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Nepal: Mass march challenges U.S. military scheme

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Have you heard of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)?

Yes, it sounds like a company that produces cheesy reality TV shows. But the truth is more dangerous. And it has workers and peasants in Nepal fighting mad.

On Feb. 25, thousands of people marched through the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, to demand that the country's Parliament reject participation in the MCC. Many carried banners and signs in Nepali and English denouncing the MCC, while others carried red flags. The action was organized by the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP).

The angry crowd marched to the U.S. Embassy, where they were confronted by lines of police. After a standoff, a delegation of NWPP leaders was able to deliver a letter of protest addressed to U.S. President Donald Trump. Embassy staff refused to meet with them, sending out a security guard to take the letter.

At that moment, Trump was being wined and dined by the far-right prime minister of neighboring India, Narendra Modi. Trump's visit to India [unleashed a wave of violence](#) against Muslims and supporters that left at least 24 people dead.

Trump and Modi also signed a [\\$3 billion arms deal](#). The NWPP has led many protests against Indian military encroachment on its much smaller northern neighbor.

The [letter addressed to Trump](#), signed by Parliament member Prem Suwal, says: “The [MCC] agreement is not only against the national interest of Nepal but also harms the sovereignty and national freedom of the country. Nepalese people refuse to accept the compact as Nepal and the Nepalese people always adhere to the nonalignment policy in the international sphere. ... It’s an open secret that MCC is a project under the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the U.S. government.”

Denouncing the MCC compact as a prelude to subordination to the Pentagon, the letter continues: “The people of the world are quite aware that the presence of U.S. military bases in different parts of the world is the main source of threat to world peace. ... The MCC compact is starkly juxtaposed with the sentiment of the Nepalese people, who have long been struggling for national freedom, safeguarding sovereignty, peace and prosperity.”

What is the MCC?

The MCC was established by President George W. Bush in 2004 as a way of placing more stringent requirements on poor countries to receive U.S. financial aid. At least 45 countries currently have MCC compacts or threshold agreements — mostly oppressed countries in the global South.

The MCC is supposed to be independent of institutions like the State Department and U.S. Aid for International Development. But the selection process and program administration are [overseen by right-wing organizations](#) like the Heritage Foundation, Freedom House and the Brookings Institution, which loyally serve U.S. imperialism, and its criteria are largely based on countries accepting market-driven economies, austerity budgets and cooperation with the U.S. military.

On Feb. 28, the government of Sri Lanka [rejected an MCC agreement](#) on the recommendation of an expert panel, which said it would damage the country's sovereignty and was incompatible with the constitution.

'Springboard against China'

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with Surendra Gosai, an educator and leader of the NWPP from Bhaktapur. He was part of the delegation that delivered the protest letter to the doors of the U.S. Embassy.

"The MCC and Indo-Pacific strategy is aimed at making Nepal a springboard against China," Gosai explained. "The U.S. and India are both preparing for a new war against China. The provisions in the agreement will make Nepal a new colony of the U.S."

"We have been opposing the MCC in Parliament and in the streets," he said. "Today, some 5,000 youths, teachers, peasants, workers and people from different walks of life participated in the protest. We walked two hours and around eight kilometers through the capital city to the U.S. Embassy, where we handed over the protest letter. Many people in the capital expressed their solidarity with us."

Asked how poor and working people in the U.S. can help Nepalis resist the MCC, Gosai replied: "Joining hands and intensifying the anti-imperialist struggle would be a good way. Nepalese need solidarity and it's important to share with the workers and peace-loving people of the world how we are resisting."

Since the march in Kathmandu, Gosai has continued to travel around Nepal, participating in [rallies and marches against the MCC](#) in several cities and towns.

Photos: Balakrishna Banamala

