



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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Mukta Kamaiyas (freed bonded labourers) being attacked by water canons last week. The protestors had gathered in front of Sinha Durbar to remind the government of its promises made to them seven years ago.



Suresh Mahajan

## Army coup: still a fear

■ nf correspondent

Nepal is not yet free from fear and possibility of army coup. This is something which appears inevitable if the election to the constituent assembly is not fair and free from intimidation, if the government fails to restore law and order, and if Nepal army continues to be vilified.

This is the gist of intense parleys among the diplomats in Nepal who have come out openly in favour of elections taking place in November, but are no less worried about the absence of a conducive atmosphere for it to happen. Ambassador Moriarty guardedly warned about it during his farewell press conference and said that the consequences of elections not taking place in November would be serious.

But those who were privy to assessment and discussions about these consequences in private say that army takeover, both in case of political instability and deteriorating law and order, or in the event of a rigged poll taking place, is a fear that nobody wants to rule out.

In fact, there are indications that Nepal's political parties have been advised by some diplomats not to criticise the Nepal Army and drag it further into politics. While Surya Bahadur Thapa has already spoken in favour of the army, more politicians from the Congress, Congress (D), UML are likely to follow him. Army Chief Rukmangad Katawal's visit to the United Kingdom on an official

invitation also may be the beginning of Nepal Army getting the same old treatment that it used to get before the Royal takeover on Feb 1, 2005.

The Maoist party is quite divided over its attitude towards army and the possible coup it might stage. While Prachanda has said that the army continues to be loyal to the king, Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal has publicly stated that coup is not a distant possibility.

Experts analysing political trends and security affairs however, claim that while possibility of a coup cannot be ruled out, it is unlikely to be carried at the will or in the interest of the king. "In the situation that Nepal is in today, army can only act in the name of promoting democracy as in Bangladesh," they insist.

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# Maoists relent

■ nf correspondent

After an intense lobbying by the international community, Maoists have agreed to let the stalled verification process begin soon. The pressure on the Maoists was exerted by Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee and British Ambassador Andrew Hall who also currently heads the European Union.

The message delivered separately on Friday was simple: both the Maoists and the government have to honour the findings of the UNMIN. In pragmatic as well as a smart move on the part of Maoist Chief Prachanda, he also got Ram Bahadur Thapa Badal and Nand Kishore Pun Pasang in the meeting so that the verification process proceeds smoothly.

The meeting between the Maoist leaders and the two envoys actually paved the way for charting out when and how to begin the installed verification process when Ian Martin, joined by his UNMIN aides, had a detailed discussion with the Maoist leaders on Friday.

As per the advice of the two ambassadors, the Maoists are expected to begin the process of discharging those from the cantonments who have been found disqualified as combatants. There are around 900 'unqualified combatants,' but as part of the understanding UNMIN might be



Andrew Hall

reinvestigating some of the cases. "Those below 18 and the ones recruited after May 6, 2006, the day peace process began, need to be discharged soon," Ambassador Mukherjee told Maoists. And the response was 'positive,' the sources said.

Ian Martin left for UN headquarters on Friday evening to brief the Security Council to the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon about the development here. The date for verification process to begin for Sindhuli will be decided in the joint monitoring committee headed by UNMIN with representatives from the Nepal army as well as the Maoists, according to Pasang. He also informed media that the officials reinvestigating the cases in Chulachuli camp of Ilam where more



Shiv Shankar Mukherjee

than 900 have been found not qualified will be trained so that they do not offend the 'cantonment insiders' when interviewing them. Maoist leadership had objected to some of the probing personal questions.

Ian Martin said the discussions took place on positive note, and there were still some more things to be discussed further. The UN side was however, categorical in telling the Maoists that it had no intention or agenda to have People's Liberation Army disintegrated as accused by some senior Maoist leaders including Prabhakar. Its emphasis over and over again was what UNMIN was doing was nothing more and nothing less than what the government and the Maoists requested it to do.

## Maoists target media

The Asia Pacific Communication Association (APCA), publisher of the Himalayan Times and the Annapurna Post dailies, have threatened to suspend their publications indefinitely if the government fails to dissuade Maoists who have obstructed their distribution during the past three days. The Maoists are ostensibly demanding that the workers of the outsourced distribution network be given salaries and benefits by the media house at par with its regular employees.

An APCA release said this is a blatant attack on the freedom of the press as well as people's right to information. It alleged that some of the Maoist leaders were protecting their activists who have hijacked APCA vehicles carrying the papers for distribution. The Maoists have targeted the APCA house a month after they withdrew similar action forcing suspension of the publication of the daily, Samacharpatra and other periodicals published by the Kamana group.

The APCA management made it clear that while it stands by the rights and entitlement of journalists, the Maoists' demands for more facilities to the delivery boys is unacceptable as they are not employees of APCA. In a clear warning to the Maoists, and assertion that it would not bow down before such demands the publication said, "We know that some senior Maoist leaders are directly protecting the attack on the free press. It is white terrorism."

"There is no option other than to suspend publication of papers if the government continues to be a hapless onlooker and keeps tolerating the unjustified defiance of the Maoists," it said, further urging that all media houses, journalists, political parties, international community, civil society readers and world agencies concerned with the development of media, protection of journalists and their rights, and press freedom to take the matter very seriously and express their solidarity for the freedom and independence of press in Nepal.



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# No safety no election

■ nf correspondent

Despite tall claims by the government about its commitment to hold elections, the general law and order situation in the country in general and Terai in particular is taking a nose dive.

The most worrying development took place in Saptari where all the employees of the district court went on an indefinite strike demanding security. The strike by the court employees, which is likely to trigger a chain reaction in other districts, follows abduction and execution of Village Development Council (VDC) Secretary, Ramhari Pokharel, by the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha group led by Jwala Singh group last week.

The Supreme Court has received a petition on behalf of the employees demanding safety of the employees, and is going to take up the issue with the government. "Obviously judicial system cannot function in absence of a situation where every employee feels secure," a judge of the court said, adding, "we will take a formal



stand on the issue very soon."

There has hardly been any effective move to device a mechanism to ensure safety of the VDC secretaries whose role and involvement will be crucial for the successful conduct of elections to the constituent assembly. Terrorised VDCs secretaries, around 50 in number, have already left their base in Terai and most of them have shifted to relatively more secure district headquarters while some have moved to the capital. A delegation of the VDC secretaries met local development minister Dev Gurung, but his assurance could hardly convince them.

Hari Pokharel, a representative of the VDC secretaries' rights protection

forum said that different factions of the JTMM have been demanding anywhere between 40 per cent of their salary per month or a sum of Rs 25,000, "for our safety." This coupled with Goit and Jwala Singh groups continuing with abduction and execution of VDC secretaries and people belonging to the hill origin has created a sense of panic, a senior police official said.

Home Ministry sources in Kathmandu claimed that some of the JTMM leaders who have been arrested are found to be hard core criminals wanted in serious crimes like murder and dacoity in Sunsari and border areas.

## Toothless TRC soon

■ nf correspondent

The much awaited bill that will enable the government to form the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as provided in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) will be introduced in the parliament soon. But the government has clearly overruled the suggestion given by the UNMIN and other human rights bodies on the scope and nature of the job that TRC will be performing.

The first compromise made by the government gives total immunity to the Maoists as the bill clearly states that no action or punishment would be recommended against anyone for violation of human rights if it was committed in the course of achieving one's stated political mission.

It is believed that Ian Martin, Head of the UNMIN and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Nepal had advised the government not to grant this kind of immunity as it would defeat the whole purpose

of having a TRC.

Although the CPA has a provision which gives the government the power to review and withdraw cases against anyone, UN and international human rights groups including the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) are clear that there cannot be general amnesty to cases of gross human right violations.

But more than identifying and classifying such cases, the proposed Human Right Commission is likely to arm itself with the power to mediate between the perpetrators of crime and the victims. The draft of the bill was circulated among members of the TRC, meant to assist the ministry in the peace process, on Thursday.

Peace and reconstruction ministry sources claim that the whole draft was mooted with a reconciliatory approach despite consistent suggestions from international bodies that the TRC needs to do something effectively so that the culture of impunity is over once and for all.

### Newsbrief

## Unfazed Giri

Dr Tulsi Giri has many haters and baiters. But all lend their ears when he speaks, specially on politics, current affairs and the past. And he loves talking to all including those whom he hates.

Last week, he got an unexpected venue to meet old acquaintances, most of them his political foes. The venue was the house of Dr Shashank Koirala, son of B P Koirala, in Maharajgunj where Dr Giri had gone to offer condolences to the family members on the demise of Sushila Koirala.

Accompanied by Rashtriya Prajatantra Party leader, Kamal Thapa, Dr Giri spent about 45 minutes talking to some of the Koirala clan. He was clear that the present sharing of power would not lead to resolution of the Maoist problem. It is essentially a fight between two guns which has no peaceful resolution, he said, almost echoing what the Maoists have been saying even now.

He also made a dig at Nepali Congress leader, Sushil Koirala who was briefly the private secretary of Dr Giri when he was Chairman of the council of ministers in the early 60s. "You call it democracy, but you have muzzled our voice." Sushil Koirala did not retort and just smiled at Giri's sarcasm.

## Deceptive nod

Soon after the former US President Jimmy Carter's visit and wide ranging meeting with the politicians in Kathmandu, the Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai were in a euphoric mood. For the Maoist leaders who were still on the US terrorist list, it was a major recognition by a leader of the US, a country they love to hate.

But what has landed them in a soup now is their claim that Carter was eager to have Young Communist League (YCL) engaged in maintaining law and order alongside the police. In fact, Prachanda said this recently attributing it to Carter.

Maoist leaders hardly bother about the impact on their credibility when they come up with such statements. But the Carter Center in Kathmandu has put the record straight, saying that it was out and out a distortion of what Carter had said. In



fact he had said in his press conference that Prachanda had assured to bring the YCL on track and that they must behave.

Putting the record straight, Carter Center in Kathmandu has clarified that Carter had clearly communicated to Prachanda the need for YCL to cease all violence and other acts that violate the May 2006 code of conduct. Further it added, "reports from Carter Center observers around the country indicate that YCL continues to behave in a negative fashion that jeopardises the peace process and causes the general public to question the commitment of the Maoists to a credible electoral process free from fear and intimidation."

In fact, the whole misinterpretation or attribution to Carter began after Baburam Bhattarai wrote an article for Maoist mouth-piece Janadesh and Gorkhapatra following their meeting with Carter. 'Carter nodded his head when we told him that Carter Center in Kathmandu had prepared a report suggesting YCL-police joint initiative in maintaining law and order,' his article said, interpreting that 'nod' as Carter's confirming existence and endorsing of the alleged report.

## Poudel vs. Sitaula

Despite their loyalty pledged quite often to Prime Minister, G P Koirala, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Ram Chandra Poudel and Home Minister K P Sitaula are at loggerheads. Both are busy at sniping at each other in any forum they meet.

As Poudel was busy establishing contact with Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) outfit leaders, Jaikishan Goit and Jwala Singh; Sitaula issued an ultimatum to both saying either come for a dialogue within two months or face the state's fury, indicating security forces would be mobilised against them. On Thursday, Poudel retaliated by asserting, "that must be Home Minister's personal view."

"Prime Minister does not approve of this slinging match between his ministers. But there is no move to deploy the security forces in Terai at the moment," a PMO source told newsfront.

## U K invites Katawal

The long boycott of Nepal Army followed by democratic countries in the wake of King Gyanendra's takeover in Feb 2005 is over. Although visiting foreign dignitaries from United States as well as the United Kingdom made it a point to meet

the army top brass, no formal invitation had been extended to the Chief of Army Staff even routinely as used to be the case earlier.

The United Kingdom has now taken the lead and invited Gen Rukmangad Katawal for a week long official trip. The UK, US as well as India, the major suppliers of arms and ammunitions to the Nepal army however, have been stating that there has been no request from the Nepal Army to resume supply which was suspended in protest against the Royal takeover.

Chief of Nepal and Indian army are awarded honorary title of the General on a reciprocal basis. But the customary visit of the new COAS to the other side is yet to resume after it was suspended for the same reason.

## Outspoken minister

Forest and Environment Minister Matrika Yadav has established himself as the most feared and respected minister because of his no-nonsense and straight forward manner. In a meeting recently, he told donor representatives, "you are not sincere and honest and we need to have a working understanding in a transparent manner."

The baffled representatives will be having a crucial meeting with the minister soon, an official source said. Yadav, by virtue of his being the environment minister, is the chairman of the Nepal Trust which has Prime Minister as ex-officio patron. It used to be known as King Mahendra trust for Nature conservation earlier.

Druk Air on lease

Despite souring relationship between Nepal and Bhutan over the refugee imbroglio during the past six years, the two governments have quietly negotiated to have Druk Airlines substitute Nepal Airlines (NA) when one of its two aircrafts goes for C-Check early next month. A C-check normally takes six weeks.

"Druk airlines will have one of its aircrafts on lease with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August," a source from NA said. While one of the two aircrafts of Nepal airline has been grounded for five days beginning 20 July for maintenance, the other one will be sent to C-Check to China on 1<sup>st</sup> August. NA sources said Druk offered the cheapest service besides fulfilling other requirements.







Editor & Publisher : Yubaraj Ghimire  
 Executive Editor : Sushma Amatya  
 News Coordinator : Manoj Dahal  
 Design: Sunil Khadgi, Kishor Raj Panta & Ramkrishna Rana  
 Address : PO Box: 8830, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal  
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Point to Ponder

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living.  
 The world owes you nothing. It was here first.

- Mark Twain

# Rhetoric plus

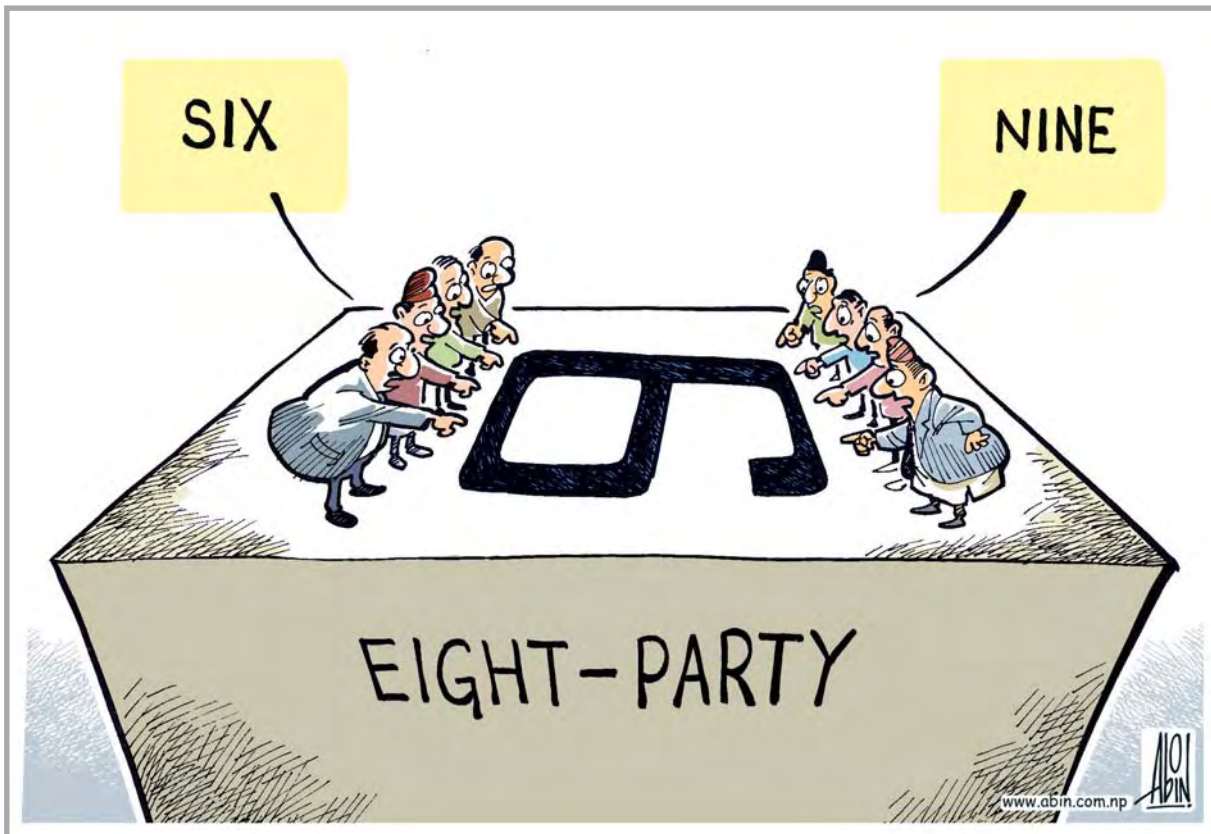
Holding elections to the constituent assembly is a national pledge and the government cannot escape the responsibility it has shouldered. But elections can take place only in an atmosphere where citizens can cast their votes free from fear and intimidation. Sheer rhetoric on the part of the government that we are committed to hold elections on November 22 cannot be accepted as a proof of its intent and seriousness. Government's credibility has taken a nose dive after it failed to hold elections in June as pledged by the interim constitution.

No doubt, the government has brought necessary legislations and the election commission has already begun exercises to meet the new deadline. But time and again, Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokhrel has warned the government at the highest level that a proper law and order situation is the most essential pre-condition for holding elections. It is as good as saying it is not possible if the law and order remains as bad or worse as it is today.

Pokhrel's assertion and fear have been endorsed by the special team of the United Nations which in its report made public recently, has expressed great concern about the prevailing law and order situation. The report also raises doubt over elections being held on time. Prime Minister G P Koirala, unfortunately, has not done anything to improve the law and order situation. None of his assurances carry clarity or messages as to how he is going to create a conducive atmosphere for election. Rather most of his arguments or rhetoric are either apolitical or emotional in nature and intent and as such cannot be taken as proof of seriousness to create a suitable atmosphere for holding the elections.

Koirala's failing health and his wanting to see two factions of the Nepali Congress and elections to the constituent assembly when he is alive do not create proper atmosphere for the polls. Village Development Committee secretaries who will have a crucial role in the elections are up in arms in protest against killing of one of their colleagues, Ramhari Pokhrel, by the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha recently. JTMM factions are threatening to launch ethnic cleansing against the people of non-Madhes origin, with the Koirala government even failing to contain them.

Moreover, Kathmandu faces the prospects of coming to a grinding halt with short supply of fuels and petroleum products for months with India wanting settlement of dues that the Nepal Oil Corporation owes to the Indian Oil Corporation. All these problems outweigh Koirala's emotional appeal and rhetoric in favour of elections in November.



## Letters

### Great leader

Chandra Shekhar's obituary in newsfront 24th issue was full of many interesting facts about the great hero. What he did for South Asia, mainly in India and Nepal, is remarkable. With his knowledge and simplicity, he proved his leadership quality, his powerful role as a South Asian socialist leader and also his attachment to grassroots level. Nepali politicians can learn a lot from him.

Subashini Nyaupane  
 Satdobato, Lalitpur

### Super corner

I enjoyed Swami Shivananda's piece in newsfront last issue. Spiritual corner is one of the most interesting columns in newsfront. Indeed, he was one of the most influential yoga masters of the 20th century who taught the world with his 6 words: serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise. Keep it up newsfront!

Suresh Karki  
 Naya Baneshwor, Kathmandu

### Youth effort

Student leader, Gagan Thapa's write-up in the last issue was impressive in which he has described the capabilities of the Nepali youth. There is no doubt that the youth is the most powerful force in an emerging democracy. However, in Nepal the force is only being used for show of physical strength.

Nepali youth doubtlessly can lead but they have to get their space by their own effort. If they remain a 'fighting force' for their parties all the time, they will be unable to develop themselves and make themselves worthy of important roles in the future. The youth have to keep this in mind. But we sure

are confident that student leaders like Gagan Thapa can lead the new Nepal.

Asmita Bhandari  
 Buddhanagar, Kathmandu

### Say NO to drugs

I am fond of reading drug counseling by Ragina Shah that is very useful for those who are in anyway involved with drugs. Ten years ago, I used to take drug off and on while I was a student of plus two level. I started it under influence of my colleagues. After getting treatment from a rehab centre, now I have found a new life.

Through your popular newspaper, I would like to give the message that drugs of any kind must be avoided and if one is

addicted, one can overcome it with proper treatment and environment. I also wish to share some knowledge as to how to avoid drugs; which I know from experience.

To stay away from drugs: enjoy in your work and business; make yourself busy, creative and constructive; use your method of communication intellectually; apply value based thoughts in your life; be positive and optimistic always; listen and respond to warnings responsibly and manage the document retention process diligently.

Surya (name changed)  
 Kathmandu



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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

## Spiritual Corner

### Fire of love

St Catherine (1347 -1380) was one of the great catholic saints. Her saintly nature attracted many people to come to her for guidance. She willingly gave solace to people who came with their suffering. She started having mystical experiences when six years old. She died when only 33.

### Poems by St. Catherine

Everything comes from love,  
 all is ordained for the salvation of man,  
 God does nothing without this goal in mind.

### Eternal trinity

Eternal trinity, godhead,  
 mystery deep as the sea,  
 you could give me no greater gift  
 than the gift of yourself.

For you are a fire ever burning and never consumed,  
 which itself consumes all the selfish love that fills my being.

Yes, you are a fire that takes away the coldness,  
 illuminates the mind with its light,  
 and causes me to know your truth.

And I know that you are beauty and wisdom  
 itself.

The food of angels, you gave yourself to man  
 in the fire of your love.

### Consecrated

All has been consecrated.  
 The creatures in the forest know this,

The earth does, the seas do, the clouds know



as does the heart full of love.

Strange a priest would rob us of this knowledge  
 and then empower himself with the ability  
 to make holy what already was.

### The Sanctuary

It could be said that god's foot is so vast  
 That this entire earth is but a field on his toe,

and all the forests in this world  
 came from the same root of just  
 a single hair of his.

What then is not a sanctuary?  
 Where can I not kneel  
 and pray at a shrine  
 made holy by his presence?





Developed Switzerland

# To make Nepal Switzerland

It is high time that Nepal puts entrepreneurship and innovation high in her list of priorities.



■ Lokesh Shrestha

Politics is about redistribution of national resources. In Nepal's case the resources are dismally limited to power brokerage. When a political revolution lands up in a nation like Nepal; hope, optimism and enthusiasm from the civil society notwithstanding, outcomes are realistically restricted to nothing but a changing of the guards. A new Nepal is not possible without the active involvement of the Nepali civil society at all fronts. However, the efforts that the civil society takes in guiding the nation are defined by the prevalent 'market' forces. In the current context, such forces have been predominantly political, and hence a civil society that is charged with a political agenda.

There is no denying that the political needs of the nation demand serious considerations. However, these considerations alone do not satisfy the conditions necessary to make a Switzerland out of the nation. Nations are built on entrepreneurship and innovation. Political backwardness of a nation can stifle progress, but it is only the efforts of an enterprising and

resourceful society that can possibly lead a nation forward. What the Nepali civil society must realise is that the responsibility of defining the market forces that will eventually shape the future of the nation rests squarely on their shoulders. It is high time that Nepal puts entrepreneurship and innovation high in her list of priorities.

Entrepreneurship creates and injects positive value into the society. An innovation that questions the standards of an industry and significantly enhances its productivity is perhaps developed. It does not involve extra-ordinary amount of resources, usury or exploitation. What it does involve is breaking of traditional boundaries to create a social phenomenon of epidemic proportions which, because of a multiplier effect, creates an impressive amount of social value.

There is no dearth of entrepreneurs in Nepal. However, lack of resources and the prevalent market forces have precluded their enterprises from reaching the heights that their potential would have otherwise indicated. The capitals market in Nepal is a collateral-based lending system, and hence strictly exclusive. While venture funds have recently come into existence, their reach and domain have been severely restrictive. Entrepreneurship thrives on performance based compensation. When prevalent market forces dictate that enterprises cook their books to save on taxes, in collusion with authorities, no standards can assess the true value of an enterprise. In absence of such evaluations, rewards are misplaced, eventually crowding-out entrepreneurs.

Human resource management is an alien concept in Nepal. Perhaps the caste system appears to be an effective system of human resource management to some and hence still in practice, but it hardly counts for one. An effective system to produce skilled and semi-skilled labor to not only meet the current demands of the market in a global context, but be able to predict the market to prepare

accordingly is necessary without which enterprises in Nepal will be denied the productivity they need to stay competitive globally.

Since the Jana-Andolan II, the IT industry in Nepal has seen an unprecedented boom. Investor confidence seems high. Business process outsourcing firms have been receiving an increase in business. Non-resident Nepalis, mostly from the US have been setting up software development houses to cater to businesses abroad. The number of domain name registrations for Nepali websites and services has surged as well. Despite all this, the IT industry in Nepal remains severely fragmented, disorganised and controlled by a few business houses. No consolidated effort to launch it globally is on the offing. Without an industry wide organisation that goes beyond vested predatory practices to coax the fledgling industry into a global phenomenon, investor confidence will soon wane.

Only when an industry matures in its home environment will it be able to tackle international turfs. IT startups do not require much investment to start with Nepal. However, if these startups are to merge together eventually to form a formidable industry, support from the civil society becomes essential. Our investment practices must change. Investors must go beyond conventional investment strategies such as real estate, to tap into new and emerging markets. Second, our society must understand that research and development injects positive value into the society, a value that may not be easily apparent in monetary terms. It must be encouraged. It is only an enthusiastic, receptive and supportive society that can help entrepreneurs and innovators achieve results. Aki Morita of Japan would have never been able to launch Sony to its heights had post-war Japan rejected Morita's early versions of electronic contraptions.

*(The author, CEO of Savant Associates, Nepal, a technology management consultancy, was educated at Princeton and Columbia University)*

Undeveloped Nepal





**Diamond Shumsher JBR**, 90, is one of the few Ranas who fought against the Rana regime and is the well known author of the novel, *Seto Bagh*, which has been translated into English, Japanese and French. He talked with newsfront recently about his extraordinary life. The excerpts:

**How does it feel to be 90 years old and a very fit one at that?**

I certainly am happy to be free of all my responsibilities and I am grateful that I still am independent. I do have a few ailments and I suffer from a major eye problem because of which I cannot write anymore and I call that a national loss.

**What do you mean by independent?**

The seven books that I have written still sell well and they feed me. I do not have to depend on my children. I lost all my inherited property during the 30 long years of political struggle for democracy. If it had not been for these books I might have been a pauper now.

**To have given up all that you had for what you believed in, you must have been very idealistic?**

Yes, I fought for a cause and was ready to suffer the consequences. I still get emotional when I talk about it. I was so idealistic; I wanted to live like Gandhi, Ho Chi Minn and Jagjivan Ram whom I admired. I wanted to have only enough to be able to sustain myself, be able to eat twice a day. I used to be happy when I had to sell my land. Now I realise how

naïve I was but come to think of it, I now am really living the way I wanted to. I just have enough to sustain myself.

**How did you gain the understanding of democracy in such a cloistered environment?**

Anmesh Raj Chowdhury, who was one of the most educated persons in India during that time was invited to teach the sons of Chandra Shumsher. He was the first Indian to pass out of the Scottish Church College in India. Once he came here, he soon found out that he did not have much to do except play billiards and I often used to play with him. He used to lament that a person of his caliber was rotting away in Patan Dhoka.

Soon, he offered to teach me and said he found an honest student in me. I loved to study and eagerly agreed. He then soaked me in literature and other subjects for several hours every day. He taught in a very unconventional way. He also informed me about the new changes sweeping across the world and predicted that Ranas could not continue the way they were ruling. I was not willing to listen to that but what he said stayed in my mind. Later when questions began to arise in my mind, I started getting restless and all that he had told me, began to make sense to me. I think that was one of the major factors that helped me change the track of my life.

**You wrote your first book, *Basanti* when you were in your early twenties. What reactions did you face after it got published?**

I shocked the society I came from. I met with contempt and was charged that I brought shame to the family by writing a book.

**What inspired you to start writing?**

Nothing. When I spent six years continuously in a jail, I had nothing else to do but write, so I wrote. It was a good way to pass time. I did not know how those years flew by. Since the lights used to be on throughout the night, I used to write till midnight. I did not write with any plans or hopes. I did not even dream that I would one day make a living out of it. I just wrote.

After the stretch at the jail, when I was finally released, I was about to leave the manuscript in the jail but was advised by a Khardar there to take it with me. He even cited examples of those who wrote in jail like Nehru and Gandhi. It was pure chance that it got published and people liked it. I have no record of how many copies sold but it meets all my expenses. Now I tell my children that I surely did not write trash for if it was so, it still would not have been selling so well.

**You have army background?**

After my father's death, I enlisted in army according to my family tradition. I was in a British army academy in a state called Mhau in British India in the then Central Province. When I jumped into politics, ready to do or die, I was a major.

**Being a Rana, the 14<sup>th</sup> brother in the line of 17 Rana brothers, you rose against your clan. Why did you do it?**

Honestly? I did it to protect the Ranas. Had I not initiated the changes, had they not let go of power, they might have been a subject of ridicule today and hunted down. I convinced them of that, took steps to protect the King

and helped bring democracy. I think the truth will be out in the next 40 years when people will be more educated and they will search for the truth. Let me tell you that I was the first one to rise against the Rana regime and to take out a protest rally against them.

**Is there any incident that stands out in your memory?**

I recall a Rana admonishing me for my pro-democracy activities and he said, "till today we have people around us doing, Hajur, Hajur meekly." And I retorted that I would rather have one friend with all his senses intact whom I can embrace and have as a friend rather than have many deaf, dumb and blind people bending before me.

**Did the Ranas accept realise what you were fighting for?**

Yes they did later. Shifting the power from Singha Durbar to Narayanhiti Durbar was a significant phase in Nepali history.

**Are you satisfied with what you did?**

Yes, although I must say I never could imagine that we would see the situation as it is today.

**How much is democracy understood today?**

Not much, due to lack of education. Maybe after a decade, it will be understood. It is a gradual process.

**Any particular incident that stands out of your time spent in jail?**

I had heard about bed bugs but had never seen them. One summer night I saw a black stream of it coming in and invading my bed. They launched attack and after that there was no sleep for months, till the day from American aid, the jail received DDT powder that eliminated them. Oh, that first night was pure bliss, when I could sleep finally. I have a soft corner for those who invented the powder since then. I feel sad that we Nepalis could not even invent even such a simple thing such as insect repellent.

**Which is the saddest event in your life?**

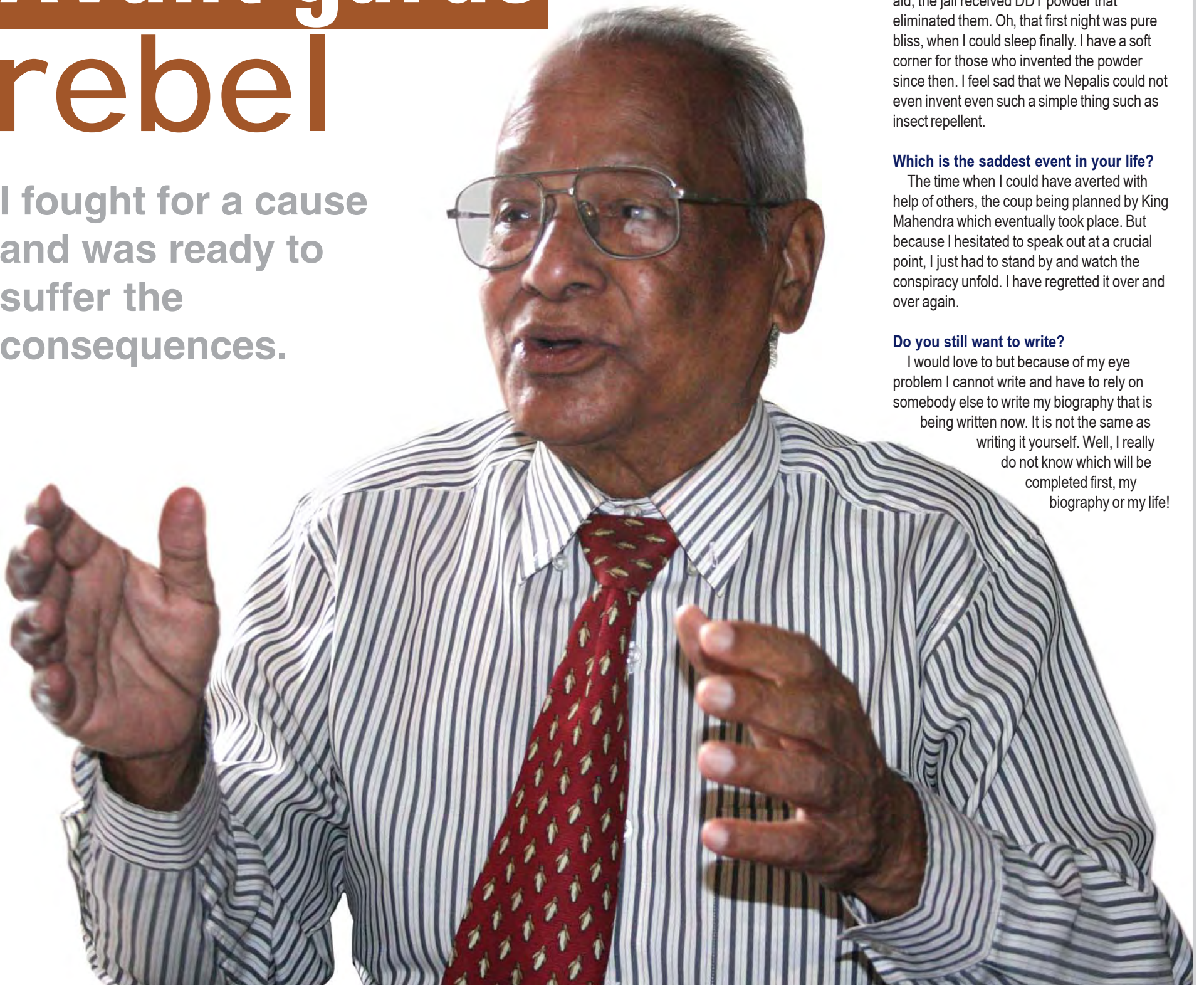
The time when I could have averted with help of others, the coup being planned by King Mahendra which eventually took place. But because I hesitated to speak out at a crucial point, I just had to stand by and watch the conspiracy unfold. I have regretted it over and over again.

**Do you still want to write?**

I would love to but because of my eye problem I cannot write and have to rely on somebody else to write my biography that is being written now. It is not the same as writing it yourself. Well, I really do not know which will be completed first, my biography or my life!

# Avant-garde rebel

I fought for a cause and was ready to suffer the consequences.





...Indicators show that it is difficult to realise the Millennium Development Goal.



# Difficult goals

■ Chhatra Karki

Nepal will not be able to meet the target of, 'education to all children by 2015' despite it being a part of the global commitment. By all estimates, the target is unlikely to be achieved before 2025, experts say. Nepal is a signatory to the Dakar Conference that took place seven years ago; which pledged education for all children by 2015.

The current annual growth rate in literacy is only 0.8 percent (NPC, 2005). If growth continues at that rate, it will take other 10 years to meet the target. Dr. Bishnu Karki, an education expert said, "although enrolment ratio in primary level is satisfactory, the dropout situation is still has not improved." He added these indicators show it is difficult to realise the Millennium Development Goal.

According to the ministry of education, current enrollment ratio of students in primary level is 87 percent of the total population of children aged above 5 years; out of which only 70 percent complete the primary level. In primary level, the number of boys' enrolment exceeds that of girls'. Girls' enrollment is 12 percent less than that that of boys'. The existing youth literacy, between 15 and 24, is also unsatisfactory which is only 75 percent. In order to fulfill the commitment made so far made by the government international forum, efforts are to be concentrated on marginalised, disadvantaged and backward communities. Karki advocates positive discrimination towards those communities focusing on children from the so called untouchable castes, indigenous communities and tribal groups.

A report by UNDP indicates two out of three Dalits are illiterate. Dalits in the national statistics constitute 13 percent. The most backward Dalit communities like the Mushahars and Doms from Terai communities account for 10 percent illiteracy in the country, according to the National Population Census 2058.

Unless literacy and poverty alleviation programmes are integrated, it is tough to meet the target of education for all, experts say. The government has also determined specific programmes, future strategies and economic plans. An investment of 800 million US dollar has been made on seminars, research and field studies.

Government and non-government organisations have conducted various programmes regarding formal and informal literacy classes, but the implementation aspect is very weak. The failure to meet the target is also due to economic underdevelopment of the country.

Another major problem is the high dropout rate in primary schools. Lack of education in native languages especially in the rural areas, is cited as the main reason for this. Indigenous children in remote areas do not understand Nepali language, as a result they lag behind those who speak and understand Nepali.

Government's endeavor to launch primary school education in native languages has been unsuccessful. In spite of the government's announcement to start primary education in 13 languages such as Limbu, Maitihili, Tharu, Rai, Sherpa, Rajbansi; non availability of teachers and text books has hindered the implementation.

The tenth plan (2002-2007) has ambitiously raised the slogan of 'education for all' but there is hardly any visible infrastructure that will ensure its realisation. The 10th plan document states that basic education is prioritised by imparting knowledge and skills to the citizens to attain their livelihood. Its

ambitious plans to raise student enrollment in primary level to 90 percent, literacy rate of age group above 5 years to 70 percent, and women literacy to 55 percent also appear unrealistic.

Government officials however claim that despite its efforts there is no guarantee that the target is within its

reach. Lav P. Tripathi, Joint Secretary for Ministry of Education says that the government is doing its best in this regard and has plans of extending primary education and starting literacy classes and child care centers, but according to experts that is just not enough.

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■ Binod P. Bista

# Benefits: real or hidden?

## Why is Nepal looking for free energy or other benefits at this stage?

With the issuance of an unusual directive by Nepal's natural resources and means committee (NRMC) meant to change the standard criteria for large scale project evaluation, current Nepali parliament seems to be creating its own standard. The standard that it seeks to establish would surely attract a horde of average to below average companies and drive away the best companies from competition.

Offer of free energy or other concrete benefits (in measurable terms) to Nepal will now secure a bid in hydropower project regardless of the company's background or current status. The policy of limiting one project per developer would certainly create a difficult condition for the development of a less attractive project unless the government provides additional exemption or compensation.

Prior to delving into the purpose of evaluation criteria, it might be necessary to enhance the understanding of 'benefits' in projects of a longer duration. Any benefit committed by a developer today can only be realised after a number of years in future if the project were to be completed in time and within agreed cost. When a bid is invited on the basis of detailed survey, unforeseen factors can lead to cost rise and thus reduce the expected benefits.

Why is Nepal looking for free energy or other benefits at this stage? It can be assumed that the parliament members, especially those looking after the NRMC, are over impressed by the lack of sufficient power in Nepal today. Owing to load shedding, the need for acquiring more and more electric power generation has never been greater. However, receiving a

portion of free electricity from large power projects (30 to 40 MW from 300 to 400 MW projects) alone cannot bridge the gap between the projected demand and supply in the next five to ten years. Furthermore, Nepal can obtain the power (benefits) only if the project/s is completed in time and within cost.

How will the government ensure that a company, any company for that matter, would successfully develop and complete the hydro-power project as per agreement if the developer were given the contract solely on the strength of its free offer to Nepal? If the project were to be abandoned, lacking financial resources during implementation, or delayed for lack of experience, then the benefit would be lost drastically.

Even when a project is completed in time but if the developer were to fail in securing the power marketing agreement with potential buyers, then the government may have to sustain the entire financial burden of the project. Instead of benefits, the government could be counting its losses and overwhelmed by it. Thus, it makes hardly any sense to change the standard evaluation criteria without giving due regard to all essential factors which together make up a project.

Unless the evaluation committee expresses its doubt on the strength and capability of a developer to launch two projects simultaneously successfully, there is no reason to limit a project per developer. If the developer lacks adequate experience for the project in question or on other critical criteria, then that developer should not be awarded any project.

To ensure timely execution of larger projects



which play critical roles in the development of a country through multiplier effects, all regional and international financial institutions have developed 'project evaluation criteria' that includes most basic elements in all projects. The only flexibility that is allowed is to add new necessary elements or delete certain elements not applicable to the project in question.

The question of free power can be taken as an additional element desired by a sovereign country which might be allowed by the lender. However, it cannot be the sole criteria at any cost. Similarly, adequate attention and ranking must be provided to other elements such as experience, financial soundness, power marketing arrangements and project completion date etc.

In fact, owing to several problems encountered in the implementation of large scale projects, lending institutions have encouraged

two-stage bidding whereby the technical merits alone are evaluated in the first stage. Financial bid is opened only after the bidders qualify technically.

Though it is helpful for poor countries like Nepal to receive grants and free services to the extent possible, the price to pay for delayed or failed projects would be too large for the country. Moreover, such a practice, if implemented, would automatically keep the institutional lenders away from future projects in Nepal. Similar to the need to develop public hearing committee for appointment of constitutional body members, the NRMC may need to equip itself first with requisite knowledge before taking any action on a technical matter. The new Nepal demands nothing less from its parliamentarians. ■

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



■ Garima Bastola

# Sexual exploitation of children

It is a crime when a fifty year old man gets involved in a sexual act with a school boy.

Women have become experimental guinea pigs who are expected to resolve everyone else's problem at their own cost. What happens to women who discover their spouse's sexual orientation? To many people in our society, women are medication pills, which can fix any problem.

There is another revolution in the Nepali society and that is sexual revolution. In our patriarchal society, where women are still struggling to shatter the glass ceiling imposed on their sexuality; we have another wave of marginalised group coming out of their closet with their sexual identities.

A homosexual man with a Masters degree said that he is proud to have discovered his identity but he feels that the society has been unable to understand people with different sexual orientation. He said, "When people say homosexual, they only equate it with sex. Like any other heterosexual males and females we are also looking for feelings, emotions, and relationships and not just sex." He questioned, "Are the heterosexual people only looking for sex?"

His family has accepted his status but however, they do pressurise him to get married to a heterosexual woman. They think that it is a disease or peer pressure that can be fixed through matrimony. He expressed his regret over how families waste their time cribbing over their sons 'being gay.' He added that gay men too have the right to parental property like any heterosexual man.

Another homosexual male, married for the last fifty years with two children, said, "I have not disclosed my sexual identity to my family. My wife does not suspect me but sometimes she tells me that I should have been born as a female rather than a male." He added, "I am living a dual life with dual personalities. At home, I act manly but with other homosexuals I can be myself. I have sexual partners, mostly school and college students who are as young as fifteen years. Sometimes these partners also get their friends. Our meeting points are usually the jungle near Pashupatinath, Ratnapark and the movie theaters."

Women have become experimental guinea pigs who are expected to resolve everyone else's problem at their own cost. What happens to women who discover their spouse's sexual orientation? To many people in our society, women are medication pills, which can fix any problem or any problem child and in this case, problem husbands.

That morality comes before desire is a pertinent issue here. It is a crime when a fifty year old man gets involved in a sexual act with a school boy. It is an issue of concern, when a large number of college and school students are regular clients of older bi-sexual males. It is a

societal problem that has remained hidden in this country.

The question arises, why are these children discovering their sexuality pre-maturely? If people with different sexual orientation are looking for relationships including emotions and feelings, why are they physically involved with children? What about serious issues like sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS? Why are the parents of such young boys still in the dark?

Parents need to know that their children be it boys or girls could be ensnared into the vicious world of sex through various means by anybody; resulting in teen pregnancy, internet sex crimes, drug abuse, prostitution, sexual exploitation, rape and sexual assault outside and inside one's own homes. One's own trusted relatives can be as bad a predator as a stranger outside.

Talking about these issues may not sound good but it is high time parents as well as teachers kept their eyes open regarding this matter. Children need guidance and attention especially in their adolescent years. If parents discover that their child is being abused sexually, it would be foolish to keep quiet about it fearing societal repercussions. Wise parents would stand up and fight for their child's rights.



# Building team spirit

...Given a sense of belonging, a team becomes more independent to provide its own direction and support.



■ Pasang Dolma Sherpa

A healthy organisation requires leaders and managers, who make genuine efforts to preserve the physical and psychological health of its human resources, keep them motivated, constantly increase their skills and knowledge, provide incentives when they deserve. This creates a conducive atmosphere for growth as well.

To maintain such environment, it is very essential that the leaders and managers are constantly aware of their pivotal roles of motivating and encouraging their employees. Their success lies in turning blunders and errors of their employees into a learning experience and opportunity to learn and fare better. Inaccuracies and weaker side get a chance to transform into strength under effective leadership. This, of course, is not an approach to encourage impunity but injects a sense of seriousness and accountability into the employees. And it helps in building an overall positive working environment where employees trust each other, and a team spirit is built.

In fact, stories that at times look like myths get woven around these positive behaviour and resultant success of the leaders. They not only create followers and supporters, but teammates dedicated to the growth of the organisation. They apply corrective and constructive measures where they devote less time and energy in digging out their employee's weak parts. Through intensive evaluation process, they examine their colleagues' behavior in organisation and appreciate the good parts in order to assist them to improve their performance.

Professor Dr. David Cooperrider, the original founder of theory on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) shares the crucial role-played by AI approach to change the field of organisational development in the recent history. AI focuses on the identification of positive parts and connects to it in

ways that heighten energy and vision for bringing about positive change of the organisation.

Based on the 4-D cycle that involves Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery, people can transform the present existing state of their organisation into a future state by building on a "positive core" of strengths to create its destiny. This helps to build high-performance teams to facilitate change, demonstrate positive intent and trust with stakeholders, improve communications, and create a common-ground vision and strategy for the future.

Many of us in Nepal, through application of AI approach; have seen remarkable changes in both personal



and professional life. It has inspired people to be more positive in individual perspective and attitude. Criticism of individual employees is not taken in negative spirit.

During the initial phase of the organisation, it invites challenges to pass different stages of development-forming, storming, norming and performing. The smooth evolution of these steps would obviously help to create a healthy organisation envisaged. Normally, positive feeling among the team members in the formation stage of the organisation seems to suffer some erosion in the storming stage when team members experience some discrepancy between initial hope and expectation and the actual delivery. In such a situation, it is very essential for

the leaders to take initiative to balance between directing and supporting the employees.

It naturally encourages a participatory approach. More participatory decision and discussion would help the team members to move past the storming stage. Norming stage draws leaders and employees together to a phase of understanding and clarity. Both sides develop much deeper understanding about the goals, and set a collective approach to realise it. Leaders get to focus more on ways to solicit support from the groups.

Its momentum and spirit with a sense of collectivism that becomes the asset in the fourth stage that is phase of performance. At this stage, both

sides gang up to increase the working level. Naturally, given the sense of belonging, the team becomes more independent to provide its own direction and support. Throughout the different stages of the organisational development, the motivation, encouragement with appreciative and participatory approach would certainly help to build up the healthy organisation, where each member of the team is proud of it.

Despite this theory being applied in Nepal successfully in some pioneer development organisations, prevailing level of gender and regional bias still come as an impediment to the desired level of success. This definitely calls for major attitudinal changes backed positive laws in our context. ■

# Marshland Flowers



■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

...Many methods could be used to see the arising and ceasing of Vedana..

Most Nepalese who have heard of the word Vipassana and perhaps have attended the Vipassana Shibir (retreats) of the venerable Sri Goenkaji in Budhanilkantha are of the impression that that is the one and only way that the Buddha taught (Ekayano Maggo). This notion is completely baseless.

First of all there are many lineages of Vipassana existing even today in Burma itself whose methods are very different from the style of Vipassana taught by Sri Goenkaji. It is certainly not the one and only true method that the Buddha taught. Two other methods of Vipassana taught in Burma are the lineage of Mahashi Sayadaw which is being taught in Sankhamula even today; and the lineage of Sun Lun Sayadaw.

There are many other lineages existing in Burma which are all different from each other; but are all pure Vipassana methods. Then there are many other different lineages still existing, still going strong and still producing enlightened Masters in the Laos Mountains, Thailand and Sri Lanka. They are all true teachings of the Buddha. Perhaps we need to explain a few points here. All these methods are based on the teachings of the Buddha like the Smrityupasthan Sutra (Pali: Satipathan Sutta).

Let us take the Satipathan Sutta. In it the Buddha simply says look at the body (Kaya), look at the feeling sensations (Vedana), look at the mind (Chitta) and look at the mental - factors (Chaitta / Chaitasik or Dharma) with Smriti - Samprajanya (Sati - Sampajana) which means with mindfulness or mindful comprehension. Now let us look at one of them.

The Buddha says look at the Vedana, when it arises and when it ceases and know that it has arisen (Udaya) and it has ceased (Vyaya). Now if you understand this, we can easily see that many methods could be used to see the arising and ceasing of Vedana and not just one way. For example, you could scan the body from top of the head to the tip of the toes and back again to the head to observe the Vedanas there and that is a correct way but definitely not the one and only way.

In the Therigatha, a Theravadin text and part of the Theravada Tripitaka, an old woman attained Arhathood by simply going around and around the wall of the nunnery feeling the sensations on the hands as she used her hands to support herself on the wall. She did not look at her Vedanas from the top of the head to the toes etc. The method of Mahashi Sayadaw is to look at the sensations in the stomach region as one breathes. It is looking at Vedana that arises and ceases in the stomach / belly area as one breathes; and the Shasta (Master) taught to look at the Vedana.

So it is equally a valid method of Vipassana. The method of Sun Lun Sayadaw is to breathe heavily until strong sensations are produced all around the body and to look at it just as the Shasta (Master) prescribed. It is an equally valid method of Vipassana. But those are just two from Burma itself which have not yet made an impact in Nepalese circle.

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

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# Pakistani Chief Justice reinstated

## Landmark Supreme Court verdict a bow to Musharraf

The Supreme Court of Pakistan made history on Friday by reversing the decision of a military ruler for the first time in 60 years when it threw out President Pervez Musharraf's reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary and reinstated the apex judge. The legal community hailed it as a "landmark verdict" that heralded the "birth of a new Pakistan".

A presidential spokesman said that the "President respects the decision of the Supreme Court". Major General Rashid Qureshi said President Musharraf "had stated earlier that any judgement the Supreme Court arrives at will be honoured respected and adhered to".

In a majority verdict of 10 to 3, the full court of 13 judges set aside the March 9 presidential reference against Mr. Chaudhary, and unanimously ruled that presidential order of the same day making him non-functional was "illegal".

"As a further consequence thereof, the petitioner Chief Justice of Pakistan shall be deemed to be holding the said office and shall



always be deemed to have been so holding the same," the order stated. The court also unanimously set aside as illegal another restraint order of March 9, by the Supreme Judicial Council, the oversight panel to which the president forwarded the reference.

Unanimously again, it ruled that a March 15 presidential order sending the judge on compulsory leave was *ultra vires*.

Also set aside by the court was the appointment of the acting chief justice on March 9, as made "without lawful authority". However, the court ruled that this would not invalidate the working of the Supreme Court or the discharge of legal and constitutional obligations by the acting chief justice during the period in question.

The full court also ruled that the petition by the Chief Justice was maintainable.

Justice Khalil ur Rehman Ramday, who presided over the full court, read out the short order a few minutes after 4 p.m. to a courtroom packed to capacity with lawyers, journalists and

members of the public.

The judges took more than five hours to reassemble after they adjourned for deliberations following closing arguments in the morning by Aitzaz Ahsan, lead counsel for Mr. Chaudhary.

### Pin-drop silence

Following a few seconds of pin-drop silence as the verdict sank in and the judges departed, Court Room 1 broke out in thunderous applause and slogans of "Go Musharraf, Go."

Making a brief comment, Mr. Ahsan said the judgement was "big blow to the Musharraf regime", and a "good omen" that would have "a positive impact" for strengthening of the judiciary and other institutions in the country.

"We have seen the birth of a new Supreme Court today, the birth of a new Pakistan," said Munir A Malik, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association who led a full-throated agitation of the legal community against the reference.

(The Hindu)

# Burj Dubai world's tallest building

Burj Dubai, the centrepiece of a Dh73.44 billion (\$20 billion) project being developed by Emaar Properties, the largest publicly listed real estate developer in the Arab world, is now the world's tallest building and global landmark.

Towering 512.1 metres, or 1,680 feet, at the centre of the 500-acre real estate development called Downtown Burj Dubai, billed as the most prestigious square-kilometre on earth, Burj Dubai is now taller than Taiwan's 508-metre Taipei 101, which became the world's tallest building in 2004.

In a statement, Emaar yesterday said that Burj Dubai has also dwarfed other skyscrapers that used to define tall tower architecture worldwide, such as Malaysia's Petronas Towers, standing (452m, or 1,483 feet) in Kuala Lumpur; the Sears Tower in Chicago (442m, or 1,451 feet); Jin Mao Building in Shanghai (421m, or 1,381 feet); and New York's Empire State Building (381m, 1,250 feet).

It also stressed that Burj Dubai has put the regional business hub of Dubai in the international spotlight and underlined the success of Emaar, an FT Global 500 (Financial Times Global 500) company, as a global developer.

"Burj Dubai has now reached 141 storeys — more storeys than any other building in the world," the statement said, stressing that

the design has not compromised safety measures against the effect of strong winds and seismic movements.

It said that high-strength concrete makes up the tower's super-structure, which is supported by large reinforced concrete mats and piles. It added that Burj Dubai's 80,000-square-foot foundation slab and 50-m deep piling are waterproof and have cathodic protection.



"Burj Dubai is not just an architectural and engineering masterpiece in concrete, steel and glass," said Mohamed Ali Alabbar, chairman of Emaar Properties.

"It is a human achievement without equal. Burj Dubai will inspire future generations to think beyond the ordinary and to challenge their mind and spirit."

The tower will be the world's tallest structure by 2008, its scheduled completion, in all four criteria listed by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH).

"The council measures height to the structural top, the highest occupied floor, to the top of the roof, and to the tip of the spire, pinnacle, antenna, mast or flag pole," the statement explained.

It said Burj Dubai will feature

residential, commercial and retail components including the world's first Armani Hotel and Residences, exclusive corporate suites, a business centre, four luxurious pools and spas, an observation platform on Level 124 and 150,000 square feet of fitness facilities.

Burj Dubai's final height and number of storeys have not yet been revealed by Emaar, which described the building's story as "only beginning" and a subject of discussion in the media and among construction experts. "But from now on, the tower will set new records for its technical and architectural ingenuity," the statement said.

It said that when completed, Burj Dubai will have consumed 330,000 cubic metre of concrete, 39,000 metric tonnes of steel rebar (reinforced bar) and 142,000 square metres of glass. A total of 22 million man hours will be spent until the completion of the tower, which will have 56 elevators travelling at 1.76 to 10 metres per second and double-decker observatory elevators that can accommodate 42 people in a given time.

With excavation work done in January 2004, Burj Dubai became the tallest building in the world in just 1,276 days. The project has more than 5,000 consultants and skilled construction workers onsite, and the world's fastest high-capacity construction hoists, with a speed of up to two m/sec.

(Khaleej Times)

# First woman president in India



The most bitterly contested Presidential poll in India's history ended on Saturday with Pratibha Patil winning by a margin bigger than expected to become the country's 12th President and the first woman to occupy the post. She will be sworn in on July 25, succeeding A P J Abdul Kalam.

Describing her win as "a victory of principles", the Congress candidate said she was grateful to "the voters... the people of India, the men and women of India".

The counting of the 3,789 ballots cast concluded around 4.30 pm, and seconds later, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi rushed out to inform the waiting media. The margin of 3,06,810 votes was "more than expected", gushed Dasmunsi, who managed the Congress campaign. Patil, he added, scored more than her projected strength in all parts of the country.

Patil got 65.82 per cent of the polled votes against rival Bhairon Singh Shekhawat's 34.18 per cent.

Minutes later, Shekhawat announced his resignation as the Vice-President. It was also the first time that an incumbent Vice-President had lost in a contest for the top post.

"I congratulate Smt Pratibha Devi Singh Patil on being elected the country's President and accept my defeat in the presidential election with all humility," Shekhawat, who contested as an Independent candidate, said in a statement.

Returning officer P D T Achary formally announced the results — the

total value of polled votes: 9,69,422; Patil: 6,38,116; Shekhawat: 3,31,306.

Achary then drove to Patil's South Avenue residence, just outside the President's Estate, and handed over the certificate of her election. That moment onwards, she became the "President elect", and protocol officials



from the Home Ministry took charge.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi were the first visitors for the President elect. "The victory of Pratibha Patil is the victory of those forces which seek to unite our people," Singh said. "It is a vote against the politics of divisiveness" and it would "strengthen the foundation of our secular republic."

Sonia said she was elated at the country getting its first woman President after 60 years of Independence. "I thank everyone, all UPA leaders, voters, (BSP chief) Mayawati and the other leaders who supported Pratibha Patil," she said. "It is a special moment for women and men too." ■

(The Indian Express)



# Nepal or Kathmandu?

"They chop big buffaloes in the temples of Kathmandu," I overheard someone in one of the sweetshops in New Delhi's Bengali Market. Incidentally, I am discussing the issue of image of Nepal abroad with Jaya Rai, a Nepali poet/diplomat currently stationed at the Nepali Embassy, New Delhi.

Jaya is reciting his poems on New Delhi, his visit to Shankar Market, his travels in the DTC buses where they try to sell you all that could be made and manufactured in India - pens and knives, soaps and saris and tears and wounds that those theatrical beggars display so poignantly. He loves the travels in the newly built metro and scribbles poems on the people in India's new tube.

Jaya seems in awe of India's overwhelming vitality and talks of his series of poems that he is working at the moment. Most of the poems are very touristy and capricious, mere humid notes of an isolated traveler. Only a few touch the inner courtyard of Indian life and polity. I remind him of the legacy he has joined, the shoes of poet/diplomats that he has stepped in. The great poets like Pablo Neruda and Octavia Paz have been to India as diplomats, I remind him. I want him to read Paz's poetry on the Hamayu's tomb and other places of New Delhi. I take him to the streets of Ghalib and sing poems of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor.



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

...Very little is known about Nepal to the outside world.

But what bothers me most is how very little is known about Nepal to the outside world. Nepal is projected in clichés, even in neighboring India. Earlier image of Nepal as the land of fierce Gurkhas has been reinforced with the recent events in the Nepali history, including Royal massacre and Maoist insurgency. People know very little about Nepal and what they know is so far fetched and remote that it tears Nepal's true picture into terrible shreds.

Why can't your office open a Nepal centre and let people know about its true picture? Can't you open a room for Nepal, if not a huge cultural centre? Isn't Nepal a major tourist destination for millions of Indians? Can't your office seek the help of offices like Tourism Board and Nepal Academy to introduce nation's unique cultural

heritage? But Jaya seems quite detached and finds the idea preposterous. It would involve lots of bureaucratic networking.

For the last two decades people keep asking me strange questions about Nepal. Is it snowing there these days, asked one of my friends from Daryaganj the other day? Who killed the royal family is another question that keeps cropping up. Most of Indians seem to know an answer to the question more clearly than I do. Do you have brick houses in Kathmandu? Why doesn't your wife have Mongolian features? And then the mega question that only yesterday my grocer asked —Do you live in Nepal or Kathmandu? ■



## Drugs create a false sense of power

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

**My classmate says using marijuana helps him concentrate on his studies. Is he right?**

■ Manisha Panday, Hattiban

Drugs numb the nervous system and affect the mind directly in many harmful ways. Drugs essentially are poisons. The amount they are taken in determines the effect. A small amount acts as a stimulant and increases activity. A greater amount acts as a sedative and decreases activity. A larger amount can kill.

Any drug affects the mind. The mind is not the brain. It is an accumulated record of thoughts, conclusions, decisions, observations and perceptions of our entire existence. The mind is a communication and control system between us and our environment. When we think of something we get a picture of it in our mind.

These 'mental' pictures are very easy to see. If you close your eyes for a few seconds and think of an object you will get a picture of that object. The mind records these pictures and uses them to solve problems in life. Normally when we remember something the mind is very fast and information comes to us very quickly from the pictures in our mind. But drugs actually inhibits our ability to create mental image pictures and also stops electrical impulses of nerve channel stopping the pain signal reaching the mind.

As a result, those who take drugs can become stupid, blank, forgetful and irresponsible. They get into a 'wooden,' unfeeling, insensitive state and ends up being untrustworthy and a problem to people around them. When drugs start to wear off, natural body sensations return and the drug users find it difficult to bear the pain or discomfort; and they go back to using drugs. The compulsion stems from a desire to get rid of the pain and unwanted sensations and results in such people using drugs more frequently and in larger quantities.

When a person smokes pot or marijuana, firstly, there is an immediate burning of vitamins and minerals in the body and secondly, the nervous system changes and nerves in the body go numb. In the beginning he/she may feel that the drug is helping but this is not true. It has only created in them, a false sense of ability and power.

Marijuana contains many harmful chemicals which adversely affect the nervous system and makes the users slow, dull and less aware of things around them. Your friend needs to know this and stop using it. If he does not, he will be unable to study; will end up giving up his studies, harming his health and spoiling his life.

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

## Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



Mro women beating rice. The Mro tribe lives in secluded villages that lie at the border area between Bangladesh and Burma.



# Beckham Pleased With Debut



David Beckham must play another waiting game on his injured ankle after making his Los Angeles Galaxy debut against Chelsea.

Beckham came off the bench for the final 12 minutes at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California, and touched the ball 10 times to the delight of a sell-out crowd of 27,000.

The debut was a losing one as John Terry, his successor as England captain, scored the only goal of the game in the 49th minute, the Chelsea defender firing home from the edge of the area.

And there was an anxious moment in stoppage time when Blues midfielder Steve Sidwell brought Beckham down with a challenge that left the England star grimacing on the floor and clutching his ankles.

Beckham's left ankle, sprained on June 6 while playing for England against Estonia and aggravated with ligament damage in his final games for Real Madrid the following week, had prevented him from playing a full part in training with his new team since arriving in Los Angeles nine days ago.

Beckham revealed his participation had finally been sanctioned just hours before kick-off but he now faces another anxious wait to see if he will pass fit to face Mexican side Pachuca on Tuesday night in the new SuperLiga tournament.

"The decision was made this morning," Beckham said. "I came in and we decided that there was no way I would be able to start the game, I would play some part of the

game but with me not training all week and not even kicking a football and not even really running, to be honest, all I had done was some deep massage.

"But I'm really pleased because I wanted to be out there and I put a lot emphasis on the game tonight. My ankle has swollen up slightly but that was going to happen anyway, so we'll see how it is tomorrow.

"It's just one of those injuries that footballers get. Everybody knows I sprained it in the England game and I played four days after and pulled the ligaments. Then I had the last game of the season a week after and I had three injections to numb it and I played in that game without any feeling in my foot.

"So there were always going to be problems after that but that's what I wanted to do to play in that game.

"You're always going to have a reaction to that and that's what I'm getting. It's been five weeks since that last game and this sort of injury usually takes six or seven weeks. It's getting a lot better, the swelling has gone down from two or three days ago, gone down a lot and it's making progress. "It's not a serious injury."

His appearance brought to an end a week of speculation surrounding his fitness.

"It was nice to get out there and kick a soccer ball again," Beckham said. "I hadn't trained all week and the first time I kicked a ball was today.

"It was nice to be out there with the



lads and to get this game over and done with. I've enjoyed it."

Beckham also praised his Galaxy team-mates for their effort against Jose Mourinho's side.

"It was a good performance, because when you play against a team the quality of Chelsea where every player is comfortable on the ball, every player wants the ball and is capable of doing something in the game. "We kept them to 1-0 and we had chances as well."

Mourinho said he was pleased to have notched a third win in three games at the start of Chelsea's pre-season campaign and also for the

Galaxy's star debutant.

The Chelsea boss said: "It was a good game for Beckham because people in the US saw that he could pass two, three, 40 metres, that his right foot has highs and it was also very good because they gave a difficult match to a team like Chelsea.

"So it was a nice day for him and for us too. I'm happy. We came here and won three matches, against a Mexican team, a Korean team and an American team, so different cultures of football. Now we go to Europe and will play Rangers, Feyenoord, Brondby, so I think we've prepared our pre-season well."

(Yahoo Sports)

## Final Potter Finally

You're safe now, Potter people. Open your eyes, unplug your ears. The spoilers can't hurt you. You have the book. The answers are in your hands. And if you can't bear to finish, to say farewell to Harry, you can always read him again.

The world welcomed one last visit from Planet Potter as "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the seventh and last of J.K. Rowling's supernatural series, touched down at midnight Friday and wrapped up the most extraordinary literary story of modern times, some 4,000 pages about a wizard and his friends that broke the rules and started new ones.

Bookstores across the United States and Britain, as far away as Singapore and Sydney, welcomed eager readers, young and old, in glasses and capes, some shivering, some sweaty, all joined by the thick hardback book with the opening words: "The two men appeared out of nowhere, a few yards apart in the narrow, moonlit lane."

In Hudson, Ohio, 17-year-old Kelly Kubik was on Chapter 2 just half an hour after getting the book. But other fans, warned by Rowling that two major characters would die, one of them maybe Harry, couldn't bear to start at the beginning. After receiving her copy at a Singapore bookstore, Adela Lim, 16, flipped right to the end of the book,

scanned the text furiously and exclaimed to her friends, "Oh my god! Oh my god!"

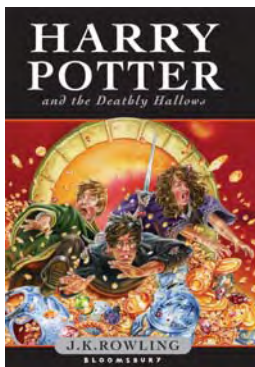
"I am aghast at the ending," she said. "I've waited since the first book all the way until now, so I can't wait anymore, I just want to find out the ending."

Rowling, an unknown a decade ago when she introduced her magical character in "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," gave a midnight reading to 500 competition-

winning children in the grand Victorian surroundings of London's Natural History Museum. Now richer than the queen, she sat in a large wing-backed chair and read the opening pages - description of a mysterious assignation, a clandestine meeting and important news for Voldemort.

For many of the hardcore Potter-maniacs, the place to be was Waterstone's bookstore on Piccadilly in central London. More than 5,000 people lined up for hours before the midnight opening, in a festive, colorful line stretching around the block. Among the fans from as far away as Finland and Mexico were dozens of witches and wizards, a couple of house elves, a pair of owls and a woman dressed as Hogwarts castle.

About 100 devoted readers donned witches' hats, wizards' robes and other costumes at a party early Saturday in the courtyard of Berlin's oldest castle, the Zitadelle. (The Forbes)



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