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YOUR GATE TO IT WORLD



Birendra Dahal of Himalayan Broadcasting Company is on fast unto death outside the Press Council building. Dahal wants a written commitment from the government that it will always honour press freedom in words and action. The photo was taken on the 15th day of his fast. His condition continues to deteriorate.

Jolt for elections 'Stabbed', Prachanda bleeds and cries.

■ nf correspondent

The fear that Maoists want no election for the Constituent Assembly in November has come true. Maoist Chief Prachanda made it very clear on Friday that it is better to have the election in April than in November.

The reasons Prachanda cited was that his party has been 'stabbed at the back' and the 'pain' he has been facing is, 'enormous.' He added that there are both national and international conspirators at play against the Maoists, and elections in such circumstances were best avoided and rescheduled.

To watch Prachanda change his hitherto rigid stance on November polls came as a surprise to many, but those who know the latest develop-

ments in the Maoist party claim that Prachanda was only repeating what the rising star of the party, Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal had said in the recently concluded plenum of the party.

"Are we going to ask for votes even though we have failed to find out the disappeared people and get

The reasons Prachanda cited was that his party has been 'stabbed at the back' and the 'pain' he has been facing is, 'enormous.'

compensation for those families whose sons and daughters were sacrificed? Will they vote for us?" Prachanda borrowed this point from Badal but concealed a couple of things that the new head of the party's central organisation bureau had raised in the midst of 2000 plus delegates during the plenum.

Badal was critical of the life style of ministers belonging to the Maoist party and also raised the fact that only a small part of the money actually got to the cantonments - from the Rs.3000 per month per head allotted by the government. Prachanda however, skipped that reference and mainly delved into conspiracy theory that domestic and international conspirators were out to finish them.

However, as criticism against

Prachanda mounted as a result of his postpone election plea; information minister, K B Mahara, even at the cost of being seen as contradicting his leader, asserted that elections will be held under all circumstances in November.

There are still speculations on why Prachanda chose to speak to representatives from various walks of national life. Maoist sources claim that he was doing all this to project it as an outcome of a larger democratic process.

Although the central committee more or less had come to the consensus that it was not in the party's interest to adopt a hostile policy towards India, Prachanda almost identified India as a key conspirator like the United States, against the Maoists. ■

Enough is enough

Elections alone will give legitimacy to the government - Army Chief

■ nf correspondent

In a speech that carried an undertone of disapproval, Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Rukmangat Katawal said, no army personnel should be penalised for carrying out orders of political masters in the past.

The message, loud and clear, was aired through a programme organised at the army headquarters by the Army Command Staff College on August 23. In the clearly formulated approach of the army, Gen Katawal said, "no officer should be penalised for having worked under the previous political regime."

The assertion comes in the wake of the demand for action against certain army officials as per recommendation of the Rayamajhi Commission for their roles during the people's movement. Reading between the lines, the army chief's assertion raises questions regarding political accountability in cases of human rights violations during the insurgency.

He also indirectly suggested that the government should take up the issue of reforms in the security forces only after the election, after they have secured legitimacy from the people. While reaffirming that the army will fully cooperate with the reforms agenda of the government, he asserted that such a government should come from the

ballot and not from the bullet.

Justifying the past as well as the present of the army, he said, "Nepal Army has been away from politics always and does not take sides." He added that at the same time, it could not be treated as an 'ideologically indoctrinated and politically motivated combatant force,' - a barb thrown at the Maoist guerrillas.

He said that along with human rights, a timely reform of the army was something that he would welcome. "In fact, the army would want to be a part of the solution than being a part of the problem," he said. He promised institutional support to reforms, but made it clear that topics like Security Sector Reforms (SSR) and Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) should be clarified and understood in proper context.

"We commit ourselves to the civilian command," Katawal said. "We will abide by the government that comes from the ballot and not bullets," he added. This comes as a response to the Maoists who are demanding unilateral action against Nepal Army for alleged violations of human rights during the years of insurgency and abuse of power during the royal regime.

Katawal's assertion comes in the wake of his two official visits, first to London at the invitation of the government and second, to Sydney to participate in the meeting of the army chiefs of Asia and pacific region recently.



Bhaskar Ojha

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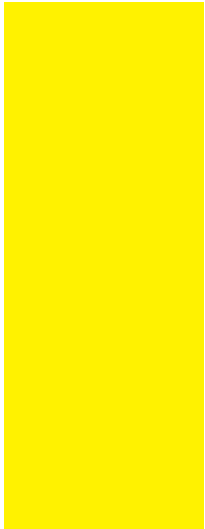
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Newsbrief

Nationalisation hoax

The government's announcement of seven royal palaces having been nationalised has only turned out to be a hoax. "Now all these palaces belong to the Nepal government,"

KB Mahara, Minister for Information who is also the government spokesman, had told media after the cabinet decision, last week.

"But that is simply not true. All these palaces including the Narayanhiti palace already belonged to the government," an official of the archaeology department said. "It is just like saying we have nationalised Singhadurbar!" he added.

"It was done to appease the Maoists who wanted to be seen as initiating some radical measures against the monarchy and G P Koirala had to give in, a Congress Minister told newsfront. But in private, Koirala put the blame on Ram Chandra Poudel. "Poudel was very keen to have this decision taken by the cabinet at the earliest," the minister quoted the Prime Minister.

New Paras

People usually tend to show leanings towards spiritualism in old age or during crisis. It is not clear if it was the prevailing crisis that has endangered the institution of monarchy that has changed Crown Prince Paras, but he is deeply into studies of spiritual books.

And interestingly, he also undertook a course of yoga as part of the 'Art of living' training.

According to the sources, Paras underwent the course in Gokarna under one of the disciples of the Art of Living master, Ravi Shankar. He has also cut down on his normal intake of meat and alcohol and has lost weight as a result.

Maoist nepotism

Was it to defame the emerging star of the Maoist top five leaders or just a coincidence? Badal's wife Nainkala Thapa has been appointed the chairperson of the National Women's commission on the recommendation of the Maoist Party, something that might bring him into controversy for having promoted 'nepotism' in the party.

Nainkala, party sources say, was not as active as Hishila Yami, but is definitely much more involved in the party affairs than Prachanda's wife Sita Poudel. She also holds a graduate degree, the minimum qualification required for the post.

Fleeing 'emissary'

Amaresh Singh, the all powerful man of Prime Minister G P Koirala is running away from the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) Jwala Singh group. Parliamentarian Singh's proposal that JTMM leader Jwala Singh must talk to the PM for settlement of the Terai problem got a very curt and threatening response from the latter.

"You have become a member of parliament by mortgaging the interest of Terai. First I will finish off traitors like you, and then think about the dialogue with the government", Jwala Singh was believed to have said. Since then, Amaresh Singh, a self-proclaimed powerful man in the Koirala and Delhi durbar has been maintaining a low profile. He has been given public security at par with a member of the council of ministers, courtesy Home Minister K P Sitaula.

Fresh assault

The National Trust for Nature Conservation, earlier known as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, has come under fresh assault of its chairman. Matrika Yadav, who resigned recently as the minister for forest continues as the chairman of the trust.

On Friday, Yadav affected major changes in the board of the trust axing people like Ambika Shrestha and Niranjan Koirala. Although he retained some foreigners like Morito and Marita who have made significant contributions in terms of raising money for the trust in the past, he has packed the board with pro-Maoist activists.

To the surprise of many, the letters of appointment (or nomination) of the board members were dispatched to the office of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) in Baneshwar. This is the second time in less than four months that the board has been reshuffled.



Upset PM

■ nf correspondent

It was not so much Prachanda's suggestion to put off November elections, but threats of 'physical action' against some top Nepali Congress leaders that Prime Minister Koirala took strong offence to.

Koirala strongly objected to the remarks made by Maoist ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai that Maoists would resort to physical actions against people like Khum Bahadur Khadka, Govindaraj Joshi and those involved in the Lauda kickback case. Koirala lodged his protest with KB Mahara, the minister in charge of information and communication regarding Bhattarai's remarks aired through Nepal Television.

Bhattarai's list of the imminent target of his party cadres' physical action included PM Koirala, since his name had prominently figured in the Lauda case. "I will not meet him if that is what he is up to," Koirala is believed to have told Mahara when he suggested that Koirala talk to Prachanda about it. Instead, Koirala asked senior secretariat staff of the Nepali Congress, Shobhakar Parajuli, to issue a strong statement criticising Maoist leaders for the threat meted out to senior Nepali Congress leaders.

"Prachanda seems determined to cheat on me," Koirala told party leader, Govindaraj Joshi who with



senior leaders like Lakshman Ghimire and K B Gurung went to Baluwater on Thursday to know PM's reaction to Maoists' threat. Koirala's loss of trust and anger at the Maoists increased further after Prachanda demanded postponement of the constituent assembly election.

But a series of developments followed. Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met Prachanda and Baburam on Saturday to convince them that they must commit themselves to November election if they want recognition by the international community as political forces. The same evening, Home Minister K P Sitaula and Congress Working Committee member, Shekhar Koirala also talked with the Maoist leaders to clarify the misunderstanding arising out of Prachanda's speech at Hyatt Hotel.

But the home minister has not yet been able to secure Maoists' assurance that his party leaders, Joshi and Khadka would not be targeted by the Maoists. Both Joshi and Khadka have not only been critical of the law and order situation in the country, but they have also been demanding that for the peace process to proceed, the Maoists must return property they confiscated during the years of conflict. Joshi and the group also objected to the use or misuse of government media including Nepal Television and Radio Nepal by the Maoists as their propaganda machinery.

PM dictates

Last minute hitch in diplomatic appointment.

■ nf correspondent

As the government is very close to finalising the list of ambassadors to 14 countries that will fill up the vacancies existing for the last 15 months, there are still some last minute hitches.

Prime Minister GP Koirala is in favour of replacing UML's candidate Guna Lakshmi Sharma BK with one of his favourites at the last minute. The person who until a few days ago wielded enormous clout in the transfer, posting, suspension and even promotion of police officials is likely to be appointed the ambassador to Myanmar.

There are also speculations that South Korea, a close ally of the US may not accept the nomination of a Maoist ambassador there. The communist party of Maoists-Nepal (CPN-M) has recommended Pampha Bhusal's name for South Korea along with their

nominees in three other countries, France, Malaysia and Denmark.

Koirala is believed to have desired that Achyut Krishna Kharel, a retired inspector general of the police, be appointed Nepal's ambassador to Myanmar. Kharel had recently been exonerated in a corruption case on technical grounds. Kharel was considered for the post way back in 2001, but the decision of the Koirala government then did not materialise because of the resistance from the palace on grounds that he was facing corruption charges.

The proposal to have Kharel replace Guna Lakshmi is however likely to trigger a tussle between the UML and the Congress. Kharel was a key figure against whom the Mallik commission had recommended action for having suppressed the movement for democracy in 1990. But with advent of democracy, he openly sided

with the Congress party and emerged as one of the most powerful persons in the country. With return of GP Koirala as the PM last year, Kharel was back to the power centre. He is also believed to have played an important role, in connivance with Home Minister K P Sitaula, to arbitrarily suspend some key officials from the civil and armed police force to pave the way for promotion of relatively junior officials.

In the meantime, the powerful minister for peace and reconstruction, Ram Chandra Poudel is believed to have lost in his attempt to have one of his close relatives, Yubraj Bhusal, promoted to the rank of secretary in the ministry. Bhusal lost out to his batch-mates after about 225 members of the civil servants petitioned against him for his role in suppression of the people's movement last year.



आवश्यकता !

- के तपाईमा छ ? ...आत्मविश्वास र खुवी
- के तपाई आफ्नो दक्षता देखाउने क्षेत्रको खोजीमा हुनुहुन्छ ?

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न्यूनतम योग्यता : प्रवीणता प्रमाणपत्र तह
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**पारिश्रमिक ?
तपाई आफैमा
निर्गम हुनेछ**



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Point to Ponder

No legacy is so rich as honesty.

- William Shakespeare

Dying twice

A leader lives through his thoughts, words and deeds. Those whose words match their ideological commitments with actions are remembered and respected even after they die. Those who live and lead with deceit only invite disrespect and hatred from the people.

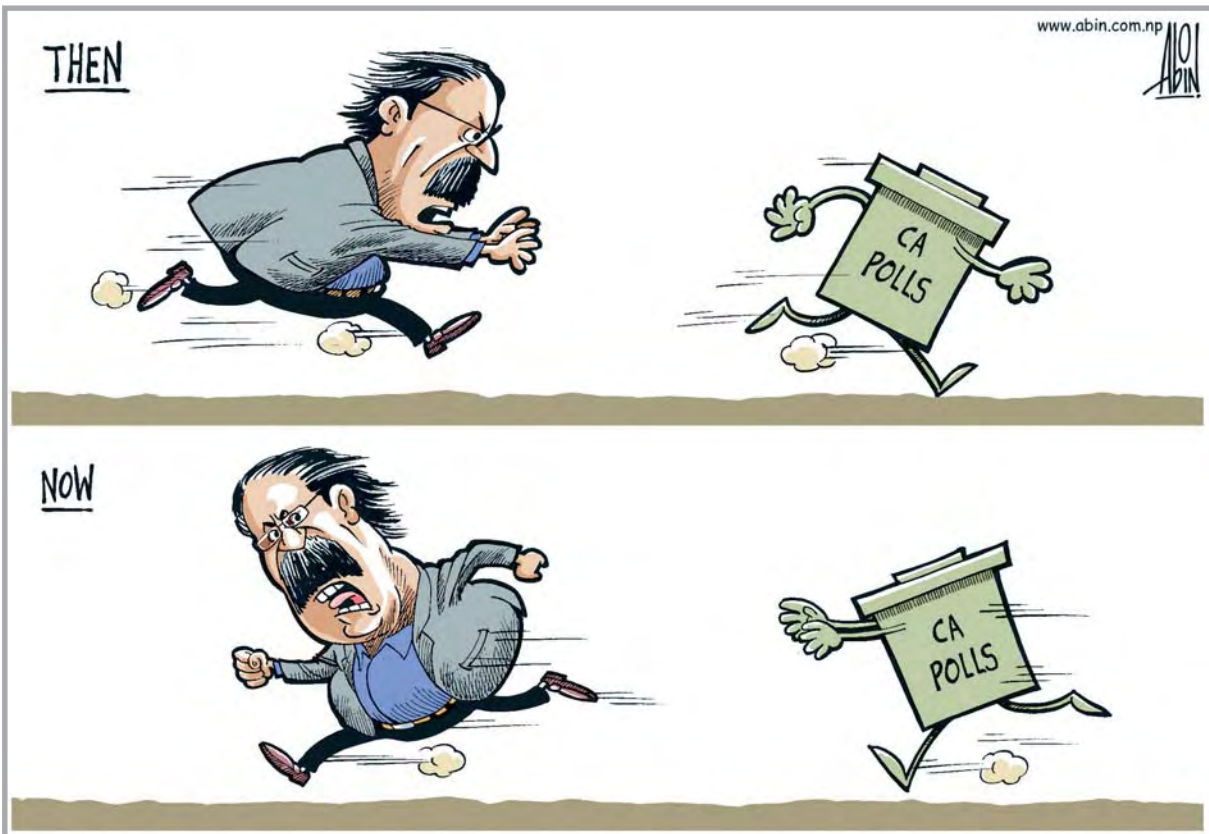
Nepal's political history and its present day show that it bears the burden of leaders whose words and deeds do not match. Only last year, as a powerful mass movement catapulted GP Koirala and his team to power, the man in his 80s pledged on behalf of his political team that there would be no repetition of the past mistakes in governance. And that the government led by him would have constituent assembly elected by June end.

But with collective dishonesty and deliberate inaction, elections were put off for November 22. Now, with less than 90 days left, there are doubts both from inside the government as well as outside about Koirala and company's sincerity to hold the elections.

Prachanda, the head of the second largest party in parliament and the government, revealed on Aug 24 that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) was opposed to the election taking place as scheduled. As the head of a political party, Prachanda is free to suggest postponing elections citing any reasons; but his move does not look that simple or innocuous. It smacks of a larger conspiracy, and gives enough ground to suspect that Prachanda and PM Koirala are together in it to not to let election take place under some pretext or the other.

Prachanda's demand, made public that says election be deferred till April, and let country be declared a republic by the existing parliament - a body which does not legally, constitutionally and validly represent the people and their aspiration at all; only indicates a conspiratorial gang-up. Koirala can always project Prachanda as an excuse for his not being able to hold election in the face of discomfiture that the international community has shown when they sensed an early sign of such a closed-room deal.

If that happens, G P Koirala will be surpassing all his past records of sticking to the chair at any cost. Not facing people or not going to the people and yet continuing as the head of the government are sinful acts in a democracy. Prachanda's latest assertion only exposes his psyche that he would opt for power, legitimate or illegitimate, as a gift from Koirala rather than going to the people through an election. Both Koirala and Prachanda will be committing an anti-people and anti-democracy act if they go back on their words given to the people to hold elections in November.



Letters

Desperate to be first president

Newsfront has been coming out with exclusive reports on conspiracy to stall elections. It has also been bringing out opinion pieces on the price of hasty decisions and consequences of stalling elections; and has given space to opinion favouring ethnic states as well as opposing them. In any case, it is going to be a major political and policy issue in days to come.

The present government backed by Maoists has failed to scrutinise the root cause of ethnic problems in Nepal. People in favour of ethnic states argue that successful democracy thrives on ethnic federal structure. Others disagree with it. Ethnicity always generates much debate.

According to Prof Amychua, ethnicity is not a scientifically determinable status rather ethnicity will refer to a kind of group identification, a sense of belonging to the people that is experienced as a greatly extended form of kinship.

Simply calling them (Madheshi) criminals, Prachanda cannot solve the Madheshi problems. First, he himself should concede now, even at this late hour, that violent strategy does not work in favour of a nation's prosperity and stability. The growing militancy in the south east part of Nepal in the name of Madheshi Andolan makes the path very difficult and rocky.

The escalation of communal violence may lead the nation to a complete collapse. In democracy, the state should provide space for its citizens to show their displeasure. Leaders should also have the patience to listen to the voice, direct or indirect, coming from any quarters.

People of Nepal have acknowledged the roles politicians



played towards ending absolute monarchy. But in last 15 months, they failed to establish a stable foundation of new Nepal, or behave differently from the way the king did.

Prachanda is in a great hurry to proclaim a republic through the existing parliament where as PM Koirala is eager and desperate to be the first president of the republic of Nepal. Inconsequent utterances can just be hyperbole. One thing is apparent, that truth must be separated from exaggerated statements. This is the time to do wise assessment for CA polls. Here is a tip, do not do different things, do the things differently. There is wisdom in making a new Nepal.

Mitra Bandhu Poudel
 Kawasoti, Nawal Parasi

Ban Bandhs

Life has become highly unpredictable today because of frequent Bandhs (strikes) in the country. The much awaited polls to the constituent assembly now appears uncertain due to such Bandhs among other factors. I wish to say to all organizers of such Bandhs to search for other alternatives to air their complaints, in a way that does not hamper fellow citizens' lives.

The government too needs to find a way to address the grievances of its people. If it does not and Bandhs continue to pester common people's lives, its' already frail reputation will be shattered completely forcing people again to look for alternatives.

Sulav Dahal
 Surunga-5, Jhapa

Spiritual Corner

Guru and right living

Shivapuri Baba aka Swami Govindanath Bharati was born in Kerela, India in 1826. When 18, he decided to abandon the world and seek absolute truth. On March 1926, he first visited Nepal, accompanied by a horde of Indian Sadhus on their way to pay homage to Lord Pashupatinath; at a time when the country was virtually closed to foreigners and pilgrims alike.

On the day he was to return to India, he met a Wilkinson who had then become the British resident in Nepal, who coaxed the Rana rulers to let the Swami settle in the Shivapuri forest. From this very forest he later emerged as a saint, the Shivapuri Baba.

Shivapuri Baba spent over 40 years of his life in Nepal. He breathed his last at the age of 137 years, in the same forest retreat. He was also

the first modern yogi to transplant the wisdom of the Indian sub-continent to the West. His audience included people like George Bernard Shaw, Queen Victoria and the Indian President Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. When Radhakrishnan queried about his teachings, Baba beautifully summed it up in a sentence, "I teach three disciplines- spiritual, moral and physical."

Shivapuri Baba taught the principle of Swadharma, which says that as humans we have three principle duties: first, physical duty towards our self - of maintaining body and mind through proper livelihood, including the obligation to help one's depen-



dents to accomplish the same.

The second - one's moral duty, consisting in remaining sensitive to the obligation to seek the truth 24 hours a day. And the third, spiritual duty means the worship of the divine. Physical discipline, he noted, brings pleasure. Moral discipline gives us serenity. Spiritual discipline yields deep peace and ultimate happiness.

Extracts from Right Living, the teaching of Sri Shivapuri Baba by Dr. YB Shrestha:

Shivapuri Baba always stressed on the practice rather than on its theory. He said understanding of right living becomes clear

only when you put in practice what you have learnt theoretically. Scriptures, the Sastras are useful for a seeker but they have their limitations because they are like a road map only. You must walk the path to reach your destination. However, if you are lucky and have a guru, this map can be dispensed with. Because then the guru will act as your map and your guide combined together.

The scriptures may prove to be a hindrance rather than a help. Furthermore the pupil may lose himself in the jungle of words, doubts and uncertainties, pulling or pushing him into opposite directions. This danger accentuates more for a 'well-read' pupil rather than for a relatively ignorant one.

The other important factors which accelerate the progress of a seeker are: patience of waiting, effort and determination.



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

The past 15 months have only proved that the entire decision making process has been hijacked mostly by the gang of eight, away from the public gaze.

"We have been stabbed on our backs. There are domestic as well as international conspirators on play against us," yelled Maoist chief Prachanda at a public function on Friday. In the same breath, he said, "let us have the constituent assembly election put off till April."

Clearly, the shadow of James Moriarty till hounds him. For Prachanda, Shiv Mukherjee now falls in the same category as he had put Moriarty in. No doubt, Nepal has lost its status as an independent country, in the past one year more than ever, if it were to be judged by the failure of the government and key political players to take decisions on what are essentially domestic affairs. Prachanda made it very clear on Friday that Koirala and his Nepali Congress are more guided by India on domestic political affairs.

Dispelling often debated doubts as to whether India would ever want CA election to take place in Nepal; Mukherjee has often been saying, both in private and public that not having the election in November as per the latest schedule will destroy the legitimacy of entire political system as well the mandate of the people's movement of April 2006.

His concern has been echoed by the United States, lately reinforced by Nancy Powell, European Union and many other countries. He has also gone to the extent of warning GP Koirala that he would not be treated differently than it treated King Gyanendra after Feb 2005. But strangely enough, neither Koirala nor Prachanda have thought about debating on it in the parliament and inside the eight parties, about what would the people of Nepal think of them if election is not held in November. Just another example of how Nepali leaders always hanker after external recognition than caring much about the 'sovereign' people's verdict.

It will be wrong to assume or claim that India has always stood for democracy in Nepal or the South Asia regime, but it has always supported the people when they have decisively become part of any movement for democracy. Any move at this stage to stall the election beyond November will bring the people against the current alliance led by GP Koirala and backed by Prachanda. India will stand against these leaders like it did against the king in post 2005 Feb scenario.

And so will the US and European Union countries. But this stage should never come, and the only way to ensure that it does not come is by going to the people of Nepal in November and making them the decision makers. That is what democracy is all about.

Foreign role and conspiracy of any nature will be reduced greatly if leaders give up politics of 'deals and conspiracy' and actually start believing in the strength of the people. This will lead to political parties promoting the culture of inner party democracy, strengthening institutions

like election commission, parliament and independent judiciary. And this will help in making the government accountable and transparent.

The past 15 months have only proved that the entire decision making process has been hijacked mostly by the gang of eight, away from the public gaze. One major reason why Prachanda is now scared of facing people is because he started hobnobbing with GP Koirala who has conspired against the spirit of the mandate of the people and made many compromises for power. Undue interests of the foreign powers increases in a scenario where politics is away from the reach of the people and power becomes the outcome of the deal among leaders.

Foreign influence will automatically be reduced if leaders start creating a conducive atmosphere for election and start going to the people; and if they stop making deals with diplomatic corps, in block or alone. Why do the Maoists and UML need a Swiss diplomat to explore their unity?

Delhi became the venue for and the key architect of the 12-point agreement, a basis for eight parties understanding; because they failed to do it themselves and left it to Delhi to define their role and responsibility towards promoting peace, democracy and economic prosperity in Nepal. Strong and visionary national players alone can reduce the undesirable roles of foreign forces.

It is also the time that the ever expanding UN agencies started serious introspective exercises about their role. The UNOHCHR which came here to monitor human right situation and enjoys free access to areas it wants to go under an agreement with government of Nepal is silent on Rayamajhi Commission, something that acted as persecution arm of the government. Is it because it wants to appease the powers that be, and wants to prolong its presence? Can UNOHCHR be a witness to unfair persecution and punishment of many just because a politically composed and motivated commission claims it as their findings?

UN bodies like OHCHR and UNMIN, not only have to work transparently and impartially, but also as per the mandate they have got. Any compromise at any point of time will only make them vulnerable to public suspicion and criticism. But again, the onus to make them work as per the mandate and not cross their limits largely falls on the national players.

Thus, it is not enough that Prachanda and others raise these issues of foreign interference only as a matter of tactic, they should be able to raise it out of conviction and commitment, and that will only come after they start listening to their own people, and honour their right to vote and reject those who they do not want to see in power. ■



Maoist Chief Prachanda

Bhaswar Ojha

DIplomacy unlimited

Not having the election in November as per the latest schedule will destroy the legitimacy of entire political system as well the mandate of the people's movement of April 2006.



Madhesis, Maoists, India and the UN



■ Chandrakishore Jha

This situation in Madhesh was not the creation of the collective Pahadi community as wrongly perceived by many, but it was the creation of successive rulers of Nepal...

Today, it looks like the very process of peace is threatening to take Nepal into yet another bout of political confusion. The situation has now come to such a pass that the unity and integrity of the country itself is in danger. There are various factors contributing to the present state of affairs. Among them, the Madhesi issues and the Terai disturbance is one of them.

The Madhesi society indeed is a very complex group of people to understand. For years they have been suppressed and subjugated and they suffer from an acute identity crisis. This situation in Madhesh was not the creation of the collective Pahadi community as wrongly perceived by many, but it was the creation of successive rulers of Nepal, who always doubted the loyalties of these people for the simple reason that they live close to the Indian border and speak the same language as that of the people of neighboring Indian states.

For reasons known only to the state, the Madhesis were never given the opportunity to actively participate in mainstream affairs in spite of their willingness. Over the years, most Madhesi leaders somehow exploited this situation. Instead of trying to unite their people, they blamed Paharis for everything, and tried to gain sympathy from India by projecting that Madhesis are being exploited by

the dominant community.

This being the case, there is mutual suspicion on the part of many Paharis as well. They always doubted Terai people of being more loyal towards India than Nepal. On the other hand, India's Nepal policy has always been Kathmandu centric. All the goodies extended to Nepalese were confined to the people in Kathmandu.

It is just since last four years that India started covering Terai areas in its economic cooperation agenda. Hence the Madhesis have always been watched from a distance, and no one really tried and understood the various difficulties of the community. Today, Madhesis continues to be watched from a distance, both by national and international players. Recent remark by CPN-Maoist chairman in which he stated that his party has been marginalised in Terai in the post Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum's agitation and with the help of India is a case in point.

No doubt the Maoists are the ones who infused a sense of nationalism among the Madhesis in an organised manner for the first time ever, by forming the Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha (MRMM). Through this platform, the Madhesis people were taught how to fight for their democratic rights. But the Terai terrain being different from other hill districts, the CPN-Maoists could not establish camps and centers to effectively

ground their ideology. As such, the following they had in Terai was more of symbolic nature, depending largely on the popularity of the leader who headed the Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha. In other words, they were mostly fence sitters waiting to jump on the greener side.

Prachanda's assertion was a case of misplaced understanding about the party's influence and popularity among the Madhesis. His remark about India with regards to helping Madhesis to marginalise his party is also an insult to the Madhesi people. However, to be fair, the blame should not go to him alone, but to the entire party, who again tried to understand Madhesis without understanding them.

Among national players, Chairman Prachanda is not the only one who chooses to see Madhesis people from a distance. Even mainstream political parties, including the Terai based Nepal Sadhbhavana Party, frame their party policies on Terai based on the inputs provided to them by urban base local leaders who never visited the remote areas.

The approach of the international community towards understanding Terai is no different either. They try to figure out the problems by speaking to a few people in district headquarters and do not reach out to the people. During my recent visit to Rautahat, Dhanusa, Sarlahi,

Rupandahi and Nepalgunj, people asked me questions like: Why is the UN so active in Terai? Will UN prolong the Terai problem as they did in Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq? Will UN bring in Indian security forces to maintain law and order?

Clearly, the intentions of the international community are now doubted in Terai, particularly after UNMIN's recent differences with the Maoists. Six months ago, the UN was seen as the only hope for the Madhesis people. There was a collective belief that this world body could help resolve the lingering Terai issues. Today, doubts are being expressed even by those who interacted regularly with UN representatives. They feel that the organisation is not transparent enough to share their intentions. The reluctance of visiting officials to openly discuss issues also increases this skepticism.

Rightly or wrongly, many feel that Terai problem cannot be solved without India's active involvement. By active involvement, they meant New Delhi's insistence on Nepal government to trash out Terai issue through talks and negotiations, and without favoritism and partisanship. Presently, India is only talking of elections and no clear cut policy has been spelt out.

In the process, India is accused of not doing enough by the Madhesis, while the Paharis doubted India's hand in the

Terai trouble. Again this is a classic case of misplaced presumption. Both Madhesis and the Paharis see their southern neighbor from a traditional stand-point. They do not realise that in the changed scenario, particularly after April 2006, India's approach towards Nepal is people-centric.

The best course of action to end the imbroglio would be for the people of Nepal to thrash out their own problems. The Prime Minister must ensure that all grievances are addressed as much as is possible with a positive intent. Parties must reach out to the people instead of relying on coteries with vested interests. As a well-wishing neighbor, India must continue to lend possible support towards resolving the differences. As a monitoring agency, Ian Martin and his men must confine their roles to pointing out where parties to the peace process go wrong. They should clap and applaud the efforts, rather than trying to fish in troubled waters themselves.

Lastly, all national and international players would be very well advised not to try and understand the Madhesis people overnight. In doing so, they may end up wrongly diagnosing the ailment, and the wrong medication may result in a chronic disease.

(Chandrakishore is a Birgunj based journalist and editor of Terai Khabar Patrika)



■ Binod P. Bista

Leave recriminations, take collective actions

Whether it was caused by the excessive monsoon rains or solely by climate change, the recent floods and subsequent inundation in the adjoining Terai districts between India and Nepal has caused a lot of sufferings for survivors and deaths to many. Over 2000 people died and nearly 28 million displaced in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. It was reported to be the worst flooding of this year which broke many previous records.

This situation called for sensible measures on the part of every government. At the time the best option for the governments of South Asia was to get engaged in the relief operations with or without external support. This had to be done to save the lives of the survivors from disease and hunger.

At the height of floods and continuing deaths, some parliamentarians of new Nepal called for demolition of embankment on the other side of the border (India) and urged Nepali government to take the issue to international forums if the Indian establishment did not heed to Nepali concerns. At the same time, the chief minister of Bihar (adjoining state in India), suffering from the same problem of even bigger

magnitude, asked India's Prime Minister to hold talks with Nepal for resolving the flood problem in Bihar caused by the swelling of Nepali rivers.

Embankments built on Indian side for preventing yearly flooding there is blamed for the problem of inundation in Nepal's many district causing untold sufferings to the Nepalis. The problem of flooding does not stop at the bordering districts and states of Indo-Nepal border. It further causes flooding in Bangladesh and adds to the death list of South Asia.

Simply put, the snow fed rivers of Nepal which provide the lifeline to all the three countries during dry season becomes wild during monsoon and causes havoc along its route until it reaches the ocean. Similar to climate change phenomenon and ongoing collective efforts aimed at reducing its impact on a global scale, flooding by rivers passing through more than one country also requires a collective program. By herself, neither Nepal nor India nor Bangladesh can tackle the problem on a sustainable basis.

Building embankment on one side of border is temporary and less helpful when flooding is more likely to occur every year during monsoon.

Without a comprehensive measure, supported by all three governments, the poor people of the area are bound to live in constant threat of flooding and its aftermath. It hardly befits the stature and dignity of the emerging regional superpower India to shut a blind eye to the suffering of its people and those of its closest neighbors.

The local as well as national leaders of the three affected countries cannot continue their rhetoric and populist campaigns endangering the harmonious relations among the nations involved. Flooding in South Asia is a reality, especially during monsoon season. It happened last year, many successive years before that and it is bound to happen next year and in many years to come. The gesturing and posturing by leaders and governments during natural disaster periods can hardly create an atmosphere for purposeful talks. If the governments are serious in resolving the crisis, the talks must be held when things are normal and no country is under pressure.

The issue calls for helping each other to fully understand the gravity of the situation, sitting together to work out workable plans and projections, and sharing costs commensurate to

the countries' capacity. As with the funding of the United Nations and its missions, capacity to pay is an agreed principle for collective action.

Apart from additional current financial benefits that accrue to the area with improved irrigation facilities from the continuous flow of water, it has also been providing employment and livelihood to a huge number of farmers. Stopping the water from taking its natural course by any country for any reason would be against the international norms, standards and conventions. However, proper management of water is required for the sake of safety and security of the population that lives there.

Given the wealth of experience acquired by every country in the management of water during emergency situations such as flooding, it is high time that the users and experts sat together for a viable solution of the continuing crisis. Only the governments of Nepal, India and Bangladesh can create an enabling environment for such meetings to take place, take initiative with/without external assistance to put the ideas into actions, and secure the lives and livelihood of the families who have nowhere else to go. ■

The problem of flooding does not stop at the bordering districts and states of Indo-Nepal border.

Water delivery and treatment are highly capital intensive businesses. God provided the water, but not the pipes.

Pricing Melamchi water

■ Shanker Man Singh

Water is one of the five largest markets in the world. It is estimated that over \$350 billion is spent annually in generating and delivering water for human consumption, industry and agriculture. As water demands grow and sources shrink, new technologies are needed to increase the supply. This year alone over \$50 billion will be invested in infrastructure and technological solutions in an attempt to meet the challenges of growing water demand.

Water is the commonest substance on earth, but 97 percent of total is sea water, unfit for human use. Of the three percent that is fresh, two thirds is locked up in glaciers or ice and snow around the poles. Only one percent of the entire world's water is available for human consumption. Without water life could not exist. But even one percent of the earth's available water should be enough for all.

Experience suggests that in the public utilities like water supply, the only way in which the minimum economic worth of investments can be determined is by giving consumers themselves the chance to let authorities know how much they value the service concerned by being charged by a

price that reflects the full economic cost of supply.

As regards the pricing rule, it should be transparent and verifiable steps should be adopted in setting the tariff. It should be clear that everyone pays at least their incremental costs, and the utility earns only normal profit. Water delivery and treatment are highly capital intensive businesses. God provided the water, but not the pipes. Wherever that capital investment comes from, somebody has to pay

Water is best treated as a normal business. But some critics are against all forms of privatisation; other work for public sector unions so they have an axe to grind. Many think that because water falls from the sky, it should be free.

for it. If it is not the users, then the tax payers or aid donors.

Water is best treated as a normal business. But some critics are against all forms of privatisation; other work for public sector unions so they have an axe to grind. Many think that because water falls from the sky, it should be free. Others argue that, as 'water is for life,' it is wrong to sell or trade it for profit. It is notable

that those who most enthusiastically hold such beliefs often come from countries such as Canada, rich in both money and water.

Nepal is a different story. The real opportunities for the private sector lie in poorer countries like Nepal, where public provision has so often been inadequate. There have been successes as well as failures with public private partnerships. The key requirement is good governance, right institution and effective regulation framework. Unless these

requirements are met, private companies may continue to be unenthusiastic about projects in developing countries.

In Kathmandu, tariff will be charged for the first time from the nearly 1000 stand

pipes. These, it is hoped will be fitted with meters and groups formed to share charges for water consumed from each tap. In the particular milieu of Nepal, the tariff structure prepared with Asian Development Bank funding proposes a 15 percent raise in tariff every year, which was, however, not implemented after 2004.

According to the proposed tariff structure for metered consumers, the block subsidy of Rs.50

for the first 10,000 liters remain constant, while charge for every 1,000 liters consumed thereafter should have gone up from the existing Rs.15 to Rs.19 in July; from the existing Rs.360 to Rs.456 in July 16, 2005; and Rs.552 in July 16, 2006.

Similarly, for the stand pipes, the tariff for every 1,000 liter, applicable from the first 1,000 liters, should have been Rs.6.65 in 2006 and Rs.16.10 in 2007. Currently, it is the respective municipalities and not the consumers that are supposed to pay for water consumed from standpipes in the valley. However, even the municipalities have been defaulting payments. With tariff remaining unchanged in 2005 and 2006, it is likely to go up by over 53 percent, based on the previous assumption.

If everything had gone as proposed in the ongoing Melamchi project, it was presumed that no later than September 2007 tariffs would be increased. However, the provision for the water supply tariff fixation commission was also crucial to approve the proposed tariff or not. Finally, the committee has been formed and it is hoped that there are lot of opportunities along with the challenges. It is now for them to consider both human development aspect and commercial aspects equally. ■

What, why, how election?

For any election to ensure people's participation, voters have to understand the voting process and the type of election.



■ Sudarshan Shrestha

The right to information bill, once enacted, will ensure transparency of the government and increase its accountability to the people, said information Minister K B Mahara while piloting it in parliament. The scope of the bill, however appears more limited in nature. It recognises the right to ask for information, but does not guarantee a definitive response.

This argument has special relevance to the scheduled November election as political rhetoric gains steam regarding the model of electoral system. The bill will not have any bearing on the secretive manners

the opportunity to shadow a winning Member of the Scottish Parliament Alex Neil of the Scottish National Party and also visit more than 15 polling stations in the Hamilton area. The polling venues had explicitly clear instructions and as well as information officers to help voters on how to cast their ballots in the double election voting system. There were three different voting systems in use on 3 May.

On the parliament ballot paper, there were two columns, one to choose individual parliament constituency members and the other to pick regional members through the

to information at least about the electoral system immediately.

Political bickering and party investigations into conspiracy theories can go on but voter education and awareness cannot take a backseat. Judging by the scattered outreach of the media and the decoding capacity of the rural masses on what appears to be a complicated system; the EC and the media must get working to inform the people on the electoral system for their voices to be valid.

However, public information and publicity for the elections appears to be on the bottom list of the EC priority list although some public information

campaign on radio and television has started with modesty. Even there the clarity of the message, the system of voting and the objectivity of the elections are clearly missing.

Creative public information campaign with involvement of all those who are here to monitor and support

preparations for the elections could be a good idea. The Carter Center and the UN electoral expert monitoring team must see the CA election process beyond security concerns to make it free and fair.

Likewise, the UNDP which is providing logistic support and covering UNMIN's activities with much fanfare should use its social mobilisation expertise to generate awareness about procedural issues related to the elections in its programme locations.

If people are central to its development initiatives, the UNDP has to make aware people of their rights as an eligible electorate. As much as conducive security environments are preconditions for free and fair elections, people's understanding of the systems under which they vote to reflect their preferences should be assessed before the elections.

It is very crucial that each voter is taught how each vote counts and how each vote is going to be reflected in the process of representation and structural transformation of the state. Current discourse of the elections refers only to election bills, training of election officers, printing of papers and security and the election code of conduct. But what good is all of this if people do not know the relevance of their votes?

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No right to mediate



■ Bhim Prasad Bhurtel

Two factions of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) claim that they negotiate with government only to separate the frontiers. At the official department, both factions are separatists because of their declaration to separate a nation state formally.

A few weeks ago, JTMM (Goit) leader Jaya Krishna Goit wrote to Mr. Ian Martin, the chief of UNMIN to mediate. How Mr. Martin has responded to Goit is not public yet. Reliable source says that Nepal Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has established close contacts with these separatist factions. A cabinet minister and member of parliament from Terai are believed to have endorsed the view point of these groups during their meetings with Mr. Martin and Lena Sundh, former chief of OHCHR, Nepal.

UN missions may not have intentions to solve the problem in a high-handed manner. However the political analysts and the intelligentsia believe UNMIN and OHCHR undertaking or exploring such responsibilities are incompatible to the spirit of UN charter and much against the scope and ambit of the current mandate they have in Nepal.

The terms of reference, guiding principle and principal mandate to UNMIN and OHCHR is the spirit of UN charter. The spirit of UN charter is reflected in the Article 2 of United Nation, the principles of UN. The first principle states that the organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members and respect of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the state parties.

Similarly the UN Security Council has established UNMIN, unanimously adopting resolution 1740 (2007) on 23 January 2007. The resolution clearly says "Reaffirming the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Nepal and its ownership of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement". Likewise OHCHR also is here on the ground of the agreement between OHCHR and the then his majesty's government of Nepal. Any proceeds of the OHCHR and UNMIN cannot go beyond the spirit of UN charter.

On these grounds OHCHR and UNMIN are not supposed to contact these separatist groups or be a part of contact on any grounds; till a separate agreement between UN and Nepal government is reached to mandate an office; or these separatist rebel groups and government of Nepal agree to formally call UN as the third party mediator.

Any one in favor of the UN involvement may argue citing the right to self-determination provides such a space to the UN. The Article 4 of the rights to self-determination may be the pedestal of this kind of logic. The article 4 of right to self-determination says all armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected.

However the Nepal case is not a case of colonial independence. The Terai was the integral part of Nepali territorial integrity, both geographically and historically. So, the right to self-determination is no longer valid in case of Nepal.

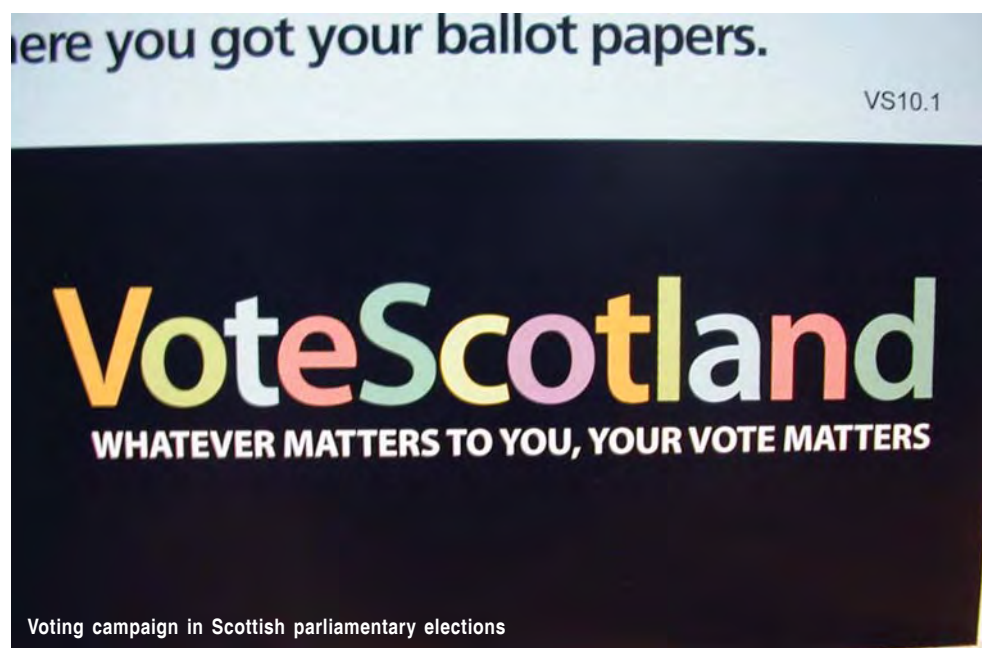
Even if we hypothetically assume that the case is valid, the article 6 of the right to self-determination clearly states that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the charter of the UN.

Similarly the article 7 of the right to self determination clearly concludes that all states shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the charter: the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of all states, and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity. Accordingly UN officials should observe this spirit.

These separatist groups are requesting arbitration of UN to legitimise their separatist demand formally. Reports that one of the cabinet ministers and a member of parliament from Nepali congress are lobbying with the UNMIN to mediate can only be termed a conspiracy. Even in that case, UNMIN and OHCHR do not deserve to make any space until and unless they are formally called for arbitration.

Mr. Martin should immediately make public his perspective on Goit's request. Similarly none of the officers of UNMIN and OHCHR are liable to meet to these groups. Otherwise it will be against diplomatic norms, values and standard of conduct and principal spirit of the UN charter.

Similarly, Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula has said publicly that these groups are not separatists even if they are saying advocating separatism. The government of Nepal also should clarify its department on home ministers' stance and acts. Nobody has the right to play game with Nepal's territorial integrity and sovereignty.



in which deals have been stuck by top leaders of the party. What type of electoral system was agreed at the closed door meeting of the top leaders? However, considering the Chief Election Commissioner's statement on 9th August that preparations were in their final stages, it is apparent that one variant of the many proportionate representation system has already been agreed.

Yet citizens are in dark about how we are going to vote, what are the options we would have; and do we choose people affiliates of parties or the parties themselves. And where does the person's right to information stand when decisions seem to have already been made and are being acted on as of today? For any election to ensure people's participation, voters have to understand the voting process and the type of election.

Let us take Prime Minister's promise to hold elections, come what may, on its face value. In that case, government and EC machinery need to educate people about the electoral system. There are five variants of the proportionate electoral system. But have people's right to information been respected even on this vital issue?

While covering the Scottish parliamentary elections in May, I had

additional member system. The task was simple, just put "X" in the box besides the choice of a party or individual.

The third electoral system in use that day was the "Single Transferable Vote" to elect a multi-member local Scottish council. The task was again simple. Voters were asked to mark 1,2,3,4,5... in the boxes next to the names of candidates according to preference.

This electoral system and how to vote were well publicised much before the elections. I was told by Sarah Mackie the Senior Communication Officer of the British electoral commission that the public information campaign about the voting system covered an 18 month period in the run up to the 3 May elections. Despite, industrialised and advanced democracy, electorates too had problems in Scotland to understand the voting system even after 18 months of sustained public campaign.

The 22 November CA election is clearly going to be an experiment as well as challenge for Nepal. It is going to involve two systems; First Past the Vote and Proportionate Representation. Yet, our preparations, especially in educating the voters, are invisible. The political class, civil society and in particular the Election Commission (EC) must address the people's right

blasts claim 42 lives in Hyderabad



A police official inspects the body of a victim at the site of the blast at the Lumbini park, in Hyderabad, India

Hyderabad : About 70 people remained in hospitals here Sunday as the death toll from the worst terror blasts in this southern city overnight mounted to 42. The near simultaneous blasts at Lumbini Park near the state secretariat and at Gokul Chat, a famous eatery, killed several people instantly while others succumbed to their injuries in hospitals, where doctors said many were still in critical condition.

Hyderabad, an IT hub and one of the fastest developing cities of India, remained shell-shocked - even a day after the worst terror attacks in its history.

Both the Lumbini Park and a famous food joint were as usual teeming with weekend crowds when the powerful blasts went off, snuffing out the lives of many unsuspecting people including students and tourists.

While one blast ripped through an open air auditorium at Lumbini Park on the banks of picturesque Hussain Sagar Lake in the heart of the city at 7.45 pm, three minutes later and five kilometers away another blast rocked Gokul Chat, a fast food joint at Koti, a busy commercial hub.

Officials said the blast at Gokul Chat claimed 32 lives while the one at the park killed 10 people. The dead include eight women and two children. Police officials and doctors warned that the toll could go up further as the condition of many of the injured in different hospitals was stated to be critical.

Hours after the blasts, two unexploded bombs were recovered - one at Mosarambagh and another at a cinema theatre in Dilsukhnagar. This, police said, indicates that there was a conspiracy to cause large-scale mayhem. Both the blast sites presented terrible sights in the immediate wake of the explosions. Bodies were strewn around. The heads of a few were severed while some bodies were disfigured.

Pieces of human flesh, blood stains, footwear as well as plates and other utensils were found strewn all over Gokul Chat.

There were heart-rending scenes at the

government-run Osmania Hospital where 32 bodies were brought. Wailing relatives of the victims anxiously looked for their loved ones among dozens of bodies. Even onlookers wept.

All but four bodies brought to the hospital were identified. Twelve bodies were handed over to their relatives after autopsy.

The situation in this Andhra Pradesh capital remained tense but peaceful. No untoward incident was reported from any part of the city, though a mob staged a demonstration soon after the blast in Koti.

Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil and a team of officials from his ministry are expected to visit Hyderabad Sunday. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy has convened an all-party meeting.

An alert has been sounded across Andhra Pradesh. Police have beefed up security at vital installations, places of worship and public places.

Additional security measures have been made for some 30,000 weddings taking place across the state Sunday, which many consider an auspicious day. The latest attacks came after the May blasts at the historic Mecca Masjid that killed nine worshippers, with the police firing that followed claiming five more lives.

The Saturday blasts have proved wrong those who had dismissed the mosque blast as an isolated incident. They have also raised serious questions about the efficiency of the intelligence machinery because there are indications that the same terror group involved in the Mecca Masjid blast could be behind attacks Saturday.

The Saturday bombings did not appear to target a particular community as both Hindus and Muslims frequent the two places. The dead included people from both communities.

"Bomb blasts are the cruelest act against humanity. The perpetrators of such an act can have no religion or ideological or national identities.

(IANS)

Sharif won't be allowed to return : Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Refusing to abide by the recent Supreme Court judgement, President Pervez Musharraf has said that exiled former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would not be allowed to return to Pakistan to take part in the general elections slated for later this year.

"The government will neither allow the Sharif brothers to come back nor would they be given a free hand if they chose to return. If Nawaz Sharif is not honouring his 'exile' deal, the government will put him behind bars or send him back to Saudi Arabia," 'The News' quoted Musharraf as saying in Islamabad.

Considering petitions filed by the deposed Premier and his brother Shahbaz Sharif, the apex court had ruled on Thursday that they were free to return to the Islamic nation after seven years in "forced" exile.

Musharraf on Saturday held an emergency meeting of the ruling party MPs at the Presidency in Islamabad amid reports that Sharif might return home possibly by next month to lead Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's campaign in the general polls in Pakistan.

The President told the elected representatives that the government would raise the issue of Sharif brothers' return in violation of the agreement with Saudi Arabia. "The Sharifs are bound



to abide by the 'exile' agreement and the Saudi government will be approached in this connection."

Sharif, who was ousted in a military coup in 1999, has denied entering into any deal with the government, which required his family members to stay out of the country for at least ten years. But, the government insists that he had signed the 'exile' pact in exchange for a presidential pardon.

However, Musharraf told the ruling party heavyweights that self-exiled former Premier Benazir would only be allowed to return to the country after general elections. "There's no possibility of her return before the polls." ■

(Dawn)

Dhaka city life returns to normalcy

Life in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka has returned to normalcy on Sunday since further relaxation of the curfew announced by the government on Saturday.

Some vendors who are selling vegetables in a market of Dhaka told Xinhua that they have enough goods to meet the demand of customers.

They said most of the vegetables' prices are getting lower comparing with the first one or two days when the curfew was imposed.

"As the curfew is only imposed

at night, so our business is not affected by the daytime," one vendor said, adding that so the police is now helping to transport the kitchen goods from different districts to Dhaka in an attempt to make sure the market in the capital has sufficient goods to meet the demand of city dwellers.

The Bangladeshi caretaker government announced on Saturday that they would impose a curfew only for 6 hours per day starting from 11:00 p.m. local time on Sunday night.

While addressing the nation on Wednesday, Chief Adviser

Fakhruddin Ahmed said, "the curfew is a temporary measure. It will be lifted if the situation improves."

The three-day students movement starting on Monday in Dhaka University caused one person killed and hundreds of others injured.

The government imposed a curfew in capital Dhaka and some other cities since then, and closed all the public universities and colleges in this cities.

(people's Daily Online)



Aboriginal dreamscapes and animal spirit guides

Silence has its own chaos, its own music and sounds.



■ Sanchita Sinha Roy

celebrations and silences. I appreciate the fact that silence has its own chaos, its own music and its own sounds.

Sometimes I would travel for days with just the horizon in front of me. Except for the painting 'My Animal Spirit Guides' all the other paintings are done with earthy reds, browns, oranges, blacks and whites - this is because the range of colours comprised of such colours. Aboriginal art uses earth colours. Why? These are the colours of the desert. Aboriginal artists

I have never been to Australia so I have no idea as to why I should have dreamt about these Australian aboriginals and their symbols. Perhaps I will understand their significance some day. Aboriginal people are indigenous Australians. They tell stories in words and pictures about how the world began. They call this Dreamtime. Their stories are called Dreamings. The Australian Aborigines pay great attention to the dream state as they believe they are spiritual messages from their ancestors who are a part of nature.

This harmony between human existence and other natural things was expressed by Silas Roberts, first Chairman of the Northern Land Council, as: "Aboriginals see themselves as part of nature. We see all things natural as part of us. All the things on Earth we see as part human. This is told through the ideas of dreaming. By dreaming we mean the belief that long ago, these creatures started human society. These creatures,



made their paints from natural materials from the desert.

A common creature featured in all the paintings is the snake or serpent. This reptile for most seem to denote negativity but be rest assured that the snake or serpent in all my paintings signify new life, rebirth, change, and a new beginning. Mythological, in almost all cultures ranging from the Mayan, Egyptian, Greek, Mexican, Roman, Welsh, Russian, Indian and aboriginal, the serpent signifies regeneration as the snake is the only animal that rejuvenates and regenerates itself by shedding its skin.

Briefly, the animals are representations of messages for example: turtle/tortoise signifies longevity, wisdom and knowledge, fish denotes strength, agility and speed, moth/butterfly means metamorphosis, change, progress, a new beginning and



lizard is a metaphor for patience and flexibility.

A hieroglyph for water is often a zigzag or wavy line representing waves of the sea or water signifying the water spirit. The waves always almost signify and are compared to a moving serpent. The serpent is often known as the great and powerful spirit and water a symbol of the unfathomable truth and wisdom. The serpent is often known as the great and powerful spirit and thus invariably identified as an alternative sign for the same idea thus becoming the symbol of water mother, a great spirit, celestial wisdom and perfect power.

Some of the aboriginal symbols I had done in my initial hospital sketches without understanding their meanings, which I later looked up, signified a lot. It would seem fit to define these dreams in medical terms by using psychological reasoning and terminology such as hallucinatory images, illusionary perceptions, and subconscious imagery and so on. However, I would prefer to treat these moments as experiences that helped me



and edged me on to recovery.

Precisely nine paintings have been done in this series using pen and ink and acrylics on cartridge and handmade paper. These paintings are basically a record of what I saw in my dreams while I was very ill a few years ago. I will not be doing such styles of paintings again as my dreams had been instrumental in guiding these paintings, and I no longer have such dreams.

When the body is weak for long periods, there may be times when the mind weakens; but I would like to say that these experiences were very real to me. I lived through them and I survived as a result of them. I can truly say that the mind and body have an amazing will to heal by itself.

(Sanchita, 44, painter and writer currently works from her studio at Gurgaon, Haryana, India. She can be reached at: sanchitasroy@gmail.com and sanchitasroy@yahoo.com;



these great creatures are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature as we are. Our connection to all things natural is spiritual."

In many of my dreams I was always constantly on the move, travelling from one place to another, from one destination to another. It was as if I was familiar with the landscapes and the horizons but needed a little guidance. Often animals would guide me, sometimes it would be plants. I never really had conversations with the people that I met in my travels but they shared food and water with me and I took part in their rituals, dances, songs,



Marshland Flowers

Shila is important because if followed properly it cools the mind...A mind beset by Klesha (emotional defilements and neurotic tendencies) cannot attain Samadhi.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

A cool mind is relaxed and open to the suffering of humans and aware of ones own human weaknesses. Such a mind cannot be critical but understanding and helpful. I would like to elucidate a story of Zen Master Bankei. There was one a thieving monk in his monastery. This had been brought to his notice many times but besides telling the monk not to steal etc. he did not take any action to punish the monk.

This kept on going for quite a while until all the other monks in the monastery were fed up. One day they caught the monk red-handed and took him to the master. But again he did not seem to take any strict action. So all the monks got together and went to the master and told him in no uncertain terms that either he kicks the monk out from the monastery or the rest of them were going to leave the monastery. But to their utter surprise, the master said, "Ok if all the rest of you would like to leave you are free to leave." They were all shocked to say the least.

After they recovered from the shock, they asked the master, "How can you possibly drive out monks like us who have adhered strictly to the Shila while taking the side of a thieving monk?" Osho Bankei coolly replied, "You are all excellent monks who maintained your Bhikchhu Shila very well and can easily maintain them anywhere you go. So you all will be able to survive easily anywhere you go but this poor kleptomaniac will not be able to adjust anywhere, so if I don't keep him who will keep him?"

This is the result of a mind that has opened to the suffering of others due to having maintained his Shila. Osho Bankei was able to empathise with the kleptomaniac monk, just like the Shasta (Master) empathised with Angulimala, who had already murdered 999 humans and strung their fingers in a garland. The Buddha's mind did not get heated up (perturbed) when he came to know about Angulimala. He remained calm and cool (Shila) and he empathised with the human situation of Angulimala. As a result, Angulimala became an Arhat himself.

Shila is important because if followed properly it cools the mind. A cool mind is the stepping stone to the next Shikchya called Samadhi. A mind beset by Klesha (emotional defilements and neurotic tendencies) cannot attain Samadhi. That is why Shila is the cornerstone of all of Buddhism. Although all the three Shikchyas (trainings) are emphasised in all forms of Buddhism, it is often said that the Theravada system of South and Southeast Asia is better known for its special emphasis on Shila; Tibet is better known for its special emphasis on Pragya while China is better known for its special emphasis on Samadhi.

Chinese Buddhism has historically been well known for Samadhi till today, Tibetan Buddhism for the development of Pragya in all its three levels (Srutamayi, Chintamayi and Bhavanamayi) and the Theravadin tradition for laying great emphasis on Shila. This does not, of course, mean that there is no Shila or Samadhi in the Tibetan system or no Pragya and Shila in the Chinese system, no Pragya and Samadhi in the Theravada system. We are talking about the emphasis given to one of the three Shila in terms of the historical direction the system took. (To be continued.)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

Tiger from inner forest



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

The tiger is patient.
The tiger is prowling in Thamel.
The tiger is stalking
the cur dogs that whimper
the mastiff that cowers
the loins of the buff
the throat of the sheep
the tiger in shadow and stealth
as Rimal foresaw, is unleashed,
and violence is sprung in the glades
of the shuddering streets. - Robin Metz

American poet Robin Metz's poem deals with the political upheaval of contemporary Nepal. The fact that this remains his first poem about Nepal and evokes the vision of Nepalese poet Gopal Prasad Rimal appears more intriguing. Robin's first impression of this once famed Shangri-La is vivid, violent and awesome. This seems the typical response of a sensitive visitor who enters the valley to the chaotic roar of the violent demonstrations in the streets of Thamel.

In fact that's not what had moved Robin to come to Nepal. He had wanted to meet the shamans of Nepal and expressed his desire to witness the mystery of the renowned Himalayan kingdom. Another friend British poet Pascale Petit had expressed a similar desire. The moment I mentioned the shamans, she leapt up like a livid flame and booked her flights. I wonder what impression she will have when she comes here.

That Nepal carries in its image this dual image of a place of political turbulence and shamanic mystery seems a matter of little concern to political analysts. A segment of the outer world sees Nepal from a different angle, an angle that media in Nepal in specific and south Asia in generally dismisses as irrelevant and awkward. Normally Nepali media also sees shamanism as pure nonsense, more of witchcraft than a spiritual discipline and psychotherapy. It is disheartening to see scores of reports and news highlights that describe shamans as evil witch doctors.

A regular reader of Nepali newspapers will often find such news about shamans as evil agents propagating blind faith and superstition. Often there are reports of a shaman being hounded in the villages. The other day I saw as breaking news on an Indian TV channel portraying a practicing shaman as the most fraudulent thing ever seen on this earth. The news reporter described the shaman as a fake sadhu trying to outwit the illiterate victims by pretending to be a snake spirit or a monkey spirit.

The problem is that the western education that concentrates only on the body refuses to see the role of soul in healing the human body. And oddly enough the fact that the same western world in recent years has slowly started seeing shamanism as a great discipline is no news to the ignorant media I described above.

In addition to introducing Nepali writers and poets to Robin and Pascale, my foremost job at the moment also remains finding shamans if any left hiding in some dark caves and corners of the Himalayas. People including my family members give me strange looks as I make inquiries about the whereabouts of these first spiritual leaders of humanity hidden in the heart of the Himalayan forest.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)



Watch out for signs

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

I worry that my teenager boy might be into drugs. How do I know the truth?

■ Mrs. Mandira, Sunakoti.

Parents often complain that they had no idea that their teenagers were drinking or using drugs. That is usually because they have been oblivious to the telltale hints all around them. By watching out for some signs, you can prevent this from happening to you.

The nose knows: If your teenage son breezes into the house after a night out; make a point of having a conversation with him – without shouting. Try and have a normal face-to-face conversation. If your child has been drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana, the smell will be on his breath. You should also be suspicious if your son enters the house chewing gum, or smelling of freshly applied perfume. He most probably is trying to cover up a telltale smell.

Take a closer look: Pay attention to your children's eyes since they tend to reveal any substance use. If they have been smoking marijuana, their eyes will be red, heavy lidded, with constricted pupils. If they have been drinking alcohol, their pupils will be dilated, and they may have difficulty focusing on you. In addition, alcohol has the effect of giving a red, flushed color to face. Intravenous drug use leaves track marks, usually on the arms. Wearing long sleeves in scorching hot summer heat may be an attempt to hide something.

Mood changes: How are the teenagers acting after the night out? Are they loud, rude or laughing hysterically? You should be on the lookout for unusual or extreme behaviour.

Something is going on if they have become silent, angry, withdrawn and uncommunicative; and this has lasted for at least a few weeks. They may get angry if you try to reach out, and they will insist that you leave them alone.

Deceit or secretive ways: Suddenly you find your normally honest child lying to you all the time. Her evening and weekend plans are starting to sound a little fishy. And she seems to have a seemingly endless line of excuses to justify her behavior. Even if you find evidence of substance use; she has someone or something else to place the blame on. When excuses fail, she will respond to your inquiries by telling you that it is none of your business.

Decreased motivation: Your child's grades start falling and there is no obvious reason for it. He gives you a weak explanation and assures you he can handle the situation, but he does not. He may be skipping school and spending less and less time on his homework; and he appears to be losing interest in other activities as well. Not putting in any effort in studies is a sign to watch out for.

Missing money or valuables: Those who want to buy drugs or alcohol will steal from their parents' wallets, and also steal valuables like jewelry and other things from the house.

Change in friends: You notice that your teenager is suddenly hanging out with a different group of friends. Perhaps these new friends are older and more independent, with less parental supervision and less interest in school. Whatever the case, your teen will probably defend her new choice in friends, saying her new friends are more fun and understanding.

Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



Water vessels in a Mro house, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh



Bollywood actor Salman Khan surrounded by police personnel on his way to the court



Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt acknowledges photographers before leaving his residence

SALMAN KHAN prisoner no 343

Salman Khan, one of Bollywood's top actors on Saturday became "prisoner no 343" at the Jodhpur Central Jail after he was arrested and jailed for five years for hunting an endangered chinkara deer in 1998.

Salman, 41, looked subdued and was mostly quiet as policemen took him into custody on his arrival from Mumbai by a Jet Airways flight and rushed him in a police jeep to a courtroom before sending him to jail.

The dramatic jailing, which drew hundreds of his fans to the court and the prison complex, came a day after a district court upheld the five-year jail term given to Salman by a lower court.

Salman has been convicted of poaching a chinkara deer at the Ghoda farm near Jodhpur on the night of September 28, 1998 while filming Sooraj Barjatya's blockbuster *Hum Saath Saath Hain*.

Jail sources told that Salman had been sent to barrack no 1.5, where the hugely popular actor had spent three nights in April 2006 before he got bail. Giving him company is Mahesh, who was with Salman during his first jail also.

Jail officials said Salman may be a celebrity but he would wear the white prison dress like everyone else and get no special treatment.

"We will follow the Jail Manual strictly and no additional (facilities) will be provided to Salman," senior jail official Ota Ram said.

The actor, Ram said, would be allowed to meet three people in 15 days.

"His food would also be similar to what is given to other jail inmates," the official said. Other sources said this would mostly be chapatis and lentils. But since the actor had been sentenced to undergo "simple imprisonment", he would not have to do any hard labour.

When he landed in Jodhpur, Salman was dressed in a white T-shirt, jeans and sporting sunglasses. Accompanying him were his brother Sohail, bodyguard Shera and his counsel Dipesh Mehta.

A large number of journalists and fans gathered at the airport and later outside the court and jail to catch a glimpse of the star. The police had a tough time controlling the crowds.

"We took him into custody and took him to court, which ordered that the actor be taken to Jodhpur Central Jail," a police official told. Salman is the second Bollywood star to be jailed in a span of a month. Sanjay Dutt spent 23 nights in Mumbai and Pune prisons after being convicted under the Arms

Act in the 1993 Mumbai bombings. He is currently out on bail.

Although the killing of the deer by Salman and his friends had evoked widespread revulsion, there was no dearth of Salman lovers on Saturday.

"He is my hero and is suffering because of his celebrity status," insisted Rupali Singh, a college student who described herself an ardent devotee of the Bollywood actor.

According to legal experts, Salman will have to spend at least two nights in jail as the court does not sit on Saturday and Sunday too is a holiday. Any bail plea can be taken up only on Monday.

However, Salman's lawyers Saturday filed a revision petition in the Rajasthan High Court on Saturday.

His counsel Hastimal Saraswat said: "We have filed a revision petition in the high court. Though the court does not sit on Saturday but the court office is open, so we are filing the petition today.

"We will also plead for

his bail when the court hears our petition," he added. The actor had earlier told reporters outside his Mumbai home: "I have full faith in the law of the land and I will abide by (its ruling). I am going to Jodhpur to surrender."

The district and sessions court in Jodhpur on Friday dismissed the actor's plea against the five-year jail term handed by the chief judicial magistrate's court.

In April last year, Salman had filed an appeal in the district and sessions court against the judgment of the lower court in Jodhpur.

The court had found Salman guilty under Section 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. He had spent three nights in Jodhpur Central Jail before the district and sessions court gave him bail.

On Friday, district and sessions judge Kamal Raj Singhvi rejected his appeal and upheld the five-year jail term and the fine. The judge also issued an arrest warrant against him.

The star of hit films like *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* failed to appear for the hearing on Friday, saying he had missed the flight to Jodhpur from Hyderabad where he was shooting. However, his sister Alvira was in the court.

A case was registered against Salman and five others under the Indian Penal Code, the Wildlife Protection Act and the Indian Arms Act October 11, 1998.

(IANS)

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