



Courage & Conviction

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UNAFFECTED BY FUEL SHORTAGE : Children crossing a river with the help of a rope tied at the other end to get to their school in a Nuwakot village.

Bahar Taruke

No atmosphere for polls Yet again?

■ nf correspondent

With normal life coming to a grinding halt because of non-availability of fuel and unrest in Terai on the increase, the GP Koirala government seems to be left with a limited choice- go for a farcical election in April or call it off once again.

The PM cut short his stay in Biratnagar by a few hours on Feb 17 as he received messages from the election commission that it was not going to hold 'any type' of election, and that the commission wanted to be sure about 'reasonably' safer climate for the movement of officials and equipment for election.

The election commission's concern was conveyed to the PM after the returning officers including some district court judges who were deployed in the western region repeatedly asked an accompanying election commissioner, "Are we going to be safe?"

There are speculations that in case the Terai groups, mainly the United Madhesh Democratic Front (UMDF), refuse to submit the 'list of candidates under the proportional representation system' by Feb 20, the stipulated deadline for the purpose, the EC will either be forced to extend the date as it did in October or review the whole scenario. "Of course, the law and order situation in the country, Terai situation and availability of fuel - it all will have an impact on our decision, but the present situation is just not predictable," the official said.

An election commission source told newsfront, "Although some ministers have unofficially suggested two-phase election, it has not been officially discussed." While the commission is capable of holding elections, it prevailed that it is for the government to ensure a situation conducive for polls.

Developments and facts collected by various agencies, national and international, suggest that the law and order situation, mainly in Terai and the activities of the Young Communist League outside Terai, were posing major threats to the conduct of smooth election. "We are concerned by the Maoists' announcement to deploy 200 YCL activists in each booth," an ambassador from one of the European Union countries told newsfront, adding, "We are keeping our finger crossed."

Besides, Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokhrel has already told the government that any obstruction in the movement of election officials and equipment to the constituencies as per schedule, and later the movement of political leaders cutting across party lines, may hamper the polls. Despite the promise made by the government that the fuel availability will be normal soon, and that it will not affect the polls in any manner, the supply has not yet been normalised. ■

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Koirala's 'no' to Terai leaders

Too late



Shyam Sundar Yadav

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala is not known for honouring what he says or saying what he means. Yet, his most candid statement on some key demands raised by Terai groups led by his former colleague, Mahanth Thakur, came on February 16 from Biratnagar soon after the Madhesh group had formed a team to negotiate with the government.

Koirala said he will neither accept the demand for 'Ek Madhesh Ek Pradesh' (single State status to the entire Terai area comprising 22

districts adjoining India) nor will he grant the 'right to self-determination' to any State. The two are on the top of six-point demands that the Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP) and the recently formed United Madhesh Democratic Front (UMDF), an umbrella body of the three Terai outfits including TMLP, have raised.

"Let any power on earth put pressure on me, but I will not accept these demands," Koirala said. There are speculations that Koirala was responding indirectly to the government of India which has been saying that Terai's demands must be

addressed for the polls. "No demand that goes against the unity and integrity of the country will be fulfilled," he said, asking the Madhesh groups to come for a dialogue so that all 'genuine demands' could be met.

Koirala is apparently unhappy with India's message that his failure to hold election this time around will take away his government's legitimacy. This was Koirala's first response to the demand for the State's right to the self determination although it was first raised by the Maoists for the ethnicity based State they had proposed under a Federal Nepal.

Koirala's outburst in Biratnagar, directly against Mahanth Thakur and indirectly against India, were apparently provoked by the rigid stance that the Madhesh group had taken in course of the meeting they had with Koirala on February 15.

Along with the flat rejection of the two key demands, Koirala also reiterated his stand that he is determined to hold elections to the constituent assembly in April as that alone is going to solve all problems of the country. As he was making these statements, he also asked the Home Minister whether he was in a position

to provide the law and order and ensure transportation of fuel from Birgunj to Kathmandu within this week.

A source in the PM's office said that he has already instructed Army Chief Rookmangad Katawal to remain on stand by for deployment of the army in sensitive polling areas as well as the constituencies and for the transportation of fuel to the capital and different parts of the country. Koirala is also believed to have told the security officials that he would first try to form a political consensus on the issue, and if he failed to secure one soon, he would issue the instruction himself. ■

A state of emergency Crippled

■ nf correspondent

Elsewhere in the world, the situation in Nepal where essential services have come to a halt, would have merited a state of emergency across the nation. Nothing seemed to be moving at its normal pace except the vehicles of the Prime Minister, Ministers and those occupying the constitutional posts besides the high-level officials.

The health and education services have come to a grinding halt. On February 17, an emergency meeting of the Private and Boarding schools Organisation of Nepal (PABSON) announced indefinite closure of the schools because of lack of fuel, while most hospitals in Kathmandu were contemplating suspension of emergency services. "We have no vehicles to ply. Even ambulances are finding it difficult to move," said

management of the Kathmandu Medical college hospital in Sinamangal which suspended the emergency services effective from February 18. Many more hospitals will have to follow suit as there are no other alternatives.

Oxygen gas cylinders were in short-supply in the hospitals because of lack of transport facility. The 46-hour load shedding per week coupled with shortage of diesel and cooking gas has already triggered public anger in many places.

The long distance surface movement has also suffered as transporters are charging at least 300 per cent more than the normal bus fare to Pokhara, Dharan, Birgunj and Chitwan.

Koirala - how sane? Sacking retired officials

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala was in an ecstatic mood when he occupied the chair that Kings used to sit on before, with hopes that there would be a battery of Hindu scholars reciting 'Saraswati mantra.' But he felt humiliated and undermined when he noticed that the head priest, Janardan Raj Pande and his deputy Madhav Bhattarai were both missing. In anger, Koirala ordered that they be 'suspended'.

Home Secretary Umesh Kanta Mainali nodded his head and on Feb 14, the order was carried out. The Ministry of General Administration put Shekhar Pundit, a priest attached with the Narayanhiti palace, along with Pande and Bhattarai, under suspension.

Arrogant Koirala apparently had no idea that the post of the head priest and the deputy head priest (Bada Guruju and Nayab Bada Guruju) had been abolished soon after the interim constitution came into existence in January 2007, as

Nepal then had ceased to be a 'Hindu country' and was declared a secular state. But why did Koirala, supposedly an atheist, who refused to follow the norms and the rituals when his father and mother died, now choose to be seen as a 'Hindu' CEO of a secular Nepal now?

Theories abound. Possibly, because the constitution and parliamentary declarations say that the prime minister will continue to discharge the role and duties that the King had been performing earlier; Koirala took upon himself the role that the King used to perform as Head of the 'Hindu State.' So Koirala moved to Basantapur Durbar for 'Basant Shrawan' on the day of Saraswati Pooja. And the missing priests, it is learnt, had gone to Narayanhiti Palace, where King Gyanendra observed the family and institutional tradition on that day. Both the former senior priests chose to go to the palace. Since the priests have not received salary from the State for more than nine months, they are no longer bound by the government order. ■



Prachanda - president for 20 years? Megalomania

■ nf correspondent

What has the 12-year old 'Insurgency' (or people's war) come to mean for Prachanda, the Chairman of the Communist Party of Maoists-Nepal (CPN-M)? It has now boiled down becoming the first president of Republic Nepal and holding on to the post for 20 years.

Prachanda's public announcement of his grandiose dreams; that he will be 55 years old (that is in the next few months) when he becomes the first president, and after that, within 20 years, he will make Nepal the world's most prosperous and richest country, smacks of megalomania. He also announced that his government's first treaty or agreement on developmental activities will be signed with the government of Norway.

Prachanda's dream to be a president has however been contested by other party leaders including Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML). "That's a day dream,"

Nepal said in a party programme in Pokhara, adding, "The election to the constituent assembly is not meant to elect a president, but meant to draft a new constitution."

No one knows the reasons behind Prachanda choosing Norway, but it



was the only country which extended him official courtesy during his visit there in June. Prachanda also met Norway's Prime Minister when he was here recently.

The CPN-M activists, in clear defiance of the instruction of the Election Commission, have gone around painting Kathmandu's walls red with the slogan that projects Prachanda as Nepal's first president.

"Becoming a president is not my personal wish. But I had to accept it after the party leaders, Baburam Bhattarai and Mohan Vaidya proposed it," he said in a gathering recently.

But his declaration to be president now and occupy the post for 20 years gives a clear signal that it will be an entirely one-party authoritarian rule that will be imposed on the country. In his interaction with students organised by political science students union in Pulchowk Engineering campus on Feb 16, Prachanda said his government will seize property of the 'feudals' and end their political and cultural hegemony. He also announced that alternative east-west highways would be built and small and medium hydro projects given priority.

Prachanda's assertion that he will rule the country as its president for 20 years far exceeds King Gyanendra's declaration in Feb, 2005 in which he had said that he wanted to restore peace and normalise situation and hand-it over to the parties in three years time. ■

Newsbrief

More 'martyrs'

At least 17 people from Madhesh who were killed by the present regime will be declared 'martyrs.' The decision is likely to be taken by the government on the recommendation of the seven party steering committee.



countries of the region gradually.

But the SPA is quiet on the action to be taken against those who killed the 'martyrs'. It was during the current regime that the proposed 'martyrs' were killed. The GP Koirala government had formed the Krishnaju Rayamajhi commission, a politically motivated commission, to recommend action against the regime and the officials for 'excessive' use of force to suppress the people's movement in April 2006.

EU's concern

The European Union embassies in Kathmandu are likely to hold a meeting to review Nepal's crisis ridden political situation soon. The

Nepalis can directly apply in Delhi through the VSS Global, a service agent, or its local office in Kathmandu which will take the responsibility of two way delivery of the passports. Visa section of the high commission in Delhi will decide on the case based on information provided without the applicant having to face interviews, Pariyar said. The visa section of the British consulate in Calcutta will also be closed soon.

The closure of the visa section by the British government in Nepal is being viewed by Shital Niwas quarter as a treatment of diminishing importance that the UK is giving to its oldest 'friend' in the South Asia region. In the past few years in Nepal, British influence is eroding while India, China and the United States are increasing their presence and activities.



meeting is going to take place this week at the initiative of the embassy of France who chairs the EU embassies.

The meeting scheduled on a short-notice, is likely to assess the situation and EU's possible stance in view of the worsening law and order situation, and acute shortage of fuel that will have much larger ramifications on economic and political situation of the country. Besides, the prospects of elections scheduled for April 10 are also likely to be assessed in the meeting.

Distant UK

For Nepalis aspiring for UK visa, this could be good as well as bad news. Good news is that they do not have to stand in long queues to submit their visa application form, and having to be refused 'visa' sometimes at the whims of immigration officials. And the bad news is that the visa section of the British embassy in Kathmandu is going shut down soon. Nepalis wanting UK visas will need to apply at the British High Commission in Delhi, effective from February 18.

Mitra Pariyar, Political Officer in the British Embassy said that this is being done as part of the 'Hub and spoke' policy of the British government in which one centre in the region will be catering to visa services; and visa services, as in Nepal will be terminated in other

Andrew's retreat

You may well have to be a diplomat or a VIP if your vehicle is still moving out on the roads these days. But even that will not ensure that you will reach your destination.

British Ambassador, Andrew Hall had to abandon his journey halfway through and get back to Kathmandu as transporters on strike did not allow him to proceed beyond Banepa. Dr Hall was on his way to Charikot on February 17 to study the political and



general situation, but the transporters said he could not move forward in defiance of their strike call.

"We will not allow any vehicle to move on the road until and unless diesel and petrol are made available in the country," transporters told the ambassador. As a result, his plan to interact with the villagers and then spend a night in Dhulikhel had to be abandoned. Being a diplomat does not always pay. ■

AICC finding Koirala not reliable



■ nf correspondent

Despite India's Foreign Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee saying for the sake of the record that Nepal is 'satisfactorily' moving towards constituent assembly polls on schedule, there is enough skepticism in Delhi about the situation in Nepal.

The biggest setback to India's earlier hopes that Nepal's transition to peace, democracy and economic prosperity under GP Koirala as the Prime Minister, has apparently fallen short of expectations. The All India Congress Committee team headed by Party General Secretary, Digvijay Singh, who was on a

visit to Nepal recently is believed to have reached a conclusion that Koirala cannot be relied upon any more given his age, and his inability to take the alliance partner together. That coupled with the conduct of the Maoists, especially the Young communist League (YCL); credible elections look remote, the team is believed to have inferred.

But based on India's official position so far; that election must take place in April and without that happening the legitimacy of the present government might come under question, Mukherjee told the parliament consultative committee on external affairs on February 16 that, "India's conception about the CA election in

Nepal is that things are progressing smoothly." He made it clear that his hope was based more on India's conception than the latest developments north of the border.

The AICC team that spent three days here collected more facts. Singh, the leader of the team who had come here along with his wife, spent a day more gathering more information about Nepal through sources and contacts outside the seven party alliance. And all facts gathered indicated that they did not tally with Minister Mukherjee's conception. Singh, in the course of a brief chat with journalists at dinner on February 13, had said that while leaders of the seven parties were confident about the government being able to hold election, some of them also raised concern that palace and other forces could 'sabotage' it. Singh is also believed to have copied details of incidents and violence let loose by the Maoist cadres in different places besides the deterioration in the law and order situation.

Even Koirala is believed to have expressed his dissatisfaction with the AICC team as he accused the team of having 'misrepresented' him about Terai situation. In a small family gathering at Mandikatar at his daughter's residence, Koirala is believed to have said that it was 'unethical' on the part of Indian delegation to make public his opposition to 'UN involvement' on Terai issue. "It was a private conversation," he is believed to have said angrily. ■



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Point to Ponder

A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back, but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.

- Marian Wright Edelman

Crippling effect

One surest way to judge efficiency of any government is its ability or lack of it to ensure service delivery. Long queues of vehicles outside petrol pumps, inadequate fuel supply and its crippling effect on production activities with its direct impact on the country's economy speak volumes about the government's inefficiency in the country.

The question that everyone has in mind obviously is: what is this government for?

The government's promise to normalise delivery of petroleum products has, like most of its pledges in the past, proven to be a lie. The latest excuse for the shortage of fuel is that because there is an agitation going on in Terai, the supply routes are obstructed. But this only exposes the state of the law and order situation in the country, for which the government is directly accountable.

While this inability of the government might trigger a riot or violence anytime, the shortage is also likely to affect the movement of electoral officials in the constituencies. If fuel cannot move from one part of the country to another, how can the election officials? The situation gives a lot of space for speculations regarding the possibility of elections to the constituent assembly being put off once again. And this very inefficiency of the government might once again be the cause for extension of yet another illegitimate tenure of the GP Koirala government, supported by the Maoists.

The country has already been hit by the chain effect of the shortage with those at the lowest rung of economy being the worst hit. A large number of industries have been shut-down while some of them have scaled down their production activities, throwing many employees out of job and curtailing wage hours of many. Non-availability of diesel and petrol also resulted in the closure of many schools lacking buses to ferry students.

Even the vocally pro-republican media have now categorised the present regime as worse than the royal regime if the service delivery is any criteria. And sadly, Nepal's present government has been practicing many things which are fundamentally against the principle of democracy. And, as in the past, it might try to use that anti-democracy credential as its strength in future as well. Therefore, its failure once again to face electorate might be its new muscle to flex around and continue in power.

And for the near absent law and order situation or the added threat on the general security of the people, the Home Minister has a repeated excuse that it is engineered by the palace. But all these compound failures, and its refusal to take any accountability, can be ignored by the government only at its peril. Koirala government has fairly established its anti-people credentials and total failure.



Letters

UNMIN says

Dear editor,

I regret having to express concern about persistent misrepresentation of facts regarding UNMIN in the pages of Newsfront. The following are examples:

In "Deficient UNMIN" (4 February), Siddharth Thapa writes that both UNMIN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights "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 absurd statement is contradicted by successive Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council, by reports of OHCHR-Nepal (including a 14-page report on abuses by the Young Communist League), and by numerous public statements of SRSG Ian Martin and successive Representatives of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr Thapa and anyone else can readily find these on our respective websites: <http://www.unmin.org.np>, and <http://nepal.ohchr.org>.

For several weeks (3 December, "UNMIN and the Peace Process", by editor Yubaraj Ghimire; 19 November, "Tussle"; 5 November, "No Transgression"; 15 October, "Clash"), Newsfront persisted in wrongly reporting that UNMIN officials (including Ian Martin himself) had met with leaders of armed groups in the Terai or in India, and this had been taken up by the Government with UNMIN. Newsfront ignored the corrections given to the media, including specifically to Newsfront itself.

In the editorial "Accountability" (3 December), Newsfront wrote that UNMIN had "rejected some deserving candidates against many vacancies just because they belong to certain castes." This serious allegation, which is entirely baseless, was made without any attempt to put the allegation to UNMIN.

UNMIN has made and will continue to make efforts to ensure that its recruitment of qualified Nepali staff includes broad representation from Nepal's diverse population, and equal representation between women and men.

These are only examples of false allegations regarding UNMIN in the pages of Newsfront, and not once has the editor or writer contacted UNMIN to check their facts before publishing. UNMIN, OHCHR and the whole UN system in Nepal are strong defenders of the freedom of the media and welcome public debate and fair criticism. However, professional journalists also have a responsibility to report accurately, especially in the politically-charged atmosphere of a peace process. UNMIN makes itself readily available to the Nepali media, and I offer again an open invitation for Newsfront writers and editors to contact us in order to base criticism on correct facts and to reflect fairly UNMIN's response.

■ Kieran Dwyer
Spokesperson, United Nations
Mission in Nepal

Editor's response

It would have been more appropriate if Mr. Dwyer had spoken only on behalf of UNMIN, and not on behalf of the OHCHR or other UN bodies. Newsfront stories are based on credible information and due verification. We stand by it. No matter what UNMIN says about its recruitment policy, some of the candidates have faced questions which are caste related.

As for UNMIN officials meeting leaders of the armed Terai outfits, what Newsfront has learnt is that such meetings took place under the knowledge and consent from top level of the mission. In some cases, human right activists were assigned the job. Responsible Indian authorities have

lodged complaints with the Prime Minister about such meetings, and a senior UN official, Paul Handley's name was mentioned. We are withholding some names of the people who had held such meetings in India for 'professional reasons'.

Siddharth says

I was particularly taken aback by the letter written by Kieran Dwyer - Spokesperson, United Nations Mission in Nepal, that described my views as absurd when I had said that both UNMIN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - "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."

I would like to draw Dwyer's attention to the fact that UNMIN and OHCHR have repeatedly kept quiet when smaller political parties were directly threatened by the Maoists during political campaign in the villages. These smaller political parties drafted letters and sent these letters to INGOs and other diplomatic missions in the country describing atrocities consistently committed by the Maoists on them.

I do agree that the OHCHR did make efforts to go investigate the Terai massacre. But did the OHCHR make efforts to show to the world how deeply the government and the Maoists were involved in planning the Gaur massacre against the MJF which tragically backfired for the Maoists?

The fact that more than 321 people have been killed by different groups and around 1000 abducted by the Maoists (after Janandolan II) aptly describes the state of our human rights situation since April 2006. However, I have not doubted the humanitarian good will of the United Nations.

■ Siddharth Thapa

Spiritual Corner

Be here and now

Eckhart Tolle (born in Germany, 1948 as Ulrich Tolle) is a contemporary spiritual teacher and writer on spirituality. Eckhart is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition. He is said to have attained enlightenment at the age of 29 after suffering long periods of depression, dissolving his old identity and radically changing the course of his life. His non-fiction bestseller, *The Power of Now*, emphasises the importance of being aware of the present moment as a way of not being lost in thought. The aim of Tolle's teachings is the transformation of individual and collective human consciousness - a global spiritual awakening.

His core teachings include:

1. You are not your thoughts. You are the awareness behind the thoughts. Thoughts are often negative and painful, yearning for or fearing something in the future, complaining about something in the present or fearing a matter from the past. However, the thoughts are not you, although your ego wants you to think that. Awareness of your thoughts without being caught up in them is the first step to freedom.
2. Only the present moment exists. That is where life is (indeed it is the only place life



can truly be found). Becoming aware of the 'now' has the added benefit that it will draw your attention away from your (negative) thoughts. Use mindfulness techniques to fully appreciate your surroundings and everything you are experiencing. Look and listen intently. Give full attention to the smallest details.

3. Accept the present moment. It is resistance to the present moment that creates most of the difficulties in your life. However, acceptance does not mean that you cannot take action to rectify the situation you are in. What is important is to drop resistance so that you let the moment be, and that any

action arises from deeper awareness rather than from resistance. The vast majority of pain in a person's life comes from resistance to what is.

4. Observe the pain-body. Years of conditioned thought patterns, individually and collectively, have resulted in habitual emotional reactions with an apparent personality of their own. During 'pain-body attacks' we become completely identified with this 'pain identity' and respond from its agenda, which is to create more pain for ourselves and others. Observing the pain-body is awareness itself arising, as it allows humans to separate from this unconscious identification with pain.



Bhaswar Ojha

Apart from his being found in possession of foreign currency, beyond the legal permit, he had traveled with a fake passport to Nepal.

Deportation controversy

According to Indian authorities, since there was a red-corner notice issued against Dr. Kumar, Nepal was obliged to deport him immediately.

The Indian authorities were cajoling their Nepali counterparts not to hype up the event of Dr. Amit Kumar, the alleged kingpin of clandestine kidney trade, who was arrested in Chitwan, first week of February. The Indian authorities were constantly monitoring Dr. Kumar's movement and activities and passing on the relevant information to Nepali police. And once the alleged kingpin of the clandestine kidney racket was in the police net, Indian authorities advised Nepali side to follow some past trend and instantly hand him over by showing on record that the arrest took place somewhere in Raxaul, only 60 km away from Sauraha in Chitwan.

But the initial set-back to the move came from the newly appointed Minister of State for Home, Ram Kumar Chaudhary, who confirmed to the vigilant media worldwide that included several Indian TV channels as well as the BBC, that Nepali police had achieved a breakthrough by nabbing Dr Kumar. Indian embassy in Kathmandu instantly put in a request that he be deported. Back in Delhi, some consistent Nepal baiters began weaving conspiracy theory - given Nepal's attitude in the past - that it might delay deporting Dr Kumar on some pretext. In midst of all this, Dr Kumar was brought to Kathmandu. After a marathon grill

and interrogation, the police declared that three different cases will be filed in the Kathmandu district court on February 10.

Apart from his being found in possession of foreign currency - euro and US dollars - much beyond the legal permit, he had traveled with a fake passport to Nepal. Moreover, there was reasonable suspicion that Nepalis were a substantial number of donors of kidneys and kept his business thriving.

Nepal police felt humiliated and betrayed by its own Prime Minister who ordered the Inspector General of Police and the Home Secretary, that the captive should be handed over to India without much fuss and delay. And it happened exactly in the manner that Koirala wanted. An Assistant Inspector General of Police escorted Kumar to the Indian Airlines Aircraft (IC-814) at the Tribhuvan International Airport through the domestic airport route, and handed him over to three officials of India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), an outfit that acts as investigating arm of the federal government.

No one in the ruling seven party alliance lodged any protest over the incident and the manner in which it was handled. There are several

similar cases of 'hand-over' by Nepal, and few by India, without following the provision and process of extradition treaty that still exists, although India has long been insisting that it should be replaced with a more practical and effective treaty.

According to Indian authorities, since there was a red-corner notice issued against Dr. Kumar, Nepal was obliged to deport him immediately. But even in Interpol case, the courts come into the picture. CP Gajurel, a senior Maoist leader was arrested in Chennai when found traveling with a fake passport, and he was in jail there



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Treaty demands consistency and equality in spirit and practice by its signatories.

for more than two years. There was a red-corner notice issued against him. Treaty demands consistency and equality in spirit and practice by its signatories. Gajurel was handed over to Nepali authorities with the court's order as the extradition treaty demands.

The urgency expressed by Indian side for handover of Amit Kumar was understandable. But Nepali authorities, especially the Prime Minister, need to explain if the alleged Nepali victims of this clandestine kidney business have a right to justice? An investigation in Nepal based on interrogation of Kumar could have only provided input to the investigation in India. But the apparent high-handedness on the part of Indian authorities undermines the right of the Nepali victims, besides the normal duty of the state authorities who were keen to pursue this case for a brief period and handover Kumar at a earliest possible date.

In the famous Sucha Singh case, a district court headed by Janakman Shrestha took three months to 'extradite' him to India in the late 60s. Singh, wanted in the murder of Punjab Chief Minister Pratap Singh Kairo, had been arrested by the Indian police from Nepal territory, but they were stopped by the Nepal

government. The extradition process perhaps took a little longer as the Nepal side was not happy with the manner of arrest. A very constructive and positive role of the then Indian ambassador, Sriman Narayan helped to bring the bilateral cordiality back to normalcy.

Between early eighties and now, Nepalis authorities have apparently handed over cases which might run into hundreds to India; as suspected Sikh, Tamil and Kashmiri militants were found using Nepal's link to the world outside and poor surveillance as a preferred passage. In most cases, they were either put in the Delhi bound flight to be arrested on arrival, or shown as 'having been arrested in Indian territory'.

The most famous case in the second category was that of Yakub Memon, wanted in the serial Bombay blast in March 1993. Memon, arrested in Kathmandu, was taken to Gorakhpur by the Nepali authorities, and India's the then Home Minister SB Chavan, announced in parliament that Memon was nabbed in India. However, given the high profile that Amit case attracted, faking the venue of arrest was perhaps not possible. But the manner of the handover can set a precedence that will have a bearing on such issues in future.

Siddhartha Thapa



The stage is almost ready; the finale for power battle in Kathmandu is about to begin. With less than two months left for elections, power players in Kathmandu are all hopping from one party office to the other and from one VIP residence to another in a last minute effort to bridge needy alliances. Unfortunately, what is most lacking among the politicians in Kathmandu is the political will to conduct elections for the convergence of the Constituent Assembly.

Former prime minister and NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba who campaigned wholeheartedly in the Terai braving repeated bomb blasts during his mass rallies commented after his arrival in the capital, "elections are impossible under the present law and order situation." What is clearly evident is that although the SPA keeps reaffirming its confidence in holding timely polls, the parties in reality are well aware of the challenges in conducting credible elections.

Behind the backdrop of the political crisis, there is another crisis that poses a major threat to the stability of the transition phase and the peace process which is economic crisis. There is an urgent need to address the crisis the country is currently facing. Inflation rate is on the rise, fuel shortages have affected not just the industry sector but also the service sector, and worse the government has avoided seeking economic remedies fearing a bad electoral response. The problem has clearly evolved into a national one affecting every person and every household throughout the country. Instances of casual issuances of bonds by the government are an example to illustrate the government is indeed facing gargantuan challenges in the economic realm.

The Russian Financial Crisis and the Brazilian Financial Crisis in the 1990's both demonstrate



The final battle

...Due to lack of government authority at all levels throughout the country, the radical ethnic groups are fast gaining popularity amongst their people.

how governments sold their debt as government bonds to ease the budgetary pressure on the government. However, the policy to sell government debt as bonds is only a short term measure that invites further problems. Both Vladimir Putin and former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique would agree economic problems are structural and that solutions can be found by addressing the problem at the grassroots rather than issuing bonds to clear government debt. However, what is the most worrying aspect of the Nepali economy is that – will the economy be able to hold itself for another two months? How long will the people keep quiet?

Similarly, the ethnic divide has widened

considerably prompting further social conflict in the country. Dharan, an eastern town has witnessed some of the worst ethnic violence in Nepal. Dharan is a town that is strategically located between the eastern hills and the plains in the east. Reports have it that the ethnic divide there is so strong that some of the radical ethnic fronts have erected landmark pillars banning non-hill people from entering the hilly area. The aim of course is to prohibit Madhesis from entering the hill region. But can we Nepali's afford a greater social conflict? The answer of course is, no. But the social challenges are real and escalating. The Maoists have provided a perfect benchmarking model that espoused

sentiments of self determination and violence. The only real solution is devolution and structural adjustments in the social hierarchy of the country. There are no shortcuts. However, with such a weak government in place, the presence of government has been only limited to certain areas of the country. And due to lack of government authority at all levels throughout the country, the radical ethnic groups are fast gaining popularity amongst their people. This is a worrying aspect. The Prime Minister is engaged in talks with the moderate leaders of the Terai, but will these talks lead to fruition? Or will the Maoists exert pressure on the PM again to sabotage the talks?

The total damage done to the infrastructure of the country by the Maoists during their 10 year war crossed 15 billion rupees. The human loss was also equally great. But the continued social divide and the looming economic crisis the country will inevitably face in the next two months in the absence of a consensus developed economic and social public policy will be far more violent and difficult to solve than the Maoists' rigid dogmatic war.

Every one knows elections won't probably happen. The chances are very slim. Despite the fact that elections are difficult to hold and unsafe to campaign for, the politicians are reluctantly optimistic about the possibilities of the polls happening; because, no one at this stage wants to be the bearer of the universal truth. However, what is interesting to observe is the changing dynamics of Nepali politics. The King has broken his silence and this time the condemnation has only come from the side of the Maoists.

The Maoists and all the political actors know the last two months are the most crucial months that will invariably alter the power dynamics of Nepali politics. Given the precarious situation of the country, the communists and the democrats are in their last round of preparation to strike yet another power deal that will shape the future power structure of Nepali politics much before the elections.

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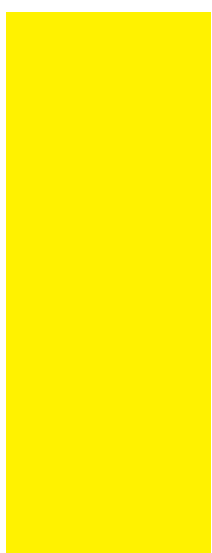
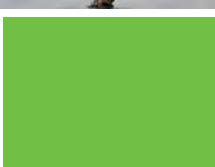
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Spontaneous melody

When I write songs or poems, I transcend this present boundary.

Creating a song would ordinarily mean tapping into one's emotions, expressing it in words that correctly describe the feelings, labouring over arrangement of words, creating a melody to suit the words and then singing it just right to convey the intention behind the words that were created in the first place. But for **ANUPAMA DAHAL**, it was a different story.

Well structured moving poems and highly poignant melodious songs that all have an essence of the Buddha's teachings in it, began emerging from her consciousness about three years ago. She has written down around 270 songs and poems so far. For someone without any singing or literature background, this amazing outpouring of words that touches the core of your heart is a unique phenomenon indeed. Anupama shared her amazing story with **SUSHMA AMATYA** recently:

When did it all start?

I started singing soon after I completed my Samatha practice. When it happened, I shared it with my spiritual guru, Sridhar Rinpoche, who advised me to sing during the pooja on every Dasami and later in the Sangha gathering. Everybody liked it and since then I've been singing for the past three years.

I still recall vividly my first experience that was so touching. I used to practice Tara, my favorite deity a lot then. As I was walking outside, a song called Utha Dakini emerged suddenly in my mind and I was inspired to write it down there and then. I did not realise till I had completed writing the song that tears were streaming down my face. While writing, I surrendered completely to Tara, looking upon her as my mother.

Another song, Madhuram, emerged when I chanced upon a beggar and felt great compassion for him. I fed him and experienced the kind of happiness that was unique when I saw the feeling of happiness on his face after he had assuaged his hunger. Right there and then, I experienced a fleeting sense of what Buddha meant when he said you get true happiness when you practice compassion.

You write in languages that you actually do not know. How do you explain that?

When I write songs or poems, I transcend this present boundary. The normal rules of this world do not

apply to me then. I write also in Sanskrit, Rajasthani and Punjabi – languages I do not know. I also write in English and use words that I am not even familiar with, such as ecstasy. In Nepali, I write in folk/Jyaure style. What emerges is perfect. I do not have to arrange or edit the words at all.

It is said spiritual mind has no boundary and that could be the only explanation. Songs emerge with melody and the stream continues till a whole song is completed. This is a unique phenomenon where there is a spontaneous flow of words complete with melody.

Is there any specific time that this happens to you?

This state of mind where songs begin to flow from within me can happen anywhere at any time. When I'm practicing kindness, songs of kindness emerge and when practicing compassion, compassionate songs emerge. When I go into that state, I am not aware of the circumstances or the people around me. Even if I am out on the street, walking, I just sit and write down the song. Sometimes, I cry as I write. Only after I complete the song, do I become conscious of my surrounding and I quickly hail a taxi and run away from the place (laughing).

Sometimes, songs appear to me in my dreams and I immediately start writing it down after waking up. I can remember each and every word that appeared in the dream. I then share

the song with my guru. I realised soon that if I share the song with others before I have shared with him, the song disappears. My mind goes completely blank. It happened so clearly that now I make sure I sing for my guru first of all.

How many songs emerge every month?

Every month, four to five songs emerge. All are not songs; some are poems, Anustup Laya / Stuti. I have never studied literature. I trained as a classical dancer and taught dancing for around nine years in different schools. I used to be a bathroom singer and never imagined that I'd be singing like this one day. Another new thing is that now different categories of songs are beginning to emerge. For example, around seven or eight songs fall into folk song category, and a number of others could be said to belong to another category.

To what would you attribute this unique phenomenon?

I feel that it is a form of blessing from my gurus, a series of message perhaps for others' benefit and perhaps a skillful means. I entered Dharma at a young age of 14 and started practicing seriously seven years after that. Whatever the gurus taught me about Maha karuna, Mahasukha – now 20 years later, I feel a few drops of it on me and I understand what they meant. I feel a tremendous sense of gratitude towards my gurus. The fleeting sorrows of life do not touch me now. I feel stronger now. With Dharma practice, I've been able to let go and the more I let go, the less the suffering of the world touches me. I feel I have reached the right place with right guidance. This

makes me very happy. I always pray that in future lives, I am never far away from my gurus.

How did your family react to this?

My husband, son and the rest of my family love my songs and appreciate the messages they convey. Most of those who listen to my songs get so touched that tears well up in their eyes. Although born into a Hindu family, my parents being very broadminded, they had no objections to me practicing Buddhism. My husband, a doctor, also a practicing Buddhist was so happy when I told him one day that life has suffering.

You released a CD recently. What plans do you have for the future?

It is my 1st CD called Pagala Badal with eight songs of mixed category. Each and every song carries some teaching of the Buddha, only in different forms. The music arrangement is done by Pema dai, a Tibetan musician. I had no knowledge of music but since the past two years, I've been learning harmonium, Tanpura and practice vocals

Excerpts from Anupama's English poems

1. Ecstasy:

.....I now can sing song of joy and sorrow
I myself am Nairatma, I myself, yogini....
.....What a beautiful picture of nothingness!
What a lovely song of no voice!
How rich I am today with these hands full of emptiness...

2. Test of voidness:

.....This is the song of evening time
the test of voidness is like drinking a glass of wine...

3. I caught:

....This is what I have caught
it is always beyond the thought
The voice of singing birds
The joy of twisting herb
Yes! I caught it....

everyday.

Not being a professional, I have many weak areas in this field that was unknown to me earlier. So, for all the mistakes I commit, I wish to ask forgiveness from the experts in this field. My only intention is that my songs benefit everybody. That is my sincere feeling I wish to share with my listeners. I will improve my vocals and continue with these songs as long as they continue to emerge. At the same time, I will continue to teach classical dance. ■





VANISHING vultures

Intentional as well as unintentional poisoning of vultures in parts of Nepal has also been documented.



■ Bijan Gurung

Avifauna is an integral part of ecosystem and also indicates status of the ecosystem. Ecosystem is dynamic, but at times, some of its changes go unnoticed until any scientific testimonials alert us with hard evidences. Vulture is a common bird; we have seen them in our locale scavenging carcass of dead animals or hovering in sky as a harbinger of the dead. Many of us even run away from such unwholesome sighting of vultures snatching pieces of dead animal's interior, but we fail to reckon the ecological significance of such event, where vultures help to maintain the ecological chain and sanitation in the area.

In the last decade, Indian sub-continent witnessed sharp decline in White-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) and Slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*). Their number even went down to zero in

some areas, whilst other parts struggled hard to maintain their scant populace. Both the species were then categorised as 'Critically Endangered'. The species were common in lowland of Nepal, but recent trend shows their fleeting population even in their stronghold areas.

The scientific community started to keep track of these vulture species in pocket areas in Nepal and the campaigning at community level for the conservation of the species. Hardly any data were available prior to 2000 AD, when there was less concern towards these species. It all then started with the rigorous documentation by the researchers from Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), Institute of Forestry (IOF) and others with financial support provided by int'l organisations deeply involved in bird conservation and sundry issues throughout the world.

Researchers have revealed that

the vultures could be seen in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR), Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (SWR), in and around Bardia National Park (BNP), Rampur Valley and Kapilvastu area. White-rumped vulture started to decline at an alarming rate since 1997 in Nepal, whilst Slender-billed vulture, once common in India and Nepal till late, started to decline sharply in the last few years.

Faster rate of decline was observed in eastern than in western part of Nepal. India and Nepal have lost almost 95% of their population. They were almost wiped out from Chitwan as a breeding bird, and merely a few sightings have been reported in some sites of Chitwan. Such sharp decline has been attributed to loss of habitat, food scarcity, detrimental effect of pesticides and poison, and parasitic infection. The species carry out their nesting and roosting in Sal, Sissoo, Saj, Simal and Botdhyero trees.

An investigation suggested that the monsoon floods in KTWR often uproot old trees, which are best suited for the vultures' habitat. But there were cases, when the birds were not seen in areas that retained sufficient number of nesting trees. So, the decline in their number cannot be solely attributed to the habitat loss. As regards food availability, the two species have been recorded short even if there was ample food supply of dead animals in KTWR.

Meanwhile, studies carried out in India have shown the toxicity of pesticides in vultures. The Terai districts of Nepal have been witnessing an increasing usage of pesticides with improper handling and disposal. The persistent compounds undergo bioaccumulation and biomagnifications in food chain. However, the correlation in between the pesticide usage and their population decline in Nepal has not yet been strongly established. There are some underlying contentions within the presumption.

In India, researchers have found the cases of poisoning of the vultures from livestock carcass containing residues of Diclofenac, a veterinary drug. Such intentional as well as unintentional poisoning of vultures in parts of Nepal have also been documented. Poisoning could wipe out substantial number of the species at one go. Similarly, a research study carried out on parasitic infection and diseases in vulture has suggested helminth parasites as one of the possible causes for their decline.

Numerous evidences have already established link in between their decline and the factors. Vultures have been affected by one or the other aforementioned causes. Habitat loss could be a reason for such sharp decline in an area, whereas it could be poisoning in another case. The long-term impact of pesticides on birds inter alia vulture cannot be kept at bay and therefore, more research is needed in order to find the nexus along the chain. Meanwhile, society has to be made aware of such 'critically endangered species', which are on the brink of extinction.

There are places in South Asia, where vultures are revered as a symbol or part of their culture. Such practices could be strengthened, which in turn, would help to maintain the viability of the two species. Amidst the growing bleak scenario in Nepal, lately almost three dozens of vulture and their habitat were sighted in a jungle in Dhangadhi. According to BCN, the flock comprised of White-rumped vulture and Slender-billed vulture. BCN has also been carrying out vulture-breeding in Kawasoti and Barda Ghat areas.

The breeding center at Chitwan has also been initiated lately. The dismal picture of the population could be enhanced by raising awareness, campaigning, research studies, and conservation efforts from each tier of society. We can still recover the dying population of the two vultures through our tireless endeavors to conserve nature's precious gifts.

(Bijan works in WWF Nepal.)

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Playing with fire in Pakistan

BY ERIC MARGOLIS

PAKISTAN'S national elections on Monday are critically important for this strife-torn country's future. They are just as important for its Western backers. Unless honestly conducted — and this seems highly unlikely — the vote will ignite further violence, plunging the highly strategic nation of 163 million into new dangers.

Only one thing is certain about Monday's vote. If President Pervez Musharraf and his PML-Q party do well enough to retain power or lead a coalition, almost everyone will charge the election was rigged.

Musharraf has manipulated every vote since seizing power in a 1999 military coup. Polls show only 15-20 per cent of Pakistanis support him. A recent World Public Opinion voter survey found 63 per cent believed conditions in Pakistan would improve if Musharraf resigned.

The majority of Pakistanis backs the late Benazir Bhutto's People's Party, and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League (PML-N).

But Musharraf's powerful friends are determined to keep him in office. In spite of Musharraf's having muzzled the media, jailed thousands

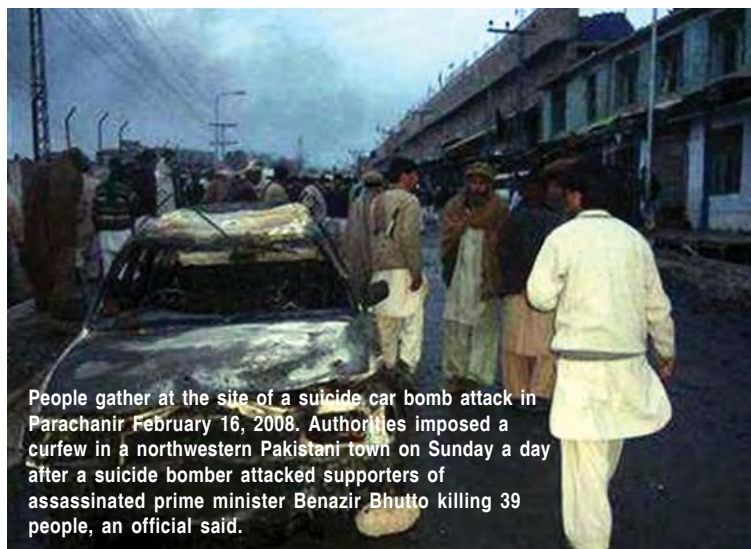
of opponents, purged the judiciary, and stuffed the electoral commission with henchmen, Washington and London still support his dictatorship and continue to hail him as a 'democrat.'

Adding to the hypocrisy, while claiming to be waging war in Afghanistan to bring it democracy, the Western powers have been encouraging dictatorship in Pakistan.

The reason is clear: Musharraf has rented out much of his army and intelligence service to battle Taleban in Afghanistan, and tribal militants at home. The fee: up to \$1 billion monthly in secret and overt US payments. Without the steady inflow of cash from Washington, Musharraf would not last very long.

Musharraf and his US and British patrons are hoping the opposition will split the vote and leave the former general as last man standing. The opposition, by contrast, is talking about ending the war against Taleban and reasserting Pakistan's traditional interests in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

The powerful military still supports Musharraf, though for how long depends on the level of post-election violence. Gen Ashfaq Kiyani, the new armed forces chief, was selected by Musharraf and Washington as a loyal



People gather at the site of a suicide car bomb attack in Parachinar February 16, 2008. Authorities imposed a curfew in a northwestern Pakistani town on Sunday a day after a suicide bomber attacked supporters of assassinated prime minister Benazir Bhutto killing 39 people, an official said.

anti-extremist who would follow America's lead. But this capable general remains an enigma. Indian intelligence sources say the US decided in early 2007 to ease the floundering Musharraf from power and make Gen Kiyani Pakistan's new strongman.

If Pakistan is rent by widespread protests and violence over brazen electoral fraud, or suffers political deadlock, the military may overthrow the widely unpopular Musharraf and seize power. Gen Kiyani is said to be reluctant to see the military re-engage in politics, but there could be

no alternative.

The best outcome would be for the military to remove Musharraf and impose temporary martial law until the independent judiciary can be restored, the electoral commission made fair, media ungagged, and political repression ended. Then genuine elections could be held and Pakistan returned to parliamentary government. But once soldiers taste power, they are often reluctant to give it up.

Until Pakistan gets a legitimate government representing its national interests, rather than those of the

Western powers, the country will remain in turmoil.

Pakistan is facing spreading civil war, and possible secession by two of its four provinces, Balochistan and Northwest Frontier. The Pashtun tribal uprising ignited by the US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan is now spreading into Pakistan, risking a full-scale uprising by that nation's 25 million Pashtuns. Any of these earthquakes could provoke an invasion by India, met by a nuclear riposte from Pakistan.

The war in Afghanistan and heavy-handed efforts by the US to bend Pakistan's military regime to its will ignited much of the current turmoil. A majority of Pakistanis don't want their soldiers to be Western mercenaries, or their leaders Western yes-men. They support Taleban and the struggle for Kashmir. But the US is so consumed by its war of revenge against Taleban it cannot see any of this.

Pakistan is one of the Muslim World's most important nations and its sole nuclear power. By treating Pakistan like a banana republic, arm-twisting Islamabad into battling its own people, and ignoring the wishes of Pakistan's people, the US and Britain are playing with fire.

(Khaleej Times)

Burmese rebel leader shot dead



The secretary general of Burma's largest rebel group, the Karen National Union, has been killed.

Pado Mahn Shar, who was in his sixties, was shot at his home in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, his family said. He was targeted by two men in a pick-up truck, while sitting on the veranda of his home. He died instantly.

The KNU and its military wing, the Karen National Liberation Army, have spent nearly 60 years fighting the Burmese government. They want to establish an autonomous Karen state in the east of Burma, and to protect the Karen people from what they say are abuses by the government.

Despite their fighting spirit, the Karen rebels have suffered a number of recent setbacks, including political splits and defections to the government. Militarily, they have been driven further and further back towards the Thai border. However, Pado Mahn Shar told the BBC last

year: "Whatever happens, we cannot surrender. "If the government won't offer us a proper peace settlement, we have to carry on fighting."

The BBC's Kate McGeown, who met Pado Mahn Shar on the Thai-Burmese border, says his death will be a serious blow to the Karen rebels. As it is, they face a huge challenge against the Burmese army, which is vastly superior both in terms of numbers and equipment. Analysts said it was not clear who was behind the shooting.

It might be the result of rivalry within the Karen rebel movement, Burmese expert Aung Naing Oo told the AFP news agency. Thai police said the gunmen approached Pado Mahn Shar and addressed him in the Karen language before opening fire. But what the KNU really feared, Aung Naing Oo said, was that the Burmese government might have ordered it. "Everybody is terrified that there could be a hit list from the Burmese military circulating around Thailand of people to be killed," he said.

Pado Mahn Shar had himself predicted an increase in bloodshed, telling Reuters this week that violence might rise ahead of a constitutional referendum in Burma in May.

(BBC)

Philippines

MILF denies role in bid on Arroyo

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has said it is offended by Armed Forces chief General Hermogenes Esperon's assertion that it was behind a plot to assassinate President Gloria Arroyo. The MILF stated that it had never entertained the thought of assassinating Arroyo.

"This is an insidious lie and a preposterous claim by one no less than the highest military officer of the country against a partner in the peace process," said Mohammad Ameen, chairperson of the MILF Secretariat.

Ameen criticised Esperon "for making sweeping and irresponsible statement against the MILF, in direct and utter disregard of the primacy of the peace process and the ceasefire in Mindanao".

"This should not be left unanswered even in the form of a formal protest," Ameen said.

Esperon said on Friday the intelligence arm of the police and the military had uncovered a supposed assassination plot against Arroyo.

The plot had reportedly been accidentally discovered by a security guard in an establishment in Metro Manila. Reports on the purported attempt on the life of the President had forced Presidential Security Group commander Brig Gen Romeo Prestosa to call off Arroyo's scheduled trip to the highland resort of Baguio City yesterday to attend the Philippine Military Academy's alumni homecoming.

MILF committee on information



Filipino Catholic priests raise their clenched fist during a prayer rally at the De Lasalle school in suburban Manila, Philippines on Sunday Feb. 17, 2008.

and peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal, branded Esperon's statement as a "virtual invitation for war".

Iqbal, in an interview with Manila-based DXML, said charging a partner in the peace process with planning bombing and assassination "is a very serious pronouncement that violates the very spirit of the peace process". Iqbal denied the existence of an MILF breakaway group.

"The MILF Central Committee is in control and every man and woman in the organisation is toeing the line the moment a decision is made," he stressed.

Iqbal called on his counterpart in the government Peace Panel, Sec Rodolfo Garcia, to have a serious

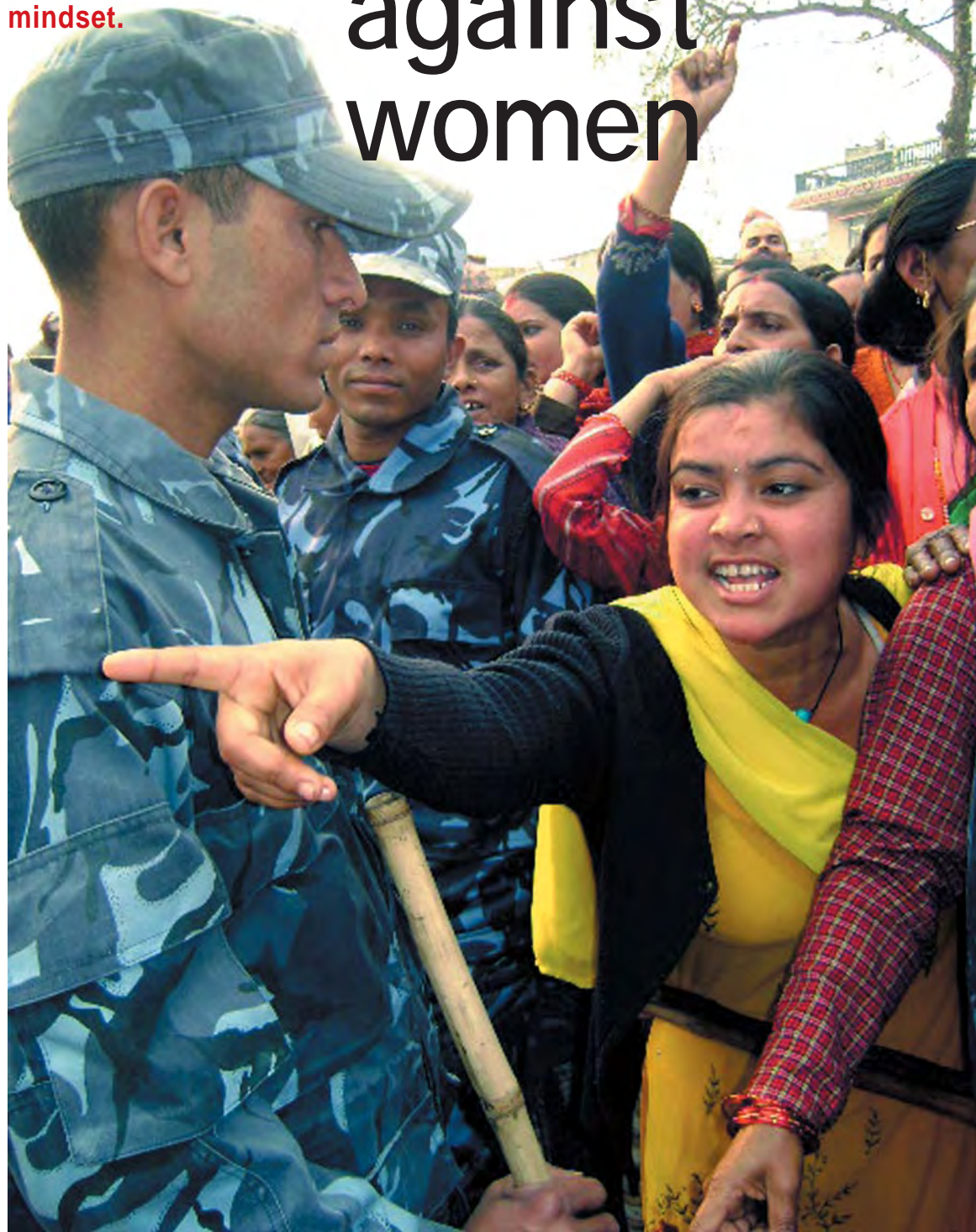
look into allegations against the MILF. Prior to Esperon's statements, Prestosa also revealed that the plot against Arroyo also involved the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Prestosa said right after Arroyo had announced an intensified drive against the NPA less than a month ago, the communist insurgent group had already drawn up a response to the government offensive.

The response, according to Prestosa, would be in the form of bomb attacks in various parts of the country. The reports over the alleged plot to kill Arroyo came amid renewed allegations of corruption in Manila. ■

Fight for rights of women, beginning at home and by changing age old outdated mindset.

Stop violence against women



Violence against women is a serious problem in our society. Due to dominant patriarchal systems, structures, social norms and values, women are not getting enough women friendly space to raise their voices for justice. Most often violence against women happens within private spheres, inside homes, bedrooms, work places, cabins of restaurants and so on.

There is violence in public space as well and women find it difficult to resist these forms of dominations. One can easily blame women for their ignorance, illiteracy, cowardice and so on but the structural factors leading to create such situations are so vicious and systematic in nature that women are rendered helpless. The culture of violence is sustained within the vicious frameworks of patriarchy in our society.

Violence against women indicates different kinds of physical as well as psychological abuse that women suffer primarily because of gender discrimination prevalent in Nepali society. According to Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, "The term violence against women means any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."



■ Sabita Gyawali

The numbers of cases of violence against women are increasing day by day. Poverty, gender discrimination, illiteracy, lack of knowledge and systems of patriarchy are known to be the major factors responsible for violence against women. Many cases of violence are not reported out of fear of the society and doubts regarding the affectivity of the existing laws.

There are women who are tortured because they belong to lower castes; and there are thousands of dowry cases where women are burnt alive or beaten severely. Likewise, there are cases of migrant women suffering due to lack of proper policies and support systems.

There are only few cases that come into public notice. Unfortunately, there are thousands of such cases festering within families that are not recorded and the women remain as silent sufferers. There are cases of such violence even within educated and rich families. In our society where rules, regulations and social customs are made differently for males and females, there exists severe gender inequality which is one of the prime

reasons for violence against women.

In Nepal women have less control over their own marriage, age of marriage, marriage partners and sexual and reproductive life after marriage. Men impose unconditional power over women's body and sexual relations; making women more prone to violence.

Different researches and reports show that forced sexual initiation through child marriage, domestic violence, marital rape, rape, and trafficking and conflict increases women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS too. In Nepal, the culture and religion dominate women so much so that they do not seem to have power over their own bodies! These are bitter realities of our society where women are forced into a culture of silence.

These issues need to be addressed urgently at all levels of our society through education and awareness at the grassroots levels and ensuring each and every girl child completes her education. Strict laws need to be implemented that act as effective barriers against early marriage, forced marriage, trafficking, sex trade and other forms of exploitation of women. Women's rights need to be focused on by all sections of society, beginning at homes by changing age old outdated mindset. And women need to empower themselves and speak out and fight for justice when their rights are violated, no matter where or by whom. ■

Diaspora

Nepali women and domestic violence



Dr. Bidya Ranjeet

Neha Gill

student population. Nepalese Association of Houston, which organises annual picnic, fundraisers for various humanitarian efforts has no programs to address the issue of domestic violence or women's issue.

■ Bhumika Ghimire in USA

In the United States, according to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, on an average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner. Asian Task Force against domestic violence reported that 44% of South Asians (Indians, Nepalis, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans) surveyed said that they know a woman victim of domestic abuse. 5% of respondents said that a woman should tell no one that she is being abused.

Dr. Bidya Ranjeet, President of Nepali Women's Global Network and a professor at University of Connecticut said that a significant number of Nepali women are victims of domestic violence in the US. Although data on actual number of victims is hard to get because of lack of reporting and also because compared to other immigrant groups, Nepalis are a small community so usually they are categorised under "South Asian." Bidya said that in the past few years has met and tried to help a couple of Nepali women victimised by their husbands and in-laws.

Dr. Ranjeet noted that because of cultural barriers and religious norms, Nepali women find it difficult to seek help in case of domestic violence. They try their best to reconcile and look at outside intervention only as a last resort. When asked about whether violence is more prevalent among specific groups, she said that it is tough to lay blame on one group as in her experience she has found it to be more across the board.

Sakhi for South Asian Women, anti domestic violence organisation which works primarily with South Asian women in the New York Area, in 2005 reported that two Nepali women requested assistance and in 2006 the number rose to seven. New York has a large Nepali community, it is estimated that even in a small neighborhood of Ridgewood there are about 100-200 Nepalis.

Houston also has fairly sizeable Nepali community, with large

Meghna Goswami, Client Services Coordinator with Daya, an NGO in Houston, Texas, which also works with victims of domestic violence, said that their organisation is having a tough time reaching out to local Nepali community. They have determined that domestic violence is there but so far their office has had no Nepali client.

Across the US there are numerous organisations and support groups to help victims of domestic violence. They offer services like transitional housing, help with immigration law, counseling, child care and job training. Immigrant women usually avoid asking them for help out of fear of deportation, losing children and other legal consequences.

Ms. Goswami said that the US law protects victims of domestic violence and they cannot be deported just for reporting violence and also police officers who respond to call for help may never ask for your immigration status, so women need not fear reporting.

Neha Gill, Supervising Legal Advocate with Apna Ghar in Chicago also echoed Meghna Goswami's sentiments that they too are having trouble reaching out to the local Nepali community. They have a volunteer who speaks Nepali and in past year have helped four women from the community who were victims of domestic violence.

The Nepali women who sought Apna Ghar's help had at least a high school diploma; some had bachelor's degree. But they had very little work experience and were first generation immigrants with dependent visas.

There are more than 30 Nepali organisations across the US, from student groups to cultural associations, but domestic violence and women's issues have received very little attention. Nepali Women's Global Network and Nepali women's association in Washington DC are so far the only organisations championing for women's issues, even though none of them have programs to target domestic violence. ■

MARSHLAND FLOWERS

Today almost all Hindu meditation methods link themselves with the Patanjala Sutra.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

This kind of insight gained by remembering one's own past lives or the past lives of others is a prominent feature of Buddhist literature. It is illustrated in the Jatakas and the life stories of Buddhist Arhats, Mahasiddhas and lineage masters. Memory of past life can also be achieved by other techniques, one of which is past life regression through hypnosis and the other is a technique called Jati smarana gyana. This is the technique of tracing events backwards.

One tries to trace back the events of the day then slowly extend it to



two, three hundred days, one year, ten years, 20 years and back to birth and onwards to next life. This method can be used without attaining Samadhis. Certain individuals, generally children remember their past lives, but generally such remembrances are feeble and sometimes not fully accurate and also they tend to fade away.

Dr. Ian Stevenson (MD), the Head of the Department of Parapsychology of Virginia University has four huge volumes of records of such children from all over the world – from Alaska, Lebanon, Turkey to India, Sri Lanka etc. And as I said before these are well researched, scientifically shifted materials that cannot be denied easily as the research method applied by Dr. Ian

With this knowledge one can realise... the operation of the law of karma..

Practical benefits

Stevenson (MD) is impeccable.

The Purvanivasanusmriti gained by meditation has practical benefits in many ways. With this knowledge one can realise the truth of rebirth, the operation of the law of karma, the history of the macro cycles and micro cycles of evolution and involution of world systems. It is of the greatest help for cultivating Maitri (loving kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (empathy) and Upekchhya (equanimity).

These are called the Chatur Brahma Viharas and are a very important meditational group within Buddhism – especially in Mahayana/ Bodhisatwayana. This group of meditation has been copied wholesale in the Patanjala Sutra. According to the famous scholar Dr. S. N. Gupta the Patanjala Sutra is nothing but a rehashing of the

Buddhist Astangika Marga. Today almost all Hindu meditation methods link themselves with the Patanjala Sutra.

Purvanivasanusmriti also helps a lot in gaining insight into phenomenal existence (Dharma) which is the main objective of Vipassyana because someone that can see all these can clearly see the changes of time, he can see nations arising and ceasing, civilisations arising and ceasing, world systems (Lokadhatus) and bigger world cycles (Trisaahasra mahasaahasra lokadhatus) arising and ceasing; just as a Vedanaanusmriti vipassyin can see his micro level Vedana arising and ceasing. And indeed that is what Vipassyana is all about.

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

विश्व अनि हामी ...
नौला, रोचक, शानवर्द्धक र
फरक प्रसंगहरू बिल्कुलै नौलो अनि रोचक प्रस्तुत

सूचना र मनोरञ्जनका लागि

फरक विश्व

... मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा

हरेक मंगलवार राति १०:३० बजे
दुधवार विहान ८:३० बजे
बिहीवार बिउँसो २:३० बजे
र शनिवार साँझ ६:३० बजे

STV
सगरमाथा
समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव

देशको तात्कालीन कार्यदिशाका
बारेमा तपाईं के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?

शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण
कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे
... मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा

अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?

STV
सगरमाथा
समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव

