



Courage & Conviction

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Brewing revolt

Cong senior leaders ask PM to discard 'coterie'

■ **nf special correspondent**

Prime Minister GP Koirala faces a palpable current of revolt in the party with his long time associates warning that he has reduced himself to the status of a 'captive' with a coterie ruling the roost.

These leaders, most of them senior members of the working committee, have also told Koirala on his face that it is time he discarded the coterie or face a revolt, an option they would like to avoid. "Koirala is no more a free man. He is a prisoner in the hands of

the hands of conspirators." They claim that more than 75 per cent of the working committee with 34 members is against the coterie. "Definitely, Congress party and its leadership is not behaving like a democratic party," KC told newsfront, but refused to go into the activities of the coterie.

There are fears that the 'coterie' is quietly working to stall elections to the constituent assembly and instead covert the existing parliament into the CA. "We are aware of this and we will oppose any move to deny people their right to vote," K C added.

"Koirala is under total surveillance and control of this group and every meeting of the Prime Minister is dictated and decided by them," a prominent working committee member of the party said. "Al-

"Koirala is under total surveillance and control of this group and every meeting of the Prime Minister is dictated and decided by them."

though he has tremendous weakness for his daughter Sujata, it is the coterie that decides what the PM is to do," he said. "It was this group that sabotaged the talks with the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum recently at the last minute," he added.

Insiders claim that Koirala at times concedes that he is being misled by the group. He has been looking for a replacement for Sitaula, the Home Minister but he somehow has retreated at the last moment. Koirala has now promised to drop Sitaula very soon and get either Amod Updhyaya, Chakra Bastola or Poudel as the Home Minister provided they can carry along the peace process. ■

the coterie," a senior member of the Congress working committee said. Senior members like KB Gurung, Binay Dhoj Chand, Lakshman Ghimire, Ram Baran Yadav, Arjun Narsingh KC and few others have been repeatedly warning Koirala separately and in groups that, "he has played with the fate of the nation," a PMO insider told newsfront. They also told him that he was acting purely under the dictates of the coterie that consists of Shekhar Koirala, KP Sitaula, Amaresh Singh and of late, Ram Chandra Poudel.

They have given him enough notice that it would not be possible for them to support him if he is simply a "pawn at



Maoist Chief Prachanda with former Minister Matrika Yadav at a press conference in the capital on Sunday.

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Congress unity

Slips between cup and lips

■ nf correspondent

A major hitch still persists over the Congress unity despite the top level hierarchical issues having been overcome with GP Koirala endorsing the seniority of Sher Bahadur Deuba, placing him immediately next to him and above Sushil Koirala.

But there are many other issues that still need to be sorted out and as a result, formalisation of the unity is nowhere near in sight. Both GP Koirala and Deuba had agreed that while Sushil Koirala will continue as the working president of the united party, Deuba will figure immediately after GP Koirala in the party hierarchy.

However, the animosity between certain leaders on both sides is so sharp that they are not at all keen to work together. In addition, there are still hitches over the names of party chiefs in the district as Sushil Koirala has reservations over many strong contenders for the post.

As per the understanding reached between Koirala and Deuba, elected



GP Koirala

members of the central working committee of both parties will find place in the united working committee, apparently with an enlarged number and a smaller apex body will be formed to oversee policy formulation and their implementation. "G P and Deuba may be deciding who all should be there in such a body," a source close



Sher Bahadur Deuba

to G P Koirala said.

On the question of choosing presidents in 75 districts, task force on both sides have recommended that seniority, active participation in the movement for democracy and leadership ability would be given higher points.

Targeting media

The communist party of Nepal - Maoists (CPN-M), the second largest party in parliament and the government with ministry of communication and information under it, has adopted a policy to let its cadre attack and muzzle the press that does not blindly support it.

This has been evident from the stepped up campaign of the Maoists to obstruct publications and disrupt circulation of two prominent media houses, Kantipur publication and Himalayan Times. They demanded beginning second week of August; all outsourced casual workers should be treated as full fledged employees.

The Maoist affiliated workers also have forced the indefinite shut down of the HBC 94, a popular radio network, with its management threatening to sit for an indefinite Dharna (sit down) in front of the Prime Minister's official residence.

In Kantipur, pro-Maoist union has submitted a 26-point charter of demands beginning with regular job and all the benefits accrued to its 400 cycle boys, all outsourced, for distribution of the newspapers.

The CPN-M which now controls the government media has however, maintained silence over 49 journalists from the Gorkhapatra Sansthan not getting their contracts extended. There are fears that while Maoists are gradually controlling the official media through Minister K B Mahara, they plan to shut-down any media which may not cooperate with the Maoists or those which criticise their wrong-doings.

Concealed confusion

Maoists fail to project a united face.

■ nf correspondent

If sorting out the growing rift between Prachanda and Mohan Vaidya and projecting a united face was their plan, the Maoists failed badly. The outcome of the extended meeting of the communist party of Nepal-Maoists with more than two thousand top, mid and lower level leaders participants only indicated that the hiatus between the factions is growing and that the grip of the leadership over the cadres and senior leaders is clearly on the decline. "We really do not know what the message of the meeting was for us," a mid-level leader told newsfront.

Matrika Yadav turning down Prachanda's request to withdraw the resignation he tendered from the

council of ministers, and the mounting disagreement on formation of the top secretariat at the party headquarters indicate the growing rift. Party cadres are also confused about their role in the possible 'people's rebellion' (Jana Vidroha) as advocated by the party leadership.

"My own understanding is we are not going to participate in the election to the constituent assembly, and perhaps we are going to be engaged in armed fight with the Madheshi groups soon," a participant from the central region of the party said.

Apart from the confusion about the role of the party cadres and party's future politics, the rift at the leadership level came to the fore with their failure to decide who all will be in the party's headquarters high command, which



Top three: Show of solidarity has only Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai as members at present. Those who are likely to be included in it are Vaidya, Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal' and CP Gajurel, and all three are part of the emerging group against the Prachanda-Bhattarai combination.

"Maybe they will agree to raise the strength of this committee beyond five so that Prachanda-Baburam axis continues to hold its majority," a prominent participant told newsfront, adding "people like us and not only the lower cadres are also equally

confused."

The attack on Fikure police post in Nuwakot by a dissatisfied group, open rifts at the top level, Matrika's defiance and coming together of ex-deserters against the Maoists - all seem to indicate all is not well within the party.

Migrating age

Security and protection of migrant labourers remains a major issue of concern everywhere.

■ Roshan Pokharel

The 21st century has been termed as the 'Age of Migration.' Migrants securing jobs and going for better livelihood is fast getting recognition. The migrants are also agents of change in societies. Countries play different roles as sender, receivers or as transit points in the migration phenomenon. Migration not only raises standard of life at personal level, it also

helps in development of the society through poverty reduction, transfer of skills, knowledge, ideas and construction of social networking.

That the experience from the neighbourhood could be a good learning exercise for Nepal was probably the reason that South Asia Centre for Police Studies (SACEPS) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) jointly organised a regional seminar on 'Labour Migration, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in South Asia' with experts drawn in from

India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Security and protection of the migrant labourers remains a major issue of concern everywhere. India is contemplating introducing a system of public hearings to redress their grievances besides setting up a National Manpower Export Promotional Council. Nepal has set its priority to protect women migrant workers.

The regional seminar expressed general concern that SAARC countries' general track

record on the issue was not all that inspiring. Setting up of a labour cell in SAARC secretariat also found an endorsement of the experts.

As the migration in search of better opportunities or because of domestic conflict as in Sri Lanka and Nepal continue to rise in size and scale, ratification of national and international instruments pertaining to the rights of migrants and their families will be the first step to guarantee their rights and protection.

Newsbrief

Maoists to hand-over arms

Maoist leadership has promised to hand over to the government, the arms which some party 'renegades' snatched from Nuwakot's Fikure police post last week.



According to informed sources, soon after the Fikure incident took place, Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai assured Home Minister K P Sitaula that the Young Communist League (YCL) cadres were after the 'renegades' and that all those arms would be handed over to the government. "Now that the leader of the renegades group, Ram Kumar Regmi Sandesh has been arrested, we hope we will get the arms and ammunitions they had taken away," a police official said.

Despite Maoists stalling the verification process in cantonments due to some excuse or the other, they are increasingly under pressure to release their child soldiers. The latest move to convince the Maoist leadership has come from no other than Kulchandra Gautam, Executive Director of UNICEF, who is here currently.

Gautam made his plea, both publicly and privately during his conversation with the Maoist leadership that the release of child soldiers should be the priority so that their assimilation in the family, their education and health needs could be addressed.

Maoists have often taken conflicting stance on the child soldiers' issue. Sometimes they have categorically denied having conscripted anyone below 18 years as a soldier, but on other occasions they have claimed that everyone joined their army voluntarily. Estimates regarding number of child soldiers vary from around 1500 to one third of the total strength of the 'People's Liberation Army.'

Indian embankments flooding Nepal

It was after a long gap that Nepal sort of made its concern regarding 'floods' in the Terai area, known to India officially. On Friday, Foreign Affairs Minister, Sahana Pradhan told Indian Ambassador, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee that unilateral construction of embankments on Indian side of the border was flooding more and more areas in Nepal, and that Delhi should be guided more by international norms and humanitarian approach.



Although India has taken the stand that the embankments

were constructed after clearing the issue with Nepal, it has nevertheless assured that it will do its best to minimise the damage in Nepal. Besides thousands of people being displaced, standing crops in vast areas in western Nepal have been damaged following submergence of the Nepali territory as a result of the construction by India.

Competition in air

Home Minister K P Sitaula and Health Minister Giriraj Mani Pokharel are good friends, but somehow avoid using the same official aircraft even though they go to the same place and for the same purpose.



Both went to the flood ravaged western Nepal ostensibly to supervise relief works in the first week of August in separate government helicopters, although there were enough seats for both ministerial groups to fit in one aircraft.

The lack of coordination on the part of the government or the ministers' ego cost the national exchequer an avoidable three lacks rupees which could have gone into the relief fund.

Minister to quit

Education Minister, Pradeep Nepal who has made a distinct mark as a 'doer' in the cabinet is not all that happy with the Prime Minister and is contemplating to quit. According to the Nepal Samachar Patra daily, Minister Nepal has sought the permission of the UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal to quit as he is increasingly finding PM Koirala's 'authoritarian style' difficult to tolerate.



Pradeep Nepal forced Koirala to appoint vice chancellors in all the universities after he served an ultimatum to quit. Nepal is still miffed with Koirala as he has been stalling appointment of other key functionaries like registrars and rectors in those universities as a result of which academic and examination calendars have gone unfulfilled.

Dabur plant to move

The Dabur plant in Bara district is contemplating to move to India's Himachal Pradesh citing absence of proper industrial climate in Nepal. The move to shift the industry, a significant contributor to the revenue, comes in the week of Maoist led trade union shutting it down for the past one week, to press various demands urgently. The union has refused to give some time to the management to consider some of the demands.

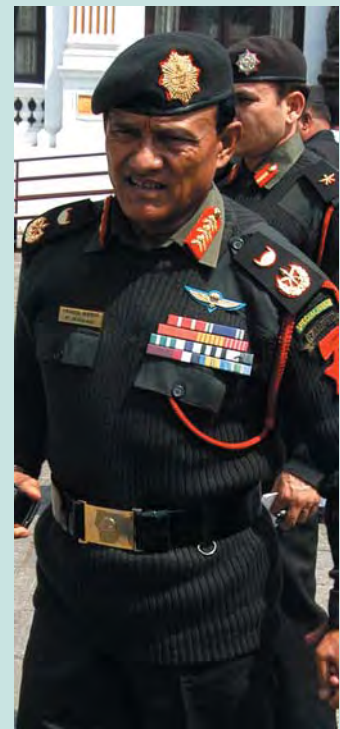
Dabur will be the second major Indian investment to move to India. Biratnagar based Arati Steel Industries has already announced its closure and is believed to be shifting to India.

Army for democracy

Asia Pacific army chiefs worried about terrorism

■ nf correspondent

Politics of violence and bullets will not be acceptable at least for the army in Asia and Pacific region. This was the unanimous stand of the assembly of the chief of Army of Asia and Pacific region held in Sydney recently.



The jamboree, which had Nepal Army Chief Rukmangad Katawal among others participating, was clear that terrorism and politics of violence posed a threat to democracy and that should be fought and defeated effectively. Nepal's line was that commitment to democracy and the way it is practiced may have variations, but there must be a minimum standard acceptable to the international community.

Commitment to free market economy, free and fair elections in which people choose their leaders and the government periodically, no space for violence in politics and supremacy of the rule of law are the non-negotiable features of democracy, the meeting of the chiefs decided. They added that the institution of army would be abiding by these basic principles. There was also a general consensus that liberty, freedom and democracy cannot be appropriated by any section with bullets in the name of politics anywhere.

Gen Katawal is believed to have briefed the meeting about Nepal's situation stating clearly that Nepal army was clearly on the side of democracy, but international community should be careful that, "Polpots, Stalins and Bin Ladens did not impose their ideology." He also had a meeting with Chief of the Indian Army, J J Singh, alongside the event. Katawal returned home on August 11 from Sydney.

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Point to Ponder

If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.

- Aristotle

Playing with fire

A true democracy is that in which people feel as insiders; where they are partners and participants in the process of decision making; and those who are left out have every right to make themselves heard and be included.

The ongoing movement in Madhesh and the one being launched by Janajatis under the banner of National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities or the undercurrent of such movements in the Chure Bhavar area, hills and mountains; the demands that Tharus, Dalits and the Muslims are raising; all indicate they want to be an equal part of this nation, and that their status as that of a 'subject' is no longer acceptable to them. They want to be proud citizens of the country with clear understanding and awareness that it is their prerogative to choose the ruler. They also know that rulers will continue to rule or quit at the pleasure of the citizens.

But the new power set-up in Kathmandu led by G P Koirala and backed by Prachanda and the rest have refused to acknowledge this simple aspiration of the people. They are trying to divide these aspirations which have already taken the form of powerful movements. This government needs to understand that there is no piecemeal solution to these demands and aspirations.

Different movements may have their bases in different territories and regions of the country, with different groups and nationalities leading or dominating them. But the Nepali identity is the sum total of all these nationalities. Nepal's emotional and territorial integrity lies in their interests and their identities protected and integrated. This is a simple, yet a vital mantra which the government seems not to have taken into account. There are serious flaws in the government's approach towards these movements.

It is trying to play Janajatis against the Madheshis. While the government committee headed by Ram Chandra Poudel has reached an understanding with the Janajatis, it has deliberately refused to take the Madheshi forum and other Terai groups seriously. All these movements would see through the conspiratorial divide and rule game of the government sooner or later. All that the centre can do at the moment is to encourage these movements to stand united and defeat the elements that might exploit the current situation to divide and disintegrate the nation in the name of caste, religion, communities and regions.

The Poudel committee is incapable of handling these issues given the fact that it is Koirala coterie which remote-controls it. It is time that the government formed a high-powered and special commission to recommend the modality of decentralisation of powers as well as inclusion of various groups; agitating or silent at the moment, instead of going ahead with the current approach of divide and rule. Koirala should understand that he and his coalition partners are too weak to stall the tide of aspirations of the people who are more concerned about protecting the interests and integrity of the country.



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Letters

Koirala disappointing

It is such a shame that the government which came to power by the strength of the people's movement appears so reluctant to face the people now. Newsfront deserves all praise and congratulations for exposing conspiracy that G P Koirala has hatched. It is a great disappointment that the grand old man of Nepali politics is engaged in such a grand design against democracy.

Koirala, in less than 15 months in power, has proved that, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." No government or leader will ever get legitimacy if they have no strength and courage to face the people. But what is the Nepali Congress doing? Has it surrendered the legacy of its history and its responsibility to just one person? That will almost ensure that NC will remain consigned to the dustbin of history.

Naresh Gurung
Baneshwar, Kathmandu.

Business of human rights

As a student, I participated in the movement for democracy last year. I faced the police baton like many others, all for democracy. We waved placards for attractive slogans in favour of human rights and denounced King Gyanendra. We did not ask where those placards came from. We did not ask the local HR organisations if they made money in the business of promoting human rights?

We hoped sincerely that once our government comes to power, human rights will be something that will be honoured by the state, that the perpetrators and violators of human rights will be punished. But what is this government up to? It wants to appropriate power to grant general amnesty to all those who violated human rights in all manner.

This will be an outright deceit on the part of the government. Failure to take action against human right violators will only prove that for those in power, human right is just a tool to acquire power.

Samir Bogati
Kirtipur.



Salute to ornithologist Kazi

I got to know about Nepal's great ornithologist Kazi Shrestha and his life after reading his interview in newsfront. I was happy to read that he also accompanied the former US president, Jimmy Carter to Shivapuri national park.

Nepal offers a great opportunity for nature conservation and studies. Like the extinct species of birds and animals, committed conservationists like Kazi are rare species in this country. Their knowledge and expertise should be used in conservation campaigns which Nepal so badly needs to promote.

Shristhi Shrestha
Baluwatar, Kathmandu

Government conspiracy

The government does not seem at all keen to solve the Terai problem. Minister Ramchandra Poudel's attitude towards Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) only proved that his mind-set was no different from that of the earlier rulers of Kathmandu.

What was the need for the minister to call the MJF delegates to the venue of the meeting only to inform that the government needs to expand its negotiation team? The same committee reached an understanding with the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN) three days later, but deliberately ignored the demands of MJF.

This is a clear conspiracy against MJF in particular and Madhesh in general by the government.

C K Gupta
Birgunj

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual

Like salt in water

Lalla Ded was a great saint and mystic from the Kashmir province of India. She was married at an early age but was badly treated by her mother in law; but she bore with it with patience and equanimity. However this cruel upbringing encouraged her to enter the life of a renunciate and she found a guru called Sidh Srikanth.

Lalla excelled in spiritual practices and is said to have reached a lofty height of self realisation. Wishing to manifest and reveal the spiritual truths she had received, she took to the life of a wandering pilgrim, travelling around the county teaching those who were receptive.

During her life Lalla composed hundreds of songs. Primarily these spoke of her great longing and love for her beloved Shiva. Her poems or Vakyas formed an important part of Kashmiri language and culture and are still very much revered today.

Lalla's poems:

God does not want meditations and austerities
 Through love alone can one reach the abode of bliss.
 Thou may be lost like salt in water



Corner

Still it is difficult for thee to know God.

Let them jeer or cheer me;
 Let anybody say what he likes;
 Let good persons worship me with flowers;
 What can any one of them gain, I being pure?

If the world talks ill of me
 My heart shall harbour no ill-will

if I am a true worshipper of God.
 Can ashes leave a stain on a mirror?

When my mind was cleansed of impurities,
 like a mirror of its dust and dirt,
 I recognized the self in me:
 When I saw him dwelling in me,
 I realised that he was everything
 and I was nothing.

I saw and found I am in everything
 I saw God effulgent in everything.
 After hearing and pausing see Siva
 The house is his alone.



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

There are far more serious issues that the international community has yet to respond to.

Defining Nepali standards?

Nepal's current peace process, governance and the proposed election have attracted an unprecedented scale of international concern. United Nations' involvement has legitimised this concern to a larger degree. But this is also a test case for the UN and other international bodies to prove their credentials. After all, this is a dangerous place with political players increasingly getting into innovative and crude conspiracies to thwart the peace process, and make compromises on human rights issues and the rule of law just to continue in power.

Ian Martin led UNMIN has already been preparing to get more observers for the election. But his primary challenge lies in how successfully the UNMIN is able to complete the process of verifying arms and armies of both sides so that an atmosphere for fair, free and fearless election can be established. After all there is no separate Nepal standard of election. It has to be an election that matches the acceptable norms in any democratic country.

Likewise, we cannot have Nepal standard of democracy and human rights. A properly conducted election will mean a level playing field for all political parties. That is the minimum that Nepal's interim parliament and the international communities have to guarantee. Similarly, international community's high pitched demand that culture of impunity should end and should not merely mean persecution of political rivals and emergence of new groups above and beyond the reach of law.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights -Nepal (UNOHCHR), joined by European Union have rightly warned about the obligation that the government should be fulfilling while bringing human rights violators during the years of conflict, to justice. They are opposed to blanket amnesty to the guilty in the name of reconciliation. The government-Maoists, as evident from the draft of Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) bill, makes it clear that present rulers and Maoists would enjoy total amnesty.

Many Nepal based human rights groups and civil societies are known to take stands based on their political equations with the present government on the proposed TRC bill as they exhibited double standards on issues in the past. But there is much at stake for them now as the country moves towards democracy and transition. They have to prove amply whether their 'commitment to human rights, end of impunity and principle of

democracy' is simply because these slogans get money from the 'donors' or whether they really have an unequivocal commitment to the causes. The challenge is no less to the donors and international bodies as they should not be seen as promoting such organisations locally.

The report of the much talked about Krishna Jung Rayamajhi commission has now been tabled in the parliament. The report comes out with the name of 201 people, out of the 296 it interrogated, recommending that actions be initiated against them for use of excess force or use of government coffer to suppress the 2006 April movement.

The government had rigidly refused to give a copy of the

commission's report to UNOHCHR as a cursory look into it would expose its bias in composition and conduct. The commission chief went to the extent of stating that people will act against those the commission has found guilty - a clear indication for the mob to take law into their hands. Luckily, the commission stands exposed before that happened. There are far more serious issues that the international community has yet to respond to.

Apart from the politically partisan composition of the commission, its conduct was biased and not transparent. The way it implicated most of people it interrogated, as well as the way it gave clean chit to others is mysterious enough to suspect that there was no honest and transparent investigation system

involved. There are clear evidence which establish that Home Minister and the commission had clear nexus on deciding who should be declared 'guilty' and who should be absolved. Evidence abounds, and some are listed below:

1. Home Minister suspends nine senior civil police and armed police officials including their chiefs to ensure that evidence should not be destroyed. But he promotes the chief of operation of the armed police force during the movement (Basudev Oli) as its chief who, apart from guiding other operational activities, had ordered hand-cuffing of the American Doctor, Bryan Cobb as he committed the crime of providing medical assistance to those injured during the movement.

The reason for this reward is simple: the current APF chief happens to be the cousin of the Home Minister. In order to facilitate Oli's promotion, the Home Minister suspends Rabiraj Thapa, a highly respected officer in the APF. In order to give legitimacy to the Home Minister's action, Rayamajhi commission recommends action against Thapa ignoring the fact that he was in no way involved in the suppression of the movement.

2. At least three Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dy. SP) rank officials of the civil police in Kathmandu are entrusted with the job to quell protests in main city areas as well as on the ring road. They demonstrate their brutality at best. They all are summoned and interrogated by the commission. They are given out of turn promotions by the current Home Minister when the interrogation is on. And surprisingly, the commission absolves them. Justice is sold and bought.

3. A Police Superintendent who was fired at by the Army for opposing the use of force on the pro-democracy mob in eastern Nepal, figures on the list of 201. The officer is not even called for interrogation.

The list of such motivated violations is longer and it gives enough credence to suspicion about the commission's motives and conduct. More than that, the government simply uses the commission as a tool to target some people. Where on earth does a government bring out legislation to ban some people from contesting elections on the basis of a commission's report without the court of law declaring anyone guilty?

4. The chairman summons Speaker Taranath Ranabhat and former Chief Justice Hari Prasad Sharma for interrogation purely on personal reasons. Ranabhat had opposed Rayamajhi's appointment as Supreme Court judge as law minister some 15 years ago while Sharma had threatened to quit as member of the constitutional council after it was pressurised to elevate Rayamajhi as court judge two years ago superseding Kedarnath Upadhyay. And worse, a commission member, Ram Kumar Shrestha even suspects that the final report may have been written somewhere else clandestinely.

All these deliberate aberrations stand as a poser to the international community, mainly the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), UNMIN and OHCHR - do you all endorse this Nepali standard of political accountability, morality and impunity? ■



Nepali standard of investigation !

Rawi Manandhar

People-centered development

It is millions of hardworking Nepali tax-payers who have kept the state functioning till this moment.

The last six decades have witnessed the complete failure of Nepali ruling elites in delivering both democracy and development – undoubtedly, it was not suited to their intent and purpose. Feudal power-mongers, royal or whichever brand, did not bother about democracy, nor did they ever feel accountable to facilitate a just development process. All the state-sponsored development projects so far, which were elites-designed and controlled; benefited a small section of the population, while leaving the majority either untouched or further marginalising them.

An internationally respected scholar-activist Rajni Kothari's carefully scrutinised observation, "the state in the third world has degenerated into a technocratic machine serving a narrower power group that is held afloat by a widely entrenched bureaucracy and a hand-picked security apparatus, assisting in a regime of order and repression" (Kothari, 2005) has fully applied in Nepali context. The state is seen to have betrayed the masses – as it has become available only to the dominant classes and their transnational patrons in pursuit of their interests, and has turned anti-people, as Kothari described.

None can ignore that, it is millions of hardworking Nepali tax-payers who have kept the state functioning till this moment. If these development victims stop producing goods and services for the system, if they stop sending remittances from afar, the state will collapse in no time. Sadly, however, the 'guardian' state's



■ Bimal Kumar Phnyual

'development strategy' always neglected them. Therefore, the development paradigm adopted so far has got fundamental flaw in it. As we have begun to talk of inclusive democracy, instead of 'formal democracy'; it is also high time to envision 'people-centred development' in the place of 'elitist version of development.'

Back in 1991, a pioneer Nepali anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista identified 'fatalism', ema-

Human needs are 'fundamental' to human survival. In ordinary circumstances, people always seek to meet their needs peacefully.

nated from the feudal and imported Indian Brahmanic values and institutions, as the stumbling block to people-centred development (Fatalism and Development, 1991). It was argued that any strategy for genuine development must oppose fatalism and a hierarchic social order, because the two were irreconcilable. The form of fatalism associated with the caste hierarchy is not Nepali, Bista adds. He

points out the hope in 'the value systems of the traditional ethnic groups of the country who are not divided into a vertical hierarchic order.' This perspective has been more pertinent than ever before, as the discourse on inclusive democracy and devolution of state power into regional federations is mounting high.

The notions of 'participatory democracy' and 'people-centred development' can be taken as the two sides of the same coin. Citizens must feel free and empowered, if they have to wholeheartedly engage in any developmental activities. Amartya Sen has theorised 'development as freedom', (Sen, 2001). Proponents of participatory democracy must make it clear that the overall purpose is to widen and deepen democracy. Repressive states cannot respond

to popular aspirations, nor can any intolerant politics contribute to democratisation process. New Nepal must allow a radical devolution of state power, a key factor to promoting people-centred development initiatives.

Recent experiences of Jana Andolan (people's movement) I and II reveal the fact that it is ordinary masses of people who need democracy; and, they are the ones who come to streets in millions, whenever needed, to protect and promote democracy. In a similar way, it is the poor and marginalised people who need a socially just

and environmentally sound development. A people-centred development strategy, thus, must create political spaces for the unrestricted participation of deprived groups and communities in all stages of development programming. The whole programming cycle must be critically owned by the concerned people, or their democratically elected representatives.

A people-centred development must be indigenously driven. Politicians and policy makers must be enlightened with this perspective. Although international cooperation is crucial, we should educate our global partners about our genuine needs and the preferred strategy, too. We must grow courage to say 'no' if any undesirable 'agenda' is imposed on us.

Human needs are 'fundamental' to human survival. In ordinary circumstances, people always seek to meet their needs peacefully. Maoist insurgency and the ongoing violent politics in Terai have already taught us that the disgruntled groups might divert to violent paths, if they are not listened to in time. If we are not to witness further violent civil conflicts, we must start envisioning and putting into practices the 'people-centred development initiatives', which respond to human needs, as well as contribute to deepen Nepali democracy.

(Bimal is a Kathmandu-based development analyst and non-formal educator; and a visiting research fellow at School of Politics and International Affairs, University of Leeds, UK. For contact: friendbimal@gmail.com)

People POWER

Majority of the key players, both in politics and the civil societies are the same.

Nepal has witnessed dramatic upheavals leading to the emergence of a new country with a new system. However the question arises, what is the 'new Nepal' we are talking about? Is it a system that is in the process of being changed, reformulated and hopefully stabilised? Who actually changes this system and reformulates it? In the midst of all these confusions, one thing that is clear is that the citizens and politicians who they elect and the rebel forces are the change agents.

The people have indeed shown that they are capable of constructing a mass movement at crucial times to restore democracy and bring peace to the country. A closer scrutiny of events, following the historic people's movement of 1990 leading to restoration of democracy, shows Nepalis have indeed played a very proactive role. They put the largest democratic party – the Nepali



■ Namrata Sharma

Congress in power during the first election after 1990; but dumped it democratically when it failed to work up to the people's expectation and forced expensive mid-term polls in the country.

They brought the biggest left party UML to power, but it simply recommended dissolution of parliament when the government felt shaky. What we got in return was politics and government sans stability. Still worse, the era of nomination began. Then the country was 'governed' for a long period by governments who were not really elected by the people but simply 'happened' to be there as an 'appointee' of the king. But the people of Nepal once more demonstrated their strength by staging a



movement which overthrew the whole system dominated by aberrations in the name of democracy.

Other two change agents, political parties and the rebel forces were as crucial in bringing the political change. It was a sign of hope that they would be different from their past; and their poor governance and ineffective strategies that led to the civil unrest and upheaval would not be repeated.

But now a cliché keeps coming to my mind – old wine in a new bottle. Majority of the key players, both in politics and the civil societies are the same. But there is one noticeable change as well. Maoists have slowly and steadily reached the spot they have been targeting for more than a

decade. Although their activities were brewing underground, finally they have emerged as a key political force. At a time when a "war on terrorism" is being staged all over the world, the underground revolutionary force has surfaced as a major power in Nepal.

They cannot be ignored any more. Some do not want to take them seriously while others are weary of their activities. It is also a fact that many are supporting them. They are still adopting populist approach in politics. Nominating 40% women in the parliament and creating an image of being the champions of the underprivileged are just a few examples.

There is enough basis for hope

that the Nepalis will take the right decision collectively for their country. But are we confident that the political parties and leaders including the Maoist will live up to it? Will they lead their forces to work towards a sustainable development of the country? We need to wait and watch! But they can forget something only at their peril, that the citizens of this country cannot be taken for granted any more. The people have the power to enact for the sovereignty of the country and will not hesitate to demonstrate their power as and when needed.

(Namrata is a micro-credit entrepreneur.)

I bought this old dilapidated house that was rumoured to be haunted ...and decided to restore it.



Sushma Anaya

Old is Gold

Rabindra Puri, 37, sculptor, painter, teacher, restorer and a self-taught architect is a man with a mission. The driven artist is committed to reviving traditional arts and architecture and he dreams of bringing native beauty back to his country. Sitting in the quaint traditional house, Namuna Ghar in Bhaktapur, he talked about his experiences with newsfront recently.

To what would you attribute your passion for traditional Newari architecture?

I was born and grew up in this ancient city. My family going back to eight generations has lived here in Bhaktapur for the past 225 years, in the very house where we still live today. We were a family of priests. I grew up breathing, feeling the environment here and I've been interested in arts right from my childhood.

What inspired you to take up arts as your career?

My father wanted me to study law but deep down inside I knew that my interest lay in arts. I somehow juggled my time and resources and ended up earning Bachelors degree in arts, law and fine arts almost simultaneously. I have been blessed by this strong will to learn and excel in everything I do. Soon after, I started my career as a sculptor.

How did the shift from sculpting to architecture take place?

My first love was painting which later changed to sculpting which had one more dimension to it. Then came architecture which is multi-faceted and it is something that you can actually live in. It is art that you can use and experience in so many different ways. I simply love it.

I worked in the Patan museum where my job was to identify statues. My boss then was an Austrian architect, Goetz Hagtmmuller who began delegating tasks of sketching and making models which I took up eagerly. I was a fast learner and later he started entrusting me with architectural designing. After three years

in the museum, I spent two years in Germany where I studied third world oriented development policy and came back to work in GTZ as a programme officer. After four years, I began getting restless and began to wonder about the purpose of my life.

I finally realised that architecture was what I really wanted to be involved with and that my purpose in life was to preserve the ancient architecture that I grew up with.

How was the transition period like?

Changing the track of my life was not easy from that of a well paid job to the unknown. The first two years were very difficult. Everybody who knew me thought I was crazy and some seriously thought I had lost it. I bought this old dilapidated house that was rumoured to be haunted and was being used to raise chicken; and decided to restore it. I was a subject of ridicule then. Although I was convinced that I had made the right decision and would finally prove myself, there was a point in that time when I faced an all time low.

Without any funds or support, the obstacles loomed so large that I found myself thinking if the others were right and I was wrong. I was so confused and disheartened. Finally, once I completed this house which is a sample of how old architecture can be modified to fit in the modern life without losing any of its essence, I was glad that I did not give up.

What reactions did you meet with when you opened this house to the public?

They just could not believe their eyes, especially those who had seen it before it was restored. My work then started getting rave reviews, thanks to the media and there has been a steady stream of visitors mostly comprising of architecture students, intellectuals and those who love art. There has been no looking back since then. When earlier I had to take up any project that came my way, now I can pick and choose.

Did you anticipate such results?

No. It has had a much larger impact than I ever imagined. One thing led to the other and now I have around 20 private projects ongoing. And thanks to the steady inflow of funds from sponsors, I have been able to realise several of my dreams such as making one government school every year in remote areas. One school already stands in Kavre and another is in the process of being built. I believe that development and art have to go side by side. We are also running a homeopathy clinic.

You also find time to teach?

I have been teaching history of Nepali arts in Kathmandu University for the past four years. I have more than 50 students who also help me in my work. I work around 15 to 16 hours a day.

What are the things you consider as challenges to your work now?

Something or the other always come up whether you take them as challenges or otherwise. I would say that my expectations of cooperation from the government and the local bodies have not been met. But I hope that they will.

What keeps you motivated?

My strong wish not to see the beautiful architecture of this valley destroyed keeps me going. It is still not too late to start preserving our heritage and to restore what is dying. My dream is to see traditional architecture flourish and become a part of modern day life.

Any exclusive project you have in mind?

I have bought the 'first cemented house', that Tony Hagen mentioned in his book on Nepal, as a sign of ugliness entering the historic Bhaktapur city. The house will be brought down and will be rebuilt in a traditional style. I feel that it will be my tribute to Tony Hagen who was a sincere lover of Nepal and contributed so much to its people. I believe that his spirit will be happy to see it. ■

Changing the track of my life was not easy from that of a well paid job to the unknown.

The land of martyrs



■ Binod P. Bista

Current political leaders seem to be bent on raising the list of martyrs of Nepal.

During a current stay at his hometown in Biratnagar (eastern Nepal), the Nepali PM seems to have assured the family of a fallen VDC secretary in the hands of a violent faction of JTMM (calling for Terai independence) that the person would be declared a martyr and adequate compensation would be provided to the family of the dead person. He also assured the widow of the murdered person that she would be given employment. For the surviving family, it would be quite an honor that the deceased would be listed as a martyr. In fact, the status of a martyr can easily overwhelm that of a saint in these modern times. Martyr is revered by the entire society whereas a saint may have some enemies from opposing groups.

resolution is reached between the government and the conflicting parties both within and outside of the government. It is ironical to watch that an ineffective government, in terms of public security and safety, resorts to pacify its citizens with martyrdom. What is martyrdom?

Borrowing from the common definition, "a martyr is a person who is put to death or endures suffering because of a belief, principle or cause." Further, outside of an academic or religious context, "the word martyr is also used ironically in casual conversation to refer to someone who seeks attention or sympathy by exaggerating the impact upon themselves of some deprivation or work." In Nepal, we have been introduced to

because of his caste. The living martyr as well as other martyrs of Nepal are long dead and ignored, except by their close families and friends.

Then there are others who, despite their lifelong struggle for democracy and human rights, could never obtain the status of martyr although it is clear that for a person to be a martyr that person need not necessarily die during struggle. The late Ganesh Man Singh, known as the iron man, who struggled incessantly for over 50 years for democracy and human rights, and suffered equally in the process, was fighting on two fronts. Due to his steadfast principle that prevented any compromise with either the rulers or his own colleagues in trying to establish and promote "democracy with dignity" he holds a special place in Nepal. However, he never attained the status of a Nepali martyr.

'Democracy with dignity' can be defined as a state of functioning of democratic ideals and values without compromising on national interest but running state affairs on the generally accepted principles of transparency, accountability and good governance.

The ongoing violence and deaths, despite the peace accord and people's constitution, is bound to produce more deaths all around the country. The government has to take its inherent responsibility of maintenance of law and order seriously to prevent further deaths of committed civil servants and innocent civilians. It cannot simply turn a blind eye to illegal activities in the name of reconciliation and peace. At this rate the present government might be filling every canvas that is available in Nepal with new martyr everyday. Would the new Nepal be known to the outside world as the land of martyrs? ■

'Democracy with dignity' can be defined as a state of functioning of democratic ideals and values without compromising on national interest.

Ever since the success of Jana Andolan II in April of 2006, current political leaders seem to be bent on raising the list of martyrs of Nepal. Since there can be no discrimination among the martyrs, all present day martyrs will find space next to the martyrs still seen in the 'Sahid Gate' near the minaret, Dharahara. There are still scores of persons yet to be declared as martyrs, being one of the conditions held by one of the major conflicting parties today. These persons died in the hands of the state whereas the VDC secretary died at the hands of insurgents.

With the current state of law and order, it would not be surprising for Nepal to witness more and more deaths in the days to come either from the insurgents or the government security forces unless a timely

several martyrs whose accounts of bravery and endurance against suppression of human rights and freedom, recorded and narrated by others, have become a source of constant inspiration to us.

Four distinct names come to our mind whenever we have an occasion to remember the great martyrs of Nepal: Dasarath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Shukraraj Shastri and Ganga Lal who were declared martyrs in the first liberation movement of Nepal in 1950. Their struggle for freedom of their fellow country men could only be achieved at the cost of their own lives. There would not be a single citizen of Nepal who disputes their status. Tanka Prasad Acharya was named as a living martyr as his life was spared by the then Rana regime

Marshland Flowers



The Buddha certainly did not teach just one method or technique or style.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Various Theravadin meditation techniques continue to proliferate in the various Theravadin countries. They maintain strong Samatha – Vipassana lineages. These Masters are not only monks, but also are, as the Buddha himself would have it, householders, both female and male. The nun (Bhikchhuni) system has been broken in the Theravadin system but, the Mahasangika Bhikchhuni system still exists unbroken in the Chinese system.

As we said earlier the Theravada is only one of 18 – 24 Nikayas (lineages) of the Sravakayana system. However, today only the Theravada lives on; the others vanished along with the rest of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent. By the time of the Muslim invasion 11 – 12th century, Theravada had already left the Indian subcontinent and had been transplanted in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.

So, even if all other forms of Buddhism vanished from India, the Theravada Nikaya continued to flourish and proliferate in the South – East Asian countries. This was merely a historical fluke. Likewise, various forms of Mahayana and Vajrayana had entered China, Tibet, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Central Asia and the entire Cis – Himalayan belt from Kashmir to North Eastern Frontier of Arunachal before the Muslim invasion and continued to thrive strongly in those countries just as the Theravada Nikaya of the Sravakayana continued to thrive in the countries it had reached before the invasion.

It is important to understand that we cannot compare the Theravada with the Mahayana because the Theravada is a lineage within Sravakayana and thus only one of the 18 – 24 Nikayas or lineages of Sravakayana, whereas the Mahayana is not one particular lineage but rather a conglomeration of a vast array of lineages. That is why Theravada is a more uniform and homogenous system as it is one lineage amongst the many lineages of Sravakayana. The Sravakayana is not uniform as there were at least 18 – 24 different lineages.

But Mahayana is a counterpart of Sravakayana. Thus Mahayana like Sravakayana has many lineages within

it. Because of that it appears to be more heterogeneous and diversified. Thus we cannot compare Mahayana and Theravada. We can compare Zen or Tien Tai and Theravada because they are more homogenous lineages within the Mahayana and Sravakayana systems respectively. However, within the Theravada system there are many diverse lineages teaching different modes, styles and emphasis on the Samatha – Vipassana meditations of Buddhism. And this is rightly so, because in his forty or so years of dispensation, the Buddha certainly did not teach just one method or technique or style.

First of all the Buddha taught many types of people and naturally as a skillful doctor, he would dispense teachings according to the needs, temperaments and capacities of the person. Famous and learned Brahmin Pandits came to him and he taught them, simple village folks came to him and he taught them, people with sharp intellects, people with

It is important to understand that we cannot compare the Theravada with the Mahayana

great faith in him all came to him. Thus it is most natural that he taught many styles, modes, techniques. If he were to have taught just one straight forward method to all and sundry he would have been very unskillful to say the least.

Secondly in the Theravadin Suttas themselves, he has given many modes and styles of meditation: Samatha – Vipassana. In the Satipatthan Sutta he gave the methods of watching four different things to attain insight into the characteristics of all phenomena. In the Udayi Sutta, Anuttariya Vaggo of Anguttara Nikaya, he has given other methods of Vipassana like Pabbhassar Sangya, Ratri Sangya, Diwa Sangya etc. He has said that people can attain liberation through these methods also which means they are other forms of Vipassana different from Vedananussati and the others mentioned in the Satipatthan Sutta. *(To be continued.) (Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)*

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Taslima and the soft underbelly of liberalism



Where have all the liberals gone, now that Taslima Nasreen, the outspoken Bangladeshi novelist living in exile in India, has come under attack from Islamic fundamentalists?

The writer was physically attacked at a public function in Hyderabad (held, ironically enough, in the local Press club, stomping ground of supposedly liberal media representatives and opinion-makers) and has subsequently been threatened with beheading by an MLA from Andhra.

This paper carried a strong editorial denouncing the shameful episode. Barkha Dutt and a few other

media people have questioned the scant protest the incident has provoked among the country's liberalati who are, rightly, very vocal in condemning any flexing of Hindu fundamentalist muscle.

This is not an isolated case. Time and again, acts of violence and intimidation by Hindu zealots have been pilloried while similar instances of Islamic bigotry and intolerance have been received with an embarrassed silence and an averting of eyes on the part of self-professed champions of freedom of expression.

All this, of course, is gleeful grist to

Hindu fundamentalists who point to this blatant example of double-standards to show up the hypocrisy of what they call 'pseudo secularism'. And they're right. Bigotry is bigotry, whether it comes from the majority or a minority community. So what's the liberal justification of its selective righteousness in the face of religious fanaticism?

The answer seems to be based on a specious calculus of liberalism whereby weightage in terms of moral indignation is given in direct proportion to numeric strength. Since the majority community is per se larger

(and putatively stronger) than a minority community, any display of aggressive intolerance on its part must be inveighed against in measure proportionate to its size.

Conversely, similar transgressions by minorities should be underplayed, or even ignored, out of consideration of that community's smaller size and hence, supposedly greater vulnerability. This attitude is dangerously flawed. It is unconscionably patronising to minorities; a condescending paternalism which encourages infantile misbehaviour ('You're a naughty little boy, but I'll forgive you because you're little').

True liberalism is all about individuals, their rights as well as their responsibilities. Protection of individual rights becomes meaningless without recognition of individual responsibilities. A violent fanatic must be treated as the unruly lawbreaker that he is and cannot be condoned on the grounds of belonging to an abstraction called a 'minority community'.

In a truly liberal context, the only irreducible minority is the individual, not an aggregate formed by faith or other common denominator.

The men who attacked Nasreen, and the man who has called for her decapitation, ought to be charged and arrested not because they're Muslim, or Hindus, or Holy Rollers, but because they are individuals who have broken the law. Let's forget the M-word, and the H-word, and focus on the I-word — which can stand both for Indian and individual.

(The Times of India)

Two dead in ammo explosion in Kashmir

Abdul Rasheed, a 38-year-old shopkeeper of Khajawara, left his home as usual on Saturday morning for work. Thirty minutes after he opened his shop, there was a huge blast which he mistook for a militant attack.

Minutes later, a contingent of forces suddenly entered the market and asked the shopkeepers and locals to evacuate immediately because the nearby ammunition depot of the army had exploded.



Around 12,000 civilians living in nearby villages have been evacuated to safer places after a huge fire engulfed the 21-field ordinance depot (FOD). The FOD is one of the biggest ammunition depots of the army in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lieutenant Colonel AK Mathur, defence spokesman in Srinagar, however said two persons have died and around 15-20 are injured.

The fire started at 8.55 am on Saturday morning when there was a huge blast in the garrison, followed by two small explosions. Within seconds, the fire engulfed the whole area sending the troops guarding the garrison in a frenzy.

What has given a new twist to the episode is the claim made by the Jamait-ul-Mujahdeen and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen that they triggered the explosion in the garrison which led to massive fire in the depot.

However, Brigadier KS Rana, commander 2 sector Rashtriya Rifles rubbishes the claims saying the security of the area is so tight that outer layer of security is five kilometre from the camp site and there is no question of any rocket being fired.

Lt Colonel Mathur said information received so far reveal that the fire may have started in the highly combustible white phosphorous ammunition kept in one of the sheds.

Meanwhile, the state has set up temporary camps for the evacuated residents at Achabal, Dayalgam and Eidgah-Anantang. (Daily News and Analysis)

30 killed in northeast violence

Suspected rebels killed four Hindi-speaking migrant workers before dawn Sunday and three more bodies were found from an earlier killing in India's insurgency-wracked northeast, police said, bringing the death toll from a week of violence to 30.

Also, police carrying out searches near the site where gunmen fatally shot 11 migrant workers late Friday found three more bodies, bringing the toll to 14, Bishnoi said Sunday.

Late Friday, a group of gunmen armed with assault rifles entered a village inhabited by mostly Hindi-speaking migrants from other parts of India and opened fire, Bishnoi said.

Also Friday, militants threw a hand grenade from a moving car into a crowded market, killing a 2-year-old girl and wounding seven others, including the girl's mother, Bishnoi said. A bomb exploded in a market wounding 13 people, including two policemen, he said.

(www.localnewswatch.com)

All Korean hostages still in Taliban hands

Two seriously ill South Korean hostages are still in Taliban hands, a spokesman for the rebel group said on Sunday, but would be freed soon.

The same spokesman had said late on Saturday the two women had already been freed and would soon arrive in the city of Ghazni, close to where they and 21 other Korean church volunteers were abducted by the insurgents more than three weeks ago.

"The Taliban leadership council has decided to release the two female hostages within several hours," Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters by telephone from an unknown location on Sunday. "They are sick, and we are hopeful that releasing them will positively reflect on releasing our prisoners." The Taliban have already killed two male hostages and threatened to kill the remaining 21, 18 of them women, unless a similar number of Taliban prisoners are freed in exchange. The Afghan government has refused to give in to the demand, saying that would just encourage more kidnappings.

Yousuf has made conflicting



statements in the past, blaming problems communicating with fighters in the field. This time he blamed the media for the confusion. "It is confusing in the media reports. I said that our council decided to release them, I did not say they are released," he said. Local and national Afghan government officials say they do not know anything about any release and do not have the two Koreans in their custody. "I don't know anything about releasing the hostages. I cannot tell you a lie," said Shereen Mangal, a spokesman for the governor of Ghazni.

The South Korean government

declined to comment. "We have no comment on the reports. But we are maintaining a direct contact with (the) Taliban," a South Korean government official, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters. The government will confirm reports and make comments when it secures the hostages, he said.

South Korean diplomats began a third day of face-to-face talks with Taliban negotiators on Sunday to try to free the prisoners. But unlike in previous days, Afghan officials were not present during the meeting.

(The Malaysia Star)

I celebrate life in all its splendour and in its utter dreariness.

■ Sanchita Sinha Roy



Of colours & letters



Gulmohar

She flaunts and frolics shamelessly painting the town red,
Bursting into wild dances
Mindless of the heat and dust
Of the sweat on man's brow
Flamboyant hussy flames of the forest
The Gulmohur, She reigns the streets
Indiscreetly inviting weary souls
Flouting nature's rules
With her ravishing wanton beauty
Heedless of the stagnant euphoria
Of the fierce midday fervour
My Jezebel mistress of summer, The Gulmohur
('A tribute to the Gulmohur,' 2003)

While I have referred to the Gulmohur tree as a 'wanton woman', I have in all sincerity attempted to give her the dignity, power, respect and honour that she deserves. I have spent many many hours in the scorching Delhi summers looking at her and being inspired by her. There have been days when there was no electricity, no water, the spirits of men were squeezed out of their very existence, tempers flared, nobody had anything good to say to anyone, the heat... the heat did it. It quashed the souls of men and made them beasts. The Gulmohur... she did not bother. She stood there proud and welcoming, defying the vicious Loo winds and mocking the intense heat. The harder it blew the wilder she danced, the hotter it turned the more brilliant her colours turned. Yeah, the Gulmohur, my inspiration.

Death

Titled, 'Death' this painting took seven months of working continuously 14-16 hours a day to

complete. I have delighted in working with acrylics. Four to eight coats have been given for each colour. The emotions attached to this painting are very strong and valid.

There was a period in my life when death was a daily opponent I had to face, a period of grave physical illness and mental confusion. A period when realisation came to me that death was another living being.

My 'opponent' soon became my most trusted friend. Death was comforting without the forces of threat. It came to me in friendship, serenity, comfort, brightness and warmth. It was positive and in harmony with the rest of the universe. I have lived through many journeys with death. My travels have been illuminated with colours.



In this painting I have tried to express that beauty and positivity. The title met with much opposition and I have been asked to rename it rebirth or life. So far, I have been unable to do so. Every time I look at this painting it reminds me of my gentle companion and wise friend called death.... and no, I am not suicidal, I do not have a death wish. I celebrate life in all its splendour and in its utter dreariness. Death is about the beauty, glory and strength I have felt to continue my journey in life.

Broken egg shells

These experiments in line and colour using rapidograph and drawing ink on handmade

paper were my obsession for a while. The inspiration of this work comes from a dozen eggs that slipped from my hands and broke into a zillion pieces. I was fascinated with the shapes and forms of the broken pieces and so began this work. The more lines I created the more I was reminded of the significance of the egg in our lives.



We are born of the egg. Fascinating thought huh? The egg moments in my life have been interesting. Half boiled eggs the English style for breakfast. The Bengali craze for having 'macher dim' (fish eggs) in all forms possible. Lizard eggs among the clothes in the cupboard; boiled egg sandwich at picnics; painting and decorating Easter eggs on Good Friday for Easter Sunday; extra fried eggs for being in the school swimming and basketball teams. Duck egg pastries and bird egg soup; decorated eggs for prosperity to welcome guests at Malay weddings; carvings on Ostrich egg; attempting to make mayonnaise; 40 fresh eggs a day from Ma's Australian and local hens; mushroom omelet fuyong; the acrid unpleasant smell of HCL simply described by our chemistry teacher as the smell of rotten eggs. Bread omelet and sweet milk tea on winter evenings at Ganga Dhaba, JNU; scrambled eggs we all scrambled for at breakfast at Mount Hermon School, project on fertilisation from spawn to tadpoles to the frog and so it goes on....

(Sanchita, 43, painter and writer currently works from her studio at Gurgaon, Haryana, India. She can be reached at: sanchitasroy@gmail.com and sanchitasroy@yahoo.com)

Death was comforting without the forces of threat. It came to me in friendship, serenity, comfort, brightness and warmth. It was positive and in harmony with the rest of the universe.

Their voice

Gossip mongers rule the roost in the inner circles of Nepali writing, keeping any self-respecting woman away from major literary activities.



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

I lay the suitcase on father's bed and unzipped it slowly, gently. Inside, packed in cloth strait-jackets Lay forty live hummingbirds tied down in rows, each tiny head cushioned on a swaddled body
- Pascale Petit, 'The straight-jackets'

"One of the main developments in British poetry is that at least half of the published poets are now women... it is a true reflection of gender balance," says Pascale Petit, British poet and former poetry editor of Poetry London in an introduction to an anthology of contemporary poets that we are putting together.

Reading contemporary British poetry with her, I was constantly reminded of Nepali women poets' situation in Nepal which is very depressing. Forget about the writers, it is difficult to find an audience that reflects the gender balance that my friend Pascale talks about. We have a joke in our poetry circles that in most of the readings we are always lucky to have at least one woman present in our readings. This continues to hold true till the last reading that we had last month with the New Zealand ambassador. We had just one female presence, young poet Idra Rani Rai, in addition to some female journalists and foreigners.

Not that there is dearth of woman writers in

Nepal. We have some very lively women writers like Parijat, Sita Panday, Momila and Bhagirithi Shrestha. Scores of young writers appear on the scene with a vivacious book, a poetry collection or a novel. But soon they are shooed away by the male Mullahs of literary establishment. Or sadly enough they get married, only to disappear into oblivion for more than a decade. By the time they come back, they seem to have lost their vigor in writing. Their preoccupation with managing their domestic life appears to make them very detached and aloof. Scores of women writers beginning with Kundan Sharma, Baba Basnet, Sharada Sharma and others have disappeared from the scene due to marital reasons.

The fact that women's association with male writers are looked upon as dubious, shady or scandalous, keeps sensitive woman away from participating in literarily circles. Gossip mongers rule the roost in the inner circles of Nepali writing, keeping any self-respecting woman away from major literary activities. For the same reason one notices how women writers feel safe when they belong to groups, form kitty party circles or seek shelter in political forums. But most of the writing done in these circles is mere ceremonial. The real writing gets swept under the nuptial bed or disappears in the vortex of social or domestic demands.

The sun blinks and blinks with grit in its eye. As a child, I picked up my pen and marveled how the ink clung in the nib, the tiny miracle

- Moniza Alvi, 'Hanging'

(The writer can be reached at writer@yuyutsu.de)



Wise not to drink

Really good friends will not stop being your friend just because you refuse to drink.

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

I am 16 years old. I do not drink but everyday I am pressured by my friends to drink and they call me names and immature when I refuse. What do I do?

■ V. Katwal, Dhumbarahi

Drinking alcohol is dangerous for anybody, be it children, teenagers or adults. Most people who are addicted to drinking are not even aware that they are addicts because it is a socially accepted drug. Yes, alcohol is a drug and it is abused mostly by the teens.

Many kids have their first drink at an early age, when they are as young as 10 or 11 or even younger. They might have seen their parents drink or may have been impressed by attractive advertisements of beer, wine or other drinks. It is easy to get wrong messages about alcohol by watching TV commercials that show drinking to be fun. Adverts and movies where people are seen drinking and having a big party may seem entertaining but it is only good to sell the movie or the products that the adverts are endorsing.

Alcohol is actually a depressant. It may make people feel relaxed and happy in the beginning but it actually slows down the brain and creates depression with prolonged use. Like many drugs, alcohol changes a person's ability to think, speak, and see things as they really are. Besides losing balance while walking, drunk people usually start crying or get into arguments, fights, say things they really do not mean. They might hurt themselves or other people, especially if they drive.

Alcohol consumption burns up a lot of vitamins in the body and after every bout of drinking, one feels tired and suffers from a hangover. Drinking too much alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning, which can kill a

person. Over time, someone who abuses alcohol can do serious damage to his or her body. The liver, which removes poisons from the blood, is especially at risk.

It can be tempting to try alcohol. It is normal to be curious about new things, especially at your age. But it is wise to be aware of what it does to your health and your life. Although on the surface it may seem people are having a good time without any problems by drinking but the reality is, many lives of children and families are being destroyed because of addiction to alcohol. Indulging in drinking eventually leads to drugs and that is a very painful and destructive path.

Please do not believe it when friends or anybody else tells you that you are immature by refusing to drink. You are actually more mature because you are being strong and smart. It may seem that you are getting unpopular because of it but remember that really good friends will not stop being your friend just because you refuse to drink. Eventually, later in future, they will definitely respect you more for your decision.

If you feel it is getting difficult to handle this peer pressure, talk to someone you trust. If you are concerned about a friend who is drinking, you should tell one of your parents, a school teacher or another trusted adult. That way, someone can talk with your friend before alcohol causes a big problem in his/her life. Those who drink are also vulnerable to dropping out of school, meeting with accidents, getting into fights and committing crimes. However, with timely help, alcohol addiction can be cured. But it is best to help oneself by not starting to drink in the first place.

Send questions on drug/alcohol/smoking addiction to: newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



Men carrying a tin roof for a new home in Kurigram, Bangladesh.

Nepali cinema – yesterday and today

Chalachitraka Sarathi, that chronicles the life and works of the 320 people involved in the world of Nepali cinema, is a pioneering work of its kind by Yam Chaulagain. Yam has been working in the field of mass media for almost a decade. The book incorporates biographies of 19 late artists, 52 film directors, ten script writers, 22 producers, 14 lyricists, 10 music composers, 8 playback singers, 171 actors, four fight directors, eight choreographers, five visual editors and one graphic designer. The author has meticulously chronicled all personalities involved in the world of cinema till date.

The author relates a brief history of the world of Nepali cinema in the first chapter. The concise biographies and contributions of the people belonging to different genres have been presented in an alphabetical order in the main part of the book.

The first compilation of its kind in the history of Nepali cine journalism is a treasure trove for students and researchers in this field. It is also a reliable source of information for those who want authentic information about the film industry.

The book makes an interesting read since it chronicles personal trials and tribulations as well as stories of success and achievement of its actors in real life. Published by the author himself, the book has 416 pages and costs Rupees 1000 for an individual and 2000 for an institution. The book is worth its price.

■ Yadav P. Adhikari

SPACE VACATIONS By 2012

Start saving your pennies now, because in 2012, you can take a vacation to outer space. Galactic Suites, will give vacationers/thrill seekers spectacular views of Earth and the chance to see the sun rise 15 times a day.

When guests are not admiring the view, they will take part in scientific experiments, reported the New York Post.

Of course a chance to orbit the earth won't come cheap. The estimated cost for three day trip will be around \$4-million according to Reuters.

"Onboard the world's first space resort you will have the unique opportunity to explore a whole new world of sensations: weightlessness activities, space sports, surreal sleeping arrangements, star gazing, views of the earth and moon, take pictures of the auroras, and others to be discovered" reads the companies website.

But before anyone goes up, the company needs to work out a few design issues — one involving water.

"It's the bathrooms in zero gravity that are the biggest challenge," The hotel's director, aerospace engineer Xavier Claramunt told Reuters. "How to accommodate the more

intimate activities of the guests is not easy."

The company has already figured out a way to have their guests stay fresh in clean. Travelers will be able to use a spa room where they can float around in bubbles of water.

Initially, 22 rooms will be made available. The rooms will be positioned and installed in orbit by a space shuttle three at a time.

Xavier Claramunt, said each room is attached to a central nucleus. Each suite will measure seven meters wide and four meters high and will have a large window and a bathroom.

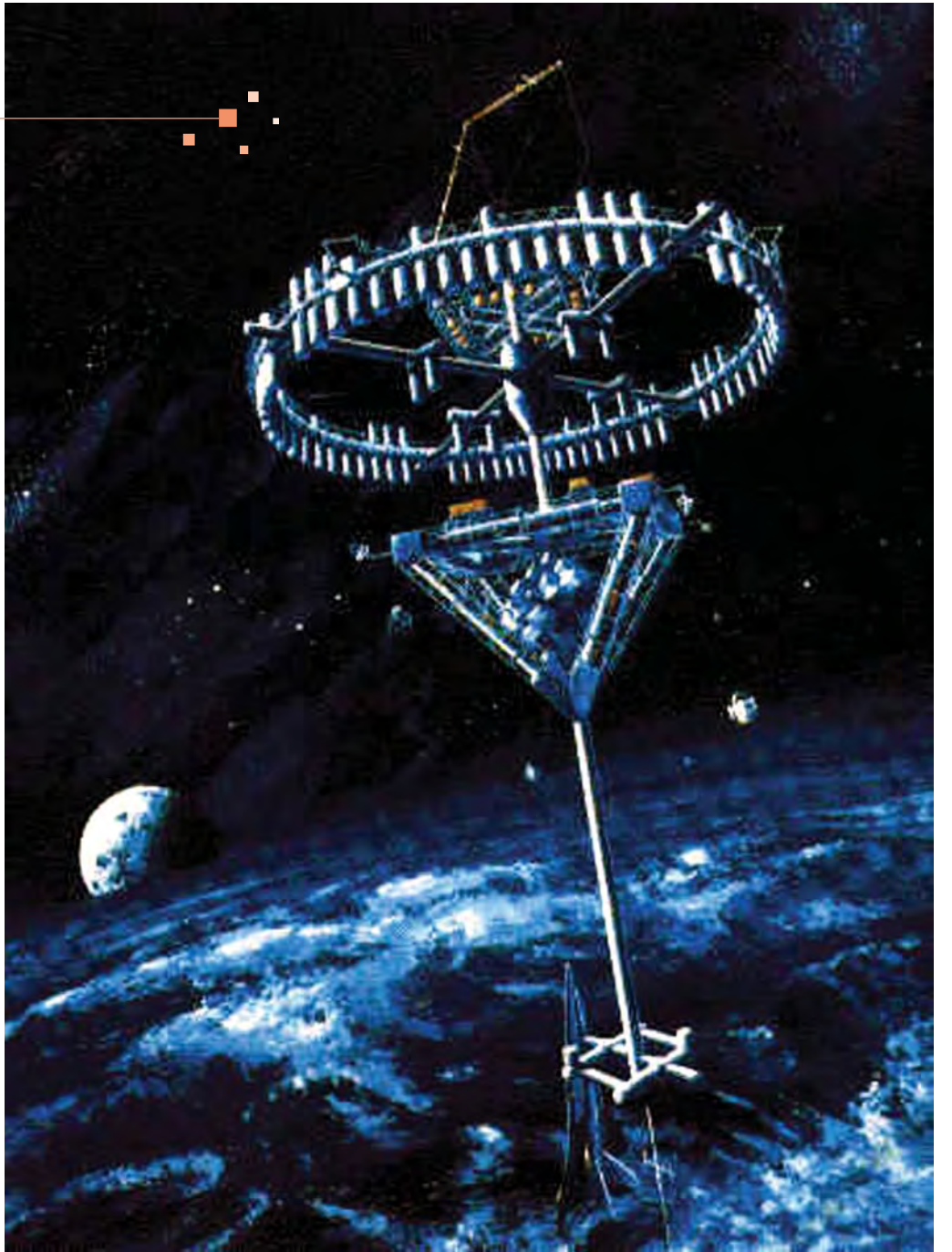
Even before guests can go, they will have to complete eight weeks of intensive training on a tropical island to insure health and safety.

Claramunt said the project will cost upwards of \$3-billion — most of which he raised himself. An American company who is interested in colonizing mars, has also joined the project.

It is estimated that there are approximately 40,000 people worldwide who are "rich enough" to vacation in space.

Book your trip today at galacticsuite.com.

It is estimated that there are approximately 40,000 people worldwide who are "rich enough" to vacation in space.



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नेपाली रिङटोन्स

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र
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NEPALI RINGTONES

Ringtone	Album	RT ID
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Trishulima buneko	folk songs by Kumar Basnet	N2006
Joban Sorako	Various Artists (Lok)	N2066
Meri aamai	folk songs by Mira Rana	N2009
Basa Tanma	Mann	N2104
Ishwor Tailee	Muna Madan	N2121
Sapana Ki Pari	Gajal	N2144
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