The 402-MW Arun Three Project is back on the priority agenda of the Government. The decision to revive the project which had been abandoned following protests by the environmental groups almost a decade ago has been approved by the Government recently.

At least 23 major companies participated in the bidding of Arun three, Upper Karnali and Budhi Gandaki Project, with lot of interest shown in the former two. An evaluation committee headed by former Finance Secretary Bhanu Acharya has been formed to study the proposals and suitable action would be taken in the light of that report, a senior cabinet minister told newsfront.

The Government's decision to revive Arun Three project seems to have been influenced by the changed political context. Many Indian hydro-power companies like GMR, Reliance and Larsen and Tubro participated in the bidding indicating the Government of India would not be averse to Arun three project being revived. The revised cost of project would be to the tune of two billion U S dollar with 95 percent yield assured throughout the year. “As it is a run of the river project, the damage to the environment would be far less,” an official said.

The Government has cleared many hydro projects in the past two weeks beginning with the West Seti project in which the Government would have about 15 per cent stake. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to provide loan to the Government which would be invested in the company on behalf of the Government owned Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Development takes precedence over politics for a change: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala inaugurating the National Institute of Neurological and Allied Sciences - in the capital on Wednesday. Dr Upendra Devkota, Founder Head of the institute declared that it would be a world class hospital.
Concealing rift

Riding on republican wave, Maoist leadership may try to conceal anti-Indian current within their party.

Anti-Indianism is back as the main political mantra of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists after almost a gap of 13 months. This was the clear line the party adopted during its central committee recently, but Maoists would be aggressively pursuing the pro-republic line for tactical reasons.

The pro-republic political line would be pursued in a much more pronounced manner since it is likely to give them more political mileage in politics than pursuit of anti-Indianism which they did during most of their existence. A stepped up movement for ‘Republic Nepal’ analysis say, will also be the best way to plug the clear schism within the Maoists, that came into fore during the meeting. A formidable nexus of Mohan Vaidya and Badal is emerging against the current pro-India line that has also come to mean Prachanda-Baburam line, sources said.

Re-adoption of anti-Indianism follows a volley of charges against the leadership by the members during the Central Committee meeting that, “they (leadership) were sold-out to India and that they were out to dump the glorious history of the Nepalese revolution” An article by their well respected Central Committee member, Biplab, even charged that the current line led by the leadership smacked of revisionism as it was hoping that that republic will come on a platter as a gift from parliament.

Some doctors and patients as well as their attendants in Om and Medicare raids conducted by the police in three stalling parliament and demanding an immediate resignation of ministers. A police official said, “We have no instruction to stop or intervene in any such activities.”

Maoists had lodged strong protests with the Government to the extent of stalling parliament and demanding an apology from the Home Minister for raids conducted by the police in three of their offices in Kathmandu.

Some doctors and patients as well as their attendants in Om and Medicare hospitals in Chabahil have lodged complaints with the police that Maoists are stopping vehicles from passing through the area and forcibly taking money. “We have not heard anything from the police. Nor have our complaints been acted upon,” a doctor said.

A sense of terror prevails in ministries where the Maoist leadership is demanding that their ministers should be given a free hand to hire people at senior level including at the secretary level. YCL cadres have also threatened officials in the physical planning ministry that, “they must carry out our orders.”

We have lodged a complaint with the Prime Minister that our officials cannot work under these circumstances, but he does not seem to have taken it up with the Maoist ministers,” a joint secretary rank officer in one of the Maoist led ministry told newsfront. Instead, the YCL cadres seem determined to acquire more backing by their ministers so that they could ‘interfere easily in our day to day work’, the official added.

Authorities who are quite scared complain that in some places YCL cadres have already begun collecting ‘parking fees’ in parts of Lalitpur without going through the necessary official formalities and bidding process. Maoists’ control over the private transporters is growing fast, mainly through terror by YCL cadres and this worries the authorities the most.

On Saturday, YCL cadres came out on the streets ostensibly to protest against ‘parking fees’ in parts of Lalitpur and the authorities prior to any meeting. Army Headquarter refused to react to the reports saying, “our reaction will be routed through the Ministry of defense.” But a senior official in the Defense Ministry said that Defense Secretary Bishnu Dutt Upreti is, “studying contents of the text sent to him through the army headquarter.”

Prime Minister G P Koirala who holds the Defense portfolio is believed to have enquired about the media reports with Army Chief Katwal who denied it right away. PM office (PMO) sources told newsfront that the Defense Ministry would be responding to the media report.

“The PM did not authorise the army chief for such a meeting. To the best of our knowledge, the meeting did not take place.” But what seems to have agitated the PMO is the ongoing cold war between the Defense Secretaries and the Chief of Army Staff. Media reports have also quoted the Defense Secretary saying “the army is yet to give up its old loyalties.”

The sources said that the clarification from the army headquarter about the media reports was also coupled with the complaints against the Defense Ministry after media reports quoting Defense Secretary claimed that Chief of Army, Bimal Gurung had a 90-minute long meeting with King Gyanendra on Friday night. Army Headquarter refused to react to the reports saying, “our reaction will be routed through the Ministry of defense.” But a senior official in the Defense Ministry said that Defense Secretary Bishnu Dutt Upreti is, “studying contents of the text sent to him through the army headquarter.”

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Since Nepal Airlines management is still undecided about acquiring the much needed new aircraft, it runs the risk of having to stall its operation soon. The risk is more pronounced now as one of the two aircraft remains grounded since April 23 following a detection of a crack in its bell crank, a devise at the wing that holds the flap during approach and landings. The only other aircraft in operation at present is overstressed; it's engine overhaul is long overdue.

According to official sources, a Boeing 757 aircraft on its arrival from Malaysia last week was issued Aircraft on Ground (AOG) instruction soon after the snag was detected. The Boeing Company is yet to send the spare parts so that the grounded plane could be dispatched for regular maintenance to Brunei.

In fact, we already have one engine sent for overhauling in China, but the work has not yet begun as NA management has not issued instruction for it, an NA official told newsfront, adding “the only aircraft operating is so over stressed that it can be grounded any moment.”

A series of NA board meetings in the past about purchase of new aircraft have remained inconclusive; “although the cost on food and regular allowance would have exceeded a few million rupees,” an angry official disclosed. The number of flights carried and distance covered by the two aircrafts would be much more than what three aircrafts would be performing elsewhere under similar circumstances.

Top level sources of the NA board say that it would be going for a short-term lease of Boeing 757 sometimes around mid July, but that is not going to be an additional aircraft. At least one aircraft would have gone for regular maintenance, generally known as C-Check during that period.

As a result of the shortage of aircraft, Nepal airlines flight schedules to Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Japan and Delhi have already been affected resulting in huge loss of revenue to the national flag carrier. Although, the airlines is trying to continue the high-profit and high-density operations, the poor engine condition of the only official aircraft will have a limitation.

“We are very serious when we say that we cannot improve the situation without buying new aircrafts, a few at least. But that would require fast decisions by the ministry over the fate of many officials working in the palace secretariat, mainly on the ground of age. There is however, a lot of confusion among them.” a board member who refused to be named told newsfront. There is no such indication from the Government. This only indicates that the agony of Nepal Airlines will increase in days to come.

News Brief

Queen’s birthday

Maoists seem to find Monarchy outside Nepal worthy of respect. It also seems that their pro-republic in Nepal is purely indig- enous, if not a tactical approach. Minister for Physical Planning and Construction, Hishita Yami’s was present at the British Embassy to join the celebration of Queen Elizabeth’s 6th day on April 23.

The celebration was hosted by British Ambassador, Andrew Hall. Hishita’s husband Baburam Bhattarai and other Maoist leaders including the ministers, however, chose not to attend the celebration.

Yami, under advice from the embassy, had gone there sans private security guard. Maoist ministers and leaders who had been invited were told by the embassy that their private security and private arms were not to accompany them when they visit the embassy.

All Male Brahmins

Radical slogans and gender equality are the most repeated slogans by the leaders of the eight parties now ruling the country. The Communist Party of Nepal Maoists (CPNM) is not tired of boasting having given more representation to women and Janajatis (indigenous people) in the interim parliament.

But when it came to appointing Vice Chancellors of the four universities, it was all males and all Brahmins. The committee headed by the Education Minister has recommended names for the universities with four major parties getting one seat each. But in what appears of more a mind-set than coincidence, all four belong to the same community and one gender.

Dr Madhav Sharma who belongs to the UML quota will be the new Vice Chancellor for Tribhuvan University where as Bhagendra Prasad Upadhaya from Nepali Congress quota will head Punanchhali University. Not to be left alone, Maoists also recommended Deepak Bhattarai, another Brahman for appointment as Vice Chancellor of Pokhara University. Bidur Poudel, a nominee of the Congress (D) will be heading Sankshi University. These three have been lying vacant for the past one year. The new appointments will come into effect after the Prime Minister, in his capacity as Chancellor of the Universities, approves the recommendation.

Shameless

With the country fast headed towards total lawlessness, the Home Ministry has fallen into disgrace. Home Minister K P Sitaula, faced with consistent demands of the parliamentarians belonging to his own Congress party, has been admitted to the Teaching Hospital for his ear problem.

Hospital sources indicate he could be there for one more week.

His most trusted Lieutenant and Home Secretary, Umesh Mainali is now away for three weeks as part of the official delegation to the United States and Peru. Sitaula, Mainali and chiefs of the security forces have come under serious criticism for their failure to contain the violence in Terai.

Another senior official of the Home Ministry is also away leaving Baman Neupane, a Joint Secretary to officiate in Mainali’s place.

There are intense speculations over the fate of the Home Minister, Home Secretary and the two security chiefs once the Commission to probe Terai violence begins. “Inefficentness of the police and the Home Ministry specially for their failure to improve the law and order situation has now brought Prime Minister Koirala himself into focused criticism within the B-party ruling alliance as well as in his Nepali Congress party.”

Surya Nepal’s Springwood

Surya Nepal has announced the launch of a new apparel brand Springwood which has been introduced in Kathmandu after a successful test marketing exercise in Pokhara.

Nearly three years ago, Surya Nepal made the foray into branded menswear market in Nepal with John Players, a premium menswear brand of shirts, trousers, jeans, t-shirts and belts which took the market by storm. The company has garnered 5% share of the domestic readymade apparel market with a volume of more than 1 lakh pieces.

According to Surya Nepal, it has now introduced its new brand, Springwood, to address the needs of the quality and price conscious consumers in the country, who currently have a limited choice in terms of low quality Chinese, Cambodian and Indonesian garments. The company hopes to double its market share with the introduction of its new brand.
Hypocrites

The CPN (M’s) reaction to police raids on Youth Communist League office in Kathmandu is against the peace agreement, which sanctions state force on armed non-state actors spreading terror among the public. Going by their yamal, the entire country should be out on the streets to oppose Maoist excesses, including abduction, extortion and torture on civilians. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and the party he unfortunately leads, is only proving their short sightedness and lack of trust in the rule of law. Why are the other parties not mustering enough courage to oppose the intimidation by the Maoists?

The return of the confiscated vehicle used by their leadership was only expected. The PM who publicly assured the nation that any such activities would be strictly dealt with as crime by the state, his inability to even take that into account, is a clear case of deception. While Vipassana is firmly rooted in the true teaching of the Buddha, Mr Goenka discovered the solution (of Vipassana) for liberation from all misery. He realised that we keep reacting to the pleasant and unpleasant sensations we feel on the body, with craving and aversion. And due to these mental impurities or habit patterns, we remain agitated and miserable.

Mr Goenka’s success in service comes from being an inspiring example and an ideal, of practicing what he asks his students to practice. “Develop purity in yourself if you wish to encourage others to follow the path of purity,” he says. “Discover real peace and harmony within yourself, and naturally this will overflow to benefit others.” Throughout life, one encounters things that one does not like, and is separated from things one likes. The Buddha went to the root of this problem, and emphasises that it is not a religion. “The only conversion involved in Vipassana is from misery to happiness, from bondage to liberation,” he told an applauding audience at the World Peace Summit at the United Nations, New York, in 2000. Vipassana is the practical essence of all religions, to develop the experiential wisdom to live a happy, productive life. In the words of Sayagi U B A Khan, Goenka’s teacher, Vipassana offers results that are “good, concrete, vivid, personal and immediate.”

In 1969, U B A Khan authorised Mr Goenka to go to India and teach Vipassana, as his representative. After arriving in India, Mr Goenka soon retired from his flourishing business and devoted his full time teaching Vipassana. There is no fee for the teaching. Neither Mr Goenka nor the assistant teachers get any financial or material gain from these courses. Mr Goenka says, “No one should make the mistake, now or in the future, of turning a vipsassana centre into a commercial organisation.” (www vri dharmma org)
Devaluing Judiciary

Institutionalising politics of vendetta is a crime, and those perpetrating it are criminals.

Respecting judiciary has never been the priority agenda for this Government. It almost tried to reduce judicial courts to the level of Kangaroo courts being run by the Maoists, under political command. Absence of a credible judiciary free from the yoke of executive is the best guarantee of people’s rights, and by extension is democracy. But the interim constitution not only snatched away the independence of the judiciary, it also folded with the fundamental principle of separation of powers and jurisdiction among the three wings of the constitution - executive, legislature and the judiciary, with executive having clear control over the remaining two.

As if that was not enough, the Government, through its act has tried to tarnish the residual image of the judiciary. The latest cabinet act is one such example. It has decided that a retired judge of the Supreme Court from the Madheshi community will be heading the probe commission in the spate of violence in Terai that has resulted in the death of about 60 people in the past few months.

‘Why did the executive feel the need to emphasise on the appointment of a Madheshi judge? Is it because it thinks that only a Madheshi judge will be able to give justice to the people of the Madhesh? It should be kept in mind that criteria adopted in appointment of the inquiry commission will set precedence for future appointments. G P Koirala’s Government has moved a step forward than the Royal regime on the question of forming inquiry commissions for pursuing the political agenda. The Supreme Court, in a rare display of independence, courage and commitment to the constitution, scrapped the Royal Commission on corruption formed by the King to try political rivals, but the Koirala regime refused to draw any lesson from it. In fact, it only followed the inglorious footsteps of the Royal regime. It formed the Rayamajhi Commission, out and out a political body, which acted as a pawn in the hands of the executive.

The Government apparently drew the list of those ‘who were to be declared guilty’, and Justice Rayamajhi endorsed that line. It is not Justice Rayamajhi’s origin or association with a community he belongs to. Those with self-pride will not take this immature decision kindly. No judge can be assumed to be more fair to Terai and less fair to the hills, and the vice versa on the basis of origin. What Koirala has not understood yet is that people in Terai want justice done to them independently, by the State and all its apparatus. Having a Terai judge heading the probe is not the way to ensure that.

No doubt, the apex court appears quite demoralised after the sweeping amendments made in the procedure of appointing judges. But this is something, the apex court and the Bar Association should seriously take up with the Prime Minister.

Devaluing Judiciary
Mt. Everest remains the dream destination despite its numerous challenges. The Everest region is the home of the Sherpas, perhaps the most famous ethnic group known for their hard work, civic responsibility, adherence to their faith, and above all for their ability in mountaineering talents. Trekking has been the backbone of Sherpas society for a long time.

**Lukla – Phakding**
A 45 minutes flight takes one to Lukla, the gateway to the Everest region. At an altitude of 2,840 metres, it is a unique airport with a 33 degrees slope, one of the busiest airports in Nepal. After landing everyone was seen talking about the nerve-racking flight and the exhilaration felt after the safe landing. We arrived at a quiet region, Lukla, a village with many lodges. It is predominantly the gateway to the Everest region. At an altitude of 2,840 metres, it is a unique airport with a 33 degrees slope, one of the busiest airports in Nepal. After landing everyone was seen talking about the nerve-racking flight and the exhilaration felt after the safe landing. We arrived at a quiet region, Lukla, a village with many lodges. It is predominantly the gateway to the Everest region.

Lukla is one of the starting points to trek to the Everest region. It starts with an easy walk through the clusters of lodges in Namche. Thundering Dudh Koshi River along the trail gives you a sense of movement and makes the atmosphere full of life. The trail and villages are clean and provides you with a myriad of tea houses. There are several Sherpa settlements like Chheplung, Ghaut and Chhuthawa along the way. The more you go up, the fresher is the air and purer the water. Everything has to be carried and makes you wonder how people up here survive with all the hardships.

**Phakding - Namche**
Phakding (2,610 metres) is one of the important settlements that lies between Lukla and Namche. The trek begins with a gentle ascent through forests. Suspension bridges and narrow trails often create traffic jams of trekkers, porter and yaks which are the landmarks of the region. Numerous waterfalls encountered along the way are breathtaking. There are rows of colourful shops in Bengkar, Mongor and Jorsale. After Jorsale, the climb is steep. Overlooking two pristine rivers of Dudh Koshi and Bhote Koshi. During this ascent, higher you reach, the better view and landscape you see. After 2-4 hours of exhausting trek, Namche arrives.

Namche (3,440 metres) is more of an alpine resort than a Sherpa town. It has every facility a modern town with cosmopolitan touch should have, excluding road and flight connections. It is nestled in a concave hollow surrounded by mountains like Thame, Kongde, Kyashar, Kusum Kanguru and others. An enchanting town, Namche has plenty of hotels, restaurants, cyber cafes, and shops with trekking gears, banks, currency exchange counters, and the enticing German bakery offering a variety of breads, cakes and pastries. A fairly wide range of food is available but it is very expensive. The fact that every conceivable household objects, food, grains, vegetables, gas cylinders and fuel supply, cases of alcohol that are physically carried up the mountain would perhaps justify the expensive price range of Namche. It has its own plant providing continuous electricity supply. The entire region seems affluent because of tourism.

Avalanches cracking on the mountains can be heard during the day and helicopters are often seen flying high to Pheriche for emergencies. Khunde – Khumjung – Syangboche – Everest View Hotel. The first part of the trek starts from Namche with a gentle walk through the ridge. Gradually, we see the welcoming sights of Ama Dablam and Everest. Most of the photos of the region are taken from this trail where spectacular Ama Dablam with Mt. Everest in the background can be seen. The trek passes through smaller settlements like Sanasa and Laya yasa before descending down to river bed Phunki Tenga. The route that divers to Gokyo region can also be seen.

There is a few water driven prayer wheels and a couple of one of the first two conquerors of Mt. Everest, has contributed immensely to the region.

A trek to Everest View Hotel (3,880 metres) is greatly recommended. The hotel, the highest in the world has truly an international character in service and facilities and is perhaps the best location for mountain viewing at this altitude. Sunrise and sunset in the mountains are magnificent. Unbelievable freshness of air is something to be felt.

**Namche to Pangboche**
The first part of the trek starts from Namche with a gentle walk through the ridge. Gradually, we see the welcoming sights of Ama Dablam and Everest. Most of the photos of the region are taken from this trail where spectacular Ama Dablam with Mt. Everest in the background can be seen. The trek passes through smaller settlements like Sanasa and Laya yasa before descending down to river bed Phunki Tenga. The route that divers to Gokyo region can also be seen.

One of the few water driven prayer wheels can be seen here. A steep ascent nearly 700 metres through the pine and rhododendron forest is perhaps the hardest trail in the region. I often wondered what my reward would be after such a rigorous trek through the treacherous forest. At times, I questioned my endurance and capability to trek any further. Yaks are found only above Namche while Donkeys are found in the entire Khumbu region. They are used for carrying heavy loads, their wool is woven for blanket and rugs, dung burnt as fuel after drying in sun and yak milk is taken as a nourishing drink. Greener decreases gradually as you go up.
As we ascend up, the atmospheric pressure gradually decreases, and we inhale fewer and fewer oxygen molecules. The body adjusts itself to compensate more by faster and deeper breathing. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) usually begins with headache but may have other symptoms as well. Drinking plenty of fluid, nourishment, proper rest, slow ascent and avoiding over-stretching your body are some of the ways to prevent AMS.

The trek starts by ascending few hundred metres through the steep and terminal moraine of Khumbu glacier. I could see the memorials and tombstones of famous mountaineers who lost their lives in pursuit of the peak of Mt. Everest and other mountains. Crossing the frozen river of Dudhkoshi on the way at nearly 5,000 metres was a great experience.

Below Ama-Dablam peak and overlooking several peaks, Lobuche (4,910 metres) is reached. It is a cluster of few lodges, some of them exceptionally good.

Lobuche to Gorakshep

Lobuche in the morning is usually very clear and sunny. The trek is gutter in this part of alpine high hills. The Pyramid International Laboratory, a geological observatory at 5,050m popularly known as Italian pyramid can be reached after walking for half an hour, a mere ten minutes diversion. Set up by Italian scientists, it is a high altitude scientific research centre for geological, environmental and other scientific projects.

On the trail, I met two foreign female doctors who had volunteered to serve on the base of Mt. Everest for four months. I could not believe the level of difficulty they would face there. They planned to provide health service for mountainers and serious trekkers voluntarily, a remarkable gesture.

The next part of trekking was a struggle, passing over the remains of glaciers in millions of years old. After many ups and downs, twists and turns, we arrive at Gorakshep.

Gorakshep (5,140 metres) had a few lodges in the alpine desert, the last house we’d see on the way to the Everest, literally an end of civilisation in the region. But to my utter astonishment, I could reach a satellite phone in such a remote location. I could then call my family and closest friends and with my son, happy birthday.

Once the sun goes down, it soon becomes bitterly cold and we had to rely on warm clothing and heated chimneys where all trekkers would sit around the fire and talk.

Everest Base Camp (5,364 metres) & Kalapatapthar (5,545 metres)

After a night of restless sleep, a symptom probably common above 5,000 metres, I was ready for the ascent to Kalapatthar, where a steep ascent for more than 400 metres awaits you. Walking is a real struggle with less than 50% of the oxygen supply and one tends to breathe faster and tires instantly. I had a feeling that I was able to use only 20% of my capabilities.

After an hour of strenuous effort, I was atop Kalapatthar. It is a small rocky mountain at an altitude of 5,545 metres (18,200 ft). It is perhaps the best vantage point to see the stunning view of mountains including the crown of the world, the Mt. Everest. The busy Everest Base Camp could be seen far below.

I was very thrilled and had a personal sense of great achievement. My camera was busy capturing moments of my summit and the great panorama. Just a few kilometers away was the Mt. Everest. One has to be there to believe the fascination and the pleasure one experiences. Sitting up here, one can watch avalanche cracking, powder snow falling and snow peaked mountains all round you and feel joyful with one’s achievement.

After a hearty breakfast, I set off for another journey to the base camp of Everest. It started with a gentle climb near the famous Khumbu glacier, followed by descents and ascents, boulders and icy glaciers. At times, it was very dangerous especially over the ridges of falling stones and narrow path dropping few hundred metres down to icy lakes. The trek to Everest Base Camp (EBC) is undoubtedly the most difficult part of the whole journey.

After 3-5 hours of high altitude trekking, one reaches EBC. The base camp, at the altitude of 5,364 metres stands virtually on the very slow moving glacier with boulders and rocks that fell from the mountains.

I was amazed to see around 50 tents at the base camp. It was difficult to believe how anyone could erect tents in such a difficult location. Adding to my area were a research laboratory and all sorts of lodges, gos, instruments, communication equipment. What amazed me more was how these sophisticated equipments were carried by porters or yaks. There was also a hospital with specialised doctors and modern equipments and facilities set by Red Cross team for mountaineers. The debris of an ill fated helicopter could also be seen in the glacier. It is worth trekking to EBC and see how a base camp looks and how technology has reached the extreme points on the earth.

The entire region with trekking routes reaching high mountain passes, frozen lakes and rivers, moving glaciers, up to 5,400 metres was intensely thrilling. Trekking to the region is possible in all seasons but preferably in spring (March-May) and autumn (Sept-Nov). Winter and summers are good for easy treks and great time for fun and fauna and social and cultural interaction.

I would put the Everest trek, according to the level of difficulty, in two categories. First category is the trek up to Namche or Shyangboche (max. altitude 3,880 metres) that takes a week. It is recommended for trekking enthusiasts and who are in good shape. One can see Amadablam, Mt. Everest and other 20 peaks nearby, study the life Sherpa people and feel the freshness of the mountains.

The second one is the tougher trek that goes up to Gokyo, Cholatse pass, Chukhung area, Kalapatthar and EBC (max. altitude 5,545 metres). It is recommended for serious trekkers and who are in the best of their health and are psychologically fit and prepared. Two weeks are required for this trek. Apart from Everest region, Nepal has numerous trekking areas namely Annapurna, Langtang, Dolpo, Kanchenjunga and others.

I was fortunate to have good weather during my trek. A lifetime memory is with me the beauty of mountains and the people of the region. With the successful completion of my Everest trek, I have many precious impressions that I can treasure forever and share with others.
You realise the significance of blood only when you need it

Nita Ghiraiya (Agarwal), 41, has donated 33,250 ml of blood over the past 27 years. She donates 350 pints of blood every time and is the record holder in Nepal as the highest blood donor who has donated blood 95 times till date. Newsfront talked about her mission in life and her attempt at attaining a place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

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What inspired you to donate blood at the age of 15? My father, Raghu Nath Agarwal who used to donate blood frequently inspired me. I understood it was a form of social service and also an act of Dharma. As a teenager, I thought blood was something that was entirely my own that I could give and that was how I began donating.

What made you want to donate blood at regular intervals? It might sound funny. Back then I used to suffer from pimples and after donating blood I began to notice that it began to reduce significantly. That prompted me to be a regular donor. Gradually the Dharma aspect of it took over and inspired me to continue.

How frequently did you donate initially? Before the rule was set that there should be a gap of three months, I used to donate every two months or even after a month sometimes though that was infrequent. But once the rule was applied, I’ve been donating once every three months.

What was the reaction of your parents? They came to know of the fact only after I had donated 35 times when I was recommended for it by the then Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba. They were surprised but were quite accepting and more so after they saw that I was in perfectly good health all the time. They have been supportive ever since. And my husband and three children too have been very encouraging. My son, who turned 18 donated blood for the first time on his birthday this year.

What keeps you going? I feel a sense of achievement with the thought that one pint of blood that I donate has the power to heal or restore life of a person. Whatever could be more valuable than blood that nobody can create in this world? I am a religious person and I believe in the slogan, donation of blood is donation of life.

What was your reaction after you began to receive acknowledgments and publicity from various quarters? I was happy! I could do something for my country and my community. To hold a record as a woman makes me feel good.

Now you’re trying to get your name into Guinness Book of World Records. What prompted that? I got the idea from my relatives and friends who said why not for it and I thought it would be great to have my name, as a Nepali woman, on an international book that would be read by future generations all over the world. I’m trying for it but even if I don’t get it, I will continue to donate blood. It has become a mission in my life to continue giving till I’m physically capable of doing it. I also donated my eyes 15 years ago and do not mind donating my kidneys once I’m over 50 years of age.

Do you follow any special diet? Absolutely not. I eat as normally as any other family member and am normal as anybody else. (laughing)

Any special incidence that stands out in your memory regarding blood donation? There was a boy from Mumbai, 11 years old who needed urgent blood transfusion. He was B positive and there was no blood of that group in the bank. After receiving the call from the nursing home, I rushed and donated blood hard to hand. His operation was successful and his grandmother was so overcome with gratitude, she showered me with her blessings, I’ll never forget how grateful the family was to me.

Do you have all the records of your blood donation? How will you validate your claim? I’ve always donated blood to Nepal Red Cross Society. Before 1989, the blood banks did not have a system of giving donors any card as they do now. They used to have a written record that they would give it at the end of the year since they did not have space to store it. But I’ve kept a track of it, have kept the cuttings of most publications where my donation was acknowledged and being a regular, I’m a known face at the donation centre where I know the doctors, the nurses and the old staff members. In those days, only labourers used to sell blood for money, there were very few donors. Now, the bank has computerised records.

What does blood mean to you? You realise the significance of blood only when you need it. When you go for an operation, the first thing the hospital asks for is to arrange for blood. And such emergencies could happen to anybody. My opinion is, since it is something so crucial, you not only take it but also need to learn to give it to those who are in need. In my opinion, everybody lives for himself or herself but to live for others is to live in true sense.

And I wish there were more women blood donors. There are very few of them. I think they feel afraid that it might make them weak which is not true. Donating once in three months does not make you weak or hamper your health in any way. In fact, I think since more women need blood during caesarians, more of us should donate for each other, for we never know when we might need it.

Peacemeal peace works

In Nepal’s 57-year long journey to the present day, giving by the different systems of governance and subsequent policies and programs, there seems to be one common factor and that is the lack of economic well-being and social development of the Nepalis. Considering the fact that the policy makers who mattered and called the shots remained almost the same throughout the period, it is no surprise that Nepal has remained where it was when it began its journey to development.

Today, Nepal seems to be in a fix despite its desire to progress under an all-inclusive democratic system chosen by the people at large. Nepal seems to be reeling under the pressure of various socio-political forces unleashed by the April revolution of 2006. Despite the formation of a parliament many months ago, and an interim government a month ago, which gave space to all dissenting parties including the CPN-Maoists; the current state of stability in general and safety to common people in particular is placing Nepal’s newfound peace at great risk.

After several experiments conducted by local as well as international communities all over the world, it’s now a universal fact that lacking political stability and national security and safety, no country can even plan for its development much less start the process. It is also true that peace and stability is unattainable in the absence of development, especially economic, which alone can provide jobs and income to the masses.

The current state of behavior shown by top leaders and several associations hardly reflect any sign of an orderly society under a democratic government. Many people are wondering whether there is a functional government in Nepal today. Timely measures are required to change the mindset of such a passive and decadent public who alone can make the planned change a success. However, the all-party government seems to have faltered in the first instance itself.

One of the striking features of the Common Minimum Program revealed by the Government on 10 April states that “schools and hospital premises will be recognised as zones of peace.” Nothing can be surprising or absurd for a government to be selective in terms of its commitment to peace.

With the induction of CPN-Maoists in the parliament as well as the government, and with firm commitment from all sides to abide by the agreement of peace, where does the question of a separate declaration recognising schools and hospitals as zones of peace arise? Does it mean that the rest of the society will have to face violence and conflict on a daily basis? Does it also mean that the CPN-Maoists have not fully given up their campaign of armed struggle despite being a part of civil government? These questions need urgent answers from the Government and parties that it represents.

Violence, abductions and threats perpetrated by some groups associated with the Maoists and others must stop whether the government announces the schools or zones of peace or not. Peace is indivisible. It has to be comprehensive and total. Nepal’s peace is neither workable nor lasting.

(Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)
Bangladesh Crisis: Emergency might stay past 120 days

Ban on politics likely to be prolonged

The ongoing state of emergency might be prolonged past 120 days and the possibility of lifting the ban on indoor politics soon is slim, in light of the prevailing situation:

The council of advisers to the military backed caretaker government, on several occasions, informally discussed lifting the ban on indoor politics. But the advisers believe the situation has yet to come into existence for either lifting the state of emergency or the ban on indoor politics, highly placed sources in the government said.

President Iajuddin Ahmed on January 11 had declared the state of emergency suspending the January 22 parliamentary election and the government banned all sorts of outdoor political activities a couple of days after. The government on March 7 also banned indoor politics.

According to the constitution a proclamation of emergency (a) may be revoked by a subsequent proclamation, (b) shall be laid before the parliament, (c) shall cease to operate at the expiration of one hundred and twenty days, unless before the expiration of that period it has been approved by a resolution of the parliament.

The constitution goes on, provided that any such proclamation is issued at a time when the parliament stands dissolved or dissolution of the parliament takes place during the period of one hundred and twenty days of the emergency as referred to in sub-clause (c) above, the proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the parliament first meets after its re-constitution, unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the proclamation has been passed by the parliament.

Questions are now being raised about the coming scenario, as the state of emergency is set to complete its 120 days on May 11. In absence of a parliament, many are questioning whether the state of emergency will be continued on the same day as a result of a resolution.

"The people are not interested in whether the state of emergency will continue or not. They want a meaningful change through a free and fair election and the government is working for it," Mainul quipped.

A former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, Ghufram Rabbani, said the situation is very unusual. The parliament does not exist and there is no scope to constitute a new parliament during the 120 days term of emergency, he said.

"So, the matter should be referred to the Appellate Division for explanation," the former judge told The Daily Star.

Constitution expert Dr M Zahir however told The Daily Star yesterday that the ongoing state of emergency may continue until the formation of a new parliament. "There is no ambiguity in the constitution," he asserted.

A well-placed source in the caretaker government said the state of emergency might continue even till the holding of the next parliamentary election, which is likely to be held by the end of 2008 as the chief adviser had recently announced. Similarly, the ban on indoor politics also might not be lifted soon, the source added.

"The situation might deteriorate further if the state of emergency or the ban on indoor politics is lifted. Things might even spin out of control due to provocative political speeches and the ban on indoor politics is lifted," an adviser to the government told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission (EC) could not hold dialogues with political parties to finalise the proposals for electoral reforms due to the ban on indoor politics.

"We cannot invite political parties for talks due to the ban. If we invite them, they will have to hold policy meetings to take decisions regarding proposals for electoral reforms. But the political parties cannot hold any meeting due to the ban," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsu Huda told reporters last Thursday.

The CEC on April 4 at a meeting with the law adviser asked the government to lift the ban on indoor politics allowing the EC to hold talks with the political parties.

(The Daily Star, Bangladesh)

India will not cross ‘red lines’

New Delhi-Ahead of the next round of civil nuclear negotiations in Washington next week, India has said that it will not cross the “red lines” laid down by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in parliament last year on not compromising the country’s strategic autonomy as it negotiates a bilateral civil nuclear pact with the US.

“We would respect and implement what the prime minister said to parliament on August 17 last year when he laid down the red lines we will not cross, which I think command broad support across the political spectrum,” a parliament panel report quoted Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon as saying.

The 15th report of the standing committee on external affairs headed by Laxmi Narayan Pandey, Lok Sabha MP, was tabled in parliament Thursday. In his statement to the parliamentary panel, Menon also stressed the bilateral pact will not compromise India’s strategic autonomy and its three-stage civil nuclear energy programme.

In an important speech to parliament on Aug 17 last year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured that India would never compromise on its strategic autonomy and repudiated any attempt to impose a ban on nuclear testing and a moratorium on the production of fissile materials.

“We are not prepared to go beyond a unilateral voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing. We are not willing to accept a moratorium on the production of fissile materials,” he had said.

Amid anxieties about the course of the civil nuclear deal, Menon heads to Washington on a two-day visit April 30 to engage in the third round of negotiations on a bilateral 123 civil nuclear energy cooperation pact with Nicholas Burns, the US’ chief pointman on the nuclear deal.

The US is pushing for including a ban by India on nuclear testing which is not acceptable to India. Differences over other crucial issues like India’s demand for access to technologies related to reprocessing, enrichment and heavy water reduction, which the US is not ready to accept, have cast their shadow over negotiations on a bilateral pact. Whatever we do with the US will not affect our nuclear strategic programme; secondly it will not in any way involve our three such indigenous civil nuclear programmes,” Menon said.

N-deal:

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Bhutan holds fake national poll

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has taken a big step to parliamentary democracy by 2008 as the chief adviser had recently announced. Similarly, the

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Similarly, the
Marshland flowers

If I have tasted sugar, I know how sugar tastes and can lead people to taste sugar.

To understand Buddhism, it is paramount to understand this concept of an unbroken enlightened lineage. Buddha himself was enlightened. That is why he is called a Buddha. The word stems from Bodhi which means awakening, being enlightened. That is why he is called a Buddha. The word stems from Bodhi which means awakening, being enlightened. It is the root of the whole of Buddhism is rooted in the enlightenment of the Buddha. I emphasise the words "Enlightenment of the Buddha" and not just enlightenment. The English word enlightenment and the related Sanskrit words Gyan, Mukti, and Bodhi have been used by many spiritual traditions since the time of the Buddha. Gyan and Mukti were used even before the Buddha. So it is of utmost importance to understand clearly that even though the words are the same they do not necessarily mean the same thing. Therefore, just claiming so and so is enlightened does not necessarily mean the person has attained the same Bodhi as the Buddha and thus can be called a Buddha. I have already explained that a Buddha does not arise like Morning Glories in spring time. The arising of a Buddha is not only unique and rare but follows a certain law. A Buddha arises only when the teachings of the Buddha before him vanishes completely. Only after a Yogavacchara (practicing yogi) has practiced for three or four Anayanssaka (immeasurable eons). One immeasurable eon is equivalent to 10^40 Kaipas. According to Buddhist literature such as the Lalita Vistara and others, a Buddha is the spiritually eldest sentient being even at birth itself due to his vast and deep practice. No two Buddhas arise at the same time or even as said before no new Buddha arises as long as the teaching of one Buddha is still alive. Here we need to clarify a point. Buddhist tradition itself calls many of its yogis a Buddha. But here it simply means his mind has reached a very high stage of enlightenment and is thus like a Buddha. It does not mean that they also have the 32 marks/characteristics and 80 sub-marks of a Tathagata. But even such a thing can be applicable only to Masters who have come from an unbroken enlightened lineage stemming from the Buddha himself. Any other person being called a Buddha would be using the language structure of the Buddhist tradition and giving it a different meaning. People have the freedom to use words as they like, but it should not be assumed that the words Bodhi and Buddha used by such others means the same thing as the meaning given it by Buddhists. One cannot practice nor—Buddhists practices and attain the Bodhi of the Buddha. This is in itself a profound topic and will be dealt with later as the parameters and paradigm of Buddhism becomes clearer. Right now let us go so to the explication of Unbroken Enlightened Lineage. As I said Buddha attained Bodhi. This is called Samyak Sambodhi (correct unexcelled enlightenment). If I have tasted sugar, I know how sugar tastes and can lead people to taste sugar. And only when I give someone sugar to taste will there be a validation that what I have tasted and my knowledge of it is exactly the same as that of the person who has tasted it. When I stamp his "sugar—knowledge" as correct, I am validating that what he has experienced is the same experience as my experience. Herein lies the purity in experience. (To be continued...)

(Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche)
Astronomers found a new planet 20.5 light years away from the Earth. The planet is about five times as massive as the Earth. The new planet, which completes its orbit around its star every 13 days, is the third one found around Gliese 581 – which is among the 100 stars closest to our solar system. The vast majority are red dwarfs. The sun is a medium sized yellow star.

The team of Swiss, French and581

But some scientists do not agree with Udry. "This could be the Earth where the temperature is likely to range from 0 to 40 degrees Celsius (32 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit), according to Udry. "It's like the Earth and the most liquid. "It's like the Earth and the most light years away from the Earth. The new planet, which

The conference of IAU in Prague declared the Pluto is disqualified to be a planet. So now there are eight planets in our solar system. Outside the solar system, some scientists have found more than 200 planets orbiting other stars. Almost all of these known "extra-solar" planets are giant balls of gas. Such exoplanets are relatively easy to find. They have a gravitational pull that makes their stars wobble, and when scientists see that wobble, they know there is a planet. Small, rocky planets cause less of a wobble, making them harder to find. A report on the discovery of the new planet has been submitted to the journal Astronomy and Astrophysics, and other experts agree that it is a significant find. Alan Boss is a planetary scientist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. "This seems to be the first discovery of an Earth-like planet," Boss says. "It's not exactly an Earth but it is close enough that I think it does deserve the title of pristine first Earth-like planet." Other small planets discovered in the past have been very hot or very cold. In many ways, though, this planet is a mystery.

Ecstasy is a hallucinogen

Ecstasy is marketed as tablets and

Ecstasy is a hallucinogen (drug that acts on mind to cause people to see or feel things that are not really there). These are some of the most dangerous drugs. Hallucinogens cause mind to record things that are both real experiences and those that are not real, which can mix up a person's memory. A person can start thinking about scary or sad experiences from the past and not be able to stop thinking about it. This can result in permanent feelings of fear, sadness or other feelings that have nothing to do with what is happening in the person's present life. Users report that Ecstasy produces intensely pleasurable effects including an enhanced sense of self-confidence and group identity. These transitory effects also include feelings of peacefulness, acceptance and empathy. This makes the drug all the more treacherous. Other effects include involuntary teeth clenching, loss of inhibitions, transfixion on sights and sounds, nausea, blurred vision, chills and/or sweating. It increases heart rate and blood pressure and seizures are also possible. The stimulant's effect enables users to dance for extended periods, which when combined with hot crowded conditions usually found at 'raves' or dance parties, can lead to severe dehydration and hyperthermia or dramatic increases in body temperature. Ecstasy damages cells in the brain resulting in users having problems with their memory. Ecstasy is a hallucinogen

"I have heard that people trying to quit drugs should not go to places they used to frequent since it could bring back drug craving. How and why does this happen?" Sharda Nepal, Nepal

"Yes, drug related memories or mental images are environmentally triggered. An ex-drug user is prone to recalling past events Triggered by events in the person's present environment. Drug users have traumatic mental images of drug use, and these pictures contain not only memories of drug use, but also circumstances surrounding it. Things like where drugs were bought, who sold it to them, how they felt about buying it, and many more thoughts and feelings will be present in these mental pictures. A drug user also stores in his or her memory all negative things they did while under the influence of drugs; along with moments of pain and betrayal mixed with moments of pleasure and bliss. Once a drug user has used drugs for an extended period of time, he or she will have millions of subtle and obvious people, places and things in the environment that remind them or trigger the thoughts of drug use. Often, the strongest environmental triggers are those that are directly connected with the use of drugs. As such "triggers" of drug use are often very common objects, the person can come in contact with such tools on a day-to-day basis. Thus the potential for a drug user to be constantly reminded of the past is very high. What this means for the person who is attempting to quit using drugs is that everyday their attention can be involuntarily pulled away from it is going on in the present and become fixed on past memories. They therefore need a lot of help from their family and friends who should try to be both supportive and understanding. Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to: newsfront@bbhk.com (Your identity will be protected.)
Sports

Seven weeks of overs, and we're done

Cricket’s seemingly eternal World Cup ends with Australia notching its third straight title. But some say it actually ended too soon.

Many complain the cricket World Cup can run too long at a whopping seven weeks, but others might complain it didn’t run long enough. The average American human brain, after all, cannot absorb cricket in seven weeks. Seven months might suffice. Or, not.

Australia became the first country to win the World Cup for a third straight time, cementing its dynasty with a 53-run defeat of Sri Lanka on Saturday evening, but with the use of the dreaded Duckworth-Lewis method.

Cricket aficionados comprehend the Duckworth-Lewis method, but many other humans, including physicists at Ivy League universities, do not. In matches fraught with weather delays, the Duckworth-Lewis method, devised by Englishmen Frank Duckworth and Tony Lewis, gauges an outcome through a mathematical formula.

Other, simpleton sports simply look at the scoreboard to see whether five innings have passed and, if not, reschedule for another day.

Cricket uses math, which many people follow sports to escape, and it’s unclear whether Australia won the 2007 World Cup once or twice.

That’s because, after delays in stormy Barbados — and everyone can agree it’s a bummer when you have a stormy Barbados — the Australians celebrated their title, then learned from umpires that it wasn’t complete, so they’d have to play on.

They played on a little bit more until darkness put the clamp on the day, whereupon they celebrated again. Reported London’s Daily Telegraph, “Nothing was visible except the electronic scoreboard which did not know what was going on. Nobody could see the celebrating Australians or the closing ceremony. “A sport which produces such a chaotic climax as this is not a sport which is properly run.”

The national newspaper the Australian chimed in with the phrase “a quite ludicrous finale.”

Most everyone employed the word “farce,” with the BBC opting for “high farce.”

Somewhere in there, one Adam Gilchrist had paced Australia, winning a World Cup final record 149 from 104 balls, in the final match for one Glenn McGrath, retiring from a memorable career. With Gilchrist as bulwark, Australia had paced Australia, wringing a World Cup climax as this is not a sport which is properly run.

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Later, Sri Lanka reached 215, not enough with the Aussies’ batting order firmly in place. Australia kept winning decisively, bringing their three-quadrennium winning streak to 23 and their unbeaten streak to 29, their last loss coming early in the 1999 tournament. They have won four of the nine cricket World Cups held since the event debuted in 1975, and their stylish Tasmanian captain, Ricky Ponting, has graced the last four finals, winning three and captaining two.

That much seems legible, if the process did not. Later Saturday night, match referee Jeff Crowe cited human error in the umpires’ mistaken decision to bring Sri Lanka back on for three more overs, after the Sri Lanka batsmen had exited because of bad light and Australia had commenced celebrating.

Even sage cricket enthusiasts might not ever comprehend that.

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