



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

Kathmandu | 28 Jan-3 Feb, 2008 | # 51 | Price Rs. 25



**JANAKPUR MEET AMIDST TIGHT SECURITY:** A person passing through a security check to get to the venue of the meeting in Janakpur on January 26. The Terai bandh call given by the Terai outfits led to the poor attendance in the meeting.

## Fortified

The Barabigha ground in Janakpur was turned into a fort with several hundred security personnel deployed to protect the seven party leaders and their supporters during the joint election meeting of the ruling alliance on January 26. The mobilisation of the security agencies had become necessary because of the Terai Bandh called by different Terai outfits to foil the seven party meeting.

But the failure of the meeting, in terms of attendance and the poor law and order situation, has led to speculations in Kathmandu that at least two prominent Congress ministers, Ram Chandra Poudel and KP Sitaula, might lose their posts for having provoked the Terai leaders.

(Details on page 2)

Discover  
Cakes & Pastries

**JULIE'S**  
CAKES & PASTRIES

Kupondol Tel.: 5539862

**Daily Scheduled Flights**

Kathmandu-Pokhara	6 flights daily
Kathmandu-Biratnagar	7 flights daily
Kathmandu-Bhairahawa	2 flights daily
Kathmandu-Nepalgunj	2 flights daily
Kathmandu-Bhadrapur	2 flights daily

**Connecting to your Business destinations**

Choosing the right airline to fly you to your business destination could be the single most important decision you take.

Our extensive network of business destinations, serviced by frequent flights, make Business Networking relevant and surprisingly convenient for your business travels.

Call us to add smileage to your business travels:  
**SkyClub Customers Service Center**  
Tel: 016 220 940, 4465888 Extn. 223  
Fax: 4464877 / 4465115  
E-mail: skyclub@yetiairlines.com

Contact us to make your business travels easy:  
**Corporate Office:** Tilganga, Kathmandu  
Tel: 4465888, 4464878 Extn. 205  
E-mail: reservations@yetiairlines.com

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

**Yeti Airlines**  
a great flying experience

www.yetiairlines.com

**TOYOTA**

**EastLink**

**The all-new COROLLA**

**Refine your presence** | When you seek something higher than the ordinary, when you want to experience something more refined, step into the new Corolla. You'll discover a moving experience that surpasses your expectations. Engineered to precision, styled with flamboyance and driven by excellence, you'll find the all-new Corolla lead by a large margin. On the road in your mind, Corolla is an ideal extension of your escalating self. It is truly the one above.

**UNITED TRADERS SYNDICATE PVT. LTD.**  
(Sole Distributor of Toyota Vehicles in Nepal)  
P.O.Box 233/2640, Tinkune, Singmangal, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel.: 977-1-4478301-5, Fax: 977-1-4497892  
E-mail: vsd@voith.com.np, Web: www.toyota.com.np

**EASTLINK MOTORS PVT. LTD.**  
(Exclusive Dealer of Toyota Corolla)  
Scout Building, Lainchaur, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel.: 977-1-4427795, 4441358, 4434055

# Keep shut!

Do not provoke Terai: PM to Poudel, Sitaula

The failure of Janakpur election meeting addressed by the leaders of the ruling seven-party alliance, and the clash with Madheshi political outfits that left at least 70 wounded, has come as a rude shock to Prime Minister GP Koirala who



Massive security deployment during the 7-party election meeting at Janakpur on January 26.

instantly instructed the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, to review the entire situation including the law and order situation in the country.

An all party meeting held in the evening soon after the Janakpur election meeting which took place under a tight security arrangement, however reported back to Koirala that they, "have won the Terai fort and that elections are very much possible in April." Not convinced, Koirala also asked the election commission to make its own assessment of the situation.

Within the Congress circle, the Janakpur episode has triggered fresh speculations about the change in the cabinet that might lead to the exit of the two powerful ministers, Ram Chandra Poudel and KP Sitaula.

The poor turnout in the meeting in Janakpur despite all the state machinery having been geared for it, attack by the Madhesh outfits on those attending the meetings, and explosion near the venue of the public meeting addressed by Party leaders Sushil Koirala and Dr. Rambaran Yadav in Sunsari, the same day, have led to doubts if the government will be able to improve the law and order situation for polls.

The PM is also believed to have chided his two most trusted Ministers, Poudel and Sitaula, for going to the extent of provoking Terai leaders. "He had oxygen pipe inserted in his nose, but was furious with the two," a Baluwatar source said.

"There is no point in inviting Mahantha Thakur for dialogue and your publicly saying that all demands of Madhesh have been fulfilled," a source quoted Koirala. This seems to have led to speculations about their being dropped from the cabinet.

The violent resistance in Terai, many think, is also a sequel to the Home Minister's assertion before a parliamentary committee last week, that the government would be using force to conduct polls if Terai leaders failed to respond positively to its invitation for talks.

The election commission reviewed the whole situation on January 27 and is going to ask the government to maintain the law and order situation. "Our immediate concern at the moment is to ensure safety of election officials that we will be dispatching to the constituencies soon. At the moment, we are not confident about their safety." The commission also said that at the moment, it has no formal proposal before it to conduct the polls in two phases. Tourism Minister Prithvi Subba Gurung had said in a public meeting that, "the election can take place in two phases if the situation so demanded."

# Open challenge

"The Prime Minister is playing a dangerous game."



A powerful section within the Nepali Congress has warned Prime Minister GP Koirala that his current policy of 'surrender' to the Maoists might lead to collapse of democracy and disintegration of the country.

The group that has dissociated itself from the party's line of going to the poll in alliance with the Maoists, launched a parallel meeting on January 26 beginning from Damauli in Tanahun district, followed by Kaski a day later. "Election at any cost provoking Terai and a policy of total appeasement and surrender to the Maoists will lead us no where. Our campaign is to save the country and democracy," said KB Gurung, Party's senior General Secretary, at Damauli.

Led by Gurung, other prominent

leaders like Bijay Gachedar, Khum Bahadur Khadka, Sharad Singh Bhandari and Govinda Raj Joshi plan to tour different parts of the country holding public meetings and interacting with the party members. "We are not Congress dissidents, but we have definitely a different approach on how to consolidate democracy and lead the country to peace and political stability," said Joshi.

Bijay Gachedar said that a blind pursuit of election even after the Maoists have broken their commitment inked in the latest 23-point agreement will only mean that the Congress party has accepted the Maoists diktat. "The Prime Minister is playing a dangerous game. He is leading the seven party alliance against Terai," Gachedar said, adding, "What happened in Janakpur and Sunsari has amply proved it."

Sharing the same sentiments, Khadka, Bhandari and Joshi said in Kaski on January 27 that the Maoists and the Young Communist League cadres have time and again violated the provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement as well as the code of conduct vitiating atmosphere that is required for a free and fair poll. "If Congress continues with the policy of appeasing the Maoists at the current scale, it will not take long for this historical party to come to an end of its life; and we are committed not let that happen," Khadka said.

# Stick to the mandate

UNMIN granted six-months extension

The United Nations Missions to Nepal (UNMIN) has been granted a six-month extension beginning January 23, but will have to 'strictly stick to its mandate,' a senior Minister has said.

The extension proposal of the government that was finally endorsed by the UN Security Council last week in New York makes no change in the jurisdiction and scope as the government had earlier turned down suggestions - directly and indirectly - that UNMIN be involved in the security sector reforms as well as negotiation with the Terai, other ethnic and marginalised groups.

"We are going to tell UNMIN that it sticks with the mandate it has got - monitoring supervision of arms and armies of the Maoists and the government and observing the polls to the constituent assembly," the Minister who did not want to be named said, adding, "our concern will be conveyed to Mr. Ian Martin on his arrival here."

The Minister also said that a prominent European Union country was in favour of UNMIN's role being enlarged. "Apart from our own assessment, our immediate neighbours, China and India were also not in favour of the UNMIN role being enlarged," the Minister said.

Prime Minister GP Koirala is said to be unhappy with senior UNMIN officials making public statements in



support of demands of one or the other ethnic groups in a manner that could be interpreted as endorsing demands for creating 'ethnic states'. "We are committed to take into account the grievances of ethnic and marginalised groups. But UNMIN officials making such speeches in different forums is clearly outside their mandate, and the government is going to clearly tell them to stick to their specified mandate," the Minister added.

The UNMIN was granted 80-million dollar budget for its remaining tenure in Nepal. It has got currently 800 odd staff, less than 40 per cent from Nepal mostly in junior positions.

# Pocketing local bodies

The government is now contemplating immediate revival or formation of the local bodies which have long ceased to exist.

Soon after the government's disbursement of Rs one million each to the sitting members of the parliament, it is now contemplating immediate revival or formation of the local bodies which have long ceased to exist. A decision to this effect may be taken soon although the move goes totally against the code of conduct issued by the election commission.

The nomination or revival of the local bodies that will have a plum share of three major parties - Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) and the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML); will not only give total control of the three parties in the local bodies, but they will also influence voters in favour of the top three during the elections to the constituent assembly.

The government move to revive the local bodies comes in the wake of wide ranging controversy and criticism of its decision to distribute Rs. one million each from the government coffer to the existing members of the interim parliament. The distribution of the money ostensibly to carry developmental activities in areas



chosen by MPs has also been challenged in the Supreme Court.

However, the ministerial committee headed by Minister for Local Development, Dev Gurung, who belongs to the Maoist party, is negotiating with the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress as they have some difference of opinion on the way to nominate these bodies. The UML has been insisting that the same old committees should be revived with 'reasonable inclusion' of the Maoist members, but that is something both the Congress and the Maoists are not happy about.

An official in the ministry of local

development told newsfront that Maoists are in favour of the leadership and majority control, equally divided among the top three parties. "The Nepali Congress supports the Maoist formula," the official said, adding, "The revival could take place immediately if the three parties come to an understanding." In the election to the local bodies which were last held a decade ago, the CPN-UML had established its control in a majority of them. The Maoists had not participated in the election then.

Newsbrief

## Not enough

Prime Minister GP Koirala's daughter Sujata Koirala is not happy with her mere inclusion in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio. Apparently, she wants her role and status clearly defined. According to the Baluwater sources, Sujata has not only been consulting party leaders and her followers who have been telling her that being de facto heir apparent to the PM is not enough, and that she should be officially recognised as the de jure PM.



She is also said to have asked the PM to give in writing that she would be representing him in different ministries during his absence or even otherwise. In fact, she has already been summoning government secretaries of different ministries with instruction that she should be consulted on major policy issues, something that has not gone down well with the ministers concerned.

## Gift of wheels

A fleet of 1200 vehicles has come as India's gift to Nepal government on the occasion of its 59th republic day. The vehicles are meant to equip the government of Nepal, mainly its security agencies, to effectively monitor the election process as well as polling.

The delivery of vehicles, promised long ago, had been kept in abeyance following postponement of the polls scheduled in November. The delivery now is also being seen as India's confidence that election will take place in April as scheduled. Incidentally, the delivery also comes as the good-will gesture of Ambassador SS Mukherjee who is to

leave the country on completion of his extended tenure a week later. It was not without significance that Ambassador Mukherjee handed over the vehicles to Home Minister, KP Sitaula, the man India has been promoting and protecting despite all his failures to maintain law and order situation in the country. India's recognition and Sujata's silence over her earlier consistent campaign for the Home Minister's resignation must have made Sitaula's life a bit more comfortable now.

## Double speak

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists is at it again. As Kathmandu burned and youths thronged the streets to protest against the price hike of petroleum products, the Maoist tried to disown their hand in it.



Information and Communication Minister KB Mahara said his party ministers were not involved in the decision and they had not been consulted. Mahara almost replicated Madhav Nepal during Deuba government's time when he said Ishwar Pokhrel, UML nominee in the cabinet in charge of civil supplies did not consult the party on the price hike of petroleum products then.

Pokhrel could not counter Madhav Nepal publicly given the party discipline and suffered a lot in the process politically. But Mahara's recent claim which apparently is not true, was aimed at bailing his own party and cajoling the Maoist cadres who came out on the street against the price hike. And that perhaps worked.

## Bush cheers up Maoists

At long last, US President George Bush has tried to make Nepali Maoists happy. In a recent message that he delivered, he appealed to the government of Nepal and the Maoists to work for the success of the constituent assembly a success.

Bush laid no pre-condition nor issued any warning to the Maoists. He did not ask them to behave, and the undertone of the message was quite positive. The Bush comment has come after unpublicised meetings that Ambassador Nancy Powell had with Maoist Ministers Pampha Bhushal and then with KB Mahara.

The latest appeal from the president came as a ritual when Nepal's Ambassador Suresh Chalise presented his credentials last week in Washington DC.

# Maoists want more security

Since the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) gear up for elections and its top leaders plan to mingle with the masses, the party has asked the government to enhance their security arrangements.

A Home Ministry source told Newsfront that despite Maoist Chief Prachanda's public outburst against the Army Chief, Nepal Army personnel remain the party's favourite to provide security cover to the Maoist leaders during election. "Although the security requirements are being reviewed in the tense situation, the government however, failed to meet the demand for multi-layer security umbrella for Prachanda," he added.

The Party had demanded that at least 100 security personnel be drawn from the Nepal Army and the police deployed around the clock for Prachanda. The demand was made in the context of Prachanda and another top leader Ram Bahadur Thapa a.k.a Badal publicly claiming that top Maoist leaders would be targeted during elections.

The government which is yet to receive any concrete evidence that substantiate such claims, has however decided to provide additional security which would be led by a Deputy Superintendent of Police with immediate effect. There would be no exception made for his security by attaching personnel of the Nepal



Army. So far, army personnel are given only to the government and state heads, besides ministers and judges of the Supreme Court.

However, the election commission has had a few rounds of discussions with the government on security arrangements to ensure protection of the contestants and leaders of different political parties. Given Maoists' fear that their leaders might be targeted during the electioneering, area chiefs of Armed Police Force and the Civil Police will also be asked to coordinate with the security arrangements whenever leaders visit their respective districts.

A cabinet rank minister said that the law and order situation is indeed worrisome, and any attack on any leader would create an adverse impact

on election conduct. "That is why from Madhav Nepal to Sushil Koirala, more and more people have now been telling the government to build consensus among the seven parties for deployment of the Nepal army during the election."

Army had been deployed in all the three parliamentary elections in the past, but now it is confined to the barrack, along with Maoist combatants, with the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) having been given the role to monitor their movement. On condition of anonymity, the minister said that if Maoist leader had no problem in seeking army personnel as security guards, "They should have no objection to their being deployed for the protection of all leaders and the electorate."

# Indo-Nepal meet ended on a bitter note

The Indo-Nepal joint official meeting held in New Delhi last week ended without conclusion after the Nepali side declined to endorse the Indian view that the bilateral border principle was violated by the Nepali side.

The bilateral meeting at the Joint Secretary level had taken place in Delhi last week in which India noted with concern the 'incursion' of the Indian side by Young Communist League (YCL) - affiliated with the Nepal Communist Party-Maoists (NCP-M), which is now a major constituent of the government.

A 14-member Nepali delegation led by Suresh Pradhan, a Joint Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, simply refused to sign on the final minute prepared by the Indian side as the routine bilateral meeting was not meant to discuss this issue. Cleverly enough, the Indian side had chosen not to put on record the march by some political activists from India crossing over to the Nepali side and hoisting Indian flag a few days after the YCL tried to march to the other side. The YCL move was aimed at protesting against the 'encroachment' of a part of Susta



area by India.

According to a Nepali official, Pradhan spoke to Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan after the Indian side insisted that the YCL 'incursion' must be put on record. But the Joint Secretary followed the Minister's instruction that he may avoid putting his signature on the minute.

The bilateral security meeting dealt mainly with cross border crimes, exchange of information and the need to increase vigilance at the border. According to a member of the delegation, Nepali side also sought India's cooperation in curbing activities of certain 'armed groups' based in India which were creating trouble in Nepal. The special cooperation was sought in the context of all preparations being made in Nepal for the upcoming elections to the constituent

assembly.

While the three day meeting ended on January 23 on a positive note, with India willing to curb cross border crimes and intensifying and modernising the information gathering at the border, its 'approach on the final day was in contrary to the earlier spirit', an official said. "If the agenda of the discussion had included such cases of incursion, we would have discussed it threadbare. The way they tried to put the pressure on was in bad taste," the official added.

The Nepali side also denied that it sought resumption of the supply of arms to the Nepal army which remains suspended since the Royal takeover in February 2005. "In fact, we had decided not to raise the issue," said a delegate.



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

Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each of us individually. Peace, for example, starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us.

- HH The Dalai Lama

## Paralysed

Kathmandu literally choked in poisonous smokes of rubber tyres as youths and students descended on the streets to protest against the hike in the petroleum price. Anarchy and violence reined supreme in rest of the country. Robbery, abduction and murders were reported from Siraha, Mugu, Kapilvastu and Jhapa. Home Minister KP Sitaula had to be rescued by his security personnel as his own followers found it difficult to digest when he said such events were not uncommon when the country was moving towards constituent assembly polls.

The GP Koirala government rolled back the price in absolute panic, but the government agencies made no effort to counter or resist the vandalism that protestors indulged in. UN and embassy vehicles as well as the media vehicles were targeted by the mob. Worse, the press representatives were assaulted. Prime Minister Koirala who has mostly remained ineffective ostensibly for reasons of health ever since he elevated his daughter as the cabinet rank minister, only reacted to the whole situation by withdrawing the price hike, but he is unmoved by the killing of his party's three leaders by Maoists in Siraha, or that of the manager of the Agriculture Development Bank there.

In Khotang, three police posts were over-run while in Kapilvastu, a Madheshi Janadhikar Forum leader was shot and wounded. Dhanusha is witnessing communal tension. Yet, like Sitaula, Koirala has little concern and time to improve the law and order. People's security is secondary to him. Prolonging his days in chair without any accountability is all that Koirala seems to be indulging in now.

The series of events, especially the abduction and murder of three Congress activists by the YCL goes against the 23-point agreement that the seven parties in the government signed on December 23. In a reiteration of what was already stated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed way back in November 2006, the 23-point agreement had pledged that there would be no protest and attack on political groups. All this was done in order to create an atmosphere for free and fair polls for the April 10 election.

The government's failure to ensure that, with mounting attack on diplomats and the media, and silence of the three major parties - UML, Congress and the Maoists, show that they only want to go for a mock election only. A state of terror and anarchy either sponsored by the state, or encouraged by its indifference will only go in the interest of three parties if polls take place now.

Their major concern at the moment seems to formulate a way to ensure the top three pockets, all or most of the 335 seats they hold in the interim parliament, when the CA polls take place under these circumstances. The Koirala government must understand that it is obliged to create an atmosphere for a free and fair election that will be representative of the people's will and mood. Any other type of election that seems to be the government's priority now, will not be acceptable.



## Letters

### Selling children's misery?

The story on street kids last week shows the miserable state of the children who are supposedly the future of our country. There are more than five hundred organisations working for children in Nepal, and there are thousands of children out there on the streets of Kathmandu and elsewhere in the country.

What are such organisations doing for the kids for whom funds pour in from all over the world? We all know now that such organisations are here, just to make money by selling poverty and misery. Had this been untrue, there would not be so many street children out there, freezing to death. Where does the money go? Not to the children surely, although all their reports may justify every paisa! How about every organisation picking up two or three of such children and use all their skills to keep them off streets? That way, there will be no such lost souls wandering the streets.

■ Pratima Subedi  
 Kalanki, Kathmandu

### Ugly and foolish way of demonstrating

Raman Grandon has shown the possibility of rafting and kayaking tourism in Nepal in newsfront last week. Tourism is the prime sector to enrich the economy of Nepal. But our government doesn't seem to recognise this. Bandhs, protests and hooliganism are destroying tourism in Nepal.

For instance, I saw a number of terrified tourists last week when



students were protesting against the petroleum price hike. Why do we have such barbaric protesting methods? Can we not express our rights more intelligently, keeping our concern for other citizens alive? Have we now become a nation of fools who do not understand the drastic implications of protesting in such an ugly manner, on the tourists, on the environment and our fellow citizens health and peace of mind? If educated youths start behaving like that, what hope do we have for our future?

■ Kailash Uprety  
 Maitidevi, Kathmandu

### True impact of fake currency

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's association with fake currency has opened a Pandora's Box. Should he have exposed his botched history to a

TV program? India has taken this issue seriously. The numbers of articles, editorials and news stories on Indian newspapers shows how seriously India is treating this issue.

It was truly immature on the part of the PM, who should have known better than to commit such foolhardiness. Now, will he have to go ask the Indian government asking forgiveness for his crime? He might have to pay heavily for his heroic statement on the TV. I, as a citizen of this country do not know whether to laugh at our PM or pity him.

■ Srijana Sharma  
 Kaushaltar, Bhaktapur

### Responsible who?

Who is responsible for the thefts of bikes from the parking places allotted by the municipality? The parking authorities charge money for each parking; but when a bike gets stolen, they say they are not responsible for it. On top of that when you park they tell you not to put the handle lock. I think the municipality authorities and the parking contractors need to work out a system to address this problem soon.

■ Kiran Rana  
 Dillibazar, Kathmandu

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

**newsfront@bhrikuti.com**

## Spiritual Corner

### Saint Bernadette of Lourdes

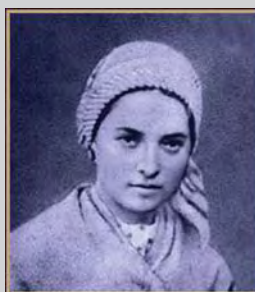
Bernadette Soubirous, born 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1844, had 18 visions of the 'blessed lady' in a grotto in the outskirts of Lourdes. On February 11<sup>th</sup> 1858, Bernadette had her first vision of 'a beautiful lady'. She describes how initially she was bewildered, but after a while she felt overcome with great peace. The visions of Bernadette created remarkable interest and speculation within the village of Lourdes. However, although some believed they were witnessing a miraculous occurrence, others in the town were both critical and suspicious.

However, under cross examination she retained a childlike innocence and also an implacable faith in the veracity of the experi-

ences she had witnessed. Despite frequent and intense examination they were unable to find flaws in her tales. She didn't seek to exaggerate or materially profit from her experiences.

On the ninth apparition, Bernadette was asked by the lady to drink from the spring.

Yet, Bernadette could not see any spring (there was none at the time), therefore she began digging with her bare hands in a muddy patch and drank a few drops of muddy water; the lady also asked her to eat some loose grass. To the onlookers this appeared to be a



disgusting act. Many returned in dismay, proclaiming it was a fraud after all.

However, in the following days water started to flow from the spring where Bernadette had been digging. From this water flowed a spring in which people started to have miraculous healing experiences, and this remains one of the great attractions of Lourdes to this day.

The miracles of Lourdes had become a significant national event, attracting the attention of many people from all over the country. For a couple of years she had to

patiently meet many well wishers, skeptics, disbelievers and the curious. Many report how Bernadette was always very patient, kind and tolerant of the many uninvited visitors. For the next 13 years Bernadette lived the simple life of a nun, eschewing the fame and attention that would have accompanied any worldly life.

Following the events of the apparitions a papal investigation was founded. After long deliberation and careful examination of the evidence it was declared that the visions of the Virgin Mary really did occur at the Grotto of Lourdes. She received beatification in 1925 and canonisation in 1933 under Pope Pius XI, not so much for the content of her visions, but rather for her simplicity and holiness of her life.

**There have been some clearly visible indicators that the US diplomacy in Kathmandu already confirms to the latest approach of President Bush.**

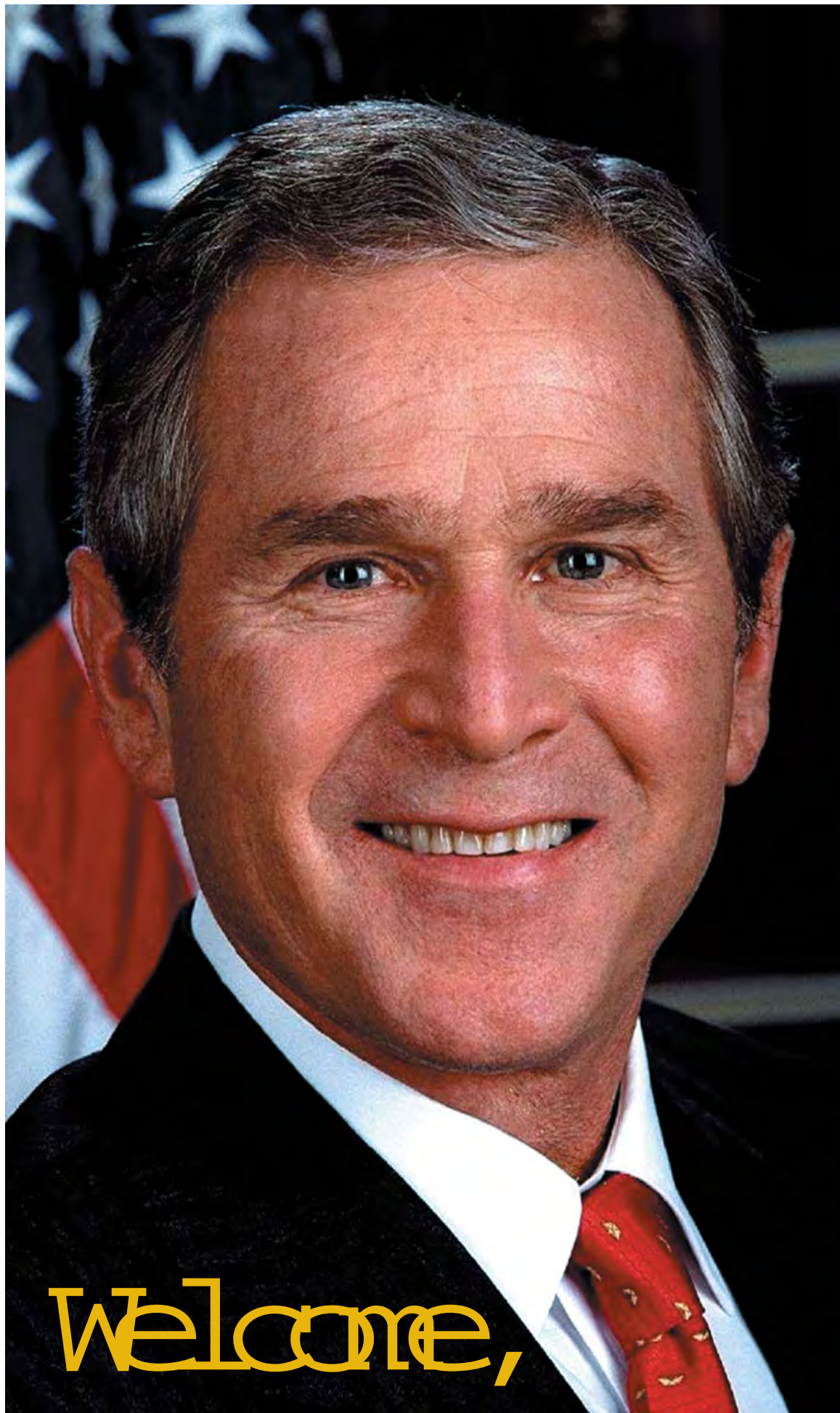
In a message that signals a clear shift in the US policy towards Nepali Maoists, President Bush has appealed to the government and the Maoists to work together to ensure that the election is held by mid-April. At last, he must have had reasons to believe that the entry of the Maoists to the peace process was not a mere tactical move as the US had all along been saying; and that their oft repeated commitment to democracy is as genuine as that of the seven parties ruling the country at present.

There have been some clearly visible indicators that the US diplomacy in Kathmandu already confirms to the latest approach of President Bush. The quiet meeting of Ambassador Nancy J Powell with the Maoist ministers cannot be taken as developments in isolation. Not long ago, Patrick Leahy, a prominent Republican senator had asked Maoists to be part of the political process and earn confidence of the world so that they could be taken off the terrorist list by all including the US.

This at least seems to have had a somber effect on Bush. Also, the US embassy in Kathmandu was more generous in granting visa to the Maoist leaders to the US in recent days, and there are already positive signals that it would facilitate Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai's trip to the DC when they go the World Bank head office, as they have a standing invitation to brief the bank about their economic and pro-reform agenda.

The appeal by Bush also comes in the wake of revelations by Prime Minister GP Koirala that he was involved in counterfeiting of the Indian currency notes and was tempted to get into gold and uranium smuggling, apart from his involvement in the hijacking of an

aircraft during his years in exile. That confession will hardly make GP Koirala's democratic credentials more preferable to the US, that that of Prachanda. Moreover, US has reasons to hope that Koirala can still deliver, as his failure will be real



## Mr. President

miscalculation of the US in Nepal. In that sense, Koirala's failure to lead the transition to democracy will also be seen as failure by the US to a large extent. After all, time is running out not only for Koirala, who is 84 and ailing, but also for Bush who shall be demitting his office as president in less than a year from now.

It was Bush, who initially supported the royal takeover in February 2005, and then went to the other extreme since his public criticism of the king through the then Ambassador James Moriarty in July. That still appears like the basis of the current US policy towards Nepal. The noticeable shift in favour of the Maoists is based on calculation that election will not be possible without Maoists remaining an ally of Koirala. However, Bush's latest statement that he gave when Nepali Ambassador Suresh Chalise presented his credentials, ignores other gloomy

developments in the country and absence of an atmosphere for free and fair poll.

The major skips of the presidents include: rampant and willful



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

**It was Bush, who initially supported the royal takeover in February 2005, and then went to the other extreme since his public criticism of the king.**

persecution of the political opponents by the state and their selective victimisation on the basis of a political commission like the one headed by Krishnajung Rayamajhi; added control of judiciary by the executive and legislature; blatant misuse of government fund to manipulate electoral outcome in favour of the three major ruling parties, including the Maoists; and the appropriation of the authority and jurisdiction of the yet to be elected constituent assembly by the current parliament. These are not mere issues or dimensions of Nepal's internal politics, but democracy can not be meaningfully restored without their being addressed.

In the past, the categorical position that the US took on election was that, a conducive atmosphere and improved law and order situation are the basic pre-conditions. Even former President Jimmy Carter laid some

**Moriarty even challenged Prachanda to furnish him with the proof to substantiate his publicly made allegations that the CIA was out to carry assassinations of the some leaders.**

pre-conditions such as: improved law and order, ending parallel policing by the Young Communist League (YCL), and Maoists returning the property they confiscated during the years of conflict to the rightful owners. Nothing will make Nepalis happier if the appeal of the president does its magic on the Maoist leaders and changes their behaviour.

The US has, in the past two years or so, mainly gone along with India on Nepal's peace process and supported Maoists entry into it with some riders. The US continued to put the Maoists on their terrorist list, and until Moriarty's time, avoided meeting with the Maoist ministers. It quite often insisted that Maoists must hand-over its members responsible for the killing of two American guards. It has also openly commented on the YCL atrocities.

Moriarty even challenged Prachanda to furnish him with the proof to substantiate his publicly made allegations that the CIA was out to carry assassinations of the some political leaders in Nepal. It will be a welcome move on the part of the US to support Nepal's democratic and electoral process. But the election in Nepal should not be something like that happened in Iraq last year or in India's Kashmir, Punjab or Assam in the 80s. While the first happened under the shadow of foreign army, the ones in India hardly represented the popular will of the majority. Moreover, the authority of the state in Nepal has almost collapsed while that of India's centre was intact when its provinces ravaged by insurgency led violence had gone to the polls.

Nevertheless, it will be a real opportunity for the Maoists to listen to Bush and create an atmosphere for the polls. Winning the American president's hope, if not trust at this moment, would be the real recognition of the Maoists as neo-democrats. The modified message of the American president in gist is: 'you have all the opportunities to be recognised as democrats world wide. In that case, you do not have to run, and you do not have to hide'. ■



■ Binod P. Bista

Kathmandu was virtually under seize for two days last

week. The reason was simple. Nepali students, affiliated with all governing parties in the government, staged a city wide 'bandh' in protest against the fuel price hike announced by the government of Nepal a couple of days ago. As a member of a civilised society every country's citizen has a right to stage protest on decisions or actions of government and its bodies that attempt to violate citizen's rights.

In this particular case, though the price rise on diesel, cooking gas and kerosene is attributed to the soaring oil prices in the international market, perhaps the timing of the decision has more to do with the problem than the decision itself. Nepali parliament had conveniently passed a bill giving every member a sum of one million rupees, supposedly for development, just three months ahead of constituent assembly elections. Everyone was harshly critical of that decision, considered illegal by most.

Although it is difficult to exactly pinpoint the part of the right that was violated by the government's decision to raise fuel price, its impact is felt mostly by the city dwellers as Nepal's villages are so poor that they can hardly afford to buy kerosene and cooking gas (most use firewood). Lacking roads, the need for diesel is even scarce. One can argue that the high price of diesel would have affected the commuters and perhaps the prices of goods in the market.

# EXERCISING human rights

Nepal needs to inculcate a culture of peaceful demonstrations, rallies and protests that alone can secure the rights of the affected in the long run.



Cooking gas is found to be more often used by the three wheelers, which claim to be free from pollution and safe (not to mention of the danger of explosion), that argument being readily accepted by the city authorities responsible for the safety and welfare of the Kathmanduites. Notwithstanding these facts, let us give the benefit of doubt to the protestors of Kathmandu that their rights had indeed been violated.

Burning tyres on all major roads, streets, alley ways, and blocking traffic with the help of boulders, tree trunks, metal scraps reflected more of a riot torn city than a peaceful protest organised by a student body. Some seem to be pleased to see an energised civil society of Nepal taking deep root in the process of transformation. Others simply brush it off saying that this behavior and condition has to do with transition.

Considering the exhortations of some of the enlightened civil society leaders in the past that "Government of Nepal has no right to put a ban on any portion of road/street as everything belongs to the people so they have a right to stage protest wherever they want," the student organisations seem to have taken it just too well.

Such a behavior is not uncommon in developing countries. The only difference between Nepal and others in the region such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan is that the opposition parties organise such rallies and protests there, whereas the student

body affiliated with the governing parties did it in Nepal. The governments in other countries ensure that the fundamental rights of majority are well protected. In Nepal, every person has to find his way even if it means walking the entire day and remain safe from violence erupting from unsuspecting places. At the recent bandh, it was reported that several journalists were manhandled, media's vehicles vandalised, windows of ambulance as well as those of private cars were smashed.

Could this be a simple snag in the exercise of human rights by the youth of Nepal? This question needs to be answered by the Nepali civil society leaders and their counterparts who are tirelessly engaged in helping Nepalis build a new Nepal.

Someone recently commented that the elections per se do not necessarily reflect functional democracies though it is the necessary first step toward democracy. Similarly, Nepal needs to inculcate a culture of peaceful demonstration, rallies and protests that alone can secure the rights of the affected in the long run.

Trampling on the rights of others through uncivil means by most associations with direct/indirect support from ruling political parties has placed Nepal into an intractable spiral of protests and counter protests. It is now incumbent on the civil society leaders to steer the country out of this jam as the government has remained virtually non-existent in these days of protests and riots taking place regularly.

## The Fort – a symbol of unity

■ Roop Joshi

From the lofty ramparts of his fort, five hundred years ago, Man Singh Tomar looked down upon the city. It was a city he had vanquished. From the lofty ramparts of this fort, Jahangir again looked down at the city. It was a city he had conquered. From the lofty ramparts of the same fort, the Maratha rulers looked down at the city. From the lofty ramparts of this very fort, the current maharajah looks down at his city. It is a city of which he is now a part.

In democratic India, there lies a place; where the maharajah, still addressed as such by his people though he has no semblance of official royalty, is revered by his people; where his actions, though he is Hindu, can stop Hindu-Muslim riots; where the people know that he will always be there – a symbol of unity, someone with whom they can identify, someone who will always listen to their troubles. And he is himself is a Member of Parliament and a Congress stalwart.

The fort looms over the city casting its protective shadow. Reputed to be one of the most invincible forts of India, it stands



It is time we look at the institution and judge for ourselves whether it serves a purpose for Nepal and its people.

rock solid – a symbol of permanence, of continuity, of a glorious history and irrefutable values, all personified by its rulers. The fort houses a Sikh gurudwara, displays Hindu palace architecture, was modified by Muslim influence and is guarded by a gigantic Jain sculpture. This amalgam of religions speaks of historical changes of power, but more importantly, it is a testimony to the religious tolerance displayed by the rulers.

From this same fort, Maharani Lakshmi Bai goaded her stallion to jump off the ramparts to her death below to escape British captors. Her courage is a testimony to the stirrings of Indian nationalism and to women's equality.

The city owes much to its maharajahs. Its industrial development, irrigation projects and education infrastructure were initiated by the then maharajah in the closing

years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The legacy of the present maharajah's father, whose political footsteps he follows, reminds all of what the father did for his city as well as for his country. A MP from his city in national parliament for 30 years, thrice a minister with various portfolios, he is credited, inter alia, with the modernisation of India's railway system.

The city itself now has a literacy rate of 70%, 10% higher than the national average. It boasts at least 42 institutions of secondary and higher education. It is prominent for its health care facilities with leading hospitals and pharmaceutical companies. It is a modern city with well developed transportation infrastructure connecting it to the rest of the country by train, air and roads.

The above discourse on the fort is not just a romantic reflection on days gone by. Obviously, this fort represents monarchy. It represents the bedrock of strength on which one can build upon. It represents stability and continuity – of culture, values and a way of life in a shifting world. Further, the positive impact of some of the recent rulers of the city personified by this fort is also quite apparent. After Indian independence, the princely states ruled by the maharajas seceded to the Indian Union. It was an inevitable evolution to secure the

huge land mass of India as a single united modern country. There was reason and logic to this development.

So when we debate the issue of monarchy in present-day Nepal, there are lessons to be learnt. There is one, and only one, criterion for the validity of the Nepali monarchy – it must remain, if it serves the interest of Nepal. Does it provide value-added to the sovereignty of Nepal? Does it help with Nepal's standing in the community of 21<sup>st</sup> century nations as a united political entity? In spite of premature announcements of the death of the Nepali monarchy, it is time we look at the institution and judge for ourselves whether it serves a purpose for Nepal and its people. When the winter blizzard is coming, let us ensure that we do not throw away our coats no matter how old and tattered they may be. Those old coats might be just be the ones to keep away frostbites.

It is now up to the Nepali people to decide whether their monarchy is useful to their country. It is up to the people, not up to a triumvirate of unelected politicians. If the majority of Nepalis want a republic, so be it – that is democracy in action. But let the choice be that of the people. ■

# Karma can change



**Karma is your own creation and you can change it yourself.**

**Tsoknyi Rinpoche**, 42 years old, was born in Gorkha district of Nepal. He is the abbot of Ngesdon Osel Ling monastery in Kathmandu and of Gechak Gompa in Tibet. He is the head of the Drukpa heritage project, which works to preserve the literature of the Kagyu lineage. He has been offering teachings in Nepal, India, Britain, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Denmark and the US. His father was the renowned Dzogchen master, late Kyabje Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche. Tsoknyi Rinpoche is known internationally for his open attitude and style of teaching that is full of humour. Extracts from his conversation with **Sushma Amatya**:

## Who were your teachers and when did you start teaching?

I was recognised as Rinpoche at the age of eight. From the age of 13 to 24, I studied in India. Along with my father, I had other teachers like Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Adhi Rinpoche of Nangchen, Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche and Khamtrul Rinpoche, who brought me up.

At the age of 24, when I was in Bodhgaya, some people asked me to teach and from there I started. It happened naturally. I teach five hours a day. I think teaching is the best practice. You have to prepare, meditate, you have to understand students' questions, and you have to have the meditation mood to teach.

## Why is humour important in teaching?

I don't try it intentionally; I think it's the way I teach. Humour is a part of human nature. It comes naturally to me. And it is useful at this age and day when people have such a short attention span.

## Is it difficult to teach modern people?

No. I think I'm prepared to teach modern people because their minds are quite open. They receive Buddhist teachings easily. If I use the old methods, they don't work so well in this century.

## What is your inspiration?

I want to share Buddha's teachings, which is peace, wisdom and compassion. These are very necessary for humanity where a lot of people are suffering because of ignorance and selfishness. The teachings help draw out negativities from our minds. The fact that things are always changing helps us keep our perspective on the right track. If we think everything around us is solid and permanent, it leads to suffering.

## Changes you have seen in your students?

Most of them were very unhappy when they came to me. I think many seekers see some kind of Dharma but no path. They want to practice

some path and when they receive this traditional path, they become happy and peaceful. The changes are amazing to see. All their anxiety, distrust, inability to love changes into peace and happiness.

## Are there drop outs?

Some. In the beginning all are enthusiastic but as you progress you have a certain system you need to follow and they feel they are being tied down and so they remain as beginners. They don't want to go all the way.

## Differences between Nepali and western students?

The basic human nature is the same in everyone. The five poisons like attachment, jealousy, anger, ignorance, pride are the same – from the president of US to a coolie here. But cultural differences are vast. Family situations, psychological patterns are different. For example, we have a lot of problem with mother in law, they don't. We have a lot of love inside out family but we don't have as much freedom. They have a lot of freedom but not enough warmth, love. When someone cares for you, you lose some of your freedom. They want the freedom and also love.

There are different ways to address those problems using the same message but the approach is different. It's like using the same cloth but with different designs. I try and understand my students' roots and speak in their language. I do have people in the west who advise me how to address the cultural and psychological aspects.

## Do you accept everybody who seeks your teaching?

I never reject. In Dharma you cannot reject, unless there are some critical problems. I try but sometimes it is very hard.

## How do you deal with attachment from female students?

I'm married already and that is a barrier and so I don't have such problems. I have heard of such problems and am quite aware of it and create my own barrier. Students love you but you don't know what they are thinking sometimes; but if you have your point of view clear, that is not a problem.

## Are you hopeful that Buddhist teaching will flourish in this materialistic world?

I divide Buddha's teaching into two parts – one is psychological and the other one is for serious practitioners seeking enlightenment. The first part

is for people who want to make their lives better. By following the teachings, they become more peaceful, kind, tolerant; it helps your blood pressure go down, your health improves and life improves. This part of teaching is successful. But the real teaching that is renouncing the world and becoming completely free from the five poisons – that takes time. That part of teaching will shrink more. But I think if Buddhism can contribute something to the world in whatever form, then why not.

## Obviously less people are seeking enlightenment?

That is true. More people are seeking spirituality to improve their current lives. A businessman will not give up his business but practicing dharma will improve his business. If anything will help improve their lives, people will take it. There is a lot in Buddhism that will help their minds and emotions and so I think people will take it. There is less and less dogmatism in people today. Most of them will not reject anything that is good for them just because it's Hinduism, Islam or Buddhism.

## How does one find a balance between spiritual life and worldly life?

You have to organise your life, find some time for spiritual practice – may be one or two hours a day. At the end of the year, there is some achievement and then slowly you can put it together. Or you can go for a retreat, a seminar and then practice it at home. To be engaged from morning till night completely in materialistic pursuit creates a lot of imbalance. There is a saying in Tibet that if you want to go to toilet, you have to build a toilet first. There should be some preparation in your life.

## What one piece of advice would you give to serious practitioners?

You have to lead your life very simply. You have to be rich in mind, not so much materially. When you engage so much in material life, it does not give you enough time. Time is important. If you have a simple life style, the time you have can be used for practice. But sadly for many people, the issue boils down to money and they don't have any time. First thing would be to fix your basic livelihood. But if you are lucky, and have family support, then go for the dharma.

## Is fatalistic approach an obstacle to dharma?

Some people blame it all on karma, on pre-programming but that is not right. You have to think both of cause

and conditions. 50 percent might be karma but you can change the other 50 percent. If it was all karma then there would be no point in doing anything. Karma is your own creation and you can change it yourself. Karma can change. If you plant a rice seed, you will get a rice sapling but the conditions too are important like fertile soil and right weather conditions. It all is interdependent.

## Please explain interdependency.

When you make tea, you have to put so many things together to create tea. Similarly, you are a combination of cause and conditions, interdependent things. Buddha says it is possible to attain enlightenment based on cause and conditions. In Nepal now, life is very difficult. If you want to change it, you have to look at the interdependent conditions. Take things out that have negative impact and bring in those things that create happy conditions. In a family, if father is happy, mother is happy and then the children are happy. If one parent is not happy, the whole family becomes unhappy. It is all interlinked.

You may be a good person, your family is good but some misunderstanding arises and the whole family is on fire. You are the same but there is so much anger around you. The problem there is not you but the delusions. Then, comes the investigation part when you should start examining why, how, where; and you come to a realisation that it was all a misunderstanding. Without this, if you allow the situation to go unchecked, you might end up burning everything.

## How is 'samsara' and 'nirvana' the same?

In reality it is the same but from a deluded viewpoint it is not same. If a cup is covered by mud and I say, it is the same cup but it does not convince you. If you take the mud of ignorance out, you see the cup. But the cup remains the cup. It is all in our mind how we see it. Purify our delusion, then, there is no suffering.

## You lead many retreats. Why is retreat important?

Retreat is very important to Buddhist practice because once you know what you are doing, you need to work with that knowledge and not leave it only on the intellectual level. You have to put it into practice. Once you have a map, you need to set aside time to do that and you need a place that is conducive to practice. First you learn from a good teacher, and then you develop that learning and understanding in retreat. The experience of retreat is of great value. ■



Uday Pariyar



As Kathmandu is recovering from the damaging impacts of the violent strikes on 22 – 23 January against petroleum price hike, nobody can tell exactly how long the newfound calm will last. The Tsunami could hit Kathmandu any day, any moment. It is advisable that Kathmandu residents and visitors remain highly alert all the time.

Watch out! Avoid being caught up in the middle of violent protestors, and police carrying sticks, water canons and tear gas. Indeed, smoke and soot from burning tyres as well as tear gas are known to be toxic. But most importantly, one has to ensure he/she does not become another martyr. Achieving the status of a martyr is no longer valued because we have far too many who apparently died for the common good. We are certainly not interested to turn Nepal into a martyr land.

Energy has now become one of the dominating issues across the globe because the economies depend on it. Every country needs energy in different volumes as per the size of its economy. For instance, faster growing economies such as China and India are getting increasingly hungry for energy. The energy issues often drive the types of relationships between nations and civilisations.

Arguably, the US attacked Iraq for oil, not really for planting western-style democracy in the Middle East. Many believe more international conflict in future will be fuelled by energy needs. The policy of the super power on different nations is largely dependant on how much the country contributes to the US energy demands. Although its rhetoric is to spread democracy and liberalism across the world, it does not care about the lack of them in some countries from where oil flows smoothly.

While the nations wage war on each other for energy, Nepali people are waging war against their government for the same cause. The violent protests in Kathmandu and other places in January were, in many ways, analogous to Jana



Andolan II. Those who saw the strikes in places like Gongabu would not disagree with the assumption. The people from the same political parties called the strikes. Many common people also joined in spontaneously. The government was ultimately forced to give in before the protestors.

The Kathmandu City Office claimed that it had to use the biggest volume of water to clean up streets, compared to other protests in the past. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to call it Tel Andolan (movement for oil). Though the movement is now over, it is likely to come back because the government has not yet found a durable solution to the problem. And it is highly unlikely to work towards it. It is hard to imagine how it will pay its increasing IOC debts without another price hike.

It is common knowledge that the oil issue, despite its urgency, is not the top priority for the Koirala government now. It has no time to see how many hours people spend queuing in

front of petrol pumps to get a few litres of fuel. It has to make a last desperate push to hold elections to the Constituent Assembly in April this year. Third postponement of elections would eliminate any remaining legitimacy of the government and interim parliament. That would seriously erode public confidence on the ruling parties.

So, elections are a do-or-die issue for the parties. Already serious doubts are being raised about the possibility of April elections. There are many issues to be addressed in a very short period to ensure free and fair elections. Tel Andolan helped fuel scepticism about holding elections on time. If the government is unable to maintain peace in the capital town, how could anyone trust it to restore order in the increasingly troubled South and hold credible elections within a few months?

It would not take a genius to guess that violent strikes were likely to follow the announcement of yet another hike in the prices of petroleum products in a

very short period. Why did the government advisers, ministers and others in power fail to predict and act? Why did nobody attempt to formulate ways to avoid the escalation? Most importantly, why did not the parties control their own students and other wings to do things differently?

This exposes gross incompetence on the part of the government and the parties. Similarly, those calling the strikes were mostly students and other organisations linked to the ruling parties. Why did they choose to take to the streets and inflame the situation, instead of talking directly to their leaders in power concerning the issues?

Do they not have any access to their main party leadership? What is the nature of relations between the parties and their wing organisations? Or were the parties playing the double game? The sincerity and integrity of the parties in power are in question. It is hard for common people to see the games involved. Whatever the motives, the govern-

ment and the parties must have realised that the strikes were counterproductive.

The government should not linger on issues like this. There should be serious discussions and debates involving the prominent economists and others on how to solve the problem once and for all. The agreed short-term and long-term strategies should be developed to meet the energy needs over at least another five years. A proper policy should guide the import and distribution of petroleum products.

This is one of the relatively non-controversial and easier areas for the government to deliver. And it could perhaps start by properly investigating the ills and evils inside Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC). If NOC proves useless, private companies should be allowed to bring in and distribute petroleum goods. Government can focus only on the policy issues. It probably has far more important jobs to do instead of distributing fuel.

ud.pariyar@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEW

Birat Singh

It is heartening to read a well composed novel about three generations of Sherpa women in the highlands of Nepal, set in the 1930s. The author, foreign-born, has used her experience of over 30 years of living in Nepal, married to a Nepali, to produce an excellent read. Set in the "harsh tough land (of the Sherpas in northern Nepal) where only the fittest survived," this story about women – interspersed with keen insights into the human condition especially that of women – has many messages relevant to the present.

Nima Tsering, the beautiful

woman from Helmu, dealing with her Solokhumbu husband's unfaithfulness; her daughter, Ang Maya, living with the fruits of her illicit affair with the respected monk from Tibet, Rinzi Sonam; Ang Maya's daughter, Diksung's naïve relations with a Rana aristocrat and how she saves herself. With exotic names in an exotic setting, vivid descriptions of Buddhist rites and festivals, this story takes the reader to the past. It also allows the reader to see how much, or how little, things have changed in the last 70 plus years.

The concept of 'sonam' (merit) is woven throughout the story. There is constant harkening for the need to collect enough merit in life, to outweigh our misdeeds so that we



**"...Marriage is a family thing; love has often nothing at all to do with marriage."**

by Greta Rana, Pilgrims Publishing, 2006, 546 pages

are not chained to the wheel of life forever. Two of the most profound themes in this book crop up when Nima tells Ang Maya that "...marriage is a family thing; love has often nothing at all to do with marriage;" and when a poor couple expecting a son's birth is disappointed by a baby girl referred to by the author as "a child who within minutes of her birth had a changed status – from wanted to unwanted – because she was a girl."

Guilt, supposedly the original sin, begins the story with the monk Rinzi Sonam contemplating his one lapse into carnal passion. Yet, his superior, the abbot releases him of any responsibility dismissing him with the words, "Oh come come. You are not

the first who has erred after taking the cloth... We must learn to accept these things and not become so attached and chained by them. It is Leh, my son. What is written cannot be erased." Rinzi Sonam is the 'chosen one' to succeed the abbot and that remains his destiny.

The author prefaces her book with a touching poem and the eternal Buddham Sharanam Gacchami. The lessons from this book are timeless. This beautiful romance by Greta Rana will hopefully also be translated into a movie. After all, it has already undergone its third edition with its German translation published in Munich in 1999. ■



# Polarised vote in Obama sweep

The electoral victory of Barack Obama in South Carolina has revealed a Democratic electorate divided by race, gender and age.

Mr Obama swept the black vote, which makes up more than half of those voting in this Democratic primary, although only 28% of the state's population.

Hillary Clinton maintained her strengths, especially among women and older voters, that have been evident in previous primary elections. And former Senator John Edwards, running as a southerner from South Carolina, had a relatively strong showing, and did particularly well among white men.

## Racial divide

Mr Obama's victory was based on his overwhelming support among the black community, which voted 80% in his favour, while less than one-quarter of white Democrats backed his presidential bid.

In South Carolina, African-Americans made up 53% of Democratic primary voters.

In contrast, Senator Clinton and John Edwards split the white vote, with each gaining just under 40%.

Mrs Clinton's slender margin of victory over Mr Edwards was provided by the 18% of blacks who voted for her. Only 2% of the black vote went to Mr Edwards.

Among black voters, Mrs Clinton had more appeal to older voters and women, but the effect was not as marked as among white voters. And in another measure of racial polarisation, the quarter of voters who said they thought the country was not ready for a black president gave Mrs Clinton a majority of votes, while 77% of those who believed the country was definitely ready for a black president voted for Mr Obama.

## Age divide

There was clear evidence of a generational divide, with Mr Obama winning 70% of the votes of those between 25 and 29, but only 51% of those between 50 and 65.

Mrs Clinton, in fact, won more votes -



Democratic presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton holds five month-old Jaren Chisholm in the air during a visit to a Shoney's Restaurant in Columbia, South Carolina January 26, 2008.



Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama and his wife Michelle arrive on stage at his South Carolina primary night rally in Columbia, South Carolina, January 26, 2008.

40% - among retired people over 65 than Mr Obama.

And among older white voters, over 60, Mr Obama only received 15% of the vote.

In contrast, Mr Obama ran most strongly among new voters who had never voted before.

## Gender split

Among white voters, women and men voted quite differently.

John Edwards had a lead among male voters, by 43% to 29% for Mrs Clinton, with 27% of white men voting for Mr Obama.

However, among white women, Hillary Clinton was ahead, with 44% of their votes, compared to 34% for Mr Edwards and 22% for Mr Obama.

Mrs Clinton also did equally well among married women and unmarried women. In the past, she has sometimes received more voters from single women.

## Electability

As in past primaries, Mr Obama appealed more strongly to those who were concerned

about the Iraq war than those who were most worried about the economy, but the effect was less marked than in previous contests.

More than half of Democratic voters thought the economy was the most important issue, while only 19% cited the Iraq war, third behind health care.

And among black voters, who are much poorer than whites in South Carolina, the economy was clearly the most important issue.

However, Mrs Clinton got a higher percentage of the vote among those who thought national economic conditions were poor than among those who thought that they were good.

Mr Obama got the strongest support among voters who wanted an immediate troop withdrawal from Iraq, while Mr Edwards won strongest support among those who wanted the troops to stay, suggesting that he was also benefiting from a cross-over vote among Republicans who were also eligible to vote in this primary.

Perceptions about the candidates' relative strengths and weaknesses played a bigger role in the election.

Mr Obama was overwhelmingly judged the candidate who could most bring about change, and three out of four voters who thought that was the most important quality in a candidate voted for him.

Mrs Clinton was equally the strong choice of those who believed that experience was the most important quality for a candidate.

Mr Edwards, who has been running on a populist platform, gained the most support among those who wanted a candidate who cares about ordinary people.

But interestingly, among those who said that electability was most important, opinion split more evenly between Mr Obama (40%) and Mrs Clinton (36%).

The analysis is based on exit polls conducted during the election, with a sample size of 1,905.

## Looking to the future

In 10 days, nearly half of the US electorate will have a chance to vote on their choice of presidential candidates in 22 states in Super Tuesday on 5 February.

Mr Obama's strong showing in South Carolina certainly gives him momentum, but he will have to appeal to white as well as black voters to win the big states such as New York, California and Illinois.

And to win in November, he will also have to reach out to moderates and independents in the electorate - who only gave him 46% of the vote in South Carolina.

Mr Obama also has to overcome what appears to be a reluctance of older white voters to support a black candidate.

Mrs Clinton faces a different task. She needs to re-energise her white working-class base, which was squeezed from both sides in South Carolina by Mr Edwards and Mr Obama.

And she needs to broaden her appeal to voters who go to church regularly. Mrs Clinton ran much more strongly among non-church goers, while Mr Obama got the voters of two-thirds of the most frequent attendees.

(BBC)

## Ex-dictator Suharto dies

Former dictator Suharto, the army general who crushed Indonesia's Communist movement and pushed aside the country's founding father to usher in 32 years of brutal rule, has died.

The 86-year-old's reign saw up to a million political opponents killed.

Dozens of doctors on Suharto's medical team had been rushed to the Pertamina Hospital in

Jakarta after his blood pressure fell suddenly. Suharto had slipped out of consciousness for the first time in more than three weeks of treatment, doctors said.

Suharto had been in intensive care with lung, heart and kidney failure since he was admitted to the hospital on January 4. Over the past week his doctors had spoken of a recovery.

Suharto, who led a regime widely regarded as one of the 20th century's most brutal and corrupt, has lived a reclusive life in a comfortable villa in central Jakarta for



the past decade.

He had been in and out of the hospital several times for heart problems and internal bleeding since being toppled by a pro-democracy uprising during the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis.

Historians say up to 800,000 alleged Communist sympathisers were killed during Suharto's rise to power from

1965 to 1968.

His troops killed another 300,000 in military operations against independence movements in Papua, Aceh and East Timor.

Suharto's poor health has kept him from facing trial and no-one has been punished for the killings.

Corruption watchdog Transparency International said Suharto and his family amassed billions in stolen state funds, allegations the family is fighting in court.

(The Press Association)

## Pakistan nuclear sites on alert

Pakistan has raised the state of alert around its nuclear facilities amid concerns they could be targeted by Islamist militants.

But a senior Pakistan military official said there had been no specific threat to the sites, and insisted that safeguards in place were fool proof.

The official was speaking in a rare press briefing on the issue.

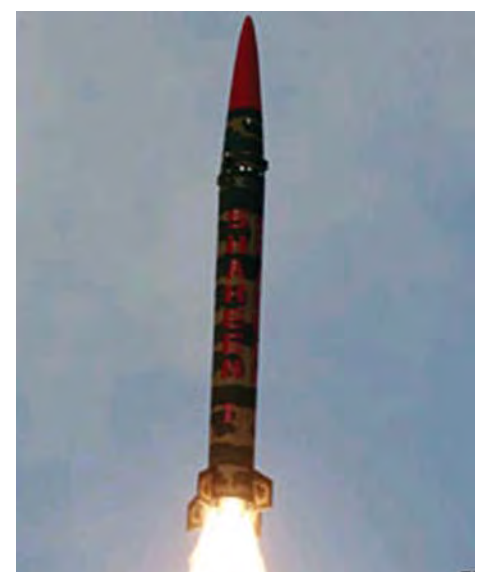
It followed Western media reports warning that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall into the wrong hands. The Pakistani authorities have been angered by Western media reports speculating that the country's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of al-Qaeda militants.

The senior military official briefing foreign journalists said that the weapons were protected by an elaborate command and control system, and multiple levels of security.

He acknowledged that Islamic militants had begun to attack army personnel in recent months, and that nuclear sites may also become a target. He said the state of alert around nuclear facilities had increased, but there had been no specific threats against them.

The official said there was no way the Taliban or al-Qaeda could take over Pakistan's estimated 50 nuclear warheads.

And he dismissed the possibility of collusion



from within the system, saying all personnel dealing with sensitive material had been carefully monitored.

Despite fears raised by US media and politicians, the official said the US administration had not shown any recent concern about the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. He also said any foreign intervention over the issue would be disastrous for the intruder.

(BBC)

# Attaining divine ears and eyes

It is made possible by good karmas and a mind freed from lower mental impurities through practices of Samatha etc.

## Marshland Flowers

**This is the hearing capacity of the Devas that is why it is called Dibya Srota Dhatu. It is made possible by good karmas and a mind freed from lower mental impurities through practices of Samatha etc.**

### Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

In the Abhidharma we find the psychic power or psi phenomena divided into five categories. These are called Abhigyas which mean high knowledge or higher knowing or higher cognitions. Abhi means special/higher and Gya means knowing.

Firstly, the Riddhi-Siddhis: These are manifestations in the outside world and are different from the other Abhigyas. Riddhi-Siddhis imply controlling power over the subjective and the objective and it manifests by controlling both mind and matter, whereas the other four Abhigyas are related only with the subjective power of the mind. As this is a bigger topic we shall go into details of the Riddhi-Siddhis after we finish studying the other four Abhigyas first.

The second Abhigya (Abhiyya in Pali) is known as Dibya Srota Dhatu, i.e. divine ear element. It is said that with a concentrated mind applied to Dibya Srota Dhatu, the purified hearing which surpasses human hearing is attained. And one can hear sounds of humans or Devas, whether far or near. The ability to hear sounds far away beyond normal human range within the human world or to even hear the sounds and voices etc. of Devas in various Deva Lokas and Brahma Lokas is what is meant by the Abhigya Dibya Srota Dhatu.



This is the hearing capacity of the Devas that is why it is called Dibya Srota Dhatu. It is made possible by good karmas and a mind freed from lower mental impurities through practices of Samatha etc. With this

pure and extended Dibya Srota, the Yogavachara is able to hear sounds whether produced on earth or in the various Deva realms of existence. There are various exercises given in various texts (Theravadin/

Sarvastivadin/Mahayana) which are more or less the same, for the properly trained yogi with a pure mind to produce Dibya Srota if it does not appear spontaneously.

The third Abhigya is called Parachitta Vijnana. It means knowing the mind of others. Having attained the Abhigya the yogi can know whether the mind of other person is with passion/emotional defilements, or free from passion. He can know whether other person's mind is filled with hatred/anger or free from hatred; whether the person's mind is filled with Moha (delusion) or free from delusion; whether the other person has achieved the correct Samadhis (Samyak Samadhi) or Mithya Samadhis, concentrated or not concentrated, emancipated (Mukta) or not Mukta etc. It is not only telepathy or mind reading though it would automatically be included within it. But it is more about the capacity to know the state of mind of another person as the above explanation makes it clear.

This Abhigya cannot be gained by those who do not already have Dibya Srota Dhatu. This Abhigya can also be called Dibya Chakshu, i.e. divine eyes, or like the eyes of the Devas of various Devalokas.

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

**24 HOURS BROADCASTING**

IMAGE CHANNEL

FIREFRONT

Violence seems to make a permanent home in the corridors of national polity...

# A nation gone astray

Yuyutsu RD Sharma



Of late, the dust and smoke in the streets of Kathmandu has earned more name than its clean

Himalayan air. The polity continues to roll its chariots on flames of the burning tyres and helplessness of its civilians, as if there's no other option left to sort out strategies to development and good governance.

Violence seems to make a permanent home in the corridors of national polity and a slightest provocation can send the life on the streets into a chaos. No matter what its cost in terms of human loss or financial crisis may be, the dragons of anarchy continue to rock this once a Himalayan haven.

The streets of Thamel, the hub of country's major industry, appears dark from the soot. Couldn't the government have sorted out a timely strategy to quell the smoke in the streets? Is dust and smoke the ultimate fate of people of Nepal?

The colors of a nation's democratic

set-up are crucial to its people. The major players of the polity have to discover the colors hidden in the dreams of the people's lives and the landscape. This alone could be a major achievement for any political party to come to prominence in the national life that they so desperately seem to lust for, with all fair or vicious means.

The colors of the most vibrant nation of the world have to come out in the streets and squares of the nation's democracy. That's why probably where the role of an artist or a writer becomes crucial.

Only a writer or an artist can unleash the true colors of a nation's rainbow. It's in the blind streets of smoke he/she visualises the shimmering daggers of snow that continue to gawk helplessly from the valley's rim. The colors of the rhododendrons of people's destinies ablaze in the sunny scenario, that's what our politicians and policy makers need to dream of often.

This might sound fancy talk to some, a proverbial poet's talk. But

there are nations in the world like Ireland that take immense pride in producing poets and writers. Just like other industrial nations who take pride in manufacturing hi-profile consumer goods, electronic gadgets, or even nuclear weapons.

That's where I find Ireland and Nepal similar. Both countries in the past have taken immense pride in producing poets and writers. Especially Nepal is a country born out of the breath of poet/ translator like Bhaubhakta Acharya. No ruler, no matter how powerful, could have formed a nation without the poet giving it its tongue. Now once again there is a need for this nation to find its true colors and ultimate destiny.

Could any political party or leader discover the withering flowers of this turbulent nation without appreciating the spectrum of its lost colors? The question a poet flings at the makers of its destiny. Maybe there's someone listening, a humble human being, someone with a Buddha face holding Gandhi's helpless, feeble cane.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)

'Pagla Badal' (crazy cloud) is Anupama Dahal's latest gift to the world. As she began meditating in her journey to the world of spiritualism, many thoughts came in her mind. 'Pagla Badal' which was launched during a special ceremony at Gurukul on January 26 was an expression of those thoughts in rhythm. Sridhar Guru's wife, Neeru Rana released the album in the ceremony organised by Byoma Kusuma Dharma Sangha.

The album, as Dahal put it, tries to include the essence of Buddhism in it. Dahal said that in course of her meditation, her thoughts wandered in creation of songs not only in Nepali, but also Hindi, Rajasthani, Sanskrit and English language as well. "Free clouds do not follow any directives. Those who do not understand it, call it mad," and thus the album is based on this theme.

"Free clouds do not follow any directives. Those who do not understand it, call it mad,"

## Songs of free clouds



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



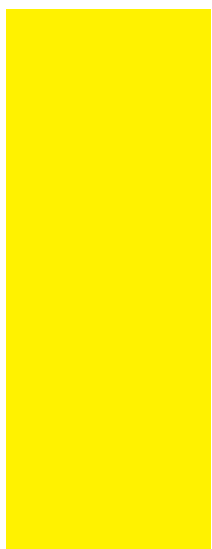
Let your **Cellphone** be your source of **News**



**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





One of Sanchita's favourite paintings titled, 'Death'.

# A LIGHT moves on

Sanchita Sinha Roy, 44, a painter and writer passed away on 26 Jan 08 in New Delhi after a prolonged illness. She was not only a gifted artist, a wonderful teacher

but an extraordinary person with a large heart that welcomed everyone she met with unconditional love. For reasons unknown, despite all the riches she was endowed with in her mind and heart, and her outstanding talent; she suffered a lot physically and materially and lady luck always seemed to elude her.

**we admire her deeply for her resilience, patience and power to tolerate human weaknesses around her.**

We used to joke saying that perhaps her paintings would start selling well only after she leaves the world, as it has happened in the lives of some world renowned artists. Little did we know death was soon to step in and take her away from us. In spite of the hardships that life threw at her,

she maintained an unflinching positive attitude and her courage almost till the very end; and we admire her deeply for her resilience, patience and power to tolerate human weaknesses around her. She was like that as a teenager when I met her

two decades ago. Her qualities were enduring and consistent all through the years that followed when we managed to keep in touch across long distances and gaps of time.

She has taken away with her a

meaningful presence that embraced everybody that came in touch with it. Her life always overflowed with giving, caring, sharing and cheering up others around her. Her joyful laughter and sophisticated sense of humour could brighten up morose moods in no time. Although blessed with a sharp intelligence, she never showed it off, but it was there for us to spar with, when we wanted to.

Her friends and fans range from all walks of life and all whom I know who met her have gained something precious, something indescribable from her; and that something will now enrich our lives, for death has the power to drive home the truth in a second, that years of association often does not. For us who were very close to her, Sanchita was a special being who came down to earth to work out her leftover karma through intense physical suffering. She now is free of the burden and we pray that she goes to light up some other realms that deserves her truly. ■

*(Sanchita contributed her paintings and writing to newsfront for some time. Newsfront offers its heartfelt condolences to her family and friends.)*

देशको तात्कालीन  
कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं  
के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण  
कार्यक्रम

**OUTLOOK**

मा

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे  
मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा



**सगरमाथा**

समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव