



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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## In a Fix

### Are MJF and NFIN, both registered as NGOs getting more political ?

■ NF correspondent

Waves of NGO led agitation and protests of political nature have not only come as a headache for the Government, but emerged as an entirely new issue for the international donors.

Gradual transformation of social, ethnic and caste based organisations into political outfits is at the root of the problem which the donors are considering to review, a western diplomat told newsfront. This was in reaction to the violence that took place during protests called by some NGOs that have been receiving support from donors.

"The international community and donors will support programmes of social awareness and

emancipation. But extending financial support to these NGOs once they expand activities beyond that framework becomes difficult," the diplomat said.

The Government, although dependent on donors for its political legitimacy and survival, has not yet mustered enough courage to take up the issue with the donors, but is said to have had several rounds of informal discussions on the theme if such assistance would continue.

The issue got prominence after the Madheshi Jandhikar Forum (MJF), and the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN), both registered as NGOs led demonstrations and strikes demanding more political autonomy.

"The violence in Gaur by the MJF has not

only forced the Government to examine their financial sources, but also to take up the issue with donors, if any," a Shital Niwas source told newsfront. NFIN has been active in creating awareness of rights and empowerment among ethnic nationalities, but its growing profile at the moment and recent protests in which some cases of violence were reported, is something the donors are said to be monitoring.

Nepal has the largest number of NGOs in South Asia with donors generously helping them. A senior Government official said that a large number of consultants suddenly transformed their consultancy into NGOs, some of them with family domination and the same circle is now influencing, if not controlling, the civil society.

Official sources said that while the political parties do not directly take money from international donors, there are many instances of political activists and leaders founding NGOs, and in some cases, even channeling such funds for the parties they belong to, exploiting legal vacuum or loopholes. "Yes, human rights, rule of law, good-governance and poverty alleviation have been our major focus. The credentials of the NGOs and the people behind them would certainly count when donors choose their partners," the diplomat, who wanting to remain anonymous said. And the challenge before the mass based social organisations and NGOs remain simple – where to draw a line of demarcation between their declared objectives and political activities. ■



Bhaswar Ojha

Mass funeral of victims of Gaur carnage at Aryaghat

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# Feet on two boats

Maoists displayed its alternate scheme of having someone else in G P Koirala's place

■ **nf correspondent**

In a sudden shift in tactic, Maoists have now begun playing a double edged game, challenging G P Koirala's leadership as well as seeking plum portfolios in the Government led by him.

Maoist chief Prachanda reiterated on Sunday, albeit without success, that the interim cabinet should have only one Deputy Prime Minister and added that the post as well as Home Ministry should go to his party nominees. Maoists displayed its alternate scheme of having someone else in G P Koirala's place as the Prime Minister of the Interim Government, if they were not given the portfolios of their choice. Already, the party's senior leader Deb Gurung publicly demanded that it was not the Home Minister, K P Sitaula, but the Prime Minister who should step down owning responsibility for Gaur massacre.

The meeting called by PM Koirala broke down with no understanding in sight, with the four major constituents, Congress, CPN-UML, Maoists and the Congress-D haranguing for major portfolios. Koirala showed no sign of flexibility when he made it clear that 'if' the constituent assembly election is to take place in June, then he 'must' have at least three—Home, Finance

and Defense—for his Congress party. The prospect of that happening grew as both Maoists and the UML were hankering for Home Ministry—a portfolio crucial for exercising Government authority during the election. In any case, the Congress party, through brazen interference by the Home Minister has already packed Civil and Armed Police Force with loyalists.

Prime Minister also argued that the international community may not cooperate if the Maoists got portfolios like Finance, Home or Defense. His argument was challenged vehemently by the CPN-UML participant Jhalnath Khanal who said his party had credentials as good as the Congress party in the eyes of the international community. UML has put forward Bamdev Gautam as Deputy Prime Minister with Home portfolio whereas Prime Minister has been lobbying for his cousin, Sushil Koirala.

Maoists' insistence for the Home portfolio is dictated by two considerations. Firstly, its most trustworthy person K P Sitaula's departure would take away the immunity that Maoists are enjoying for any violation of law of the land and the code of conduct. Secondly, rival outfits like the Madeshi Janadhikar Forum could be marginalised with the use of state machinery in a much more legitimate way. ■

# Belling the cat

■ **nf correspondent**

Former Prime Minister and Congress (D) president, Sher Bahadur Deuba finally did it, even at the risk of being labeled an ally of the king. He spoke his mind that elections in June did not look possible and that the eight parties should realise this.

Deuba suggested that the Maoists and the ruling seven party coalition should decide on the next course, since having election in the existing law and order scenario did not look possible. His clear stance came in during an all party meeting called by the Election Commission last week.

"Maoists' extortion and abduction has not stopped. And the time for electoral preparation is not enough. It's time that we looked at these factors and took a collective decision," Deuba told newsfront.

His suggestion to reconsider the time schedule for election comes in the wake of Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokharel expressing doubts over the credibility of the electoral process in the existing law and

order situation, in the absence of laws defining role, responsibility and rights of the Commission. Two and half months, the available time for the June deadline does not appear enough to complete the necessary formalities.

While UML Secretary General Madhav Kumar Nepal and Maoist Chief Prachanda have often said that any move to have the election postponed should be seen as a design of the palace; Prime Minister Koirala still insists that the Commission must hold election within the stipulated time frame as "it is a national commitment." Deuba, with Congress-D behind him however chose to dissent, though not formally.

There is however, an overwhelming majority in the Working Committee of the Congress party led by the PM who are against the Maoists joining the interim cabinet, without their initiating the process of returning forcibly captured and occupied private, institutional and Governmental property. But no one from the party has directly demanded postponing the election till date. ■



Mass funeral of victims of Gaur massacre

# Threat to Peace

■ **Bishwamani Pokharel**

A series of confrontation and clashes that began in Lahan almost two months ago, culminated in a gory blood-bath in Rautahat's Gaur area on March 21 in which at least 30 Maoists lost their lives, and forty were wounded, some seriously.

The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) whose cadre went into mayhem as Maoists tried to obstruct their public meeting by organising a parallel one, has since expressed regret, but it is yet to be forgiven. Maoists are pressuring the Government to outlaw the MJF and at the same time using the incident in support of their argument why they need to head the Home Ministry.

Maoist parliamentarians created a pandemonium, stalled proceedings in the House, boycotted a probe ordered by the Home Minister and demanded that the Government resign. But till date, the party which indulged in killing of political rivals, ordinary people and security personnel in the past, showed utmost restraint when the bodies of

the victims were brought to Kathmandu. Political parties cutting across party lines paid homage to the slain Maoists, most of them supposed to be combatants from Nuwakot and Makwanpur area who had gone to Gaur on command of the regional leadership of the party. Most of those killed are said to belong to the recently formed Youth Communist League (YCL).

But as Government began rounding up the MJF activists, its leader Upendra Yadav has gone underground. He issued a statement expressing regret for the massacre, but political parties are not willing to consider it more than mere formality. However, MJF continues to blame the Maoists for having provoked the backlash. MJF Central committee member, Upendra Jha said, "we had announced the venue of the meeting a week in advance but Maoists came solely with the intention of disturbing us leaving with limited options to quit or go ahead with the meeting".

But the pressure on the Government from Maoists is mounting. "We

are considering all options, and the law has to take its course," Minister for culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Pradeep Gyawali told newsfront, adding, "Maoists should not get provoked by this act and should also stop disrupting meetings of rival political groups". Following the Gaur incident, Maoists cadre have disrupted the MJF meetings at least in five different Terai districts with the administration clamping curfew of varied duration. On March 24, YCL destroyed the dais built by the MJF for a public meeting in Gool Bazar area of Siraha district.

Despite widespread condemnation of the MJF both by different political parties and the international community, Government seems moving cautiously on the demand of the Maoists to outlaw the MJF. Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chitralakha Yadav, warned that such a move would create further violence and wedge divisions among various political parties. But the last is yet to be heard on the politics of intolerance. ■

# Credibility-the buzz word

■ **nf correspondent**

An election with its credibility questioned has all the risks of being rejected at home and abroad. This was the subtle but clear message that three dignitaries delivered to the Government recently.

Neena Gill who heads European Union Parliamentary delegation conveyed that though not being able to conduct election on time would invite questions on Government's competence; an election under a veil of fear and intimidation cannot reflect people's mandate in its true sense. Her frustration arose from a series of incidents of extortion and intimidation by the Maoists delaying their entry into the Interim Cabinet.

Dr M S Gill, a former Chief Election Commissioner of India, who was here in connection with a seminar last week held similar views. Dr Gill during his interaction

with Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokharel and other commissioners, was clear that given the short time span left for election and the prevailing law and order, election looked difficult indeed.

And Ian Martin, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon, said pretty much the same to Koirala, a day before he left for New York on Thursday. The day he called on Koirala coincided with the bloodbath that Gaur witnessed following the long-drawn rivalry between Madheshi Janadhikar Forum and the Maoists. "Election should not only happen in a credible manner but needs to be seen as credible," a source in the PM's office quoted Martin as saying. Martin, during his meeting with other political leaders, believed to have advised to contemplate on the cost of holding an election lacking credibility and held in an atmosphere of violence and intimidation.

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■ **Rajesh Ghimire in Ilam**

Nepali spiritual healers are normally neglected in conservation work despite their knowledge in our natural heritage. An NGO in Ilam has come up with a unique idea of garnering help of Lamas, Dhamis, Phedambas, Bijuwas, Pandits and training them for conservation of the Kangchenjunga region. That nature is a common wealth, responsibility and heritage seems to be the guiding theme behind the idea that has now been translated into action.

Bisnu Kafle of Ilam Cooperation Council said, "we believe that an aware and empowered civil society can conserve the biodiversity." This venture is one of the several initiatives to conserve the biodiversity hotspot of Eastern Himalayas region which includes Bhutan, northeastern India, and southern, central and eastern Nepal. It is home to 163 globally threatened species, including

Asia's three largest herbivores—Asian elephant, greater one-horned rhinoceros; wild water buffalo, tiger, as well as several large birds such as vultures, storks and hornbills, Ang Phuri Sherpa, country coordinator of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) told newsfront.

The Eastern Himalayas, one of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots, comprises diverse ecosystems and biodiversity. Its conservation campaign is now recognised by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) including it as part of WWF's Global 2000 eco-regions, popularly known as 'Gift to the Earth'.

Dr. Krishna K. Shrestha, an Ethnobotanist says Kangchenjunga region is floristically rich. It has nearly 2,000 species of flowering plants. Several species are found to be endemic to the Himalayas. Apart from that, Kangchenjunga region has 25 species of endemic flowering plants and large expanse of Himalayan forest types and vegetation.

However, like many other sites, rapid population growth and unsustainable consumption patterns

have threatened this unique natural heritage site. According to CEPF, the hotspots harbor half the diversity of life yet they have already lost 86 percent of their original habitat.

To save these habitat, CEPF is working in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as part of a joint initiative of Conservation International, Global Environment Facility, Government of Japan, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The World Bank. It enables conservation action and builds capacity for sustainability in biodiversity hotspots, the Earth's biologically richest and most endangered regions. According to the officials, as of December 2006, CEPF has supported more than 900 civil society groups in conserving hotspots in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

CEPF/WWF last week organised a function in Ilam to launch those initiatives in Nepal. Five local NGOs received total grant of RS. 2,30,04,777 for a two year period. Officials say that the livelihood of local communities gets enhanced and dependency level on natural resources reduced through



Kamal Rai/NDC

institutionalisation of local people. Ilam Cooperation Council (ICC) is working in Jogmai, Jamuna, Mabu, & Maimajhuwa which are major parts of upper Mai watershed. Bisnu Kafle of ICC said, "Community forest statutes will incorporate biodiversity issues and access and control will be strengthened on forest resources."

As part of the conservation programme, Ethno-botanical Society of Nepal (ESON) is planning to make a plant biodiversity inventory which envisages identifying hotspots and formulating conservation strategies for threatened species and habitats in Kangchenjunga-Singalila ridge. It also

aims at inventorying plant biodiversity of Kangchenjung—Singalila Ridge and documenting their associated habitats. Dr. Sarala Khaling, Regional Coordinator of CEPF/WWF is hopeful that these initiatives will help to conserve the habitat.

Bird Conservation Nepal plans to develop civil society networks to conserve Key Biodiversity Areas in Nepal (KBA), and focus on the Kangchenjunga-Singalila region. The job of conservation is not an easy one. Half of Nepal's KBAs lie outside protected areas and even those inside the protected area need management intervention. And this throws a real challenge. ■

# Thriving hotspots



WWF

## Challenge - destigmatise leprosy

### The disease continues to carry the social stigma

■ **Chhatra Karki**

Despite worldwide efforts to eradicate leprosy, Nepal, Congo, Tanzania, Mozambique and Brazil are the five countries that have not yet succeeded in meeting the target. Less than one patient per 10000 people qualifies a country to be listed in the leprosy free category. There are no signs that Nepal is anywhere near joining that category.

The Government however, has always announced that it is committed to meet the WHO target—elimination of the disease by 2010; but no significant steps have been taken so far. According to the officials in the ministry, it would be impossible to achieve the goal with this level of indifference or inaction.

In 1991, WHO declared its commitment to reduce the rate of prevalence of leprosy to less than 1 case per 10,000 population at the national level. Indicators of Nepal's leprosy control program reveals that the prevalence rate here is 1.65 per 10,000 people. Around 80 per cent of this disease has been found in the Terai region. In Parsa prevalence rate increased from 3 to 3.4 and in Bara from 1.2 to 2, compared to the previous year.

Department of Health is the nodal agency for containing the disease in collaboration with

leprosy control program. "Nepal needs more efforts from all stakeholders to eliminate leprosy," former Director General of Department of Health, Dr. Mahendra Bahadur Bista said.

The number of people infected by leprosy was roughly over a lakh in year 1966. Forty years down the line, there was phenomenal decrease in the number with 4213 cases detected in 2006. Multi drug therapy service that started in Nepal 25 years ago has now expanded throughout the country, but the disease continues to carry the social stigma.

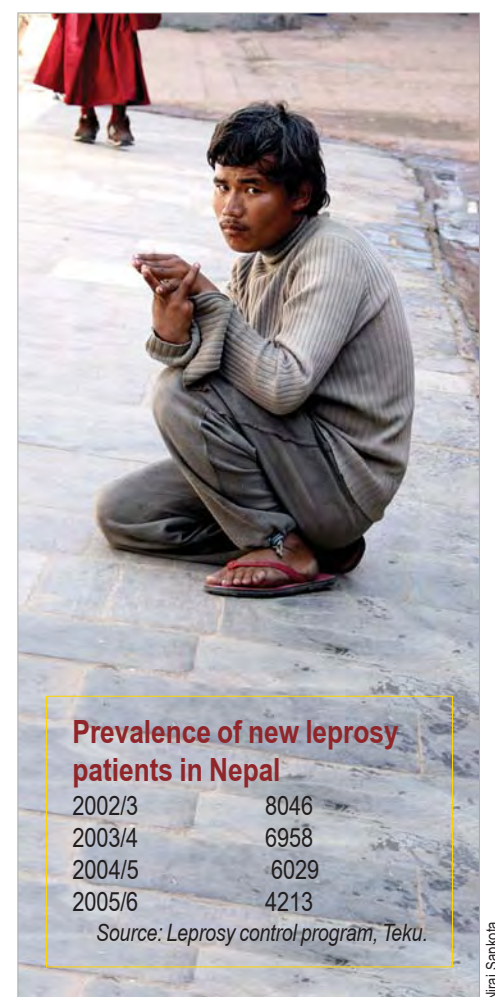
Yohei Sasakawa, the WHO goodwill ambassador for elimination of leprosy, said during his visit here a couple of months ago that poverty remains the major barrier as the most affected also are the ones who are poverty stricken. In his opinion, the eradication programme has to meet the dual challenges of eliminating leprosy as soon as possible and ensuring quality service delivery as long as needed in the country, by involving other institutions of health care delivery such as medical colleges and hospitals.

Sasakawa has been providing medical support to leprosy affected people in Nepal for three decades. He said he worried most about social stigma and discrimination in the

country, "leprosy cannot be eradicated as long as the social stigma and discrimination continues."

The leprosy affected people and their family members also face obstacles in the way of education, employment and marriage and are denied basic human rights. Sasakawa had approached the UN Commission on Human Rights regarding this issue way back in 2003. UN sub-commission on the promotion and protection of human rights was recommended to take action in favour of rights of the victims. After approving the report by the human rights council, the UN General Assembly adopted principles and guidelines on discrimination against people affected by leprosy and their families.

Eleven top leading personalities of the world including former US President Jimmy Carter, Nobel Peace prize laureate Dalai Lama and former Indian president, R. Venkatraman joined in the first Global Appeal, released in New Delhi, January 2006. The tradition was carried further with 11 people from various countries, all affected by leprosy, re-endorsing the appeal from Manila towards the end of January. It only comes as a challenge for Nepal—the only country in South Asia with leprosy—to listen to the appeal and act. ■



Niraj Sapkota

**Prevalence of new leprosy patients in Nepal**

2002/3	8046
2003/4	6958
2004/5	6029
2005/6	4213

Source: Leprosy control program, Teku.



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### Point to Ponder

**An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind**

- Mahatma Gandhi

## Violence hurts

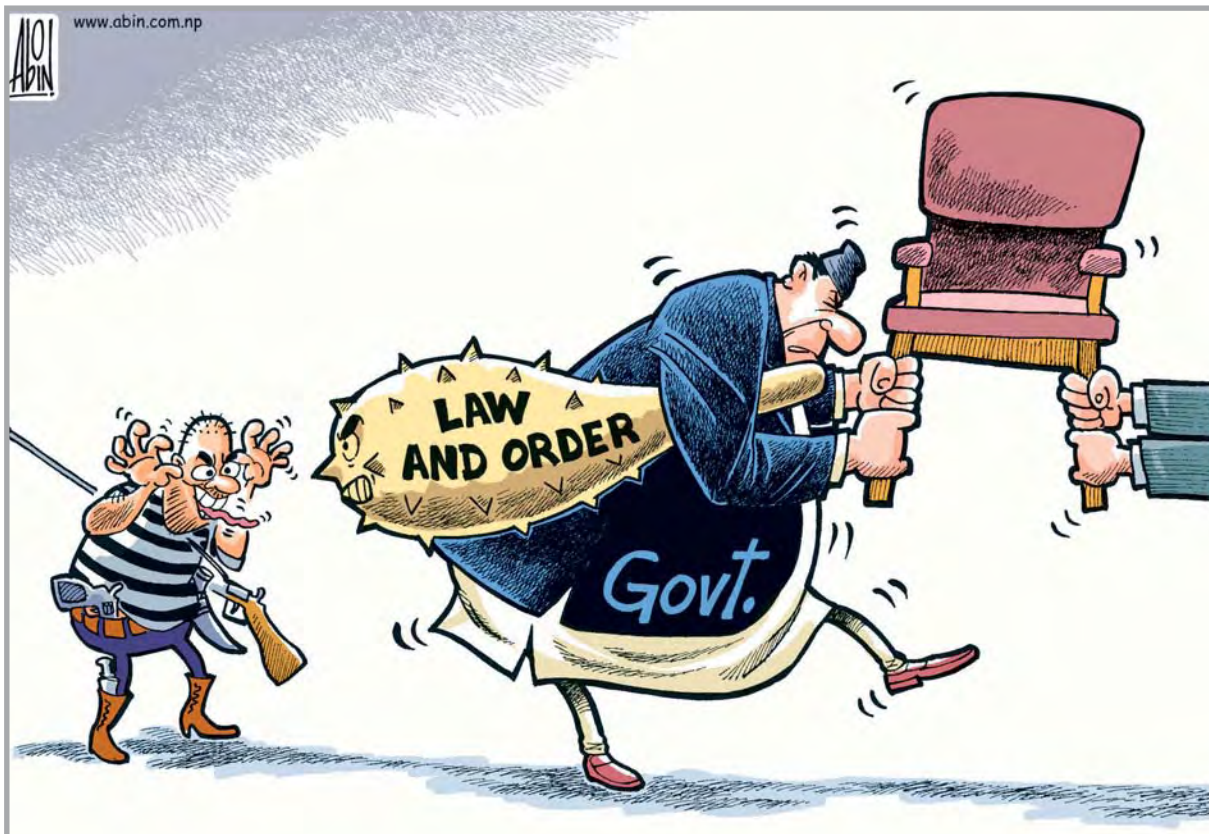
The massacre in Gaur, Rautahat that claimed at least 28 lives is downright outrageous. The heinous act is no way justified to secure any legitimate demand—political or otherwise. The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) that forcefully raised political demands on behalf of the Terai, risks losing its credibility and identity as a legitimate representative outfit by its shocking acts of violence. Killing of citizens cannot be accepted as a way of politics but only puts the perpetrators of the act in the bracket of militants or terrorists.

The people of this country who have suffered enough in the past 11 years will not accept any form of violence, be it in any guise. By indulging in the massacre of the Maoists, both armed and unarmed, MJF has only tried to derail the peace process and emerged as a force that people would soon begin to abhor.

This is also a tremendous setback for the international community including the US, UK, India and EU who had in a way recognized MJF as a political outfit and had advised the government of Nepal to fulfill their legitimate demands. It is therefore in the interest of the Terai as a whole that MJF unconditionally apologises for the crime that resulted in the loss of precious human lives; and takes initiatives to bring the culprits to justice. MJF otherwise will be discarded by the very people who created and stood by it for their legitimate rights through legitimate means.

While MJF deserves condemnation for this, this needs more soul searching as well. The root cause behind this retaliation is the Maoists' intolerance towards political rivals. Disturbing Rastriya Prajatantra Party meetings in Lamjung and Jhapa and murdering Ramesh Mahato, a MJF supporter in Lahan in January triggered off a chain of hostilities between the two groups in different parts of the country. These were clear acts of provocation but it doesn't justify in any manner the cold-blooded attack on Maoists in Gaur.

It ought to be taken as a costly lesson by the Maoists and they should realise that they have shed enough blood in the country and also accept that politics of guns does not bring peace and prosperity. Nor it guarantees safety and security of those still with guns. They should now not lose the opportunity to create history by renouncing violence altogether in words and actions and inspiring others as well. That would also be a tribute to the Maoists who fell victim to the cowardly attack by the 'political rivals' in Gaur. ■



## Letters

### Spot on

I really enjoyed reading Ms. Amatya's article titled "Not Beyond Redemption". It was spot on. When I was studying in Scotland, people frequently questioned me if I were a soldier referring to the Gurkhas. Often taxi drivers and cultured Scots would subsidise bills as a gesture of compassion for the Nepali Gurkhas.

However, some were rather ignorant and like the writer said, were quick to ridicule Nepalis. One thing though which must be covered is the rash behavior of foreign diplomats often ridiculing Nepalis. And to my astonishment, most Nepalis in these hi-fi parties often turn a blind eye to such treatment.

SB Thapa  
London

appreciates the quality of the magazine for its sharpness in coverage. I will circulate newsfront to many of my friends the day you gave me the web link.

Your paper answers many questions that many of us have. Still I'd like to ask how you through your paper are encouraging young, literate, able people to enter politics in Nepal? You can generate this debate in the public through your weekly.

Why don't you also cover the success and failure stories of Nepali economic migrants and job-seekers, who with their blood and sweat are helping to run the nation in these depressed times. Their sad stories are being neglected so far. Their stories will help future job seekers to be more cautious when they go aboard to work, especially the uneducated ones.

Anuj Khanal  
London

### Unclear Foreign Policy

As depicted by Yub Raj Ghimire in the 8th issue of newsfront, the foreign policy of Nepal is not clear, independent and strong enough to deal with its neighbors' concerns about social, political and economical affairs of Nepal.

The negative trend of political appointments in the government results in the country's foreign affair policy being determined by the politician's ambition to build relationships to gain support for personal gain and development. As a result no attention is paid to what would benefit the country. Political leaders pay scant attention to sovereignty and national policy. To save our country and its people, we need people with character to lead our country.

Binod Pathak  
pathakbinod@gmail.com

### More humour please

I and my friends have been watching the growth of newsfront with keen interest. It is creating an example of what journalism should be like. It is balanced, neutral with no political leaning and independent of funding from any people or organisation. It is indeed a weekly with substance. Please keep it up. But my only complaint is that you need to inject more humour, black or white, in your write ups. The readers would like to laugh sometimes you know, especially during these depressing times.

Urgyen Sherpa  
Gwarko, Patan

### Answers our questions

The clarity of pictures your pictures are very good and the language straightforward. Whoever reads newsfront

Readers, your reactions, criticisms, comments, suggestions are most welcome. Please address it to:

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

## Spiritual Corner

### Liberation from self

**Albert Einstein** (1879 – 1955) was one of the greatest physicists of all time, best known for the theory of relativity and specifically mass – energy equivalence,  $E=mc^2$ . He was awarded the 1921 Nobel Prize in physics.

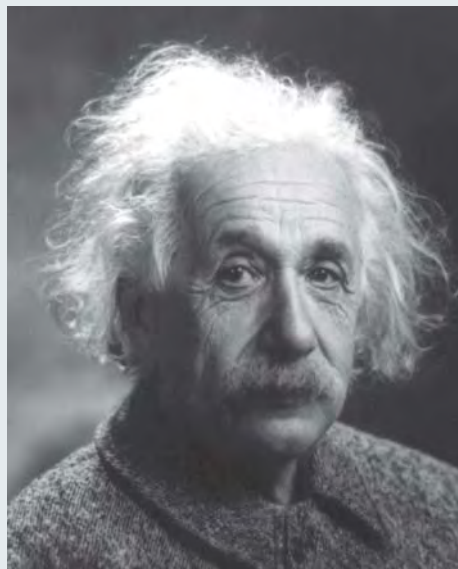
#### Einstein on Gandhi

I believe that Gandhi's views were the most enlightened of all the political men in our time.

We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non-participation in anything you

believe is evil.

- A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and the sense in which they have obtained liberation from the self. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive. (1954)



- The most beautiful and most profound experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the source of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their primitive forms - this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness. (*The Merging of Spirit and Science*)

- Communities tend to be guided less than individuals by conscience and a sense of responsibility. How much misery does this fact cause mankind! It is the source of wars and every kind of oppression, which fill the earth with pain, sighs and bitterness. (1934)



Bhaswar Ojha

Victim of cold blooded murder

# Prevent more carnage

**Ironically, the Maoists schooled in the Marxist tradition of class conflict have instead given greater priority to the caste/ethnic conflict**



■ Anuj Mishra

On Wednesday March 21<sup>st</sup>, Nepal witnessed yet another gruesome mass murder in recent history. The killings marked the single largest event of political murder since the end of active insurgency in April 2006.

Despite this horrendous event that portends a specter of ethnic flares all over Nepal; the political forces, civil society and in Nepal's case the all powerful international community still maintain the decidedly myopic perspective on ethno-populism.

The politics of identity gained much currency in Nepal after the Maoists, in their drive to rapidly shore up support against the Nepali state, raised the issue of social exclusion based on caste, ethnicity and language. Nepali state was uniformly portrayed as predatory, that it had repressed and sought to homogenise the various ethnic, regional and linguistic identities into a singular Nepali identity.

Nepali state was indeed predatory but it was the predation of an exclusive clan that had the whole nation in its hold in a medieval feudal system that continued until recently. The Nepali State in its conventional sense had, it can be

argued yet to be structured, let alone the talks of re-structuring that has gained much purchase in political discourse recently.

The populist politics of ethnic victimisation espoused by the Maoists in order to shore up support against the Nepali state conjoined it with the 'structuring' of a repressive State. However, the State essentially was more of a feudal estate of an exclusive clan. All caste groups basically remained particular organs tasked to perform particular functions for the operation of the

**In this scenario the espousal of ethnic nationalism only stokes the fire of hatred as the Gaur carnage gives a clear indication of.**

fiefdom. Although the Hindu caste system remained the determining factor of social hierarchy, the discrimination however more often took the economic class dimension.

Ironically, the Maoists schooled in the Marxist tradition of class conflict have instead given greater priority to the caste/ethnic conflict, with the latter increasingly eclipsing the former. With the conjured up image of a reified Nepali Hindu

state a target, the Maoists have been offering an alternative federation.

The Maoists have initiated a host of 'liberation front' of almost all of the ethnic and linguistic groups in Nepal and have called for a federation of ethno-linguistic republics. How such republics will accommodate the 'settler' populace that does not belong to the said ethno-linguistic criteria is not clear. The distribution of ethno-linguistic population is not congruous with the historically claimed area of nativity. Many ethno-linguistic groups themselves are minority in their claimed areas of nativity. In this scenario the espousal of ethnic nationalism only stokes the fire of hatred as the Gaur carnage gives a clear indication of.

In politics devoid of any credible and viable economic agenda of national development, the political opportunism of ethno-linguistic grievances has gained a high currency. The cheap political opportunity cost of stoking ethnic tension and reaping high profit from the consequential sectarian sway of popular support is capable of catapulting a non-entity to national prominence as illustrated by the publicity generated by the Madhesi People's Right's Forum (MPRF).

The more radical the movement the more prospects it has- either getting eliminated, if the

state is consolidated and repressive; or rising to challenge the state itself, if the state is fractured. And democracies, however unqualified they may be, cannot be overtly repressive. Despite Maoist's claim to the sole credit for their "success", the fact that Nepal had already become a "democracy" after 1990 allowed them to launch their assault on the very system, which in principle could not deny them right to dissent.

Social inclusion by itself is not a new agenda. In fact the struggle for democratisation of societies all over the world is about social inclusion itself; the inclusion of all sectors of society in the governance as opposed to the exclusive nature of undemocratic system. In Nepal, the primary area of social inclusion ought to focus on providing equal and equitable access of education and health care to all regardless of their ethnic or caste background.

Then in other areas, the inclusionary practice ought to focus on lifting the economic status of the poor, regardless of their ethnic, caste, regional or linguistic identity. However, the straightforward policy of positive discrimination based on caste or ethnic identity which in itself is contested and not settled in many respect, will lead to even more schism based on caste and ethnicity. We have the ghastly Gaur to remind us.

*Mishra is a researcher with interests in Civil Society, Democratization and Globalization. He can be reached at: a.mishra@warwick.ac.uk*



HIV/AIDS awareness campaign at Maitighar, Kathmandu

# The Silent Kill

■ nf correspondent

## Shocking facts and figures

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) – the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome) was first identified in Nepal in 1988. In the ten years that followed, the country found itself facing a "concentrated epidemic," among certain sub-populations. These included injecting drug users and migrant labourers whose HIV prevalence rates consistently increased by five percent year after year. (*National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal Government, May 2006*)

HIV infections recorded in November 2005 by NCASC shows a cumulative total of 5,647 people affected with HIV, of who 929 developed AIDS. Altogether, 273 AIDS related deaths were also recorded. Out of the infected population, 53 percent were clients of Female Sex Workers, 20 percent Intravenous Drug Users, 14 percent housewives and seven percent adolescents

(NCASC, 2005).

In the absence of community based HIV prevalence data, these figures were obtained from sentinel surveillance and voluntary counseling and testing centres, and are gross underestimates of community prevalence. In absence of effective health interventions, some reports predict a generalised epidemic occurring by the end of the decade, with an estimated sero prevalence of 1 to 2 percent among the age group 15 to 49 (*Chin, 2000*).

Mobility and migration are not direct risk for HIV but create conditions that can increase people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The employment-oriented seasonal and short-term migration of Nepalis to urban areas of Nepal, India and other countries has emerged as a major factor in driving the HIV epidemic (*Furber et al, 2002; Pokharel, 2000; Seddon, 1998; Puri et al, 2004*).

**With over 70,000 people living with HIV/AIDS now, one fifth of which are women, this issue needs to be highlighted urgently and brought to attention of the general public.**

With over 70,000 people living with HIV/AIDS now, one fifth of which are women (NCASC, 2005), this issue needs to be highlighted urgently and brought to attention of the general public. With the intention of creating awareness, newsfront spoke with two HIV positive women and decided to publish their account (translated from Nepali) exactly as they said it. ■





Bhaswor Ojha

## Voices of HIV positive women

# Now, I have hope

■ Sharmila Ghimire

I was married in 15 years ago when I was studying in class 11 in Jhapa. The mediator said he was a good man working in Kathmandu, from a good family. One day he announced that he was going to Delhi with his friends to earn money and asked me to stay back with my child. He disappeared for four years. There was no news of him. In the meantime, I met my brother with whom I shared my woes. He took me back to my village, to my parent's home and I stayed there. You know how difficult it is for married daughters to stay in her parents' home. How difficult the community makes it for her.

The villagers began to gossip that my husband had left me. When he appeared after four years, he looked very thin and darker. He said it was due to hot weather and didn't say more. I went to live with him in his parent's home. After four months he went back to India again. My in-laws then gave me tough time. I was in a situation where I used to wonder what it would be like to buy bangles worth ten rupees. It would hurt me the most when my daughter would cry for things that her uncles would give their children and I was unable to provide anything for her.

One day my daughter followed a child who was going to school. I went to fetch her and met the principal of the school. He asked me why I hadn't sent my daughter to school. When I told him a bit of my problem, he asked me if I would like to teach in the school. Encouraged by him, I agreed to teach Nepali and was offered 2000 rupees a month.

When my husband came back again, he looked very sickly. I asked him to rest at home. He began to borrow money and drink. I'd come back tired from school and find the house reeking of alcohol and find

him lying on the floor. I used to ask him why he was drinking when he was suffering from continuous diarrhea. His response would be, "let me die in peace. You also won't live for long." That used to confuse me a bit but it never struck me to ask him what he meant. He got worse and died in a hospital where they announced that he had died of kidney failure.

After a year, I began to suffer from frequent fever and started losing weight. I used to feel unwell most of the time but I continued to go to school. Life at home began to get worse. My in-laws would call me a husband-killer and a bad omen. After two years, I left the house and went back to my parent's home. My brother who had suspected that my husband might have died of AIDS asked me to go with him to Kathmandu for a check up. He asked me to leave my daughter behind since there'd be nobody to look after her in the city.

In Kathmandu, in Patan hospital, the sisters asked me many questions. I told them everything about myself and my husband. They told me they'd be doing HIV test on me. I didn't know what they meant but assumed it must be something like typhoid. The result showed positive. We got it rechecked and the result was the same. My brother explained everything to me and advised me not to tell anybody.

In the hospital, I was advised to start medication which I'd have to take regularly. Since I didn't have any money and my brother didn't say anything about this matter, I didn't pay any attention to it. Later, I realised the mistake I had made. I told my brother, had he advised me two years ago, I'd have been spared much trouble. He replied that he himself didn't know enough to be able to give me right directions.

Two years later, when I fell terribly sick, I was brought to Teku hospital and was hospitalised for about two months. I was so ill, I couldn't lift my head. Thinking that I was dying, my family

members came to see me. My father in law got to know of it and accused me of doing wrong things. When I told him that I had got it from his son, he replied that his son died of kidney failure, not AIDS. "Where did you get it from", he asked me spitefully.

I met Sneha members at the hospital. After being discharged from the hospital, I went to them. Now, I'm sharing a room on rent with some friends. When I went to meet my daughter in Dasain last year, I wasn't allowed inside. I was so thirsty, I asked my daughter to fill up the bottle I was carrying with water and spent some time with her. I spent the night with my friends who of course did not know I was HIV positive. When I went to my parent's home, my family members did not want to share the utensils I used. When I asked them, my mother said that my brother had advised her to do so.

I started ARV (Anti-Retro-Viral) medication about a year back and am also taking treatment for tuberculosis – both available free from Teku. After coming here, I received counseling, training and started working as an outreach worker.

Now I have hope. Though I know there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, I still pray that I be healed. I worry about my daughter a lot. I feel good helping other HIV positive women who come in this shelter. I now know a lot about HIV/AIDS and feel good sharing my knowledge with others who come to this shelter.

I think we need to spread more awareness about HIV/AIDS and get rid of people's misconceptions. My wish is that a family and community would not discriminate a HIV positive person. And I wish that I had never got married. What did I get out of the marriage, except so much suffering at the hands of my husband and my in-laws?

(name changed)

# iller

## Awareness protects

■ Tsering Sherpa

I'm a HIV positive woman. Most women I've met have been infected by their husbands but the irony is that the family of the husband tends to blame it on the woman, not the man; and the woman ends up getting discriminated. I too was infected by my husband who studied abroad. My husband didn't tell me that he had been infected. I found it out from a nurse who was handling his case after he fell sick.

Soon after he was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, his family began his treatment, importing medicines from India. But later when I too was diagnosed as positive, I was devastated. I was ignored and looked upon with suspicion. My husband was protected by his family but I was an outsider and so they did not care.

I think it's very important to spread awareness of HIV/AIDS - how it gets transmitted, how one can protect oneself and how important it is to treat HIV positive people with respect. A young unmarried girl has the right to know if her prospective partner, boyfriend is free from infection. A housewife needs to know how to protect

herself. They should be aware of it all so that they do not face the same fate as we have. Awareness protects.

Before I was infected, I had little or no interest in any news regarding HIV/AIDS. But after being infected, my interest grew. I wish I had the basic knowledge to protect myself before I got infected. I divorced my first husband and later got married to a HIV positive person. We marry so that you have somebody of your own. If something hurts me, it should hurt him too. But that wasn't the case in my marriage. I looked after him a lot but when I fell sick, there was nobody to look after me.

I sought help of a shelter that looked after me. Had it not been for that shelter, I wouldn't have been alive today. I established this shelter, Sneha, in 2004, as an organised support center (supported by FHI and UNDP) for HIV positive women and to make their voices heard. A positive woman, if she tells the truth about her health status cannot get a room on rent. Are we not citizens of this country, aren't we members of this society that we are denied right to live our life?

We have a branch in Acham. Most of the women who come to our shelters seek anonymity

and a source of support to sustain their life, as their last hope. Due to the discriminating attitude of society, most HIV positive people prefer to keep their status hidden. Sneha now deals with 200 clients who are HIV infected and affected, who come and go. Most of them are from outside the valley. I think that along with spreading awareness to stop spread of HIV/AIDS, it is equally important to look after the already infected group, so that their frustration and anger does not harm others.

Women don't get infected by choice. They don't get trafficked or become prostitutes out of choice. There is always a story of desperation, helplessness or exploitation hidden behind such cases. Some families who know that their sons are positive get married to girls who are kept in dark. Most family members do not support their infected daughters and daughter in laws.

By getting involved in this work, by keeping my attitude positive and looking after myself, I feel that I can live happily and can contribute something to the society. ■

(If you are HIV/AIDS positive and have a story to tell that is different from the one already published, please contact us at [newsfront@bhrikuti.com](mailto:newsfront@bhrikuti.com))



Niraj Sapkota



Indian Navy base on the Indian Ocean

# If India goes to war...

War manual being reworked after 15 yrs to factor in private players in infrastructure and technological advances

■ Shubhajt Roy

The Government is rewriting the Union Warbook, its manual for war, to keep pace with reforms, technology and new threats. The Warbook was last updated in 1992, when mail was what the postman brought, telephones were immobile and when the fortress of licence raj was just beginning to let in the first wave of reforms.

Fifteen years later, while private players dominate crucial infrastructure sectors such as telecom and aviation, an inter-ministerial group is working on a set of sweeping changes in the Warbook. The changes will give the government overriding powers over private players if and when the country goes to war.

• The Civil Aviation ministry has been asked to prepare a contingency plan so that greenfield and private airports and private airlines can be requisitioned during a war. The years of liberalisation have seen a major presence of private players in the sector—operating not just airlines but important airports as well.

• The Power ministry has been

asked to prepare a contingency plan—keeping in mind the private power plants and distributors, to “control private sector to divert electricity to public sector/contribution” in case of a war.

• The Home ministry has been asked to involve private security agencies in providing security to various vital/sensitive installations/establishments, both in the government and private sectors.

• With the Metro emerging as the new face of transport in cities like Delhi and Kolkata already and Mumbai and Bangalore soon, the government has moved in to include them in the list of vital installations where security will be stepped up in the event of a war.

• The government, aware of the threat of bio-chemical warfare, has, for the first time, roped in the Animal Husbandry department to prepare a plan to combat the impact of nuclear, biological and chemicals attack on animals.

• The Water Resources ministry has been asked to prepare a plan to tackle biological and chemical pollution.

• And as if that’s not enough, the

government, realising the potential of fake currency’s ability to wreck the country’s economy, has asked the Finance ministry to prepare contingency plans to print currency and introduce secure currency notes during war.

• The Communication and IT ministry has been asked to work out “counter electronic warfare measures.” It should replace the word “telephone” by “voice, data and fax.” It has been told to add “Information technology” after telecom, and the new command would read as, “Postal, telecom and Information technology censorship will always be imposed together whether censorship is to be complete or partial.” Telecom censorship will now cover all forms of telecommunication.

The Union Warbook review committee, headed by secretary (security) in the Cabinet Secretariat N C Padhi, has Air Vice Marshal S K Gahlaut as its vice-chairman and Brig Sanjiv Laumas as secretary, both belonging to the Integrated Defence Staff. The committee has members from all key ministries who share their inputs.

(The Indian Express)

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Amar and his wife  
Deepa at his school

# Heart on Wheels

After being in coma for about eight months, Amar Thapa woke up to the painful reality that the tall handsome body that used to be in his command now refused to respond in any way.

## ■ Sushma Amatya

Amar Thapa is grateful to his wheelchair, which he said is the reason he has been able to serve others. "Had I been normal the way I was before I met with this spinal cord injury, I'd have been busy earning money and stuck in material trappings without any feeling for others who are suffering or any will to do anything about it." Amar, now 37, was paralysed neck down when he hit his head while diving when he was 20. After being in coma for about eight months, he woke up to the painful reality that the tall handsome body that used to be in his command now refused to respond in any way. Learning to accept what happened to him, finding the will to live and finding a purpose in life has been a long and arduous journey for Amar.

He was inspired to snap out of his sorrow and disenchantment with life by a sister in the hospital in Vellore where he was recuperating. "She drilled this in my head that though my body was disabled, my mind was not and I could use it for some greater purpose", recalled Amar. Indebted to her kindness, he resolved to pay it back by serving other women whose plight he had observed in his young life.

His strength was further tested by the loss of his father, mother and older brother within a short period of time and he found himself in charge of a school that was established by his mother for the less privileged children and women. The 'Boudha secondary English school' in Mahankal, Boudha, has 400 students, out of which around 105 students are provided part or full scholarship. Most students in the school are from broken homes or homes with disturbed background. Amar has a special way with his students and they respond positively to his gentle ways. He told newsfront with pride, "none of our students have failed in their exams and none have resorted to any form of violence though they come from disturbed homes and live in an area that is prone to violence."

A unique feature of the school is that it provides free classes to mothers of the children. Classes are held for the women three times a day, one hour in the morning when they come to drop their children, an hour in the afternoon when they come to

deliver food and an hour in the evening when they come to pick up the children. In all, 175 women take advantage of these classes and some have succeeded in studying up to the level of class 6 and aspire to pass the SLC exams. "They have fun competing with their children and it gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction when I see the transformation in their personalities. They look cheerful and a lot more confident now", said Amar.

So as not to rouse suspicion in husbands' minds regarding the women's activities outside homes, they have been provided with uniforms. The classes that began informally took a formal shape two years ago. Amar hopes to help them learn skills that would enable them earn a livelihood as cooks, beauty parlour workers and the like.

Amar has been successful in inspiring other young accident victims, those with spinal injuries and other physically incapacitating diseases. He recalled the incident when a group of alcoholic teenagers approached him after his televised talk in Germany and vowed to give up drinks and start helping others. "Somehow, my counseling seems to work for those who are in a similar condition as I am or disabled in a different form. I can connect with them well. I make it a point to tell them and others that life is so uncertain and what happened to me could happen to anyone, anytime. And so one needs all the courage and wisdom to live through whatever life presents," said Amar. He admitted that to give continuity to his dreams, finding funds and garnering government support posed tremendous challenges.

He attributes all that he's been able to achieve to his father figure, Devi Ghimire, who encouraged him to take on the responsibility of the school after his mother's demise; his wife Deepa, a nurse by profession who looks after him all the time and Dr. Chakra Raj Pandey whom he visits at regular intervals for check up. "Without their continuous help and support, I would not have been here today. And above all, I'm thankful to God who is still keeping me alive. Given the severity of my injury, it's a miracle", concluded Amar. It was indeed a miracle, blessing him with the will to serve the needy. ■



Ning Sapkota

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# Building Peace

Civil society's roles in peace building have not been adequately discussed in policy analysis in Nepal



■ Dev Raj Dahal

The imperative of peace in Nepal is competing with other claims, such as power, liberation, social justice, basic needs and identity of various political and social actors. Negotiation of these competitive claims into a legitimate social contract is a precondition to fulfill the ardent desire of public for peace in Nepal articulated through Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The central responsibility of Nepalese civil society groups lies in inspiring liberal norms in a highly conflict-prone politics and balance the need of the state for national security and societal needs for democracy. The moral consciousness of the government about its own power requires it to define practical measures

for payoffs to all the citizens and enable conflict parties to seek common social, political, economic and cultural transformation for conflict management.

Civil society's roles in peace building have not been adequately discussed in policy analysis in Nepal. The scant attention is partly due to the perplexity associated with the nature and functions of civil society, partly due to overexcited hope attached to them by political leaders, mass media and rights-based NGOs and partly due to more aspiration and less outcome that civil society discourses have yielded to the Nepalese citizens. The notion of peace is bound up with an order based on mutually agreed principles for the behavior of all actors in their dealings with each other. In this order they can defend themselves and pursue their goals without having recourse to supremely vicious means of violence. Peace is a condition that frees life from the vale of fear and provides all a civilized coexistence.

Pitting democracy versus the state, human

rights against security responsibilities, professionalism versus political alliance, tradition versus modernity, men versus women and one class, caste, ethnic group or race against the other will not resolve the conflict in Nepal. Attempts to project conflict in this light means that there are active interests to repress the public purpose. These are issues that need to be carefully worked out to resolve the condition of unstable power equation which has opened space for each actor to negotiate for absolute gain rather than relative advantage. Nepalese civil society cannot therefore remain satisfied with mere preaching of the politically correct word, but should engage itself constructively to follow it with the right deed so that the hiatus of almost a year long political transition is not allowed overtaking peace-building mission.

Peace building as a practical area involves a set of goals, policies and strategies which aim to prevent the occurrence of armed conflict, avoid structural and direct violence and seek to establish a legitimate political framework for all the stakeholders to peacefully participate in social, economic and political life of the nation. Peace building provides a keyhole for an analysis of the root causes of conflict in Nepal and an examination of the transformation of troublesome links between structural injustice and cycles of violence and counter violence setting a downward spiral of security, democratic and development processes.

It is possible to establish stakeholders' solutions if each actor comes out of its institutional, ideological and personality frame, understands each other's concern, begins to communicate national purpose, recovers the equilibrium of state-society ties and offers peace building as a lasting security to all the citizens. Rebuilding the state is a precondition to any national initiative: security, CA elections

and the compression of the anarchy of free will.

It has become a necessity for civil society to moderate the emerging habits of conflict and keep it within the bounds of legitimate constitutional order. Legitimate order means the leadership has to forget about muscular peace that resolves conflict by subduing opponents. Muscular peace did not prove feasible in the country as it fostered structural injustice. Power-equation based hegemonic peace too did not yield durability. It did not help the nation achieve structural stability of the polity, economy and society and, like in the past, is encountering multi-polar resistance. A democratic peace transcends power equilibrium and creates more winners than losers.

The level of social development of a state determines the efficacy of civil society to foster human aspirations of peace. The public realm of civil society is embedded in the general life of people, where all members are attached to the same sovereignty. The realism of peace requires precise conviction, rather than ideologically and emotionally conditional stance, a conviction which remains unwavering even during shifting situation and competing actors realise the sterility of violent means. A correct disposition of human will by placing constitutional checks on power can entice contesting groups to shape a shared future.

Essentially, peace building is rooted in the sense of peace community formation: in the appreciation of the preservation of human rights, promoting human values and reciprocity. An integrated strategy for conflict mitigation and post-conflict peace building and recovery helps to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities. A stable peace rests on collaborative efforts of entire stakeholders. ■

(Dahal is a political analyst.)

Many expatriates working in non-governmental agencies and elsewhere in Nepal are believed to be involved in strategic intelligence gathering operations.

## Unwelcome foreign matters

■ Rajan Wasti

Nepal has never paid attention to strengthen its national security institutions and law enforcement agencies particularly the intelligence apparatus. Many expatriates working in non-governmental agencies and elsewhere in Nepal are believed to be involved in strategic intelligence gathering operations. There are several expatriate professionals in various disciplines working as agents for several foreign intelligence organisations.

A number of them working in such covert intelligence collection campaigns are engaged in many areas of work with approval from the Nepalese government and line ministries. Many of them not only collect information from the Nepalese government sector but also carry out espionage activities directed at counterpart foreign installations and their interests.

This was revealed in one of the seminars recently held in an undisclosed location of the capital

by security officials where only a select group of people participated. The experts revealed the findings that foreign intelligence agents have been massively carrying out their operations in Nepal. Some of these foreign agents are even running businesses, paying taxes and enjoying harmonious relations with government officials who wine and dine with them in five star hotels. These people keep close contacts with the key individuals working in strategically important government agencies including security organisations.

In a working session conducted during the seminar a wide range of issues of national interests was discussed. It was a noble initiative taken by these officers in their personal capacity to address the burning issues and discuss the future course of action to protect national interests.

The experts concluded that a number of such international agents are working in Nepal without any difficulties because of the ineffective counter espionage system in Nepal.

The government has not been able to agree on the priority this issue deserves. Yes, Nepal is going through a transitional phase and restructuring of the state is the main thrust of the government today but political influence and interference in all the national institutions is rampant. The experts pointed out that National Investigation Department is an absolute failure given the senseless political interference in recruitment and development of human resources.

The Police comparatively seem to have more effective intelligence mechanism in place. However the officials in this department seem to be aware of the fact that their political masters are not to be trusted with any such vital information as they are not likely to take any action.

The participating officers, guided by sense of patriotism and national duty, are highly trained professionals from different countries. Though they have collected a good amount of reliable intelligence of massive infiltration of foreign agents in Nepal, they have not revealed their identities. A paper

presented by one of the veteran officers revealed that Prime Minister's office is one such central target of intelligence collection of these foreign agents. The other vital target is the Army Headquarters. Royal palace and the activities of royalties is another major area under scrutiny. A three-member team had been focusing on the aftermath of the massacre of the late king and his family over the last couple of years. Other vital targets of such operation are the National headquarters of major political parties. A significant number of party workers are believed to have been cultivated by these agents for first hand information.

One of the presenters tacitly revealed that these agents pay regularly the concerned government officials to get information, which includes many key position holders—bureaucrats and politicians as well. Foreign agents have even managed to infiltrate the Maoists camp. They apparently concentrate more on soliciting information on military and weaponry as well as future strategies of Maoists and their connections with

the foreign entities.

In the light of such development, Nepal government needs to work out a crucial plan to stop such dangerous moves by the foreign elements by strengthening national intelligence and security agencies. It is perhaps high time that Political parties developed a code of conduct for leaders and cadres to prevent such activities. Corrupt bureaucrats and politicians, the two major problems of this country today need to be brought to book. National Investigation Department needs to be overhauled. A high profile and better-trained intelligence agency should be established to protect the national interest and guard the country against such rampage operations from foreign intelligence agents. A country in transition can ignore vital security issues only at its peril. Kudos to those alert intelligence professionals for the initiative taken to educate policy makers on this very crucial issue.

(Wasti is a security analyst.)

# Jane Austen painting on sale

What many believe to be the only painting of Jane Austen will be auctioned in New York in April by Christie's, a relation of the English author and owner of the picture said.

But Henry Rice, a "sixth generation descendant" of the writer of classics such as "Emma," "Sense and Sensibility" and "Pride and Prejudice," believes the sale of a picture that has divided experts will not be without controversy.

In 1948, a leading Austen scholar dismissed the authenticity of the portrait, saying the style of costume the subject wears does not match the date.

Rice and his family never doubted the lively girl wearing a long white dress and carrying a parasol was

their ancestor. The painting is thought to have been made in 1788 or 1789 when Austen would have been about 14.

So he had the painting examined by a number of academics, including Austen scholar Professor Claudia Johnson at Princeton University in the United States, and they supported the original attribution and subject matter.

"The painting had rather fallen into the abyss," Rice told Reuters. "So I decided to take up the challenge and found that many of the arguments against the painting (being of Austen) were extremely weak.

"Effectively they were calling us liars. Then we really started a bit of a crusade," he added in a telephone interview.



Only painting of Jane Austen

"We were lucky in the people we met, including quite a lot of Americans, and the thing gathered strength, but there was fierce resistance and there probably still will be."

He offered the painting to the National Portrait Gallery in London several times, but they turned it down because of doubts over the authenticity of its subject. ■

(Yahoo.com)

## Insight

# Words don't come easy



■ Sushma Amatya

Nepalis do not suffer from stiff upper lips but it would not be an exaggeration to say most do tend to suffer from stiff expression of face and hearts, generally due to lack of words of love in our native vocabulary. We lack a romantic dictionary and have no such history to draw from. All we have are sagas of duty, sacrifice, martyrs in marriage or ardent affection that strays miles away from carnal love. This has attributed to the much in vogue, imported line, 'I love you' and other synonymous one-liners to be hot favorites. It would cause indignation to even hint at other commonly used one-liners in our native tongue; but one could be forgiven for using the imported versions during rattled moments.

Where would we be without romance? In Nepal, exactly where we are right now. For we do not place a premium on romance, only on dutiful marriages, and again marriages initiated by first flushes of romantic inklings or confusion of loins. What was courtship and marriage like for our ancestors or for that matter barely a decade ago? Parents meeting parents, a societal drama, begetting children and spending the rest of the life rearing them with laser like love, brewing them in age old societal expectations and smothering their individual aspirations. Romantic customs, dating rituals, tokens of love had no place in a typical Nepali culture. Arranged marriages were and are still the norm, primarily business relationships born out of the desire and or need for property, monetary or political alliances.

After searching the romantic history, we find that the ancient Greeks recognised more than one kind of love; word 'eros' meaning carnal love, and 'agape,' spiritual love. During medieval times, the importance of love in a relationship emerged but was still not considered a precondition in marital decisions. In 1228, women first gained the right to propose marriage in Scotland, a legal right that slowly spread through Europe. During the Victorian Era (1837-1901), romantic love began to be considered primary requirement for marriage. Then courting, wooing a prospective bride became almost an art form among the upper classes.

After more than a century, now in Nepal, love appears to have gained some legitimacy but only among certain sections of society. Approved or not, the young population especially in urban areas have begun to defy the societal norms in expressing their feelings, albeit in foreign words. The lack of social expression,

ensorious attitude of society and lack of acceptability of romance encourages young people to take covert actions. Thus trips to temples and other places of worship end up serving as an apt place for rendezvous and as a result lose its original meaning for the youngsters.

Lack of equal partnership in marriages and gender inequality in giving and receiving love results in painful co-existence. Reasons behind these, though unidentified and unarticulated, exists nevertheless. The social taboo in self-expression gets so deeply ingrained that one becomes unable to express, even if one wants to. This tendency is carried over to schools where teachers avoid imparting sex education to their students and students in turn cringe when it's given, rendering the whole exercise futile. This restricted state of affairs further contributes to suppressing individuality, especially in women, traditionally long subjugated.

Treated as a commodity for so long, even educated women do not realise they are contributing to the chain effect by passing on the same set of values and goals – weighed on monetary scales, to their peers and children.

Does this practice contribute to collective mental poverty in our nation? Perhaps that would explain the extreme self-centeredness of our society. Ironically, that again translates to less self expression where one ends up becoming even stingier with expression of love of any kind. Consequently, a majority are unable to connect with their own emotions, far from being able to do so with others. Knowing and loving self first is definitely important to be able to know others' needs and give love of any kind.

Lack of romantic vocabulary in our language appears to lead to constipated behaviour that does not encourage free expression of one's thoughts and feelings. Sure, there are arcane expressions found in plays and poems but who could use it without feeling theatrical or dissolving into helpless laughter?

So for the meantime, English words will have to do. Even if you do not understand the language, 'I love you' is acceptable nationwide. But problems would arise if you want to add value to the hackneyed words or justify it with more declarations. All said and done, it seems if we want to remain native in your romance, we might have to go back to exchanging deep looks and sighs like our ancestors must have done, if they did it at all. Or create a new vocabulary. ■



## Family also needs counseling

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

### How is family of a drug addict affected?

Karan Pant, Kuleswor

Drug addiction is a destructive force that rips a family apart. Every drug addict has a family and every family of a drug addict face similar problems in their day-to-day lives. It is very important to realise that drug or alcohol addiction is not just about individuals or drugs. It is also about an addicted person's family, loved ones, friends and community who suffer, sometimes as much or more than the addicted member.

Parents usually have a picture in their minds of what they would like their children to be when they grow up. All parents want their children to turn out well and make their mark in the society. When they find out that their children are into drugs all their hopes and dreams get shattered and they go through severe emotional stress. They cannot work or function properly and begin to suffer from many stress related diseases.

The greatest suffering for the family members is the helpless feeling of not knowing what to do to keep the addicted person from destroying his or her life with drugs. The best advice is to not to hide this problem and to get out and get help for the addict immediately.

Counseling for the family members is important too since that would help them see things in better perspective and enable them to deal with the situation better.

### What is Cannabis?

Mohan Thapa, Naxal

Cannabis is a substance extracted from Ganja/cannabis plant. Production and sale of cannabis is illegal in Nepal.

Various types of this drug are found in Nepal. Ganja (marijuana) is made from the leaves and young foliage of Ganja plant. This form is used for smoking. Hashish, the juice or resin of the plant is used with tobacco in cigarette or without, commonly known as smoking Pot. Other form is Bhang is a finely ground mixture of seeds and leaves which is mixed with food and drinks.

Since most people use this drug as a form of entertainment and for relaxing, it is commonly abused. The immediate effects of using this drug would be that a person loses his/her sense of time and distance. Many symptoms arising after using cannabis is similar to that resulting from alcohol consumption. When used over a period of time, one gets used to it and tolerance of their system increases. When one's body and mind gets resistant to it and the body starts to ask for more of it, it is a sure sign that addiction has begun.

Excessive use of cannabis leads to mental disorders and fatigue. Bodily functions get very slow and the addicts' mentality gets fixed in a certain phase or time frame, losing their ability to move with the present.

**Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to:** [newsfront@bhrikuti.com](mailto:newsfront@bhrikuti.com)



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"We did not play well in this tournament and did not deserve to go into the second round"

# "We didn't deserve it"

Smarting under the humiliating loss against Sri Lanka that has all but put them out of the World Cup, captain Rahul Dravid said the Indian team 'has not delivered' on its promises and did not deserve to win the trophy. "It is too early to collect my thoughts. A lot of hard work has gone into it over the last year. But we did not play well in this tournament and did not deserve to go into the second round," Dravid said after the 69-run defeat at the Queen's Park Oval on Friday. After restricting Sri Lanka to 254 for six, India were all out for 185 in 43.3 overs. The defeat left them with just

one win from three games in Group 'B' and only a miraculous win by Bermuda over Bangladesh on Sunday would see them through to the next stage. "The target was gettable. I am disappointed with the top order. We had an extra batsman but we lost wickets at regular intervals. We needed one big partnership but we did not get that," the skipper said. "I don't think it was a wrong decision to field first. There was something in the wicket early on. It was the right decision, we bowled quite well. We did not have luck upfront as the ball beat the bats a few

times, hit the pads a few times." Dravid, however, backed his team mates even while being humble enough to accept the responsibility for the team's disastrous performance. "We definitely do take the responsibility. I am not sitting here and trying to shirk responsibility," he said. "I am the first one to stand up and say that we should have done better, and it starts with me. I am not trying to put the responsibility on anyone", Dravid said. "Some of these guys have had success before as well. It's a question of, maybe the guys going back and looking at their performances, how they performed in the important and critical games."

The Karnataka batsman did not expect the fans back home to show extreme reaction to the team's below par display.

"I hope the players wouldn't be under any physical danger. I don't expect that to be the case. I am sure people will be disappointed but there is nobody more disappointed than the players themselves," he said.

"It is very emotional moment. People will be disappointed, fair enough. They have invested a lot of hope in this team and we haven't delivered. But I just hope that no one is in any physical danger. We have to think about it rationally. I guess there is always a lot of emotions that gets involved in all these things."

Dravid also said it was up to the selectors to decide on his future as India captain.

"I was appointed captain till the World Cup. So I am not even the captain at this point of time. So it's not my decision to make," he said. ■

(Express India)

# "Bob wanted to write"

Report claimed the proposed book was to include a chapter on match-fixing



Deceased Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer was indeed planning to come up with a book in which he wanted to shed light on the menace of match-fixing, according to a media report.

The Daily Telegraph quoted from an e-mail in which Woolmer wrote, "I am going to write a book on my tenure as Pakistan coach. I shall only start after the World Cup. I believe, regardless of the money, the story is worth telling, has to be told and in the correct way".

"I am not a name and shame guy, just the honest facts. Let the punter make up his mind etc", he said.

The report claimed the proposed book was to include a chapter on match-fixing.

Earlier, Woolmer's family and a co-author had denied that Woolmer had any such project in mind.

Incidentally, former Pakistan pacer Sarfraz Nawaz has also claimed that Woolmer was about to spill the beans in the book,

which led to his murder by a betting syndicate.

Woolmer had sent the mail to a Pakistani journalist, seeking his help to complete the book.

South African batting great Barry Richards, best man at Mr Woolmer's wedding, said, "There was a feeling around that Bob was going to expose something. There is a dark side to cricket. The game got on top of it for a while but it has never really been stamped out. Bob was passionate about the game. Perhaps too passionate",

According to the report, Woolmer was disturbed after being told by a friend about 'suspicious movements' in betting markets a month before Pakistan's match against Ireland which the 1992 world champions lost.

Investigating officers are convinced that Woolmer knew his killer or killers. The sleuths are not ruling out the match-fixing element and they are now concentrating on the Pakistan-Ireland tie. ■

(Express India)



## When Moriarty will shake hands with Prachanda?

James Moriarty, US ambassador to Nepal candidly talks to Vijay Kumar on Maoists and more. Do not miss Nepal's most watched current affairs show "Dishanirdesh". Monday night at 9:20 and repeat run next morning at 11:30. Only on Nepal Television.

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