

The Role of Parliamentarians in Combating Corruption

- There is no dispute over the fact that the parliamentarians should be at the center stage of anti-corruption drive. There are three reasons for this: (1) so far, civil society anti-corruption drive is good only to the extent of making noises or voicing concerns for state transparency and accountability. They are good at generating *demand* for good governance. (2) the government, on the other hand, may be interested in cleaning up petty corruptions. When it comes to grand corruptions, the state mechanisms have failed because they are too weak and ineffective. No government in the world will ever be interested in revealing its own wastes, weaknesses and inefficiencies; therefore, therefore there is less probability for the government coming up with a whole hearted and an active anti-corruption intervention. This is especially true when the government is formed without election. In a democratic set up, anti-corruption drive basically takes the form of an oppositional voice. Therefore, the responsibility of the parliamentarians in curbing corruption is crucial and indispensable. It is through the medium of parliamentarians, people can actually establish the mechanism of voice and accountability in state administration. (3) We often talk of "political will" in combating corruption and the will is no where more aptly reflected than in the parliament, by the parliamentarians.
- However, the problem becomes complicated when the parliamentarians themselves are accused of inefficiency, corruption and self-indulgence. The paradox is here: how do we tackle the problem when the remedy itself is accused as the source of malady?
- We need first to investigate whether corruption accusation to the parliamentarians is of real or just a ploy to disrepute parliamentarians. Let us look at some of the facts from Nepal: (1) After Royal takeover in 1 February 2005, the Royal Palace budget increased from NRs 110 million to NRs 650 million. (2) During 12 years of multi-party regime in Nepal, a total of NRs 70 million was drawn for medical expenses by 735 elected MPs, however, in a single year, NRs90 million was released from the state coffer for the medical treatment of King Gyanendra's daughter, yet Nepali media is washed with stories of corruption by the politicians, MPs and bureaucrats. This is not to mean that we are all honest and clean, this is just an indication of something grossly mistaken about our system.
- Here are some of the steps taken by the Interim Parliament related to anti-corruption drive in Nepal: (1) Broadening the mandate of CIAA to investigate corruption charges related to judiciary, army and royal members hitherto limited to politicians and bureaucrats. (2) Parliamentary investigation into the properties owned by the monarchy (3) Bill on Special Court has been passed with the possibility of increasing the number of benches to speed up judicial hearings on corruption charges, (4) Bill on CA election to bar people charged by the Rayamajhi Commission, enlisted as willful defaulters and proved of corruption

charges from contesting in the forthcoming elections to the CA, (5) Bill on party funding, right to information and good governance, (6) provision for the NBA nominee in the Judicial Council, (7) investigation into the excess committed by the then Royal Commission on Controlling Corruption (RCCC), (8) bill on increasing the penalty to the bank defaulters.

- The role of parliamentarians in anti-corruption drive in Nepal needs to be stressed for following reasons: (1) Anti-corruption is an important clause in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the Government and the Maoist Party in November 2006, (2) Nepal is in a transition period, in a transition period there are increased opportunities for corruption, (3) the country is poised for elections to CA in November, corrupt influences can distort election outcomes, (4) we have non-elected coalition government in power - there are chances of corruption in power sharing exercises, (5) Even though we have opposition in the House, its size is insignificant, (6) in Nepal public rating of politicians is very low, (7) our anti-corruption drive is too much pre-occupied with punitive or curative methods. We need to move beyond punitive methods of promotive and preventive methods.
- Some issues to be addressed in Nepal are: (1) Restoring people's confidence with MPs, (2) education and ratification of UNCAC, (3) Determining the impunity of MPs, conflict of interest, code of Conduct, (4) Controlling political corruption, particularly, corruption related to election campaigning and state capture.