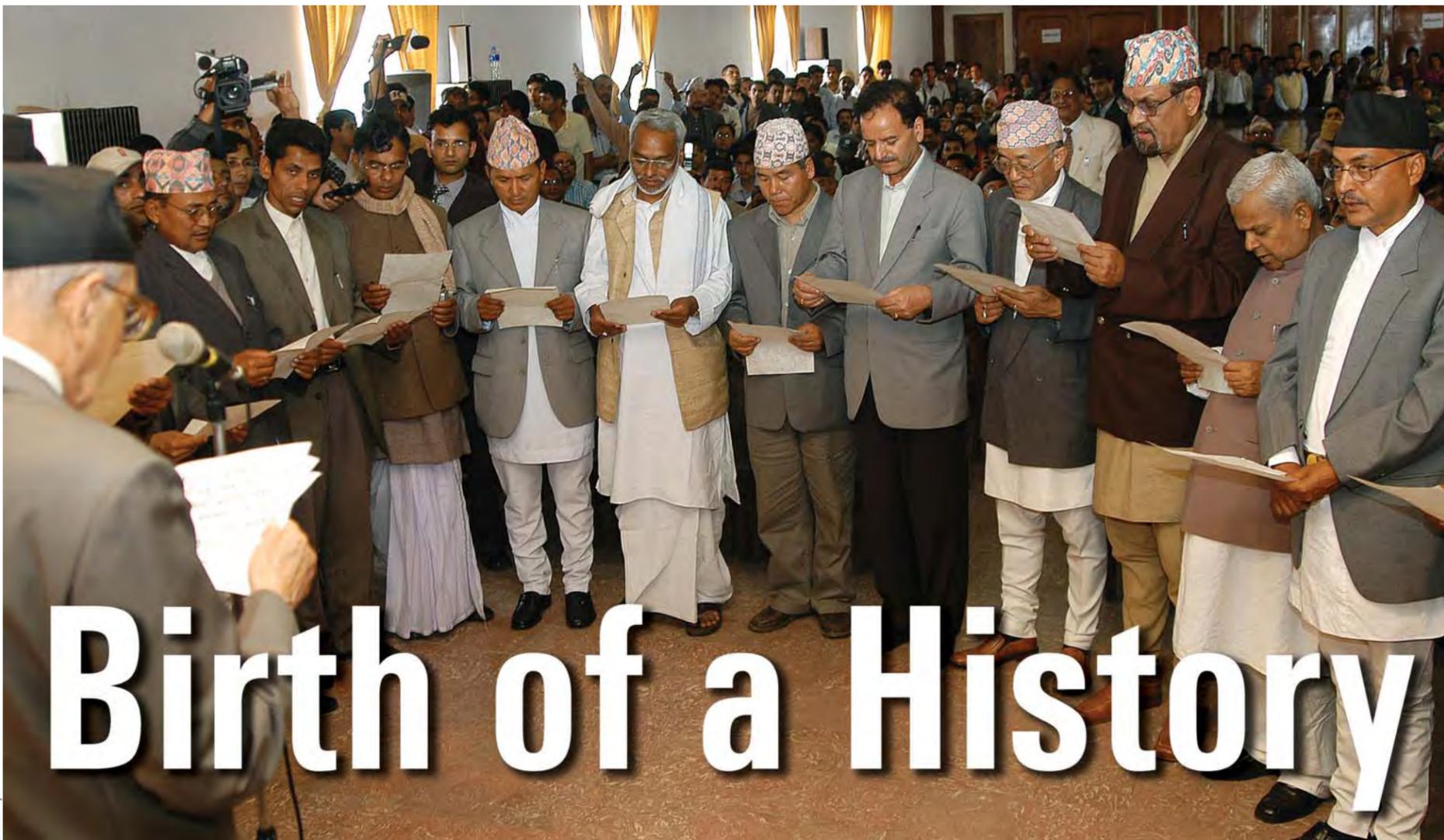




Courage & Conviction

# news front

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Interim Prime Minister administering oath of office to newly appointed ministers

## Birth of a History

### ■ Yubaraj Ghimire

A history of conflict and hatred was buried, and a future of hope was sown as Maoists declared the end of the two-regime rule and became part of the interim cabinet under a parliamentary system in Nepal.

G P Koirala (83) took the oath of office as interim Prime Minister with 22 member council of ministers under his wing. He administered the oath of office to the new members; seven members from his Nepali Congress, five each from CPN-UML and Maoists, three from Congress (D), and one each from Nepal Sadhbhavana Party and Bammorcha.

As the first indication of their tolerance towards state's security forces, Maoist ministers accepted Nepal Army personnel as their 'security guards', but there are no indications if their guerrillas and the Youth Communist League will stop extortion and parallel running of the law and order.

But the formation of the much awaited interim Government, already three months behind schedule, appeared as a secret deal between Koirala and Maoists since not only the PM tried to veto the nomination of Sahana Pradhan from the UML as Foreign Minister, but he also took a rigidly anti Terai posture by retaining K P Sitaula as Home Minister. The minister's failure in maintaining the law and order situation and inept handling of the Terai problem has resulted in loss of at least 60 lives from two warring sides - Maoists and the Madheshi Janadhikar in the past two months, "but Koirala bowed to Maoists pressure," a Congress

working committee member told newsfront, adding, "this does not augur well for country's future."

Koirala entrusted the number two position along with the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry to Ram Chandra Poudel who had on record stated that "Maoists are guided from Nirmal Niwas," accusing that they were pro-palace forces.

While Maoists inclusion in the cabinet has generally been welcomed, international community apparently would wait and watch going by the cautious 'welcome' it has expressed. "A truly unified government should be in a stronger position to face the challenges still ahead: creating conditions for a credible Constituent Assembly election; addressing the legitimate demands of groups in Nepali society calling for more inclusive democ-

cracy; establishing effective law enforcement across the country; and providing for the future of former combatants and a wider reform of the security sector," Ian Martin, Special Representative of the U N Secretary General said.

The U S was equally generous in its welcome, but clearly asked Maoists to change. "The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which to date has refused to abandon violence, must finally do so. As a partner in the interim Government, the Maoists must now be held fully accountable for their actions. They must meet their commitments and at last join the mainstream as a non-violent political party," a U S embassy release said.

Koirala is believed to have asked Maoist leaders to begin returning private and institutional property they have confiscated soon so that the international community would start trusting the Maoists. ■

- UML sticks to its ground
- Koirala surrenders to Maoists
- Angers Terai by retaining Sitaula
- Government yet to announce CA poll

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Sushil Koirala's loss turned out to be a windfall for Ram Chandra Poudel who emerged as the dark horse.

# Winner and Losers



It was purely his ill luck that the prominent Nepali Congress leader, Sushil Koirala had to be dropped as the senior-most minister in the interim cabinet. His loss turned out to be a windfall for Ram Chandra Poudel who emerged as the dark horse. And the credit for this largely goes to the Communist Party of Nepal—United Marxist Leninist.

Prime Minister Koirala, at one point, even asked UML General Secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal to have Sahana Pradhan dropped from the party's list of nominees. The

reason was simple. If UML was not going to be very rigid regarding her inclusion in the most-senior position, then he could include Sushil Koirala as the number two who would succeed as Prime Minister in the event of senior Koirala's resignation, incapacitation or death.

But UML stuck to its guns. Not to be undone, G P Koirala put forward Ram Chandra Poudel since his former Deputy Prime Minister and Speaker tag would place him ahead of Sahana Pradhan. But that came at the cost of Sushil Koirala who had reluctantly agreed to join as the most senior Cabinet Minister, or a Prime Minister in the waiting, given PM Koirala's age and fragile health. Sushil Koirala had unsuccessfully contested for the Prime Minister's post against Sher Bahadur Deuba in June 2001.

UML's internal politics also took its toll on Bhim Rawal who was away in Norway and was asked to return cutting short his trip and takeover as Foreign Affairs Minister in the interim cabinet. But since the party ultimately decided to dispatch senior leader Sahana Pradhan, Rawal backed out refusing to take the education portfolio that was offered to him.

■ nf correspondent



File by Bhaswar Ojha

## Fait Accompli

It was almost a case of heart ruling the head when the eight parties decided to have the election for the Constituent Assembly on June 20 (Ashad 6) completely ignoring the informal advice given by the Election Commission.

The commission is believed to have told the Prime Minister and leaders of the ruling eight party coalitions not to announce the date without the interim Government making full assessment of the law and order, legal as well as other logistics.

"We will not make any comment as the commitment to hold election in June was made by the

eight parties, and not by the Government," a senior EC representative told newsfront. The cabinet is expected to review the issue at entirety once the Prime Minister returns from Delhi.

There are however, hopes and despair in equal measures in the commission on what the new Government will do about the June deadline, something which has been mentioned in the interim constitution. Led by Chief Election Commission Bhojraj Pokharel, the entire team has been saying publicly that June deadline may not be very realistic now.

But it will almost be a case of fait accompli for the EC if the Govern-

ment went by what G P Koirala said recently - that there could be an unusual election in an unusual time like this.

In fact, EC's quest and repeated commitment to have a 'credible and fair' election to the constituent assembly has found many takers. U N Secretary General's Special Representative, Ian Martin, various diplomats and representatives from the U S, Switzerland and European countries have privately or publicly expressed fears that the election in June may not be possible given the law and order situation and the short time gap left before the electorate.

■ nf correspondent



Office of Election Commission

## Moriarty Mantra

James F Moriarty continues to be at the core of Maoist politics

Despite the hatred that Maoists have exhibited for US Ambassador, James F Moriarty, he continues to be at the core of Maoist politics. Maoist chief Prachanda invoked Moriarty's name on every occasion when coalition partners, mainly the CPN-UML would raise any inconvenient point delaying formation of the interim cabinet.

"Are you working under the dictates of Moriarty?" was Prachanda's poser to Madhav Nepal in Baluwatar when UML's demand for number two position in the cabinet delayed the formation of the interim cabinet.



Moriarty

But that was until yesterday. What the United States and Ambassador Moriarty say and do in the wake of Maoists joining the interim Government is being watched with utmost curiosity. The formation of the interim Government coincided with the visit of two senior officials of USAID from Washington. They will evaluate the ongoing peace process and review USAID programmes, food security and disaster preparedness. They are expected to meet with political leaders, civil society representatives, and beneficiaries of USAID programs in Kathmandu and in the far western districts, but avoid meeting the Maoist ministers.

"I hope their inclusion in the cabinet will make Maoists much more serious and realistic as US support is crucial," said a Congress leader, who heard most of what Prachanda said in Baluwatar.

Prachanda, however, did not mention other diplomats' names including that of German Ambassador Franz Ring whose latest criticism of the Maoists was much more strident than that of Moriarty in the past. Ring had criticised Maoists before the recent European Union delegation. Ring's criticism was provoked by the Maoist leaders justifying the physical assault on two businessmen, Hari Shrestha and Suresh Malla in Kathmandu. "Justifying such crimes and human rights violations is a crime, and a political party which is already in parliament doing that is unthinkable," ambassador Ring had said.

■ nf correspondent

# Crude Diplomacy

“As the meeting got prolonged, no one bothered to inform us”



As a result of what can be termed, 'irresponsible' behaviour on the part of the Government, at least half a dozen diplomats who were 'invited' to attend the ceremony of interim cabinet formation in parliament, returned disappointed if not dejected.

They had reason to be doubly frustrated as the short-notice invitation came on the weekend. As utter confusion over portfolio delayed the formation of the cabinet, no one from the Government bothered to inform the parliament secretariat to cancel the invitation to the diplomats. Those who arrived at the empty House which rose for the day without transacting any business on Saturday included British, Russian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ambassadors and Deputy Chief of Mission of Chinese embassy. Many were however spared as they could not be contacted. Some of them waited there for half an hour and got back without being informed when the House would meet.

Diplomats had been asked to be present in the house for the swearing in ceremony at 1 PM on Saturday after Prime Minister's office informed parliament that the 8-party meeting would be over and Koirala would take oath of office as the Interim Prime Minister. "As the meeting got prolonged, no one bothered to inform us", a parliament secretariat source said. "I think, we, the diplomats, need to reconsider attending such short notice functions," an Asian ambassador told newsfront.

However, diplomats being diplomats attended the parliament session on Monday in which a part of the G P Koirala led interim Government with Maoists, took the oath of office on Sunday. Prominently focused by the TV camera was James Moriarty, Maoists betenoire

■ nf correspondent

## News Brief

### School Reopened

The Notre dam school, once considered an identity of the picturesque Bandipur city is back in existence after nearly four years. The school run by Roman Catholics of Japan was closed down following Maoists intimidation and extortion. The school provided quality education to children of the area, with full scholarship to Dalits and many other deprived children. The school principal remains the same, and most teachers who had left following the closure are being requested to join back, a source affiliated with the school said. The decision follows the mission's assessment that the success of the peace process will lead to congenial atmosphere for promoting quality education in the country.

### Major Resigns

Maj Gen Randhoj Limbu has resigned from service citing 'injustice' to him as the reason. This is the first instance in the history of the Nepal army in which a senior officer resigned in protest against being superseded.

Sources in the Ministry of Defense said Limbu's resignation has not been accepted yet, and he is being approached to reconsider the language and reasons he has cited in the letter of resignation. Limbu who served in the army for 34 years has worked in most conflict hit areas in the past eleven years.

### Securing Gates

As the Government seems determined to downsize security and secretariat arrangements in the Royal palace, some safety measures seem to have been taken before the curtailment policy is implemented.

A parallel metallic gate has been built within the Narayanhity palace complex on the southern side. The Government plans to reduce the size of the army from existing 3,000 to 400 besides bringing down the size of the total secretariat and service staff to less than 200 from the existing 800. The Government is in the process of 'nationalising' the property King Gyanendra inherited and bringing the income of the royal family in the tax net.



# Charity first



■ nf correspondent

Got a toothache? Rinse it with alcohol or chew a clove. If it hurts too much, bear with it till it becomes loose and then pull it out with a piece of string. This is what an average Nepali, mostly in rural areas tend to do. Dental services are hard to come by in rural and semi-rural areas. Even in urban areas, where such services are available, people from lower income bracket are reluctant to visit dental clinics where the fees are pretty high. Free dental services are scarce and little known to the general public.

In such a scenario, a free dental camp comes as a surprise. Such a unique venture was initiated by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche and Pakchok Rinpoche with the intention of taking health services to common people to alleviate their suffering. The Rinpoches, oversee Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Boudha, that runs a Buddhist college,

publishes books and conducts overall Buddhist activities; and Shenpen organisation which is in charge of philanthropic activities.

Last year Pakchok Rinpoche took a group of Tibetan doctors and Tibetan medicines to Singapore. As an exchange programme, he invited a group of doctors from Singapore to Nepal. The group helped by local volunteers conducted a 6-day free dental camp and attended to almost one thousand patients. Inspired by the experience last year, a group of 9 dentists and 2 volunteers from Singapore kindly decided to hold another 6-day free dental camp this year in Kathmandu, where they have seen 1500 patients. Beginning 24 March, they spent two days each at Boudha, Bajra Barahi and Bungamati. In Bajra Barahi, the space was provided by Pal Nyida Zungdrel Mindrol Norbuling monastery.

At the camp site, hordes of visitors were being registered, their blood pressure taken and nature of ailments noted. Each patient



Picture by Sushma Amatya

then was escorted into the well lit interior of a tent where a flurry of activities was taking place. Suitcases modified into highchairs, dentists were examining each patient with care. Nepali volunteers were interpreting and explaining each patient the status of their teeth and what needed to be done and making sure the patients voluntarily permitted the doctors to work on their teeth.

Tools were being thoroughly sterilised by W.H.O standard and laid out on two tables in the centre of the tent. Dr. Sapphire Gan, one of the dentists expressed what a great experience all of them were having. She said, "once inspired by the Rinpoche, everything just fell into place naturally. All these equipment, tools were donated by individuals and organisations in Singapore. We all volunteered time away from our routine work. To be able to reach out to those who are so much in need is a great feeling. I think it is an important aspect of Dharma." She enthused about the locals who

**A free dental camp was initiated by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche and Pakchok Rinpoche with the intention of taking health services to common people to alleviate their suffering.**

were very cooperative and, "there were some, who just stepped in, asked how they could help and got to work immediately."

Another volunteer, Cynthia, was busy with a model of a set of teeth and a toothbrush and explaining the locals in fluent Nepali how important it is to brush. "Spreading awareness of dental care is equally important. It's not enough just to attend to them and leave them without any information," said Dr. Gan. Two Nepali doctors, Dr. Ritesh Giri and Dr. Sudha Singh Thakuri were also part of the team.

A majority of cases comprised of tooth extraction, cleaning and cavity filling. Dr. Gan attributed smoking and chewing tobacco as the major culprits that resulted in bad teeth besides lack of basic awareness. Cases requiring follow ups were referred to Patan hospital. The ambiance in the monastery was a cheerful one where each was doing one's best sans any expectations and setting an example worthy of imitation. ■



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### Point to Ponder

*A free press can of course be good or bad, but most certainly without freedom, the press will never be anything but bad.*

Albert Camus

## Freedom and accountability

Press freedom is neither exclusive nor more important compared to other fundamental rights. But media is expected to champion all types of fundamental rights and freedom. Its role therefore becomes uniquely crucial in preservation of rights and freedom.

In countries in conflict journalists' lives are often threatened. Nepal which falls into that category has often been mentioned as an inglorious example of journalists being victimised both by state and non-state actors.

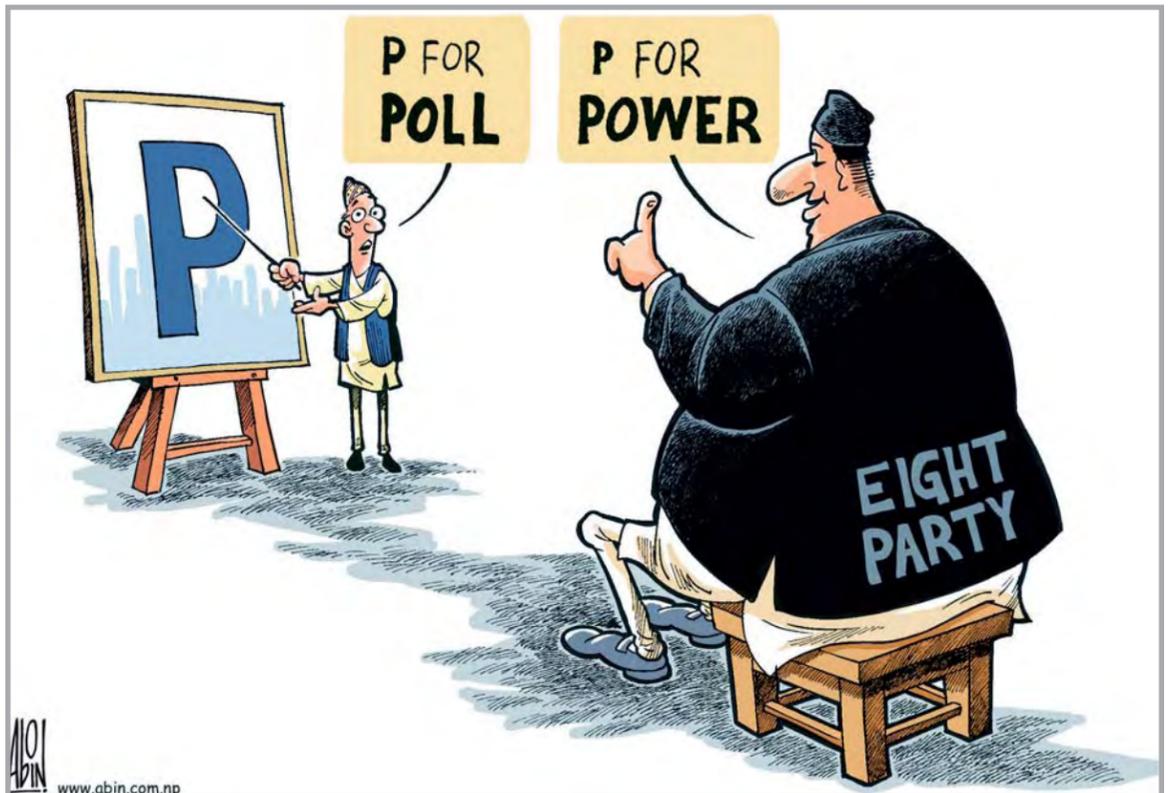
In post 2005 scenario, media at the outset responded differently—some by complying, some by protesting symbolically and a few challenging head-on the Royal take over. But subsequently, except the Government media and their allies in the private sector, all came out openly against the anti-democratic move. Curb on the media or press freedom was defied. And that defiance perhaps inspired politicians and many other professional groups besides individual citizens to join the movement for democracy.

Despite the present Government and its constituents including the Maoists playing lip service to the role media played in restoration of democracy, threats to journalists have not receded. This is all the more alarming because it comes at a time when the new Government is out to take away independence of the judiciary by bringing it under executive control. Threat to media by the state actors will not be addressed if the judiciary is not independent.

Journalists and editors in different parts of the country continue to be threatened by the Maoists and MJF (Madhesi Janadhikar Forum). No action has been taken by their respective leadership against the perpetrators of crime. The threat is a manifestation of their barbaric and anti-democratic view, and therefore, condemnable. Only tyrants and autocrats in the history have believed that muzzled press would ensure their safety, continuity in power and victory. Unfortunately, Government of the day has been demonstrating double standards on such threats, depending which side it has come from.

Media supports democracy for simple reason that it's the best system in which freedom of individuals and all fundamental rights are guaranteed. But this system cannot be effective without all sections of the society including the media and Government acting in an accountable manner. Media freedom encompasses much bigger responsibility in that it has to be objective, impartial, responsible and at the same time to have the courage to tell the truth.

Activism when freedom and democracy are in peril is fine, but its overdose and visible proximity with one or other political groups and the causes championed by them would not only invite a tag of 'media being biased,' but also make it more vulnerable to attack from rival groups. It will contribute to decline in professional standards as well. While asserting our freedom and safety, it is also high time media reviewed its overdose of political activism and bias in the country.



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## Letters

### Really Inspiring

The life story of Amar Thapa, Heart on Wheels, articulated by Sushma Amatya, is really stirring. Life is so uncertain. Who knows what will happen? What

Amar Thapa is doing despite his physical disability is inspiring. His contribution to the nation and the society is highly encouraging and appreciable. His story really matters, it encourages especially those who are suffering from disabilities and are reduced to counting the days of their lives.

Please find other such hidden stories that show the way to live.

Gyanendra Kunwar  
Shifal

### Good HIV/AIDS Story

I have been reading Newsfront from its very first issue. I am very attentive to the eye-catching analytical coverage of this newspaper. 'The silent Killer' on its 9th issue is a very important issue. My thanks to Newsfront for the story on this enormous malady. We have to realise that we need to get serious about this threat. Even some educated people in urban areas do not know about this problem. To make sure HIV/AIDS does not paralyse the country, we have to spread the awareness all over the country without delay.

Bishnu Devkota  
Kuklekhami

### More Literature

The arrival of Newsfront is good news for English readers with its wide coverage of political, social and different other issues. However, in my opinion, non-political issues should be given priority. Newsfront has covered art to some extent, but it is not enough. As a reader of literature, I request more coverage for literature.

Ratnamani Nepal  
Lecturer, Padma Kanya Campus

### Strong Analysis

I am a regular reader of Newsfront. I appreciate the effort put in by its team to give its readers a variety of coverage. Among English Newspapers, Newsfront has created its own identity in a short span of time but it needs more improvement in layout, design and printing quality. I find analysis of political affairs very strong and objective.

Yagya Bikram Shahi  
Program Coordinator, DFID

### Priority to Marketing

I hope Newsfront will follow its slogan of courage and conviction. What drives me to read this weekly regularly is its news and opinion articles that are published in the Newsfront. I hope this paper will succeed as a credible Nepali product in English.

However, it is disappointing that I cannot get the paper in Banepa and Dhulikhel, which is only about 25 kilometers away from capital. I have to arrange to get it from Kathmandu every week. If you arrange for newsfront to appear in all major news stands in, around and outside the valley, reader like me would benefit.

It is my suggestion to the Newsfront team that it has to give priority to marketing and distribution. In my opinion, the tourist hub Dhulikhel is not a bad market for newspaper of your stature.

Suman Sherestha  
Dhulikel

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

## Spiritual

## Corner

## Craving has no end

**Swami Chandresh, born in Bengal, has been living in Budhanilkantha Ashram, Kathmandu for nearly three decades now. He spent more than two decades in solitary contemplation in the Shivapuri hills. The renunciate is a master of yoga, an educator, poet, musician and a painter.**

**The power of action:** "Work done with unselfish motive calms down a restless mind causing harmony and peace within, which

help to restrain the desires quite easily. As a matter of fact, working for the welfare of others or for serving God is the way to throw tensions overboard. A mind is always craving for materials and worldly pleasures only because it is deprived of spiritual experiences which are capable of rendering a superior kind of joy. Cravings have no end, they are only the diverse expressions of mind's internal dissatisfaction. And, this ravenous dissatisfaction can never be averted by materials, however precious."

**The human society:** "When a society is excessively politicised and mean party politics interfere in every function, its progress is hindered. Even the religion in it becomes contaminated by that. A religion grossly dominated by politics loses its flow and purpose as well and eventually takes the form of a social



institution. So, we find that no experienced master with direct perception is produced from a religion which is rigorously controlled by local

politics and absolutely institutionalised. Of course, some sort of institution in religion may be needed for the common masses, yet freedom of religion must be there and those who follow religion without enlisting themselves in a religious society should be supported and encouraged by the common masses. Not all people in the world have the capacity to come out renouncing their family life and search for the highest truth with absolute social and personal freedom. And the greatest wisdom as always comes from such people who appeared to be completely useless in the eyes of the society, whom people may even revile and persecute, never understanding their inner state of attainment."

(Extracts from his book, *The Ocean in a Drop*)

History starts: Maoists join government under a parliamentary system



Pic by Bhaskar Ojha

# The South Fixation

The South factor always came in handy



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Looking southwards, attributing every major domestic decision to the South is a regular feature in

Nepal's politics and decision making process. Formation of the interim cabinet, an inevitable fall-out of earlier agreements, will not be viewed differently. India, of course, has many ways of commenting and acting, sometimes with contradictions, under the veil of its declared pledge that a peaceful and stable Nepal is in its best interest, but at times Nepali actors and decision makers would deliberately project Indian role, hyped up beyond reality.

Yes, India's latest stance of silence on formation of the interim Government came at a tangent with its line three weeks ago that Maoists inclusion in the ministry should precede

**Maoist leadership, in their current phase of pro-India politics, has often said that it would appreciate India's genuine interest in Nepal. Once in Government, the Maoists certainly will have to reinforce that commitment.**

a 'complete and credible' arms management. It perhaps came as a let down to European Union and the Americans, especially the latter, who were under the impression that they are working in tandem with India especially after it chose to treat the not so credible arms – combatant ratio registered with the U N team as a non-issue. It will perhaps be seen as the South's seeking to assert itself, giving no space for others to expand their interest.

In principle, India seeking to minimise third country role in Nepal is understandable, although its solitary exit from collective move may not be taken kindly by others. But there still are clear exaggerations to what the South has done. Is it correct to attribute everything to the

South block including the rumour that it put pressure on G P Koirala to have the cabinet formed before his arrival in Delhi for the SAARC summit?

Koirala is certainly to be blamed. Frustrated by treachery from his own party colleagues including close relatives and dictated by his own habit of trying to appease as many people as possible, he would often shift the blame for denial of ministerial berths to many aspirants to other factors. The South factor always came in handy.

Let us examine some close developments preceding the formation of the interim cabinet in the PM's office. His current eyes and ears, Dr Shekhar Koirala and Krishna Sitaula, kept insisting that Koirala should go to Delhi as the leader of the country and for that inclusion of the Maoists was necessary. It was much more

convenient for the Maoists as well to endorse that view as in that case it would not oblige them to return the illegally captured property of individuals, institutions and the Government.

Yet another Nepali Congress parliamentarian, known as a mystery man, kept flexing his

mobile phone in Baluwatar and insisted that he was on a hotline with Delhi which wanted the cabinet instantly. Was it a mere coterie tactic or reality? If Koirala is actually dictated by India to this extent, then Nepal is already worse off than Bhutan. But those who know Indian politics little bit, need to understand that Delhi would not be showing so much interest even in the choice of a Chief Minister in any Indian state.

Can Delhi really help if the level of servility from Nepal side goes this far or this low?

Maybe blaming India was equally handy for Koirala to have his favourite K P Sitaula continue as Home Minister despite his utter failure in handling the law and order. "What can I do

when there is so much pressure," was the easiest answer that Koirala could give. And the coterie always said India and Maoists would not want Sitaula out. Interestingly, the 'hotline conversation' by the mystery man and his claim what India wanted took place in the full view and knowledge of Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai.

India certainly may have its preferences on the timing and choice of people as Ministers or even Prime Minister in Nepal, but it knows its limitations and perhaps draws a line there. We all need to be sure that it was Koirala - Prachanda pact on one hand, and willingness on the part of others, ultimately to accept anything the two offered, that decided the timing of formation of the cabinet.

Again, it was the last minute move by the UML, perhaps decided without any external influence, to have Sahana Pradhan as the number two which delayed the swearing in on Saturday. The cabinet was entirely home brewed. India's real role was perhaps limited to the extent of changing its tone about conditions it had earlier set for inclusion of the Maoists in

the cabinet. But its perceived role was much bigger.

Maoist leadership, in their current phase of pro-India politics, has often said that it would appreciate India's genuine interest in Nepal. Once in Government, the Maoists certainly will have to reinforce that commitment. They however, will have to tread more cautiously in balancing their past of anti-Indian stance as a fundamental principle of their politics, and the present where a good relationship with the neighbour has to be an essential approach of the Government. But in the long run, it will be counter productive to overstretch the South factor to conceal one's shortsightedness, helplessness and cunningness, at least on essentially domestic affairs. ■

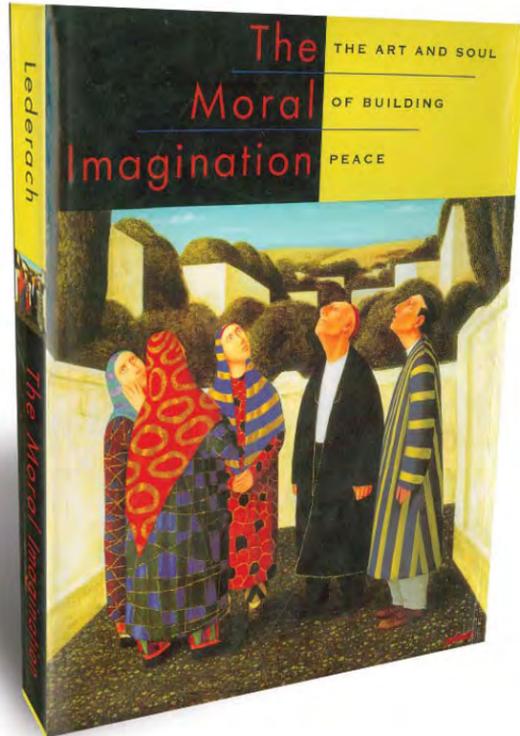


## Book Review



Lederach

**John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Peace Building*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, PP. 2000**



# Future no Prisoner of Past

Leaderach brings the metaphors of spiders, crabs, skin, rivers, and peace builders as artisans of social change.

## Tara Dahal

The increasing scale and intensity of violence in the world has inspired a serious pursuit towards justice, peace and security. Peace-building has now become universal concern of statesmen, scientists, development workers and ordinary public.

Crisis in any system occurs when rules are trampled by the actors in their cut-throat competition for individual profits rather than shared public good. System survival rests on its ability to balance, adapt and change with the transformation in the internal and external capacity of actors and their environment.

Knowledge about the systemic approach brings contextual learning and confidence to end cycles of violence and counter violence. Lederach opposes both linear and disciplinary models of conflict resolution because they avoid "critical assessment of the social world" and, therefore, fail to break the conflict trap and transform violent conflict into a sustainable peace.

Lederach argues that the post-September 9/11 international politics characterised by a "war on terrorism" illustrates that "official politics reflects little moral imagination." He defines moral imagination as the "capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist" (p ix).

Many peace efforts, for example, in the Middle East, Colombia, Liberia, Sri Lanka, etc relapsed into violence after a brief spell of no-war-no-peace, ceasefire and peace talks due prolonged

standoffs. Isolation and mutual fear paralysed the imagination of actors to identify the common ground and creative alternatives to deep-rooted conflicts.

He suggests, "If we are to survive as a global community, we must understand the imperative nature of giving birth and space to the moral imagination in human affairs" (p. 172). For this, he formulates a number of viable alternatives, such as: inclusionary survival, develop inquisitive capacity to gain contextual thinking, love with trust and build a genuine community based on the engagement of all the stakeholders of society.

Lederach introduces a holistic view of analysing conflict that allows one to build and sustain the web of community life, well-being and freedom. He explains how system of conflict and peace is linked together in a network of interdependence. Citing the examples of spiders' webs, yeast and siphons, haikus and ancestors, Pied Pipers and princes of Serendip he evoked the centrality of moral imagination in the midst of human conflict and violence.

Moral imagination provides the people a capacity of seeing "oneself in the bigger picture of relationships and of keeping people, not humanly created structures, at the center of public life" (p 62). To him, solution of any conflict can be possible only when all the actors in the system share a common vision and formulate strategies accordingly. Peace mediators have to act like crabs, "Crabs when surrounded on all sides, will bury themselves in the

sand and then rise again at a later point. A crab has the instinctual capacity of multi-directionality" (p 120).

One can fully agree with Lederach that resolution of conflict requires the creative imagination of artists and professional specialists. Building of skills and technical expertise is no less important in the process management as well as cognitive and behavioral responses to turning points for peace building, respect and love with enemies. Art is not confined to a particular discipline and vision. It is an open-ended exercise. To build artistic space requires opening the "design process itself to different and critically important ways for knowing what has, is, or could happen in the complex reality" (p 62).

Lederach brings the metaphors of spiders, crabs, skin, rivers, and peace builders as artisans of social change (p 129). Definitely, future is not the prisoner of the past but holds the hope to incubate something new space, one that has meditative capacity and impact on the conflict system.

Lederach's approach is imaginative, participatory and solution-oriented than just analytic-empirical. This method has, therefore, practical utility in everyday work of people. The book is inspiring as it is written by one of the world's best experts on peace building. It is honed by the practical experience of various countries undergoing violent conflict. It is also useful for Nepal torn by over a decade-long violent conflict and to build a peaceful and prosperous future. ■

(Dahal teaches sociology.)

## Nepali Diaspora

# Memoirs of Adventure



We passed through tiny hamlets and villages, some with not more than a hundred people.

## Neeraj Pradhan

I had never really been outside Kathmandu, save for a few trips with my family to Nagarkot and Narayanghat. That is why the last summer trip to the north was the reason for so much excitement.

The ride to the border in my Phupu's car was filled with enrapturing views and entertaining exchanges. We passed through tiny hamlets and villages, some with not more than a hundred people. The houses in the villages ranged from clay bungalows to sturdier stone embankments.

## Nepal.

We spent around four days in those hills, exploring, hiking up and down the sides of the mountain, meeting and chatting with farmers and crossing paths with livestock.

On the second day, we headed towards the Tibetan border. The bus that came to pick us up must have been a half-century old. The six of us were scrunched up in the back row, bobbing up and down because of the lack of shock absorbers on the back wheels. We swerved around higher and higher as we hovered towards the border.



The further we drifted from civilisation I wondered how the hillside denizens might change in personality or disposition, compared to the locals in Kathmandu.

As we stopped in between, I had a chance to walk around and view the countryside. My family and I stood out with our cosmopolitan dress and distinctive speech.

We finally made it to the border, a mere three hours after leaving. We were camped in tents at the base of a 10,000-foot mountain overpass with the Bhote Khosi River surging past at break-neck speed below us.

It had been a while since I'd been in such a pristine, serene environment. While I'd spent time outdoors during college, my camping and hiking had been limited to the upstate New York countryside, which are only hills in comparison to the mountains in

The sight at the border was an eye-full. There were tourists (European, American, East-Asian, etc.), officials (Nepali and Chinese), merchants and monks pacing to and fro across the 'Friendship Land Bridge' connecting Nepal to China. One could hear Nepali, Chinese, and even Tibetan over the sounds of trucks and buses waiting in line to pick up and drop off people crossing the border.

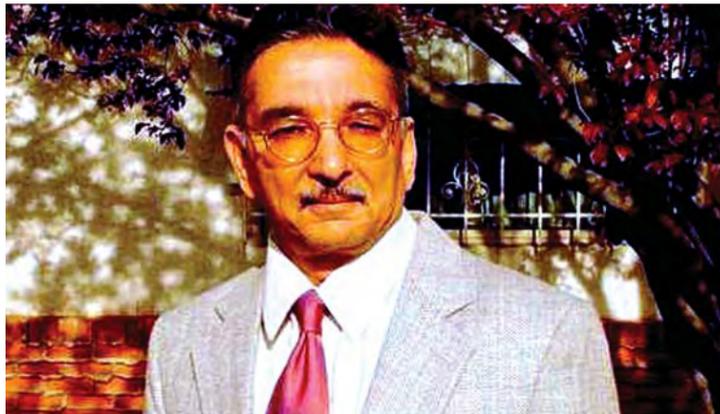
After four days, the entire experience ended and we headed back to the valley. A little more tanned and recharged from the fresh air, we retraced our steps, only to run into a flat tire and traffic jams along the way. In any event, we got back to the capital, and I could finally say that I'd finally explored some parts of the country.

(Neeraj is a student and currently lives in southern California.)

The word Nepal on its title makes it sound very narrow, and presents difficulties in seeking grants. In the process of looking around for resources, I was offered resources if I were to change the title to something like the Asian Studies.

# In politics, things move very fast

The Maoist conflict started out as an ideological war to create a class-less society



**Dr. Alok K. Bohara, founder and director of Nepal Study Center (NSC) at University of New Mexico (UNM), Albuquerque, US, is a professor of economics. Extracts from an interview with him by Dharma Adhikari of Nepal Monitor:**

**How did the idea of Nepal Study Center originate?**

I was intrigued by the influx of the Nepali young generation students in the US and elsewhere. Many young scholarly minds from our part of the world tend to get lost in this vast land, and I felt that an academic platform could bring all of these minds together and promote Himalayan-related policy research and share it globally, especially with those in Nepal; and registered the Center

be more forthcoming in providing financial support to keep it afloat in this highly competitive academic world.

**Do you think it is about time that Nepali professors in North America form some sort of an association to learn from each other and grow professionally?**

Yes, and NSC has already begun the process. Our goal is to form an Association of Himalayan Policy Research. We are going to devote some time during the upcoming conference in Wisconsin in October 11, 2007. Our idea is to then become a member of the ASSA (Allied Social Science Association). It is open to anyone from anywhere in the world who are interested in policy related research on the Himalayan region

comprehensive approach in dealing with these polarisations, which requires us to go deep into the causal links. Our paper published in Journal of Conflict Resolution finds that the conflicts in Nepal are linked to rugged geography. But most important finding was the effect of social capital. In that, a place with high level social capital did provide less opportunity for conflict. Thus, erosion of social capital (e.g., community oriented program and activities and participation) in the rural area is the big loss for us, and we need to do everything in our power to build it up again.

**From your theoretical perspective, do you see any difference or similarities between the recent Madhesi conflict and the Maoist conflict?**

The Maoist conflict started out as an ideological war to create a class-less society, and to do so they used poverty, political corruption, social marginalisation, and feudal exploitation as their rationality to enlist various ethnic groups for their cause to overthrow the 'establishment.' The Madhesi movement is for dignity and their ethnic identity against the socio-economic exploitation, and the exclusionary policy of the Kathmandu-centric power base.

**As a statistician, how reliable are polls that seek to aggregate public preference for a republic, democracy or a ceremonial monarchy, etc, especially since media polls within a week report contradictory findings?**

Some Nepali organisations are trying their best to gauge the public opinion and assess them using various polling data. These organisations have collaborated with the international polling agencies to do such polls. This is a good sign that there is recognition of need for conducting polls based on some sound sampling framework. But still we need to be careful in making sweeping inferences. In politics, things move very fast, and these polls are just snapshots

**How do you assess the state of the country's overall economy?**

A conflict ridden country loses its charm as a place for investment. In fact, rural areas have suffered much in terms of basic development activities. As a result, people are either fleeing the countryside to go abroad for employments or moving their liquid assets in the urban areas. This will create more development gap between the rural and the urban areas. So, there is a direct cost of war in terms of damaged infrastructure (buildings, bridges, roads, communication, towers), but the bigger loss is in terms of opportunity cost. Furthermore, extortions, robberies, intimidations all add to the bad business environment and raises the cost of doing business in Nepal.

**You have watched Nepal's development and environment closely. What are the current challenges and the prospects?**

I am assuming you are referring to the environment in terms of ecology and not the business environment. As the conflict deepens or does not get resolved in a timely manner, economic opportunities in the mountain and the hill areas become scarce. Reliance on the environment (forest product) increases, and it puts migration pressure from the hills to the Terai. This ecological dependence between the mountains and Terai

cannot be brushed aside. It is the lack of political-economy development that will devastate our fragile ecology.

**What type of economic system do you see emerging in Nepal? What do you think is the best way to go?**

We have our comparative advantage mainly in the following areas: water, hydropower, tourism, cash crop, and geographic vicinity to two super powers. We also have tremendous amount of untapped entrepreneurial energy that has come to bear fruits in various growth sectors like IT, banking, education, and media. Nepal could develop into an attractive financial mini capital of the region. Just as an example, Nepal needs to invest in broadband technology, highway infrastructure, and education to make it an attractive place for both China and India.

But, Nepal does have more than 80 percent of its people living in the rural area earning less than \$1 a day. Poverty is rampant (32 percent below the poverty line) and some basic needs like water, health, and education are still not within the reach for many millions of these impoverished Nepalis. We should and can find a way to solve these problems without sacrificing one for the other. But, a protective, controlled, closed and highly regulated economic system is not the answer. ■

(Courtesy: Nepal Monitor)

**We have our comparative advantage mainly in the following areas: water, hydropower, tourism, cash crop, and geographic vicinity to two super powers. We also have tremendous amount of untapped entrepreneurial energy that has come to bear fruits in various growth sectors like IT, banking, education, and media.**

under the College of A& S (University of New Mexico) as a not-for-profit organization.

**How do you ensure a steady flow of funds to sustain the programs? Who underwrites the activities of NSC?**

The word Nepal on its title makes it sound very narrow, and presents difficulties in seeking grants. In the process of looking around for resources, I was offered resources if I were to change the title to something like the Asian Studies. After talking to some diaspora friends we came to conclude that having a name like Nepal Study Center is the best way to promote knowledge transfer to help Nepal and the surrounding Himalayan region. But still, the NSC's scope is not narrow and its global approach to scholarly connectivity has far reaching implications. Still, I urge the Nepali diaspora to

and the countries in South Asia.

**What are your current research projects on Nepal?**

We are looking at various issues such as the linkages between conflict, poverty, and geography. We are also working on health care access issues for women and children. Other ideas under exploration are food security, micro hydro, ethnic and gender discrimination, and environmental degradation in the Himalayas.

**You have studied the Maoist conflict from a causal perspective, analyzing data on poverty, vulnerability and conflict. Can you describe in layman's terms your approach, and what you found in your study?**

There are three types of polarisation that took place in Nepal: social, economic, and political. Thus understanding conflict will require a

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Blaswor Ojha

Coping with darkness

# Draw from Sun n' Wind

Unwise decisions in energy sectors are creating energy dilemmas all over the developing world.

All societies are dependent on energy. Affordable energy services are among the essential ingredients of economic development, including eradication of extreme poverty. Modern energy services—mainly provided by liquid and gaseous fuels, as well as electricity—are essential for building enterprises and creating jobs. Convenient, affordable energy is also important for improving health and education, and for reducing the human labour required to cook and meet other basic needs.

Roughly 1.6 billion people worldwide do not have access to electricity in their homes, representing slightly more than one quarter of the world population. The 2.4 billion people who rely on traditional biomass fuels for their energy must collect and burn straw, dung, and scraps of wood to cook their meals. They often go without refrigeration, radios, and even light. The International Energy Agency estimates that if the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) poverty-reduction target is to be met, modern energy services will need to be provided to an additional 700 million people by 2015.

In recent decades, the energy needs of poor people have been met most often via petroleum-based liquid fuels and by extension of the electricity grid, which is powered mainly by fossil fuels and hydropower. These options have benefited from government subsidies and are widely available in world markets. However, these conventional energy systems are often out of reach for people in remote areas, and even in urban slums, they are most of the times too expensive for the poorest to afford. In addition, in many developing countries like in Nepal, most of the fuel and many of the technologies are imported.

The economic risk of relying primarily on imported energy has grown in recent years as oil prices have been raising consistently. These



■ Madhav Prakash Thakur

rising prices have had a disproportionate impact on poor people who depend on kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for their basic cooking and heating. This certainly has increased the development in alternative energy sector since some years now. The rapid growth in solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass energy, coupled with ongoing technology improvements and cost reductions, is making a growing array of alternative energy options in developing countries.

According to the world energy assessment, human development is all about wise energy consumption, based on economic factors and making clever choices. Unwise decisions in energy sectors are creating energy dilemmas all over the developing world. Energy conservation is the process of using less energy, either by making processes more energy efficient or by reducing the demand for energy services. Developing countries being the lowest energy consumers can alleviate this constraint by means of alternative energy and can set an example for the developed world.

Alternative energy is the best tool of energy conservation. Solar, wind and biomass energy are some of the major successful means of alternative energy. Solar energy is very successful worldwide with the current capacity of more than 10GW. It already supplies electricity to several hundred thousand people, provides employment for over 10,000 people and generates business worth more than 2.5 billion US dollar annually.

Energy from biomass is popular in the rural regions due to its low cost set up and simple mechanism. Wind

power has grown most after hydropower in last two years. Apart from the developed countries, India has been most successful in setting up wind power stations which now generates the fourth highest energy worldwide. Bio fuels such as biodiesel which is the best alternative for the fossil fuels is growing its market all over the world. It is now produced to around 40 billions liters per year.

Alternative energy can in many ways accelerate the development process of any country. It should be well understood that only smart choice of energy consumption will lead to economic stability. Modern energy from the alternatives needs a strong market in developing countries; for instance the PV cells which is the means of solar energy has to be made cheaper and easily available for the users. Alternative energy will certainly create employment and make people less dependent on the mainstream energy such as hydropower and fuels in developing countries.

The recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report has indicated the current global warming and its increasing trends by the massive use of fossil fuels all over the world. Alternative energy is a safe game in terms of environment. Development is implicit in social, economic and environment terms and this energy plays an effective role in stabilising all three.

The current over dependency of hydropower energy can be fatal in long term for the economic sectors in developing countries especially where large hydropower stations are unavailable or not owned properly. Nepal in particular has to go for the alternatives as it relies on the amount of rainfall for hydropower generation in dry seasons. Market for alternative energy sector has to be increased sooner otherwise we will be depleting our economy.

(Madhav is a student of environmental management.)

## Ridding Begging Habit

The moment the country stops begging, it will be much easier to understand how important it is to protect legal and ethical interests and ensuring physical safety of the indigenous business community.

■ Anuj Khanal

May be Prime Minister Koirala wanted to give a message to the representatives of the business community by not meeting them. Perhaps his over enthusiast advisors asked him not to since meeting victims of Maoist atrocities would annoy the rebels and derail the peace process. But to say the least, not meeting those who had gone to his official residence was not only a dereliction of duty by the PM, but also signified him going weak in the knees to appease the perpetrators of the crime.

Subsequent meeting with them will not absolve the PM of his poor sense of judgment. It is sad that Nepal as a country has not acknowledged what its business community can contribute to the nation. Political parties and leaders perhaps do not hesitate to accept any offer from the community under the veil of secrecy, and yet in public, they refuse to side with them even when their demands are genuine.

The business community is equally to blame for this status they have created for themselves. But the fact that they woke up to the reality, marched in protest against the state and the Maoists, injects some hope that the community has realised its strength. The community has the right not to be assaulted and vilified and the state has its responsibility to protect their life and dignity.

But a superficial study of the psychology of the PM who acted so arrogantly would indicate that generous donations or assistance from the international community is perhaps behind this. Why care about the safety and dignity of the local business community when you have enough monetary backing from others?

The moment the country stops begging, it will be much easier to understand how important it is to protect legal and ethical interests and ensuring physical safety of the indigenous business community. It is equally necessary to create a business and investment friendly atmosphere, if the eight party agreement for peace, democracy and prosperity is to be realised.

Finance Minister Dr Ram Sharan Mahat's statement that every problem could be sorted out through dialogue is correct in principle. That is exactly what the businessmen wanted. But Dr Mahat should have been able to

convince the PM that not meeting the aggrieved business community representatives was wrong.

The community's last resort to come out on the streets was purely compelled by Koirala's refusal to listen to them. By not listening to them, the Government only succeeded in giving out the message that begging is much easier than working. Its refusal to create a situation in which the business community could work without fear and intimidation meant just that.

Business community and industrialists also on their part need to realise that lack of openness regarding their relationships with political parties and politicians does not protect the community when under threat from organised groups, like the Maoists at present which has been using powers of the state without accountability. It is high time the business world realised the importance of co-operation and supporting each other for the right cause.

When the business community felt so aggrieved with the PM,

**When the business community felt so aggrieved with the PM, Prachanda and Baburam exploited the situation more tactfully although their followers' atrocities against the business community had fuelled the protest.**

Prachanda and Baburam exploited the situation more tactfully although their followers' atrocities against the business community had fuelled the protest. They sat with representatives of the business community, and as in the past on similar occasions, gave generous assurances they will do what they can to create a good atmosphere to conduct business.

Koirala always asked others to behave but this is perhaps about time that the business community said—you behave Mr. Prime Minister.

(Khanal is a London based economic analyst.)

The idea is to make the next 20 years of SAARC, as Manmohan Singh said at the last summit in Dhaka, different from the previous 20 years that was mostly preoccupied in producing grand-sounding documents but had little to show by way of result on the ground.



# Terror, trade, transit to dominate SAARC summit

NEW DELHI: Terrorism, trade and transit will be the three big themes at the landmark summit of an expanded South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation that will include Afghanistan as its eighth member.

The 14th SAARC summit, that takes place here April 3-4 at the Vigyan Bhavan convention centre, will underscore a larger global interest in the region with the United States, the European Union, China, Japan and South Korea participating as observers for the first time in the 22-year-old history of the regional grouping.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Bangladesh chief advisor to the interim administration Fakhruddin Ahmed, Bhutan Prime Minister Khandu Wangchuk, Nepal Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapakse and Afghan President Hamid Karzai will attend

the summit.

Foreign ministers of China, Japan and South Korea, Li Zhaoxing, Taro Aso and Song Min-soon respectively, will make brief presentations at the opening session of the summit. The US will be represented by Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia.

The meeting of the programme committee on Friday will kick off a list of official events in the run-up to the summit.

It will be followed by the 33rd meeting of the standing committee at the level of foreign secretaries over the next two days. The Council of Ministers meet on Monday a day before the two-day summit starts.

The focus will be on making the SAARC a more efficient organisation and move it towards implementing some of the crucial regional projects that have been long under discussion, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon said.

The idea is to make the next 20

years of SAARC, as Manmohan Singh said at the last summit in Dhaka, different from the previous 20 years that was mostly preoccupied in producing grand-sounding documents but had little to show by way of result on the ground.

"As India's global stature grows and its economy continues to boom, it has a greater stake in promoting economic integration in the region," SD Muni, a South Asia expert said.

SAARC leaders will discuss the contours of a South Asian University, a large part of which will be based in India, the best in the world that attract best students and best faculty. An inter-governmental agreement will be signed to form the university before the details are worked out.

Other important intra-regional projects that will be discussed include a SAARC Development Fund, a Regional Telemedicine Network and a Regional Food Bank. The summit will focus on translating these ideas into reality by formulating a time-

bound plan.

The LTTE's dramatic attack on a Sri Lankan Air Force base has goaded Sri Lanka to ask for a revision of the 1987 SAARC convention on suppression of terrorism and put terrorism on top of the agenda of the SAARC summit. Rajapakse is likely to raise the issue of growing terrorism in his country and how SAARC can help him in countering it.

India will press for more intra-regional cooperation in combating the common scourge of terrorism in the region. India's concerns about terrorism in the region is directly linked to its broader agenda of promoting greater connectivity and free trade in the region.

Connectivity, physical, economic and mental, is clearly the grand overarching theme of the SAARC summit that New Delhi is hosting after 12 years.

India will push for greater connectivity in South Asia with SAARC leaders expected to discuss proposals

of SAARC Multi-Modal Transport Study to enhance rail, road and air links and economic integration through the elimination of trade barriers and freer flow of ideas.

With Afghanistan's inclusion in SAARC, India will push hard for a transit to Kabul through the land route which has been a stumbling block in its trade relations with Central Asia.

India will also make a pitch for harmonising and simplifying customs procedure and standardisation to simplify transit rules in the SAARC.

According to New Delhi, these steps would help in implementing the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA).

Pakistan's reluctance to adhere to its obligations has marred prospects of SAFTA, with New Delhi hoping that Islamabad will soon see the light and fulfil its commitment under SAFTA that became operational in July last year.

(IANS)

## Bangladesh confirms bird flu rise

"The avian flu has now spread to 16 farms in five districts so far. But no humans have been confirmed infected," an official of the Bangladesh fisheries and livestock ministry said.

Bangladesh has culled about 60,000 birds since confirming the outbreak of the H5N1 flu virus simultaneously on six farms near the capital, Dhaka, on March 22. All the culled birds belonged to the 16 affected farms.

So far, 30 workers in the five newly affected farms were being monitored after they were given

health checks.

Earlier, 100 poultry workers were released after no H5N1 infection was detected by a local laboratory, which tested their blood and other samples days after the initial outbreak was detected.

Movement of chickens has been banned outside a 10 square kilometre area around the affected farms, officials said.

Livestock officials said after the outbreak of the virus they had inspected about 10,000 farms containing nearly 1.1 million birds.

(news.com.au)



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# April Sizzle and February Chill

**In a monumental miscalculation, the palace had jumped at the weaknesses of the political parties while completely failing to appreciate their collective strength that had both an internal and external dimension.**



■ Saubhagya Shah

Within a year of the Janaandolan II, the national mood is back to self-doubt and despondency, a far cry from last April's giddy heights. The sense of victory and epochal accomplishment has been overshadowed by anger and accusation, suspicion and cynicism in every quarter. Interestingly, nowhere is this sense of foreboding shriller than among the main actors who coalesced to defeat the old regime and institute the New Nepal. There is more to this St. Valentine's Day chill in the

valley than just the freak snowfall in sixty-two years.

While the new dispensation contained several inherent structural and ideological contradictions that had been conveniently glossed over during the movement to overthrow the royal regime, it was the sudden firestorm in the Terai that left last April's winning paradigm in tatters. Hubris met its match, and is now groping for a rationale, a cohering narrative to piece together the impossible pieces of thought and action, rhetoric and reality suddenly unhinged and exposed by the Southern salvo. The original critique of New Delhi's 12-Point Pact an essentially one-point instrument of convenience rather than a larger national vision or principle might come to haunt the eight party victors than has been given credit so far.

Had there been a more sober rather than a

rhetorical assessment of the nature and scope of the April upheaval, perhaps the country would have been spared another bout of apprehension and despondency. Caught up in the euphoria of the moment, many enthusiasts characterised the April change as being unique, unprecedented, and a historic mark on the canvas of the 21st century. The panglossic view even claimed that it was a world-historical event that would allow the world to be remade entirely new again. What was forgotten was Marx's caution to his revolutionaries that men may make history, but only within the circumstances they find themselves in.

Objectively speaking, the April episode was not even a regime change, it was simply a case of regime collapse. Basically, a supremely incompetent regime in a weak state setting crumbled at the first serious challenge from a combined opposition. In a monumental miscalculation, the palace had jumped at the weaknesses of the political parties while completely failing to appreciate their collective strength that had both an internal and external dimension. It was this elementary political blunder which cost the crown its constitutional authority and much more.

What succeeded the King's debacle is not even a regime in the strict sense, it is a regime-to-be. With seven constituent members and one external partner, the new regime appears as an internally conflicting holding group rather than a coherent government. Paradoxically, the only issue that is still keeping the winning alliance intact is their shared hatred of the Crown that has been put in a kind of political coma by the interim constitution. It is almost as if the republican coalition now has more need of a phantom monarchy to keep them going than the royalists ever dreamt of. During its heydays, the Crown was often hailed as the unifying center of

the Nepali nation. History will certainly pass its verdict on that claim, but it is ironic that it should already be the galvanising force for the political parties as well. Indeed, where would the grand alliance now be without the benefit of a royal bogey?

Given the character of the new elites and the regional and international environment, it is very unlikely that the new dispensation in Nepal will be able to undertake substantive economic reforms and initiatives that could positively impact the fortunes of ordinary Nepalis. Notwithstanding the occasional radical bluster, the new ruling circle will not dare change course from the current peripheral capitalist economy or disregard IMF and World Bank market prescriptions.

The problem with the state quo is that unless something creatively drastic is undertaken, the fundamentals of Nepali economy will remain the same for the foreseeable future: unsustainable subsistence cultivation, export of cheap labor, widening trade deficit, and massive unemployment amidst abject poverty. What the ordinary people need most in this country is growth and employment, but the new rulers at the helm are still without any credible ideas or commitment on this imperative.

It must be considered a strange twist of fate that just when the communists finally emerged as the dominant force in Nepal, class as an analytic and political category has been replaced by ethnicity and identity as the major frames of intellectual, political, and developmental engagement. Although the initial payoffs might be good, it must be borne in mind that after a certain point, communalism elsewhere has usually proven to be a scoundrel's last refuge. ■

(Trilogy – 1)

(Harvard anthropology Ph.D. Shah teaches at TU.)

## Maoist's Future

**Even if the Maoists do come to power which they might through fraudulent and violent elections or a forceful agitation, the solution is not permanent.**

Even though the Nepali communist parties were formed in the early 1940's, it has failed to sufficiently yield power to impact changes. Firstly the communist parties were divided amongst themselves. Secondly, unlike now, the Indian communist parties were not in a position of power to influence Nepali communist parties. During the Panchayat, the communists were leveraged by the palace to counter mainly the Nepali Congress and other liberal democratic outfits – therefore the communists were not allowed space to exert their beliefs.

The communist party was only leveraged as a hedge to counter far right and centrist adventures by the palace. Yet another crucial point is the reluctance of middle class to submit to the ideology of communism.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, Nepal has so far gone through three general elections and despite consistent failure of the Nepali Congress to sustain a majority government; the UML has failed to garner a majority. Similarly at this juncture of political deadlock the Maoist began their armed revolt sensing the inability of the UML to lead a revolution strictly to impose a communist republic. Constant rifts and splits among centrist communist parties generated greater disillusionment amongst party workers prompting radical communists to initiate a greater



■ Siddhartha Thapa

revolution.

As the fringe communist parties and the UML failed to impact substantial political breakthroughs – the CPN Maoist came into light. With the christening of Maobadi as a political outfit, communist politics in Nepal saw a departure from Marxist-Leninist ideology to Maoism. The UML perceived the Maoist as their primary threat and vice versa. And as the Maoist revolution gained new heights, the UML during various stages whether in government or not supported military action against the Maoist. UML's counter insurgency measures lost them valuable friends within the leftist circle in South Asia. As for the arms and monetary assistance – communist government in Bengal and porous international borders proved priceless for smuggling arms and retreating into India for safety.

For Prachanda and his radical comrades, UML had betrayed communism. With the conclusion that Marxist-Leninist approach had failed, Prachanda and his comrades embraced Maoism as their core ideology. Maoism calls for permanent revolution that incites rural masses who are largely peasantry, to rise against the bourgeoisie. Maoist strategy

revolves around creating peasant based indigenous armies, and luring rural masses to fight wars of national liberation.

Another key constituent of Maoist strategy is the creation of autonomous indigenous regions, example Vietnam during its experiment with radical communism. The eventual aim of Maoism is to capture state power through waging a war of national liberation and stagnation of the national economy.

It was in apparent in February 2005 that the Maoist had all but failed to sustain their revolution. On the other hand the political parties were in complete disarray; for four years now one party or the other had been in opposition stirring agitations to no avail. The palace on the other hand had exposed India's nexus with the Maoists; and unfortunately King Gyanendra failed to heed to the advice of urgent rapprochement measures with the political parties to avoid a joint alliance of the Maoist and the parties challenging the king.

Perhaps the inability of the political parties to muster strength in the streets compelled India to come to Baburam's rescue; or perhaps Prachanda's coziness with King Gyanendra threatened India's influence in the Maoist rank and file. There are hoards of conspiracy theories but the crux of the dilemma was the incompetence of the political parties to independently orchestrate a successful agitation to force the King to cede power.

However, challenges lay ahead for Prachanda and his men - continued violation of the peace process has cast doubts in their

intentions. India's growing Maoist insurgency and Nepali Maoists nexus with Indian leftist insurgents is matter of deep concern to India's national security. The dismal performance of the Indian Congress in state elections bordering Nepal and ascendancy of BJP is

turning the momentum against the Maoists. But the key element that has coagulated Maoist design to come to power rapidly is the reluctance of the middle class to submit to Maoist ideology. The middle class who are stake holders in various interest groups have largely remained apathetic but the continued Maoist atrocities forced them to take the streets putting the government and primarily the Maoist in a spot of embarrassment.

Finally, even if the Maoists do come to power which they might through fraudulent and violent elections or a forceful agitation, the solution is not permanent. The growing disillusionment among the masses would herald a scenario where the working class, middle class and the apathetic majority would take to the streets to protect the Nepali way of life. A life free of fear of continued intimidation, abduction, corruption, elimination of political opponents, extortion, freedom of pursuing religious and cultural obligations, a sense of law and order and an environment to compete in a free market economy. ■

# TV ads make kids fat

Food, not sex and violence, is No. 1 product advertised to kids, study finds

Many parents fear their children will consume too much sex and violence on television. But a new study finds that food is the top product served up to kids and teens onscreen.

The study, released Wednesday by the Kaiser Family Foundation, found that "food is the Number 1 product advertised to kids, followed by media such as music, video games and movies," said Vicky Rideout, vice-president of the Kaiser Family Foundation's Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health. Rideout directed the study, which was conducted by Indiana University.

The study, the largest done on television food marketing to children and teens, found that more than a third of commercials targeting children or adolescents are for candy and snacks – often high-fat, sugary foods that are likely to fuel the ongoing childhood obesity epidemic.

Children eight to 12 years old watch the most food commercials, averaging 21 ads daily, according to the findings. That adds up to 7,600 per year, or nearly 51 hours annually. Teens, 13 to 17 years of age, see 17 food ads daily, or more than 6,000 per year, while youngsters two to seven years of age view 12 foods ads per day, or 4,400 yearly.

"It's the first time in over a decade that anybody has looked at television advertising aimed at children," says Margo Wootan, director of nutrition for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group. "And it's the first time ever that anyone has looked at such a huge sample of ads."

Researchers analyzed more than



1,600 hours of television programming broadcast from late May to mid-July in 2005, with additional sampling in September of that year. The team examined 30 times more television programming than has been included in previous studies. Unlike previous studies, it also looked at viewing times when children and teens are most likely to be watching television.

Half of all the ads aired during children's shows are for food. Of all the ads in the study, 34 per cent marketed candy and snacks, 28 per cent were for cereal and 10 per cent promoted fast foods.

None of the commercials in the study promoted fruit or vegetables. Only 4 per cent advertised dairy products – a rich source of calcium, which most children fall short in consuming, according to the 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

"Data like this is always useful,"

said Lee Peeler, CEO of the National Advertising Review Council and head of a new food industry initiative on marketing to children. "The thing that is most interesting and useful is that it will allow trends to be established."

One thing to keep in mind, Peeler said, is that the report was conducted on television shown in 2005. "A lot has changed since then," he said.

Some companies, including Disney and Kraft, have begun new efforts to promote more active lifestyles and healthier food to children. In November, the National Advertising Council started a new food and beverage initiative aimed at children. The 11 companies participating in that effort represent two-thirds of the products sold to children, Peeler said. Participants pledge that at least 50 per cent of ads directed to children younger than 12 will be devoted either to "healthier products or healthier lifestyle messaging."

(Washington Post)

## Insight

# Scrutinise MPs



■ Sushma Amatya

Every member of the parliament (MP) is paid 38,000 rupees and now we have 330 MPs who are being supported by tax payer's money. Thus it is but logical that the public is entitled to the minimum expectation that the MPs, representing the people, raise issues of the people in the august body.

The parliament elected eight years ago was dissolved in between and even otherwise its tenure of five years was long over. The revival of the parliament under dictates from the pro-democracy forces in April was a rare and extraordinary political development. The House comprising 85 members from the Congress, 83 each from Maoist and CPN-UML, 48 from Congress (D) and the rest from other nine smaller parties is expected to abide not only by the norms set and followed by parliaments all over the world, but also take into account the additional responsibility that the rare event of revival has thrust upon them.

The nation incurs extra expenditure in terms of energy, subsidised canteen, water, equipment etc for every extra minute the MPs spend in the

of the parliamentarians amounts to willful defiance of duty.

The speaker, who as the Chair is expected to act as the custodian of the House, has enormous responsibility to get the members to behave and establish order in the House. This however becomes definitely a tall order if the members do not realise their folly and improve their ways.

As citizens are the ultimate judge and have the right and responsibility to punish and reward political parties and MPs on the basis of their conduct and performance, it is perhaps the right time to bring their activities in parliament to the public. A direct live telecast, like it happens in most democracies, could bring the desired result, both in terms of regulating their conduct inside parliament, and getting people to know whether their representatives are acting and behaving as per the aspirations of the voters. Television, of course, is still more of luxury and an urban phenomenon in the country, but the visuals would have tremendous impact in case MPs behave below the set standards.

There is one fundamental deficiency in Nepal's parliament

**Any failure on the part of the ministers from eight parties is certain to frustrate the people and add to their disillusionment.**

parliament when in session. Apart from honestly discharging their responsibilities, the MPs are also expected to justify the cost borne by the tax payers, not contribute to criminal wastage, which we are unfortunately witnessing.

Any failure on the part of the ministers from eight parties is certain to frustrate the people and add to their disillusionment. The entry of certain members and their private security guards with arms into the parliament did exactly that to cite one instance. As if the scandalous exhibition of irresponsibility was not enough, the members often resort to stalling parliamentary proceedings and not allow any transaction to take place.

Due to such unruly behaviour, important legislation that directly relate with the mandate of the people for empowering election commission to hold election to Constituent Assembly in June has already become a casualty. Creating fish market like environment in the parliament is a gross insult meted out to the people by the parliamentarians.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that human behaviour cannot be regulated through legislation only. A sense of responsibility and serious attention paid to ones conduct is needed to see the parliament performing in a decent manner. Any apathy shown to the public reflected in the performance

today. This is the absence of opposition party whose legitimate duty is to 'oppose, expose and if necessary depose' the Government through constitutional means. In absence of opposition, the role of the media has increased. While the print media do have an all time access to parliament during the session, similar access to the electronic media equipped with device to present the House to the people, would have much bigger impact. Such an exposure would enable the people to know what kind of 'leaders' they voted for. A quote by Abraham Lincoln would be appropriate here, "I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts."

Of course, media alone would not be able to bring about changes in the behaviour and conduct of parliamentarians, but it can certainly help enormously in that direction. Along with it, a decentralised process of selecting parliamentarians and enhancing culture of inner party democracy would help inject larger dose of reforms consistent with the qualities and core value of democracy. This will perhaps take care of major deficiencies in what we call, 'Democracy' practiced here.



## 'Drug personality' is an artificial state

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

**How do drugs affect behaviour?**

Kimi Khadga, Kuleswor

Drug addicts attempt to withhold the fact that they are using drugs from friends and family members. Gradually, they begin to suffer from the effects of dishonesty and guilt, and as a result become withdrawn and difficult to reason with. They then may start to behave strangely.

The more they use drugs and /or alcohol the guiltier they feel, resulting in increased depression. They begin to sacrifice personal integrity, relationships with friends and family, job, savings and anything else in order to get a regular supply of drugs. This way, drugs start becoming the most important thing in addicts' life. They gradually begin to lose the distinction between right and wrong actions; their sense of isolation increases and distance between them and other people increases. This further compounds the problem.

**What does 'drug personality' mean?**

Shyam Gurung, Ranibari

'Drug personality' is an artificial state created by drugs. Drugs can scar one's personality and completely alter it. An addict begins to harbour hostilities which he/she does not permit to show on the surface. This contributes to establishing the link between drugs and crimes which results in breakdown of social and industrial culture.

A 'drug personality' suffers from mood swings,

inability to finish projects, unexpressed resentment, dishonesty, taking advantage of friends and employers, withdrawal from those who love him, isolation of self, appearance of being chronically depressed and stealing from family and friends. All such personalities can think about is getting and using drugs. They lose the ability to control their drug intake and ends up disregarding the horrible consequences of their actions.

**Why do people take drugs even when they know it is dangerous?**

Gyan Joshi, Banewsar

Most people take drugs out of curiosity. Once they experience the false sense of pleasure induced by drugs, they turn it into a habit. Some also use it as recourse to cover up - problems in life, unhappiness, sense of hopelessness or physical pain. Those having difficulty 'fitting in' as a child or a teenager, those suffering from anxiety due to peer pressure, or those suffering from shyness or even boredom tend to use it. After using drugs, the artificial sense of being in control of life makes drugs appear indispensable. The numbing effects of drugs or alcohol become a solution to their emotional or physical discomfort. It is just a matter of time before a person becomes fully addicted and becomes a slave of drugs.

Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to: [newsfront@bhrikuti.com](mailto:newsfront@bhrikuti.com) (Your identity will be protected.)

# Fun of Festival

Jiri Film Festival received a high profile treatment where almost every person in the Bazaar participated adding life to it.

## Manoj Dahal in Jiri

The local people were really excited to be a part of the two-day Jiri Film Festival last weekend in the eastern Bazaar, 180 kms away from Kathmandu. Navin Subba's 'Numafung' and Eric Valli's 'Caravan' witnessed thousands of audience out in the compound of Jiri Technical School where an open theater was established to showcase these blockbusters.

Almost everybody in Jiri arrived to watch these movies. Although 'Caravan' was in Dolpali language

around 50-member team from Kathmandu. Hill sides filled with red carpets of Laligurans was a special treat for those who were traveling to Jiri for the first time, away from the pollution, noise and crowd of the capital. Manna, son of American Ambassador James F Moriarty appeared really excited to be there as were the filmmakers, journalists and others.

Most of the makers of the documentaries and feature films were present in the festival such as Kesang Tseten, Nabin Subba, Mohan Mainali, Dhruva Basnet,

Another happiest person was Eric who was watching his 9 year old debutante feature film in the open theater. "I am happy," said Eric, who was in Jiri for the first time. Most probably, he is in Nepal to make another feature film about an aspect of Nepali society.

Many other activities accompanied the festival. Local products were displayed and interactions with journalists and filmmakers were held to attract the local youths to such professions. Kunda Dixit, editor of Nepali Times gave a lecture on media to the interested youths. Kesang Tseten and Nabin Subba provided basic information on filmmaking to a young crowd.

Former Member of Parliament and a prominent social worker in Jiri, Indra Bahadur Khadka and his straightforward speech attracted a major crowd. He showed the dreams of the people living in Jiri in an interactive program entitled 'Jirika Sapana', also a presentation of his vision to develop the Bazaar, a gateway to Mt Everest.

In the festival, a collection of 70 photographs selected from the recently-released picture book, A People War, began its nationwide exhibition tour. Jiri was the first point of its travel. The photo exhibition displayed pictures that showed human and material costs of the ten years of conflict. The photo exhibition will move from Jiri to Chautara, Lahan, Ilam, Narayanghat, Nepalgunj, Dhangadi, Tansen, and Pokhara before concluding in Kathmandu a month later. Nepalaya is organising the tour.

In every place, the exhibition will be locally inaugurated either by a person portrayed in the book or by a photographer whose picture is in the book. In Jiri, a victim of the conflict, Nanimainya Kafle inaugurated the exhibition. Her husband was killed in a Maoist attack on a public bus two years back at Mainapokharai, Dolakha. She is seen breast-feeding her child in an exhibited photo. ■



Thinley, Eric Valli and his wife watching 'Caravan' under the sky in Jiri

and the audience didn't understand the dialogues, they seemed to enjoy the movie for its adventure and its location in the Dolpo region.

Except 'Caravan' and 'Numafung,' all 17 documentaries and a feature film 'Mukundo' were screened in an indoor setting and it was hard for the locals to get tickets for these screenings on the spot as all seats were booked in advance. "This is most probably the first open air film festival in Nepal," Nepalaya's Arpan Sharma said. The event received a high profile treatment in Jiri where almost every person in the Bazaar, 7 hrs drive from Kathmandu, participated adding life to it.

Spring at its peak made driving through Dolakha special for the

Kedar Sharma, Girish Giri, Shekhar Kharel, Kiran Krishna Shrestha and Dilbushan Pathak. The festival was managed and coordinated by Nepalaya, organised locally by FNJ - Dolakha, Jiri VDC, Dolakha Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Jiri high secondary school and Dhungeswari lower secondary school.

Eric Valli and his hero of 'Caravan', 66-year-old Thinley were the major attractions of the festival. In spite of his illness, Thinly was in Jiri to watch his movie for the first time with a crowd of two thousand people. When asked how he felt watching his film, he replied, "Amazing! I have never been to this part of country, actually I had not travelled beyond Bhaktapur earlier."

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