



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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Celebrating the fourth Asar Festival on 15th of Asar at a village close to Begnash Lake, Lekhnath, Kaski. Ashar 15 is celebrated by planting paddy. Farmers have fun eating 'Dahi-Chiura' and splashing mud at each other on this day.

## No coup!

### Katawal says army is for democracy

■ nf correspondent

After the possibility of an army coup became a subject of intense fear and discussion in the political circles; Prime Minister G P Koirala had a long and fruitful discussion with the Chief of Army Rukmangat Katawal, recently.

A key aide to the PM told newsfront that Katawal pledged that the Nepal army would always back the forces of nationalism and democracy, and that the fear of army coup was false and baseless. The meeting which took place last week at the PM's residence attaches significance in the light of the stand off between the Maoists and the Nepal army with Prachanda publicly stating that Katawal was still guided by the palace.

Koirala, on his part is believed to have told Gen. Katawal that the government trusted the army, and that he would tell Maoists and other constituents of the government not to bring the army into unnecessary controversies.

Total deterioration of the law and order situation, near collapse of the police forces and criticism of the Young Communist League at home and by the international community for taking law into its hands, has fuelled further fear

that army is going to step in any time soon.

The fear of army coup does not seem confined to the local political circles alone. A bi-annual get together of the Oberoi Hotel group's executives (called 1974 group) debated the possibility of such a coup taking place while considering Kathmandu as the venue for the meeting sometimes in the middle of August. It however decided to hold the meeting here, come what may.

While there have been many occasions in the past in which the army and the Maoists have come into open confrontation, this is the first time that a possible coup by the army is being widely debated. The first tussle came when Maoists obstructed the movement of the army vehicles meant for repairs in Kathmandu last year on false allegations that they were carrying arms and ammunitions. The second incident was in early June when the army turned down Maoists' demand to remove their camp from Birpur in Kapilvastu.

In fact, in his first press conference at PM's residence in Baluwatar, Prachanda had declared army as the institution of 'corrupt and rapists,' a comment which he withdrew later faced with wider criticisms of his remarks. ■

### Inside

Army says, no compromise

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# Mahat struggles with strained coffer

...An unprecedented high demand from the election commission...

■ nf correspondent

Nepal peace time budget will have the highest allocation for defense thanks to the spiraling demands from the security agencies and forces, mainly the police and the armed police force. As per the indication, the demand if conceded, together with the allocation for army with the same amount as that of last year; will have at least 35 per cent of the total budget earmarked for defense, according to the finance ministry sources. The ministry also faces an unprecedented high demand from the election commission, to the tune of two billion Rupees.

Finance Minister, Ram Sharan Mahat gears up to prepare the budget but will have to depend more on outside assistance to keep the country going. The increase in the police and armed police force demands along with that of the Nepal army despite it being confined to the barracks; and the government having to pay for the Maoist guerrillas in the designated cantonments have contributed to this

increase in the budget.

There are growing concerns among the donor communities since the government is depending more heavily on them for regular developmental assistance and peace initiatives. Lack of transparency and accountability regarding the expenditure of more than 100 Crore Rupees that the government has paid to the Maoists - more than 60 percent of which was routed through information and communication minister, K B Mahara; without the amount being subjected to normal auditing is creating another problem in soliciting external assistance.

While the number of the Nepal Army, police and the armed police force together constitute around 170,000; it now touches on 200,000 with the Maoist guerrillas getting regular salary in the form of allowances.

Despite monarchy being an issue of debate among the political parties, the budget which is due to be announced around mid July is likely to have 20.97 Crores earmarked for palace affairs, according to available



indications. The PM is believed to have instructed the finance minister not to get into fresh controversy and maintain the level of last year's allocation of the same amount, which is to be reviewed after the administrative downsizing is implemented as proposed. Mahat has already come under pressure

from UML and the Maoists not to be generous to the palace.

In absence of a clear policy by the cabinet or the government, Mahat in all likelihood would go by what the PM has told him although K B Mahara, in his capacity as the Maoist minister has suggested that there should be no allocation in the name

of royal palace as in the past. Any amount meant for the palace should be put under the 'Bhaipari Aune' which means under the contingency fund of the government.

Speaker Subhash Nemwang, on the other hand, has asked the King to keep mum regarding the budget allocation for the palace.

## Who will remove Situala?

■ nf correspondent

It came as a rude shock once again to many senior Congress leaders who were waiting for the removal of Home Minister K P Situala as PM G P Koirala had assured them that he would oust the minister. But the deadline passed and Situala still remains more powerful than even Koirala.

Of all the leaders and some senior officials of the security agency that Koirala consulted with, the PM was the most convinced that Situala had now outlived his utility, and that he should not be continuing in the government any more. The only person who opposed Koirala saying that he should be clear about what he expects of his new home minister before Situala is removed at this stage was the PM's nephew, Dr Shekhar Koirala. Senior Koirala obviously decided to go by what his nephew said but it has left his daughter Sujata fuming.

According to the party sources, Koirala has no love lost for Situala but what has delayed the decision to fire him is the PM's inability to decide who to choose from within the family. "He does not want the home portfolio go outside the family," a senior office bearer of the party told newsfront, revealing that the three people in his mind are Shekhar Koirala, Sujata Koirala and Amod Upadhyay. Names of Chakra Bastola and Arjun Narsingh KC are also doing its rounds as probable successors.

There are many theories doing rounds about why Koirala agreed to have Situala removed by end June. Firstly, he was increasingly becoming more of a liability than an asset and secondly, some party leaders even told Koirala that Situala is guided more by



Home Minister K P Situala

another country than by the PM; and lastly, he was also taking an uncalled for anti-American stance to appease some other country, something a minister should not be doing.

S D Muni, a well known Indian lobbyist whose views are taken into account in Delhi on regional security matters, is believed to have spoken out twice about why Situala should continue to be retained in the post. Baluwatar sources reveal that even ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee casually told Koirala that it may be about time that Situala is shifted to some other ministry now that the law and order situation is so bad.

Koirala is left torn between contradictory choices, but he feels most embarrassed about how to respond to the party leaders to whom he said that he would be removing Situala soon. Appearing to ignore the moves against him, Situala recently announced that the law and order situation will improve only after the constituent assembly elections, thus indicating that he has no intention of vacating the post anytime soon.



G P Koirala and Prachanda

## Artificial making-up

Koirala and Prachanda agree on a joint election rally

■ nf correspondent

As Prachanda's announcement to withdraw from the government created a mini-political earthquake, Prime Minister G P Koirala once again went head over heels to appease the Maoist chief promising to address his demands soon. And what Koirala got in return was Prachanda's promise to participate in the joint election rally in five regions soon, the date for which has not yet been announced.

Prachanda and Koirala's agreement on the rally followed Koirala's assurance that Maoist nominees for the ambassadorial appointment would seriously be considered, although the PM flatly denied Prachanda's suggestion that one of the four major countries, India, US, China and UK should have a Maoist ambassador. According to the sources in the PM's office, Prachanda however did not insist on it and simply told Koirala that he was only conveying what his senior party colleagues suggested.

Most likely, Denmark, which Maoists consider friendlier than other countries, will have a Maoist ambassador designate announced soon. But all these agreements followed Koirala's clear message to Maoists that with YCL activities on, there will be serious doubts about election taking place in free

and fair manner, especially because the international community has been raising this issue.

Only India so far is officially believed to have told Koirala that the election and YCL activities should not be linked at all, as that will create grounds for postponing elections once again. But that is something which is not acceptable to many Nepali actors including UML and Congress-D. UML General Secretary Madhav Nepal said publicly in Dolakha last week that YCL atrocities are much more gruesome than reported in the media, and Sher Bahadur Deuba made it clear that elections cannot take place with these kinds of activities continuing to take place.

The election commission has also asked the government to ensure that law and order situation should be maintained so that electioneering takes place in an atmosphere free from fear and intimidation.

Despite the agreement between Koirala and Prachanda, Koirala continues to be targeted both by the Maoists and the UML, with the latter calling him a dictator. There are indications that the eight parties, mainly the four major ones, will chart out a common approach so that at least in the joint rally they will not be criticising one another.

## Newsbrief

## King's party

After a prolonged discussion it was decided that King Gyanendra will be celebrating his 60th birthday with a royal touch but sans the usual pomp and gaiety. A list of invitees has been drawn by the palace with the initial number of 1800 slashed down by half.

According to the sources, the invitees include people from different walks of life such as politicians, social workers, media and of course royal relatives. Prime Minister Koirala, the head of the constitutional bodies also figure as one of the invitees, sources said.



## Cheap demand

That the former Deputy Prime Minister, Bharat Mohan Adhikary who handled the finance portfolio a couple of occasions can easily somersault politically is not new. But that he will sometimes act in a childish manner is something that seems to have baffled Ram Sharan Mahat, the current finance minister.

Someone who was responsible for hiking the royal palace budget as deputy PM under Sher Bahadur Deuba, Adhikary said recently that there was no need to release any big amount to the palace; and some 30 to 40 million rupees should do, he said.

But it was not that which annoyed Finance Minister Mahat. As per the democratic and parliamentary norms, Dr Mahat consulted all the former finance ministers separately to share his thoughts and plans about the impending budget. Adhikary, in that capacity, had the honour of superficially knowing what Mahat was toying with.

But soon after he came out of the meeting, he called a press conference and demanded that Mahat incorporate issues in the budget which finance minister had told him that there were already there. It was indeed a political but a cheap way of making demands.

## His master's voice

Keeping police out of politics is something that security experts and donors working in the security reforms sector in Nepal have been suggesting; as they believe that the best way to secure support and cut across party lines for the security agency is its apolitical character.

But the Chief of Police, Om Bikram Rana, handpicked by the home minister does not seem to believe in it. In what appeared like speaking for his, 'master,' Rana recently instructed his officials that they should not spare those who are posing a threat to law and order. But guess who the villains of the law and order were in his mind? Those who have not adjusted and accepted the great political change of the last year are his real culprits.

There was no mention of rising crime or the activities of YCL. Many believe that it was a message to his brother officials that YCL or those who belong to the eight party alliance, even if they pose a direct threat to law and order should not be touched. Rana's statement of appeasement comes in the wake of home minister trying to sacrifice Rana, if saving his own chair demanded that.

## Confirmed US Ambassador

The US Senate has confirmed Nancy Powell's appointment as the US Ambassador to Nepal on June 28, 07. Powell, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, is now all set to replace James Moriarty whose three year term, marked by firm anti-Maoist public stance and equally firm pro-democracy stance comes to an end next week.

Ms. Powell, who has most recently served as the National Intelligence Officer for South Asia at the National Intelligence Council, has earlier served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the Department of State. She also has the experience of having served in South Asia earlier as an ambassador to Pakistan.

## Rediscover Bajaj

After the successful sales of Bajaj Discover DTSi 125 cc motorbike; to provide optimum customer satisfaction, Bajaj has introduced its Discover DTSi 135 cc motorcycle with a new 'black' and 'executive' look.

Bajaj says that the newly introduced Discover has been targeted at all age segments but is believed to have received approval from the office-goers and students due to its graphically enhanced looks. The blackbody design has been attracting more customers everyday.

The popular DTSi engine drives the new bike which is unique to Bajaj motorcycles. The four-stroke engine has been provided with the ultra-modern Exhaust TEC technology that ensures lesser amount of gear-change in smooth city areas. This motorcycle comes with two years warranty and five years servicing warranty.



## No compromise

..Nepal Army will never compromise with terrorism, extremism and anarchy..

■ nf correspondent

Nepal army came out with a veiled threat that it was not bound to carry out all orders of the government if that meant supporting anarchism, terrorism and extremism. This is for the first time that the Army Chief has openly laid down the institutional support to the government.

Chief of the Army staff, Gen. Rukmangat Katawal said that Nepal Army will never compromise with terrorism, extremism and anarchy, and that it will be solely guided by democracy, people's right and human rights. "In course of carrying out orders given by the state, the NA will never compromise with terrorism, anarchism and extremism that hijacks people's rights, attacks human rights and believes in violence and want to threaten democratic system or attack the system preferred by the Nepali people," Gen Katawal said addressing his soldiers and officers at No. 7 Brigade in Kulekhani on Saturday. He added that army was committed fully to national integrity, sovereignty and democratic system and it would not make any compromise on these.

There are indications that what Katawal said had been cleared by Prime Minister G P Koirala who also holds the defense portfolio, and comes in the wake of India lobbyist, S D Muni openly, "guiding some political parties in Nepal which even the votaries of pro republic system did not quite appreciate."

Katawal's unusual outburst follows Home Minister



Chief of the Army staff, Gen. Rukmangat Katawal

KP Sitaula's announcement that armed police force, and not the army, will be used in the elections; a message that army did not receive well. As anger, frustration as well as a sense of dejection rose high in the institution, Koirala rushed to the army headquarters on Sunday to assuage their feeling.

According to the sources, the army top brass raised the issue of what Sitaula had said and complained that the minister was systematically provoking the security institution. Koirala, the sources said, gave a clear hint that he would take necessary measures to dispel that impression, but gave no definite hint of what he meant by that.

## Verification struggle

■ nf correspondent

The UNMIN team acted tough and overruled Maoist objections in the process of second round of verification of the 'combatants' lodged in Chulachuli cantonment in Ilam. As a result, around 400 of them will have to leave the camp.

According to the official sources, the rejected 400 are either below 18 years or were recruited after the peace process began, and also include nursing mothers, disabled and aged people who could not have worked as combatants.

While these people will be allowed to remain in the camps till alternative

arrangements are made for their shelter, Maoists seem to be having a had hard time explaining their position. Maoists have also been accused by many in the seven parties of having recruited people under duress or temptation that they would be paid money at par with the Nepal army.

It is not yet clear whether these people found unqualified as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will be entitled to get the payment which government has already released at the rate of Rs. 3,000 per month. According to the news circulated by the government news agency RSS, around 3,221 PLA living in one main

camp and three satellite camps have qualified the second phase of verification, but their names have not been made public yet.

The Spokesperson of UNMIN, Kieran Dwyer's latest update on the matter said, "UNMIN Chief Arms Monitor General Jan Erik Wilhelmsen and senior political officer John Norris today met with Maoist chairman Prachanda and delivered a report detailing the results of the process of verification of Maoist army personnel in the first cantonment site in Ilam. Commencement of the verification process in the second site, in Sindhuli, is pending further discussion of these results and the next steps forward."

## Baby King Theory

■ nf correspondent

Vishwabandhu Thapa, a veteran royalist insists that abdication by King Gyanendra and his son Paras will go a long way in giving a fresh life and continuity to the institution of monarchy. He has been the author of the theory of baby King that suggests Prince Hridayendra should be enthroned.

He did not quite cherish the way Prime Minister Koirala raised the issue in Delhi a couple of months ago, and recently with Pakistani journalists. "What the King did after Feb 1, 2005 did not quite go with the interest of the nation and the people. But as someone who took all executive

powers, it is for him to own moral responsibility and act accordingly," Thapa said, adding, "the King should avoid a situation of being penalised by others."

Thapa feels strongly about the need for the monarchy as an institution continuing in the country. As someone who keenly studies the trends of politics and development worldwide, Thapa feels that the political alliance between the democratic forces and the Maoists is not at all a natural phenomenon and will only be a temporary one. "Look at what happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Democracy has followed the demise of communism," he said. "Nepal's case will not be

different," he added.

"Either the communists will prevail or democracy," he said, strongly advocating for 'pro-democracy forces' coming together with G P Koirala as its leader. Thapa also warned that the consequence of this kind of alliance not taking shape soon will be disastrous. He feels that Nepal is being dictated by external forces more than ever. "It has already become like something in between Bhutan and Sikkim," he said without elaborating, but was definitely concerned with the number of meetings Indian ambassador has had with the PM in recent days without the country knowing what transpired between them.



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### Point to Ponder

Laws control the lesser man... Right conduct controls the greater one.  
 - Mark Twain

## Genuine elections, true democracy

The date for the polls to Constituent Assembly (CA) has been finally decided upon as per the demands of the political parties and the international community. The announcement comes as a welcome step as it somehow dispels growing fear that the government is not serious about holding election even in November. And the fears were not unjustified.

Prime Minister G P Koirala and Maoist chief Prachanda were responsible for not creating necessary laws and conducive law and order situation required for the mid June elections as pledged by them through the interim constitution. By setting the new deadline, these two leaders have ensured that the failure to hold elections by mid June would not perhaps be an issue at this stage.

Having CA elected in a free and fair manner without any kind of fear in the general public is something that the last year's people's movement envisaged. Not respecting that would totally be a negation of the movement's mandate as is apparent today by the way the ruling coalition partners including the Maoists are behaving today.

Citizens have the sole right to frame a constitution and to elect or dump a government as they see fit. Elections that are fair and representative demand certain preconditions. From Carter to Sundh, dissatisfactions have been expressed over the prevailing law and order situation and they have warned that elections that are free and fair may not be possible in the existing condition.

The State's authority has totally collapsed and the PM has miserably failed to bring order back into the country. The extent of demoralisation is visible in the police force; and the compulsion of the army to remain in the barracks has injected fears that any interested group that wants to manipulate the outcome of the election can easily cause bloodshed without the government machinery being able to take any preventive or punitive action. Announcing a new poll date is no doubt a welcome step but that alone is not sufficient in the given scenario.

The eight party government also has to ensure that people's right to elect or reject their representative falls solely under their domain and any move by political parties in power to debar certain political parties from contesting polls by merely amending laws amount to tampering with fundamental principles of democracy. Election just for the sake of it and legitimising all forms of legislated discrimination will not help in establishing peace and democracy in the country.



## Letters

### Protect journalists

In a short span of time newsfront weekly is progressing fast along with its parent magazine Samay Saptahik. I wish success to both. I wish to say that after the April uprising, the situation of Nepali journalists is not good. They have to face various problems from various uncivilised as well as responsible people.

India, the world's greatest democratic country is also causing problems to Nepali journalists. For instance, the journalist, Dayaram Dahal (Sulav), related with CPN Maoist, was arrested by Indian police for collecting news of Bhutani refugee's long march in Mechi bridge, Jhapa. During his 21 days spent in an Indian jail, Dahal suffered beatings and trauma at the hands of Indian police. This should be highly condemned by journalists all around the world.



Sulav Dahal  
 Surunga-5, Jhapa

### Save Kathmandu

I am a UK citizen who is in love with the mountains of Nepal and come here at least once a year for trekking and to enjoy life in Kathmandu valley where I have good friends. But I regret to say that in the past ten years, the situation of this valley has been deteriorating rapidly. Every time I come, I see more air and noise pollution, dirtier rivers and streets (plus the stench), unruly traffic and a sense of growing insecurity. Where once I could go for long undisturbed walks, now is jam packed with people, vendors and of course traffic. There is no place for a peaceful walk within the valley now.

this city has begun to look and feel just like any other crowded city in Bihar. Sorry, but this is the truth as I and my friends see it. Please do not let this city die.

Chris Whittington  
 London, UK

### Stop not writing

As usual with anticipation, I looked at the second last page to see what is it this time that features in the Insight column of Ms. Amatya; only to be disappointed by a small picture, which though interesting had lost its impact due to its small size. I would like to request the writer to continue with her remarkable columns?

Suresh Basnet  
 Budanilkantha, Kathmandu

## Spiritual Corner

### Unborn, unchanging

Jetsun Milarepa, (1052-1135), one of Tibet's most famous yogis and poets was a student of Marpa Lotsawa, and a major figure in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. After practicing very diligently for twelve years Milarepa attained the state of Vajradhara (complete enlightenment). Milarepa is famous for many of his songs and poems, in which he expresses the profundity of his realisation of the Dharma with extraordinary clarity and beauty. The 'hundred thousand songs' of Milarepa is an important spiritual scripture for Tibetan Buddhism.

#### Milarepa's poem:

#### I have forgotten

May I be far removed from contending creeds and dogmas.  
 Ever since my Lord's grace entered my mind,

My mind has never strayed to seek such distractions.  
 Accustomed long to contemplating love and compassion,  
 I have forgotten all difference between myself and others.  
 Accustomed long to meditating on my Guru as enshrouded over my head,  
 I have forgotten all those who rule by power and prestige.  
 Accustomed long to meditating on my guardian deities as inseparable from myself,  
 I have forgotten the lowly fleshly form.  
 Accustomed long to meditating on the secret whispered truths,  
 I have forgotten all that is said in written or printed books.  
 Accustomed, as I have been, to the study of the eternal truth,  
 I've lost all knowledge of ignorance.

Accustomed, as I've been, to contemplating both nirvana and samsara as inherent in myself,  
 I have forgotten to think of hope and fear.  
 Accustomed, as I've been, to meditating on this life and the next as one,  
 I have forgotten the dread of birth and death.  
 Accustomed long to studying, by myself, my own experiences,  
 I have forgotten the need to seek the opinions of friends and brethren.  
 Accustomed long to applying each new experience to my own spiritual growth,  
 I have forgotten all creeds and dogmas.



Accustomed long to meditating on the unborn, the indestructible, the unchanging,  
 I have forgotten all definitions of this or that particular goal.  
 Accustomed long to meditating on all visible phenomena as the Dharmakaya,  
 I have forgotten all meditations on what is produced by the mind.  
 Accustomed long to keeping my mind in the uncreated state of freedom,  
 I have forgotten all conventions and artificialities.  
 Accustomed long to humbleness, of body and mind,  
 I have forgotten the pride and haughty manner of the mighty.  
 Accustomed long to regarding my fleshly body as my hermitage,  
 I have forgotten the ease and comfort of retreats and monasteries...

# Facing challenges for a better future

## ■ Ambassador James F. Moriarty

I am ending my assignment at a pivotal moment in Nepali history. Democracy and peace are within view but hinge on a Constituent Assembly election on November 22 that is free and fair. My hopes that the current peace process will lead to a democratic Nepal are great but my concerns about that process are equally great. The prospect of a better future for the people of Nepal faces two increasingly serious threats: the worsening security situation and threats to free and independent media.

### Worsening security situation

Basic law and order are key factors in establishing a stable democracy. Individuals and institutions must feel secure in their lives and missions, or the society will stop moving forward and risk collapsing into a failed state. For over a decade, Nepal stagnated during the Maoist insurgency. Supposedly, peace is now here and the fighting has stopped – but only on paper. Killings, kidnapping, and intimidation are on the rise.

The Terai is awash with political violence, carried out by extremist Madhesi groups that are tearing the region apart with horrific fighting and heightened ethnic tension. Threats and violence by the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) are affecting citizens at all levels of society. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights underscored YCL abuses in a report released in June. The report points out that these criminal acts appear to have increased since April 1, when the Maoists joined the Interim Government.

While everyone from the Prime Minister to former President Carter and, I might add, even Pushpa Dahal, has spoken out about the intolerable security situation, action is missing. First and foremost, Dahal must keep his many promises and stop his cadre, young or old, from continuing their reign of lawlessness. He must show the people of Nepal whether his words carry any value.

Secondly, the government of Nepal must follow through on its basic duty to its people to enforce law and order, effectively using the enforcement agencies and resources at its command. And third, the extremist groups in the Terai must come into the political mainstream – or be treated as common criminals.

When law and order is respected by all, then the hard work of building a democratic federal state can proceed freely for the benefit of all. Fiery speeches, such as C.P. Gajurel's June 25 outburst in Bhairahawa that threatened a return to arms by the Maoists, are irresponsible and call into question the Maoist commitment to peace. The Maoists are in the government and claim to support the democratic process. As of today, however, their words are hollow and everyone knows it.

### Threats to the free media

Now, more than ever, the media have a

weighty role to play in establishing a democratic system in Nepal. In an environment of constant change, Nepali citizens desperately need unbiased information to make informed decisions. Nepali media have flourished since the overthrow of royal rule in April 2006.

In the last few weeks, however, private media have faced sustained intimidation, including threats to individual publishers' and journalists' lives. Just two weeks ago, a Maoist-affiliated union shut down the daily newspaper Nepal Samacharpatra and its smaller evening sister publication for several days. Attacks on journalists in the Terai are occurring at an alarming rate, causing some journalists to go into hiding.

Democracy in Nepal will not survive without a free media. Certainly the media will play a key role in the Constituent Assembly election. Independent news and free public debate are key components in any successful, developed country, whether the model is Switzerland, South Africa or the United States. For a nation that aspires to democracy and prosperity, free media is the key. Nepalis must demand an end to Maoists' aggression against the media and threats from any corner.

**All Nepalis deserve to live in a safe place with free access to independent information and no threats to their families or livelihoods.**

### Violence in refugee camps

While not a Nepal-wide concern, another security challenge greatly concerns my government and other friends of Nepal as well. I refer to recent violent outbreaks in the Bhutanese refugee camps. The refugees have lived 16 years in primitive conditions with little hope of creating better lives for their children. They cannot own property or start businesses, and the prospect of returning to Bhutan is as dim now as it was when they were forced out.

And yet, elements inside the camps are increasingly using violence in an attempt to keep these poor refugees in a continuing state of helplessness for political aims. This is blatant political manipulation of a population that has already suffered too much. For the first time in 16 years, thanks to an offer of resettlement from the United States and other nations, the refugees will have a choice regarding their futures. Each refugee family has a right to decide its own best future based on the choices available. No group or individual should be allowed to take away this right through violence or threats.

Nepal has taken commendable and significant steps in its nascent democracy. As the early history of the United States confirms, young democracies face many challenges. Now is the time for leadership, national unity, and a clear vision. All Nepalis deserve to live in a safe place with free access to independent information and no threats to their families or livelihoods. As diplomats say, these conditions are non-negotiable. ■



# Disastrous West Seti

**Our people near the border area would be forced to live virtually in swamps throughout the year.**

People of Nepal and particularly those living in Western Terai would be forced to bear the disastrous consequences if the West Seti Dam Project is implemented without resolving the downstream benefit issues and the worsening flood problems in the Western Terai associated with the Saryu Canal (that includes Laxmanpur Barrage) which is in reality a further extension of the West Seti Dam Project.

Any decision to implement West Seti Project, which is clearly a multipurpose project, without the approval of the parliament might be in violation of the present interim constitution since this project has the potential to provide our country an opportunity to share with India a very large proportion of the downstream benefits. Apart from these issues, there is a need to conduct a thorough checking of the engineering design of West Seti dam, which appears to be riddled with a great deal of uncertainties.

The total net discounted power benefit of the project could be 456 million US Dollars according to a study. Similarly, based on the feasibility study of the Karnali High Dam Project the total net discounted irrigation benefit of West Seti Project at 1989 price level for the reference year 2003 could be as high as 720 million US Dollars. It implies that the net irrigation benefit of West Seti Project could be greater than the net power benefit.

India must be approached to share with Nepal a certain percentage of the downstream benefits to accrue to that country from the use of the regulated flow of West Seti. It is a practice followed by the US and Canada while implementing the Columbia River dam in Canada. At present Canada is receiving 50% of the net downstream

benefits from the US in perpetuity for the use of the regulated flow of the Columbia River in the US. It should be noted that Canada had declined to take a decision to implement the Columbia River project until the US agreed to sign a treaty on downstream benefits sharing.

A few years back it was reported that the government of India had appointed a three-member task force headed by the former Power Minister, Suresh Prabhu. The task force was expected to address the issue to obtain the consent of Nepal (also Bhutan) through a revenue sharing pact to divert water of the major rivers for irrigation across India. Until that time India was seen to be hesitating to accept the idea of buying water stored in the reservoirs proposed to be built in Nepal.

The year round operation of Saryu Canal, that starts from the Girjapur Barrage in India and ends near Indo-Nepal border after crossing the Banganga River, depends on availability of the regulated flow from the proposed storage



■ Anand B. Thapa

reservoirs in Nepal. The construction of Saryu Canal, that started a long time ago, is still continuing at a snail's pace perhaps due to uncertainty about the date when West Seti Project would be ready for operation. Nevertheless, it appears that Saryu Canal could be made fully operational at a short notice after the completion of the West Seti Storage Project because most of the structures of Saryu Canal might be already ready. After that our people near the border area would be forced to live virtually in swamps throughout the year.

The total length of Saryu Canal running almost parallel to Indo-Nepal border is about 230 km. In

the original design the barrage across Saryu River was at a location about 328 meters to the south of the railway bridge at Nanpara. Later, the design was modified and the location of the barrage was shifted 10 km to the north from the original site.

Saryu Canal crosses three main rivers - Saryu (Babai), West Rapti and Rohini (Banganga). Normally siphons are provided to deliver canal water across the river. An altogether a different type of structure has been devised for reducing the average slope of Saryu Canal that would allow the canal alignment to be pushed as far as possible north close to Indo-Nepal border. Barrages have been built across the rivers to elevate the river water to such a level that would allow free passage of canal water across the river into the canal taking off from the other side of the river. The contentious Laxmanpur Barrage is one of such structures devised to deliver the water from Girjapur Barrage across West Rapti.

It would be necessary to maintain the pond water upstream of the barrage above certain fixed level all the time, to keep Saryu Canal running at desired capacity. Thus the pond would always be full, with the result that a sizeable area of lands in Nepalese territory could remain perpetually submerged. When the river is in flood, the water would be spreading out onto lands that were never before regarded prone to flooding. It was recommended that a panel of renowned foreign experts be formed and their opinion sought on this matter. It was also proposed that any further action in the direction of taking the decision to implement the project should be deferred until the panel gives its absolutely positive opinion.

*(A.B. Thapa, Ph.D is former member and executive secretary, Water and Energy Commission.)*



A farmer affected by Laxmanpur Barrage

Shaphalya Amatya, Ph.D., a distinguished historian and cultural heritage expert worked in various positions in the archaeology department and ministry of culture and tourism for 30 years. He has written extensively on the issues of cultural conservation and preservation of Nepali art. He talked with newsfront about his work and experiences recently.

**What occupies you after your retirement?**

I love writing and spend most of my time writing. My biggest wish is to disseminate the knowledge that I have gained. I do not want to die with it. Sharing knowledge is my motto. Although a historian, I write based on my experiences of work in various sectors – museum, excavation, monumental restoration and diplomatic activities. I have written around 17 books and my latest book, Monument Conservation in Nepal, my Experience with World Heritage Site in Kathmandu Valley, will be published in October this year.

**What inspired you to take up writing despite your busy working schedule?**

As a student of history, I used to guide tourists in Kathmandu. One such tourist, an elderly professor, Schophil from Wisconsin advised me to start writing about my heritage and that is what inspired me. I must add that writing and getting published here is a big challenge and for the common people, buying a book is a big proposition. It is difficult to buy a book with limited resources. Sadly, there is also a lack of good libraries here, since most that we have are propaganda libraries. So, it is difficult for people who want to study and research.

**How were the seven sites in Kathmandu declared as World Heritage Sites?**

After Nepal opened its doors to visitors in 1951, Kathmandu art and culture was much appreciated and admired by all who visited this valley. They were all impressed by the concentration of so much cultural heritage in such a small valley; and especially because they are living heritage. The seven sites of the valley – Pashupati and Changu Narayan temple; Swoyambhu and Boudha Stupas; Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square, were enlisted as the world heritage site in 1979.

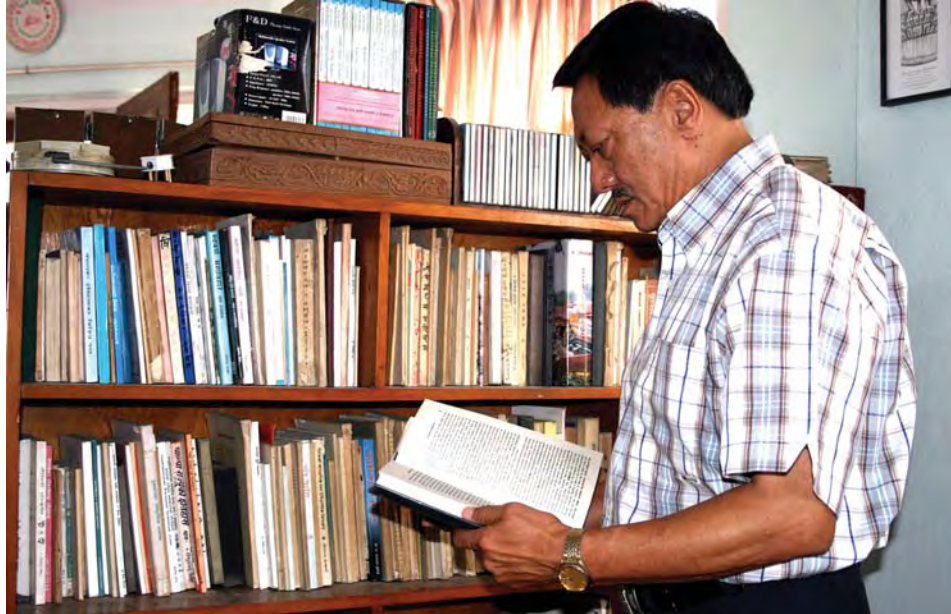
In 1975 UNESCO helped Nepal to prepare a protective inventory of the monuments in the valley. That inventory actually helped create awareness about Nepal's heritage around the world. At the behest of UNESCO, support was gathered from many donor countries for the restoration and preservation of monuments which were in dilapidated condition. This also acted as a gateway for many missions from UNESCO to come and start working here.

Campaigns by the organisation resulted in a lot of assistance that resulted in a lot of work in survey and restoration and also holding exhibitions on our heritage around the world. This naturally increased the flow of tourists. A review committee was also formed here to monitor the activities and strategise future plans for preservation of physical environment of the sites and culture.

**What does physical environment mean?**

When we talk about preservation, most think it means only the monuments. But it is equally important to preserve the sites around the monuments. Preservation of built heritage site is something we have not been able to accomplish. Due to our ignorance, we have destroyed many old houses around the heritage sites and continue to do so.

# Protect our TREASURES



When from 1994 onwards, international voices started getting vocal about preserving it, a lot of damage had already been done. Just look at Hanuman Dhoka where there are so many concrete tall structures. The public have not understood the importance of preserving our heritage. Rapidly growing urbanisation and destruction of ancient urban fabric pose huge challenges. There are a set of laws to ensure that people do not distort the façade or build over a certain height but they are frequently ignored.

**What kind of challenges did you face in your work?**

The department of archaeology is a very small department which has no policing power. It requires help from police and the municipality. Our major problem was that municipal officials would never go against any locals for fear of losing votes in elections.

This is a small society where everybody knows everybody and someone is connected to somebody. And so somewhere or the other, a process of taking action is disrupted. Illegal constructions got built overnight and roofs built. After a roof is built, a building cannot be brought down according to our rules; and that was/is taken full advantage of. There are more than 1000 illegal houses in these seven heritage sites today. The common trend is to show one building plan, get it passed and make something entirely different in reality.

When I took action as the director general of the department to bring down an illegally made house within the Patan heritage site, it was only with media support that I could prevent the house from being built. I also prevented Kathmandu University from being built close to Changu Narayan. It was a long struggle but I took a firm stance and did it. A university would have destroyed the forest area and distorted the environment.

And when we brought down one storey of a house in Boudha that was built against the regulations the local chased the police away, my effigy was burnt, demonstrations took place and finally, we could not do anything about it. That is

how difficult it is to implement rules here.

Frequent changes of chiefs in the department, lack of accurate reporting by people who are sent abroad to interact with world heritage experts and of course political interventions posed/pose as huge obstacles in this line of work.

**How does being declared in or out of World Heritage Site affect the monuments or the Nepali public?**

Monuments remain the same but I think it tarnishes the image of Nepal for not being able to look after its own heritage. Some foreign consultants who tried to make a base here to get work as consultants worked to get the sites on the endangered list. When for the first time I participated in the world heritage conference in 2000 in Cairns, I requested all my allies not to vote for it. We then were given three years to improve the conditions of the sites. I drafted an Integrated Management Plan as per their advice immediately and informed the prime minister and the rest.

I retired soon after, in 2001 and not surprisingly, nothing was done after that. In 27th

**If something goes wrong during the mass meetings the heritage sites will be easily destroyed.**

session, in Paris they put Nepal on the endangered list. It was an impetus to improve and to encourage donor's support, many voices said. But soon with the political upheavals in Nepal, a lobby that sympathised with Nepal's problems advocated against putting Nepal on the endangered list and it was taken off finally. The fact remains that we cannot just continue to do whatever we want and expect our monuments to be declared as world heritage sites.

**What imminent dangers do you see facing the sites today?**

Unruly and uncontrolled growth of buildings is number one problem. Another dangerous trend is the public gatherings that have been taking place in the heritage sites. If something goes wrong during the mass meetings the sites will be easily destroyed. Mass gatherings in such areas are illegal.

The vendors too harass tourists so much that any tourist would hesitate to come back here again. There are no facilities and no toilets in heritage sites for the visitors. I remember escorting a visiting dignitary who was taken straight to Swoyambhu from the airport and he desperately wanted to visit a toilet. Luckily I could send him to a toilet in a monastery nearby.

**What can be done to improve the situation?**

The locals need to understand that it is their house in world heritage site and they should be proud of. It does not belong to any ministry or official. They may be more worried about economic returns but they need to understand that even by retaining its authentic form they can get some economic benefits. They should not take maintaining an old structure as a burden. The government also has given subsidies for buying the traditional building materials.

Lack of public support is a big problem and that is because lack of awareness and knowledge. This can be dealt with by spreading messages to the public from an economic point of view. That will surely work here. We Nepalis have to understand that it is our own heritage, responsibility and only we can protect it. ■



# Revamping YCL for greater good

Exceptional ways of YCL cannot be executed outside of law in a civilised society.

Ever since the YCL, Young Communist League, came into existence in December 2006 it has made headline news in Nepal. Notwithstanding the objectives that it has taken to eliminate corruption from the political, economic and social areas in Nepal, its style of operation has remained a serious concern to the authorities and the public as well. Not a single day goes by without a direct or indirect reference to YCL and the possible implications that it could have on the CA elections.

This organisation, formed by the Maoists political party, has recently announced that it will start a door-to-door campaign in Kathmandu valley for gathering the 'views, suggestions and problems' of the general public. At a recent interview given by the YCL valley coordinator, Sagar, a former member of PLA and valley brigade commander; additional information can be obtained if one were to go by the published information in one of the weekly Nepali newspapers. YCL seems to be working for the workers and daily wage earners of Nepal, which it takes as one of the major mandates of Jana Andolan II.

Of the so called structural decisions made in four areas, one is solely concerned with the expansion of the strength of YCL from its present 50,000 members to about 150,000 within a month in Kathmandu valley. The other objectives are certainly noteworthy and they are: finding suitable employment means to the unemployed youth; protecting Nepal's national



■ Binod P. Bista

interest and ending foreigners' intervention in Nepal's internal affairs; and eliminating social ills such as corruption, hooliganism, smuggling, criminal acts and abductions in Nepal.

In the eyes of Commander Sagar, forceful confiscation of red sandalwood and capture of the so called criminals and corrupt persons without legal sanction does not constitute 'taking law into

**Political corruption and related issues of protecting and preserving national interests are better left with the political parties and the Nepali government of which Maoists are an integral part.**

own hands' as according to him, the end justifies the means. By handing over to the police the persons wanted by law and correcting tax evasion and illegal trade on red sandalwood matter, in spite of necessary force applied, YCL believes that it has done a great service to the nation.

Every Nepali knows that institutionalised corruption has set firm roots in Nepal. The nexus between the politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen is so entrenched that it might be virtually improbable to eliminate corruption in the conventional manner. It is one of the exceptional areas that require exceptional ways to make it work. However, exceptional ways cannot be executed outside of law in a civilised society. Taking the anti-corruption objective of YCL at face value, it would be up to the party and lawmakers (CPN-Maoists in the parliament) to transform the working style of YCL to an acceptable degree so that its performance can be commended by all in Nepal and abroad.

Political corruption and related issues of protecting and preserving national interests are better left with the political parties and the Nepali government of which Maoists are an integral part. By acting as a role model in all areas of involvement, the

Maoists can bring a desirable change to the culture of political corruption with impunity. However, YCL can always make its case peacefully, similar to all other members of the civil society, against foreign intervention.

Countering criminals by force, checking

instances of abductions and hooliganism by counter force can only lead to further incidences of violence and conflict in the society. As two wrongs do not make it right, YCL's forceful and illegal actions can hardly attain the goal that it has set for itself.

The central objective of YCL for unemployed youth of Nepal is a praiseworthy goal if appropriate means are employed. Unemployment is directly related to lack of economic growth in all countries including Nepal. Short term relief can be given to unemployed youth by creating additional jobs by a partnership between the government and business community.

However, the problem many a time is the lack of meritocracy in recruitment of qualified youth. This can be corrected only with transparency and rule based policies that must be adopted by all organisations in the government as well as private sector. YCL can act as a watchdog for correcting the existing problems.

However, YCL needs to redefine its central objective which can make a lasting impact in the Nepali society. If it is playing the role of a Marshal, such as the system practiced in the US, for apprehending a person wanted by law, then it needs to obtain the authority from a designated court and act lawfully. For YCL's acceptability at large, revamping its working mechanism is a must. ■

*(Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)*



■ Bhim Prasad Bhurtel

## Gross national silliness

**Bhutanese want a lasting solution to the crisis which sees their dignified and safe return to Bhutan and nowhere else.**

According to the report made by a media mission sponsored by South Asians for Human Rights (SHAR) that visited Nepal to assess the miserable plight of Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal, they do not consider themselves anything but Bhutanese nationals, with a right to return to their homeland. They are victims of political apathy on the part of the totalitarian government of Bhutan led by despot King, who does not consider them Bhutanese nationals, and is not interested in ensuring their repatriation.

The report says that Nepal government has "erroneously" stepped in as a bilateral player and has held 15 rounds of talks with the Bhutanese establishment. Nepal is not in a position to assimilate them into the country and has now made it quite clear that the problem is between the Bhutanese government and the refugees. India has the most influence on Bhutan to push for a solution that might be amenable to the refugees but has steadfastly refused to get involved. The refugees entered Nepal through India and originally it should have been the problem of India. Strangely, India says they are Nepali speaking people but millions of Indians are also Nepali speaking people.

To tackle the 16 year old problem, the US has come up with a resettlement proposal in the US, Australia, Canada and some Nordic countries, which according to respective ambassadors to Nepal is acceptable only by a segment of the refugees. However, the proposal has sparked off a controversy and several refugees say that it has created confusion amongst them. What they want is a



lasting solution to the crisis which sees their dignified and safe return to Bhutan and nowhere else. Another issue of concern is the fear that camps could become a fertile breeding ground for violence and terrorism and the US is more concerned about a possible Maoist insurgency.

The report concludes that the US proposal is only a temporary solution while recognising that the humanitarian solution proposed by the US and other countries are welcomed. In fact, there are two issues: one related to ushering in democracy in Bhutan, and the second related to the situation of the refugees. It needs to be always borne in mind that it is the democracy deficit in Bhutan that has resulted in the refugee issue in the first place.

The report emphasises on India's role as

crucial. As the biggest democratic nation in the region, it certainly is in a position to correct the atrocities done to the refugees. The issue of the refugees in Nepal is ultimately an issue of justice which demands that Bhutan not only does not get away with the expulsion of its citizens, but also makes sure that the refugees get back to their country and their right to live a normal life. The Bhutanese King is humming the gospel of Gross National Happiness (GNH) repeatedly. According to the King, the four pillars of his GNH are the promotion of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance.

During mid 1980s there was peace, equality

and justice in Bhutan. In mid 1980s the present monarch introduced 'one nation, one people' policy and enacted new citizenship act under which Lhotsampas (Southern Bhutanese) were persecuted. It also mandated dress codes, cultural and social etiquettes demanding ethnic homogeneity. Lhotsampas held public demonstrations to resist the implementation of this policy but the dissenting voices were dealt with iron hands. They were branded as anti-nationals, illegal immigrants and were imprisoned or evicted.

To examine, 'Gross National Happiness' - whose happiness is it? How can there be happiness when one-sixth of the country's population are refugees demanding safe return to their home country; when the Lhotsampas inside Bhutan are secretly and systematically persecuted, their lands are expropriated, their language withdrawn from school curriculum, text books burnt in the public and when their children are selectively denied citizenship and education?

How can there be gross national happiness when the Lhotsampas and other minority groups are discriminated and denied equal education, employment, business opportunities and are excluded from equal participation in nation building process? Bhutan is not committed to resolving its refugee problem. For how long should the refugees wait? What does this GNH mean to over one hundred thousand Bhutanese living in exile and to those Lhotsampas living inside Bhutan? In my opinion, it is equivalent to Gross National Silliness of the Bhutanese King. ■



# 1.3 million affected by floods in Pakistan

Pakistani troops and rescuers struggled Saturday to help 1.3 million victims of monsoon-triggered floods in the country's southwest, officials said, a day after villagers rioted over the slow response. The death toll from the floods in worst-affected Baluchistan province rose to 17, an official said, with local media reporting that more than 200 people have died across the country after about four days of rains and flooding.

At least four people were injured Friday when police fired tear gas and bullets into the air to disperse villagers who ransacked the mayor's office in the flooded southwestern city of Turbat, driven by anger over a lack of relief aid. It was the first such protest since Tuesday, when floods triggered by rains from Cyclone Yemyin began causing havoc in Baluchistan province, which includes the coastal town of Turbat, about 400 miles southeast of Quetta.

However, Khudah Bakhsh, the relief commissioner for Baluchistan, said Saturday that the situation was now under control in Turbat and that officials were trying their best to get food to victims. "Pakistan's army is using transport planes and helicopters to

ferry aid" to the flood-hit areas in Baluchistan, he said, adding the storm and floods had affected 1.3 million people in the province.

The comments by Bakhsh came after protesters said they had waded through chest-deep water from outlying areas to voice their anger about the shortage of relief aid. They said they received only packets of biscuits and bottles of water. "Every family is looking for one or two members. They are all missing," said Chaker Baloth, who walked more than 25 miles through the night to reach Turbat, a town of 150,000. Bakhsh said the official death toll in Baluchistan was 17, with an unspecified number of people missing.

But, Farqooq Ahmed Khan, head of the National Disaster Management Authority, said Friday accurate figures were unavailable due to poor communications in stricken areas. Khan told reporters in Islamabad that the military had rescued about 1,600 people. The floods also killed more than two dozen people in a northwestern tribal region, forcing the temporary suspension of the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said Friday.

More than 2 million Afghans still live in camps along the border. Floods also have ravaged four



eastern provinces of neighboring Afghanistan, causing at least four deaths, a NATO statement said. Monsoon storms have claimed more than 120 lives in neighboring India. Bakhsh estimated that 500,000 houses were destroyed or

damaged in Baluchistan, and many people needed more aid. "Despite bad weather, we are trying to ensure the supply of relief aid to the needy people," he said.

(cbnews)

In 10 years, Hong Kong seems to have changed less than its owner, China.

On the day this longtime British colony returned to Chinese rule 10 years ago, even the sky seemed to be crying over the territory's uncertain future.

The heavens opened as the colonial masters waved their farewells and sailed away on the ship *Britannia*. At day-break, another downpour drenched the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army as they crossed the border.

By that wet summer, half a million people had fled Hong Kong in search of safer harbors and foreign passports. But a decade after the five-star Chinese red flag replaced the Union Jack on July 1, 1997, much of the worry about Hong Kong's demise has dissipated.

Mostly left alone by a giant Communist motherland busy undergoing its own metamorphosis, Hong Kong is thriving

as a beacon of capitalism. The "one-country, two-systems" formula designed to preserve Hong Kong's freedoms and way of life for 50 years appears to be working, give or take a bit of muscle-flexing by Beijing.

In many ways, the past 10 years have shown how much China has changed and Hong Kong has stayed the same.

"The concept of isolating Hong Kong's capitalist ways from China's socialism did not work in the way people thought it would work," said Michael DeGolyer of Hong Kong Baptist University, who has conducted opinion polls in the territory. "China has utterly failed to change Hong Kong in their direction."

Instead, China has become more like Hong Kong - economically speaking, at least.

When the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping was plotting the return of the colony in the early 1980s, Hong Kongers, with their business savvy and materialistic sensibilities, were considered

spiritual contaminants.

In China today, money is the new religion, and communism in many ways is just a name. The country has joined the World Trade Organization, modified its constitution to protect private property and accepted entrepreneurs into the Communist Party.

Hong Kong, on the other hand, is not nearly as transformed. But residents of this open international city prefer the status quo.

"I am still free to talk, free to read newspapers, free to make money," said Ping Lam Mak, 58, who runs a tiny stone-carving stall in the heart of Hong Kong's business district.

Contrary to the doomsayers, Beijing did not shut down the territory's free media, arrest dissidents or patrol the streets with PLA troops. But neither has Beijing been willing to grant Hong Kong full democracy.

Hong Kong's top leader is elected by a committee of 800 mostly pro-Beijing businesspeople. Only half of the

60-member legislature is chosen by a popular vote. The timetable for universal suffrage guaranteed under the territory's mini-constitution, has been pushed back indefinitely, leading critics to say that Beijing has not held up its end of the bargain to leave Hong Kong alone.

The issue of who is in charge was made obvious in June by China's top legislator, who declared that Beijing would dictate Hong Kong's political future.

"Hong Kong's administrative autonomy is not intrinsic. It is granted by the central government," Wu Gangguo, chairman of the National People's Congress, said in a speech in the Chinese capital marking the 10th anniversary of the transfer.

On the surface, Hong Kong, which has a population of 7 million, has retained much of the look and feel of a British colony. Double-decker buses drive on the left. English is spoken with a Cantonese-British accent.

Street protesters waving anti-government slogans remain a way of life in Hong Kong. But even as they strive to keep a distance, the people of Hong Kong also have come to embrace the motherland.

When the territory's economy hit the rocks in 2003, Beijing came to the rescue by opening the borders and making it easier for mainland visitors to spend their money here.

The flow of people goes both ways. About 500,000 Hong Kong residents now live and work outside the territory. Hong Kong investment alone is responsible for employing more than 13 million people in southern China's Guangdong province.

Meanwhile, all along the Chinese east coast, bustling cities are emerging, many backed by Hong Kong investment. ■

(Baltimore Sun)

**Small territory,  
GREAT  
INFLUENCE**

# Harboring the incubus

The announcement of elections date is a bold step. However, it is pertinent to question whether or not elections are possible at this point of time. Unfortunately, the ground reality is vastly different from what our leaders actually think. The law and order situation is appalling and as a consequence the country is moving towards a political crisis.

The Maoists who have supposedly quit violence have failed to mend their ways. In the past year, they have attempted to seize power and overwhelm the state on three occasions. After the King ceded power to the political parties last April, they tried to cash in the lawlessness situation by brewing further anarchy and positioned People's Liberation Army (PLA) around Kathmandu valley at strategic points. But fortunately, the international community threw their weight behind the Koirala government and intervened aggressively to foil a probable Maoist take-over.

**Koirala has gambled his political career by compromising with former terrorists and his interest is to give space to all political forces in the country.**

In tangent with their desired objective, the Maoists made a second attempt to seize power early this winter when the Prime Minister's health was known to be bleak. The latest attempt to seize power was after it became apparent that the government was in position to conduct elections on the 20th of June. Instead of taking collective responsibility for the failure to conduct elections in June, the Maoists made the PM the scapegoat and concurrently created serious disturbances throughout the country. But, the media came against the Maoists and influenced public opinion against them.

The Maoists are desperate to buoy the international community in their favor. Although their goals are intact to nationalise private properties and stringently regulate the economy of the country; they have been forced to



■ Siddhartha Thapa

restrain themselves. Nonetheless, the move is a tactical one that aims to deceive the international community. The rumours suggesting a change of hearts in Maoists' thought regarding Melamchi is nothing but a strategic move on their part to delude the international community by demonstrating they are reasonable.

Yet another dangerous move that might have gone unnoticed is the recent posting of 43 police personnel in key positions by the home minister on the recommendation of Prachanda. The police personnel who have been posted would have undoubtedly given assurance to the Maoists demonstrating their loyalty

and vice versa. The Home Minister continues to keep his job and it becomes obvious that politicians south of the border - Yechury, SD Muni and the Maoists in Nepal form a pressure group in support of the home minister.

The Maoist leadership keeps insisting they have retracted from violent politics and committed themselves to multiparty politics. On the contrary, if for some reason they are unhappy with other political parties or want to incite their cadres, the senior leaders shamelessly threaten stir and thunder they have not deviated from their desired objective of one party communist republic. If the leadership situation is grim, the law and order situation is worse in the country.

The Maoists have bought time due to the incompetence and the lethargy

The Maoists who have supposedly quit violence have failed to mend their ways.

of UNMIN arms management process. The 27,000 new recruits in the PLA camps have had enough sheltered time to comprehend the basic use of arms and combat. Although Pushpa Dahl and Bhattarai highlight the good work the YCL are said to be doing, in reality however, it is a mere façade to conceal all the dirty work they are currently involved in.

For instance, the killing of a NC -D worker in Jumla by YCL is an elaborate example of their 'good work.' The press conference in Dhading by Laxman Tharu, a former Maoist leader, who disclosed that the Maoists have hidden arms, is symbolic; and it ties in with the increased YCL recruitment drive that is aimed at recruiting at ex-Gurkhas and former disgruntled retired army and police low ranking staff.

Unfortunately, although everyone acknowledges the political crisis is taking a turn for the worse, the government fails to generate adequate political will to avert a major political crisis. If Koirala fails to initiate political moves to counter Maoist tactics that will contain them within the frame work of the constitution, they will continue to operate as an extra constitutional force and will be tempted to consistently explore alternative avenues to overwhelm the state. Therefore, it is imperative that Koirala has a viable deterrence strategy.

However, herein lies the contradiction. Koirala has gambled his political career by compromising with former terrorists and his interest is to give space to all political forces in the country. On the other hand, the desired objective of the Maoists contravenes with what Koirala is trying to achieve. The Maoists are using the interim phase as a catalyst to storm into power and establish one party communist republic that defies the norms of multi-party politics and constitutional liberalism. In conclusion, it becomes a necessity for the eight party alliance to give up personal and party interests and create national consensus in the interest of the nation to safe guard democracy by conducting free and fair elections. ■

# Marshland Flowers

Importance of authentic unbroken enlightened lineage.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche



Of the 18 to 24 Sravakayana lineages, only the Theravada (which developed out of the Vibhajjyavadin which itself developed out of the Sthabirvadins) remains today. However, it is still alive, dynamic and going strong. It has many lineages and there are still enlightened masters in Laos, Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

And these masters are both householders (Upasakas / Upasikas) and monks and nuns (Bhikchhus / Bhikchhunins). However, the Bhikchhuni lineage of the Theravada tradition has been broken. But China still has an unbroken Bhikchhuni Sanga of the Mahasangika Nikayas. For anybody to become even a Srotappanna, what to speak of an Arhat, one must study and practice under such lineage masters and be confirmed by such a Master.

This is how the Buddhist system works from the time of the Shasta (Master) himself. It was the Buddha himself who declared and thus stamped the authenticity of the Srotappanna, Sakridagami, Anagami and Arhats of his time. In fact, there is a story that some Bhikchhus who had reached the very high state of Anagami (those who will not return to human forms) claimed that they had reached Arhathood; but when the Buddha was told about this, he

called them and told them they had not become Arhats yet.

This story implies that only Arhats and Buddhas can know whether a person has become an Arhat or not; and that the individual himself cannot possibly know it and can easily be fooled. This is the raison d'être for an unbroken enlightened lineage. All forms of Buddhism and specially lineages of the Mahayana place great importance on and value the purity of such an authentic unbroken enlightened lineage.

No yogi / yoginis or practitioner is accepted as a genuine Master no matter how intelligent he may be, no matter how hard he may have practiced, no matter how many years he has spent in retreat, no matter how scholarly he is, no matter how much of an orator he may be, until and unless he is authenticated by a master or masters of such authentic unbroken enlightened lineages. This is the Buddhist culture in all Buddhist countries where the unbroken enlightened lineages have not died out.

This issue is crucial not only to understand what is genuine, authentic Buddhism but also for the existence of authentic Buddhism itself. So, forget about non-Buddhists who have never practiced any form of genuine Buddhist practices of either the Sravakayana or the Bodhisattvayana even by reading genuine, authentic books of Buddhism; even those who have studied and practiced for long periods under authentic masters do not dare pretend to be Masters until and unless, older Masters authenticate them as Masters.

(To be continued.)  
(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)

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newsfront

# Vocation of the visionary

To understand the dynamics of a nation's literature, a closer look at the vocation of most of the creators is crucial. The question bothered me when I was editing a special Dutch issue of the magazine, Pratik with Dutch poet Harry Zevenbergen as the guest editor.

Out of the twenty-four Dutch poets including legendary Simon Vinkenoog, Diana Ozon, Bart FM Droog, Tjitse Hofman and Hans Plomp that we decided to include in the anthology, most of them had diverse backgrounds and vocations and came from different strata of life.

Some of them had held several assorted positions as barkeeper, canvasser, chauffeur, pub manager, industrial cleaner, panel beater, shipyard worker, scaffolder and civil servant. Others remained ardent travelers, hippies, publishers, songwriters, bandleaders, public gardeners, telephone operators, medical couriers, dolphin keepers, beekeepers, pub proprietors and animal protectionists.

Most of the creators in Nepali literature remain Kathmandu-based teachers/journalists or civil servants. The Nepali writers until 1950 came

from the upper class. Bal Krishna Sama, Jagadish Shumsher Rana, even Siddhi Charan Shrestha and Laxmi Devkota came from upper class and had considerable influence over the rulers of their times due to family ties and other social connections. After the 1950 democratic upsurge, over the decades the middle class writers have started slowly appearing in Nepali literature.

However, lower middle class and the working people, Dalits and women from the lower, marginalised section of Nepali society have yet to make their mark in the Nepali literary arena. Why would Nepali writers come from upper/middle castes and clans only? Is it lack of education? Is western education a prerequisite to be poets or storytellers? Has the ordinary Nepali writer yet to make an entry in the literary arena? What would a truck driver, sweeper, porter, carpenter, farmer, manual laborer or a blacksmith write? The questions are intriguing. I am simply wondering if the people involved in real life events like their Dutch counterparts will ever enter this world.

The issue is important because it offers an answer to another serious

Little 'provincial' flavor appears to be available in Nepali literary works.



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

question - the question of authenticity of writing. For the lack of authentic details in Nepali literature seems to stem from this phenomenon of teacher/journalist/civil servant dominated literary world. Since most of the creators do not come from the lower strata of life and do not engage in real life works due to social status and caste bias, it becomes very difficult for them to immerse themselves in the heat and dust of the world they are describing.

A second hand accounts made to dramatise stories and experiences heard arbitrarily appears to be the major cause of Nepali literature's deplorable state, be it fiction or criticism.

That is why very little 'provincial' flavor appears to be available in the Nepali literary works, especially from recent fiction. For their failures to delve deep into the content and lacking in authentic details, major Nepali novelists including Druv Chandra Gautam find it fit to dabble in the murky waters of senseless experiments in name of post-modernism and deconstruction.

The writer can be reached at [writer@yuyutsu.de](mailto:writer@yuyutsu.de)

## Insight

# Destiny beckons

What is to ensure the November polls will guarantee people's right to life and dignity?



■ Sushma Amatya

An essential feature of democracy is periodic elections where people get to freely choose their representatives to form and run the government of their desire. In such a system, the people are considered to be truly sovereign and the source of all state power, only when they can express their opinion without fear, intimidation or favor. In this context, the constituent assembly (CA) election to formulate the future constitution will be different from regular parliamentary elections because it will shape the nature of the state system and the basic political rules of the game. Understandably, the people have high hopes that the CA elections will reflect the true will and aspirations of the people and that it will not be influenced by money or power as in the past.

Translating people's hopes into realities will be a long process even if the elections take place as per the schedule. The process of drafting and finalising new constitution will take at least another couple of years and it will be filled with challenges. In the meantime, the government has to ensure that the people's basic needs are fulfilled and their basic rights honoured and that they are not taken for a ride again.

Despite this historic opportunity, the political dominance of the same individuals and cliques who collectively brought the country to this sorry pass is yet to reassure the public about the future prospects. What is to assure the public that there is new vision, energy and commitment going forward if the same people are at the helm with not much sign of remorse or reform in their policies and politics?

Many are asking: have our leaders changed their attitudes, working style, and value orientation sufficiently to take the country to a different destination after the CA? The people who say there is not enough enthusiasm among the masses for the CA polls should not be surprised, they should instead look at the source that is demoralising the nation. What is to ensure the November polls will guarantee people's right to life and dignity? The CA will be as good as those who manage and conduct it.

Experiences in other countries that have gone through conflict show that elections to CA alone is not a panacea to all problems. Reports from Bosnia suggest that in absence of economic security and personal liberty for the people, any kind of election is a gimmick that only buys questionable legitimacy for the rulers. In a true democracy, elections should be more than mere rituals of power for the powerful at the cost of the people.

The recent elections in Iraq and Afghanistan are a case in point. Despite the polls and the government, the democracy there is not worth the paper it is written on if men, women and children have to be blown up every day to prove its greatness.

Some disturbing trends in the hills, valleys, and the Terai gives the average citizen the fear that we might be heading in the same direction as well. Nepal is not under occupation of any international military but there are questions being raised about how free are we to take decisions in a manner that we would want to. CA would be one occasion where the people would want to be true sovereigns. But will the various powers – indigenous as well as outsiders – allow us to achieve that?

Thus, the ball is in the court of the ruling eight party alliance. They now have the power and the opportunity to show they are different than the previous regime. Rhetoric matters little if there is no delivery. What they do now will be history: they can choose to make it a farce or a shining New Nepal of which we all can be proud of. ■

**Translating people's hopes into realities will be a long process even if the elections take place as per the schedule. The process of drafting and finalising new constitution will take at least another couple of years and it will be filled with challenges.**



## Drugs change the way brain works

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

### What is Methadone?

■ *Prasanna Thapa, Dhapakhel*  
Methadone is a synthetic, narcotic analgesic (pain reliever). Often used by and associated with the treatment of heroin addicts it is also used for other medical purposes such as relieving pain. This drug has characteristics of morphine and acts in similar ways to it and other narcotic medications. However, with methadone the gradual and mild onset of its effect prevents the user from getting high and experiencing euphoric effects.

Doses of Methadone used in heroin treatment vary based on a person's body weight and tolerance; but proper dosage is measured and determined by a patient's decline in craving of heroin. It is dispensed primarily in oral forms, including tablets, powder, and liquid for treatment of narcotics addiction. Although methadone is primarily used for treating narcotics addiction, users can still experience negative physical effects. Careful monitoring and a close relationship between a doctor and the patient are essential for its proper use.

Although it is intended to prevent

narcotics addiction and dependence along with associated withdrawal symptoms, there is still a possibility of becoming addicted since it is an extremely physically addictive drug. However addiction is less likely when under supervision of a doctor. Withdrawal symptoms occurring from use of methadone are not as common as they are with heroin; therefore it is possible to maintain an addict on methadone without harsh side effects.

### How do drugs affect our brain?

■ *Khusbu Karki, Pako*  
Our brain is made up of billions of nerve cells. A neuron contains three important parts: a central cell body that directs all activities of the neurons; dendrites, short fibres that receive messages from other neurons and relay them to the cell body; and an axon, a long single fibre that transmit messages from the cell body to the dendrites of other neurons or to body tissues, such as muscles.

Transfer of a message from the axon of one nerve cell to the dendrites of another is known as neurotransmission. Communication between nerve cells occurs mainly through the release of chemical substances into the space (synapse) between the axon and dendrites.

When neurons communicate, a message travelling as an electrical impulse moves down the axon and toward the synapse. There it triggers the release of molecules called neurotransmitters from the axon into the synapse.

The neurotransmitters then diffuse across the synapse and bind to special molecules called receptors that are located within the cell membrane of the dendrite of the adjacent nerve cell. This in turn, stimulates or inhibits an electrical response in the receiving neurons dendrites. Thus the neurotransmitters act as chemical messengers, carrying information from one neuron to another.

Pleasure, which scientists call reward, is a very powerful biological force for our survival. Life sustaining activities such as eating activate a circuit of specialised nerve cells devoted to producing and regulating pleasure of which one is called dopamine. Almost all drugs change the way the brain works by affecting chemical neurotransmission.

Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to: [newsfront@bhrikuti.com](mailto:newsfront@bhrikuti.com) (Your identity will be protected.)

Manoj Dahal

Before leaving for USA after finishing his term as the US Ambassador in Nepal, James F Moriarty was enjoying one of his last evenings at Nepalaya's newly established office at Kalikasthan, Kathmandu to be a part of the musical programme, 'Palenti.' Renowned lyricist, Ratna Samasher Thapa, 68, was there to describe the background of his songs which he wrote, some of which were almost 50 years old.

A crowd of around 100 with a large number of renowned personalities and classical music lovers listened to Thapa's old numbers. Palenti is a series of classical Nepali music program where an artist revisits his/her past. Thapa was there to witness the two new singers Suraj Thapa and Shila Bista who were singing his masterpieces. In his white shirt and grey hair Thapa was flashing his few white teeth in happiness, obviously recalling his past.

Nepalya started Palenti series three years ago and has been receiving enthusiastic response from the lovers of classical music. Aavas, a 38 year musician, composer and singer, and the coordinator of Palenti, ran the series for one whole year, singing and composing. Last year renowned Nepali singers from India and Nepal mesmerised the audience in Palenti series.

Avash said that this year, they have planned to bring celebrities from all three sides that go to create a song - musician, composer and singer. In the first program of Palenti series this



# Irresistible CLASS

Musical programme, Palenti, thrills classical song lovers.

year, last month, singer Phatteman delighted the audience with his numbers. In this second program, Thapa overwhelmed the people. He remembered the famous singer Narayan Gopal who chose Thapa's words to enter the field of music almost 50 years ago.

'It was the stage of Trichanda College where Narayan sang his first song, Swargki rani, mayaki khani,' recalled Thapa, fondly. Friendship between Narayan Gopal and Thapa was unique since the latter always has been a teetotaler and the former could not do without it. "I never met

him when he was drunk," Thapa explained.

Suraj and Shila, the young singers sang almost one and half dozens of songs created by Thapa including 'Goreto tyo gaunko' originally sung by Premdhawaj Pradhan, 'Tyo kholako' and 'Kholanala sang' by Manikratna, 'Ankhai ma rat gali' by Natikaji, and 'Jati hansu bhanchhu' by Deep Shrestha. Nepalaya orgainises 'Palenti' every last Friday of the English calendar. The renowned musician, composer and singer, Bharat Jangam will appear in Palenti the next month. ■

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रेशम फिरि रेशम फिरि

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