

Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Koirala not to relinquish Dual Message

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala has been talking about the need for political consensus in forming future government, but relinquishing his post is nowhere in his agenda. Koirala's reluctance also emanates from the provision of the interim constitution that he will cease to be the Head of the State the moment he quits as the PM.

In his meeting with some diplomats recently, all that Koirala is believed to have said is that he is keen to move ahead with cooperation from all sides, but not once did he tell them that he is going to quit and make way for Prachanda, the leader of the single largest party in the hung constituent assembly. Although there are speculations that Koirala has been negotiating with the Maoists for 'president's job' once the monarchy is abolished by the first meeting of the constituent assembly, senior leaders of the Congress say Koirala is worried about much bigger issues.

"Abolition of the monarchy in a haphazard and undemocratic manner will lead to the situation where Maoists will bring Nepal Army under the Peoples Liberation Army, and everyone knows the consequence of that move," a PMO source told newsfront. In fact, Koirala, the source said, raised this issue when he had separate meetings with US Ambassador Nancy Powell, Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood and Sitaram Yechury, member of the politburo of the CPM, recently.

Koirala, the source said, assured them that

he will go by the letter and spirit of the interim constitution and that he would not go against the spirit of consensus reached among the political parties earlier. Koirala's assertion for 'consensus' comes at a time when no single party has acquired simple majority, in the constituent assembly with 601-members. Any party including the Maoists will need at least two thirds majority support to form the government.

No one knows if the PM has got any backing from any major international player to continue, but there are speculations that both the United States and India are quite worried about some of the activities of the Maoists.

No one knows if the PM has got any backing from any major international player to continue, but there are speculations that both the United States and India are quite worried about some of the activities of the Maoists, especially directed against their political rivals, and their approach on economic issues and international relations. They are also concerned about how Maoists will honour the press freedom and independence of judiciary, a subject that none of the seven political parties have raised so far.

The PMO source said that all these issues have been brought out during Koirala's meeting with diplomats; and he will be taking up the issue with all the parties including Maoists, UML and Madheshi Janadhikar forum and other parties in the CA, to arrive at a common agenda. But he has not yet broached on the subject of forming the new government and that will be done as per the provision of the constitution, the source said. ■



PM Koirala inaugurating the 22nd General Convention of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) held at BICC, on Saturday.

Bhaskar Chha

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अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता

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एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सजोरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ...

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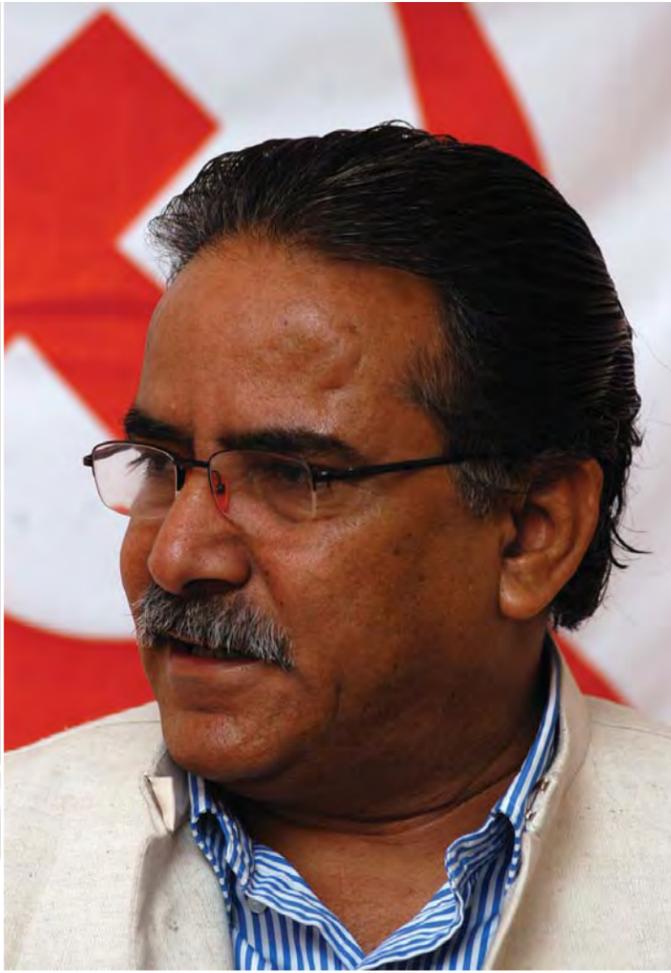
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would be difficult for the US government to go against the mandate if it is to continue its more than half a century long diplomatic and developmental activities in Nepal.

There are also indications that there are behind the scene pressure on the US, especially from India, to encourage Maoists to stick to democratic process and that the problem would not be solved by discarding them as terrorists. Some media in Delhi have personally accused Powell of trying to stall Maoists coming to the power, and of instigating GP Koirala to continue despite his party's poor show in the recently held poll to the constituent assembly.

The meeting also came in total departure of the US government's stern message that it would have nothing to do with the Maoists unless they disclosed the identity of the killers of two security personnel working for the embassy in Kathmandu three years ago.

The meeting apparently took place at Powell's initiative, a Maoist source told Newsfront, without disclosing any further details. The embassy release said the meeting was meant to discuss the 'outcome of the April 10 elections, CPN-M plans for the constituent assembly, and the future of U.S.-Nepal relations.'

Powell, the statement said, provided an overview of current US government assistance to Nepal designed to help create a more prosperous, democratic, and stable Nepal. She sought assurances that the new government would respect current donor agreements and ensure the safety of those implementing them. She encouraged Dahal to ensure that all Maoist organisations illustrate their commitment to the political process through their words and actions.

The last time the US officials had interacted with the Maoists was some three years ago in the embassy office, but that was at the level of a political counselor. A notice that promised suitable rewards for anyone giving clue about the killers of two security guards was stuck on the wall as Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai and two of his colleagues had gone to the embassy during the earlier ceasefire period.

Nancy meets Prachanda

The meeting apparently took place at Powell's initiative

■ nf correspondent

Kathmandu, May 2: In a significant move that no one thought would come so fast, US Ambassador Nancy J Powell had her first ever meeting with Prachanda, Chief of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M). The meeting took place on May 1, a

public holiday on the eve of her visit to Washington DC, to brief the State Department on the changed political situation in Nepal. The CPN-M and Prachanda are still on the terrorist list of the US government. There are no words yet from the Maoists side on the meeting, but a press statement issued by the US Embassy here said Powell sought assurances that the new

government would respect current donor agreements and ensure safety of those implementing them.

The US government has given a mixed signal about the possibility of the CPN-M being taken off the terrorist list, and all that was said so far was that 'the US would wait and watch.' But Powell's meeting with Prachanda signals that it

Congress to be revamped

The central committee of the Nepali Congress will soon be revamped in the wake of major electoral reverses it suffered in the constituent assembly poll. This was announced by GP Koirala in his capacity as the Congress president during the recently held central committee member to review the poll outcome.

Koirala who is under pressure to resign as the party chief owning moral responsibility for the setback was however, silent on the issue. He said he was not happy with the '60-40 equation' in the central committee, a reference to the shared proportion of the Nepali Congress and erstwhile Congress-democratic in the central committee following the two parties' merger last week.

"This means Koirala might be increasing the presence of his loyalists in the committee which will be downsized," a central committee member told newsfront. The central committee will be meeting again on May 10 to review the poll outcome and decide party's stand on formation



of the future government.

Koirala also said that he could not accommodate some of the very deserving candidates in the constituent assembly under the proportional representation system. Two notable personalities, both members of the central committee - Sunil Bhandari and Man Mohan Bhattarai's name was struck off from the list by Koirala to accommodate less deserving candidates in exercise of his prerogative, party sources said.



Although the government of India has ostensibly exhibited its willingness to go for a review of the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship with Nepal, it is using all the back channels to stop any such move.

The government of India conveyed its latest thinking on the treaty privately through Sita Ram Yechury, the politburo member of the Communist party of India-Marxist (CPM), during a two-day visit that he undertook last week. Yechury said he was here to congratulate the people of Nepal as it is all set to embark on a republic path.

But the real intention of the visit came later when he said only a government that will be elected after the new constitution comes into force should begin reviewing the treaty. If Yechury's suggestion is accepted, the revision of the treaty will have to wait at least three years from now as the

Status quo

Yechury mission appears to have succeeded in reversing the anticipated speed of the revision of the 1950 treaty with India.

election to the first parliament will come not before 2011, if the current target of preparing the new constitution by mid 2010 is realised.

Yechury, who met Maoist leader Prachanda besides Prime Minister Koirala and UML Gen Secretary Madhav Nepal, is believed to have told the three that the revision of the treaty in hurry may have other complications. The Maoist party which launched the 11-year old insurgency beginning February 1996, had put abolition of the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship with India as the most important agenda on their international affairs.

Prachanda, in his interview to Hindu, had said he was keen for the review of the treaty, but made it very clear that he understood the significance and role of India in Nepal's stability and progress. Yechury's visit came after Prachanda, the person who is most

likely going to head the new government, had demonstrated enough flexibility from the earlier stance that the treaty must go since it was unequal on letter and intent.

From Foreign Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee to the all powerful Nepal hand Shyam Sharan, all have said that they are positive towards the Maoists' demand for a review of the 1950 treaty. But the Yechury mission appears to have succeeded in reversing the anticipated speed of the revision. After the two governments in principle agreed to have the treaty reviewed way back in 2001, it has been under the 'passive review' at the foreign secretary level of the two countries.

Yechury said the CPM was all for review of the treaty, but it should best be left to the government that will be elected after the new constitution comes into effect.

News Brief

One China policy

Prime Minister GP Koirala has said that Nepal's One China policy and its stand that Tibet is an integral part of China are 'irreversible' stands, and the international community must appreciate it.

Koirala was responding to US ambassador Nancy J Powell's concern over the use of force by the Nepali authorities on Tibetans who were peacefully raising their voice for Tibet's freedom. A US embassy release said Ambassador Powell expressed official US concern about the treatment of



Tibetans by Nepali authorities. She urged the Prime Minister to ensure the right to peaceful protests was maintained and that the human rights of Tibetans in Nepal are respected.

But officials in Nepal said while Nepal respected Tibetans' right to protest peacefully, they should understand Nepal's link with China and that Nepal would not indulge in activities that would go against the friendship between the two countries. "Prime Minister also told the ambassador that Nepal firmly believed in One China policy and as far as Tibet was concerned, it is an integral part of China," Aditya Baral, advisor to the Prime Minister on foreign affairs said.

Foreign Ministry's objection

Nepal's foreign ministry has unofficially told Prime Minister GP Koirala that his meeting with India's new ambassador, Rakesh Sood, even before he submitted the letter of credentials was not a practice that Nepal should be encouraging.

Apparently, Sood's meeting with Koirala on April 26, four days before the letter of credentials was submitted took place even without the foreign secretary Gyanchandra Acharya knowing about it. The entire programme was finalised between the Indian embassy and the Prime Minister's office without keeping Shital Niwas in the picture.

A source in Shital Niwas confirmed that even the Foreign Secretary had no information about the meeting. Mr. Acharya has conveyed to Koirala the feeling of the Ministry in the light of established diplomatic norms and practices that such meetings are best avoided.



Boycotting Queen's birthday

Hishila Yami was among those present in the British Embassy during Queen Elizabeth's birthday last year. But this year, the day was observed in the embassy with the Maoist leaders making it a point not to attend the ceremony. Ambassador Andrew Hall who is one of the first European diplomats to establish contact with the Maoists had sent invitation to all the top Maoist leaders, but no one showed up.



FNJ probe

The Federation of the Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) has constituted a five-member inquiry team to investigate into alleged misuse of the funds, mainly received from international donors for carrying various study projects and training programmes.

The probe which will be headed by Prateek Pradhan of Kathmandu post will have Bishwamani Pokhrel (Samay), Kirsan Nepal (Himal), Narayan Sapkota and Subecha Bindu as the members. The committee was constituted as many members not only alleged large scale irregularities by the FNJ headquarter, but also insisted that they would not let the election take place without such a probe being ordered.



The two-day general convention of FNJ ended on Sunday with more than 1000 representatives (council members) voting a new set of office bearers for a three-year term. The convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister GP Koirala who assured full cooperation to the FNJ in their professional journey. He also lauded the role of journalists during restoration of democracy in the country.

FNJ, on the occasion, felicitated various journalists for their contribution to the cause of journalism. It also felicitated Krishna Sen Ichhuk and Birendra Saha posthumously. Ichhuk

was killed by the police during detention some six years ago, and Saha was killed by the Maoists last year. FNJ however, had to face criticism for having made no mention of who killed Saha when a 'letter of appreciation' was handed over to his brother by the Prime Minister.

Damodar Neupane, the Gorkha based correspondent of Kantipur daily, who had to go through torturous ordeal and illegal detention for reporting election malpractices committed by the Maoists in Gorkha, shared the Sridhar Acharya award for journalism with Saha.

Reports on terrorism

... The report fails to mention that neighboring India's position as one of the most terror afflicted countries in the world poses a significant risk.

Bhumika Ghimire

Country Reports on Terrorism 2007 released by the United States on April 30th raises concerns over the spread of terrorism in South Asia and lists Iran as top state sponsor of terrorism. India is ranked as one of the world's most terrorism affected nation and Nepal's troubles with internal terrorism is mentioned as a serious threat to the nation's stability.

Ethnic tension and violent activities in the Terai region and Maoist lead extortion, intimidation and abductions poses risks to Nepal's ongoing peace process. The report chides Maoists for not completely following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and continuing on their path of violence and political vendetta. Their youth group, the Young Communist League's increasing influence and willingness to engage in undemocratic practices is presented as a sign that the Maoists may not be serious about abandoning their past violent ways.

The question over how the US is going to deal with Maoists who have now won the Constituent Assembly election in Nepal, not a part of the report, was raised during the press conference organised to release the report.

Dell L. Dailey, Coordinator of the Office for Counterterrorism responded: "Well, in any terrorist organisation or any terrorist situation,

if there is a way for reconciliation legally and lawfully through the political system, obviously, we prefer that. And there are places where that's taking place already. It is taking place in Nepal, although it's had some ups and downs. But we prefer a legitimate reconciliation and reintegration politically long before we go after and try and do a coordinated, integrated, with host nation military action."

Maoists are not the only one being criticised; the report chides the Nepali government's inability and unwillingness to address the legitimate concerns of the Madhesis and ignoring the growing tensions in Terai.

DIASPORA

Violent uprising in Terai, in which many local groups took part, is reported to be infiltrated by criminals, who 'followed the Maoist lead of negotiation via armed struggle.' The report lists Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha as one of the most violent group operating in Terai.

Unfortunately for the Maoists, they are blamed for aggravating violence in Terai in "in a scramble to regain influence it had lost in the region." Gaur massacre is presented as a macabre flashpoint of the struggle between various Madhesi groups and the Maoists.

Despite being critical of the Nepali government's inaction on the

Terai issue and confronting the Maoists about their unchanged violent ways, the US has kind words for the government positive response to America's "requests to be prepared to freeze the assets of individuals and entities involved in the financing of terrorism when or if such assets were discovered."

Although Nepal has not suffered any international acts of terrorism, the report fails to mention that neighboring India's position as one of the most terror afflicted countries in the world poses a significant risk. Especially rising Maoist activity states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand, which are near Nepal.

The Country Report on Terrorism 2007 says that the Indian government now fighting against extremists groups in Jammu and Kashmir, Naxalites and Maoists in eastern and central parts of the country, pro independence groups in the northeast and nation wide Islamic extremists, is bogged down by corruption and slow moving justice system. Counter terrorism activity is hampered by poorly equipped security forces and inadequate training.

Civilian deaths in Jammu and Kashmir have gone down and the number of terrorists infiltrating into India from its border with Pakistan has also decreased, the Indian government asserts that extremists are now entering the country through Bangladesh and Nepal.



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Point to Ponder

All ideologies end up killing people. If you separate love from nonviolence you turn nonviolence into an ideology, a gimmick. Structures that are not inhabited by justice and love have no liberating or reconciling force, and are never sources of life.

- Jean Goss

Political morale

Almost all the political parties have now been going through the assessment of the poll outcome. Madhav Kumar Nepal has quit as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), owning moral responsibility for his party's poor performance.

But unfortunately, the Nepali Congress Party heading the government has shown that morality means almost nothing to the party. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister GP Koirala's Deputy tried to demonstrate some degree of 'morality' by quitting as the Working President of the Nepali Congress.

The reason is simple. If he accepts Sushil's resignation, he too might have to resign on the same ground. There have been unpardonable compromises on basic values of democracy in the past two years. Not only dissent ran rampant in the parliament, governance and political process, but the seven parties including the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists agreed to let GP work as head of the State without quitting the post of President of the Nepali Congress.

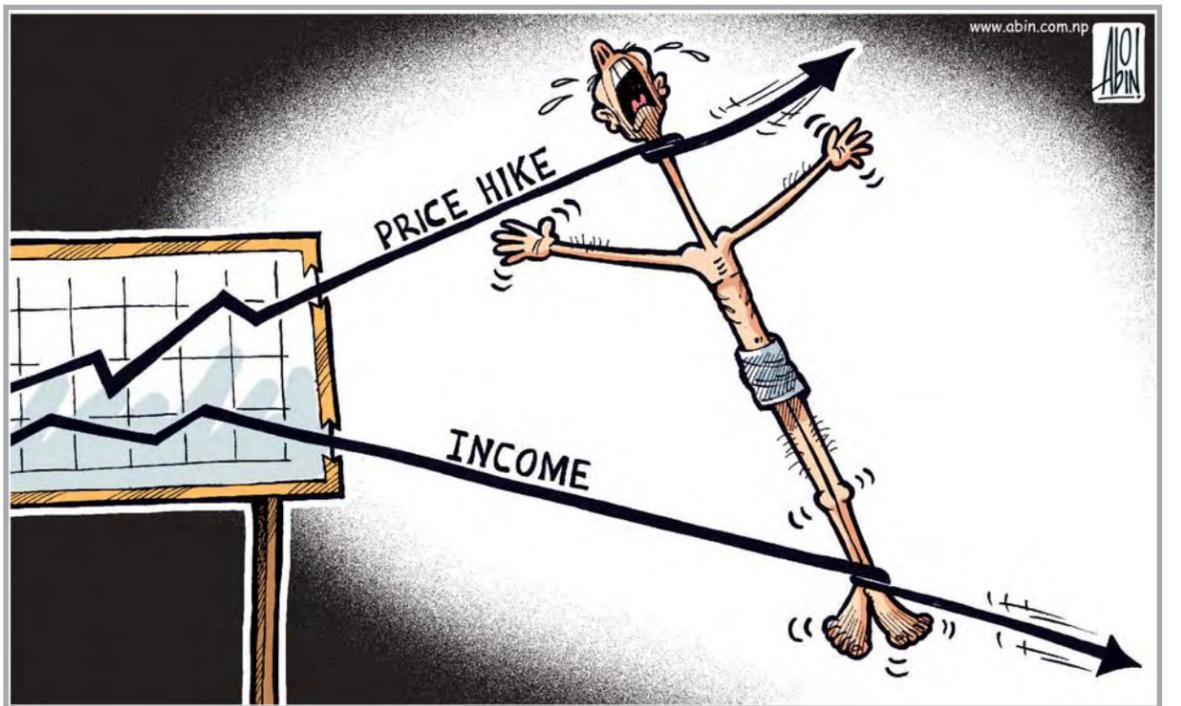
GP has not yet said that it is not a mandate for him to continue as the Prime Minister. Nor has he told his coterie that he ought to be emulating Madhav Nepal. The moral gesture that Madhav Nepal has demonstrated, especially during the transitional phase goes a long way in establishing values in politics.

But Koirala's decision to stick to the chair like a limpet and manipulate for his continuity defeats those values altogether. It seems that he is either keen to continue as the Prime Minister or strike a deal with the Maoists to be elevated as the first 'President of the Republic Nepal'.

The way the interim parliament adopted the resolution and directed the future constituent assembly to 'enforce' republicanism was not only unconstitutional but also made a mockery of the entire democratic and constitutional process. It was bizarre as the Congress, UNL and Maoists came together to exclude the role of opposition in politics.

There is a growing realisation in the country that no part of the constitution can and should be implemented before the constituent assembly prepares the draft constitution and adopts it. If this basic common sense is ignored, it will create a constitutional crisis and trigger political confrontation.

Koirala, by refusing to even recognise the core message that he has no right to continue has given a strong message that all he is interested in, is to continue in power, by thwarting the spirit of the mandate if necessary. Such designs can only be defeated if the parties which are present in the assembly go strictly through the democratic and constitutional process on bringing issues (including monarchy) and chart out the course and method of implementation in a time bound manner.



Letters

Thanks Lucille Bolduc

Dear Ms. Bolduc, allow me to express my gratitude for your excellent articles in Newsfront. The latest installment: 'Bubble', is brilliant and most eloquent! I myself gave up writing awhile back for a few reasons including time restraints and pressure from my business partner (who was terrified my identity would be leaked) but mostly because I got fed up with analysing this country's descent into...whatever the hell it is we have now.

As you point out, the willingness of the Kathmandu chattering class to accept this 'verdict' just shows how removed from reality they are. Then we have the international observers...at least the Maoists hate foreigners less as a result of their whitewash. I greatly appreciate your voice of hard-edged truth in the wilderness as it is such a rare commodity these days...please keep up the fine work.

Foreign Hand Kathmandu

Distant peace?

'Fractured mandate' by Ajay Sahni was a great piece as it put the Maoist politics in Nepal in perspective. Nepalis will no doubt, be happy if the Maoists lead the future government with total commitment to peace. But going by



what they have been saying all along, it indicates that they would not adopt peace as the instrument to achieve democracy and economic prosperity.

The author also makes a cautious reference about the likely impact the Maoists' victory in Nepal will have on India. After all, it is the government of India and the Delhi agreement, the two that was largely responsible for the Maoists joining the negotiation process.

But Maoist leaders have so far been quiet about the 'other assurances' they had from the Indian authorities when they signed the 12-point agreement. Maoist leaders, especially Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda will be seen

with lot of suspicion over the Delhi agreement.

Sunil Kayastha Kathmandu

Bold piece

'At larger stake' by Yubaraj Ghimire brings in public the deal that external forces played in Nepal. India, UK and US were behind the King when he sacked Sher Bahadur Deuba as the Prime Minister in October 2002. In fact, even G P Koirala was quite happy about it. He opposed the move only after the King appointed Lokendra Bahadur Chanda as the PM a week later.

Maoists must be thankful to these external forces for their political success today as these players are largely responsible for instigating the King and pulling out the support, arming the Nepal army and stopping supply of arms and ammunitions, and successfully weakening the authority of the State.

The Maoists must be aware how the foreign forces with special interest in Nepal can play and operate at different levels, and put the blame entirely on the local players. King Gyanendra is a victim of his own ambition and instigation of the foreign forces.

Nayan Ghimire Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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

Spiritual Corner

Shri Neem Karoli Baba

(died September 11, 1973, in Vrindavan, India), also known to followers as Maharaj-ji, was a Hindu guru and devotee of the Hindu deity Hanuman. He is known in the West for having been the guru of a number of Americans who travelled to India in the 1960s and 1970s and were responsible for the dissemination of his name in the West after their return, the most well known being the spiritual teachers Ram Dass and Bhagavan Das, and the musicians Krishna Das and Jai Uttal.

Details of Neem Karoli Baba's birth and early years are not known. According to one story, he was born Lakshmi Narayan Sharma

(in Akbarpur, Ferozabad district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. After an arranged marriage at the age of 11, he left his home and wandered extensively throughout northern India as a Sadhu. During this time he was known under many names including Lakshman Das, Handi Wallah Baba, and Tikonia Walla Baba. When he did Sadhana at Bavania in Gujarat, he was known as Tallaiya Baba. In Vrindavan, local inhabitants addressed him by the name of Chamatkari Baba (miracle baba). He was



considered by many to be a saint.

Neem Karoli was a life-long adept of Bhakti yoga, and encouraged service to others (Seva) as the highest form of unconditional devotion to God. In the book Miracle of Love, compiled by Ram Dass, a devotee named Anjani shares the following account:

There can be no biography of him. Facts are few, stories many. Just as he said, he was 'nobody.' He gave no discourses; the briefest, simplest stories were his teach-

ings. Usually he sat or lay on a wooden bench wrapped in a plaid blanket while a few devotees sat around him. Visitors came and went; they were given food, a few words, a nod, a slap on the head or back, and they were sent away. There was gossip and laughter for he loved to joke. Orders for running the ashram were given, usually in a piercing yell across the compound. Sometimes he sat in silence, absorbed in another world to which we could not follow, but bliss and peace poured down on us. Who he was no more than the experience of him, the nectar of his presence, the totality of his absence...

The magic of voting

Many believe election observation is an impossible task, especially for foreigners, who usually do not understand the subtle ground realities in a complex place such as Nepal.

■ Lucia de Vries

I've never been much interested in elections. I don't know why. Is it because I belong to a Dutch minority group which doesn't trust anyone wearing a tie? Or is it because elections in my home country are generally a rather dull affair? However, on April 9 I found myself in a Maruti van headed for Kavre district with a rather challenging task: observing the Constituent Assembly Elections 2008.

Having witnessed the 1990 revolution, two of the three consecutive elections, countless governments, a royal take over, a decade long insurgency and the Jana Andolan II, I felt I needed to be part of this historical election, not only as a foreign correspondent, but on a more intimate level. When the National Election Observation Committee NEOC approached me, I thanked the universe for listening to me.

So here we are the five of us, three Nepalese and two foreigners. Next to the driver, a young Tamang man from Ramechhap who has not had a holiday for the past three months and naturally will not get the opportunity to vote, sits our senior team member,

Many believe election observation is an impossible task, especially for foreigners, who usually do not understand the subtle ground realities.

Dipankar Chakrabarti. Dipankar is, he explains, 'on extension', having been given a new lease on life after suffering a massive heart attack some years ago. Dipankar is a retired Indian professor, Calcutta based, and the editor of a monthly left wing Bengali magazine. During the Emergency he was imprisoned for 21 months, refusing to give up his publication. Very outspoken and inquisitive, Dipankar keeps us busy with numerous questions, some philosophical, such as the nature of Maoism in Nepal, some more mundane, like the meaning of Nepalese pop songs on the radio.

Opposite me sits Bhomika Shrestha, a beautiful woman with long copper coloured hair, sporting a fancy mobile that rings all the time and an I-Pod featuring all of Nepal's latest hits. Bhomika is quick to point out that she is indeed a woman, but in a boy's body, and her dream is to have a sex operation. She too has been in jail, after being arrested in a discotheque where she used to dance in order to make some money.

Meena Sharma, a young human rights activist from the Terai, sits next to me. She visited the Mid-West when no one else dared to go there and

was kidnapped by Maoist insurgents on at least one occasion. On my other side I find Ganga Tamang, a local observer. She found herself in an army barrack some years ago, accused of being a Maoist fighter. Nine months later it was found that she was mistaken for someone else. Ganga was released but not after being tortured on many occasions, by an army commander whom she refers to as 'the dog'.

And then there is me, a Dutch journalist and editor, a rather dull character in comparison, grateful to find myself in the company of such colourful individuals.

Many believe election observation is an impossible task, especially for foreigners, who usually do not understand the subtle ground realities in a complex place such as Nepal. I tend to agree. Parachuting into a district, visiting a record number of polling booths, writing up a report and taking the next flight home certainly must be a useless exercise. Luckily the team is committed to do a better job. We decide to get as much background information from local observers on the day ahead and on D-day to limit ourselves to a few sensitive areas only.

It is only seven in the morning when we visit the first polling booth but already hundreds of people have gathered. The women are almost universally dressed in red saris, creating a festival-like mood. We see children donned in fancy dresses, elderly people who smilingly allow them to be pushed in the front, and countless excited young men who for the first time will cast their vote. A few men are seated at the entrance, holding children, waiting for their wives to return from the booth.

It is impressive to see how Nepalese polling officers using only a few means (some bamboo poles, strings, pieces of cloth, a couple of signs and some booths made out of carton, blue for boys, pink for girls) transform a school compound into a well functioning polling station.

But it takes more than a creative polling officer, some volunteers and a handful of police, and thousand of enthusiastic voters to make an election successful. It doesn't take long before we meet the 'youths in booths', from different political parties, inevitably dressed in black t-shirts featuring Bruce Lee, Sylvester Stallone or any other aggressive looking Hollywood character. It's amazing what a t-shirt, long hair, and a bit of extra weight do to a Nepalese teenager. These boys mean business.

Another inevitable obstacle to free and fair elections in a place like Nepal is the biased local observer. We meet ours in a well functioning polling booth and offer him a ride. We should have been alarmed when the observer took off his identity card and cap after leaving the booth. Or when he stopped the car of a Nepali Congress candidate, an elderly, frail looking former minister, and provided him with confidential information. Or when he kept on saying that the booth we were going to visit was the best one in all of Kavre District.

It isn't. We soon find out that the frail candidate has hired over fifty mean looking boys from Kathmandu, who plan to capture the eight ballot boxes at Kharelthok in the afternoon. We leave the local observer behind and inform the office. Half an hour later the local observer calls. The armed police has arrived. Why did we call them to a booth that is so peaceful and well organised?

"I didn't like that guy from the beginning", mutters Dipankar. Bhomika makes another phone call to the office. "You're a hero," I tell her. "Not a hero, a heroine," she corrects me, shaking her beautiful mane.

The next polling station, Sathighar, is an unorganised affair. Boys wearing t-shirts with party symbols walk in and out of the polling station. People are so keen to vote, they tussle for space in the little carton booth. The polling officers have moved into the shade and don't seem to notice what is going on. One particularly restless looking boy, a CPN-UML supporter according to his t-shirt, guides elderly people into the booth. "Put your stamp here. No not there, here!", he shouts. We happen to see whom he forces people to vote for: Nepali Congress. Meena is shocked: "Such clever people! And here we think city people are cunning."

On the way back we talk to a woman who walked for an hour to get to the polling station. She shares her concerns. "We are left with so little choice," she says. "When we vote for the Maoists their intimidation will continue and possibly get worse. But if we don't vote for them they might return to the jungle and inflict even more suffering. What am I supposed to do?"

When we return at Kharelthok an hour later the atmosphere has changed. The women and children, after being threatened by the Congress *gundas*, have locked themselves inside their homes. The only woman left, apart from officers and volunteers, is Devi Sunwar. Devi is the mother of Maina Sunwar, a fifteen-year old girl who was tortured to death by the army in one of



Nepal's worst war crimes. Devi has seen worse than this in her life and has vowed not to leave the booth until the boxes are sealed. Her stark green eyes observe the movement of every voter and visitor.

The Kathmandu boys, in groups of three or four, regularly march into the polling station, followed by members of the Youth Communist League, who are growing increasingly anxious and angry. There are two identical looking boys, dressed in red, who vent their anger at us. When one takes a breath, the other continues. Why we always point our finger at the YCL while the Nepali Congress is the one creating the trouble? Why we don't talk to the *gundas* and teach them a lesson? What will we write in our report? And so on.

We decide to visit another polling station and to return as soon as possible. We visit Dolalghat, a bazaar town by the Bhote Kosi River. Here things are well organised but the voters who are lined up do not look older than fourteen, fifteen. There is not much we can do. Their names are on the voters list and they have shown their ID. We take their photos and drive back to Kharelthok.

When we return the situation has become even more complex. The Congress boys have approached the YCL and offered a deal: the ballot boxes are to be captured jointly, after which all votes, apart from those of NC and UML, will be removed. The YCL apparently is not too keen. "This is the proof that YCL is the only democratic force in the country. Now why are you not taking any action?" the double shouts. Dipankar calms them down. "Don't explode; stay cool. We are doing what we can."

That is when we realise five people cannot do much without the presence of the armed police. The few police officers who are present clearly have no control over the situation. The station has four polling booths and keeping an eye on all of them at ones is virtually impossible. We divide into

smaller groups and position ourselves close to the booths, in full view of voters, visitors and polling officers. Luckily the armed police soon returns and –like us– decides to stay till after five, when the boxes will be sealed.

When the boxes are finally being carried away we sigh with relief. Devi Sunwar looks relaxed; there is actually a little light in her eyes. "Today I feel so relieved", she explains, "This is the first time we've had fair elections in this polling station."

When we leave we're a tired but happy group. "We did it," says Meena. The YCL double have followed us and now prepare a final lecture. "Thanks to the YCL", says one, "the elections have been made a success," says the other. "Thanks to our efforts and constraint," adds the first, "no booth has been captured", says the other, adding: "Make sure you write that in your report."

We follow the vehicle carrying the ballot boxes and countless passengers. The road winds along the rugged hills, the backdrop to a decade long insurgency. We pass Chairupokhari, where three young students, Reena Rasaili, **Ashmita Chaulagain** and **Tashi Lama**, were raped and killed by a large group of soldiers in February 2004.

We pass the Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre, where a week after Reena's murder Maina was taken, never to come out again. Not far from here is Chhatrebanjh, where Maoists killed 48-year-old Arjun Lama after abducting him in 2005. These are hills of poverty, where not so long ago virtually all men had left, afraid of being singled out by the Nepal Army or the People's Liberation Army.

When we finally arrive in Dulikhel it is dark. The police chief, relieved to find that the elections have been relatively peaceful, joins us for a drink.

"So how were the elections?", he asks, with a slur.

"They were magic", I say, and I mean it. ■

Next miracle: economic revolution

Maoists have a chance to succeed in their goals only if they can convince the businesses upfront.

■ Binod P Bista



After having successfully achieved civil/political campaign, which aims to transform Nepal into a

federal democratic republic, the largest winner of the constituent assembly elections, Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, has announced that it will now bring economic revolution in Nepal. As it stands and considering the recent success, there is hardly any room for apprehension on their word and people's enthusiasm.

If it were to happen, Nepalis would be extremely pleased in their correct judgment of trusting and providing the needed electoral support to the Maoists at this critical juncture. The scenario painted by Maoist leadership currently is nothing short of a miracle: producing 10,000 MW of electricity in ten years' time, raising Nepal's present per capita income to ten fold to USD 3000, and last but not the least, achieving annual economic growth rate of 15-20 percentage points.

In order to achieve these lofty goals the Maoists would wish to base their key policies, namely, revolutionary land reform, freeing Nepal from neo-liberal economic policies exerted by global expansionist forces but allowing foreign direct investment to suit national interest under a public private partnership system. This has been termed as the new transitional economic policy.

Economic development roadmap under the transitional economic policy has been divided into ten-year (for

turning Nepal into a medium level developing economy), twenty year (high level developing economy) and forty-year (developed economy) time periods. Besides agriculture, the other major areas of focus are to be forestry, tourism, water resources and hydropower development.

Also, full attention would be paid to achieve optimal utilisation of national resources with proper use of science and technology for reaping maximum benefits. The policies and development focus enunciated by the Maoists in their commitment paper released prior to the constituent assembly elections do not appear to be radically different from what has been practiced in Nepal during the time of all past democratic governments.

In spite of several commitments made by the previous governments on the advice of international/regional financial institutions and donor

governments, privatisation simply remained in paper. Some start was made during the early 1990s when maximum efforts seem to have been expended in disposing national assets (created with generous help received from Nepal's friends) at throwaway prices.

Without sincerely following through the complete cycle of privatisation process (since an effective regulatory body did not exist) the so-called privatisation schemes seem to have simply transferred ownership to few individuals and businesses. There was no improvement in either production or productivity of these industries while in private hands. The main principle of privatisation was thus squarely defeated and the consumers suffered more in private hands as the prices of commodities rocketed. Most of the industries have either been closed or eliminated

altogether today.

For a long time Nepal has been focusing on agriculture and forestry, tourism, water resources and hydropower development. Although the focus, rightly so, has been there but there is hardly any progress made, much less of a revolutionary nature. Public private partnership and foreign direct investment have been accepted and is being practiced, albeit to a different degree by the parties in power. Such a national behavior, lacking policy continuity and sudden changes, has confused the domestic as well as foreign investors.

Miracle or not, the Maoists have a chance of transforming Nepal into a progressive economic Asian nation by accepting the hard facts and coming up with pragmatic plans and programs. The hard facts are: Nepal first needs to develop its basic infrastructure to support agriculture

and industry sectors; Nepali private sector needs support for its healthy development so that it can compete within the region, if not internationally.

Public private partnership, as a desirable policy for infrastructure development, is clearly accepted by international institutions including the Asian Development Bank. It could also come handy for the development of Nepali private sector that is still in its infancy.

Maoists have a chance to succeed in their goals only if they can convince the businesses upfront. Although they have been trying hard to convey their message to domestic business organisations and international community in meetings and discussions recently, what they need to do is announce their policy publicly with focus on certain aspects soon after assuming power.

Some of the issues could be: non-nationalisation of businesses; adhering to the rule of law in conducting state affairs including economic affairs; non-use of force (illegal) in making people comply to the rule of law; explaining the rationale and application of public-private partnership (including its scope); treatment to foreign investment and so on.

Since the Maoists need to operate in a stable political and secured environment for Nepal's economic development, its relations (political, security and economic) with its contiguous neighbors should be at the top of agenda. Only with full support from China and India the Maoists (Nepal) stand a chance of achieving some sort of economic miracle. ■



Andie Gustafson

■ Lucille Bolduc

Once again the leaders of Nepal's more peaceful parties, the ones without private armies, are missing the big picture: deals signed in Kathmandu mean nothing, power is based on the ability of a government to control the use of force. The Maoists spent ten years fighting for that control, and over the last two years they were given it by the NC and the UML. To turn around today and start earnest arguments about whether the Maoists have the right to form the government is ludicrous, and profoundly undemocratic.

Not that the April 10 elections were adequate: they were distorted by Maoist intimidation and the general failure of the government to create a secure environment. The mark of a good election is one where the voters can cast their ballots without fear of retribution; clearly the Constituent Assembly polls failed that test. All parties behaved badly, the Maoists were just much more organised and effective in their badness (although the MJF gave them a run for their money in the Tarai).

The terrible security environment was no mystery to the unarmed party activists living in the countryside: they lived with the consequences every day, in the form of

The ground realities

For politicians raised in the feudal courts of the Ranas, Shahs, or Koiralas, this is a strange experience.

beatings, torture, and threats. They watched their parties trade away their election prospects in exchange for meaningless mounds of Maoist pulp. It's a good thing other clever authoritarians weren't so profligate, if Chamberlain had had to carry as much paper back from Hitler as Prachanda foisted on Koirala, his plane could never have heaved its own weight off the runway in Munich.

In the face of the clear disinterest of party bosses, and in the teeth of Maoist violence, Nepal's party activists did the rational thing: they kept their heads down, and hoped this moment would pass. Those brave or foolish enough to take a stand were knocked down hard and fast, their mistake confirmed by the failure of the government, of the Election Commission, of any responsible person or institution, to stand up

for their rights. Because all those bodies were following the same basic instinct: if the state will not protect me, then I must protect myself.

So now the election has passed, the intimidation worked, as it nearly always does, and the parties have woken up to a strange world where actions have consequences. For politicians raised in the feudal courts of the Ranas, Shahs, or Koiralas, this is a strange experience. At first they were baffled by the results but accepted them, not because they thought the elections were fair, but because they couldn't imagine they would make any difference. It was only with the rush to the capital by hundreds of UML and NC local leaders, each with stories of violence endured, and humiliations imposed by the government their parties were

supposed to lead, that the old leaders did what they always do: they yielded to the most immediate pressure.

For the last two years that pressure came from the Maoists, so they gave the Maoists what they wanted. But now it is coming from within, from those who bought the line of tolerance and patience for too long, and who suffered – unlike their leaders in the capital – the real consequences in the form of bruises, blood, the loss of property, and funeral shrouds. But this sudden energising of a long-dormant democratic circuit has come at just the wrong moment for the parties. They must choose between the fizzing anger of their cadres, acknowledge that much of the so-called peace process has been a sham, in that it bears little resemblance to a process and it has not brought peace, or respect an election that they organised, controlled, and initially endorsed. Either choice could lead to the parties short-circuiting and, possibly, burning out completely.

In the short term the NC and UML will yield to the cadres, and call for continued control of the government by Koirala, or insist on terms like the dismemberment of the YCL that were never raised in any of the numberless agreements signed in more delusional times. The consequence of this will not just be increased public

cynicism, which the parties never notice anyway, but increased Maoist strength. The latter are gaining credit for their 'reasonableness', although their new affection for globalisation and the World Bank makes you wonder why they bothered fighting a revolution against – well, globalisation and the World Bank. Now they will have another excuse to break deals, pointing out that the other side is just as bad, just as unreliable. And this is, if not a valid excuse, at least a good point.

If Nepal's parties are to have any hope of surviving the coming months and years, they need to accept the election results, stop worrying about which party heads the government or gets what post in a meaningless Assembly. It's time to pay attention to real politics: In this context the Foreign Ministry is meaningless and the Home Ministry all important, worth a dozen other posts for the sole reason that it offers influence over the police and Armed Police. The NC and UML must be ready to play a hard game, to be focused, and to learn the lesson their local leaders have been yelling at them for two years, government is not about titles, or nice offices, it is about exerting control. Having lost an election, they must not lose this war. ■

Jeevan R. Goff and Adam
with REVA cars

Adam Friedensohn's deep love for nature is reflected also in his work life where he chooses to protect it. He agreed to answer Sushma Amatya's questions about his connection to Nepal and his passion for the little clean car REVA which seems to hold many promises for the traffic and air quality in Kathmandu.

What brought you to Nepal and made you stay on?

I first came to Nepal in 1987 to pay respects to my teacher, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche who had passed away and whose remains were placed in a monastery stupa near Boudhanath. I have always been fascinated by Asia, its people and its human way of life. Sure, many things don't work properly here but the same could be said for the USA where everything only seems to be perfect. I didn't have to dig very far to see that to trade my mechanical way of life in the USA for a chaotic one in Nepal was a good idea.

Back then, I felt that the needs of the Nepalese people were simple and easy to understand. I started with a calculation: Twenty two million people, 90% living in darkness in unelectrified remote areas; cost of running electricity transmission lines to these areas was around \$20,000-\$30,000 per running kilometer. One thing was clear. There was nobody in Nepal who was going to be able to serve village people by transmitting electricity to remote areas using a centralized grid.

This problem brewed in my mind until I made my move here in 1990 to open Lotus Energy (P) Ltd. with Jeevan R. Goff my business partner, in 1991. The plan was that we could bring something so valuable to the Nepalese people in remote areas, and establish our families here in a rich human culture. At the age of 30, that was the time to make the move. Lotus Energy quickly became the largest Solar Photovoltaic Company in Nepal, serving thousands of villages to date. A simple idea of service grew into a life for me and my family in a beautiful and exciting country.

What got you involved in promoting this electric car? Why is it special?

Wherever you go to live, there you are. You face all the problems and rewards of that particular place and you bring your personality to the problems. In my case, since Kathmandu was the place I wanted to live and the place where my family would grow, I tried to engage in an activity which supports those around me while adding some social value to my presence.

Kathmandu had achieved its reputation as having pollution levels higher than Mexico City (the second most polluted city in the world) and local asthma and other respiratory disease levels were and still are, on a radical rising trend. Put this problem together with a solar energy field "way of thinking" (Solar PV deals with clean energy storage) and you get an electric vehicle venture. During the time of the success with our first electric vehicle venture EVCO (where we made around 600 Safa Tempos) I headed back to the USA in 1995 to see if I could find a small electric vehicle that could become the "people's car" for Nepal.

I found just the right baby from connections in the California government and made an agreement with the Maini Amerigon company (a US / India JV company) to secure our



Crazy about REVA

I didn't have to dig very far to see that to trade my mechanical way of life in the USA for a chaotic one in Nepal was a good idea.



Adam and his wife Sapana

group Eco-Visions (P) Ltd. in Nepal, as the exclusive dealer for REVA in 1996. Jeevan and I put a deposit down on the first five REVA cars even though we knew it would take years to the point where they came rolling off the assembly line in Bangalore, India.

When did the first one get here and what problems did you face during the time?

In 2002 we opened the order for the first five REVA cars. At the time the published Gazette of Nepal stated clearly that 4 wheeled electric vehicles had a special preferential tax treatment of only 10% customs duty. No other taxes were supposed to be levied. We asked the customs department several times if it applied to the REVA and they said: "Yes it does. It is written clearly. "Even though they responded positively, we asked again and again to be absolutely sure. We got the same answer each time before we finally opened the order.

When the vehicles came to Nepal the customs stopped them and sent several extremely silly questions to the environment ministry (asking if a battery operated REVA was indeed an electric car or not). The finance ministry decided that the REVAs were not to be allowed in at the published rate. The customs department was then directed by the MOF to: "Take no action." (i.e. freeze the cars at customs for several months) until the next year's gazette could be updated with a higher tax rate of nearly 200%.

This essentially meant that the cabinet decisions reflected in the published gazette of Nepal could be overturned by the Minister of Finance alone in one afternoon with no consultation to the cabinet. So much for published promises. Things have cleared up quite a bit since then but the fact remains that GoN pays you to pollute and use non-renewable fuel

while on the other hand it taxes you to ride clean and use our own indigenous clean hydro power.

REVA advantages:

The REVA is an extraordinary vehicle in so many ways. It offers several advantages that make it one of the most desirable cars to own. To begin with, it is the most hassle-free car on the planet. It doesn't need petrol or diesel so there is no standing in a queue or down-time due to fuel embargoes. It has no gear shift nor clutch so, in other words, it is extremely automatic, safe and easy to operate for anyone, male, female, young or old.

It is quiet and offers much less stress and strain to the passengers (and pedestrians for that matter) and driving it tires one less. It moves through traffic more easily than a motorcycle, has the tightest turning radius of any car in Nepal at 3.5 meters and it can go from 0 to 40kph in 7 Seconds passing other cars on steep uphill climbs. Extremely easy to park in small awkward places, one of the main advantages is answered by talking about its economics.

Is it expensive?

The REVA car is a new way of looking at the way we transport ourselves. Most of the trips we make are either done alone or with one or two of our family members for short distances (under 80 Kilometers). Each time we travel, regardless of the number of people we take with us, we burn almost the same amount of expensive fossil fuel to get the heavy car moving.

It fits our Kathmandu dweller usage pattern perfectly. It can comfortably carry two adults and two children and in a pinch it can easily carry four adults. The cost of the car is currently around NRs 8.5 lakhs for the deluxe

luxury version (with Air con / CD player/ remote locking) for tax-free customers, plus 8.1 lakhs Tax, So, NRs 16.6 lakhs for taxable customers.

But, since most people buy a car with a financing package, the initial cost of owning the vehicle is completely off set by its extremely low operating costs which are less than a motorcycle! Operating the REVA only costs about NRs 2 per kilometer including the electricity cost and depreciation of the battery pack. In other words the true cost of the transport. With such an excellent financial profile the REVA is an excellent investment for a family's main or secondary transport.

Battery charging in the current difficult scenario:

REVA only takes 4-8 hours to charge and this can be done while we are sleeping just like we charge our cell phones. In fact, the REVA can get 80% of its charge in only two hours and the rest of the time is a slow "trickle charge" to dress the batteries for longevity. A full charge from a nearly empty state, takes around 8-9 units of electricity which costs around NRs 80-90 total and this offers a range of 80 kilometers average driving range. Even with the problems we face in electricity availability, No REVA owners have had problems with an empty tank. Conversely, I drive by hundreds of cars waiting on petrol lines, seeing the angry disappointed faces of the drivers stuck sitting there thinking about politics.

Maintenance:

One easy maintenance consideration is to make sure the batteries get enough water (adding some every two weeks in hot weather) and this can be done at home in a few minutes by the owner. The second regime is just to check the system functions from time

to time. This is done by a technician at the workshop near Bhatbhateni or by a technician who comes to your own house on regularly scheduled service intervals.

The technician uses a "Palm Pilot" computer to plug into your REVA's serial port and it shows clearly everything that the car has been through in the last period. The Pilot shows how far it has driven, what electricity usages, what patterns of charging the batteries etc. The readout shows everything needed to diagnose any problems and to inform or instruct the owner accordingly.

Suggestions for Nepal:

This car can easily be made affordable by the average person who currently owns a motorcycle. But the Government of Nepal has to take this opportunity to realise its benefits for Nepal. Even now, so highly taxed, the revenues from it are not coming to the government anyway. More importantly there is a comprehensive calculation we have performed that shows that if given a complete and total tax free break, each REVA imported to Nepal would translate to three lakhs extra electric sales and another three lakhs saved by the government on petrol subsidy losses, i.e. six lakhs revenues for the country.

Of course the cost of air pollution is not included in this calculation and according to a study done by Business Age Magazine, the number one reason tourists declared they would not return to Nepal or suggest others to visit is the staggering levels of pollution in the cities. If the positive economic figures are not enough to turn the Nepal government heads around now, then maybe the simple frustration of petrol lines and rising petrol costs will.

(For more information :
www.eco-visions.com.np)

The people can make or break dreams

Maoists' commitments to multiparty democracy and culture are now on the litmus test.

■ Bidula Shrestha

The Maoists, who according to pre-assumptions of many intellectuals and analysts was to win a third in rank position, has taken the lead in the election results. The poor performance of Nepal's two largest political parties, the NC and CPN-UML has been devastating to both the parties and its leaderships. The parties' failure to reach to the people with their Kathmandu centric politics, the people's desire for change with clean and new dynamic political faces/forces have been very evident.

The Maoists win could be multifaceted that includes the myopia of the mainstream political parties, people's desire for structural change and lasting peace and settlement with guns, and the fear and intimidation of the insurgency for those who have gone through the pain.

The Nepali people have time and again proven to the Maoists that peaceful means can give more legitimacy and lasting settlement to the change process as compared to violent means. The Jan Andolan-II and the CA election are glaring examples. The Maoists who otherwise ideally would not have believed in the electoral process and their time to time sweeping remarks on the unacceptability of election results, the people's verdict

have bestowed them with more responsibility.

Their commitments to multiparty democracy and culture are now on the litmus test. Besides the Maoists, the newly emerged MJF comes as fourth largest party after NC and CPN-UML with their winning of over two dozen seats alone in FPTP will also be an important player in shaping the 'New Nepal'.

People have high hopes after the peace process for quick socio-economic transformation and well being. The global changes in oil prices have challenged the State, its national polity and efficacy greatly which is likely to aggravate in the coming days. This can still destabilise the political economy if played out by the oppositions. The post election poses many challenges to the new faces and their competency will largely depend on their delicacy and expertise to handle the situation.

Major political challenges

There will be changed power equation where the predilection will be to take the major government portfolios by the winners. The big and the frontline democratic parties losing the ground to CA may have the tendency to act as those of a wounded wild which can set a tug-of-war for the CA process instead of carrying forward the mandate of the

CA election and the spirit of the interim constitution. This is already evident in the notion of the some losing major parties. There is also the emergence of new parties which have advocated for more geographic isolation.

The easiest perhaps could be the decision on the republican agenda that has been explicit in all of the leading party's manifestos. The country is on the watch as to how this gets implemented. The most critical could be the security sector reform where the Maoists which was a party to the conflict and was the major actor to the peace negotiation are likely to be on the lead for such reforms. Smart acts on the part of the Maoists to settle these issues should be such that it will not invite civil and military tension.

The agenda on restructuring of State i.e federalism and state power proposition in manifestos have fundamental differences among the most prominent parties. The biggest test would be as to how the parties can come together and sort out the differences to craft and steady a democratic republic. The oppositions may try always to have their views strong to demonstrate their popularity. The onus of the reconciliation lies with the lead governing party and their political will and ability to shepherd at all levels.

Socio-economic challenges

The current political change needs to bring about changes on the socio-economic front through service delivery means embraced in good governance practices which can only bring lasting peace and democratic consolidation for Nepal.

The process of peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation will very much depend on the sensitivity of how the Maoists will handle their own deconstructions/ destructions to constructive developments. The political will to form and implement in a true spirit the Truth Reconciliation Commission, handling of disappearance issues will also be the major parts of the changed face of the peace process.

The conscientious ability of the Maoists led government to see through the other side of the coin without any prejudice will prevent Nepal from falling into further unrest and viscous cycle of violent conflict.

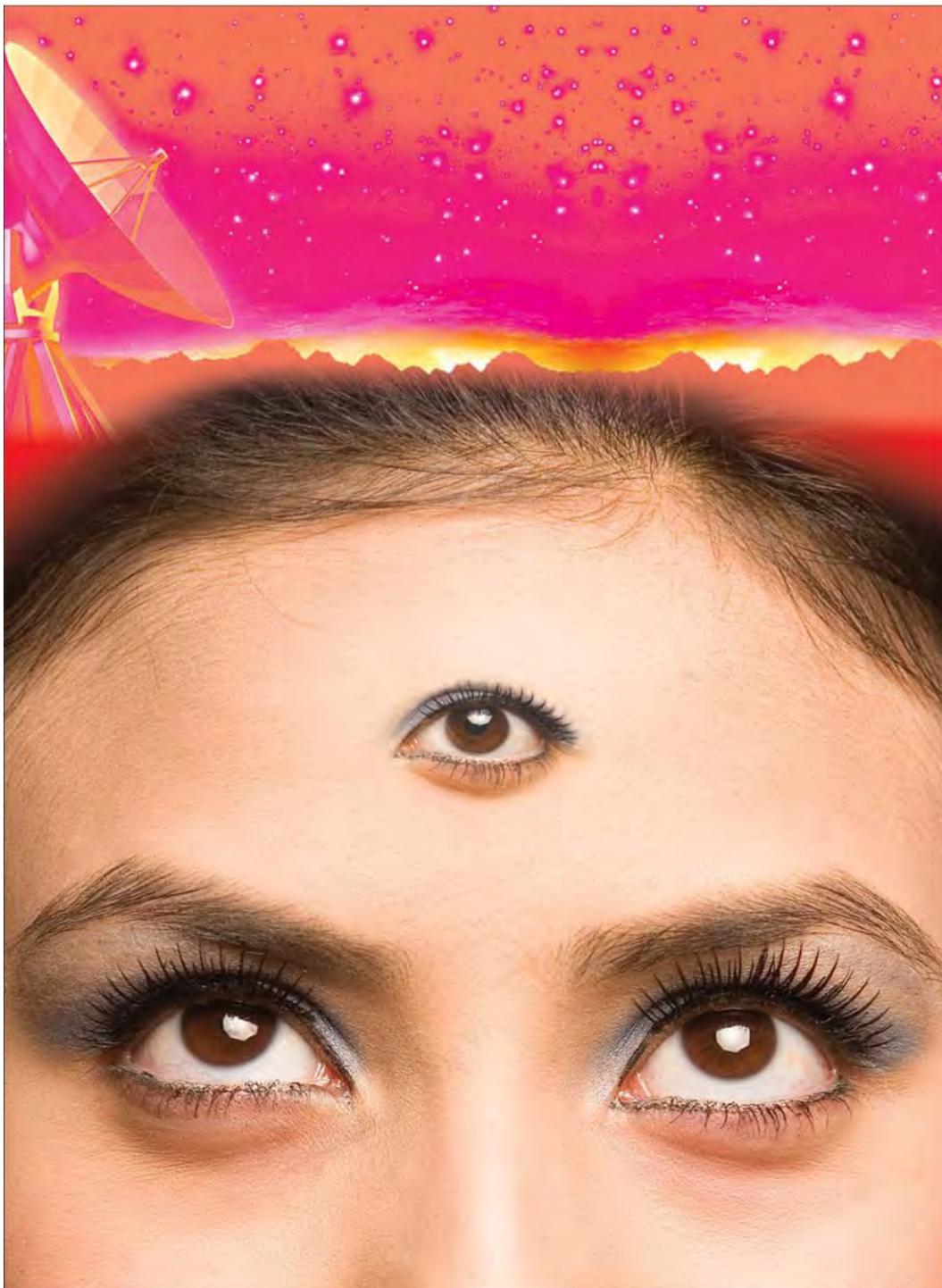
The change management

One needs to remember that although state governing will be an important factor in fulfilling people's immediate needs thereby their expectations, the primary responsibility of the CA election mandate is drafting of a Nepali people owned new constitution. The constructive activation of the all stakeholder can only lead to positive changes. The

interim constitution provides room for all party cooperation and consensus on issues or a 2/3 majority, which even the leading party does not command.

Thus the time demands culture of coalition rather than fighting opposition. The best way out could be to reach out to the people on major issues and based on the people's assertions build consensus on such issues. It is high time for parties to realise that this is a body which stands for two to two and a half years and sets a firm footing for the next parliamentary election. Rather than be overwhelmed or frustrated with the facade of the current results, it is the prime time to act fast and smart to the best interest of the people.

It is an opportunity to review, reshape, reaffirm and reorient parties in true spirit of democracy within and above and of practicing what they preach. The current election results are also a sign that democracy is the right of the people and people have the power to make or break the dreams. It is time for the parties to mature with responsiveness, transparency and accountability practices. What people need today is a vision that leads the country to stability, equality, justice and prosperity that gets implemented as 'their dream come true'. ■



संचार जगतमा तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा

स्पस्ट, दरिलो र विश्वसनीय श्रोत, केहि तीतो सत्य, केहि मिठो विचार र पुरो विवेचना अनि विविध विषयको सुमधुर समिश्रणका साथमा समाचार र निष्पक्ष विश्लेषणलाई फरक दृष्टिकोणले प्रस्तुत गर्दछौं । तेस्रो आँखाको कोणबाट हरेक पक्षको विश्लेषण र प्रस्तुति गर्दै तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा बन्ने प्रण गर्दछौं ।



सगरमाथा

तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा

'China talks may reduce tensions'

Face-to-face meetings are the only way to resolve issues

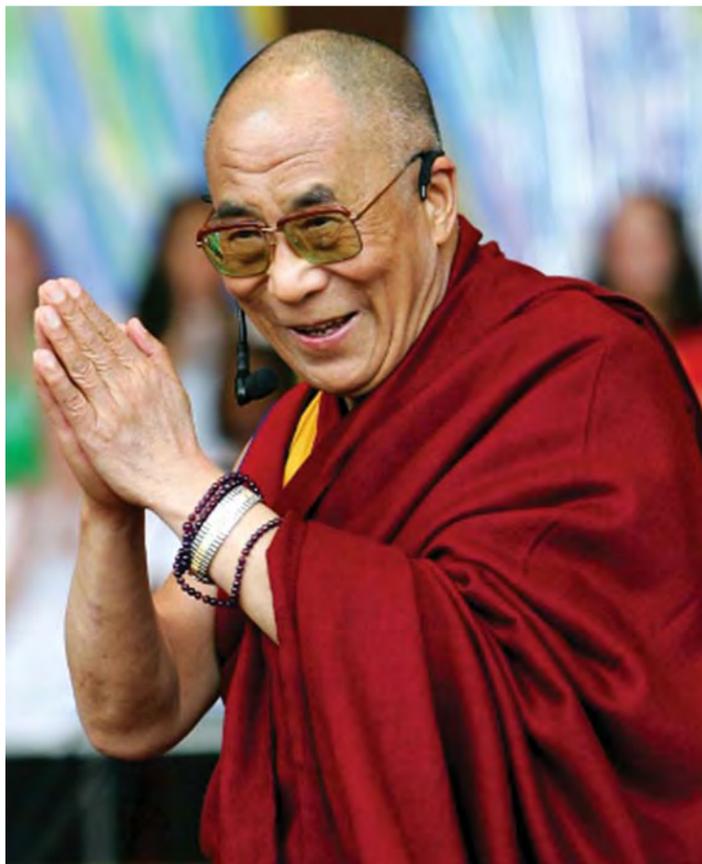
The Dalai Lama's government-in-exile said it believes its first talks with Chinese officials since protests broke out in Tibet in March may reduce tensions.

The meeting between the two Tibetan envoys and officials from the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party started this morning in the southern city of Shenzhen, Chhime R. Chhoekyapa, a spokesman for Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, said in a telephone interview from Dharamsala.

"Face-to-face meetings are the only way to resolve issues, and this time the meetings are primarily to deal with the present situation in Tibet," Chhoekyapa said. "We have neither high nor low expectations," he said, calling the meetings "informal talks."

China's decision to meet with Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's Washington-based special envoy, and Kelsang Gyaltzen, his envoy to the European Union, may break a deadlock after riots in March prompted global protests over Chinese rule of the territory. China has previously blamed the Dalai Lama for triggering the biggest demonstrations in Tibet in almost 20 years.

Chinese President Hu Jintao said he hopes the talks will have a "positive outcome," state media



Xinhua news agency said. Hu was speaking to Japanese reporters in Beijing today ahead of his visit to Japan from May 6 to 10, according to the news agency. Hu said China has always kept the door open to dialogue with the Dalai Lama,

Xinhua said. "We sincerely hope the Dalai Lama and his supporters will show through concrete actions they have stopped activities of splitting the country, stopped plotting and inciting violent activities and stopped

undermining the Beijing Olympics, to create conditions for further consultation," Hu said.

Xinhua news agency last night confirmed Chinese officials Zhu Weiqun and Sitar, who uses only one name, will meet with the two Tibetan envoys. The report didn't say where the talks will take place.

The envoys will "talk about the recent unrest and see how it can be reduced and bring calm, and see how we can from this end help toward resolving the problems in Tibet," Chhoekyapa said. "They will also want to talk about the process to move forward."

The last official discussions between representatives of China and the Tibetan government-in-exile took place in July 2007. The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after a failed uprising against Beijing's rule.

China's decision to meet with the Dalai Lama's envoys may defuse pro-Tibet Western protests that threaten to disrupt the Beijing Olympics in August. Protesters from Paris to San Francisco have used the torch relay to highlight criticism of China's policies in Tibet and Sudan's Darfur and the nation's human rights record. The torch arrived in the southern Chinese city of Sanya last night for the first mainland relay, which starts today.

(Bloomberg)

Myanmar cyclone causes devastation

Several regions in Myanmar have been declared disaster zones after a tropical cyclone, accompanied by winds up to 190km per hour speeds, destroyed hundreds of houses and knocked out electricity. Casualties were expected after Nargis hit Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, at about 5am local time (2200 GMT) on Saturday.

But neither the United Nations nor the government has provided a death toll or detailed damage assessment. The military-run Myaddy television station said on Sunday that Yangon, Irrawaddy, Bago as well as Karen and Mon states were all heavily damaged by the cyclone. Yangon residents ventured out to buy construction materials to repair their homes.

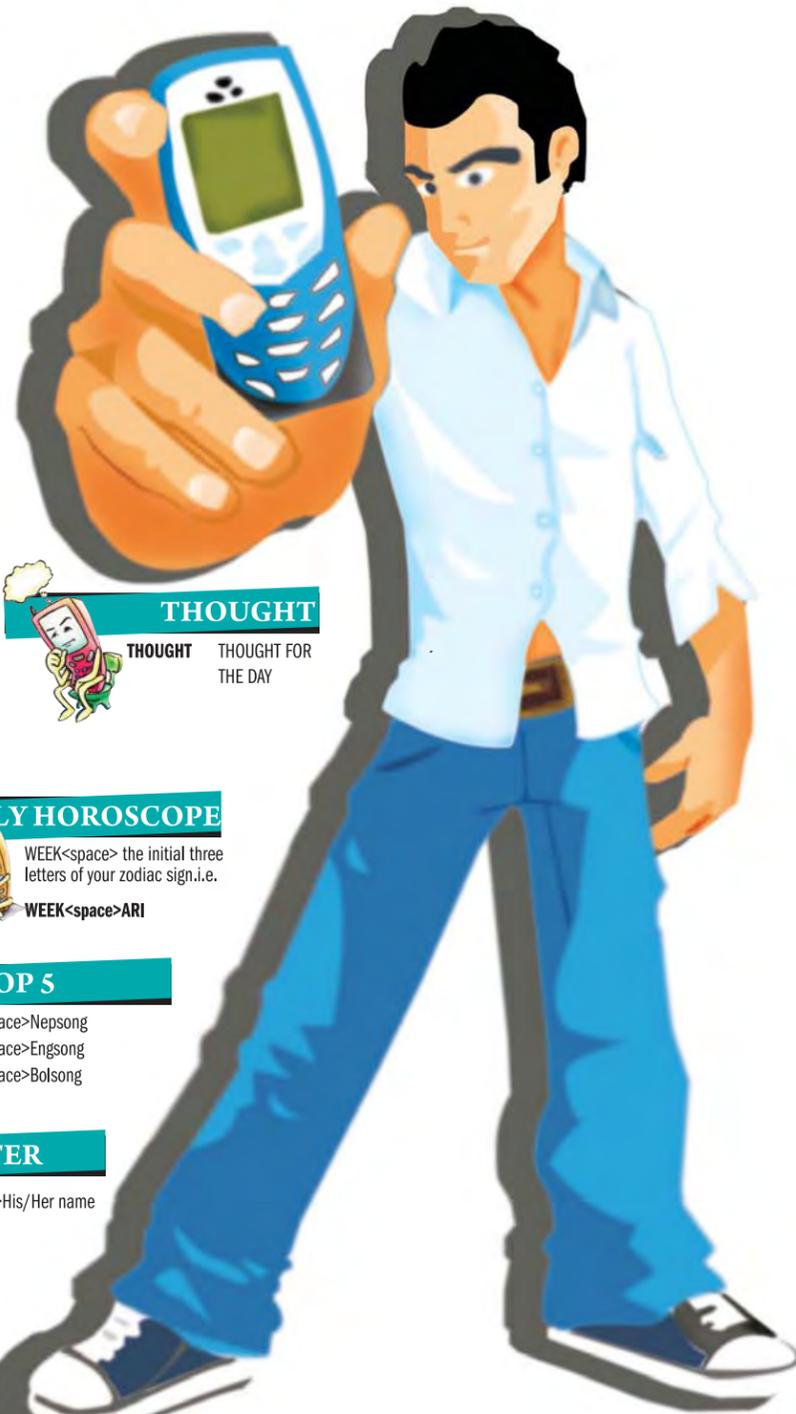
Some people interviewed said that the military-led government had done little so far to help with the clean-up.

"It's a bad situation. Almost all the houses are smashed. People are in a terrible situation," a UN official in Yangon, who requested anonymity, told the Associated Press news agency.

(Al Jazeera)



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ENT Entertainment news
INT International news
LIVE Breaking news

JOKES

JOKE
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JOKE<space>LAWYER
JOKE<space>SANTA
JOKE<space>BLONDE

THOUGHT

THOUGHT THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day
SHL Top 5 losers of the day
SHH Stock related help

FOREX

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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

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DICTIONARY

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MARSHLAND FLOWERS

Samatha

The mind remains the same without thoughts, concepts, Kleshas changing or disturbing it.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Samatha comes from two words. Sama which means quiet, tranquil and etymologically it is linked with the English word, 'same'. It means the mind remains the same without thoughts, concepts, Kleshas changing or disturbing it. But here the mind remains the same because it is focused on the same thing with a high level of concentration; so the mind remains the same (Sama), with the same Alambana (object grasped for meditation even if it is an objectless object) for two – four – eight – ten hours or even days.

This kind of meditation when it reaches a certain depth (depth here does not mean how many hours s/he remains absorbed in the Alambana (object of focus) but rather deeper levels of absorption) is called Samadhi. Although the words Samadhi is used in the Hindu and Jain systems too, the Buddhist classification of Samadhis are far

more detailed and refined.

While the Hindu Samadhis are classified into Savikalpa (also called Sampragyata which means with a thought or focus, i.e. Alambana) Samadhi and Nirvikalpa (Asampragyata) Samadhi, which means without any thought or object of focus (Alambana); the Buddhist classification is far more complex. It must be remembered that the Patanjali Sutra upon which virtually all forms of present day Hindu – meditation is based, is, according to Dr. Surendranath Das Gupta in his A History of Indian Philosophy, merely a re-hashing and Hinduisation of the Buddhist eightfold path (Astangika marga).

But even though Buddhist concepts, ideas, categories were taken as the very name Astanga yoga from the words Arya Astangika marga, it still seems to be a mixed pot pourri of ideas picked up from here and there. For example, even though the word Chatur Brahma Vihara is

found in the Patanjali Sutra no Hindu commentary including Vatsaayan seems to know what it is or what kind of meditation it is. And the Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa Samadhis are just a rather rough categorisation of Rupa Samadhi and Arupa Samadhis taken from Buddhism and given new names.

But the Rupa Dhyanas have four levels of Samadhi (sometime considered as five depending upon how it is distinguished) called first Dhyana, second Dhyana, third Dhyana and fourth Dhyana where breathing stops. And the Arupa Dhyana are also divided into four levels. All these are missing in the entire Hindu systemisation of Samadhis. The Arupa Samadhis are without any object of focus; but they are more or less the same level as the fourth Dhyana. However they do get more and more refined.

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

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final decision regarding the participation and selection will be done by selected panel of judges.

■ Pramesh Pradhan

Nagarkot, located 32 kilometers east of Kathmandu at an elevation of 2,000 meters, is one of the most scenic vantage points in Nepal, renowned for its breathtaking view of numerous snow-capped mountains including Mt. Everest. Just after an hour's exciting and winding drive from Kathmandu through the villages, one is welcomed by a gentle cool breeze and sprawling shops, restaurants and hotels. Nagarkot can be reached by bus from Bhaktapur or shuttle tourist bus from Kathmandu or taxis.

It is a mountainous hilltop and an idyllic escape outside Kathmandu on the northern fringe of the valley. Evening hours oversee

Kathmandu sparkling and with the backdrop of the thickly forested pine jungle, one is far from the heat, dust, smoke and maddening crowd of Kathmandu; with nothing to distract from the pleasures of fresh breeze of the rural countryside.

Nagarkot literally means Nagar (town) and Kot (fort). It was the eastern entrance for the valley since hundreds of years and one of the trading routes between India and Tibet. Nagarkot, cooler than Kathmandu, is in a windswept ridge. An Army training unit nearby is accredited for maintaining the rich flora and fauna. Bird watching is a joy in the forests of Nagarkot. Bicycle ride to the place is one the favourite attractions besides pony-riding, kite flying, village tours, meditation

and yoga. Once a rustic hilltop, it is now an increasingly popular picnic destination.

Nagarkot is good for short treks, hikes and pleasant strolls in the hills. Hikes to Bhaktapur, Sankhu, Changu Narayan, Dhulikhel and Vajra Jogini can be taken from here. A viewing tower at 2,164 metre is a vantage point for spectacular sunrise and sunset views. Lhotse (8,501m), Makalu (8,462m), Chova Vamare, Numbur, Karyo Lung, Manaslu (8,463m), Ganesh Himal (7,111m), Langtang (7,246m), Dorje Lakpa, Melungtse, Chugi Mago, Sisha Pagma (8,027m), Cho Oyu (8,201m), Gauri Shankar (7,134 m) and above all the Mt. Everest (8,848m) can be seen on a clear day. It truly is an idyllic escape round the year.

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FIREFRONT

I see how the poets here struggle to keep the meaning and relevance of the written and spoken word alive

Landscape and the lines

■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma



Tears in the eyes of the lake Erie have frozen, hidden in its eye sockets, the thirst of the world's fresh waters.

Its waves grey like Gandhi's feeble staff, as he raises his neck in rusting belt's cold furnaces, rolling mills and withered gardens (Cleveland)

"Coffee is a fuel to change the world," says the placard on the Vox Pop Cafe at Bowery Poetry Cafe, New York. As I sit with poet Gary Glazner and Catherine Fletcher of Citylore to plan a Himalayan reading at Bowery, I see how the poets here struggle to keep the meaning and relevance of the written and spoken word alive.

The poetry scene is vibrant and almost everyday an event takes place here to keep a creative writer busy. Also it seems strangely reminiscent of London's literary life. Even in the States, I feel have a small family of writers who love south Asia, especially Nepal.

Gary Glazner who visited Nepal couple of years ago seems in awe of the spectacular beauty of Nepali landscape and people. He narrates his anecdotes from his travels in the region and then recites his poem on the festival Holi.

"Poets there have very bushy eye-brows," Gary discerns with a smile and recalls a meeting with a prominent poet. He was a sort of poet laureate, he guesses. "It must be Madhav Ghimire," I suggest and he seems to agree.

While working on few fresh poems and stories on my travels in the States, I try to see a shift in my writing. My recent visits to Cleveland and Chicago have inspired me to write a few pieces and slowly I see how the lines in my poems have started demanding an expansion and length that was not the case in the Himalayas.

In the mountains, my two line format of the lines imitated the high and low snow ranges. But travels in the States introduce me to vast expansion of American wilderness. During my train ride to Cleveland I was face to face with the American land that stretches into the horizon, making you marvel at the vast sky.

Now I can see the rationale behind Whitman's long lines and endless catalogues. The grand landscape also explains the stormy rush and sweep of Allen Ginsberg's howl that echoes even today in the vast American scene. And then return to New York's cloistered subways makes you drowse for few minutes, compelling you imagine and celebrate life in the vivid landscape of this magical land.

In the stale and smothered airs of the NY subway, grim as a graveyard; your fingers, in my hands; a miracle, from the goddess, of the winds of the world.
(writer@yuyutsu.de)

Friends and family shocked by Carey-Cannon nuptials

“This is what Nick does; Nick is such a sucker for love,”



The whirlwind romance between Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon turned into “I dos” for the couple, and their friends say they’re stunned about the wedding. “I’m shell-shocked,” a source in Carey’s camp tells People magazine. “As far as I know, they are happy together.”

Music mogul Russell Simmons said he didn’t know about the nuptials ahead of time. “Whatever makes them happy,” he said Friday. “They have a lot in common and should have a lot of fun together.” Even Cannon’s family was surprised. “It’s crazy right! We’re definitely happy,” Cannon’s brother, Gabriel, tells People.

Another insider says the newlyweds didn’t know each other before Carey’s video shoot for her song “Bye, Bye” in the Caribbean on March 26. “Nick was cast as the romantic lead and was flown to Antigua where they met so basically their started during the shoot,” the

“It’s crazy right! We’re definitely happy,” Cannon’s brother, Gabriel, tells People.

insider says, adding, “She’s very into religion and Nick is very into religion. That’s something they bonded on.”

Jacob Arabo, who created the



diamond ring that the actor gave the singer, tells People that his friend is in love with Carey. Still, others seem more dubious of the romance. “This is what Nick does; Nick is such a sucker

for love,” said a source close to Cannon. “He falls in love so quick.”

Adds another Cannon insider: “We all thought it was a joke, but he’s been

impulsive before. . . . Maybe this was a crush that went too far. We’ll see. He takes a while to come down from the cloud.”

(Newsday)

Covered-up Cyrus

Miley Cyrus took to the stage in Orlando on Saturday night - dressed from head to toe and unfazed by the week-long controversy over her Vanity Fair photos. The “Hannah Montana” starlet’s adoring fans made it easy.

“I saw a sign back there that said, ‘Miley, I’m praying for you.’ I could not be more appreciative,” 15-year-old Miley told the crowd, according to People.com.

“Thank you guys for all your support. Without you, none of this would be possible. I love every one of you.”

Miley - clad in a white tank top, white jeans and sneakers - sang in the rain at the Disney Channel Games concert.

The teen has apologized for the Annie Leibovitz shots in Vanity Fair, one of which shows Miley wrapped in a sheet.

(Newyork Daily News)



Miley-clad in a white tank top, white jeans and sneakers - sang in the rain at the Disney Channel Games concert.

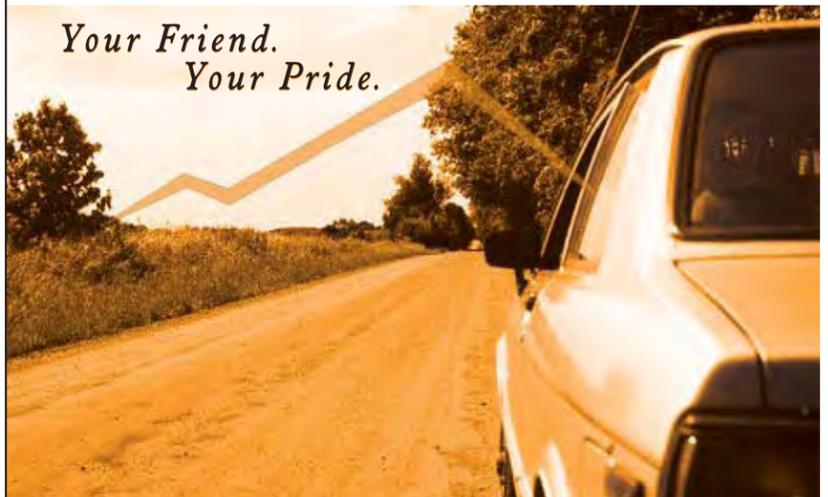
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