



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

Kathmandu | 15-28 Oct, 2007 | # 38 | Price Rs. 25



Free journalist Birendra Saha demonstration outside the parliament building on October 11. The programme was organised by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) in which representatives of all the pro-press freedom political parties and human rights groups were present.

YOUR GATE TO IT WORLD



**Gates Computer Pvt Ltd.**

Dharmapath, New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 4229529  
E-mail: g\_computer@wlink.com.np

## Clash

■ nf correspondent

India was initially not keen to welcome UN Mission in Nepal to play any major role in the peace process. But things do not appear comfortable even after India exhibited remarkable flexibility on the matter, facilitating UNMIN's giant presence in Nepal.

The UNMIN and India have seemingly inched towards a major confrontation with their contradictory approaches on the way Nepal should chart out the way about holding elections to the constituent assembly. While India insists on declaring a new date at the earliest, UNMIN suggests setting a date is far less important compared to deciding other steps to ensure a credible poll.

A few months ago India had strongly protested against some top UNMIN officials crossing over to India without informing their government to meet the leaders of Nepali Terai insurgent groups. India is also believed to have conveyed to Nepal that while it was between the government of Nepal and the UNMIN to decide how long it needs to stay, he stated, "but we will not be able to clear the mess if the prolonged UNMIN stay here creates." India seems to be worried about the prospects of Nepal crossing over to India to settle down if the UNMIN assisted peace process does not work.

India has communicated to Nepal that UNMIN's role should not exceed managing arms and armies of the government and the Maoists and observing the elections. While UNMIN does not quite link the elections and the

## India and UN differ on the way Nepal should adopt

peace process and India firmly believes that the two are very much linked to each other.

Shyam Sharan, the special envoy of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, reminded Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai during his meeting with them last week, that they were obliged to be a part of the multi-party democracy and peaceful process under the 12-point agreement initiated by Delhi and, "the only way to honour that was to participate in a free and fair election at the earliest."

While Sharan insisted that the government and the Maoists should declare a date at the earliest for CA polls, UNMIN Chief Ian Martin said the prospects for holding a credible CA poll is not just a matter of fixing the date. "It is a matter of agreeing upon steps that are necessary to make it possible." "This is a moment when the parties need to focus not just on the date but as I have tried indicate, but on some of the key steps that are necessary for a good election," Martin said in a press conference just a day prior to Sharan's visit to Nepal.

The necessary steps that Martin suggests include a dialogue not only among the seven parties but with marginalised groups, civil society and all democratic forces; cooperation at the local level to establishment effective governance and public security; addressing the future of Maoist combatants and the security sector; more effective implementation machinery operating by consensus; a renewed commitment by all to non-violent and democratic political activity and independent monitoring of all peace process commitments. ■

Over 1.5 million satisfied passengers



## You can count on us

In just eight years of operation, with your patronage we have become Nepal's largest airline in the domestic sector, that delivers an on time and comfortable travel experience with high performance reliability across the length and breadth of the country. That's because we have always believed in meeting and exceeding our customers expectations.



Get upto 30% discounts at over 100 outlets across the country.

**Corporate Office**  
Tilganga, Kathmandu  
**Reservation**  
Tel : 446 4878  
446 5888 Ext: 555  
Fax : 446 4877  
Email : reservations@yetiairlines.com

**Yeti Airlines**  
www.yetiairlines.com

Nepalgunj 081 526556 Bhairahawa 071 527527  
Pokhara 061 530016 Biratnagar 021 536612 Bhadrapur 023 455232

a great flying experience





The opening of the special session of parliament on October 11.

# Postponed

Amidst hope and no hope, parliament to sit on Oct 14 and 15

■ nf correspondent

The special session of parliament that was to decide on the Maoists' proposal, to go republic and switch to the proportional representation system of election at once, has been postponed by a couple of days.

The session which was to take place on October 14 and 15 was postponed till October 16 and 17 as decided by the Business Advisory Committee of the House held at

Speaker Subhash Chandra Nembang's chamber on Sunday. "It was decided to postpone it by two days as there were still some efforts taking place to arrive at a certain understanding," Dr Surya Kiran Gurung, Secretary General of parliament told newsfront.

The Congress and the UML leaders are suggesting a 60/40 ratio of the proportional and the first past the post system for a total of 480 seats in the constituent assembly. That will

mean retaining the mixed system with a larger share for the proportional system. But all will depend on how Maoists respond to this amendment.

Altogether 87 members of parliament belonging to the Communist party of Nepal and their allies, have moved resolutions seeking complete switch to the proportional representation of electoral system and abolishing the monarchy right away superseding the existing provision in the constitution that says - 'Monarchy can be abolished by a two third majority of the members present and voting in the House' - if there is evidence available that the king has tried to create problems.

Parliamentary experts and members of the Congress and UML have already opposed the 'improper and hasty' way of rushing the resolution much against the provision of the constitution. There are intense speculations in the political circles as to what would happen if

the Maoists do not withdraw the resolution as requested by the PM and UML General Secretary.

"We cannot have free and fair polls without monarchy being abolished. That is the reason we moved these resolutions," Maoist ideologue, Dr Baburam Bhattarai told newsfront.

But with no possibility of the resolution getting enough support from the other parties, Maoists are now left with options of pressing the resolution for voting and face the defeat; withdrawing the resolution to explore a common approach among the seven parties; or to boycott the session and accuse the Congress and UML parties of having worked 'at the behest of regressive forces' by not supporting the Maoist resolutions.

Political pundits think that the chances of Maoists going for the last option is much higher as they could use this against the two potential rivals as 'fight against regression' is going to be their key political agenda in future.

# South disappointment

Maoists would have to face a hostile India if they ever try to enter its borders as insurgent groups.

■ nf correspondent

Shyam Sharan's recent visit to Nepal as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's special envoy ended without much significant impact on the political impasse prevailing in the country. Sharan, a former ambassador to Nepal, and one of the key architects of the 12-point agreement that brought Maoists and the seven parties together after a New Delhi initiative in November 2005; conveyed Delhi's disappointment with the postponement of the November elections to the constituent assembly.

During his two meetings with Prime Minister GP Koirala and Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) Chief Prachanda; Sharan gave a message which implied that India was disappointed with both the leaders for their failure to keep their promises. Koirala has failed to hold elections on the previous deadlines twice; and the Maoists are going against the promise they made to India on the eve of the 12 point agreement that they would renounce politics of violence and sincerely join the multi-party system of government and face the election to the constituent assembly.



There was also an underlying message that Koirala should not hope to get continued backing of India if he simply wanted to prolong his authoritarian and arbitrary rule without facing elections, and that it may not be possible for India to treat Maoists as a

democratic outfit if it kept creating situations for postponing the polls. Sharan also made it clear that if Maoists ran away from the peace process, they would have to face a hostile India if ever the Maoists tried to enter the South as insurgent groups.

This was Sharan's second visit to Nepal that appears to stand on a turning point. The first time he accompanied Congress leader Dr Karan Singh, the Indian prime minister's special envoy in April 2006 with a message to the king with appeal to handover power to the political parties which the king ultimately complied to. But there are still many speculations about whether India had given any assurance to the king about the future of monarchy once he handed over power to the political parties.

During his stay here which lasted for nearly 48 hours, Sharan also met former Prime Ministers, Sher Bahadur Deuba and Surya Bahadur Thapa, UML General Secretary Madhav Nepal, Sadhbhavana party leader SS Gupta and Ministers -RC Poudel and KP Sitaula. His plea for early elections, as early as December, was however, not found practical by most of the leaders he met.

# Kickback

Mine protective vehicles purchase move

Despite Nepal Army being feared as a potential threat to democracy, the defense wing of the government is in the centre of a controversy over purchase of mine protective vehicles with possible involvement of huge kickbacks.

According to the sources in the Ministry of Defense, the army is considering purchase of half a dozen vehicles, and there are pressures that the contract should be awarded to a relative of the most powerful political family in the country.

"It is almost at the final stage," the source said. As per the preliminary discussions held on the subject, each vehicle, if bought from India will cost Rupees two crores whereas it would cost 300 percent more if bought from South Africa.

Obviously, since the entire purchase is being made in a hush hush manner, and maximum profit is the motive, there are high chances that the purchase will be made from South Africa, the Ministry of Defense source said.

This means that against the purchase of six mine protective vehicles, the government would be paying at least Rs. 24 crores more if the pressure on the Defense Ministry is turned into a deal.

The sources refused to reveal the names of the group that is likely to bag the contract, but indicated that the family is of Bangladesh origin.



**Newsfront wishes a very happy Vijaya Dashami to all our readers and well wishers.**

Subsequent issue of Newsfront will now appear only on October 29.

- Publisher

## Newsbrief

### Downsizing

The UN Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) in all likelihood is going to stay for some time. It has got three helicopters and a fleet of cars besides the whole establishment befitting its 89 million dollar budget. In fact, it has been a great employment opportunity for Nepalis in the organisation's middle and lower rung at least. But with the uncertainty over elections and its likely impact on the peace process, the UNMIN is contemplating downsizing its human resources. Many staff members at the lower level have been asked to find alternative jobs citing inability to sustain them.

### Maoist goal post

Maoists no longer believe they have been shifting the political goal posts too often. In an interaction with the non-resident Nepali leaders who are here to participate in their annual conference beginning October 15, an influential Maoist leader said they are being wrongly blamed for alleged shifting of the goal posts.

CP Gajurel, Chief of the Foreign Affairs of the party said that, in fact the goal posts have gone missing and all that the Maoists are trying to do is firmly establish a goal post which no side can pull out. His hint was clear - if the parties agree to have the proportional representation model of election and the country is declared a republic immediately, they will stick to the new date for election to the constituent assembly. But by the time Gajurel said it, chances of fixing the goal post of his liking had been reduced to nil.

### Nearly sacked

Thanks to the series of defeats in the fight with journalists that the Maoists had to suffer when its leader KB Mahara was the Information and Communication Minister, at least 38 journalists of Nepal Television could save their jobs.

Information available now suggests, Mahara had prepared a list of 38 TV journalists who had been put in the firing line, but the move was dropped at the last moment after he was forced to withdraw his order terminating services of 59 journalists from the Gorkhapatra Sansthan two months ago. But the minister ordered a massive curtailment in the allowances of the TV scribes which came as 'Dashain gift' to their shock.

Nepal TV sources said, despite Mahara's resignation as the minister, the entire board of directors and key posts has been filled up with Maoist cadres and they can take any decision to suit the Maoist political line. All the political and current affairs based programmes are also being run by the Maoists which they conduct as 'party propaganda', sources claim.

### Secretaries at last

It took less than an hour for Prime Minister GP Koirala to appoint 22 secretaries in the ministry. He cleared the old list on the basis of recommendation from all the political parties including the Maoists who are no longer a part of the government.

With all electoral processes called off and the code of conduct that restricted the government to make appointment in posts automatically withdrawn, Koirala seized the opportunity. There were no Maoists to insist that the appointment of secretaries should be a part of the package deal for all key appointments in constitutional bodies including the Commission of the Inquiry into Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Koirala is now all set to appoint a retired senior bureaucrat with pro-Congress background as the chief of the CIAA.

### Chiding Amaresh

Amaresh Singh is a Congress parliamentarian who has a larger than life image. The self acclaimed representative of the South block in Nepal, and someone trusted equally by PM Koirala and Maoist Chief Prachanda, fell flat on the ground like a kite with its thread cut, last week.

PM Koirala was at his 'meanest best' when he shouted at Singh, with all TV cameras focused on him, saying, "You are just an ordinary member of Nepali Congress and not someone who should be talking about policy matters." A red faced Singh kept his cool but his discomfiture was telecast live in various channels of Nepal television.

Singh, a Ph.D student at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi had been going around telling people and power centres that he was instrumental in getting Maoists and the seven parties together in Delhi to sign the 12-point agreement. While Singh's claim remains unverified, he has been getting free access to the PM's residence and continues to enjoy that in the home ministry even today. Many senior security officials have complained that he has been taken to confidential and sensitive meetings of the security officials by the home minister himself on several occasions.

# Abduction of journalist

Maoist leadership knows journalist Saha's fate

■ nf correspondent

When cornered from all sides, Maoist leader K B Mahara assured parliament on October 11 that the Communist party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) would not hesitate to take action if his party members were found involved in kidnapping of journalist Birendra Saha from Bara on October 4.

At the same time, he also challenged the government, especially the beleaguered Home Minister K P Sitaula, to take action against those guilty. But Mahara knows how helpless Sitaula has been in protecting the lives of journalists and ordinary citizens, especially the ones from Terai, and yet has been mysteriously sticking to the chair without any accountability.

"You must quit if you cannot protect the life of journalists and the freedom of the press," most members in the House told the Home Minister who said he will get back to the House with all the details. Neither Sitaula's nor Mahara's assurances were taken seriously by the members of the House.

Mahara's assurance for action against his cadres found guilty and his challenge, followed a nationwide protest and condemnation of the Maoists for having been responsible for kidnapping of Saha, a local journalist who also reports for Avenues Television. In fact, even Maoist parliamentarian like Hari Roka and Civil Society leader, Devendra Raj Pandey, now identified with the Maoists, felt compelled to march against Saha's kidnapping in one of the protest programmes recently.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists launched a 'Free Saha campaign' as the special session of parliament was to commence on October 11. All party leaders including those from the Congress and the UML participated in the campaign following a general criticism of the Maoists.

Ruffled with the all round criticism of the parties in



parliament that was led by Raghu Pant of the UML; and himself a journalist once, Mahara found no other way to wriggle out except by promising an investigation by the party into the matter. The CPN-M stands exposed in the matter as a human rights group probe has concluded that the Maoists local cadres are behind Saha's kidnapping.

In fact there are worst fears about Saha's fate as the alleged kidnapers are said to be shunning contact with the party leadership. "Maoist leaders know his fate," a senior home ministry official who has been involved in the probe told newsfront, fearing "the worst might have already happened."

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE: SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH





Editor & Publisher : Yubaraj Ghimire
Executive Editor : Sushma Amatya
News Coordinator : Manoj Dahal
Design : Sunil Khadgi, Kishor Raj Panta & Ramkrishna Rana
Address : PO Box: 8830, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel : 4443888, Fax : 4421147 (Edt.), 4411912 (Mkt.)
Email: newsfront@bhrikuti.com, marketing@bhrikuti.com (Mkt.)
Printed by: Express Color Press, Buddhanagar, Tel.: 4781810, Distribution: Kasthamandap, Tel.: 2010821

Point to Ponder

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

- Albert Einstein

Coup remark

Parliament enjoys a unique privilege. This privilege is the symbol of people's faith in the institution. As a representative of the people, members should be free from fear to express anything in the interest of the people and the country.

It is however, altogether a different matter how shabbily the government treats the parliament and its proceedings. The special session of parliament which began on October 11 did not have Prime Minister G P Koirala present there.

On the first day of the session, Maoist parliamentarian K B Mahara, alleged that the Nepal army might stage a coup any time and appropriate power. Under any circumstances, the chair should have shown the guts to ask the member concerned to share with him, if not with the entire house, the basis of such wild remarks.

Under the interim constitution, Nepal Army is very much under parliament, and an institution of the government cannot be accused of preparing to seize power through use of guns.

By maintaining total silence on the issue, Koirala is sending across two messages: that he does not need to take issues raised in parliament seriously; and that by maintaining silence on the charge, he can instill a sense of fear and terror and can use the Nepal Army to crush his potential political opponents.

It is true that most parties in parliament, human rights groups and even some UN bodies have been less than objective in assessing the role and responsibility of the Nepal Army during the years of conflict - singling it out for excesses, and leaving out the political bosses. But since last year the NA has made it clear that it will fully abide by the provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement and the interim government, as well as the orders of a legitimate government, although the government has time and again deferred polls, the only process that it could have drawn legitimacy from.

But once the current regime turns authoritarian and is not accountable to parliament, aberrations in political system can swing to any extreme degree, and the blame for that should go largely to the current coalition led by Koirala's inability to establish democracy and democratic norms.



Letters

Sans principles

Newsfront's coverage of political events is far superior since it gives precise coverage in a way that everyone can understand. But your main story 'Beleaguered' seemed to suggest that Koirala was willing to quit after he failed the second time to hold elections on time.

Koirala quit in the past only after he was defeated in the House. In 1993, he recommended dissolution of the parliament instead of quitting as the prime minister even after he lost the parliamentary voting. He also outmaneuvered KP Bhattarai who was projected as the party's candidate for prime minister-ship in the manifesto immediately after the last election.

Koirala began the campaign to remove Bhattarai in a matter of months and ultimately succeeded in his power game in 2000. Age might give wisdom, but not character.

Advertisement for newsfront magazine featuring the headline 'Beleaguered' and an image of a person with a cart. Below it is an advertisement for the Spark car with the text 'Spark Your Deshain' and 'BUY NOW Ready Stock Available'.

culture, and Newsfront has been able to bring that part before its readers.

Ranjit Shrestha, Indrachowk, Kathmandu

Feudal lord

Yubaraj Ghimire's fractured state gives a sense of what has been happening in Nepal. Repeatedly, the leaders are behaving like dealers. And the peace process increasingly appears it is taking the shape of a deal between the politicians.

We are almost on the verge of saying goodbye to a feudal system and its symbols. But why is GP Koirala being allowed to work as the worst feudal lord under the guise of Loktantra? That only indicates that our political parties can raise slogans, act quite radical if necessary, but are incapable of doing any thing

substantial, to change things for the better for the country. Since Koirala has lost all moral authority to rule and act on behalf of the state, he should not be taking any decisions that have long term implication for the country, society and the people of Nepal.

R K Shakya, Lagankhel

Superb coverage

Newsfront's coverage of Kumari with the entire historical and cultural genesis, both in the form of article and the interview are superb. In fact, its relevance was felt after the Indrajatra controversy. The fact that a 'secular country's Prime Minister' felt the need to go there for Kumari's blessing and King Gyanendra also rushed there for the same purpose, shows how deeply rooted the value of Kumari culture is in Nepali mind.

It is definite that Nepali politics is deeply influence by its

Corrigendum

We regret the errors in the 37th issue on the editorial page where a quote from an earlier issue was wrongly placed above the quote of the week; and it was again repeated at the end of the editorial column. - Ed.

Spiritual Corner

Strong voice against hypocrisy and patriarchy

Mahsati Ganjavi, was an Iranian poetess of the 12th century. Her birth-date is unknown but her birth-place is considered to be in Ganjeh. Ganjeh is presently the second largest city of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Mahsati was contemporary to Seljukid Dynasty who ruled most parts of Iran from 1037 to 1194 AD.

The poetess protested against religious prejudices, conservatism and protected man's moral freedom. Her poems written in Persian

reflected the people, especially women's romantic dreams of a free and happy life. She was celebrated at the court of Sultan Sanjar for her Rubaiyat (quatrains), but later persecuted for her courageous stand against arbitrary male dominance and for her courageous poetry condemning religious obscurantism and fanaticism. Her only works that have come down to us are philosophical and love quatrains (rubaiyat), glorifying the joy of living and the fullness of love.

After almost 900 years, Mahsati Ganjavi is



still highly respected in most parts of Iran for her courageous poetry condemning religious fanaticism and dogmas. In the city of Ganjeh; a street, a school, an academic institution, a museum, and some other places have been named after her. Her monument was also set up in

Ganjeh in 1980. Selected quatrains composed by Mahsati:

Love's magic grain
A world there is for those in love with mines of precious stones,

But bards select a different world as setting for their thrones. The bird that eats love's magic grain lives on another plane Its nest beyond both worlds, ignoring riches, scorning fame.

World of love
When my heart came to rule in the world of love, it was freed from both belief and from disbelief. On this journey, I found the problem to be myself. When I went beyond myself, the pathway finally opened.



# Threat to democratic peace

In a condition of security vacuum neither peace building nor democratisation process can proceed.



**An open conflict system does not help much to maintain the stability of the state, its polity and policy executing agency, the government. This demonstrates that Nepal's conflict system is moving from state-centric conflict to society-centric.**

Following the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), many people assumed that Nepal has entered post-conflict phase. But, the unending bargaining by incumbent political parties for more power and state positions, movement-oriented social, economic, territorial and ethnic actors for representation and armed non-state actors acting at their own free wills indicate that politics is totally at liberty from the rule of law.

In a condition of security vacuum neither peace building nor democratisation process can proceed. The government has also failed to outlaw violence as Nepali citizens increasingly realise that even the state of no-war-no-peace they have enjoyed so far was a fragile thing.

The open-ended nature of Nepal's conflict and its geopolitical milieu are reinforcing each other's propensity for escalation. Many autonomous conflict actors are stacked on macro actors—the SPA and CPN (Maoists) on a scale of cooperation, competition and conflict depending on their interests and setting the dynamic cycles and counter-cycle of violence in motion.

An open conflict system does not help much to maintain the stability of the state, its polity and policy executing agency, the government. This demonstrates that Nepal's conflict system is moving from state-centric conflict to society-centric. This has made it more complex. As a result, political transition in Nepal is in a state of perpetual imbalance.

The tendency of monopolising power by a few political elites has made the heterogeneous actors of society non-stakeholders of peace accord. In a condition where every actor is fearful of its rivals, it is difficult to entrench security, property and dignity of citizens and expand the development space other than just relief and humanitarian supplies.



■ Dev Raj Dahal

Breaking the conflict trap, requires not just the escape routes and shifting responsibilities to others, but a concrete political measure to break the trap of poverty, fast economic recovery and coordinated behavior in the implementation of the polices of peace accord. Is it possible without the transformation of political parties and democratisation of civil society from personalised to mass-based? How can synergies of these two be captured for stable state-party ties?

The Nepali government has lost its unified sovereignty due to its incapacity for governance, inability to compress the growth of competitive violence, unrestrained birth of a neo-patrimonial culture and erosion of policy sovereignty. The interim constitution, without enforcing power, is but words, and of no strength to secure human rights of Nepali citizens. As long as this state of affairs prevails and anti-political deadlocks remain unresolved, the government cannot bring the forces of reaction, reform and revolution into a framework of peace.

Social learning of actors of conflict is a must to know the successes and failures of various policies and changing nature of context, issues, rules and actors. It allows producing and distributing policy-relevant knowledge to various national and international actors who are engaged to overcome peace building challenges and examine non-violent option.

The role of civil society and various political parties in promoting security should be critically analysed to see whether they contribute to human



security or are engaged in anti-state discourse that fosters lawless frontiers to penalise the weak, poor, women and children. Integration of various sources of feedback including the role of women and victims of conflict is central to change the structures, behavior and beliefs of actors of conflict.

For any peace-building activity to be successful those in national leadership positions and the society at large must have to play an innovative role for constructive change because timely change in political process makes conflict redundant. But, support of international stakeholders for their capacity building is a must to build the foundation of sustainable peace. The growing crisis of governability can be resolved by changing the power relations from monopoly and control to reconciliation and coexistence.

Peace building is more than signing peace accord. The honest execution of the provisions of peace accord helps the government to understand which

policies work best under various changing conditions. Peace building in the context of high political dynamics requires extensive discussion of the various aspects of the peace-building process, rules and institutions and the critical challenges to addressing them. Four strategies are crucial to a peace building in Nepal:

Firstly, in a heterogeneous society, balance of interests of politically significant groups rather than monopoly of power by a few organised interest groups can contribute to political stability. The role of international community as high-leverage actor lies in balancing act, that is, taking the side of weaker ones and enlisting their stake in peace.

Secondly, cooperation of heterogeneous actors in peace requires the optimisation of interests of all actors rather than maximisation of a few powerful ones. Combined value generated by all is more powerful to prevent the collapse of state and enable it to perform basic state functions on governance. To achieve

peace, powerful actors should not annihilate the less powerful ones but should provide incentives for cooptation into the established order.

Nepal's historiography reveals that it is a country of minorities and there are no institutional mechanisms to prevent minorities becoming a majority in the future. A balance between the government and opposition and minority and majority is a prerequisite to maintain peace and stability.

Thirdly, establishment of a mechanism to foster overlapping interests of all for the invention of a common ground is important for the coordination of goals and means of various actors. Lastly, acquisition, use and transfer of power must follow democratic principles so that opponents trust the rules of the game and pin a hope on the possibility to return to power non-violently. This helps to establish a culture of peace. Sustainable peace can be achieved by peaceful means tied by general will of all for the common good. ■



# Mess in Nepal

**It does take several decades for a failed nation to come up above board with continuous hard work and good imagination.**

Not holding timely elections would signal an end to peace and stability in Nepal. It then, would share space with many failed nations around the world that have never found their right bearings despite several changes in governments and policies. This fear has only increased after the government put off indefinitely the polls slated for November.

Once the international community loses its interest in a country, even a fully united effort for a long period by the parties can hardly make any change for the better for two reasons: first, there are hardly any instances where the political parties unite in a poor country at times of distress; second, the wealthy nations find much better places to engage including investing their money. It does take several decades for a failed nation to come up above board with continuous hard work and good imagination.

The momentous change that took place in April of 2006 came as a result of the uprising mounted by all political parties with full support of the Maoists who had shown little or no interest to come to dialogue unless

their demands for a republic was acceded by all previous governments. The political parties had been reduced to a virtual non-entity at the hands of King's regime that barely lasted for 15 months.

The parties were left with no choice but to hang on to the last straw offered by the Maoists in New Delhi. The 12 - point agreement signed in New Delhi gave all the advantages to the Maoists with little left for the parties. It was a natural outcome of an agreement signed between a largely weakened party (seven political parties now has become six with unification of the Nepali Congress party) and a rising force (of Maoists insurgents then) to contend with.

In less than 18 months after the successful uprising that took back state power from King Gyanendra, Nepal has seen historic changes in a near lightning speed. The interim parliament under the new interim constitution, as amended, has made sweeping changes such as embracing the concept of secular state away from a Hindu Kingdom with promise to adopt federal structure and model



■ Binod P Bista

**The protracted discussion that took place on the question of fully proportional representation for the CA elections was first raised strongly by the Madhesi community.**

of governance. With the Nepali Congress, after unification, taking the republic agenda, there remains little doubt on the nature of the system that Nepal will follow after the constituent assembly elections.

Almost all these radical changes planned for a poor and beleaguered nation, with full support from the international community, has been taken at the behest of the Maoists, now a full-fledged political party under CPN-Maoists. CPN-Maoists have near equal representation to the Nepali Congress (before unification) in the legislature parliament and had been in the government until recently.

The protracted discussion that took place on the question of fully proportional representation for the CA elections was first raised strongly by the Madhesi community. This was seen as a pretext to the postponement of polls by leaders of many parties including the leader of Nepal labor and peasants' party.

The recent meeting of the central committee of the CPN-Maoists has now clearly expressed the stand of

its members that unless all of their 22 point demands are met, especially the call for declaration of a republic and fully proportional representation system of CA elections, there is no point in holding the election. The obvious message the Maoists have given is: they would not take part in any elections now or in near future so long as the political parties do not agree to their demands. This new situation puts the government of GP Koirala in a mess.

The biggest question at this moment is whether the Maoists are ready and willing to participate in the CA elections at all? GP Koirala, as the leader of the government and the largest democratic party, must now make a decision of his own in the interest of democracy, rule of law and judicial independence under the interim constitution.

It is needless to state that the interim constitution reflects the will of the people of Nepal and the confidence of the international community. Any action contrary to this understanding would be tantamount to a gross betrayal of the trust of the people of Nepal.

## ■ Ganga Dutta Acharya

The right of everyone to be free from hunger is a fundamental human right. Every state has a primary obligation to respect, protect and fulfill all basic human rights. But the right to food is badly violated across the globe. Recent statistics shows that there are 845 million people in the world who go hungry to the bed every night, of which six million are the Nepalis.

An individual can realise right to food when there is physical and economic access at all times to adequate food and the means for its procurement. The right to food thus has three aspects- adequacy, accessibility and sustainability. Adequacy means that the diet should be nutritionally balanced, safe and culturally acceptable. Accessibility refers to the physical and economic access of every individual to food with dignity. Sustainability is regular supply of adequate food and uninterrupted capacity of individuals to its access.

Nepal has institutionalised the rights to food as a fundamental human right in the interim constitution 2006. But the biggest challenge is to make it happen in reality. In 2004 the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organisation has endorsed "Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realisation of Rights to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security." The guidelines are particularly important for countries like Nepal.

As an entry point to make the right to food a reality, the voluntary guidelines demand governments to assess the causes of food insecurity and to consider adopting sustained and well focused national policies and

strategies that clearly envisage the progressive realisation of right to food. In developing such policies and strategies, the state must consult civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.

Productive resources such as land, water, forest, genetic resources and services like input supply, planting materials, extension services and so on for the farmers and employment opportunities for the workers, are crucial to generate incomes permitting them in accessing adequate food. The guidelines strongly demand states to respect and protect the rights of individuals to employment and to productive resources like land, water, forest, seeds, credits etc.

Agricultural land is the most important production resource as well as the determinant of access to other resources, benefits including public goods and services and power in rural economy of Nepal. But the land distribution and ownership pattern in Nepal is highly skewed, leaving a majority of the indigenous communities, tillers and women out of this valuable asset. Therefore, land reform is an important component in realising the right to food.

It is urgent to put a comprehensive agrarian reform agenda into the political agenda.

Agrarian reform that ensures land to the tillers and those without access to land have farm-based livelihoods should be the priority. Tribal and traditional indigenous communities should be ensured to possess their whole territory.

Another important aspect of agrarian agenda is to reform the existing agricultural and rural development policies and institutional practices. Nepal's agricultural and rural development policies and programs are fundamentally guided by the growth-led development paradigm with the strong conviction on trickle-down mechanism.

The development policies and programs generally have not been informed and generated from 'within' based on our own experiences and specific contexts and needs. Rather they are primarily donor-driven approaches. Experiences have shown that such externally driven blue-prints are often bound to fail as they poorly fit in the existing institutional practices and socio-cultural contexts, failing to impact significantly on poverty.

Making right to food a reality thus requires realisation that as elsewhere, poverty and hunger are predominantly a rural phenomena in Nepal. Therefore, the government should focus on formulating contextual sustainable agricultural and rural development policies and

programs, informed by our own experiences and needs. Civil society organisations have a crucial role to make aware the rural poor and excluded communities with respect to their right to food and the government responsive to address the poverty and hunger problems.

State policies should focus on improving access to productive resources- land, forest, water and genetic resources- for those who are denied of their rights. Policy measures should be taken to make available the appropriate and affordable technologies, production inputs, financial resources and public services to the poor households, to promote the participation of poor in policy decisions and conservation of and protection of natural resources. Government should have policies to invest in rural infrastructure such as road and irrigation facilities, education and agricultural research to generate appropriate technologies.

Agricultural development is only the pathway to escape from poverty and hunger. Increased agricultural productivity benefits the poor households through higher incomes, plentiful and cheaper foods. It generates patterns of development that are employment-intensive where poor can get higher wages. To do all this, a comprehensive agrarian reform is mandatory in Nepal. ■

# The right to food

Six million Nepalis go hungry to bed every night.

## On the occasion of World Food Day





# Polls without Maoists not credible

## Leaders have to explain their roadmap to the people...

**Dr. Gunther Baechler** has spent nearly three years with the Swiss Development Cooperation as Special Adviser for Peace Building in Nepal. He has been the most visible and tireless diplomat shuttling between key actors in the peace and development process that include representatives of the seven party coalition including the Maoists, peace and human rights activists. Gunther shared his ideas with newsfront on how Nepal should move forward so that peace, justice and democracy co-exist.

*Where do you see Nepal's peace process headed now? Is indefinite postponement of the November polls a set-back to the peace process?*

Overall the peace process has been surprisingly successful – despite several set backs and a lack of implementation of many agreements. This indicates there is certain stability, a political will which dominates the differences among the stakeholders. That is extremely important. At the same time, the erosion of trust among the political leaders is alarming!

*How inter-related are the peace process and the Constituent Assembly (CA) polls?*

Nepal decided to put a new constitution at the core of the peace process. So far, peace and constitution making are one and the same. Polls are a necessary step towards a functioning CA. If the leaders continue to postpone them like a tea party they will get the bill sooner or later – presented by the people of Nepal. And if the leaders think peaceful elections later are safer than risky elections today they do have to explain their roadmap to the people and not just keep mum.

*Maoists have pulled out of the government. How credible will this poll be without them being a part of the government?*

CA elections without participation of the Maoists is not possible, elections with them in the opposition is, at least in principle. It would be much better of course if the seven parties can demonstrate unity which is also reflected in a coalition to run the interim government institutions with consent. The Maoists as a whole has to learn quickly that it can be a very radical party and agent for change without using violence or coercion. Other big parties have to execute power without arrogance knowing they depend on a preliminary mandate through Janaandolan II.

*It was agreed earlier among the 8 parties that the CA's first meeting was to decide the fate of monarchy and that a mixed system of electoral system was to be adopted for the polls. How do you view the entire scenario and do you have any suggestions to the key players?*

I'd suggest negotiating in good faith presenting 'packages' from both sides. Package deals indicate flexibility and as a rule lead to sound compromises. Two years ago a give and take approach made 12 points and peace possible. If political parties claim they cannot be flexible because of central committee decisions, then the decisions taken are not peace sensitive enough. If, let's assume, the CPN / M compromises on the question of monarchy the Nepali Congress is well advised to compromise in the question of elections.

*What are the minimum requirements that in your opinion will ensure free and fair elections*

*soon?*

Firstly, the seven parties' alliance has to be strengthened through confidence building measures (implementation of agreements, sound consultations and consensus culture). Secondly, the people of Nepal desperately expect trust building measures from the leadership such as for instance a national peace conference after Tihar which includes all stakeholders in the country. Third, there must be an election procedure that satisfies both the major stakeholders as well as the voters before and (most importantly!) also after the elections. I guess the prime minister would urge for elections the results of which would not be accepted by one or more stakeholders. Lesson learnt number one is: elections are the most critical phase in any peace process.

*Switzerland has played a crucial role in establishing democracy in Nepal right from King Tribhuvan's time. How do you think Switzerland can contribute to that campaign now?*

Nepal and Switzerland differ in many ways from each other. Nevertheless, the two were able to build a sustainable partnership based on mutual trust and respect between its people. Against this Nepali partner asked us to be helpful in search of democratic and federal principles or institutions that best fit the Nepali society. This includes the question of a security sector reform with a sound civilian oversight over the armed forces, with efficient border guards, with a federalised judiciary etc. In turn, many Nepali remind the Swiss that democratisation is a never ending societal process. Democracies are the best systems we know but they are never as good as they ought to be. We all have to learn from each other.

*How independently do you think Nepal can assert its domestic affairs squeezed between two giants? Can it play a role in the regional and global context independently?*

Big and small countries are highly interdependent nowadays. Nobody can just unilaterally do what s/he wants. Globalisation is therefore a chance for small countries. They all together

have to insist on the rule of international law in order to be protected from coercive powers. They have to promote international justice in terms of economic and environmental issues. And they can benefit from big neighbors in terms of socio-economic development and politically sound relations.

Switzerland is not a member of the EU. However, economically speaking, it is more integrated than any member state; it enjoys excellent relations with its big neighbors; it promotes trans-border regional development etc. At the same time Switzerland preserves a high degree of national autonomy. Autonomy is very much related to internal democracy and local self-determination in the federal states. Can Nepal make sense out of this for its own development?

*How best can the implementation of issues such inclusion, participation and decentralisation be ensured?*

Exchange of experiences, comparative studies, exposure visits, and hard work based on a 'Nepal model' can lead to success. Only a legitimised and all-inclusive CA will be able to draft a constitution that takes care of all the concerns raised during the peace process. It is not an easy walk. Much depends on the working style of the CA. Consultation and participation is crucial. At the end of the day there must be a political understanding that devolution and sharing of power at all levels of the new state can only induce change.

*Can the uncertainty of the polls be attributed as failure of the donors?*

The international community at large is responsible for a coordinated approach in order to avoid confusing statements and unsound interference. That is not as easy as it sounds. I am sure I also made many mistakes, also in this interview. I apologise for my ignorance and hope for a dialogue among friends. ■





■ The wanderer

It is a common human failing that we receive much wisdom from the past, but never act upon it. History, hence, repeats itself. History doesn't confine its repetitiveness to one place, it travels. It's rather like an epidemic: it creates havoc in one place and then travels to another. Conflicts are part of the sad repetition of human ineptitude.

One is often amazed at the number of conflict mediators Nepal has been receiving. None of them has managed to do anything positive. They still keep coming, nevertheless, because of that strange Nepali idea that people from other nations are less stupid than Nepalis themselves. In fact, people from other nations are just as stupid as we are! The only difference between them and us is that they are stupid in a different language which we don't understand.

There are four main reasons why conflicts arise - the mega conflicts of course being wars. Reason number one is resources: one group or nation has resources others want and others make moves to grab them. Resources range from land to oil, to diamonds and other assets; and they may even be something like a right of way through somebody's territory. Reason number two is when there is an unacceptable gap between haves and have nots; and usually that leads to internal conflict, especially when there is an excess of unemployed, adolescent youth.

Reason number three is when a nation or government has imperialist designs, delusions of grandeur really, and will find any reason to influence or control those areas of the world that don't conform to the master plan. Reason number four is when a government is so weighed down with ineptitude that it practises divide and rule within its own nation just to remain in power.

We have worked our way through all four main reasons now at one time or another in our history, and we are currently hovering at number

# Wisdom (UN) received

**Conflict mediators still keep coming...because of that strange Nepali idea that people from other nations are less stupid than Nepalis themselves.**



four. Our awesome comrades are doing their utmost to persuade the prime minister that the source of all problems is the monarchy. Many of our elite intellectuals are beating the same drum. Maybe the individual is a problem for the prime mover, but the institution seems to be working within democratic norms in Britain, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Denmark to name some of our donor nations.

It bemused one a great deal when erstwhile

diplomatic representatives of these nations jumped on the Nepali elitist intellectual bandwagon instead of guiding us to lessons learned from their own histories. As they say, there are so many solutions just hanging around looking for a problem, and the Nepali political tendency is to find all the solutions without ever understanding what the problem is!

Let's look back to that pivotal point in 2005 when a certain foreign minister of an erstwhile colonial power decided that they would, "Follow India's lead." Very easy to say, but hey wait a minute. So easy to be a champion of democracy when you never had to bite the bullet for it! In fact, in our own unique form of absolutely 'free for all and let the chips fall where they might,' did we ever examine the democratic credentials of our advisors?

Had we done so we may have uncovered that most of our democratic advisors were former colonial powers and that while their elite cadres were lording it over far-flung climes, their own masses were struggling to get adult franchise. We were lucky we got adult franchise because it was a sine qua non for joining the UN. Considering all the heady days of former systems we've had, including the period from 1990 to 2001, it's amazing that donors are only just beginning to realise what money grabbers the political elite are.

How can they ever answer to their own

taxpayers when they see all those gas-guzzling Pajeros, when the debts mount up, and when they have to watch the pantomimes that take place every time there's a cultural festival and our prime minister decides he's not only a king, but Badshah and can decide who can pray and not pray, who can be blessed and not blessed. Now I ask you, is this democratic? Is this what tax payers in donor countries are paying for? How do we come to such a pass? No elections in sight and the people's right to have a voice in their own destiny completely usurped!

In handing over the 'protectorate' (that's in a history book) of Nepal to another colony in 1947 lock, stock and grand ambassadorial residence, could not our historic (not present) protectors have also handed over more than a soupcon of imperialistic je ne sais quoi? The Wanderer believes this sits rather heavily on our next door neighbours and their political movers and shakers are all rushing to tell our government exactly what to do: not for Nepal's sake but for their own.

And hey, that's fine, that's exactly what they should be doing if they love their nation. But here's the rub, what does that say about our political lot, what do they love? Where are their commitments? Maybe our awesome comrades love the nation and us, warts and all. Maybe they really intend to do build us a paradise on earth with the barrels of their guns, but there is just one caveat.

If you're not sure about the intentions of the awesome comrades in making their famous 22 demands; read the Communist Manifesto for a quickie, world view (dating back over a century ago in Europe), the Gulag Archipelago, and The Trial; and throw in for good measure a quick look see at The Killing Fields, Hotel Rwanda, and maybe the report of the United Nation's Human Rights' Commission on Tibet. As they say, it's history, it's a mystery and we'll probably not learn anything from it anyway, but don't say no-one gave you a reading list! ■

national news :: international news :: sports news :: business :: entertainment news :: THT Live :: 2722 :: your cellphone



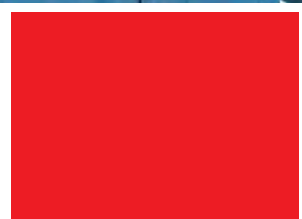
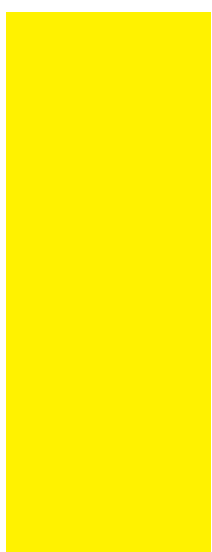
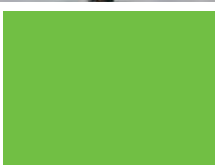
Let your **Cellphone** be your source of **News**



## NEWS

Keyword	Result
NEWS	National News
INT	International News
SPO	Sports News
BIZ	Business News
ENT	Entertainment News
NEWS HELP	Help

For example to get international news  
Type INT & send to 2722





# Was the Ajmer blast a suicide attack?

'Suspicious material' found in one of the dead man's pockets

Home Minister Shivraj Patil said on Saturday that the bomb blast at Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti's shrine in Ajmer that killed two people appeared to have 'links across the border'.

Rajasthan Police sources told DNA that said six people, including two Bangladeshis, had been detained for questioning. A mobile telephone with a SIM card was used as a trigger.

A police team arrived in Hyderabad to probe whether Syed Salim, one of the two men killed in the blast at Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti's shrine in Ajmer, was behind the attack.

The body of 42-year-old Salim, a resident of Hyderabad, was brought to the city in the early hours of Saturday. Salim had made Ajmer his home nine years ago.

He used to run a cosmetics shop near the shrine. While Salim's family has refused to talk, his neighbours and friends in Janki

children.

Some friends claimed he wasn't mentally sound and decided to settle down in Ajmer out of his



Nagar in Hyderabad's Toli Chowki neighbourhood said Salim, the eldest of seven brothers, had been living in a rented house in Ajmer. He used to visit Hyderabad once a year to meet his wife and two

reverence for the saint. Similarities between the Ajmer blast and the Mecca Masjid blast have further raised suspicions about his involvement. ■

(DNA)

## Bhutto faces corruption setback

Pakistan's Supreme Court is to rule on whether a government amnesty lifting corruption charges against former PM Benazir Bhutto is legal. The amnesty was one of Ms Bhutto's conditions for her return to Pakistan next Thursday ahead of a possible power sharing deal with President Musharraf.

Gen Musharraf won another term in office in presidential elections held last Saturday.



That election is also being challenged in the Supreme Court. The court's Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry, said he would hear five petitions against the amnesty, known as the National Reconciliation Ordinance. He said the court would rule on whether the "ordinance and its provisions are beyond the constitution".

Chief Justice Chaudhry said anyone granted an amnesty under the ordinance would "not be entitled to claim any protection if this court concludes that the ordinance and its provisions are beyond the constitution," the AFP news agency reports. It is not due to start detailed work on the case for another three weeks. The petitions were put forward by a leading Islamic politician, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, and four other individuals.

(BBC)

## Burma 'deeply regrets' UN rebuke

Burma's military junta has responded to a UN Security Council statement deploring the regime's response to pro-democracy protests last month. In a statement released via state

detained protesters and a "genuine dialogue" with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi - did not reflect the desire of the people.

The UN's statement was the



media, the military leadership said it "deeply regretted" the document. Rangoon says 10 people were killed and 2,100 arrested during last month's demonstrations, many of which were led by Buddhist monks. Foreign diplomats and analysts fear both figures could be far higher.

The UN Security Council statement was agreed after China, Burma's closest ally, lifted its objections. Burma's leaders insisted they would co-operate with the UN but said the country would pursue its own road map for democratic reforms.

The statement from Burma's generals also said the UN agreement - which called for the release of political prisoners and

first time the council has taken official action against Burma and marked a shift by China that had previously used its council veto to block criticism of the country's rulers.

But China's foreign ministry has been quick to say that the move did not mean that it would support harsher action against its neighbour. In a statement today, it said the Security Council's move was meant to support mediation efforts by its special adviser, Ibrahim Gambari, who is due to leave this weekend for an Asian tour, expected to culminate in his second visit to Burma.

(BBC)

## China

# A watershed congress

The Chinese Communist Party will hold its 17th party congress next week in Beijing to chart the future course of China's development in the next five years. In a sense, the meeting of the CCP's 17th Central Committee can be viewed as a watershed congress as the country is entering a new era of development that faces new challenges in economic, political, and social areas.



Twenty-nine years after the reform and opening-up initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, mainland China's economy is at a crossroads: whether to keep pursuing a "GDPism" that has resulted in a tenfold increase in gross domestic product at the

expense of the environment. The economic prosperity brought about by the explosive, double-digit GDP growth has also produced the problem of an uneven distribution of wealth, creating widespread discontent among the poor and disadvantaged.

When Hu Jintao assumed leadership of the CCP at its 16th congress in 2002, succeeding Jiang Zemin as party boss, mainland China's economy was on the verge of taking off. Hu's five-year reign saw an unprecedented economic boom, despite the SARS epidemic of 2003, that has vaulted the country into the number 3 ranking of the world's economy. Within five years, the mainland's foreign exchange reserves have not only broken the US\$1 trillion mark, but also have been growing rapidly and steadily, to a staggering US\$1.4 trillion at present.

This may sound remarkable, if not for the serious side effects. For one thing, the environment is the direct casualty of the boom, as rivers and air and soil are damaged beyond recognition, not to mention the damage to human health. In other words, the current economic development in mainland China is unsustainable. It is like, as the Chinese saying goes, "to empty the pond for fish". For another, the overflowing coffers of foreign cash accumulated from the trade surplus, estimated at over US\$200 billion this year, have become a source of trade friction and fueled protectionism in the West against Chinese imports.

The seven-day congress which opens Monday is sure to discuss ways and means of striking a balance between GDPism and the environment. The growth rate, at 10.7 percent in 2006, will have to slow down. The cost of growth, to the environment and natural resources, has been too high to bear. The party congress must make a momentous decision on this crucial issue.

In the area of politics, the paramount issue is political reform, which has been too slow and too little. The opening-up should include relaxation of control on the press, religion and human rights. It is apparent that mainland China's political reform has lagged far behind its economic progress. The key to the reform is political democratization, administrative transparency, and judicial independence.

But political reform is a sensitive issue, and also a difficult issue for a one-party dictatorship which lacks effective supervision, much less checks and balances. The absence of supervision over power has resulted in pervasive corruption of party cadres, causing growing discontent among the people and damaging the legitimacy of party rule. Hu Jintao knows that the political opening-up is an irreversible path and the party must dispense more democracy, not less, to cure the many woes plaguing the country.

In this regard, it is encouraging to know that Hu Jintao won't anoint his successor, a departure from the party tradition set by strongmen Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. According to Beijing's semi-official China News Service, the CCP decided at its last plenum of the 16th Central Committee held this week in Beijing that "momentous decisions" such as top personal appointments must be "discussed and decided collectively." This means the practice of picking the party's future leader by one man will come to an end.

Will the CCP allow popular election of officials beyond the village level? This is an issue seen as the index of progress in the mainland's political reform. But few would expect the CCP to take a bold step forward in this area at the current stage when the party distains Western-style democracy and stresses implementing "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The mainland's social problems are legion. The gaps between rich and poor, city and village, coastal and inland regions are cause for concern. They are time bombs of social unrest and political instability. During the congress, thousands of "petitioners" from villages are expected to swarm to Beijing to tell of the social injustices they have suffered from corrupt officials. But as usual, they will be kept at arm's length from the delegates to the congress. The phenomenon underscores the urgency of Hu Jintao's call for "building a harmonious society," which aims to solve the problems. Hu's motto, together with his catchphrase of "scientific development," is sure to get a boost at the congress by enshrining it within the party's charter.

Will the issue of Taiwan come up? Surely, especially when President Chen Shui-bian is heightening his separatist activities by trying to change the country's official name, a move regarded by Beijing, and Washington as well, as a step toward *de jure* independence that Beijing has threatened to use force to prevent. The congress won't sit idly by on the issue.

Mainland China, under the leadership of Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, has reached a turning point in its breakneck development, where changes must be made in many areas to ensure sustainable growth and advancement in the next five years and beyond. It is a milestone congress, and a watershed congress to boot.

(The China Post)





Sanchita Sinha Roy

Leaves that give life to flowers, enjoy all the accolades flowers receive and patiently endure all the thorns.



Magnificent

# LEAVES

Leaves are a series done on 8 panelled canvas boards size 10"x12" in acrylics and texture white. It is in celebration of the enduring beauty of leaves. Leaves that give life to flowers, enjoy all the accolades flowers receive and patiently endure all the thorns.

It gives so much and yet takes in so little, and so graciously. It remains in the background, sustaining and enriching the buds, flowers and fruits. Co-existing in multitude, it knows its work well and performs efficiently, without any expectations. A lesson for us there! I could never tire painting the vast world of leaves in different hues, shapes,

sizes, texture out there in this wonderful world.

Each leaf has its own unique character. Leaves on tall trees that provide shade to weary travelers, huge fronds that float on ponds on which rests insects and frogs, fragrant herbal leaves that heals, spiky leaves that seem to challenge you, velvety ones that feels so soft, the silky ones from which dew drops slither off. I could go on and on. The leaves are another brilliant part of nature that I absolutely adore.

(Sanchita, painter and writer, can be reached at: Cell – 00- 919818803916 and sanchitasroy@gmail.com)

## Marshland Flowers

Thousands of meditators around the world have remembered vividly incidents in their past lives.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

So things like rebirth, miracles, the laws of karma may not have been proven yet by 'science'; but that does not warrant throwing them out of the window by calling them unscientific. Science has very little to do with these things and probably never will prove these things as either false or true because, they do not belong to the field of science. And as we have seen, even according to top level scientists it is false to think/ believe that only the narrow and limited field that science deals with is real / actual / true / non – superstitious. This is a kind of fallacious thinking wrought about in the present day due to excessive outdated over-modernistic education which is already getting to be out of date in the western world.

Since the time of the Buddha till now, for about over 2500 years, reports have come again and again from both Buddhist and non – Buddhist sources of special humans possessing special powers of the mind. Yes there have been fakes who have capitalised on the simple credulous minds; but as the Egyptian Sufi saint of the eleventh century El Ghazali says, "If there are fake gold that itself is a proof that there is genuine gold. If there were no genuine gold there would be no fake gold."

In the Indian subcontinent it is not only the Buddhist literature spanning 2500 years of history but also Vedic – Hindu literature and Jain literature which speak of miraculous powers and remembering former lives etc. It is not a matter of one human or twenty humans but virtually unaccountable records when we take into consideration all the Buddhist / Hindu / Jain records. Such a vast array of records even if only anecdotal and not validated by scientific methods just cannot be thrown over-board so easily. And it should not be too, as we have seen that the knowledge based on science is not the only true piece of knowledge we humans should treasure.

As far as rebirth or re-incarnation goes, Ian Stevenson (MD), the Head of the Department of Parapsychology of Virginia University has done 'scientific research' on this issue, conducting research all over the world from Alaska, Lebanon, India to Sri Lanka. By the so called 'scientific research' it



is meant research that is based on double blind methods and such other modus operandi used by science to prove any hypotheses.

He has come up with a huge four volume work doing research in cases from all around the world, even amongst people who do not have any cultural background regarding reincarnation. Based on his record he says that we can definitely say that science cannot disprove rebirth.

In the context of Samatha meditation, it is possible to bring back memories of past life, just like memories of this life. This is not easy, but even memories of childhood are not easy. But thousands of meditators around the world have remembered vividly incidents in their past lives. We are not talking about imaginations but memories. There is a qualitative difference in experience between a memory and an imagination. Every mentally healthy person can distinguish whether he is imaging or remembering. After all I remember a past event not a future event while we imagine / fantasise the future.

Besides the meditators remembering when they go into deep levels of Samatha / Samadhi there are hundreds of cases of young children all around the world who remember, their previous life – their names, family names, city / village / town, the details of their old street / house / rooms and even what was in the cupboard in the room. (To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

## Subscribe to Samay & Newsfront Weekly at a Discount

Special Offer

Duration	Actual Rate (Rs.)	After Discount (Rs.)	Joint Subscription (Rs.)
Three Yrs	3750	2800	5300
Two Yrs	2500	1900	3600
One Yr	1250	1000	1900
6 Months	625	550	1050

समय  
राष्ट्रिय साप्ताहिक

newsfront

For Details:

Bhrikuti Publication Pvt. Ltd.  
Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Tel: 4443888, Fax: 4411912

Kasthmandap Distribution Pvt. Ltd.  
Teku, Kathmandu, Tel: 2010821



# Dashain and the Annapurnas

Dashain makes us go back to our families..



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

The quiet that envelops the Kathmandu valley with the arrival of Dashain festival is truly reassuring. It also reminds me of my travels in the Annapurnas. The festival comes like a calming experience, its source the same as Annapurnas, the silence and the divine presence. If Annapurnas' grand godly presence, its height and eternal snow, makes it a sacred destination that we all strive to pursue, so does the festival that we wait for months.

Something that is far away and hard to get is forever alluring. Not everyone can dare climb those mountains. The very mammoth shape and the expanse of its sprawling size and their influence on the landscape are sheer magic. Otherwise why would we go climbing it like stubborn children? While traveling in the mountains one always hears talks about the sightings of the peaks. The breaking news in the mountains always remains the view of the glaciers, collapse of bridges, sighting of a ferocious animal, and the loss of your mule track or a landslide that sweeps the whole village to the bottom of the gorge, especially during the monsoons.

You come across travelers from the world and the first question that crops up is the concerning the sightings of the mountains. During the monsoons, it becomes impossible to travel and snow ranges go permanently behind the clouds.

Last month during my travels I understood the meaning of Dashain and why people await it eagerly in the mountains. It was when the torrential rains swept

**The festival comes like a calming experience, its source the same as Annapurnas, the silence and the divine presence. Annapurnas' grand godly presence, its height and eternal snow, makes it a sacred destination.**

away the bridges and as we slept in a lodge on our way to the base camp, I could see the whole village up all night long, gasping from the clamor of boulders that the angry Modi Khola turned upside down.

In the middle of the night the lodge owner came to warn me of calamitous consequences if the rain persists even on the fifth night. It was raining like a solid fall of molten mass on our rooftops. The rain came hysterically, with a monstrous fall. I slept precariously with fears of waking up in a riverbed as shown in the Hollywood apocalypse movies. Probably being a city man, I had no real idea of the harsh situation.

Next morning we woke up to the news of the disaster. Most of the bridges had been swept away and there was no way we could go ahead or backwards. My friend Pascale suffered from vertigo and taking her across the makeshift bridges and wading through the icy cold creeks was an experience.

There was a huge landslide before Gandruk that made us either return or walk through muddy rice fields. We sat in our lodge as the sky cleared a bit and soon after the Fishtail Himal came into our view. The view of the snow mountain made me think of my late mother. The quiet moments I shared in the presence of the Fishtail took to me the peaceful time one spends in the temple, monastery or in the company of one's family. The way Dashain makes us go back to our families; the Annapurnas take us to our roots - feeling of the pulse of a quiet moment in our lives.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)

## World Heritage

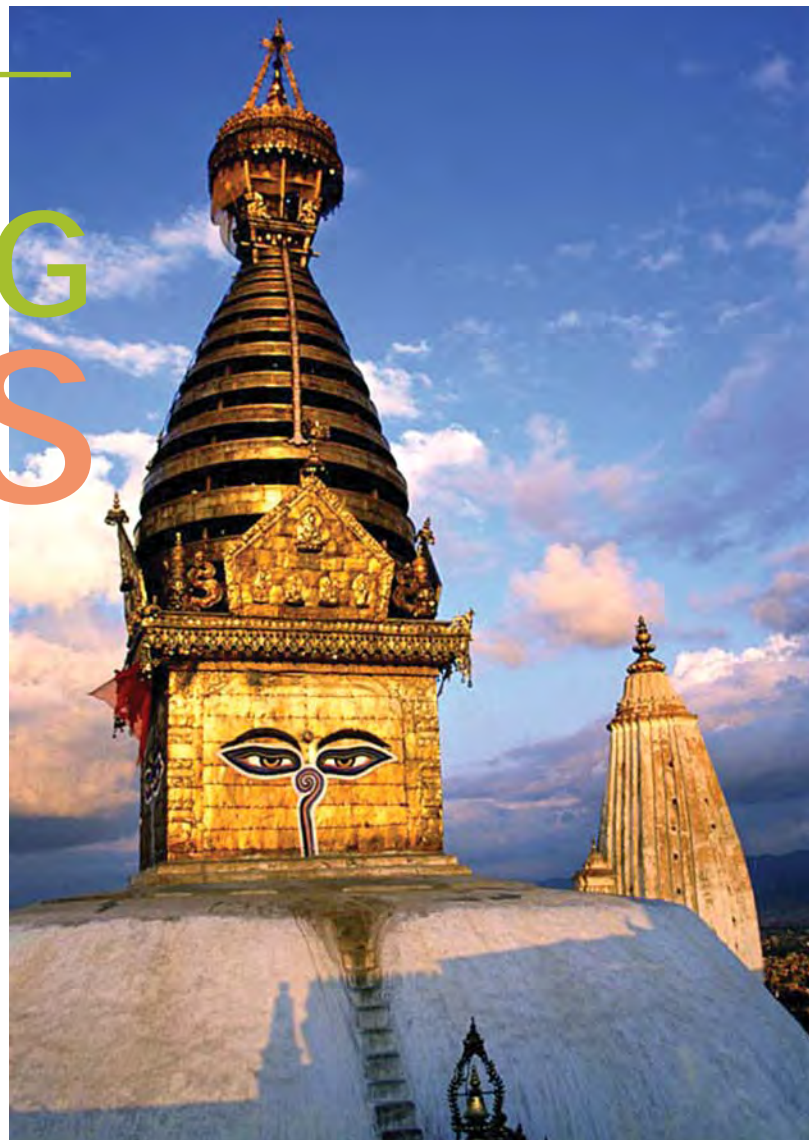
# ALL SEEING EYES

Swoyambhunath stupa, situated on a hillock 1,405 metres above the sea level at the western end of Kathmandu valley, has been the centre of Buddhism in Nepal for centuries.

A world heritage site, Swoyambhu literally means the self-existing land and is believed to have been established more than 2000 years ago. Geologists say a big lake turned into the Kathmandu valley about 10,000 years back. The rich and fertile soil after the lake drained, turned it into a fertile land for civilization.

Inscriptions indicate the construction of Swoyambhu was carried out by King Manadeva of the Lichhavi dynasty. The shrine was destroyed completely during the Moslem invasion in 1349 and the stupa was renovated in 1372 by Jayasthiti Malla. King Pratap Malla in 17<sup>th</sup> century built the main eastern entrance, two big Buddha images on the eastern staircase and 365 steps to the shrine. The temple was damaged substantially in the earthquake in 1934 and was renovated by Prime Minister Bir Sumsher.

Standing on a 77 metre high hillock, the stupa is 36 metres tall. It is the representation of Buddha's enlightened mind. It is seated on a mandala, the circle of meditation. The two eyes of the stupa are believed to represent peace, prosperity and capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. The huge thunderbolt (Vajra) is believed to cover the eternal flame coming out of the powerful shrine. Five Buddhas : Akshovya, Ratna Sambhava, Amitabh, Amogh Siddhi and



■ Pramesh Pradhan

Vairochana are placed around the stupa. One can view the deities as one goes around the stupa turning the prayer wheels mounted around it.

Pratappura and Anantapura- two white Shikhara temples dedicated to Pratap Malla and queen Anantalaxmi stand on both sides of the main stupa and the spacious balcony nearby makes it a wonderful spot to view the valley.

Manjushri and Saraswati temples stand on the twin hillock near the site. Saraswati is the goddess of wisdom and learning for both Buddhists and Hindus. For Hindus she is the daughter and consort of

Bramha and for Buddhists, she is the consort of Manjushri. Legends say, Manjushri, the Bodhisattva- during his flight to south from Tibet, saw a big lake and on it the island of Swoyambhu where he saw a mystic lotus flower in its brilliance with mystic flames emanating from it. Identifying the religious importance of the location, he cut through the Chovar gorge draining out the water thus creating the valley.

Swoyambhu is a great place to observe religious harmony in Nepal. The temple of Harati or Ajima is widely visited by both Buddhists and Hindus. For Buddhists, Harati is the protector of children and for Hindus she is Ajima, the mother of Saptamatrikas (seven sacred mothers), the console of Kuvera and the goddess of smallpox. Although a Buddhist shrine, it has incorporated icons of many Hindu deities. The mystical atmosphere in and around the stupa makes it a place truly worthy of many visits. (nte@mail.com.np)



Early morning sunlight cuts through a jungle.

BY Sushma Amatya





Bhaskar Ojha

# Destination documentary

■ nf correspondent

At this time of the year Kathmandu not only comes alive with the festivities but also an array of documentary films, its subject matter ranging from Jajarkot to Jaffna. The sixth edition of Film South Asia (FSA) with 48 documentaries from eight south Asian countries were showcased here that concluded on Oct 13. Ten year old FSA has been like an film making institute which teaches different varieties of non-fiction cinema making techniques to handle serious subject in South Asia.

Himal Association has proved itself to be a successful film festival organiser showcasing varieties of non-fiction movies on South Asian subjects changing the traditional definition of documentary usually seen as promoting a topic; which now has changed into a kind of visual investigative reporting where you can have a vivid examination of contemporary societies.

Individual documentary makers have found FSA as a good space for their work. A member of this year's jury, Farrjad Nabi was the winner of Ram Bahadur Thapa Trophy (US \$ 2000 award) for the best film in the festival, in 2nd edition of FSA. This young film maker from Pakistan started his movie-career eyeing FSA eight years back and is a jury member now. The jury was chaired by famous Indian film maker Saeed Mirza.

FSA this year ran full house in the Kumari cinema. Four documentaries from Nepal figured in the festival that ran four days. The Nepali films included Pranaya Limbu's 'Chhama

Deu! Tara Nabirsa!

Film South Asia is now a platform to explore different south Asian perspectives, regional subjects, including culture and society. Its 'Dare to document' has significantly increased the number of documentary audience in Nepal.

# Dasain prayer

...Do these large political men reflect like the rest of us?

■ Keith D. Leslie

Outside the lights of Kathmandu fill the darkened sky, while colleagues, who have come from Nepal's five remote regions, seek lessons from the work that fills our lives.

As we drove this morning from Harihar Bhawan, the decaying 19th century Rana palace where the National Human rights Commission has its office, we passed buses of young Maoist supporters heading into Kathmandu to apply pressure once again on the government for an instant republic and greater proportional representation.

I wonder, as the days slip by, as a pre-Dasain chill creeping from the nearby ridges, are we coming closer to the cusp of a dramatic historical change or another false dawn for the aspirations of the struggling people of this tired land?

Of course, there is reason to celebrate this Dasain as the constant conflict that kept the country in suspended animation for over a decade has been officially over for the last year. The fear of night attacks in district centers and brutal incidents in the cities has waned. The wasteful self-destruction of the nation's limited infrastructure appears over. The pressure among schools to send students for military indoctrinations or use their compounds for armed encampments may have ended.

In all of this, there is cause for some hope as the Maoists and seven parties keep a fragile hold on the anniversary of their Comprehensive Peace Accord, signed last November.

Yet, equally, there is deep concern given the history of Nepal's political leadership failing the country while, too often, putting personal gain & prestige above realistic compromises and lacking a

sincere sensitivity to the ceaseless suffering of their own people.

We all watch mutely the increasing communal violence, the constant Bandhs, the daily murders and abductions, the sharp splintering of radical and reactionary movements, and the international community's reluctance to speak frankly to leaders who no longer command the respect of their own people.

Fortunately, the past is not necessarily a roadmap to the future. We hope that the current context -- and even the individuals -- may change enough that they, too, may finally be weary of the anxieties and uncertainties that their internecine conflict has inflicted upon the darkened Himalayan landscape.

Painfully, after their numerous peace process violations and obstructions, without elections, we have no choice but to live with the self-proclaimed leaders who rule Nepal's government and parliament. The once-again postponed or suspended or neglected election is still the only democratic path forward to find new, capable and untarnished leaders for Nepal's long-suffering people.

Therefore, this week, on the cusp of Dasain, when Nepali families gather for Tika and blessings, as the peace process hangs in the balance, leaving many worried about the coming months, each of us must find our own personal commitment to a manageable peace amid the painful truths of continuing human rights abuses.

As night settles here out on the edge of the valley, I wonder what our national leaders, those in whom we must place our faith, are thinking. Is there a trace of pride in having come so close, at last, to their political ambitions? Or, per chance, is there a sense of humility

when they think of the cost paid by so many others' lives, of villagers who have lived in fear for so long or the women who became youthful widows or the children who have grown up in uniform missing years of school?

At nighttime do these large political men reflect like the rest of us? Do they wonder about the long-term impact of their words and actions over these past ten years? In the quiet of their minds are they able to acknowledge some of their own responsibility for the suffering of others?

Or, are these men of history for whom there is no past -- only an idealised future they can see on the distant horizon. Having achieved rehabilitation among Kathmandu's enclosed political elite, are they busy seeking even more power for themselves? Can we believe that their latest rounds of discussions, after two lengthy years, offer a sincere promise of further accommodation and responsibility in the months ahead?

Tonight, do they look out their windows and see the same darkness outside that I see? Illuminated by the tentative, flickering lights of the city below -- a vulnerable valley lit, it appears, with thousands of butter lamps at the feet of the eternal Himalaya.

These lights, for me, represent those common souls who will never have a seat around the table. People, who in Faulkner's famous phrase, 'endure.' Nepalis who walk each day to work or travel in crowded micro-buses, who struggle to feed their families, send their children to neighborhood schools and dream of a modest success by which to measure their world.

People for whom prayer is still a form of communication.  
(Keith is Sr. Human rights Advisor at the National Human rights Commission in Nepal)

## On Dashain !!

**Let the festival of dashain shower the blessings of peace, joy & prosperity on all nepalis in every way & fill the world with happiness.**



## Happy Dashain



M.B. GURUNG  
MD  
Bhat-Bhateni Departmental Store  
&  
Bhat Bhateni Group