which can mediate in this process and facilitate the management of the armed forces while election to the constituent assembly is held".

About the future of the RNA and the PLA, Bhattarai said: "The royal army has to be dissolved. There should be no confusion about that. About the PLA — we neither visualise it completely taking over nor as being completely dissolved. It will be converted into a new national army with the consent of all the political forces."

0 - THE TELEGRAPH



Former minister
Vidya Devi Bhandari
at a protest in
Kathmandu. (Reuters)

Nepal army challenges Amnesty

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, Aug. 2: The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) today denied that it was arming villagers to take on the Maoist rebels in rural Nepal.

In a statement here today, the RNA's Public Relations Directorate denied the claims made by Amnesty International in its recent report that it was providing support to the so called "Village Defence Forces". "The accusation that the RNA has been involved in providing support to what Amnesty has termed 'Village Defence Forces' in its report is not well founded", it said.

The statement said the RNA had on the 26th of July 2005, made a public appeal to vigilante groups not to take the law into their hands by killing Maoist activists. "We all know that people in some villages across the country have come out strongly against Maoist atrocities independently on their own," the statement said.

It also claimed that it had a "zero tolerance" policy regarding sexual violence against children and women. "The RNA has handed cases of rape and sexual violence by its servicemen to civilian courts", it said adding that it had already handed over two soldiers accused of raping women in Sunsari to the district court earlier this year.

USA raps Nepal for conviction

Sudeshna Sarkar
in Kathmandu

Students clash with police

July 28. — The USA today became the first foreign nation to criticise the prison sentence slapped on the sacked Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba and five more people by a controversial commission nominated by the King Gyanendra, saying it was a "setback to democracy".

Issuing a statement from Washington, US state department spokesman Mr Sean McCormack said that the US government was "disturbed" by the conviction of Mr Deuba and other "opposition political leaders" by the Royal Commission for Corruption Control, calling it an "extrajudicial organisation appointed by the King Gyanendra after he imposed a state of emergency".

Coming down heavily on the royal watchdog that enjoys unprecedented power, the official said, "Acting outside of the Nepalese judicial system, the Commission served as investigator, prosecutor, and judge in this case, ultimately imposing a harsh sentence on the former Prime Minister for alleged corruption in the Melamchi Water Supply Project."

The statement also noted that the commission had gone against an independent investigation con-

KATHMANDU, July 28. — Riot police clashed with students here today injuring several of them as the protest against the detention of a student leader spread to other parts of the country. At least six students and three policemen were injured and a police van was damaged during skirmishes between the police and students who shouted anti-King slogans, official sources said. — PTI

ducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the lead donor in the \$464 million water supply project.

The ADB investigation report, leaked by the opposition parties this month, said it had found no irregularities in awarding a tunnel construction contract to a firm that had bid the lowest. "In taking this action, the Royal Commission for Corruption ignored the findings of the Asian Development Bank, the principal donor to the project, which examined similar allegations and did not find evidence to support them," McCormack said.

The US official reaction comes a day after a former senator Mr Tom Daschle, who ended a week-long trip to Nepal yesterday, called Mr Deuba "political prisoner."

THE STATESMAN

Deuba jailed for corruption

27/7 report Hi-13
ASSOCIATED Press
Kathmandu, July 26

A POWERFUL anti-corruption commission found former Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba guilty of embezzlement on Tuesday and sentenced him to two years in prison, a judge said. Chief commissioner Bhakta Bahadur Koirala, in reading out the verdict, also said Deuba must pay Nepali Rs 90 million (US\$1.2 million) as fine. Prakash Man Singh, a former Cabinet minister, was handed the same sentence.

Deuba was sacked in February following accusations that his administration misused Nepali Rs 370 million (US\$5.3 million) in awarding a contract in connection with a road construction project.

"The granting of the contract was done with ill intentions that financially harmed the government," said Koirala. "It has been proven that the contract was given to an unqualified contractor. The estimate was unrealistic."

Deuba listened to the verdict calmly, but later said the case against him was politically motivated. "There is no basis for this case. This is political assassination. We will fight it politically," Deuba said as he was being tak-



Sher Bahadur Deuba

en back to the prison after the verdict. Government lawyers had sought a 13-year prison term for Deuba and Singh. Deuba has insisted that the commission is illegal and has refused to cooperate. He also declined to post bail and answer questions.

King Gyanendra set up the commission after sacking Deuba and his government on February 1 as part of a wider sweep to seize absolute power. He said the move was necessary to quell a nine-year communist insurgency and stamp out corruption.

Deuba was among hundreds of politicians and activists arrested after the royal coup.

27 THE HINDU TIMES

Parties reject Maoist plea

Kathmandu, July 25 (Reuters): Nepal's main political parties rejected today an appeal by the country's Maoist rebels for talks to plan joint opposition to King Gyanendra's seizure of power, saying the guerrillas should stop killing civilians first.

Their rejection of dialogue with Maoist guerrillas opposed to the monarchy came as political unrest continued in the country and pro-democracy activists clashed with police. "We urge the Maoists to stop attacking unarmed civilians, including political activists, and stop extortion," the top leaders of seven parties said in a statement.

खिच म्यादा 6/25 2005

"We appeal to the rebels to create an atmosphere of confidence and demonstrate that they are sincere about talks with the political parties."

Nepal's parties have been protesting against the February 1 sacking of the multi-party government by the king, who also suspended civil liberties and curbed media freedom. Earlier this month, the elusive Maoist guerrilla chief Prachanda proposed talks with political parties to discuss the possibilities of common protests against the king to press him to roll back his seizure of power.

The rebels — since launching their violent campaign to

set up a single-party communist republic by toppling the monarchy — have killed hundreds of civilians, including political workers, straining their ties with mainstream political groups.

In April, a landmine planted by the Maoists killed 38

civilians on a bus, but the rebels apologised saying the device was aimed at an army convoy.

About 200 pro-democracy activists, including journalists and human rights workers, clashed with police today in the heart of Kathmandu.



A protester tries to break a police cordon outside the building where Deuba was appearing before the anti-graft body in Kathmandu. (AFP)

Deuba loyalists, police clash

Kathmandu, July 24 (Reuters): At least two dozen people were injured today when supporters of sacked Nepali Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba clashed with police when he appeared before an anti-graft body hearing corruption charges, witnesses said.

Police used batons to push back about 200 activists of the Nepali Congress Party protesting against the anti-graft body, demanding it be abolished as it was illegal.

The protesters, some of them carrying placards, threw stones and bricks at the heavy security cordon as Deuba arrived for the hearing at the office of the Royal Commission for Corruption Control, which is investigating charges of graft against him.

"Deuba is innocent and he must be freed," read a placard.

The sacked Premier and Prakash Man Singh, a minister in the ousted cabinet, are in police custody since April. They have been accused of embezzling \$5.3 million while awarding the contract for a section of a \$464-million water supply project.

The scheme funded by foreign donors, including the Asian Development Bank and Japan, is aimed at enhancing the supply of drinking water to Kathmandu.

Deuba and Singh deny any wrongdoing and have refused to appoint lawyers saying the anti-graft body was illegally set up by King Gyanendra, who seized power in February.

The hearing, which has been postponed several times in the past, was not completed and will resume tomorrow, officials said.

Deuba was under house arrest for several weeks after February 1 and was arrested in the middle of the night in April by the anti-graft body.

The king formed the commission with sweeping powers to arrest and jail corrupt bureaucrats and politicians.

Four other people, three officials and a contractor, are also facing similar charges.

In July, the same panel cleared Deuba and six other ministers in his sacked cabinet for distributing \$54,000 to party workers during the festival of *dasain* in October.

24 JUL 2005 THU

New alignments in Nepal?

The possibility of an alliance between Nepal's political parties and the Maoists brings fresh hope of an end to the illegal and unconstitutional rule of King Gyanendra. The seven-party coalition against the King has only cautiously welcomed an overture for talks from the Maoist leader, Prachanda, but it is clear the gap between the two sides is narrowing. Leaders of the two main parties, the Nepal Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), have described it as a "positive" development. The political parties have so far been wary of linking up with the Maoists for two principal reasons. First, they do not subscribe to the violent methods employed by the Maoist insurgency, especially as this violence targets them as much as it does forces directly associated with the monarchy. Secondly, their goal is to restore a multi-party democracy with a constitutional monarchy, not abolish the monarchy as the Maoists want. However, an apology from the Maoist leadership for a bus bomb that claimed several innocent lives in May, followed by a public resolve not to harm civilians again, appears to have gone some way in assuaging the fears of the alliance about aligning with the insurgents in the struggle against the King, even though the Maoists' refusal to disarm remains a problem for the political parties. As for the abolition of the monarchy, the ease with which King Gyanendra brushed aside the 1990 Constitution and usurped executive powers from the Government seems to have spurred a rethink among some politicians about the wisdom of retaining monarchy in any form. Hinting at this, the coalition recently put forth a demand for "total democracy."

It has often been said of Nepal's political situation that if two of the three actors – the King, the political parties, and the Maoists – join hands they can trump the third. Several times in the past, each of the actors has gone by this dictum to outdo the other two. But there can be no confusion now about who has to be trumped. Six months have passed since King Gyanendra seized power and there are no signs yet that he plans to restore multi-party democracy, although he pays lip service to the idea from time to time. To the contrary, he shows all signs of staying on, the recent Cabinet expansion being a good indication of his intent. The Royal Commission for Corruption Control, which the King appointed after assuming power, is determined to show up elected politicians as a corrupt lot who cannot be trusted with the governance of the country. The RCCC found no evidence to convict former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in one of the cases against him but he remains under arrest while it investigates a second charge. Even though an Emergency is no longer in force, many restrictions on ordinary freedoms continue. Despite their fundamental differences, the seven-party alliance and the Maoists have a common primary objective – a total reversal of the King's reactionary coup. They must seriously pursue the option of joining forces to achieve this.

DEMOCRACY IN NEPAL

Strange Behaviour Of The Masses

By PARMANAND

The 12-day stay in India of Girija Prasad Koirala, Nepal's longest-serving Prime Minister in the post-1990 multi-party phase and the most respected leader in contemporary Nepal, has aroused the curiosity of all kinds of people inside and outside the Himalayan kingdom. No one in the present-day Nepal can claim to have suffered so much for the cause of democracy in the landlocked state. If he had been the kingdom's Prime Minister for a total period of nearly six years, he had served imprisonment for more than 10 years. In addition, he was under house arrest between 1 February (when King Gyanendra imposed emergency) and 1 April 2005.

He has had more than his usual quota of critics. A very common criticism about him is that he does not allow anyone to remain Prime Minister for long, nor is he himself able to run the administration very effectively and efficiently. Be that as it may, he is the tallest political personality in Nepal both literally and metaphorically. He is seen as the strongest and the most effective voice of democracy.

Koirala as ray of hope

Girija Prasad Koirala visited India (where he was born on 4 July 1924 because of his father and mother living in exile there) in altogether changed political circumstances. He has convincingly shown for several years that he is more interested in principle than in power. He says very emphatically that he is in the last leg of his political career, but he will not give up his fight for the establishment of democracy in Nepal. No wonder, he is seen as the strongest ray of hope within and outside Nepal.

Meanwhile, Indian leaders and MEA officials who had been scathingly faulting GP for not allowing his party to join the Sher Bahadur Deuba coalition government in June 2004 had realised that he was in the right. Deuba had, in truth, been made an instrument for the power concentration of the monarch, whose own credibility and legitimacy remain questionable to this date, and who is not supposed to be the head of government (as he has become today) but only a titular or symbolic head of state.

On the other hand, Girija Prasad Koirala has been spearheading the struggle along with various political parties for the revival of the Pratinidhi Sabha (the lower and popular house of

the kingdom's bicameral parliament) ever since it was dissolved in May 2002.

While in India, he utilised the opportunity to meet leaders and officials involved in policymaking and decision-making. Apparently, they had all been looking forward to receiving him because of his increasing importance in the kingdom's politics. They all heard him sympathetically. On his part, Koirala was careful not to cause any embarrassment by any of his actions in

reference where he again called a spade a spade in his typical low-profile style. Having lived in India in political exile for more than a decade, he understands the psyche of the leaders and the general people.

Had the interactions between the political elements of Nepal and their counterparts in India been adequate, the mountain kingdom would never have experienced the absence of democracy. Girija Prasad Koirala was realistic when he said on 14 June



New Delhi.

Koirala's meetings with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, MEA minister K Natwar Singh, BJP leader and former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechury and CPI leader AB Bardhan provided him and Indian leaders an opportunity to understand the problems of Nepali democracy more deeply.

While insisting that he did not want to embarrass India, he thanked Indians for helping Nepal in a variety of ways for decades. Koirala, however, repeatedly stressed that India must see whether arms supply to Nepal helps democracy or dictatorship. That is his way of articulating opinions on important issues.

A spade a spade

He also participated in a get-together organised in his honour on 12 June by a JNU sociology professor Anand Kumar and a socialist leader Sudhindra Bhadoria. In his 12-minute presentation, he talked about the domestic politics of Nepal and Indo-Nepal bilateral ties. Besides, he addressed a press con-

ference where he again called a spade a spade in his typical low-profile style. Having lived in India in political exile for more than a decade, he understands the psyche of the leaders and the general people.

Had the interactions between the political elements of Nepal and their counterparts in India been adequate, the mountain kingdom would never have experienced the absence of democracy. Girija Prasad Koirala was realistic when he said on 14 June

In the new millennium, their strange behaviour seems to be accompanied by some strange reasons as well. Multi-party democracy during its real operational phase showed that democracy had become synonymous with non-governance or bad-governance and unbridled corruption — creating a wide gulf between leaders and followers. Intra-party and the inter-party politics during the operational multi-party phase, to say the least, only continued to baffle the man in the street.

Today, the palace has apparently made a very effective and working constituency for itself in almost all political parties and this process, if anything, appears to be getting more intensified. The Nepalese masses may or may not be fond of the monarchy at the present juncture, but they have not come out strongly against it so as to leave a tangible impression.

While, on the one hand, the Maoists have succeeded in shaking the society politically and economically, and more than 11,000 Nepalese have been killed in the insurgency since 1996, the kingdom seems to have been militarised dangerously. This, at least for the time being, seems to be contributing to the strengthening of the monarch and the institution of monarchy.

India's role

So many politically-conscious Nepalese think that India would change the situation. Their feeling becomes stronger when they find that a large number of their leaders camping in India. It is obviously difficult to understand what magical power India can use in this situation. Of course, it has been quoting the relevant portions of the existing 1990 Constitution, which go in favour of a multi-party democracy and a figurehead monarchy.

India, it is true, can, by not cooperating with Nepal on economic and military fronts, make the king see some reason. But King Gyanendra keeps looking for alternatives. Having attended two international summits after the royal takeover of 1 February, he has gained confidence, which is unlikely to be shaken in the near future. They say the Americans have not told the king very clearly that Nepal has to move fast towards democracy. Probably, it has other considerations. Probably, it thinks that King Gyanendra can defeat the Maoists decisively with its help. In America, ending terrorism is probably more important than establishing democracy. When King Gyanendra had assumed direct rule on 1 February he had asked for three years to set things right. He seems to be entrenching himself well.

There is little doubt that no political system operates in a vacuum. No matter what the results of opinion polls on the popularity of monarchy, the political parties will take time to mobilise the masses. And this time they have to prove their credibility much more seriously than they had to in 1950, 1979 and 1990.

Nepal Maoist leader back in politburo

HD-19
Hi Sr 19/12
KPM

KATHMANDU: In a bid to patch differences in Nepal's Maoist leadership, Baburam Bhattarai, who was expelled from the party's politburo some months back, was on Monday reinstated in the rank and file of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist).

Mr. Bhattarai has now been re-appointed to the politburo, said Maoist leader Prachanda in a statement E-mailed to various newspapers here. Mr. Prachanda said in the statement Mr. Bhattarai and two of his associates had been re-appointed to the party's top body and reunited with the party, which was facing a crisis after the rift between the two top leaders.

The senior leaders including Mr. Bhattarai were suspended from their top posts after refusing to toe the line of the party's high command. Mr. Bhattarai was said to be in favour of holding talks with the seven political parties agitating against for restoration of democracy. Earlier, Mr. Prachanda has called the alliance to form an authorised team for initiating talks.

The seven political parties on Monday discussed the issue of forming a team to initiate a dialogue with the rebels. — PTI

Maoist top guns bury hatchet in Nepal

Kathmandu, July 18 (Reuters) Nepal's Maoist rebel leaders appeared to have patched up their differences today as the party's former deputy was reinstated to its high command after months out in the cold.

Baburam Bhattarai, the Maoists' unofficial deputy leader who was regarded as head of a relatively "moderate" faction within the rebel movement, was stripped of his rank earlier this year after a power struggle with rebel chief Prachanda.

The Maoists have been fighting to overthrow Nepal's constitutional monarchy since 1996 and replace it with a Communist republic. The conflict has cost 11,000 lives. There

has been talk of divisions within the movement between moderates, who want to pursue a negotiated solution to the conflict, and hardliners favouring a military solution.

But the crux of the dispute between the two men seemed as much about Prachanda's leadership style with Bhattarai accusing him of grabbing too much power for himself by running both the political and military wings of the movement.

Whatever the real cause of the row, the Maoists seem to have put their differences aside in the months since King Gyanendra sacked his government in February and assumed power for himself.

The rebels, sensing an opportunity, have been reaching out to the country's mainstream political parties to form an alliance against the king. Bhattarai, who led the rebel delegation in failed peace talks with the government in 2003, could play a key role in trying to build alliances with other groups.

"Differences within the party have been resolved on the basis of criticisms and introspection," Prachanda said in a statement e-mailed to the media. So far the country's seven political parties have resisted the Maoists' overtures, saying they should first renounce violence.

Prachanda, a *nom de guerre* which roughly trans-

lates as "awesome", said Bhattarai had been reinstated to the politburo's highest policymaking committee, while two of his aides had also been rehabilitated.

"There is no alternative to unity among all people-oriented parties against the feudal autocracy and to establish full democracy," he said.

London breather

The truce announcement came amid a perception in Nepal and outside that the London bombings, which brought terrorism to the international centre stage, may help ease pressure on King Gyanendra to take urgent steps to restore democracy, adds our special correspon-

dent in New Delhi.

India, the US and the EU have been persuading the Nepalese monarch to take steps to restore democracy in the Himalayan kingdom. However, the terrorist attack in the London Underground on July 7 has forced world leaders to re-focus on measures to deal with global terrorism.

Delhi is also trying to draw a parallel between the Ayodhya attack and the London bombing to tell the US and other countries of the continuation of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan and Islamabad's lack of seriousness in dismantling the terror apparatus.

Observers believe that Gyanendra will also benefit

from these developments.

The king's argument in the past — that he should be backed by the international community in his fight against the Maoists — had weakened over the months. More and more countries had been urging the monarch to take immediate steps to restore democracy in Nepal.

"But we have a feeling that the London bombing may help the king divert the focus from democracy to Maoist terror in the country," said a senior Indian official.

Prachanda recently issued a statement asking political parties to start talks. He said the move will help unite different forces against Gyanendra's "autocratic rule".



King Gyanendra, Breather

King in the parlour

586 ^{to be Nepal} Talk-time for the Reds in Nepal 19/7

Maoists in Nepal may be trying to smoothen ruffled feathers; overtures to the Opposition for talks come three days after reports that the Left radicals were being shown the ropes by the Tamil Tigers on how to conduct suicide strikes in Bihar. So much for the hi-falutin platitudes on regional cooperation, periodically reeled off at the high tables of South Asian capitals. The Opposition has given a diplomatic spin in its response; the parties are prepared to seek international help — euphemism for the UN — should the king choose to throw a spanner in the works. Both sides have been remarkably astute in timing the feelers; the move coincides with the visit to Kathmandu of Lakhdar Brahimi, Annan's special envoy. Indeed, he has been discussing the issue with Opposition leaders, notably Koirala, as part of the UN's effort to end the Communist insurgency. In a sense, the offer is also in response to the Nepali Congress leader's recent assurance that he is willing to meet the Maoists.

The palace hasn't reacted, either to the talks offer or the Opposition inclination towards UN mediation. But a concerted move towards negotiations will doubtless put the king under pressure. Gyanendra runs the risk of being further isolated in the comity of nations should the talks materialise. A host of donor countries, including India, have been calling for a patch-up and political stability. However positive the response of the seven-party Opposition combine, its iteration on arms and violence virtually shuts the door. Jhalanath Khanal, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) indulges in semantic quibbling when he asserts that his party is ready to hold talks if the rebels agree to a process to lay down arms, a somewhat convoluted way of prescribing arms surrender as a pre-condition. The insurgents will also have to stop their murderous attacks and agree to an international probe into the recent killings. Though the Maoists haven't yet reacted, these are undoubtedly stringent conditions for them to adhere to. The talks may come a cropper irrespective of the attitude of the palace. Nevertheless, there has been some progress with the Reds inching towards a meeting point.

THE STATESMAN

Nepal: Gyanendra expands cabinet, includes convict

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, JULY 15

SHOWING utter contempt for international calls for a quick return to democracy in Nepal, King Gyanendra expanded his cabinet for the third time on Thursday, taking the number of ministers to 24. The two-tier council now has 16 cabinet rank and eight assistant ministers.

One of the Assistant Ministers, Jagat Gauchan, has served many years in prison for the attempted murder of Padam Thakurathi, a veteran journalist, in the 80s. Thakurathi escaped the attempt, but lost one of his eyes and sustained major head injury.

Allegations of corruption are also rife about many other ministers. The cabinet expansion was announced last night by the government-controlled Nepal Television and Radio.

The move has signalled the King's unwillingness to allow

political parties to inch closer to power.

The expansion came after Lakhdar Brahimi, special envoy to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, met the King. The envoy offered the UN's help in resolving the conflict in Nepal. An early restoration of democracy—as suggested by Annan when he met the King in Jakarta in April—was another gentle reminder.

The cabinet expansion was greeted with surprise by the high-powered international mission, which came here to express solidarity with the movement for press freedom.

Though the cabinet has a reasonable regional and ethnic balance, the new entrants are either seen as hardliners and controversial, or political nobodies. Many of the freshly-inducted ministers have been associated with either the Nepali Congress or the main Communist party, CPN-UML, at some point.

Nepal parties' terms

Kathmandu, July 12 (PTT): Nepal's political parties today welcomed the Maoists call for talks but asked them to give up violence before entering into a dialogue to end the insurgency in the Himalayan kingdom.

The Maoists must first put into practice the conditions set by the seven-party alliance by giving up acts of violence and murder, Nepali Congress spokesman Arjun Narsingh said.

The rebels should first stop attacking unarmed civilians and allow political party workers to move freely within the Maoist controlled territories, he said.

Maoist leader Pushpa Kumar Dahal alias Prachanda

had yesterday called upon political parties in the country to come forward for negotiations to end the insurgency in the Himalayan kingdom.

Nepal Communist Party (UML) spokesman Pradip Nepal said instead of issuing such statements, "they (Maoists) should first abandon violence. We believe in action, not in statements," he said.

Pilgrims killed

Eight pilgrims were killed and seven others went missing after their boat capsized in the flooded Kamala river in Janakpur town of Nepal's Dhanusha district, bordering India, police said today.

The mishap occurred when 27 pilgrims were cross-

ing the river on a ferry on Sunday to travel to Sikanaghat to participate in a religious fair.

Fifteen of them went missing after the boat capsized, police said adding, the bodies of eight people have been recovered at Lagam ghat.

The remaining 12 pilgrims swam to safety. The whereabouts of seven people, who have gone missing, is not yet known.

At least two children were killed and three others seriously injured when a bomb planted by Maoist rebels exploded at Pahalmanpur village of Kailali district. The children were grazing cattle on an open ground in the village yesterday when the blast occurred, the sources said.

13 JUL 2005 THE TELEGRAPH

Rebels woo Nepal parties

*for Dr
M.P.*
J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, July 11: In a significant political initiative aimed at isolating King Gyanendra, the Maoists have urged the seven-party Opposition alliance to constitute an official team for holding talks with them on all political issues confronting the Himalayan kingdom.

In a statement, the Maoist supremo Prachanda said his party, the Communist Party of Nepal, was ready for talks with the Opposition alliance that was formed to launch a campaign against Gyanendra's February 1 takeover. "We are ready to collaborate with all political parties that are against authoritarianism in order to make the people's movement powerful and united", he said.

Prachanda described the recent statements of several top politicians, including Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala seeking talks with the rebels, as extremely positive. In response to the political initiative, Prachanda's party has issued a directive to its cadre not to target activists of the seven Opposition parties, he explained.

(Prachanda's statement coincided with intense speculation in Nepal as well as in India that the king is thinking of banning all political parties, adds our special correspondent in Delhi.)

The Maoist leader, who issued the statement via e-mail from his hideout in western Nepal, urged the alliance to respond to his initiative by constituting an official negotiating team in order to create people pressure for a democratic solution.

"A strong basis of confi-

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dence can be prepared by holding a dialogue with such a team and by organising serious discussions on the whole gamut of political issues," he added.

Prachanda also said that his party was ready to hold talks with anyone, including the UN, in the larger interests of the Nepali people.

Significantly, Prachanda's statement comes at a time when Lakhdar Brahimi, special adviser to the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, is in Nepal to explore possibilities of resolving the conflict peacefully. The rebels, who have been waging an armed struggle in rural areas, have been demanding a multi-party talks, an interim government and elections to the constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution.

The political parties are calling for the reinstatement of the dissolved parliament and have agreed on elections to the constituent Assembly provided the Maoists give up violence.



Nepali security forces
in Kathmandu. (AFP)

12 JUL 2001

THE TELEGRAPH

'Stop support to Nepal monarchy'

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: The Nepali People's Right Protection Committee has urged India not to extend "moral, material and military support" to the monarchy in Nepal.

Talking to mediapersons here on Saturday, its central committee president Laxman Pant said India should stop dealing with the monarchy as it had been rejected by the people of Nepal.

He said the Nepalese people should be allowed to decide what they wanted, and no outside force, including India and the U.S., should interfere with Nepal's internal affairs. Mr. Pant said the Maoist movement in Nepal was not a terrorist organisation. "It is a political movement, and Maoist leaders are all political people. So, those leaders who had been detained in various prisons of India must be released forthwith and accorded the status of a political leader of a foreign country," he said.

Mr. Pant said the committee represented about eight million Nepalese people working in India, and added that it was striving for their welfare as well as for the cause of democracy in Nepal.

"Rural Nepal under Maoists"

He said vast parts of rural Nepal were controlled by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The Maoists' armed struggle was out of compulsion, he said, as their efforts to bring about a working democracy by participating in the electoral process in 1991 failed to yield any result.

The committee is holding its two-day national meet here on Saturday and Sunday. While the first day's proceedings would be a closed-door affair, there would be an open session on Sunday. The meet will also elect office-bearers for the State Committees.

Mr. Pant, accompanied by the Tamil Nadu-Pondicherry State Committee president Nand Tiwari, said they had units in 22 States and in Pondicherry and Chandigarh.