



Concern Nepal

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Editorial

Countdown to a Republic

Unprecedented people's movement in April 2006 forced the king of Nepal to relinquish his absolute powers. Thereafter, the proclamations of the house of representative, the historic peace agreement with Maoists, and the promulgation of an Interim Constitution are the key achievements born out of that uprising. Year 2007 comes with a greater hope for the long awaited desire of Nepalese people to establish a republic with a democracy that is fitting to the consciousness of our times. All indications are that the election of the constituent assembly promised to be held this year will do that and no power in the world could stop the will of the people of Nepal.

Nepal has been bestowed with diversity unfathomable by the rest of the world in many fronts like in ethnicity, language, culture, religion, geography, and the natural resources. Unfortunately, its history had fallen into a darkness spelled by a feudal monarchy and its sub-organizations. Grinding poverty, extreme backwardness, and socio-political disparities were the rewards presented to the people of Nepal for honouring such institutions for rather long. Thanks to the rising consciousness, Nepal's neglected people mounted a massive grassroots uprising that shook the foundation of Nepal's feudal structure. Nepalese people are at a juncture to seize their democratic rights and take on new responsibilities that have fallen onto their shoulders.

Nepal has enormous potentials to progress on its own. What it needs is political stability, incorruptible-and-committed political leadership, equal opportunities in education, health and employment, instruments for building a vibrant economy, and of course the rule of law. The new Nepal should guarantee regional autonomy, eliminate discriminations and injustices carried from the past, and emanate a hope for the future. With these commitments, Nepal should lay the foundations for building a real economy and not be fooled by temporary and volatile projects on the name of poverty reduction and welfare. The current state of Nepal is like that of a fluid with transients and turbulences, and the days ahead are ever more challenging. At this moment, the time, energy and resources of the country should be concentrated on harnessing the energy of optimism floating in the population for solidifying the foundations for building durable economy. Each and every Nepalese should comprehend the sensitivity of the situation, embrace others, and add bricks for building lasting peace and prosperity in Nepal. They should realize that through unity and respect for others, they could dismantle the inequalities, discriminations, exclusions and myriads of other injustices. But first they should focus on mechanisms to elect an inclusive and representative Constituent Assembly and for building a permanent constitution that is just, inclusive, progressive and fitting of our times.

CFFN Programs and Activities: Report from the Executive Board

It has been just a year since a team of Nepalese Diaspora in Ottawa and Friends of Nepal started working under the name Canada Forum for Nepal (CFFN) in early January 2006. The desire to do something about Nepal, the feelings against the oppression of King Gyanendra's military regime in Nepal at that time, and the hopes raised by the historic Memorandum of Understanding reached between the Seven Party Alliance and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) on 22 November 2005 were the motivating factors for this organization. In the process, CFFN circulated a petition protesting the oppression of king Gyanendra and supporting the movement and submitted it to Canadian government and the UN in early February 2006. With this effort accompanied by other groundwork, an Ad-hoc committee of CFFN was formed on 26 February 2006. Looking back at the last one year, we are proud to say that it has been an amazing year for CFFN both in terms of its involvement in advancing its vision of "peaceful, democratic, just, and prosperous Nepal" and the changes of Himalayan scale that have occurred in the land where CFFN is dedicated to have its impact.

The Forum which started as a preparatory organization has been registered as a not-for-profit organization with Industry Canada with the following objectives:

1. Seek support of Canadian and international policy makers, and organizations for the cause of peace, democracy, human rights, social justice, and development in Nepal;
2. Organize workshops, interaction programs and educational activities on contemporary issues of Nepal;
3. Conduct research on social, political, economic, scientific and environmental issues of Nepal and support endeavors of prosperity in Nepal.

The memberships of this organization are open to all who are motivated to work on the above objectives. Here we provide a highlight of our activities since the inception of CFFN in early 2006.

1. [Petition Campaign](#)

On January 2006, CFFN launched a petition for peace and democracy in Nepal. The appeal summarized the current Nepalese political crisis and appeals for all to denounce the autocratic royal regime and to express solidarity to Nepali people who were fighting for democracy and human rights. The petition was also posted on-line by the Kantipur Publication, a leading daily newspaper in Nepal. The petition stressed that the 12-point MOU signed by seven major parliamentary parties and Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) was a ray of hope for building a peaceful and democratic Nepal and appealed to the international communities to use their collective influence on King Gyanendra to put country in the path of peace, democracy and economic stability. The petition was handed to UN and Department of Foreign Affairs Canada along with CFFN position paper presented at UN Human Rights Consultations in Canada.

2. [Radio Interview](#)

On 16 February 2006, CHUO 89.1 FM Radio Ottawa interviewed Pramod Dhakal, a CFFN committee member, on issues related to the press, media and human rights in Nepal. Mr. Dhakal stressed that situation of press freedom and human rights were dire in Nepal. He praised the 12-point memorandum-of-understanding signed by seven parties and the Maoists as a positive step. He added that king must respect the spirit of the MOU and permit the people to bring a democratic constitution through an election of a constitutional assembly – a most desired way to prevent further death and catastrophe in Nepal.

3. [Nepal Relief Fund](#)

On April 17, 2006, CFFN collected a fund of \$2,833 (Nepalese Rupees 179,131) from the Nepalese community in Ottawa and other well-wishers, and handed it to Janandolan Primary Health Treatment Fund (a fund for the treatments of the injured during the peoples' movement in Nepal) on April 19, 2006.

4. [Himalayan Heartbeat](#)

CFFN organized a multifaceted cultural evening, "Himalayan Heartbeat: Nepal Cultural Evening" on 7 July 2006 in Ottawa. The program was attended by prominent Canadians like former Foreign Minister Hon Flora MacDonald, former Secretary of State for Asia Pacific Hon David Kilgour. In the event, the chief guest of the evening, renowned Canadian mountaineer, Andrew Brash, who helped save Australian Lincoln Hall in the Mount Everest, said that the Himalayas present extreme

challenges that humble any seasoned mountaineer but a spontaneously presented human tragedy that made him abandon his climb to help save another person has profoundly affected his life afterwards. Mr Brash also touched on the idea that Nepal should focus on building a just and equitable society. Nepalese youth artists performed beautiful dances that spell bound the audience and a movie "Ujeli: A Child Bride in Nepal" was screened, which presented a very poignant theme of social justice to the audience. Also there was a spectacular display of Nepalese arts and crafts in the Nepali bazaar.

5. Interaction Programs

o [Peace, Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal](#)

On 18 February 2006, CFFN and Harmony International jointly organized a panel discussion on "Peace, Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal" in Ottawa. Four speakers from different backgrounds, highlighted social, political and economic factors that were contributing to the crisis in Nepal. As a chief guest, Hon. Flora MacDonald, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Canada, expressed that Nepal was on the verge of being a failing state. She was critical of the government decision for not reciprocating the four-month long Maoists ceasefire. She raised concern about the difficulties that the ordinary people were facing in their daily life following the coup by the King using his military power.

o [Reflections on Nepal](#)

On November 18, 2006, CFFN organized an interaction program where Nepalese Diasporas and Nepal experts of Canada welcomed the peace accord of 8 November 2006 between seven party alliance and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a rainbow over the horizon of Nepal. Program participants diagnosed issues related to constituent assembly election, inclusive democracy, the practice of formulating aid-reliant economic plans and educational reform in Nepal.

o [Interim Constitution and Ethnic Issues](#)

Another interaction program was organized on ongoing ethnic and constitutional issues of Nepal on 14 February 2006 in Ottawa. After a serious discussion, the participants converge to the conclusion that a constitution assembly must be inclusive of all sectors of society if the constitution made by such body is to win the hearts and minds of the people. Formulating a new constitution for a country is a special event in history and all sectors of the society should allow be participants of this process.

6. Press Releases

o [Appeal for Peace and Democracy](#)

In January 2006, CFFN launched a campaign for peace and democracy with an appeal sent to media and friends. The appeal was printed in its entirety by a prominent English language newspaper Kantipur, it is still prominently placed to this date by [Kantipur Online](#).

o [Rights and Democracy](#)

Soon after the interaction program of February 2006, CFFN brought the highlights of the program in a press release, which was covered by a number of newspapers, including [Kantipur](#).

o [People's Uprising](#)

In the heights of April uprising, CFFN released a press release in support of the people of Nepal and in opposition to the oppressive regime of king Gyanendra. Although, due to press censorship, it could not appear in Nepalese media, it was widely circulated through emails.

o [King's Address](#)

In response to first State of the Nation Address by King Gyanendra, CFFN issued a press release supporting the people of Nepal and denouncing the the deceptive move adopted by king Gyanendra. It was also widely circulated through emails and given to Nepalese media.

o [Post Uprising](#)

In May 2006, CFFN issued a press release in celebration of people's victory and with words of caution to not derail the achievements of the people's movement.

o [Promote Nepal](#)

CFFN press release covering the successful Himalayan Heartbeat program of July 2006 was published in more than 20 newspapers around the world including [kantipur](#).

o

o [Peace Deal](#)

A week after the November 2006 peace deal between Seven Party Alliance and the NCP (Maoist), CFFN organized an interaction program and published the highlights in a press release. A number of newspapers covered the news such as [NepalNews.com](#).

- o [Constitution and Issues of Representation](#)
On February 11, 2007, CFFN organized an interaction program whose findings were released in a press release and published by a number of newspapers. Please read [NepalNews](#) for a sample.
7. [Publication](#)
- o [Website](#)
Canada Forum for Nepal (CFFN) established its website first at www.democraticnepal.com domain at a time when we were still deciding its name. However, when the name CFFN was chosen, a new domain cffn.ca was acquired. This website has been a source of valuable information and great way of connecting to the world. Today, more than a thousand people of Nepalese origin receive CFFN information through the mailing system of cffn.ca website.
 - o [Concern Nepal](#)
This newsletter - Concern Nepal - is a periodic publication of the Canada Forum for Nepal. It is circulated electronically and posted in its website. At the moment you are reading its fourth issue. We invite you to be part of the Forum by getting involved and by sending news, views, op-ed writings and research articles. You can reach us by sending email at info@cffn.ca.
 - o [Historic Document Collection](#)
CFFN has made significant effort in making important historic documents of Nepal through its website cffn.ca. This was conceived in response to frequent requests we received from Nepal enthusiasts from Canada and around the world. Because document translation is a difficult and time consuming endeavor, we are building the volume gradually. Nevertheless, we have already put most of the documents that our non-Nepali friends request from us in a recurring basis.
8. [By-Laws and Registration of the Organization](#)
CFFN spent some time in late summer and early fall of 2006 in drafting, reviewing/ revising its By-laws and registering the organization. As a result CFFN is registered as a not-for-profit organization with the Government of Canada.
9. [General Members' Meeting](#)
As per its Bylaw CFFN organized the first meeting of the general members on 27th January 2007 in Ottawa. The executives elaborated the By-laws, board composition, election process, meeting procedures, and the processes the current executive went through while registering the organization to Industry Canada. Executive board also presented an idea that if CFFN should be involved in a small way on a project, education is the area where the impact would be the largest. There was general consensus that education sector is in need of help and might be the most important issue for Nepal. However, there were cautious notes from the members on whether CFFN will have perennial source or resources to support long lasting projects. The Board agreed to be small in its involvement, if it is decided to be so, and also agreed to look further where and in what form CFFN can be involved in education. As a background on educational project, the Board also highlighted about the school of Tibetan organization in northern India.
10. [Miscellaneous](#)
CFFN carried out a number of other activities throughout the year. They include networking, delegations to Human Rights Consultations, consultative meetings with CIDA and other organizations, participating in events organized by like minded organizations, bidding for a capacity-building project, periodic communications with members and friends, and so on.

Featured Articles:

How Rewarding an Educational Program can be in a Remote Nepalese Village?

✍ Donna Lea
Illinois, USA

Sometimes there are moments in life that are worth reflecting upon. There were years not so distant from now that I used to be called Mrs. Lea by my third and fourth grade students at Fisher Grade School of Illinois, USA. It was a time when I assimilated the studies about Nepal in my classes to achieve four objectives: to make the learning interesting and fun; to make my students understand about life in the poor countries and value what is available to them; to make my students do something about the children of the world that are less fortunate; and to subtly teach my students about project development, marketing, sales and other valuable skills while raising fund for a Sister School in Nepal.

Many years after our Sister School project was ended and as the years of my retirement advanced, my curiosity about what might have happened in Nepal as a result of our endeavors grew more intense. This quest to know, along with other endeavors we had become involved with in Nepal, took my entire family to Kathmandu in December 2006. It turns out that sometimes simple beginnings can bear unexpected and delightful outcomes that are worth mentioning.

I was not in the best of shape and my husband, Tom, had the privilege of making a long and mountainous journey to the village of Sarkuwa to visit the Sister School and see for himself what things had been done with the money we provided them several years ago. With a graduate of Sarkuwa as a guide, Tom flew to Pokhara, took a Taxi to Baglung and then took a jeep to carry them down a rutted trail to the start of the trek to Sarkuwa. He reports that the jeep ride was quite an experience, an opposite of what could be called relaxing! The treacherous climb up the winding and dangerous mountain trails, ended after night had fallen. A meal of freshly slaughtered chicken and dal-bhaat, the usual daily meal of Nepalese, concluded the trek along with a good night's rest. Tom was meticulous in telling me that all parts of the chicken, except the comb, feet and entrails were cut up into the chicken meal! Water came from a spigot coming out of the mountainside and bathrooms, of course, are non-existent as we know them. But Megh the science teacher and his family generously shared all they had with Tom.

The next morning, Tom was led on a two and a half hour trek up a very steep, but scenic, mountain trail to where the school was. When he arrived, he found that all 500 plus students were lined up on the terraces to greet him. He collected flowers from every child and dutifully returned 'Namaste' to each and every one. Full program of activities had been planned in his honor with dances, songs and speeches, very little of which he understood. However, once the festivities were over, he met with the staff of the school and they described how the money we gave them had been used. The most remarkable, and very commendable thing about this group of people, is how diligently they have managed the money. They have used it for improvements to the school's infrastructure as well as providing scholarships for children of poor families. But beyond that, they have made the money grow so that now there is more to use for the children's educational needs than they started with... an unbelievable feat in Nepal!

The school's buildings are well kept and the students have furniture to sit at. However, as is true of all Nepali schools, they are ill-equipped. Megh's science lab was bare bones; it was difficult to figure out how it could be called a science lab. Some of the money could be spent on supplies but such supplies are found only in Kathmandu and have to be transported there. However, electricity has arrived at Sarkuwa and they have hopes of purchasing computers and connecting to the rest of the world. Carrying computers up the mountainside seems to be of little or no problem to these people if their dream of getting connected to the world from their remote mountain were to come true. Taking a poorest quality Internet connection to a remote location in the world is, however, five-fold more expensive than getting the highest quality connection in a city like Chicago or Toronto. Moreover, paying almost two-hundred dollars every month by a rural school like Sarkuwa is an impossible feat at the moment without a benevolent sponsor.

In those years of 1997-99, a sense of joy and pride had prospered within me because of the way our activities had enhanced the education of my students and their learning environment had become meaningful with a worthy and simple mission attached to it. I was thrilled beyond my wildest dreams to know that our efforts for Sarkuwa have continued to prosper and grow and that we helped to benefit so many children. I am proud to share my experiences with all educators and volunteers who have compassion for the people of Nepal, and equally importantly to those who were involved with our activities of that time. We have much to be proud of! Tom was incredibly excited to have actually stood on the terraces of Sarkuwa that we had heard so much about, and he enjoyed the hospitality of these gentle people. We have concluded that when a stone is cast into a pond, the ripples run far and wide. We can never know where they will end, and so it has been with our efforts for improving educational opportunities in a small village perched on a mountain half a world away.

Thank you!

(Mrs Donna Lea is an educator in Illinois, USA. After 35 years of full-time teaching in the Fisher Grade School of Illinois, USA, she has been retired, but she still teaches part time)

Road to Fair Representation

✍ Dr Pramod Dhakal
Ottawa, Canada

(Author's Note: This is a second part of a five part series. The first and fifth parts are published in a number of news media. Please visit [NepalNews](#) for Part I and [Kantipur](#) for Part V. A related article published in August can be found in [Kantipur](#). Other parts are coming to print media soon)

These days, a rapid political transition is taking place in Nepal - a tiny country on the Himalayas. However, the changes taking place in Nepal are of Himalayan scale and are intriguing the spectators of international politics and diplomacy on an unprecedented level. Nepal's transformations are noteworthy because this country is characterized by complex interactions of hard-to-solve-issues of ethnic, religious, cast-originated, geographic, and regional differences manifested and highlighted by 10 years of armed conflict. These issues are further compounded by gender, economic, educational and other disparities, and also by a labor of transition from feudality to modernity. In this backdrop, Nepal is attempting to develop a system of representation that is fair, futuristic, and acceptable to all. This endeavor of providing fair rule and unity for Nepal's 28 million people, who are increasingly aware of their rights, is a tall order for any mortal living in this planet.

Nepal's rapid march in pursuit of answering the question of "who represents me?" to its people is a tough one and, if successful, bears potential to become a model for the whole world. This ideal of developing a system of just-representation where people's values and interests are embodied by their representatives in the parliament is not emerging out of a vacuum. Nepal is attempting to ride on the strides made by world's democracies when they made transitions from old Anglo-American and elite-centric model to relatively modern proportional representation system but with a heightened meaning into it.

The way Irish democracy solved the problem of fair representation among Catholic and Protestant religious groups in Ireland, Nordic democracies attempted to provide fair representation among organized ideological groups and also to reduce the gender divide in representation. Sweden today sends more than 45% women representatives in its parliament. All these democratic experiments, however, were done in countries with ethnically homogeneous and highly educated population. But Nepal has much more complicated issues at hand, such as those stemming from ethnic, cast-originated, religious, knowledge and other socio-economic divides. This country is an example of diversity at its extreme. On top of that, having embarked a mission to write a new constitution by people's representatives, Nepal has born the responsibility to address the inherent flaws of modern of democracies in representing the views of the majority of ordinary citizens who do not belong to any organized political party.

This mission called democracy or "rule of the people" is not so easy because of the twisting of its definition to fit the convenience of its "keepers." The whole domain of democracy appears like some fuzz because of actions and reactions of multitudes of competing interests like: freedom vs. law-and-order, me vs. you, me vs. us, rights vs. responsibilities, wealth-of-an-individual vs. wealth-of-a-nation, money vs. ethics, need vs. want, quantity vs. quality, material vs. spiritual, privacy vs. transparency, public-ownership vs. privatization, consumption vs. preservation, expediency vs. fairness, and so on. The problem is that we want all of them and we want them "now" – a goal theoretically unachievable. Then we become complaisant and allow the discourse to take the path of least resistance, which favors expediency over fairness. Our complaisance makes us purposeless, then makes us seek happiness in a material world, and then leads to an ultimate demise of our spirit of creativity and innovation.

Once upon a time, this beast called democracy was supposed to promote fairness in society. Then a new beast called corporation was born and then multiplied at an unprecedented scale. These corporations were supposed to promote expediency through process and systems. But today the whole world is being corporatized and the process of corporatization has tragically becoming synonymous to democracy, and this has led to a new movement called privatization of the world. We are allowing the corporations to take over all affairs of the world and letting the governments to become subservient to the corporate world. All big "democratic" governments are busy serving the corporate interests than to serve the interest of their ordinary citizens. They are pressurizing small countries to succumb to their grand interests by forcing them to take paths that are destructive, let alone be fair. Nepal adopted a for-profit education and health-care

systems and wholesale privatization of everything to serve this world interest. The preservation of people's interests has, therefore, become more so important today than ever before.

A whole host of issues related to the development of democratic, connected and global world is to be re-thought with the understanding of the present context of the world. This will lead to debates on issues of fairness in party representation in parliament, mechanisms for effective local and geographic representation, mechanisms to permit novel ideas to be debated in society and legislative organs, fair representation of all influencing sectors of society (gender, age, professions, economic classes, ethnic groups, religions, and so on), mechanisms to not let organized politics dominate the voices of ordinary citizens, to ensure that money does not control media-parties-and-vote, mechanisms to reduce income gaps and social divides, to create fair opportunity and access to resources for all, systems for incorruptible governance, channelling human energy to endeavors of prosperity, and myriads of other mechanisms required to advance the democratic development of a society.

Finding a state of balance and fairness in the presence of competing societal factors is what we must try to attempt. Fairness in this context is about meeting or exceeding the expectation of the people, who are permitted to think freely and are given fair opportunity to develop their intellectual capacity. But then there comes a process of transition and a period of transition when there is a monumental task of correcting inequalities and injustices practiced and carried over from the past. Without passing through this transitory process honourably, the dream of giving a level plain field to all will remain a perpetual illusion.

(Dr Pramod Dhakal is Executive Director of Canada Forum for Nepal. He lives in Ottawa, Canada.)

Call of Time and the Monarchy in Nepal

✍ Dr Ishara Mahat
London, Canada

Monarchy has long been a tradition in Nepal. Its demise was due during Rana regime but is overdue now. This institution has been delinquent and unpopular at best. Those who benefited enormously from the feudal structure of the past are trying to find a loophole to sneak back on the name of so called ceremonial monarchy. But if history of South Asia is any indicator, people have to be free from the old feudal power entirely if they were to be assured that their peace and prosperity will not be robbed by the feudal elements any more.

Monarchy was supposed to be a system that unites Nepal under the leadership of a king. A wishful thinking must have been that the poor and deprived people would become wealthy and powerful by entertaining corrupts and oppressors, and encounter less problem with the system. In reality, however, the opposite is true. Even a common sense should indicate that a democracy can hardly be empowered if the interest of an individual takes over the interest of the community and the state.

Monarchy during its long existence has proved to be a source of significant deficiency for Nepal. For centuries, Nepal has not only revealed a poor identity but also has devalued its importance as a state and left its people in a dilapidated state. Monarchical leadership has deconstructed Nepal towards exploitation, discrimination, and inequalities. Power was amassed at the cost of people and was exercised for suppressing human beings to entertain the pathetic interests of the rulers. Post scenario of Royal Takeover of 2005 demonstrated that people's resistance to the king's ambition for a supreme power is profound and the entirety of the new generation of Nepalese, which represents the future, is growing restless to throw the feudalism into the dustbin of history and build a modern Nepal that can carve its space in a modern, connected, informed and tolerant world.

For some time, the civil society and intellectuals organized in national and international fronts have visualized the role of a republic as a must for the wellbeing of the people at grassroots. Today, people struggling for hand-to-mouth by working from dawns to dusk who have hardly seen the light of education are no longer willing to be the eternal slaves of a feudal monarchy. Further, they have come to understand that states that are republics are surviving as well and surviving proudly in the world without dampening their human ingenuity.

Increasingly conscious people of twenty-first century unquestionably seek democratic rights in par with the best of democracies in the world. With the connection to the world, Nepalese people have seen how democracy has survived or suppressed in different parts of the world such as Middle East, and past Nepal. It is not an illusion to think that Nepalese people would like to envision their nation's journey towards a better destiny by being able to elect a head of the state who can establish a harmony with their consciousness. Nepalese people are in search of a system that nurtures leadership that rises above self, strengthens the whole fabric of society, and establishes positive identity of the nation in the world stage. That is the rule of people; that is the identity of a republic worth striving for!

(Dr Ishara Mahat is a scholar in women and gender studies. She works as a research fellow at the University of Western Ontario and lives in London, Canada.)

This newsletter - Concern Nepal - is a periodic publication of the Canada Forum for Nepal and is circulated electronically and posted in its website. We invite you to be part of the Forum by getting involved and by sending news, views, op-ed writings and research articles. You can reach us by sending email at info@cffn.ca.



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Membership Form

Name:

Address:

Phone and Email:

Name of Family Members (Optional):

Membership Fee Included (circle one): (Cdn\$25 individual), (Cdn\$35 family)

I support the objectives of CFFN and am applying for a membership in pursuit of fulfilling those objectives. I understand that CFFN reserves right to decline my membership application.

Signature:

Please print this page, cut this section, fill all the information, sign and send with appropriate membership fee to above mentioned address.

To see a Peaceful, Democratic, Just, and Prosperous Nepal!

[Click here to go to CFFN home page.](http://www.cffn.ca)