



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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It is not a traffic jam but a queue of vehicles waiting for their turn in front of a petroleum station near Singha Durbar on Feb 3. Ramesh Lekhak, Minister for Labour and Transportation, has said the petroleum crisis will be solved by Feb 7.

Going soft Majority for king

■ nf correspondent

As the ruling seven party alliance continues to push the King against a corner, an opinion poll suggests there has been an increase in the number of people who think there should be space for monarchy in some form in future Nepal.

The size of the pro-republic mass also seems to have reduced considerably compared to when it was at its peak in January 2007, when the ruling seven party alliance led by GP Koirala was just nine months old in probation, promising that it would hold the election to the constituent assembly in May 2007.

A total of 49.3 per cent of the respondents said monarchy should be retained against 37.8 who said they do not want the institution in any form. Around 12.2 per cent said they either did not know the answer or did not want to say anything at the moment. The percentage of those wanting monarchy to continue has gone up by three per cent in the past eight months.

The study was conducted between December 16 (2007) and January 12 (2008) by the interdisciplinary analysts out of a sample of size of 3010 respondents drawn from 30 districts scattered over five development and three geographical regions across the country.

Apart from the issue of monarchy, the survey report also brings out a public opinion that is not only at tangent with the assessment of the seven parties, but also challenges the government's decision on issues like religion and the administrative pattern of the country. The number of those who say that Nepal should be a 'Hindu state' and 'not a secular one' remains at 59.1 percent. Only 31 percent of the respondents supported Nepal's status as a secular state.

Opinion poll

The worst rated institution in terms of the lack of people's faith is the interim parliament as per the finding. Both interim parliament and the present cabinet stood at a very low esteem of the people as only 3.2 per cent and 3.4 per cent of the respondents said they had faith in these institutions. Similarly 28 per cent of the respondents said they had absolutely no faith in the ministry while 22.2 had a similar view on parliament.

There is also a far bigger number of people who believe that election cannot take place in April compared to those who say 'it will'. The opinion poll suggests that only 22.1 per cent of the respondents believe that the government will be able to meet its new deadline for election against 41.3 per cent of the people who say election cannot take place in April. A maximum number of respondents, approaching nearly 70 percent believed that the issue involved in Terai movement could be sorted out through dialogue. ■

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Extremists prevail

Elections look increasingly difficult

■ nf correspondent

As law and order situation plummets, and elections in April look increasingly difficult if not impossible, Prime Minister GP Koirala is toying with the idea of deploying army, as in the previous general elections, to ensure that elections are reasonably free and fair. The issue is being seriously contemplated following a series of explosions in Terai that has hampered the election meetings organised by the ruling seven party alliance despite heavy security arrangements manned by the police and the armed police force.

But the Nepal army is believed to have told Koirala that while it would happily do the assigned job, pressing it for partisan political interest would go against all that the army has stood for all along. That is being interpreted as army's suggestion that it being deployed in Terai, and not

being deployed elsewhere, might again earn it a 'pro-hill or sectarian' image.

The subject was raised, with far more seriousness than before, when the PM separately met chiefs of the security agencies: Gen Rookmangat Katawal., Chief of the Nepal Army; Basudev Oli, Chief of the Armed Police Force (APF) and Om Bikram Rana, Chief of the Civil Police, last week. Koirala is believed to have considered various options: deploying army in Terai alone leaving the remaining part of the country to the APF and police.

Koirala is under pressure from different leaders of the alliance in a more vocal manner to deploy the army as in the past, if elections are to be held in April. But what ties his hands back is the implications it will have on the peace process, especially on the role assigned to the United Nations Missions to Nepal

(UNMIN) which is assigned with the role of managing arms and armies of the government, on condition that they will be confined to the designated barracks and cantonments.

The decision of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) to deploy at least 200 young communist league (YCL) cadres, many of them feared to be combatants, has further injected fear among the alliance that they are out to create problems during the polls.

Congress leader and former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba; UML leaders, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Khadga Oli, have already said the government should build an understanding among the partners of the ruling alliance while some Maoist leaders have welcomed the idea with a rider - that their combatants also should be involved along with the Nepal army. This idea was rejected by others right away.

GP Koirala



PH by newsfront

Complicity

Criminal-JTMM nexus

A nexus between the hardcore criminals from India and a prominent armed group of Terai has been established. The recent arrest of Dharendra Yadav from Morang recently has provided many clues to the police regarding the nexus between criminals across the borders and Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) groups, mainly led by Jwala Singh.

Yadav, a most wanted criminal from Bihar for murder and robbery, is believed to have been involved in the killing of Manoj Bikram Shah, the manager of the Siraha district branch of the Agriculture Development Bank (ADB), two weeks ago. A sum of Rs.30 lakhs was looted by the group after Shah was shot dead.

The police have now arrested Tawalal Yadav, assistant manager of the bank, for having informed

Dharendra Yadav and Jwala Singh group about Shah's movement, and the fact that he was going to deposit ADB's money in the Rastriya Banijya bank at Biratnagar.

Tawalal had also refused to accompany Shah to the Rastriya Banijya Bank saying he was not well. A sum of Rs two lakhs has been recovered from the assistant manager and the police said that the amount is part of the cash robbed by Jwala Singh group.

Leaders of the two JTMM groups, Jwala Singh and Goit live in India. Political parties, mainly the ones based in Terai are wooing them. The two groups have also announced recently that they would not target any one of Madhesh origin in future. The decision was taken after Shah was murdered.



Digvijay Singh

Worrisome Nepal?

India's high level concern over Nepal

■ nf correspondent

A high-level team of the Indian National Congress, that leads the federal coalition, is due to arrive here soon to assess Nepal's situation. The decision to dispatch the team was taken by Congress President Sonia Gandhi, in the wake of anti-India feeling growing in Nepal after a long spell of cordiality, and its visible drift towards bigger crisis and instability.

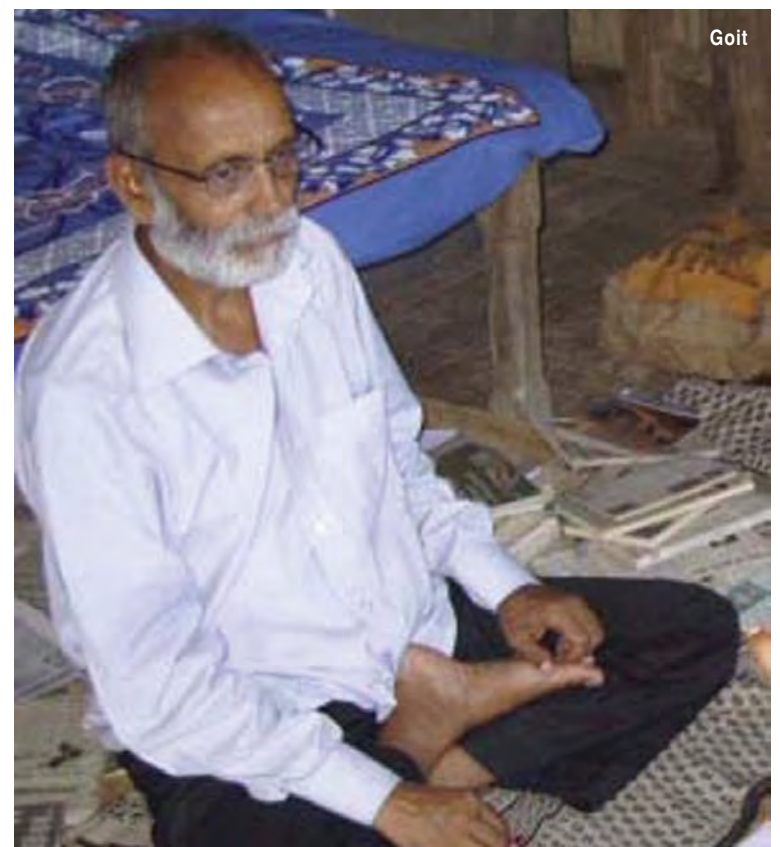
The team headed by All India Congress Committee General Secretary, Digvijay Singh coincides with open criticism from the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, that the government of India was endorsing and condoning everything that was happening in Nepal under the Maoists' 'diktat'. Its leader LK Advani had recently said that the decisions of turning Hindu Nepal into a secular state and removing monarchy, taken by the interim parliament were done under 'Maoists' diktat'.

He had also questioned government of India's silence on the process adopted in deciding on both issues. BJP is also furious with the Man Mohan Singh government for having used CPM leader Sitaram Yechruy as the 'official representative of the govern-

ment of India on Nepal.'

Many believe that the Congress team's visit that is to begin on February 12 is aimed at dispelling the impression that the government in Delhi has outsourced its Nepal policy to the CPM, or that to bureaucracy, as the congress team is expected to make its own assessment and report to the party high command. This is for the first time that a high level team of the ruling Congress will be visiting Nepal with such an alarm, at a time when uncertainty looms large over the April elections. The team consists of Congress parliamentarians and AICC office bearers with prominence, and also the rising stars of the party with enough national exposure.

Apart from Singh who has been Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh; Veerappa Moily, a senior leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister will also be joining the team. Others include Salman Khursheed, a Former Minister of State for foreign affairs; Abisekh Manu Singhvi, a noted constitutional lawyer and Congress secretary; Dr Shakeel Ahmed, a Rajya Sabha member; besides Sachin Pilot and Jitin Prasad, two prominent youth parliamentarians of the party.



Goit

Newsbrief

Limited choice for SPAM

GP Koirala and his government may face a legitimacy question if the election to the constituent assembly is not held on schedule, said Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, India's ambassador to Nepal.

In an interview to Vijay Pandey for Avenues Television, Mukherjee said that although the question has not arisen yet, it might in due course if the government failed to hold the election. Ambassador Mukherjee is due to leave to take up his new assignment as High Commissioner in London soon on completion of his tenure in Nepal.

He chose not to divulge details of his talks or understanding reached with King Gyanendra during his last meeting, just prior to the hand-over of power to the seven parties in April 2006.

PM stops interview

Having successfully embarrassed government of India and Nepal by admitting that he was involved in counterfeiting Indian currency and divulging that the hijacking of a Nepal airlines plane by the Nepali Congress team took place only after RAW chief assured 'protection' way back in 1973, Prime Minister GP Koirala has now stopped his weekly television interview series to Kantipur television.

Koirala initially tried to disown part of the text, but as that did not work, he is believed to have decided to stop the interview altogether. Shekhar Koirala, his nephew and a key political aide until a few days ago, went public stating that the PM's interview came as an 'embarrassment to the government of India and the people of Nepal'.

Indian interest

The inter-ministerial official team which refused to sign the 'minute' prepared by India at the end of its three day meeting in Delhi about a fortnight ago, has asked the government to take up the issue at the highest level with India with 'utmost seriousness.'

The suggestion that came in the course of briefing to Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan implied that some of the Indian desires were detrimental to Nepal's national interest. The Nepali team was particularly annoyed with India's suggestion that its defense personnel be deployed at the ammunition factory of the Nepal government located at Sundarijal. "These are the issues which are best conveyed through the appropriate or highest political channels, the delegation is believed to have advised the foreign minister.

The 14-member delegation which was led by Suresh Pradhan, Joint Secretary in the Foreign Ministry had refused to entertain the suggestion saying it was not something that Nepal would find acceptable. The team also refused to sign on India prepared minute that sought to decry, 'incursion of Indian territory by the Young Communist League (YCL)' when they carried their campaign against 'Indian encroachment of Susta.'

The Nepali team's plea was simple: that the routine bilateral meeting had certain fixed agenda like strengthening machinery and information channel to check cross border crimes and 'it had no mandate' to go beyond that. Ultimately, the team returned without signing the minute.

Labour racket

There are at least 15,000 Nepali labourers in Israel, most of them untrained and unskilled, faced with the possibility of losing their jobs any time, which would render their stay in the country illegal.

The Labour and Foreign Ministries have received many complaints, in writing and mostly verbally, that man-power agencies are sending work force without proper training in jobs they are supposed to be handling. Nepali labourers are paid one thousand dollars every month as per the rules there.

There are also reports that each labourer sent to Israel pays around eight times more as commission/bribes to various layers of officials through the man-power agencies. A deputy secretary in the Foreign Ministry told newsfront that there is hardly anything that the ministry can do against such complaints "Such complaints are received from labourers and their families going to different countries, but in absence of evidence they can not be processed," he said.

Nepal set up its embassy in Israel last year, 45 years after the diplomatic relations between the two countries was established.



'Hydro-rich' country in the dark

More power cuts to hit the country

An extended power cut, 46 hours a week, which is to increase in months to come, has plunged the capital and the rest of the major urban areas in the country into darkness, crippling normal business and industrial activities.

The extended power cut, coupled with shortage of diesel, has already compelled some hotels in the capital to warn their guests that they may not be able to serve running hot water as the temperature in the capital threatens to touch the zero Celsius. The grim power situation is unlikely to improve at least till mid-April since the repair and maintenance works at the Kulekhani power plant is underway and will take that long. All sectors of production have already been hit by the power-cut in the country that boasts of being the second biggest source of hydro-power in the world.

The Hetaunda based cement factory owned by the government



and the Reliance spinning unit in Biratnagar have been closed down rendering over 1200 employees jobless. Many others, across the country, have cut down their production hours and targets, as a result of the power shortage. The alternative source of power, diesel, has become

unavailable for ordinary consumers. "Moreover, having to run generator on diesel is more expensive than other source of energy," a hotel executive told newsfront.

The shortage of power has also adversely affected the large scale development and construction works, according to Shakuntal Hirachan, President of the Nepal Contractors Association. Many of the works now will not be completed within the targeted period, the association said.

Moreover, the cost of production will now go up. With very little reserve of diesel and petrol available in the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) depot, the resultant crisis and impact on various spheres of economy are expected to be far more serious. The crisis is also likely to hamper the preparations for the election to the constituent assembly. The NOC still owes more than six billion Rupees to its sole supplier, the Indian Oil Corporation.

Maoists' anti India stance

Maoists torch Indian vehicles, vowing to stop their entry into Nepal, as its top leaders, mainly Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai are accused of being dictated by India. The lower cadres of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) have taken not only the law and order situation in their hands, but also a brazenly anti-India posture.

Groups of YCL vandalised and set ablaze three Indian vehicles, two trucks and a jeep in eastern Nepal's Jhapa and Sunsari district on Feb 2 and 3; and vandalised a truck in Biratnagar. The incident that has triggered tension along the border has also affected the movement of bilateral trade as truck drivers and owners took the decision not to ply their vehicles in Nepal unless the



damage caused by YCL was compensated.

YCL has however, become a loser this time around as the government decided to take stern action against those involved in burning the Indian vehicles. Eastern region police has detained at least four YCL leaders and framed cases against them. The YCL action was in retaliation to thrashing and detention of 33 YCL activists by the Seema Surkasha Bal (SSB) when they crossed over to the India side of the border on February 1 ostensibly to 'liberate Nepali territory encroached by India.' YCL claimed that they had gone to the Indian side to 'inspect the border encroachment'. They also alleged that the SSB not only illegally detained them, but also seized their cell-phones and other equipment.

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Point to Ponder

An election cannot give a country a firm sense of direction if it has two or more national parties which merely have different names but are as alike in their principles and aims as two peas in the same pod.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

State-managed

The seven party ruling alliance which has begun its election rally, beginning with the one in Kathmandu, has drawn varied crowds in half a dozen places in the past two weeks. But none of them has been violence free. From the capital, Janakpur and then to Birgunj, explosions have marred the election meetings. The scenario was worst in Birgunj where at least 40 people were wounded, seven of them critically.

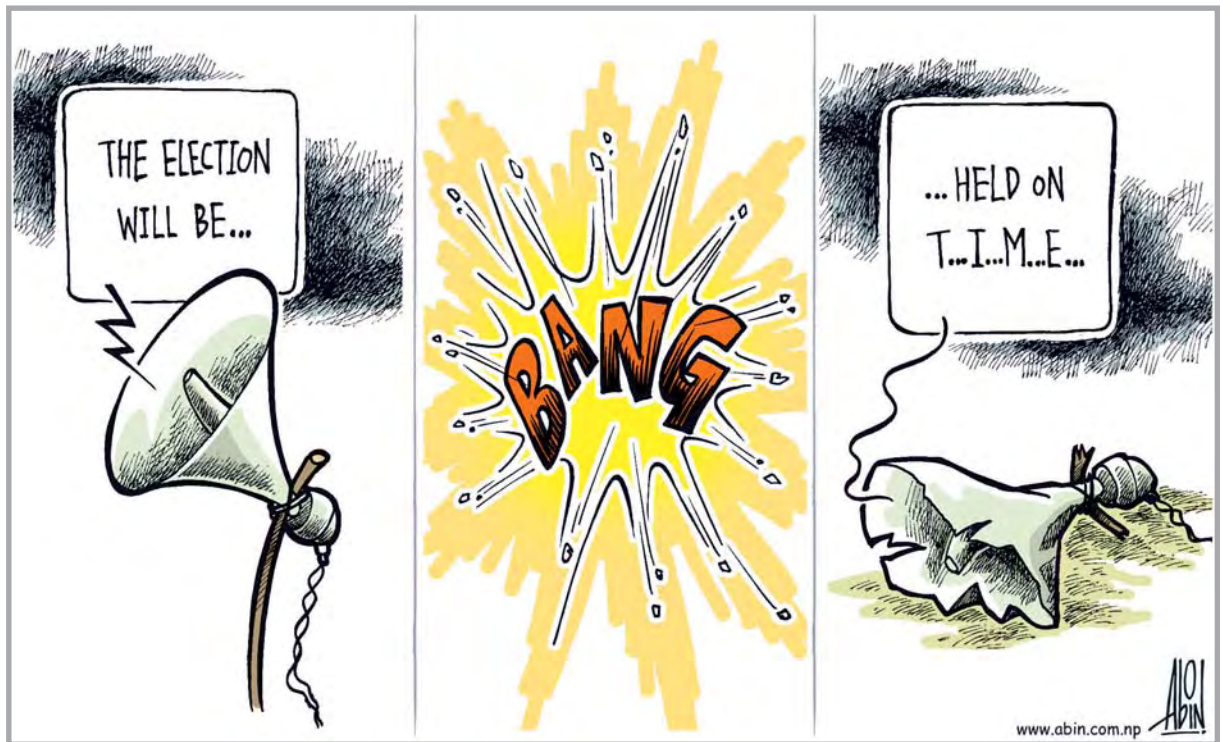
The big size of the security personnel deployed in Terai to ensure the success and safety of the election meeting is unprecedented. It is also without precedence that metal detectors have been installed for the election meetings. Deputy Minister Ram Chandra Poudel avoided meeting his party workers in Janakpur and his local address was kept a secret for safety reasons. He managed to speak only for about ten minutes from a fortified podium announcing that all the demands of Terai have been met. Two days later, Prime Minister GP Koirala sort of corrected his deputy saying all demands of Terai will be met if polls to the constituent assembly are held on schedule. The country knows both the men were lying.

All these meetings are held at the expense of and in active involvement of the state agencies, and this is also equally certain that none of the other parties wanting to hold election rallies will be getting that protection. There are many instances in the past where other political parties and individuals entitled to the same treatment and protection from the state have been physically assaulted and obstructed in their bid to hold such meetings.

The state has taken a visibly partisan role in favour of the seven parties and against the rest. Is election going to be free and fair with all this happening? This cannot be left to the election observers alone. A fair poll can take place only when there is free and fearless atmosphere for campaigning. No one knows if the international community that include India and China who have earlier welcomed the announcement of new date for CA polls are happy about it.

And worse, Home Minister, the person who is supposed to be collectively and individually responsible for the law and order situation in any form of democracy; says he is not satisfied with the existing law and order situation in the country and gets away with it. Only the PM whose strength is his weakness for his family members and favorites, can condone it.

The country not only suffers, but the abdication by the government injects fear in the minds of the masses that the election is just going to be staged/state-managed similar to the ongoing election rallies for one sided advantage of the ruling alliance. That cannot lead the country to a peaceful and democratic transition if the election is going to be reduced into a farce.



Letters

Evidence first, Sitaula!

I was surprised to read in the newspapers about Sitaula's irresponsible rhetoric, blaming the palace for the recent bombing without providing any evidence to support it. Since when did Jwala Singh and his likes have become royalists?

We the Nepali people have the right to know who is actually behind all this havoc! As a common citizen, I demand substantive evidence on the public remarks made by the Home Minister. Sitaula, proof first, please.

■ Sanjaya Tuladhar
Kathmandu

Koirala above law?

Our 'democratic' Prime Minister Koirala is a self-confessed criminal, and yet he clings to power with the agencies of the states having to serve him. He said in a recently televised interview to Kantipur TV channel that he was involved in counterfeiting Indian currency note when in political exile. He also said that he hijacked the Nepal Airlines plane and robbed Rs. 40 Lakhs after the Chief of RAW of India gave him a green signal to do that.

Koirala has become Nepal's PM five times. There are instances in different parts of the world when politicians in

power have quit their posts after their links with external intelligence agencies have been suspected or established. This is a serious matter as Koirala himself has confessed his illegal activities. Is it not time he follows the logical practice?

A few years ago, some Pakistani diplomats based in Nepal were declared persona non-grata and they left the country, after they were found to be dealing with counterfeited Indian currency. The government of India had taken a strong stance against the Pak

environment?

■ Sabina Uprety
Maitidevi, Kathmandu

The magazine is now fortified 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 28. The mobilization of the security agencies has become necessary because of the Terai bomb attack by different Terai outfits to kill 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 the government Congress members, Ram Chandra Poudel and GP Sitaula, might have been asked for having provided the Terai leaders.

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officials and Nepal government had asked them to leave the country within days. Do India and Nepal have some different yardsticks in the case because it is Koirala who was involved?

■ Dhruva Karki
Sinamangal, Kathmandu

Terror politics

I do not believe that CA elections will be held on the scheduled date. Terai is a huge issue replete with crime and terrorism. The cover picture on last week's newsfront made me think seriously about Nepal's political instability. When you need to pass through a security check even to enter a place of mass meeting, how can you imagine that the CA elections will be held in a free, fair and secured

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

Spiritual Corner

Sachal says

Sachal Sarmast (1739-1829) was a renowned Sindh Sufi poet during the Kalhora era. Abdul Wahab was his real name and Sachal was the name he used in his poetry. Suchal Sarmast literally means 'truthful mystic'. He was an ardent follower of Wahdat-ul-Wujood (unity of existence), an Islamic Philosophy synonymous with Hamah Oost (all from One), and Advaita Vedanta philosophy. The concept of Hamah Oost (all from one) is similar to that found in Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Sachal says (translation by Gul Agha):
 There is no other beloved,
 There is only what I see everyday!
 I was sitting by the roadside,
 When the path became clear to me;

In the palace the beloved I saw,
 a glimpse the beauty gave;
 Through the window was the vision,
 a glimpse the beauty saw;
 Take care of the ignorant;
 Our bond was made for a reason.
 I truly recognised the lord,
 My companion he sure became;
 'He is the creator of all and intrinsic to all',



All doubts in this perished;
 With happiness shall I carry
 Sisters, if your trust I have.
 All the journeys, all the manifestations
 The dear one's own;
 Friend 'Sachal' know this correctly,
 Slumber has created illusions.

Like other Sufis of Sindh, Sachal made no distinctions based on religion, but regarded love as the path to spirituality:

'Tis not in religion I believe
 'Tis love I live in.
 When love comes to you.
 Say Amen!
 'Tis not with the infidel
 that love resides
 Nor with the faithful.

Sachal advocated self-realisation as the path to liberation. Sachal says (translation by Jethmal Parsram Gulrajani):
 O friend! This is the only way to learn the secrets of the path:
 Follow not the road of another, however virtuous he may be.
 Rend the veil over thee, searcher expose thy being.



Ways to deal with the power crisis



■ Keshav Upadhyay

There are various schools of thoughts on finding resources required for hydropower development in Nepal. One school, mostly comprising of technocrats in the power sector, argues for continuation of the existing methods of finding resources via bilateral or multilateral funding with expensive consultants and contractors. This, of course, results in a high retail tariff of electricity comparable to what we pay today.

Questioned as to the desirability of this approach, its advocates do not deny the high consumer price of energy. But they advance geography and stage of economic development of the country to explain the high tariff. The claim is that the country is landlocked so the transport cost is high since all the construction equipment and materials must be imported. Further, the country suffers from a low credit rating that makes the cost of capital high.

A second school of thought advocates local financing and local private entrepreneurship. Though this is a very welcome approach it conveniently disregards the fact that home financial institutions are incapable of funding capital intensive hydro power generation except if the projects which are really small. Recent agreement between Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and Employees Provident Fund (EPF) to finance Upper Tamakoshi has generated a hope that local financing for larger hydropower projects too is possible, and yet a doubt lingers when you look at the conditions set by EPF.

The covenants, which have been a

subject of righteous anger and derision till now, are no less different than those imposed by multi lateral agencies like World Bank or ADB. When you see that both of the contracting parties are government controlled entities and whatever they do are more or less dictated by the government it produces a sort of merriment that such conditions should be elaborately set down. Thus, this approach, which, though needs to be actively pursued is yet to produce visible results in the ground and therefore has to be viewed with caution and thus is bound to remain of marginal interest at least at present.

A third group of people pleads for closer Indian collaboration, for two reasons. First, the construction cost would come down heavily since per kilowatt cost of Indian hydro projects is substantially lower than the cost in Nepal. Secondly, if Indian companies are involved in the field of hydropower it would be easier to deal with the agencies of the government of India for export of electricity. This group presents the example of Bhutan to reinforce its argument: look at how Bhutan achieved manifold increase in its national income out of hydro revenue alone. But the Bhutan model arouses strong opinions both in favor and against.

One such critic of the Bhutan model is a senior and highly respected professional from power sector, Mr. S.B.Pun, ex-Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), who has written a paper describing how this model works. He argues that the power projects in Bhutan also have covenants not unlike those for the

donor assisted projects in Nepal even though the covenants in Bhutan's case are not explicitly stated. But he then takes a position saying that the Bhutan model of hydropower development should be kept on hold until the Bhutanese refugee problem is resolved.

He says, "Nepal cannot and must not talk of the Bhutan model in isolation, without delving into the 17 year-plight of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal." He further adds, "Paradoxically, Nepal's Madhes and Bhutan's Lhotsampas problems have the same root causes. While Nepal chose the 'inclusive' mode due to India's 'open border' concerns, Bhutan chose the 'eviction' mode with India's silent nod. The Bhutan model has to be perceived from this context."

First of all, let us take a look at the so called Bhutan Model. India has invested in the Chukha (336 MW) and Tala (1020 MW) projects in almost the same way. Chukha was financed with a 60% grant and 40% loan with a fixed interest rate of 5%. Tala also received 60% grant money but the interest rate on the loan portion was hiked to 9%.

Since Tala is the latest one in the series of such projects, let us see how it compares with the projects developed in Nepal whether privately or publicly owned. It has a capacity of 1020 MW. The project was started in 1996 and with a one year delay was completed in July 2006 for a total investment of IRs. 43,450 million. The cost per KW comes to USD 1,065 at the exchange rate rounded to IRs 40 per dollar while the energy output is 3,962 MUs (GWH).

For Nepal, let us realistically

assume the following: a) the cost is met entirely through loans at an interest rate of 9% since Nepal cannot expect a 60% grant from India, b) the economic life of the plant is 40 years and c) the operation, maintenance and depreciation of the plant per year is 6% of the project cost. The cost per KWH then comes to IRs 1.75, or NRs 2.80. Further assume a loss of 25%, as today, in transmission and distribution, and add another rupee per KWH for expenses such as meter reading, billing and collecting. All this adds up to Rs. 4.75 per KWH as the retail price for the end consumer.

Now, this compares very favorably with Rs. 6.50, the weighted average retail rate that Nepali consumers are paying at present. The generation tariff of Rs 2.80 is also very competitive when viewed against the projects developed as yet in Nepal and very much in line with the Indian market rate.

Why not pursue the Bhutan model then? A decision on the development of hydropower in Nepal is, I believe, urgent. The country is going to be put into a harsh load shedding regime for at least the next five years. Nepali consumers are getting a taste of the severe power crunch, forty-six hours a week of load shedding, at present, and this is bound to worsen. Last September, a presentation made by NEA officials to the leaders of trade and industry painted an extremely gloomy picture of the power scenario.

It showed that the load shedding, during dry season, would reach up to 11 hours a day very shortly and may even go up to 17 hours a day if projects are not handled on war

Load shedding, during dry season, may even go up to 17 hours a day if projects are not handled on war footing.

footing or, alternatively, import from India is not accelerated. The import cost of electrical energy from India could reach a level of 11 billion Indian rupees, a quantum jump from two billion at present, to have any appreciable impact on the load shedding hours. It raises a question, then, whether Nepali economy can afford this level of import from India on top of the aggravated balance of payment scenario prevailing at present. A gloomy picture indeed.

There are a host of measures that the government must take on long term and short term basis to ward off the catastrophic effects of severe power crunch in the country. Long term measures are known to everybody. Get money from the market as soon as possible and as cheaply as possible and start work on attractive projects on war footing. Effect structural changes in the power sector as fast as possible so as not to repeat Middle Marsyangdi fiasco. But whatever we do, near future scenario looks bleak.

In the short term, apart from importing power from India, what we could do, for example, is to go for demand side management so as to clip the spike in demand during evening hours. An aggressive blitz of publicity to replace energy-expensive incandescent bulbs with highly efficient CFL lamps and an incentive scheme for those who do so could make some dent on the peak demand. But all this would require a focused policy and an action plan to implement it by the government and the government controlled NEA. But where is the government? ■

There are a host of measures that the government must take on long term and short term basis to ward off the catastrophic effects of severe power crunch in the country. Long term measures are known to everybody.



■ Binod P. Bista

Exclusion in the name of inclusion?

... The international community seems to have adopted a policy of exclusion from the very beginning.

The developing countries, particularly those from the east, have learnt a lot in the past century or so from the developed western hemisphere. Although a citadel of modern human civilization a few hundred years back, Asia lost its lead by being complacent and happy with what it had. The Asians saw hardly any threat from the less civilised world, which was just emerging.

Asia has been at the receiving end for the past one century and it has benefited also from the knowledge of informatics, science and technology and various other productive sectors. Together with the gift of several innovative products, developing countries also started receiving lessons, sometimes unwarranted, on social development and harmony.

Though the developed countries' governments as well as civil societies are found to have not only acknowledged but also stressed the axiom that 'one size does not fit all,' yet they seem to be trying to replicate their philosophy and ways of life in social development models in Asia, among others. The latest in the series of such social lessons has to do with inclusiveness.

Nepal is one of the countries in Asia, which has been receiving several lessons from the international community in virtually every sphere. It is as much to do with the political leaders of Nepal for the rise in lessons, including social, as with the foreigners. Today, Nepal hosts the largest field office of the Office of the Commissioner

for Human Rights for imparting important lessons on Nepal's human rights, seeing that the parties responsible including the government ensure the rights of Nepalis, and also recommending punitive actions against violators to the UN Headquarters.

Now, there is also a United Nations Mission on Nepal (UNMIN) which was established about a year ago for one year (mandate recently extended for six months) to oversee Nepal's elections to constituent assembly that failed to take place twice. UNMIN, besides helping the seven-party government to monitor arms management with keys of arms store handed to combatants, would wish to manage Nepal's military and build it to a credible force by infusing the Maoist combatants into its ranks and file.

When it comes to lessons on inclusiveness, Nepal has been constantly reminded of its importance by several illustrious leaders as well as UN officials, not to mention of the advice constantly received from Nepal's closest neighbor, India. The issue of inclusiveness or lack of it was at the center of Maoist campaign, which had received good support from the rural poor of Nepal. Issue of inclusiveness has remained the prime topic for discussion for all developing countries.

Societies established on caste or occupation, especially the South Asian Region, have failed to improve the lives of all people despite excellent

economic growth and development in some of them. Undoubtedly, inclusiveness of the Nepali society must be a pre-requisite for securing a better future for all Nepalis.

However, in spite of several speeches and statements on inclusiveness, and to the bewilderment of many, the international community seems to have adopted a policy of exclusion from the very beginning. The process of social exclusion, with full support from the Nepali government, started with the black list (of bank defaulters), continued with groups, agencies and even individuals involved in the King's regime, and recently it seems to extend to government departments defaulting on electricity bill of Nepal electricity authority.

Conscious efforts are being made to exclude political parties, well meaning civic organisations, individuals that sided with or did not join the movement of disobedience or carry out protests of violent nature against king's regime, from the society. It is baffling for any sane person to comprehend this new program of creating inclusiveness through exclusionary policies.

There have been instances of excesses carried out in every sphere of Nepali society. The seven party government with full support from the international community represented in Nepal, wanted to prevent the persons of legitimate political parties, who once sided with the king's

government, from taking part in the constituent assembly elections. The supreme court of Nepal had to rescue and preserve the rights of freedom of expression and association of these individuals.

In the business sector, too, fundamental rights of business leaders such as the right to hold a national passport and travel freely outside Nepal, have been ruthlessly denied by the government on the advice of a foreign management team hired with support from the international financial institution. The simple and reasonable thing to do would have been to follow the rule of law and punish the perpetrators, if found guilty. So much so that by starting a process of social boycotting and exclusion, distinguished individuals of Nepal, who have served the country well throughout their life, have been grossly humiliated and vilified. Continuance of exclusionary policies is bound to affect the Nepali society adversely and the dream of inclusiveness will hardly be fulfilled.

More than the foreigners, present Nepali society needs to review the current policy carefully and see if it truly meets the aspirations of all Nepalis, who are still waiting to be integrated in the main stream. If a simple difference of opinion or view is seen as 'regressive', 'anti-democratic,' 'anti-social' then the hope of Nepal becoming a democratic country is already lost before it has even started. ■



Prime Minister meeting with diplomats



■ Siddhartha Thapa

The possibility of an ethnic war or a civil war becomes more and more a reality day by day given the lackluster policy of the SPA government.

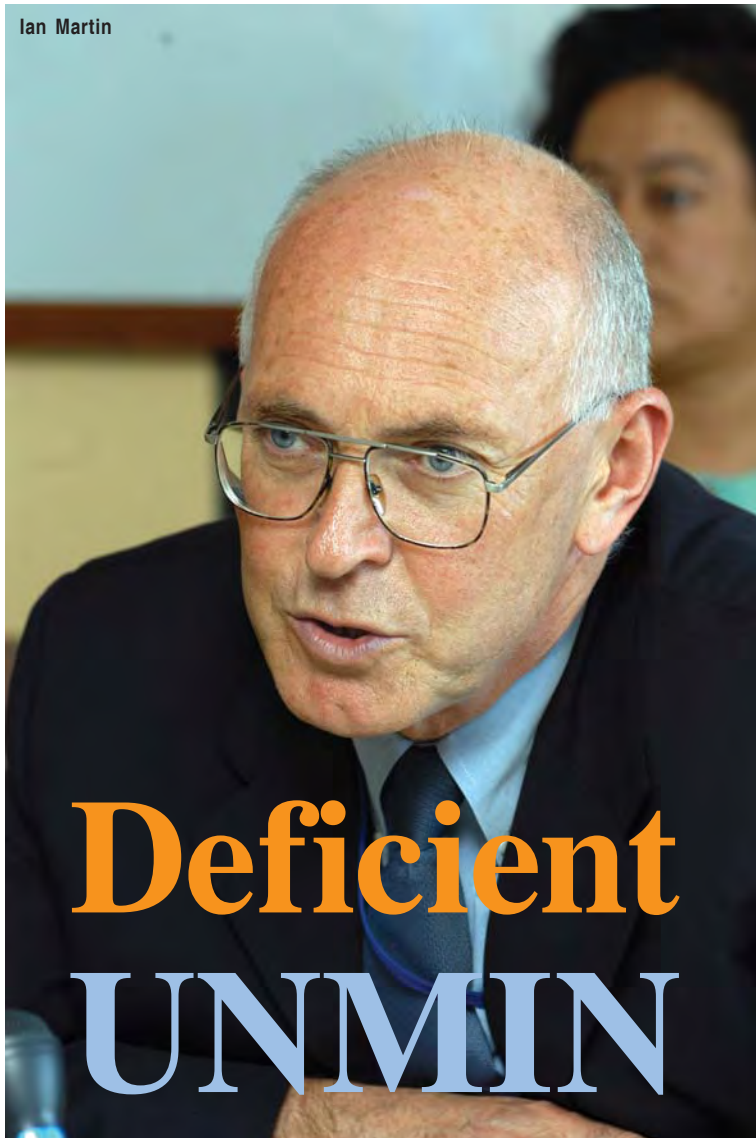
Last summer I had the opportunity to visit Kosovo for about two weeks. Like Nepal, Kosovo too has an enormous UN presence, but fortunately for Nepal; the UN's presence is substantially smaller than that in Kosovo. One of the disturbing images I noticed was the graffiti sprayed on UN SUV's by frustrated Albanians labeling the UN as "killers". Of course, the label – "killers" is not justifiable at any cost, especially considering the number of humanitarian missions the UN has in operation in Kosovo. But one thing is for sure, the prolonged presence of UNMIN and its inability to meet its most basic objective in Nepal will inevitably draw more criticism and anger towards UNMIN just like in the case of UNMIK in Kosovo.

Almost two weeks ago, daily news papers carried a story where the British Ambassador had spoken in public about how polls were not possible taking into account the poor law and order situation in the country. Similarly, the following week UN Security Council met in New York and approved UNMIN's tenure extension. Although Britain did propose an extended mandate, China was quick to veto Britain's proposal quite rightly. However, there is a hidden meaning to Britain's proposal to extend the mandate of UNMIN.

In lieu with the British envoy's assessment that polls would not be possible given the present law and order situation; other international powers have also reached similar conclusions and have thus pushed Britain to propose the extension of UNMIN's mandate in Nepal for two reasons. It now becomes obvious that the security situation might be taking a turn for the worse especially considering the casual attitude demonstrated by the government in handling the Terai demands. Similarly, the possibility of election happening depends primarily on the ability of the government to solve the deepening political crisis that seems to be only escalating in the Terai day by day.

Taking into consideration, the growing lawlessness in the country and the escalating political crisis in the Terai, many in the international arena are beginning to believe that the elections will be deferred for the third time. However, what really worry the international community about the deferral of the polls are the consequences. Given the track record of the present government – unimaginable corruption and divisive

Ian Martin



in nature; a section of the international community feels that the UN with its technical expertise is the only international institution that can realistically help Nepal through this fragile transitional process as they know the SPA, if left alone to govern, will make more mess.

For about two years the international community has been toeing India's policy vis-à-vis Nepal. But unfortunately, things haven't worked out as planned for India. The Maoists seem to be far from India's influence and the Terai groups would want India to be sympathetic to their cause. This situation has obviously put India in an awkward position considering the fact that its policy is far too stretched and scattered. This policy of appeasement of all political groups has proved to be counter-productive. But the net result is that; the Nepali peace process is in danger by the very forces perceived to be in the close influence of the Indian government – Maoists and the Terai parties.

As a result of the failure of the Indian policy to successfully democratise and mainstream the Maoists and other warring ethnic groups; the international community now feels the urge to independently pursue their own policy towards Nepal. As the Terai boils, other ethnic groups have also started to raise their demands. The possibility of an ethnic war or a civil war becomes more and more a reality day by day given the lackluster policy of the SPA government. Therefore, the international community wants an extended mandate for UNMIN so that the international community can play a greater role in solving the Nepali problem by leveraging its influence with political parties and other ethnic groups.

However, is an extended UNMIN mandate desirable to Nepal's national interest? The answer of course is, no. Most western countries have their own vested interest in solving Nepal's problems. If the UNMIN is allowed a greater mandate, what we will have

in Nepal is a constitution that will probably reflect the desires of other western countries rather than having what we Nepalis want in our constitution.

The other problem is related to the often controversial issue of nationalism and sovereignty. If it was bad enough having the Indian's club together an unholy alliance (SPA-M), think about UNMIN with various international players trying to impose their policy for Nepal all at once. It is a recipe for disaster. More importantly, UNMIN has been very poor in its performance over the last two years; it hasn't even been able to assist the Nepal government in its most basic objective – completion of arms management before elections.

Secondly, the intent of the UN also becomes increasingly questionable. UNMIN and OHCHR have both kept mum over the systematic abuse of political opponents and human rights abuse perpetrated by the state and primarily the Maoists over the last two years.

This whole concept of India card and the China card is just a myth. It is in the interest of both India and China to have a stable democratic Nepal because; Nepal provides both India and China a geographical avenue for economic opportunities to flourish between the two countries. Therefore, it is in the interest for both India and China to work closely on Nepal affairs to thwart any designs to allow western countries to enter the Nepali political platform more visibly and that fundamentally means keeping the UNMIN as far as possible from the politics of Nepal.

Lastly, what is most important is defining and allowing Nepal's national interest to prevail for both India and China. For that matter, it is not in the interest of Nepal to have an extended mandate or mission for UNMIN after its extension expires in June. The need of the hour is for the Nepali political actors to identify the ideology that is the real threat to Nepal's national security and democracy. ■

Different organisations working for the rights and justice for the blind and disabled are silent regarding such issues.

Pay attention to sightless and voiceless

■ Sabita Gyawali



Shruti Gautam is a student of class nine in Shree Gurujajur Higher Secondary School, Rakchya Chaur, Dang. She is a talented student in spite of her eye disability. However, when she got admitted to class nine, her parents found her behavior and attitude completely different and changed; sitting alone most of the time, depressed. Her worried parents brought her to Kathmandu to consult a doctor.

While talking to the doctor, she revealed her problem and it was related to her study and especially the course book of class nine which has now been changed. According to her parents, Braille books are still not available in schools out of Kathmandu. Shruti said that she was able to obtain second division while passing her class eight exam as her course book were in Braille and it made her studies easy, but now she is confused.

She has a dream of passing S.L.C in a good division and of becoming independent; but due to insensitiveness and careless of the government, her dreams might be shattered. And she is not the only victim of such insensitive policies; there are other two students also in her class who are facing similar problems and doubtless, many others throughout the country. In the human rights framework they are deprived of their basic human rights of getting education and the state is responsible for this. This is just an example of how issues around the marginalised sections have been grossly neglected. Unfortunately such issues do not figure within the so called mainstream political debates.

Shruti studies in a normal government school where teachers teach



the entire class in the same way. Those who can see, can read by looking at the text books, but Shruti and her friends who cannot see, are compelled to study just by listening to what teachers say in the class. In this situation, with exam dates approaching near, we can easily assume the psychology of those students. The fundamental question here is who is responsible for these children? Where do the children's dreams fit within the so called inclusive politics?

Before making new policies and changing old policies, the state and responsible agencies should have done a proper homework before implementing the policies, they should have internalised the framework of inclusion where they could address the concerns of all. But policies such as mentioned above are implemented without enough exercise at the ground level. Such exclusionary policies pose serious question in the overall governance mechanism of our institutions and systems. Along with state's increasing attitudes of irresponsibility, different organisations working for the rights and justice for the blind and disabled are silent regarding such issues.

This is just one example of how easily the marginalised sections of society are neglected. Unfortunately the state, government and mainstream parties are simply irresponsible regarding such issues. Time has now come for the government, civil society and parties to respect the issues of the marginalised and the minorities. Students like Shruti and many others need to feel that they are also the part of this broader sociopolitical system of the country. ■

They paint the picture of Cinram as a sweatshop exploiting cheap foreign labor.

Murky tale of missing Nepali workers

■ Bhumika Ghimire in Indiana, USA

On Tuesday, AP reported that over 100 Nepali workers are missing from a factory in Huntsville, Alabama and expensive furniture and appliances are also missing from their apartment. They were employed at a DVD factory of Cinram. Cinram manufactures pre-recorded DVD, CD-Audio and CD-ROM. The company has manufacturing facility in Olyphant, Pennsylvania and Huntsville, Alabama and its US head office is in Richmond, Indiana.

Alabama Department of Homeland Security is now looking into the incident, although their spokeswoman Ms. Bethune said that the workers pose no security risk.

Blair Staffing Agency recruited the workers from Nepal and brought them on a H2B visa, which allows foreign workers to take employment at non-agricultural jobs in the United States temporarily. Every year about 66,000 H2B visas are issued.

When I called the Huntsville office

of Cinram on Wednesday to inquire about the situation, an official who does not want to be named said that the workers actually left after informing their recruiter that they were going back to Nepal and that the reports on missing furniture and appliances are exaggerated.

Nick Banaszak, reporter with WAAY TV Huntsville, who is working on this case, said during a telephone conversation on Thursday that the landlords who had leased furnished the apartments in two buildings to the Nepali workers told him that the items missing are TV, mattresses, pillows etc worth thousands of dollars.

Huntsville local police department said that they had received no complaints about the missing furniture, and the investigation about the 'missing' workers was now being handled at the Federal level. Federal involvement raises questions because if the Cinram official's statement is to



Nepali celebrating New Year in USA

be believed that the workers left after informing their recruiter that they are going back to Nepal, there seems no need for an investigation into their 'disappearance.'

I tried to contact local FBI and Customs and Boarder Protection Agency if they had any information on the case but they had no answer.

Then the story took another turn when WAAY TV, first one to report on this case, said on Wednesday that the Department of Homeland Security is now looking into this case seriously and considering the missing workers as a 'security threat,' a major shift from their initial position.

WAAY also reported that now Blair Staffing Agency and Cinram place the blame for this messy situation

squarely on the missing workers, whereas local city officials believe that Cinram is to be blamed. Madison County Commissioner Mo Brooks, who tried to bring a resolution punishing Cinram from bringing in foreign workers in December, is particularly upset about the situation.

In the midst of the finger pointing, local resident are beginning to sound off on the issue online. Alabama blogs like Left in Alabama (a liberal blog) are buzzing about this incident. The workers were being paid \$8 and hour and worked 12 hours shifts, which is awfully low pay for hours of hard work. Bloggers suggest that Cinram brought in foreign workers to toil in low wages that the local workers would not accept. They paint the

picture of Cinram as a sweatshop exploiting cheap foreign labor.

Also, Cinram getting tax subsidy but employing largely foreign workers has angered residents and now they are demanding that the company not be given a preferential status.

As of Saturday, the Immigration Agency has found no proof that any of the missing workers have actually left the United States. Meanwhile the issue is getting national attention after "Lou Dobbs" a prime time CNN show reported the incident on Thursday and Saturday evening's program. The show known for its strong stance against illegal immigration and guest workers program, questioned the workers' disappearance as a possible visa fraud. ■

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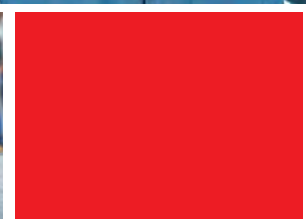
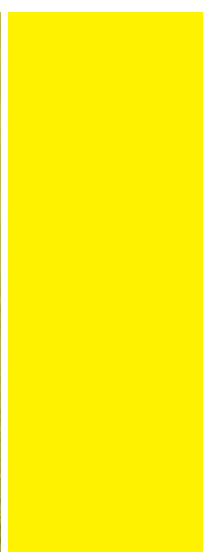
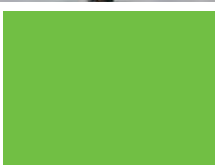
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'Super Tuesday' may not settle it all

Advantage, John McCain. Hillary Clinton? Maybe not so much.

In a presidential primary season that has repeatedly turned conventional wisdom on its head, American voters find themselves confronting another big surprise as the campaign sprints towards Super Tuesday, the biggest day so far on the 2008 election calendar.

The Republican party — divided by competing factions and searching for a post-Bush era identity, suddenly is much closer to picking its presidential candidate than the Democrats, who only a few months ago seemed united and ready to hand Ms. Clinton the nomination.

What's even more ironic? The GOP candidate standing tallest heading toward Tuesday is also the one most disliked by social and economic conservatives who have controlled the party since the early 1990s.

"John McCain really is in the driver's seat, and may well be the Republican nominee," says Merle Black, a political scientist at Emory University in Atlanta. "But he is going to have a huge problem just uniting and motivating all the parts of the Republican party to come out and support him with any kind of enthusiasm."

Not many folks saw this coming.

It was only in December, Republican strategists were predicting a long,

drawn-out nomination process in their party, and Clinton aides privately were predicting Super Tuesday would put their candidate over the top. Voters in 24 states will head to the polls on Tuesday, making it a de facto "national primary" for Republicans and Democrats alike.

The GOP will award more than 1,000 delegates to its national nominating convention in Minneapolis-Saint Paul this September, roughly half the delegate total.

Likewise, the Democrats will award almost 1,700 of the more than 4,000 delegates attending their Denver convention in late August.

Because no candidate in either party has accumulated enough delegates in the early contests, Super Tuesday won't produce a clear winner on either side. But Ms. Clinton, the nominal Democratic frontrunner, faces a far more complicated path to her party's nomination than Mr. McCain does to his. An average of nationwide polls among Democrats shows Ms. Clinton with an eight percentage point lead over rival Barack Obama, but her advantage has been almost cut in half since the Iowa caucuses Jan. 3.

Blame some of those poll declines on Bill Clinton. The former U.S. president's attacks on Mr. Obama



before the South Carolina primary are now widely believed to have damaged his wife's campaign — driving black voters and liberal Democrats like Ted Kennedy firmly into the Illinois senator's camp.

With the sense of Ms. Clinton's invincibility destroyed after losses in Iowa and in South Carolina — and a near-loss in New Hampshire — enthusiasm for Mr. Obama's campaign has soared.

In January, Mr. Obama's campaign raised an astonishing US\$32-million.

Mr. Obama is spending the money as fast as it comes in; he plans a US\$10-million advertising blitz in each of the 24 states ahead of Super

Tuesday, making him every bit as competitive in the campaign 'air wars' as Ms. Clinton.

"The biggest thing for the Democrats is that Hillary Clinton — with all her experience, skills and advantages — is really being hard-pressed here for this nomination," says Ms. Black. "When you look at the national polls, you see Obama getting closer and closer to Clinton all the time."

It's long been assumed Clinton would fare better in a national primary than Obama because she has 100 per cent name recognition and an unrivaled political organization. Heading into Super Tuesday, the former first lady holds commanding

leads in her home state of New York, and neighbouring New Jersey.

She's also competitive with Mr. Obama in the southern states voting on Feb. 5. Mr. Obama leads in Alabama and Georgia, which have large African American populations, while Ms. Clinton is strong in Arkansas and in Tennessee.

Mr. Obama is expected to win easily in his home state, Illinois, and is hoping the strength of endorsements from Mr. Kennedy and Senator John Kerry will help him pull off an upset in Massachusetts.

The big unknown — and the state that will decide which Democrat emerges from Super Tuesday in the lead — is California, which has 441 total delegates. A Rasmussen poll released Jan. 29 showed Clinton with just a three-point advantage in the Golden State.

"Because those big states split their delegates and it's not winner-take-all, Mr. Obama can certainly continue in the campaign even if he loses in California," says Earl Black, a political scientist at Rice University in Houston.

"The fact is, the Clinton campaign thought that it would be all over by Super Tuesday, that she would be so far ahead everyone else would drop out. That certainly hasn't happened."

(nationalpost.com)

Al-Qaeda 'killing' spawns doubts

It was unusual for Islamist websites to break the news of the death of an important al-Qaeda operative as they did this week in the case of Abu Laith al-Libi. Two such websites - Ekhlhas.org and as-Sahab - which usually carry statements from al-Qaeda leaders, reported the story.

These websites and al-Qaeda and its affiliates usually deny any report of their operatives' deaths because the loss of a leading member of the network could be demoralising for its rank and file. This change could mean one of two things.

Perhaps it was no longer possible to keep secret al-Libi's killing in an apparent US missile strike on a hideout of militants in a village near Mir Ali town in North Waziristan.

Or perhaps the intent was to say that he was dead, even though he may be alive, and prompt all those closing in on him to give up the chase.

'Significant loss'

Conclusive evidence about his death is difficult to obtain as the village near Mir Ali is presently outside the writ of the government of Pakistan. It is also far from the bases of the US and Nato forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Even four days after the missile strike on Khushali Torikhel Wazir village, 2km (1.2 miles) south of Mir Ali, the Pakistan government was still unable to officially confirm or deny anything about the airstrike or provide



details about the death toll and the identity of those killed.

The government and the military have been finding it difficult and risky to send men to the targeted village to seek details about the missile attack.

The new governor of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Owais Ahmad Ghani, told reporters that the government had finally sent officials to the village. However, it is doubtful if the government would share any information gained with the media and the public. In the absence of more solid information, there is lots of hearsay and speculation.

Pakistani Taliban in North Waziristan are claiming that al-Libi was not among the 13 mostly Arab and Central Asian militants who intelligence sources say were killed in the missile strike by a pilotless, CIA-operated Predator aircraft. However, they conceded that al-Libi had been seen in that area recently.

Some reports suggested that al-Libi was not present at the targeted house at the time of the attack, but that his deputy Abu Sahel was there and had been killed.

Disruption

If al-Libi was killed in the airstrike, this would be a significant loss for al-Qaeda. It has been some time since someone considered as important has been killed. Although the network is known to quickly replace its fallen or captured operatives, the loss of such an important member would be painful for the group and could degrade its effectiveness and disrupt its immediate plans for attacks against the US and its allies.

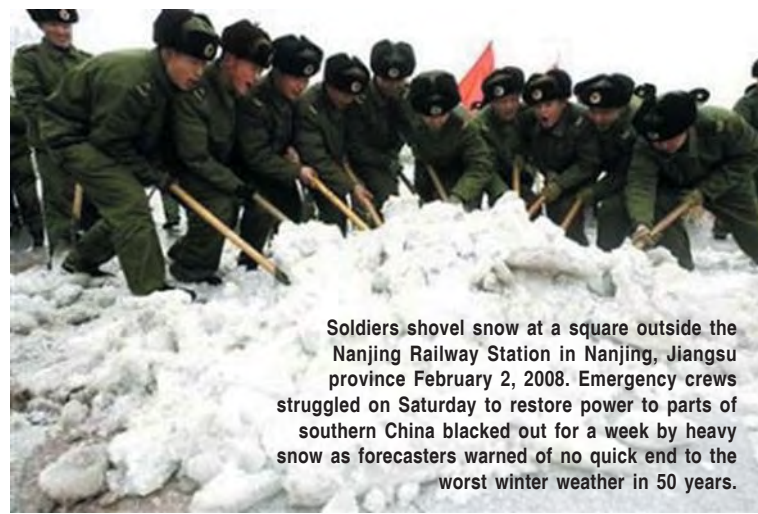
Apart from the operational impact, al-Libi's death could also have political and symbolic effects because he was seen a few times with al-Qaeda's deputy leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in video-tapes and had given speeches to preach "jihad" and attract Muslims to his cause.

If al-Libi's death is confirmed in the airstrike in Pakistan, the belief that Dr Zawahiri or even Osama bin Laden were also hiding in the Pakistani tribal areas such as Waziristan will gain more strength.

This would put greater pressure on the Pakistan government to hunt down al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives hiding in Waziristan and elsewhere in the country. ■

(BBC)

Thousands of docs in snow disaster areas



Soldiers shovel snow at a square outside the Nanjing Railway Station in Nanjing, Jiangsu province February 2, 2008. Emergency crews struggled on Saturday to restore power to parts of southern China blacked out for a week by heavy snow as forecasters warned of no quick end to the worst winter weather in 50 years.

More than 12,000 medical teams with 65,500 staff had been dispatched to snow-stricken areas as of midnight on Saturday, according to an estimate provided by the Ministry of Health. The teams were in charge of medical treatment, epidemic prevention and sanitation supervision, the ministry said. So far, the teams had treated 216,000 ill and injured persons in areas hit by the heaviest snow in five decades.

The authorities have also delivered more than 6.3 million brochures advising the public on disease prevention and the impact of the bad weather. No cases of infectious disease or food poisoning had been reported in snow-disaster areas by Jan. 31, the Ministry said on Saturday. About 33,370 square meters of health facilities, such as hospitals, have collapsed and another 74,461 sq m were in danger of collapsing, according to the ministry. Medical machinery losses stood at 25.2 million yuan (about 3.5 million U.S. dollars) and losses of large medical equipment reached 26.9 million yuan.

The snow, the heaviest in decades in many places, has been falling in China's eastern, central and southern regions for almost three weeks. It has caused deaths, structural collapses, blackouts, accidents, transport problems and livestock and crop destruction. Health Minister Chen Zhu and Deputy Minister Gao Qiang have ordered public health administrations to implement state medical procedures and emergency plans to ensure timely treatment for the ill and injured. Local health administrations must immediately report any outbreaks of illness, including infectious diseases, food or carbon monoxide poisoning and illness of unknown origin, the ministry ordered.

(Xinhua)

The Buddha, Tathagata, the Dasa Baladhari, the holder of ten powers

With such an Abhigya a person can remember one's past lives.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Marshland Flowers

The possessor of this Abhigya becomes essentially somebody who can help others and he can do that better than a psychotherapist can. He would be able to diagnose a person's state more accurately.

Again there are various exercises given in the various texts for the yogi who is ready. Ready here would mean a mind which is not tied by heavy Kleshas (though not free from the Kleshas completely), a mind which has attained high levels of Samadhis. Actually, as we have said before a mind that is heavily laden with emotional defilements (Kleshas) cannot possibly attain Samadhis (higher level of absorptions).

The possessor of this Abhigya becomes essentially somebody who can help others and he can do that better than a psychotherapist can. He would be able to diagnose a person's state more accurately. This was a special Abhigya of the Buddha, which enabled him to preach the dharma with great success and most beneficial results because he could see through the mental state of his audience.

It is one of the ten special powers of the Tathagata called the Dasa Bala. The Buddha – Tathagata was called the Dasa Baladhari – the holder of ten powers. All



these ten or the special powers that only a Tathagata – Buddha can have. No yogis no matter how advanced can have all ten of them. We shall talk of this later. Parichitta vijanana is not limited only to knowing human mind – states but also the mind states of Devas and Brahmas.

The next Abhigya is called

Purvanivas Anusmriti Gyana. As the words imply, Purva means former, Nivas means place of existence, Anusmriti means recollection or remembrance. With such an Abhigya a person can remember one's past lives. How far he can remember depends on how advanced he is in Samadhi. He can even remember

cycles of evolution of the universe of dissolutions, and evolution and dissolution again. He can remember that "In that one I had such a name, clan, caste and experience pleasure or pain and how I died. Having died, I was born here etc. etc."

There are six classes of men who may possess this Abhigya: i) Sramanas (ascetics) holding other views called Tirthikas in Buddhism. They specifically mean Hindus and Jain yogis. They are called Tirthikas because they believe that various Tirthas (pilgrimage spots) purifies ones' sins (Kleshas) which is something the Buddha emphatically denied. ii) Sravakas who are the ordinary disciples of the Buddha. iii) Mahasravakas, the special disciples of the Buddha. iv) Agrasravakas who are the great disciples of the Buddha. Every Buddha has two great disciples. Sakyamuni's Agrasravakas were Mahamaudgalyayana and Sariputra. More will be said on the special capacities when the time comes.

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

देशको तात्कालीन कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं के सोचदै हुनुहुन्छ ?

अनि राजनेताहरु के सोचदै होलान् ?

शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK मा

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा

सगरमाथा समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव

Properly nourished and cared children below the age of two years are likely to have higher memory, do better performance in school, and do better in health and physical wellbeing.

Get serious about Child Health

Chepang kids in Dhading



Ramu Bishwakarma

A large number of Nepali children suffer from chronic malnutrition, diseases, and ill-health. Every year, nearly 15,000 children below age five die from diarrhea alone. While contaminated drinking water and poor sanitation are the main reasons of diarrhea, malnutrition-led physical weakness just increases the risk of diarrhea attack. The combination of poor nutrition and diseases like diarrhea not only take a large toll on children's life every year; but also damage the natural growth (both physical and mental) of thousands of children who survive.

Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) report 2006 shows that 49% of children below the age five are stunted in Nepal (stunting is an indicator of chronic malnutrition defined as a deficit in normal height for the age of children). The same report also shows that 11% of children are wasted (wasting is an indicator of acute malnutrition defined as a deficit in normal weight for height). Both wasting and stunting are closely related with each other.

Wasting if persists for an extended period of time leads to growth stunting. NDHS report further mentions that the population of stunted children declined by 8 percentage points within the period of 2001-2006. But, child wasting, unfortunately, increased by 3 percentage points since 2001. Given such a high rate of child stunting and wasting, no wonder UNICEF ranks Nepal as the most child-stunted country in South Asia, next to Afghanistan.

Child stunting and wasting becomes a serious issue if occurred during the age 0-5 years. Even between 0-5 years, the most sensitive age period ranges from 7 to 36

months. Scientists agree that most part of the brain growth occurs during this period. Similarly, existing research show that the properly nourished and cared children below the age of two years are likely to have higher memory, do better performance in school, and do better in health and physical wellbeing.

This, however, does not remain the same if the child experienced malnutrition and inappropriate nurturing for an extended period after that short age-window of 7-36 months. But the impact would not be as damaging as it would during 7-36 months. That means an adequate nutrition and care affect most positively on child health and wellbeing when the child is in age in between of 7-36 months.

While malnutrition is the most

important reason, low birth weight, resulted from poor nutrition and poor health of mothers, is also one of the main reasons of child stunting and wasting in Nepal. However, the low birth weight itself does not obviate child stunting or wasting. In fact, research shows that children who are born with low birth weight can catch up normal weight and height within the first six months if they are provided with an adequate nourishment and care.

In this regard, breastfeeding plays a key role in providing adequate nourishment to children below the age of 7 months. Hence, a child's ability to catch regular weight and height, in the case of low birth weight, largely depends on mother's health and her breast-feeding practices. The practice of using baby formula to supplement breast-milk is increasing but such

advantage is largely absent for those living in poor and remote areas.

Children's health and nutrition significantly affects their life chances—ability to achieve success over the life course. A growth stunted child of the age of 7-36 months is greatly disadvantaged with the lack of adequate brain and physical development. Because of inadequate cognitive growth, the stunted child is likely to perform poorly in school in his/her later life. A recent World Bank study shows that children with stunted growth, have, on average, 11 points less IQ than the children with normal height and weight.

Such consequences may negatively influence children, and their parents' decision regarding the continuity of their kids' schooling; thus affecting the government's goal of achieving

universal primary education by 2015. Similarly, stunting and wasting may also affect children's ability to participate in physical activities, limit their creativity, and critical thinking ability.

Given a large number of wasted and stunted children in Nepal where the socio-economic condition is so fragile and the political institutions are still very weak, the future of children is something that everyone needs to be worried about. The fact that nearly half of the children are stunted means the country may have a half of its future population with a limited cognitive and physical ability. Such a loss of human resource is sure to toll the nation's economy and prosperity in large if the country does not commit to address the problem immediately and effectively. (Bishwakarma is a PhD student in Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park.)

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Looking Back, Looking Forward: Centralization, Multiple Conflicts and Democratic State Building in Nepal.
By Mahendra Lawoti,
East West Center Washington: Policy Studies 43, 2008, pp.93.



Insights for rebuilding Nepal

This book has critically analysed the historical political, social, cultural trends of Nepal stressing particularly on the achievements and failures of the 1990-2000 political regime in institutionalising democracy and delivering public goods. It focuses on the centralisation of power, democratic erosion, competing claims of diverse people, multi-dimensional nature of conflicts and contesting visions of state building process in Nepal. It has depicted the over centralised state and its consequences like poverty, structural injustice embedded in hierarchical institutions, culture of violence and impunity and over dominance of executive in public sphere and multiple sources of crisis of governance.

The writer has mentioned that the growing quest for fundamental and human rights, power, identity and emancipation by minorities, Janajatis, Adibasis, Dalit, Madhesis and women created conditions for social movements and change. The Maoist's war ventilated the grievances of these groups against unitary political system and its leadership's propensity to "abuse power,

corruption and politicization of bureaucracy and the police, popularly described as "Congressisation and UMLisation" leading to a deep-rooted crisis of governance (p.15) in the post-1990 decade.

For him, the withdrawal of central state created vacuum in governance failed to provide appropriate perspectives and opportunities in mainstreaming the politics of excluded. This has provided structural opportunities for the opposition, alienation and rebellion of excluded minorities of people through NGOs, civil society and popular associations.

The author brings to light remarkable achievements of the period 1990-2000 like promotion of civil society, flourishing mass media and growth of people's consciousness although he says, "civil society was often uncivil" (p. 12) due to their accountability to parties rather than the people and interest in fostering patron-client political culture.

But, the critical question is: Are they fostering social capital, civic culture and national cohesion? His answer is: they have

widened public say in politics and policy by politicising micro and macro issues like violence, discrimination and exclusion in terms of class, caste, ethnicity, gender, region and so. Scope of freedom has also been widened during this period. What about their absorption in the institutional framework of governance? His data demonstrates a skewed image. The author prescribes a mechanism to deal with the ongoing crises, a redistributive regime.

Does not it demand a welfare state? Obviously yes, demands for power redistribution, devolution of power both horizontally and vertically between different bodies of government with appropriate federalism, land reform and political space to civil society are key recipes to resolve the crisis of governance now.

He clearly says, "Autonomous state agencies should regulate markets" (p. 56). Does not redistributive regime especially that of land reforms violate property rights system? The west has resolved this historical dilemma through property tax. Perhaps Nepal too needs to consider its relevance. The state's democratic

accountability and responsiveness are positively correlated to the scope of tax its citizens pays. But, this requires venturing into an approach of political economy, the autonomisation of central state agencies (p. 58) and conflict resolution through power-sharing mechanism.

The writer's analysis of post 2006 period is revealing as he recasts Nepal's historical political culture: "Nepal faces the challenge of holding leaders, such as the prime minister, who has been made powerful by the Interim Constitution, accountable." This requires dramatic improvement in governance, an increase in the accountability of leaders and rule of law (p. 85). On the whole the book contains many empirical facts, sufficient data and maps. It synthesises the major aspects of Nepal affairs and offers numerous insights and lessons to awaken the policy makers and citizens about rebuilding Nepali state.

■ By Tara Dahal

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