



Courage & Conviction

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Monks performing Monlam prayer festival for world peace at Rabten Ling Monastery, Lumbini.

Hemanta Gurung

No shift

Visa to 'terrorists' on govt request

■ nf correspondent

Nepal army is believed to have lodged a protest 'informally' with the United States for having given visa to Prabhakar, Deputy leader of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) parliamentary party. The protest was lodged on grounds that Prabhakar who is Deputy Commander of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had led the Maoist attack on army in Pili at a construction site, killing many unarmed army personnel, two years ago.

The US Embassy in Kathmandu is however, believed to have explained to the army as well as the diplomats, NGOs and politicians 'unofficially' that visa was granted to three Maoist parliamentarians including Prabhakar on the request of the government of Nepal to facilitate them to participate in the UN general assembly meeting, but it in no way indicated any shift on US policy towards the Maoists.

Embassy officials are also believed to have explained to the army that they gave the visa to Prabhakar as the government failed to lodge any objection to his traveling to the US. Shital Niwas sent a list of 43 members from different parties, a record in terms of the number and expenditure made from the government exchequer, for the parliamentarians' visit to the US.

Nepal army apparently took this US gesture towards the Maoists as a shift in the US policy

vis a vis Nepal army. Despite suspension of lethal arms and other equipments in the wake of Royal takeover in February 2005, the US government had continued providing usual training and other logistical support to the army.

Are there any restrictions on the movement of these Maoist leaders outside New York, if the visa was granted purely to facilitate their participation in the United Nations at its headquarter? Diplomats quote US authorities as having stated that the US is not a police state to go that far, but they would certainly expect Maoist leaders not to carry on any undesired political activities in any part of the US.

Apart from Prabhakar, Maoist leader Suresh Ale Magar has been granted the visa as part of the government delegation on recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ale Magar had been denied visa a few months ago on the way back from Latin America, citing the reason that the Maoist outfit had been placed on the US government's terrorist list. Despite their having been granted visas, the Maoist parliamentarians would not be entertained by any US authorities at any other social occasions or meetings, diplomats said.

The US embassy is also believed to have told the authorities that it is not going to take Maoists off its terrorist's list unless they give proof of their sincere commitment to peace and democracy, through their actions. ■

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On sale—Nepali embassies



Pix by newsfront

■ Kiran Bhandari

The government is considering selling off at least four Nepali embassies abroad on grounds of high maintenance cost; but senior officials of the foreign ministry and some former Nepali ambassadors say that the move is directed more by lust and greed for kick-backs during the transaction.

On top of the list for sale is Nepali embassy in London at Kensington Garden Palace, a prime location; as Prime Minister GP Koirala has taken interest in the matter personally. Koirala instructed the new ambassador, Murari Raj Sharma to formalise the deal.

"Please go ahead with the deal," he told Ambassador Sharma in front of other ambassadors who had called on the PM at his Baluwater residence about a month ago. Given the prime location and size of the land and other assets, the property could fetch up to 55 million pounds sterling, but officials who know about the latest development say, the government could even throw away the whole property for less than 40 million pounds.

The government's intent to sell the property has not been notified anywhere officially, which is the normal practice in such deals. Among others, industrialist Lakshmi Kant Mittal is believed to have shown interest in the property as he has his property in the neighborhood.

"It will be a shame to sell that property on any pretext... the records and estimate of expenses for maintenance are being inflated to sell the property at a cheap price," a former ambassador to

London told newsfront on condition of anonymity.

A committee formed by the government for the purpose is believed to have estimated that maintaining the embassy building in the present shape would cost at least 45 crore Rupees (nearly 45 million pounds), but some senior officials are believed to have challenged the estimate.

There are also preliminary rounds of suggestions within the ministry and Baluwater about the need to sell the embassy property in Delhi, Bonn and Belgium. A senior official in the Foreign Ministry told newsfront that the only property that needs to be sold is the embassy in Bonn since it now remains unused following the transfer of the capital to Berlin.

The property in Belgium was bought by Singha Pratap Shah, way back in 70s for 10,000 US dollars. "Yes, if both ambassadors' residences which are located in more expensive areas and are in a bad shape could be sold along with the embassy, we could buy new property with that money," the official said. "But the government seems more interested in selling the embassy in London first, and Delhi afterwards, since it would fetch more money, more commission, all at the cost of the state exchequer."

The embassy in London, a Royal property, was given to the government of Nepal in 1936 by the British government, apparently as a token of appreciation of Nepal's military support. A fresh lease of 99 years was signed in 1977. Delhi's embassy that was established during the 40s is located at Barakhamba road, in the heart of the capital.

Foundation in Dr. Gurung's memory

Recognising a hero's contribution

Friends and admirers of Dr. Chandra Prasad Gurung have formed Chandra Gurung Conservation Foundation (CGCF). The Foundation was launched on the occasion of his birth anniversary on December 1, first after his death in an air crash at Taplejung's Dhunsa area, last year.

The occasion was marked by a nature hike organised by the foundation in which his friends, colleagues and fans, about 150 in number, trekked to the Shivapuri National park area, followed by a spiritual ceremony at the Lhun Drop Choeling Gompa (Budhanilkantha monastery).

Organisers said the aim of the event was: to officially launch and

introduce CGCF in Nepal and publicise the establishment of Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust in the United States; to make public aware of the vision of the trust which will be working in collaboration, in many areas; and begin fund-raising to start the work of the foundation.

"During his life-time Dr Gurung had one vision, to conserve Nepal's most valuable treasure for her people, her natural heritage. Intrinsic to his vision was the belief that conserving biodiversity and natural resources can only be achieved through active participation of the local people. Dr Gurung dedicated his whole life to his cause. He also found time to mentor countless individuals and guide them," a press note issued by the CGCF said.

Dr Gurung, PhD in medical anthropology from the University of Hawaii was the Country Representative of the World Wild Life Fund (WWF), Nepal. He had also served as Member Secretary of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation; and was one of the pioneers in designing Nepal's first community based integrated conservation and development project that took the shape of The Annapurna Conservation Area Programme (ACAP).

He had been recognised and honoured for his contribution to nature conservation, both at home and abroad. A recipient of the Ati Prabal Gorkha Dakshin Bahu, he was also awarded the Knight First Class, Order of the Lion of Finland.





PM yields

Threat of mass defiance in Congress

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala was all set to declare Nepal a Republic country to save his chair, and ensure election to the constituent assembly (CA) by mid April, but desisted from doing so in the face of defiance by a large number of parliamentarians belonging to the Nepali Congress (NC).

"If you go beyond what the party's general assembly has mandated you for, we are going to defy the party whip," the party leaders warned Koirala last week. And the person who decisively convinced PM Koirala of the disastrous consequences that a political surrender to the Maoists' demands, was Sushil Koirala, the Working President of NC.

During several rounds of informal meetings that the senior leaders and parliamentarians had with the PM last week at his residence for three consecutive days, they told him to stick to the mandate of the party general assembly that favoured a final decision on the fate of monarchy, and oppose the Proportional Representation (PR) system of election.

It was this crucial meeting that apparently forced Koirala to make his mind public, totally rejecting the Maoists' demands for a PR system. "This will lead to the disintegration of the country," he said in an interview he gave to Spotlight (weekly), with a categorical assertion against Maoists' pre-condition for CA polls in future.

Govinda Raj Joshi, one of the most vocal and persuasive members of the group told Koirala point blank that the way he was surrendering to the Maoists will now have only two consequences. "Either you will end up handing over power to the Maoists or the army." The only way to avoid that, Joshi advised, was to reinforce law and order, exercise the authority of the state, and expand party's base among a large number of electorate and citizens who were quite scared of the Maoists way of politics.

"There were of course some feeble voices that suggested Koirala to be considerate towards Maoists' demands, but they were lost in the din," a senior member of the party's central committee said. Vinay Dhoj Chand and Sunil Bhandari warned Koirala that many parliamentarians will revolt against the leadership if the party was to conduct itself under dictates of the Maoists.

They also advised the PM to note that Maoists were not at all interested in participating in the CA polls, "Even if you consider all their demands." The declaration made by Mukti Pradhan, an advocate and leader of the Maoist party almost confirmed that fear. Speaking to BBC Nepali Service on Saturday night, the Maoist leader said that all parties existing at present will not be allowed to contest elections. "Only those accepting the ideology we champion would be entitled to contest elections," he said.

Unhappy Danish

How is our money being spent?

The government of Nepal faces the prospect of facing punitive action from donors if it further defaults in its commitment to holding elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) on schedule.

An indication to this was given by Danish Ambassador, Finn Thilsted during his interaction with the media in Dhangadi last week. He made it clear that although in the long run, Denmark will have to review issues like financial assistance to the government of Nepal if there was no elected government; it was in favour of election to the CA taking place by Mid-April. It would be difficult, he said, to continue with the aid projects if election is not held and, a historic opportunity, which could be a milestone in Nepal's peace process is bungled.

Peter Eilschow Olesen, Deputy Head of the Mission of Danish Embassy, told newsfront, in Kathmandu that the government of Denmark was definitely concerned about the frequent postponement of elections to the CA. "Our government is answerable to our parliament and the people; and the money that we have given to Nepal for conducting election should be spent for that purpose within the stipulated time," he said, adding "It cannot be spent for other purposes."

The stand of the Danish embassy here is being taken as an indicator that it is going to seek details of the financial assistance it gave to the government and the election commission for holding election on November 22. There are also indications that the Danish government might ask for its return, if the new deadline is missed. The government is contemplating to hold election, postponed twice by the government, by mid April.

Newsbrief

Troika to visit Nepal

A European troika delegation will visit Nepal to explore ways of supporting the government in the peace process as well as in conduct of credible elections.

The delegation during its four day visit beginning December 3 will offer its support to the government to put in place the key building blocks of the peace process and credible elections at the earliest opportunity.

The high-level delegation consists of officials from Portugal, the current EU Presidency, Slovenia, the forthcoming EU Presidency, the European Commission and the European Council. The troika will support Nepal's peace process and encourage the parties to work together for the people of Nepal, a statement issued by the EU here, said.

The troika will be focusing on issues like improvement of public security, discussion on the future of Maoist combatants, an end to impunity and human rights abuse, progress on development and dialogue with marginalised groups, the statement said.

On govt. order

Young Communist League (YCL) may have forcibly captured private, government and semi-government properties in different parts of the country; but it has legally 'captured' at least two government offices in prime locations in Kathmandu.

The head office of the trolley bus in Min Bhavan (Baneshwar) and another huge building in Pachali (Teku) have been under the occupation of the YCL for months now. "We

are there legally with government's permission," a YCL leader said. He said that the YCL had been approached by many people to set up its offices, "And so we approached the government to give us a suitable site. We have got these two sites on order of a minister he said," but he did not identify the minister. Both buildings currently 'captured' by the YCL belong to the Ministry of Labour and Transport.

New ambassador

Indian ambassador, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee will soon be replaced by Rakesh Sood. The new appointment was officially announced in Delhi recently. Sood holds the rank of a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Mukherjee who has been in Nepal almost for four years now will be succeeding Kamlesh Sharma as High Commissioner to London.

Agremo

Shailaja Acharya has been appointed Nepal's ambassador to Delhi. Acharya, a senior Congress leader, will now be going to Delhi soon. The government of Nepal finally received the agremo from Delhi, more than two months after the proposal was sent. But the fate of at least four more ambassador designates hangs in balance as the host countries have not yet responded to the government of Nepal's proposal to appoint them.

Incidentally, all the ambassador designates belong to the Maoist party. More and more hardened attitude on the part of the Maoist party against election is making international

community more confused and suspicious about the former rebels's commitment to peace and democracy.

Wanting in sincerity

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) has never apologised for any crime the party committed during the years of conflict or in peace time. The closest the party leadership has come to showing any sign of 'regret' is by expressing 'sorrow' over the incident.

The latest expression of 'sorrow' came from party Chief Prachanda over the abduction and torture of Dr Gyanendra Giri, Chairman of the Biratnagar based Nobel Medical College, by Young Communist League activists recently.

Prachanda admitted that his YCL cadres were misled by 'someone' into abducting Dr. Giri and his colleagues in a 'filmi style', and assured cooperation with the government in initiating action against that person. He however gave no indication that YCL activists involved in the crime would be handed over to the government authorities. Sagar, the valley in charge of the YCL, has been asked to apologise for his cadres in the abduction case.

The CPN-M chief said what happened to an 'honourable' doctor was not right. The YCL is directly under charge of Prachanda. After the doctor's abduction case, Prachanda has also promised that the YCL would be transformed into a good organisation indicating that they would no longer be used for looting, abduction and other crimes. But there are still some banners hung in different parts of the capital asking people "to let us know about suspicious behaviour of the people or their activities."



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Point to Ponder

If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh, otherwise they'll kill you.
 - Oscar Wilde

Accountability

To what extent should international community or any country get involved in Nepal's domestic affairs? Nepal government, civil society and key political actors have taken stands, often contradictory, and their response are guided by their own narrow self-interests at any given point of time.

Theoretically speaking, international community or any country's or their representatives' behaviour and conduct should be in conformity with the norms and practices of diplomacy elsewhere. But sadly, in Nepal's case, its external dependency, not only on economic matters but also on issues which are largely related to domestic policies, is on the increase. Nepali actors, both state and non-state, have not even tried to come together around the policy and practices of self-reliance.

In fact, civil society and NGOs have quite often acted in a manner that exhibits their bias and politically compromising nature even on human rights, principles of equality before law, fair trial and basic values of democracy. Despite their exemplary role in re-establishing democracy after the king's takeover, they have of late acted more like blind allies of certain political parties. This has resulted in the loss of their credibility.

Successive governments have failed to regulate the funding to NGOs and civil society by the international community. The level of corruption and lack of transparency in their businesses, including recruitment in these bodies (of course, with some notable exceptions) is as rampant as it is in the government. Some of the NGOs, trusted recipients of reputed international donors, have almost taken the shape of family owned enterprises. In some other cases, their affiliations to certain political parties are well established.

With political awareness on the increase, people are as critical of these practices in the NGO sector as they have been of the government. Moreover, this is likely to bring the international community, mainly the donors in added controversy in Nepal. Civil society and major NGOs in the capital as well as urban Nepal are part of the social and political elites who have been the beneficiary of culture of impunity; something that the international bodies have time and again said should be ended.

In fact, UNMIN with its large presence now has become an object of criticism for its having practiced policy of 'discrimination' brazenly. In the name of inclusive politics, it has rejected right away some deserving candidates against many vacancies just because they belong to certain castes. UNMIN adopting a policy of positive discrimination is understandable as well as welcome, but its disqualifying people purely on caste basis may have the potential of triggering fresh social unrest. These are some of the attitudes and realities that need to be addressed.

Accountability and transparency are basic features of democracy. We cannot have a meaningful and effective democracy and government without these; but honest, transparent and accountable NGOs and civil society can enormously contribute to realising that kind of democracy which is the best guarantee to the Nepali people deciding their country's fate. ■



Letters

Anti- drug drive

I am a 21 year old college student. I was a drug addict and I greatly benefited from the counseling I got from some rehab centers. Not all of them were good. Most did not have the required knowledge and skill to run such centers, but some of them definitely helped me.

I and some of my friends had found the regular column by Ragina Shah in your paper very useful. Has the column stopped? With drug use growing at an alarming rate in Nepal's urban as well as rural areas, an awareness campaign by the media about dangers of drug use and counselling for the drug users will go a long way in motivating youths in the campaign. I think this is something the growing number of FM stations also should take up.

Nilesh Shrestha
 Dilli Bazar, Kathmandu

Democrats or terrorists?

Siddhartha Thapa's articles at times created an impression that he is biased against the Maoists and that he has a political agenda. But with political developments take place in the country, now it has become more evident that Maoists want neither democracy nor peace, and it was wrong on the part of the government, especially the leaders of the coalition, not to have detected the Maoists' real motive. Their entry to parliament and the government earlier was purely tactical to destroy the system from within and derive maximum political advantage out of the resultant confusion, chaos and erosion of institutions.

Thapa deserves congratulations for having detected the real motives of the Maoists at an early stage. Having said this, Maoists remain a challenge to the country and the governing leaders since the peace process will not succeed if they are not given due importance. They need to be motivated and encouraged in the peace process and clearly told that they



have no future if they do not come into the fold of democracy. Otherwise, they will simply remain terrorists.

Janak Gurung,
 Kalimati, Kathmandu

Shameful

Nepali politicians have not changed. The way the Maoist leaders have been behaving also shows that they are no different from leaders like GP Koirala and Madhav K. Nepal. As your editorial suggests, the past one year, despite the hope it contained has been bungled. This is a shame for the country. A message will go around the world that Nepalis are not capable of managing their internal affairs without assistance from outside. And any assistance does not come without

strings attached.

It rightly suggests that the way to move forward is by implementing some of the key provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Maoists have been looting and capturing more properties of the ordinary people as well as activists and leaders of its rival political parties.

There are reports from Nawalparasi, Dang, Nepalgunj, Makwanpur and Hetaunda to substantiate these facts. The government, especially the Home Minister is directly aiding and abetting the Maoists to carry on their campaign in clear violation of the peace agreement. We cannot ensure that peace is established if the rule of law is suppressed by the government. This is something the Maoists and the government must understand.

Sudan Sharma
 Anam Nagar, Kathmandu

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

Spiritual Corner

Kahlil Gibran was a poet, philosopher and artist. He was born in Lebanon, and is considered to be one of the greatest Arabic prophets. Kahlil's most famous work is his short book, *The Prophet*. In 1895 Gibran and his family moved to the US where he lived until his death in 1931

Kahlil's poems:

A blade of grass

Said a blade of grass to an autumn leaf,
 "You make such a noise falling! You scatter all my winter dreams." Said the leaf indignant,
 "Low-born and low-dwelling! Songless, peevish thing! You live not in the upper air and you cannot tell the sound of singing."

Then the autumn leaf lay down upon the earth and slept. And when spring came she

waked again — and she was a blade of grass.

And when it was autumn and her winter sleep was upon her, and above her through all the air the leaves were falling, she muttered to herself, "O these autumn leaves! They make such a noise! They scatter all my winter dreams."

Religion

And an old priest said,
 "Speak to us of Religion." And he said: Have I spoken this day of aught else? Is not religion all deeds and all reflection. And that which is neither deed nor reflection, but a wonder and a surprise ever springing in the soul, even while the hands hew the



stone or tend the loom? Who can separate his faith from his actions, or his belief from his occupations? Who can spread his hours before him, saying, "This for God and this for myself; This for my soul, and this other for my body?"

All your hours are wings that beat through space from self to self. He who wears his morality but as his best garment were better naked. The wind and the sun will tear no holes in his skin. And he who defines his conduct by ethics imprisons his song-bird in a cage. The freest song comes not through bars and wires. And he to whom worshipping is a window, to open but also to shut, has not yet visited the house of his soul

whose windows are from dawn to dawn.

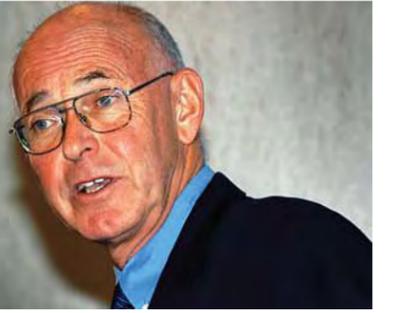
Your daily life is your temple and your religion. Whenever you enter into it take with you your all. Take the plough and the forge and the mallet and the lute - the things you have fashioned in necessity or for delight. For in revery you cannot rise above your achievements nor fall lower than your failures. And take with you all men.

For in adoration you cannot fly higher than their hopes nor humble yourself lower than their despair. And if you would know God be not therefore a solver of riddles. Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children. And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain. You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees. ■



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

UNMIN's role in Nepal is not to highlight militarisation, but to work towards demilitarisation...



The government has rightly recommended extension of UNMIN's (United Nations Mission to Nepal) tenure, initially for a period of six months, beyond its current term that ends on January 22; all in the hope that peace process will move ahead in the desired direction.

Key political actors, mainly the Prime Minister and the Maoist leadership, have come in for sharp criticism for their not having implemented crucial provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Moreover, frequent change of the goal posts by the Maoists setting newer pre-conditions for holding elections to the constituent assembly (CA) – such as the demand for a proportional representation (PR) system of election and abolition of the monarchy right away, and now reintegration of their guerrillas in the Nepal army; has threatened the seven party unity, which is definite to have a bearing in the peace process.

How much will an external assistance including that from the UN be of use in taking the peace process forward and holding elections on a new schedule, if the key internal actors' intentions and ability, are under increasing doubts both at home and abroad?

Yet, Nepal's key actors and UNMIN are one in their inference that the seven party unity is the pre-condition for success of the peace process. But that alone will not be enough. To begin with, the signatories to the conflict have to begin implementing key provisions of the CPA as a proof that they are serious about taking the peace process to its logical end, as well as creating an atmosphere conducive to polls to the CA.

They also need to convince people that they will behave in conformity with the code of conduct signed by both sides. It was also hoped that UNMIN, which has been assigned with the task of managing arms, armies of the state and the Maoists, and observing CA polls; would conduct itself as per the

UNMIN and the peace process

established norms and practice in areas of conflict, and therefore, would not require a separate code of conduct. But with some aberrations in that, it is perhaps time that UNMIN works out some regulatory measures for its staff and members as well.

The presence of the Norwegian General, Eric during anniversary celebrations of the 7th battalion of People's Liberation Army in Chitwan recently as the chief guest is an issue that has not been taken very kindly by the authorities in the government. Those knowing the norms of diplomacy say it goes against the basic principle of UNMIN presence in Nepal since its role is not to highlight militarisation, but to work towards demilitarisation and decommissioning to enhance the peace process.

That was the occasion when Maoist combatants used their arms for a ceremonial purpose, clearly forbidden by the peace agreement. Gen Eric's controversial presence follows Prime Minister GP Koirala's disapproval of UNMIN Chief Ian Martin's meeting with some Terai leaders waging armed struggle. Gen. Eric's conduct has also been questioned by the government.

It is surprising to see how the government was duped into airing such a programme on a government owned TV network even when the portfolio of the Communication Ministry remains vacant after the Maoist minister submitted his resignation some months ago. The event with the General wearing the UN's blue beret was highlighted by the media and the reaction it has generated so far is not at all

positive. In fact, this is an issue that UNMIN would require to explain sooner than later.

Since key political actors at home had no expertise or visible ability to take the peace process forward, it was definitely justified to get a neutral world body like UN as a facilitator. But once its neutrality or lack of it becomes an issue of debate or doubt, its role cannot be as effective as envisaged.

A neutral and yet an effective UNMIN can exert more moral pressure on the parties in the conflict if and when they err. In fact, that will be the challenge before the UNMIN during its extended new tenure.

The chances of elections taking place in a free and fair atmosphere, even in the new deadline that is

likely to be announced very soon, are still very remote. The restoration of law and order and total impunity, that Maoist groups, especially the Young Communist League (YCL) enjoy, are issues that need to be urgently addressed as pre-condition for elections. And the government and the Maoists also must begin implementing at least some of the provisions of the CPA to begin with.

They include formation of a high-powered commission to recommend the mode and model of devolution of power and appropriate electoral model as there seems to be a stalemate over the issue, besides forming a body to investigate the whereabouts of the disappeared from both sides, and another body to enforce return of property confiscated by the Maoists during the period.

UNMIN can obviously exercise its moral strength on the two sides, as proper electoral atmosphere will not be established without all that happening. The demands for review of electoral model or that of the integration of Maoist combatants in the army will be much easier, if the parties in the conflict give proof of their good behaviour and seriousness of purpose.

The way Maoists put forward the demands for Republic Nepal and PR system as pre-condition for elections to the CA which effectively stalled the electoral process has been taken by some, as their admitting lack of mass support even before facing the electorate.

Should the democratic or electoral process be a casualty for a long time to come in Nepal if the Maoists back out of it? It is equally important for Maoists to ponder: do they have a future as a political party if they shun people and contemplate taking up guns? But these political theories need to be discouraged for once and all. In other words, Maoists need to be encouraged to take the CPA and peace process to its logical conclusion. ■



Nepal's key actors and UNMIN are one in their inference that the seven party unity is the pre-condition for success of the peace process.

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There has always been a dearth of press coverage and articles on Dalit issues. Out of the few, many published opinion pieces on Dalits make one ponder over who might be the actual culprit behind the current plight of the so-called untouchables. Some highlight the importance of ending intra-Dalit hierarchy and segregation first, as a precondition for doing away with caste-based discrimination. To validate their arguments, the authors usually cite examples of Dalits discriminating against Dalits much the same way as non-Dalits treat them.

Though it is undeniable that Dalits are not a monolithic group and there is intra-Dalit hierarchy, not all would accept the mea culpa view. Indeed they would be in a much better position to get organised and rise against the discriminatory practices and traditions if they were not culturally and ritually divided. In an ideal world it would be a perfect thing to do. And there are many Dalit rights activists who have been advocating for the same.

But the main question is – is intra-Dalit hierarchy the absolute cause behind the perpetuation of the evil practice? Would Dalits be free from domination had there been no division within Dalits? Or are the intellectuals and writers simply projecting the issue in such a way that Dalits themselves can be blamed for their suffering? Could it be a part of their implicit attempts to eschew Dalit's freedom?

In reality, there is no community in

Who is the real culprit?

They are recommending medical cure for the limbs despite knowing that the real illness is in the head.

Nepal that does not have its internal hierarchy. Newars are an obvious example. Different clans of Bahuns consider themselves higher than other Bahuns. So, it is simply not true that only Dalits are divided along a hierarchical line. History also shows it was not Dalits who created the divisions amongst themselves. Clearly, this was a product of a divide and rule strategy adopted by the so-called high castes over centuries to ensure that those at the bottom of the social strata never unite for their common cause.

Do we then blame all high castes? If we hold this perception we would have to point our fingers at every member of the Bahun and Chhetri communities, including the impoverished and undernourished ones living in remotest parts of Humla, Jumla and Kalikot districts. Is this a realistic view?

History is witness to the fact that



■ Uday Pariyar

the Hindu religion prescribed the caste hierarchy and the state of Nepal applied it over the centuries. Those who did not follow the caste rules would be heavily penalised and tortured. For instance, if any member of Dalit community was found reading books during the Rana regime, his eyes would be destroyed. If he heard any sacred mantras, molten lead would be poured into his ears.

The Malla rulers started the strict implementation of Manubad and the Shahs, Ranas and Panchayati Rajas did their level best to ensure the practice continued. The rise of multiparty system in 1990 raised

some hopes but it also proved to be a democratic façade. The party rulers promised a lot, made some changes to the constitution terminating caste based discriminations on paper, but did nothing significant to discourage the state-sponsored discriminatory practices.

Even now there are many cases of police refusing to register the cases on untouchability issues. Dalits are discriminated even at homes of the government ministers and senior administrators. Dalits across the country continue to be victimised. Nobody is bothered about such a serious abuse of human rights and attack on civil liberty. In essence, there is not much change.

On the surface, we could blame all those who discriminate against a certain segment of population on the basis of their caste background. But clearly the state is the main culprit. It

means all those who ruled or are ruling are responsible for the inhumane practice. Even the Maoist party that stayed in power briefly cannot escape the blame. Everybody is cognisant of this reality.

This understanding makes it clear that those so-called intellectuals who recommend an end to the intra-community hierarchy within Dalits as a way of liberating them are simply not telling the truth. They are simply trying to evade the real issue and covertly endorse the inhumane practice. They are recommending medical cure for the limbs despite knowing that the real illness is in the head.

This is such a plain fact but even some Dalit activists and leaders appear to be confused. No doubt, the real culprit is the state. The real target should be the state. Of course, intra-Dalit hierarchy should be challenged but it won't make much impact unless the very nature of the state is transferred. Simply altering the system of governance will not mean anything for the suffering masses, as evidenced by history.

The state should be forced to shed all the traditional caste-based principles and practices. The rulers should be made to stop discriminating against Dalits inside their homes and communities. Nobody working for the government should be allowed to practice untouchability. Only then would we begin to see some changes in the perceptions and practice of the grassroots people.

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Chain of suffering

Of the 70,000 people in Nepal living with HIV/AIDS, 4000 are children...

■ Manish Gautam

Rita (name changed), 25, is a mother of a five year old child. Both the mother and the child are infected with HIV. Rita was infected by her husband, a migrant worker. Rita, who is now a widow, spent all she owned on the treatment of her husband who died a year ago. Now she earns her living by selling fruits. "If I reveal my HIV status, it will mean the end of my livelihood. I will be ruined. And I and my little kid will face severe stigma and discrimination."

This is the representative story of HIV infected Nepali women today; whose prime worry is their kids' future. The former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan once said that the saddest part of HIV infection is that it passes down from parents to their children.

According to UNICEF, HIV infection among Nepali children is rising alarmingly. The HIV/AIDS Project Officer of UNICEF, Nepal - Sara Beysolow Nayanti disclosed that approximately 4,000 children in Nepal are infected with HIV. UNICEF, FHI and National Association of PLWHA in Nepal; to achieve universal access for children and their families to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support; launched UNCAAN partnership in 29 Nov, 2007.

Sadly, we do not know who these 4,000 children are, where and how they live. It has been said that in Nepal children account for



half of all the new HIV infections.

With the estimated 70,000 people living with HIV in Nepal, what will be its impact on children? This is a serious concern which has not yet been addressed.

The gravest long-term impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis will fall on children in many ways. The vulnerability of children of AIDS affected parents start well before the death of their parents. Besides the tremendous emotional trauma they face when they suffer the deaths of

their parents, the loss impacts negatively on family structures and ends up requiring children to become caretakers and breadwinners of the family.

On the eve of this year's World AIDS Day, Rajiv Kafle, President of National Association of PLWHA in Nepal (NAPN) said, "New infection rates of HIV are rising alarmingly and deaths related to AIDS are increasing every year in Nepal." This means as the number of adults dying of AIDS rises over the next decades,

increasing numbers of orphans will grow up without parental care and love, deprived of their basic rights to shelter, food, health and education.

HIV/AIDS is not a distant affliction in sub Saharan African regions but a rising scourge in Nepal, which is creating enormous toll on psycho-social, economic conditions of the afflicted families. There are many cases especially in far west region of Nepal, where children drop out from school either because they could not pay the school fees or because they now have to support their family.

And increasing numbers of elderly couples take care of their grandchildren since they lost their sons and daughter-in-laws to AIDS. The rate at which the housewives of migrating populations are being infected with HIV virus is increasing alarmingly. Many new born HIV infected die because it did not have access to pediatric ARV. These are the real but untold stories of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. What kind of future does it warrant for the country?

AIDS results in discrimination, impoverishment, hunger and the chain of suffering passes down from generation to generation. AIDS orphans, as the situation stands now, will not receive love and support from their families and communities. HIV/AIDS is thus fast breaking the chain of family support, love, knowledge transfer and skill sharing between generations in Nepal. This issue demands urgent attention and well thought out actions. ■

Whatever arises, do not reject or grasp it. Look at it as wisps of clouds passing by on the screen of your awareness.

Going beyond suffering



Jikusan, 61 years old, is a Zen master who has been practicing for the past 20 years. He shared his experiences and knowledge of Zen meditation with **Sushma Amatyia** recently.

What is Zen?

Zen means meditation in Japanese. Zazen means sitting meditation and Satori, enlightenment.

What would one gain by meditating?

You gain peace of mind and go beyond suffering, no matter the circumstances and the environment you are in.

How does one practice it?

In Zen, posture is very important. Select a place that is clean, quiet, not too hot or too cold; sit facing a wall to reduce distractions for the senses. Sit on a cushion that allows your knees to press on the floor. Cross your legs in lotus or half lotus position or the easy cross legged position without one leg pressing on the other. Rest your hands in cosmic mudra, the left finger on the right and tips of thumbs touching each other, in a straight line. Let the lower abdomen relax forward which keeps your back erect; pull shoulders back gently, allowing ears to fall in line with shoulders. Stretch the top of the head towards the ceiling, keeping chin slightly tucked in as if to create a double chin. Breathe with abdomen, waist down.

Keep eyes half closed, open just enough for the light to get in, looking about a meter ahead. If you close your eyes, it is easy to get lost in the jungle of thoughts. Allowing light in helps you stay in the here and now, just as it is, without letting the thoughts of past or present distract you. Focus on the Hara, the area in your abdomen, four finger down from your navel, far from the head where there are so many distractions; and settle in the Hara. Whatever arises, do not reject or grasp it. Look at it as wisps of clouds passing by on the screen of your awareness.

Centering on Hara, watch your breath coming in and going out and begin counting. Count one for every cycle of breath, coming in and going out, till ten. Then, start all over again from one. Thoughts will continue to arise and disappear. Just look at it as illusions and they will start losing their grip on you and begin to disappear.

With practice, you can learn

to treat the production of mind as illusions without building on it and without rejecting it, staying in the present moment that change from one instant to another. Slowly, you will find your view of your life begins to change and the quality of life improves. After you finish the meditation, move your body slightly from side to side, from back to front, relax for a while and then get up; and use the practice of staying in the moment and viewing things as they are, in your daily life.

Did Shakyamuni Buddha teach Zen meditation?

Yes, he did. There is historical evidence that it has been passed down through a line of lineage masters. The Buddha sat for seven days under a tree, without sleep or food and attained enlightenment on the eighth day. We try and copy that in our monastery in Chile - like I used to in the monastery in Japan where life was highly disciplined - by practicing meditation for seven days in a row on the first week of every month. But of course, under a roof, on comfortable seats, with food and sleep. But the Buddha sat for a week, in the same meditating posture, without moving.

How does one take meditation into daily life?

Taking it into daily life is more difficult as there are more distractions out there. This is meditation in action. Letting go, as events come and go, as you speak, as you act, centering in the moment, is how you do it. Every moment is changing all the time and once you learn to let go and observe each change as it happens, without trying to run away from it or without clinging to it, you are better able to handle life as it comes. Things that used to make you suffer a lot earlier will cease to have any effect on you. Similar things happen and yet you don't even notice it.

Each small step leads you towards the goal. You develop the attitude of letting go, while remaining in the present and while doing it, you will still have your memories and will have your plans but that will not interfere with your present. Instead you will be able to handle your memories and plans in a better way by being here and now.

When you are angry, observe it and just let it go; since anger never helped anybody. It's amazing how with practice you can watch

yourself improve step by step. Sitting in Zazen for 40 minutes daily without moving the body, with discipline, gradually makes you realise that the body drops and the mental productions also loses its strength. Once the mind and body drops, you realise that the real self is pure bliss, it has always been there and will always be. But even practicing for five minutes daily can have positive effects on you.

How important is it to have a teacher to guide you?

You can start practicing on your own but sooner or later you will need to contact a teacher to guide you. There are many things that could arise, such as very nice feelings or the opposite and a teacher can tell you how to handle it, among other things. However grand an experience might be that arises out of meditation, it is important to let it go without wanting to experience it again.

Being with an authentic teacher, even if you do not communicate with him, is an experience that cannot be articulated, as I've experienced.

How has meditation changed you?

It changed my life in such an extraordinary way. I was in habit of identifying with my mind; and used to be happy, sad, bored or exuberant. Then with practice I learned that anywhere I am, whatever is happening, it's fine, it's perfect.

I used to be a photographer, lived for many years in London, traveled a lot. Everything was going well, as I wanted it to but I realised that I wasn't getting any satisfaction. Then I started reading books about the wisdom of the east. Reading wasn't enough. I began searching in India and then came to Kathmandu to learn Hatha yoga. During that time, I heard that somebody was giving talks on Zen nearby.



That very day, I went and I heard Sridhar Rana Guru talking. It was like dawning of light in the darkness of my soul. And I started my practice of Zen. After a few years, I went to Japan on an assignment to cover a Zen monastery for a few days. The days changed into weeks and months and years. I could not leave. I stayed there for ten years. Life changed so much for me, I was smiling for one whole year, and then I got used to it. Life was so perfect.

Then I realised I had to do something for others too who are suffering and share the knowledge with them. In my country, Chile, there is nowhere you can get any such teaching. I went there and began teaching and many people came. Now we will soon be having a monastery, in a quiet place on top of a hill, which should be ready in April. In the meantime, I'm using the time to travel around in places of pilgrimage. I'm so happy to be able to meet Sridhar Guru again whom I consider to be my primordial teacher.

How can everything be perfect with so much suffering around you?

The illusion that you are separate from others causes this suffering. As long as we believe that we are separate from others and hold on to our sense of I-ness, as long as there is that division, suffering will be there. The moment you see that all are one, you see perfect harmony and things are just as they are meant to be. Then you begin to understand all the chaos, destruction you see taking place around you. Destruction goes hand in hand with creation.

Why is it so difficult to live in the present?

Because of bad habits, basically due to ignorance. As we speak, the moment is already gone, replaced by another. Keeping yourself centered in the here and now is the key to be free of suffering. It is so simple. Perhaps because it is so simple, people do not understand it.

How does one become compassionate?

Compassion begins to flow naturally the moment you realise that we all are a big body of light that encompasses everything in the world.

Can supreme enlightenment be achieved through Zen?

I suppose so (laughing).

Enlightenment is an overused, ambiguous word.

Do you consider yourself enlightened?

If somebody says he/she is enlightened, most probably, the person is not. So I will say no (laughing heartily).

Why do you like Nepal so much?

So many wise people have lived in the country and this gives a very nice feeling to this place.

Why do some people see the nature of mind quickly and others do not?

I'll never know why in some people it just clicks and in some, even after years of practicing it still does not. It has nothing to do with age, gender, studies, intellect or whatsoever. Sometimes people, in whom you think change is impossible, change overnight. We used to go into prisons to teach and have seen amazing changes in some prisoners. They reported that they never felt so free in their lives, while in reality they are in a prison! I recall a lady prisoner saying she is thankful that she was put in prison for she said otherwise; she would never have encountered this teaching. However, whether it clicks or not, it is important just to keep on practicing.

Why is Zen not so much heard of?

Though Zen has been very open to everybody, it has been contained within small circles, perhaps because it is quite strict. And there are obstacles that arises that many people cannot face - like physical aches and pains that arise initially. We all get attacked by demons or seduced by dancers - just as the Buddha was while meditating, but it's just the mind. If you persevere, one day you will see mind face to face and will realise that your mind has been keeping you a prisoner; and then it will fall off. It will cease to have any effect on you.

How can householders/busy people practice Zen?

The same way. Set aside a little time for practice everyday and continue with meditation in action the rest of the time. Keep focusing in the centre, whatever arises, just observe it. Initially, you may not be able to observe whatever arises. Even if you react, once it passes, go back to the centre and start again. Every effort counts. It is not wasted.

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Riding against the tide

The current strike mounted by the association of petroleum dealers, and now supported by petroleum transporters, defies all logic.

As if the misplaced actions of the political leaders of the parties in parliament and government were not enough, the private sector which is supposed to rescue the country through ingenuity and farsightedness in troubled times seems to be simply following the mindset of our present leaders. This behavior is reflected in almost all sectors and industry categories. If this were to continue any further, Nepal would have no space left for itself to spring back to life at the right time. Simply put, the Nepali private sector seems to be going against the standard norms set for doing business in today's world under globalisation and against the terms of Nepal's membership in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Instead of preparing itself during the grace period obtained by Nepal as a member of least developed countries while becoming a member of WTO, almost more than half of the time is lost by the Nepali private sector in trying to secure protection



■ Binod P. Bista

from foreign companies and obtaining concession from the government. It is really a pity to find the Nepali private sector wanting in productivity as well as efficiency. Blaming the open border for all ills of the manufacturing companies has remained a standard excuse.

Government of Nepal, by its inaction and lack of initiative, shares equal blame for this plight of Nepali private sector when full competition in international markets sets in within three years time. Competitive and comparative advantage in goods and services, however small, must be carefully explored by the Nepali private sector with full support from the government. Nepal cannot survive as a healthy nation on the strength of a few handicrafts that never seem to

innovate, and tourism sector lacking necessary infrastructure to attract tourists.

A peculiar trend seems to be taking place in Nepal that is bound to destroy whatever little Nepal has progressed in following the path of industrialisation. Every sector has come up with umbrella organisations, often named as 'federation of ...,' which appear to be serving the interest of a special group/s rather than the profession. So far, the worst part even in the so-called unions (also federations) is lack of understanding of collective bargaining concept and its process.

Moreover, from two distinct groups, each aligned to Nepali congress and Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist Leninist, another significant and perhaps most effective group aligned to Maoists has been added in every sphere. Be it education, trade, manufacturing, transport or service, these groups are ever active to extract the benefit from the government as well as private sector. The very

presence of these groups not only makes doing business in Nepal expensive but also unworkable at times when there is a clear conflict of interest.

The current strike mounted by the association of petroleum dealers, and now supported by petroleum transporters, defies all logic. Why are the petroleum dealers against the quality bylaws and sellers' regulations of 2007? Why should they be concerned with direct supply to industries by the Nepal oil corporation? The government, it appears, is trying to meet its obligations to the industries for smooth supply of necessary raw materials used in the production process.

Is there no responsibility of the private sector to the local individual consumers? At a time of increasing awareness of corporate social responsibility, the Nepali private sector does not even seem to understand the basic of doing business: their first responsibility is to serve the people of the locality where

their businesses are established. The Nepali public has a right know whether the bylaws and regulations create serious bottlenecks, as asserted by the dealers, or check adulteration of fuel, as claimed by the government agency, since the consumer is impacted either way.

The current situation is responsible for lack of interest of the foreign investors in Nepal when they can find attractive investment opportunities on either side of Nepal in South Asia. It has also added to the existing woes of the citizens who, in spite of paying exorbitant prices for basic commodities, are always at the mercy of importers and distributors. Nepal needs to make extra effort to make up for its several shortcomings such as lack of state of the art in communication, superb infrastructure in plant locations and distribution centers, among others. Not to mention of Nepal's geo-physical handicap as a land-locked country.

Exemption on taxes and other government duties alone is not enough to attract and sustain foreign direct investment. Nepali private sector can help the government by identifying some select industries that can either find a ready market in the two booming economies or compete with ease in the international markets. Public-private partnership seems to be the only recourse for a country like Nepal that is yet to develop the private sector into a strong, healthy and capable force to take on the emerging business challenges. ■

■ Roop Joshi

It is traditional for us Nepalis to gather at the local "chiya pasal" (tea shop) and share views. It is in this spirit of conviviality that this piece is written. The CA elections have been postponed yet again, journalists are being dug up from unmarked graves, doctors are being thrashed, business houses are being solicited for 'voluntary donations', echoes of Mao's Red Guards ring out daily and Jimmy Carter has come and gone once again presuming to cure Nepal's ills.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) has been overtaken by events, the coalition government is participating in a power-crazed orgy of accusations and counter-accusations, the king and the prime minister compete to serve the living goddess, temples have been attacked by hooligans, we live in a limbo between a republic and a monarchy in a 'democracy' governed by the unelected, UNMIN is seeking extension to further prolong its impotence - no dearth of topics to talk about

Tea chat and act

It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against mindless terrorism with meaningful actions.

as we sit comfortably and sip our tea.

We - meaning the educated supposedly aware elite - are apparently unable to make any difference. We complain, criticise and curse. The tea or coffee seems to go down better as we righteously proclaim half-baked solutions to the country's woes. We resort to our proverbial complacency and take umbrage in the belief that whatever will be, will be - it is, after all, written in the stars.

Let us remember that 'we' are among the Nepali people for whom democracy is meant. It is our right, if we are citizens of a democracy, to demand accountability from our political leaders. They must follow our aspirations and dreams, not theirs. It is heartening to see recent efforts by professional groups towards this end. The sufferings of the doctors at the Nobel Medical College in Biratnagar and the sit-ins at Singha Durbar by a

rainbow coalition of professionals bear testimony to the fact that we have had enough.

Doctors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, businessmen, human rights advocates, youth, women have joined hands to proclaim "enough is enough". We must be allowed to get on with productive lives - lives without fear. All of us have been aware over the past months how steeply law and order is deteriorating. The Home Ministry pays lip service to improving this situation and the police have proved ineffective. The army's hands are tied by their confinement to the barracks. So who is going to improve the law and order situation? Maybe we have to resort to mercenaries or external security forces. The latter has an ominous ring to it, doesn't it?

The fact of the matter is that without law and order there is no democracy. Let us not fool ourselves about this. As

long as this climate of fear persists, the future of Nepali democracy is non-existent. It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against mindless terrorism with meaningful actions. We have seen how guns can achieve political power, how bandhs can debilitate society. Should we let these tactics be the monopoly of the few? Let us remember that we all have the democratic right to protest this invasion of our personal security - and we, the real People are the majority.

We expect that the professional organisations will now unite in a strong but non-violent campaign with clear objectives to right the wrongs that have been done to this country in recent times. The euphoria of "Jana Andolan II" has long given way to disappointment, disgust and even depression. The current threat by doctors to hit the streets is a stellar

example of what civil society has been driven to, due to, in this case, the shocking apathy of the Home Ministry and the police regarding finding and punishing the perpetrators who kidnapped and tortured doctors from the Nobel Medical College.

The Nepali population must not be allowed to be held hostage to selfish political interests. If the authorities are incapable of performing their duties, then matters have to be taken into our own hands. It is also heartening to see the increasing number of stories in the daily press highlighting the present dismal state of affairs. As the guardian of free speech, this role of the media cannot be underestimated. The martyrdom of Birendra Sah cannot be forgotten.

We the people have been taken for granted and fooled long enough. Our leaders must start becoming accountable to us immediately. So the next time any of us are in a tea shop chatting with friends or strangers, let us exchange views on current affairs but with an eye to act on the tyranny of the few. We are, after all, supposed to be living in a democracy. ■

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Musharraf silences critics

President Musharraf has abruptly resigned as army chief, but what are the likely consequences now?

JUST when everything seemed to be collapsing in on him, Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf pulled out some key compromises from his military and presidential hats.

He resigned his army chief position, announced emergency rule will end on Dec 16, and said elections would be held in January as planned. Suddenly, his critics in Benazir Bhutto's People's Progressive Party (PPP) and in Washington quietened down.

Originally Musharraf had wanted to renew his presidency first, then step down from the military if at all, and all in his own time. But now he has done what his PPP and US detractors had wanted: quit the army first, then renew the presidency, and lift the emergency before the January elections without postponement.

This may seem like gratitude to his generous (US\$10bil and counting) patron for a role in an avowed "war on terrorism." But the larger reason

is that Washington had begun to hedge its bets by secretly beginning to deal with some Musharraf opponents, should he remain an intransigent lost cause.

Now Musharraf has placated the United States and the PPP, while also dividing the domestic opposition. This leaves him enough space to concentrate on outflanking his chief unconditional rival, former premier Nawaz Sharif, and the Pakistan Muslim League (N), since smaller opposition parties, the general public, NGOs and the legal community remain unorganised.

Benazir's rhetoric is still critical of Musharraf, but since he is now less unacceptable to the West she can return to the prospect of a possible alliance between the PPP and his Pakistan Muslim League (Q). She is usually a reliable barometer of Pakistan politics, and the weather vane part is sensitive to where the wind is blowing.

But then some things had already been put in motion, like the



Commonwealth's suspension of Pakistan's membership the week before. This was what the Commonwealth felt it had to do, but the symbolic gesture did not make Musharraf feel he had to do anything in particular.

The historical fraternity had long been strong on pious pronouncements and little else, at whose Games last year the Pakistani team had fared

poorly anyway. There was, of course, the embarrassment of suspension, but what are such passing sentiments to seasoned practitioners of *realpolitik* like Musharraf? Even Britain's position on Pakistan within the Commonwealth seemed negotiable. London's foreign policy being only a shadow of Washington's, it could never have reconciled itself with a firm "no" to continued Musharraf rule.

Thus much of the vocal anti-Musharraf rhetoric is muted over the technicalities of office as he always saw those grievances to be. And the West continues with its Musharraf policy in place of a Pakistan policy, as Senator Joe Biden put it succinctly.

Musharraf's style of "holding down the patient" to administer treatment required democracy and democrats to hold their breath, and not only from the stink. As storm clouds of instability gather and spread in the North-West Frontier Province, Punjab and Baluchistan, this style also reveals certain propensities.

After eight years in office as both

army chief and president, Musharraf has strengthened the military's clout in Pakistan politics, yet without denting Taliban influence. He claims to have strengthened the essence of democracy in the country, so he must have done the opposite from expediency rather than inclination.

By holding on to the army post until the eve of being sworn in for a new presidential term, he has confirmed the continued importance of military dominance in government. To have done so even after heavy domestic and international pressure underscores the primacy of the principle.

Then by promoting ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani to the post of Chief of Army Staff, Musharraf further showed a comfortable collusion between government and military intelligence. This could help the government fight the Taliban better, but given their mutual familiarity it could also help the Taliban elude capture better.

(BUNN NAGARA in Malaysia Star)

No agreement yet on Iran sanctions

The UN Security Council is considering imposing a third round of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme and may reach an agreement within weeks.

While the closed-door talks on Saturday produced no firm decision, an unnamed official was reported as saying a compromise text on a new resolution would soon be circulated.

"There are elements that allow us to think we will have a resolution in the short term," he said, adding he was "relatively optimistic" about having a resolution in the next few weeks. US officials declined to comment after the talks. Nicholas Burns, the US undersecretary of state and America's chief participant in the negotiations, left France immediately afterwards.

Talks were also held up as Sergei Kislyak, the Russian deputy foreign minister who was scheduled to attend, was stuck in Canada because of snow and a colleague attended in his place. Saturday's talks came a day after Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief, met Saeed Jalili, Iran's nuclear negotiator.

Solana said the meeting in London had been "a disaster". The US, Britain, China, France, Russia and Germany agreed in September to delay sanctions against Iran until the end of November, pending reports on an investigation by the UN nuclear watchdog and a EU mediation effort.

They had decided that if the reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Solana did not show "a positive outcome", they would agree on more sanctions against Iran and put it to a vote in the security council.



Jalili said he defended Iran's rights to nuclear technology at talks with the EU

The IAEA report found Iran was co-operating, but not proactively, making it likely that Britain, the United States and France will resume their push for sanctions. In previous meetings, Russia and China, which have strong trade ties with Iran, have agreed only to the mildest of measures. Tehran had promised to bring "new ideas" to the table for the London talks but Cristina Gallach, Solana's spokeswoman, said: "There was not enough new in order not to be disappointed."

However, Jalili said on Saturday that Iran was not to blame for the disappointment expressed by Solana.

"The fact is that we defended the Iranian nation's rights and stressed fulfilling our duties and that the Iranian nation will not accept anything that goes beyond the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," he said.

"If some people have become disappointed because they cannot deprive Iran of its natural rights then this is another matter," he told reporters after arriving back in Tehran.

(Aljazeera.net)

No break for coup-weary Philippines

Since Gloria Macapagal Arroyo became president of the Philippines seven years ago, she has crushed three major coup plots to overthrow her. In between the foiled coup bids, the 60-year-old economist has also defeated three impeachment complaints over allegations of corruption and electoral fraud, and faced down a violent riot by loyal supporters of her disgraced predecessor.

With one scandal after another hounding her administration, Arroyo has become so unpopular that coup rumours circulate in the country almost every month and pundits speculate on when the next attempt to oust her would be.

While the government may have quashed the latest challenge to Arroyo's presidency in just seven hours, the threats are expected to persist until her term ends in 2010. Analysts warn that pervasive problems of poverty and corruption, a political leadership perceived to be weak, dishonest and illegitimate, and disgruntlement within the military are setting off the rebellions against the government.

"The elements that allow for military adventurisms and coups d'etat are going to be with us from now until 2010," said Prospero De Vera, a professor at the University of the Philippines' National College of Public Administration.

"I don't see any dramatic change that would make military adventurism or coup attempts simply fade away between now and 2010," he added.

The latest plot came amid allegations that Arroyo, her husband and a key political ally were involved in a multimillion-dollar bribery to fast-track the implementation of a 329-million-dollar telecommunications contract awarded to a Chinese firm despite irregularities in the deal.

The president has also been accused of bribing lawmakers and local officials to ensure their support against a new impeachment complaint, which her allies in the House of Representatives blocked after one week of deliberations.

In 2003, junior officers launched a failed mutiny against Arroyo amid accusations she was condoning rampant corruption in the military and alleged state terrorism perpetrated by top armed forces officials.

Three years later, she faced another coup attempt triggered by allegations she connived with a senior elections official to rig the 2004 presidential vote. The accusations stemmed from publicized recordings of telephone conversations between her and the official.

On November 29, detained Senator Antonio Trillanes and a small group of renegade soldiers took over the Peninsula Hotel in Manila's financial district of Makati to demand for Arroyo's removal and the creation of a new government.

Trillanes and the other soldiers were already on trial for leading or taking part in two previous attempts to oust Arroyo.

In a statement, the group warned that "a crisis of extreme proportions" was confronting the Philippines, with "the economy, the rule of law and the moral order" lying in ruins.

"Political, judicial and economic power have been perverted to inflict and justify high crimes against the Filipino people," they said. "More and more among our people no longer eat, while the idle rich and the corrupt live like kings."

"Minority rule has replaced majority rule," they added.

Trillanes' group called on the public and the military to gather at the Peninsula Hotel in support of their action, apparently hoping to recreate

the mass uprisings that led to the removal of two past presidents.

But the people did not come and government troops, instead of sympathizing with them, stormed the hotel to end the siege, firing teargas and warning shots and ramming an armoured personnel carrier into the lobby.

While authorities were still hunting down other suspects in the plot, Arroyo was so confident the threat had been put down that she embarked on an eight-day trip to Europe two days later. But De Vera cautioned the government against letting its guard down.

He said nobody could be sure that Trillanes and his group had no backing in the military, whose support is critical to ensure the success of a mass uprising in the country.

"It is possible that it's a waiting game for the different forces within the military and the civilian bureaucracy," he said. "They could be waiting for signals ... for the people to come in. They are maybe waiting for another opportunity to do it."

The Philippines has endured more than a dozen coup plots since the ouster of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, and most of the leaders of these bids have been hailed as heroes in the country.

With a nationwide survey showing that 59 per cent of Filipinos think Arroyo should step down amid the corruption scandals and 25 per cent even supporting any means possible to achieve this, De Vera said the Peninsula siege could be just a portent of things to come.

"It bears watching," he said.

"Maybe they are just testing how the government responds to it, and maybe there is something more in store for the coming months or years to come."

(Earthtimes)

Waves in mind

This is called habituation and is a good example of how the mind can block out what it doesn't want.

■ Mahayogi Acharya Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Then we have the wavelengths from 3.9 hertz to 0.1 hertz which is called the delta waves which is the wavelength of deep sleep, lucid dreaming, and in this wavelength there is increased immune function. The HGH (Human Growth Hormone) is released when the mind is in this state. This is probably the reason why

yogis who practice going into Samadhi like Raja yogis and Shamatha yogis of Buddhism, seem to retain their health and youth for a longer period than normal.

Although I have been saying that both deep sleep and Samadhi produce delta waves and

likewise Zen masters made ingressions into theta waves; and that deep hypnosis and dream states also produce theta waves; it should be understood that these

states are not exactly the same. Meditation at theta or alpha waves is not the same as either hypnosis at theta or alpha or hypnagogic and dream states at alpha and theta waves.

It must be understood that research has distinguished these states; but how they are differentiated is too technical

to go into an article like this. Electro-graphical difference exists between the theta waves etc. in sleep and the rhythmical theta train in Zen meditation and the catalytic theta waves of a subject in deep hypnosis. Likewise differences exist in the alpha waves in the hypnagogic stage just before falling asleep and the alpha waves seen in the beginning of Zen

meditation etc.

One interesting experiment done by both the Japanese and Indian researchers on their subjects seems worth mentioning here to see the key

Marshland Flowers

Zen masters made ingressions into theta waves; and that deep hypnosis and dream states also produce theta waves; it should be understood that these states are not exactly the same.



average person were to sit in a place and a clicking sound was to be made continuously he would hear the clicking sound and that would be registered in the EEG; but after some time the clicking sound would stop being registered. The person would stop hearing the sound that is measured by the EEG which stops registering the sound.

It was found in Zen Masters in Samadhi that their mind remained open to all sounds and there was no habituation. No matter how long the clicking continued monotonously, the sound kept on registering in the mind of the Zen master as shown by the EEG. This means the Zen master's mind is always open and does not close automatically based on conditioned reactions or Sanskaras.

On the other hand, the Raja yogi's mind blocked out the clicking sound right from the beginning when in Samadhi. These two EEG findings point to the fact that what is called Samadhi in Vipassyana type meditation based on mindfulness are quite different from Samadhis based on Shamatha type meditation like Raja yoga, Kundalini yogas etc. This is what I have been distinguishing in this article. (To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

difference between Buddhist mindfulness meditation and Raja yoga Samadhi type of Hindu meditation. The average human mind tends to block out any persistent

sound like for example the rhythmic clicking of an object, after some time.

This is called habituation and is a good example of how the mind can block out what it doesn't want. If an

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Type INT & send to 2722



Poems from the fiber
of my bones.

Little Annapurnas



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

Your face, wears airs of a blossom
Elegance of a dandelion
majesty of a sunflower
drowse of a blue mimosa

your eyes have stolen fires
from the Himalayan lightning
your body has kissed moistened
lips of clear creaks

(Annapurna Poems)

Walking in the Pokhara Bazaar or sauntering by the lakeside appears an epilogue to the countless journeys I have made in the Annapurnas sanctuary. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, I've forgotten my digital camera back in Kathmandu. As if to mock me, the massive ranges of snow-laden Annapurnas emerge in a spotlessly clean air and continue to gaze at me all day long. A colossal mass of a cosmic figure looms over the valley.

Almost envious of the Pokhara people, I walk in a reverie. The still moment of the ever-wavering mountain ranges staring at me for an instant stretches into a glorious day. The face of the mountain breaking into irresolute tapestry of sunlight and rain, shadow and shape. The clouds making and breaking the face of the giant goddess, whose glaciers feed our world, replenishes the granary stores of the subcontinent.

Yet there were times when I was afraid to go into the sanctuary, first about two decades ago because I feared the rigorous mountain life and later more recently because it had become the stronghold of the Maoist insurgency.

Unfortunately, the moment I decided to give the final touches to my Annapurna Poems in 2004, the things were not as bright. Gandruk village had turned into a ghost town, and the Gorepani and the rest of the region quaked ominously from the operations of the insurgent and the military. I did meet some of the insurgents. They appeared ordinary looking people, bent to charm any newcomer in the region with their party songs and exhort additional entry fee from the tourists holding the permits.

The local people seemed strangely quiet and only sheepishly complained of the food and accommodation that they had to dole out the insurgents. Even today, the cadres continue to seek donations from the people in the Annapurna region. The hoteliers and lodge owner seem more vocal and critical of the cadres' attempt to exhort money, food, and accommodation.

Threading through the forest leading to the spacious Buddhist stupa that keeps counting the myriad moods of the blue-eyed Fewa below, I look out at the almost supernatural stretch of the snow, vegetation and water.

Where would I find a world as beautiful as this? Where else in the world would I make my little poems from the fiber of my bones and breathe my helpless words? I walk the courtyard of the hilltop stupa where a plump tourist lies lazily on a soft carpet of grass. In each fold of the Annanpura range, I recognise the place, the people struggling for bare survival in each crevice. My head bows in reverence to the spirit of snow that gave me enough food to eat, to fill my mind and a mission to survive for the rest of my life.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)

SPECTRUM OF LIFE



Brick factory workers covered in dust. Bungamati, Lalitpur, Nepal.

■ By Sushma Amatyia

HERITAGE SITE

Save the magical site

Revered shrines since centuries have established the city as the city of temples.

■ Pramesh Pradhan



Kathmandu Durbar square, a world heritage site, is rich in temples, monuments, courtyards and gigantic images; all creating a spectacular exhibition of medieval artistry. The rich artistic flavour of 18th century can be experienced walking down the square that has more than 50 significant monuments lying within 300 metres.

Archaeological evidence dates back the site to as early as the 3rd century BC. Images older than a millennium prove the complex to be an important one. Kathmandu (Koligram, the older name) is believed to have developed into a town in the 9th century. The history of Kathmandu Durbar Square is incomplete without mentioning the contributions by King Pratap Malla. He was an intellectual and a dynamic king as well as a pious devotee of art and music. He called himself a Kavindra, king of poets and boasted that he was learned in 15 different languages. A passionate builder, he enlarged palace areas, built numerous monuments and temples, ponds, fountains and introduced new systems in the city.

Contributions to enhance the beautification of the complex were carried out by his successors during the Malla dynasty. The Shah Kings were more interested in warfare than in art but continued to patronise Newar artisans and give continuity to culture and traditions.

The Kumari house in the square is the residence of the living goddess Kumari, who is regarded as the spiritual and tantric manifestation of Goddess Taleju Bhawani. It is fundamentally a Buddhist shrine with wonderful woodcarvings. Kumari tradition was started by King Jaya Prakash Malla after building the house in 1757. Legends say the king initiated the tradition as an apology for his bad behaviour towards Taleju Bhawani who used to play dice with the king.

The nine storied palace known as Nautalle Durbar made by King Prithvi Narayan in late 18th century is a superlative display of wood carving. Vishnu's of Trailokya Mohan Narayan temple in front of Kumari house is known better as Das Avatar temple. Ten incarnations of Vishnu are exhibited at the temple during Dashain festival. The front face of the square is a neo-classical building dating back to early 20th century. The British emblem on balcony illustrates the British



influence on the Rana dynasty.

Kasthamandap, one of the oldest wooden pavilions on earth, was made in the 10th century by King Gunakama Deva. The name Kathmandu is derived from this pavilion. Known also as Maru Sattal, it is a Gorakhnath shrine dating back to 19th century. Kabindrapur temple of Shiva in the form of Nataraj or Nasodya, the god of dance is in front. Maru Ganesh, north of Kasthamandap, is perhaps the most visited temple in Kathmandu.

The 24 metre tall, three roofed pagoda temple of Shiva, Maju Dega was built in late 17th century. A small white Shikhara styled temple of Kama Deva can be seen in front of this temple. Shiva Parvati or Uma Maheswor temple is a late addition to the square. Constructed in 1792, it used to be the dancing and cultural platform. Basically a Nava Durga temple, it is famous more as Shiva Parvati temple. Nearby is the Taleju Bell of Kathmandu, the biggest in the valley.

Another site is Hanuman Dhoka, the entrance of which is guarded by a Hanuman statue after which the entire complex is named. Hanuman is the son of air and is worshipped for endurance and power. Hanuman, a bachelor, is supposed to have closed his eyes to avoid seeing the erotic carvings of Jagannath temple. On the top of the entrance gate, images of Krishna with his girl-friends and King Pratap Malla's family are seen.

The courtyard inside the palace is called Nasal Chowk, the dancing courtyard. Image of dancing Shiva, is seen in northeastern corner. The courtyard is used for religious and

special occasions. Marvelous carved images of Narasingha, Mahavishnu, royal chamber and museums make the courtyard a grand place to visit. The temple of Panch Mukhi Hanuman temple dedicated to monkey god Hanuman, a faithful assistant to Rama; is a spectacular display of five roofed Nepali style pagoda temple in shape of an umbrella.

Gigantic Sweta Bhairav and Kala Bhairav images, pillar of Pratap Malla, temples of Jagannath, Mahendreswor, Degutalle, Indrapur temple dedicated to Indra, Vishnu temple, Kankeswor temple are the attractions of the square. The ceremonial drum in front of Kala Bhairav goes back to early 19th century. Chyasin Dega of Vamsagopala Krishna is an octagonal terracotta temple made in mid 17th century, a distinct imitation of Krishna temple of Patan.

Stone inscriptions dedicated to goddess Kalika, built in 1664 by Pratap Malla is said to be written in 15 different languages including English and French. It reads, 'when the text is fully read, milk starts flowing from the tap Tushahity in the centre' and 'who can read it are intelligent and not thieves.'

The tallest temple in Kathmandu is Taleju Temple, built in 1564, dedicated to Taleju Bhawani, the royal goddess. For Buddhists, she is the Tara. Two huge lions, confiscated from Bhaktapur, guard the attractive Singha Dhoka. This 37 metre high, three roofed temple is opened to public once a year during Dashain. 12 shrines cluster around this temple.

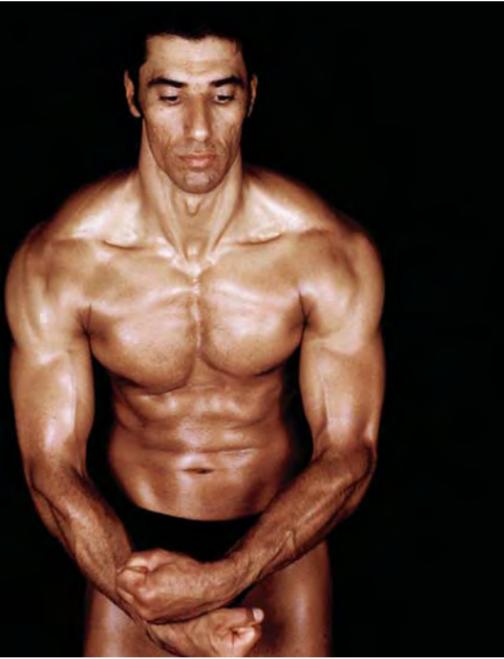
Hundreds of revered shrines since centuries have established the city as the city of temples. Although the original size has decreased, Kathmandu Durbar Square still displays spectacular ancient surrounding that is spread across more than five acres. It is a great treasure that testifies Nepal to be one of the best in the world in terms of culture, tradition, engineering and architecture – at least at the end of 18th century.

A wonderful place still to stroll around in, it is increasingly at risk due to public gatherings for political or entertainment reasons taking place frequently. Although the metropolitan authority in Kathmandu collects money from tourists for its maintenance, the evening open air market, food vendors and bars around the site is turning it into a very unruly, crowded and dirty place. Urgent steps need to be taken to preserve this magnificent site.

(Writer's email: nte@mail.com.np)

Visual fiesta

...Reviving hope and generating momentum...



The burly dreams of Afghani men - a film from Denmark.

The fifth edition of Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival is being held in Kathmandu from 7 -11 December 2007 showcasing 52 films from 20 countries and a variety of other events focusing on mountains and films. KIMFF 2007 will be held in Rastriya Sabha Griha and the Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu. There are 22 films vying for the KIMFF Trophy.

Alpine documentation, experimental shorts, anthropological narratives, feature films on a wide array of issues will be presented. This edition is being organised with a specific focus on reviving hope and generating momentum for a post-conflict, democratic Nepal. As a festival dedicated to mountains, it will focus on the devastating repercussions of global warming, on the environment and ecologies of the world.

An international jury chaired by Danish director Per Fly will select the top three films. While the best film will get a trophy and a cash

award, the second and third best films will receive citations and cash awards. The three-member jury will also select the best film from Nepali Panorama - a selection of seven films by Nepali filmmakers. KIMFF '07 will also present a showcase of Danish Films which will later travel outside Kathmandu.

KIMFF '07 will feature a photo competition on peace-building and reconciliation in Nepal. Mr. Fly will conduct a filmmaking workshop for Nepali filmmakers; in 'Know Your Himal' quizmaster Kunda Dixit will test audiences on their knowledge of the Nepali Himalaya. A Nepali edition of French scholar Sylvan Levi's 'Nepal History' will be released during the festival. There will be lectures/slideshows on 'Glacial Melt in the Himalaya' and on Nepal's wildlife. The festival will also feature a climbing demonstration by professional Nepali climbers and an exhibition of climbing gears, making it an action packed event. ■

Monlam prayer for world peace

The 16th Monlam Prayer Festival for world peace is being held at Lumbini, starting from Nov 29 and concluding on Dec 08, 07. This tradition was started 16 years ago in Lumbini by His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche. According to the late Rinpoche, Lumbini being the birth place of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha is the most suitable place for such an important prayer. Monlam is an aspiration prayer for world peace and for liberation of all beings from the samsaric cycle.

Present for the occasion are His Holiness, Sakya Trizin Rinpoche, the 41st patriarch of the Sakya tradition of Buddha dharma; H.E. Abikretn Rinpoche, H.E. Asanga Rinpoche, H.E.

Tharche Khen Rinpoche, H.E. Shabdrung Rinpoche, H.E. Chogye Shabdrung Rinpoche, H.E. Dejung Rinpoche, many high

lamas, Tulkus and Khenpos. Thousands of Lamas chant together the Monlam, which is being held in the Gompa. Thousands of devotees and delegates from all monasteries and the International Sakya Centre are present for the prayers.

Time Table for Puja: 6:30-8:00 - Tara Puja for accomplishment of all activities; 9:00-9:30 - sixteen Arhat Puja for the expounding of Buddha Dharma for a long time; 9:30-9:50 - Sakya lineage prayer; 9:50 - 10:10 - Manjushri Puja for knowledge and wisdom; 5:00 - dedication of merit.

On Dec 09, the final day, a prayer for world peace will be held in public at the Asoka Pillar, in the sacred garden. This also marks the commemoration of the 317th day of Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's passing into nirvana. Peace chants will be done by Ani Choying Drolma. ■



Hemanta Gurung

देशको तात्कालीन कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK

मा

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा



सगरमाथा

समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव