



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Protestors demand Home Minister's head and Maoists apology

newsfront Team

At least two protestors were killed, about 30 wounded in Lahan as police opened fire to quell supporters of the Terai Janadhikar forum after they went on rampage attacking Government offices and security personnel at Lahan on Monday. The forum supporters have been on the agitation for the past five days demanding political autonomy for the region. The death toll so far has risen to three.

The Government imposed a 12-hour curfew beginning Monday evening as tension mounted and the forum threatened to intensify the agitation since the Government did not meet their demands - resignation of Home Minister K P Sitaula, apology from Maoist Chief Prachanda—by Monday afternoon, the deadline set by the agitators. The forum's rage against the Maoists was a sequel to the killing of Ramesh Mahato, a local student by Maoist commander Shiamram Thakur on January 19, and his forcible cremation.

Ignoring all that Sitaula declared at a hurriedly called press conference in Kathmandu on Sunday to the effect almost absolving Maoists of the killing and accusing that the agitation in Terai was being instigated by the palace.

"This is a total lie. We are for our political rights and autonomy under a federal set-up", said Amaresh Narayan Jha, a forum leader who was released after three days detention in the capital on the charge of burning interim constitution. The Government, under pressure from the Maoists, hurriedly enforced the interim constitution on January 15 ignoring the forum's demands. The forum is now being backed by two parallel Terai insurgent groups—Terai Jananatrik Mukti Morcha --both splinter groups of the Maoists. The Janadhikar forum is ostensibly the umbrella organization of the Terai right groups.

Of late, Maoist Chief Prachanda has been accusing that the Terai agitation is being

"Government is fully responsible for what has been happening in the Terai today, and if the Government refused to address the grievances we have raised, constituent assembly election can not be held in June"

sponsored by the palace, something that Home Minister hinted recently whereas Maoist leader from Terai, Matrika Yadav says "both India and the palace are instigating it". There are also fears that the pro-Hindutva Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) elements in India who are not happy with Nepal's recently acquired 'secular status' might create problems in Nepal using Terai areas which share border with India as base. There are also reports that the flare up in the Terai came soon after the RSS family met in the Saraswati Sishu Mandir, educational wing of the RSS in Terai, in which the Madheshi Janadhikar forum leader Upendra Yadav, among others were participants.

Altogether 17 people—14 protestors and three security personnel who were wounded in the



clash in Lahan were brought to Kathmandu in a night vision army helicopter, and most of them admitted to the Army hospital on Monday itself. The Government however, has not been contemplating to deploy the army yet, a senior government official said. "We are in the barrack as part of the understanding between the Maoists and the Government. But if in their judgment, these parties decide to use our services, we are at their disposal", said Brig Gen Bijaya Bahadur Thebe, Spokesperson of the Nepal Army. ". The decision to use the army helicopter was taken after the Prime Minister called an eight party meeting to

review the situation in Lahan, and its reverberation in the capital in the form of Bandh. The meeting agreed to pay compensation to the family of Ramesh Mahato at par with the amount given to

those killed during the 'Jana-Andolan', but stopped short of declaring him a 'martyr'.

"Government is fully responsible for what has been happening in the Terai today, and if the Government refused to address the grievances we have raised, election to the constituent assembly can not be held in June", Jaya Prakash Gupta, a former leader and parliamentarian, told newsfront.

The current round of agitation in the Terai emanated directly once the Government, under pressure from the Maoists, ignored their demands and unilaterally announced the interim constitution enforced on January 15. The Government action was retaliated by the burning of the constitution by the forum in Kathmandu.

(With Shyam Sundar Yadav in Lahan)

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Shyam Sundar Yadav

Arbour's advice

Action not words enough to end impunity

■ Govinda Pariyar

Louise Arbour, UN High commissioner for human rights, was not at all a happy person when she last visited Nepal. She felt betrayed as King Gyanendra, contrary to the assurance given to her, took over all the powers and suspended all freedom days later. Her visit this time comes on a happy note now that democracy has returned.

Arbour's worries have reasons to grow. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is absent almost for eight months now and majority of the past 147 recommendations by the Commission's office have not been acted upon.

But challenges have not receded, and that's one message she has been conveying from every forum available.

And the loudest message she has delivered soon after she arrived on a six-day visit beginning Jan 19 is not something that would cheer the Government of the day and the Maoists who are waiting to be part of the interim government soon. "General Amnesty to those who were guilty of grave human right violations

during the years of conflict can not be an acceptable way of long-term resolution of the conflict", Arbour said.

This clearly goes against the deal reached by the Government and the Maoists which empowers the cabinet to grant general amnesty to any convict.

Arbour's messages in public and private when she met Prime Minister and other leaders were

without ambiguity—End the culture of impunity, and prove it by taking actions against those who were guilty. She had first hand experience of agony of families who had lost their family members during the conflict. In Bardiya she spent time with such families and experienced their grief.

"The first priority of the present Government should be to make those from both sides—state and the Maoists—accountable for the grave cases of human rights violations".

Human right groups echo her sentiments; "If steps are not taken towards ending the culture of impunity during the present transitional phase, the fire of conflict will spread faster than most people think".

In fact, representatives of the victims of

Maoists excesses told Arbour that they were losing all hope of getting justice after the Maoists joined the interim Government. And this is something her special Representative Lena Sundh has to keep monitoring and putting pressure on the interim Government and scheduled CA election.

Arbour's worries have reasons to grow. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is absent almost for eight months now and majority of the past 147 recommendations by the Commission's office have not been acted upon. "Families of those who lost their lives and those who disappeared must be given suitable compensation and the guilty punished", Arbour said.

She was mostly positive and optimistic in her statements about the peace process, the guilty being brought to book. But most of her suggestions expressed her deep concern about the inability of the Government and the Maoists to take serious note of these issues that would result in keeping the conflict alive in some form or the other. "The main challenge before the Government of Nepal today is to address the issues of deep-rooted inequalities and discrimination and establish durable peace". She also suggested that political parties needed to demonstrate will power to end social and all forms of exclusion. ■



Bhaswar Ojha

Reverse Order

Koirala in CPP leadership



Newsfront

Interim Head of the state and the all powerful Prime Minister G P Koirala is all set to be elected leader of the congress parliamentary party on Tuesday. Completion of the mere formality simply legitimizes Koirala's continuation as the Prime Minister of the interim Government once the Maoists join it, some two weeks later.

Koirala's formalisation as the parliamentary

party leader comes in the wake of criticism and controversy over his administering oath of office to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court without his having taken oath as the 'interim head of the state'. With the interim constitution coming into effect from January 15, the king remains virtually out of job as all his ceremonial roles will be discharged by the Prime Minister.

While the arrangement under the interim constitution to have judiciary and legislature under control of an all powerful executive and the Prime Minister with sweeping powers has been criticized by the bar, concentration of power on one person has not been taken kindly by his own party leaders. Newly elected president of the Nepal Bar association, Vishwakanta Mainali has warned that the consequences would be serious if the Government did not amend constitution to ensure freedom of the judiciary. But the politics is taking precedence over constitutional issues at the moment.

"Once Koirala began acting as head of the state, he should quit as party chief", said Narahari Acharya, a prominent dissident leader and member of the working committee of the Nepali congress. But Acharya is in minority, although the recent nomination; of ten law makers by Koirala has irked senior congress people. "The method Koirala adopted in selection of the mps lacked transparency as well as democratic norms. It was purely his decision as an individual", Arjun Narsingh K C, another working committee member of the party told newsfront. ■

Backfire

Maoist retreat in Dhulikhel



Bhaswar Ojha

Hotel owners of Dhulikhel took an unprecedentedly assertive posture when the employees union affiliated to the Communist party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) padlocked nine hotels there demanding salary and other facilities at par with the five star hotels.

The lock out was however, lifted on January 22 after a perusal of the demands and facilities being enjoyed showed that the strike was not justified. The Hotel Association of Nepal mediated in the peaceful resolution of what could have snowballed into a major set back to the growing hotel business in Dhulikhel.

A hotel owner said that the HAN brokered peace agreed that there would be no increase in

the salary of the employees for three years, but all those who have been on contract for more than 240 days would automatically be made permanent with effect from January 1, 2007.

Although the employees had demanded salary at par with the five star hotels, they would be entitled to monthly salary ranging from 2420 to Rs 3070 depending upon the hotel category they belonged to.

"We had been paying all these facilities to the employees and Maoists demands were thoroughly unjustified. And we were determined not to accept unjust interference of the Maoists", a Hotel owner who participated in the tripartite discussion said in the meeting. ■

Bhaswor Ojha



James F Moriarty: firm and flexible

James F Moriarty is perhaps the most vilified and hated diplomat in Kathmandu. Almost echoing top Maoist leaders, Home Minister K P Sitaula literally called him a 'liar' when Moriarty expressed fears that Maoists could take advantage of the porous Bihar-Nepal border to get old arms as the process of depositing Maoist arms in the container is underway.

That hardly deters him. Last week, he repeated what he's been

saying all along—that the U S welcomes the peace process and the latest decision of the Maoists joining parliament. But the Maoists, he insists, need to demonstrate conduct and behavior matching their words.

And in almost a challenging tone, he says no one will be pleased more than himself if he is proved wrong. And clearly the onus to prove Moriarty wrong lies on the Maoists. Is the challenge acceptable comrades? ■

Three New Banks



Global Bank in operation

If openings of new banks is any indicator, Nepal's economy is in for an upward mobility.

At least three National banks - Global Bank limited, Citizens bank and the Prime commercial bank are joining the fast expanding banking industry in Nepal. Global Bank which is basically going to focus on 'remittance and foreign currency service' started its operation in Birgunj and Kathmandu recently.

Chairman of the Prime bank Narendra Bajracharya said, "we will start our operation within three months after we get the Letter of Intent from the Nepal Rashtra Bank." Both the Prime and Citizen banks will be located in the

capital".

All the three banks will have 1000 million paid up capital and around 2000 million rupees authorized capital each.

That will qualify them to be a 'A Grade' commercial bank. The banking system in Nepal has largely been plagued by huge default as a result of which the total non-performing assets has almost touched the 30-billion rupees figure.

As a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) Nepal had agreed to open the International Banks from 2010 making the sector more competitive.

■ Madhusudan Poudyal

We wish Samay team's New venture Newsfront weekly all success. We hope that it will be a role model in journalism for others to follow.

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UN verification team in job

Likely to be over in ten days



UN photo

Visibly young and tender looking guerrillas are posing tough challenge to the U N team which has begun verification of arms and armies in the designated cantonments of the Maoists. However, no one has been confirmed as a 'child soldier', information coming from the camps said.

"In case of any controversy over the age of the guerrillas, the issue will be sorted out by the team in consultation with the Maoist commanders", a Maoist source said. So far around 2,200 Maoist guerrillas

have been verified in two camps—Shaktikhor in Chitwan and Jhyaltung Danga in Nawalparasi. Arms verification which is to follow the completion of the guerrilla verification process is likely to be completed in the next ten days . A team of 20 including two from the U N special team, four from the UNDP and 14 from the retired Gurkhas of Indian Army is engaged in the verification process of the two places. Access has been denied to the media persons on insistence from the top Maoist leaders.

Although it has been officially stated that arms verification will begin soon after the guerrilla verification process is over, it has not disclosed the way it would be done. As per the information available, arms and weapons which Maoists captured from the security forces and private license holders, and the ones Maoists bought and manufactured would be segregated and deposited in containers under the single lock system with the key under Maoist possession.

■ Dipak Gyawali in Butwal

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Arbour and impunity

Nepal has long been known, criticized and condemned at times both home and abroad for the culture of impunity that thrives here. That clearly means, certain individuals, families and class are not only beyond the reach of law, they are clearly above it. Impunity is the clear anti-thesis of rule of law without which Democracy can not be an effectively functioning system of governance.

With the collapse of King Gyanendra's authoritarian rule in April and subsequent advent of democracy, one would naturally imagine that those who suppressed the people's movement and all those who were beneficiary of the culture of impunity would not be able to enjoy immunity any further. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour's emphasis to end the "long-standing practice of impunity" is both understandable and laudable. After all, Arbour has been a consistent and strong voice in favour of restoration of democracy when it was eclipsed, and what she advises the Government of the day will carry no less weight.

Culture of impunity can not be ended with the agenda of political vendetta and the revenge which the present Government is openly pursuing. The commission it formed to investigate into the 'misuse of Government fund' and excessive use of force to suppress the April movement was not only political in nature and composition, its conduct was anything but transparent. It clearly acted as the persecution wing of the Government, specially the Home Minister, who arbitrarily pursued the politics of vendetta and reward even before the commission started its work.

The Government has refused to give a copy of the Inquiry commission's final report to Arbour's local office. The reason for this refusal is simple. The composition and conduct of the commission, besides the method it applied in investigation are not only devoid of transparency and impartiality, they were out and out political. In fact, political revenge has now emerged as the new culture of the Government. And this, at a time, when the interim constitution has totally done away with the principle of separation of powers bringing apex judiciary and legislature under the executive headed by an all powerful Prime Minister will only mean democracy today faces a threat as big as it did during the King's authoritarian regime. The country no doubt, is cautiously optimistic about the outcome of the peace process, but the key political players are used to failing people.

The country is also waiting for the formation of a "Truth and reconciliation commission" so that those guilty of atrocities during the time of conflict are brought to book in one or the other form and that the healing process gets an institutional boost. While the Maoists participation in parliament has paved the way for the rebels joining the interim Government, there are also fears, specially among the victims of Maoist atrocities that they would not get justice or compensation in any form. Arbour is undoubtedly the right authority to give a clear message that all the victims of the conflict—no matter which side the perpetrators of the crime belong to—are entitled to justice, and in the changed political set-up no one should be able to enjoy impunity. ■



I am happy Samay team is going to launch newsfront. I hope it will maintain the ethnical and professional standards of the media. I am confident that long felt need of a english paper will now be fulfilled. I would love to see Newsfront with more investigative and innovative stories and also as a platform of diverse opinion.

■ **Bhim Bahadur Tamang**
Leader, Nepali Congress



Nepal is in a transitional phase. Media not only can play an effective role in giving proper direction to the transition, it also has a responsibility to do that. I wish that newsfront reflects and represents aspiration of all communities who together constitute Nepal.

■ **Dr Sanduk Ruit**
Ramon Magsaysay awardee



I'd like to read about educating people about their rights, especially women's rights and new roles for women. Please also give coverage to issues on children, terminally ill people, disabled and mentally ill people, besides the role of psychology, mental and emotional health for the development of a healthy family and society. Educate the public and parliamentarians about the upcoming elections and sensitise them about political ethics and leadership.

A few more issues: alternatives to formal, stereotyped education to bridge the gaps in education; measures for poverty alleviation, effective ways to bust the vicious circle of drugs, narcotics and a corrupt administration; measures to check the alarming rise in prostitution; youth friendly issues and how they can do something for their country; and the same would apply to non residence Nepalis.

■ **Rani Gurung Kakshapati**
Educator



I am happy that Samay Team is going to start newsfront. I sincerely wish that it will be able to promote the campaign for construction of New Nepal with radical changes. Consolidation of democracy will be a major challenge that we all be facing.

Election to the constituent assembly will be a milestone in that direction. I hope that newsfront takes a positive attitude in all these issues.

■ **Madhav Kumar Nepal**
General Secretary, CPN-UML



Media's leading and vibrant role during the successful movement for democracy in Nepal has barely any parallel. Samay magazine deserves special appreciation as it took the lead in defying the censorship imposed by the Royal regime. I hope the new venture by the Samay team will follow that example and play effective role in consolidating and strengthening democracy and the peace process in Nepal.

■ **Sher Bahadur Deuba**
Former Prime Minister



The needs of New Nepal are two—to make the partisan culture a reality and to make the atmosphere of free thinking strong. The temptation of the parties to draw everybody into their ideological folds is very strong. I guess, this is a universal psychology of party people everywhere. But in Nepal there is a growing need for promoting the culture of free thinking which conversely makes the partisan culture itself very strong.

The growth of free media can create an atmosphere for free thinking. Why a weekly in English? I think Nepal's recent events, the great experiments of the revolutionaries to come to parliament and of those parliamentary parties to sit in dialogue with the guerrillas and bring them to sit across the aisles in the parliament is a great achievement. For that reason, the world has become interested in Nepali politics. Moreover, a large English reading public has emerged in Nepal. So an English weekly that caters to the needs of all groups of people, and that makes the cultivation of a culture of free thinking its main principle is a great need now. I hope your weekly will make its own contribution towards that.

■ **Dr. Abhi Subedi**
Author



I hope Yubraj will manage his newly acquired responsibility of a publisher as best as someone can do in Kathmandu. It is very hard to be a good journalist and a good human being at a same time. The very nature of the profession is not conducive to produce such a rare combination. Journalism makes us skeptic to start with and very soon upgrades us to the class of pompous cynical. A class that sees problems on each and everyone except themselves and their media owners. If someone is working in a poor country like Nepal it would be much difficult for anyone to be a good journalist and a good human being—something I hope Yubraj maintains even in his new role. Time is right, all you need for success is a combination of courage, conviction and ability.

■ **Bijay Kumar Pandey**
Journalist



English readership is on the increase every day. Nepal needs to be expressed more clearly to the international forum. After all, those who decide Nepal's fate should be well informed. These factors indicate that there is a clear scope for English papers in the market. The existing English media have fallen short of expectation in one or the other way. Newsfront's arrival is therefore a welcome event. I sincerely wish that this would prove a milestone in the history of Nepali media.

■ **Rajendra Dahal**
Chairman, Press Council



Every Nepali is looking forward to have a Peaceful country. I sincerely hope that the government will be able to deliver that. We can make Nepal richer if we properly mobilise our resources. I congratulate newsfront and hope it plays a prominent role to construct new Nepal.

■ **Karna Shakya**, Tourism expert





Diverse representation: Maoist law makers

Unravelling Inclusiveness: Challenges Ahead

The Maoist movement made substantive contributions in raising and highlighting the issues related to the extremely alienated and marginalised peoples of Nepal. It will take a long time, protracted action and a consistent commitment from the Maoists to prove how genuinely they are inclined to addressing these problems. These apprehensions arise since the top leadership in the Maoist party is also dominated high-caste individuals as in other out-of-gear "mainstream" political parties.

The inclusion debate, largely concentrated in the Kathmandu valley, is in fashion today. One sees that among academics, the media and the civil society, topped by funding from scores of clueless foreign missions. This monopolization of the debate by valley-based elite itself shows that nothing much is going to happen as their concerns have very often proved to be superficial. This is what happened during the making of the 1962 and 1990 constitutions. The first challenge for the Maoists today therefore is to take this debate to places far removed from the capital and make it as broad based as possible. Let the stakeholders from all these distant locations speak their minds and shape the outcome of the debate.

As in other crucial issues that pertain to Nepal today there has been no real debate or long-term vision on this crucial issue. In the name of debates one sees floating emotions, political compromises and blatant patronage. Nepal's traditionally excluded and deprived populace do not require individual symbols of inclusion in the likes of Nembangs, Biswokarmas and Ansaris. Such selective patronage, in fact, later become the edifice of further deprivation and marginalisation. This is what happened in India for many years. The recent Sachar Committee report on Muslims in India clearly shows the

negligible impact on such attempts at inclusion when you have only elite Muslims within the nation's inclusionary matrices. In fact, what the Nepali political elite has done for the last six decades is copy the tactics of such exclusive patronization of the Ranas and Shahs in the name of doling out something to the alienated lot. Whereas the criticality of the situation demands serious introspection, followed by a visionary policy and large-scale institutionalisation of



■ Mahendra P. Lama

The inclusion debate, largely concentrated in the Kathmandu valley, is in fashion today. One sees that among academics, the media and the civil society, topped by funding from scores of clueless foreign missions.

inclusion as the single national socio-political agenda.

In this regard, Nepal has much to learn from the Nepali-speaking citizens of India spread out across Darjeeling, Sikkim, the Northeast, Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh. The caste divisions among these Indian Nepalis are the same. Yet, they have shown tremendous robustness in practising intra-community equality. What has really made the difference is education, democratic ethos, freedom and choices. If Ratanlal Brahman became the first communist to be elected to the Parliament from Darjeeling, his political foes back home included firebrand Deo Prakash Rai of the Gorkha League. In Pandit Nehru's All Indian Congress Committee one of

the most trusted and acclaimed Secretaries was Theodore Manen, a Dalit. The Chief Minister of Sikkim is Pawan Chamling who was preceded by a Bhutia, a Gurung, a Limbu and a Chettri. The Gorkha National Liberation Front Leader is a Tamang and the speaker in the Assamese Assembly is a Rai. Chokila Iyer, former foreign Secretary of India, Louis Banks, the Jazz musician and several Olympians, including C.S. Gurung, were the products of a genuine and fine

practice of inclusiveness. The famous poet Agam Singh Giri worked with literary giants like Achha Rai Rasik and Indra Sundas. Lain Singh Bangdel, Parijat, Nirmal Lama, Amber Gurung and Gopal Yonzon left Darjeeling in 1950s and 1960s and carried with them the righteous values of inclusiveness they had imbibed in India. Nepal never seemed to have learnt from them. What today's Nepal is clamouring for actually happened throughout the 20th century among the Nepali-speakers of India. The Maoists would do well to examine why it did not happen in Nepal.

One fails to understand the wider implications of the Maoists' declaration of the right to self-determination to the communities that have remained deprived. Does it mean federal

freedom and accommodation with greater autonomy? Could it also mean the right to secede from the emerging "Republic of Nepal"? We only see vague interpretations of these declarations from the media but nothing that reflects a clear and deeper understanding of the issue by the Maoists. Was it merely a compulsion to make inclusion a major platform in order to mobilize their grassroots cadres?

Inclusiveness anywhere is a protracted and long-drawn-out process. The Indian Government regularly includes new castes and tribes in the scheduled lists. New states are being created and greater decentralisation made mandatory by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution. "Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth" is the theme of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). The impact of the debate on inclusion has shown definite results. Which country can boast of having a President (a Muslim) from a community that makes up 11.7% of the population, a Prime Minister (a Sikh) from a group that is less than 2% strong, and the president of the ruling party (a Christian) representing just 2.3% of the population. All three are actively functioning today. This is a genuine example of inclusiveness, religious-ethnic tolerance and respect for multi-culturalism. But despite all the liberal provisions in the constitution, the issue of the "other backward classes" is only just hotting up the debate on inclusion.

In all these respects, Nepal has a long way to go. There is always a huge gap between the cup and lip. The relevance of the Maoists coming into power would largely depend upon their being able to narrow this gap. ■

(Lama is the chairman of the Centre for South, Central, South East Asia and South West Pacific Studies in School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.)



Bhaswar Ojha

A Way of Life



■ Neena Rana

Teachers, administration and students will all become a community that accepts the diversity of their own cultures and strengths and respect that of the others.

Education that becomes a way of life each day and each moment and a right and a way of life for all was envisioned by Maria Montessori an Italian doctor turned educationist. She saw education in the future without traditional tests and replaced it with a holistic evaluation of the development of the child. In her approach, the outcomes of intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual development were to be evaluated with the broader picture in mind - how to tap the potential and purpose of each individual.

Maria believed that at an early age a child when observed in a prepared environment indicated his or her intrinsic strengths. When opportunities were provided to exercise choices and the will - with freedom of movement and choice - it led to wiser and maturer development. Her method inspired educational environments to address holistic development of a child with physical movement and development material, educational and technological materials, spiritual and psychological supports and a diverse range of social support. Anything short of the above were inadequate environments.

Education is not just limited to what is read, lectured, memorized and/or recalled. Education is what is learnt, experienced, reflected, assimilated and implemented in real life with consequences. Not all learnt theory can be practised in everyday life. Yet the process of questioning, discussing, reviewing, reflecting, experiencing needs to be given the respect that is due to encourage the process of development. Skills that are the essence of work - reading, writing and assessing are the natural processes in students that follow the natural thought process. Reference becomes a natural phenomena, the urge to know and learn, to search and find, to create and share with presentations becomes a way to consolidate the knowledge. A classroom then vibrates with interaction rather than controlled by silence.

Development becomes effortless and with concentration. Work then becomes a pattern of life when the drive comes from an inner source that addresses the interest of the learner. Teachers thereby

become the presenters of lessons and the discoverers of the topic as they proceed to share and observe the development of the child. They know that they must address the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual need of the student to proceed on a journey

that requires concentration, drive and respect from the participants. They can visualize the birth of the concept with clarity and yet are humble enough to turn and change for an improved form.

The trust in each human potential takes away from the traditional evaluation in grading, acceptance and rejection as per the test results. Equal opportunities are inevitable and the right to reach a highest potential and self discipline. When an intrinsic evaluation and introspective participation is required from all in a group there is a sense of consciousness, self acceptance that urges the student to self-commit to reach further and higher.

Smaller classes are vital to address the queries and practice of all in the group. Meaningful discussions and practice take longer to achieve results. Physical upkeep and agendas that address the healthy growth nurture positive involvement in other areas of study. Opportunities to express, address and share emotional issues during educational years of change and growth prove to be the foundation of strong individuals. Individuals who can understand their own selves and realize their own strengths and weaknesses will set clearer goals for their own lives and integrate their educational abilities towards their focus with self - motivation. Ample time and energy needs to be allotted for the various areas.

Teachers, administration and students then will all become a community that accepts the diversity of their own cultures and strengths and respect that of the others. ■

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The General in his labyrinth

■ Yubaraj Ghimire

He was barely noticed by the media in the past four years since his retirement from the Royal Nepal Army. But suddenly Kumar Phudung has become the subject of debate, with some calling him a hero and others a 'villain', a 'defector', a 'deserter' and even a possible mole of the 'terrorists'. Maj Gen Phudung is now a member of the interim parliament as a nominee of the Communist party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN-M).

So how does it feel to be on the other side? He has already learnt the art of not getting provoked by hostile reactions. He fondly remembers those 37 years he spent in the army, beginning with his rigorous but fruitful training in the Indian Military Academy back in 1965. "I was always keen that a realistic defense policy should replace the imaginary one," he said, adding that he sincerely tried to do that as a military officer and failed. "If I can give my input from a different forum like the parliament—why should I not do it?" he told newsfront at his residence in Sanepa. Unlike most army generals, his living room does not have portraits of the Shah kings except one of King Tribhuvan, who had included Phudung's father, Lakdhoj Limbu, in the royal advisory council in 1955.

As a village boy from Tehrathum in eastern Nepal, Phudung had never set his sights to join the RNA. He concentrated more on his studies having to trudge 12 km a day to school and back. But, after graduating high school, he completed an Intermediate in Science, a qualification that made him eligible to apply for a second lieutenant's post.

As a colonel during a 'brigade exercise', he risked his job by challenging the futility of annual ritualistic debate as to what the army should do in case of external intervention. Phudung spoke for nearly 50 minutes to an audience held in pin-drop silence. Fortunately, his outburst did not attract any punishment even though it was contemplated upon. Years later, when the country faced the Maoist insurgency and the RNA became involved in it, Phudung like any other top general, was in favour of "Maoists being contained" militarily.

He expressed his opinion to King Gyanendra when he was among the generals summoned. "I told the king that, of course, the Maoists need to be contained militarily, but they are fast making inroads in areas the state has not looked into. The Maoists are targeting to bring the oppressed, ethnic groups and the marginalized into their fold and the state can defeat them only through restructuring the present power-set up. The king, I guess, was impressed," said Phudung.

But how did he suddenly attract the attention of the Maoists? Last year, Phudung started publishing his articles on the need for state restructuring that would include recognizing ethnic

nationalities, thereby almost reaffirming what the Maoists have been saying. He, however, insists that it's not an issue that only the Maoists have been raising. Singapore is an example of where this idea has been implemented successfully, he adds.

The point Phudung made through his articles may not have caught many eyes. But apparently it was enough to impress the Maoist leadership, with whom he claims he had had no contact of any kind previously. "Tanka Aanwahan, a district-level Maoist leader called me on Jan 4, asking me to fly down to Kathmandu as the Maoist leaders were keen to 'see me'," he says.

Two days later, he met Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai. He recalls what he told them. "I am willing to

"I told the king that, of course, the Maoists need to be contained militarily, but they are fast making inroads in areas the state has not looked into."

make my contribution towards formulating a national strategy for national defense and an independent foreign policy. But you will be wrong if you expect me to get the Nepal army on your side." Even those who accuse Phudung of having betrayed the army believe he speaks his mind, at times without thinking of the consequences. Those who know him say that he is fiercely independent. After ten minutes, Prachanda conceded that Phudung would be working independently in the parliament and that he will not have to follow the Maoists' party whip.

"The collective identities of its nationalities alone would give Nepal its national identity now," he asserts. "I will be able to make small contributions in my own way." But the general turned 'comrade' has many challenges to face and many accusations, including that of being a 'traitor' to answer to, as he begins his new career at the age of 60. ■



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Say no to sycophancy



The emerging new institutional culture requires the youth to become innovative, skillful at multiple assignments and able to integrate diverse sources of knowledge into their political works.

■ Dev Raj Dahal

The Nepalese youth, a critical mass of change agents of the society have played a vital role in the democratic transition. Their challenges today lie in consolidating this achievement and institutionalizing democratic peace. To do that, they need to surmount democratic deficits in major areas like: the tradition of idolization of leadership, culture of impunity in political sphere, lack of social representation in political power as well as inter-generational justice in decision-making. Mitigation of these democratic shortfalls alone can underpin the social base of regime stability.

Already, families and religions are increasingly losing their socializing capacity to media and educational institutions. They are transmitting upon the youth a general distrust of authority and social order. Decline of family values afflicts the vitality of the nation's solidarity institutions, such as civil society, political parties and the state. A civic culture in the youth can only enable them to undertake political responsibilities in determining policy and political decisions.

Nepal's main paradox lies in the rightful aspirations of the youth for autonomous action and skewed choices the political class offers them for legitimate role occupation. The attitude of the political class treating them as a passive audience leaves them with uneasy options: indulge in street politics or face the fate of a robot. Political youths are, therefore, contesting the utility of a pre-programmed anti-politics operating under a binary code of friend and foe, while non-political ones are resigning themselves to a fatalistic attitude.

Another paradox lies in their yearning for free will and defiance of non-consensual and non-discursive order in the society. And they see in the constituent assembly elections all hopes through which they can reshape the nation's vision and resolve the widespread generational and value conflict. This is also an option to link their personal identity with national dignity.

The society faces a stark contrast. While democracy has given votes to all citizens, economy has given power to a few. To avoid this contradiction, a system of property rights to the poor, that of course includes voting rights must be established to avoid the inevitability—a future class conflict. Such conflicts can spoil citizenship equality in the same way as the force of market which reduces citizens into mere consumers.

Modern democracy flourishes with a culture of compromise among equal citizens while exclusion, vengeance and self-aggrandizement continue to characterize Nepal's political culture. The youths have a role to play in the mediation of this growing chasm through the sovereignty of constitutional politics. If the progress of this productive human capital is squandered through lack of sound value framework, the optimism of Nepalese youth may turn into political confusion. This in turn may result in imbalance between the spirit of the young and needs of society which together may trigger a systemic polarization of politics.

A number of jarring concepts articulated by political class about democracy are diverting the attention of the youth much beyond their search for legitimate rights, recognition and dignity. The industrial-technological revolution has placed democracy on a nation-state scale as opposed to democratic city-state (Nagar Rajya), folk democracy (Loktantra) of grassroots organizations, inclusive democracy (Samabesi Prajatantra) as articulated by ecologists, radical left and anarchists, a nativist alternative (Gana Rajya) rooted in Hindu epics or federal democratic republic (Sanghiya Ganarajya) of Leninist variety. Only a framework of democracy at the national level can define the concept of citizenship, bring the benefits of globalization and address the suffocation of genuine civil society and a class of globally mobile elites not connected to national loyalties by 'partyocracy'.

Modern democracy requires the connection of citizenship with the nation-state, instead of a pre-political state of nature and anti-state

discourse. Once national democracy is couched into local terms it not only reduces its universal potential rooted in human rights and public international laws, but also confines it to a local version of elite's fiefdom. It is a rationalization of pre-modern politics of divide and rule which lack coherence between law and politics. Primacy of interest-based politics

over constitutional principles undermines both the sovereignty of rule of law, human rights and social justice. Biological instincts rooted into anti-politics can easily undermine the very reconciliatory ideology of democracy.

In Nepal there is a great divide between the rural and the urban youth generated by geography, sociology, gaps in awareness and empowerment. Disparity in education, communication and economy have intensified this and weakened the potential of politics for social and system cohesion. The idealistic and liberal values of the youth must be tapped upon to begin reconciliation in society. Inclusion of the excluded youth also need to go hand in hand with developing technical skills, critical thinking, partnership and educational achievement to be able to move away from a political culture of clientalism.

The emerging new institutional culture requires the youth to become innovative, skillful at multiple assignments and able to integrate diverse sources of knowledge into their political works. This is essential to liberate them from a culture of unaccountable activism. Integrating the youth into national policy can increase their voice and visibility and enable them to exercise their citizenship rights. The state has a major responsibility to try to level the playing field for the rural and the urban youth so that the talented get opportunities to realize their potential.

The anti-systemic spirit of youth provides a corrective mechanism for democratic resilience. However, there is a need to reduce the partisan volatility of youth and socialize them into public politics. Without this, they cannot see, feel and experience themselves in a system. Transformation of subsidiary identities into equal citizens and citizens into a deliberative public is the way to link those who are refusing to acknowledge the systemic ties. After all, civic culture rooted in a vibrant youth politics alone can ensure a secure future. ■



Gagan Thapa, a youth leader

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No incentives for tourists

Despite the peace process in place, adverse advisory continues to discourage tourists – something the tourism entrepreneurs are not too happy about.



Tourists are having fun in Pokhara

■ Madhusudan Poudyal

The fact that the Maoist rebels have joined the interim parliament and the appreciation expressed by the world community welcoming this development has hardly been reflected in the travel advisories put out by certain countries. Most countries led by the United States continue to send out warnings dissuading their citizens from visiting Nepal.

The US advisory continues to advise that Maoists have not given up abduction, extortion and intimidation, and that a quick bandh call is a possibility at any time. Other countries have not exactly followed the mode of the American warning, but they have nevertheless warned their citizens. As a result, Nepal has not gained much in terms of rising tourist numbers, even

during peace, something the tourism entrepreneurs are not too happy about.

"Nepal is one of the safest destinations in South Asia," well-known tourism expert, Karna Shakya, told newsfront, adding that not a single tourist was killed during the 10 years of insurgency, while a large number of tourists had lost their lives to terrorist attacks in many parts of the world. A joint request by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA) to the US embassy in Kathmandu to review the advisory has had hardly any effect. "All we were told was that the advisory simply reflected the reality of the situation as it existed today," said Shakya.

The United Kingdom's travel advisory appears moderate in comparison although it suggests that its citizens "must have medical

insurance before visiting Nepal". Australia, another major tourist exporter to Nepal continues to have Nepal's "fluid political situation" in its advisory that acts as a deterrent to potential travelers. The New Zealand advisory talks about "some risks" and Canada alerts its citizens that "a high level of security carefulness is required" for those visiting the country.

Neighbouring India, a huge reservoir of tourists for Nepal, accounts for the 50 percent of total tourist arrivals. According to the NTB, India has not issued any adverse travel advisories regarding Nepal. But frequent 'bandhs' and incidents of violence in the Tarai region along the Indian boarder over the past couple of months have affected the flow of tourists from the south using the surface route, official sources said.

Tourism accounts for 10 percent of the total

foreign exchange. The peace process which began some eight months ago has been accompanied by only a marginal increase of 2.3 per cent over the previous year. Tourist arrivals in the country was only 300,000 in 2006 against the country's capacity to host and manage a million tourists per year.

According to the official information, while there was nominal increase in the number of tourists from Japan, China and South Korea, numbers from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, Belgium and Switzerland fell by around 40 percent during this period. For airlines like Bangladesh, Air Arabia, Korean Air and Air China, the fall in the number of tourists has come as a shock since they have already announced operations to Nepal in anticipation of the improvement in the situation. ■



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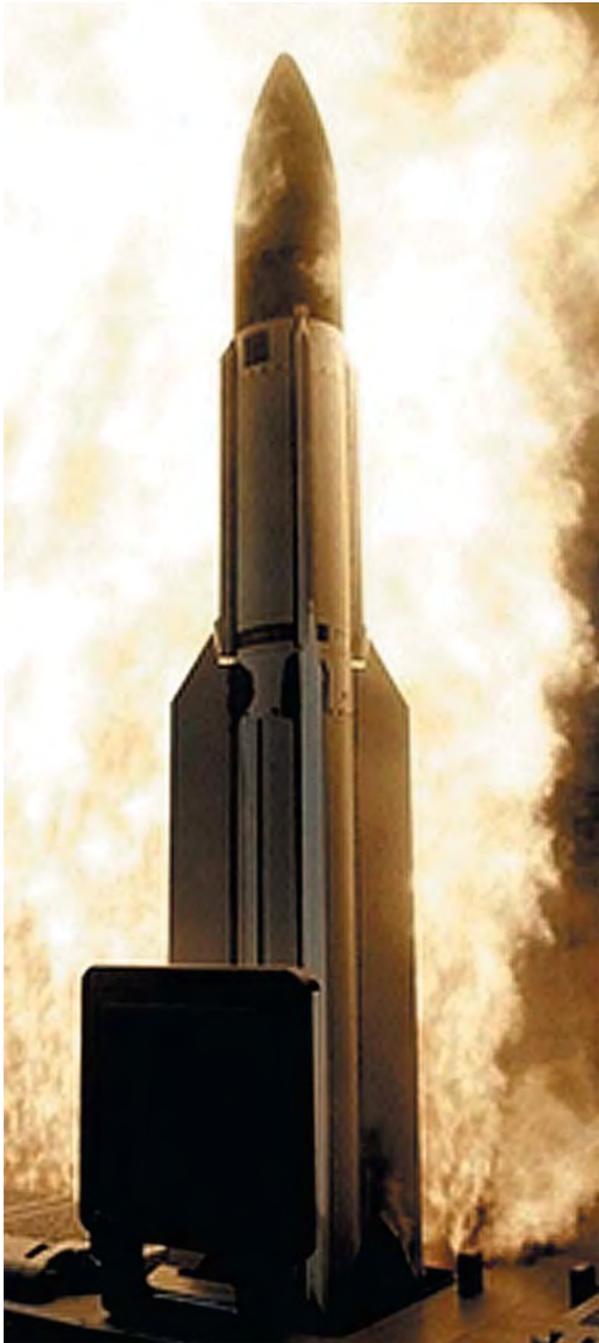
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China in space war

When China is strengthening its military arsenal, modernizing its nuclear forces and is sending men in space, the "satellite killer" landed a direct hit on the White House.

Has Star Wars been revived? The missile that China launched last week in the direction of one of its ageing weather satellites shook the planet from Washington to Tokyo on Friday.

Revealed by U.S. spy agencies, the launch reached its target without a hitch, demonstrating China's scientific progress in space weapons. It was supposedly fired from Southwest China's Xichang space center on the morning of January 12 (January 11 in the West), and resulted in the destruction of the inoperative satellite at an altitude of 500 miles [800 km], scattering debris likely to collide with expensive orbiting equipment, according to American and Japanese experts. The remains of the Chinese satellite Feng Yun (Wind and Clouds) could represent a threat to orbiting equipment for the next quarter century. This risk was most responsible for forcing the Soviet Union in 1982 and the United States in 1986 to put a stop to these tests, and they did so at a time when there was much less space activity. Up to now, only those two countries had attempted the remote destruction of spacecraft.

At a time when China is strengthening its military arsenal, modernizing its nuclear forces and is sending men in space, the "satellite killer" landed a direct hit on the White House. In theory, this means that American military spy satellites, even those that detected the explosion, are in shooting range of the Chinese.

Gordon Johndroe, spokesman of the U.S. President's National Security Council, stated that, "The U.S. believes China's development and testing of such weapons is inconsistent with the spirit of

cooperation that both countries aspire to in the civil space area." A front-page news item in the *International Herald Tribune* pointed out on Friday that George Bush had authorized a new space program last August, ignoring the protests of Russia and China. According to the American newspaper, the Bush Administration authorized studies into laser based, anti-satellite weapons, which would be faster and more powerful than its ancestors from the 1980s.

Is China trying to counter these plans? For one expert, again quoted by the *Herald Tribune*, the Chinese launch is intended to, "increase the pressure on the United States to negotiate space disarmament."

Contrary to its attitude during its previous space performances, China has exhibited absolute discretion in regard to this new ballistic success. Hardly a word was in China's official press on Friday. Only one national tabloid mentioned the American protests. As Friday came to a close and hassled by questioning from Beijing's English-speaking press, the press officer for China's Foreign Affairs Ministry, Liu Jianchao, refused to confirm the test, but said that there is "no reason to feel threatened" by China's space program.

An analysis signed by a group of anonymous experts from China's National Defense University in August and published in the very official *People's Daily* assessed that the Chinese army must consider space a potential stage for protecting the country's interests. ■ (*New Scientist*)

Bangladesh poll

ULFA funding candidates

KOLKATA: Even as Indian security forces crack down on the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), it is reportedly funding select candidates in the now deferred general elections in Bangladesh, well informed sources here say.

The sources say that ULFA is providing money to certain candidates from a cross section of parties in the election expected to produce a stiff contest between the two main alliances led by the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and the Awami League.

the self-styled commander-in-chief of ULFA, Paresh Barua, is one of the wealthiest leaders in the outfit. His personal earnings a year from business ventures in Bangladesh are staggering. The total assets of ULFA are valued at over Rs.5 billion. This includes several benami (illegally operating) companies.

Barua, against whom Interpol alerts have been issued, also goes by the names of Kamruj Zaman Khan, Nur-uz-Zaman and Zaman Bhai in Dhaka.

Anti-terror specialist and former Punjab Police



Riot torn Dhaka

According to reports from Bangladesh, ULFA, the most active insurgent group in northeastern India, is pumping over Rs.300 million (nearly \$6 million) in the polls.

"It is partially funding at least 15 candidates, besides indirectly donating to party funds of a few major parties," a source, with access to reliable information in the underground said.

"It is not a coincidence that most of these candidates are also very close to the ISI (the Pakistani intelligence agency)," the source added.

According to reports from Bangladesh, ULFA, the most active insurgent group in northeastern India, is pumping over Rs.300 million (nearly \$6 million) in the polls.

According to Indian government sources,

chief K.P.S. Gill says that ULFA has launched several income generating projects in Bangladesh.

"It has set up a number of firms in Dhaka, including media consultancies and soft drink manufacturing units. The ULFA reportedly owns three hotels, a private clinic and two motor driving schools in Dhaka."

The site says that Paresh Barua is reported to personally own or has controlling interests in several businesses in Bangladesh, including a tannery, a chain of departmental stores, garment factories, travel agencies, shrimp trawlers and transport and investment companies.

Reliable sources quoting political leaders in Bangladesh said Barua's funds are being managed and assisted by a senior functionary and candidate of one of the parties fighting elections.

The ULFA leadership has managed to stay in Bangladesh for close to 15 years regardless of the party in power, be it pro-India Awami League or Khaleda Zia-led BNP. There is not a single report of Bangladesh taking any action against ULFA, barring some isolated cases.

Gill indicates on his website that it is an open secret in Bangladesh that ULFA leadership is living an open and luxurious life in that country.

Reports indicate that the stakes for ULFA in the

coming Bangladesh election is very high. The new government will have the authority to decide either to give shelter to ULFA leaders and cadres or to hand them over to India.

Analysts say ULFA apprehends that with Indian influence growing in Southeast Asia and with the US cooperating with India on many issues including terrorism, the possibility of the rebels being deported to India seems very real.

"ULFA has to pay protection money to government officials of Bangladesh," said one source who spoke strictly on the condition of anonymity. ■ (*Times of India*)

For nearly two weeks now, old and new media - print, radio, television, chatrooms, blogs - have been clogged with debates around Jade Goody's unseemly conduct towards Shilpa Shetty touched a raw nerve in Britain's large non-white minority



Shilpa puts racism on agenda

Shilpa Shetty will be long remembered for doing what the Commission for Racial Equality and other institutions have been struggling to do - put racism on top of Britain's public agenda.

The issue has been lurking around for some time but not under such blinding media torchlight that 'Celebrity Big Brother' show has come under. The last time racism hit the headlines - but not to this extent - was in 1999 when the inquiry into Afro-Caribbean teenager Stephen Lawrence's murder called the police force 'institutionally racist'.

For nearly two weeks now, old and new media - print, radio, television, chatrooms, blogs - have been clogged with debates around Jade Goody's unseemly conduct towards Bollywood actor Shilpa touched a raw nerve in Britain's large non-white minority.

But large numbers of the white community have also voiced revulsion over Goody's 'colourful' comments. Driven by political correctness or not, almost everyone has rushed to proclaim their stand against racism, right from Prime Minister Tony Blair downwards.

As the strong reaction shows, the Asian community in Britain is remarkably networked. The many fissures within the community are pushed into the background when faced with the curse of racism. The vast majority of Asians who have born and brought up in Britain (and new migrants) have at some point faced racism - overt or covert.

Of course, nobody believes that the Goody-Shilpa spat will overnight change attitudes, despite the overwhelming majority voting to evict Goody from the Big Brother house. But the show has indeed brought to the surface how much remains to be done to weed out racism from British society.

The Shilpa show also highlighted the economic strength of Britain's Asian community - not only as consumers but also as wealth creators. The strength of what is called the 'brown pound' has become more important at a time when Indian investment has been flooding into Britain and creating jobs.

Apart from the main sponsor Carphone Warehouse, companies whose food, furniture and electrical goods are used in the Big Brother house have asked for their products to be removed from the show. These include Indian origin entrepreneur Karan Bilimoria's Cobra Beer and United Biscuits.

There are already signs that the row is hastening ongoing official measures to further strengthen Britain's multicultural mosaic. Education secretary Alan Johnson has promised to overhaul citizenship lessons in schools to dispel racist and ignorant attitudes. Johnson's plans include discussions of core national values such as fairness and mutual respect and debate about what 'Britishness' means. Children will also learn about the way immigrant groups throughout history have forged the shape of the nation.

Johnson said: 'The current debate over Big Brother has highlighted the need to make sure our schools focus on the core British values of justice and tolerance. We want the world to be talking about the respect and understanding we give all cultures, not the ignorance and bigotry shown on our TV screens.'

'Britain is a nation built from and by people from other countries, from the Romans and William the Conqueror right through modern history. We owe a debt of gratitude to all the people that make up Britain today: immigrants from Pakistan, India and the West Indies have helped build our new welfare system and our public services, particularly the NHS.'

John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, said the row had exposed 'an ugly underbelly in society' and added that the furore had highlighted how people 'are only too ready to point the finger at the foreigner, or those who might not fit in'.

Meanwhile, Vanni Treves, a former chairman of Channel 4, has expressed outrage at the Big Brother show, calling it a 'grotesque travesty' of what Channel 4 is supposed to be. He wants the show to be taken off the air for good. Under the terms of the 2003 Communications Act, Channel 4 is expected to 'demonstrate innovation, experimentation and creativity, appeal to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society and to include programmes of an educational nature'.

(IANS)

Facing the mirror of conscience



■ Sushma Amatya

In these fast changing, media and technology driven times, bombarded with subliminal messages, information and ideas, our attention is being constantly diverted outwards and rather scattered, leaving us no inclination or time to reflect on what each of us as an individual is feeling, sensing, thinking and acting.

It appears increasingly, we are losing touch with our inner selves and getting swept away in the wake of each and every day where the aggression of outer forces and appearances leave its mark a little stronger than yesterday. It thereby gradually creates an impression that it's alright to be dictated by short sighted values, ideals and get caught up in the cloud of mass hysteria of short term materialistic gain at any cost. This tendency appears to be shorn of simple, time tested core human values of truth, loving kindness and compassion that transcend geographical, religious, political, communal and other barriers.

If one were to examine one's heart and mind carefully, for just one minute, stripping away all layers of what is proper or popular, what would be found? Perhaps a stirring of conscience, a small voice that tells you exactly what it thinks of your intentions, thoughts and actions. How many of us stop to listen to that voice? The voice that one has to live with and the one that can never be got rid of.

Even if we've desensitized ourselves enough to ignore it during our

In the process of examining oneself, one could ask: Do I mean what I say? Do I believe in what I say? Do I do what I say? Am I happy with what I'm feeling, thinking and doing?

waking hours, nightmares would continue to haunt and the subconscious never cease to nag us in our dreams. If we were conditioned by our environment to ignore it or to suppress it beyond any recall, or if we have learned to be so insensitive that this all makes no sense; we could still stop and examine our motives, our real intentions behind every thought, speech and action. Is any good coming out of what we are intending, thinking, speaking, doing for ourselves and those around us? Are we conducting our lives in a way just to please or to impress others? Are we really what we project ourselves to be?

In the process of examining oneself, one could ask: Do I mean what I say? Do I believe in what I say? Do I do what I say? Am I happy with what I'm feeling, thinking and doing? These questions and several more would help one see one's life in a larger perspective and see the direction it's taking and help one take steps to adjust one's bearing and gradually change one's attitude.

It takes real courage to face oneself, rewind the tapes and be accountable for one's past and not take the easy way out of point fingers at others or to project one's demons onto others. It's great to dream of a world that is to our liking; we all dream of changing the world at some point or the other but the stern reality remains that the change has to start from oneself first. One just cannot set out to change others without changing oneself and without being true to one's inner self. It's easy to judge others, pass sentences unto others but who's going to judge our own being?

Only when we learn to be in touch with our core and be brave enough to face it, communicate with it, be aware of our negative and positive sides, understand and accept it and most importantly watch ourselves so carefully so as not to let our dark sides take over can we learn to be peace with ourselves.

Only when each individual constantly tries to transform himself/herself to the kind of person that the individual is happy to live with; can we as individuals and as a collective whole begin to live a wholesome, well balanced lives and create an environment where all can live in peace and harmony. ■



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Beckham's move

■ Prayan Ghimire

At his prime, David Beckham was considered arguably the best footballer in the world. He was quick on the wings, his crossing was sublime and his free kicks were magic. But that was then. Now, at 31 years of age, Beckham has minimal playing time. Beckham has been booted off the English roster and his only work at Real Madrid is warming up the bench, yet he is now the talk of football fans around the world. How did that happen?

There can only be two reasons why a player continues to be in the limelight. Either that the player is doing wonders on the pitch or it has to be something that has happened outside it. Looking at the form of Beckham is in now, the first option gets canceled out, leaving us with the other one which indeed appears to be the case. After not being offered a contract extension by Real Madrid, Beckham was shown the door. Many clubs were after his signature and one of them was expected to snap him up. The big clubs after him were Arsenal, Chelsea, Tottenham, New Castle and Celtic.

So it came as a shock when David Beckham announced that he had joined the MLS team LA Galaxy. Then came in the details of the deal. It was confirmed that Beckham had signed a 5-year deal with the team starting June 2007 for which he would be paid around 250 million dollars.

After the announcement, speculations have been rife as to why Beckham joined the LA Galaxy. Some said it was purely for the money and others disagreed. Beckham himself said that he had made the decision because his academy was in

the U S A and that he would be there to promote the game. Well, by now every one has an opinion on this and I'm no exception.

He may deny it forever but it looks like his first priority was the money. Becks is already the richest footballer on the planet. And 50 million dollars a year is just too huge a temptation. He is also a marketing icon and earns a lot through advertisement. It has also been widely conjectured that David Beckham's wife, former spice girl Victoria, was the driving force behind her husband's decision. Victoria has long expressed her desire to settle in the U S A and this was the chance. Posh has earned millions of dollars in advertisements from American products; and her good friends like Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes also live there. There are also

rumours that Beckham's next destination is hollywood. Love for football seems to figure last on the list.

The MLS is not a huge league and an easier ground to play in than in the Spanish or English league. Beckham will surely be the biggest name in the MLS and he cannot be ignored. Beckham thus will be chosen for all the matches and will get lots of playing time.

His move is not without significance. David Beckham will not be joining the LA Galaxy until June which means Real Madrid has time to adapt without him on the pitch.

For Beckham, it is a farewell from the top level of football and he will never get to play for England again. All said and done, he will be teaching the young ones and earning mega-bucks and so congratulations to him. ■



There can only be two reasons why a player continues to be in the limelight. Either that the player is doing wonders on the pitch or it has to be something that has happened outside it

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