

Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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The Maoist candidate in Rupandehi using a vehicle with Indian registration number for election campaign. Does not the election law prohibit the use of such vehicles or is it keeping quiet about it?

Deepak Gyawali

Windfall

Rules flouted in 'largesse' distribution

■ Govinda Pariyar

It indeed was a windfall for both the Maoist combatants and those chased away by the Maoists during the years of conflict, when the government generously distributed money from the state coffer in a hush hush manner.

According to the information available, the Peace and Rehabilitation Ministry, distributed nearly Rs three billion, two billion plus for the Maoist combatants and Rs 200 million for non-Maoist victims who

were displaced by the conflict, three weeks ago. And there was a clear violation of the earlier agreement reached between the Maoists and the government that the representative (s) of the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) will be present at the time of distribution of the money.

Sources said that the Maoist combatants who have been living in seven main cantonments and 21 satellite camps were paid Rs 27,000 at the rate of Rs. 3000 per month as per the 23-point

agreement reached among the seven top leaders of the ruling alliance including the Maoists. Those found 'unqualified' by the UNMIN during its verification process were to be paid for only three months.

But reports available from camps in Kailali and some other places indicate that UNMIN representatives were not present while distributing the money to the combatants. Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat, when contacted, told newsfront that, "While it is for the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to reimburse the money, UNMIN presence during the occasion is mandatory. If that has not happened, it is wrong." UNMIN had disqualified nearly 12,000 'combatants,' with nearly one third of them as child soldiers.

There have been complaints earlier that only a small faction of

the money allocated to each combatant actually reached the target with the party pocketing a bigger chunk of it. The absence of UNMIN representatives in some of the latest cases has raised doubts once again.

Similarly, in the case of the displaced people, the verification process was actually 'faulty' and all that was done with an eye on the forthcoming elections, an official of the Home Ministry said.

According to the officials, the money for the combatants was to be channeled through 'camp management office' with Chief District Officer (CDO) of the districts concerned acting as nodal persons. "CDOs could not have defied pressure from the ministries for keeping UNMIN representatives away in some camps," a senior official requesting anonymity, said. ■

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Pic by Bhashwor Ojha

No truck

NA's warning to Maoists

■ nf correspondent

In a significant pre-election message, Nepal Army (NA) has nearly placed the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) at par with the terrorist forces, with a vow not to ever make any compromise with them.

Reaffirming its commitment to uphold national unity, geographical integrity, sovereignty and democratic system, the army maintained that any 'propaganda' to drag the institution and its leadership into controversy will just not work. The provocation for the army to give this statement appears to be a public statement, by Maoist central committee member, Agni Sapkota, that claimed that Chief of the Army Staff Gen Rookmangad Katawal and Maoist Chief Prachanda had held a secret meeting a few days ago.

The statement issued by the public relations directorate said Nepal Army faces any national crisis like a solid rock. "Nepal Army will not bow down and make any compromise with forces who try to capture state power with the

muscles of terrorism, extremism and militancy in the current global context," it said.

It asserted that it would have nothing to do with elements who belittled the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. It also decried the forces which still believed in the politics of arms, or raised arms against democratic system hoping that 'democracy' could be guided by arms. It however, does not mention Maoists by name, but makes it obvious who its target is.

While it's political significance is yet to be known, Nepal Army's latest statement is the toughest so far in terms of its political content, and it being directed against the Maoists who are not only a part of the current government, but are also contesting the elections.

There was no response available from the Defense Ministry if the statement was cleared by the Prime Minister who holds the defense portfolio. "We have issued the statement with full responsibility and it is in adherence with the norms and practices that the army

follows," a senior army official said, hinting that the statement had been cleared by the Prime Minister.

In fact, the statement has already triggered a fierce response from the Maoists' side as its key ideologue Baburam Bhattarai accused the army of having killed its two cadres in Rolpa last week. "The pro-palace elements within the Nepal Army are responsible for the killing," Bhattarai said, during an interaction with the locals in Nepalgunj on March 21, barely 20 hours after the army issued the statement.

"Nepal Army condemns the ill-motives of some elements that have been making baseless allegations against the army and its leadership through smear campaigns in the media. It is all done to maintain the level of violence and instability in the country as that alone would help promote their self-interest, it added. The army, appealing to the general public not to get misled by such propaganda, also asked those responsible to immediately halt such activities 'on time'.

Washing off its hands

■ nf correspondent

The United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) has refused to own any responsibility for the criminal antecedent and activities of one of its guards posted at its Nepalgunj office. According to a statement issued by UNMIN, the matter is to be investigated and settled by the police and the court.

Babru Singh Thakur, the security guard at UNMIN's Nepalgunj office, the local in charge of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM- Jwala Singh), was arrested by the police on March 20, further dragging UNMIN into controversy. Given criticism of UNMIN in the past that its senior officials had met some JTMM leaders in India clandestinely, a JTMM leader's presence there as a security guard is naturally a matter of worry to the UN outfit.

UNMIN said that the person arrested with arms while extorting money from a local business man was



an employee of Group-4 (G-4) which provides security to the UNMIN. The UNMIN response to the incident was -"These charges are a matter for the

police and court."

UNMIN said Thakur was an employee of the G-4 security company, which UNMIN contracts to provide security at UNMIN headquarters in Kathmandu and its five regional offices. He is not an employee of UNMIN or UNMIN staff member. "He performed security duties at the UNMIN mid-western regional headquarters in Nepalgunj, and was issued with an UNMIN grounds pass. Under the contract with G-4, the company is responsible for conducting screening of its employees assigned to UNMIN's premises, including a check for criminal history and other background checks.

While the statement does not indicate if it is going to review its contract with G-4, it says it is requesting G-4 to strengthen its screening procedures in order to ensure that its personnel are in no way unsuitable to be assigned to security duties at UNMIN premises.



Japanese Ambassador Tatsuo Mizuno inaugurating 'Super Specialty Center for AIDS care' in Kathmandu on March 20.

Disagreement

Advani stands for monarchy

Much against the general perception here in Nepal that India's officialdom is nearly writing an obituary of the 240-year old Hindu monarchy in Nepal, LK Advani, the man Bharatiya Janata Party has projected as its Prime Ministerial candidate when India goes to polls next, has said that monarchy in a progressive multi-party democracy is an essential factor for Nepal's stability and unity.

Advani's advocacy for a Hindu Nepal and monarchy are not new, but he chose to reiterate his views once again when Nepal is all set to go for a constituent assembly election on April 10 with the ruling seven party alliance, leaving the 17 million plus voters with a fait accompli on both the issues. The people as well as the yet to be elected constituent assembly shall have no right to review these two issues.

In his autobiography 'My life, my country' released in Delhi recently, Advani said the monarchy symbolised Nepal's unity and sovereignty and said India and Nepal shared long-standing deep cultural and emotional ties.

In the speech he made during the book release, Advani refrained from taking a confrontational stance vis a vis the government of India on Nepal, but made it clear that the government was wrong on dumping the monarchy and adopting the Maoists.

He pointed out that encouraging Maoists at the cost of monarchy and democratic forces would be suicidal. He refused to buy the government of India's latest statement in parliament that Indian Naxalites had no connection

with the Maoists in Nepal. He asserted that the two had a deep nexus.

He warned that it would be detrimental to India's interest if the government continued to adopt a softer stance, as it was doing at present, towards the Nepali Maoists who are responsible for killing thousands of Nepalis.

Drawing many parallels in the context of Nepal and India's age long ties, he said both the countries are 'scourged' by communism, an ideology that the world has rejected. "The two are twin brothers, both being the off springs of the global monster of communist extremism."

"A soft corner for the Maoists in Nepal, whose insurgency has caused thousands of deaths and greatly destabilised the Himalayan kingdom is a dangerous policy," he said.

What Advani said through his book however, stands at odds with not only the officialdom of Delhi and its representative embassy in Kathmandu, but also with most Indian lobbyists-cum-intellectuals on Nepal, and there are no visible indications that Advani's or BJP's line on its northern neighbor will have any impact on India's Nepal policy.

Advani said if the current policy of letting Maoists dictate everything in Nepal continued, the price to be paid would be heavy on peace and stability on both sides. He also reiterated that interim parliament's decision to turn Nepal into a republic and a secular country, were something done entirely at the dictates of the Maoists, and Nepali people had no role in that.

Hot-headed minister

In a bizarre development, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Matrika Yadav locked the security guard room of his ministerial residence at Pulchowk, after the guards told him that they would require orders from 'competent authorities' to accompany him outside the capital.

The furious minister not only locked their room which security guards broke open soon after, but also hurled 'abuses'. "Yes, our officer and guards were subjected to abuse and humiliation by the minister just because they decided to stick to the rule," an army official told newsfront.

There are 11 security guards from the Nepal Army provided to Minister Yadav at his residence.

But the trouble began when he wanted all of them to join him at Janakpur recently where he had gone by

air a day earlier. The army unit's inability to do so citing rules infuriated the minister.

The army is believed to have informed the Prime Minister through the Defense Ministry seeking immediate intervention in the matter. "Army is a disciplined institution, but we hope that the minister will be restrained from abusing his security guards and follow the official rule in the matter," the official said.



CA Election Countdown

In doubt

Behave if you want the polls



■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala called the Maoist duo, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai at his official residence on March 23, and handed down the message that if elections are disrupted, the Maoists alone will have to take the blame.

That only shows there are still many 'ifs and buts' for the elections to take place which is only a little more than two weeks away. Koirala's meeting with the Maoist leaders, and then with the UML General Madhav Kumar Nepal three hours later, came a day after United Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) report said prevailing law and order situation were not conducive enough for polls, and that Maoists sincerity for polls were questionable.

Along with that came the statement of Usha Nepal, one of the election commissioners, that Maoist combatants were violating the code of conduct by coming out of the designated cantonments.

The meeting with the Maoist leaders that lasted for nearly 40 minutes saw both sides trying to score a point, but Koirala had the last words, "you alone will be held respon-

sible if election is not held."

The Maoists gave a list of seven dead, all belonging to their party, following the attack by rival political parties. They also alleged that Nepal army might have been involved in the killing of two of its members in Rolpa.

A Baluwatar source said the PM warned the two leaders that he was in receipt of detailed reports of the law and order situation including the activities of the Maoists, 'which were spoiling the election atmosphere'. Koirala later advised Madhav Nepal to restrain his workers and not to get instigated by Maoists' activities.

On March 22, Koirala asked the media people at his residence to work for the success of CA polls as that alone would take Nepal to a new age of peace, progress and stability. He also warned that Nepal would be losing the unprecedented level of international goodwill if elections are not held this time around.

He refused to take any query from journalists after his brief speech, but gave enough scope to speculate that he had not yet ruled out the possibility of the elections being foiled. He said, "You are journalists. You can work for its success as well as failure... I hope you all will work for its success."

Questionable sincerity

Security situation yet to be conducive for the polls

As the Election Commission (EC) still adopts a conciliatory and persuasive if not passive attitude towards the incidents of violence and intimidation during the campaign, the United Nations Mission to Nepal has warned the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) that it must change its behavior to prove that it wants a free and fair election.

In its report made public to the media on March 22, UNMIN expressed concern over the growing attacks by Maoist cadres on their political opponents and said, "The pattern of these incidents has raised serious questions about whether the CPN-M, or significant parts of it, are willing to be engaged in a genuinely free and fair democratic process."

It said the CPN-M, particularly the Youth Communist League (YCL), have been preventing campaigning in areas traditionally under their control, leading to a climate of fear. It said it had gathered evidence that at least in one place, the attack by the Maoists was pre-planned.

The report which UNMIN prepared together with the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (OHCHR) drew the attention of the CPN-M leadership, that several commanders and combatants belonging to the 'People's Liberation Army' had been fielded as candidates, while some were actively campaigning for the polls in violation

of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The inconsistency raised may not come under the purview of the EC, but this is something that the international observers may find difficult to ignore.

It also expressed concern that a sizeable number of the Maoist combatants were on leave and out of cantonments, and appealed to the Maoist leadership to ensure that the number did not exceed 12 per cent of the total combatants in the cantonments.

Based on the input gathered from police, officials, party activists and the local people, the UNMIN report said that there were also widespread concern about booth-capturing on the day of the poll, or disputed results leading to violence. The report also claimed that it had credible information about the misuse of resources by influential candidates.

It has taken note of the increase in election campaign related violence and urged the political parties to create an atmosphere for free and fair polls. It also asked the armed groups to initiate dialogue for their political accommodation. "The electoral campaign is increasingly taking a violent turn, with daily reports of clashes between party supporters, use of other forms of violence, intimidation and threats." It also expressed concern over the rising level of distrust and hostility among the contestants.

Brief

Innovative 'bullying'

Maoists have mixed their 'creativity' with their 'ability' to bully voters and candidates. And it is mostly being implemented in and around areas of Maoist key ideologue Baburam Bhattarai's home town.

In several places in Gorkha and Tanahun, the Maoist cadres not only forcibly captured the food that was cooked for other parties' campaigners; they also occupied the night shelter arranged for the rival campaigners.

In a constituency in Tanahun (where Congress has fielded former Home Minister Gobinda Raj Joshi), Maoist cadres allegedly took away milk, biscuits and sugar, where the residents of a Gurung village were hosting an election meeting in support of the Congress. But the Maoists' feat in Gorkha was much more aggressive. They ate all that was cooked for the Congress candidates, and also occupied the space where accommodation for about two dozen campaigners had been arranged by the Congress party's local unit.

Truce

Madhav Kumar Nepal failed to forge an electoral understanding with the Maoists, but has succeeded in hammering a truce between his CPN-UML and the Maoist party, at least in one 'sensitive area' of the country.



Maoists and UML have reached a 'no first attack' understanding in Kapilvastu area at the intervention of the central leaders. The verbal understanding followed a bloody clash between the two sides in which more than a dozen UML activists sustained major injuries last week. As per the understanding, no side will disturb or attack the other side's electoral activities including campaigning. Initiatives in other places where the two left groups clashed, have however not worked.

At least one Maoist activist was killed in Gulmi following the clash with UML, while Maoists have thrashed and wounded many from UML sides in different parts of the

country. Devi Shankar Kandel, a UML candidate from Ramechhap, had a miraculous escape in the attack by the Maoists.

Sujata annoyed

High profile Congress candidate and the daughter of Prime Minister GP Koirala is quite upset with the sudden disappearance of her election materials in Sunsari, from where she is contesting the polls. The flags, banners and festoons planted



during the day are found missing the next morning. Although she has lodged a verbal complaint with the local authorities, the disappearing act has not stopped.

Among others, Madheshi Janadhikar Forum leader, Upendra Yadav is contesting against the Minister without portfolio.

Election in two phases

In what appears like his fast eroding confidence in the prevailing security situation of the country, UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal has asked the Election Commission (EC) to go for a two-phase election in the country.

Nepal made the suggestion after he met his party's activists undergoing treatment in Kathmandu's Bir Hospital, following attacks by the Maoists on March 21. He said he is going to talk to the Prime Minister as well as the commission about it.

He did not quite make it clear whether he wants separate poll dates for Tarai and the rest of the country. The EC has begun dispatching all election materials in 240 constituencies which are going to have the one day poll on April 10 for the 240 seats under the first past the post system, and another 335 under the proportional representation system.

Media Center

The Election Commission has set up its own media center as the countdown for the election begins. The commission's media center is equipped with computers with internet facilities, and journalists covering the election related events will have access to the computers for forty minutes at a stretch.





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Point to Ponder

Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.
 - Isaac Asimov, Astounding Science Fiction, May 1942

Costly justice

The country has been without a governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) for more than a year now. Governor Bijayanath Bhattarai had been under suspension ever since he was charge-sheeted in a case involving financial irregularity and corruption by the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Authority (CIAA). The case found its way to the Supreme Court after three judges of the special court differed on the charges labeled against him by the investigating agency, and naturally one hoped that the apex court would be delivering justice.

But the judgment that Justice Tahir Ali Ansari delivered dashed all hopes, not because Governor Bhattarai and Director Surendraman Pradhan, were held guilty of making loss to the NRB, but because the very 'basis' of his judgment was not based on truth. All that can be said at the moment is there has been a crude miscarriage of justice as the judge concerned perhaps did not take into account the relevant facts while delivering the judgment.

The judgment said the two did not obtain consent from the World Bank (WB) prior to making payments worth more than 51,000 U S dollars to KPMG, the consulting firm that the NRB had hired for financial sector reforms programme, with the understanding and assistance from WB. As WB makes it clear now, obtaining such permission was not at all necessary.

Secondly, NRB had kept WB informed on issues like hiring and firing of the consultants. WB's latest statement also makes it clear that NRB removed the consultant on its failure to fulfill some of the contractual obligations only after it had obtained the green signal from WB. Moreover, the bank had entire 51,000 plus dollars reimbursed to NRB which only means that the central bank did not suffer any financial loss as Justice Ansari's judgment claims.

Supreme Court must always remain above the cloud of suspicion, and especially when it delivers judgment on issues related with corruption and irregularities. Moreover, the apex court was fully in knowledge about the controversy surrounding this case right from the day CIAA began its investigation. A powerful lobby of the bankers was out to get the duo as they were behind the takeover of some of the financial institutions much against this lobby's interest.

Besides, the fact that the CIAA chief was maintaining a regular contact with the lobby had hit the newspaper headlines. One would naturally expect that the judge or the bench of the court would not only take all these factors into account, but also fully equip itself with the required knowledge on the issue. WB's latest public stance gives justified basis to infer that the apex court did not meet those expectations.

That the duo has the right to go for an appeal in larger bench, no doubt, still gives hope that finally justice will be done. But any room left to speculate on the motive, quality and character of the justice delivered by the Supreme Court will be unfortunate and self-destructive.



Letters

Women's Day matters

In her article, Why Women's Day, published in the previous issue of News Front, Lucille Bulduc raised some very important issues. However, I cannot agree with everything she has written and with the way she used, 'we' and 'they'. I agree neither with Ms. Bulduc speaking on my behalf ('we') nor I can accept the dualistic vision of the word divided between 'us' and 'them'. (Who are 'we', who are 'they'?)

It is obvious to me that the author is neither able to read in Nepali nor is she acquainted with the local media and the situation in general. Judging the reality based on media coverage is already strange; judging all Nepali media on the basis of coverage of a handful of English language print media is ignorance; but judging the reality on the same unrepresentative basis is a big misunderstanding. I didn't quite get which of these three the author was attempting since it started as media coverage analysis and ended in some kind of prophecy.

Personally I believe every occasion is good to remind societies that the 'half' cannot be called a 'minority' and that all people as citizens have to be equally treated in their countries. I don't think many women in Nepal have ever thought that Women's Day is a social event. If that is the author's perception-too bad for her. In my opinion talking (accompanied by marching, picnicking,



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or whatever) is a necessary part of acting; and talking cannot stop until everybody in this country will be considered a citizen first of all.

Yes, 'we are the lucky ones' that is why we, the educated people, 'members of the club of English speakers' have additional responsibility. I don't believe in big words and do not expect immediate results but I think if each and everyone tries to do a little there will be progress. I'm not a rich person who can make hefty donations but I have enough to invest in my only employee and her child's education. Over the years I taught her language and skills which will allow her to keep improving her own and her family's lives. My friends who come from abroad do the same, sadly

few Nepali families follow the suit.

The point here is not to generalise; the world is not black and white. Well, I have to agree, the way international partners or agencies operate is far from ideal, but what is the alternative? Is it better not to do anything or to do something? And actually quite a lot is being done for many individuals across Nepal thanks to those internationals. It takes effort to travel and talk to people.

I agree that 'progress comes from sacrifice, and politics, and organisation' but it is not a speedy process. I also have to agree that the behaviour of some international workers posted in Nepal is irritating but what I do not agree is throwing everybody in one sack. You cannot blame anybody for being

born in one or the other country, in this or that family. I cannot change what has been done in the past but I can focus on working for the future. I will be looking forward to every Women's Day.

■ Anna Adhikari
 Kathmandu

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

Spiritual Corner

The translator

Marpa Lotsawa (1012-1097), or Marpa the translator was a Tibetan Buddhist teacher credited with bringing many Buddhist teachings to Tibet from India, including the teachings and lineages of Mahamudra. Although he eventually became a highly accomplished Buddhist master, Marpa neither founded nor joined a Buddhist institution, choosing instead to remain a married householder.

Born as Marpa Chökyi Lodrö, in Lhodrak Chukhyer in the southern part of Tibet, to an affluent family, he began studying at a young age but was wild and untamed compared to other children. Marpa first received instruction for three years at Mangkhar and mastered

Sanskrit. He decided to travel to India to study with renowned Indian Buddhist masters. Marpa returned home to Lhodrak and converted his entire inheritance into gold to fund his travel expenses and to make offerings to teachers.

Marpa journeyed first to Nepal where he studied with Paindapa and Chitherpa, two famous students of Naropa. Paindapa later accompanied Marpa to Pullahari, near Nalanda University, where Naropa taught. Marpa spent twelve years studying with Naropa and other great



Indian gurus. After twelve years he set forth on his journey back to Tibet to teach and continue his dharma activities.

Marpa was to travel to India twice more and Nepal three more times and studied with Naropa and other great teachers including Maitripa. On his third visit to India, Naropa, who was engaged in tantric practices, proved difficult to find. However eventually Marpa found him and received the final teachings and instructions from Naropa. It was then that Naropa proph-

esied that a family lineage would not continue for Marpa, but that his lineage would be carried on by his disciples. Marpa now had received the full transmission, so Naropa formally declared Marpa to be his successor.

Upon his return to Tibet, Marpa spent many years translating Buddhist scriptures and made a major contribution to the transmission of the complete Buddhadharma to Tibet. Marpa continued to practice and give teachings and transmissions to many students in Tibet. After his third visit to India Milarepa became his disciple, who inherited his lineage in full. Marpa lived with his wife Dakmema and their sons in Lhodrak in the southern part of Tibet.

Maoist leaders (from left) Matrika Yadav, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Prachanda and Post Bahadur Bogati in a poll campaign



Detente of a new kind

Thus the scene is set for a massive confrontation which might lead to a huge poll-related violence if security is not placed on top.



■ Binod P. Bista

CPN-UML affiliated All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) is preparing to capture those (Maoists) attempting to seize election booths. There are still others who will surely put up their cadres according to their capacities in specific polling centers but have not yet announced openly.

Regardless of the arrangement to be put in place by the election commission with the help of the Nepali government for a free and fair election of the forthcoming constituent assembly, the major political parties in the present government are readying themselves with the mobilisation of their party cadres at each polling station. With the fear and suspicion of Maoist affiliated young communist league (YCL) seizing the election booths, said to be mobilising about 200 YCL cadres per polling center, Congress affiliated Nepal Tarun Dal is said to be mobilising 101 cadres of its own to ensure free and fair election by presenting itself as a security shield at those centers.

CPN-UML affiliated All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) is preparing to capture those (Maoists) attempting to seize election booths. There are still others who will surely put up their cadres according to their capacities in specific polling centers but have not yet announced openly. Thus the scene is set for a massive confrontation which might lead to a huge poll-related violence if security is not placed on top.

Since the seven parties seem to have very little faith in their security apparatus, who can blame others outside of this coalition. In spite of the government leaders, joined by UNMIN chief, in reiterating that anybody trying to disrupt the polls will be harshly dealt, but the major question is who will or can do it under the current situation in Nepal. The question does not end with the extreme factions of Tarai which has not only remained outside of the election but also openly announced to disrupt it. Preventing other parties access to their constituencies for electioneering purpose, manhandling as well as abducting leaders and cadres of other parties reflect that there are more than the extreme factions at play presently.

The massive mobilisation of cadres by all major parties in all constituencies could lead to any of these anti-democratic activities: preventing others from entering the booths, seizing booths after polling, directly confronting against each other before the elections. If any of these incidents were to happen, the elections might turn into one of the bloodiest in modern democratic setup. Not to

mention of the parties challenging or revolting against the election outcome.

Since the present plan calls for direct election to all constituencies at one go in spite of the fact that it may not be possible for the government to maintain law and order in some parts of Tarai, and also some other parts in the hilly areas, the security requirement would have to be quick and effective to contain the trouble spots during the elections. It would also require good strength to provide a peaceful and secure environment in places where polling can take place. With the Nepali military out of the picture for this election, the task of maintaining law and order primarily rests on regular and armed police forces. Are they up to the challenge with their present strength?

As it stands, the best solution lies with the major political parties standing in the CA elections, including the Maoists. They can simply restrain their cadres from getting involved in any anti-democratic activities and lead them to follow the code of conduct prescribed by the election commission. Observance of law and order is critical in ensuring

the success of the CA election. When the major political parties have a coalition government of their own, what threat do they have from any other group other than themselves in the conduct of this election?

In the past two years of governance, the government must have ensured that it has the right people in the right places including the security forces. The straightforward thing to do is to deploy the bureaucrats along with the security forces in consultation with the election commission which has the responsibility to see through the election.

May be the government is backing on the détente created by the evolving situation in most polling centers as a result of the mobilisation of huge number of cadres of the three major players! If it works, it would be the first of its kind in a developing country and truly worthy of imitation in other places. Or, perhaps the government is discreetly working with its neighbor of the South, which has assured of any kind of help during the election, to supplement its efforts including securing peace in Tarai? ■

Madhesis through Kathmandu Lens

The Madhesis often suffer from wrongly preconceived notions that these international organisations are the answer to all their suffering

■ Chandrakishore Jha



It is heartening to note that since January 2007, the Madhes of Nepal has attracted lots of international

NGOs who are willing to do some development works among the people. It is also encouraging to know that these INGOs make efforts to interact with people from the Madhesi community, which one understands is, with a view to have better knowledge about the community and the problems that confront them. And in all honesty, I must say that I have been fortunate to have interacted with them on a number of occasions.

While it must be acknowledged that such interactions are immensely useful and beneficial for both sides, it is also equally necessary to point out that the approach of some of these INGOs however, desires a modification. Some of them seemed to have mixed up humanitarian assistance and development activities with politics.

In what may be termed as typically driven by selective Kathmandu mindset syndrome, they come to the Tarai with some pre-conceived notions about the people, particularly, the Madhesis. Certain questions they

routinely hurl at people they meet, either collectively or individually, are sometimes not only annoying, but disturbing.

For example, in one such interaction with a reputed INGO recently, we were shocked by some of the questions rudely put to us by the esteemed members of the organisation. Questions like "how do we feel when called a Nepali", "how do we react to the fact that India do not want to recruit Madhesis in the Indian Army," etc, which has nothing to do with their proposed development activities, nor has any relevance to knowing or appreciating the Madhes way of life.

Though on this particular occasion, our friends were politely reminded that such questions are of no significance, and should therefore be avoided, not many among those they meet have the courage to constructively suggest to them. Make no mistake. The Madhesis relish every bit of attention they get from national and international organisations since a good chunk of their history was an experience of neglect.

Therefore they are most willing to open out whenever they are spoken to by people from outside their community. And without exaggera-



tion, it has to be said that they also sometimes tend to go a little over board than actually required. This in a way is a reflection of their confidence in people representing INGOs. The Madhesis often suffer from preconceived notions that these international organisations are the answer to all their suffering.

It must also be emphasised that the Madhesi is now a community with a newfound sense of pride and emotion. They have parted with their usual characteristic of being able to

absorb all kinds of insult and humiliation. Contrary to doubts being raised about their sense of belonging to Nepal, they are no more prepared to take lying down any suggestions that question their Nepali nationality. They are also allergic to direct or indirect suggestions that their movement might have been triggered from elsewhere.

Therefore, what these INGOs must keep in mind is that they should approach the Tarai from Tarai perspective, rather than seeing it

through the lens of few ill-informed Kathmanduites. They must not get carried away by what they read or hear from a few with vested interests, who are in fact equally ignorant about the Madhesi people. Their independent and objective assessments will go a long way in serving the interest of the people.

They should also be sensitive enough to accept that people appreciate more the humble ways of reaching out.
(chandrakishore_jha@yahoo.com)
(Chandrakishore is Tarai based)

Sadly, in Nepal, we are no longer in control of our destiny

■ Siddhartha Thapa



In Nepal everything our politicians have done has tragically been viewed through

the lens of profit. The escalation in violence and the lack of seriousness demonstrated by the ruling group compels a lot of us to wonder if the opportunity to establish permanent peace and democracy is being lost day by day; and some opine we have already lost the opportunity, at least for now.

I wonder if we truly are a sovereign nation. Take the present situation in Nepal: no electricity, law and order situation has crumbled, acute fuel shortages, political infighting, ethnic clashes, and worse you have a political party who possesses weapons and obstructs other parties from campaigning for elections through

What kind of New Nepal?

force. Now in such a situation, for example hypothetically, in Britain, if the country were in a similar quagmire, would the army have kept quiet?

If you had a similar situation in India, could the Indian army afford to keep quiet and allow things to further deteriorate because acting in the interest of the nation would enrage the international community? Sadly, in Nepal, we are no longer in control of our destiny; we have succumbed to the pressures of the international community and in doing so, we have compromised our country's sovereignty.

This may read as polemic, but in actuality it is the exact opposite. Let me for a moment raise the issue of Hinduism in Nepal and compare the cultural values of any western country. For instance Britain, a country very similar to Nepal, the queen is the head of the Church of England, Christian holidays are strictly followed and Anglo-Saxon ideals are strictly adhered to and guarded. Now, could the international community force Britain to change its cultural making? The answer of course is, no.

What we fail to realise is that even in the fast changing modern world, religion is still a critical political denominator. Our identity is just not confined to being Nepali, it is more than that and religion is a major component that has shaped and branded our identity even in this modern world. A vast majority of Nepalis consider themselves Hindu or Buddhists. In other words, by declaring Nepal a secular state by a resurrected parliament which was last elected in 1999, we have constructed a religious divide; and the international community applauded an appointed parliament's decision to declare Nepal secular state where 85% of the population follows Vedic Hinduism infused with tantrik Buddhism.

Who is the real enemy, let us ask. Our very way of life is under threat, and it is only we who can protect our way of life.

I genuinely think the monarchy if routed has to be done through a democratic manner. The decision of an appointed parliament to direct the constituent assembly to declare Nepal a republic through a simple majority can only be viewed as cowardice. It is shocking for us Nepalis to think that we need to kick the institution of monarchy out of our socio-political system just because the international community wants us to do so. Or worse, are we to compromise our heritage, our history, our culture and our religion just because the Maoists who have adopted a failed western ideology of communism, threaten us to do so?

Despite the fact that the Maoists still continue to use violence and threaten the very socio-cultural construct of our society, we are still mute. This fight isn't just about democracy, it is about much more. The fight against communism is about safeguarding our sovereignty. Prachanda is dictated by an international and a regional body of communist movements. He spent eight of his ten years across the border during the revolution. It is the Maoists who invited UNMIN and other international forces to mediate

in Nepal's peace process. So, who is a nationalist and who is not a nationalist?

This fight is about social rights. For centuries Nepal has maintained social harmony, however, the Maoists to suit their needs sowed the seeds of social hatred to further their ideology. The social unrest we have been observing in the Tarai and other parts of Nepal are all results of what the Maoists have preached during their insurgency. Today, it is no secret that the Maoists want to create a society that has no social and cultural components to it – they want to cleanse all social, religious and cultural assertions.

Who is the real enemy, let us ask. Our very way of life is under threat, and it is only we who can protect our way of life. Surely, ten years down the road, we would not like to see our children organising secret religious gatherings; and we for sure do not want to give up the right to own property in the name of an ideology. Nor would we want a Dashain less year in the name of communism. ■

“Nep-Batt has been performing extremely well.”

Keeping peace

Lok Bahadur Thapa Magar

Brigadier General of Nepal Army, **Lok Bahadur Thapa Magar** was appointed as Head of Ituri Brigade of United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic in Congo (MONUC) recently. More than 4,600 officers and staff from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Guatemala, Indonesia and Uruguay army besides Nepal army serve under him to establish peace and order, in the violence affected Ituri district of Democratic Republic Congo. Brig. Gen. Thapa Magar spoke to **Chhatra Karki** at his office in Ituri. Excerpts of the interview Chhatra took for newsfront:

As the head of the Ituri Brigade, how do you project the role of MONUC in peacekeeping process in Democratic Republic Congo?

I am keenly aware that the key to lasting peace, security and stability in the Ituri district of eastern Congo lies in the control of Bunia, Tchey of Irumu Territory (Patriotic Force for Resistance - FRPI militia stronghold) and Lalo of Djugu Territory (Front for National Integration - FNI stronghold) by having a strong presence of MONUC military and civil components, as well as Armed Forces for Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), and local government authority of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

MONUC/Ituri Brigade and Congolese authorities have been making substantial progress towards carrying out the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants in the Ituri region, which helped to stabilise security conditions in this part of the country.

What were the positive results in different fields due to the efforts of Monuc?

Activities of MONUC, Ituri Brigade yielded positive results in the following arena: asserting control over various militias stronghold areas and establishing writ of MONUC by physical deployment of troops in far flung reaches of the area of responsibility such as Tchey in Irumu Territory and Lalo in Djugu Territory and there by restoring normalcy; sensitising FNI/FRPI splinter militia groups including key leaders to join national mainstream; liberty of action of militia has been severely curtailed by imposing check on illegal activities not only inside Ituri district but also in key border areas; prevention of ethnic clashes; return of internally displaced people and training to FARDC personnel.

MONUC'S Ituri Brigade organised the return of Ex Lord's Resistance Army elements to Uganda. It has been conducting joint operations in order to monitor and control the FARDC violations effectively.

What is the status of Nepali battalion (Nep-Batt)?

Nep-Batt has been performing extremely well. Since the arrival in the

mission area on 5 March 07, the battalion has put its heart and soul on accomplishing the assigned tasks under the given mandate. With high morale, dedication and professionalism the battalion has been supporting the peace building mandate of MONUC by conducting various security operations as and when ordered and required in its Area of Responsibility.

As a result of it most displaced locals have returned to their homes giving a boost to the process. Schools and shops have been opened and civil authorities have

living conditions of local people.

How is Nep-Batt working to keep peace and harmony in Democratic Republic Congo?

To say it briefly, Nepali peacekeepers have five great qualities, they are: courage, humanity, tolerance, impartiality and neutrality. These are the qualities which make Nepali peacekeepers an essential component of peace keeping operations. Nep-Batt is working in close collaboration with local authorities of Government of Democratic Republic of Congo as per the MONUC mandate.



Congolese rebel leader Peter Karim's son in a 'Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (DDR)'

assumed their responsibilities. Now people are feeling secured and leading a normal life. In addition to that Civil agencies, INGOs, NGOs and several organisations have started their activities in the Nep-Batt AOR for the improvement of the

Are you satisfied with Nep-Batt's performance?

I feel immensely satisfied. It has been proven through the series of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration program (DDR) of FNI splinter militia groups and establish-

Nepali peacekeepers have five great qualities, they are: courage, humanity, tolerance, impartiality and neutrality.



A DDR program

ment of Mobile Operating Base at Lalo, a stronghold of the militias. I am very happy also for the persistent efforts Nep-Batt has put in to bring the Internally Displaced Peoples back home and also for the sensitisation of militias to join DDR process with profound professionalism as a result of which 25 militias including three prominent leaders voluntarily surrendered to Nep-Batt with at least 10 AK-47 weapons in the months of Jan / Feb 2008 alone.

Besides it has also conducted a number of humanitarian activities like improving the water supply facility, repairing roads and bridges, providing medical assistance, organising cultural exchange programs, conducting schools and community support programs etc., to win the hearts and minds of the Congolese people.

What are the major problems faced by Nep-Batt in their job?

Nepali contingent has been deployed in one of the most far flung regions of DRC since the very outset

of its mission. And its area of responsibility is quite vast; therefore, it has been facing a number problems related to administration and logistics. Both Nep-Batt and Nep-Engineer Company are getting constant support, assistance and guidance from the Directorate of Peacekeeping Operations, Army Headquarters, Kathmandu, Nepal in this regard.

What efforts should be made to increase the potential of Nep-Batt?

Efforts are underway to resolve the administrative and logistical constraints faced by Nep-Batt in order to enhance its efficiency. For instance, it has already chalked out a strategy to resolve the repair and maintenance problem of equipment as pointed out by Contingent Owned Equipment and Operation Readiness Inspection teams. Besides the recent visit by Nepali delegation headed by the Director of Peacekeeping Operations, Nepali Army has tremendously boosted the morale of Nepali peacekeepers in Democratic Republic of Congo. ■

Politically confused foreigners risk making Nepal's crisis worse

There is reason to fear the Maoists. Not because they are bad people, but because their ideas are stupid, violent, and have failed everywhere they have been tried.

■ Lucille Bolduc

There is reality, and then there is what we want to hear. In Nepal, most people can't tell the difference. This confusion is a function of geography, not race – some of the worst deluded in town are the foreigners. From European diplomats re-experiencing their gap-years, to American Peace Corps veterans living off US tax dollars, while hoping to relive Castro's seizure of Havana; too many Bideshis romanticise Nepal, and they've made themselves easy prey for the country's political operators.

Look at the facts: last Wednesday the head of INSEC, a well known and credible domestic human rights organisation, had the unusual courage to state that 97 per cent of the violations of the election Code of Conduct have been committed by the Maoists. It's the Maoists who have attacked police stations, rolled rocks down mountains on UML leaders, shot at an NC candidate. The Maoists have threatened voters that if they don't give the CPN-M their, "vote, or they'll be like a Goth [forced out of their homes to sheds], and have to pay notes". It rhymes in Nepali, too. Not the best revolutionary poetry, but motivating when delivered by a man with a

homemade pistol in his hand, backed by a homemade army.

The other political parties are no angels: the RPP, UML and NC wrote the book on booth capturing and corrupting election and security officials. But they're all amateurs in this war, and they don't have armies behind them. The Maoists are an army masquerading as a political party, and they're a Maoist army. Like any word, you say it enough and it loses its meaning. You forget you're talking about the ideology of Mao Tse Tung, 70 million dead in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, that you're talking about Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge; more than one in four dead from starvation in just three years.

The only good thing you can say about Peru's Shining Path, another Maoist gang our Maobadis like to talk about - probably because Peru, like Nepal, has big mountains - is that they were wiped out before they could take power and do more damage. But their long war led to nearly 70,000 casualties, and did nothing to develop the country, or bring freedom to the poor people who were more often their victims.

But read the papers in Kathmandu and you would think the elections are a battle between equal parties. The Nepali Times' CK Lal fell into

the deep-end of the Nepal fantasy swamp in his March 14 column on West Bengal, where he abandoned a reasonable assessment of the Communist Party of India, their successes and failures, and launched into an unsupported and unsupportable argument, asserting that there's no reason to fear communist parties, and that the UML and the Maoists are somehow the same.

On whether to fear communism, clearly there's a difference between say, the German Left Party, and the Khmer Rouge. The first is old-fashioned, the second is frightening. I'd be more interested in the fantasy talk about the Maoists being better armed versions of Swedish social democrats if the Maoists had transformed Rolpa and Rukum into little Switzerlands during their dozen years under Prachanda's control, or used their two years in Kathmandu to clean streets and not empty our pockets.

As it is, those Maoist base areas are among the poorest. Sure, the Maoists argue they stayed poor because they were cut off from the rest of the country, but isn't the Maoists' economic policy of self-sufficiency designed to turn all of Nepal into Rolpa? How else do you read their plans to shred trade treaties with India, and the unsettling talk about 'scientific land reform'?

There is reason to fear the Maoists. Not

because they are bad people, but because their ideas are stupid, violent, and have failed everywhere they have been tried. Maoism has nothing to do with the pragmatic leftism of the UML, or the CPI government in Kolkata. The UML talk about 'building your own village' – the Maoists will burn your village down.

The inability to examine Nepal honestly is at its worst here, confusing one brand of left politics with another. This only happens on the left – no sane person would say Germany's conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel is a fascist, even though fascism lurks on her side of the ideological spectrum. India's Maoists are happy to attack the CPI in the same way they attack the BJP: for extremists everyone who disagrees with you is the enemy.

Nepal is going through a confusing time; foreigners should not make it worse by ignoring the difference between generally well-meaning social democrats and fundamentalist ultra-leftists. And if we don't want blood on our hands we should speak up soon. We should know better, most of us do know better, and this is no time to live out 1960s Che fantasies. We would never accept the CPN-M in our own countries, why do so many of us give them tacit support here in Nepal? ■



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Finally, it's Gilani

“thoughts and prayers” were with Mr Gilani, the coalition government and the people of Pakistan and that he wished them “all success in the challenges that lie ahead”.

The Pakistan People's Party on Saturday named Makhdoom Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani for election as the country's next prime minister to head a landmark coalition of former political rivals, ending weeks of suspense on a day of high political drama that also saw some old friendships being punctured and a new one initiated.

Wiles and guiles of politics were in full play in Islamabad before a statement from PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari announced the choice he said he had made through consultations within the party and with coalition partners, dumping the other most prominent hopeful, Makhdoom Amin Fahim.

The nominee of the PPP, which emerged as the largest parliamentary group in the Feb 18 election, will be the coalition's joint candidate whose election by the National Assembly for a five-year term, set for Monday, is a foregone conclusion because of the expected support by more than two-thirds majority in the 342-seat lower house.

Mr Fahim, a senior vice-chairman of the PPP, like Mr Gilani, and president of the party's electoral arm of PPP Parliamentarians, immediately accepted the nomination despite strongly pressing his candidacy publicly in the past, and told the media by telephone from Karachi that he would arrive in Islamabad on Sunday “only, only and only” to vote for Mr Gilani on Monday.



The nomination was earlier due to have been announced by PPP boy chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who, according to party officials, had come home during a studies break in Britain only for this purpose.

But in an apparent last-minute change of plans amid murmurs about the wisdom of involving the 19-year-old undergraduate in a controversy and to announce a choice he was not expected to make, the task was left to a statement from Mr Zardari that was read out to the

media by party spokesman Farhatullah Babar.

However, the statement spoke of consultations having been held with Bilawal as with other coalition partners and unspecified party members and made no mention of Mr Fahim, whose candidacy had fed rumour mills for weeks after media reports that Mr Zardari and main ally PML-N had developed some reservations about the PPP's most senior parliamentarian because of his past contacts with President Pervez Musharraf.

Though Mr Zardari never spoke about the matter publicly, Mr Fahim had reacted to a statement by PML-N MNA Khwaja Mohammad Asif by stating recently that he had such contacts during the lifetime of assassinated party leader Benazir Bhutto on her directives and Mr Zardari was aware of those made afterwards.

While the PPP prepared for the announcement of its prime ministerial candidate, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) stunned the opposition alliance by withdraw-

ing its member Farooq Sattar as joint opposition candidate for the office to give an unconditional support of its 25 National Assembly members to the PPP nominee. The sudden move left the formerly ruling Pakistan Muslim League and its allies with no option but to look for an alternative.

Political observers were intrigued by the sudden MQM's withdrawal from the race, which set off speculations about a possible role of President Pervez Musharraf because of his perceived sympathies for the party. The move came after a reported telephonic contact between Mr Zardari and MQM's self-exiled leader Altaf Hussain.

Strangely, leaders of both the MQM and PML said they would remain together in opposition though one of them will vote for the PPP candidate.

Some political sources speculated that peace with MQM could help the PPP overcome any problems in its main power base of Sindh province due to the rejection of Mr Fahim's candidacy or to neutralise any future challenge from any other coalition partner at the centre.

Mr Zardari said in his statement that a “consensus has been achieved” in nominating Mr Gilani after completion of consultations within the PPP, with coalition partners and with Mr Bilawal Bhutto.

(Dawn)

Taiwan victor promises China ties



Taiwan's newly-elected president has pledged to establish better economic and political ties with China.

Ma Ying-jeou said he would like to work towards a peace treaty with Beijing, but would only do so if China removed missiles pointed at Taiwan.

He said he had no immediate plans to visit the mainland, but wanted to work on “substantive issues”.

Mr Ma won a comfortable victory over Frank Hsieh of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party on Saturday.

Official results gave Mr Ma 58.45% of the vote - an advantage of nearly 17 percentage points over Mr Hsieh.

Mr Ma, of the Kuomintang party, had stood on a platform of economic reform and improving relations with China.

He ruled out an immediate

visit to mainland China, but said he would focus on improving relations by “substantive” means including stepping up direct flights.

No incumbent president has visited the Chinese mainland since the Kuomintang was forced to retreat to Taiwan in 1949, as civil war broke out on the mainland.

On Saturday, Mr Ma said economic normalisation would take priority over concluding a peace treaty, which he said would be conditional on the removal of what Taiwan says are some 1,000 missiles aimed at the island.

In Sunday's further comments, he acknowledged that the issue of sovereignty was the most difficult problem affecting bilateral relations, adding that mutual recognition was “out of the question”.

Instead, he proposed a

middle road of “mutual non-denial” - “we will not deny their existence but we cannot recognise their sovereignty” over Taiwan, he said.

China says that Taiwan is part of its territory, although the two have been separately governed since 1949, and China has never ruled out using force against the island should it move towards formal independence.

Mr Ma indicated that he would move away from the stance of arch-nationalist Chen Shui-bian, who steps down in May.

“I will make it crystal clear that Taiwan will be a stakeholder and will not rock the boat in the region. By stakeholder, I mean peace-maker.”

In Washington, President George W Bush greeted Mr Ma's victory.

“I believe the election provides a fresh opportunity for both sides to reach out and engage one another in peacefully resolving their differences,” he said.

Though Mr Hsieh had also pledged to build closer commercial ties with China, his approach was more cautious than his rival's.

Mr Ma now has a commanding mandate, as the Kuomintang controls two-thirds of the seats in parliament having won a sweeping victory in polls in January.

But analysts were split over how rapidly change might come, noting that Mr Ma would want to reassure voters that he was not selling out to China.

Mr Ma, 57 and educated at Harvard, put the promise of an economic revival at the centre of his election campaign.

(BBC)

China says Tibet protests ‘under control’

China said on Sunday anti-government protests that spread from Tibet into other provinces were under control, while Chinese officials accused Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama of masterminding the recent protests.

The Communist Party's official state newspaper said on Sunday the Dalai Lama had never abandoned violence since fleeing China in 1959, and was seeking to hijack the



upcoming Beijing Olympics. Officials have also accused him of colluding with Uighur separatists in Xinjiang, who are calling for an independent state.

The exiled leader, for his part, has criticised the violence and said he wants to open negotiation channels. On Saturday, 29 Chinese dissidents urged Beijing to end the bitter propaganda war, allow UN investigators into Tibet, and open direct talks with Tibet's government in exile.

Foreign media have been banned from large parts of western China where thousands of troops have been dispatched to quell the protests against Chinese rule, the most bloody in nearly five decades.

(Gulf News)

MARSHLAND FLOWERS

The Buddha – the holder of ten powers

No yogis no matter how advanced can have all ten of them.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

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

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

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

audience. It is one of the ten special powers of the Tathagata called the Dasa bala.

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

The next Abhigya is called Purvanivas anusmriti gyana. As the words imply, Purva means former, Nivas means place of existence, Anusmriti means recollection or remembrance. With such an Abhigya the person can remember the past lives of oneself. How far he can remember depends on how advanced he is in Samadhi. He can even remember cycles of evolution of the universe of dissolutions, and evolution and dissolution again. He can remember that, "In that one I had such a name, clan, caste and experience pleasure or pain and how I died. Having died, I was born here," etc.

There are six classes of men who

may possess this Abhigya: i) Sramanas (ascetics) holding other views called Tirthikas in Buddhism. They specifically mean Hindus and Jain yogis. They are called Tirthikas because they believe that various Tirthas (pilgrimage spots) purified ones sins (Kleshas) which is something the Buddha emphatically denied. ii) Sravakas who are the ordinary disciples of the Buddha. iii) Mahasravakas, the special disciples of the Buddha. iv) Agrasravakas who are the great disciples of the Buddha.

Every Buddha has two great disciples. Sakyamuni's Agrasravakas were Mahamaudgalyayana and Sariputra. More will be said on the special capacities when the time comes. v) Pratyekabuddhas are more advanced than the Sravakas. They appear only when the teaching of the Buddha has been completely lost. But they are below the levels of a Samyak Sambuddha (the fully enlightened Buddha). As Sakyamuni's dispensation still exists strongly, there are no Pratyekabuddhas. vi) The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

(To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)



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By the snow fields

The cold takes my hands away as I place them under icy waters and wait for them to return. I keep looking for them, my hands that worked all these years for me. Only the mind remains my own, the cold of my lonely life.



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

It is only with the magic of cyber space that I can cross boundaries and reach out to audiences that would have remained hidden from his world. Traveling across North America I realise how a writer needs to know the other worlds to know the truths that his own world offers. My sojourn that began with Newfoundland moves on through Toronto to Montreal. If Toronto's underground bazaars offer solace, the huge bookstores with sections on cooking and political biographies appear disturbing.

As I take to the roads, the Nepali characters keep knocking doors of my consciousness. At Brampton, popularly known as Brown town, I meet all Nepali ethnicities in one house. There is a Gurung woman who just arrived from Mayagdi, missing her homeland. Last night she phoned her family back home since her husband had begun

laughing in his dreams. She asked her mother to go and ask the local shaman the implications of her hard working husband's queer behaviour. The other one called Caption Saab acclaims to have been better off in Nepal than having to learn the art of opening heavy engines every night here.

The cold outside with skunks hunting the garbage cans appears desolate. The child of the Newar couple from Patan seems strange. At five years, she looks much older, talks with the serious intent of 14 year old Nepali child. I am stunned by her grandmotherly talk and loss of innocence.

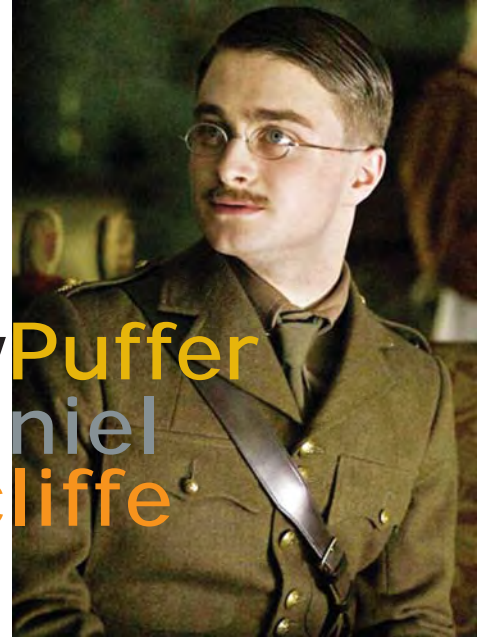
Snow piling outside each house sends a chilling message to my soul. Would spring never arrive here? Reaching Montreal, I see the ice piles taking shapes of little hills. On the highway, in the van, the romantic

Hindi songs the Punjabi driver is playing makes me very wistful. He plays the famous songs of 80s and 90s bringing my childhood memories alive.

Outside there is nothing but fields of snow. I constantly keep thinking of green wheat fields and paddy fields in Punjab that I thought to be so mundane. Life here is hostile, I wonder how the earlier settlers, the Vikings and the Europeans came to terms with this wilderness. Back home spring must have spread its wings in the landscape. I have already started getting e-messages of festival of colours, the Holi.

Behind my seat in the van, three Pakistani girls sleep soundly. They are moving to Montreal with their father carrying their stuff in a truck behind them. When they wake up, they start reading my books. To my amazement, they pick up the most erotic poems as their favourites. The most beautiful one is hidden behind the Purdah of my seat and I can hardly turn back to look at her truly stunning Asian face. Nor do I dare to take their photos, in spite of their inspiring comments on my love poems.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)



Harry Puffer Daniel Radcliffe

Daniel Radcliffe's friends are pleading with him to quit his "disgusting" 20-a-day cigarette habit.

The 18-year-old actor - who is currently filming 'Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince' - has become so addicted to nicotine he has been nicknamed 'Harry Puffer' by his co-stars.

A source said: "Daniel has been smoking up to 20 cigarettes a day. Every time they call 'cut', he lights up. It's disgusting.

"Friends, including co-stars Rupert Grint and Emma Watson,

have been warning him about the dangers of smoking. But he doesn't take any notice."

Daniel reportedly got through a whole pack of cigarettes when he had to film a difficult stunt last week.

The insider added to Britain's The Sun newspaper: "He was really nervous about the scene and was sparking up constantly." Movie bosses are said to be worried Daniel's habit could tarnish his schoolboy image and have reportedly told him not to smoke in public.

(Female First)



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सगरमाथा

समाजिकको विकासक, नेपालको गौरव

हरैक मंगलवार राति १०:३० बजे
बुधवार विहान ८:३० बजे
बिहीवार दिउँसो २:३० बजे
र शनिवार साँझ ६:३० बजे

Election watch

This election is not for the parliament, but for a constituent assembly; something the parties must understand even at this late hour.

agreed not to disrupt each others' meetings at Rupandehi, and one only hopes that this will be an arrangement made nationwide. Equally encouraging is the initiative at the top level of the political parties for seat-adjustments as revealed by the UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. A constructive approach by the media will also go a long way towards giving concrete shape to such initiatives, and discourage negative events like clashes among the competing parties.

This election is not for the parliament, but for a constituent assembly; something the parties must understand even at this late hour. This election is also an essential and integral part of the peace process. Any obstacle to the election will have a direct bearing on the peace process and invite disastrous consequences for the nation. That is why all the stakeholders need to enhance the possibilities of joint initiatives or actions, and minimise the chances of clashes. Together, they need to be vigilant towards any possible attempts by anti-election forces to thwart the collective endeavors of the pro-democracy forces.

(An analysis prepared by the Constituent Assembly Election observation joint forum.)

NEPAL stands at the crossroad of history. A successful and credible election to the constituent assembly on April 10 will open the vista for unlimited opportunities. Its failure, on the other hand could lead to a disaster. The government accord with agitating groups in Madhes a few days ago, created a positive atmosphere for polls, and the increasing participation of the political parties in the election campaign is a proof of that.

But the sudden increase in the incidents of clashes among the political parties, mainly between the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), has given rise to serious concerns. Let us hope that the leaders of both sides will demonstrate farsightedness and restrain their workers, guided by peace. But the latest reports indicate otherwise.

The two sides have clashed in Ramechhap, Dhading, Chitwan, Rupandehi, Makwanpur, Gorkha. Kamal Prasad Adhikary, a Jana Morcha candidate, was gunned down by criminals in Nepalgunj last week, and two Maoist activists also fell prey to criminals' bullets in Rolpa.

All these have exposed the



NC candidate Narahari Acharya campaigning for election

security arrangements made by the government. The armed outfits based in Madhesh have made public their designs to disrupt the elections. The government has also failed to investigate and identify the culprits for

the killings in Rolpa in the remote hills. All these indicate that the CA polls may still face three kinds of resistance: from the armed outfits based in Terai; from the conspiratorial and regressive forces, and from a situation arising out

of the clashes between the partners of the ruling alliance.

The UML and Maoists, even at this late hour, perhaps could see through the dangers. That is why they probably

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