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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Mon, 09/17/2012 - 11:48

Note No. 236

23. 08. 2004

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The Maoists affiliated trade unions imposed an “indefinite blockade” on the capital, Kathmandu from 18th August. It is said that not a single vehicle has come through Thankot the entrance to the capital! No one was willing to defy the Maoists and it is said that the Maoists note the numbers of the vehicles defying the ban and take on them subsequently. Some vehicles with covered number plates were seen plying in the high way to Kathmandu.

The capital at any point of time, would have no more than a fortnight’s supplies of essential goods and oil but could stretch the use of supplies for another month. The danger is therefore not immediate but it could develop into a serious situation, if adequate steps are not taken immediately.

It is hoped the political parties including those outside the government like G.P.Koirala’s Nepali Congress take note of the developing situation and help the beleaguered Deuba’s government to survive and beat the blockade.

The blockade was well planned and was in the offing:

The Maoists are now moving on to the strategic offensive phase. It is their assessment that the fractured polity in the centre

would help them succeed in their final phase of the offensive. The political parties that are still agitating do not seem to understand the situation.

For the last six months, the outline of Maoists' strategy was getting clear. In a slight deviation of Mao's strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside, the Nepal Maoists have been intensifying their activities in the districts surrounding the capital and simultaneously putting pressure on the capital city itself with well-targeted bombings, kidnapping and strikes.

With the objective of destroying the political and economic structure in the capital, the Maoists have been active in the surrounding districts of Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Sindhupalchok, Kabhre and Makwanpur. With the valley's committee being disturbed by the security forces several times, a new leader with the code name "Prabhakiren" had been appointed to restructure the Kathmandu valley Committee and coordinate the operations in Kathmandu valley.

Immediate Causes:

It all started with a few bombings in the Soaltee, a five star hotel partially owned by the King. Though no one was injured, the message was clear and Soaltee instead of defying the Maoists, as it should have done, since it is owned by the King, started the panic by closing the hotel. The Maoist affiliated trade Union the ANTUF-R (All Nepal Trade Union Federation- Revolutionary) buoyed up by their success, called for shut down of the major industries owned by the King and by other multinationals and those considered "anti people". These included Soaltee Hotel, Surya Nepal (Pvt) Ltd another major industry known to be owned by the King, Bottlers Nepal Ltd, Elite Oil Store, Tankeshwar Garment Industry, Pasupathi Spinning mill, Shanghai Plastic industry, Sraavan Garments, Yeti Fabrics and Makalu Yatayat Pvt. Ltd.

The Strategy of the Security Forces:

The strategy of the Security Forces is also getting clear. It is now in full strength of over 78,000 men. Recruitment to the Armed Police Force specially created for counter insurgency warfare is going on though it has not reached planned levels.

The primary objective of the Security of the Armed Forces is to deny the Maoists any permanent "haven". With this in view the Army launched a major operation in the Rukum-Dolpa area some time ago and the Maoist strongholds were occupied for a few days and then vacated. The idea was not to occupy the area permanently which it cannot, given the paucity of communications and lack of strength but to leave the Maoists and their sympathisers in their stronghold with the message that they are vulnerable.

As it always happens, the Maoists disappeared into the surrounding jungles only to return after the troops left.

The operation did not yield any spectacular results but the message was clear.

In yet another major operation last week in Acham, helicopters were also used to disturb the Maoists in Binayak and Kamal Bazar areas.

These operations were launched openly and with prior warnings. One would question the wisdom of mounting such operations when the army is unable to restrict the activities of the Maoists in the capital itself.

The Siege has to be lifted:

The Maoists insurgents have not physically blocked the road or ambushed the convoys. Even a mere call for blockade has caused panic among the transporters. Kathmandu's lifelines are through the two roads leading from India from where the City is sustained. One is curious to know where the bulk of the anti Indian lobby in Kathmandu would run for life- north or south?

People have stopped the establishments in Kathmandu more out of fear. The Maoist insurgents cannot succeed and should not be allowed to succeed.

The morale of Armed Forces is high. Given the right training and support they will do well. The situation is alarming but not critical yet. It is here that India can help and help quickly. There is no quick solution to end the insurgency, but from the present mode of insurgents calling the shots, it should be the other way. Only then can elections be held and democracy restored.

Countries:

Nepal ^[1]

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