

Letters to the Editor

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Nepalese have lost hard-earned democracy



ASSOCIATED PRESS ARCHIVES

The bodies of King Birendra, Queen Aiswarya and other members of the royal family are cremated in the Nepali capital of Katmandu in June 2001.

THE first thing that comes to anyone's mind when thinking about Nepal in the West now is the ruthless massacre of the entire Royal family, except one lineage which was destined to become heir of the monarchy little more than a year ago. Until then, the Himalayan kingdom was remembered for having restored multi-party democracy in the national polity, bringing sovereign powers to the people for some 11 years.

Soon after the horrendous incident, the country saw an escalation of violence and the killing of thousands of people on one pretext or the other by both the militant rebellion of Maoists and the national security forces. People felt the chills of the extended emergency period when they were to



forgo their basic civil rights. Amid a progressively increasing political instability, the constitution of Nepal has been continually breaking down from being the fundamental law of the land, thanks to all quarters of responsible authority. Meanwhile, elected bodies of local governments at all levels have been dissolved. This was soon followed by the dissolution of the elected Parliament.

The final showdown came with a bang, as the King dismissed the elected government, taking over full executive powers against the spirit enshrined in the constitution. Thukuris and Kajis, who are of minority but royal castes by birth in the multi-ethnic society, currently head the nominated council of ministers and all organs of the security forces. As the affairs of the state stand now, there is absolutely no body of governance duly elected by the people at any level, and there has been no definite declaration yet to have any election in the foreseeable future. Nothing has been heard yet, in relation to the ensuing sequence of

events, from the Supreme Court, which is responsible for interpreting the fundamental law.

All political parties of a mass base are in a state of shock for having to pay the price for taking constitutional monarchy way too far in their faith, and have yet to recuperate enough from the aftermath to go to the masses for consultation. This perhaps characterizes the worst kind of collapse of a functioning democracy that happened when everyone was unwary of the unpredicted situation. The United States, championing democracy in the world, hastily declared that this was not a coup d'état of any kind. Whatever it is, the reality is that the innocent people of a South Asian nation have momentarily lost their hard-earned democracy, and are now forced to live in fear and uncertainty once again.

Drona Rasali is a Nepali national living in Winnipeg and a former senior scientist with the Nepalese government.