

Prachanda to lead dialogue team

Maoists' roadmap for future may create problems

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Prachanda, on Saturday laid down his party's political roadmap for future, and said he himself would lead the rebels in the "high-level" dialogue with the government.

Issuing a statement, Mr. Prachanda said that a recently held central committee meeting of his party decided that the rebel dialogue team be led by himself. The Maoists have also formed a three-member dialogue preparatory committee, headed by party spokesman and Mr. Prachanda's confidant, Krishna Bahadur Mahara. "The team will prepare ground for high-level dialogue," said the rebel statement. A senior minister told *The Hindu* that the government team would be headed by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. "But that's a long way off," said the minister, requesting anonymity.

This is for the first time that Mr. Prachanda himself will be heading the rebels in the negotiating table. Three rounds of dialogue were abandoned in the past for lack of their success. The first dialogue was held in 2001 and the second and the third in 2003. Over 13,000 people have died since the rebels started armed insurgency ten years ago.

The rebels have also proposed their roadmap for future. The roadmap sequences the future political course in the following order: Finalisation of the code of conduct, formation of full talks

• **Maoists have also formed a three-member dialogue preparatory committee**

• **Cautions on the possibility of a counter revolution in the country**

team, release of all political detainees, beginning of the dialogue, dissolution of the House and the current government, scrapping of the constitution, political round table that will form an interim government and interim constitution, redrawing of the election constituencies, election to the constituent assembly under credible international monitoring and, finally, restructuring of the Nepali state and the army.

The rebel leader has also cautioned on the possibility of a counter revolution in the country and has warned the seven party alliance (SPA) that his party was ready to lead another public uprising if they did not honour people's aspiration for a republic.

Observers say the rebel roadmap could be problematic for the parties, for they do not contemplate dissolution of parliament and the present government anytime soon.

A senior leader of the Nepal Congress, and lawmaker, Ramchandra Poudel, told *The Hindu* that parliament would not be dissolved leaving a political vacuum. Another lawmaker Pari Thapa said, "Parliament will not be dismissed until

the modality and procedure of the election to the constituent assembly is agreed upon." But the rebels have categorically said that the House of Representatives and the government should be dissolved soon after the beginning of the dialogue, paving way for the formation of an interim government.

The House of Representatives on Saturday unanimously elected Subash Nembang, a CPN-UML lawmaker, Speaker. Nembang, a lawyer by profession, is a former Minister of Law and Parliamentary Affairs.

Breaking the tradition of taking the oath of office at the royal palace, Nembang took the oath of office at parliament.

The Speaker's post had fallen vacant after Tara Nath Ranabhat resigned as Speaker under pressure from the SPA immediately after the House was reinstated. The lawmakers were angry with Ranabhat for his "dubious" role during the King's direct rule.

He had refrained from criticising the king when he seized absolute power on February 2005.

He had also rebuffed parties request to him to chair the "mock" sessions of parliament that the parties held on the street.

A cabinet source on Saturday revealed that Chief Secretary Lok Man Singh Karki was among the suspended officials by the government on Friday.

The government had suspended chiefs of the three security agencies, along with six other senior security officials.

Nepal to curtail King's powers

Nine top security officials suspended

KATHMANDU: Nepal's new Government headed by Prime Minister G. P. Koirala is planning to issue a proclamation that will curtail the King's powers and privileges, the Finance Minister said on Saturday, but he declined to confirm reports that the monarch might have to pay taxes for the first time.

A declaration of Parliament asserting the sovereignty of the people and Parliament, which would have the effect of a law, is being prepared by the Government and is being discussed among the seven parties in the ruling alliance, Finance Minister Ram Saran Mahat said.

Discussions on

"The document will certainly curtail the King's power and privileges, this is certain, but what the specifics will be, we are discussing," Mr. Mahat said. "It is definitely on the cards but it will be thoroughly discussed."

A Government official separately said the details being discussed included asking the King to pay taxes and reduce his palace budget, which, according to media reports, grew from Rs 120

million (Nepal) to Rs 600 million when he was running the Government. The official spoke on condition of anonymity citing parliamentary propriety.

People's aspirations

Mr. Mahat declined to confirm the details of the proclamation. "I am sorry, I cannot go into the specifics," he said, adding that the proclamation would reflect the aspirations of the people.

Meanwhile, the Government on Saturday suspended nine top security officials, a day after arresting five former Cabinet ministers, in a crackdown on King Gyanendra's old royal regime.

The Government action came as Maoist leader Prachanda warned that the country faced another "people's revolution" if lawmakers broke their commitments to the rebels and defied "republican sentiment."

The nine high-ranking security officials included the heads of the police, armed police and the national investigation department. "Friday's emergency Cabinet meeting took the decision to suspend the security officials,"

said Home Ministry Secretary Umesh Mainali.

State-run media reported that the officials were suspended for "using excessive force against pro-democracy protesters."

On Friday, four ex-ministers and one assistant minister — including the former Home Minister, Information Minister and Foreign Minister — were jailed for 90 days.

A family member of one of the ministers has said he was being held on charges of plotting against the new administration.

The new multi-party Government took power in late April after King Gyanendra was forced to give up absolute rule following nationwide pro-democracy protests that were backed by the rebels and left at least 19 persons dead.

New constitution

The King had sacked the government in February 2005, claiming it failed to tackle a bloody Maoist revolt that has left at least 12,500 dead.

The rebels confirmed in a statement Saturday that Prachanda will head the guerrilla side in planned peace talks to end the decade-long insurgency.

Parliament was restored by the King last month. It has pledged to hold elections for a constituent assembly — meeting a key demand of the Maoist rebels — to rewrite the constitution that would decide the future of the world's only Hindu monarchy.

The Maoists have battled since 1996 to install a single party Communist republic in the impoverished Himalayan nation sandwiched between India and China.

But they have since agreed to accept whatever constitution is agreed to by a new assembly and to function in a multi-party democratic system. — AP, AFP

U.S. lifts travel curbs

KATHMANDU: The United States has lifted travel warning issued to non-essential staff and their family members at its Nepal mission.

The State Department has permitted all non-essential mission personnel and their families to return to Nepal, a notice issued by the U.S. embassy here.

Concerned about their safety, the Department on April 24 had ordered all non-essential mission personnel

and families to leave Nepal amidst the pro-democracy uprising.

The consular section, which resumed certain services on May 1, will return to full operations on Monday, including visa interviews.

The United States last month had also closed down various missions including American Centre and the consular section in view of the escalating violence in Nepal. — PTI

14 MAY 2006

Pro-Hindu protests in Nepal

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 24: Hundreds of Nepalis in the southern town of Birgunj protested against the plan to turn Nepal into a secular state.

The activists, who belonged to the World Hindu Federation (WHF) and Shiv Sena Nepal, organised rallies and blocked the Tribhuvan highway on the Bara-Parsa industrial belt near the Indian border. They also burnt copies of a newspaper which supported the parliamentary declaration to turn the Himalayan nation into a secular state.

The protesters enforced a

day-long bandh in Birgunj and Kalaiya bazaar. They also blocked traffic at Gandak, Parwanipur and Jitpur intersections of the Tribhuvan highway which leads into India.

The protesters burnt tyres and shouted slogans in support of Hinduism and ridiculed the parties for daring to convert the world's only Hindu state into a secular one.

The WHF, which is headed by Bharat Kesar Sinha, a close aide of King Gyanendra, has supported the monarch during his 15-month reign which ended last month after the pro-democracy movement.

In fact, as the pro-democracy protests gained in momen-

tum, Gyanendra attended the WHF silver jubilee celebrations in Birgunj early last month.

Both the WHF and Shiv Sena plan to continue with the protests in Birgunj and other towns tomorrow. Nearly 75 per cent of Nepal's 26 million people are Hindus.

The rest are Muslims, Christians and Animists, who believe that plants, animals and natural things have a living soul.

Maotist demand

The Maoist rebels have said that they will join an interim administration only after the dissolution of Nepal's re-in-

stated parliament and government, a rebel negotiator said today.

"It is part of our roadmap that the present parliament, constitution and the government should be dissolved and replaced by an interim government and constitution," said Dinanath Sharma, part of a three-member rebel team which is in Kathmandu for peace talks with the new government.

No date has been set for the talks.

The rebels, which supported the pro-democracy protests organised by the seven major political parties, have no representation in parliament.



A man is arrested by the police in Kathmandu on Wednesday for vandalising the Everest Nursing Home over the death of a patient. (Reuters)

25 MAY 2006

Nepal to free Maoist detenus

Talks with Prachanda fruitful

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: In a bid to boost the upcoming peace talks, Nepal on Monday decided to release all Maoist detenus charged under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance.

Minister for Information and Communications Dilendra Prasad Badu told journalists that the decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting held at Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's official residence.

Following the decision, the Appellate Court, Patan, released 75 Maoists. More releases are expected in the districts. About 350 Maoist rebels, who are charged under TADO, are languishing in various jails.

Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula and Maoist leader Prachanda held discussions on Sunday. Mr. Sitaula, along with Maoist chief negotiator Krishna Bahadur Mahara, flew to a remote village in Kanskai district, some 200 km northwest of Kathmandu, to meet the rebel leader.

Roadmap to peace

Mr. Mahara, speaking in the capital on Monday, said the talks were fruitful. "The Government explained its roadmap to peace. We have taken it in a new spirit and will show maximum flexibility to reach the main goal [Constituent Assembly elections]." Mr. Mahara, who is also the spokesperson of the Maoist party,

• **Maoists hint at readiness to drop House dissolution issue**

• **Next round of talks to focus on ceasefire monitoring**

hinted that they were ready to drop the House dissolution issue, a sticking point between the rebels and the Seven Party Alliance. "We should not get tangled on the issue of whether and when the House should be dissolved."

Asked about the next round of talks, he said they would take place "in three days, or latest by the end of this week." The talks would take up the issues of ceasefire monitoring and the need for an interim Constitution.

Party office opened

The rebels opened their party office in Lalitpur district, on the banks of the Bagmati that separates Kathmandu from the ancient district.

Inaugurating the office, Maoist polit bureau member Dev Gurung said it was aimed at maintaining contact with the people in the Kathmandu valley. "We want to listen to what the people have to say, and will honour their wishes."

Cabinet expanded

Meanwhile, Mr. Koirala added three more members to his Cabinet on Sunday.

1 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

No interim govt unless rebels lay down arms: Nepal

Pokhra (Nepal): No interim power-sharing government will be formed with Maoists in Nepal until the rebels lay down their arms, home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula said on Wednesday.

"Formation of the interim government is not possible without settling the Maoists' arms issues," Sitaula told journalists in the western tourist town of Pokhra.

"The interim government containing the Maoists will be formed only after the management of the rebels' arms."

Nepal's authorities and Maoist rebels clinched a landmark deal on June 16 which will see parliament dissolved and power shared in a new interim government, which is due to come into being within a month.

The question of the rebels laying down arms was not addressed in their eight-point agreement, although the two sides agreed to request UN monitoring of arms by the rebels and Nepal's army during voting for a body to redraft Nepal's constitution.

Sitaula told Wednesday's media conference that the Maoists, who have been fighting to install a communist re-



Nepal government claims that Maoists had agreed to settle the arms issue before the formation of the interim government

public in Nepal for the past decade at the cost of more than 12,500 lives, had agreed to settle the arms issue "before the formation of the interim government."

"The United Nations will be invited soon to manage and monitor the arms of both the

state and the Maoists before going for constituent assembly elections," the minister said.

"It will take time to invite the United Nations because we are still engaged in consultations with the Maoists on decommissioning of the rebel arms." AGENCIES

Maoists to join interim govt in Nepal

Prachanda Strikes Deal In First Public Appearance In Years

APN & Agencies

Kathmandu: The Maoists in Nepal, who have waged a decade-long war to seize control of the Himalayan nation, agreed on Friday to join an interim government to be formed within a month, the rebels' leader Prachanda said after his face-to-face talks with prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

"This is a historic decision and will move the country in a new direction," he said after his nine-hour meeting with Koirala and leaders of the ruling Seven-Party Alliance (SPA).

The interim government, which will eventually create a new permanent constitution, will replace the current parliament as well as the Maoists' 'people's government', which rules over the territory they control. Prachanda said he wanted elections to a constituent assembly by May 2007 at the latest.

The agreement also calls for the creation of an interim constitution within three months and United Nations oversight of both the Nepalese soldiers and Maoist fighters. It made no mention, however, of disarmament.

"We have begun a new political experiment in the world through collaboration between parliamentary forces and armed insurgents for a single agenda," Prachanda said. "We treat this experiment not as a political give-and-take but a historic test, which has spread a new message in the world for peace and liberty."

The announcement followed talks that began early in the morning, when home minister K P Sitaula escorted Prachanda, his wife Sita and his deputy Baburam Bhattarai in a helicopter to Kathmandu from Pokhara. They were driven straight to Koirala's resi-

dence in his official vehicle under heavy security. Soon after, the heads of the political parties joined them.

It was the first time that Prachanda, whose real name is Pushpa Kamal Dahal, had met the country's top leadership since insurgency began in 1996.

The rebel leader said the agreement between the two sides was a landmark decision towards uprooting the 237-old feudal structure of the state and beginning of an inclusive system with space for all people to decide their fate.

Prachanda also said he wanted to settle in the capital in the near future and go hand-



Maoist chief Prachanda (left) with opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal at a news conference at the PM's residence at Baluwatar in Kathmandu on Friday

in-hand with the SPA to implement the people's mandate given through the recent democracy agitation. He dominated the press meet where other Maoist and SPA leaders were also present.

Government officials made no immediate comment on the agreement, but observers were pleased. "Today's meeting was a breakthrough in establishing peace in Nepal," said Narayan Wagle, editor of Kantipur, the country's biggest newspaper. "Prachanda appearing in public in the capital was a big achievement that guarantees they (the rebels) will not be returning to the jungles again."

Nepal's assembly sworn in first time sans King

PRESS Trust Of India
Kathmandu, June 28

NEPAL'S PARLIAMENT members and ministers on Wednesday took a fresh oath of office at a function which, for the first time, marked the absence of the King, while Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was forced to skip the event due to ill-health.

House of Representative Speaker Subhash Nemwang administered the oath of office and secrecy to Deputy Speaker Chitralekha Yadav and members of the House of Representatives, National Assembly (upper house) and Chairpersons of all Parliamentary Committees at the Parliament Building here.

All MPs, ministers and Parliament Committee chairpersons were, on May 18, instructed to take fresh oath as per the historic Parliamentary proclamation that severely curtailed powers of King Gyanendra and declared the House of Representatives as the most powerful sovereign body.

Former Minister Badri Prasad Mandal, who was grilled by the high-level commission formed to investigate the atrocities committed to suppress the pro-democracy movement of the country, also took the oath of office.

Earlier, the King used to swear-in the prime minister and other MPs — before the seven-party government came to power following a 19-day agitation in April which forced King Gyanendra to give up his 14-month direct rule.

**RISE OF
DEMOCRACY**

THE HINDU TIMES

THE HINDU TIMES

Nepal panel summons 3 ex-ministers

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: The high level probe commission formed to investigate the atrocities committed against the pro-democracy people's movement in Nepal has sent letters to three Ministers in the King's Cabinet to be present before the Commission by 11a.m. on Tuesday.

In separate letters sent to Tulsi Giri, Vice-Chairman in the King's Council of Ministers and

Badri Prasad Mandal and Nikshya Sumsher Rana, the commission has said it wants to interrogate them in connection with the Royal Government's crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations.

Though formed on May 5, this is for the first time that the commission has summoned high-ranking officials of the King's Government. A source at the commission told that more summons would follow soon. "This

is just a beginning," he said.

Prachanda in capital

Maoist leader Prachanda and his second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai arrived here on Sunday and began consultations with the leaders of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) to "address suspicions and differences" that set in after the parties and the Maoists signed a deal on June 16.

The Maoist leaders met Com-

munist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and Nepal Workers and Peasants Party president Narayan Man Bijuckhhee. Following the meeting, a member of the Maoist delegation, Dinanath Sharma, told State-owned Radio Nepal that the rebel leaders had begun discussions with the party leaders to address the differences and doubts that have surfaced after signing the deal.

Nepal Maoists join mainstream, interim government

98 2
1976

Prachanda and other top leaders of the Seven-Party Alliance said. But nothing specific was said about the decommissioning or demobilisation of the guerrillas.

A committee of legal experts led by Laxman Aryal, retired judge of the Supreme Court, has been formed to draft the 'interim constitution' which will form the basis for formation of an interim government with Maoist participation.

The formation of the interim government would be preceded by dissolution of the revived house of parliament and the 'people's government' formed by the Maoists.

"We want that the draft should be ready within a month," Prachanda said, but there are apparently divisions between the two sides on the issue. He hoped that the election to the constituent assembly will take place within a year.

Prachanda, his wife Sita Dahal and party ideologue Baburam Bhattarai were flown in from Pokhara in western Nepal in a private helicopter chartered by the Government for the sum-

mit-level talks. The ten-hour meeting—in which Koirala and Prachanda had a one-on-one discussion a couple of times, together lasting nearly 90 minutes—perhaps encouraged the Maoist chief to concede that Koirala or anyone else was free to support "ceremonial monarchy as that's what the competitive multi-party democracy is supposed to be."

Prachanda, by all means, was the uncontested ruler or hero today as he was flanked by leaders of the 7-party alliance on the dais, and all listened to him, at times nodding their heads in support, when he spoke about the mismanagement of the present government.

His guerrillas, most of them carrying bags which many suspected had arms inside, took charge of the law and order as well as the responsibility of regulating the crowds in the prime minister's residence.

"I did not want the event of my coming overground in such a poorly managed situation. This shows how pathetically this government has been running the country," he said. Deputy

Prime Minister Amik Serchan and Home Minister K P Sitaula listened quietly. Sitaula had gone all the way to Pokhara in the morning to escort the Maoist leaders to the Prime Minister's residence.

"We are not using this peace process for any short-term political gain. We want to make this country a model of peace and development in the whole world through development, industrialisation and drastic cut in unnecessary expenses," he said adding "what glory has the Nepal army achieved except taxing on the government and committing rapes on women?"

The ministers present there chose not to respond. Koirala perhaps sensed the likely embarrassment when he excused himself from sharing the dais with the Maoists chief.

"We will manage the country with just about 20,000 Army instead of the 90,000 at present. Can this army face Indian or Chinese army in case of war?" he asked, adding "but we can train 25 million Nepalese as militias, and they can defeat Indians or Americans if they come aggressively."

INDIAN EXPRESS

NEPAL ■ Overground after two decades, Prachanda criticises govt, ministers listen and nod

Maoists join mainstream, interim govt

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

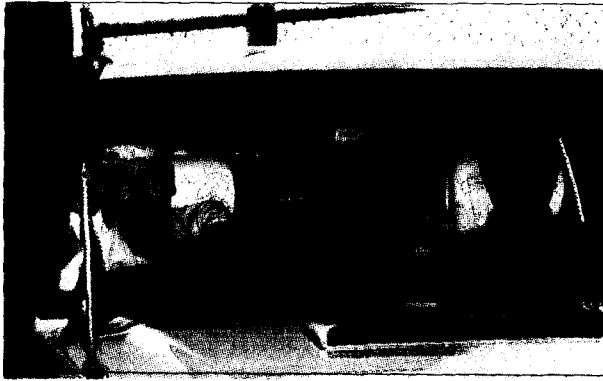
KATHMANDU, JUNE 16

HE did not invoke Marx, Lenin or even Mao. For a change, Maoist chief Prachanda invoked Lord Buddha, the apostle of peace, as his role model for future politics of competitive parliamentary democracy as

rebels were over.

The crowded press conference marked the end of his underground life that has spanned almost two decades—its last half as head of the Maoist insurgency which began in February 1996.

The meeting which took place on the eve of Prime Minister G P Koirala's departure to Bangkok for his med-



he came overground and announced the decision to join the interim government to be formed shortly.

"Some 2,500 years ago, Lord Buddha led a revolution and gave a message of peace in this land. Today we are going to make another history," Prachanda told journalists within the precincts of the Prime Minister's official residence after the ten-hour summit-level talks between the Government and the



Prachanda, wife being driven to the residence of PM

ical check-up, in principle, brought the two sides to an agreement to involve

United Nations for management of arms of both the Nepal Army and the Maoist guerrillas so that the proposed elections to the constituent assembly would be fair and free from intimidation, a statement signed by Koirala,

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INDIAN EXPRESS

17 JUN 2016

Koirala, Prachanda reach 8-point pact

Both sides express commitment to human rights, press freedom

Ameeta Dhakal

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist supremo Prachanda here on Friday reached a "historical" 8-point agreement in their first meeting.

The two sides agreed to draft an interim constitution, dissolve both Houses of Parliament and Maoist's local governments through consultations, invite the United Nations to manage and monitor the arms of both armies (state army and the rebel army), hold constituent assembly elections in a free and fair environment, among others. The agreement also says both the sides have expressed commitment to competitive and multi-party politics, rule of law, civil rights and to uphold human rights and press freedom.

Drafting committee

They have also formed a five-member interim constitution drafting committee that will prepare the draft within 15 days. The interim constitution will, among others, define the process of the constituent assembly.

Speaking at a press conference, Mr. Prachanda said within one month Parliament and the Maoist's local governments would be dissolved and an interim government would be formed. "The spirit of the 8-point agreement is to form the interim government within a month," he said.

He also said that the constitu-



UPBEAT MOOD: (from left) Maoist Polit Bureau member Baburam Bhattarai, Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal known as Prachanda, general secretary of Nepal Communist Party Marxist and Leninist Madhav Kumar Nepal and Home Minister Krishna Sitaula address the press in Kathmandu on Friday. — PHOTO: AFP

ent assembly elections would be held within a year, preferably by next April.

Hailing the agreements, Mr. Prachanda said, "We have jointly created a history. No one ever thought that rebels waging war and the parties involved in parliamentary politics would jointly make a revolution happen."

Mr. Prachanda also chose to speak about the future of the Nepali army and said his party was in favour of a small army. "Why do we need a big army of 90,000? At most it should not exceed 20,000 and the surplus re-

sources that otherwise goes to the army should be used in tackling the poverty in the country."

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the CPN-UML, said, "The country has decisively entered into the process of the constituent assembly and asserted that no force in the world could stop it."

The former Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, also hailed the agreement as historic and said, "We have proven to the world that Nepalis are capable of resolving their disputes themselves."

THE HINDU

Koirala to dissolve Parliament

Maoists will join interim government, take part in polls

PRESS Trust of India
Kathmandu, June 16

IN A landmark decision paving the way for Maoists joining the political mainstream in Nepal, the rebels on Friday agreed to join an interim government and dissolve the administration in areas under their control.

The government on its part agreed to dissolve parliament and conduct elections to a constituent assembly, meeting a key demand of the rebels, said a joint press statement issued after the first ever face-to-face talks between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist supreme Prachanda.

"This is a historic decision and will move the country in a new direction," Prachanda told a crowded press meet after the talks that lasted over 10 hours.

"We reached an eight-point understanding to get the country ahead of the current crisis," said home minister Krishna Sitoula, who also led the government's peace negotiation team.

The joint statement said the two sides agreed to manage the arms of both the army and the Maoists, convert their ceasefire into permanent peace and hold constituent assembly elections in a free and fair manner while affirming their commitment to competitive multi-party system.

They also agreed to conduct each other's activities peacefully, allow international observation during the constituent assembly election and seek UN's assistance for its monitoring.

"The two sides would sincerely implement 12 point understanding (reached between them last November) and the government-Maoist ceasefire Code of Conduct, dissolve the Parliaments as well as the local level 'Peoples Governments' formed by the Maoists, to resolve the armed conflict through dialogue," the statement said.

The Maoists and the government formed a five-member drafting committee headed by former supreme

court justice Laxman Prasad Aryal to prepare the interim constitution on the basis of the 12-point understanding.

The committee will draft an interim constitution within 15 days and after the Maoist government talks endorse it, that will replace the present Nepalese constitution, home minister Sitoula said.

Admitting that "arms struggle alone could not capture Kathmandu," Prachanda said the cooperation between the peaceful parliamentary forces and those taking up arms to launch a joint movement was a new and unique example in the history of the world.



REUTERS

Nepalese government officials with the Maoists in Kathmandu on Friday.

Koirala, Prachanda talks anytime soon

Most of the differences sorted out: Maoists

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: The Government and Maoist negotiators held a "surprise" second round of talks here on Thursday afternoon and agreed on an early meeting between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist Chairman Prachanda, among others.

After the talks, chief negotiator of the Maoists talks team Krishna Bahadur Mahara said, "The supreme leaders will meet anytime soon." When prodded how soon, he said, "Sooner than you would imagine."

Since Mr. Koirala is leaving for Bangkok on Saturday, the meeting is likely to take place by Friday evening at the latest.

"We have sorted out most of the differences between us, now the meeting of the supreme leaders will address the rest of them," He said. He also said the talks would focus on constituent assembly elections and management of weapons.

Ceasefire monitoring team

Talking to journalists after

• Meeting may take place today

• Our trust level is high, says Minister

the meeting, government chief negotiator and Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula urged the media and the international community not to doubt the trust between the rebels and the Government. "Our trust level is high enough to succeed the talks."

The second round of talks, which the media came to know only after they started at a Hotel in Lalitpur at 2 pm, also formed a 31-member ceasefire monitoring committee led by veteran civil society leader and Finance Minister in 1990 interim government, Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey.

The talks lasted only for about two hours since most of the issues were agreed upon beforehand.

The *modus operandi* of the talks team so far has been to ne-

gotiate behind the scene and come to the formal table only when they have something to announce to the press.

A 4-point joint communiqué issued after the talks said the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu would be requested to provide necessary assistance to the committee in monitoring the violations of the ceasefire code of conduct. The Government and the rebels signed a 25-point code of conduct during their first round on May 26.

The talks also formed a five-member team to observe the peace talks. The members include the former Supreme Court judge, Laxman Prasad Aryal, Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, former lawyer Padma Ratna Tuladhar, the former Speaker, Daman Nath Dhungana, and the former Minister and human rights activist, Mathura Prasad Shrestha.

AFP reports:

The newly-reinstated Parliament was adjourned on Thursday for 18 days in an effort to boost the peace process with Maoist rebels.

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16/6
Hi Prachanda ✓

16 JUN 2008

THE HINDU

Nepal frees 124 Maoist captives

KATHMANDU, June 13: A day after Nepal's new government scrapped a draconian anti-terrorism law and dropped legal cases and investigations against over 500 Maoist guerrillas, 124 rebels were freed from prisons on the eve of the next round of peace talks.

Exultant rebel cadres, mostly young men, took out a victory rally in the capital today, shouting "Gyanendra murdabad" and "Long live the Maoist party". At a prominent square near Kathmandu's Dasarath Stadium, Maoists scrawled graffiti around a royal ancestor's statue, delivering the same message.

Home ministry spokesman Mr Baman Prasad Neupane was reported as saying 61 Maoists, including leaders of their students wing, had been released from the

high-security Nakhu prison in Kathmandu valley. Last week, the jailer had

been held captive by prisoners for nearly 30 hours. Over four dozen prisoners were freed in Kaski, the district in western Nepal where home minister Mr Krishna Prasad Sitaula had met Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal secretly on Sunday, and more in Rupandehi and Mahottari districts.

The releases came after the cabinet on Monday announced an end to the draconian Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance clamped down since 2001 and withdrew all cases against the rebels and stop investigations. Many detainees were held illegally on framed charges even after the Supreme Court asked the government to free them. ■ SNS

14 JUN 2006

THE STATESMAN

Nepal scraps anti-terrorism laws

Kathmandu: Nepal's government scrapped anti-terrorism laws on Monday and withdrew cases against hundreds of jailed communist rebels, a minister said.

The Cabinet met and decided anyone arrested or imprisoned under a tough anti-terrorism law imposed by the previous royal government would be freed, information minister Dilendra Badu said told reporters after the meeting. Several Maoist rebels have been freed since the government and the rebels declared a cease-fire and began peace talks in the past few weeks. However, hundreds remain in jail charged under the anti-terrorism laws.

Rebel spokesman Krishna Mahara confirmed that the government had pledged to free 350 of their jailed members and supporters starting on Monday.

The anti-terrorism laws were enforced by the previous government of King Gyanendra to hunt down and prosecute rebels. Many rebels had been charged with murder, kidnappings and crimes against the state under the anti-terrorism laws.

Weeks of street protests by the alliance of seven major

political parties forced Gyanendra to give up powers, reinstate parliament and appoint Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister in April.

Since then, the new government and the rebels have

process with rebel Maoists, a senior politician said on Monday. Parliament reconvened for the first time in four years in April after King Gyanendra ended 14-months of direct rule following mass protests

second largest party.

"The break is to make an environment that is favourable for talks with the rebels," Nepal said.

The decision to adjourn the house will likely be approved by parliament Monday, said Nepal, whose party has 68 seats in the 205 seat legislature.

"We are going to discuss closing parliament proceedings in Monday's sitting in order to speed up the peace talks with the Maoists," Narayan Man Bijukchhe, chairman of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, told AFP. Politicians will return to their constituencies while senior politicians will concentrate on the peace process, the Kathmandu Post reported.

Nepal's rebels have been calling for the dissolution of the reinstated parliament and the establishment of an interim government in which they too will be represented.

The rebels and new government have been observing a ceasefire for more than a month and have held one day of peace talks. More discussions are expected within a week, after the home minister made a flying visit to meet with rebel leaders. AGENCIES



The top Maoist negotiator, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, talks to the media in Kathmandu on Monday

declared a cease-fire and have been holding peace negotiations to end the conflict that has killed more than 13,000 people.

Meanwhile, Nepal's newly-reinstated parliament is set to adjourn for several weeks so members can devote effort to boosting a fledgling peace

organised by an alliance of seven political parties in concert with rebel Maoists.

"The seven party alliance has decided to adjourn the house for a few weeks," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), Nepal's

Nepal Parliament session adjourned to mollify Maoists

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, JUNE 11

PEACE efforts in Nepal have run into rough weather after the government refused to dissolve the revived House of Representatives, something that the rebel Maoists have been clamouring for.

As a conciliatory gesture, however, the Government today decided to put off the ongoing session of the House for a few weeks, but categorically said that it was not going to dissolve the House.

Maoist leader K B Mahara, head of the Maoist team at the

peace talks, threatened last week to go back to the jungle if Parliament was not dissolved.

"This is an unpractical demand," said a minister, who refused to be identified. "We cannot dissolve Parliament as it has been reinstated only after the people showed such a massive support. Moreover, the government needs to present the budget next month in the House."

The Maoists have been leery of the ruling alliance after most of their issues—including a secular Nepal and constituent assembly elections—were appropriated by the government.

Maoist chief Prachanda, in a TV interview, has also demanded immediate representation for the Maoists in the Cabinet—with the liberty to retain their militia.

Prime Minister G P Koirala told *The Indian Express* that adjourning Parliament should keep the Maoists mollified for the time being. "Such irritants should not damage the peace process," he said. Koirala is expected to soon call Prachanda to discuss his recent India visit and assure him that nothing "against the Maoists" was discussed with Indian leaders.

12 JUN 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Rebuild Nepal

India should let UN
come on board

It is no surprise that G P Koirala's first official trip after taking over as Nepal's prime minister was to India. Koirala's four-day trip to New Delhi was primarily intended to get India's support to rebuild Nepal's shattered economy. New Delhi has rightly promised a generous aid package for Kathmandu. But economic help is only one aspect of getting Nepal back on track. An equally, if not more, pressing issue is getting Maoists involved in the process of electing a constituent assembly and in drafting a new constitution. After the initial euphoria of toppling the king and installing a democratic government, little progress has been made in working out modalities on how to integrate Maoists in the political process. Maoist chief Prachanda has been critical of the lack of progress in the dialogue between the rebels and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA)-led government. He has also warned that reinstating parliament without taking into account the Maoists would lead to bloodshed. While some of this is rhetoric, if the Koirala government does not act quickly there is a real danger that Nepal might again slide back to civil war. It is important that the democratic parties use this historic moment, when the people of Nepal are united against monarchical rule, to take the Maoists along.

India has to play a proactive role in getting Maoists to give up arms and join the democratic process. But the way MEA has been going about this is problematic. New Delhi is reportedly trying to get the US and European Union to join India in backing the Koirala government to squeeze Maoists. South Block is also opposed to the UN mediating between the SPA and Maoists because that would give legitimacy to the rebels. But this move could very well backfire by making Maoists walk away from negotiations. Now that everyone accepts Maoists as legitimate players in Nepal, there is no reason to keep the UN out as mediator. That does not preclude India from using back-door diplomacy to get Maoists to join the political mainstream. CPM's Sitaram Yechury has earlier acted as an intermediary between the SPA and Maoists. Such options could be explored in future too. But MEA's noises against international mediation could well be interpreted by Kathmandu as India playing neighbourhood bully. New Delhi must realise that treating South Asia as its own turf won't pay dividends.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nepal King's veto powers scrapped

Bills need no royal assent

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Parliament has unanimously voted to strip King Gyanendra of his right to veto laws, ensuring a purely ceremonial role for the once powerful monarch.

The new regulation was passed by the lawmakers late on Saturday, according to a Parliament notice.

It authorised the House of Representatives Speaker to certify the passage of any Bill in Parliament. The King will no longer be able to reject Bills and laws passed by Parliament, and the lawmakers will not need to seek his approval while signing Bills into law.

The King, who was directly ruling the country for 14 months after sacking the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government in February 2005, handed over power to the Seven-Party Alliance and reinstated Parliament in April this year after a 19-day agitation against him.

A Parliamentary proclamation last month drastically clipped the King's powers and Saturday's regulation formally eliminated all the authority he once had in Parliament.

All those Ministers, lawmakers and officials who were appointed or sworn in by the King earlier are required to take the oath of office once again before a 15-member Special Committee of MPs headed by the Speaker. They included the Prime Minister, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Upper House, Ministers, the

• **Concept of 'King in Parliament' abolished**

• **Full executive power centred on Council of Ministers**

• **"We have accepted the principle of separation of power"**

Opposition leader, the Chief of the Army Staff, other senior Army officials, Ambassadors, and heads of constitutional bodies.

The concept of 'King in Parliament' has been abolished through the new law.

The House of Representatives has given the authority to the Special Committee to make "additional arrangements" regarding the swearing-in of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, its judges, members of the judicial council, judges of the Appellate Court and district judges.

Hailing the new regulation, Special Committee member Ananda Prasad Dhungana, was quoted as telling the House: "We have accepted the principle of 'separation of power,' which is vital for democracy."

Nepal Communist Party-UML member Asta Laxmi Shakya said the lawmakers were now free to criticise the King in Parliament. Mr. Shakya, however, said the House should not delay formulating an Act to decide on the successor and heir to the throne. — PTI

PM lends helping hand to Koirala

Ready To Help Rebuild Nepal, Asks Maoists To Lay Down Arms, Join Mainstream Politics

Indrani Bagchi | TNN

New Delhi: Describing his Nepali counterpart G P Koirala as a towering personality, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday pledged India's unstinting support to Nepal in rebuilding its shattered economy.

Accepting Kathmandu's list of "requirements", the PM promised that it would be given "utmost consideration" for both immediate and long-term infrastructure and development projects.

But it's the peace process between the political parties and Maoists, and the roadmap to elections that dominated the 40-minute one-on-one and the delegation-level talks in the morning.

The bottomline, from the PM's remark, is that India has decided to throw its weight behind the seven-party alliance, officially junking its own battered "twin pillars" in Nepal.

Emphasising the importance of disarming the Maoists before the elections, minister of state for external affairs Anand Sharma, who was also present during the talks, said: "We feel it's important that the Maoists also deliver on their commitment to multi-party democracy."

Later, the MEA spokesperson said: "We support the peace efforts of the government of Nepal and the Maoists, and we believe that the Maoists must abandon violence and accept the discipline of multi-party democracy to enter the mainstream politics in Nepal."

This point was also driven home in Kathmandu on Wednesday by the US ambassador who said the Maoists should work towards laying down arms and joining the political mainstream. "In the present peace process, the Maoists should put into practice their words," US ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty said.

The Maoists remain on the terror list in the US while there are hundreds of their cadres in Indian prisons. Maoist leaders in Nepal are pressuring the Nepal gov-



PHOTO: Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat in New Delhi on Thursday

ernment to ask India for their release.

While this was not raised by Koirala's delegation, the Maoist issue was discussed in a "comprehensive" manner, said sources. The dates for the second round of talks between the Nepal government and the Maoists will be announced after Koirala returns.

During the disarming process, "third party" or international monitors' presence will be necessary. This could be under UN inspection or the informal coalition of India, the UK and US.

India would prefer that Kathmandu conduct the negotiations directly. But the new Nepal regime appears to be leaning towards requisitioning for a third presence. India is unwilling to play the role, but equally it remains reticent about letting in facilitators into the peace process.

The MEA spokesperson reflected that hesitation. "The very fact that direct peace negotiations are being held between the political parties and the Maoists shows that the people of Nepal have the ability to face these challenges."

The India government's hesitation stems not so much from a traditional Kashmir fixation as from the fact that any facilitator would be honour bound to treat the two sides on a par.

The rest of the Koirala visit will be spent in hammering out an aid package. Anand Sharma said: "The Nepalese have given us adequate information about their needs and requirements. The government of India will be working out a detailed package for Nepal which would be announced before the delegation returns."

0 5 JUN 2006

Nepal seeks Left's help on Maoists

Koirala wants Indian parties to persuade extremists to give up arms before elections

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, June 7

DURING HIS talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday, Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala sought not only economic, but also political assistance, sources said. Nepal would like the Indian government — through its Left allies — to help bring the Maoists around, to desist from violence and lay down arms before talking of further political concessions.

As the Nepalese government prepares for a second round of talks to bring the Maoist insurgents into the political mainstream, they would like the Indian Left parties to help persuade the Maoists give up arms before announcing elections to a constituent Assembly. The government feels it has made enough gestures to indicate its goodwill, and needs some positive response from the Maoists, Nepal's finance minister Ram Sharan Mahat, said.

Acknowledging India's assistance in bringing the Maoists on board with the SPA to remove the monarch's direct rule, Mahat told the *Hindustan Times* that similar "good offices" were needed to carry the dialogue process ahead with the Maoists so that they relinquish arms.

According to analysts, the Maoists are wary of the seven-party alliance (SPA) government having won over the popu-



Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala with Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Tuesday.

PTI

WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE TALKS

REQUEST

- Nepal PM sought economic and political assistance from PM Manmohan Singh
- Said Nepal would like Left to help bring Maoists around, make them lay down arms before talk of further concessions

RESPONSE

- India said it would favourably consider requests
- Also said it was working on how best to meet the demands and a package would be put together by the end of Koirala's visit

lar sentiment by effectively removing the overt symbols of the monarchy from the government. At talks on Wednesday, Koirala spoke of Nepal's long-term development needs and assistance they seek from India to get the country back on the rails. India, the MEA spokesman Navtej Sarna said, would favourably consider the requests and is working out

how best to meet the demands. A package for assistance would be put together by the end of Koirala's visit, Sarna added. A request for arms would also be considered favourably, but according to Mahat, lethal arms were not a priority at this stage. Instead, the army needed trucks and other transportation equipment, which India would be in a position to supply.

War if Nepal not made a republic: Prachanda

Kathmandu: Nepal's Maoist leader has warned that the rebels will go back to war unless Nepal is made a republic following constituent assembly elections, local media reported on Tuesday.



"There is no political way out unless the country opts for a republican setup. If the parties are not ready to accept republicanism as per the aspirations of people... we are ready to wage the final war," Prachanda said at a meeting in Morang district, the Nepali language daily Samachar-patra reported.

Accusing the political parties of trying to "awake the dead tiger" by accepting ceremonial monarchy, Prachanda warned that the crisis will not be resolved unless the parties go for a republican state.

The Maoist leader warned that there were people in the new government trying to undermine the fragile peace process. AGENCIES

07 JUN 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nepal without strings

76.8
6/6

THE Indian establishment's familiarity with the visiting prime minister of Nepal, Girija Prasad Koirala, should not obscure a simple new reality. The ageing Koirala today represents a Nepal that is very different from the one we have known all these decades.

Steeled in the fire of a successful pro-democracy movement, the Himalayan Kingdom is now in the middle of a complex transition to a republic in all but name. While Koirala needs all the help he can get from India, the last thing he needs is a display of New Delhi's instinctive paternalism. New Delhi will have to demonstrably shed that attitude if it needs to construct a successful policy towards Nepal in the coming days. The old 'hegemon-protectorate' relationship is no longer sustainable between New Delhi and Kathmandu. Nepal has changed irrevocably in the 19 days of the pro-democracy agitation. That the Nepalese stood up bravely against the shoot-at-sight orders of King Gyanendra and refused to compromise with the monarchy despite the advice from India and the international community, has injected a new sense of self-confidence in Kathmandu.

Under intense popular pressure the restored Nepalese parliament has quickly cut the monarchy to size, converted the nation into a secular state and, yesterday, it declared untouchability and caste discrimination illegal. These decisions reflect the demands for a fundamental reorganisation of the 200-odd years old Nepalese state. And the new leaders of Nepal seem confident that they can write their own future. As the age of feudalism and upper caste control in Nepal unravels, India's own policy towards Kathmandu can no longer rest on a small trans-border Thakur fraternity, or a manipulation of the bilateral relationship by a small elite across the border.

In retrospect, India's paternalism



for nepal

End the paternalism that marks New Delhi's ties with Kathmandu

C. RAJA MOHAN

towards Nepal was a burden rather than an advantage. New Delhi got into the bad habit of deciding what is good for Kathmandu rather than letting Nepal decide for itself. The dependent relationship, in turn, encouraged the Nepalese political classes to blame India for all their failures. Posturing against India became an obsession and the Nepalese elite was prepared to cut its nose to spite the Indian face. India now has an unprecedented opportunity to bury that dismal legacy and reconstruct the bilateral relationship with Nepal on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests. This involves a nor-

Koirala's visit to New Delhi. India had sensibly held back from rushing to announce that package and wait for the Nepalese government to define its own priorities. India should know from its own long experience of receiving international economic assistance that aid rarely wins either love or gratitude; it often breeds political suspicion and resentment.

India's talk of a 'Himalayan Marshall Plan' has already evoked negative commentary from the left in Nepal. One hopes India has carefully designed its aid package to address the real needs of the Nepalese people and is focussed on capacity

India's announcement of a large aid package is expected to be the highlight of Koirala's visit. India had sensibly held back from rushing to announce that package

malisation of the relations even as India and democratic Nepal move towards a deeper and more complex engagement in the coming years. The unfolding transformation of Nepal for the first time in decades has marginalised deeply held anti-India sentiment in that country. But mistakes on India's part now could easily re-ignite that sentiment.

Three major issues stand out for discussion with Prime Minister Koirala this week — economic assistance, facilitation of the transition to a new political order, and creating a new basis for a long-term political relationship between New Delhi and Kathmandu. India's announcement of a large aid package is expected to be the highlight of

building and infrastructure development, especially road building in the Himalayan nation. If "helping Nepal help itself" should be the guiding principle for Indian aid, New Delhi needs to do a lot more than dispensing money. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh must make a genuine commitment to Koirala on dismantling the huge number of non-tariff barriers that India has erected against Nepal. Trade facilitation on the Indo-Nepal border, zero duty access to much of Nepal's produce, and promotion of Indian and international investment across the border are more important for the long-term economic development of that country than any amount of aid New Delhi proclaims this week.

India will also have to be even more sensitive in defining its own role and that of the international community in the difficult transition towards the planned election of a constituent assembly in the next few months. Instead of letting its traditional opposition to international involvement in the sub-continent and reluctance to contribute to peacekeeping within the neighbourhood cloud its judgement, India must find a fine balance in responding to the new security challenge in Nepal. Working with the international community has helped India and the Nepalese people to prevent King Gyanendra from playing one great power against the other. Similarly letting the UN play a carefully defined role in the Nepalese peace process could be helpful. India must also undertake a substantive role in addressing the challenge of arms management in the transition period. India's own participation must also be designed to strengthen the capabilities of Nepal rather than replace them.

Finally, India must publicly signal during Koirala's visit that New Delhi is prepared to consider alternatives to the 1950 treaty that has guided bilateral relations all these decades. The 1950 treaty was never an end in itself for India. But an independent, strong, and economically vibrant Nepal will remain an enduring Indian interest. While Koirala may not raise the issue, it is in India's interest to publicly communicate to the Nepalese people at this moment that it has no desire to hang on to a treaty that many across the border see as hegemonic. Rather than wait for the treaty to become an issue once again in Nepal, India must offer Koirala the prospect of building future ties between the two nations on the basis of a new treaty that is equal and more representative of the times we are in.

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06 JUN 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

New regime focus of Koirala visit

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury

ITS ECONOMY shattered by a spell of political instability, Nepal is now looking at its neighbours for a massive inflow of aid.

And encouraged by the "smooth transition to civilian rule" in the Himalayan kingdom, with restoration of Parliament and "serious attempts" to bring Maoists into the mainstream, India has firmed up a comprehensive economic package for the beleaguered nation.

The package will be presented to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala when he comes on an official visit to New Delhi between June 6 and 9, his first trip abroad after assuming office on April 30. According to a statement from the ministry of external affairs, Koirala (84) will be accompanied by a delegation of ministers and business representatives.

During the visit, at the invitation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the two leaders are expected to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral issues, including what officials called the "challenge" of negotiations with Maoists.

The insurgents have to "show allegiance to parliamentary democracy" and eschew violence and threats of extortion before they can be accepted legitimately, officials here pointed out.

India, which has already pledged support to help revive Nepal's economy and aid the country's massive reconstruction efforts after the King was forced to hand over power to a seven-party alliance, will con-



REUTERS

A Maoist rebel in Kathmandu.

King in first public appearance

NEPAL'S KING Gyanendra attended a Hindu festival in Kathmandu on Friday, his first public appearance since being stripped of most of his powers by Parliament last month. Witnesses noted that the usual fanfare that had greeted the king's public appearances at the height of his powers was absent, although some 1,000 people turned up to see the monarch, who attended the festival for around 20 minutes.

AFP, Kathmandu

sult Koirala before making the package public.

Delhi's assistance will be closely monitored by the US and European Union too for, after all, they are Nepal's major donors and have been following Delhi's lead in reacting to the fast-changing situation in the land-locked country.

Nepal goes from mourning to celebration

ASHIS CHAKRABARTI

Kathmandu, June 2: This day five years ago, thousands of people were out on the same Kantai Path near the Narayanhity Palace.

They were sad and angry over the massacre at the palace the previous night.

They cried revenge at the then Prince Gyanendra, whom they suspected to be behind the murder of the family of King Birendra, his brother. They battled the police and the army around the palace and elsewhere in the city.

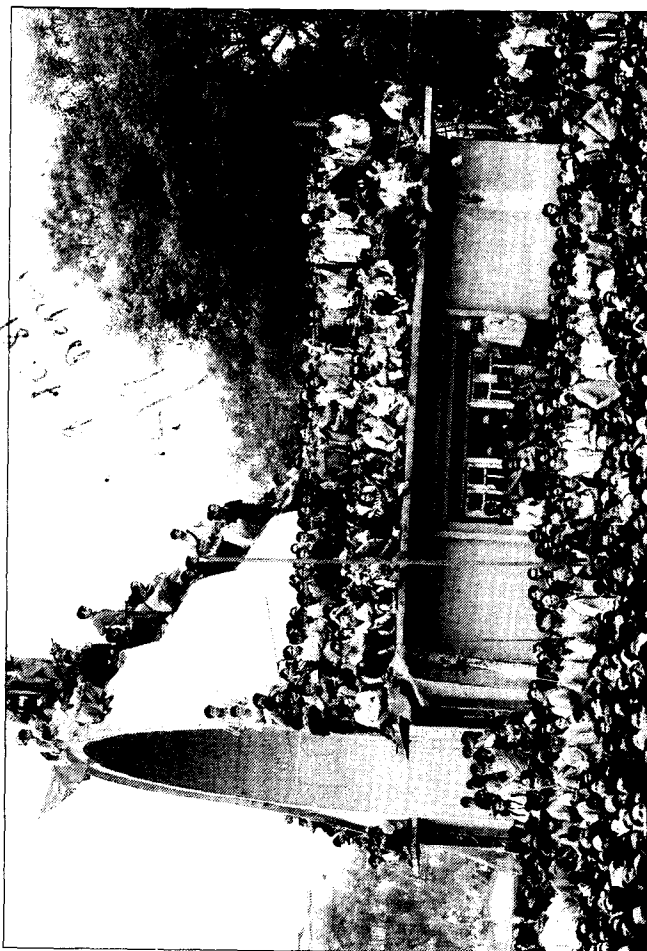
Today, several hundred thousand people were on Kantai Path again on their way to Tudikhel, Kathmandu's Brigade Parade Ground, where the Maoists held their first public rally in the city since the popular uprising against King Gyanendra in April.

They were in a festive, celebratory mood, singing and whistling on their way. At the meeting, there were scores of Maoist "journalists" in their white caps, several of them busy broadcasting the meeting's proceedings live to their own Radio Republic stations in 37 districts across the country.

The contrasts in the two June scenes could hardly be starker.

Today, small army units stood by around the lonely

5 YEARS AFTER PALACE MASSACRE, MAOISTS RULE



Maoist supporters at the rally in Kathmandu. (Right) A young supporter waves a flag during the rally. (AP)

palace. The change showed on their relaxed faces, body language and, most tellingly, on the emblems on their vehicles, on which the "royal" was blacked out from the army's name. It is now just Nepal Army, not the Royal Nepal Army it had been until a few days ago.

It is the same story for police outfits. The "royal" has

disappeared — or is disappearing — from the names of all offices, institutions and even public places. The Royal Chitwan National Park, a popular tourist resort, for instance, has the touch of majesty struck off its name. The King Mahendra Raj Marg, the 1,060-km national highway running through the entire Terai re-

gion in the south, is now the East-West Highway. If the dropping of "royal" from names is one symbol of the historic change, there was an even more dramatic one at the mammoth Maoist meeting. The people came in their hundreds from seven districts close to the Kathmandu valley.

They filled every bit of

people. About 17 years ago, it was taken over by the army — hence its name. Only the royals and the army could use it since then. Today, that history was unmade.

As the main meeting ground filled up, the people pushed against the fence separating the Sainik Manch from the public ground. Maoist leaders called upon the armymen not to stop the people from moving over to the ground of the Sainik Manch. No sooner had they said so than the people climbed the fence and poured into the ground.

"We've taken the Sainik Manch," the fiery Maoist students' union leader Lekhnath Neopani, told the cheering crowd. "We're powerful enough to capture the durbar also. The headquarters (meaning Maoist leader Prachanda) has only to give us the order."

The crowd cheered as lustily when "Pravakar", one of the four deputy commanders of the Maoists' armed wing, the People's Liberation Army, said: "We can also capture the palace peacefully."

The loudest cheers were, however, for Prachanda's father when he was introduced to the crowd. And, the cheers would simply not stop for the many cultural troupes from minority, indigenous groups that sang and danced between the speeches. Cultural groups

have been a vital instrument to the Maoists' overground and underground organizational network. But, it was not all song and dance.

Speakers, who included Krishna Bahadur Mahara, leader of the three-member Maoist team for peace talks with the new Girija Prasad Koirala government, pointed out the problems ahead.

The Maoists demand the Koirala government as well as the parliament to go. They want a national convention, chosen from political parties, civil society, ethnic groups and other sections of the people, to form an interim government, which will draft an interim constitution.

The arrangement will run the country until a constituent assembly drafts a new constitution and holds fresh elections in accordance with the provisions of the new constitution.

The mainstream parties do not agree on any of these Maoist demands, except that they all agree to the formation of a constituent assembly.

It is, therefore, too early to celebrate in Nepal, says Padma Ratna Tuladhar, a leading human rights activist who acted as a facilitator for the peace talks between the Maoists and the then government in 2001 and in 2003. "It's more an interregnum", he says.

Nepal Maoists set fresh conditions

Want dissolution of govt and return of army to barracks

AGENCIES

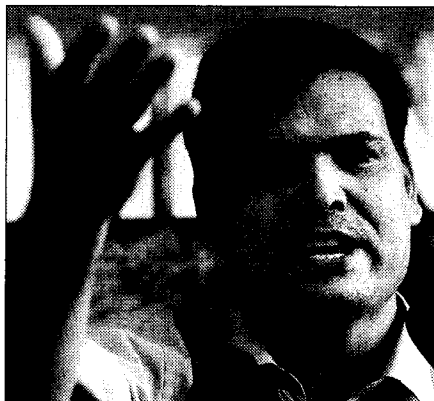
Kathmandu, June 1

MAOISTS IN Nepal on Thursday sought dissolution of the multi-party government and re-instated Parliament and asked the army to return to barracks as part of confidence-building measures to move the peace process forward.

They also insisted that the government should not make any delay in releasing all political prisoners and making public the whereabouts of the Maoist cadre who have been missing after being detained by security forces.

Addressing a Press conference, chief Maoist negotiator Krishna Bahadur Mahara asked the ruling seven-party alliance to dissolve the re-instated Parliament and government, abolish the present Constitution and convene a wider political conference to hold the Constituent Assembly elections, the major demands of the Maoists. He also asked Nepalese Army to return to barracks.

Mahara said the rebels were committed to the 25-point code of conduct they signed during the recent first round of talks with the government. He dismissed the allegations that the Maoists were extorting mon-



Krishna Bahadur Thapa: Tough stand

ey but admitted that they had been voluntarily collecting funds from people to feed their army and also raising taxes as they ran a parallel government.

He also did not rule out possibility of mediation in dialogue with the government and said they were also working to form a committee to monitor the ceasefire.

Mahara said they would discuss with the government during the next round of talks the type of mediation they would

need to move ahead the peace process. Mahara said both the seven-party alliance and Maoists were the forces of the "People's Movement".

He stressed the need to convene a political conference involving the seven parties, Maoists, the civil society and all other forces that took part in the people's movement to decide the mechanism for holding constituent assembly polls.

Mahara said that now it was time to strengthen unity among the pro-People's Movement forces and not to create crisis of confidence. He expressed concern over the slow pace of development in releasing political prisoners and other aspects of the agreement with the government.

At the press meet held ahead of the first public meeting of Maoists here after the restoration of democracy, he said that their tomorrow's major meeting would be totally peaceful and nobody would attend it in combat dresses or carrying weapons. He, however, ruled out the possibility of Maoist chief Prachanda appearing at the public meeting.

"We should foil all types of conspiracies that are designed to prevent us from going to the constituent assembly elections," he said.

02 JUN 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Peace and change

KRISHNA BAHADUR MAHARA, spokesman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and coordinator of the three-member Maoist team that last month began peace talks with the new government of Nepal, speaks to SUDESHNA SARKAR about the new phase in the People's War.

Last month, you held preliminary negotiations with the government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and agreed on a code of conduct. What is the agenda for the next round of talks?

The formation of a broad national assembly to replace Parliament... All the forces that had taken part in the April agitation against King Gyanendra - the seven political parties, us, civil society, professional organisations, rights bodies - should be represented in the assembly. That would truly fulfill the mandate of the protests. People want a republic, not a constitutional monarch, and the seven-party alliance has pledged to hold an election that will ask people to choose between the king and a republic. Then why did the parties follow the old Constitution of 1990 and agree on the reinstatement of Parliament? Since people want to scrap the old Constitution - which provides for a king - and have a new one under which monarchy will be abolished, reinstating the house was a regressive step and a grave mistake. We want the old Constitution, Parliament and government to be dissolved. In their place, there should be an interim Constitution, an interim Parliament, and an interim government. This government will start the process for holding a constituent assembly election so that there is a new Constitution. This is not as elaborate as it sounds. If we reach a consensus with the parties quickly, the whole thing can be done within six months.

As long as the king remains in Nepal and continues to exercise considerable influence, will the election be free and fair?

The king and the army have not changed. They have just retreated one step. That is why there is still the danger of the king taking over once again, of reasserting himself. One has to con-

sider the possibility that he could conspire anew. The question is, what can we do to prevent that? There is a new, strong unity among the forces that took part in the people's movement against the king. We are united over the political goal - to hold a constituent assembly election (that will ask people to choose between monarchy and a republic). There are differences over the procedure, technique and petty issues. The forces that do not want us to hold the election are trying to foment disunity over these problems. The parties should not fall into that trap. We must rise above these and heed the people's aspirations. If we can do that, we will be able to foil the conspiracy. To ensure that the constituent

neutralised so that they don't influence it. And this is the best possible way of doing it.

The earlier round of talks in August 2003 broke down because the army killed 19

Nepal doesn't need a single soldier... For Nepal to remain a sovereign country, its people have to be politically conscious...

19/8/03
579
2/6

people's desire.

If you look at the Doramba incident, it didn't weaken us; it weakened the army. The nation was pushed into a civil war again and the army had to retreat. They did not win... The army's movements are suspicious, even today. Movements are afoot to create a negative image of the mass rally we have called in Kathmandu on 2 June. Look at the spate of robberies in Kathmandu, the sectarian violence in Birgunj. So I can't say there is no possibility of a conspiracy. But today, the people's movement has reached a strong stage; people's consciousness has reached a very high level. This has to be institutionalised at the earliest. For that we have to hold the constituent assembly elec-

armies are merged and a new army has been created, we have to decide if this army will remain in the barracks or be employed in nation building. We don't favour keeping an army in the barracks thus proving a burden on the state exchequer.

The parties say they led the April agitation that forced the king to quit. Is that a correct assessment?

The seven parties had been agitating against the king for nearly one and a half year. Their protests ran into relay hunger strikes, not more than that. Some of their leaders would be arrested and the protests would end. Not a single party leader could go to the remote villages to mobilise people. So when the parties say it was their protest, it is self-aggrandisement. The main reason the protests were a success was our 10-year-old movement during which we have been raising people's consciousness level.

You mean your party, which launched an armed uprising in 1996, led the peaceful protests in April?

From the beginning, we had been advocating a peaceful struggle. Otherwise, why did we appear for talks? We had called a truce and we tried to awaken people through mass rallies. But the government wouldn't let us. So we tried to strike a balance between political action and military action. In the capital, we concentrated on a peaceful protest and in the outer districts - like Palpa and Makwanpur - we launched military offensives. Both actions are complementary. One wouldn't have been successful without the other.

You called a three-month cease-fire in April. What happens after it expires?

We too want peace; we want a cease-fire that will last. But people don't want peace alone; they want change as well. Without change, it would be a dead peace. That is why they supported us during the anti-king agitation. If they had wanted only peace, they wouldn't have stood behind us in April.

(The interviewer is The Statesman's Kathmandu based Correspondent.)



assembly election would be free and fair, we have also asked for national and international supervision.

You had raised the question of international supervision earlier too, suggesting that both the Nepal Army and your People's Liberation Army lay down arms under the supervision of the UN - or a similar credible agency - to create a fear-free atmosphere for the election. But this was rejected by royalists who said it was unthinkable that a sovereign country would have its army lay down arms under a foreign agency...

We are not talking of foreign political powers but of a neutral, credible, humanitarian agency. There are two armies in Nepal, ours and the state's, and during the election, both should be

people in Doramba village in central Nepal during a cease-fire. Are you confident the army will not try to wreck the talks this time?

We have misgivings about the army, whether it will remain under the government's control or not, whether it will obey the code of conduct agreed upon by both the government and us. If that happens, we have to again battle the forces responsible for breaking off the talks. That is why I can't say there is no possibility of the talks breaking down; there is such a possibility. In the past too, the army tried to force us into resuming arms. We are sincere, honest, serious; we want to find a way forward. But no one should think we came because we have weakened. We came because of the

tion as early as possible and build a new Nepal.

In a "new" Nepal, what will you do with two armies? The Nepal Army has nearly 1,00,000 soldiers and your People's Liberation Army claims to have an equal number. What will a small country like Nepal do with such a giant army?

Theoretically speaking, Nepal doesn't need a single soldier. If there is an external invasion by China, India or the USA, Nepal can't win with an army of 2,00,000! For Nepal to remain a sovereign country, its people have to be politically conscious; we have to create patriotic citizens. Once there is peace, internal security can be provided by the people's militia or by the Nepal police. Practically speaking, after both the

Royal wings to be clipped further

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 31: Less than a fortnight after he was tamed by parliament, Nepal's King Gyanendra is going to lose more legislative and ceremonial powers with a parliamentary committee drawing up guidelines for the reinstated house that seek to minimise the king's presence in government matters.

The king will no longer be the appointing authority of ambassadors and chiefs of constitutional bodies like the Chief Justice and Chief Election Commissioner.

Foreign diplomats will no longer present their credentials to him at the Narayanhity royal palace but instead meet the Prime Minister at his office. The royal seal will no longer be needed to enact a new law; instead the Speaker can proclaim a resolution law after it is passed by parliament. Nor will the king's assent be required to deploy the army.

Finally, in another blow to the chauvinistic nationalism advocated by the royalists, the national dress - the *daura suruwal* and cap - will no longer be obligatory at government func-

tions and events attended by the king.

The decisions are part of the 71-page guidelines drawn up by a committee comprising leaders of the seven party alliance to regulate parliamentary proceedings. They were tabled on Tuesday and are to be finalised by 4 June, the very day five years ago when Prince Gyanendra was crowned King.

The committee has also axed the tradition of a royal address to parliament before tabling the budget, authorising the Prime Minister to do the honours instead. Indeed, when the budget is presented next month, it is likely to give another glancing blow to the royal family as finance minister Dr Ram Sharan Mahat is reportedly pressing to reduce the palace's allowances to about NRS 200 million from the current NRS 750 million.

Meanwhile, Nepal's parliament struck a blow for gender equality as well, deciding unanimously Tuesday that in future, children would be able to get citizenship on the basis of their mother's identity and the government would have to reserve 33 per cent seats for women in all gov-

ernment bodies. The issue was raised by lawmaker Ms Vidya Bhandari of the Communist party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist, who crashlanded into power politics after the death of her husband Madan Bhandari, the charismatic general secretary of the party, but then came into her own and held her seat against opposition Goliaths like a former prime minister and former Speaker.

The current citizenship law that says a child would be given Nepali citizenship only if the father is a Nepali leaves in the lurch children born to rape victims, children abandoned by their fathers and children born to Nepali women married to non-Nepalis, especially Indians.

There are about two dozen laws that discriminate against women. Activists had an uphill task in getting some amended by the government, like the law that makes abortion legal under certain circumstances, which remained held up at the palace for a long time. Since last year, some discriminatory laws and traditions have been struck down by Supreme Court.

Maoists step up anti-India, US propaganda ahead of talks

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 31

AHEAD of their first-ever public meeting in Kathmandu due on Friday, the Maoists seem to have revived their anti-India stance. A pamphlet circulated by the special central command of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists blames India and the US of conspiring to prevent a true democracy getting established in Nepal.

"The imperialist US and the hegemonistic India are conspiring to prepare a master plan to retain ceremonial monarchy ... and stall advent of full-fledged democracy in the country," the



Maoist chief Prachanda

pamphlet says. Many thought that India's involvement in bringing the Maoists and the seven party alliance together on a 12-point understanding had softened the Maoists' attitude towards India, but the pamphlet proves otherwise.

Friday's rally, to be addressed by senior Maoist lead-

ers who have not been named yet, is likely to demand unconditional election to the Constituent Assembly. In all possibility, the rally would also be the formal launch of the pro-republic agenda of the party.

While Maoist cadres have painted walls in and around Kathmandu with pro-republic slogans, a sense of terror prevails as they have asked schools and factories to provide food and lodging to their cadres who will come to the rally from different parts of the country.

The security forces, especially the Nepal Army, appear demoralised with the Maoists' grand preparation and the government's indifference towards security arrangements

to prevent any outbreak of violence. Home Minister Krishna Sitaula's response in Parliament that deployment of army has not been ordered, was quite "irresponsible", a senior army official said.

Meanwhile, Maoist chief Prachanda has said that he may hold direct talks with PM Girija Prasad Koirala within a fortnight but wanted all senior rebel leaders to be freed from jails in India and Nepal before their parleys. The government has assured to take up the matter with India and also make public whereabouts of people who disappeared after detention by security forces, Prachanda said to the *Annapurna Post*. —With PTI

washingtonpost.com

Nepal Backs Ceremonial Monarchy

By John Lancaster
Washington Post Foreign Service
Friday, May 19, 2006; A17

NEW DELHI, India, May 18 -- Nepal's newly reinstated parliament gave overwhelming approval Thursday to a plan that would strip King Gyanendra of all but ceremonial powers, revoking his control of the army and palace budget and requiring the royal family to pay taxes.

Passed on a voice vote, the resolution was the most forceful action taken by lawmakers since Gyanendra agreed last month to restore parliament after violent protests had brought the Himalayan kingdom to the brink of anarchy. Nepal's multi-party democracy had been in suspended animation since February 2005, when the king assumed absolute powers he said were needed to crush a Maoist insurgency.

The measure passed Thursday does not have the force of law, and its provisions will have to be passed as separate legislation. Even then, questions would remain about how to implement the changes. Under Nepal's constitution, Gyanendra remains the head of state and would theoretically have to sign them into law.

Lawmakers asserted, however, that Thursday's declaration overrides the constitution and requires no endorsement from the king. "It reflects the aspirations of the people and respects the sacrifices of the people who were martyred during the movement," Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said in presenting the resolution to parliament. "Now no one can dare underestimate this. I urge people to remain alert and rise against anyone who tries to interfere in this and undermine this."

The resolution targets the Shah dynasty, which has ruled Nepal since 1769, its kings revered as incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu. Some of the changes it calls for are symbolic. For example, the formal designation His Majesty's Government of Nepal would become simply the Nepal government, and the country would be identified as a secular rather than a Hindu state.

Other changes would remove real authority. Control of the military and security services would be transferred to parliament. Lawmakers would effectively put the royal family on an allowance, limiting spending on the palace and other perks. The royal family would pay taxes, and parliament would have to approve the royal succession.

"What has been the semi-feudal character of the state would be transformed into a political system where the king is just a ceremonial" figure, said Yubraj Ghimire, editor of the newsmagazine Samay, in a telephone interview from Kathmandu. "The king is really scared, and parliament is saying, 'This is the mandate of the movement,' " he added.

Ghimire and other analysts said the plan was likely to trigger court challenges by the king or his allies because of its obvious conflict with the constitution. But Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of the

Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party, said the changes were legitimate because they were based on the "people's mandate," as expressed in last month's protests.

"The parliament will soon change its working procedures so that nothing has to be endorsed by the king," Poudel added in an interview. In moving so quickly to curtail the king's powers, lawmakers were responding to pressure from the mostly youthful protesters who took to the streets of the capital and other cities in huge numbers, sometimes clashing violently with security forces. The protests were orchestrated by opposition political parties in loose cooperation with Maoist rebels who have waged a 10-year fight to topple the monarchy.


The Maoists and the government have observed a cease-fire since shortly after Gyanendra capitulated to the protest movement. Both the Maoists and the political parties have agreed on the need for elections for a national assembly to write a new constitution, which could weaken or eliminate the monarchy.

In a statement, the Maoist leader, who goes by the name Prachanda, offered a qualified endorsement of Thursday's resolution. He criticized it for allowing even a ceremonial role for the monarchy -- the Maoists are seeking a republic -- and expressed concern over its "silence" with regard to peace talks that both sides have said they want.

Special correspondent Bikash Sangraula in Kathmandu contributed to this report.

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April 14, 2006

Young Nepalese Lead Their Nation's Push for Democracy

By SOMINI SENGUPTA

KATMANDU, Nepal, April 13 — The Nepalese New Year dawns on Friday, with Nepal's young lashing furiously at the past.

"We will not ask the king to leave the throne — we will go and take the throne and put it on display," Gagan Thapa, 29, the political symbol of young Nepal, told a crowd of thousands on the outskirts of this capital on Thursday. The vast majority, dressed in baseball caps and jeans and looking well below the age of 30, roared in approval.

A brassy antimonarchy call-and-response echoed through the warren of terraced lanes.

"We will burn the crown," Mr. Thapa shouted.

"Burn the crown, burn the crown," the crowd hollered back.

The irrepressible protests that have gripped Nepal in the last several days, demanding the end of palace rule and the reinstatement of Parliament, are a function of demography and its discontent.

Young Nepal has been at the forefront of this week's rambunctious, often violent pro-democracy protests, which have left four people dead. Whether Nepal descends into further tumult or sees the dawning of a new political age in the Nepalese calendar year of 2063 will depend on whether the protesters can be appeased.

With his country's crisis mounting by the day, King Gyanendra seemed to make the slightest of nods in that direction. In a brief statement read on state-owned television shortly before midnight, he called for general elections "with the active participation of all political parties committed to peace and democracy."

But the king said nothing about when elections would be held or, more important, whether he would concede to elections to review the Constitution, something the country's coalition of political parties and the Maoist rebels insist on.

Whether the gesture restores peace in the Himalayan kingdom will depend on the reaction on Friday from the uncompromising throngs of young people who today represent his most formidable foe.

Nearly 60 percent of Nepal's 23 million citizens are under 24. They came of age after democracy came to Nepal in April 1990, and they have tasted the fruits and failures of electoral politics. They have seen a Maoist rebellion put much of the countryside through the wringer.

In February 2005, they saw their king suspend Parliament and install prime ministers of his own choosing in a bid, as he said, to defeat a bruising Maoist insurgency. For 14 months, they have lived under the king's direct rule.

Last week, he banned protests here in the capital and for six days imposed a daytime curfew.

That order has not stopped young people from defiantly pouring out into the streets. They have been taking the lion's share of police beatings. On just one day this week, of the 59 people admitted to Katmandu's main teaching hospital for treatment of their injuries, only 13 were over the age of 30.

Consider the verdict of Shashi Sigdel, a 22-year-old medical student on the shift in attitudes toward the king.

"My grandfather used to think he is a god," Mr. Sigdel said. "My parents used to think he stands between God and the devil. Me, I think he's the devil. That's the generation gap."

On Thursday, the government restored cellphone service, suspended for nearly a week, and lifted the curfew in the capital. The ban on protests in Katmandu and several other cities continued — as did the protests.

The Royal Nepalese Army has been dispatched to some of the demonstrations. But so far, it has largely refrained from open confrontation with the demonstrators. Of the four people killed in the demonstrations, at least two died by army fire.

A protest by the Nepal Bar Association on Thursday morning ended with the police beating of dozens of demonstrators; nearly 50 landed in the hospital, including two whose heads had been grazed by rubber bullets.

In a statement on Thursday, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights hinted that the use of excessive force by police officers could jeopardize Nepal's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, a good source of income for the country.

"One would expect them to be respectful of United Nations standards in their conduct at home," Ian Martin, the High Commissioner's representative in Nepal, said in an interview Thursday night.

Pro-democracy demonstrations have been commonplace since the royal takeover of February 2005, but none have been as intense, sustained or violent as the ones unfolding over the last week. The Maoists have given their blessings to the protests, having signed a peace deal of sorts last fall with a coalition of Nepal's seven largest political parties.

Thousands of Nepalese, including lawyers, journalists and other professionals with no explicit links to political parties, have been arrested over the past week. The palace has accused Maoists of infiltrating the ranks of the protesters.

The young people who have been on the front lines of these protests are the children of parliamentary politics in Nepal. Democracy brought more than elections to this Himalayan kingdom. It ushered in new schools and colleges. Roads were built connecting the countryside to the capital. A feisty independent press was born.

Many of those who joined this week's demonstrations, if they had even any memory of the pro-democracy movement of 1990, had never joined a political protest before.

Ila Sharma, 39, remembered watching her neighbors light torches and march in the street in the spring of 1990. Last Saturday, she joined a protest march. The same day, she watched television videotape of the police beating protesters. She has not been able to stop protesting since.

Ms. Sharma said she had lost what little faith she once had in the king. "We are amply disillusioned," she said.

The young Nepalese are a thorn in not only the king's side, but also the sides of the politicians who gave the call for these protests and saw them spreading well beyond expectations over the course of the last week.

In interview after interview, protesters said they would not allow their politicians to strike any power-sharing deals with the palace.

"These young people are not going to spare us if we go against their aspirations," Mr. Thapa, who belongs to the Nepalese Congress Party, said after his speech Thursday afternoon. No sooner had he climbed down from his stoop, he was buttonholed by his fans.

"Our destination is a republic," said Rajesh Sapkota, 21, a college student. "You have to convey this message to the leaders. We want to be clear about democracy."

Mr. Thapa assured the protesters that their wishes would not be sidelined. "We thought years ago that a republic was unthinkable," he told them. "Now it's possible."

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April 20, 2006

Army Fires at Protesters as Nepal's Political Crisis Deepens

By SOMINI SENGUPTA

KATMANDU, Nepal, April 19 — The Royal Nepalese Army fired at pro-democracy protesters in an eastern town on Wednesday, as the death toll climbed to at least eight in two weeks of defiant demonstrations and the country appeared headed toward a dangerous brink.

The brink of what remained unclear.

From King Gyanendra, increasingly isolated at home and abroad, came no suggestion of whether there would be further crackdowns or concessions. A coalition of political parties, with the blessings of Maoist rebels, has called for the demonstrations, and the parties have said they will not budge until the king restores the ousted Parliament and gives up control of the government.

With the parties preparing for what they had hoped would be the biggest demonstrations so far on Thursday, the government announced a fresh 18-hour curfew on Wednesday night. Journalists, diplomats and local human rights monitors have not been issued permits to travel during the curfew.

Meanwhile, an Indian government delegation arrived Wednesday with a message to hasten a return to democracy. The Indian foreign secretary, Shyam Saran, accompanied by an Indian royal, Karan Singh, the son of the late maharaja of Kashmir, were scheduled to meet with the king on Thursday. "Our message is simply that we should try and get out of the present downward spiral," Mr. Singh said in an interview before setting off from New Delhi.

What King Gyanendra is prepared to do to ease the crisis remains a mystery. In a statement issued last week, he reiterated his call for dialogue with the political parties but did not address the protesters' demands for an end to royal control of the government, let alone respond to the calls on the street for an end to the monarchy.

Nevertheless, with violent protests roiling the country for 14 straight days, there was little disagreement that the king's own actions had narrowed his options, and that he would ultimately be compelled to concede more than he would have only a few weeks ago. Doctors, lawyers, bank workers and even bureaucrats working in the Home Ministry have joined the protests.

"He has left it too late," Keith Bloomfield, the British ambassador, said Wednesday afternoon. "The sort of concessions he might have gotten away with two weeks ago are not acceptable to the parties."

Gyanendra seized control of the government in February 2005, with a promise to finish a Maoist insurgency. He clamped down on political freedoms, consolidated his rule and refused to reciprocate the rebels' cease-fire, but ultimately brought no peace. Frustrated, the seven-party coalition struck a deal with the Maoists and called for rallies in April. What were intended to be four days of protests spread across the country. For two weeks, Nepalese violated curfews and bans on demonstrations and poured into the streets, with chants of "Burn the crown."

"The king is in serious difficulty," Mr. Bloomfield said. "He has got to make major concessions."

Indeed, whether the monarchy will survive in Nepal is anyone's guess.

The nub of the conflict between palace and politicians is what kind of power the king intends to hang on to. Even if he were to offer to hand over the government to a prime minister of his choosing, it is unlikely to quiet the agitation. After all, before assuming sole control of the government 14 months ago, the king dismissed and installed a series of prime ministers.

The political parties maintain that their bottom line is the restoration of Parliament. The palace has said nothing suggesting it would be willing to take such a step. Its only other option would be to tighten the screws further on political freedom. Parliament was suspended in May 2002, by an elected prime minister, who was in turn dismissed, appointed and dismissed again by the king.

"We are walking into a moment where the king will be forced to make a choice, forced to show his true colors," one European diplomat said, on condition of anonymity.

The Maoists, in their alliance with the political parties, have promised to admit international cease-fire monitors and to play within the rules of parliamentary democracy.

The latest violence came in the provincial town of Chandragadhi, roughly 300 miles southeast of here, when security forces opened fire on a group of protesters numbering in the tens of thousands and approaching a local government office. The Royal Nepalese Army confirmed that two people had been killed. The Defense Ministry, in a statement, said someone in the mob had fired at the security forces, injuring two police officers and prompting soldiers to open fire.

A rights monitoring group called Informal Sector Service Center, or Insec, reported 4 dead and more than 100 wounded. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights could not confirm the killings. In a statement, Kieran Dwyer, spokesman for the United Nations human rights office, said his office was "deeply concerned at these latest reports of grossly excessive use of force by security forces against demonstrators."

It was the worst violence since protests began two weeks ago, with demonstrators lobbing stones at the police, burning tires on the streets and demanding the return of parliamentary rule. The police have commonly

responded by baton-whipping the demonstrators, often in the head, firing tear gas and rubber-coated bullets and arresting thousands.

On a number of occasions, the army has said it was compelled to take aim at the crowd, using live ammunition. The United Nations human rights monitors earlier this week confirmed that 10 soldiers in plain clothes, including at least one armed with a grenade, were present in a demonstration last week in western Banke district.

Among foreign diplomats, discussions have been under way to consider penalties against the royal government. These could include travel restrictions, a freeze on assets abroad, and in what would certainly pinch this country the hardest, a bar on Nepalese soldiers and police officers from partaking in lucrative United Nations peacekeeping assignments. Earlier this week, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists called for a travel ban and a freeze on foreign assets of top government officials and military commanders.

The International Crisis Group on Wednesday echoed the call for penalties, urged continued pressure on the Maoists to "move towards peace" and pushed for the creation of an international cease-fire monitoring mission to usher in a peace effort.

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5 royalist ministers arrested in Nepal

SNS & PTI

KATHMANDU, May 12: Cracking down on those behind excesses against the pro-democracy movement, the Nepal government today arrested five ministers of King Gyanendra's regime while a probe panel recommended suspension of the army chief and three other top security officials.

The action came hours after Maoists announced that their leader Prachanda would personally lead talks with the new government to end the decade-old insurgency in the Himalayan Kingdom. Former ministers Mr Kamal Thapa (Home), Mr Rameshnath Pandey (Foreign), Mr Shrish Shumsher Rana (Communication), Mr Tanka Dhakal (Local Development) and Mr Nikshya Shumsher Rana were arrested following a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Mr GP Koirala, a source in the cab-

inet said. They were arrested under the Public Security Act and detained for 90 days at Nepal Police Training Centre at Maharajgunj and Praharai Paharagan, the source said.

The new government also suspended the three chiefs of national security but spared the powerful head of the army. Mr Shyam Bhakta Thapa, chief of Nepal Police, Mr Shahbir Thapa, Armed Police Force chief and Mr Deviram Mishra, head of National Investigation Department, were suspended.

Meanwhile, The United Nations envoy to Nepal, Mr Tamrat Samuel said that the United Nations was ready to give all types of assistance to the Himalayan Kingdom, including overseeing the decommissioning of arms of the Maoists. Speaking to the The Statesman, Mr Samuel said that there has been no formal request yet from the Nepali government for UN help for disarming the Maoists.

THE STATESMAN

19 3 MAY 1990

Nepal annuls laws

JHEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 9: The Girija Prasad Koirala government today annulled all ordinances, including the controversial media law, implemented by King Gyanendra's regime and sacked the son of the former foreign minister from a government think tank.

According to sources, a cabinet meeting held at Prime Minister G.P. Koirala's residence this evening decided to annul all 39 laws issued by Gyanendra during his stint as absolute monarch. "The cabinet concluded that all these ordinances were intended to consolidate the king's illegal reign as an absolute monarch," the sources said.

Among the controversial statutes which have been repealed are the media ordinance, code of conduct for NGOs and the local administration law.

The cabinet also decided to oust Nischalnath Pandey as the executive director of the Institute of Foreign Affairs.



Nepal Prime Minister G.P. Koirala (right) with the special adviser to the UN under-secretary general for political affairs Samuel Tamrat in Kathmandu on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Nischalnath, who is the son of former foreign minister Rameshnath Pandey, was the head of the institute for three and a half years. The institute is funded by the foreign ministry.

Soon after the cabinet meeting, top leaders of the seven-party alliance, including Koirala, CPN(UML) leader Madhav Nepal and Nepali Congress Democratic chief Sher Bahadur Deuba, held talks on cabinet expansion

which will take place later this week.

13 children killed

At least 13 children were killed in Nepal today when a bus carrying about 25 students plunged into an irrigation canal, police said.

The accident occurred in Sunsari, about 500 km east of Kathmandu. "We have recovered 13 bodies so far," a police officer said from Inaruwa, a town near the crash site.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 MAY 2005

Parliament nod for election to Constituent Assembly

Motion approved unanimously; decision taken at end of four-hour debate

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FACE TO FACE: King Gyanendra of Nepal (right) administers the oath of office to Prime Minister-designate and leader of the Nepali Congress Girija Prasad Koirala at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace in Kathmandu on Sunday.

— PHOTO: REUTERS

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Parliament on Sunday unanimously approved a proposal by new Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to hold elections for a special Assembly to draw up a new constitution that will decide the future of the monarchy.

The 205-member chamber took the decision at the end of a four-hour debate on the proposal, days after King Gyanendra returned power to political parties, but it did not set a date for the vote.

An election schedule is expected to be drawn up only after Mr. Koirala's Government has

held talks with Maoist insurgents and won their backing for the plan.

"We have fulfilled the demands of the people," said Ram Sharan Mahat, joint-secretary of the Nepali Congress party. Elections to a constituent assembly were a key demand of the Maoists who have fought a decade-long insurgency in Nepal that has left at least 12,500 people dead. "Now the government will announce a ceasefire and form a team to negotiate with the Maoist rebels," Mr. Mahat said.

The Maoists joined a loose al-

liance with seven Opposition political parties last year to take on King Gyanendra after he seized absolute control of the country in February 2005. Gyanendra had accused the government of corruption and of failing to quell the Maoist insurgency.

Last week, Gyanendra buckled under the nationwide protests and agreed to reinstate parliament dissolved in 2002.

Legislators, swept back into office by "people power", vowed to call elections to reframe the 1990 constitution to limit Gyanendra's powers to prevent a future power grab.

The Maoists announced a three-month ceasefire on Thursday to "motivate" political leaders to call elections to the assembly.

The current constitution gives the king powers to dismiss the government and take control of the 90,000-strong military.

The parliamentary motion came as Mr. Koirala urged the Maoists to sit down for peace talks.

He opened the session with a brief speech, calling on the communist insurgents to join the country's mainstream. — Reuters, AFP, AP

THE HINDU

01 MAY 2006

New Nepal PM talks peace

GP Koirala Assumes Office, Invites Maoists For A Dialogue

Kathmandu: Nepal's new Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Sunday invited Maoist rebels to talks to try to bring peace to the Himalayan nation, days after King Gyanendra bowed to pro-democracy protests and returned power to political parties.

Koirala's comments to parliament came as he initiated a debate over holding elections for an assembly to draw up a new constitution to decide the future of the monarchy.

"I urge the Maoists, who have announced a three-month ceasefire, to stop violence now and come for talks immediately," said Koirala, who was sworn in as prime minister by the king earlier in the day.

"The establishment of peace and democracy is the national aspiration," the 84-year-old veteran politician said as lawmakers thumped their desks in approval.

It was the first public speech by the ailing leader since he was named as prime minister last week by an al-



TRIUMPH OF PEOPLE'S POWER. King Gyanendra administers oath of office to Prime Minister GP Koirala in Kathmandu on Sunday

liance of seven political parties opposed to the king's absolute rule.

Nepal, one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, was in chaos and its aid and tourism dependent economy was in tatters, Koirala told the 205-member house. He urged the seven political parties to unite to address the country's problems as it goes through a

transition.

"The Nepalese people have achieved new fame in their history through their popular protests," Koirala said referring to a campaign against the king's 14-month rule which culminated this month in mass protests and street battles with troops across the mountainous country.

As Koirala spoke inside par-

liament, about 150 protesters gathered outside its gates shouting, "Hang the murderers", "Hang the killers", "Long live democracy."

Political parties are under popular pressure to abolish the monarchy and turn Nepal into a republic. This is also a key demand of Maoist rebels to end a decade-old insurgency in which more than 13,000 people have been killed.

Sunday's parliament session began hours after the king, humbled by the protests and facing possible moves to abolish the monarchy, administered Koirala the oath of office at the Narayanhity royal palace.

Koirala, who is suffering from bronchitis, was due to be sworn in on Friday but he was too ill to attend the ceremony, causing it to be put off. On Sunday, Koirala was accompanied by his doctor to the palace ceremony.

Last week, the king appointed Koirala as prime minister on the recommendation of the seven parties. AGENCIES

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2006 ✓

Showing who's the boss

It has been barely a week since Prime Minister Koirala took over the reins in Nepal but the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) government he heads has quickly understood a key principle of political survival: the amount of power it wields is a function of its own assertiveness. The extraordinary manner in which millions of ordinary citizens took to the streets demanding not just the restoration of democracy but the creation of a new constitutional order provides a legitimacy to Mr. Koirala and his colleagues that is more authentic than anything envisaged by the 1990 Constitution. Acting in this spirit, the new government has announced a ceasefire, removed the unhelpful and politically contentious "terrorist" tag from the Maoists, and declared its intention of holding elections to a constituent assembly. It has annulled the decrees issued by the King during his absolute and unconstitutional rule and recalled a number of ambassadors tainted by their energetic espousal of the palace line. A commission of inquiry has been set up — under the chairmanship of a respected former judge of the Nepal Supreme Court — to probe the excesses committed by the security forces against protesters. Given the depth of public sentiment, it is unlikely that the Rayamajhi Commission will meet the same fate as the earlier Malik Commission whose findings were simply ignored. Those guilty cannot expect to escape the law's penalties.

As the SPA government moves forward to implement the roadmap to peace contained in the 12-point agreement with the Maoists, it could find the Royal Nepal Army a harder nut to crack than the other branches of the state. At the same time, the task of ensuring that the armed forces report to parliament and not to the palace is one the parties can ignore only at their peril. The effectiveness of this control will manifest itself, at least in the first instance, in the extent to which the army honours the government-declared ceasefire with the Maoists. In 2003, the RNA acted unilaterally to sabotage peace talks with the insurgents by mounting an attack at Doramba. This experience must not be repeated. There are other issues that call for quick resolution, starting with the release of Maoist leaders held in Nepalese and Indian jails and the adoption of a code of conduct that armed Maoist cadre and RNA soldiers must abide by during this interim period. On the political side, the SPA and Maoist leadership must begin a focussed discussion on two tricky issues: fresh delimitation of constituencies to ensure a truly representative constituent assembly, and the kind of international presence required to oversee the confinement of all combatants to barracks during polling. Both Mr. Koirala and the Maoist leaders know that elections need to be held on a priority basis, preferably within six months but, in any event, no later than a year from now. They must press ahead while King Gyanendra is still on the back foot.

09 MAY 2006

UN envoy meets Koirala after mediation offer

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KATHMANDU, MAY 9

A SENIOR United Nations official met with Nepal's prime minister on Tuesday, a day after offering UN mediation as Nepal tries to bring communist rebels into mainstream politics and change from a royal autocracy to a democracy.

Tamrat Samuel of the UN Department for Political Affairs is spending a week in Nepal, meeting with political leaders and aid groups to assess the country's needs after political parties took over power last month.

The power change followed weeks of nationwide anti-monarchy and pro-democracy demonstrations that

forced King Gyanendra to give up authoritarian rule and return to his ceremonial position. Gyanendra seized direct control over the government on February 1, 2005, saying it was necessary to combat corruption and quell the country's long-running communist rebellion.

Samuel met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at his residence Tuesday, said Matthew Kahane, the UN chief in Nepal. He gave no details of the meeting. Nepal faces numerous obstacles as it tries to cobble together a democracy after a long period of intense political unrest. Its dire poverty is regarded as a catalyst of the Maoist guerrilla insurgency that began in 1996 and left more than 13,000 dead.

INDIAN EXPRESS

10 MAY 2006

Nepal to probe excesses during Gyanendra's rule

Hi & Nepal
SI - 11
11/5



The five-member commission will recommend and advise on action to be taken against those responsible for abuse of power

Kathmandu: A commission set up by Nepal's new government to investigate abuses of power during King Gyanendra's absolute rule began work Wednesday and is expected to report in July, a panel member said.

Gyanendra was forced to end his absolute rule and reinstate parliament in the Himalayan nation late last month, after weeks of mass protests in which 19 protesters died and hundreds were injured. "The commission which was formed on Friday by the new cabinet has been mandated to submit its report within two months," lawyer and panel member Ram Kumar Shrestha said.

Human rights groups in Nepal and internationally have accused the army, police and Maoist rebels of serious abuses including abductions, killings and extortion.

The commission however is not slated to review rights abuses by the rebels, but only by the security services during the 14

months of Gyanendra's direct rule. Opposition parties in concert with the Maoists claimed a "people's victory" over the monarch. The new government and rebels have both declared ceasefires and outlined plans to form a constituent assembly, a body to amend the constitution and clip the powers of the King.

"The commission has the right to issue warrants, interrogate and recommend to the government the action that should be taken against the perpetrators, if found guilty," said Shrestha.

Under the terms of reference, the five-member commission will "recommend and advise on action to be taken against those responsible for abuse of power, state funding and human rights violations and cases of loss of life and property by the royal government."

Gyanendra sacked the government on February 1, 2005, and took direct control until April 24, 2006. AFP

Cancelling King's appointees adds problems for govt

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 8

THE government's decision on Sunday to annul over a hundred political appointments made during the royal regime, including that of 12 ambassadors, has created a vacuum affecting the normal functioning of the government.

A source in the parliament secretariat said that the Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Surya Kiran Gurung refused to attend his office on Monday as his promotion and appointment to the current post took place during the "royal regime."

In fact, the government decision is being seen by some as too sweeping and difficult to implement. "Even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

was appointed by the King during the regime, although it was clearly done according to well defined norms and rules of succession," a Supreme Court judge said on condition of anonymity.

Embarrassed by the fallout, the government is likely to make a case by case review of the earlier appointments within the framework of its decision that those who are considered close with the King's erstwhile regime should not be retained in their current posts.

The government and the revived parliament have been iterating time and again that allowing any one appointed by the royal regime to continue in his post would go against the mandate and spirit of the people's movement.

INDIAN EXPRESS

09 MAY 2006

Danger of counter-revolution

TWENTY-TWENTY

BHARAT BHUSHAN

His
Majesty
Nepal

The victory of the Nepalese people has been so spectacular that the euphoria associated with it refuses to die down. However, a government, even if interim and *ad hoc*, cannot function on adrenaline alone.

The primary task of the interim government would be to manage transition to a constituent assembly peacefully. The roadmap is clear: the interim government creates conditions for talks with the Maoists, the Maoists then join the government, while their arms and that of the Royal Nepal Army are managed — perhaps by a neutral third party — new constituencies are decided for the constituent assembly and elections to the constituent assembly are held.

The objective is clear but the modalities of achieving it are not. The emerging political reality of Nepal cannot make one sanguine about the future of multi-party democracy. There is a lot of enthusiasm and anger in the streets but no one is visualizing the possibility of a counter-revolution should things go awry.

The political situation is fluid. If allowed to drift, it may pave the way for a counter-revolution or a situation where the main arbiters of Nepal's fate are once again the two forces with guns — monarchy backed by the Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists.

The people of Nepal may then be left high and dry once again. They did not fight against King Gyanendra's executive monarchy alone. By their unequivocal rejection of violence and search for permanent peace, they were also acting to check the Maoists.

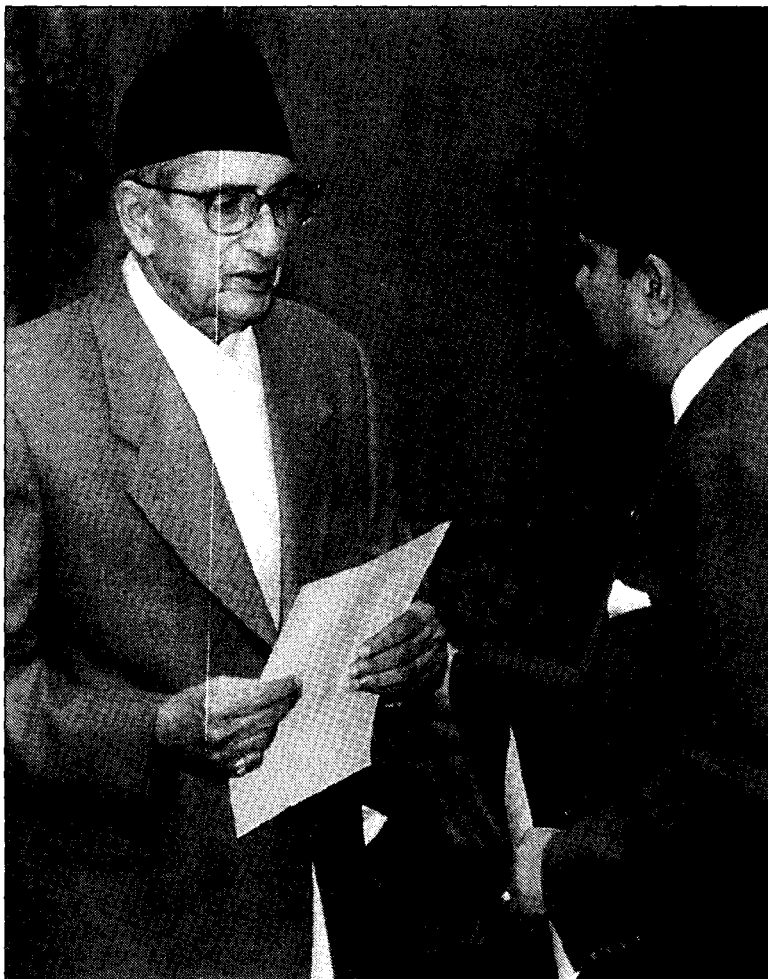
If they were vehemently against executive monarchy, they were not fighting for a communist Republic either. This mediating force of democratic politics — the people of Nepal — may stand in danger of getting marginalized. As it is, the new government seems to have no clear strategic vision. The political scene is hazy and full of confusion about what should be done and how.

In Girija Prasad Koirala, a weak prime minister is suddenly in charge. He is not only very old and ill but prefers backroom manipulations to transparent and democratic decision-making.

Low cunning among politicians cannot be a substitute for the practice of democracy — especially when the cleverest among them has one leg in the grave. Neither the seven-party alliance nor a cabinet full of inexperienced political leaders, has made any provision to deal with this glaring disadvantage. Neither Koirala nor the half-formed government he leads gives the impression of having a grip on state power.

The sudden prospect of power has increased the fissures in the seven-party alliance. Such is the scramble for berths and portfolios in the cabinet that not even a workable council of ministers has been put in place.

The house of representatives, which has been reconstituted under peoples' pressure, is confused about



With hands tied

what it should do, should not do or can do. Is its will truly reflective of the will of the people? Should all actions of this parliament be taken as if they were the result of a referendum? Not even the members of parliament are sure of an answer.

In short, Nepal is faced with a situation in which the people and their representatives are not as well organized as the recently disadvantaged feudal elite they have tried to overthrow or those waiting in the wings for power, the Maoists.

The 230-years of power enjoyed by the Shah dynasty is unlikely to evaporate overnight. And certainly not with a parliament adopting a resolution that His Majesty's government will now be called the government of Nepal. It is useful to remind oneself that this is a divided parliament for royalist parties are still a part of it.

There may not be an immediate prospect of a counter-revolution from

the Right. However, there is a possibility that in a few months, once the dust settles, the marginalized old elite, the top brass of the army and royalist ex-army personnel might come together and make a play for power.

On the other hand, the young, the ultra-left in the seven-party alliance and the Maoists are impatient. They want the reconvened parliament to take some quick decisions and dissolve itself. At this rate, a situation may soon emerge where the interim government in Nepal has no legitimacy in law — there may be no constitution in place and no parliament either.

There would only be an interim government. Whether such a non-elected government can coast along citing the "peoples' will" alone is doubtful. The reactionary forces would take advantage of a situation of legal and political confusion if it were to arise.

The centrist liberals who are in

the interim government are under pressure as they try and manage "continuity with change". But they are also confused about what should continue and what should change.

Only the Maoists appear to have clarity of vision. They are taking the initiatives and the interim government only responds to them. They are proactive in their policies. They took the initiative to announce a ceasefire first and are now demanding the ground rules that would govern it. They know what their agenda for talks with the interim government is. Leave alone identifying a team to negotiate with the Maoists, Koirala's government has not even begun discussions within the seven-party alliance about the parameters of the peace talks.

The dilemma of the interim government is that if the process of transition is too fast, it can falter and pave the way for counter-revolutionary forces. If it goes too slow, the peoples' aspirations will take a knock. What a measured pace of transition under these circumstances should be is unclear.

To manage the transition to a constituent assembly, Nepal either needs an interim constitution or it needs a functioning house of representatives. A situation of no constitution and no parliament, as the ultra-left wants, could be a recipe for disaster.

When there is no parliament and no constitution, the forces with guns, which recognize no law, will try to dominate the political arena. The gun-wielding forces of the left, or those who are being removed from power, could easily overtake the civilian government, with no guns. The irony is that it is the defenceless, weaponless people who have won Nepal's peaceful revolution.

There are some in the seven-party alliance who want the 1990 constitution to be converted into an interim constitution after modifying it to allow a smooth transition. Among other issues, the modifications could include the control over the Royal Nepal Army being given solely to the executive.

There are others, however, who want the reconvened parliament to adopt an interim constitution with no reference to the old one. They then want parliament to dissolve itself. The actions of the interim government, they claim, would then be legitimized by the interim constitution. However, questions remain about what legitimizes such an interim constitution in the first place.

Yet another option is to not bother with an interim constitution at all. A fully authorized parliament can take all the decisions necessary during the transitional phase. This would, however, mean continuing with the reconvened house of representatives and not pressing for its immediate dissolution. Whichever way one looks at it, the transition in Nepal seems unlikely to be smooth.

‘ In Girija Prasad Koirala, a weak prime minister is suddenly in charge. He is not only very old and ill but prefers backroom manipulations to transparent and democratic decision-making ’

Nepal recalls King's envoys to 12 countries

AP & PTI

KATHMANDU, May 7: Political appointments made during King Gyanendra's autocratic rule have been invalidated and 12 ambassadors to Nepal's key allies have been withdrawn, a top official said today.

The decision was made by the new Cabinet that was installed last week after the King yielded power on 24 April and restored democracy in the face of mass protests.

Home minister Mr Krishna Sitaula announced that the ambassadors to the United States, India, Japan, Britain, France and other countries were being recalled. The government has said it will dismantle legislation, appointments, decrees and other actions taken after the King grabbed power in February 2005.

Parliament also has committed to elections for a constituent assembly that

will rewrite the Constitution. That was a key demand of Maoist rebels. A news report today quoted the rebel leader, Prachanda, as saying an interim constitution should be enacted immediately, even before the special assembly is elected.

"There should be an interim constitution and an interim government," Prachanda was quoted as saying by a Nepal magazine.

The parties in the government and the rebels both agree there should be elections for a constituent assembly that would rewrite the constitution, but appear to have differences in how to do it.

The rebels want an interim constitution immediately, but the alliance is happy to just make minor changes in the existing charter until a new one is written by the constituent assembly.

"We have not made any official decision on the

issue but we are in agreement that it would be fine just to remove some clauses from the existing constitution," said Mr Gopal Man Singh, minister for physical planning and works.

Two protestors, who were seriously injured during the pro-democracy agitation, died today. With this, the number of people who lost their lives during the 19-day-long protests reached 21, including an Indian national.

Chandra Baylakoti (40), who was injured in police action on 22 April, died in a hospital, Nepali Congress sources said.

Fortytwo-year-old Anil Lama, injured during a protest at Chabahil died in another hospital in Kathmandu.

The government has decided to provide compensation of Rs 1 million to the families of those who died during the agitation.

THE STATESMAN

08 MAY 2006

Nepal recalls 12 Ambassadors

Pro-democracy movement toll 21

Ameet Dhakal
KATHMANDU: The Nepal Government on Sunday recalled 12 Ambassadors, including the envoy to India, and dismissed all political appointees to various state organs and public enterprises made after October 4, 2002, following the sacking of the elected Prime Minister by the King.

Royal Nepalese Ambassadors to New Delhi, Karna Dhoj Adhikari, and to Beijing, Narendra Raj Pandey, are among the 12 Ambassadors who will be leaving soon for Kathmandu. The Ambassadors to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Pakistan, Russia and Myanmar are also among the envoys who will be returning home. Among the recalled envoys, three are former army generals. Most of these Ambassadors were appointed after King Gyanendra's royal coup on February 1, 2005.

Dozens of top executives from various public enterprises and state bodies, who were appointed after October 4, 2002, will also have to leave their job. But the exact number is not available yet.

The move is seen as the new Government's first attempt to assert itself to consolidate power. The Government of Seven Party Alliance, led by veteran politician Girija Prasad Koirala, came to power two weeks ago after the King bowed down be-

fore a popular pro-democracy movement that brought million of people to the street nationwide. The Government is soon expected to turn the heat on the security forces, which is widely accused of unleashing terror on peaceful protesters during the people's movement.

Two more die

Meanwhile, two more protesters, injured during the movement, died on Sunday at city hospitals, taking the pro-democracy movement's toll to 21.

Anil Lama and Chandra Bayalkoti, who were injured during police actions in Kathmandu, died at the Nepal Medical College and the Nepal Medical Hospital.

Lama, 42, who was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit, was declared dead late in the evening on Saturday, according to the hospital sources. Likewise, 35-year-old Bayalkoti, who was hit by a teargas canister in the chest, died at midnight on Saturday.

Lama was a Nepali Congress activist, while Bayalkoti was affiliated to the CPN-UML, according to the parties.

Following the deaths, the Cabinet meeting on Sunday decided to pay special attention to the treatment of the injured during the movement. Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula said the Government would even take the injured abroad for treatment, if need be.

Koirala govt to release Maoists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU | MAY 6

IN an effort to forge lasting peace in Nepal, the Girija Prasad Koirala government has initiated the process of releasing jailed Maoists after the rebels agreed to hold talks to end the decade-old insurgency in the Himalayan Kingdom.

The government has started collecting information about the jailed Maoist cadre for their release, Home Minister Krishna Sitoula told Parliament on Friday. As per the preliminary estimates, there are about 700 Maoists behind bars. They could be released through different legal procedures on the basis of their offences, a Home Ministry official said.

Sitoula said the government was collecting information on what charges the Maoist leaders and cadre were arrested, according to

the state-run newspaper *The Rising Nepal*.

It is the job of the government lawyers to withdraw the charges against them, he said.

It might take some time to release the Maoists after complete information regarding their conditions of arrest is acquired, said Home Secretary Bal Krishna Prasain.

Maoist Chief Prachanda on Thursday said that he was ready for the peace talks after the government declared a ceasefire and removed the "terrorist" tag from the rebels.

Meanwhile, Maoist Central Committee member Matrika Yadav has submitted a memorandum to Koirala to immediately release the detained rebels, scrap the ordinance on the control of terrorist and disruptive activities and bring all war crimes to the book, the newspaper said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

07 MAY 2006

THE HINDU
MAGAZINE

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Trends
Taking IT to China

2



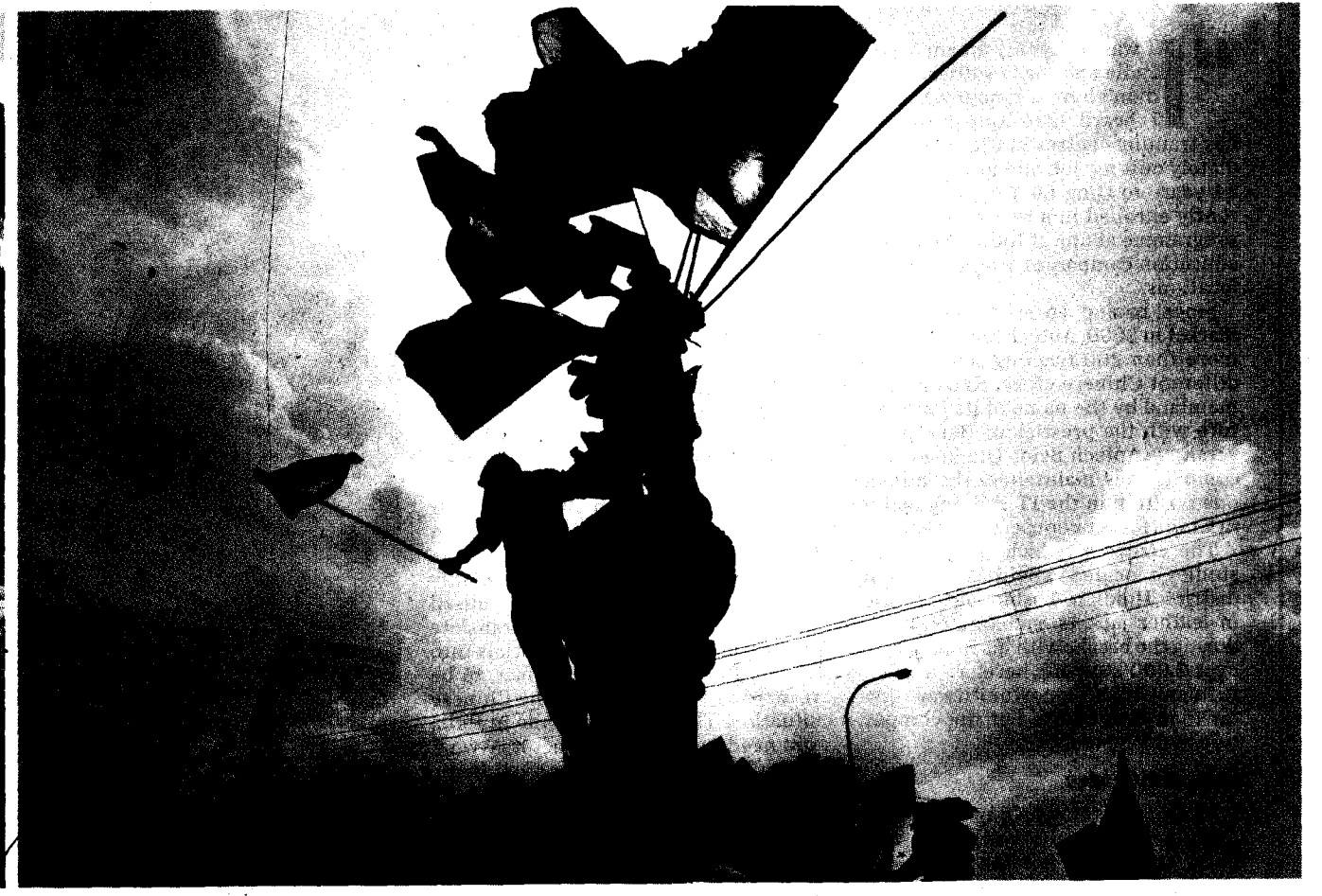
Lensview
Images of
blighted lives

5



Time Out
The misty mountains
of Ella

7



PEOPLE POWER: Celebrations on the streets after the King relinquished power. PHOTOS: AP

First glimpse of a new dawn in Nepal

The oldest nation-state in South Asia will soon have the subcontinent's newest constitution. Whether peace and prosperity follow depends on how inclusive it is.

SIDDHARTH VARADARAJAN

EIGHTEEN months is a long time in politics but even by the legendary elasticity of South Asian politicians, the transformation Nepal's political leaders have undergone is nothing short of miraculous. On a visit to Kathmandu in September 2004, I asked Sher Bahadur Deuba, who was Prime Minister at the time, what he thought of the idea of a constituent assembly.

The Maoist leader, Prachanda, had just asked a series of six questions to Deuba, one of which was whether his government was really committed "to making the people sovereign through an election to the constituent assembly". Prachanda's question is ploy, a tactic, Deuba told me, adding that he could not agree to any proposal which might compromise the country's system of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy.

"The monarchy is widely respected... we need constitutional monarchy for the unity of the country," Deuba also ruled out a ceasefire with the Maoist rebels and brushed aside the need to remove the terrorist tag from the party and its front organisations so that they could come forward for dialogue.

That was then and now is now. Barely four months after that interview, Deuba's "widely respected" monarch sacked him and seized control of the country himself. Addressing a mass rally in Kathmandu's Khula Manch on April 27, the former Prime Minister, who heads his own faction of the Nepali Congress, finally came out strongly in favour of a constituent assembly. He confessed that King Gya-

endra had deceived him many times before. "But this time I will not be deceived ... That is why I can't compromise on the issue of holding elections to a constituent assembly to make people sovereign."

National consensus

What changed? In fairness to Deuba, he did tell me in 2004, somewhat tautologically, that the idea of a constituent assembly in Nepal could only arise if there was a "national consensus". So what happened in the intervening year and a half since that interview to produce so strong a national consensus on constitutional change that on its second day of business, the restored House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution calling for elections to a constituent assembly?

The easy answer is people power — millions of feet worth of it — but the underlying causes need to be disaggregated as well. The first was King Gyanendra's power grab, which made it clear he wanted to turn the clock back to the *panchayat* era when the palace was completely unconstrained in what it could do. In many ways, the royal coup of February 1, 2005, did more to foster a longing for constitutional change in Nepal than 10 years of "peoples' war" waged by the Maoists. Regardless of its intrinsic merits, many Nepalese also saw in the creation of a constituent assembly the possibility that the Maoists would end their insurgency and enter competitive politics.

The combination of republican sentiment and the yearning for peace proved

irresistible for the parties, who found themselves pushed by their own cadres and supporters towards endorsing the Maoist demand for a constituent assembly. Meanwhile, in the Maoist camp, two years of ideo-political debate had led to the emergence, by 2005, of a new line in which the party's participation in "competitive politics" was seen as the best way of ushering in a democratic revolution.

These two political streams came together last November in the form of the 12-point understanding reached between the parties and the Maoists. The rest, as they say, is history, though the real historical transformation the constituent assembly will bring is still many months, if not years away.

Questions ahead

When the assembly meets, the easiest question to resolve will be what happens to the king.

The choices are discrete — (1) monarchy, the way it is now with the power to dismiss parliament and control the army; (2) constitutional monarchy, where the king and army are subservient to parliament; and (3) republic, where the monarchy is abolished totally. Selecting one of these options will depend largely on the configuration of the assembly.

However, members of the prospective assembly will find it far more difficult to resolve the kind of political and social questions over which a partially elected body like the Indian constituent assembly agonised for nearly four years.

What kind of political system should

Nepal have? Should it be a federal or centralised state? How to ensure adequate representation for all of the country's ethno-linguistic groups and castes? Should there be affirmative action in favour of the most disadvantaged communities? What should the prerogatives of parliament be in overseeing the country's foreign relations? How can the economic and social rights of citizens be guaranteed? What kind of army does Nepal need?

Various rights

At the end of the day, the constitution and system that emerge from this process will stand or fall depending on how inclusive they are. Nepal's *janajatis* — the Magars, Tamangs, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, Sherpas and others — as well as the Dalits and Madhesis would like a system, which would grant them a greater say in governance. Nepal's peasants would like an end to the feudal system. Nepal's women, who played an equal part in the struggle against the king, are looking for meaningful empowerment. And there are others — the disabled, for example, or religious minorities like Muslims and Buddhists — who want their specific rights enshrined.

As the product of the greatest mass upsurge South Asia has witnessed for decades, Nepal's constituent assembly will be uniquely

placed to create a genuinely inclusive democratic system. The challenge would be to create mechanisms which empower the citizenry and its diverse collectives rather than the economic and social elites — as electoral practice in India, the United States and other democracies has ended up doing.

One can only hope that the seven-party

alliance, the Maoists, and all others who eventually win representation in the constituent assembly will rise up to the occasion. If they don't, Nepal will eventually sink back into violence and instability. But if they do, the modern, inclusive and empowering democratic system they create could be a model for the rest of South Asia, including India, as well as the world.

Looking back

2001: King Gyanendra ascends throne after the killing of his brother King Birendra.
February 1, 2005: King Gyanendra declares state of emergency and assumes absolute power. Government and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dismissed.
July: Deuba sentenced to two years in prison for corruption by Royal anti graft commission.
September 3: Unilateral ceasefire announcement from Maoist rebels.
November 22: Political parties and Maoists agree to work together to restore democracy.
January 2, 2006: End of Maoist ceasefire.
February 1: First anniversary of Gyanendra seizing power. Protests across country.
February 8: King calls for local elections. But low turnout and protests.
March 14: Maoists launch blockade of roads. Supplies run short.
April 6: General countrywide strike begins. Violent protests spread throughout Nepal.
April 21: King bows to increasing pressure. Calls for opposition to nominate prime ministerial candidate.
April 30: Girija Prasad Koirala sworn in as Prime Minister.



HAND OVER: G.P. Koirala (left) with King Gyanendra. PHOTO: REUTERS

Nepal: All the King's men could get jail terms

INDO-ASIAN News Service

Kathmandu, May 5

ROYALIST MINISTERS hand-picked by King Gyanendra as well as bureaucrats and security officials who carried out his orders to use excessive force against anti-King protests could find themselves behind bars.

Nepal's Parliament on Thursday unanimously agreed to form a commission that would identify the royalist officials who ordered the ruthless suppression of peaceful protests that paralysed Nepal for 19 days last month and bring them to book.

So far 19 people have been killed by the security forces, which were ordered to fire on unarmed demonstrators, and over 6,000 injured.

Ishwor Pokhrel, MP from the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist, on Thursday formally proposed setting up a commission and the house agreed. MPs are also asking prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala to order the arrest of the ministers and officials involved.

Maoist guerrillas, who have said they were ready to sit for dialogue with the new government, have also asked for action against the key officials involved in the suppressions.

Appeal for funds

NEPAL NEEDS immediate aid to help the Himalayan country foster its sudden restoration of democracy, the new deputy prime minister said on Friday.

The country faces a number of pressing issues, from holding peace talks with Maoist rebels to kick-starting the economy, rewriting the Constitution and undoing all of the autocratic actions taken after King Gyanendra grabbed power in February 2005. "Nepal needs financial support for immediate efforts, but not long-term projects," said Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli, who also serves as foreign minister. "We need to get the country back on its feet."

Norwegian Development Cooperation Minister Erik Solheim said on Friday that his country was restoring its annual \$25 million aid package for Nepal.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

06 MAY 2005

Nepal seeks funds to get back on its feet

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KATMANDU, MAY 5

NEPAL needs immediate aid to help the country foster its sudden restoration of democracy, the new deputy PM said today. "Nepal now needs some financial support for the immediate effort but not long-term projects," said Deputy PM Khadga Prasad Oli. "We need some support to get the country back to its feet, get the country rolling again."

The country faces a number of pressing issues, from holding peace

talks with the Maoists to kick-starting the economy, rewriting the constitution and undoing all of the autocratic actions taken after King Gyanendra grabbed power in February 2005.

Some good news came today when Norwegian Development Cooperation Minister Erik Solheim announced that Norway was restoring its annual \$25 million aid package for Nepal. "We have decided to immediately restore aid to this level to show immediate support to this new government...(and) their peace effort with the Maoists," said Solheim.

06 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

06 MAY 2006

OLD MAN AND THE SIEGE

It was exactly three days after the royal massacre on June 1, 2001. Nepal's elite had assembled at the ancient royal Palace in Hanu-man Dhoka in Kathmandu. The occasion was the coronation of Gyanendra as the King of Nepal.

As the new King of the Himalayan country prepared to take the traditional buggy ride from Hanuman Dhoka to Narayanhitti Palace, he urged the then prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, to accompany him. Koirala politely declined the offer: "Sarkar, I do not want you to face the public ire," he said to the king. "People are very angry with me. They will stone the buggy if I ride with you."

Koirala's popularity during his third term in office was at its lowest ebb. The people of Nepal blamed him for the deteriorating law and order situation, escalating Maoist violence and, worse still, for the Royal massacre, in which 10 members of the royal family, including the king and queen, were killed by the crown prince. A few weeks later, Koirala resigned from office after the Royal Nepalese Army refused to obey his orders to put down the Maoist insurgency.

Life has come full circle for the 84-year-old Nepali Congress supremo.

Girija Prasad Koirala

Now, four-and-a-half years later, life has come full circle for the 84-year-old Nepali Congress supremo. Today, as Koirala copes with falling health, people from all walks of life are hoping that he will steer Nepal to safety in this critical period of protest and distrust.

In strife-torn Nepal, there is hope in the air. The Nepali elite believes that Koirala alone can bail out the besieged monarch, the common man feels that Koirala alone can ensure unity among the constituents of the seven-party alliance which spearheaded a protracted but successful pro-democracy movement in the kingdom.

By a strange travesty of fate, this chain-smoking frail old man has suddenly become a fashionable icon. No more do people talk about his alleged corrupt ways. No more do they whisper about the extra-constitutional authority wielded by his ambitious daugh-

ter, Sujata. And no more do people blame Koirala — or GPK, as he is popularly known — for the failure of democracy in Nepal.

For a man who brought the mighty monarch down to his knees, Koirala is rather modest. As the streets swelled with protesters last month in Kathmandu — forcing the king to throw in the towel — GPK chose to give the credit to the people for the movement. "It's the might of people power," he said when asked who was responsible for the return of democracy in Nepal.

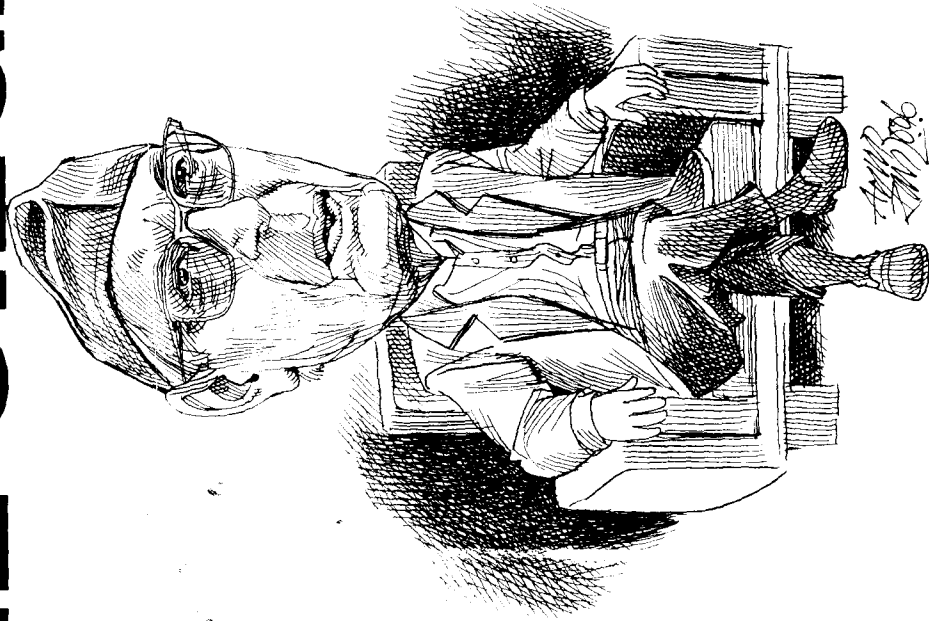
But, clearly, Nepal stands on the threshold of change. After administering the oath of office and secrecy to Koirala, the king of Nepal — traditionally seen as the reincarnation of Vishnu — put his arm around the shoulders of the new prime minister and led him to a sofa. And, as the media recorded this historic moment, Gyanendra, himself a chain smoker, urged Koirala to quit smoking.

For Koirala, who was born in India where his father, a political activist, lived in exile, this is the beginning of another era. GPK's career so far has been tumult-

tuous, even though he started his political journey 55 years ago under the shadow of his more illustrious brother, B.P. Koirala, often described as the father of Nepal's democratic movement. GPK held the prime ministerial post for more than seven years after multi-party democracy was restored in 1990. He, however, has the dubious distinction of never having completed a full term in office.

During his last tenure, which ended in August 2001, he earned notoriety for what was described as his non-performance and alleged corrupt ways. Despite having fallen out with the Royal Palace, GPK continued to remain a monarchist. Even when the pro-democracy movement gathered momentum and lakhs of protesters threatened to overrun Narayanhitti Palace, GPK opposed it, much to the chagrin of Nepal's leftists. In private, he told diplomats who called on him that he continued to favour the twin-pillar concept of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy.

The spirited grand old man of Nepali politics has now begun ruling the nation with renewed vigour. His first task was to declare a ceasefire, withdraw red corner notices on Maoist leaders and set the roadmap for peace. Now that it has been done, Koirala is likely to encounter tougher hurdles on the road ahead. That's when his tenacity and political acumen will be tested to the maximum.



Kathmandu Spring

People say no to king
and the gun

Kunda Dixit

For a while during the past three weeks of turmoil in Nepal, observers would have been forgiven for thinking that the crisis had more to do with Indian domestic politics than with events in the Himalayan kingdom. Till the last moment King Gyanendra was banking on sections of New Delhi's military-intelligence establishment, Indian royal in-laws and the Hindu right to offset pressure on him from the CPM and South Block. Indeed, even before he seized power in February 2005, the king had been lobbying the Indian government and skilfully manipulating this rift.

But by early this year, Gyanendra's international isolation was growing. Even the Americans had overcome their obsessive communist phobia to conclude that the king may soon have to flee the country "hanging on to the wheel of a helicopter", as the US ambassador in Kathmandu put it bluntly. Although Gyanendra had been using the China card to spook the Indian military, by January Beijing had changed its hands-off line and was expressing public concern that the king's takeover was dangerously destabilising a country bordering Tibet. With Nepal's economy on the verge of bankruptcy and the Indian, British and American embargo on military supplies to the Royal Nepali Army beginning to bite, the situation for the king was becoming untenable.

Despite all this, Gyanendra would probably have held out had it not been for the breathtaking display of people power across Nepal. When the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) began its street protests in early April there was still ambivalence among Nepalis who blamed politicians for corruption and mismanagement after multiparty democracy was restored in 1990. Gyanendra was so sure the parties had no support that he was allowing himself to be feted as the 'emperor of the world's Hindus' at a Vishwa Hindu Parishad jamboree at a town near the Bihar border even as the first demonstrations erupted across the country on April 7. When the regime declared curfews to curb

the rallies and brutally cracked down on demonstrators, something snapped. People who had till then been on the sidelines, poured out spontaneously on the streets. Doctors, journalists, lawyers, ordinary citizens, civil servants and even home ministry officials defied curfews to join pro-democracy protests.

Just before midnight on April 24 the king relented and read out a statement on television drafted by the SPA restoring parliament



dissolved four years ago. What made him do it? International isolation, the military embargo and economic collapse were all factors. But in the end what sealed the king's fate was the sheer force of non-violent people power. He brought about his own downfall by treating the people with contempt and turning the clock back to mediaeval absolutism.

In a nationwide Himalmedia public opinion poll taken just before the uprising, most Nepalis said they didn't like the king but wanted to keep the monarchy. The events of the past three weeks have certainly increased the num-

ber of those who want the monarchy abolished once and for all. Many of them may still tolerate a symbolic king without powers, but they don't trust Gyanendra or his son to remain figureheads.

There is consensus in Nepal's reconvened parliament to go for an elected constituent assembly that will draft a new constitution. But till then, the interim administration under prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala will have to take immediate steps to delink the army from the palace, abolish the privy council, repeal royal edicts of the past year and reciprocate the three-month ceasefire announced by the Maoists. This would create conditions for the Maoists to renounce violence, join an interim government and start a peace process.

The royal rollback last week was a direct result of intense behind-the-scenes mediation by India, which has been worried about the spillover effect of a Maoist takeover in Nepal. A key figure has been the CPM's Sitaram Yechury who first got the Maoists and the SPA to agree on a 12-point agreement in New Delhi in November. In it the Maoists for the first time agreed to work towards joining peaceful multiparty politics provided their demand for a constituent assembly was met. Despite sharply criticising the parties for having agreed to parliament restoration, the comrades appear to be fully on board. The tough talk is needed to assure the commanders in the field that they haven't sold out and also to prevent the parties from backtracking. Yechury got a standing ovation in parliament in Kathmandu on Friday, and he later said Nepal's people power revolution would provide an additional incentive to India's own Maoists to join peaceful politics.

The Kathmandu spring's non-violent pro-democracy movement achieved in three weeks with relatively low casualties what the Maoists couldn't get with 10 years of war and 14,000 deaths. Now that parliament is debating the main Maoist demand for a constituent assembly, there is little logic for the Maoists to wage a ruinous war that no one can win. And the message to the Maoists is that just as the Nepali people stood up as one against the king and his army, they will also not tolerate Maoist totalitarianism.

The writer is the editor and publisher of Nepali Times.

Koirala opens peace door for Maoists

AGENCIES

Kathmandu, May 3

The Girija Prasad Koirala government in Nepal on Wednesday extended a generous peace deal to the Maoists, declaring a cease-fire and offering to drop all terror charges against the rebels. The Cabinet also decided to take the outfit off its list of terrorist groups.

The move, however, did not find favour with the US, with the Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher saying that Washington was not yet ready to drop the Maoists from its terror list.

"We can't forget the issue of the Maoists in Nepal, what they have done in the villages, what they continue to do in the villages," he told a news conference.

The peace overture came in response to the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Maoists last week. The rebels played a key role in the pro-democracy protests and appear headed for a role in the political mainstream.

The Cabinet also invalidated February's municipal elections, finance minister Ram Sharan Mahat said. It was the first move to rescind all legislation, decrees, appointments and other actions

taken since King Gyanendra grabbed power in February 2005.

The elections were for mayors and city and town council members. No date was immediately set for new balloting.

Mahat, sworn in on Tuesday with the rest of the new seven-man Cabinet, also said the government will give Rs 1 million to the families of each of the activists who died in the protests that forced the King to yield power last week. At least 17 protesters died when riot police tried to quell the demonstrations, opening fire with live rounds and rubber bullets.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Gyanendra fate splits new rulers of Nepal

VINOD Sharma

Kathmandu, May 10

THE SEVEN Party Alliance (SPA), which led the struggle for democracy in Nepal, has divergent views on the future of monarchy — with the communists partners striving for a republic and Prime Minister G.P. Koirala envisaging a "ceremonial role" for the king.

Insisting that he was not a republican, Koirala on Wednesday said Gyanendra could be a ceremonial king like the British queen. At a meeting with a delegation of the South Asian Free Media Association, Koirala asked: "What is the harm if he stays as Lord Pashupati?"

Forever a centrist, Koirala defined the ceremonial monarchy-multi-party democracy combination as "borderline" to the republican system. "I've nothing to say if the people want to cross that," he said. "I'm expected to lead rather than being led by popular opinion."

The ailing PM's comments are unlikely to go down well with the Maoists, who have not yet responded to the SPA's invitation for formal talks on the roadmap to a constituent assembly.

If Koirala persists with his stand, his Nepali Congress (NC) could also end up alienating all alliance partners barring, perhaps, Sher Bahadur Deoba's breakaway Nepali Congress (Democratic), the only SPA constituent with which it could strike common ground on the ticklish issue.

But more worrisome for Koirala should be the prospect of getting clubbed with those sections of royalists who remained neutral during the anti-monarchy protests and are now pushing for a symbolic role for King Gyanendra.

Against this backdrop, Koirala's juniors in NC fear early formalisation of the incipient pro-republican front, comprising the CPN-UML, other Left-leaning SPA partners and possibly the Maoists, who would go to any length to capture popular imagination and a bigger space in the constituent assembly.

To a poser on the NC's stand, UML's Madhav Nepal said: "People are above the Nepali Congress, in fact, above all parties, who have to respect their views. Nepal doesn't need monarchy. We are for a democratic republic."

That leaves Nepal with a daunting question: who would prevail upon whom, especially when the SPA's 12-point agreement with the Maoists merely talks of doing away with "autocratic monarchy"? Any division on the issue will only benefit the king and the Maoists, whose integration in the democratic framework, in Koirala's words, was his foremost challenge — "That will set an example to the world".

Be that as it may, a greater confluence of views is visible on another complex question — that of institutionalising the Royal Nepal Army's accountability to civilian authority. "It's a national army... not of the king alone. We will curtail the king's powers (by changing the existing constitution) and place the army under democratic control," the PM said.

And if Madhav Nepal is to be believed, a parliamentary declaration is on the anvil to rename the RNA as "Nepal Army". Its palace-based military secretariat — dealing with promotions, dismissals and transfers — will be dismantled and placed under the Defence Ministry. The new regime will bar one-on-one meetings between the king and the army chief, who will be accompanied by "a minister during such calls".

THE ILLUSTRATION

THE ILLUSTRATION

11 MAY 2006

Nepal rebels welcome talks

Kathmandu: Maoist rebels agreed on Thursday to peace talks with Nepal's government that are aimed at ending a decade-old insurgency which has killed 13,000 people.

The insurgents released a statement accepting an offer made by Nepal's new Cabinet on Wednesday.

It will be the third time that

the two sides have tried to work out their differences; peace talks in 2001 and 2003 broke down after several months. Both sides have declared cease-fires since mass protests forced King Gyanendra to yield power last week.

"We welcome it as a positive move," rebel chief Prachanda, in the statement

that was e-mailed to news organisations, said of the Cabinet's moves, which also included dropping terrorism charges against the Maoists. "We believe that the talks this time will not be unsuccessful like the two previous ones because there is a historic moment behind this."

Prachanda said the rebels

have proposed a code of conduct for the peace talks and "hope the government will sincerely implement it." The rebels joined forces with a seven-party alliance in playing a key role in the three-weeks of often-bloody demonstrations against the king. They now appear to be headed for a role in mainstream politics. AP

05 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Maoists agree for talks

A positive move to fulfil people's aspirations, says Prachanda

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Maoist rebels on Thursday welcomed a ceasefire announced by the new, multi-party government and said they would join talks to try and end a decade-old insurgency that has killed thousands.

"We welcome it as a positive move forward towards fulfilling the aspirations of the people for democracy, peace and progress," rebel chief Prachanda said in a statement. — Reuters

Terrorist tag removed

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Government has announced an indefinite ceasefire and removed terrorist tag slapped on the Maoist rebels with immediate effect and invit-

ed them to the dialogue table.

Wednesday's Cabinet meeting also scrapped the Red Corner notice issued against the Maoists, removing obstacles to the rebel leaders to appear in public. The rebels declared a ceasefire for three months last week.

The Maoist top guns are soon expected to address mass meetings, expediting their campaign for a republic. The House of Representative has already passed a resolution to go for elections to the Constituent Assembly, chief demand of the rebels to join the political mainstream. The Government had declared the Maoist rebels as terrorists on August 28, 2003 when the latter broke the ceasefire on August 27 and attacked army officials in

Kathmandu. Subsequently, the Interpol had issued the Red Corner notice against 26 top rebels leaders, including Prachanda as per Nepal's request.

The Government also annulled the "controversial" municipal polls held on February 25, during the King Gyanendra's direct rule.

Likewise, the Government dismissed all regional and zonal administrators, and district development committee chairpersons appointed by the King.

The Cabinet meeting also announced Nepali rupees 1 million to each martyr's family. Nineteen persons died and over 5000 are believed to have been injured during the three-week movement that forced the King to concede power to the people.

05 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Nepal to talk to Maoists

Ceasefire announcement soon

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's first Cabinet meeting on Tuesday agreed "in principle" to take immediate initiatives to bring the Maoists into the political mainstream.

Speaking after the meeting, newly appointed Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula told the reporters that the Government would soon announce ceasefire, scrap terrorist tag slapped on the rebels and remove the Red Corner notice issued against them. The Cabinet will soon invite the rebels for talks, he said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Koirala announced his seven-member Cabinet after much political wrangling for key Ministries among the main parties in the seven-party alliance (SPA). He is expected to announce his full Cabinet within a week.

Departure from tradition

K.P. Sharma Oli, senior leader of CPN-UML, one of the major constituents in the SPA, has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and given the Foreign Ministry portfolio.

Acting president of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) Gopal Man Shrestha has been given the Ministry for Planning and Construction.

President of the alliance of fringe leftist parties, Left Front, Prabhu Narayan Choudhary, has become the Minister for Land Reforms.

Mr. Koirala has also included three Ministers from his party, Nepali Congress. Breaking with the tradition of taking the oath of the office in the Palace, the Ministers were sworn in at the hall of National Planning Commission in Singhadurbar. Later,

• **Seven-member Cabinet announced**

• **Communist leader appointed Deputy Premier**

• **Constitutional amendments proposed**

Mr. Koirala said his Government would propose major constitutional amendments in Parliament to consolidate the gains of the pro-democracy movement.

Journalists' demand

PTI reports:

Journalists have demanded the release of three of their colleagues who were taken into custody by the erstwhile Royal regime and asked the new Government to withdraw all rules and regulations introduced by King Gyanendra to curb the media.

Journalists Tejnarayan Sapkota, Rajendra Gautam and Hom Prasad Basyal who are still in jail should be immediately released, said the Federation of Nepalese Journalists in a statement.

The FNJ also asked the Government to withdraw all laws, rules and ordinances introduced by the Royal government to curb the media.

Asking the Government to withdraw all political appointments made by the previous regime in the government media, the organisation demanded that those journalists, who were working in private and government media and had lost their jobs following last year's Royal takeover should be returned their jobs and provided with compensation.

03 MAY 2008

THE HINDU

Nepal Cabinet finally sworn in

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 2: It took God seven days to create the world. And it took Nepal's new Prime Minister Mr Girija Prasad Koirala an equal number of days to announce a mini Cabinet of seven members after a long week filled with bickering among allies, warnings by an enraged public and even a resignation.

Expected to be announced on Sunday, the new council of ministers was delayed as three of the government allies couldn't

decide whether to join the cabinet while the second-biggest party in parliament, the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML), threatened not to join if it was not given the key portfolios of home and defence.

Alarmed by the negative signals the delay was sending out to the nation, senior leaders stepped up advocacy and finally, the new Cabinet was announced with premier Mr Koirala keeping defence and the rest of the ministries not yet allocated. Home ministry has gone to Mr

Krishna Sitaula, the soft-spoken but determined spokesman of Mr Koirala's Nepali Congress party, finance to Dr Ram Sharan Mahat, a former finance minister, and agriculture and cooperatives to Mr Mahant Thakur.

For now, the UML has been pacified with the post of deputy prime minister and foreign minister. Mr Khadka Prasad Sharma Oli, who was named leader of the UML's parliamentary party last week, was given both posts. However, cracks have started surfacing in the party with one of

its leaders, Mr Pradip Nepal, yesterday resigning from the standing committee to protest against the decision to join the government.

The third largest party, Nepali Congress (Democratic) headed by deposed premier Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba was given physical planning and works, which went to Mr Deuba's deputy Mr Gopal Man Shrestha.

The United Left Front, the fourth party in the seven-party alliance, was given land reforms and soil management for its leader Mr Prabhu Narayan

Chaudhary.

Another small partner, the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi) had decided to send its MP Mr Rajendra Mahato to the Cabinet.

Continuing its war on the crown, the new cabinet was sworn in at the office of the National Planning Commission in Singh Durbar, the central administrative block where the prime minister's office and other key ministries are located, instead of being administered oath of office by King Gyanendra at the Narayanhity royal palace.

However, the ceremony

was low-keyed as angry students, enraged at the jockeying for power in the past week, began a sit-in in front of Singh Durbar.

The students had marched from Kirtipur town in Bhaktapur district, raising slogans against greedy politicians and demanding the government respect its commitment to holding an election for a new constitution.

Mr Anil Kumar Jha, leader of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anand), was happy and he hailed the decision to appoint Mr Sitaula as home minister.

03 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

Nepal Maoists

The American Connection And More

The Maoists hold the key to Nepal's future stability. Their declared goal does not differ from that of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA). They simply do not trust the King. They are dragging their feet until elections to a new constituent assembly actually occur. Comrades Prachanda and Bhattarai, Chairman and Convener respectively of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), stressed that their agitation would remain peaceful. They announced a three-month ceasefire. The SPA has indicated that the interim government will speedily elect a constituent assembly to make the new Constitution. The main problem would be to persuade the Maoists to give up arms. The Royal Nepal Army has already indicated its readiness to recruit Maoists in the army. If Prime Minister GP Koirala with his known tact succeeds in persuading the Maoists to enter the democratic mainstream they would become a major, if not dominant, factor in Nepal's politics. If that happened, what would be the result for India?

Armed struggle

In the mid-1990s the Maoists formed their own group to separate from other communists who participated in elections. The Maoists committed themselves to revolutionary change through armed struggle. The organisational structure and nomenclatures they adopted were inspired by the Chinese model. They established their own Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) with its own Central Military Commission (CMC).

Analysts tended to conclude easily, therefore, that Nepal's Maoists were and are controlled by China. The truth may not be that simple. Interviewed by Charles Haviland for BBC World on 13 February this year Comrade Prachanda was asked: "Fighting a war is very expensive. If your supporters are mainly in poor rural parts of Nepal, where are you getting your money from?"

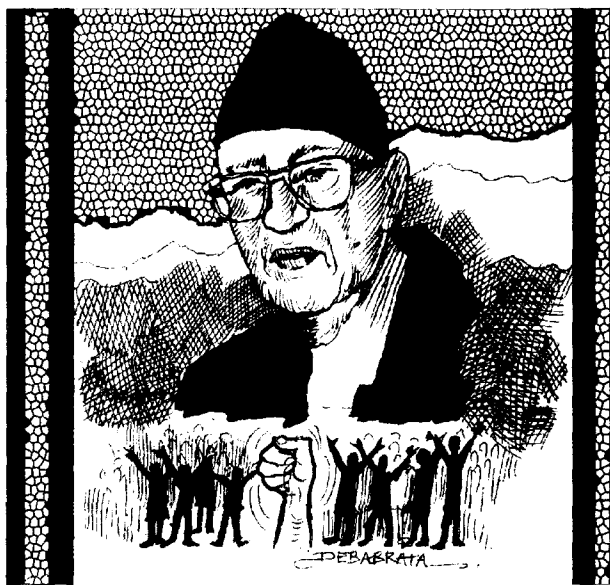
He replied: "We are certainly fighting for the rights of poor people in Nepal. We are the children of Nepali citizens. The main source of our income is the same people we are fighting for. As a secondary source, we used to extract from our

The author is a veteran journalist and cartoonist

Rajinder Puri

enemies; but now, our main source is the support from the people. It's been well established that no government anywhere has financially supported our revolution. We are free to make decisions". No government, perhaps. But what about others? The Maoists have 40,000 armed

ment, the concern and assistance given by your Party to the advance of the Communist movement in the South Asia region and throughout the world, even at difficult moments in your struggle, inspire us. The Committee of RIM and the CPN (M) will continue to march forward as in the



Instead of speculating on the foreign links of Maoists, India would do well to focus on its own interests in Nepal

activists. Comrade Prachanda may well be speaking the truth. But if he were getting arms and money from outside powers, would he admit it? He could be right, though, about his power to take independent decisions. Regardless of outside support any group engaged in armed struggle enjoys far greater freedom of action than its counterparts engaged in traditional politics. All politics today, including revolutionaries and NGOs, has become corporate activity. It matters little if money comes from governments, agencies or business houses. What matters is the agenda that is followed. The tendency to hide sources of funding arises from coyness associated with conventional morality. In a decade or so such coyness might disappear.

Internet and the Info-Tech age could introduce a kind of transparency that renders secrecy impossible. From the beginning the Maoists have been closely associated with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) with its headquarters in Chicago, USA. On February 1, 1998 the RIM Committee wrote: "The participation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in the Revolutionary Internationalist Move-

past - united by our all-powerful ideology." In 2001 Prachanda responded: "The present rapid pace of development would have been inconceivable without the support of Communist revolutionaries, particularly the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, during the period of the historic initiation of the People's War".

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) is the US political arm of the apex international body, RIM. Mr Robert Avakian heads both RCP and RIM. Other fraternal members of RIM, apart from Nepal's Maoists, include Peru's extremist party Shining Path. RIM is strongly opposed to China's economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping. Its leaders endorse China's Cultural Revolution. To evade arrest after a White House demonstration against Deng Xiaoping in 1981, Mr Avakian and other RCP leaders fled the US to live in France. While Mr Avakian directs affairs from France, RCP is led by Mr Clark Kissinger in the US. The RCP spokesperson is a former convict, Mr Carl Dix, who firmly believes in world revolution through violence.

The puzzling fact is that the US State Department has designated Nepal's Maoists as a terrorist group.

Despite this, RCP's Avakian supports the Maoists. He condemns the US for describing Nepal's CPN (M) as a terrorist group. And yet, both RIM and RCP continue to function in the US. How? After 9/11 the Bush administration's security measures have been extreme enough to provoke allegations of even converting America into a police state!

It would, therefore, be reckless to identify which foreign inspiration, if any, guides the Maoists. If there is indeed covert US support for the Maoists it may or may not be in cooperation with elements within China. The economic advantages accruing to China's Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) for decades through commerce with the US were not unnoticed. In 1996 reputed columnist Abe Rosenthal wrote in *New York Times*: "Wake up America! Wake up to the truth that the Republican leaders are partners with the Democratic leaders in building up the Chinese armed forces." In 1997 he wrote: "The great part of US business in China is with companies and cartels controlled by the Chinese military".

Historical links

Instead of speculating on the foreign links of Maoists, India would do well to focus therefore on its own interests in Nepal. Nepal and India have the closest of historical and cultural links. Nepal's Maoists have interaction with India's Maoists. They could influence their Indian comrades to enter the electoral mainstream. India and Nepal have enormous economic potential to explore. With Indian funding and technology, the two can utilise all the estimated energy of potentially 50,000 megawatts still available and untapped in Nepal. That would spectacularly transform the economies of both Nepal and India's heartland. If the Maoists remain difficult, India can shut the door and let Nepal fend for itself.

The Maoists want both China and India to have close relations with Nepal. That would be welcome only if China granted autonomy to Tibet and opened it to India. India's foreign policy should be dictated by two simple axioms. First, it must welcome democracy everywhere. Secondly, it must insist on reciprocity in all international relationships.

Koirala unveils new team

Kathmandu, May 2 (Reuters): Nepal's new Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, named a seven-member multi-party cabinet today with the task of negotiating peace with Maoist rebels and curbing the king's powers.

King Gyanendra, who bowed to bloody street protests last week and handed power back to political parties, appointed the cabinet on Koirala's recommendation, a statement from the palace said.

"We believe this council of ministers will receive the cooperation of all in the discharge of its duty for the welfare and prosperity of Nepal and the Nepali people," the king said.

The cabinet formation was delayed amid reports in the local media that members of a seven-party alliance, which led a campaign for democracy, jostled for positions.

Ram Sharan Mahat, a liberal economist, was named finance minister and Khadga Prasad Oli was appointed deputy prime minister in charge of foreign affairs in the new cabinet.

Koirala, who was sworn in on Sunday, kept the key post of defence and more than a dozen ministries to himself.

Today's announcement came two days after Nepal's parliament unanimously approved a proposal by the new Prime Minister to hold elections for a special Assembly to write a new constitution and to decide the future of the monarchy. No date has been fixed for the vote.

The cabinet, which is an interim arrangement, faces the difficult task of holding talks with the Maoist rebels, win their backing for the election to the Assembly and reverse laws introduced by the king to maintain his grip on power.

The government also faces a cash crunch as political instability has taken a toll on the economy. "How to increase revenue and meet government expenditure is a challenge," said Keshav Acharya, a top official of the central Nepal Ras-tria Bank.

Revenue collection stood at a little over \$661 million as of mid-April against the annual target of \$1.15 billion at the end of the current fiscal year in mid-July, he said.

The cabinet announcement also came as US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, Richard Boucher, became the first senior foreign official to visit the country since King Gyanendra returned power.

Norway's development cooperation minister, Erik Solheim, is also due to arrive in Kathmandu. Both visitors are expected to hold talks with Koirala and other leaders.



A man tries to climb the main entrance of the Singha Durbar, the Nepalese parliament, in Kathmandu on Tuesday during a protest. (AFP)

03 MAY 2036

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02 MAY 2006

Dissent delays Nepal Cabinet formation



General Secretary of Nepal Communist Party-United Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal talks to the Press after a meeting in Kathmandu on Monday. ■AFP

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 1: May Day should have been a day of victory for newly appointed Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who began his political career as a trade union activist. However, after illness, the 84-year-old was today thwarted by dissent among his allies, delaying the announcement of a mini Cabinet.

Initially, it had been decided that each of the seven parties in the alliance would send a representative, forming a mini Cabinet that would be expanded during the week.

But though the partners

agreed to give the five-time Prime Minister a free hand to choose his deputy and allocate portfolios according to his choice, till Monday, three of the smaller parties had not been able to decide if they should join the government.

While two left parties that have a tradition of supporting the government from outside - People's Front and Nepal Workers and Peasants party - wanted to stay away, the third, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi), the party of plains people from the terai belt, could not reach a decision and would meet again tomorrow morning.

However, the three big parties, Mr Koirala's Nepali Congress, the second largest party in parliament, Communist party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist, and deposed premier Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba's Nepali Congress party, the third largest, have in principle agreed to join Mr Koirala's Cabinet.

Perhaps the only development during the day, full of hectic parleys, was the Nepali Congress relenting towards Mr Deuba and agreeing to consider his party as a separate parliamentary party.

In 2002, Mr Deuba had fractured the Nepali Congress but due to the

absence of parliament, had not registered his party as a separate entity.

When parliament sits again tomorrow afternoon, the Cabinet may be announced finally. However, the delay bodes ill for the parties, given their reputation for infighting, that allowed King Gyanendra to seize power last year.

The longer the formation of a Cabinet is delayed, the greater administrative difficulties.

Also, the government needs to begin immediate re-engagement with the donors and declare a ceasefire with the Maoists.

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Nepal to probe protest suppression

BINAJ GURUBACHARYA
KATHMANDU, MAY 1

NEPAL'S political leaders decided on Monday to install a leaner Cabinet that will negotiate with the Communist rebels and probe the bloody suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations that forced the King to yield absolute power.

Some Cabinet ministers were expected to be named later in the day after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala met at his house with leaders of the seven main political parties. The Cabinet's key task will be negotiating peace with the Maoists, senior politicians have said.

Lilamani Pokhrel, a legislator from the People's Front Nepal—part of the seven-party alliance—said the Cabinet will also investigate who ordered security forces to crack down on protesters, clubbing them with batons and firing rubber bullets and live rounds. The death toll among protesters rose on Monday to 17 after an activist died of head wounds from a police baton on April 21, said Dr Sambhu Upadhyay of Katmandu's Model Hospital.

The Cabinet will be assigned to invalidate all ordinances, decisions and appointments made by the former royal government since King Gyanendra grabbed power in February 2005, Pokhrel said.

Initially, the new Cabinet will have about a dozen members—well below the 34 outgoing ones—with the number to be raised later, Pokhrel said. All seven alliance parties are expected to be represented.

The newly reinstated Parliament on Sunday called unanimously for an assembly to rewrite the constitution, and for a cease-fire with Maoist insurgents. The rebels played a major role in the anti-monarchy protests, and appear headed for a role in the political mainstream.

A new constitution has been the Maoists' top demand. The new government under Koirala, sworn in Sunday, must now spell out the dates and other details of the constitutional assembly.

Koirala, 84 and suffering from persistent lung ailments, got a standing ovation Sunday before addressing Parliament, which opened its first session in four years on Friday. —AP

02 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Nepal leaders get bogged down on govt

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 1: The process to form the government in Nepal was bogged down for the second consecutive day today after serious differences within the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) over the allocation of important portfolios.

Till late this evening, Nepal's new Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was trying to hammer out a compromise formula with prominent SPA constituents — CPN(UML) and Nepali Congress (Democratic) — without any progress.

While the CPN(UML) want their candidate K.P. Oli to be given the crucial portfolios of

deputy prime minister and home, the NCD is demanding separate status in the re-instated House of Representatives.

Koirala convened a SPA meeting this morning to discuss the formation of the cabinet and finalise the names of the candidates.

Even though it was decided at the meeting that the cabinet will have 21 members, the members could not agree on the allocation of portfolios.

A top coalition leader told **The Telegraph** on condition of anonymity that Koirala is keen on making former deputy prime minister and senior leader of the Nepali Congress Ram Chandra

Poudel his second in command with the additional portfolio of home affairs. The communists, on the other hand, want the same posts for veteran Leftist K.P. Oli.

The leader said that soon after the inconclusive SPA meeting, Koirala had a long conversation on the phone with CPN (UML) supremo Madhav Kumar Nepal with the hope of persuading him to accept his decision.

Koirala reportedly told Nepal that owing to his falling health he wanted his trusted aide Poudel to hold the portfolios.

However, Nepal reportedly told the Prime Minister that Koirala himself had made a commitment on making Oli

the deputy prime minister during the pro-democracy movement. Nepal also said that both the standing committee and central committee of his party had endorsed the move.

Later in the evening, the CPN (UML) standing committee met once again and passed a resolution nominating K.P. Oli for the twin posts.

The NCD, which stalled the SPA meeting yesterday demanding separate party status within the House of Representatives, today managed to have its way. The parliament secretary today endorsed the SPA decision to treat the NCD as a separate entity within the House with 29 lawmakers in its ranks.



A worker dresses a mannequin at a shop in Kathmandu. (AFP)

02 MAY 2006

Nepal to free 2 Maoist leaders

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Kathmandu: Nepal's new government has dropped murder charges against two Maoist rebel leaders, paving the way for their release from prison, a senior government official said on Thursday.

"The government on Wednesday decided to withdraw the charges against Matrika Yadav and Suresh Ale Magar," Umesh Mainali, Home Ministry secretary, said.

Yadav and Magar were arrested at Lucknow in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh early in 2004 and deported to Nepal where they were accused of the murder of a senior police officer the previous year. They were awaiting trial and are being held in Nakkhu jail near the capital.

"They will be released after legal procedures," said Mainali, without revealing when the two could walk free.

Yadav is the the Maoist leader for the Terai central

plains region, and Magar is a member of the Maoist central committee. Some 1,200 Maoist leaders and cadres are imprisoned across Nepal, with around 100 in the capital, according to figures compiled by the Informal Sector Service Centre human rights organisation.

The Maoists have called on the new government to release all rebel prisoners to "ease the environment" for expected peace talks.

The interim government came to power when King Gyanendra was forced to end absolute rule after weeks of street protests crippled Nepal and left 19 protesters dead. Since returning to parliament, the multi-party interim government has agreed to a key rebel demand—elections to a body that would redraft the constitution and clip the powers of the monarch. AGENCIES

12 MAY 2008

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nepal detains 2 members of Gyanendra's cabinet

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1375
Koirala
Prachanda

Prachanda To Lead Rebels In Talks With Koirala Govt

Kathmandu: Two prominent politicians who served in the cabinet of the ousted government of King Gyanendra were detained on Friday, an official said.

The detention of former Home Minister Kamal Thapa and former Information Minister Srish Sumshere Rana took place on the recommendation of a judicial commission investigating alleged human rights violations during anti-monarchy protests last month, a home ministry official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Ministers of the King's regime have been blamed for ordering—and supporting—a crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in which 19 people died last month, before the King gave up his authoritarian powers after 14 months.

Meanwhile, Maoist rebel chief will personally head peace talks with the government, his associate said on Friday, hours after the deputy prime minister said negotiations would be delayed unless the elusive rebel leader came to the table to negotiate.



The announcement came two days after Prachanda, the communist rebel chief, named three negotiators to represent his group. However, on Thursday evening, Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli said in an interview that talks would have been expedited if Prachanda had personally headed the talks. On Friday morning, one of his senior associates announced the change of plans.

"The peace talks will be between our chairman and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala," senior Maoist leader Matrika Yadav told reporters in the national capital Katmandu. "These talks, we believe, will be conclusive." There was no immediate reaction from the prime minister's office.

No date has been set for talks.

On Thursday, Oli made the first statement on behalf of the new government asking Prachanda to personally join the talks. "We have invited their party. Why he (Prachanda) didn't come leading his team? He could come to the table for talks leading his team," he said. "It would have been better because then and there the talks would be finalised." Oli also pledged government security for Prachanda, who has kept a low profile for more than a decade. "If they ask the government, (the) government will provide security for them," he said.

He said Prachanda's absence would likely delay bringing an end to the decade-old insurgency, which has killed more than 13,000 people since 1996. AP

13 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

NEPAL | Five royalist ministers arrested; army, police chiefs among officials suspended

Heads roll as Nepal begins clean-up

AGENCIES

KATHMANDU, MAY 12

THE Nepal government today detained five ministers in the former royalist government and suspended eight senior government officials, including the Army Chief, for excessive use of force to quell demonstrations during the pro-democracy movement last month.

The state radio said police had picked up former home minister Kamal Thapa, former minister of state for communication Shrish Shumsher Rana and former foreign minister Rameshnath Pandey. Tanka Dhakal and Niksha Shumsher Rana, two other ministers in the king's cabinet, were also detained.

"They have been detained for 90 days and they are being held at the Nepal Police Training Centre at Maharajgunj," state TV said.

The officers suspended include Royal Nepalese Army Chief Pyarjung Thapa, Armed Police Force chief Sahabir Thapa, Nepal Police chief Shyam Bhakta Thapa and National Investigation Department head Deviram Sharma, apart from five other senior officials who ordered a police charge against thousands of pro-democracy protesters.

Action against them was recommended by a high-level

commission investigating the excesses during last month's agitation. Harihar Birahi, a member of the commission, told PTI that the officers had been suspended for abuse of human rights and excessive use of force during the 19-day agitation.

The security officials were suspended as they could destroy the evidence if they remained in their posts, he added.

The ministers who have been arrested are also accused of misusing government funds to suppress the popular uprising.

The country moved one more step back to normalcy when a senior Maoist leader said today that their supremo Prachanda would lead talks with Nepal's new government.

Prachanda alias Pushpakamal Dahal would head the negotiation team from the rebel side, said Matrika Yadav, who along with another guerrilla leader Suresh Alemgar was released from jail yesterday.

Prachanda's participation was one of the conditions laid down by Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli today in an interview with the Associated Press for an early framing of the new constitution.

If Prachanda was part of the talks, Oli said, the constitution could be ready in 18 months—the first time any kind of official date for the same has been given.

INDIAN EXPRESS

13 MAY 2006

Ex-Ministers Barred From Leaving Kathmandu As Crackdown On Pro-Royalists Continues

Nepal suspends King's chief secy

Kathmandu: Tightening its grip on anti-democracy conspirators, the Koirala government on Saturday suspended seven more top officials, including chief secretary Lokman Singh Karki, in King Gyanendra's ousted regime and barred former ministers from leaving Kathmandu, a day after arresting five of them.

The authorities handed over the suspension letter to the Royal regime's chief secretary Karki, who had instructed government employees not to take part in the pro-democracy agitation of the seven-party alliance and warned of stern action against those supporting democracy, a source close to the home minister said. With this, the total number of officials suspended so far has reached 10.

The government has given Om Bhakta Rana, Basudev Oli and Dhan Singh Karki charges in acting capacity of the Nepal Police, the Armed Police Force and the National Investigation Department respectively after suspending the chiefs of the three security services yesterday.

It also put travel restrictions on all the ministers of the royal government. They cannot leave Kathmandu and security agencies



Three district chiefs in the Kathmandu valley have also been replaced for their involvement in suppressing the pro-democracy movement

have been instructed to arrest them if they do so, said the source.

Apart from the three security chiefs and the chief secretary, the government suspended Additional IGFs Rajendra Bahadur

involvement in excessive use of

force to suppress the pro-democracy movement.

The government on Friday arrested former ministers Kamal Thapa (Home), Ramesh Nath Pandey (Foreign), Shrish Shumsher Rana (Communication), Tanka Dhakal (Local Development) and Nikshya Shumsher Rana under the Public Security Act for their involvement in misappropriation of government funds and abuse of human rights.

A probe commission had also recommended suspension of army chief Pyarjung Thapa, but a decision on the matter would be made only after it is taken up in Nepal's Security Council meeting.

The government has appointed three district chiefs in the Kathmandu valley, replacing the senior officials who were involved in suppressing the pro-democracy movement during which at least 21 protesters were killed and 5,000 injured.

Subash Nemwang, a senior leader of the Communist party of Nepal-UML, has been chosen the new speaker of the reinstated Parliament.

Nemwang said it is a "challenging responsibility" for him. AGENCIES

14/5 14/5 14/5

Make Nepal a secular state: Prachanda

Kathmandu: Nepal's communist rebel chief on Saturday released a roadmap for peace that seeks the release of political prisoners, abolition of the country's parliament and constitution, and the restructuring of the army. In a statement sent to media organisations, rebel chief Prachanda confirmed his own participation in direct talks with the government. He also said in a statement a special assembly should be elected that should turn Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, into a "secular state."



The roadmap reiterates several points already agreed upon between the Maoist rebels and the seven Nepalese political parties that led a national movement to end King Gyanendra's authoritarian rule last month.

The roadmap statement outlines a 10-point plan, of which some steps—including a ceasefire and the naming of peace negotiators—have already been accomplished.

Prachanda did not give any date for the proposed talks. There was no immediate comment from Koirala or his government but the response was expected to be positive. AGENCIES

Nepal Maoist chief unveils talks plan

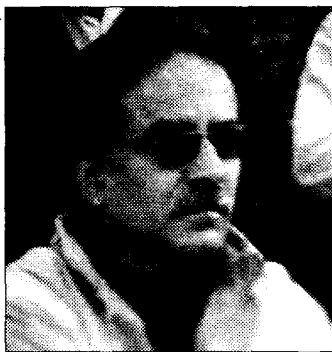
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU | MAY 13

UNVEILING a roadmap for peace in Nepal, Maoist supremo Prachanda today said he would directly participate in talks with the G P Koirala government to end the decade-old insurgency but sought release of all jailed rebels before the dialogue.

In a statement, Prachanda said the special central committee meeting of his CPN (Maoist) party has asked him to lead the rebel team for the "high-level" talks with the government.

He said the Maoists have deputed a team comprising their spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Dev Gurung and Dinanath Sharma to make preparation for the peace talks.

The release of all Maoist prisoners was a pre-condition before the negotiations could begin, he said. The 10-point Maoist roadmap, which contains several points already agreed upon by the government, includes declaration of ceasefire; release of pris-



Maoist chief Prachanda

oners; dismissal of Parliament, constitution and government; formation of interim government and interim constitution; election to constituent assembly under reliable international supervision; and restructuring of the Royal Nepalese Army and the People's Liberation Army of rebels after the election results.

Meanwhile, lawmakers chose a Parliament Speaker today amid political squabbling that has exposed cracks in the ruling alliance. Subash Nemwang has been chosen as the new speaker and voting would not be held as scheduled since he was the only candidate,

Chief secretary of royal regime suspended

KATHMANDU: Nepal's government on Saturday suspended chief secretary of King Gyanendra's ousted regime and put travel restrictions on former ministers.

Authorities handed over the suspension letter to Lokman Singh Karki, who had instructed government employees not to take part in the pro-democracy agitation of the alliance in April and warned of stern action against those supporting democracy, a source close to the home minister said.

Besides, it has put travel restrictions on all the ministers of the royal government. They cannot leave Kathmandu and security agencies have been instructed to arrest them if they attempt to do so, said the source. —PTI

Parliament spokesman Mukunda Sharma said.

Nemwang, a senior member of the Communist Party of Nepal, was scheduled to be sworn in later today.

14 MAY 2006

মুখ্যসচিব-সহ ১০ আমলা, সেনাকর্তা বরখাস্ত নেপালে

কাঠমাণ্ডু, ১৩ মে: সংবিধান পরিবর্তন করে রাজার বিদায় নিশ্চিত করা সময়সাধা। তার আগে আপাতত রাজতন্ত্রের অনুগত আমলাদের প্রশাসনিক চৌহদ্দি থেকে উজাড় করতে উঠেপড়ে লেগেছে নেপালের নতুন গণতান্ত্রিক সরকার। আজও রাজার নিযুক্ত মুখ্যসচিব-সহ ৭ আমলাকে বরখাস্ত করা হয়েছে। রাজার প্রশ্রয়ে কিছু মন্ত্রী ও আমলা গণ-বিক্ষোভ দমনে অতি সক্রিয় ভূমিকা নিয়েছিলেন। এমন ৫ মন্ত্রীকে জন-নিরাপত্তা আইনে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছিল কালই। সরানো হয়েছে পুলিশ ও সেনাবাহিনীর কর্তাদেরও। এঁদের বিরুদ্ধে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের দায়ে মামলা করা হচ্ছে।

রাজার যে ৫ মন্ত্রীকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছে তাঁরা হলেন, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী কমল থাপা, বিদেশমন্ত্রী রমেশনাথ পাণ্ডে, যোগাযোগমন্ত্রী শ্রী শামশের রানা, স্থানীয় উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী টঙ্কা ঢাকাল এবং দফতরহীন মন্ত্রী নিষ্ক সামশের রানা। মুখ্যসচিব লোকমান সিং কার্কিকে বরখাস্ত করা হয়েছে আজই। দু'দিনে ১০ আমলাকে সরালো নতুন সরকার। এ দিনই পুলিশের বিভিন্ন বিভাগের প্রধানদেরও বরখাস্ত করা হয়েছে। মানবাধিকার ভঙ্গের ঘটনাবলি তদন্তের জন্য একটি কমিশন গঠনের ইস্তিতও দিয়েছে নতুন সরকার।

আজই নেপালের সংসদে স্পিকার পদে নির্বাচিত হয়েছেন কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (ইউএমএল)-এর সুভাষ



শান্তির জন্য প্রার্থনা। গৌতম বুদ্ধের জন্মদিনে কাঠমাণ্ডুতে। --- রয়টার্স

নেমওয়ার। প্রবীণ এই সাংসদ ছাড়া আর কেউ প্রার্থী না হওয়ায় ভোটভূটি হয়নি ঠিকই, কিন্তু তার আগে স্পিকার মনোনয়ন নিয়ে কয়েক ঘণ্টার তিজ টালবাহানায় সরকারে আসীন ৭ দলের জোটের মধ্যে চিড় স্পষ্ট হয়ে যায়।

পাশাপাশি মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে শান্তি-আলোচনার তোড়জোড়ও

চালাচ্ছে সরকার। মাওবাদীরা আজ এক বিবৃতিতে আলোচনার আগে সব বন্দীদের মুক্তিসহ একতরফা ভাবেই শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ার ১০ দফা পদক্ষেপ ঘোষণা করেছে। সর্বোচ্চ নেতা প্রচণ্ডই তাদের প্রতিনিধি দলের নেতৃত্ব দেবেন বলেও বিবৃতিটিতে ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। — পি টি আই

4 MAY 2008

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Nepal parties put off move to check King's powers

Kathmandu: Nepal's seven mainstream parties put off a plan on Monday to table a landmark resolution in parliament to curtail the powers of the king, including taking away his control of the army.

The proclamation, which is expected to override the existing 1990 constitution, would now be tabled after an expansion of the cabinet and a debate there, political party leaders said after a three-hour meeting.

It was expected to be presented to parliament on Thursday, the leader of one of the parties said. "The cabinet is not complete yet. By Tuesday or Wednesday it will be expanded and the expanded cabinet will give a final shape to the draft and it will be presented to parliament," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, general-secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML).



Cutting the king's powers was a key demand of pro-democracy protesters during the demonstrations which led to King Gyanendra reinstating parliament and handing over administration to a multi-party government.

The proclamation is expected to wrest control of the army from the king and give it to parliament.

But independent Kantipur TV said some politicians were not comfortable with the idea of also stripping the king of his formal title of supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The administration would no longer be known as "His Majesty's Government" and the king's key advisory body, the Raj Parishad or privy council, is likely to be abolished. Besides, the draft aims to tax the king's income and property and allow his actions to be challenged in court. REUTERS

16 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nepal House defers move

Discussions on curtailing King's powers inconclusive

Ameet Dhakal

hi 8/2/06
KATHMANDU: A crucial meeting of the House of Representatives that was to proclaim itself as the sovereign and supreme body of the country and cut the King's power and privileges has been deferred at least till May 18, the next meeting of the House.

The Seven Party Alliance (SPA) leaders, after their meeting this morning, told reporters that the proclamation was deferred as the leaders felt that some more homework needs to be done.

A senior leader of the SPA, however, told *The Hindu* that

some differences have cropped up within the alliance about stripping the King of his title of the Supreme Commander of the Army, among others.

Differences denied

Minendra Rijal, spokesperson of Nepali Congress (Democratic) denied such differences and said Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala told the alliance meeting that he would first expand the Cabinet and endorse the proclamation by it before taking it to the House. Prime Minister Koirala is expected to expand his seven-member on Tuesday at the latest. The draft

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of the proclamation proposes massive cuts in King's power and privileges. It also proposes to rename the Government as "Nepal Government" and the country's army as "Nepal Army." Currently, the Government is called His Majesty's Government and the army as the Royal Nepal Army.

After the proclamation, the House will have the right to enact the laws regarding the heir to the throne. Furthermore, the royal family's income will be taxed. The King's actions will also be open to question in a court of law. The proclamation will also open door for the Maoists to join the national government.

16 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2006

Go-slow on Gyanendra angers Nepalis

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 16: Protests again erupted in several Nepal cities, including Kathmandu, today over delay in implementing a resolution to strip all political and military powers of King Gyanendra.

Demonstrations hit Pokhara and some cities of western Nepal as angry protesters set government vehicles ablaze in Kathmandu.

Home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula appealed to the protesters for restraint at a hastily-organised news conference. He said the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) will present the resolution curtailing the king's powers in the House

of Representatives on Thursday. The minister said the entire process was delayed as the SPA wanted the resolution to be passed by the cabinet first. "Let there be no doubts. We will table the resolution on Thursday", he said.

Sitaula denied that former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had opposed the move to strip Gyanendra of the post of supreme commander-in-chief of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA). Sitaula also denied that Deuba was against plans to bring the RNA under the full control of parliament. "There is no truth in such reports. The SPA is one on this issue," he asserted.

Deuba, who was the target of the protesters today, denied

in a statement that he had opposed the moves to strip Gyanendra of political and military powers and bring the RNA under parliament control. "This is character assassination and unfair. I have repeatedly emphasised the need to bring the army under the parliament. Why should I support the king when he has repeatedly victimised me?" he said.

Deuba added that his party also supported the move to rename the government of Nepal.

Angry protesters burnt tyres and chanted slogans against the delay in implementing the resolution. Student wings of various political parties of the alliance organ-

ised rallies in Nepal cities against the government.

Dozens gathered outside the secretariat which houses parliament and the Prime Minister's office. "Down with monarchy", "Gyanendra thief, leave the country", "Down with corrupt leaders," they shouted. "I don't think these leaders are capable of doing this," said Govinda Rayamajhi, one of the protesters, referring to the resolution.

Analysts said people were expecting quick changes and lacked confidence in the political leaders who are now in charge. People have very little faith in politicians and think they are slow in taking decisions," said Rajendra Dahal, editor of the magazine, *Himal*.



Protesters gather near a burning vehicle in Kathmandu on Tuesday. (Reuters)

New Nepal govt gets court notice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, MAY 17

NEPAL's Supreme Court today issued a show cause notice to the government to furnish reasons for the detention of two royal government ministers Ramesh Nath Pandey and Shrish Shumsher Rana.

Acting on a corpus petition filed by the two minister seeking their release, a single bench of Justice Tahir Ali Ansari asked the PM's office and council of ministers, the Home Ministry and Kathmandu district administration office to furnish reasons

for their detention. The court also ordered the government to be present during the next hearing on Thursday.

Former assistant health minister of the royal cabinet Nikshya Shumsher Rana also filed a writ petition in the Apex Court seeking his release.

The government had arrested five former ministers at the recommendation of the high-level probe Commission for abuse of authority and misappropriation of government fund to suppress last month's popular uprising.

They have also been

charged with using excessive force to crush the pro-democracy demonstrations.

Meanwhile, noting that the government appears "positive" about releasing jailed activists of the outfit, CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda has asked his detained cadres to end their hunger strike on the issue. Some of the jailed Maoists cadres on Monday started a fast-unto-death in Nakkhu jail here to demand their release.

"The seven-party government appears positive about releasing the detainees and has expressed commitment to

speeding up the process following certain practical procedures," he said in a statement. "We have been holding talks with the government regarding this," he added.

Prachanda, however, warned that fresh protests would be launched if they were not released within a certain time frame.

The outfit's Kathmandu bureau in-charge Prabhakaran has issued a statement denying the rebel's hand in yesterday's protest programmes against the delay in issuing a proclamation to curtail the powers of the King.

18 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

New Republic

*हि १४
०८/०५/१५* Nepal begins long road to *१५-१६*
peace and freedom *१९१५*

Nepal has taken a giant step towards becoming a republic. The Nepalese parliament has adopted a resolution stripping the king of his privileges, including his title of commander of the armed forces. The Royal Nepalese Army will now be known as the Nepali Army. Parliament has also declared that henceforth Nepal will be a secular state, which will spell the end of the country as the only Hindu state where the king was revered as living Vishnu. In another blow to the monarchy, parliament has decreed that the king will have to pay taxes and that he won't have the inherent right to choose his heir. All this radically circumscribes the role of the Nepalese king leaving him with no constitutional authority. Parliament has been able to take these bold steps because public will is overwhelmingly opposed to the king. Indeed, prime minister G P Koirala had said that he would have preferred a constitutional role for the monarch but acceded to the wishes of the people. Though parliament's resolution is momentous, it marks only the beginning of a long road to freedom and democracy. The immediate task before parliament is to get Maoists on board in the process of turning Nepal into a republic. The initial response of Maoists to parliament's resolution is encouraging. Maoist leader Prachanda has welcomed the development, calling it a victory of the people's movement.

Several issues will, however, need to be worked out in the coming days. One of the most important tasks before parliament is how to integrate the Maoists into the institutions of an evolving democracy. A constituent assembly must be elected at the earliest with Maoists having a role in drafting Nepal's future constitution. A sticky issue is whether Maoists will lay down arms, and if so to whom. The Maoists have indicated that they might be willing to merge with the Nepali Army. But that would raise the problem of how to combine a professional army with one that was a 'people's' army engaged in rebellion. Equally important is the task of reviving Nepal's economy. During the past year or so, Nepal's economy has been in a shambles and its tourism industry crippled. Government has been virtually non-existent in large parts of the country that were under Maoist control. India and the international community must play a proactive role in channelling funds and expertise for reconstruction of Nepal's economy. But merely pumping in funds won't do. Nepal's institutions of governance have to be reinvigorated if the country is to become a robust republic.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 MAY 2006

Nepal King loses power, privileges

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Country declared secular state

Ameet Dhakal

KATHMANDU: The House of Representatives on Thursday passed a proclamation declaring itself the sovereign and supreme body of the country and massively cutting the king's power and privileges. It also declared the country a secular state and put the army under its control.

The House also renamed the Government the 'Nepal Government' and the country's army 'Nepal Army'. Till now, the government was called 'His Majesty's Government' and the army 'Royal Nepal Army'.

The House also stripped the king the title of 'Supreme Commander of the Army' and introduced a new provision regarding the appointment of the Chief of Army Staff. The cabinet will appoint the Chief of the Army and will decide the security system of the palace. The proclamation also said a new National Security Council, to be constituted under the chairmanship of the Prime

Minister, will decide the mobilisation of the army. Such a decision will have to be ratified in the appropriate House committee within a month. The national anthem has also been scrapped.

The House also proclaimed that it would have the right to enact, amend or annul the laws regarding the heir to the throne. This means the House will have the right to decide the heir to the Nepali throne. According to the proclamation, the House shall decide the royal expenses and the facilities; the royal family's income will be taxed and king's actions can be questioned in the Court of Law.

The House has also scrapped the Rajparishad or the Royal Privy Council and said the royal service will be merged with the civil service.

The proclamation has also opened the way for the Maoists to participate in the national government. The proclamation was passed by the House unanimously.

19 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Nepal curtails King's powers

Kathmandu: Nepal's reinstated parliament on Thursday unanimously approved a sweeping plan to curtail the powers of the king and take away his control over the army.

The historic move came less than a month after often violent mass protests across the Himalayan nation pressured King Gyanendra to reinstate parliament and hand power back to a multi-party government.

The landmark resolution was approved by a verbal vote by deputies in the 205-member house, less than two hours after it was presented by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

The proclamation takes away the title of supreme com-

mander-in-chief of the military from the king, traditionally revered as an incarnation of Hindu God Vishnu until the present monarch fell foul of his people after he grabbed power in 2005.

The government will no longer be called "His Majesty's Government" but just Nepal government. The country would also stop being a Hindu nation and become a secular state. "It reflects the aspirations of the people and respects the sacrifices of the people who were martyred during the movement," Koirala said as he tabled the resolution, referring to weeks of mass protests against King Gyanendra. "Now no one can dare underestimate this. I urge

people to remain alert and rise against anyone who tries to interfere in this and undermine this," Koirala said, speaking in Nepal.

Cutting the monarch's powers was a key demand of last

month's pro-democracy protests, which led to King Gyanendra reinstating parliament and handing power back to a multi-party government. The proclamation also taxes the King and allows his actions to be challenged in court. The principal advisory body of the king, the Raj Parishad or privy council, is scrapped, the Royal Nepalese Army renamed Nepali Army, and the army chief would be appointed by the cabinet.

Besides, parliament will have the power to make laws on the heir to the throne, decide on the perks and expenses of the king and be responsible for his security while his secretariat is placed under the national civil service.

Analysts have expressed doubts over the effectiveness of the proclamation, as under the current constitution no parliamentary bill can become law until the head of state—the King—signs it. But politicians say the proclamation overrides the constitution and reflects the will of the people and therefore cannot be challenged. They also say the king would have no powers and the proclamation would not need his approval. "If anyone tries to dishonour this, they will be digging their own grave," former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba told parliament.

While parliament debated the resolution, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside its gates. REUTERS



19 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

King without a kingdom

J. HEMANTHAND
AGENCIES

Kathmandu, May 18: The kingdom unravelled right before the eyes of the king.

When the parliament was stripping him of one title after another, King Gyanendra was watching the historic demolition live on television, surrounded by his family and close aides.

The House session was telecast live on all Nepali channels, including the state-owned Nepal Television.

In 1769, Gyanendra's forefather Prithvi Narayan Shah had brought together several small principalities to form Nepal. Two hundred and thirty-seven years later, the last public act of the palace came when it despatched a helicopter to a private school a few kilometres away to pick up Gyanendra's grandchildren who were stranded after street protests disrupted traffic.

The protests were over the

WINGS CLIPPED

The changes mooted by the proclamation

- Nepal to be called secular state, not Hindu nation
- The words 'Nepal government' to replace 'His Majesty's Government'
- King not to be supreme commander of the military
- The Royal Nepalese Army to be renamed Nepali Army
- Cabinet to appoint army chief
- King to pay tax and can be challenged in court
- King's advisory body Raj Parishad to be scrapped
- Parliament can make laws on heir to the throne, decide on king's perks and expenses and his security
- King's secretariat to come under the National Civil Service

delay in clipping the wings of the monarch, who sacked the government and seized power last year saying the political parties had failed to tackle the Maoist revolt that has killed thousands.

The relentless public pressure ensured that the new government had little option but

to move ahead with the proclamation that cut the king to size.

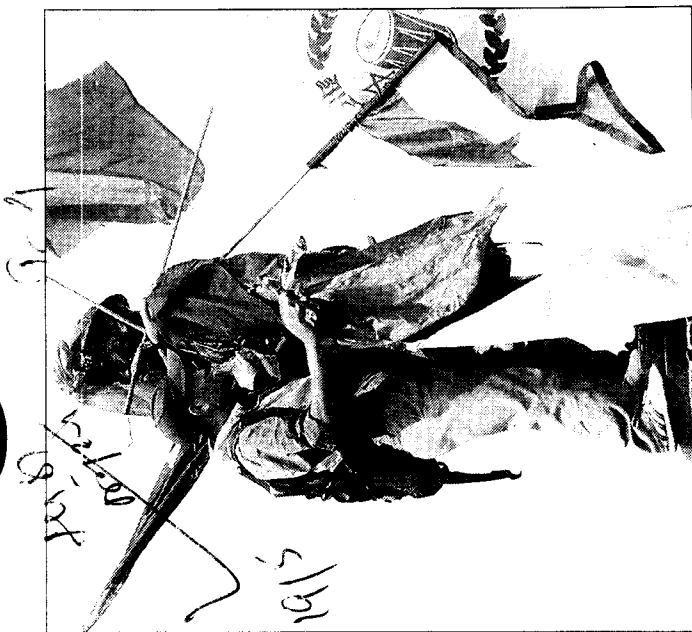
The proclamation takes away the title of supreme commander-in-chief of the military from the king. The government will no longer be called His Majesty's Government but just Nepal govern-

ment. The country would also stop being a Hindu nation and become a secular state.

"It reflects the aspirations of the people and respects the sacrifices of the people who were martyred during the movement," Koirala said as he tabled the resolution, referring to weeks of mass protests against Gyanendra.

At least 17 people were killed in the protests that compelled Gyanendra to reinstate parliament. "Now no one can dare underestimate this. I urge people to remain alert and rise against anyone who tries to interfere in this and undermine this," Koirala said.

The resolution — also backed by the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the Rashtriya Janashakti Party, two outfits that are not part of the seven-party pro-democracy alliance — scraps the all-powerful privy council, the Raj Parishad. It taxes the king and allows his actions to be challenged in court.



A Maoist supporter tries to place his outfit's flag on the statue of King Prithvi Narayan Shah in Kathmandu on Thursday. In 1769, King Prithvi had brought together several small principalities to form Nepal. (AFP)

19 MAY 2006

THE ILLUMINATOR

রাজাকে প্রায় ছুঁতে হিন্দু তকমা ছাড়ল নেপাল

কাঠমাণ্ডু, ১৮ মে: নতুন সংবিধান না হওয়া পর্যন্ত রাজা রইলেন, তবে যত দূর সম্ভব ঠুঁটা হয়ে। কার্যত রাজতন্ত্রের অবসানই ঘটল নেপালে। পৃথিবীর বুক থেকে মুছে গেল শেষ হিন্দু রাষ্ট্র।

সংসদে আজ এক ঐতিহাসিক ঘোষণাপত্র পাশ হওয়ায় ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত হল হিমালয়ের কোলে পাহাড়ি দেশটি। সেনা বাহিনীর নিয়ন্ত্রণ, রাজ পরিষদের খবরদারি, বিচারের উর্ধ্বে থাকার রক্ষাকবচ, সবকিছু হারিয়ে রাজ্যও পরিণত হলেন নেহাত ছা-পোষা সাধারণ নাগরিকে, এ বার থেকে যাকে আয়করও গুণতে হবে আর সরকারই মতো। বাতিল করা হয়েছে রাজার গুণ-গানের জাতীয় সঙ্গীতটিও।

রাজতন্ত্র সম্পূর্ণ উচ্ছেদের জন্য সংবিধান বদলাতে হবে। সময়সাপেক্ষ এই প্রক্রিয়া চলার সময় ক্ষমতানোভী রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র আর যাতে না বাগড়া দিতে পারেন, তার জন্যই আজ সংসদে বিশেষ সাংবিধানিক প্রস্তাব আনেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী গিরিজাপ্রসাদ কেরালা। আজ সকালেই প্রস্তাবটির খসড়া ৭ দলের মন্ত্রিসভায় চূড়ান্ত হয়। শুধু এই ঘোষণাপত্রই নয়, এবার থেকে সংসদে পাশ হওয়া কোনও কিছুই যে রাজা বাতিল করতে পারবেন না, স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয় তা-ও।

আনেকে বলে থাকেন, নেপালের বহু মানুষ এখনও পূর্ণ ক্ষমতার

রাজাকেই চান। রাজতন্ত্রের উচ্চাভিলাষে লাগাম পরানোর লক্ষ্যে সংসদে আনা ঘোষণাপত্রটি পাশ করানোর সময় ২০৫ সংসদের এক জনও কিন্তু বিরুদ্ধ-ভোট নিয়ে এগিয়ে আসেননি।

রাজার ক্ষমতা কতটা ছাঁটা হবে তা নিয়ে মতভেদ প্রকট হয়ে ওঠে ৭ দলের জোটের দুই প্রধান শক্তি নেপালি কংগ্রেস ও কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (ইউএমএল)-র। ঐষ হারিয়ে মানুষ পথে নামেন রবিবার। রাজাকে তত্ত্ব থেকে টেনে নামিয়ে যে জনতা ৭ দলের জোটকে ক্ষমতায় বসিয়েছিল, মাস পেরোনোর আগেই তাঁদের রোষে ভয়ীভূত হয় নতুন সরকারের নানা দফতর, গাড়ি। রাজতন্ত্রের সার্বিক উচ্ছেদের দাবিতে প্রায় এক দশকের সমস্ত আন্দোলনে যতি



দিয়ে মূল স্রোতে ফিরতে যারা সরকারের সঙ্গে ঘোষণাপত্র এনেছে, চাপ ছিল সেই মাওবাদীদেরও। নেপালী কংগ্রেসের নরমপন্থা অবশেষে জল হয়ে যায় মানুষের আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (ইউএমএল)-র ধারাবাহিক চাপের কাছে।

সংসদে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ঘোষণা করেন, 'রয়্যাল' নেপাল সরকার আর নয়, শুধুই নেপাল সরকার। 'রয়্যাল নেপাল আর্মি'র নাম বদলে হল 'নেপাল আর্মি ক্যামিনেট'। তাদের নিয়ন্ত্রণও আনা হয়েছে মন্ত্রিসভার হাতে। নতুন জাতীয় সঙ্গীত পরে বাজা হবে, কিন্তু পুরনো রাজানুরাগ-গীতি বাতিল আজ থেকেই। রাজ পরিষদ নামে রাজা ক্ষমতার যে বিকল্প কেন্দ্র চালাতেন,

উচ্ছেদ করা হল তা-ও। গোটা দেশের সঙ্গে রাজার প্রাসাদের নিরাপত্তার দায়িত্বও আনা হল সরকারের হাতে। এত দিন রাজা ও তাঁর পরিবারের সদস্যরা আইনি রক্ষা-কবচের বলে বিচারের হাত থেকে পার পেয়ে যেতেন যে কোনও আপরাধ করেও। রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রর পুত্র পারশ বেপরোয়া গাড়ির চাকায় একাধিক মানুষকে হত্যা করেও তাই দিবিখি খুরে বেড়ান আইনের বরা-ছোঁয়ার বাইরে। সে রক্ষা-কবচই কেড়ে নেওয়া হল রাজ পরিবারের। এখানেই শেষ নয়। আর পাঁচ জন নেপালি নাগরিক যা যা কর দেন, এখন থেকে রাজা বা রাজ পরিবারের সকলকেই মানতে হবে সে সব বাধ্য বাধকতা।

এত দিন সংসদে কোনও আদেশ পাশ হলে রাজা স্বাক্ষরের পরই তা আইনে পরিণত হ'ত; স্বাক্ষরের অর্ধ অনুমোদন! এ দিন ঘোষণাপত্রটি পেশ করে প্রধানমন্ত্রী কেরালা জানান, এখন থেকে আর এই অনুমোদনের প্রয়োজনও রইল না। দেশের মানুষ চান বলে সংসদে পাশ হলেই কার্যকর হবে ঘোষণাপত্রটিও। এমন কী আদালতেও এই একে চ্যালেঞ্জ করা যাবে না বলে জানান প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

এর পর দেশের পাতায়
● ক্ষমতাবদলের নেপাল...পৃঃ ১০

হিন্দু-তকমা

প্রথম পাতার পর

এবল গণ-বিক্ষোভে ১৯৯০-এ রাজা বীরেন্দ্র নেপালে যে গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা প্রণয়নে বাধ্য হন, তাতে সংসদীয় ব্যবস্থার সঙ্গে নিয়মতান্ত্রিক রাজতন্ত্রের সংস্থান ছিল। গত বছর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে সংসদ ভেঙে দিয়ে অসাংবিধানিক পদক্ষেপে ক্ষমতা দখল করেন রাজা। এ কাজে সেনা বাহিনীকে ব্যবহার করেন তিনি। গণতন্ত্রের দাবিতে ফের উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে নেপাল। সেই সঙ্গে রাজতন্ত্রের সার্বিক উচ্ছেদের দাবিও উঠে আসে সমান্তরাল ভাবে। নেপালি কংগ্রেসের মধ্যে কিছু নেতার এ বিষয়ে দুর্বলতা থাকলেও আন্দোলনরত মানুষের চাপে তা দানা বাঁধতে পারল না। নেপালে রাজতন্ত্রকে বাদ দিয়ে নতুন সংবিধান রচনায় শীঘ্র সাংবিধানিক পরিষদ গড়ার কথা আগে ঘোষণা করেছিল সরকার। গণভোটের পর গৃহীত হবে নয়া সংবিধান। স্পিকার সুভাষ নেওয়াং জানান, এ কাজ শেষ হতে ২০০৭-এর নভেম্বর হবে। তার আগে নতুন ঘোষণায় রাজতন্ত্রের অবলুপ্তি ঘটল নেপালে। (এফপি-র ফাইল চিত্র)

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(Continued from page 1)
the National Security Council regulating the security forces has been dismantled. Instead, a new body chaired by the Prime Minister would make all future security decisions. The cabinet would now choose the army chief and the earlier practice of the king appointing generals has been scrapped.

The cabinet would also have the power to deploy the army after obtaining the approval of the House of Representatives. The army, accused of recruiting only from elite high-caste mountain people, would be made inclusive.

The government also scrapped the tradition of senior officials like the Chief Justice and the Prime Minister being sworn in by the king, giving the power to the House instead.

An official refusing to do so would be liable to be dismissed. Pleading illness, Mr Koirala had asked Mr Subhas Nemwang, Speaker of the House, to read out the proposal that he said had been drawn up keeping in mind the aspirations of the Nepalese people, who had sacrificed their lives to oppose the king's rule through a peaceful movement last month and in accordance with the pact signed with the Maoist insurgents.

There was thunderous applause as Mr Nemwang put the proposal to vote and asked the lawmakers if they were in favour of the changes, but dead silence when he asked if anyone opposed them.

There was no opposition to the curbs targeting the king, even from his former ministers who were present in the House as MPs.

105 die in Afghan strife

KANDAHAR, May 18: Some of the fiercest violence since the Taliban's 2001 ouster erupted across Afghanistan, with coalition forces engaging in multiple fire-fights, two suicide car bombs and a massive rebel assault on a small village. Up to 105 people were killed.

The estimates of Taliban fighters and suicide bombers killed ranged up to 87, with 14 Afghan police, a US civilian, an Afghan civilian and a Canadian soldier also killed in the multiple attacks late yesterday and today, officials said. The assault marked another escalation in the campaign by supporters of the former Taliban regime to challenge the US-backed Karzai government. ■ AP

19 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

TAXING TIMES FOR KING

Nepal on secular road

1915
Heir to Nepal
SFI

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 18: King Gyanendra today paid a heavy price for 15 months of authoritarian rule with Parliament unanimously approving a series of radical changes that would shrink his stature drastically, snap all his links with the army, his source of strength, and turn Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, into a secular state.

After failing to keep the date with history on Monday, the Girija Prasad Koirala government was forced to table the historic declaration in Parliament today after angry protests erupted in the capital on Tuesday, warning more would follow if their demand was not heeded. Consequently, the 84-year-old ailing Koirala today asked Parliament to approve a series of measures, including re-naming the government Nepal Government instead of the earlier His Majesty's Government and the Royal Nepalese Army Nepalese Army.

Now the king's heir would be decided by the House of Representatives, the decision-making Lower House that would have the power to make,

amend and annul succession laws. It would also decide the king's allowances and privileges.

In the past, the king issued decrees to increase his allowances substantially. Last year alone, he gave himself a 16 per cent hike. From *Vishnu avatar*, the king now becomes a taxpayer, paying tax on his property like other citizens. He also loses his legal immunity with the House and court authorised to question him.

The nearly 4,000-strong royal guard defending the palace and taking their orders from the palace goes with the council of ministers given the task of providing the king protection. The palace secretariat, also hired by the king, will now be supervised by the bureaucracy.

The national anthem of Nepal, that extols the king, would be replaced and from a Hindu kingdom, Nepal would become a secular country. The government has abolished the controversial Raj Parishad - Nepal's Privy Council - that became politically active under King Gyanendra's rule.

To free the army from the king's control and bring it under Parliament,

■ Turn to page 3

The Telegraph

SATURDAY 20 MAY 2006 VOL. XXIV NO. 314

HAD A GREAT FALL

First to go were the king's men; it was then the king's turn. No two historic events being quite the same, there are differences between the English Revolution of 1640 and the birth of a Nepali Magna Carta. Yet, the Nepali parliament's proclamation stripping King Gyanendra of his powers and privileges has the spirit and resonance of the Cromwellian revolution. It proves once again that kings may find it easier to conquer other kingdoms than to win battles against their own people. If it had been so in the 17th century, when kingdoms and empires were the order of the day, it is even more true in this democratic age. In Nepal's case, the change is truly dramatic. Not only has the king lost almost all his powers, but the state has lost its character. It will henceforth be a secular state and not a Hindu kingdom. Nepal's monarch compounded his failure with acts of aggression against his people and the country's parliament. Almost each step that he took since ascending the throne five years ago imperilled the future of the monarchy. The last straw was his coup against parliament and the people in February, 2005. The Maoists and the mainstream political parties played their part in the Himalayan history. But King Gyanendra's own indiscretions were enough to bring about the end of the monarchy.

For the people and the parties of Nepal, though, a new beginning may still be some distance away. The parliamentary proclamation has put the

palace in fetters, but it has not answered many of the questions that the pro-democracy agitation raised. The most important of these was whether Nepal would have a monarchy at all — either constitutional or ceremonial. The people's verdict was unambiguous — they wanted a republican Nepal. It is time Nepal's parliament settled the issue once and for all. The experiences of the mass uprisings against the monarchy in 1960 and 1990 suggest that this anachronistic, feudal institution has held back the growth of Nepali society as much as it has

stymied the country's democratic politics and economy. Two bogus arguments are often offered in defence of the monarchy. A republican Nepal, it is argued, will be a communist country, since the Maoists have always sought to make it a republic. The other argument points to the many failures of the democratic parties

since multi-party democracy was introduced in 1991. The answer lies not in an absolutist monarchy but in strengthening democracy and bringing the Maoists into its fold.

For the international community, it is important to read correctly the writing on the walls in Kathmandu. It is no longer politically or diplomatically correct to try to defend an indefensible institution. The international efforts, especially those by New Delhi, should now focus on ending the decade-old Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The end of the Nepali rebellion can help India tackle its own Maoist challenge better.

The verdict of the people of Nepal was unambiguous. They want a republic. It is time Nepal's parliament settled the issue once and for all

20 MAY 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

20 MAY 2006

Maoists back king cuts, but say not enough

Sherpa feat
Kathmandu, May 19 (Reuters): A Nepali, Apa Sherpa, climbed Mount Everest for the 16th time on Friday, bettering his own record set last year, a hiking official said.



Apa Sherpa: Unique triumph

Kathmandu, May 19 (Reuters): Nepal's Maoist rebels backed sweeping cuts of the king's powers today but said the changes should not overshadow planned talks to end their decade-old insurgency that aims to overthrow the monarchy.

The comments by the rebels came a day after Nepal's parliament curtailed the powers of the king drastically and took away his control over the army. Today, about 5,000 people shouting "it is a victory of people" marched in Kathmandu to celebrate the proclamation. "We have to establish a republic," the cheering and dancing crowds shouted barely 500 metres from King Gyanendra's sprawling palace in the capital.

In the southern town of

Narayanhari, crowds toppled a statue of Mahendra, the father of King Gyanendra, and marched through the streets, witnesses said.

Similar rallies were also held in other towns and districts, residents said.

The proclamation also declared the royal family had to pay taxes, scrapped the royal advisory council and declared Nepal was no longer a Hindu kingdom but a secular country. It also said that the king's actions could be challenged in court and took over the power to make laws on the heir to the throne.

"Our party welcomes and supports it," the elusive rebel chief Prachanda said. But it was not enough, he added.

The proclamation seemed to have interpreted last

month's mass protests against the king and demands for a republic to mean that the monarch should remain a ceremonial head, Prachanda said. "This is incomplete in itself."

He said the move was silent about "peace talks as a solution to the problem of a decade-old civil war and this has given rise to serious suspicion". The Maoists have been fighting since 1996 to overthrow the monarchy and establish one-party communist rule. In November, the rebels and seven mainstream parties agreed to a loose pact against the king after he grabbed power in February 2005.

They have agreed to talks aimed at ending a revolt that has killed 13,000 people.

They are also preparing for

elections to a new Assembly to draft a constitution and decide the future of the monarchy, a key rebel demand.

Some analysts have expressed doubts over the effectiveness of the proclamation, and said it could be challenged in court. But the multi-party government asserts that the document overrides the 1990 constitution and has the force of law. Nepal's media widely welcomed it and the government declared today a public holiday to mark the event.

"Nepali Magna Carta is born" read a banner headline in *The Kathmandu Post* daily.

The US welcomed the historic proclamation. "The US supports the Nepal Government as it continues its efforts to restore democracy," a US embassy statement said.



Nepalis celebrate the sweeping cuts of the king's powers in Kathmandu on Friday. (Reuters)

199-6 2095 Throne out 199-8 2095

THE NEPALESE Parliament's historic decision to strip the monarchy of its powers is likely to set the Himalayan nation into a new and uncertain phase. The decision is in the form of a resolution from a Parliament which is clearly an interim one, and it has not satisfied the Maoists who want the complete abolition of monarchy. Yet, the right to make a final decision rests with the Nepalese people whose will can only be ascertained through fresh elections or a referendum. Nepal's monarchy was no ordinary one. In the mid-18th century, Prithvi Narayan Shah united a number of hill principalities to form the kingdom of Nepal. The monarch was regarded as a living *avatar* of Vishnu and ruled with the doctrine that 'the king can do no wrong'.

In modern times, however, these very attributes led to an overweening attitude and the monarchy proved unable to adjust to the times. In the Fifties, King Mahendra choked the democratic movement through a coup of sorts. It was only in 1990 that his successor, Birendra, accepted the status of a constitutional

monarch after a people's movement. But the dénouement thereafter has been more shocking. On June 1, 2001, Crown Prince Dipendra murdered his father, King Birendra, his mother and seven other members of the royal household and committed suicide. This was followed by a more prolonged *hara kiri* of the successor, King Gyanendra. Instead of trying to bring the shocked nation, already wracked by a Maoist insurgency, together, he tried to take the clock back to the reign of Mahendra. It took a heroic struggle by the Nepalese people to defeat him and begin writing what now appears to be an epitaph of the monarchy.

But having achieved this goal, Nepal needs to tread carefully. Given the history of Maoist movements, it is unlikely that they will compromise on their ideology which is an anti-thesis of democracy. The Maoists control large parts of the countryside and will not hesitate to resume their guerrilla war should they see that things are not going their way. The challenge before the fragmented democratic forces is to ensure that Nepal doesn't jump from the frying pan into the fire.

It's not the economy, stupid!

IT WOULD be a cardinal error to interpret Thursday's collapse of stock prices, cataclysmic as it was, as a reflection of the state of the economy. Little has changed over the past fortnight to justify this precipitate loss of confidence. Indeed, the justifications advanced when stock prices went into overdrive still hold good. The economy is still on course to grow at over 7 per cent per annum. Corporate results, barring a few, continue to be quite sound. Admittedly, results in some sectors have been below market expectations — which does not mean that these companies made losses. Quite the opposite, in fact — most have shown reasonable to good growth in revenues and profits, and look well set to continue to do so. It just means that these companies delivered results lower than what investors and analysts had expected.

But all these factors are geographically limited to India. Thursday's crash, which mirrored a downslide in both equity and commodity markets worldwide, is the clearest indication yet of an increasingly globalised economy. Fluctuations in global stock, commodity and currency mar-

kets will naturally lead to volatility in entry and exit of foreign funds — money will go where it gets the best return-to-risk ratio. At current levels, a 12,000-plus Sensex was getting somewhat overheated. Hence, the fall should be seen as a correction of previous overcalculations. Professional fund managers had expected this and had clearly prepared for it — the Sensex fell almost 500 points within the first minute of trading on Thursday, indicating a pre-planned exit.

Those who got hurt were small-time investors, who had been speculating on margin money — in other words, buying stocks which they had not researched, with money they did not have. When brokers put in margin calls, these investors could not pay, forcing further sales and a price collapse which continued into Friday. A salutary, if painful lesson on the benefits of a planned, long-term investment strategy. Exchanges, regulators and the government, however, need to reflect on developing a faster and more effective 'panic control' mechanism, to squelch unnecessary or *mala fide* rumour-mongering.

অবশেষে প্রজাতন্ত্র?

নেপালে রক্তপাতহীন বিপ্লব এক রকম তাহাই। পার্লামেন্টের একটি প্রস্তাবে রাজা একজন করদাতা সাধারণ নাগরিক, সেনাবাহিনী আর 'রাজকীয়' নয়, নির্বাচিত মন্ত্রিসভার অধীন, রাজবন্দনামুখর জাতীয় সংগীত রদ, প্রাসাদের নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং রাজার উত্তরসূরি নির্ণয়ের অধিকার আইনসভায় হস্তান্তরিত এবং নেপাল হিন্দু রাষ্ট্র হইতে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত। এক ধাক্কায় এতগুলি বৈপ্লবিক পরিবর্তন, এবং তাহাও সর্বদলীয় সংসদীয় ঐকমত্যে, সচরাচর দেখা যায় না। এই প্রজাতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লব আপাতদৃষ্টিতে রক্তপাতহীন, কারণ সংসদীয় প্রস্তাব মারফতই এই আমূল পরিবর্তনগুলি সংঘটিত হইতেছে। কিন্তু ভুলিলে চলিবে না, যে-সংসদ ইহা করিতেছে, রাজার ভাঙিয়া দেওয়া সেই প্রতিনিধিসভার পুনরুজ্জীবন সম্ভব হইয়াছে হিংসা, রক্তপাত ও আত্মোৎসর্গের মাধ্যমে। প্রজাতন্ত্রের দাবিতে দেশব্যাপী উত্তাল গণবিক্ষেভে রাজানুগত সৈন্য ও রক্ষীদের গুলিচালনা এবং গণ-আন্দোলনে মাওবাদীদের সক্রিয় নেতৃত্ব যখন গণতন্ত্রীদের হাত হইতে আলোচনের রাশ ছিনাইয়া লইয়া দেশময় রক্তাক্ত উপপ্লবের উপক্রম করিতেছে, তখনই রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র পার্লামেন্ট জিয়াইয়া তুলিতে বাধ্য হন। নেপালে প্রজাতন্ত্রের আবাহন অতএব কেবল সংসদীয় নিয়মতন্ত্রের শান্তিপূর্ণ পথে হয় নাই।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী গিরিজাপ্রসাদ কৈরালার নেতৃত্ব লইয়া সংশয় ছিল। সংবিধানসভা আহ্বান করিয়া নূতন প্রজাতান্ত্রিক সংবিধান রচনার জন্য মাওবাদীদের চাপ বাড়িতেছিল। জনসাধারণও ক্রমশ অসহিষ্ণু হইয়া উঠিতেছিলেন। ইতিপূর্বে বহু বার প্রাসাদ ষড়যন্ত্রে গণতান্ত্রিক সংস্কারের প্রয়াস বানচাল হইয়াছে। জনতার ভয় ছিল, রাজাকে অধিক সময় দিলে সেনা আনুগত্য এবং আমলাতন্ত্রের সহানুভূতি সম্বল করিয়া আবার না রাজা প্রজাতান্ত্রিক সংস্কারের সম্ভাবনা বানচাল করিয়া দেন। তাঁহার ডানা ছাঁটিয়া ফেলা তাই অতীব জরুরি ছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রী কৈরাল। সেই কাজটিই তৎপরতার সহিত নিষ্পন্ন করিয়াছেন। এ প্রসঙ্গে দুটি বিষয় প্রণিধানযোগ্য। এক, সংসদের এক জন সদস্যও রাজার ক্ষমতা, মর্যাদা ও বিশেষাধিকার হরণকারী প্রস্তাবে ভোটদানে বিরত থাকেন নাই, যাহা অভূতপূর্ব। এমনকী, যে দুইটি দল সাত দলীয় জোটের গণতন্ত্র পুনরুদ্ধার আন্দোলনে शामिल হয় নাই, সেই রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রজাতন্ত্র ও রাষ্ট্রীয় জনশক্তি দলের সাংসদরাও সোৎসাহে প্রস্তাবের পক্ষে ভোট দিয়াছেন। দুই, প্রস্তাবে রাজার ধর্ম হইতে রাষ্ট্রকে বিচ্ছিন্ন করিয়া তাহাকে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতার আধুনিক মহিমা দান করা হইয়াছে। ইহা তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ, কেননা রাজাকে ঈশ্বরের প্রতিনিধি ভাবার অভ্যাস অপরিবর্তিত রাখিয়া প্রজাতন্ত্র সফল হইতে পারে না।

জ্ঞানেন্দ্রর রাজকীয় প্রাসাদ-অভ্যুত্থানের জবাবে ইহাকে জনপ্রতিনিধিদের সংসদীয় গণ-অভ্যুত্থান আখ্যা দেওয়া যায়। তবে এই 'অভ্যুত্থান' এখনও নির্ণয়ক জয় হাসিল করে নাই। ক্ষমতাচ্যুত, হতগৌরব রাজা কী করেন, তাহা দেখিবার। তিনি যদি প্রজাদের অভিপ্রায় শিরোধার্য করিয়া রাজনৈতিক সম্ম্যাস বা বানপ্রস্থে গমনোদ্যত হন, তবে সেটা সকলের পক্ষেই মঙ্গলজনক। কিন্তু যদি তিনি তাহা না করেন, যদি পার্লামেন্টের প্রস্তাবে অর্থাৎ নিজের মৃত্যু-পরোয়ানায় স্বাক্ষর করিতে অস্বীকৃত হন, যদি সেনাবাহিনীর অনুগত অফিসারদের বিদ্রোহে প্ররোচিত করেন, তবে গৃহযুদ্ধ ও বিপুল রক্তক্ষয়ের পটভূমি রচিত হইবে। চাপে পড়িয়াই নিরুপায় জ্ঞানেন্দ্র পার্লামেন্ট জিয়াইয়া তাহার হাতে শাসনক্ষমতা প্রত্যর্পণ করেন। চাপ একটু হাল্কা হইলেই তাঁহার রাজনৈতিক উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষা যে নূতন করিয়া মাথা চাড়া দিবে না, তাহার নিশ্চয়তা নাই। রাজা, প্রাসাদ-প্রশাসন ও সেনাবাহিনীর রাজানুগত অফিসারদের উপর তাই চাপ অব্যাহত রাখা জরুরি। ইতিমধ্যেই অবশ্য গণ-আন্দোলন দমনকারী নিরাপত্তা অফিসারদের বরখাস্ত বা সাসপেন্ড করা হইয়াছে। উপরন্তু প্রধানমন্ত্রী ক্রমাগত জনসাধারণকে সতর্ক ও সজাগ রাখিতেছেন প্রাসাদ ষড়যন্ত্রের বিরুদ্ধে। জনসাধারণও এখনই চূড়ান্ত জয় হাসিল হইয়াছে ভাবিয়া ঘরে গিয়া খিল আঁটেন নাই, প্রতিদিনই তাঁহারা পথে নামিতেছেন, রাজতন্ত্রের উদ্দেশে হুঁশিয়ারি দিতেছেন। মাঝপথে যাহাতে প্রজাতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের অর্জনগুলি প্রাসাদের চক্রান্তে ছিনতাই হইয়া না যায়, সেই সতর্ক পাহারায় নেপালিদের নিশিচাগরণ অব্যাহত।

Victory celebrations in Nepal

Kathmandu: Cheering Nepalese held rallies in several cities and towns on Friday to celebrate the parliament's vote to dramatically cut King Gyanendra's powers and turn him into a figurehead leader.

Communist rebels, who control much of the countryside, also welcomed the resolution, passed unanimously by parliament on Thursday, but said the king's ceremonial role should also be eliminated.

The sweeping resolution called for King Gyanendra to be stripped of his command over the army, his legal immunity, and freedom from paying taxes. It also said the king should lose his official position as head of the Himalayan nation, changing traditional references to 'His Majesty's government' to simply the 'Nepal government'.

To be enacted, the resolution still must be voted on as a series of laws, officials said. That was expected in the next few days.

The measure's passage "has begun the process," Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli said on Thursday. "The government will



Nepalis celebrate in Kathmandu, a day after parliament approved a sweeping plan to curtail the king's powers

work with parliament to execute the resolution and laws will be drafted to implement the resolution."

Thousands participated in celebratory rallies on Friday in several towns and cities, while top political leaders were to address a major rally in the capital, Kathmandu, later in the day.

The seven parties in the ruling alliance called the resolution a historic achievement that had eliminated all of the king's powers.

"This ends the remains of the royal regime and establishes the king as only a figurehead," said Narayanman Bijuchche of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party.

Rebel leader Prachanda said he welcomed the resolution, but said it failed to address all needs of the people. "We want to make it clear that this declaration has not been able to fully address the needs and aspirations of Nepal and the Nepali people," the rebel leader, whose real name is Pushpa Kamal Dahal, said in a statement.

He said a continuing ceremonial role for the king "is against the aspiration of the people to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic." The rebels want to completely abolish the monarchy, but have said they will leave the decision to a special assembly which is to write a new constitution.

The parliamentary vote was the most significant move since the new government assumed power last month after weeks of street protests forced Gyanendra to give up direct control of the government, reinstate parliament and return political authority to elected officials.

Earlier this week, a delay in voting on the proclamation sparked angry protests in Kathmandu. AP

20 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MAOISTS | Rebels say overthrowing monarchy is the main objective Nepal ready to work with UN

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 19

IN ITS first ever official announcement, the Nepal government has said that it is ready to engage the United Nations in monitoring the code of conduct during the negotiation process with the Maoists.

Deputy PM KP Oli said that the government was ready to enter into agreements with the Maoists to develop a mechanism to ensure "strict adherence" to the code of conduct governing the ceasefire.

"In this context, we are ready to work with the United Nations including the UN Office of the



Pro-democracy activists celebrate Parliament's vote to strip King Gyanendra's powers in Kathmandu on Friday. AP

High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu and other institutions, said Oli during an in-

teraction with the representatives of diplomatic missions, the UN and donor agencies.

Clearly annoyed with the continued extortion and Maoist intimidation despite the ceasefire, Oli said that the government would begin negotiation soon but for this the Maoists must stop all these activities. Oli's criticism of the Maoists became more strident in the light of fresh threats from the rebels that they would shut down many Indian joint venture companies including Dabur if they failed to pay up.

Meanwhile, Maoist today backed stripping of the King's powers but said the changes should not overshadow planned talks to end their insurgency that aims to overthrow the monarchy.

20 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Declaration of Nepal as secular state criticised

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KATHMANDU: Nepal parliament's proclamation declaring the world's only Hindu Kingdom as a secular state has evoked a mixed response with the majority Hindu groups saying the decision has hurt the community.

People hurt

"The decision of the so-called Parliament has hurt the faith of the 900 million Hindu populace across the globe and brought about possibilities

of a religious crusade in Nepal," Shiv Sena Nepal president Arun Subedi said. The Parliament should not have panicked over preserving the only Hindu Kingdom in a world where 52 countries are Christians and 46 Muslims, the outfit said.

Arjun Lamichhane of the Bishwo Hindu Youth Federation said the issue of secularism should not be raised in a country where religious tolerance has always prevailed.

However, some minority ethnic groups have welcomed the decision. "With this declaration, the nation has moved towards ensuring social justice and harmony," Pasang Sherpa, general secretary of Confederation of Indigenous and Ethnic Groups of Nepal, said.

"We welcome the decision as minorities are exploited in a state that rules on the basis of a certain religion," he said. — PTI

21 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Minister named for talks with Maoists

Kathmandu, May 20 (Reuters): Nepal has named a senior minister to hold preliminary talks with the Maoists to prepare for a direct meeting between rebel chief Prachanda and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, a minister said today.

The multi-party government, formed after King Gyanendra bowed to massive protests and handed power back to political parties, has appointed home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula to head a three-member team, he said.

"Other members of the team will be named soon," works and physical planning minister Gopal Man Shrestha said. "There will also be a separate multi-party party team to assist the government negotiators," he said.

The Maoists, who have been fighting to topple the monarchy and set up a communist state in Nepal, have named their spokesman, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, for



Gyanendra: End of road

the preparatory talks.

Officials said the meeting, the first in nearly three years, would begin soon.

"These will be only preliminary talks," Shrestha said. "There will be a higher-level team headed by the Prime Minister for the talks with Prachanda." Early this month the government matched a rebel ceasefire and the two sides agreed to meet.

Preparations are also going ahead to hold elections

for an assembly to draft a new constitution and decide the future of the monarchy.

This week, the parliament reinstated by Gyanendra stripped him of various powers and took away his control over the army.

The administration is now called the Nepal government instead of "His Majesty's Government".

RSS vigilance

The RSS today asked the people of Nepal to remain vigilant in order to protect their religious identity.

"The constitutional recognition of Nepal as a Hindu nation was symbolic of its ancient traditions and culture. This identity was so far safe under the constitution. But now the people of Nepal will have to maintain eternal vigilance to safeguard it," RSS general secretary Mohan Bhagwat said in the sangh fountainhead's first comments on the proclamation.

21 MAY 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2006

End of the road for Gyanendra

In issuing a proclamation ending the absolute power of the monarchy, Nepal's House of Representatives has acted in the best traditions of sovereign parliaments the world over. In one swoop, King Gyanendra has lost his kingdom and his realm, his army and his immunity. He is no longer free even to decide on his own successor. He remains king, of course, but only because the people, acting through their representatives, have postponed a decision on the matter till the establishment of a constituent assembly. It is tempting to see in Thursday's historic decision the distant imprint of England's 'Long Parliament'. Revived by Charles I in 1640 after a long interregnum, Westminster moved almost immediately to make the king subordinate to it. Charles I's eventual insistence on absolutism led to more than a decade of civil war. It also cost him his head. But at the end of that turbulent period in English history, the limits of the monarchy were clearly established. In Nepal, the civil war — between the Maoists and the Nepal army — preceded Gyanendra's drive for absolute power and it is only with the restoration of Parliament that the conflict appears to have got a chance of finally ending. As in revolutionary England, such a change in the nature of the monarch's position would not have been possible without an end to his absolute monopoly over the control of armed forces. If the Long Parliament was forced to raise its own army to confront Charles I, in Nepal the erstwhile 'Royal' Nepalese Army was wise enough to read the writing on the wall and change sides. But General Pyar Jung Thapa is no Oliver Cromwell and Nepal's parliamentarians would do well to ensure he does not aspire to the role of a Lord Protector.

For the political parties and the Maoists, the transition to representative democracy from the absolute monarchy that existed before April 24 has been dramatic and remarkably smooth. But as the two sides start discussing the process of elections to the constituent assembly as well as the manner in which the Nepalese Army and the People's Liberation Army are to be sequestered or confined during this period, there will be need for statesmanship and patience all round. An urgent priority has to be the signing of a formal ceasefire agreement between the PLA and NA, which goes beyond the armistice and 'code of conduct' being considered by the Maoists and the Government. Since the process of framing a new constitution and holding elections after that could take a couple of years or more, participation of the Maoists in an interim government is important. On their part, the Maoists need to re-evaluate their attitude towards the political parties. It is the vigilance of millions of ordinary people that has brought Nepal's democratic revolution to this point. As for India, it should be ready to provide the people and the democratic process in Nepal any assistance they may require.

22 MAY 2006

11:11 AM

Nepal's hesitant steps to democracy depend on how the Maoists behave, and whether the international community keeps a watchful eye

King checkmated but the game continues

ONE chapter of Nepal's history was bid goodbye, another written last week. The all-powerful institution of the monarchy was stripped of all its traditional and constitutional powers, and almost reduced to a non-entity. The world's only Hindu kingdom was declared a secular country. And the Royal Nepal Army was brought under Parliament instead of the king, as it had been all these years.

The declaration by Parliament in fact strikes at the source of the king's powers: the military, which

But there was still a glimmer of hope, at least for the monarchists, that despite a clearly visible anti-monarchy mood within the movement for democracy, a traditional country with a nearly 85 per cent Hindu population was not yet ready to reduce the institution to a non-entity. Significantly, public disenchantment with the country's Hindu status was a direct fallout of the overt support the palace received from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its leader Ashok Singhal, who not only supported the royal takeover but also promised to parade about 2 bil-

took measures to ensure that all possibilities of king ever trying to take power back were scuttled once and for all.

The Government had recently constituted a high-level probe into excesses committed by the state to suppress the movement

27/5
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The government has promised that the dialogue will begin soon, the Maoists' attitude has triggered suspicion that they want to use the ceasefire period to consolidate their position, as they've done twice before.

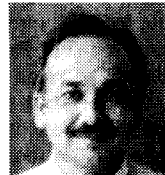
However, the current situation

will not hold any dialogue with them so long as they use violence as an instrument of politics. And while CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury hopes that the successful entry of the Maoists in Nepal's political mainstream would inspire Indian Maoists to follow suit, such a quid pro quo does not look likely.

In fact, Nepalese Maoists have already started hard bargaining, demanding the Prime Minister's post in the interim arrangement even before they have agreed to demobilisation of arms — a process which could be a bone of contention between Nepal and India, with the former favouring some degree of international involvement, preferably by the UN, and the latter opposing it.

The failure of the peace process, or its tardy progress, has

From Next-Door NEPAL



YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

The Maoists have declared a ceasefire, say they are willing to join the peace dialogue but are busy with extortion and recruitment to the 'people's army'. Their attitude has triggered suspicion that they want to use the ceasefire period to consolidate their position, as they've done twice before

hitherto enjoyed absolute immunity, and his imposed divine status that makes him superior to the rest of his countrymen.

That all options before the king had closed was evident on April 24, when he ceded the power he had hijacked unconstitutionally 15 months ago. Two days before that, the chief of the loyal — and erstwhile — Royal Nepal Army had warned the king of colossal loss of life and property if the king did not give up most of his powers.

lion Hindus all over the world in support of the world's only Hindu king. Between a Hindu state and a secular democracy, the Nepalese opted for the second. Rightly so.

The monarchists also pinned their hopes on the confusion and inherent contradictions within the ruling 7-party alliance on some crucial issues, and the palace's penchant for engineering plots and conspiracies.

But all hopes were dashed last Thursday when the declaration

for democracy. In the process, it arrested at least five former Ministers and suspended three top security chiefs. This and other similar actions had rightly raised concerns over the government's fairness and competence. More seriously, this was taken as a signal that the government would politicise the security forces. But the declaration in Parliament, which reads like the country's agenda forward, has temporarily allayed those fears.

That, however, does not allay Nepal's problems and fears. The Maoists, who have declared a ceasefire and expressed a willingness to join the peace dialogue, are busy with extortion and recruitment to what they call the people's army. Although the gov-

is different from peace efforts in the past: India, which had played a large role last November in bringing the Maoists and the seven parties to the table of parliamentary democracy, is now rather more wary of the Maoists' behaviour. And the rebels moving away from the peace process or continuing with activities like extortion would also give enough space for the international community to question or suspect India's motive behind the initiative it took on Nepal — drawing parallels with what happened in Sri Lanka in the late 1980s.

Significantly, India's position on the Maoist groups in its own country is that the government

PEACE AT LAST? High hopes in downtown Kathmandu

the potential to sabotage the historic blueprint, a direct outcome of the movement for democracy. In fact, the success of this movement so soon has also sent a warning message to the Maoists that it was also a rejection of violence — state-sponsored and Maoist-sponsored. While the seven-party alliance will continue to receive international and domestic support to move ahead on the declaration, it may be a last chance for the Maoists as their unreasonable demands and behaviour would once again bring them under targeted attack of the international community.

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Nepal rebels not to disarm before polls

Somini Sengupta

The voluble chief of Nepal's Maoist guerrillas has rejected the notion that his troops would disarm before elections, as many insurgent armies have done across the world. He demanded instead that his troops be sequestered and kept under international supervision, but only if the Royal Nepalese Army agreed to the same treatment.

"We are not exactly an armed group like in other places in the current world," declared the leader, known as Prachanda, or the fierce one. "How can you think we are only a small rebel group and the RNA is legal and legitimate?"

His comments, made in a wide-ranging interview on Friday night in an Indian city that he insisted remain unidentified, signalled one of the central challenges facing the peace process in Nepal: How to carry out credible elections to redraft the country's constitution, as the

new government has promised, without compelling the rebels to put down their guns.

But Prachanda's comments also hinted at a deeper, less tangible concern: Less than a month after helping to dislodge King Gyanendra's royal government, the Maoists, it seems, are worried about being slighted or sidelined in the new political landscape.

That landscape is nothing that this country has seen before. In late April, faced with three weeks of debilitating street protests started by Nepal's principal political parties and backed by Prachanda's organisation, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), King Gyanendra ceded control of the state to an interim government.

That government in turn ordered the arrests of five of the king's most prominent former cabinet ministers and last week approved a far-reaching measure to diminish his power. The government declared Nepal a secular nation, stripped the



Maoist rebels say they have now accepted the principle of a multi-party democracy. They say they will accept the verdict of Nepalese voters

king of his authority over the military and excised references to "His Majesty's Government" from government institutions.

On the face of it, these are important victories for the Maoists, who for the last 10 years have been fighting for the creation of a secu-

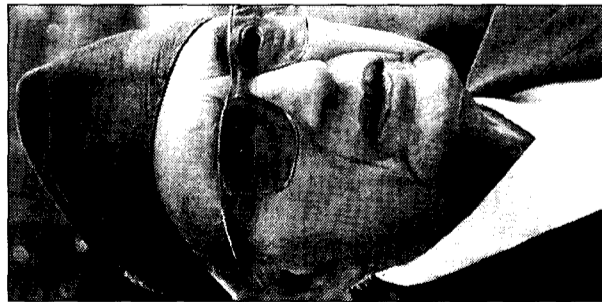
lar, republican Nepal and an army answerable to an elected government. And yet the Maoist leaders are complaining of being left out of the process, and cranky as it may sound from the underground leader of a feared revolutionary army of not getting the credit they deserve.

Clearly, a deep distrust still lingers. "Now they want to marginalize us, they want to bypass us, and they want to minimise the role of the Maoist movement," Prachanda said of the politicians. "That's why we are seriously concerned."

The Maoists can hardly argue with the substance of what the politicians have done; indeed, the measures seem to have been lifted straight out of the Maoist playbook. Their problem is with the process. The interim government, Prachanda said, should have immediately begun negotiations with the Maoists, dissolved the old parliament and assembled a new national body that would in turn organize elections for the drafting of a new constitution. Whether the apparently procedural dispute will bog down efforts at real reconciliation between the government and the rebels remains uncertain. Prachanda said the negotiating team he planned to lead is ready to start immediately. NPT NEWS SERVICE

22 MAY 2006

PM asks Maoists to spare business



Koirala: Trade travails

Kathmandu, May 21 (Agencies): Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has asked Maoist chief Prachanda to allow industrial units, including an Indian joint venture, in southern Nepal to run smoothly after rebel threats and extortion drives forced their closure.

Koirala phoned Prachanda yesterday and urged him to stop the extortion and intimidation drives launched by the rebels against the business ventures, the Nepalese Prime Minister's advisor Suresh Chalise said.

Koirala also asked the Maoist leader to allow the industries in Birgunj, including Indian joint venture Dabur Nepal, to run smoothly, he said.

Several units have been closed for the past two days following intimidation and

extortion. Prachanda assured Koirala that he would issue an internal circular to the cadre after investigating if they extorted money from the industrialists in the area, *The Kathmandu Post* reported.

Dozens of industries in Birgunj in southern Nepal are facing threats of closure and some of them have already been closed due to the extortion drive launched by the Maoist affiliated All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF), which has denied the allegation.

Dabur Nepal closed down its production unit in southern Nepal on Friday after the ANTUF demanded jobs and a donation, an industrialist said on condition of anonymity.

Indian industries have come under attack by the Maoists

in the past, too. Besides Dabur Nepal, Colgate Palmolive, Surya Nepal and other Indian joint ventures have faced similar threats from the Maoists.

"The Maoists are demanding huge sums of money and intimidate the management to close plants," Bijay Sarawagi, the chief of the local unit of the Federation of the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries, said from Birgunj.

Birgunj is a business town 150 km south of the capital Kathmandu. It is home to about 500 industries producing iron goods, hydrogenated vegetable oil and clothes and employing about 50,000 workers.

Sarawagi said groups of Maoists come into factories, demand work or higher wages for their cadre or force the fac-

tory to close.

"If this continues, all 500 factories will be forced to shut down," he added.

Last month, the Maoists declared a ceasefire after King Gyanendra gave in to weeks of street protests and handed power back to political parties.

Maoists have been extorting money to fund their war against monarchy since they began the fighting in 1996.

More than 13,000 people have died in the conflict that has shattered the aid and tourism dependent economy one of the world's 10 poorest.

Koirala expands Cabinet amid dissent

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, May 22: Nepal Prime Minister Mr Girija Prasad Koirala's fledgling government continued to walk the tightrope, expanding the Cabinet today amid continued bickering among its allies and facing new attacks from the Maoists. Twenty days after it was sworn in, the seven-member mini Cabinet expanded to 18 finally but still failed to reach an understanding with two partners. There were surprises galore in the appointment of the 11 new ministers, eight of whom are first-timers, two women and one a dalit.

The five new ministers

are Mr Narendra Bikram Nemwang (law, justice and parliamentary affairs), Mr Pradip Gyawali (culture, tourism and civil aviation), Mr Mangal Siddhi Manandhar (education and sports), Mr Rajendra Pandey (local development) and Ms Chitralekha Yadav (water resources). Confusion surrounded the appointment of Ms Yadav, who is deputy Speaker in the Parliament and passed over during the appointment of Speaker as the powerful Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist wanted the post for its member. She is said to have refused her portfolio, according to television channel Kantipur, but there

has been no immediate official confirmation.

The six new ministers of state are Mr Gopal Rai (forest and soil conservation), Ms Urmila Aryal (women, children and social welfare), Mr Ramesh Lekhak (labour and transport management), Mr Dilendra Prasad Baru (information and communications), Mr Dharmanath Prasad Shah (general administration) and Mr Man Bahadur Bishwokarma (environment, science and technology). Mr Bishwokarma, a dalit, replaces Bollywood actress Ms Manisha Koirala's father, Mr Prakash Koirala, who had been given the portfolio last year by King Gyanendra.

The original members in the Cabinet are Mr Krishna Prasad Sitaula (home), Mr Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli (deputy Prime Minister and foreign minister), Dr Ram Sharan Mahat (finance), Mr Gopal Man Shrestha (physical planning and works), Mr Mahanta Thakur (agriculture) and Mr Prabhu Narayan Chaudhury (land reforms). Besides heading the Cabinet, Mr Koirala also holds the key ministries of defence, palace affairs, commerce and health. The Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi) and People's Front were expected to join the government but didn't owing to continued wrangling over the number of ministries.

Even as the Cabinet was expanded, ⁵¹ ²⁸¹⁵ hopefully paving the way for forming a government team to hold talks with the Maoists, the rebels bombed the house of an activist from Koirala's Nepali Congress party. Mr Jogendra Sahani's house in Basantapatti village in Rautahat district was bombed today and his son and two brothers abducted by the rebels, *Kantipur* reported. The incident comes during a three-month ceasefire declared by the rebels and with their representatives reaching Kathmandu for negotiations. Ironically, Mr Krishna Bahadur Mahara, head of the team and spokesman of the rebels,

Dabur Nepal re-opens

Dabur Nepal and nearly a dozen other industries in southern Nepal that had closed their factories indefinitely from Friday owing to Maoist extortion bids and intimidation re-opened today but kept their fingers crossed as negotiations began between the guerrillas and representatives of the beleaguered industries and business groups.

23 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

NEPAL | Rebel negotiator also wants Parliament dissolved, polls held Scrap Constitution, say Maoists

AGENCIES
KATHMANDU, MAY 23

THE Chief Maoist negotiator for peace talks with the Nepal government on Tuesday urged the constitution be thrown out, parliament dissolved and an interim government including the rebels formed before elections are held to map the nation's future.

"We are going to have a new Constitution. But how can you have that without abrogating the old one?" asked Krishna Bahadur Mahara two days after arriving here to lead a three-member team in talks with a caretaker government.

The talks are to pave the way for a meeting between reclusive Maoist chief Prachanda and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, appointed to head a multi-party government after violent protests forced King Gyanendra to give up power.

Mahara said a "national polit-



File photo: Pro-democracy activists during a rally in Kathmandu. AP

ical conference" attended by all political parties including the rebels and the civil society should form an interim government to hold a planned election for a special assembly to decide the future political set up of the Himalayan nation and draft a new constitution.

"Parliament should be dis-

solved permanently and the Constituent Assembly should be in place as soon as possible," said Mahara. "We want this to happen in six months if possible."

Mahara said the rebels were prepared to place their weapons under the supervision of the United Nations or any other "credible" international organi-

sation only if the Army did too.

He also said "King Gyanendra is still in a position to conspire. The belief that the government proclamation (stripping the King of his powers) has made him completely powerless is untrue. Only changing the appearance of the king and the Army is not enough, the basic things are not changed."

Mahara, however, welcomed the proclamation. "We welcome Parliament's declaration that sliced the King's powers and converted Nepal into a secular state."

On the peace talks, Mahara said the rebels would like to initiate a dialogue with the government at the earliest. "We are not in a position to make the process of dialogue lengthy, it should conclude early," Mahara told the *Kantipur Daily*.

"The talks should start soon," Mahara said, demanding early release of their cadre and making public the status of those made disappeared by the government forces.

20 MAY 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Protest over plan to turn Nepal into secular state

REUTERS

KATHMANDU, MAY 24

THOUSANDS of Nepalis protested in a southern business town on Wednesday against a plan to turn Nepal into a secular state.

More than 5,000 people burned tyres and logs, and blocked roads in Birgunj, about 150 km south of Kathmandu, resident Shiva Patel said. They were protesting over a plan approved by Parliament last week to turn Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, into a secular state.

Shouting *Jay Shree Ram!* (Lord Ram is great!), demonstrators obliged shops to pull down shutters and forced vehicles off the streets, local journalist Govind Devkota said from the town on the Indian border.

"They are demanding Nepal be declared a Hindu nation," Devkota said. "It's peaceful so far, but could turn violent." About 80 per cent of Nepal's 26 million people are Hindus and 11 per cent Buddhists.

In April, King Gyanendra bowed

Government names two ministers for talks with rebels

KATHMANDU: Laying the ground for substantive talks with the Maoists, Nepal's interim government has named two ministers to hold preliminary talks with the rebels, official sources said. Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Pradip Gyawali of CPN-UML and Minister of State for Labour and Transport Management Ramesh Lekhak of NC (Democratic) have been included in the talk team, a senior minister said on condition of anonymity.



PM GP Koirala

The team will be lead by Home Minister Krishna Situala. However, the government is yet to formally announce the talk team. The talk team members have been announced a day after chief Maoist negotiator Krishna Bahadur Mahara stressed on the need to initiate a dialogue with the government at the earliest to resolve the 10-year-long armed conflict. Mahara, who is in Kathmandu leading a three member preparatory talks team, yesterday met with Nepal Communist Party-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and senior politburo member Amrit Bohara.

During the meeting, the two sides expressed concern over the delay in initiating the talks. "We discussed ways to creating conducive atmosphere for talks and regarding procedures to move ahead the dialogue process," Bohara said, adding, "any delay in the dialogue process would give chance to sabotage the peace".

—PTI

to weeks of pro-democracy protests and handed power to a multi-party government after almost 15 months of absolute rule.

He also reinstated the Parlia-

ment disbanded in 2002. The Parliament quickly moved to curb the King's powers, took control of the Army and declared Nepal a secular nation.

25 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Ground set for talks

Nepal frees Maoists

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 25: The Nepal government today began preparing the ground for talks with the Maoist rebels by releasing all detained members of the outfit from various prisons all over the country.

The decision to release the detainees was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala here today.

"The cabinet has decided to release all Maoist detainees in order to create a conducive environment for talks," home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula said after the meeting.

The cabinet also formally added the names of minister for culture, tourism and civil aviation Pradip Gyawali and minister of state for transport and labour management Ramesh Lekhak to the team which will represent the government at the talks with the Maoists. The team is headed by Sitaula himself.

The home minister said it was decided at the meeting to form a committee to trace all those who were reported missing after being taken into custody by the security forces. The Maoists claim that about 1200 of their colleagues are in government custody.

The rebels have already formed a three-member team for the talks headed by Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara. They have also promised to consider the code of conduct compiled by the Seven-Party Alliance, to be followed by both sides during the talks.

THREE MINISTERS SELECTED, MAOISTS URGED TO BEGIN DIALOGUE WITH INTEGRITY

Nepal names talks team

108/1 4072/15

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 25: A month after declaring a ceasefire, Nepal's government today announced a three-member ministerial team for starting peace negotiations with the Maoists and asked the guerrillas to begin a dialogue with integrity.

Home minister Mr Krishna Prasad Sitaula, who played a key role last year in forging an alliance between the rebels and the seven major Opposition parties who are in the government now, is heading the team that also includes

newly appointed minister for tourism, culture, and civil aviation, Mr Pradip Gyawali, and labour and transport management minister Mr Ramesh Lekhak.

The Maoists sent a three-member team to Kathmandu on Sunday for the preliminary negotiations, after which their enigmatic leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda, who has remained underground for over a decade, will make his appearance for the final negotiations. Maoist spokesman and former member of parliament Krishna Bahadur Mahara says he has already begun

informal consultations with the leaders of the seven parties.

"We ask the Maoists to come to the talks table with integrity," government spokesman and newly appointed information and communications minister Mr Dilendra Prasad Badu said today after the announcement of the talks team.

"The government is also ready to hold dialogues on any issues with full integrity," Mr Badu said the cabinet has reached an understanding on a code of conduct that would govern both sides during the truce and the talks.

"We are asking the Maoists to create an atmosphere free from fear so that people can express their opinions freely (during the election to choose a new constitution", Mr Badu said.

The Maoists, on their side, want the government to release all political prisoners, annul the draconian anti-terror law that allows a suspect to be held incommunicado for a year, and publicise the whereabouts of all cadres missing since their arrest.

They also want war criminals - security officials responsible for torture and extrajudicial killings - to be

brought to book.

Mr Sitaula today said the government has begun legal proceedings to free 19 Maoists facing court cases and over 400 detainees have been released. It has also decided to form a one-member commission to discover the whereabouts of the missing people. According to Maoist estimates, over 1500 of their people were in prison and over 1200 missing.

Unlike two earlier rounds of talks that failed in 2001 and 2003, Mr Badu said the present government was optimistic this time since both the government and

the Maoists wanted a constituent Assembly election to write a new constitution that would leave it to the people to decide if they wanted a kingdom or republic. "We are in agreement with the Maoists and the universal goal is a constituent Assembly election," he said in his debut press conference.

"The talks are intended to widen the path for laws that would enable people to determine their own future. This government came to power through a people's movement and remains committed to the people."

Nepal govt and Maoists begin peace talks



Home Minister Krishna Sitaula (right) with Krishna Mahara, chief Maoist negotiator, before the start of peace talks at Gokarna Resort near Kathmandu on Friday. AP

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, MAY 26

THE long awaited talks between the government and the Maoists began today at the Gokarna tourist resort on the capital's outskirts, amidst hopes that this would be able to finally steer Nepal away from impending civil strife.

The meeting—in which three members each from the government and the rebels participated—takes place as the two sides were expressing public commitment that together they would take the country towards democracy, durable peace and prosperity. But the latest developments indicate the path of dialogue may not be hassle-free.

Even as Maoist leaders say that the question of demobilisation prior to elections for the constituent assembly is out of the question, they have stepped up extortion activities, openly demanding up to Rs 10 crores from private banks and industrial houses to run their guerrilla army.

The proposed public rally of the Maoists next week has already made the government nervous since the rebels plan to participate in combat dress, and possibly bearing arms. The rally which coincides with the fifth anniversary of the royal massacre, officials said, was deliberately planned to allow the rebels to officially launch their cam-

paign for a republic Nepal.

Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula, who are heading their respective teams, both expressed 'optimism' about the success of the dialogue. However, the enthusiasm is not shared by the rest. There are also fears the Maoist leadership is not in total control of its armed cadre. There is also a general sense of fear that the Maoists are carrying on their cadre mobilisation parallel to the dialogue, capitalising on the demoralisation in government security forces ranks.

The initial few rounds of the meeting would take up the code of conduct that both parties have to follow during the negotiations. Stopping extortion and releasing child soldiers are two crucial demands that Maoists may resist, though the government has conceded most of the conditions put forth by the rebel prior to the talks.

Meanwhile, Ian Martin, special representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, today made public the list of 49 suspected Maoists 'disappeared' by the government between September and December 2003. He said this was carried out by the Bhairabnath Gana, a special anti-terror battalion. Martin also demanded that RNA officers responsible for this should be suspended.

27 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Nepal Government, Maoists begin talks

Dialogue will certainly succeed, says Home Minister Sitaula; rebel representatives offer no comment



FIRST CONTACT: Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula (left) and head of the Maoist team Krishna Bahadur Mahara at the peace talks near Kathmandu on Friday. — PHOTO: AFP

KATHMANDU: Nepalese government negotiators launched peace talks with Maoist rebel leaders on Friday confident of success in ending a deadly decade-long insurgency after clearing the way for a constitution.

The meeting which got under way at a hotel is the first formal discussion between the rebels and the Government since they joined forces for 19 days of street protests that last month ended King Gyanendra's total rule.

"We are 100 per cent hopeful that the talks will succeed," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, interim Home Minister and head of the government talks team.

Fight for republic

Maoist rebels began their insurgency in 1996 to fight for a republic that has left them in control of large parts of rural areas. More than 12,500 persons have died.

As the price for joining the political mainstream, the Maoists have demanded elections to a body to rewrite the 1990 constitution, which would decide the future role, if any, for the monarch.

"The talks will focus on the

First formal discussion between rebels, Government

Talks to focus on constituent assembly election

Hundreds of Maoists freed from prison

clashes with security forces that left 19 dead but forced the King to recall Parliament and end the 14-month period of total rule.

In less than a month, the interim government has moved to cut the King's powers, including ending his control over the army, and declaring the former Hindu kingdom a secular state.

Regular contact

Responding to a Maoist ceasefire, the Government removed the tag of "terrorist" from the Maoists and began releasing the rebels.

Head of the Maoist talks team Krishna Bahadur Mahara arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday and had been speaking regularly to government negotiators by telephone.

He demanded the release of up to 1,300 comrades from prison, and an inquiry into the fate of some 569 rebels who disappeared during the decade-long conflict, before they would sit down to formal talks.

The Government responded on Thursday by saying it had freed 467 Maoists from prison and ordered the release of another 100. — AFP

issue of constituent assembly elections," Mr. Sitaula confirmed before heading into the talks.

The Maoist team arrived a few minutes later but declined to comment to waiting media as they went into the first session.

King Gyanendra seized power in February 2005, accusing the Government of corruption and failing to quell the Maoist rebellion, and cracked down on political Opposition and the media.

The Maoists and a seven-party coalition, former foes, struck an agreement late last year to focus their energies against the King and force him to relinquish total control.

They brought thousands on to the streets leading to violent

Talks end with code of conduct

Sudeshna Sarkar

KATHMANDU, May 26: Nepal's government and Maoists concluded their first round of peace talks that lasted six hours today agreeing to continue the peace process, government and rebel negotiators said. The two sides agreed to follow a 25-point code of conduct as they continue the talks.

Nearly three years after they ended in acrimony

and bloodshed, peace talks between the Maoists and the new government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala kicked off afresh in Kathmandu valley this afternoon. The venue chosen for the third round of talks was in a way symbolic of the vast changes in the country, government and the Maoists themselves since August 2003, when the second round of talks ended.

The three-member Ma-

oist team headed by former member of parliament and Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara, and including senior rebel leaders Dinanath Sharma and Dev Gurung, warmed up for the meeting with the government team, headed by home minister Mr Krishna Prasad Sitaula and including newly appointed culture, tourism and civil aviation minister Mr Pradip Gyawali, and labour

and transport management minister Mr Ramesh Lekhak, at a meeting this morning at Mr Koirala's official residence in the capital.

The 25-point code of conduct decided to create a fear-free atmosphere, to create an environment of trust, to discuss development and public service, to allow educational institutions, hospitals and industries, to function in harmony. They have also

asked the media to help with the peace talks by disseminating news accordingly. They have also agreed not to raise money through intimidation. Both sides have agreed on the rehabilitation of the displaced people and to release the detainees. The government released 27 Maoists in Kathmandu and Rautahat. Based on the concessions among both sides they would ask the national and interna-

tional agencies to monitor the ceasefire.

Mahara said he is more optimistic about the talk this time. This is because both sides have agreed on the constituent Assembly election. The army would be a crucial factor during the peace talks. In 2003, the talks broke down after the army killed 19 people during a truce called by both sides. At that time, the army had been under the king's control.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Koirala takes over with peace call

APR 30 11:55

DRIMI Chaudhuri
Kathmandu, April 30

VETERAN NEPALI Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala took oath as Prime Minister for the fifth time on Sunday and Parliament unanimously backed his resolution for elections for a constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution that would clip powers of King Gyanendra, a key demand of Maoists. A motion calling for a ceasefire with the Maoists was also approved.

Koirala was sworn in by Gyanendra at the Narayanhiti Palace in the morning and soon afterwards, in his speech to the House of representatives, he exhorted the Maoist rebels to join the peace process.

"The desire of the Nepalese people is peace and a democratic atmosphere would lead to an environment where people can leave without fear. The process has begun and we should all cooperate. Since the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist has already declared a three-month ceasefire, I call upon them to come and join a peace dialogue," Koirala said.

After the HoR began its session on Sunday, the newly sworn-in Prime Minister urged the lawmakers to take a positive decision on his proposal to hold Constituent Assembly elections. He also assured the MPs that the

CRASH COURSE

A bus-load of wedding guests on Saturday landed up at a police station in Kathmandu after a brush with Nepal's crown prince Paras.

The prince's car, with Paras at the wheel, rammed the bus and sped away. And, instead of an apology, the victims were detained by police for questioning.

Paras had once run over a popular singer but wasn't punished as the royals are above the law. IANS

government would soon make its agenda public. "The new government would work according to the aspirations of people and in the spirit of the recent movement for democracy. We hope the international community would cooperate with us in the rehabilitation of Nepal and various relief activities," he said.

After a four-hour debate, Parliament unanimously approved Koirala's poll proposal, a crucial demand of the pro-democracy movement. The Assembly is to frame a new Constitution severely curtailing the powers of the monarch who had seized absolute powers in February last



Nepal's King Gyanendra (right) administers the oath of office to Girija Prasad Koirala in Kathmandu on Sunday. AFP

year overthrowing the government headed by Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Senior parliamentarian and general secretary of CPN (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal said, "The government should move ahead with the SPA roadmap in mind and the 12-point understanding

with Maoists. Election to Constituent Assembly and peace talks with Maoists should be top priority." He also demanded the setting up of a commission to investigate the murder of CPN (UML) parliamentarian Hem Narayan Yadav and the formation of a committee to compensate families of those killed and

injured during the last few weeks pro-democracy movement. Former Prime Minister Deuba said he was confident that past mistakes would not be repeated. Koirala, a trusted friend of India, thanked the international community for its support and called upon them to help revive Nepal's economy.

Sudan accepts Darfur deal

REUTERS
Abuja, April 30

THE SUDANESE government accepted an African Union-drafted Darfur peace deal on Sunday and said any outstanding disagreements on issues such as security and power-sharing could be negotiated later.

The AU had set Sunday as a deadline for the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels to wrap up negotiations that have dragged on for two years while the conflict in the vast western region of Sudan has escalated.

After all-night discussions at a no-frills hotel on the outskirts of the Nigerian capital Abuja, the government announced it had accepted the AU's terms. "The government... wishes to confirm its decision to formally accept this document and its readiness to sign it," said a statement from Majzoub al-Khalifa, head of the government's negotiating team at peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria.

"The government wishes to confirm its full commitment to implement the agreement in good faith. The delegation is also convinced that any difficulties that might come up can be resolved by consensus."

The rebels have yet to respond officially to the 85-page document but several of their leaders have complained that it does not meet their key demands.