



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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Durbar School : Waiting to be the centre of excellence !  
(News on Page 3)

# Showdown?

## Respect constitution: Army tells PM

■ nf correspondent

In a day of hectic developments, Nepal Army has taken unambiguous stand that it would not be obliged to carry on government and the ruling 7-party decision that violated the letter and spirit of the interim constitution.

The message was conveyed to Prime Minister G P Koirala as the three top leaders -- Prachanda, Madhav Nepal and the Prime Minister himself--appeared determined to declare the country a republic bypassing the provision of the interim constitution.

"We must and we shall respect each and every order of a legitimate and elected government. We will leave no stone unturned to protect sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and interest of the Nepalis people", COAS Katawala is believed to have told senior army officials at the army headquarter at a recent meeting.

The development in the Army headquarters was a sequel to the understanding reached among the seven parties to go republic that would leave the proposed constituent assembly with a fait accompli on the republic issue. Though the central secretariat meeting of the Maoists on December 23 morning had directed its party leadership not to make any compromise on the issue of proportional representation system, Party Chief Prachanda and key ideologue Baburam

Bhattarai exhibited enough flexibility after the civil society leaders like Padmaratna Tuladhar asked them not to insist on it for the moment. "We might write a note of dissent and agree on what the seven parties have decided", said a central committee member.

Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal is believed to have taken a rigid stand on Sunday's Central Secretariat meeting against any come-down on the 100 per cent PR system of election. But

Badal's position was ignored after the Party leaders met the select group of civil society the same afternoon. The politics is clearly headed towards uncertainty after the Army headquarter came out with a warning of open defiance in case the fundamental tenets of the constitution are undermined by the government.

The seven parties have just reached an understanding to hold election to the 601-member constituent assembly by Mid-April. They also agreed to declare Nepal as a 'Federal Democratic Republic' which the "Constituent assembly" shall endorse and implement. Out of the total CA seats, 240 will be elected under the first past the post system, 335 under the PR system while the Prime Minister will be nominating the remaining 26 seats. On recommendation of the Maoists, the ruling alliance also agreed to vest all the powers of the king on the Prime Minister during the interim period. ■

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# RAW deal: Spy chief's secret mission again

Apart from Koirala, Home Minister K P Sitaula, Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam, and the Army Chief Katawal are reported to have met the RAW chief in Kathmandu.

India's external intelligence agency called the Research and Analysis Wing or simply RAW played a critical role in bringing the Maoists and the Seven Party alliance together in Delhi to oust the royal regime in 2006.

With serious fissures now visible in that alliance based on the 12-point Delhi agreement largely crafted by India, RAW could not be expected to have remained silent for too long. Newsfront sources have now confirmed that B K Chaturvedi, RAW chief, indeed paid a quiet visit to Kathmandu that lasted for four days beginning December 19.

During his half-an-hour one-on-one meeting with G.P. Koirala on last Thursday, the spy master made



it clear that India was in favour of holding election to the constituent assembly elections at the earliest. "The Prime Minister has not shared details about this meeting with us", a senior cabinet member who does not belong to the Congress party told newsfront.

Chaturvedi's secret visit came at a time when there are speculations that Shyam Sharan is coming to Nepal again as Special envoy to Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh.

Sharan had earlier visited Kathmandu in October soon after the November 22 elections had been indefinitely postponed. His message, relayed through a press conference, was that without elections, the legitimacy of the current political order would come under question, both at home and abroad.

But Chaturvedi, given the nature of his position, could avoid taking a public position on what India's

message and concern are. The latest official Indian line, sources said, was that under no circumstances would it support 'takeover' by Maoists or prolonged rule of the current regime without facing the polls.

It was Hermes Tharakkan, RAW station chief in the Indian embassy in Kathmandu, who is believed to have played an important role behind the scene in organising the November 2005 meeting of the

seven party leaders and the Maoists in Delhi. The 12-point understanding signed there called for a joint struggle against 'absolute monarchy' with Maoist agreeing to renounce violence and being part of the democratic mainstream as well as CA polls.

Chaturvedi's secret visit came at a time when there are visible fluctuations in the Maoist political line against its Delhi commitment and the new violence in Terai that together seem to derail the possibility of holding CA polls. Apart from Koirala, Home Minister K P Sitaula, Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam, and the Army Chief Katawal are reported to have met the RAW chief in Kathmandu.

## House committee summons PM, COAS

Prime Minister G P Koirala and Chief of Army Staff, Gen Rookmangat Katawal will be deposing before the parliamentary committee on Human Rights in a case related with the suspected mass killing of Maoist detainees by the Bhairabnath battalion of the Army.

The summon was issued by the committee headed by its chairman Mahendra Pande of the UML. The instruction of the House committee follows suspected 'finds' in Shivapuri national park. The National Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Human Rights Commission (OHCHR) have asked for the protection of the sites for proper investigation.

The alleged mass killing of 49 Maoist detainees by the Bhairabnath battalion and the torture and murder of Maina Sunwar are the two cases

most pursued by the OHCHR.

Prime Minister Koirala who also holds the Defense portfolio is directly answerable to the allegations directed against the army. This would be the first time that the Prime Minister would be questioned by the House committee in a case related to HR violation and disappearance. "Nepal army is committed to honour Human rights and will provide all assistance to the investigation", COAS Chief Katawal is believed to have told senior army officials on the issue. Both have been asked to appear before the House committee on December 24.

Home Secretary, Umesh kanta Mainali, who appeared before the House committee on December 22 said it was not possible for a 24-Hour police deployment in the site as the Nepal army had been assigned the

job long ago. He was responding to a question about what the government was doing to protect the site as well as 'suspected finds'.

Based on information provided by surviving detainees, the OHCHR had last year come out with the report on disappearance of 49 Maoists suspecting that they might have been killed. The supreme court had also asked the government to form the committee to probe the incident. The latest finds of some 'clothes' and polythene packets in the area, are suspected to contain the mortal remains of the victims.

Under instruction from the NHRC, some forensic experts have already been engaged to begin the preliminary investigation. "We will soon decide how to take the investigation further", said Gauri Pradhan, NHRC member and spokesperson.

## Abducted CEO freed by criminals

Pashupati Paints CEO Mahesh Murarka returned home after almost a week in captivity with a criminal gang whose identity still remains unidentified. Murarka arrived at his residence in Baneshwar around 9 P M on December 23.

His family members refused to give details of the ordeal that Murarka had to go through, or the circumstances in which he was released. But it's suspected that his freedom was bought for a big sum. Police sources said they had no clue about the 'independent negotiation' going on with the gang to secure Murarka's release. Earlier, a telephone call to the Murarka family on behalf of the abductors had demanded a sum of Rs 50 million for his safe release.

Murarka was abducted on December 18 while he was traveling in his car. A blue vehicle had intercepted his car at Maitidevi area. Soon an armed group dragged his driver out of the car and took Murarka along with the vehicle. His car was later found abandoned at Pingalasthan, near the Tilganga area the same evening.

Police said that they were in touch with Bombay Police as the SIM card used to make the call to the Murarka family for ransom was bought there. "The possibility of some local criminal groups working in connivance with major outfit in India can not be ruled out", police said, adding that they had not yet received any major lead in the case.

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## Newsbrief

## Combatants verification over: UNMIN

While the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) is still maintaining utmost secrecy on the number of Maoist combatants, it has now confirmed that the verification process is over. A statement issued by the UNMIN on Dec 22 said it has completed the second stage of registration and verification, in accordance with the agreement on Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA).

The information the top Maoist leaders have shared with the government suggests that the final number of those recognised as qualified combatants will be any where between 15,000 to 17,000 against a total of 31,000 scrutinised. More than 7,000 had already deserted the camps while nearly the same number were said to be either under 18—falling under child soldier category or those recruited after May 6, 2006 when the peace process began. It said

UNMIN make the reports public after it submits it to the AMMAA and to the Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee (JMCC). The JMCC is headed by UNMIN with representatives from the Maoists and the Nepal Army.

UNMIN press release said the last combatants to be verified were those retained outside the cantonments to provide security for the Maoist leadership or were out for medical treatment in accordance with the understanding on this matter agreed between the Government and the CPN (M). They were interviewed at CPN (M) headquarters in Kathmandu on 20-21 December 2007.

The UNMIN said the UN has expressed willingness to assist the government and the Maoists in the process of their reintegration once they are discharged as combatants.

## Durbar School gets new management

The Ministry of Education and culture has appointed Umesh Shrestha as Chairman of the new management committee for Durbar High School (renamed Bhanu Madhyamik Vidyalaya). The committee has been asked to revamp the school and make it a centre of excellence 'befitting its glorious history'.

According to official sources, the decision was taken by Education Minister Pradeep Nepal. "Shrestha was chosen to head it as he has successfully managed Little Angels chain of schools besides being Chief of PABSON—a body of the Private and Boarding Schools Organisation", Education Ministry official said.

Durbar school was founded by Jang Bahadur Rana soon after his return from Great Britain. Dev Shumsher, the reformist Rana Prime Minister, moved it to the present site from Thapathali, and opened it to the Non-Rana families. The school was also the first Centre in Nepal for conducting School Leaving Certificate (SLC) beginning in 1943 A.D. "we will try to restore the school to its previous glory and explore its huge potential to convert it into a centre of excellence", Shrestha told Newsfront.

## Cancelled

The Foreign Ministry has decided to annul the appointment of Shailaja Acharya as ambassador to Delhi. The government of India is being informed of this decision, a Shitalniwas source told newsfront.

Acharya's appointment to Delhi had been confirmed by the government three weeks ago after receiving necessary acceptance from the Indian government. "Her appointment is being terminated on health grounds", the source said.

Senior congress leader Acharya's appointment had been resisted by UML and other factions of the Ruling alliance on the charge that she supported the February 1, 2005 Royal takeover. Prime Minister Koirala had used his discretionary powers to appoint her as the ambassador despite her failure to receive the endorsement of her nomination by the 29-member parliamentary committee. "There has been no decision yet on who will be sent to Delhi, but the issue will get priority", the foreign ministry officials said. Nepal is without an envoy in Delhi for the past 18 months.



Supreme Court

# Courts are hostage to mobs and powers that be

The legal validity of the government headed by G P Koirala has now become the focus of debate, not only in the political circle, but also among members of the bar. The question has now become more strident and intense after the government failed to amend the interim constitution that had entrusted the seven party alliance to hold election to the constituent assembly by December 15 (end of Mangshir).

"That was the responsibility given to the present government by the interim constitution. It was both an obligation and national duty on the part of the government to make good on that responsibility", Kumar Regmi, Chairman of the Constitutional Lawyers Forum (CLAF) told newsfront.

The present constitutional dilemma dominated the discussion during the 52nd Bar day celebration in Lalitpur on December 23. Prakash Raut, Chairman of the Supreme Court Bar

Association (SCBA), stated that the country is without a valid and legal government at present. "It has outlived its constitutional validity after the government's failure to conduct the poll", he said.

It was equally frustrating for the members of the Bar to hear a noted Indian Jurist, P N Bhagwati expressing concern over the onslaught on Judicial independence by the Executive in Nepal. He made the point in the context of the interim government having introduced a new provision for parliamentary hearing for appointment of Supreme court judges. Bhagwati, a former Chief Justice of India, was here at the invitation of the SCBA.

Sambhu Thapa, former President of the Nepal Bar Association was critical of the seven party alliance and the Maoists for having run the country by their 'diktat' instead of the rule of law. He opined that the constitution

was the biggest casualty in Nepal's avowed move to establish democracy and rule of law. The meeting, hosted by the Lalitpur unit of the NBA, was presided by senior advocate Krishna Prasad Bhandari who has of late been expressing concern that the supreme court has never been made so weak as now during the past 50 years. There is a growing frustration among the judicial community that the executive branch has now managed to make the judiciary a mere appendage of the government.

But the most 'frank' confession came from the Judge of Patan appellate court, Kumar Prasad Pokharel who revealed that the court decisions are now swayed either by political power or the threat on the street. "First I need to peep from my window at the crowd below before delivering the judgment", he said, making it obvious that judgments are not being delivered purely on judicial considerations.

## High profile killing: dangerous trend ahead

In a clear indication that militant outfits have now begun to target relatives close people in high places, Kiran Aryal, related to Prime Minister G P Koirala's family through marriage was killed and his brother, Asish Aryal, seriously wounded in Biratnagar on December 22. Aryal's sister is married to Dr Shekhar Koirala, nephew and all powerful aide to the Prime Minister.

A senior Police official at the Headquarter told Newsfront that more relatives of people in high places may be on the target. Although no one has owned responsibility for the murder, Jananatrik Terai Mukti Morcha headed by Jwala Singh is being suspected for the crime, the official said.

Reports from Biratnagar said the Aryal brothers who live in Kathmandu had gone to sell off their agricultural harvest in defiance of the instruction of JTMM and other Terai outfits as well as the Maoists. Many farmers have not been able to reap their harvests this year for this reason.

Kiran Aryal had managed to sell his paddy worth Rs 38,000 but had ignored to pay the tax to the JTMM-T group, Police sources said. His motorbike, with his brother on the pillion ride, was stopped by some unidentified assailants in Biratnagar, and a live bomb put into the pocket of his brother. As Kiran tried to speed away his motorbike, he was shot to death while his brother sustained injuries. The injured has been

admitted to the hospital for treatment.

The incident also gives a new turn to the rivalry between Maoists and the JTMM which has raised arms against the state demanding autonomy and more rights to Terai. Shekhar Koirala who is negotiating with the Maoists on behalf of the Prime Minister, has been perceived as anti-Terai and pro-Maoists.

The incident took place barely a week after the government, under the initiative of Home Minister K P Sitaula and Shekhar Koirala, deployed a Special Task Force in 12 out of 21 districts in the Terai belt to restore law and order. The recent event raises the possibility that the JTMM and other similar outfits may be targeted by the task force led by the police forces.





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Point to Ponder

Most people would die sooner than think; in fact, they do. - Bertrand Russel

Judicial emasculation

At a time when the Executive has repeatedly failed to secure legitimacy by facing polls, and the rule of law is almost non-existent, people tend to look towards judiciary in the hope that it will protect their rights, issue necessary directives to the state to maintain order.

Threats were meted out from the floor of parliament that judges going against the 'vague' mandate of the people's movement would be impeached. Parliamentary hearing system was introduced without prescribing any norms for it.

There are already disturbing signs that the Judiciary, including the supreme court, has failed both in courage and in duty to settle cases of controversial nature. The judgment on Nepal Rastra bank Governor case has been deferred repeatedly for political reasons.

A Supreme Court judge is said to have been in tears when confessing to some of his 'confidants' recently that he had to give verdict much against his conscience because of pressure from a minister in a case in which the government was a party.

The country has now been passing through a phase where rule of law has become the biggest casualty and constitutional behavior of the regime is increasingly under question.

The recent trends visible in the courts are not only disappointing, they also hint at some kind of indifference which might go on to institutionalize Judicial servility to the Executive as in some Banana Republics.



Letters

Honour good examples

The interview with Niels Gutschow was an interesting read into a foreigner's insight into Nepal. He has helped in preserving and promoting our culture. At the same time, he has exhibited sensitivity and respect for the labours who work hard to earn a living.

Sameer Thapa
Baluwatar, Kathmandu

Reintegration a bad idea

The Maoists and the government must not coerce Nepal army into accepting reintegration of the Maoist combatants into the Nepal army when Maoist party continues to run parallel government, court and taxation authority.

The issue of integration is a very sensitive one. There are examples of Indian National Army (INA), formed and led by Subhash Chandra Bose, which was not integrated into the Indian army after independence even though the INA had no history of having killed any of its Indian brothers and sisters.

Maoist guerrillas have killed people in Nepal. Can they be integrated into the army without the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission process?

Any imposition of such a move by the government will have very serious consequences.

If the 'reintegration' is to start sometime in the future, the Maoist guerrilla army must start behaving today to prove their

newsfront magazine cover featuring G P Koirala and an advertisement for Yeti Airlines with the headline 'Over 1.5 million satisfied passengers'.

loyalty to the law of the land, and not that of their party. (Name with held) Tahachal, Kathmandu

Reintegration a must!

Newsfront report suggests that the Chief of the Army Staff Gen Rookmangat Katawal is opposed to integration of the People's Liberation Front in the Nepal Army. The entire peace process depends upon the implementation of this clause.

Ramesh Rana Magar
Kalanki, Kathmandu

Big liability

A basic lack of honesty only matched by unrivaled lust for power best describes a character that is Prime Minister G P Koirala. Why is he in power when he has lied to the nation at least on two occasions about holding constituent assembly?

Mohan Sainju
Anam Nagar, Kathmandu

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Love thy neighbour

Jesus Christ lived on earth for a mere 33 years, yet had a profound impact on world history. Much of what we know about Jesus Christ is based on the four gospels written many years after his death.

On Jesus Christ

"Jesus accepted a mortal body so he could reveal man's immortality. Jesus accepted a man's consciousness so he could fulfill the divine consciousness. Jesus accepted bodily

pain so he could offer the world eternal joy. Jesus accepted betrayal so he could teach the world the meaning of forgiveness." - Sri Chinmoy

"Truth is not a monopoly of the orient or the occident. The sunlight, though pure silver, appears to be red or blue when looked through red or blue glasses; so also does pure, undiluted truth appear to be different when expressed through oriental or occidental civilisation. The original simple teachings of Jesus have undergone many changes, because of diverse



translations from language to language, and diverse translations of translations. But all of the great ones have expressed themselves simply, and I can find very little difference in the message of Jesus the Christ and the other great teachers.

Now, I want to tell you something in the beginning, lest there be any doubt in your minds: What I received from the great oriental masters, that same have I received from the teachings of Jesus the Christ! The great ones, like waves, bathe in the eternal sea, and become one with it. Disciples

make all the trouble and differences. They begin to create narrowness and bigotry. The pure message becomes diluted with ignorance. Humanity drinks of the polluted waters and then cannot understand why the thirst remains. Only pure water can quench thirst.

The time has come to separate truth from falsehood, knowledge from ignorance. All truth and knowledge must be used to combat the black doubts and superstitions hedging humanity in the prison of unhappiness, that the mighty flood of truth may inundate the gathered darkness of the ages, setting the soul of humanity free.

- Yogananda Paramahansa

If India can successfully defend the rights of all her people with a 645 member parliament, Nepal should have been able to do it with much less.

**If numbers were to solve all issues confronting Nepal today, such as inclusiveness, proportional representation, then why was all that drama staged in all these months at the cost of hard working people? Future of Nepal is becoming more and more obscure.**

After many months of suspense, anxiety and hardship, especially to daily wage earners whose right to livelihood was openly trampled by the political parties enjoying full power in today's Nepal, it appears that the curtain is slowly opening. One would generally expect discussion on economics or similar national issues when number is made the central point of discussion, but in our new Nepal it appears that the major political parties are playing a number game at every available opportunity.

After the restoration of parliament

for nominations. Last, but not the least, this number is being raised to 601 with 240 for direct elections, 335 for proportional representation and 26 for nominations. However, it is claimed that the ratio between direct and proportional elections at 40: 60 respectively, ensures the mixed system for Nepal's new parliament, to be formed after a new constitution comes into force.

It appears that the current parliament will also decide the date of elections to the constituent assembly before the closure of its winter

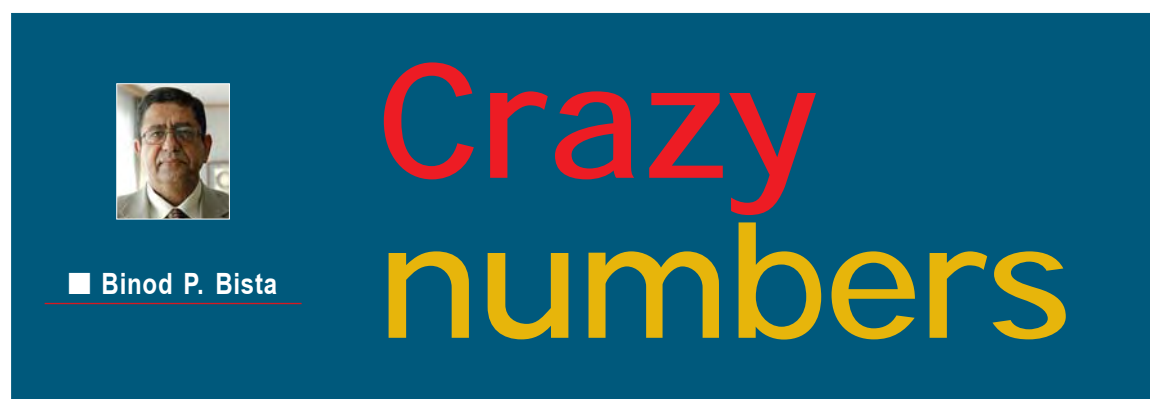
second one had this issue as well as announcement of republic prior to elections. The larger objective was said to be for creating an atmosphere for conducting the elections. Whatever may be the reason, as long as the Maoists remain unsatisfied, the elections can again be deferred or cancelled on one pretext or the other.

Furthermore, with the proposed third amendment in the interim constitution, there are hardly any substantial issues to be resolved by the members of the constituent assembly except to map out the

Now, the question remains that the proposed increase of the seats in the parliament of a small country like Nepal is nearly equal to the seats in India's parliament. India is many more times larger than Nepal from any standpoint and has a population of over one billion. If India of one billion people can successfully defend the rights of all her people with a 545 member parliament, Nepal with just 27 million should have been able to do it with much less. Though Nepal has maintained its relations with both of her closest neighbors, China and India, Nepali political parties (almost all) have been closer to India while running the country. One can expect that the Nepali nation will closely follow the system of governance of her neighbor in the south.

It would not only be a matter of enormous cost to be borne by the people in perpetuity for such a large number of parliamentarians, the very concept of autonomy of every state within the country could be seriously jeopardised by a number which might be unmanageable at best. The Nepali people can hardly understand the number game the political parties are playing.

If numbers were to solve all issues confronting Nepal today, such as inclusiveness, proportional representation, then why was all that drama staged in all these months at the cost of hard working people? Future of Nepal is becoming more and more obscure. The irony is that the leaders of the people who were instrumental in bringing this mammoth change are sadly responsible in creating a state of confusion and uncertainty. ■



■ Binod P. Bista

in the wake of a resounding success of Jana Andolan II, the major political parties had arrived at a number that seemed to satisfy all parties, or they thought so. Setting 205 for direct elections, 205 for proportional representation and 15 as nominated, the total number of seats in the parliament would have been 445. However, this number was short lived. Immediately after the Terai revolt, the parliament on the recommendation of the coalition government raised the number to 497 with 240 each for direct and proportional representation and 17

session. Although the announcement of new election date would be music to many ears, including the international community members involved in Nepal's politics today, nobody can be certain of its implementation today. In fact, most educated city dwellers find it hard to believe that the same will be held in the next four months.

They are not totally off the track in their assessment. Last two dates for constituent assembly elections did not work for the central issues: first one had to do with the demand for fully proportional representation, and the

nature, scope and limitations of Nepal's federal system.

In spite of the first amendment calling for an all-inclusive representation and carrying out requisite arrangements (almost nine months back), the state has remained quite complacent and done nothing to improve the present system and structure. Inclusiveness has only remained in paper and speeches. The situation seemed so bad that the leaders had to be reminded by domestic as well as foreign experts on the lack of any work in this area.



# Demanding justice peacefully

## Dalits have not been able to lead a dignified life

■ Sabita Gyawali



At a time when major political parties are enslaved by their own political interests, a number of Dalit

activists gathered together to amplify their voice through the Dalit parliament in Kathmandu two weeks ago. Speaker of the Nepali Parliament, representatives from UNMIN, few members of parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, civil society actors, dozens of Dalit networks and organisations and other solidarity groups participated in the discussions. The Dalit parliament came up with 23 point demands focused on political, economical, educational, cultural and health issues.

The issue of Dalit has been an issue for everyone to talk about but the situation at the grassroots level remains unchanged. Even within the larger Dalit movement the issues of Badi women and other such marginalised groups have yet to gain importance. Uma Badi, one of the leading Badi women activists who were awarded in the program stressed that the issue of Badi is still neglected by the government, even after the formal agreement conducted four months ago.

Even though Dalit movement is one of the country's oldest move-



ments against injustice, Dalits have not been able to lead a dignified life till date. They expressed their anger that government has not been serious in the issues of Dalit and their peaceful movement. They stressed the need of complete transformation of the state and its mechanism so that there is equal opportunity for the marginalised groups.

Director of Rastriya Dalit Network (RDN) Ganesh BK. said, "Discrimination and exclusion of Dalit community from mainstream social, political and economic aspects has played a key role to marginalise them. If Dalits are

**In the symbolic parliament, parliamentarians also discussed the condition of Halia, Terai Dalits, Badi women, Kamaiya, Newar Dalits who are engaged in the movement.**

given equal opportunity and a place to explore their talents, they can do a very good job and uplift themselves." Ganesh added, the issues of Dalit are always kept in the shadow and not given importance. He also demanded for a special population census of the Dalits.

The participants concluded that Dalit communities have not been able to unite themselves as they are divided into different groups in the name of sister organisations and donors. The participants expressed their views that Dalit movement is in full momentum at district and village

levels, but not in the center where resources and official agencies responsible for work regarding rights and justice of Dalit are located.

Deputy speaker of the session, Janaki Nepal said that women suffer the most in our society. In each and every situation like flood, drought, social violence or conflict they are the ones to suffer more and Dalit women are the ones to suffer the most. Similarly children are also affected, who are compelled to leave their education due to social and economic barriers.

In the symbolic parliament, parliamentarians also discussed the condition of Halia, Terai Dalits, Badi women, Kamaiya, Newar Dalits who are engaged in the movement but have not been able to achieve their rights. They also discussed Karnali, among other issues and demanded for a focused attention for the improvement of the region.

It was also highlighted that Dalit migrant workers are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The national data shows migrant workers are among the most vulnerable groups and a majority of people from Dalit community are forced to work as migrant workers in different parts of India. Citing the situation in the far west region of the country, they said the children and women are hit the hardest by this scourge. ■



■ Amit Pyakurel

## Rectify disorders in time

**While the parties shout slogans for a 'new' Nepal, the 'old' Nepal we live in is being thrown into disarray and difficulties, thanks to the politician's indifference.**



Hounded by political deformities, we all are paying scant attention to the disorders of our ordinary daily lives. Aside the political impasse, the

seemingly inconsequential, yet everyday troubles of the commoners, is a brewing ground for future unrest.

Disconcerting lack of space for pedestrians caused by indiscriminately growing roadside vendors, uncontrolled vehicular movements; noise, air, water and soil pollution; escalating cost of daily commodities, hardly attainable gasoline products; and above all, criminal activities like kidnapping, looting, intimidation and killings grip the common people in its vicious clutches.

The overwhelming numbers of vehicles result in frequent and relentless jams that the traffic police are unable to cope with. This has become routine and highly irritating and is resulting in tragic consequences in cases of emergencies. The nuisance of traffic jams is increasing every day but the concerned authority and the common people seem helpless to fight it. While the parties shout slogans for a 'new' Nepal, the 'old' Nepal we live in is being thrown into disarray and difficulties, thanks to the politician's indifference.

Maintenance of law and order by the concerned authority as well as the ordinary citizens is important to sustain a peaceful environment in the country. The existing law has not been able to 'rightly' punish the most brutal perpetrators of our times. What happened to the culprits of the Madi bus mishap and the executors of the Gaur carnage, the master minds behind Kapilvastu bloodshed and the

bomb blasts in Kathmandu. Where are the kidnappers and murderers of Bibek Luintel and likes? Have we heard any news of these criminals actually being punished; forget about a few arrests that were made just as a show to the public. Is it not the responsibility of the law to be answerable to the people, especially the aggrieved ones?

Another aspect that has not been addressed is the pain of the family members of those who disappeared during the insurgency (and some after that). Neither the government nor the Maoists have shown enough sensitivity to unearth the whereabouts of the disappeared and to punish the culprits.

If these issues are not addressed soon with genuine intentions, the patience and tolerance of the general public will soon run out; and the present power holders will have to bear the brunt of it.

If the present government wants to avoid this scenario, they would do well to replace the current dictatorial and regressive way of governing with a genuinely people centric, humane and sustainable way of governance; based on mutual understanding and transparency. (amit.pyakurel@gmail.com)

# LESS RHETORIC, more action



Pix by Nimal Sapkota

**Truth and transparency are essential values to end impunity... Human rights and wrongs cannot be the privilege or responsibility of the few.**

**Keith D. Leslie** is currently working with UNDP and OHCHR as the Sr. Human Rights Advisor at the National Human Rights Commission. Previously, he worked with Save the Children US as their Himalayan director while based in Kathmandu. He lives here with his Nepali wife and three children. He shared his experiences with newsfront recently.

**Having worked with Save the Children for 20 years, what changes have you seen in the status of children in Nepal?**

The role of the conflict since 1996 has had a seriously disturbing impact on the lives of many children throughout Nepal. Although their daily situation was difficult before with regard to minimal formal education, public health facilities and economic opportunities, there wasn't the

heightened violence, aggression and destruction that have come with ten years of civil conflict. Sadly, I believe we've lost a decade of opportunity, especially for the poorest and weakest segments of society to achieve an education and opportunities for greater prosperity and peace.

**What needs to be done to address children's problems?**

I believe what children need most is a sense of optimism that Nepal will find the right balance between its rich historical tradition and a progressive future. Children are remarkably adaptable, but as adults we must be more sincere about what we are doing now for their future. As a nation, we should invest more time, resources and effort in creating better lives for the least advantaged children in the country.

Social inclusion, quality education and non-discrimination must start today for all Nepali children to have greater opportunities. A bit less rhetoric and a bit more serious action around our children's lives is crucial, particularly outside of Kathmandu, where children live far from the public services we have in the valley.

Imagine, for example, if every ward in Kathmandu & Lalitpur decided to support or adopt a sister VDC in a neighboring district, like Nuwakot. How much the nation would benefit from such reciprocal linkages between modern Kathmandu and those isolated villages that provide the less educated migrant laborers to our urban areas!

**How much is actually being done in the interest of children and what remains as mere 'paper tigers' created by the job holders as commonly alleged (esp. in reference to I/NGOs)?**

I don't think that all NGOs and I/NGOs are 'paper tigers'. Some are just paper and others really tigers.

From my experience, there have been many valuable projects done for and by children through many well-meaning agencies -- although there is much that can be improved, as well. We definitely want to avoid creating donor dependency or recreating the hierarchical social structures that have traditionally limited opportunities for disadvantaged communities in the country.

It's important I/NGOs lower their own profiles to support leadership skills and community institutions in the more remote districts of Nepal. Cost-effective management should pass to district-level organisations, especially, where possible, those led by the most

historically discriminated communities in order that they, too, may take on greater responsibilities within modern Nepal.

**What could be the role of parents/guardians/communities in children's lives?**

As we all know, parents have the largest impact on their children's lives. In talking with villagers around the country, I've tried to remind them that the state has its obligations while the parents have theirs. We all have rights and we all have responsibilities. Ensuring that your child attends school, does their homework, meeting with your children's teachers and seeing that our kids are raised with a sense of joy, love & respect are all responsibilities of the parents. The state can provide the infrastructure, the teachers, the resources et al, but the inner core of a child is nurtured by their family and community -- which, of course, is all the more reason to put a stop to the culture of violence that afflicts Nepal, as soon as possible.

**How much commitment you see on the part of the government?**

Clearly, the government has failed to fulfill its obligations to its own children. Even before the conflict, most rural areas were ignored by the central government with too few resources being shared with local governments and communities. Many local schools and health posts were in miserable condition and few government staff actually stayed in the places they were posted.

Rather than upgrading local people for such jobs, staff was transferred to remote places they didn't want to work. For that reason, greater decentralisation is essential in Nepal. It's critical that local communities take greater responsibility, as well, for their local governance and local participation. Not to mention, unless leadership at all levels of governance is equally representative of women from all castes and ethnic communities, we won't see peace or development in the nation anytime soon.

**Your feelings about Nepal?**

Nepal is a special country. Many foreigners have fallen in love with Nepal, especially the peaceful, cultured Nepal that we have known before. There is a richness of heritage, culture and history, not to mention nature that is unique in the world. However, unless these aspects of Nepal are appreciated, respected and protected, this beauty of this country can be lost to the destructive pace of concrete, plastic,

pollution and greed.

**What are the challenges and opportunities you face as a Sr. Human Rights Advisor?**

As a long-term resident of Nepal, it is an honor to be working as the Sr. Human Rights Advisor to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). As you may know, the commission became a constitutional body under the Interim Constitution 2007. Now, with the recent arrival of new commissioners there is an excellent opportunity to re-energise the institution.

The major challenge is meeting the overall mandate of the commission to effectively enforce the protection and promotion of human rights across Nepal. Given the lengthy conflict from which the country is still struggling to emerge, there is a long litany of past human rights violations, as well as the continuing threats and intimidation facing so many people. Therefore, for the NHRC to be truly effective, it will need to create practical and trusting partnerships with civil society organisations and local communities to protect and promote human rights throughout Nepal.

**What are the challenges that Human Rights face in Nepal?**

Nepal is in a process of profound historical transformation. Unfortunately, such historical changes are usually accompanied by intensified levels of violence. Already over 15,000 people have been killed with many more injured, tortured or made homeless by the civil conflict that began in 1996. Many disappeared and abducted cases have not yet been resolved or individuals held accountable. Many children have missed their schooling or are still kept in the cantonments. Even now, the violence continues, particularly in the Terai, and could get worse if there isn't greater wisdom and accommodation among our political leaders.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord was an important step forward to diminish the conflict between the government and the Maoists. It effectively brought the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists into the legislature-parliament; but the human rights accords in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have not been seriously implemented by either party. Nor have equal opportunities, especially for women, particularly from the most discriminated and disadvantaged communities, been sincerely understood or accepted upon by the government of Nepal. Also, numerous new groups have resorted to violence to impose their own demands on the State. This

intertwined culture of discrimination and violence is the greatest human rights challenge facing Nepal.

**How do you access the status of human rights situation and rule of law?**

Clearly, the human rights situation is grave and full of risks for individuals and the nation. The continuing political tensions continue to have painful repercussions on the human rights environment around the country. Without a stable government and the rule of law, we are seeing increased acts of violence, particularly killings, abductions and torture.

These will not end until respect for the rule of law and the sanctity for the right to life is re-established by everyone for everyone throughout the country.

**There is a general agreement that the culture of impunity has to be ended in Nepal. How can it be achieved?**

This is the core of the question with regard to human rights violations in Nepal today. The culture of impunity is so endemic that people feel that they can commit the gravest human rights violations and suffer no consequences. Whether it is the rape and murder of a Dalit girl in the isolated fields of the Terai or the torture and murder of a political prisoner held secretly in enforced detention by people with weapons, there has been little accountability over the years in Nepal. Only when the culture of violence in Nepal ends and a new generation of leaders, who profoundly reject force to solve society's deepest problems come to power, will this culture of impunity begin to change.

Already many of the international human rights conventions and treaties have been ratified by Nepal. Now, many of these are being domesticated into Nepali laws. New laws on disappearance, abduction and torture are being prepared. There needs to be greater human rights awareness throughout the country, as well as specifically on issues of transitional justice in a post-conflict environment.

Truth and transparency are essential values to end impunity. Human rights and wrongs cannot be the privilege or responsibility of the few. These fundamental rights need to be understood and accepted throughout Nepali society; only then will the democratic structures of governance be mirrored in the minds of the people, and people are true participants in a living, functioning democracy. ■

Siddhartha Thapa



With the congregation of Terai leaders, the political crisis in Nepal has morphed further.

Although the Seven Parties and the Maoists have charted a "compromise agreement", it will in no way lead to a political solution, mainly because it aims at finding solutions to problems that are only related to the seven parties only. It does not try to go beyond the SPA-M parameter. The congregation of Madeshi leaders was inevitable and their quitting national parties in search of an alternative can rightly be attributed to the apathy demonstrated by GP Koirala towards their concern. To make matters worse; Home Minister K P Sitaula mishandling the Terai issue to suit Maoists interests has further added to the frustration of the Madhesi leaders. But on a political level, the coming together of Madhesi leaders may even shed a positive light in the depressing state of Nepali politics.

**Moderation vs Extremism**

Leaders and camp followers of Baluwatar and Nayabazar club want to stay in power without facing people, or the polls. It was only natural that an effective opposition would emerge. As political bargain continued in Kathmandu with the government having no time for Terai, more radical groups emerged there. The cost of inaction was so heavy

# AN INEVITABLE CRISIS: TERAI and SPAM politics

even the moderate leaders such as Shukla, Mahantha Thakur and Hridayesh Thripathi can be pushed into extremism if the government, under dictate of the Maoists, continues to demonstrate apathy and provoke them further.

that the government even lost the minimal capacity to counter the radical groups.

Moderate and pro-democracy leaders move to form a new party might be a rallying point for pro-democracy groups and a natural platform to counter the radical groups. As Sarvendranath Shukla, former Rastriya Janashakti Party spokesman commented "it is the need of the hour to neutralize radical groups and armed groups". Clearly, government apathy and Maoist provocation have pushed the Madeshi leaders into an alliance, but even the moderate leaders such as Shukla, Mahantha Thakur and Hridayesh Thripathi can be pushed into extremism if the government, under dictate of the Maoists, continues to demonstrate apathy and provoke

them further.

**Electoral numbers**

Almost fifty percent of the constituencies slated for the CA polls are in the Terai. Since, the second Janaandolan, the Maoists were the only party roaming around the country and their cadres were busy whipping political opponents. Government inability to check that only disillusioned the Terai. However, no one mustered the courage to challenge the clearly visible authoritarian tendencies of the present government, as it gave an impression--and many bought it initially-- that it was the sole representative of the Pro-democracy and progressive forces in the country.

But all changed with the Terai agitation early this year. The dynamics of electoral mathematics has changed dramatically. First, the Maoists who thought they would secure a majority in the elections have come to realise that an electoral victory is nothing more than a mirage at this stage. Second, without winning significant amount of seats in the Terai, no group can form a government in the future. Therefore, the strategy of all major political parties is to gain political ground there by sidelining regional outfits like the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), and Nepal Sadhbhavana Party (NSP) and any other political groups that may pose threat to the big three: Nepali congress, UML and the Maoists.

**Foreign Hand**

The resignations and the congregation of Madesh leaders should be an eye-opener for SPA-M leaders. India, Nepal's closest and influential neighbor no longer perceives the SPAM as reliable actors who can bring about lasting peace and democracy in Nepal. It may now even throw its weight behind forces which can counter Maoist dominance as it threat to Nepal's multi party democracy and India's security. Incidentally, the Madeshi parties have the potential to make elections happen. This is because the SPA-M parties have lost their base in the Terai. Similarly, the left threat is also real as the Nepali Congress has failed to checkmate the Maoists in the last two years. A successful and conducive election environment can

force Maoists participation in the polls. But all said and done, the fact that can't be ignored is that the Terai leaders have the blessing of foreign stakeholders in Nepal's political affairs who want to see to that elections are held at the earliest.

**Conclusion**

The current political crisis is only about to get worse if Terai issue is not properly addressed. The key to the solution in Terai lies with Koirala and his SPAM colleagues's ability to handle it with deft and understanding. They need to treat the emerging political party in Terai as a political equals, and not mere dissidents. Treating them as dissidents will only complicate the crisis further. Going by their attitude, Maoists appear to be in full preparation to launch the final assault to capture state power in the coming months. They will make sure that elections don't take place. And in the resultant vacuum, they will portray themselves as the alternative to the government and its leadership. Once the government fails to hold elections again in April, confrontation is indeed inevitable because the Maoists do not want elections and the Madeshi parties want it. Once the Madhesi leaders start their agitation as planned, certain powerful Terai leaders in NC and UML may end up backing it. That will have a direct bearing on the current doctrine of "for the seven parties, by the seven parties and of the seven parties." And once that happens, that might lead to desertion of the SPA by more MPs--both Madeshis and Non-Madhesi. ■

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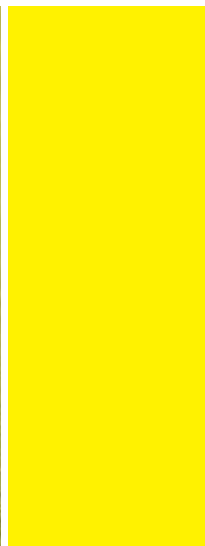
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# Moditva steals the thunder in Hindutva laboratory

It is a hard-earned victory for the BJP in Gujarat, its 'Hindutva laboratory', the credit for which mainly goes to Narendra Modi.

Attacks and 'sabotage' came from both within the party and political rivals for the Chief Minister, who was the BJP's face in the crucial elections in the communally-sensitive state.

The victory will give a boost to Modi's stature within the BJP, considering that he single-handedly powered the party to victory, relegating the top leadership to the backseat during the high-voltage and bitter campaigning.

As results showed, the rebels did not pose much of a threat to the BJP in Saurashtra though the party lost some ground in Central Gujarat, hit badly by the post-Godhra riots in 2002.

The Assembly election was virtually a battle between Modi and anti-Modi forces, which even the 57-year-old former RSS pracharak's hardcore detractors would admit.

The Congress, which was desperate to wrest power from the BJP in the state after 12 years, focused its entire campaign on attacking Modi, clearly indicating that he was the challenge that the party had to overcome.

Despite his being attacked for his role in the riots, the BJP



consciously decided to project Modi as the 'man for Gujarat', seeing him as a perfect foil for an emotive 'jitega Gujarat' (Gujarat will win) campaign. Modi set the agenda for the tightly-fought race right from the beginning, whether it is his emphasis on development initially or the clever use of Hindutva later.

Modi initially concentrated on development and later capitalised on Congress president Sonia Gandhi's 'merchants of death' remarks to rake up the Hindutva plank. Right from the selection of candidates to identification of campaign issues, he left his imprint firmly on the party's

election strategy.

He made a daring decision to deny tickets to as many as 50 sitting legislators and field around 100 new faces to overcome the local-level anti-incumbency. Initially, Modi spoke only about the development of the state and the welfare of five crore Gujaratis and struck a chord with the masses with his pet theme of 'Gujrati asmita', (Gujarati pride).

He refrained from publicly talking about Hindutva in the election campaign, but subtly reminded people of the Godhra train fire through newspaper advertisements. The twist in campaigning came after Gandhi's

controversial 'Maut ke Saudaagar' remarks about Modi, which shifted the thrust of the campaign to emotive issues like communal riots and terrorism.

Adding to it was Congress leader Digvijay Singh's 'Hindu terrorist' remarks which Modi utilised to the hilt to arouse passions in the communally-polarised state. Modi countered Congress by referring to the sensitive terrorism issue and referred to the killing of Soharabuddin Sheikh, which was seen by political adversaries as justifying the fake encounter.

While Team BJP romped home victorious in Gujarat, the claimant for the man of the match crown is surely Modi, who began his political career as a RSS pracharak and went on to become a General Secretary in the BJP. The BJP left no stone unturned to woo voters. It carpet-bombed its entire leadership, including L K Advani and Rajnath Singh, but what remain etched in everyone's mind is Modi's rouble-rousing speeches and his mask.

He travelled the length and breadth of the state and addressed campaign rallies in all the 182 constituencies, gauged the mood of the people and played the development and Hindutva card on and off.

(Express India)

## Terror trail

Suicide-bombings did not lead Pakistan into an emergency, or out of it. They were a ruse used by the president to consolidate his slackening hold on power. With the nitpicking judges gone and the constitution moulded to sustain Pervez Musharraf in power, much of the purpose behind the imposition of the martial order has been achieved. Naturally, the persistence of suicide-bombings during the emergency, or after — as now — should cause little surprise. The recent blast in a mosque in the Northwest has taken a heavy toll, although it has missed its target, the former interior minister, Aftab Ahmed Sherpao. But neither this one, nor the other suicide attacks on December 9, 10 and 15, which killed civilians with as much impunity as armymen, can be expected to force Mr Musharraf to rethink his magnanimous gesture of lifting the emergency. As for the bomb attack on the convoy of Benazir Bhutto, which took one of the severest tolls ever, it should have entered the annals of history by now.

The much-targeted Mr Sherpao is reputed to have played a decisive role in the cleansing of the Red mosque in Islamabad earlier this year. The embarrassment of those days, which made evident the collusion of the administration in the flourishing growth of an Islamic fundamentalist stronghold in the heart of the capital, is something the president and his men would want desperately to put behind them. They are looking forward to the January elections — in which Mr Sherpao is a prominent candidate — and thereby the establishment of their democratic credentials to wash off past sins. But history, as Pakistan has repeatedly proved, is a tough paymaster. Neither Mr Musharraf nor his loyal former ministers can run away from the error they committed by encouraging radical extremism for their narrow political interests. Already perceived as a sinner against Islam for allying with the West, Mr Musharraf inspired a *jihad* against himself when he undertook the Lal Masjid operation. For the neo-taliban in his territory, the president and his loyalists have done nothing since then to deserve a revision in the objective of that holy war. As Pakistan gets closer to its desired goal of a democratic future, in tandem with the wishes of the West, this passion is likely to be heightened.

Pakistan, in fact, could witness more turbulent times in the coming days. Given the unrestricted flow of *hawala* money into the border regions that fund the stockpiling of arms, the increasing consolidation of links between the Pakistan taliban and al Qaida, the play of religious passion among the predominantly tribal and backward population in the country's Northwest could take on alarming proportions. The fluid political situation, with its ill-defined hierarchy and administrative order, can only do further damage in this scenario. It is in the best interests of Pakistan's president, his army, the country's political elite, and, above all, its people, who are the worst sufferers, that the political movement towards democracy reaches its fruition. ■



# NATO Leaders Visit Afghanistan



French President Nicolas Sarkozy, second from left, along with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, left.

The leaders of France, Australia and Italy have met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, each pledging that their countries were committed to Afghanistan for the long term.

Making the first-ever visit to Afghanistan by a French president, Nicolas Sarkozy told Karzai that France has a long-term political and military interest in Afghanistan.

The remarks apparently signaled that French troops would not pull out of the country anytime soon.

Sarkozy told the France-Info radio that his country did not want to give the signal of a withdrawal at a time when "we see the ravages that terrorism can do to the world".

French television quoted Sarkozy as suggesting there would be a "qualitative" but not "quantitative" increase in the French presence.

"A war, a war against fanaticism is being played out here, that we cannot, that we must not, lose," Sarkozy said.

France announced its decision a year ago to withdraw 200 elite Special Forces, raising questions about whether the pullout would precede a larger withdrawal.

US military commanders have pleaded with NATO countries to contribute more forces to Afghanistan. About 26,000 of the 50,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan are American.

Sarkozy said that the "first contribution" of French forces in Afghanistan was to help train the Afghan army and police, and assist in the building of the Afghan state, administration and justice system.

During his six-hour visit, Sarkozy also met with some of the 1,300 French troops who are mostly stationed in the Kabul region as part of

NATO's military force here.

Hours after his meeting with Sarkozy, Karzai met with Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who was visiting some of the 900 Australian troops stationed in Uruzgan province, site of fierce battles this year.

Rudd, whose party was elected in late November, said he wanted to make an early visit to the troops and confirm Australia's commitment to Afghanistan.

"We will be, as I said before, in this country, Afghanistan, for the long haul, and it's important for us to be here in partnership with countries from NATO," he said.

He said he would be encouraging other countries to continue or expand their commitment to Afghanistan.

Asked why military forces haven't tried to retake Gizab, a region near Uruzgan province under Taliban control, Karzai said the government could establish control there "at any time" but that he didn't want casualties -- civilian or Taliban.

Karzai has increasingly been trying to persuade insurgent fighters and leaders to lay down their arms and pledge their allegiance to the government. Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi was also in Kabul Sunday to meet Karzai and some of the Italian troops based in Afghanistan, the Italian embassy said.

"He came to visit the Italian troops and he will meet the president," said an embassy official.

The prime minister started his visit in Kabul and was due to travel to the western city of Herat, where most of Italy's some 2,000 troops in Afghanistan are based, another official said.

(Alalam.ir)

# Teaching munificently

Learned Vedic Brahmins came to Buddha to ask questions, challenge him or to ask what he thought of certain ideas, beliefs, and practices in the Vedas.

## Marshland Flowers

**He taught for 40 to 45 years and all kinds of people came to meet him and ask questions; and they were answered. Learned Vedic Brahmins came to ask him questions, challenge him or to ask what he thought of certain ideas, beliefs and practices in the Vedas.**

■ Mahayogi Acharya Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

The Buddha's teachings are recorded in three categories and those categories were made by the Buddha himself. These three categories are called the Tripitaka or the three baskets. One of the Pitaka is the Sutra Pitaka. The Sutras, within Buddhism are the records of the various teachings that the Master himself gave to various people like monks, nuns, lay women and lay men as he wandered up and down, east and west, north and south of Northern India, and also in other parts of India, through miraculous projections.

He taught for 40 to 45 years and all kinds of people came to meet him and ask questions; and they were answered. Learned Vedic Brahmins came to ask him questions, challenge him or to ask what he thought of certain ideas, beliefs and practices in the Vedas. And they left convinced that he was extraordinary or in most cases surrendered to him and became monks.

Very old learned Rishis; who has special powers of clairvoyance, send their disciples to learn from him or to become his disciples, saying they were too old to travel from places like Maharashtra, to where he was in present day Bihar, otherwise they would come themselves. Many



Brahmins came to find out whether he was really a Tathagata - a Buddha, and either left convinced of his authenticity or became Bhikchhus,

there and then.

Many Sramanas of the time came to challenge him or ask him questions and remained as his disciples. It is recorded that one of the main sponsors and disciples of Mahavira was sent by Mahavira to debate with the Buddha about the interpretation of Karma but remained behind as his disciple. But the Buddha asked him to continue being a sponsor (Danapati) of Mahavira, the founder of present day Jainism.

Many householder males and females and Bhikchhus asked him many questions and he answered them. He also kept giving teachings on various topics throughout his life after attaining enlightenment in Bodhgaya, called Vajrasana in Buddhist literature, till his Parinirvana under the Sala trees in Kusinagara. All these teachings were recorded in the Sutra Pitakas.

There are also stories of how Vedic and Sraman ascetics of his time challenged him to debates and to competitions of miraculous powers; and again he either defeated them or they became his disciples. It is interesting to note that by far a greater percentage of his disciples were such Brahmins who had come to challenge him.

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

## Driving license are killing license as well

Traffic death carries a far lighter sentence for the offending driver – a minimal fine and a short sentence in case of conviction. On the Nepali roads, homicide continues to be a far cheaper option for an erring driver.

■ Pasang Dolma Sherpa

Eleven dead and 89 wounded in more than 250 road accidents in Kathmandu in the month of Kartik—reads a huge billboard right in front of the Gaushala police station. The casualty figure as well as the number of accidents in the capital and elsewhere go undiminished. Protestors employing terror tactics like tire burning, road blockade, and other sufferings techniques against the general public totally unrelated with the accidents have almost been an order of the day. But nothing seems to be done to reduce such accidents and ensure that those wounded get timely treatment, and guilty punished.

There is a need for a whole lot of reform in the license distribution system and traffic management in Nepal. At the same time, the whole practice of drivers being held unilaterally accountable for the accidents have increased the trends of hit and run. They do not even perform their basic human duties of taking the 'wounded' to the nearest hospital. In some cases, drivers are even reported to have reversed their vehicles to kill the wounded pedestrians lying on the road to avoid the medical bills and other economic support they would have to pay to their victims should they live on as a cripple or a disabled person. Traffic death carries a far lighter sentence for the offending driver – a minimal fine and a short sentence in case of conviction. On the Nepali

roads, homicide continues to be a far cheaper option for an erring driver. Unless of course, the mob manages to get its hands on him. With both the law and order having made their disappearing act from Nepal, it is the rule of jungle on the roads and elsewhere, unfortunately.

Even a cursory look into our license system reveals a lot. Moments after I failed in the first trial for Light vehicle license just about a month ago, I was approached by a tout. He minced no words. "Give me Rs 5,500 and I will get your license tomorrow", he offered. A Whole lot of things and likely consequences of my getting license in such a manner went in my mind. After all, a driver is responsible not just for his or her life alone, but also for the passengers, pedestrians, and those in other vehicles. I was appalled as a fellow who had failed with me agreed to pay the amount to get the license the easy way.

I had reasons, apart from principles, that forced me to say no to the easy way. First, I knew money would not buy the 'driver's confidence' along with the license. More tragically, my niece, Phima Sherpa's life and every potential it contained was cut short at the bud when she was just seven in a high way accident in Hetaunda six years ago. The void left by my sister's only child remains unfulfilled yet. More recently, my neighbour in Kathmandu's Bhatbhateni area is yet to recover after being hit

by a motor cyclist more than a year ago. But fortunately, the motor cyclist did not run away, and performed the minimum duty of taking the patient to the hospital, and also contributed whatever he could towards the treatment. In most cases of hit and run, there are hardly any investigation by the police – so there is no arrests, trial, or conviction. This either shows apathy on the part of the police or corruption to protect the guilty. In such circumstances, our driving license, even if unintentionally, become licenses to kill as well.

Nepal's roads, even within municipal limits, are bad. Most of them have no pavements for pedestrians including children. Kathmandu's limited length of roads, some 1300 KM during the last count, have to cope with the 300,000 plus vehicles that increase by the day. There is no commensurate expansion or improvement of existing roads. As a result, the whole city is turning into a big parking lot where nothing moves.

If the Civil society in Nepal were less political and more civil, it would have taken up these public transportation and safety issues long ago. Any death on the road is treated largely as accident, and a matter to be sorted out between the killer and the family of killed, with state and the society having no role in that. Or just look at the plight of the passengers packed like sardines in a can, abused both verbally and physically, and charged exorbitant

rates by the taxis and buses. A little bit respect for human rights, or at least human dignity would go a long way in making the pedestrian's life bearable in this city.

Perhaps, it is about time to start from small things. Suspending or canceling license for few years in cases of proven negligence including failure to provide humanitarian and medical assistance to the wounded after the accident should be the first step. Giving crash courses to those awarded license on humanitarian laws, especially in case of accidents, and their duties will go a long way in reducing the number of death, at least, even after the accidents take place.

If laws and investigating agencies change their mind-set that deem drivers automatically 'guilty' for accidents, this will to a large extent motivate and encourage drivers to take their 'victims' to hospitals and not run away. The prevailing practice of drivers or vehicle owners having to bear all medical expenses and even provide support to the surviving victims is largely responsible for their killing the wounded deliberately. Most accident deaths including my niece Phima have met their end not just because they were not rushed to the hospital on time, but because the drivers also chose to go 'killers'. A review of the law and practice can save many untimely and deliberate deaths. And also make our lives more civil both on the road and off the road.

# THE REAL CHARLIE WILSON



In the 1980s, Charlie Wilson seemed the unlikely of crusaders. He was best known as the hard-drinking, hard-partying Texas Congressman with a penchant for beautiful women.

He is now lionized, however, in the new blockbuster "Charlie Wilson's War" as the one-man wrecking crew who helped defeat the Soviet army in Afghanistan. And the real life Charlie Wilson led a more flamboyant life than the star Tom Hanks who plays him on the screen.

"Charlie may have been the only believer in the United States that the Afghan people could actually expel the Soviets. He had his own personal jihad," said Lawrence Wright, author of "The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11."

The real Charlie Wilson, now 74, has retired from both Congress and from his days of drinking. But he's as brazen as ever.

When ABC News' Bob Woodruff spoke with the former congressman

on "Weekend Good Morning America" today about those days, decades ago, Wilson was asked about the reports of his cocaine use.

"Nobody knows the answer to that and I ain't telling," Wilson joked.

"How many dates did you have?"

**"Charlie may have been the only believer in the United States that the Afghan people could actually expel the Soviets. He had his own personal jihad," said Lawrence Wright.**

How many women did you sleep with?" Woodruff followed up.

"Gosh I didn't keep count (Laughs)," Wilson replied.

But among Wilson's bevy of beauties was a tenacious Texas socialite named Joanne Herring -- played by Julia Roberts in the movie -- who opened Wilson's eyes to Soviet brutality in Afghanistan.

Once Wilson met Herring and she told him about the horrors of the Afghan war, he says he got more serious. "Mines that looked like they were toys would blow apart, blow off [children's] hands," Wilson recalls learning from Herring.

"Charlie said this had to stop. Not only does it have to stop, but it has to stop there before it comes here," Herring said.

#### Charlie's Covert War

Although the CIA was funding Afghan Muslims to fight the Soviet Union, Wilson wanted more money

and more weapons because he thought the communists could be beaten faster. As the head of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, responsible for funding CIA operations, he was in a position to help do that under the public's radar.

With Wilson's support, nearly a billion dollars was allocated to help the Afghan Mujahideen's jihad to expel the Soviets, including a key \$17 million for stinger missiles to shoot down Soviet attack helicopters.

The Soviet army called it quits in Afghanistan in 1989, striking a major blow to the empire. Within one year the Berlin Wall fell and Wilson remembers that day vividly.

"I believe that was the most electrifying moment of my life," Wilson says. "I watched Peter Jennings. I had a bottle of champagne I was saving for such an occasion and I broke it open. And gave [the Mujahideen] a little toast."

#### Aftermath

The U.S. cut back support and money for Afghanistan after the Soviets' withdrawal and civil war broke out. Wilson regrets the pull back and says that if the U.S. had stayed, "We would have had a friend in the Muslim world which we could use."

With the U.S. and Soviets out, foreign terrorists moved in. Osama bin Laden who fought alongside the Mujahideen, returned to Afghanistan and contributed to the rise of the Taliban regime and 9/11. Wilson doesn't blame 9/11 on the U.S. withdrawal though.

"We would have had something like 9/11 anyways. I think that bin Laden had his course pretty well set... But when you fight a war, you do what you think you need to do at the time. What seems right at the time is what you do," Wilson says.

(abcnews)

देशको तात्कालीन  
कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं  
के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण  
कार्यक्रम

**OUTLOOK**

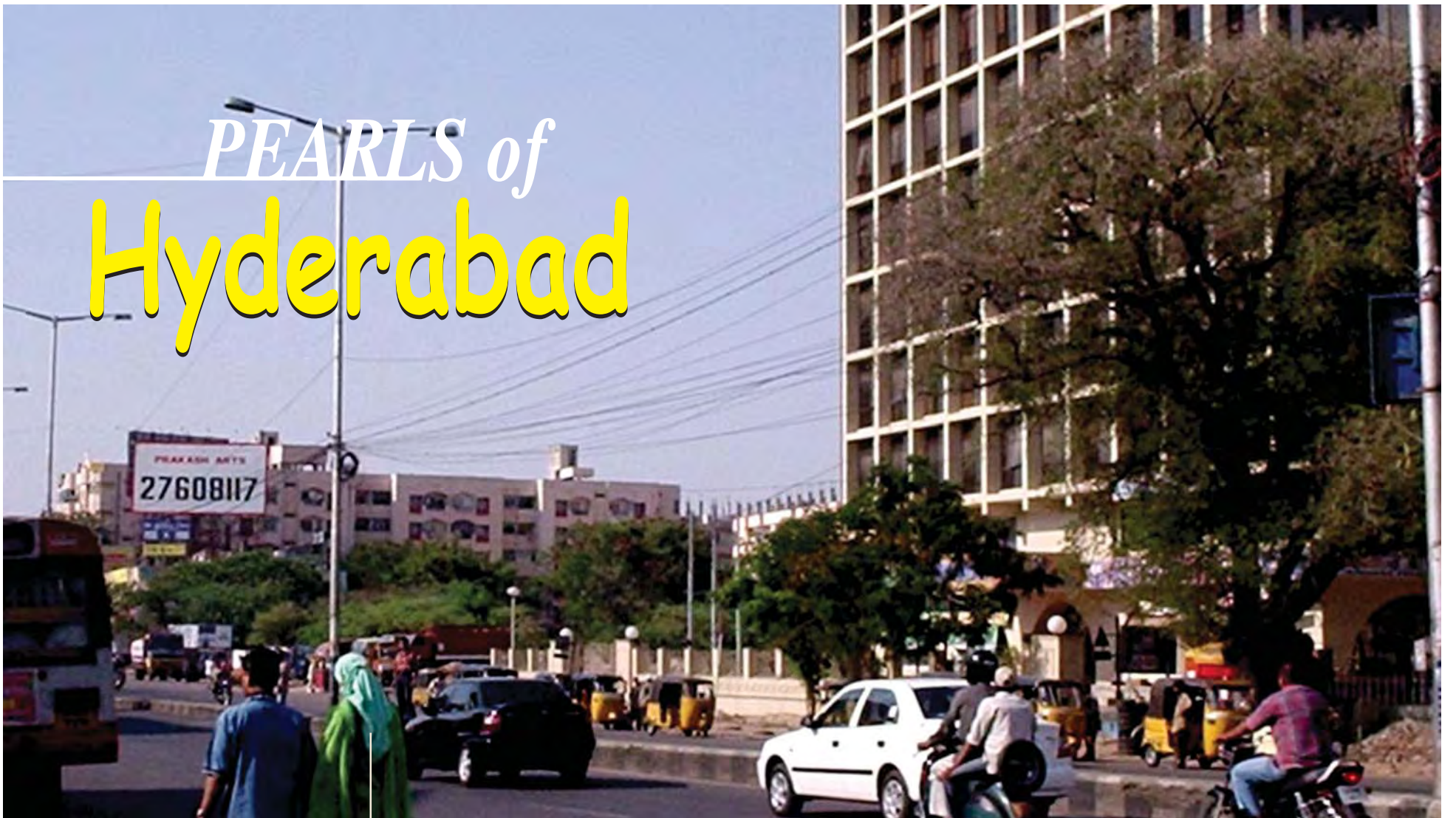
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हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे  
मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा



**सगरमाथा**

समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव



# PEARLS of Hyderabad

■ Raman Grandon



Hyderabad is officially called the city of pearls. Today it is an emerging IT hub of India and is one of the most beautiful and hospitable tourist cities in India. It is all the more enchanting to

have the taste of South Indian culture when you are in Hyderabad.

The legendary tales of the city of Hyderabad is out of place without mentioning Nizam dynasty ruled Central India from 16<sup>th</sup> century to early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today their legacy has turned into national treasure. Most of the magnificent heritage sites and monuments in Hyderabad once belonged to these Nizams. Whether it is the 1591 built Charminars made with 4 minarets and its imposing artistic and architectural blend or Qutub Shahi tombs, they offer more than a mere delight for travelers. Chow Mohalla Palace is one such mesmerizing monument that never fails to delight the travelers.

The palace is said to have been built between 1857 and 1869 to accommodate the 'unofficial wives' of the Nizam. The Durbar-turned-museum, declared twice as an important heritage site by Indian Heritage Society houses almost all the riches of Nizam in four palaces of Moghal and European styles. The variety of artifacts on display includes chariots, arms and swords, attires of Maharajas, hospitality of Nizam women folk well displayed in mannequins, the earliest photographs of Nizam revelry during British Raj, the massive halls with exquisite interior designs and more. The palace is a testament to the majestic splendor in which the Nizams lived in.

Another site worth a visiting in the Nizam city is one of the biggest temples in India, the Birla Temple. Perched on giant rocks and boulders-also known as Kala Pahad that Hyderabad is so famous for, the temple was built over a span of 10 years with marbles imported from Rajasthan. No one is allowed to take photographs inside the temple and shoes are strictly prohibited. The temple has statues of many Hindu gods and goddesses and the temple offers a 360 degree sweeping view of the ever growing Hyderabad city.

A trip to Hyderabad is hardly complete without a visit to Nehru Zoological Park. The

**A trip to Hyderabad is hardly complete without a visit to Nehru Zoological Park. The park is spread over an area of 300 acres so it is wise to travel in a safari jeep or van.**

park is spread over an area of 300 acres so it is wise to travel in a safari jeep or van. Here very few animals have been locked up in cells or enclosed in metal cages. Lions, crocodiles, deer, tigers, elephants and rhinos all roam openly in their separate areas. Instead of metal fences, 6-7 feet moats have been dug around and filled with water. The zoo has been beautifully managed and contains over 250 species of animals ranging from Siberian tigers and African Lions to vipers and crocodiles.

Situated about 5 km from the zoological park, Golconda Fort is certainly the most important place of interest for tourists visiting Hyderabad. (Golla Konda in Telugu means 'Shepherd's Hills') Sprawled in an area of 11 kilometers, the Fort is one of the biggest in India. The fort is the ancient capital of Yadava's, Kakatiya's, Bahmani's and later Qutub Shahi's dynasty and still stands intact, thanks to the recent effort of local conservation bodies. The fort rests on massive stone pillars and consists of enclosed chambers, open halls,

water reservoirs, beautiful garden, dungeons and a temple. The entire fort is made of mud bricks and its wall ranges as high as 40 m in height at some sections. The 11 entrances the fort once had has been reduced to just three. In the court yard, every evening, documentaries about the fort is played in front of seated audience. Today the fort is guarded and protected by the Indian army.

There are plenty of activities you can indulge in when you are in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. For instance, a boat ride on Tank Bund Lake, which has a 370 feet tall statue of Buddha, visit the Lumbini Park or the Salar Jung III Museum; or go to the Snow World to experience living in -5 degree Celsius. Or better still try out the IMAX movie experience which can cost as much as IRs. 200. In 2006 alone some 6.69 lakh international tourists visited this city. Moreover, Andhra Pradesh tops in domestic arrivals with a total of 11.17 crore internal visitors in 2006. ■

## संविधानसभाको सवालमा राष्ट्रिय रेडियो बहस

तपाईंको बिचार, प्रश्न र भोगाई प्रत्यक्ष टेलिफोनमा

**पैसा नलाग्ने**  
फोन: १६६० ०१ ३४५६७

# नेपाल चौतारी

हरैक दिन विहान  
०८:१० देखि ०९:०० सम्म

**AFN** Antenna Foundation Nepal  
देशभरका स्थानीय एफ.एम.हस्बाट एकैसाथ प्रत्यक्ष प्रसारण

<p><b>सुदूरपश्चिमाञ्चल</b> कञ्चनपुर: शुक्लाफाँट एफ.एम. 94.4 MHz बझाङ: साइपाल एफ.एम. 100.6 MHz केलासी: घोडाघोडी एफ.एम. 100.4 MHz <b>मध्य पश्चिमाञ्चल</b> बाँके: मेरी एफ.एम. 105.4 MHz रेडियो मेरी आवाज एफ.एम. 95.6 MHz रेडियो बागेश्वरी एफ.एम. 94.6 MHz सुर्खेत: रेडियो मेरी एफ.एम. 98.6 MHz बुलुले एफ.एम. 103 MHz दाङ: रेडियो तुल्सीपुर एफ.एम. 100.2 MHz</p>	<p>स्वर्गद्वारी एफ.एम. 102.8 MHz प्युठान: रेडियो माण्डवी 97 MHz <b>पश्चिमाञ्चल</b> लमजुङ्ग: मरस्याङ्दी एफ.एम. 95 MHz कास्की: हिमचुली एफ.एम. 92.2 MHz माच्छापुच्छ्रे एफ.एम. 91 MHz गोर्खा: रेडियो गोर्खा एफ.एम. 92.8 MHz नवलपरासी: विजय एफ.एम. 101.6 MHz रूपन्देही: लुम्बिनी एफ.एम. 96.8 MHz तिनाउ एफ.एम. 98.2 MHz रूपन्देही एफ.एम. 102 MHz</p>	<p>पाल्पा: रेडियो मदनपोखरा एफ.एम. 106.9 MHz रेडियो मुक्तिनाथ एफ.एम. 90.8 MHz रेडियो पश्चिमाञ्चल एफ.एम. 99.4 MHz श्रीनगर एफ.एम. 93.2 MHz बागलुङ्ग: धवलागिरी एफ.एम. 98.6 MHz <b>मध्यमाञ्चल</b> धनुषा: रेडियो जनकपुर 97 MHz पर्सा: नारायाणी एफ.एम. 103.8 MHz मकवानपुर: हेटौडा एफ.एम. 96.6 MHz रेडियो पालुङ्ग 107.2 MHz प्रतिध्वनी एफ.एम. 97 MHz</p>	<p>चितवन: सिनर्जी एफ.एम. 91.6 MHz ललितपुर: उज्यालो एफ.एम. 90 MHz काठमाडौं: सिटी एफ.एम. 98.8 MHz <b>पूर्वाञ्चल</b> भद्रा: कञ्चनजंघा एफ.एम. 92.6 MHz सप्तरी: सप्तकोशी एफ.एम. 90 MHz मोरङ्ग: कोशी एफ.एम. 94.3 MHz उदयपुर: रेडियो त्रियुगा 104 MHz सोलुखुम्बु: सोलु एफ.एम. 102.2 MHz</p>
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रेडियो चौतारीको सवालमा  
०१ ३४५६७ ०१ १६६०  
**LIVE**