Nepál

An independent Kingdom in the Himalayas, between 26° 25' and 30° 17' N. lat., and between 80° 6' and 88° 14' of E. long.; its greatest length 500 miles; its greatest breadth about 150; bounded on the north by Tibet, on the east by Sikkim, on the south and west by British India.

The sovereign is His Majesty Maharajadhiraja Tribhubana Bir Bikram Jung Bahadur Shah Bahadur Shumshere Jung, who was born on June 30, 1906, and succeeded his father on December 11, 1911. The Prince-Royal and Heir-apparent was born on June 11, 1920. The government of Nepal is a military oligarchy. All power is in the hands of the Prime Minister, to whom it was permanently delegated by the Maharajadhiraja Surendra Bikram Shah under pressure of the Bharadars or nobles of the State in 1867. The present Prime Minister is General Joodha Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana G.C.S.I., Hon. G.C.I.E. (born April, 1875), who was appointed on September 1, 1932. The office of Prime Minister is always held by a member of his family, the succession being determined by special rules.

The aboriginal stock is Mongolian with a considerable admixture of Hindu blood from India. They were originally divided into numerous hill clans and petty principalities, one of which, Gorkha or Gurkha, became predominant in about 1769 and has since given its name to all. The ruling family are Hindu Rajputs.

A commercial treaty between India and Nepal was signed in 1792, and a British Resident was sent to reside at Kathmandu, but was recalled two years later. A frontier outrage, in 1814, compelled the Indian Government to declare war; and a British force advanced to within three marches of the capital. Peace was concluded and the Treaty of Sagauli signed in December, 1815. Since then the relations of the British with Nepal have been friendly. In 1854 hostilities broke out between the Nepalese
and Tibetans, and in 1856 a Treaty was concluded between the Nepalese and Tibetan Governments by which the Tibetans bound themselves to pay an annual sum of Rs. 10,000 to Nepal, to encourage trade between the two countries, and that the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa should be of high rank. Besides, trade agents are maintained at Gyantse, Kuti, Kerrong, and other trade marts in Tibet.

In accordance with the treaty of Sagauli, which amongst other things provides that accredited ministers of each shall reside at the Court of the other, a British Envoy, with a small escort of Indian sepoys, lives at the capital; but he does not interfere in the internal affairs of the State. The appointment of the British Envoy was raised to that of His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Nepal on May 18, 1934, and a Nepalese representative of the same rank was appointed to the Court of St. James with effect from June 12, 1934.

A fresh treaty was signed on December 21, 1923. By it all previous treaties, agreements and engagements since and including the Treaty of Sagauli were confirmed, and the British and Nepalese Governments acknowledged one another's independence, internal and external.

Area and Population.—Area about 54,000 square miles; population estimated at about 5,600,000. The estimated gross revenue is 15,000,000 rupees. The races of Nepal, besides the dominant Gurkhas, include earlier inhabitants of Tartar origin, such as Magars, Gurungs, and Bhotias. The Newars, who came from Southern India, live in the valley or adjacent to it.

Capital, Kathmandu, 75 miles from the Indian frontier; population about 80,000, and of the surrounding valley 300,000.

Religion.—Hinduism of an early type is the religion of the Gurkhas, and is gradually but steadily overlaying the Buddhism of the primitive inhabitants.

Defence.—The Army consists of about 45,000 men, mainly infantry, of whom about 20,000 are regulars. The armament comprises about 15,000 magazine .303 rifles, 25,000 Martini-Henry rifles, 110 machine or Lewis guns, 30 modern, 12 fairly modern and about 240 old-fashioned guns.

Trade.—The principal articles of export are cattle, hides and skins, opium and other drugs, gums, resins and dyes, jute, wheat, pulse, rice and other grains, clarified butter, oil seeds, spices, tobacco, timber, saltpetre. The chief imports are cattle, sheep and goats, salt, spices, sugar, tobacco, drugs and dyes, petroleum, leather, brass, iron and copper wares, raw cotton, twist and yarn, silk, cotton and woolen piece goods. Nepal possesses very valuable forests in the southern part of the country.

Slavery was entirely abolished in the country by the Maharaja in 1924-6. A telephone connects the capital with Birganj near the southern frontier. In February, 1927, the first railway into Nepal (metre gauge), from Raxaul on the Bengal & North-Western Railway to Amlekhganj, a distance of 25 miles, was opened. There is a suitable road for motors from Amlekhganj to Bhimphedi, a distance of about 27 miles. A ropeway was opened at about the same time for the carriage of goods over the last 14 miles of the road from Dhursing above Bhimphedi into the Kathmandu valley. A topographical survey of the country by Indian personnel of the Government of Indus was completed in 1927.

The silver mohar is valued at 6 annas and 8 pies of British Indian currency. Copper piece, of which 50 go to a silver mohar, are also coined. The Indian rupee passes current throughout Nepal.