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**Kanak Mani Dixit- "The recent political developments in Nepal" og "The Transhimalayas, forgotten regions of Nepal".**

Dixit er en av de mest respekterte journalistene i Nepal og i Sør Asia, og er redaktør for flere magasin, deriblant Himal South Asian.

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**Neste medlemsmøte (årsmøte) blir i februar 2006**

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## Nepal awaits the king's move

By Rabindra Mishra  
BBC Nepali service  
BBC News 24.11.2005

**This week's understanding between Nepal's Maoist rebels and the country's major opposition political parties signifies a huge shift for both groups in their policies towards the monarchy.**

The country has been in increased turmoil ever since King Gyanendra seized power in February, sacking the government and suspending civil liberties.

But it may be some time before it is clear how significant the new accord is.

The Maoist rebels have been fighting for a decade to turn Nepal into a communist republic and have seldom ignored the chance to insult the king.

Since the February royal coup, the major opposition parties have also come to see the king as part of the problem, rather than the solution, to Nepal's many ills.

### **Dropping support**

After the coup, the country's largest political party, the Nepali Congress, decided that it could no longer unconditionally say that the country ought to have a monarchy.

The second largest party, the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), went further, deciding that it favoured turning Nepal into a 'democratic republic.'

**There is a growing feeling both within and outside the country that the monarchy is becoming an impediment to democracy in Nepal**

However, the 12-point common agenda made public this week suggests the possibility of some major shifts in position.

It does not even mention the word 'republic'. It talks only about ending the "autocratic" monarchy. That, analysts say, clearly implies the acceptance of a ceremonial, or constitutional monarchy.

The other 11 points of the joint programme indicate other compromises.

The Maoists have pledged not to engage in violence if their demand for the election for a constituent assembly to chart a fresh political course for Nepal is met.

They have not decided to surrender their arms but have agreed to place them under the supervision of a credible international force during such an election. The opposition parties have now for the first time agreed among themselves on the need for a constituent assembly.

The international community seems to be cautiously positive about the understanding.

The Nepalese government has not formally responded - that may have to wait for the king to return from a tour of Africa - however, the initial responses have not been enthusiastic.

Senior ministers have been cynical about the deal, which they are saying was reached at the "behest of the foreigners".

That is a veiled reference to recent clandestine meetings in India between the Maoists and the opposition party leaders as well as meetings between the party leaders and foreign diplomats in Kathmandu.

### **The issue of trust**

Elsewhere, the new agreement has produced mixed views.

The editor of Himal South Asian magazine, Kanak Mani Dixit, told the BBC that the Maoists should be given a chance and they should be "tested - if not trusted."

Trust is indeed the key issue.

If what is in the joint programme can be taken as representing the good faith of the rebels, then it is indeed an historic agreement.

The rebels, who have been arguably waging the most successful Maoist insurgency in the world in recent decades, have clearly stated that they are ready to accept multi-party democracy. Moreover they have given indications that they would accept some form of non-autocratic monarchy.

However, the past 10 years indicate that the rebels cannot be relied on to keep their word, says the editor of the People's Review weekly, Pushkar Raj Pradhan.

"Every time they have been in a win-win situation and through out all these years they have very successfully played one constitutional force against another."

Time will tell if that caution is justified.

But what cannot be denied is that Nepal's tri-polar power struggle between the king, the parliamentary political parties and the Maoists seems to be now turning into a bi-polar one.

### **King's move**

The opposition parties and the Maoists are not using the word 'alliance'.

But they have agreed to "attack the autocratic monarchy" from their own positions.

The Maoists have also agreed to allow political parties to conduct their activities without intimidation or violence.

Now the ball is in the king's court. The agreement gives the king both a warning and room for compromise.

If he does not compromise, then this week's deal could well turn into a more concrete alliance.



That would be a serious threat for the institution of the monarchy itself, as there is a growing feeling both within and outside the country that the monarchy is becoming an impediment to democracy in Nepal.

However, the agreement also suggests the Maoists are prepared for a massive climb-down in their insistence on the abolition of the monarchy. The recent raucous criticisms of the king by the political parties are also absent in the agreement.

At this stage some argue that the king could not ask for more from the Maoists or the political parties.

Some also think that the softening of positions on the question of the monarchy could not have come without a hint from the king's side that he too would be ready to compromise if the challenge to the throne were withdrawn.

However, there are others who think such softening of positions was a result of the realisation that the country's current conflict cannot be resolved without compromise.

The king has been dismissive to all the national and international reactions during his past 10 months of direct rule.

Does that mean he will give the thumbs down to the deal between the rebels and the political opposition?

We shall have to wait and see.

## The next move Two months of ceasefire left to build a peace process and the clock is ticking

KUNDA DIXIT, NEPALI TIMES

Just about everyone agrees that King Gyanendra is contemplating a new move but no has a clue what it will be.

Trial balloons from the royal regime could indicate he is considering the option of scrapping the constitution altogether, after all there isn't much left to destroy. Hardline army brass make no secret of their preference for a ban on parties and still seem to have the king's ear.

More moderate advisers, however, argue that the royal takeover instead of helping crush the Maoists has actually put the monarchy in serious jeopardy and have told the king he should quickly backtrack.

The question is whose advice will the king take? He has been on the road constantly for the past two months and has met a slew of businessmen and advisers. He has admitted



NARESH NEWAR

*IN BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE: Safeha Fakir's husband and his two brothers were killed by Maoists last year in a village near Lumbini, she now takes care of her children and 29 members of her clan.*

to them his regime has failed to deliver. Exactly three years after 4 October, 2002 and seven months after 1 February 2005 things are not going according to plan and King Gyanendra knows it.

"The capable are not loyal and the loyal are not capable," he was quoted as saying during a recent get-together. But the king retains a deep distrust towards the political parties, appears to believe that the Maoist-party link is a plot hatched by the India-US-UK and still seems to believe he can go at it alone.

The king's immediate agenda is to reduce domestic and international pressure on his regime. A reshuffle after Dasain to induct less-tainted faces from centrist parties could be in the cards, but few will want to be seen as being coopted. He could follow this up with an announcement of local and general elections after municipal polls to show the parties as recalcitrant.

The king didn't meet the EU Troika, which warned on Thursday of "a strong risk of political collapse". The Troika statement added: "The changes of 1 February have been self-defeating." It said the Maoist ceasefire offered an opportunity for the government and that there may be a role for third-party involvement. In meetings with the Europeans, party stalwarts rejected elections outright but there will be pressure on them to contest given their thaw in ties with the Maoists.

Elsewhere, efforts are underway to forge unity among constitutional forces. The US-based Carter Centre is organising a two-week retreat in Boston between selected representatives of the seven-party alliance and monarchists next week. If the parties and the palace can iron out their differences and give the king a face-saving way to climb down, the hope is that they could begin negotiations with the Maoists at an international venue. Unless someone sabotages it first.

The Maoists' unilateral ceasefire ends on 3 December, and despite sabre rattling by radical royals there is hope the next eight weeks can be used to build a lasting peace process. Although under strong pressure from its republican rank-and-file the NC and UML could still allow the king a soft landing to a constitutional monarchy while there is still time.

## **Fears in Nepal over media curbs Journalists in Nepal could get two years in prison for criticising King Gyanendra, according to a new law.**

BBC News, 17.10.2005

Details of the new law was released on Monday after its announcement on 9 October, a day before government offices closed for a week-long holiday.

Journalist groups have said they will file a case in the nation's supreme court against the restrictive law.

King Gyanendra has imposed restrictions on the media ever since he seized direct power in February.

## Gagging

The law also bars private radio stations from broadcasting news and makes it a crime to criticise the royal family.

**These extremely repressive amendments to the press law are a major blow to journalists in Nepal, who have worked tirelessly to preserve their livelihood, from a king who appears determined to destroy the independent press**

Ann Cooper

The law has also increased the maximum fine on newspapers and journalists by ten times to 500,000 rupees (\$7,000).

It also gives the government the power to revoke journalists' press accreditation - barring them from the field.

"We are going to file the case at the Supreme Court on Tuesday. The new laws not only violate the press rights guaranteed by the constitution but also several decisions held by the courts in favour of press freedom," said Balram Baniya of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists.

He said journalists would also protest in the streets.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has also condemned the new law and called for its immediate repeal.

"These extremely repressive amendments to the press law are a major blow to journalists in Nepal, who have worked tirelessly to preserve their livelihood, from a king who appears determined to destroy the independent press," Ann Cooper, the executive director of CPJ said.

Dozens of journalists were arrested and a number of newspapers ceased publications temporarily after king Gyanendra seized power in February this year and imposed nationwide emergency.

Though the emergency was lifted after three months, groups fighting for press freedom say a number of restrictions on media are still in place in the country.



# Press under pressure

## The crackdown on Kantipur is to show the regime has teeth but it may have bitten off more than it can chew

Nepali Times, 28.oktober-3.november, 2005  
KUNDA DIXIT

The persecution of Kantipur this week may have been the royal regime's way of showing it means business with its media control decree but it appears to be having the opposite effect.

After the heavy-handed midnight break-in on Kantipur FM last Friday, the government gave the station a 24-hour ultimatum to stop broadcasting news. Targeting the country's most powerful media is obviously a message to the rest to toe the line or else.

The regime's credibility was at stake. Three weeks after the promulgation of the media ordinance on 7 October, radio stations throughout the country had been openly flouting its provisions. The royal council of ministers was annoyed about the defiance, insiders told us, and wanted to show that the ordinance had teeth.

But the crackdown has gone against domestic public opinion and intensified protests from international media watchdogs and governments. Even US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said his government was "deeply disappointed and concerned" about the "the shocking seizure at gunpoint of radio equipment".

State media and pro-establishment op-ed writers have been justifying the crackdowns, saying the government doesn't want to control the press, only to "regulate yellow journalism". Indeed, some of the provisions of the royal decree, such as restrictions on cross-ownership, a code of conduct for journalists and even the ban on news on FM, were tabled by the elected Deuba government three years ago. But a landmark Supreme Court decision in 2002 won FM stations the right to broadcast news.

Journalists and civil society members say it's the sneaky way the edict was announced on the eve of Dasain and its draconian nature that proves the royal regime is acting in bad faith. Senior officials often point to critical coverage in the papers to prove the press is free.

But Shiva Gaunle, vice president of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, says people shouldn't be hoodwinked: "It may appear free but the media gag rule hangs like a sword over our heads." Indeed, the sword now seems to have fallen on Kantipur FM as punishment for its fiercely critical coverage of the February First royal takeover by its sister newspapers.

### Breaking news

The Supreme Court late Thursday issued a stay order banning any government action against Kantipur FM for allegedly violating the new Media Ordinance. The order says officials must hold off until at least Sunday, when the court will hear numerous petitions against the ordinance.



ADAPTED FROM WALKLEY



But the crackdown has united the media like nothing before. Journalists and activists camped outside Kantipur FM on Thursday as the government's 4:30 PM deadline for the station to stop broadcasting news neared. It also woke up the seven party alliance, which is still on Dasain hibernation, to announce a protest shutdown in the Valley on Friday.

Of all the provisions in the ordinance, rights activists say it is the ban on FM radio news that is the most illogical. Frequent statements by officials that nowhere in the world is news allowed on FM has made them a laughing stock. The media ordinance has also severely eroded the credibility of the king's election announcement.

## Ceasefire eases tensions in Nepal

By Charles Haviland  
BBC correspondent, Nepal

BBC News 27.10.2005

**Maoist rebels fighting Nepal's government are now more than half-way through the three-month ceasefire they called in early September.**

The government, which King Gyanendra has led since seizing power in February, has refused to reciprocate the truce, saying it mistrusts the rebels' intentions.

There have been continuing reports of the army killing Maoists or Maoist suspects, sometimes unprovoked; and of the rebels victimising and sometimes killing civilians.

But the level of violence is markedly down, for instance in Kailali, a district very heavily affected by the insurgency.

### 'Exchanging' views

In a school in one tiny village, an unusual gathering is taking place.

Despite the sweltering midday heat, local Maoists are holding a meeting with representatives from Nepal's mainstream parties.

They have invited them and teachers and businessmen to exchange views on Nepal's future.

The meeting is very much on the communist rebels' own terms. Their red banner is displayed and a minute's silence is held for a Maoist leader recently killed.

But Maoist speakers apologise for what they call their "mistakes", and party politicians feel it is worthwhile.

"In the past, workers from our party and others were victims of Maoist violence," says local Nepali Congress leader Ghanashyam Joshi. "Relations between us were bad.

"But the ceasefire has brought a change. They're increasing their contacts with us and there's no violence against us any more."

### 'One-sided'

The Maoists' chief for this and neighbouring Bardiya district is present.

**Before the ceasefire, every day you heard blasts. It was like a kind of routine**

Saroj

A fresh-faced young man calling himself "Comrade Atom", he told the BBC this was a ceasefire aimed at helping ordinary people and at working with the parties against the government.

He said the door was not closed against talking to the authorities, but strongly criticised them.

"This ceasefire is one-sided," he said.

"The royal regime's aggression has made things very difficult for us. The army is still killing and kidnapping people.

"In the past we would retaliate, but as we're not retaliating now they are doing it all the more - killing dozens, arresting people and stopping us moving around."

Asked about reports of the Maoists increasing their abductions of schoolchildren in parts of Nepal for political indoctrination, Comrade Atom would not be drawn.

"We have not been informed about this. I can't say anything more."

**More relaxed**

The bus to the district capital, Dhangadhi, passes endless fields where newly harvested rice straw is laid out to dry - and some of Nepal's most heavily fortified military barracks.

At one, a couple of soldiers climb on, give a cursory glance at the passengers and wave the vehicle on. Before the ceasefire, passenger Ramesh Kunwar says, bags would have been searched and all travellers made to disembark.

Dhangadhi is a city of bicycle-rickshaws. Barely a car plies the streets, perhaps because the rich have fled to Kathmandu.

Its mayor was shot dead and it has suffered more insecurity than any other large town in Nepal.

Last February, 2,000 Maoists stormed its central prison, freeing over 150 prisoners including 70 Maoists. Seven guards were killed.

"Before the ceasefire, every day you heard blasts. It was like a kind of routine," says local restaurateur Saroj Bikram Shah.

But since September, "people are happy. We don't have any problem at all."

At the sports club, the police chief for this Far Western region, Deputy Inspector-General Ramesh Kumar Shrestha, has just finished a round of badminton.

He acknowledges things have relaxed.

"The situation is improving remarkably, not only because of the ceasefire but because of our effectiveness also," he says.



"People are enjoying the ceasefire. But our security status is the same: the Maoists have declared it for the people, not for the security agencies."

He says the security forces here are effectively reciprocating the truce by not going on offensive operations, but alleges that in remote parts of this region the Maoists are still kidnapping and torturing people.

Mr Shah adds that the rebels are still extorting money from businessmen in Dhangadhi, and he expresses doubts about their overall intentions, saying they may be using the ceasefire to store up weapons and ammunition.

### **Late-night revelry**

Whatever the politics of the ceasefire, however, it is giving people respite.

Late at night, in one far-flung village, local people put on a show for the religious festival of Dashain - traditional comedians take the stage followed by dancers gyrating to Bollywood hits.

It is being revived for the first time in six years.

The fun lasts till three in the morning. Before the ceasefire, organiser Mohan Chowdhury says, everyone would have been in bed by seven.

Their hope, although it may be a vain hope, is that the lull can continue beyond early December and Nepal be stopped from plunging again into full-scale violence.

## **Nepal: Beyond Royal Rule**

International Crisis Group  
15 September 2005

### **OVERVIEW**

Nepal is in turmoil and the monarchy is in question. King Gyanendra had calculated that his authoritarian moves since October 2002 would return order to a land wracked by Maoist insurgency and political instability but he has failed. The seven months since the royal coup have seen security degenerate under a royal government with no plans for peace and democracy. The Maoists seized the initiative by announcing a unilateral three-month ceasefire on 3 September 2005. The international community needs to recognise that its calls for palace/ political party reconciliation as the sole path toward stability are unrealistic. New lines need to be explored, beginning with support for the ceasefire and the tentative dialogue underway between the parties and the Maoists.

The king's actions have marked the definitive end of the old status quo. There is no prospect of a stable balance of power between palace and

parties. The monarchy retains control of state instruments, crucially the army, but it has alienated other natural allies and prompted swelling republicanism. The Maoists are militarily strong and control much of the countryside but have failed to win popular support. Mainstream parties offer the hope of representative leadership but have lost legitimacy and must make difficult decisions about the monarchy and the Maoists. Civil society is finding a voice but cannot supplant the parties and will struggle to play a decisive role on its own.

History may credit Gyanendra for forcing the pace of political developments, albeit not as he had hoped. While endangering the future of the monarchy, the royal coup has prompted a healthy clarification of positions and acted as a catalyst for Maoist-parties dialogue. But there are many dangers. The Maoists are strong and determined, possibly serious about peace talks but also reluctant to give up the advantages they have won through force. The monarchy is weakened and in a corner; as pressure mounts the king, backed by the army, may stage a further, more brutal, crackdown on the mainstream opposition. The political parties' unity is fragile, and they have to reengage with their public while treading a careful line between two armed forces hostile to democracy.

The final pattern of the fallout from the royal coup has yet to become clear but some trends are identifiable. The Maoist-parties dialogue has been boosted by the ceasefire announcement. So far it has set modest aims, with no illusions of instant solutions, but it has made some progress on building confidence and developing an agenda. Popular support for a monarchy that has failed to deliver peace or prosperity is declining. Political activists have already been joined on the streets by other protestors, and mainstream dissent will certainly grow. The mainstream parties will have to struggle to regain mass support.

The death rate from the conflict has risen, with 1,574 fatalities reported from January 2005 through June and major clashes in the following two months. If the Maoist ceasefire is not reciprocated or does not hold there is potential for further escalation. Meanwhile, both the economic and humanitarian situations have deteriorated.

The international community's one-point policy of urging the palace and parties to cooperate was reasonable as long as there were realistic indications they might oblige. However, the king's actions since February 2005 have produced a political sea-change, with moderate parties moving toward a more republican stance and the Maoists urging them to negotiate. Nepal's most influential friends need to engage in a serious rethink. They should:

- welcome the Maoist ceasefire and urge its indefinite extension, government reciprocity, and that all sides in the conflict seize the opportunity for substantive talks;
- continue suspension of military aid in order to maintain pressure on the royal government to restore democratic governance and explore all avenues to peace talks;
- replace the traditional insistence on a constitutional monarchy alongside parliamentary government as the sole path to stability and democracy with an unequivocal focus on democracy -- with



- or without the king -- and a negotiated peace;
- work towards better international policy coordination, especially between India, the U.S., the EU and the UN, preferably in the form of a loose contact group;
- hold a follow-up to the 2002 London International Conference on Nepal, bringing together all major players to chart a course towards a principled, democratic peace and ensure basic unity of purpose;
- support the UN human rights monitoring mission with money and political backing; and
- support mainstream, non-violent democratic parties, helping to protect them against attacks from both armed sides and planning for a potentially difficult transition to democracy.

There can be no return to the status quo before the 1 February coup. Nor can there now be any easy return to the political institutions of the 1990 constitution. The king has made clear his desire to take Nepal back to the absolute monarchy of the 1960s, while the Maoists insist on moving straight to a constitutional revision process. King Gyanendra's refusal to go back on any of his controversial steps, however many diplomatic exit routes he is offered, has reduced the chance for compromise. The mainstream parties' suspicion of the king's intentions and their consequent willingness to envisage abandoning the monarchy make a palace climb-down risky.

The king may yet give in to pressure to reinstate democratic institutions but his instinct is to see out his all-or-nothing gamble. He may find that he has been outflanked by both the Maoists and a resilient political mainstream that still embodies most Nepalis' desire for peace and democracy.

**Kathmandu/Brussels, 15 September 2005**

## **EU says Nepal at risk of collapse**

BBC News 06.10.2005

A European Union delegation on a visit to Nepal says the country is in danger of political collapse.

EU delegation leader, Tom Phillips, said the failure of constitutional forces could lead to a breakdown of government institutions.

King Gyanendra seized direct power in February saying politicians had failed to tackle the insurgency by Maoists.

The EU team also accused the Maoists of continuing to recruit child soldiers despite calling a ceasefire last month.

### **'Self-defeating'**

Mr Phillips, who is also director for South Asia and Afghanistan at Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was speaking at a news conference in Kathmandu at the end of a three-day visit.

**We are greatly concerned that unless all involved move quickly to address the country's problems effectively, there is a strong risk of political collapse in Nepal**

Tom Phillips,  
EU delegation head

He urged the Nepalese government to reach out to the political parties to develop a full return to multiparty democracy.

Mr Phillips said the king's takeover of power had darkened prospects for a resolution of the armed conflict and the political crisis.

He called King Gyanendra's move self-defeating.

The BBC's Charles Haviland in Kathmandu says the EU is an important donor to Nepal and this visit by the diplomatic mission reflects its continuing concern at the violence and political stalemate.

Mr Phillips said the government and security forces must combat what they called the "culture of impunity" on human rights violations.

But he told Maoist rebels the EU absolutely rejected the use of violence and did not see Maoist ideology as the answer to Nepal's problems.

Mr Phillips said the rebels' unilateral truce appeared to be tactical - they were still extorting, intimidating people and signing up children to fight.

However, he urged the government to respond to the ceasefire whatever its misgivings.

Nearly 12,000 people have been killed in the nine-year Maoist insurgency that aims to replace country's monarchy with a communist republic.

## Nepal - Halvårsrapport per 1. august 2005

Det Norske Utenriksdepartement. Hovedtrekk det siste halvåret

1. februar avsatte Kong Gyanendra Deuba-regjeringen – med begrunnelse i dens manglende resultater i forhold til sitt mandat - og oppnevnte en ny regjering under egen ledelse. Det ble samtidig innført unntakstilstand. Sosiale og politiske rettigheter ble satt til side, herunder pressefrihet, bevegelsesfrihet og forsamlingsfrihet. Videre ble de politiske partiene satt på sidelinjen – tidligere ministere og partilederne ble holdt i husarrest, og mellomledere og studentledere ble fengslet. Kongens maktovertagelse og tilsidesettelse av flerparti-demokratiet møtte sterke internasjonale reaksjoner, herunder fra Norge.

I tiden etter 1. februar har de militære virkemidler vært prioritert, noe som har medført ytterligere eskalering i volden mellom hæren og maoistene. Selv om unntakstilstanden formelt ble opphevet 29. april, videreføres sentrale begrensninger på sivile og politiske rettigheter. Den generelle MR-situasjonen har vært i forverring siden 1. februar.

Som en konsekvens av kongens maktovertakelse besluttet både India, USA og Storbritannia å suspendere våpenleveransene til Nepal inntil videre. Håpet om at Kong



Gyanendra ville ta positive veivalg innen utløpet av 100 dager ved makten ble ikke innfridd, og utviklingen i situasjonen har etterhvert gitt lite håp om snarlig bevegelse mot flerpartidemokrati og en begynnende fredsprosess. Det samlede internasjonale presset var sentralt under årets møte i MR-kommisjonen i Genève, hvor det ble vedtatt en resolusjon om Nepal, og hvor Nepal signerte en MoU med UNOHCHR om MR-overvåking i Nepal.

Den 8. mai samlet de 7 sentrale partiene seg om en felles plattform. Hovedpunkter i plattformen er gjeninnsetting av parlamentet og etablering av en allparti-regjering. Plattformen legger til rette for dialog mellom partiene og maoistene. Etter gjensidige erklæringer fra partiene og maoistene om vilje til dialog, la India i juni til rette for møter mellom partiene og maoistene i Delhi. Kongen har foreløpig inntatt en avventende posisjon i forhold til initiativet.

Den norske beslutningen om å redusere bistanden til Nepal har fått mye oppmerksomhet. Spesielt har oppsigelsen av Melamchi-avtalen skapt reaksjoner. Myndighetene har naturligvis uttrykt skuffelse over den norske beslutningen. I media har beslutningen vært møtt med forståelse og fingrene pekes mot regimet for å føre en politikk som gjør det vanskelig for donorene å fortsette samarbeidet. Media har spesielt kritisert Melamchi-etterforskningen til den kongelige korrupsjonskommisjon (RCCC) og domsavsigelsen mot bl.a. tidligere statsminister Deuba.

Antallet protestdemonstrasjoner mot Kongen er økende. Partiene er foreløpig noe avventende i forhold til å igangsette større demonstrasjonskampanjer mot Kongen. Foreløpig demonstrerer de ulike gruppene separat. Om motstanderne av Kongens regime samler seg, samt at Kongen fortsetter på sin kurs, vil demonstrasjonene ventelig øke i styrke og intensitet.

De menneskelige og økonomiske tapene ved konflikten er vanskelig å beregne. Antagelig taper Nepal fra 2 til 4 prosentpoeng realvekst hvert eneste år som følge av konflikten. Sagt på en annen måte, kunne et Nepal i fred doble den økonomiske veksten i forhold til hvordan situasjonen er nå.

## **Bush to sign strict laws on Nepal**

NEW YORK: A bill passed by the US Senate and the Congress recently, which is being signed by the US President George W Bush this week, has attached more and "stricter" conditions on Nepal government and the security forces for providing military assistance. According to a copy of the bill received, there are altogether nine conditions laid out on two major categories – "civil liberties" and "protecting human rights" – for providing military assistance to Nepal under the "Foreign Military Financing Program" for the upcoming fiscal year. There were only four major conditions last year.

Significantly, unlike last year, the newly passed Foreign Operations Bill hasn't deplored and condemned Maoist insurgency anywhere, which was, however, mentioned in its draft that was also made available.

"Funds appropriated... may be made available for assistance for Nepal only if the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that that Government of Nepal, including its security

forces, has restored civil liberties, is protecting human rights, and has demonstrated, through dialogue with Nepal's political parties, a commitment to a clear timetable to restore multiparty democratic government consistent with the 1990 Nepalese Constitution," the bill says.

The United States has stalled supply of lethal assistance to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) in the aftermath of the Feb.1 royal takeover.

The newly passed bill has defined "civil liberties" as "due process under law, freedoms of speech, the press and association, and the right of movement", which have been enforced in Nepal following the royal takeover.

The new bill has said, however without mentioning it clearly, the formation of the controversial Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) goes against "protecting human rights".

"...ensuring that the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority is receiving adequate support to effectively implement its mandate and that no other anti-corruption body is functioning in violation of the 1990 Constitution or contrary to due process."

Other conditions in this topic are: (1) release of all political detainees including those detained before February 1; (2) granting civilian prosecutors and judicial authorities, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and international humanitarian organizations, unannounced and unimpeded access to all detainees, places of detention, witnesses, relevant documents and other requested information; (3) ending torture, extrajudicial killings and other gross violations of human rights; (4) restoring the independence of the NHRC in accordance with constitutional provisions; and (5) complying with habeas corpus orders issued by Nepal's courts including all outstanding orders, and the security forces are respecting such orders.

Responding to a question, Tim Rieser, a top aide to Democratic Senator to Patrick Leahy, said President Bush is going to sign the Bill this week. "We expect the President to sign this into law this week," he said.

Addressing the Senate on November 9, the day when the Bill was passed, Senator Leahy said King Gyanendra's actions, more than that of Maoists, have made the political solution in Nepal "more elusive". "We have once again put conditions on our military aid because of the King's undemocratic and repressive actions on February 1, and the army's continuing involvement in human rights violations."

He also deplored Maoists from personal capacity. "We detest the tactics of the Maoists, who forcibly recruit children, who engage in extortion, and brutalize civilians. But the King's actions have only made a political solution to the conflict in Nepal more elusive, and at great cost to democracy and the rule of law."

The new conditions, finally approved by the Congress and the Senate, were proposed by Leahy in his speech to the Senate on July 28.



However, the Secretary of State may waive the new conditions if the Secretary certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that to do so is in the national security of the US.

The US Government has also decided to provide \$2.5 million to the OHCHR in Nepal to monitor and report on human rights violations throughout the country.

## **Nepal water project under review**

By Sushil Sharma  
BBC News 03.10.2005

**International donors are meeting in the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu, to discuss the future of the country's largest infrastructure project.**

The donors are expected to discuss the funding of the project over the next five days, authorities said.

The \$500m Melamchi drinking water project was plunged into uncertainty after a key donor, Norway, pulled out following the February royal takeover.

The drinking water project is aimed at meeting the needs of Kathmandu.

### **Uncertain future**

Representatives of a number of bilateral donors and the Asian Development Bank, one of the key donors, are taking part in the meeting.

Norway, one of Nepal's many international donors, has criticised King Gyanendra's seizure of direct powers after the monarch dismissed a multi-party government.

The mega-drinking water project is being built on the Melamchi river in the northern district Sindhupalchok, near Nepal's border with China.

Water from the site will reach the capital city Kathmandu through a 27-km (15-mile) tunnel.

### **Political crisis**

In July, sacked Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his colleague, Prakash Man Singh, were sentenced to two years in jail by an anti-corruption panel set up by the king following his takeover.

The panel convicted Mr Deuba and Mr Singh of corruption in awarding contracts for the project.

The two leaders belong to the Nepali Congress (democratic), part of a seven-party alliance that has been engaged in anti-king protests over the royal takeover.

The move had been widely seen as an act of political vendetta and criticised internationally.



The Nepalese authorities denied it, but the biggest donor, ADB, ruled out any corruption in the awarding of contracts following an independent investigation.

## **SAFTA: A New Prospect For Nepal**

By Uttam Maharjan

THE 13th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Dhaka from November 12 to 13, 2005 after being postponed twice this year. SAARC was established in 1985 to work towards finding solutions to the common problems facing the South Asian region. The South Asian region is home to 1.4 billion people. During the last two decades, SAARC has not achieved any remarkable economic progress vis-a-vis some regional groupings like ASEAN and EU.

### **Low Income**

Most of the people in the South Asian region are poverty-stricken. The region, however, accounts for only 1.65 percent of the world gross national product (GNP) and only 1.12 percent of global trade. The per capita income of the region is also very low. Out of the total international trade, Nepal carries on 98 percent of trade with India alone. This figure was 88.27 percent in 1995 and increased to 98.74 percent in 2001. Thus, India has dominated our regional and international trade as well. The main reason for India's domination in trade is the common land borders with four SAARC countries and close geographical proximity to two island nations of the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Thus, the centrality of India to South Asia has given it the most important role to play in regional trade. The country has based its relations with its smaller neighbors on the changed regional and global imperatives. Nevertheless, SAARC could not share ample regional trade between the member nations. The regional trade of EU, ASEAN and NAFTA are 55 percent, 61 percent and 25 percent respectively of the total international trade, whereas the regional trade between the SAARC countries is very negligible.

Today, the global economy is volatile. The demand for goods and services in the USA has an impact on the price of the goods and services in Nepal and elsewhere. In order to uplift the nation's economy, the economic reform programmes are essential. It is very challenging for the countries like Nepal to cope with other countries in terms of trade and investment.

Due to the lack of sustainable economic growth, Nepalese businessmen have to face numerous problems. The economy of the country is lopsided and at stake. In the previous years, the nation has achieved one of the worst economic growth rates (EGR) in its history. Nepal needs to do a lot to improve its economy. It may be noted that SAARC countries entered into an agreement on the South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) in 1995. This was a significant move towards economic cooperation in the region. But, SAPTA could not contribute to the economic reforms of intra-regional trade. The failure of SAPTA has awakened the SAARC countries to the need for moving towards a free trade area (FTA). This topped the agenda during the SAARC summit in Sri Lanka in 1998. The summit

agreed to furnish the initial modalities within 2001. During the Male summit, free trade between the SAARC members was finally named South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and the agreement was signed by all the member countries at the 12th SAARC summit in Pakistan in January 2004. They agreed to implement SAFTA from January 1, 2006. SAFTA is expected to take a full-fledged stage by 2016.

Further, some intellectuals and businessmen have also suggested to the SAARC members to transform this intra-regional association into an economic association by 2020. SAFTA is a new prospect for Nepal and it will buttress up the economy. In order to overcome economic hurdles, Nepal expects a lot from SAFTA. The businessmen are looking forward to benefiting from SAFTA. The provisions in SAFTA are designed to enhance the production of the indigenous products and create easy passage for international arenas. The export sector will also get a shot-in-the-arm, as the basic thrust of SAFTA is to have a very nominal customs duty.

We have to use Indian routes for our export business and therefore businessmen have faced hassles. They are bound to export their goods to the third countries and have to follow the Indian government's norms. Sometimes, the Indian government interrupts our business by imposing quarantine checks on the commodities and by using a quota system in some export-oriented products. The exporters have to use Indian territory to export their commodities, raw materials and equipment to other foreign countries. In this way, they are facing transportation problems. SAFTA will act as a watchdog in all these activities and we are hopeful that these business problems will be solved. It may be hoped that with accession to WTO, Nepal will capture markets in other far-lying nations and the network of exchange of products will improve. The membership of WTO has also made it easier for the country to comply with the laws of SAFTA in its global trade. Nepal is said to have many other advantages from SAFTA. They could be the development of an open market system, secure and profitable investment, competition with the brands of other countries and improvement in the economic growth of the country.

#### Investment

It is further expected that with the implementation of SAFTA, intra-regional trade and investment will also be enhanced, thus improving the economy. The countries like Nepal are expected to attract some investment from the larger ones. Moreover, establishment of the South Asian Development Fund (SADF) and the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry is expected to provide opportunities for increasing trade and investment in the region. Many issues and challenges of intra-regional development and trade are obvious. However, in view of growing global competition the importance of regional cooperation is increasing. Nepalese export-oriented products like leather, garments, carpets, pulses, jute, ginger, cardamom, mustard cakes, handicrafts, herbs, noodles and cigarettes will flourish, if SAFTA is implemented without any bias. Imports and exports will go global after the implementation of SAFTA. Finally, Nepal will have a chance of securing a niche in global markets as well. Thus, apart from these opportunities and threats, SAFTA will provide the country with a new prospect for ameliorating the battered economy.



## A new look at Nepal's history

Ny bok om Nepal

**'Sudden and violent political change has been a recurrent part of the country's history'**

Outside Nepal, the Troubled Kingdom is often in the news these days, although rarely for encouraging reasons. Triumphant accounts of ever faster Himalayan ascents have given way to puzzled field reports by foreign journalists about Nepal's home-grown Maoist revolutionaries and their violent battles with an increasingly unforgiving state.

Even though John Whelpton's very readable History of Nepal was not written as a primer on the nation's present political crisis, it nevertheless provides much helpful context for understanding the thorny question now posed so often by commentators on the situation: How and why did seemingly peaceful Nepal suddenly erupt into brutal civil war? In keeping with the seriousness of the subject matter, the author's position is historically nuanced and judicious, providing a healthy corrective to the 'from Shangri-La to Hell' type of reports which are common in the international press.

'Sudden and violent political change has...been a recurrent part of the country's history' (page 1), and the history of Nepal's royal lineages is one of intrigue, assassination, poisoning, exploitation and corruption. As a case in point, one may begin with Prithvi Narayan Shah, king of the principality of Gorkha and the founding father of the Nepali nation state. As ruthless as he was shrewd, this first Shah king issued an order to 'cut off the lips and noses of the inhabitants of Kirtipur after its surrender in 1766' (page 38).

A History of Nepal will be of interest to any student of South Asian studies since it fills a serious lacuna in scholarship on the region. An example of the narrow scholarly gaze on Nepal is that while ethnographic descriptions of Nepal's Sherpa and Thakali communities are plentiful, Whelpton's text appears to be the first accessible overview of Nepal's political history published by a university press in English. Well, not quite. Almost 130 years ago, in 1877, Daniel Wright, surgeon to the British Residency in Kathmandu from 1873 to 1876, submitted a manuscript of the same title to the same publisher. Wright's text, essentially an edited compilation of manuscript sources translated by Shiva Shanker Singh and Gunanand, would become the first History of Nepal to be published by Cambridge University Press, and Whelpton's the second.



Whelpton's choice to use a photo of a street scene in the tarai town of Birganj on the front cover, rather than a clichéd image of a plume of snow above some Himalayan peak or one of Kathmandu's much photographed temples, deserves special mention and is a gesture that will be appreciated by the still underrepresented inhabitants of the tarai.

After a slightly choppy first chapter on the environment, state and society of ancient Nepal through the mid 1700s, the book settles down to six increasingly robust sections with ever more specific focus. Whelpton is particularly fluent in the political history of Nepal's last 150 years and his observations about this period are insightful and impressive. Since Whelpton's reading of Nepali history is on the whole even-handed, it is surprising that he is so restrained when it comes to evaluating the vicissitudes of Rana rule. The Rana family autocracy, lasting 104 years and finally overthrown in 1950-51, was striking for its nepotism and violence, with the titles of maharaja and prime minister passed on by direct descent and agnate succession respectively. Passing off the 'systematic discrimination against those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy' as sustaining 'values that had underpinned the Nepalese state since its creation' and therefore as a 'more positive ideological defence' (page 84) of the Rana's repressive and bigoted policies, strikes the reviewer as unnecessarily charitable. Most scholars and citizens regard the Rana century as a dark age from which the nation is still recovering. The monograph also suffers from an unfortunate number of errors for such a basic primer, although these will surely be weeded out in the second edition.



**A History of Nepal**  
John Whelpton  
Cambridge University Press  
2005, xxiii + 296pp

Regardless, Whelpton deserves much praise for rising to the challenge of writing a comprehensive yet orderly history of the nation that ranges from the geological formation of the Himalaya many millions of years ago to the political intrigue of 2003, and all in under 300 pages.

Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist and director of the Digital Himalaya Project, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge. An earlier review of this book was published in the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) in the UK.

## Tibet var mitt hjem - ny utstilling åpner 21. oktober

Utstilling på Etnografisk Museum, Oslo

Utstillingen "Tibet var mitt hjem" retter seg hovedsakelig til barn og ungdom. Med musikk, fotografier, filmer og fargerike drakter skildrer den danske sosialantropologen Ditte Marie Seeberg skjønnheten og gleden i den tibetanske kulturen.

Ditte Marie bodd sammen med eksiltibetanske familier ved den buddhistiske helligdommen Bodhnath i Nepals hovedstad Katmandu. Alvorlige temaer som flyktningsliv, kulturell identitet og buddhistisk filosofi er sentrale i

utstillingen, og den er vakker, livsbejaende og inspirerende.

En 12 år gammel munk forteller sin historie i et videointervju, en 17 år gammel pike forteller om sin fars bønnerom på en annen kortfilm i utstillingen. Livet rundt stupaen og barnas oppgaver skildres også på en liten film som vises kontinuerlig. Her er smørlamper og bønneflagg og buddhistiske symboler. Utstillingen søker å bidra til økt forståelse for tibetansk kultur spesielt og livet i eksil generelt.

I utstillingen inngår også en samling fotografier av fotografen Matthieu Richard. Richard skildrer den berømte lamaen Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's hjemreise til Tibet etter 30 år i eksil. Gjennom fotografiene skildres Tibet, natur, mennesker og buddhisme.

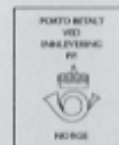
Grunntanken i utstillingen er å iscenesette begrepet: *Sem Zangpo – å handle utifra et godt hjerte*, som er kjernen i tibetansk buddhisme.

Utstillingen skal gjenskape noe av rikdommen i det kulturelle landskapet, som inneholder både det hellige og det profane, og hvordan dette inngår i et multietnisk Nepal.



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**A**



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