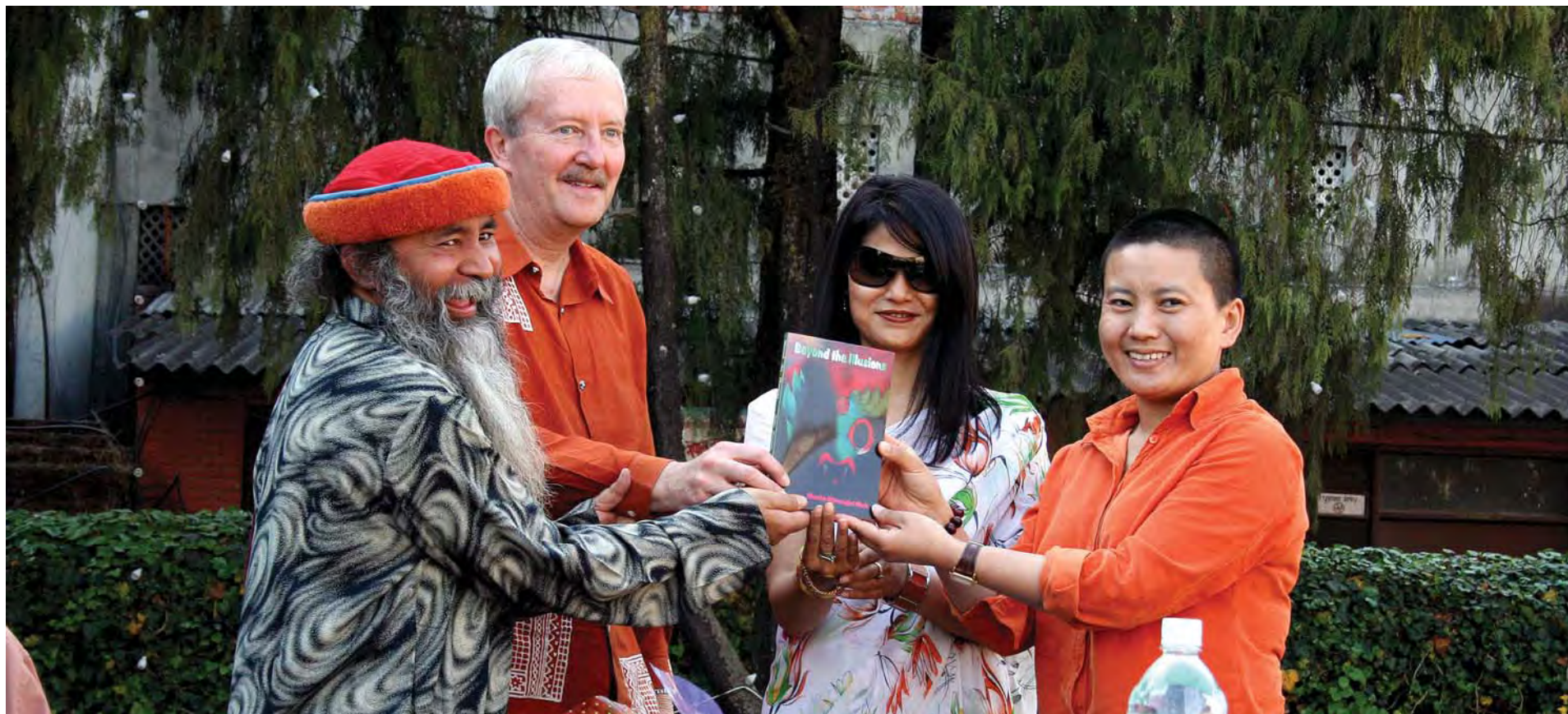


Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Sheeba Shivangi Shah's novel, *Beyond the illusions*, was launched in the capital on March 15. Novelist Shah, Ani Choying Dolma, Australian Ambassador Graeme Lade, and publisher Ramanand Tiwari, jointly released the book.

Giant protests

China unhappy with protests

■ nf correspondent

China has asked the government of Nepal to ensure that 'Free Tibet' or anti-China groups do not find their base in Nepal. The protest with a clear warning that such activities will go against the 'traditional and friendly ties' since ages between the two countries, was lodged by the Chinese embassy with the Foreign Ministry. Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan has assured the Chinese ambassador that Nepal fully recognised and appreciated China's security concern and that 'no anti-China activities will be allowed from

Nepali territory.'

But with elections nearing and Nepal under watch of international human rights observers, the government has found it difficult to suppress the protest demonstrations that have taken place in front of the Chinese embassy and the country office of the United Nations many times during the past week. "Nevertheless, we have provided additional security in front of the Chinese embassy and any demonstration there will be strictly foiled," a senior Home Ministry official said, adding, "more than 200 demonstrators have been held and released so far."

The demonstrators who

submitted a six-point memorandum to the UN office on March 15 not only condemned the Chinese authorities for the killing of protestors in Lhasa, but also demanded that China be stopped from hosting the Olympic 2008 event for its human rights record. A senior official of the foreign ministry said on condition of anonymity that China has also protested against the use of monasteries in Nepal for anti-China activities.

Chinese embassy refused to make any comment on the events of protests. "You ask your Foreign Ministry and the Home Ministry about it. We do not have

anything to say at this moment," the embassy information officer told newsfront on the phone.

Officials say that a Chinese Assistant Minister who recently visited here had also raised the issue of 'growing activities of anti-China force' from Nepali territory and had secured Prime Minister GP Koirala's assurance that 'no such activities will be allowed'. China had also asked Nepal to take into account China's interest while allowing any Tibetan refugee to go for a third country settlement. "There are about two to three hundred such refugees, but Nepal government does not want to displease the Chinese", official said.

"But the latest round of protests in Nepal just across Tibet on a scale never before will be of concern for China, and Nepal government has to take their sensitivity into account," the official said. ■

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Changed tone

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala's latest public utterances seem to confirm that things are not going too well for the Congress, and that his 'absolute rule' is going to be over once the elections take place.

His preference to coalition arrangement even after the elections and his preparing to opt out of politics are being taken as messages of conceding that his days in power are numbered.

Koirala's announcement of his preparing to opt out of politics came long after he included his name at the top of the list of candidates that the Congress party submitted to the Election Commission under the proportional representation system.

Reports coming from the Madhesh region including his home areas, Morang and Sunsari, also indicate



that the position of Congress is getting shakier by day. At least in 75 places the three constituents of the United Madhesh Democratic Front (UMDF) have come to an understanding; posing direct challenge to the Congress and the UML, since the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) does not seem to have any substantial presence in the area.

In Morang (one), Prime Minister's

daughter Sujata Koirala is facing an uphill battle as UMDF leader Upendra Yadav is pitted against her. "In the whole of Morang and Sunsari, Sujata is perhaps in a relatively comfortable position, but the party cannot be certain about her victory at this point," one of her aides told newsfront, adding, "Prime Minister's concern is understandable."

The UMDF seems to be stridently moving with two clear objectives – that of its own victory wherever possible, but working for defeat of Congress seems to be far more important to them.

Political observers also claim that Koirala's recent speech that said that 'everyone wins and nobody loses in democracy' at the time of releasing the Congress manifesto was aimed at securing support as a compromise candidate, should the poll throw a hung constituent assembly.

Nation first

“Nepal army is in favour of democratic system...”

For Nepal army, the country's political and territorial integrity which are at the crux of nation's sovereignty are issues which are non-negotiable. According to Chief of Army staff, Rukmangad Katawal, Nepal army is in favour of democratic system that is acceptable to the Nepalis as well as the world community.

Delivering his speech during the 14th convocation ceremony at the Staff College, Gen Katawal said Nepal army is never going to compromise on core issues of nationalism like sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. "Democracy comes after that," he said, adding, "for that a legitimate government's supremacy also needs to be established."

The speech that was made in the closed room also indirectly touched upon the demands,



mainly from the political quarters, that Nepal army must be democratised.

"For us democratisation means adhering to discipline, maintaining distance from politics, and accepting the chain of command... We are the institution which has followed the practice of inclusiveness throughout as there is no discrimination made on the basis of caste, creed, religion and birth. There are certain eligibility prescribed for getting into the army and they relate with physical fitness,

knowledge, ability and competence. Of course you need loyalty or commitment to the sovereignty and the selection is made on the basis of competition," Gen Katawal added.

He said Nepal army definitely understands the need to be more accommodative, but it also understands that 'there is a conspiracy to wreck its national character by raising issue of caste and communalism.' "Every sovereign country has a national government, a democratically elected government and it has a national army. In Nepal's context, we are the national army," he asserted.

This was Gen Katawal's first speech in the institution after Prime Minister GP Koirala announced that mass recruitment of different ethnic groups in the army will take place to make it more inclusive.

Young Global Leader

■ nf correspondent

The World Economic Forum has announced Aashmi Rana from Nepal as a Young Global Leader for 2008. This honour is bestowed each year by the forum to recognise and acknowledge the top 200-300 young leaders from around the world for their professional accomplishments, commitment to society and potential to contribute to shaping the future of the world. The announcement was made at Davos in Switzerland on March 16.

The Young Global Leaders for 2008 include 121 business leaders, as well as leaders from government, academia, the media and society at large from 65 countries. "The World Economic Forum is a true multi-stakeholder community of global decision-makers. We need the young

leaders to be a voice for the future in the global thought process and as a catalyst for initiatives in the global public interest," said Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum.

Drawn from a pool of almost 5,000 candidates, the YGL 2008 were chosen by a selection committee of 31 eminent international media leaders, including Thomas H. Glocer, Chief Executive Officer, Reuters, United Kingdom; Arthur Sulzberger, Chairman and Publisher, The New York Times, USA; Robert Thomson, Publisher, Dow Jones & Company and The Wall Street Journal, USA; and Hisashi Hieda, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Fuji Television Network, Japan. The selection committee is chaired by H.M. Queen Rania Al Abdullah of the Hashemite

Kingdom of Jordan.

"This honour is one of my most prestigious achievements that will encourage me to keep on going forward with my vision and beliefs. I wish to network with all my fellow YGL League to shape a much larger synergy that can cast wider influence for the betterment of the fellow beings beyond each of our nations' borders. I feel that I am armed with strength that can tackle the weaknesses of human beings, especially women of the third world, and produce results that will shape a stable, prosperous and peaceful world," said Aashmi Rana, the Managing Director, Himali Pashmina Udyog, Nepal. "I wish to pay tribute to my country's women from whom I have silently absorbed the strength to achieve my goals," she added.

Newsbrief

Mass promotions

Nepal government seems to have an ability to create history without parallel. It earned that feat once again. In the midst of election process and long after the code of conduct for the government came into effect, the Ministry of General Administration has decided to go for mass promotion of nearly 10,000 officials. The promotion has come into immediate effect.

The mass promotion follows government's decision that government employees up to a certain level would be entitled for automatic time-bound promotion. A section of the bureaucracy which got promotion on 'merit' however now feels insecure, with those given time bound automatic promotions joining their ranks. "There will be more chaos and less work now," a Joint Secretary told newsfront.

Most of those promoted, however, continue to occupy the same chairs and same rooms and perform the same job as the government never defined their roles and responsibilities once they occupy the higher posts.

The government realised the new situation only after the Civil Service Employees Union lodged a protest with the Chief Secretary Bhojraj Ghimire, threatening to go on general strike, if they are not accommodated in their new posts immediately. The Chief Secretary tried to borrow time till the elections, but the employees have been insisting that their grievances must be addressed within a week.

Mountaineering suspended

It will be a hard time for Nepalis engaged in the mountaineering business since all the expeditions to the Mt. Everest will remain suspended for nearly two months now. The expedition suspended till May 10 on China's request will create hardships to nearly a million people engaged in the trade besides the loss of revenue that the country will suffer.

"But we understand the sensitivity behind this genuine request from China and we are going to suspend it," a senior official of the Ministry of Tourism told newsfront. China will be taking the Olympic torch from Mt Everest on May 10 as it prepares to host the event for 2008.

The request to the government of Nepal to suspend any expedition to that area follows fears that anti-China groups might use it to disrupt the Olympic event. Last year, four Americans and a Tibetan had planted banners demanding free Tibet at the site.

De-hydrating children and the patients

The Kathmandu Valley drinking water limited, known as 'Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited' has taken a drastic action of limiting or curtailing the number of water supply hours. KUKL, effectively under direct control of Hishila Yami, the Minister for Physical Planning and Construction, has made no exception to the residential schools and hospitals in its latest decision.

A general letter issued by KUKL to some residential schools and hospitals said drinking water supply hours will now be limited to four hours, two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. Hospitals and schools have not been able to make alternative arrangements as the decision comes into effect immediately.

The KUKL top brass has now been filled with Yami's relatives, and most decision are taken by the ministers in consultation with her relatives.

'Robbers' arrested

The police have arrested five people allegedly involved in the armed robbery that took place at the residence of Norwegian ambassador, Tore Toren's residence on March 3. According to the police, they are still on the lookout of three more people as the gang consisted of eight.

Nothing that was taken away from ambassador's Bhainsepati residence has been recovered yet from the arrested five, police said. One laptop, about Rs 40,000 and 90 Euro in cash had been looted in the incident in which at least one of the security guards deployed at the ambassador's residence had sustained injury. Police said although the ambassador was not harmed, the robbers were wielding Khukuri at him to ensure that he coughed up every thing he had.

The police however appear to be underplaying the whole episode by giving an impression that the robbers were actually looking for a large cache of gold and jewellery

since the house belonged to a jeweller and that the criminals had no knowledge that the Norwegian ambassador was living there.

Stealing electricity

A multi-national company dealing with herbs has been caught stealing electricity from a government school. The company has apologised for the theft which the school authorities detected. According to available information, the company has promised to compensate for the loss accrued to the school as a result of this theft.

The company has taken a vast stretch of land in the outskirts of the capital to grow herbs. It was found using a pump-set and drilling machine using the electricity connection of the school. According to the school authorities, the company has given in writing to the school that it will compensate for the loss.

CA Election Countdown

Non-negotiable

Power at any cost

No matter what the outcome of the April 10 elections to the constituent assembly will be, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) will not be accepting results if it means defeat for them. All the top four leaders: Prachanda, Mohan Baidya, Baburam Bhattarai and Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal seem to be one on the issue, although they have responded to the possibility of defeat in their own ways.

Prachanda who is contesting from Kathmandu and Rolpa said, in course of his election meetings and interactions with the media that if Maoists are defeated in the election, the party will try to capture power peacefully. Bhattarai's assertion tallied with that of Prachanda's response on the likely defeat of the Maoists. He said, "Those not satisfied with the poll verdict will raise arms once again."

He also said that the defeat of the Maoists in the election will mean rejection of the people's war and that "will not be acceptable." On many occasions, Bhattarai's statements have however been self-contradictory as he also sometimes talks about the need for



Pix by Bhaswar Ojha

seven party unity to continue even after the polls are over.

The most explicit and clear statement 'what if the party loses' has come from party's most respected ideologue, Mohan Baidya. In Dang, he said that the party will capture power under any circumstances and an electoral defeat will not deter it. What Baidya asserted was that

the party's joining the peace process was more of tactical in nature with the view that it will make capture of power much easier.

Similarly, Badal has been justifying attacks on political rivals, mainly those perceived as pro-royalists, by the Young Communist League cadres on the ground that, "Advocating monarchy will go against the present interim constitution." Party sources quoting Badal say that the first priority of the Maoists will be to win the elections by capturing booths, or by creating an atmosphere where rivals cannot effectively campaign and secure votes. "But in case, the party ends up losing, it should be ready to capture power and that is not possible peacefully," said the source attributing it to Badal.

The Maoist leadership has however, disowned that it has circulated any directives to the YCL to obstruct rival candidates' electioneering. "Those documents which have appeared in a section of the media as our official documents are not actually ours and are aimed at defaming us," a Maoist leader said.

Lage Raho Bhojraj Bhai

It is not known if the members of the election commission found time to watch Sanjay Dutt's highly acclaimed movie, Lage Raho Munna Bhai. But it appears that the commission is trying to replicate some of the scenes or messages of the film in its election mission.



One of the many touching scenes in the film show an agitated resident seeking Munna Bhai's advice on the ways to tackle his neighbour who used to spit Pan juice almost every day on the wall of his house. Munna Bhai's Gandhian advice was simple: wash it smilingly without speaking a word of anger against the neighbour. His followed the advice, and that did wonders, as the erring neighbour not only stopped spitting red but also apologised for his past mistakes.

Too early to say if Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokhrel's advice to the political parties will have the same magic effect. But he has asked the administration to get police help to erase slogans written all over the walls, as some of the parties, mainly the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) refused to follow the CEC's earlier 'order' that they must erase it. In equally Gandhian fashion, he also pleaded with the ministers to kindly follow the code of conduct.

But the CEC has not compromised on money matters. The expense of the 'campaign erase' will be levied from the parties who wrote the slogans.

Diaspora

US based Nepalis' reactions

Nepalis should remain united and not divide the nation based on ethnicity, language, culture or religion.

■ Bhumika Ghimire in USA

After the peace agreement was signed between the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) and the Nepali government, many breathed a sigh of relief hoping for peace and stability in the nation. Many Nepalis and various Nepali organisations based in the US are now reacting to the news of the peace agreement.

ANTA, an umbrella organisation to advocate Terai causes in the US and globally and the Nepalese Americas Council welcomed the accord. A joint statement said "ANTA and NAC warmly welcome the agreement between the United Democratic Madhesi Front and the government of Nepal to end the Madhesi agitation and to secure Madhesi and other disadvantaged groups' legitimate rights and fair share in the state.."

In the past, the ANTA had supported the resignation on Madhesi leader Mr. Mahantha Thakur and other parliamentarians, "as an effort to support the legitimate rights, dignity and respect of Madhesi people, and to restore peace in Terai."

Nepalese Democratic Youth Council in USA also welcomed the agreement. Through a press release its president Pramod Sitaula said, "It is our belief that all parties would honor and implement this agreement and their previous understandings. It is for the people to choose their representatives, their future and betterment of the country as well"

Bishwa Shah, General Secretary of the Youth Council said the Constituent Assembly should take place on time to safeguard the ongoing peace process between the government and the UDMF.

But among the general Nepalis living in the US, there is less enthusiasm. Many still doubt that the election will take place on the scheduled



date and some even question whether the peace agreement between the government and UDMF will hold.

Nagendra Rana of New York said he finds it hard to believe that the election will take place on scheduled time. A long history of incompetent leaders, corruption and selfishness, Rana said, makes him question the intention of political leaders on both sides-government and the UDMF. Girish Pokhrel of Nepalipost.com is more optimistic. He said that the agreement, at least on paper, looks good.

What about the persistent rumors that other ethnic groups in Nepal will try to copy the UDMF and demand autonomy and reservation for themselves? Nagendra Rana said that it is good for the country when its people are conscious of their rights and demand their rightful place, but he insists Nepalis should remain united and not divide the nation based on ethnicity, language, culture or religion.

Girish Pokhrel, on the other hand, expressed concerns over the tendency of the leaders to look outside the country for support whenever there are faced with a major problem. He hopes that the election, if it happens peacefully and on time, will help change this attitude among Nepal's leaders.

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Point to Ponder

People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war or before an election.

- Otto Von Bismarck

Justice at last

The politics of persecution that the present government launched against some of the politicians and bureaucrats is gradually getting exposed. Major credit for this should go to the Supreme Court for having shown some courage to stand up against the executive, that is totalitarian in nature and which has even tried to have the judiciary servile to the executive. The current regime also invented a new way of harassing politicians and bureaucrats at will by setting up inquiry commissions under pliable heads.

Rayamjahi Commission was one such brazen example. The commission was political in composition and conduct, and the job that was clandestinely assigned to it was that its findings should endorse what the government did to certain people, rather than going by the available evidence against them. It acted with unprecedented degree of servitude towards the government, especially the Home Minister, when he rendered the entire investigation process futile, by rewarding one set of bureaucrats and punishing another set, although both were under investigation of the commission for their alleged role in suppressing the people's movement, by use of force or the government fund.

The Home Minister went to the extent of denying post-retirement benefits to Deviram Sharma, Head of the National Intelligence Department (NID), although the commission had simply recommended that the official be 'warned' for unspecified lapses on his part. And a mid-level police officer was denied promotion for two years on the Home Ministry's orders although no such recommendation had been made by the commission. But its Head chose to maintain silence when all these things were being done in the name of the commission's findings.

At long last, the Supreme Court was compelled to state that enough is enough and that the treatment meted out to Sharma was wrong and prejudiced. "Does anyone have to come to the court to ask for post-retirement benefits?" - an angry judge, Anupraj Sharma asked the government counsel. Similarly, another bench disapproved of what the Home Ministry had been doing to the police official. Not too long ago, the government bill that debarred some politicians, who the Rayamajhi Commission had found suppressing people's movement from contesting the election to the constituent assembly, had been quashed by the Supreme Court.

The government assessment, that the Supreme Court judges who were threatened day in and out by the legislators in parliament that those going against the spirit of the people's movement would be impeached and bring the apex court on its bent knees, just did not work. That is a healthy development as democracy cannot survive without a free and effective judiciary. No doubt, in some cases, some of the judges have acted in a shameful manner, but the latest verdicts, like the one cited here, indicate that the Court will not waver much when the executive tries to overstep its limits.



Letters

Double standard

It is amazing that newsfront chose to make a lead story based on what two discredited leaders, CP Mainali and Narayanman Bijukchhe said. Both are allies of the current regime, and enjoying power without accountability. They would deserve enough attention by the media if the two showed their guts to stay out of the alliance on the ground of principles. But by raising their dissatisfaction with the seven party alliance and its leader GP Koirala, they are only trying to bargain for more power.

The two said that the accord between the Madhesh group and the government was prepared in Indian embassy in Kathmandu, and that it was a direct threat to Nepal's sovereignty. But did they not know that it was the 12-point agreement prepared and signed in Delhi that brought Mr. Mainali, Bijukchhe, GP Koirala, Madhav Nepal and all the so called nationalist and democratic forces together with the Maoists? So how is the spirit and intent behind the 12-point agreement different from the one that was allegedly prepared in Lainchour?

■ Somesh Thapa
Kopundole, Lalitpur

Choice is yours!

Mr. Bijukchhe and Mr. Mainali, there is no point in your cribbing. If you are not comfortable with the kind of politics that your alliance partners and leaders are indulging in, you should be guided by your conscience and national interest. It seems you two are just playing to the gallery. There is no middle path if you really think you need to defend



nationalism and independence. It is a litmus test for the two of you.

GP Koirala is at least honest enough to admit that he was involved in the hijacking the Nepal airlines plane after he got green signal from RAW. He also admitted that he was involved in counterfeiting Indian currency. It is time for you both to stay with Koirala as his quiet collaborators or demonstrate through action what you stand for.

■ Naina Basnet
Sanepa, Lalitpur

UNMIN and press freedom

UNMIN chasing away the media was shameful. A UN body whose duty it is to promote press freedom and provide access to the media to the source of event, acting otherwise is unthinkable. A recent example is when the UNMIN

staff prevented the media from getting to the scene of the air crash. What is then the difference between the UNMIN headed by Ian Martin and most government offices in Nepal that have denied access to the media regarding some events on some pretext or the other?

■ Mohan Rana
Dilli Bazar, Kathmandu

Opportunist Bhattarai?

The picture of the Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai accepting Tika from a priest and paying obeisance to the gods at the premises of Gorakhnath temple, I presume, has symbolic significance. It is a matter of shame for the man who, in the past portrayed himself as an atheist

and went to the extent of defiling temples and humiliating priests in different parts of Nepal in a barbaric way. It is the heights of his hypocrisy and double standard. Didn't he always posture himself as a true communist who defied the existence of gods and religion in all forms?

■ D. Sharma
Via email

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

Spiritual Corner

In service of the lepers

Mother Eugenia Elisabetta Ravasio was born in San Gervasio d'Adda (now, a small town in the province of Bergamo), Italy, on 4 September 1907, in a family of peasant background.

She received only an elementary education. After a few years working in a factory, she entered the congregation of Our Lady of the Apostles at the age of 20 years. It was here that her great charismatic personality developed, leading to her election as Mother General of the Congregation at the age of only 25.

Quite apart from her spiritual qualities, her work in the social field alone would suffice to ensure her a place in history. In twelve years of missionary activity she opened over 70 centres - each with infirmary, school and church - in the remotest spots of Africa, Asia and Europe.

It was she who discovered the first medicine for the cure of



leprosy, extracting it from the seed of a tropical plant. This medicine was later studied and developed further at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. She encouraged the apostolate of Raoul Follereau, who, following in her footsteps and building on the foundations laid by her, is regarded as the apostle of the lepers.

During the period 1939-41 she conceived, planned and brought to fruition the project for a 'Lepers' City' at Azopte (Ivory Coast). This was a vast centre, covering an area of 200,000 sq.m. for the care of leprosy sufferers. It remains even today one of Africa's and the world's leading centres of its kind.

In recognition of this achievement, France conferred the Couronne Civique, the highest national honour for social work, on the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, of which Mother Eugenia was Superior General from 1935 to 1947.

Let it be a rare occasion for the media to accept lapses and learn that honouring the dignity of the dead is our duty, be it of UNMIN employees or Nepalis anywhere anytime.

Media and ethics



Ian Martin's grief over the demise of ten of his colleagues in an air-crash followed by suicide by another employee of the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) is understandable. The incident on one hand saw the loss of those working for peace in Nepal, and on the other it provoked him to appeal to the Nepali media to follow ethical journalism.

UNMIN's preventing the media people from taking photographs of his colleagues with their faces uncovered was something that Nepali media resisted. It was at this point that Martin rose in defense of ethical journalism, an issue that only victims raise occasionally in this country. By and large, Nepali media, despite its crusade in restoration of democracy, a role that the international community as well as UNMIN has time and again praised, has faltered many a time when it came to ethical standards. But since it did not directly affect the international community as well as UNMIN, it did not invite any debate.

Even during Jana-Andolan two, the media largely blacked out the shortcoming of the pro-democracy forces even when they resorted to violence and provoked the other side. No doubt, King Gyanendra committed a political and constitutional blunder

by taking over power in 2005, but all ethical lines were crossed if one were to examine the way media covered the events of political protest against the royal acts. International community did not act differently. How many diplomats maintained the practice of diplomacy or its norms normally followed elsewhere?

Martin came to Nepal little more than two years ago as special representative of Louise Arbour who recently announced that she would not seek a second term as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), when her current term expires in a few months. In fact, Martin, as Head of the Office of the Human Rights Commission in Nepal

(OHCHR), brought out lapses committed by the GP Koirala government in arresting the likes of Kamal Thapa and Ramesh Nath Pande initially.

It was only OHCHR that through its reports used to highlight how the pro-democracy crowd had people provoking security forces and how they used children for political protests. But the ethical and professional drift in OHCHR functioning was visible soon. Martin's effective voice as OHCHR Chief no doubt earned him enough credentials to head UNMIN as a facilitator in the

peace process. But it soon drew him into controversy sometimes for silence on crucial issues, sometimes for what he said, and also for his perceived proximity with human right groups and leaders associated with one or the other political group.

On occasions, he was also a victim of circumstances. With government's failure to contain the law and order and create a situation conducive for polls to the constituent assembly, UNMIN would also be seen as failing to put enough pressure on the government. Monitoring of arms and armies of the government and the Maoists was a key assignment entrusted to UNMIN, but that is



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

(OHCHR), brought out lapses committed by the GP Koirala government in arresting the likes of Kamal Thapa and Ramesh Nath Pande initially.

definitely connected with implementation of other key provisions of the comprehensive peace accord (CPA).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission that the CPA promised to form within months has not yet come into existence. But while the UNMIN and OHCHR did take a public and activist stance on some issues, like the brutal murder of Maina Sunuwar, they hardly took up with the same seriousness the cases of the likes of Muktinath Adhikary or that of Arjun Lama of Kavre. However, the Supreme Court followed its own ruling in the Maina Sunuwar's case and has now asked the government to charge Agni Sapkota, a central committee member of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and a party candidate for the constituent assembly.

Can OHCHR and UNMIN afford not to react on Sapkota case keeping their 'ethics' intact? Any aberration in discharge of professional responsibility in a fair and just manner may almost always drag the issue of ethics into public debate. UNMIN and OHCHR's silence on persecution of civil and security officials as well as a set of politicians following formation of the Krishna Jung Rayamajhi Commission – regarding both its conduct and political composition have brought the two UN bodies

under disrepute.

Ethics demands that like the civil society and media, UN bodies rise above narrow partisan lines, maintain neutrality or impartiality and at the same time prove their effectiveness. A key UNMIN official accepting the guard of honour at Maoist cantonment was an issue that media raised as not so ethical practice, but UNMIN chose to ignore that.

In other words, they are seen as aligning with certain political groups in Nepal. In all these cases, 'ethics' have somehow been compromised, may be in good faith in certain cases. But there cannot be selective application of ethics. Nor can media alone be expected to maintain the ethical standards while other groups including the UN bodies and diplomatic crowd go against it.

Nevertheless, learning or following ethics becomes much easier, when tragedy teaches us that our existence and march to democracy and peace will remain highly deficient if we try to secure democracy without ethics. Let it be a rare occasion for the media to accept lapses and learn that honouring the dignity of the dead is our duty, be it of UNMIN employees or Nepalis anywhere anytime. That might also be the beginning of Nepali media moving ahead with professionalism that is not bereft of ethics.

Why Women's Day?



Niraj Sapkota

Nepal plays at being a developed country, using a western script. It's a terrible play, but we keep asking for encores.

we are all part of the same gang, you and me. If you can read these words you are part of the worldwide club of English speakers; we are the lucky ones who can at least talk in the language of global power, giving us an influence those who can't speak the language only dream about.

And there's an unspoken deal between us, foreigners and Nepalis: we are all going to pretend to be the same. My Nepali friends are rightly embarrassed by the way their leaders have blown opportunity after opportunity to turn this country into something more than a receptacle for failed western ideologies and foreign aid. Foreigners talk in quiet groups about the bizarre decisions Nepali leaders make.

Put us all together and we talk about shared struggles, and values, and we come up with little rituals and festivals that make us feel comfortable, and help us avoid unpleasantness. Women's Day is a day like that, it helps us forget that in the countryside women are being tortured and murdered for witchcraft, and that many women still believe they are less intelligent and less able than the men around them.

So we have our rituals, the coming together of elites from in and outside Nepal. Your job is to tell us that everything is going to be okay, and ours is to smile and nod at something we both know to be a lie. And then

we go on a march. You give us the approval many of us are looking for, the feeling of acceptance and of knowing a foreign culture, and we give you the feeling of recognition from cultures and countries that have managed, at least partially, to address many of the problems Nepal still suffers from. You help us forget the crimes we committed along the way to progress, and we help you imagine that progress is inevitable.

We all ignore the fact that progress comes from sacrifice, and politics, and organisation. We pretend aid programs can replace empowerment – and I mean the empowerment of doing away with bad rulers with the ballot or the bullet, not the warm feeling that comes from your cappuccino in the Soaltee conference room. Women's Day meant something when it was invented, and its history is a spur for progress in western countries where the battle against gender discrimination is not yet completely won.

But in Nepal it has become an amusement-park ride, where locals and outsiders hold hands and enjoy an experience that is, sadly, almost completely artificial. Last week I was glad that most Nepali women could not read English. At some point the poor people in this country – women and men, are going to get fed up with all the lies we tell them; and when that happens there will be bloodshed. Happy Women's Day! ■

Lucille Bulduc

International Women's Day has come and gone. What started 98 years ago as a hard-edged political campaign of women literally fighting for their political rights, in the face of police sticks and militia guns, has degenerated into another social event. Last week, Nepal's English-language papers were filled with stories about women's empowerment and self-confidence, and pictures of women in business suits. Reprinted columns from the western press talked about the corporate glass ceiling and pay inequality. But, in a story I didn't see reprinted here, Nepal ranked as the sixth worst country in the world to be a woman; in between Iraq and Sudan.

We know why women suffer in Nepal: death in childbirth, limited access to education and healthcare, cultural prejudices, early marriage, and a war more than a decade long. One paper did carry a story on these women, the ones Women's Day passed by: running small shops, selling scraps on the street, thrown out from their homes, all scraping for a living from the bottom of Nepal's leaking economic barrel.

One of them said something more true and useful than all the reports that fluttered out from last week's workshops and seminars. For her, the worst thing about gender discrimination was the poverty it forced her to endure. No matter how much she works, she stays poor. She

didn't have time to go on a Women's Day march, and couldn't have read the letter inviting her to join in, had the organisers sent her one - which of course they didn't.

And they won't. Because Women's Day is yet another western political institution co-opted by development workers and Nepal's elite; co-opted and stripped of its radical context and content, and turned into something safe and, ultimately, meaningless. I do not question the sincerity of those who participated in last week's events, but I do question the point of what they did.

I am picking on Women's Day because it is a symbol of a serious downside to globalisation. Because

Sabita Gyawali



In the agro-economy based country like Nepal, land plays an important role in socio-political and economic systems. Nepali society considers ownership of land as a matter of pride and wealth; symbolically it holds 'the socio-political and economic power' as well. However, only ten percent of women of Nepal have ownership of land. This clearly reflects that women are excluded from the power dynamics based on the land ownership.

Agriculture is one of the major sources of livelihood and nearly 76% of total populations are dependent upon land. Women consists nearly half of the total population in Nepal. As different studies show, among the total population contributing in agriculture 39.5% are male and remaining 60.5% are female. Though agro economy plays an important role to contribute in the overall economy of the country, there is vast difference between

Challenging male dominance in land

the percentage of male and female contributors in agriculture and their percent of land possession. Legal ownership of male upon land is 89.17% and for female it is only 10.83%. Similarly women who have ownership of both land and house are only 4%.

The above data clearly shows the hegemony of male over land and it also ritualises male dominance in the overall power structure. Nearly 10 percent of women possess legal ownership of land and we can assume that remaining 90 percent of women are landless. This landlessness does not only matter within the

economic sense, but significantly in the overall sociopolitical and cultural life as well, and the serious fact is that almost 90% of women are very systematically excluded from socio political and economic mainstream. And the contribution made by women in the agro economy is not acknowledged formally.

These facts also show the imbalanced power structure which exists in the society. Power structure in a country like ours is still largely sustained within the politics of land ownership, which is largely dominated by males. Women as such and in particular the marginalised women

have been the victims of social and economic exclusions. Land is a symbol of power and women who do not have control over it have to go through a sense of insecurity and various stages of exclusion; this situation gradually limits their space for decision making within the family and outside as well.

Generally the condition of women in upper class is considered to be better. But even within elite family structures, women lack the power of independence. In these critical contexts the most important aspect is to have a political space of dialogue, participation and decision making power for women of all class, caste and ethnicity. The symbolic enjoyment of land or property by certain women of certain class cannot create such an enabling environment for women as such and thus women who belong to the upper class also are unable to enjoy that sense of freedom.

In most of the marginalised sections of society, families are compelled to live in chronic poverty. Among them the condition of women and children is more vulnerable. Thus the situation of women even within the marginalised sections is specific

and they deserve special policy attention.

In Nepali politics, political parties and the government have been discussing about land reform and this has been a long and a defunct story; women have been the constant victims of this male chauvinistic politics. None of the governments and political parties have seriously tried to respond to this issue. The politics based on the land has been sustaining the feudal and male dominance in overall sociopolitical structures.

At a time when the country is trying to move towards transformative politics; until there are pro poor land distribution policies and practices at the ground, the situation of poor people will never improve. Similarly, the situation of women and their empowerment will not be sustainable until there is progressive pro women land reform policy in the country. It is obvious that land has been sustaining a feudal and male dominated power structure and if we are honest about transformation, we have to challenge, change and redefine this structure. ■

Director of International Land Coalition (ILC), **Bruce H. Moore**, visited Nepal recently. He met with several stakeholders related to land reform. Mr. Moore and his institution that has played a crucial role in land reform in post conflict countries like Uganda is ready to play a role in Nepal as well. Bruce's basic idea of land reform is to ensure that the poor and the landlords participate in the high level Land Reform Commission that is going to be formed. Excerpts of the interview by **Biswaha Mani Pokharel** for newsfront:

The ruling alliance in Nepal has agreed to form the high level Commission on land reform. What should be the objectives of that commission and on what principles should it work?

Fairness and equity are the principles in my view. If you look at the society, we can say that there is a distinct gap existing between the politicians, land owners and the tillers of the land. The people who are landless must be included. First we have to have an agreement about how those people will be represented in the commission. Their interests should be represented. You have complexities among seven parties; they have differences in terms of subdivision of land. But this situation is not difficult to handle if parties agree on balanced representation.

The issues need to be assessed independently. I would propose that you consider the model that we have used in other countries. We should have a meeting with the political parties and ask them what they think needs to be done for the problems to be solved. We should hear what they have to say. Then we should have meetings separately with the landlords and all the poor people and ask them the same set of questions.

The government should also ask international donors to provide their ideas and support. They have been financing in land reforms in many countries. Then let us examine all ideas impartially. There is no single answer as there are different answers in different countries. It is possible to give advice and share experiences of other people who have done this. In this sense, Nepal does not have to start from the bottom.

Do you have any formula for redistribution of land in a manner that will not trigger unrest and violence?

One way would be to determine a level of justice and review. If there is evidence that people have obtained land illegally by forced eviction, if the legal system is not prepared to address the claim back, if there are people who have used force or coercion to claim land or grab land, you might have violence in the first place.

Then you have the issue of the amount of compensation you pay to the land owners. First, you have to find out the injustices from the past and then find the formula of financing, which varies. Some say you pay land owners the market value. Some say

compensate them in limited form. The challenge here is that the World Bank would propose the model of market.

The poor would say that the many of the public services like the roads, the irrigation and public infrastructure are only benefiting the landlords. They would say, if the government is going to redistribute land to us, the public money should be spent to help the landlords start business in the city. But once you compensate landlords you should sell the land at a price which we can afford. This should be considered as an investment in improving the poor economy as you have spent public money to help other classes.

You interacted with senior government officials here. Do you have a fair idea on the kind of reform they have in mind?

I spoke to very few. I spoke to the Agriculture Secretary about land reform. I was thinking that the Secretary would have a clear idea. But he asked me how we could we go for a scientific land reform and asked me for cooperation. At the moment I can say that commitment without any clear plan cannot work.

Does it mean that they have no clear cut plans?

That is my impression. If there is commitment they should be planning in consultation with tillers and the land owners. Both sides must be there, not just one. Instead of coming into the political commitment with just one idea in mind, there must be consultation. They should not jump on to one solution. They should make a careful study first.

Nepal has been through a bloody conflict during the past twelve years. How much of the agrarian component you think is behind this. If agrarian issue is settled will Nepal be free of violence in future?

I think there are two things that probably happened in Nepal. One is the political interest. Sometimes the poor are used to the advantage of

Finding solution through communication



Instead of coming into the political commitment with just one idea in mind, there must be consultation.

the political interest. So many poor people became desperate after waiting for so long that they thought there is no choice but through violent action to get their land. Therefore, they became part of the forces opposing the government. But I do think poverty is one of the main factors. I do believe there is tremendous inequality and the feudal system is out of control. The system was understandable at some point but now people have to find different solutions. And if the solution does not come in time, violence obviously takes over.

Do you think poverty in Nepal can be reduced or abolished through land reform policies?

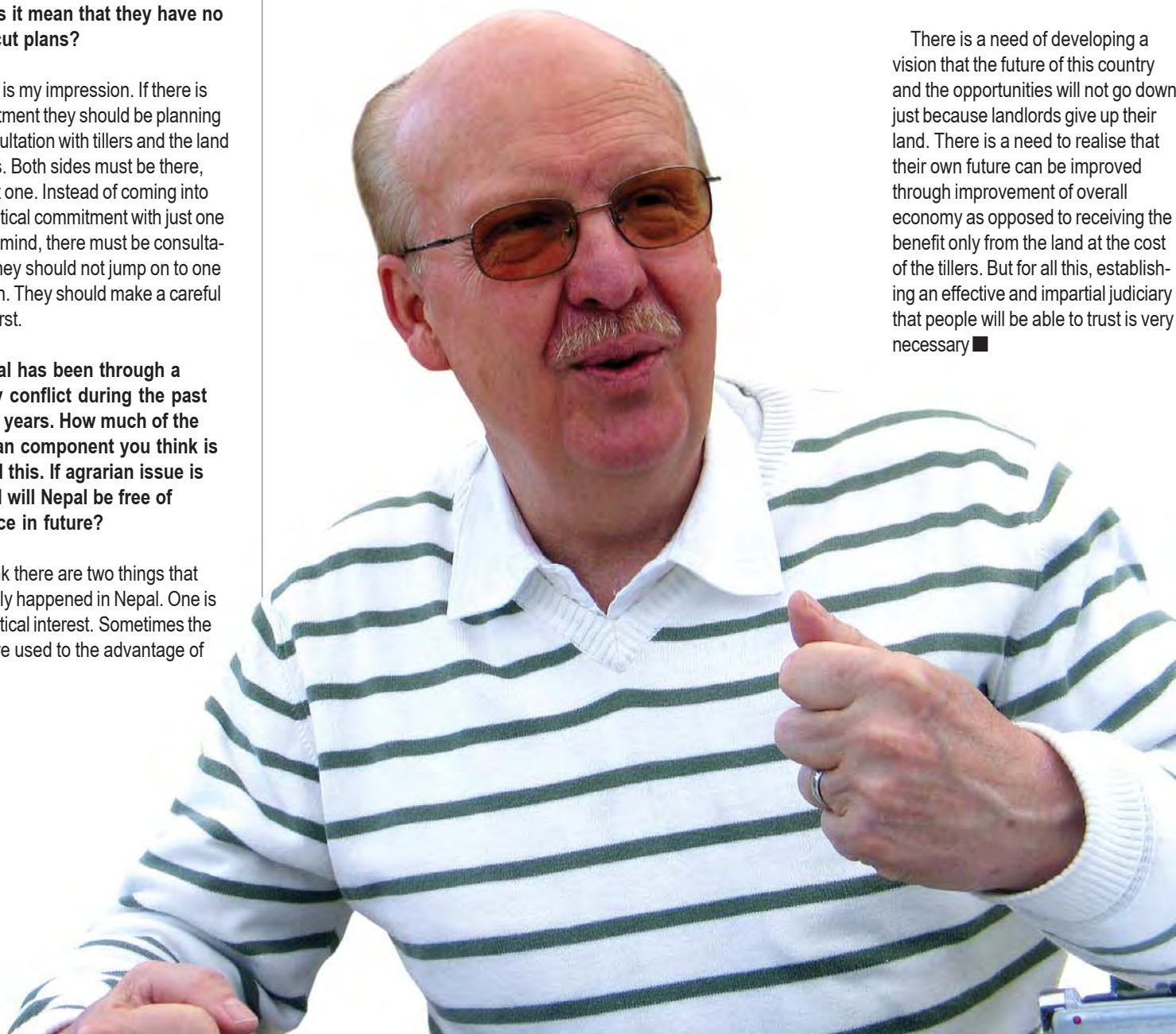
I am convinced Nepal can reduce poverty by land reform policies. There is no one solution of course since poverty is a huge problem to overcome. But one cannot overcome poverty without land reform. 70% of people in Nepal work on agriculture and the hungry people and poor people are the ones who grow food. It is not logical. I am convinced that once people have the incentive on owning their land, it will take the production levels higher.

ILC has taken some initiatives in post conflict Bolivia and Uganda. What has been the outcome there, and how easy or difficult is it to have land rights enforced?

They were international meeting. We had meeting in Uganda, in order to open up people and politicians to ideas from the world about how other people have solved such problems. May be in 2009, we will have meetings in Nepal or Indonesia. We know the meeting in 2009 will take place in Asia. Maybe the constituent assembly will make some good progress and if the high level commission on land reform is established it would be an incentive place to bring the international meeting to Kathmandu.

In Nepal's case, it depends on the provision regarding the use of natural resources in constitution. It has to develop its judiciary system, which is sufficiently independent. To ensure that constitution works, the legislation and the regulation that the constitution established need to be enforced. It seems to me that those who are powerful or those with high control of natural resources today are going to face challenges.

There is a need of developing a vision that the future of this country and the opportunities will not go down just because landlords give up their land. There is a need to realise that their own future can be improved through improvement of overall economy as opposed to receiving the benefit only from the land at the cost of the tillers. But for all this, establishing an effective and impartial judiciary that people will be able to trust is very necessary ■



If there is commitment they should be planning in consultation with tillers and the land owners. Both sides must be there, not just one.

Bahunbad or modern Manubad?

...We may have a significant bunch of Dalit representatives in the elected body but they are unlikely to deliver much for the historically segregated masses.

■ Uday Pariyar

Nepal's political parties may have changed in many ways, but not in the way they view and treat untouchables or Dalits. Despite their rhetoric, they are still very insensitive towards the oppressed groups. They continue to hoodwink Dalits in all possible ways. The selection of candidates for elections was a most recent example of their indifference towards the concept of inclusion.

Nepali Congress party considers itself the champion of democracy and socialism. Its leaders constantly argue in public that Nepal's democracy will be ruined if NC does not win. Ironically, many of its own supporters and workers and some leaders accept that there is hardly any internal democracy and transparency within the party. It was one of those parties that selected its candidates in a most unstructured, unprofessional and opaque manner. The largest party in power and the interim parliament had the least number of Dalit candidates, just one, for direct elections.

The CPN-UML followed suit with four Dalit candidates. CPN-Maoist proved itself to be much better by fielding around 17 Dalit candidates under the first past the post system. It was a significant number compared to the other parties but Dalits were probably expecting much more out of the party. On the contrary, smaller parties such as Jana Morcha (Amik Sherchan's faction) had many more Dalit candidates. It was also surprising that the newly emerged Madhesi parties appeared equally insensitive towards Dalits. They had a very few Dalit candidates for direct elections. It gave the impression that the outcome of the recent Madhesi uprising was only for Yadavs and Thakurs, and not



for Doms, Chamars and Musahars.

History is repeating itself. Why are there such few Dalit candidates? Why are there so many spouses, relatives and friends of senior figures of almost all parties? The recent developments do not make us optimistic about the idea of real change after the elections. The leaders often harp about the prospects of Dalit candidates unlikely to win because of their caste background. A very simple question is how could they win the race if they were barred from taking part in it, in the first place? And what is the justifiable reason to believe that only Bahuns and Chhetries, and not other castes, will win? This is nothing but the modern practice of Manubad. This exposes the fact that the Loktantric, pro-republic party leaders continue to be driven by the philosophy of Bahunbad.

Under the closed system, the parties were

bound by the rules to select candidates as per the allocated quota for each group, including Dalits. The Election Commission had to remind some parties even to fulfil their criteria. Surely, they would not have fielded that many Dalits if they had not signed the agreement earlier. But again, the party workers and supporters themselves are expressing their frustration with the clever and cunning approach of the party leaders. They selected mostly those workers from the Dalit communities who were just blind followers of the leaders and who were unlikely to significantly influence the Constituent Assembly (CA) to formulate pro-Dalit statute.

But many of those party workers who were relatively independent, focussed on their communities and those qualified to debate in favour of Dalits were systematically left out. So the situation is such that we may have a significant bunch of Dalit

representatives in the elected body but they are unlikely to deliver much for the historically segregated masses. Such a token representation is not much different from non-representation.

The major parties have announced their election manifestos – promising to restructure the state, including the introduction of autonomous federal states. Although there is no serious discussion on how federalism should be practised, it is clear that all these federated states will have at least one common social feature of the untouchables.

Obviously, Dalits are in minority in every region or district and there is no question of having their own federal state. Dalits need some other commitments and better adjustments – primarily the resolve and political will to crush the inhumane practice of caste discrimination. None of the parties so far have proposed any tangible and practical ways of doing away with the evil practice. This is another reason why very few Dalits have faith on the proposed CA delivering much for them.

But that does not mean Dalits are against CA. They do wish to see an end to the prolonged interim period and an elected body to govern the country. But they also wish to see a meaningful exercise in the CA to ensure a better future for them. But the nomination of candidates and the continued practice of untouchability even by the active party workers show that there may not be much in store for them. The parties need to be more sensitive towards the Dalit's issues and prioritise their cause. This is time for the ruling parties to give up fire-brigade approach. Dalits should not be forced to organise a separate ethnic movement before their voices are heard.

(ud.pariyar@gmail.com)

There were several items in the newspapers last week about candidates from various parties who didn't really understand what this current election is all about. The only candidates who know what it's about are the Maoists. They know it's about them grabbing absolute power and hanging on to it ad infinitum; and their current behaviour demonstrates that they intend to do so by hook or by crook and preferably by both.

We have had the 'people's voice' shoved down our throats so often during the past two years that we are beginning to choke on it. By and large the people's voice has been touted around by certain scions of the media, fascist politicians (of the extreme left and extreme right who obviously have the same aims and methods), and thugs with guns and sticks.

Now we are learning that, in the countryside, even candidates don't understand what the Constituent Assembly is about. Now we are also learning that, in the countryside, Maoist cadres have left the UNMIN supervised camps and are terrorising candidates of other persuasions. Now it is also clear, even to our foreign fifth columnists, that the grand alliance never really was about democracy but just a sprat to catch a mackerel as the saying goes.

Who is to answer for this sad state of affairs? As always, we the people, because we let it go too far. Like sheep we followed the one who bleated loudest and put our trust in people who are no smarter than we are. We put our trust on 'top' people with very poor track records. So yes, the buck stops here, with us.

Many people are sick at heart quite frankly, and they have every reason to be because they have been betrayed. Maybe it

In closer context

Like sheep we followed the one who bleated loudest and put our trust in people who are no smarter than we are...

■ The wanderer

is our fault, but we have been betrayed. It is time to challenge all our foreign diplomatic missions that were sold hook, line, and sinker on SPAM to earn their tremendous salaries, which are for what? I will hazard a guess that the terms of reference are something to do with ensuring that we have free and fair elections in Nepal and that every voter is able to vote according to her/his conscience. Sadly, I must also comment that so far they haven't earned their salaries, not by a long chalk.

Nevertheless, hats off to the Election Commission for laying down the law about ethical electoral behaviour, but who will uphold that law? It is time to throw down the gauntlet and challenge the government and our international monitors to take proper measures to stop this intimidation of candidates with measures that should be made transparent to the public according to its right to information.

It is the least a genuine candidate can expect. In closer context, bite the bullet and do what you are being paid to do, and if you cannot do it, then admit you failed and go home. You are wasting our time and some of us actually have to work for a living. If things continue as they are, no-one will accept this election as a just, free and fair one.

One can hear the protest now from specific international organisations: "but that's not our job, we're not here to dictate terms... etc ... etc." But, wait a minute, weren't they dictating terms two years ago, withholding funds, vociferously condemning the brutality of organs of the state? In retrospect, their prissiness over funding projects in the 'royal regime' looks rather lame in comparison to the money poured into the pockets of people who still perpetrate violence.

Correct me if I am wrong, brutality is brutality, cruelty is cruelty, murder is murder, violence is violence, and human rights' abuses are abuses whether they are committed by the organs of the state or others. Am I correct? I think so, but I also think it is correct to say that in matters of abuse and violence those in governance have a greater responsibility than others to ensure that such acts are not perpetrated.

Given this, and logically speaking, what is the difference between the Maoist leadership failing to prevent violence and intimidation by their cadres of election candidates from other parties and those organs of the state so vociferously condemned by foreign donors two years ago? The Maoists are, after all, now part of the government. Where is the international outcry, the effrontery that such things could happen?

Frankly, they are getting off without just retribution. They are punishing the rest of the citizens of this country for not agreeing to their totalitarian vision, and they are doing it with impunity. It is, indeed, amazing, that their leader can claim to have a vision of making a Switzerland out of Nepal when his faithful cadres have been responsible for destroying many bridges and other infrastructure, including electricity installations, some of which were financed by Switzerland!

Is everything that we read to be trusted? Like George Orwell I am a great believer in the Ministry of Disinformation, especially when it belongs to a dictatorship: and we have a dictatorship now. Many of the actors in this dictatorship are the same people we have seen in parliament for the last 18 years. We have heard their promises time and again. Still village after village is left without electricity, water, or proper access to anywhere. So many things are possible in this land and with good governance we could go a long way. The people have been disillusioned time and again, and this current situation has been the biggest con trick of all that our political elite have ever pulled off.

The SPAM has proved itself to be no less than a totalitarian state in embryo. What is worse, it gets away with it because not even all the candidates understand what the Constituent Assembly is for! This is an essential piece of homework left unfinished and, perhaps, purposefully so by those who intend to go on and on and on being in power. They have had two years to ensure political literacy, and they have failed. Only fools reward failure, why would we reward any of them? Our politicians have three weeks left to answer this question, if they can!

Dalai Lama's Tibet bloodshed fear



The Dalai Lama has said he fears there will be more deaths in Tibet unless Beijing changes its policies towards the Chinese-controlled region. The Tibetan spiritual leader told the BBC he had "grave concerns" over Friday's deadly protests in Lhasa city. But he emphasised that he still supported Beijing's staging of the Olympic Games this summer.

Lhasa, Tibet's main city, was reported quiet on Sunday, locked down by a heavy Chinese security presence. The Dalai Lama told the BBC he had received reports the death toll from the protests may be as high as 100, although he said the figure could not be verified.

The Chinese official news agency Xinhua says 10 people died in Friday's clashes, including business people it said were "burnt to death". On Sunday, businesses remained

shut, the streets were empty and locals said a curfew was in force. The unrest erupted a fortnight before China's Olympic celebrations kick off with the start of the torch relay, which is scheduled to pass through Tibet.

The Dalai Lama told the BBC the Games were an opportunity for the Chinese to show their support for the principle of freedom. The demonstrators, who on Friday set fire to Chinese-owned shops and hurled rocks at local police, have been penned into an area of the old town by government forces.

A government official in Lhasa told AP news agency: "It is fairly quiet this morning (Sunday). The local people have been persuaded not to go out." A shopkeeper in the city told Reuters news agency: "There are police checking our homes and handing out warnings." Eyewitnesses described

seeing military checkpoints, with vehicles and armed troops patrolling the streets. A 23-year-old Canadian student told AP: "The entire city is basically closed down."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Saturday urged China to "exercise restraint" in dealing with the protests.

She spoke as pro-Tibet demonstrations were held in Nepal, New York, Australia and several European cities. A British journalist in Lhasa on Saturday said police had used tear gas to disperse demonstrators defying a curfew.

The authorities in Tibet have urged the protesters to hand themselves in by midnight on Monday, promising leniency to those who surrender. The violence - the worst in Tibet since 1989 - erupted on the fifth day of largely peaceful protests that began

on last Monday's anniversary of a 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

The demonstrations - like those last September in Burma - were initially led by Buddhist monks and then attracted crowds of ordinary people.

Chinese officials said the riots had been "masterminded" by the Dalai Lama, an accusation he has denied.

Analysts say the last thing Beijing wants is bloodshed tarnishing its image before it stages the Olympic Games in August, but at the same time it cannot show weakness to the protesters.

Many Tibetans claim their culture has been brushed aside by Beijing and resent local Chinese settlers.

China says Tibet has always been part of its territory, although Tibet enjoyed long periods of autonomy before the 20th Century.

(BBC)

Explosion rocks Pakistan restaurant

Pakistan's capital was on high alert and foreign embassies were scrutinizing security measures Sunday after a bomb exploded in an Italian restaurant crowded with foreigners, killing a Turkish aid worker and wounding 12 other people.

U.S. and British embassy personnel were among the wounded in what appeared to be the first attack targeting foreigners in a recent wave of violence in Pakistan blamed on Islamic militants linked to al-Qaida and the Taliban.

"Embassies are reviewing their security practices and the guidance they give to their employees," U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Kay Mayfield said Sunday.

U.S. policy prohibits families of American diplomats from accompanying them on assignment in Pakistan, but most other countries allow it. A notice posted on the embassy's Web site late Saturday urged Americans "to avoid areas where Westerners are known to congregate and to maintain a low profile."

"American citizens should stay alert, be aware of their surroundings, reduce travel to a minimum, and act self-defensively," it said.

(IHT)

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Indigenous people have been denied chances to have their voice heard or intervene in the negotiation process.

Pasang Dolma Sherpa



The Working Group on Protected Area (WGPA)-2 meeting on the issues of Convention on

Biodiversity (CBD) was held recently in Rome, Italy under auspices of the United Nations which was attended by delegations from 188 countries representing inter-government organisations, non-government organisations, indigenous people, local communities and other groups and agencies.

The Red hall at FAO-UN building was covered by more than 600 participants in all. The thematic part of the meeting was to develop the system to save biodiversity of the world by 2010 based on the decision adopted by the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity (COP 7/CBD). A preliminary three day discussion was taken up as part of the process of reworking on program of work.

It gave participants enough time to prepare themselves for the WGPA-2 meetings, so that they can effectively secure equal rights of the indigenous people. But the chair's insensitivity

during the session provoked indigenous peoples' representative to stage a boycott the convention. An assurance by the chair later that their equal participation will be ensured did not quite assuage their hurt feeling.

Their stance was clear, that they would refuse to participate in a process that is making decision over their lives, and 'yet expect us to be silent observers.' The boycott decision was irreversible, although the group was appreciative of mediatory role played by certain UN groups and the civil societies.

The reason for this boycott was simple: UN declaration of their rights to self determination on political, social and culture developmental issues had been violated. The General Assembly on 13th September 2007 states that indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No re-allocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return. (Art 10).

What they faced in Rome was



WGPA-2 meeting at FAO-UN building, Rome, Italy

something they had been facing all along in national, regional and international forum on the issues related with preservation of their rights to the access of protected areas or political/social and cultural rights.

In fact, the challenge that the indigenous peoples groups faced in Rome is nothing new as it is practiced in most countries including Nepal in one or the other form. They have

been denied chances to have their voice heard or intervene in the negotiation process.

The boycott in Rome makes the scheduled meeting of COP 9 in May in Bonn all the more challenging as it will have to find a way to dignified participation of the indigenous group there by correcting the attitude of the chair in Rome. If the UN Hall in Rome can afford to ignore its own general assembly

declarations on indigenous peoples' rights in the protected areas; can we expect much from the government in Nepal that is not elected by the people? Problems and challenges abound here.

For instance, both practices and research in Sagarmatha National Park area suggest that traditional indigenous knowledge and values were ignored when the park came into existence in 1976. They no more felt part of the new conservation program; rather the government discouraged them to be involved in the same traditional scale and manner. In a way, they are not being heard or given a space in formulation and implementation of the conservation project now.

The buffer zone concept that ensures that at least half the revenue earned by the park goes to the local people has not been able to win over the disheartened people. Their enthusiasm has evaporated compared to the old days. As a result, degradation of bio-diversity caused by poaching, logging, deforestation and to some extent mining, has taken place. This will not only continue but increase unless their ownership in some manner is restored. ■

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JOKES

JOKE

JOKE<space>DOC

JOKE<space>SILLY

JOKE<space>LAWYER

JOKE<space>SANTA

JOKE<space>BLONDE

THOUGHT

THOUGHT THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day

SHL Top 5 losers of the day

SHH Stock related help

FOREX

FOREX<space>BUY

FOREX<space>BUY

FOREX<space>CURRENCY ID

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

WEEK<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign.i.e.

WEEK<space>ARI

DICTIONARY

DICT<space>the word you want to know the meaning of.i.e.

DICT<space>tut

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TOP 5

TOP5<space>Nepsong

TOP5<space>Engsong

TOP5<space>Bolsong

CRICKET UPDATE

cri

WEATHER

CLI<space>city name i.e.

CLI<space>dharan

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Higher knowing

Dibya Srota Dhatu is the hearing capacity of the Devas.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

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

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

2. The second Abhigya (Abhiyya in Pali) is known as Dibya Srota Dhatu, i.e. divine ear element. It is said that with a concentrated mind applied to Dibya Srota Dhatu, the purified hearing, which surpasses human hearing is attained. He can hear

sounds of both humans and Devas whether far or near. The ability to hear sounds far away beyond normal human range within the human world or to even hear the sounds and voices etc. of Devas in various Deva Lokas and Brahma Lokas is what is meant by the Abhigya Dibya Srota Dhatu.

This is the hearing capacity of the Devas that is why it is called Dibya Srota Dhatu. It is made possible by good karmas and a mind freed from lower mental impurities through practices of Samatha etc. With this pure and extended Dibya Srota, the Yogavachara is able to hear sounds whether produced on earth or in the various Deva realms of existence. There are various exercises given in various texts (Theravadin/Sarvastivadin/Mahayana) which are more or less the same, for the properly trained yogi with a pure mind to produce Dibya Srota if it does not appear spontaneously.

The third Abhigya is called Parachitta Vijnana. It means knowing the mind of others. Having attained the Abhigya the yogi can know whether the mind of other person is with passion/emotional defilements or free from passion/emotional defilements. He can know whether other person's mind is filled with hatred/anger or free from hatred/anger, whether the person's mind is filled with Moha (delusion) or free from delusion, whether the other person has achieved the correct Samadhis (samyak samadhi) or Mithya Samadhis, concentrated or not concentrated, emancipated (Mukta) or not Mukta etc.

It is not only telepathy or mind reading though it would automatically be included in it. But it is more the capacity to know the state of mind of another person as the above explanation makes it clear.

(To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

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Spitzer sex scandal woman named

The prostitute at the centre of New York Governor Eliot Spitzer's sex scandal has been named by US media. The woman, named in court papers as Kristen, is Ashley Alexandra Dupre, the New York Times reported.

Ms Dupre, 22, told the Times she did not want "to be thought of as a monster", but gave no comments on her alleged relationship with Mr Spitzer.

He resigned after evidence came to light that he was the client of a high-end prostitution ring.

The scandal erupted on Monday when federal investigators revealed that a wiretap had caught the 48-year-old arranging to meet "Kristen" at a Washington hotel on 13 February. Flanked by his wife, Mr Spitzer told a news conference on Wednesday that he could not allow "private failings" to disrupt public work. He is to hand over power on Monday.

In his first public comments since the scandal, his deputy, Lieutenant-Governor David Paterson, said his priority on taking over would be to put the state's government back on track.

Announcing his resignation, Mr Spitzer again apologised for not living up to the standards he demanded of others - but he gave no details of the allegations against him.

Ms Dupre was born Ashley Youmans. She left home in New Jersey at the age of 17 and moved to New York where she hoped to



become a singer, the Times said. Ms Dupre did not comment when asked by the newspaper when she first met Mr Spitzer and how many times they had met.

"This has been a very difficult time. It is complicated," she told the Times.

It is not clear whether or not Ms Dupre will face charges but she is reported to have hired a lawyer.

Federal investigators have alleged that a wiretap caught Mr Spitzer arranging to meet a \$1,000-an-hour prostitute named Kristen who worked for the Emperor's Club VIP prostitution ring. Mr Spitzer is reported to have paid thousands of dollars over 18 months to the ring. He could be charged with soliciting and

paying for sex, breaking banking laws and with transporting someone across state lines for immoral purposes. He could also lose his licence to practise law in New York.

It marks a spectacular downfall for the man once known as the "Sheriff of Wall Street" for his investigations of organised crime, financial crime and prostitution.

The father of three teenage girls is a leading supporter of Senator Hillary Clinton in her battle against Senator Barack Obama to become the Democratic Party's candidate for president.

Mr Spitzer's deputy, Lieutenant-Governor David Paterson, will become New York's first

black governor as well as its first blind governor when he takes over on Monday.

He told a news conference on Thursday: "The message to the people of New York is that New York government is still thriving, and we are still serving the people."

Mr Paterson said he had asked for a delay in the handover so that Mr Spitzer could say goodbye to his staff and the legislature could focus on putting together the state's budget. He added that he had spoken to Mr Spitzer, saying: "I just told him how sorry I was this happened and how much he still inspires me."

(BBC)

Young hearts

I still carry on

Rufus Phobendra



Many a days have passed by
Memories they do linger
Some are grey with pain and sadness
Others are coloured ones

Many a paintings can be drawn of my life
But then my friend - bygones are bygones
There is nothing to look back on
And I will carry on...

Life is a complex dilemma
It can be tough to figure out your destination
When you don't have one
It can be hard to carry on

Countless thoughts race through my mind
Imaginations - wild and crazy
Whatever will be the time & tide
I still carry on...
Days they come and go

Life seems to swiftly unfold
Bringing many a surprise, many unexpected
Now I am hesitant and timid
to open the gifts that life brings forth
Yet no matter come what might out of the closet
I still carry on...

I have stopped to dwell in the future
Our fantasies never come alive
But then my friend, time never ends
The world goes on just the same
I have a long way to go before I rest
So in this journey of life
I still carry on...

I thought I lost it all
But it seems that I gained it all
For out of the dark I saw a ray of hope
And found that I can live with no support
In the journey I have undertaken
I have left that old heart of mine behind
And here I go on the highway of life
So dear reader, I say goodbye
And whatever the miles that I pass by
I've got to carry on...

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