



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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King Gyanendra stands among a crowd of commoners outside Norvic Hospital at Thapathali on Thursday where Crown Prince Paras is undergoing treatment following an angioplasty performed in the hospital.

KP for monarchy

The only surviving NC founder refuses to go republic

■ **nf correspondent**

In a move that might act as a morale booster for those supporting B P Koirala's policy of national reconciliation within the Nepali Congress, party's only surviving founder member K B Bhattarai said that alone will safeguard Nepal's nationalism, independence and democracy.

Issuing a statement on the eve of B P Koirala's 90th birth anniversary, Bhattarai said that a prolonged differences between the king and the democratic forces will only weaken the country and its opportunities to prosper, clearly asserting that a republican Nepal was much against everything that the Congress party stood all along. That also means he remains opposed to the dictate G P Koirala gave to the Congress party manifesto committee that the party should go republic.

"Late BP Koirala and Ganeshman Singh came back to Nepal from India in 1976 ending their eight-year long exile with the call for national reconciliation. They were clear in their minds that a prolonged difference between the king and democratic forces will only weaken the Nepali nationalism,

independence and democracy, besides the enormous economic opportunities the country has. Policy of national reconciliation and the spirit it represented is valid even today as it was before. I have no doubt that this will remain valid for quite some time to come. Let us not destroy our history and legacy which generations together have built," said he. In a brief chat with newsfront, Bhattarai hoped that the leaders of the Nepali congress, mainly the central committee members would take a wise decision in the context of our nationalism. A senior central committee member of the party said "we have more than 25 out of the 35

members who feel exactly the way Kishunji has expressed himself"

Bhattarai also had a piece of advice to the king. "Now it is high time to remember again that the

monarchy truly acted as a unifying symbol of diverse religions, culture, ethnic and political groupings within a truly democratic set-up." He said Nepal's transition needs a safe landing which is possible only through unity and reconciliation.

In a Gandhian spirit, he said, "politics of hatred and denial dictated by undemocratic desire of revenge

will only sow seeds of disintegration in the country, and it is our responsibility to defeat those designs together. Let us be guided by our lessons of the past and collective thoughts for future, and not by anything else including republicanism."

He said the country is passing through an unprecedented crisis. "Any such crisis will demand collective wisdom and dedication on the part of

the people so that it does not sweep away everything that makes Nepal," he said, adding; political parties, especially the Nepali Congress has a crucial role to play as a true representative of the people. "As a founder member of the party, I am proud to state that our party has always stood in favour of nationalism, independence and democracy against all odds right from the day it was founded." ■

"Let us not destroy our history and legacy which generations together have built."

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Army's warning

Maoists may sabotage elections, but we will protect democracy

■ nf correspondent

The Nepal Army fears that the Maoists are active to sabotage elections to the constituent assembly scheduled in November. This was the dominant view, based on 'information-based' assessment of the existing situation at a top-level meeting of the army officers in the capital recently.

The meeting attended by about 17 senior generals, commandants of the regions and those based in the headquarters, was near unanimous that the activities of the Young Communist League (YCL), directly under control and guidance of party chief Prachanda, were clearly aimed at creating a situation in which holding polls on November 22 would not be possible.

There was anger expressed over home minister K P Sitaula's activities that encouraged the YCL and Maoists to do whatever they liked and at the same time, "demoralised the army and cast it in a poor light." The participating officials also expressed grave concerns over the existing law and order situation, quite inadequate for conduct of the polls.

The army's latest assessment follows the bombing incident last week. It suspects Maoists' hands in



the serial explosions in the capital in which three people, including two school girls were killed, and more than two dozens wounded.

The meeting was also unanimous that it would be happy to play any role assigned for successful and impartial conduct of elections, should the government so desire. Army's offer to play a role in the election comes in the wake of more and more leaders, including Purna Bahadur Khadka of Nepali Congress-D, Pradeep Nepal and Mahendra Pandey (both UML), demanding that they should be deployed for election purpose as in the past. The agreement between the government, Maoists and the

United Nations special office, UNMIN, however, makes it mandatory for army to be kept in the barracks until the peace process is completed.

"We have been honouring this. But the Maoists have already violated this undertaking as a sizeable number of their combatants are out in action in the guise of YCL," a general told newsfront. But the army also made it a point to deliver a message to the prime minister (who is also the defense minister), that said, "you will consider using the status and strength of the Nepal army to protect country's sovereignty and independence besides consolidating democratic system in the country."

Election vs. no election

Whom to trust: PM or Prachanda on the fate of the election?

■ nf correspondent

As count-down for the polls begin and the election commission gears up for the final preparations, there are still doubts if at all the election to the constituent assembly will take place on November 22.

The conflicting stance between PM Koirala and Maoist chief Prachanda over the fate of the election has triggered the uncertainty given a series of instances in the past where almost invariably, the PM conceded to the wishes of the Maoists. "That only means election will take place on schedule if Koirala agrees to declare Nepal a republic in the next few weeks, or before the process of nomination begins," a member of the Congress central committee said, adding, "I am not sure if Koirala and Maoists have struck such a deal already."

Prachanda made his remarks more strident in Nepalgunj on Saturday when he insisted that the election in November would only be an exercise in futility if held without declaring Nepal a

republic, and asked his party cadres to go for an agitation to stall such a drama. His call for agitation also comes as a challenge to the home minister who has been instructing security officials to act sternly against any person or groups if found indulging in activities that will disturb the atmosphere for election.

"We are very upset with these developments. We have been asking the political party leaders to promote an atmosphere for healthy polls," one of the election commissioners told newsfront.

The EC on its part is busy dispatching election materials beginning with ballot-boxes to approximately 9,000 polling booths. It has finalised the list of returning officers and is engaged in regular consultations with the government on security arrangements to be made. "But the commission has not been able to issue the model code of conduct because the government has not been able to make necessary key appointments within the time frame that the commission has given," the commissioner said.

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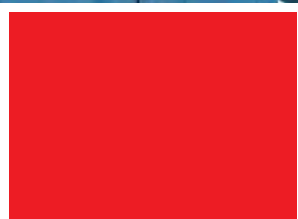
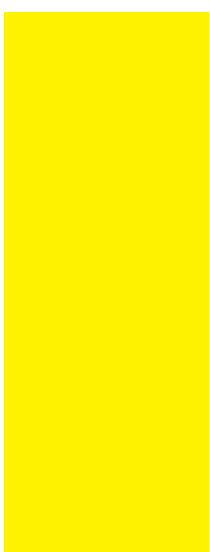
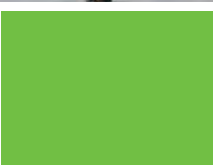
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Newsbrief

Bizarre politics

Anandi Devi, Chief of Nepal Sadhbhavana Party (NSP) and widow of its founder leader, late Gajendra Narayan Singh, has become not only an object of amusement in the coalition politics but there are also indications that she might soon be suspended from the post. The party is likely to adopt a resolution expressing lack of confidence in her leadership.

The latest round of development was triggered by her recommendations to PM Koirala, the second in less than a month's time, to remove Rajendra Mahato from the cabinet. Industries and commerce minister, Mahato represents her party in the cabinet. But Koirala refused to act on her recommendation following information that the "simple village woman" was being used by certain leaders or factions of the party.

Mahato and Hridayesh Tripathi are pitted against each other in the NSP politics, and there are indications that the party may soon split with the two factions parting their ways. On Saturday, Koirala even refused to see Anandi Devi who had gone to Baluwatar along with some anti-Mahato group leaders to plead that he should be dropped from the cabinet right away.

Sarita Giri, the party's spokesperson said, "given the fact that she was acting against the interest of the party, a no-confidence motion has been moved in the party and appropriate actions would follow on that."



Paras fine

Crown prince Paras who underwent an emergency coronary angioplasty last week in Norvic Hospital is stable and fine. According to the hospital sources, he will be discharged any time now as his progress is satisfactory. He spent the first three days in the coronary care unit (CCU).

He was admitted to the hospital on Thursday following chest pains. Subsequent tests revealed that one of the arteries had 95 per cent blockage leading to circulatory problems. Dr Bharat Raut led the team of surgeon that conducted angioplasty.

Hosts of visitors and well wishers visited the hospital to wish him speedy recovery. Except former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai and former speaker Taranath Bhattarai, none of the senior leaders from the current ruling coalition visited him.



Caught lying

Education and those who have excelled in the field do not appear to mean much for PM Koirala. The event on Saturday showed how less he cared for them and the day also caught him lying.

Koirala, in his capacity as the 'officiating head of the state' and ex-officio Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, skipped a function at the last minute while students and academicians who earned their Ph.D., those excelling in their bachelors and master's degree examination results, were waiting to receive 'Vidhya Bhushan Award' from him. The ceremony used to be conducted by the king in the previous years.

As a result, 33 out of 75 Ph.D. holders refused to receive the award from the education minister Pradeep Nepal saying it was an insult for them, not so much because the PM did not show up, but because he lied to cancel the programme at the last minute. They said that while they were told that he could not come because of ill health, he was actually busy meeting a diplomat in Baluwatar palace then. But the government took a tough line against the 33 Ph. D degree holders saying they could collect their awards any time from the ministry.



Country without CJ

Parliamentary committee takes time to decide on new Chief Justice

■ nf correspondent

Nepal goes without chief justice as the parliamentary committee in charge of confirming CJ designate Kedar Prasad Giri felt the need to grill him over some of the 'controversial judgments' he made.

The 28-member special committee of parliament discussed and debated the findings of a nine-member sub-committee which looked into some of the major complaints against Giri's elevation. The committee on Sunday decided to invite Giri on Tuesday for his explanations on at least three major rulings that he delivered as a judge in the past.

They include endorsement of the government action in curtailing rights of the FM radios to broadcast news and current affairs programme during the royal regime and exonerating one industrial house in the tax-default case related with Mahalakshmi Sugar mill. Giri is also likely to be asked about the circumstances in which he was physically assaulted by one person last year in retaliation to a judgment that he delivered.

But all these delays had a toll on the functioning of the Supreme Court as the apex judiciary went without a leader. In fact, committee members appeared sharply divided over Giri's appointment and the understanding that emerged, was in favour of interrogating him in some controversial cases besides asking him about his plan to make judiciary more accessible, transparent and worthy of people's trust.

The new experiment with the country's judiciary also leaves one major question unanswered. Will Giri continue to serve as the judge if the committee refuses to confirm him? "It is a gray area. There is a moral question involved. But the law is silent on this," a prominent lawyer said.

Besides, completing on the hearing on the CJ appointment case, the first after the interim constitution has come into effect, the committee will take up the cases of appointment of the ambassadors as well as the chairman and members of the National Human Rights Commission. Some members of the committee are unhappy with the nomination of Shailaja Acharya as ambassador to India on the ground that she was too soft on the king after he took over power in February 2005.



Avoid Par hearing : Dhawan

An eminent constitutional expert from India has warned that the system of parliamentary confirmation for appointment of Supreme Court judges in Nepal will not be a healthy practice towards promotion of independent judiciary.

Dr Rajeev Dhawan who is here to participate in debates and discussions on independence of judiciary in a federal set-up said, "to say a judge should go before the house committee is like throwing baby out with bath water."

"Ask anything about public and private life of the judge, grill him on anything, there is no end to it," Dr Dhawan said amidst applause from the members of the bar. "Entire process has the danger of a political witch-hunt." Interestingly, Chief Justice designate Kedar Prasad Giri was sharing the dais with Dr Dhawan along with Bar Association chief Vishwa Kanta Mainali, attorney general Y M Banjare and advocate Prakash Rawal.

Congress groups fail BP

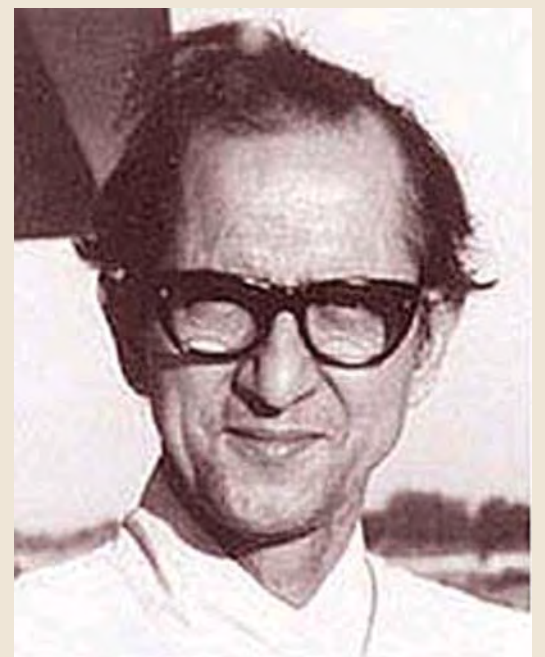
■ nf correspondent

The long expected unity between the two Nepali Congress groups could not materialise on the birth anniversary of BP Koirala on September 10, a deadline set earlier for the purpose.

The unity was to come as an offering to the memory of the late leader, a week after his brother GP Koirala decided to dispense with the policy of conciliation that envisaged a constitutional king and Congress party working under an understanding. Koirala has already instructed that the Nepali Congress should go republic through its manifesto which is in the process of being written.

The failure to unite on the occasion was largely because of some hitches that have still not been sorted out. According to one of the members of the task force, chiefs of party units in 12 districts are yet to be decided. Similarly, the share of the two parties on the frontal organisations like Nepal Vidyarthi Sangh, Tarun Dal, Mahila Sangh and Labour Front of the party still need to be sorted out. "It might still take about a week for a formal unification. But things are moving in the right direction," the member said.

Both G P Koirala and Congress-D chief Sher Bahadur Deuba agreed to have Sushil Koirala as the working chief of the party, but below Deuba in the party hierarchy. Similarly, an agreement has already been made on who will be the vice presidents,



general secretaries and senior office bearers of the unified party.

The two sides have also agreed to have an enlarged central committee, but the two top leaders, G P Koirala and Deuba will be appointing the supreme body which will decide on the selection of candidates for the forthcoming election to the constituent assembly.



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Point to Ponder

Unity to be real must stand the severest strain without breaking.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Purpose of unity

Splits and reunions are regular features in Nepal's politics. Those responsible for a split almost always find imaginative explanations with an ideological façade and they are quick to come out with equally idealist explanations behind the need for a re-union.

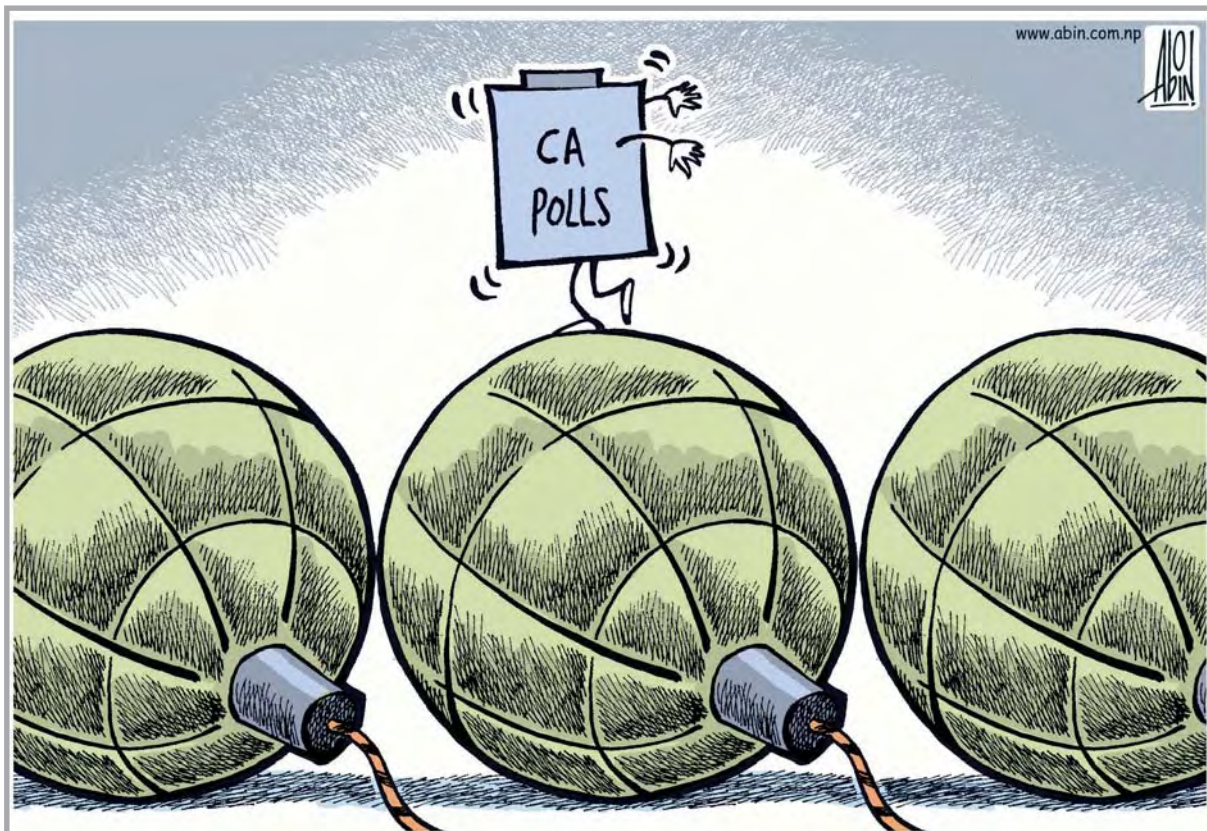
Two parties, Nepali Congress and the Nepali-congress (D) have once again come out with statements, heavily loaded in favour of democracy, saying they are taking this constructive move to save the country and democracy and they are going to leave their past behind.

Ironically, personal as well as ideological differences between G P Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba, initiators of the present unity move, had led to the split in the United Nepali Congress five years ago. Koirala, as chief of the party, was trying to dictate the government led by Deuba, and the latter, fearing Koirala would expel him from the party making his continuation as Prime Minister impossible, recommended dissolution of parliament in a surprise move. The political crisis and vacuum that followed, and the cost that the nation had to pay were painful.

There are many forces both inside and outside the country that argue that consolidation of pro-democracy forces alone can checkmate the rise of authoritarianism, be it in the form of absolute monarchy, or Maoist one party dictatorship in the country. But the unity at the top level of the two parties will be meaningless without real commitment and without a permanent machinery to address the root issues of the split in the party. The separation of jurisdiction as well as the area of coordination between the party and the government has to be clearly defined.

One major reason for that is clash of personality, and it will cease to play a destructive role only if the united party encourages inner party democracy and promotes grass root leaders instead of sycophants. Can Koirala, as leader of the united party, act like a democrat? Too much concentration of power as the head of the government, head of the party and also his appropriating the role of head of the state - are clear indications that his lust for power have little or no parallel in the history of Nepal, perhaps with the exception of Jung Bahadur Rana, the founder of the oligarchy.

This unity would only be a travesty in the name of consolidation of democratic forces if the swollen strength of the united party would be confined to making more or bigger claims of share in power. This unity will only mean something, if it successfully leads the country to a meaningful and functional democracy where people will not only elect their government in a free and fearless atmosphere, but will also have a much larger say; and where the political parties will truly act as people's representative bodies.



Letters

Say no to party authoritarianism

With Nepali Congress embracing "federal democratic republic" as their objective, a Rubicon has been passed in Nepali politics. While this clears up the confusion and paves way for the elections, it also sounds the death-knell for a truly free and fair election, and hence a just peace in this country.

If the three major parties are all for republic, it is unlikely any other smaller parties will root for any form of monarchy, or that they will be effective even if they do. This means that the election is going to be a choice-less election. The people will have to vote for a republic out of compulsion. What is this if not a farce?

What's the point of having an election if there is no real choice? The people, the large and silent majority, supported the election believing that the political candidates would represent our views in the constituent assembly.

Now the politicians' views and agendas are being forced down on us, and we're being asked to rubber-stamp it. There is no option now but to have a referendum on the monarchy concurrently with the elections. If we allow this farcical election to take place as it is, then the politicians will forever rule "new Nepal" in a farcical manner. If one illegitimate and unjust act is allowed to pass, more are bound to follow.

In order to teach the parties, once and for all, that they are here to represent our views, not to force theirs on us; to teach them that we did not fight the king's authoritarianism to be replaced by theirs; and to teach them that sovereignty in this land belongs truly and only to the people, not to the parties, we have to root for a referendum now to decide the fate of the monarchy.

Satyajeet Nepali
Kathmandu.



Kudos to Limbu

R D Limbu's presentation of the current political as well as social situation and realities of present day Nepal was a very powerful expression and articulation of the realities. He deserves all praise for putting forth his views, in the form of a subtle warning to the rulers that they should not behave like Dhritarashtra of Mahabharat epic.

This also could be a reference article for most of those who have been writing on the political as well as ethnic issues, that you can be objective, to the point and powerful without being virulently communal. I hope to see Mr. Limbu more often in the newsfront column.

Asha Choudhary
Kathmandu.

Why main news?

Newsfront seems to be advocating for continuation of monarchy in one or the other form. Otherwise, how could G P Koirala's instruction to his party's manifesto committee chief make the main news (dumping BP Koirala, issue 32) of the paper?

Political parties have often trusted and in return, been cheated by the kings one after another. However, I feel that the present leaders including GP Koirala who contested and won election in the name of 'multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy' in the past elections must step aside for new leadership within the Nepali Congress who by conviction, is pro-republican.

It is Narahari Acharya who has been advocating the pro-republican slogan within the party almost for six years now, and Koirala will actually be proving his democratic credentials if he steps down and gives space to people like Narahari.

Ramesh Uprety
Kathmandu.

Spiritual Corner

Your true home is in the here and the now.

Thich Nhat Hanh has been living in exile from his native country Vietnam since the age of forty. A Buddhist monk since the age of sixteen, he earned a reputation as a respected writer, scholar, and leader. He championed a movement known as "engaged Buddhism," which intertwined traditional meditative practices with active nonviolent civil disobedience. This movement lay behind the establishment of the most influential center of Buddhist studies in Saigon, the An Quang Pagoda.

He lives in exile in a small community in France where he teaches, writes, gardens, and works to help refugees worldwide. When Thich Nhat Hanh left Vietnam, he embarked

on a mission to spread Buddhist thought around the globe. In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Hanh's Buddhist delegation to the Paris peace talks resulted in accords between North Vietnam and the United States, but his pacifist efforts did not end with the war. He also helped organise rescue missions well into the 1970's for Vietnamese trying to escape political oppression.

He teaches respect for life, generosity, responsible sexual behavior, loving communication and cultivation of a healthful life style. He gathers people of diverse nationalities,



and concentration, the energies of the Buddha, you can find your true home in the full relaxation of your mind and body in the present moment. No one can take it away from you. Other people can occupy your country, they can even put you in prison, but they cannot take away your true home and your freedom." -Returning Home

Quotes by Thich Nhat Hanh:
"The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment, to appreciate the peace and beauty that are available now." - Touching Peace

"Your true home is in the here and the now. It is not limited by time, space, nationality, or race. Your true home is not an abstract idea. It is something you can touch and live in every moment. With mindfulness

and concentration, the energies of the Buddha, you can find your true home in the full relaxation of your mind and body in the present moment. No one can take it away from you. Other people can occupy your country, they can even put you in prison, but they cannot take away your true home and your freedom." -Returning Home

"If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. If we really know how to live, what better way to start the day than with a smile? Our smile affirms our awareness and determination to live in peace and joy. The source of a true smile is an awakened mind." - Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Nepal, at the moment has escaped a debate whether it is failing or a failed state. But political pundits have begun fearing the worst. Nepal perhaps qualifies to be listed as a 'captured state' where some powerful personalities and groups or parties have monopolised or captured the state power as well as privileges without people's mandate.

Any differences or quarrels among those who have captured power at the moment is not so much because they are opposed to it, but simply because they want an increased dose of power, perhaps at the cost of other partners. The government is purely running on a contract system where principle of collective responsibility or accountability has become the casualty. It is a weird system of politics and governance where government's powers have been clandestinely transferred to political parties or individuals and their decisions are final. Personalities are getting stronger at the cost of the institutions.

With elections to the constituent assembly around the corner, the government is hardly bothered about maintaining law and order. Instead, the home minister has been given sole monopoly over the institution of the police and the armed police force. Similarly, cabinet or the prime minister would have no right to interfere in what Hishila Yami will be doing on Melamchi. Almost all the government hospitals and their management, top level recruitment as well as transfer are in the sole hands of Giriraj Mani Pokharel and Shashi Shrestha, the ministers who represent Jana Morcha.

The most classic example of this contract system that has surfaced, in the so far incomplete attempt to appoint secretaries to the government departments is that; each party prepared a list of 'loyalists' from among the bureaucrats. Assessment of their pro-people credentials, efficiency or performance was not at all the criteria for considering their promotion. Jamuna Krishna Shrestha, the senior-most joint secretary, tendered his resignation from the post after he got to know that he did not figure in any of the political parties' list for promotion. The fact that he did not act as a politician, and only acted as a bureaucrat went against him at the end of his career. Yet, he showed guts that bureaucrats rarely display.

Maoists did not behave differently from the Congress and the UML during several rounds of meetings and lobbying, for who they thought were their loyalists, for filling up the posts of ambassadors and commissioners for the National Human Rights Commission. Such a brazen appropriation of the authority and power of the states by individuals and political parties weakens the state, and may become the cause of its fragmentation in the long run.

Maoist Chief Prachanda has declared that the Kangaroo Courts have been reactivated. KB Mahara, the government spokesperson as well as the Maoist leader in the cabinet, is in favour of such parallel private courts' effective existence. On the other hand, parliament's special committee is now going through the process of hearing chief justice's appointment case. Naturally, and justifiably, Maoist legislators are a part of this committee. But conducting parallel courts under their parties violating the authority of the state, and having a substantial say in appointing the chief justice of the country's legitimate apex court is ridiculous and a contradictory exercise in any country allegedly practicing democracy.

When ruling parties appear more in

Captured State



Might is right has already become the mantra for the key political players and the parties.

■ Yubaraj Ghimire

favour of going republic than having a constitutional monarchy; it obviously means putting the king under an effective control of law. Might is right has already become the mantra for the key political players and the parties. The state has totally abdicated its role and responsibility to the private political parties and the gang of eight that rules through the coalition now.

As a result, the country is moving towards a civil war. Parties are defying the traditional and constitutional norms of exercising power with responsibility and accountability. In absence of involvement of the people in the business of political parties, their chiefs are gradually turning into tribal chieftains and acting like one, some even questioning the basis of integration of the society. That is just one step before the era of war-lordism begins.

Strangely enough, absence of rules and refusal on the part of the government leaders to adhere to established norms do not raise eyebrows of the international community anymore. Instead, they have resorted to the politics of appeasement of the national players, and in a way, recognised their way of governance. There has been no concern expressed over the threat that an independent judiciary is facing over a period, or about unfair trial and persecution by the state, through its regular agencies, or the ones created for a particularly motivated purpose.

The home minister has now admitted publicly that there were some lapses on the part of the commission in recommending action against two officials, the then CDO of Dang and Superintendent of Police of Jhapa. But it was the ministerial committee in which the home minister himself was a member that scrutinised the report and recommendation actions against 201 people including the two, who he now says are innocent.

All this only shows that the state authorities and power under Koirala indulged in a game of unfair persecution. And the international community, mainly the designated UN bodies, which were so dutifully vocal during the king's

regime against the state's persecution campaign, is now mysteriously silent. This indicates that these bodies are as responsible for the current state of mess witnessed in this hijacked country. Hopefully, UN Security Council will soon be taking stock of the situation and the role of its designated agencies in Nepal; so that they could play much more positive and constructive role in retrieving the situation before it is too late.

As of now, UN bodies' silence over these malpractices committed by the state will mean that they have endorsed it. It will also mean that the international system will be fast discredited in the same proportion as the current political dispensation in Nepal.

The first mistake of the international referees as well as the designated UN bodies was to keep mum when the executive began systematically violating the principles of separation of power and independence of judiciary.

Secondly, their silence over the new eight-party regime monopolising every political process by literally excluding the rest of the population has created an impression that the UN system at times endorses policy of persecution as well as exclusion of political minority. And finally, it has not been able to prove itself effective enough in putting pressure on the government to have monitoring committee for an effective evaluation of the peace process as well as the code of conduct.

The outcome of these failures is all the more dangerous and in Nepal's context, it will mean endorsing hijacking of the state apparatus by the high and mighty, with the people having no role in it at all. ■



Learn from world history

Countries adopting step-by-step reforms are found to be more successful

A 12-part documentary on 'The rise of Great Powers' released by the China Central television had attracted a good deal of attention of the global community not only for the contents of the film but also its relevance in the context of China's rise. The CCTV documentary identifies nine big powers as Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United States leaving out Italy and some others.

The media seems to have tried to support the wishes of Chinese political leaders who wanted to draw lessons for the benefit of China's modernisation. Once dubbed as 'China's peaceful rise,' China's success story is now known as 'China's peaceful development' and also called 'harmonious development'.

Although there is continuing discussions on the 'great powers' film in China, and there are admirers as well as critics on the issue, one of the notable factors of the film for countries like Nepal is the selection of countries included on the series. Many of the countries listed as great powers do not match the population or territorial size of big countries but

yet exerted their influence globally.

The main themes have to do with convergence of various social forces and blending of modernisation with tradition. One of the striking examples of these themes has been cited as Japan's adhering to the emperor system during her modernisation to preserve social order and stability.

Also, it gives a clear message to the world that countries adopting step-by-step reforms are found to be more successful whereas others which introduced radical changes faced setbacks and defeats. Though China and Japan shared similar feudal background, with Japan's road, completely different to China, it led to successful modernisation.

There is no dearth of critics who opine that perhaps the underlying theme of the documentary was to stress the point that economy is the key of all world powers, but without proper political system it can hardly last. China needs to reform in many areas as her rise to become a world power is nearly a reality.

In Nepal today, we seem to be going for radical reforms in many



■ Binod P. Bista

A system must be devised by the members of constituent assembly to involve every common man, especially those who have difficulty in understanding the complicated speeches and manifestos.

areas without properly assessing the impact it could have on the society as a whole. In the name of uprooting feudal mindset, we are trying to adopt a new political system. We are also making efforts to put monarchy away from the national scene without giving due regard to the Japanese lesson.

Since Nepal, too, has to follow a path of modernisation for the benefit of her people, all things must be considered in a careful and serious manner. The onus of building a new Nepal rests with the constituent assembly members who must not only be representative of the entire people of Nepal but also work hard to come up with a constitution. It is needless to state that the new constitution must find a balance between ground realities and pragmatism.

Past lessons offer ample examples that incremental process of development involves all stakeholders and it is long lasting. Whether it is a political system or economic policies or social development, unless the people are at the core of these activities and have a say in the state affairs, any new exercise is bound to fail. People of Nepal did not go to the extent of

sacrificing their lives, enduring sufferings for a long time just to place a select section of leaders at the helm acting irresponsibly.

Constitution making exercise is neither the preserve of legal professionals nor political activists. Economists, social scientists, engineers, doctors and everybody from all professions must take part in it. A system must be devised by the members of constituent assembly to involve every common man, especially those who have difficulty in understanding the complicated speeches and manifestos. The common man alone can make the dreams of a nation come true.

For it to happen, the elections to the constituent assembly must take place in a free and fair atmosphere. When the parties in power express serious doubts in the convening of elections in time in November, what can the people do? Why is not the government functioning as a government to restore stability and order in the country? Why are several groups, associated with political parties now registered for the elections, allowed to carry out illegal and violent activities? Are we serious as a nation? ■

■ Roop Joshi

As they waited for the bus to take them home, their life seeped away in that crowded bus stand. The tapering monsoon gave way to a climate of fear. Terrorism has raised its macabre head amidst us again. It is not the first time; alas, it probably will not be for the last time either. We now struggle to come to terms with the bombings of September 2007 in Kathmandu. Do we accept them as just another symptom of the making of a "New Nepal?" Or do we label them for what they are – attempts to achieve political ends by unacceptable methods of violence against innocent Nepalis?

A few days have passed since the bombings. A few obscure organisations have allegedly taken responsibility for them. The police say they have some suspects. Meanwhile we, the general public, try and go about our lives with the impermanence of life haunting our sub-conscious. The news says that the target of these bombs is the constituent assembly polls. But who gives the perpetrators the right to use innocent civilians as fodder for their objectives?

It is unfortunate that the sanctity of human life and the traditional peace-loving nature of Nepalis have been violated repeatedly over the past 11 years. The gun culture popularised by American western films or the incessant modern Jihads is now no stranger to this land of the Buddha. The current lack of security and the incapacity of the security forces to do anything about it have driven many a Nepali to arm himself in order to defend his life, family and property. We are turning fast into an armed nation, even though the national army is ironically confined to its barracks.

The other troubling phenomenon is the rise of communalism. Is there anyone

CLIMATE OF FEAR

It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against mindless terrorism. Unless we want Nepal to mirror Baghdad, it has to stop.



anymore who considers himself/herself a "Nepali"? We now comprise an ethnic mosaic with pointed classifications such as Madhises, Pahadis, Bahuns, Chettris, Limbus, Kirats, Newars, Thakalis, Janjatis, Dalits and on and on – each fighting for that last pound of flesh from an emerging democratic polity.

Somewhere down the line, the 'unity' of this country has been placed in the back burner. While, for example, the European Community is

increasingly united by its monetary unit and international perspective, we Nepalis are fragmenting ourselves, stapling ethnic and communal labels on one another. Our new national anthem that speaks of a united Nepal, likening it to a garland of 100 flowers, pays but lip service to today's reality.

Any keen observer of contemporary Nepali politics is fully aware that there are those who would benefit from the postponement or even

cancellation of the November polls. There has been the recent alarming proposition to convert the current interim parliament to a constituent assembly. Different political parties have put other preposterous proposals forward. There seems to be an ongoing competition on who can come up with more demands. The futility of this demand-based politics is obvious when the supply of goods and services to be provided by the government is so scarce.

The necessity of the elections is sacrosanct, if Nepal is to be a multi-party democracy with a legitimate elected government. Politics is certainly the art of compromise, and political decisions will never please everyone equally. The 1990 Constitution was hailed at the time as one of the best in the world. Today that same constitution is being shredded by haphazard amendments and on its way to being defunct. One wonders about the fate of the new post-polls constitution given the fickleness of our leaders.

No matter who planted those bombs, the fact remains that it was wrong – morally, socially as well as politically. Unless we want Nepal to mirror Baghdad, it has to stop. Those who believe that they are achieving political ends must ask themselves whether the means they are using are justified. The question is whether the entire Nepali population is to be held hostage by a few terrorists. As long as this climate of fear persists, the future of Nepali democracy is bleak.

It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against mindless terrorism. We have seen how guns can achieve political power, how Bandhs can debilitate society. Why let these tactics be the monopoly of the few? Let us remember that we all have the democratic right to protest this invasion on our personal security – and we, the real people, are the majority. ■



FLOOD action

Bangladesh ▲

▼ India



▼ Nepal



■ **Shashanka Saadi**

Floods in South Asian countries are a major setback for the regional and national economy.

Directly and indirectly affected poor and middle income people cope with the loss of asset and livelihood in formal and informal ways. Directly affected people have a chance to get some relief and recovery support from governments, state authorities and non-government sources and few of them might get compensation but indirectly affected people do not have any chance to get any kind of support. There is no effort to identify indirectly affected people by floods in South Asia or to bring them under flood adaptation schemes by NGOs and governments

Poor and middle income people take loan mostly from informal sources and use social capital to overcome the grave situation and start a new life. But they cannot repay the loan due to continuous loss and are forced to migrate and are displaced to more remote places or to cities and towns to survive.

Although South Asian states and non-government actors focus mainly on visible means of control the loss through different measures, the recovery schemes and adaptation schemes get lesser priority at the national planning of poverty reduction. Most of main

ivers of South Asia flow over more than two countries but South Asian State authorities treat the flood issues from an individualistic and nationalistic perspective and as a bilateral issue which have been proven incompetent to tackle the impacts of floods.

Social and political organisations lack understanding and awareness on the flood issue due to their ignorance and stereotyped views. Most of the duty bearers, elected MPs, local governments, state authorities and NGOs have exhausted their time and energy on relief distribution and meeting the immediate needs of the affected people rather than addressing the causes behind the high level of impacts, especially on the women, children, aged, excluded groups like sex workers, HIV/AIDS people, ethnic minorities, lower castes, fisher folk, and day laborers.

Meanwhile flood control has become a buzz word and high profile political agenda in all of the four countries of South Asia affected by flood in 2007. But there is no clear effort to develop a strategic plan focusing on the vulnerable and regularly affected people, their livelihood and the state level recovery system to prevent the hunger, loss of food production, properties and assets. Public action is limited to adhoc level or at piloting level in a micro-area for last fifty years.

To find solutions, these measures could be implemented:

1. Civil society as a part of public action can do advocacy on the rights of the riverine people and rights analysis of state and non-state laws, acts, regulations and interventions.
2. An energetic media can play more proactive role to raise the issues of continuous damage due to flood, increasing poverty among poor and mid-income people and reflect the people's voice for a regional flood resilient planning in South Asia.
3. Social and political organisations can play an effective role in introducing an efficient and systematic mechanism and functional procedure to predict damage to protect livelihood security of poor at national and regional level.
4. Develop micro level informed planning and implementation of flood protection programmes through community centered regional strategy.
5. Flood affected communities are heterogeneous entity due to their different socio-political and economic condition as well as cultural position within the South Asia societies. During last 30 years of response planning by the public in South Asian states against flood has been dominated by homogenous thoughts rather than

recognising the diversity of the issue.

6. Corporate thinking and planning without political wisdom for flood protection will replace the remaining weak chain of social security in the South Asian societies and will force many more poor and marginalised communities to live in more vulnerable and insecure areas, increase the number of displaced people and flow of migration to the big and small cities and towns.

Floods are inevitable in South Asia and they are the source of regenerating life and fertility along the flood plains in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Structural public actions like dams, protection walls or embankments on the rivers and tributaries increased the extent of flood related vulnerabilities and damage.

South Asian states and political organisations jointly with social organisations should recognise flood as a regional issue. They should also recognise flood related vulnerability to agriculture, health, education and other sectors linked with hunger and under-nutrition.

We can resist the threat of floods if we promote the social and political movements jointly by the people centered non-government entities, various social and political organisations and an active non-corporate media.

(Saadi is a climate change expert.)



■ Uday Pariyar

Avoid genocide in Nepal

It is in everyone's interest to ensure that the political conflict does not transform itself into an ethnic one.

A heart-wrenching movie, *Hotel Rwanda*, released in 2004 is based on one of the most terrifying events in modern history – the Rwanda genocide. The movie realistically captures the scenes of horrific killings.

The killings started soon after the murder of the Rwandan President by the Tutsi rebels in April 1994. In retaliation, the Hutu government ordered its army to kill all the Tutsis in the country. One of the worst ethnic conflicts in the world led to the murder of some 800 000 citizens, mostly Tutsis, over a short period of three months. Nobody, including the UN could control the rapid escalation. The widespread massacre, the human tragedy shocked the world.

Clear message from the movie is to take lessons from the Rwandan genocide and work towards preventing such horrific crimes. Indeed, there is a lot of anger and frustration among the marginalised and suppressed individuals and communities. Every oppressed person seeks freedom from domination. But, it is important that we weigh up the costs against achievements.

It is perfectly justifiable, for various groups in this country to pursue liberty and equality. But they should be clear about the ways and means of going about it. Their movements should not be directly or indirectly fuelling communal hatred; or else we might end up in a mess that would benefit nobody.

Nobody can be sure that ethnic tensions would not reach a boiling point in Nepal. Never in our wildest imaginations did we think a decade ago that a bloody communist revolution in Nepal would cost some 13000 lives. Still, people are not fully assured that the armed movement is over. Many other



A scene from 'Hotel Rwanda' (2004) which speaks about Rwanda Genocide.

smaller insurgent groups have started their bloody campaigns emulating the Maoists, particularly in the Terai areas.

All these have a potential for increased tensions between communities. Already, we are witnessing some level of ethnic tensions in some troubled districts of the southern plains between the Pahadis and Madhesis. This is an unprecedented development, something that everybody should be taking seriously. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that the political conflict does not transform itself into an ethnic one.

Obviously, it is the primary duty of the government and the parties in power to objectively study and analyse any possible threats and plan out the future course of action. Currently it has been negotiating with only those groups that have organised powerful strikes and disrupted public life. This is indicative of the fact

that the government simply does not have a comprehensive and long-term strategy for identifying the most suppressed groups and working to address the major issues associated with social exclusion and marginalisation. More dangerously, many of the agreements reached with the agitating groups have not actually been put to practice.

Non-implementation is a potential factor for eroding public confidence. For example, although the government declared Nepal as a secular state, Prime Minister is busy officially attending Hindu religious ceremonies, in place of the traditional King. PM is not a person but the state himself. By definition the secular state does not follow any religion. This gives an impression that the announcement of Nepal as a secular state in practice was bogus. Such double standards do not help build sustainable peace.

Similarly, the parties in power are not as

serious as they should be. On top of maintaining the rule of law, this is the time for all responsible parties to publicly condemn violence and give up violent tactics. It is wrong for the Maoists or any party to continue to argue that the violence from their side is justifiable and the violent means followed by other groups is criminal.

Parties should stop raising the expectations of the marginalised and suppressed groups in an unrealistic manner. So far the parties have been projecting the ethnic issues merely to gain more votes in elections and to increase their cadre force. But the real issues are neglected. For example, all parties have their Dalit wings but none have put in their substantive efforts to end the practice of untouchability. Their own cadres are found discriminating against Dalits. Party activities should be geared towards integration, not further segregation. To me, having a separate Dalit wing instead of making the party structures more inclusive is promoting institutional segregation.

If we want a peaceful and prosperous Nepal, one of the key challenges is to maintain and develop the traditional harmony between our diverse communities. Addressing the issues of social exclusion and injustices in a proper manner will only strengthen the societal unity and reinforce integration.

Ethnic conflict tends to be far more devastating than the political ones. The government and major parties should realise this on time and take careful measures to reduce the possibility of the start of an ethnic conflict. They should see beyond the party interests on such crucial issues.



■ Sabita Gyawali

Booming nursing

Nursing is a noble profession for both males and females.

Susmita Khadka of Balkhu who passed SLC in the first division this year wants to be a nurse and go abroad for further studies. There are many youngsters like Susmita who are interested in nursing. Till a few years ago there was a conventional dream in the minds of parents who always wanted their kids to be doctors and engineers and the children too wanted the same. Now there is an increasing shift in these desires; where the young generation is exploring diverse fields to satisfy their ambitions; and nursing is one of the emerging professions that many youngsters are attracted to.

It is not easy to be a nurse since the competition has become tough and it is expensive too. Sarala KC, president of Nursing Association of Nepal (NAN) says, "There are limited seats and students need to go through a tough competition. Previously it was easy to become a nurse but not anymore." She adds, "There are more than 100 colleges which conduct nursing programs with only 40 seats in each collage and there is tough competition among students to get admission." It generally costs about three to four lakhs to complete a certificate level nurse, and seven to eight lakhs for BSC nursing.

Till 1956 there were no professional Nepali nurses in Nepal. Sarala says, "Before 1956 there were only foreign nurses in Nepal. Realising the importance of Nepali nurse, Bir

hospital started its first nursing school in 1956. At that time girls who did not pass SLC were also given admission because it was difficult to get girls with SLC certificate." Lalitpur Nursing Campus is the first campus established in 1956 that offered post-basic bachelor of nursing.

Nursing has attracted many teenage girls today. "I studied science in intermediate level. As I had background in science, I choose BSC nursing because its scope is high both at national and international level," says Ava who is a student of Scheer Memorial Hospital and College of Nursing. She added, "My main purpose of studying nursing is to help the poor and needy and my second priority is obviously to seek better opportunities abroad."

Sarala KC explained the reasons why nursing has become a hot ticket to go abroad for many young people, "There are no opportunities or facilities which government should be providing to nurses in Nepal. Thus nurses are bound to go abroad seeking a better life. America, Britain, Australia, Canada are the main destinations of Nepali nurses. And they are doing well there. Although I don't have exact number of how many nurse go abroad every year, the number is rapidly increasing." She added that every year around 3200 nurses are produced in Nepal.

Despite the rise, the number of male nurses in Nepal is conspicuously low. Ranta Guragain, who is one of the first batch of male nursing and is currently working in Asian Collage for

Advance Studies, says, "Male nursing started from 2046 B. S. Now we have around 100 male nurses... the government started male nursing so that we could go to remote parts of the country and help. But due to lack of opportunities the number of male nurse is not on rise." Guragain who is also the secretary of Nursing Association of Nepal says, "NAN has submitted demands to the Tribhuvan University and one of the demands is to ensure the government policy for the provision of male students."

Nursing has always been seen as a profession of

females; and some feminists protest that it is stereotyping the profession and so it should be opened up for everyone. Due to this social projection, there is still confusion among prospective male students whether to take up nursing as a profession or not. Added to this is the lack of clear government policy that adds to their confusion. There definitely is a need for more support from all concerned to promote this noble profession for males and females alike.



World eyes Chinese market

World business leaders attending the Summer Davos in Dalian are seeking to expand their presence in China, which has seen booming economic growth for nearly three decades.

US banking giant Citibank announced at the meeting it has been approved by the China Banking Regulatory Commission to open a branch in Dalian later this year, its eighth in China and the first in the country's northeastern areas.

"With its infrastructure and outstanding support for foreign investment, the thriving city of Dalian represents a key city for Citibank's expansion plans in China," said William Rhodes, chairman of Citibank NA, at the meeting.

Citibank is among several major international banks that are ramping up presence in China, particularly after the country fully opened its banking sector to foreign banks in December last year to fulfill its WTO commitment.

Among other business leaders brought together by the three-day meeting, many said that business prospects in China are good.

Craig Barrett, chairman of the US computer chip maker Intel Corp said at a panel session on Saturday, "The Chinese market is huge. It is the second largest computer market place and the largest communications market in the world. There is a huge opportunity for both home-grown and international software companies."

Barrett later attended a ground-breaking ceremony of a computer chipset plant in Dalian, the corporation's first in Asia with a record investment of US\$2.5 billion.

At the beginning of the Inaugural Annual Meeting of the New Champions, dubbed Summer Davos, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao



pledged to maintain the country's fast growth while tackling such problems as trade surplus, environment issues and energy consumption.

"We are confident that with enhanced macro-regulation, the giant ship of the Chinese economy will continue to surge ahead steadily,"

Wen said.

Sir Martin Sorrell, chief executive of the UK-based advertising giant WPP Group Plc, said choosing Dalian as the host for the Summer Davos is a recognition of China's economic achievements, and more importantly, the

Chinese economy will be sustainable and there are immense potentials.

"We will definitely redouble our efforts in China, including time and investment," said Sorrell.

(China Daily)

Truck crash kills 86 pilgrims



JODHPUR, India— The toll in one of India's worst road accidents mounted to 86 on Saturday as one of scores rescued from the mangled wreckage of a truck that fell into a ravine died in hospital, police said.

Some 200 people were crowded into the truck travelling to a religious fair in the desert state of Rajasthan in western India.

"One person has died in hospital. This takes the number of dead to 86," said police superintendent Rupinder Singh in Rajsamand district, 200 kilometres (124 miles) from Jodhpur city, where the accident occurred after dark on Friday.

The truck driver lost control on a sharp bend in a mountainous region and smashed through a protective roadside wall, plunging into the 80-foot (25-metre) deep gorge, said Singh. Apart from the deaths, some 60 people were in three hospitals, many seriously

injured, police said. A large number of the dead were women, said police, adding about 50 remaining passengers were believed to have survived unhurt or with minor injuries. Eighty-three bodies had been handed over to relatives, police and local officials said. At least three of the victims were so badly mutilated that their bodies could not be identified, police said.

Rajasthan's home minister Gulab Chand Kataria told late Saturday that a district transport officer had been "suspended for negligence of duty" that resulted in people overloading the 10-wheel truck -- meant for hauling cars and heavy equipment. Police official Singh said he suspected negligence. "Such a large number of people being carried in a truck like (this) has never been seen," he said.

Earlier, a witness told that piercing screams and cries could be heard as survivors called for help from the ravine where the truck fell. "I stopped the car and saw a truck lying upside down in the ravine," said Udaipur

district official Shikhar Agarwal, who was driving by soon after the accident. "The wireless phone was not working so we could not even call for help from there. We started sending people to hospital in private cars." Passers-by also alerted the nearest police post.

Nearly a dozen cranes were brought to the accident site overnight as rescuers using searchlights scrambled to find survivors and recover bodies. The smashed vehicle had been pulled out of the ravine and investigators were examining it to determine the cause of the accident. During the day, anxious villagers thronged hospitals where the injured were taken.

"We knew the truck driver who was going and he told us to come too. So 54 of us went with him," said 25-year-old Manji Lal, lying in a bed with a bandaged foot in Rajsamand's main hospital. "It all happened so suddenly we had no idea where our family members ended up. People were screaming for a long time until someone came and rescued us."

Television channels showed patients attached to intravenous drips, including a boy in a blue shirt with a thick bandage around his head. "Suddenly the brakes failed," the boy told the Aaj Tak channel.

The driver of the truck, who was killed in the accident, appeared to have used a wooden plank to rig up extra seating, police said, and may have offered a free ride to the shrine of a mystic saint revered by both Hindus and Muslims. ■

I am coming, says Nawaz



LONDON: Former premier Nawaz Sharif said on Saturday he would return to Pakistan on Monday despite a request from Saudi Arabia to abandon his planned trip, AP reported.

"I will go back to Pakistan on September 10 with my brother because my country needs me," he told a press conference in London.

Daily Times Monitor adds: Nawaz said he had not broken any promise and accused President Pervez Musharraf and Lebanese lawmaker Saad Hariri of going back on their word because the promised duration of the exile was five years, but he had spent seven years away from his country. Nawaz said that he had tried his best to refrain from saying anything on the "agreement" due to its sensitive nature, but Hariri's press conference in Islamabad had compelled him to disclose "some hidden facts".

Nawaz said that Hariri visited him in Attock Fort in 2000 with an understanding under which the Sharif family would have to remain in exile for 10 years in Saudi Arabia. The former PM said that he objected to the

duration of the exile and insisted that it be reduced to five years. Nawaz said that Hariri then visited him after a week and told him that Saudi King Abdullah had also objected to the exile duration and had agreed to reduce it to five years. He added that Hariri then asked him to sign the papers.

Nawaz said that in spite of the verbal assurance that the exile duration would be five years, the papers of the understanding still carried the figure "10-year exile", to which he objected, but Hariri said it was his responsibility to change the figure in the papers and pressed him to sign them. Nawaz said that he believed Hariri and agreed to go in exile for five years.

Nawaz said that the agreement stated that there would be no bar on the Sharif family to move anywhere (except Pakistan) from Saudi Arabia during these five years. "But Musharraf violated the understanding, seized our passports and restricted us to Saudi Arabia only," he said.

Nawaz denied that former US president Bill Clinton was involved in brokering the agreement between him and Gen Musharraf. ■

(Daily Times)

Marshland Flowers

It is said that great Gurus like Gampopa (the disciple of Milarepa) took his breath in at sunset and let it go at sunrise.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche



In the Buddhist tradition, there are many kinds of focused meditations. The

Sravakayana has around 40 different types of focused meditations on outer and inner objects and the Mahayana has others on top of those 40 or so. The Samatha methods were taken by the Shasta from those prevalent in the Indian subcontinent and were not his own creations.

Samatha is the quieting of the mind by focusing it on some object normally. No matter what method is used, if that method gradually stills the mind and concentrates it on an object, whatever it is, that is Samatha meditation. This was common in the time of the Buddha in the Indian subcontinent and it was common before his time and is still common today. The Buddha himself took some of those to help his disciples to attain one-pointed concentration. So Samatha is not specifically special to Buddhism.

Even Christian Mystics and Muslim Sufis have various methods to make the mind concentrated, i.e. Samatha meditations. When one crosses a certain level of ability to remain in a concentrated state without effort then that is called Samadhi. In the Buddhist tradition, there are eight levels of Samadhi called Dhyanas (meditative stabilisations). There are nine levels of concentration.

Through long and dedicated practice the person slowly climbs upon the ladder as his / her capacity to concentrate single pointedly on one object (Alambana) increases by dint of effort. At the eighth level, her concentration starts becoming easier and effortless. When she reaches the 9th level, the object of meditation takes on a new

quality. It generally becomes brighter and seems to come closer to the meditator. This is called Samantaka Samadhi in Mahayana or Upachar Samadhi in the Theravada system (near attainment Samadhi).

Then as she goes on practicing with great dedication, the winds in the body (called Prana – vayu in Sanskrit and Rlung in Tibetan and Chi in Chinese, Ki in Japanese) begin to move in her body. The winds begin to flow up to her head so that she feels like someone is pressing her head lightly with the palms of the hand. During this period bliss called Prasabdhi begins to rise. It can rise to such a degree that her breathing can become belaboured.

This Prasabdhi reaches a peak point and then begins to subside somewhat like a rushing river subsiding when it arrives at the ocean. Then the mind becomes extremely calm like the calm after a storm and this is the attainment of Mula Samadhi of the 1st Dhyana. In the Theravada tradition, this is called Appana Samadhi. But this is only the first Dhyana; higher levels than this is the second Dhyana; third Dhyana and the fourth Dhyana. In some Buddhist systems both Sravakayana and Mahayana, there is also a 5th Dhyana but this is not really a higher Samadhi than the fourth Dhyana mentioned above but only the style of categorising it makes the difference.

In the fourth Dhyana, breathing stops automatically. This breathing can stop in other methods of meditation using the Nadi – Chakras as Alambana (channels etc); but even without the use of any breath control and Nadi – Chakra when a person reaches the fourth Dhyana his/her breathing stops. It is said that great Gurus like Gampopa (the disciple of Milarepa) took his breath in at sunset and let it go at sunrise.

Above the fourth Dhyana is what is called formless meditative stabilisations (Arupa Dhyana). These are really based on the fourth Dhyana and are not really considered higher than the fourth Dhyana in the Buddhist tradition. They are called formless Dhyana because the objects of meditation (Alambana) are formless (Arupa). The first of these is infinite space Dhyana (Akasanantayayana Dhyana). The experience at this stage is of infinite space or void, as all forms are dropped.

Beyond that, even the space is dropped and experience is of the infinite consciousness (Vigyanantayana Dhyana). This is what many non-Buddhist systems call the experience of super-consciousness, where there is only the infinite all expansive consciousness or pure awareness by itself that does not seem to change. In the Buddhist system of Samatha, there are two more stages above this: Akinchanyatana (nothing remaining) and above that, Naiva Sangya Naasangya (neither perception nor non-perception).

All these are highly rarified states of mind; but in Buddhism, none of these states are considered as the attainment of enlightenment. There is one more Samadhi state called Nirodhasamapatti which is higher than all the above but is accessible only to Arhats and Boddhisattvas from eighth Bhumi upwards.

This is a crucial point to understand if you want to understand Buddhism. Although the various Samadhis, including the Samadhi of pure awareness by itself, is cultivated and used in Buddhism as in all religious systems, in Buddhism they are only used to develop concentration and never accepted as the enlightened state. (To be continued.)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

After their fifth plenum, the Maoist leadership came to a conclusion that holding elections would severely damage the party.

The election fiasco

■ Siddhartha Thapa



The bomb blasts in Kathmandu last week prove that the law and order situation of the country has taken a nose dive. Contrary to the fact that government authority is virtually non-existence throughout the country, the government is still adamant about holding timely elections. The Home Minister during his parleys in the parliament conceded to the fact that the government would need to recruit an additional 30,000 troops for the Nepal Police to ensure security for the polls.

On the other hand, in past elections Nepal Army provided the backbone for the security arrangements during elections; however, the present peace agreements prohibit the deployment of army for any purpose. Therefore, how the Prime Minister envisions conducting timely elections is still a mystery.

To add to the PM's worries, CPN-Maoist - one of Koirala's major allies has now stated that elections are impossible given the deteriorating law and order situation of the country. Although the legal aspects concerning the elections have been completed, the administrative work is still incomplete and political will is lacking among all parties to forge consensus to conduct timely polls. The only person pushing for elections is the PM and the international community, while the others are ranting hollow rhetoric.

The Maoists actually do not want elections. After their fifth plenum, the Maoist leadership came to a conclusion that holding elections would severely damage the party. The Maoist leadership has come realise that their position in the Terai is extremely weak and their position in the hills is no better. Therefore, the leadership has decided to explore alternative avenues to end the institution of monarchy and create disturbances to sabotage the polls.

The fifth plenum also ironically concedes to the fact that the King is a spent force and the probability of the resurgence of the King with the backing of the army is nil. Knowing that forceful fraudulent elections can only guarantee them victory, the Maoists know these elections will be condemned domestically and internationally, and so now have accepted the fact that going for elections will prove to be a political suicide. Elections would also

decrease their numerical strength in the parliament. They also know that an electoral loss would tear their party and they are unwilling to make ideological concessions to enter the political mainstream.

The international community has conducted endless surveys that all indicate Maoists' loss in the polls. Therefore, the international community has increased their pressure on all political parties to conduct polls this November. Some diplomatic missions have gone one step further to broker an electoral alliance. For example, Gunther, the Swiss diplomat; who has been busy trying to broker alliance between ethnic groups, particularly the Madhesis and the Maoists.

The Norwegians and the Swiss for long have been cultivating the Left ever since the restoration of democracy in 1990. They have been doing so because they have come to realise that the democratic forces will always work closer with India and this they can not digest. Therefore, Günter's attempted bid to unite ethnic groups and the Maoists is a ruse to help the Maoists recapture the lost ground in the Terai.

PM Koirala will inevitably yield to the pressure tactics of the Maoists; hence, there is a very slim chance that elections will take place on time in November. Over the last year, political observers have been taken back by the PM's inability to confront the Maoist on fundamental issues. Time and again, he has conceded to the Maoist demands and on some occasions has been forced to backtrack.

Koirala has embarked on a trend where he has inevitably succumbed to the pressure of the Maoist leadership. Therefore, to ignore Koirala's trend in surrendering to his coterie and the Maoist will prove detrimental. The truth is that Koirala's coterie and the Maoists are bent on pushing Koirala for the immediate declaration of a republic and exhausting the means to hold elections. But there is also a genuine case of deteriorating law and order situation.

The Maoists fear an electoral loss. The international community is confident the democratic forces will prevail and Koirala has already begun to yield to the Maoists. However, the question regarding the possibility of elections should be left to the people to decide. If Koirala holds the election in haste – the electoral process would prove futile. ■

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Prayer in mountains

Would bombs enter her poems?



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

*Fragile my eyeglasses,
Fragile and foreign,
I take them off;
there is a speck of a scar in them.
On the mule path
I take them off to face the green
stretch of mountains beneath the saddle of
Annapurnas.
From the balcony
of clay plastered house I see
a sun rise in the clear sky of my life.
(In the Mountains)*

The week passed with the rumble of the bombs in the streets of Kathmandu. But what amazed me how the people ignored the evil impact that this bombing had on the hearts of the ordinary people. A friend said he was expecting curfew but nothing of the sort happened and people went about their lives. The defiance that the Nepalis have shown to this terror proves that nobody can put down this nation. Nepal is not just arcadia, a sequestered little Himalayan nation, it is fast turning into a modern busy democratic nation that has lot to do in the practical world than to be held back by these nefarious acts.

To get rid of stress, once again I turn to the Annapurnas. Once again I take that less traveled road that passes through alluvial valleys. My bus speeds past the flooded river. I wonder how

Pascale who has come to see Nepal would miss these spectacular scenes from stadiums of delight as he has taken the flight to Pokhara. Would bombs enter her poems? Would she ever in future visit this land, or ask others to come?

The whole landscape of green paddy fields tinged with yellow flowers looks like wavy beard of an ascetic. Poet Robin Metz keeps mumbling prayers for this nation as he sees the breathtaking landscape. This is just the beginning, I tell my guests. Tomorrow we would go into the leach greasy landscape of perennial waterfalls. Tomorrow we would see real Nepal. Tomorrow we would see Annapurnas, the place where soul of the gods lives.

You will see smiles on the faces of people. Mules will shake their head gears and the song of the whistling thrush will sing in the valleys of your hearts and then there we shall utter a prayer for those who became victims of the terror. And a prayer for our own beloved one who passed away, without a warning:

*This is where last spring
a rainbow appeared
and seconds later the sun set at the same spot.
A huge sun-sized moon
crept from behind the mountain
and lingered like a cherry-faced child
peering over the courtyard of Annapurnas,
the gorge of the River Modi.
Fragile my eyeballs;
Fragile and tainted with the speck of a bleeding
tear
of my mother who left me lately.
I close my lids
and see her face in the courtyard of Annapurna.
(writer@yuyutsu.de)*

Marijuana use damages nerves and brain



Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

My friends at college use Pot/ marijuana and they tell me it is not a drug and so is harmless. Is it true?

Arjun Lamichane
Bhanimandal

It is not true. This is a myth created by people who sell drugs and the users themselves, ignorant of the harm and consequences of marijuana smoking. Marijuana damages lungs, nerves and brain. There are 400 chemicals in marijuana smoke. 60 of these have been proven to cause cancer. The chemicals can stay in users' body for months or even years.

Marijuana contains THC, a neurotoxin (a poison that damages nerves), which causes memory loss.

When people use marijuana regularly, their body start tolerating the chemical in the body and they will need to take higher doses of it to get the high that they used to get before. This usually leads to other drugs like brown sugar.

Lack of knowledge and awareness among students make them think that smoking pot or tobacco is harmless. But marijuana is fatal and one has to stop using it whether for fun or otherwise. Once addicted, the users become unable to face life problems and become dependent on it to conduct their daily activities. It is common to see marijuana users eventually moving on to hard drugs and destroying their lives.

I think my boyfriend is into drugs. What should I do?

Manju Sthapit
Putalisadak

When a boy is into drugs, his integrity will start decreasing gradually. His actions will start becoming unethical and this will affect his relationship with everyone in his family and friends. He will gradually start isolating himself from those who suspect him of drug addiction. Once addicted, he will start borrowing, stealing and selling valuable things from his house.

In the beginning he may say that he is managing well and he is in control but soon his addiction will control him. His personality will start changing; he will stop communicating and may also start avoiding you. He will not be able to keep any kind of routine. He may call to meet you but will not keep the date. He will lie and make excuses and try to justify why he was late. He would also promise to change everyday or even pretend that he is trying.

But addiction is powerful and has to be treated on time with help from professionals; for even if he does try and stays off drugs for sometime, he will relapse again unable to quit drugs for good. You could check if he is exhibiting any of these signs. If so, he needs help. Only your love will not be enough to pull him out of the trap that is too vicious to be handled without outside help.

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

Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



Enjoying the morning sun – Syangja, Nepal.



ASHA turns 74

New Delhi— From "Piya tu ab to aaja" to "Dum maro dum" and "Kambakht ishq", singing diva Asha Bhosle has been enthralled listeners with her vivacious and versatile numbers for more than six decades. And the singing legend, who turned 74 Saturday, is still going strong.

From Madhubala to Helen in the older films to newer actresses Urmila Matondkar and Kareena Kapoor, these screen scorches are all bound by a common thread - the evergreen voice of Asha.

Says Gulzar: "If Lata-ji has sung all the songs in my 'Aandhi', 'Mausam' and 'Libaas', Asha did the entire score in 'Namkeen' and 'Ijaazat' and of course our collaborative effort 'Dil Padosi Hai' with Pancham, which is a personal favourite."

Gifted with one of the most versatile voices in the industry, Asha has sung every genre of song, be it pop, club mixes, romantic numbers, bhajans and ghazals. Asha's zingy

singing has made memorable many of the cabaret numbers by yester-years' diva Helen.

Urmila, for whom Asha has sung many hit numbers, including in "Rangeela", says: "I've always been one of Asha-ji's biggest fans. We go back a long way. She has known me from when I was a child. She had sung in one of my Marathi films as a child actor called 'Sansar'. Then, of course, her husband R.D. Burman composed music for my 'Masoom'. The couple has seen me grow up."

"The biggest compliment to me was when people thought songs like 'Khallas' in Ram Gopal Varma's 'Company' were mine only because Asha-ji sang them," added Urmila, who lent her voice for Asha's album "Asha & Friends".

Born into the musical family of Pandit Dinanath Mangeshkar, Asha took her initial training in music from her father. But it came to an abrupt end when he died. She was just nine

years old then.

After his death the family moved from Pune to Kolhapur and then to Mumbai. Asha and her elder sister, Lata Mangeshkar, started singing in films to support their family.

She sang her first film song "Chala chala nav bala" for the Marathi movie "Majha Bal" in 1943. Her first Hindi song was "Saawan aaya" for Hansraj Bahl's "Chunariya" in 1948.

The year 1957 was the breakthrough year for Asha when O.P. Nayyar used her to sing the heroine's songs in "Tumsa Nahin Dekha" and "Naya Daur". The same year the legendary S.D. Burman had a rift with Lata Mangeshkar. This came as a blessing in disguise for Asha, who soon became his favourite female singer. In the 1970s Asha came closer to another legend of Indian music, R.D. Burman, who gave a new hip and happening sound to her singing. The songs "Piya tu ab to aajaa", "Dum maro dum" and "Chura liya hai tumne" were a result of this combination.

But it was her immortal ghazals for Muzaffar Ali's "Umrao Jaan" that fetched her huge accolades. The songs "Dil cheez kya hai", "In aankhon ki masti", "Yeh kaisi jagah hai doston" not only proved her versatility but are still all-time favourites. For her contribution to music in Indian cinema, Asha was conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke Award, the highest title in Indian cinema in 2000. She is a source of inspiration for wannabe singers.

"Asha-ji has always been a great source of inspiration for me. In fact, she inspires all budding singers. She is so versatile and her voice is so young that even today if she lends her voice to any actress, the song becomes a chartbuster," Abhijeet Sawant, the winner of "Indian Idol 1", told IANS.

"Nowadays when established singers don't want to take a chance with pop albums she comes up with an album every year. She is so enthusiastic and always open to work with youngsters. I wish her many, many happy returns of the day and also that her blessings should always remain with us," added Sawant.

Her popularity is not confined to Indian shores! She has collaborated with artistes like Boy George and Stephen Lauscombe. In 2002, she teamed with Michael Stipe on the track "The Way You Dream" on the self-titled album by 1 Giant Leap.

In 1997, the British band Cornershop paid tribute to Asha with their song "Brimful of Asha", an international hit which was later remixed by Fatboy Slim.

(IANS)

Ralph Lauren's 40 years

NEW YORK - Ralph Lauren took a well-deserved extended bow Saturday night as he both presented and celebrated his 40th anniversary collection.

Lauren sauntered down the runway at a tent erected just outside the Conservatory Gardens in Manhattan's Central Park to Frank Sinatra's "The Best Is Yet To Come." A crowd that included Sarah Jessica Parker, Martha Stewart, Diane Sawyer and Barbara Walters gave the designer a standing ovation. Fellow top-tier designers Donna Karan, Carolina Herrera, Diane von Furstenberg and Vera Wang, who once worked for Lauren, also were at the black-tie event.

The theme of the spring collection, debuting during New York Fashion Week, was a day at the races. Some models wore oversized hats with garden-party dresses — one of the best being a pale-blue floral printed silk plisse gown with a halter neckline and ruffled jabot — while others wore menswear-style jackets, ascots and tailored trousers. Spallike shoes completed the look.

The jockeys were even represented with crystal-embellished jodhpurs, a yellow jersey dress with an equestrian print, and a bright pink equestrian-print taffeta jacket with splashes of blue, white, green and yellow, and a peplum at the hip.

Spring '08 features more colors than Lauren has shown in years.

The clothes, however, were secondary to recognizing Lauren's long tenure at the top of an industry always looking for the next big thing.

Lauren is one of the "nicest, warmest and loveliest" in the fashion world, said von Furstenberg, president of the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

"He is so successful because he lives his fantasy with such passion. I just love him," she said.

After the last gown — a slinky and stunning silver chain-beaded gown — disappeared from the runway and Lauren had his moment in the spotlight, the back wall opened to reveal an elegant and elaborate party set up in the Conservatory Garden itself. This was the first private event ever held at the Gardens by a third party.

A sprawling fountain in the middle picked up the light from the dozen chandeliers hanging from arched arborways on the terrace and from the hundreds of candles on the tables.

"Like a Henry James character, he (Lauren) is the last true idealist about America's imagination of itself," said Harold Koda, curator at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "That makes him the greatest ambassador of American style."

(Yahoo News)



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