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**A Study on Situation after Royal Take over
(Feb. 1, 2006)**

(Review of the situation in Kailali, Surkhet and Palpa)

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Background

King Gyanendra's unilateral decision of February 1, 2005 to take over the state affairs, imposing his direct rule, generated extreme reactions across the country among the Political Parties, Citizen Groups, media person, Non Governmental Organizations and others who have stake on the democratic polity and governance system. Though the King repeatedly express his commitment to constitutional monarchy and multi party system of democracy, the analysts and political experts were not convinced with that commitment. Reactions of international community were sharp and critical. The countries seriously involved in the development of Nepal expressed their intention to pull out from the process if the King failed to restore democratic rule.

The royal proclamation alters the constitutional concept of 'King in Parliament' and formalizes the division of the country in three grouping: the King, Parliamentary Parties and the Maoist. An era of democratic polity effectively ended and the direct rule of the King imposed. Those pleading the King's intervention to end the Maoist violence were also shocked and confused. For them also, it was an extreme step that will eventually create vacuum in the national polity.

Immediate Reactions

Reaction to the Royal proclamation was predictable. Following the take over, the rebel, Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) called indefinite Nepal Banda. Many assumed that the Banda may have no effect on the life of the people because of the emergency rule imposed immediately after the royal proclamation. But, the effect of Banda was total outside the Kathmandu Valley. There was no vehicle movement either from east or west. People were throwing their rotten Tomatoes and other perishable agricultural products on the road. The roadside Markets were quite and the movement of the people scarce.

In places like Tansen of Palpa, people discussed on the issues of democracy, peace, development, corruption and other related political topics and expressed their opinion.

Without referring to political development and emergency rule, they emphasized on peace talk with the rebels saying the "gun cannot be a solution. It will create more problems." As in the normal period people emphasized on the restoration of fundamental rights.

One local leader from Surkhet was opined that the leaders are using party workers to climb the ladder of power. Once they reach the top they forgot everything. Our situation is very pathetic. We were already living under the several social conflicts and now we are facing the political conflict created by the King and the Political parties.

In Kailali, the business people presented a gloomy picture of financial and commercial environment. Commented a trader, "We are already sandwiched between two guns. This step of the King will spread further conflict. It seems there is no way out. Extortion and threat of abduction has become a normal practice. We the people from business community can survive and thrive only in the peaceful situation. We think **Boli** (the Voice) is more powerful than the **Goli** (the Bullet); we want peaceful solution of this problem of conflict. The King and the political parties should work together for the future of this country. Both sides should come to the dialogue."

Each and every individual we met during the period of this study emphasized on effective democratic system, respect of civil liberties and conflict resolution through dialogue. They have unanimous opinion that no body should create obstacles in democratic process. Commenting on present political scenario, some participants hoped the situation may change now. But opinions differed. Most of the people supported that the problem will be solved only through national consensus among King, political parties, the Maoist and every segment of Nepali Society.

Everybody we interviewed for the study condemned the censorship and suspension of fundamental rights. They said, "What is happening in the country now will only make the thing worst. The Government should initiate the dialogue with the political parties and the rebels. Curb on Human Rights of the people is no answer to the violence. One should realize that Bullet would not be the answer of present problem. This problem will solved only by the consensus building process.

From the uncertainty created by the royal take over, financial institutions are facing severe problems. They hoped to go to the villages for the new investment or to form the new groups of marginal people. Because of this, their return rate is also slowing down. Their already limited activities outside the municipality are restricted heavily in the prevailing situation.

Reacting to the Royal take over, the leaders of the financial sectors said, "There are no alternatives to democratic system. Curtailing fundamental rights of the people will complicate the situation. The King should side with the multi party people to find a way out to the present situation of violent conflict."

Media people and human right activists criticized censorship and suspension of Human Rights. They complained that the local authorities are targeting human right activists and trying to frame false charges against them. Human Rights condition is very fragile.

1. Kailali

After the Royal Proclamation the local administration arrested all the prominent leaders and dozens of workers of different political parties. Censorship imposed on the media. Political activities of any kind were prohibited. The political parties started joint and solo agitation immediately after the Royal takes over. But, the people's participation to these agitations remains minimal. Even the workers of the political parties are hesitating to participate in the protest Marches. Workers of the political parties who were activating the people to protest against the royal 'regression' of October 3, 2002, hesitated to participate in the protest rally against the Royal proclamation of February 1. The local administration seemed confused. They were waiting the central directives to take the action against the protesters. But, those directives did not arrive. Instead the security forces sidelined the civil administration and issued the necessary strictures. A Senior Police Officer was disturbed very much as this act of the security force was not compatible to the royal proclamation. "The King has taken over the national administration, not imposed army rule," On the condition of anonymity, he said, "this has spread fear among the citizens and there were silent reaction against the royal move. This has also affected the psychology of the political worker. Any kinds of emergency rule obviously discourage the people if the new set of people with more

authoritarian hands appears to enforce the order. In the situation, immediate emergence of people's power is unimaginable".

Political Situation

The politics of Kailali influence the total political scenario of Far Western Nepal. The district itself is a huge conglomeration of the people from all the districts of Seti and Mahakali zone. The Tharu tribe dominates the district but their influence is limited. With a population of 6 hundred 32 thousand and with 2 municipality and 42 VDC, it has 5 parliamentary constituencies.

The democratic polity dominates the district. In 1979 referendum, the multi party side won from the district with a margin of 10000 votes. In the parliamentary election of 1991, Nepali Congress grabs all the seats and in 1992 local election the NC got the majority. But, in the subsequent mid term poll, NC lost four parliamentary seats and also lost the subsequent election of local bodies. In the last parliamentary election NC regain its supremacy over the district. Division in Nepali Congress has altered the political equation of the district. But, the Nepal Communist Party (UML) has failed to gain from this new equation. After the NC and UML, Rastriya Prajatantra Party is the important political set up of the district. Jana Morcha Nepal or People's Front was influential in the eastern Kailali, but Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) has replaced the front effectively. The Maoist has dug the hole in the base of CPN (UML) and forcing displacement to other party workers as well. The Maoist cannot hold these bases of other political parties permanently. But, their presence in the villages like Balia, Sungurkhal, Masuriya, Udasipur, Basauti, Thapapur, Pahalmanpur, Ratanpur, Gadaria and Sadepani is very strong.

In the first week of Royal Proclamation, the district was in total confusion. There was no dialogue or contact between political people and the parties. But, the political activities increased from the second week of February. Defying the 'administrative orders' Seven Party

Alliance launch the movements against the Royal take over. Forty political workers (twenty two from NC alone) from different parties were arrested.

In the meantime the NC and NCP (UML) organize the protest meet in all five parliamentary constituencies. The People Front is also mobilizing their workers in the village level. The NC was unable to hold the village level elections, but they successfully elected the constituency level leaders in all five constituencies. According to official data, the NC has 1656 active members in Kailali. Similarly, the UML has also renewed the organized membership in all the villages. Altogether 1230 individuals were enrolled as organized members. The number of UML's organized membership has decreased from 1800 to 1230. But they have strength of 5000 ordinary members in 17 Area Committees. The Peoples Front strength is also significant. They have 600 organized members, 14 class organizations and 5 Area Committee in the district.

What the political workers think?

Workers of the political parties were the first target of NCP (Maoist) people's war. Several hundred political workers from various villages displaced either to district headquarter Dhangadhi or India. Those who could afford shifted either to Nepalganj or Kathmandu. Barring a few, many local level leaders of political parties disappeared from the scene. Insurgents killed many workers. The Maoist captured their properties and agricultural lands. The Maoist banned activities of political parties in the villages. The political parties could not resist the Maoist either physically or politically.

Besides, the credibility of the political parties has been eroded during last decade. People are still criticizing and commenting on the failure of the political leadership in every field, every step and every aspect of governance. The people extremely resented to "very opportunistic" approach of the political parties during last three years period. Workers of the political parties, sympathizers and general public are disenchanted with the status quo of the political parties and do not believe that the policies adopted by the political parties will do any good to the nation. They are also against the present leadership of political parties, which is

parochial, conservative, and misfit to lead modern society. “Without rewriting the overall policies and without replacing the present illiberal leadership in every level, the political parties can not be effective” said Karna Shahi, a political worker of Dhangadhi.

The mood of political workers of Kailali district is sharply divided in two segments. One segment, which is in the leadership position, cannot challenge, disobey and negate the higher leadership. They cannot put and plead their opinion for the change of status quo in the party hierarchy either directly or indirectly. But the majority of political workers, who are honest, dedicated and committed, want immediate changes in the policies and the leadership. These workers support for immediate move from present political structure with radical approach.

Lack of clarity in policies and approaches

Leaders and active political workers of all the mainstream political parties are unanimously convinced that the present political anarchy, large scale frustration among the people and failure of democratic system of governance is the result of inconsistent policy and narrow minded leadership of the parties. The political parties were instrumental to empower the people but their approach was seemingly manipulating the people to earn short-term gain for the sitting government. Instead of putting pressure on the government in favor of the people, the parties behave like the support machinery of the government. This has resulted in massive inactiveness on the part of the people.

Commenting on the recent political development, Maheshwar Pathak, former Secretary of NCP (UML), accepts that the party establishment in every level promoted adhocism and short-term vision. “It is sad to note that the large chunk of UML cadres and supporters in Kailali have joined NCP (Maoist) in recent times. There are very few card holders among them but anyway this is the great set back for our party and for the mainstream parliamentary democratic system.”

Yagya Raj Bastola, Party Secretary of UML, was more candid on the issue, "Here are three types of worker: those who could not resist the pressure from the Maoist party and

joined them; those power oriented workers who always side with strong and powerful faction and those non committal or silent workers who neither support, nor oppose the party.

This is exactly the situation for every party functioning in Kailali. The political workers of all the political parties failed to confront with Maoist workers and fled to district headquarters. They are not in a position to resist or tolerate the Maoist attack. But, there are still few exceptions. Ram Nath Upadhyaya and Prajapati Upadhyaya, both the village level leaders of Nepali Congress were attacked thrice, their properties were looted. But, they are still in the village: keeping quite and totally inactive.

It seems a common fact that the political parties in the district are in a very precarious position. On the one side there are increasing pressures from Maoist to join the anti monarchical forces and at the other side a hostile administration imposing several strictures and prohibitory orders. Still the workers have not lost the courage. Said Bastola, "The parties, and only parties, can change the present impasse. But for this they should be prepared to rehash their policies and also should be able to change the leadership. Our upper level leadership is heading toward more revisionist and rightist path where as lower level leaderships inclination is more toward left extremism. The leaders of our parties could not feel the gravity of social and political situation on time and the King and the Maoist took advantages of this".

But, workers of Nepali Congress are hesitant to speak on leadership issues. They think there should be procedural change in the leadership to avoid the anarchical situation. "A mass base party like Nepali Congress can not cope with the situation that will emerge with hasty change in the leadership" opined Dipak Kathayat, a NC worker, "but it is imperative to review the core or fundamental policies of the party like, constitutional monarchy and socialism in the right perspective. The Congress has become like a dirty pond, which needs cleaning regularly. For this the worker should have courage to speak out against the wrong doing of the leadership. The workers with slave mentality cannot function as the agent of change. The party has always discouraged the competition within the party. This trend must be change for the effective growth of the party."

Most of the worker complained that the NC never encourages debate and discussion in any kind of assembly. The leaders feel shyness in committing their mistakes. They avoid workers and never took them into confidence. This is why once the most powerful party of democrats loosing its grip from the Nepali Society.

The general workers of each and every political parties seem convince that their leaders are not clear on what they are doing. They do not have developed any realistic ideas on Maoism, Monarchy, globalization, open market economy, socialism, capitalism and communism. "This is why the complexities are increasing. Look at the our party UML, we accepted the people multiparty democracy as our main philosophical plank. But neither we follow the parliamentary system, nor we discarded the old communist perception" said Maheshwar Pathak who want his party to drop any symbols, trademarks and name that relate to communism. In his opinion, the UML should be recast itself as the liberal party of the country.

What went wrong?

In an interaction program, organized for this study, the workers of the political parties pointed out the weaknesses of leaderships in various count. But they were unanimous that growing intolerance and hostility between the monarchy and the political parties should be blamed for the development of present situation. Besides, political corruptions, power mongering, ideological instability, poor or bad governance, non professional attitude of the political players and lack of managerial skills are the other elements equally responsible for the present state of the country.

Leading the argument, Maheshwar Pathak said, in the first account, we all the political parties never followed the rule of the game. The UML announced nationwide protest program against the first elected government without any basic issues. That announcement not only divided the political strength of the workers in the local level, but also provided an opportunity to those anti democratic elements that were looking at the loopholes of the parties.

What will be the exit point?

The workers of the political parties in Kailali think that the leadership of the parties must review their policies and must rewrite it to suit the need of the modern society. The political parties should shift their emphasis and work to win the confidence of the people. They should also be prepared to the total change demanded by the society.

According to Dirgh Sodari of UML, there are basic differences in the republicanism raised by the Maoist and parliamentary parties. The parties must accept the "unconditional" constitution assembly and also be prepared to discard the concept of constitutional monarchy. Most of the workers of political parties agreed with Sodari. But, some prominent workers of Nepali Congress still believe in maintaining the political balance between the monarchy and the parties. Professor Lila Nath Ojha pleaded that the "King in the Parliament" is an absolutely perfect idea for a country like Nepal. The Parties and the King must join hand for the betterment of the country. Both sides should realize this on time.

Activities of the political parties are limited to the street demonstration. These demonstrations are very poor and according to the congress sources only 180 workers of the NC were involved in these political road shows. The people seem indifferent and totally uninvolved. A shopkeeper said, "There is no effect. We are watching them. There is no spontaneity. We know the present rule is like the previous one. But, where are the new themes ? We can not join the Maoist and these same old faces with same old ideas does not appeal us any more."

Nar Narayan Shah, an activist of Tarun Dal, said, "Nobody can suggest what will be the solution of the problem. Because the King, the Political Parties and the Maoist will not come to the meeting point. The Maoist are destroying the social structure of our country. But, responsible people are not acting as they should. In this situation any prediction will be failed. *Ko Bhanna Sakchha Ke hunchha hunchha !*"

Maoist Activities

Though the Maoist activities escalated in the district since 1998, it has taken lives of several prominent people since then. In last seven years, the Maoist have killed 50 political workers and four dozen security people that includes Ex MP Chakra Bahadur Dangaura Tharu, Ex Mayor of Dhangadhi Dhan Bahadur Bam, an activist of Tarun Dal Tanka Dhakal

and women activist Shanta Rawal. Thirty-Seven VDC houses have been destroyed. Most of the works of the villages are done either from Dhangadhi or from Tikapur.

District Headquarter Dhangadhi is in the grip of Maoist. Explosion, killing and extortion are rampant. The Maoist controls the east West Highway for weeks. Taking the advantage of 107 km long open border, the Maoist has developed Kailali as their main entry point to smuggle in the weapons and other artilleries.

After February 1, the Maoist called for indefinite transport strike, which went for 10 days. Again in March and April, the transport remained close for another 20 days. The Maoist attacked district jail in Dhangadhi on February 10. Five policemen were killed and 72 Maoist activists and 150 general prisoners escaped from the jail.

On 24 April, the 22nd Batallion established a checkpoint in Masuriya, a small market on the East West highway. This checkpoint remains active for seven days. During this period the Maoist collected huge donation from the trading and industrial community of the district.

The Maoists have not disturbed other mainstream political parties since February 1. They have allowed them to organize protest meet and other political activities. The local leadership of the Maoist Party has showed willingness to work with other mainstream political parties. In fact, they have invited some of the local UML activist for the talk. But the parties are not taking their gesture seriously.

2. Surkhet

Surkhet, regional headquarter of Mid Western Nepal, is considered a strategic transit point for the leaders and workers of Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and their affiliated organizations. As Surkhet is easily accessible to various districts of Far and Midwest Nepal, the protagonists of the violent conflict have concentrated on developing this district as their one of the main domain. The districts like Kalikot, Achham, Dailekha, Salyan and Bardiya where the violent movement has speeded heavily surround Surkhet.

Though, Surkhet has acquired its importance in the regional politics, it is still under developed. There are only 230 KM of road and 1785 Telephone lines for a population of nearly three million people. But, the literacy rate (62.48%) of the district has been increasing since the restoration of multi party system of governance. Population of Surkhet increased tremendously in recent time as the internally displaced people from different districts of Karnali Region choose the place as their temporary shelter. Influx of the displaced has been increasing even after the royal takeover.

Royal proclamation of February 1 has heavily affected the political, social and economic situation of Surkhet. Immediately after the royal takeover, the Maoist called two days closer of the district on February 2 and 3. But, on 3rd February, the security force destroyed the office of eighth brigade and food storage of the Maoist in Kunapari region of the district. On February 23, the Maoist killed a prominent Hindu leader Chandra Prakash Rathour in Bulbule and on April 07, they put fire on a truck carrying a dead body in Neureni of Ratna Highway. Besides these incidents, skirmishes in various places of the district, extortion and abduction continued.

Political parties of the district organized protest move against the royal take over. A procession organized jointly by the parliamentary parties marched around Birendra Nagar on April 08 Two hundred strong participants chanted slogan in favor of Multi Party System. In Surkhet also, general people's participation in the movement was minimal. But they were not indifferent like in other districts. The general public seems quite supportive.

Restriction in Political Activities

After the last visit of the King, regional offices of various security forces, except regional headquarter of the Army, has been shifted to Surkhet. Since the security management in Birendra Nagar Municipality has been improved slightly. After the change in February 1, the political activities of the constitutional political parties have been restricted. Intervention in regular civil administration by security and "other elements" has increased.

Involvement of newly appointed Regional Administrator in each and every activities of the district has created various problems for the administration and security people. The administrator has put aside the rules, regulations and acts and directed the personnel of administrative system to follow his instructions and orders. In the first meeting with civil servants and security chiefs, after their appointment as the regional and zonal administrator respectively, Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav and Min Bahadur Pal, jointly order the civil servants and security chiefs to follow their order, "We are the representatives of the King and act according to wishes of the King. You have to follow our orders and not the orders of those who are ministers, secretaries and departmental chiefs". After these directives, the administration of the district has been demoralized.

Though the Royal take over of the state affairs was targeted against the "terrorist activities" but the behavior of the state's administration is just opposite. In Surkhet, the administration activities are more against the political parties than the Maoist. Constant intervention of the securities in civilian affairs has created psychological barriers between the people and state. The constitution remained a useless piece of paper. In Surkhet, people have become more desperate than they were previously.

Problems of the Political Parties

Most of the political parties of Surkhet are entangled in different organizational problems. The senior leaders of the Nepali Congress Party are not in the district. The district convention of the party has elected the president and regional members of the district committee. But, the president has failed to expand the executive committee and the meeting of the district committee still to organize. The party is functioning on the ad hoc basis. The leaders are executing the central directives "informally".

According to Anant Poudel, chairman of one of the regional units, the NC's district leadership is much confused after the division in the party. The groupism within the party, absence of proper evaluation system of the workers and infiltrations in the party from outside the political periphery are the real problems. But, the leadership of the party has ignored these problems. This has caused frustration among the workers.

Tapta Bahadur Bista, President of NC-D is in Kathmandu since long and the leader and ex MP Purna Bahadur Khadka has not returned to the district and constituency since February 1. After the division, the party command 70 percent of support base of united NC. But there is no one to consolidate the organization.

Said Dharma Acharya, officiating President of NC-D, " there is no debate or discussion within the party. We follow what the central disseminates to us. This has caused much harm to the party and now on we are thinking to organize debate forums which will be within the limits of the party.

Acharya is convinced that they should publicly apologize to the people for their past mistakes. "This will restore the image of the party. Without this nobody will believe us."

For the NC and NC-D, the problem is in the policy level and also in the organizational level. The Maoist are inviting local leaders for the talk, but the leaders are reluctant to participate in such process as there is no uniform central policy towards the Maoist.

The NCP (UML) is in similar situation. There is no coordination within the party. Many general members of the Party have joined the Maoist faction. According to Hrishi Sharma, district secretary of the party, their party is active only in Birendra Nagar and three surrounding VDC. "We are organizing area committee meetings. But, out of 1303, only 700 organized members have renewed their membership. We have 299 general members and we have requested them to renew their membership within July 15".

Because of the inconsistent policy of the central leadership, many prominent workers, with largest mass base, of the party are frustrated. The workers think that they are paying the price of dishonesty of the leadership. "Most of the workers think that there should be a sweeping change within the party and the party should formulate practically progressive policies that will benefit the weaker section of the society," Sharma said.

The NCP (UML) in Surkhet facing stiff challenge from the Maoist. For the general communist workers, the NCP (Maoist) offers greater attraction. "Between Maoist and UML there are no ideological differences. The principles of communism are the same. It seems, the UML has forgot the principles and ideology of Marxism and Leninism. They have become revisionist and their political approach is very feudalistic. To remain in this party is wastage of time," said an UML worker who recently joined the rank of the rebel.

But, People's Front Nepal have no political problems in Surkhet district. Ratna Bikram Pyasi, Vice President of the Party, said: We are not very active in this district, because our organizational base is limited. But we are fighting and protesting against both the King and the Maoist. On the issue of Monarchy we have little differences with the Maoists. But, we strongly differ with them on their policy and means of violence.

"We did not commit any mistakes in the past like NC and UML committed. They are responsible for what happened now. They work to consolidate the position of the King and not of democracy. That is how the King got supremacy over democracy," Pyasi told.

And, Ganesh Khadka, DC Member of Nepal Mazadoor Kisan Party said that there are no alternatives to the people's movement. In his personal opinion, alliance with NC and UML for the movement is a practical compulsion. People are very much frustrated and disenchanted with the leaders of these big parties. The leadership of these parties must realize their faults and directly go the people and apologize.

Political parties are not convinced with the functioning of administration. They also wants to avoid confrontation, "The King and the leaders of the Political Parties should work together to diffuse these problems. King alone or Political Parties alone could not achieve anything. First, the political parties and the king should sit together. After that, the leadership of the party should use party mechanism for the restoration of peace and stability. Leadership of our political parties never shares the ideas with local leaders of the party. We send report on overall situation of the district to them regularly. But they don't read that. They are not aware of local realities. This is the major problem and this is true with all the parties" said Hrishhi Sharma, DC Secretary of UML.

District Economy

The Market has not seen any radical changes in economic and financial activities in the district after February 1. Indefinite closure of the market and the roads has affected the business communities very much. In the last three months there were three major general strike, Feb 2 and 3, February 12 to 21, April 2 to 12. The traders have not experienced any change regarding the security. Difficulties in transporting goods from one destination to other remained the same. There is no change. The transport cost has also been up by hundred percent. The cost of transporting goods from Birgunj to Surkhet was 15000 per truckload. Now it has increased to 35000. The Maoist are collecting donations from the trading community even after the Royal Takeover.

According to Khum Bahadur DC Bhabuk, Secretary of Commerce and Industry Association, the traders are paying 13 percent VAT to government and 27 percent "war tax" to the Maoist, and 1365 traders have been registered with them. Only 395 trading firms are registered with association. But, security activity in Birendra Nagar has increased since February 1.

NGO Activities

After February 1, developmental activities in the district have been halted. NGO's are not free to act. They have to submit their working reports to security and administration on their activities regularly. There are lots of confusion on social activities.

Surkhet presents a gloomy picture. Crisis of confidence and mistrust among each other seems very thick. The people have stopped to ask what next? They are concerned about their future.

3. Palpa

Palpa, a naturally beautiful district of western Nepal, is famous for Nepali Dhaka Topi (Cap) and cool climate. The place can be developed as a summer resort, but till now very few entrepreneurs have recognized its potentialities. With a population of 282574, Palpa leads surrounding districts of Gulmi, Argha Khanchi and Syangja in many counts. The district has boasted its proximity to the capital city in many ways. Even the names of narrow lanes and chowks of Palpa are similar to Kathmandu.

Palpa has developed a kind of 'culture of silence' after the incident of February 1. People hesitate to talk with the strangers, not even with the journalists. One shopkeeper said, "What is there to talk? We saw the rule of the leaders and now experiencing a new kind of rule. We are ok till we can feed our siblings."

The Maoist destroyed the transmission tower of Nepal Television in Sri Nagar at 2130 hrs. on 18 May. The villagers of many surrounding villages, who have no access to cable transmission, cannot watch the TV now a days. Since the incident, the FM Station are alert. Station Manager of Sri Nagar FM, Jagadish Bhattarai said, "Situation has not improved. Though the security is more than adequate in Tansen Bazar, the headquarter of Palpa, the situation is not predictable. I can not sleep in the night thinking they may blow up my station, and I am restless in the day because of unnecessary harassment."

Assesing the situation, Hari Rayamajhi, President of Association of Commerce and Industry, Palpa, said: The situation has not improved yet. We are just hoping to improve the situation. We hope that one day the peace will prevail and situation will improve gradually.

He said the situation in the town has been improved slightly, but there is no basic changes in the rural scenario. Rayamajhi was critical of the misrule of the party, but he was in favor of conciliation between the King and the political parties. "If they walk in their own tune, they will reach nowhere, but if they walk together with the mission to restore peace then the peace will be restored. The King and Political Parties should discuss and find a way out to adjust the demand of the rebels. Killing will not solve the problem. That is an evidence now".

"After February 1, the Maoist are changing their behavior. They are a little bit modest and don't pressure for donation with heavy hand" said Pashupati Bhattarai, ex President of Association of Commerce and Industries.

Activities of Political Parties

Palpa is always in the center stage of the Politics. The politics of Palpa used to be governed by the wishes of the capital. But, the restoration of democracy alters that scenario. Even then, one can feel a kind of vacuum in the overall political situation. Except for regular protest move against 'regression" there are no substantial political movement in Palpa. Even the workers of various political parties are reluctant to participate in the protest. Thus the protest movement of the political parties is very weak and unimpressive.

But, the political leaders and analyst accept the fragility of present political situation. People may be reluctant to participate in the political movement; they are very sensitive to the present situation. People agree that present dispensation was necessary to bring back normal situation. But, even this experiment failed to generate hope among people. People are convince that there is no alternative to parliamentary system, but the leaders of political parties must adopt policies that will massively reform the society and they also should change their political behavior.

"The King has expressed his commitment to the Constitutional Monarchy and Multi Party System of Government. But, practically political parties are informally banned. They are free to have their flag and the board, but, they are not allowed to function as the parties. The situation is contradictory to Royal proclamation. When there is direct rule of the King, Parliamentary system simply can not function," Said Hari Nepal, an ex MP and political analyst. Explaining the present political situation, he said, "Even the nominated members of monitoring group are resigning because of the fear. The Palpa coordinator's resignation is an example of this."

Recently the Maoist abducted a leader of People's Front from Dobhan VDC. They severely beat the head teacher of Gahate Middle School, in front of teachers and students, dragging him out from the school building.

The civil rights in Palpa has not been restored even after the emergency period is over.

"In the context of Palpa, the politicians of the district has not done any wrong during their tenure as elected representatives" Said Hari Nepal, "We have concentrated ourselves in the development of basic infrastructures like health, education, drinking water, electricity and roads. We have no regrets and there should not be. May be, some central level leaders were involved in corruption and malpractices. That does not mean the failure of democratic system. After the restoration of democracy, our society becomes vibrant and responsive. Nobody can deny the fact that the democracy has generated massive awareness among the people."

According to Nepal, unity between two factions of Nepali Congress Party is essential and the workers of the district are demanding immediate unification of the party. The division in Nepali Congress in Palpa was the result of the division in central level. Workers of Palpa are working together even today.

He said, " Looking positively, one can describe February 1 as blessing in disguise. The King has provided an opportunity to every leader of the parties to unite. Unity among the political forces is the need and challenge of the hour. The leadership of the parties should be free from unnecessary pride and egoism."

For Krishna Raj Adhikari of UML, present crisis is not related to the political parties. The parties have become victim of complexities escalated by the Maoist. To resolve this problem, the King, parties and other concerned people should work together. Without involving the Maoist in the dialogue the peace can not be restored.

Dul Bahadur Kunwar, President of RPP, suggested that the political parties must seek to resolve the problem from the grass root level. Without this effort, the politics of the country would not be back to normal.

Kunwar said the political parties at every level failed to create an opinion about the happenings. He was hopeful that the King would restore the democratic order very soon.

Conclusion

From the situational study of three representative districts of Far, Midwest and Western Region, one can realize that the democratic polity is deeply rooted in the society. Most of the participants shared the same ideas with each other regarding democratic rule in the country. But every one said that without the inclusion of the rebels in the process of democratic development, the country couldn't overcome the problem of violence. They strongly express their opinion that use of force to quell the rebel will do much harm to the country.

People suggested that the political parties reform their mechanism, making it more transparent, inclusive and participatory. They identified the key reasons for present set back to democratic rule as follows:

- Growing misunderstanding between two major political forces of the country, the NC and NCP (UML) pave the way for anti democratic forces.
- Money, Muscle power and Greed dominated the Political scenario.
- Democratic culture and ethos disappeared from the Parties and the political leadership.
- Political Parties failed to respond to expanding Maoist appeal in the rural Nepal.
- The Maoist adopted a policy that was instrumental to drifting apart the constitutional forces.
- The Political Parties failed to bring the Army under the sovereign umbrella of the people.
- The parties did not try to focus on the social transformation; instead they tried to finish each other.
- The Parties become chaotic and anarchical. They failed to maintain even the minimum level of decency.
- The leadership of the parties guided by feudalistic mindset.
- Corruption increased with the political blessings.
- The leadership of political parties could not realize the growing awareness, aspirations and hope among the people.

- The political leadership tangled in different vested interests forgot their responsibilities of consolidating democratic system. They failed to limit the King within the parameter of the constitution. Lack of political confidence and eroding moral authority make them dwarf in front of the King. The party leadership became very weak and mechanize. To hide their own weaknesses they encouraged the King to become a player in the power game.
- The Political Parties failed to draft the common minimum program to counter the Maoist agenda for change. They neither succeeded in countering the Maoists ideologically.
- For the self-promotion, leaders of the political parties encourage people with dubious and criminal background and prized them with plump positions.
- The political leadership from central to local level did not try to realize the developmental needs and real problems of local people. The traditional monopolistic polity swayed them.
- The Press did not behave responsibly. Instead of investigating the issues they promoted sensationalism. The Press was manipulated by the political parties, in power or in the opposition, as their tool. The credibility of the free and fare press eroded.