

The Himalayan Times

KATHMANDU, MAY 20, 2005, Jestha 06, 2062 ARCHIVE SECTION

Nepal to face UN scrutiny on children's plight

Himalayan News Service

Kathmandu, May 19:

Nepal is to face scrutiny by the United Nations over its human rights record once again, this time on the rights of its children.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is scheduled to examine tomorrow a report submitted by the Nepalese government, which rights organisations say omits the "significant adverse impact" on the country's children caused by the escalating Maoist insurgency. The government report refers only to child deaths caused by scarcity of medical treatment. It ignores deaths due to food security and the armed conflict.

According to estimates by rights bodies, from May 1996 to February 28, 2005, at least 305 children died due to the armed conflict. The second periodic report of the government was submitted to the UN in December.

According to the Asian Centre for Human Rights based in New Delhi, security forces were responsible for the death of more than 165 children while the Maoists killed 138.

Releasing a shadow report, "Nepal: The Maoists' Conflict and Impact on the Rights of the Child", on Wednesday, the centre said both the security forces and the rebels are known to target minors for alleged offences by their parents.

The centre's report cites an instance in which three schoolchildren were shot dead by security personnel in March while collecting donations for a religious festival on the suspicion they were Maoists, even though they were in school uniform.

The report also holds the Maoists responsible for forcible recruitment of hundreds of schoolchildren and widespread disruptions in the education system following shutdowns called by them.

It also highlights the indifference of the government to the plight of thousands of people who have no nationality certificate. "According to UNICEF, only about 21 per cent of births are registered in Nepal, and these are mostly in major towns," the report said.

"Hundreds of thousands of children belonging to Dalits, Sikhs, Badi, Madhesi and Chepang communities have been denied the right to nationality."