



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Trichen Rinpoche giving initiation to his disciple H H Dalai Lama. Rinpoche passed away on Jan 22 in Kathmandu. see obituary on last page.

Election in June No guarantee

'Election is no drama', CEC Pokharel tells top leaders of eight parties

■ Kiran Bhandari

As political confusion gets compounded with deterioration in law and order situation, Election Commission wants major parties to be honest and serious if they at all want election on time. 'Election is no drama', a soft spoken, no-nonsense Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel told top leaders of eight parties sending chill down their spines, making it clear election is not possible under the existing circumstances.

"If you cannot create law and order conducive enough to hold elections, I can't do it just for the sake of it", Pokharel told them. The unarticulated message was loud and clear - that he would not hesitate to quit if the political parties including the Maoists did not cooperate with him. All the chief of the parties except Prime Minister G P Koirala and Maoist chief Prachanda were present when Pokharel spoke his mind today.

When the Commission has just three months time left for conducting elections to the Constituent Assembly, the deteriorating law and order situation including disruption in the voters registration process by the Maoists, slow pace of the Government to set election related laws in place, is making election impossible in Mid-May. The commission has curtailed several normal pre-election formalities, but it sees no point in conducting election if fears of intimidation during the election are not totally eliminated.

Pokharel's protest is also a sequel to attack on

Rastriya Prajatantra party workers in Lamjung and snatching away of the voters list in Dolakha by the Maoists. Moreover, the demand by Maoist Representative Baburam Bhattarai in the meeting that even those with 'temporary residency' should be included in the voters' list—something impossible given the paucity of time, seems to have irked the CEC.

Along with his warning that improvement in the law and order situation was a pre-condition to holding election on time, Pokharel also asked the eight parties to have Constituent Assembly Election Law, Election Commission Law and the Election Law in place with clarity and details so that the commission can proceed with all the legitimacy. All the laws related with Commission and the election process cease to exist and the interim parliament has not legislated the new ones.

The Commission's agony increased further with the ambiguity in Prime Minister's address to the Nation on February 7 in which he said Terai will have more constituencies for the Constituent Assembly. "We appreciate Koirala's political approach, but it does not have the force of law as far as the Commission is concerned. We do not know yet whether those additional constituencies would be carved out through delimitation or reshuffling of the existing constituencies, or altogether new ones will be created," a Commission source said, adding "if they are going to be new ones, we do not have enough time left before the election to the Constituent Assembly". ■

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All for a minister



Home Minister K P Sitaula

Prime Minister G P Koirala's reluctance to axe his Home Minister K P Sitaula is holding the Madheshi Janadhikar forum (MJF) from approaching the negotiation table. Forum Chief Upendra Yadav has set a ten-day deadline, beginning February 7 for Koirala to fulfill the precondition failing which "agitation will be resumed" with added vigour.

A letter sent to the Government by the forum on Saturday not only asked for Sitaula's resignation, but also insisted for the constitution of a Commission of Inquiry into deaths of 38 people including the killing of a student in Lahan on January 19, in course of the movement for more political rights, statehood and representation in proportion with the Terai population.

Yadav set the conditions formally after he was conveyed by an insider that Prime Minister did not feel quite comfortable with his pre-condition. Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist party of Nepal—United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) did suggest Koirala in a feeble voice, "why not sacrifice him if that brings peace in the country?" But Koirala cut him short and said, "I am prepared to resign myself."

The MJF suspended its movement for ten days in the hope that Prime Minister would quietly agree to the pre-conditions without it having to go public. But instead, "Koirala seems to have solicited India's help to shut us down", a MJF source said, adding "we felt

forced to state our conditions. I do not think India should have objections to any probe as well as for resignation of Koirala".

Yadav reinforced those demands through the letter on Saturday. "We have only suspended our movement for ten days to create talks in a conducive atmosphere. But we also expect the Government to reciprocate our gesture by removing the Home Minister".

It however, made it clear that it had no objection to the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIM) holding talks with the Government as announced by its Chief - Pasang Sherpa.

(Newsfront Report)

Inquiry fiasco

In what appears to be a half hearted measure the government has decided to ask the truncated Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Authority (CIAA) to look into the findings of the two investigating Commissions and take necessary measures. The CIAA will proceed with the report of the Rayamajhi Commission as well as that of the Ojha Commission, which together cost more than 18 million rupees to the State exchequer.

While the Rayamajhi Commission which was formed to investigate cases involving misuse of the State power and money to suppress the movement for democracy, the Ojha Commission was meant to investigate into the conduct and abuse of power of the Bhakta Bahadur Koirala Commission to look into corruption in high places during the Royal regime.

The Koirala Commission which had arrested among others, former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba and Congress Democratic leader, Prakash Man Singh, had been declared unconstitutional by the supreme court. It has recommended action against the members of the Koirala Commission which most likely will lead to their arrest. The Ojha commission has recommended that an Appellate court judge who acted as the secretary of the commission be terminated from the service while in other members' case it has held them indulging in 'corruption' and defaming pro-democracy leaders.

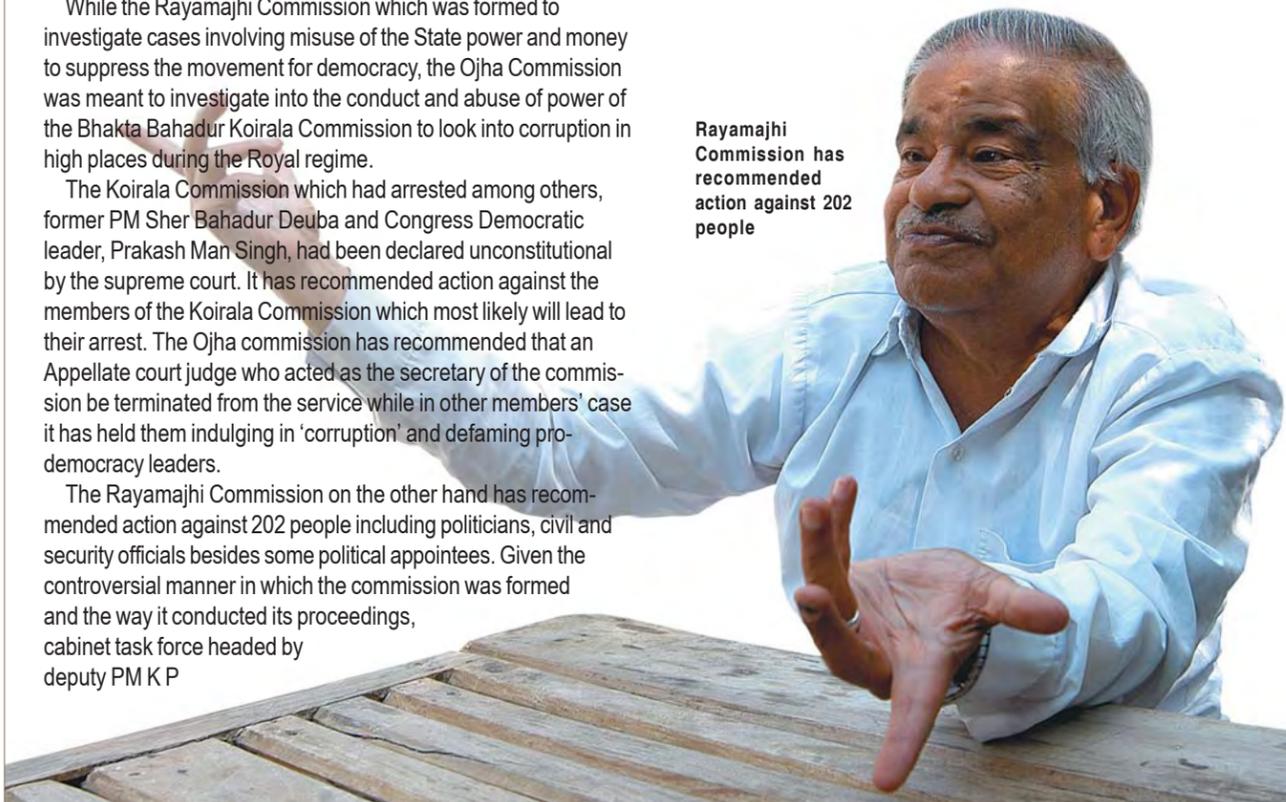
The Rayamajhi Commission on the other hand has recommended action against 202 people including politicians, civil and security officials besides some political appointees. Given the controversial manner in which the commission was formed and the way it conducted its proceedings, cabinet task force headed by deputy PM K P

Oli is believed to have recommended that CIAA go into charges against the members of the Royal cabinet only.

The Commission has also recommended that law should be enacted with retrospective effect to try the King for excessive use of State power and money against forces of democracy. But the task force left it to the constituent assembly to decide.

(Newsfront report)

Rayamajhi Commission has recommended action against 202 people



Rayamajhi Commission has recommended action against 202 people

India proposes Nepal silent

Close on the heels of India amending the 1949 treaty of friendship with Bhutan, its move to demonstrate similar gesture towards Nepal has not come through mainly because of the lack of initiative on Nepal's part. India and Bhutan signed new treaty on Feb 7 upgrading Bhutan's status from what it used to be an Indian protectorate under the previous treaty.

India after decades of reluctance is said to be in favour of reviewing the 1950 treaty with Nepal but it has not made any headway as there has been no interest shown on Nepal's part. The issue of modification in the treaty to take into consideration modern challenges and realities is however pending before the bilateral committee at the foreign secretary level. This is said to be an indicator of India's seriousness to embark on a relationship with its neighbours which will not be guided by the principle of reciprocity; which it hopes will help India to shed its image of big brother.

South Block sources told newsfront that India was willing to consider various options – review, modifications or replacement – of the treaty if such a proposal came from Nepal. India's consistent stance earlier was that there is no provision of the treaty being modified but it was willing to go into no treaty regime if Nepal gave a year's notice for scrapping it as mentioned in the treaty. Various quarters including political leadership and intelligentsia in Nepal have on different occasions demanded treaty's review on the ground that not only its provisions were unequal, loaded in India's favour, but it was signed by two authorities not par with each other. The treaty was signed by Mohan Shumsher Rana who was Prime Minister then while CPN Sinha, ambassador to Nepal had signed it on India's behalf.

Maoists at the moment have been demanding that the treaty be scrapped as it is unequal in letter and spirit.

(Newsfront report)

Currency sans Buddha image

After an euphoria driven announcement that the photograph of king will be replaced with that of Lord Buddha in currency notes, the Government withdrew its decision and is now contemplating using a photograph of Mt. Everest instead.

The sudden change of decision was preceded by peaceful protests and pain expressed by certain Buddhist scholars and monks over the short-sighted declarations of the Government regarding 'misuse' of Buddha's picture.

The points which were relayed to Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat through various sources not only contained their polite objections, but also comments that, 'Government needs to be sensitive at times'. The points raised included - Does any country have a currency note with Gods' or Goddesses' picture? Will it be a good idea to have Buddha's picture for commercial purposes? And how will the large number of lord Buddha's followers react to it?

Dr. Mahat, according to the sources, realized the folly and announced, "Buddha's picture will not be used in the currency notes." "The other picture that relates Nepal to the world outside is obviously Mt. Everest. But no formal decision has yet been taken regarding this", official sources told newsfront.

(Newsfront Report)

WE HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ARMED STRUGGLE

With the help of a few forces, the monarchy is still trying very hard to survive. So in terms of strategy, we want to target only one force at a time and now it is the monarchy

– CP Gajurel 'Gaurav'



■ Interview by Sankarshan Thakur

Q: What is your understanding of what is happening in Nepal today?

A: At the moment there are two aspects of the political process. There are the revolutionary forces, which would like to push things along and take them to their logical political conclusion. Something remarkable has happened in Nepal. We have a situation in which probably for the first time a despotic monarchy is going to be formally overthrown by the ballot. Monarchies have always been overthrown through violent revolution, but in Nepal, because of the ten-year people's war and the 19-day street rebellion last year, we have a situation where it is going to be dismantled by peaceful means. That is what we are trying to accelerate. And the struggle that the Maoists waged has meant that even the so-called mainstream political parties are now pushing for removal of the monarchy. And it appears to me that India is also supportive of that, although India seems to want that Maoists should not get the majority.

Q: Why do you think India does not want the Maoists to win?

A: Because once Maoists get the majority, India thinks that a genuine peoples republic will be created and that India would not like.

Q: Are you saying this based on something concrete?

A: I do not have any concrete proof of the Indian thinking but the line of the Indian political establishment—both in the Government and the opposition. Indians have come to recognise that Nepal has to be a republic now. Initially, India also supported the monarchy because there was a thinking that only the monarchy can suppress the Maoists, but the people of Nepal have changed all that and India has to recognise the new reality. But even then, India will want a convenient sort of republic.

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: I mean a republic that Indians are comfortable with, like their own parliamentary type of republic.

Q: So what sort of republic do you want?

A: We want a people's republic.

Q: Which means not a parliamentary republic.

A: You can say that. There will be a parliament, of course, but not of the sort that exists today. Essentially it will have to be a peoples republic which can solve the basic problems of the people of Nepal. An anti-imperialist and anti-feudal republic.

Q: You are saying that the biggest roadblock in your struggle was the monarchy. That has practically been disabled and is in the process of being totally dismantled. And that done, your next battle will be with what we know to be the mainstream political parties, the Nepali Congress etc. Those are the

forces you will fight your next battle with.

A: We cannot say this at this moment because our main target still is the monarchy. It has lost support among the masses but the monarchy still has its backers. For example, the US is backing them, there are also some political forces within Nepal that are for the monarchy. With the help of these forces, the monarchy is still trying very hard to survive. So in terms of strategy, we want to target only one force at a time and now it is the monarchy. Once we overthrow the monarchy, we will think about the mainstream political parties.

Q: Looking back, do you think that decade long armed struggle was wrong or would you say it was an inevitable process Nepal had to go through to arrive at this stage?

A: First of all, we have not given up either our arms or the armed struggle. We have only suspended that strategy. Armed struggle was an inevitable process, we could not have come here without waging the peoples war. And what we are trying to do now is also part of that process through which we want to achieve a peoples republic. This is the continuation of the peoples war in a different form, but we have not given up the armed struggle. If we think it is required, we will resume it.

Q: Do you have a timeframe in mind for this ?

A: Yes definitely. If the process moves smoothly, elections (Mid-May) will be held and the first meeting of the elected constituent assembly will decide the fate of the monarchy and the character of the future Nepali state. Of course we will win that election so we are hopeful we will be able to implement the roadmap we have. We will have a people's republic after that election.

Q: What is the basis of your confidence about winning the election. You have never contested elections, we have no idea of your real strength.

A: We have got the support of the overwhelming majority of the Nepali people, we have been controlling more than eighty percent of the country's area, we were virtually running our govern-

ment in those areas. We have been working among the people, so we have a fair idea of what our strength is.

Q: A lot of people say that the hold you had in large parts of Nepal was because of the fear you created with the gun and the atrocities your cadres committed atrocities on the people ?

A: Of course, there are people who will complain about it. They are the class enemies, they are the enemies of the people, and we did drive them out. We cannot work to please or appease them. That class will definitely work and talk against us. But as far as the masses are concerned, they are happy because they feel liberated from the feudal system.

Q: What happens to the King once the monarchy is gone? His immense properties, his business interests, his privileges.

A: No privileges. He will have to remain just as another citizen. And a lot of his property is really the property of the state which he has been using as his own. That the state will take back from him. As far as everything else is concerned, the law will apply to Gyanendra as it applies to everyone.

Q: Do you think Gyanendra's political

ambition accelerated the process of monarchy's downfall? from being treated as an avatar of Vishnu to being a common man?

A: Those are all myths, this avatar of Vishnu business. The reality of the people of Nepal is that they have been suffering at the hands of an exploitative system. It is our scientific ideology that changed the temper of the people. Maybe a long long time ago, the king was worshipped as a god, but the struggle against monarchy has been going on for a long time. People have been wanting democratic rights, that began in the early 1960s. But there was no good leadership. It is the success of the Maoist leadership that has brought victory to the democratic and republican sentiments of the people of Nepal. And, of course, Gyanendra's behaviour in power forced to people to oppose him more determinedly.

Q: But some of the parties that you are in alliance with are themselves feudal and status quoist in nature. How long is this partnership going to last?

A: It is not going to be smooth. And the alliance is there because it was their compulsion, not ours. Earlier these same parties were allying with the king to fight us. They have killed thousands of our cadres, they have put rewards on our heads. They tried to physically finish the Maoist movement, But now they have come to realize that it was not going to work because the will of the Nepali people was behind the Maoists, we have forced them to change and ally with us. I also think they realised that they cannot work with a man like Gyanendra who was an autocrat and wanted all the powers only for himself.

Q: Do you think India's suspicion of the Nepali Maoists has something to do with the Maoist movement in India?

A: Definitely, they do. We have clarified our relationship with the Indian Maoists.

Q: But a lot of the Nepali Maoist activity has been based out of India.

A: Yes, we have seven million Nepali people in India, don't forget. We have our own network of organizations. We don't need to take anybody's help, we can do that in our own way, with the help of our people. There has been enough shelter here, there has never been cause for us to worry on that count. ■

Gajurel spoke to Thakur, Tehelka's Executive Editor, in Delhi recently. The interview will be published in Tehelka on Saturday, Feb 17.





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Fire brigade approach

Prime Minister G P Koirala, backed by the ruling coalition and the Maoists, have succeeded in dousing the fire in Terai, by acknowledging that any or every citizen has a right to be part of the country one belongs to. And Democracy alone which by its definition and philosophy is inclusive and participation based can instill that sense of belonging among all citizens of the country.

Prime Minister's recent speech could deliver that sense. But charting out basis of polity that Nepal needs to adopt for a foreseeable future institutionalising their stake cannot be accomplished at once. It needs much larger preparation based on transparent process and calls for nationwide debate giving people a chance to have their say rather than going by what Prime Minister said under pressure of the movement. Prime Minister's message should of course, be treated, as the basic framework of federalism and electoral system that Nepal would adopt in future, but the job of working out details and suggesting infrastructural machinery should be best left to the commission of experts. Political parties, with clearly thought out electoral and devolution model, will be able to honour the rising and natural aspirations of the people to be part of the emerging power structure.

A devolution model also needs to take into account the traditional, cultural, social, economic and other factors that should be able to promote national integration in which diversities will not be seen as an impediment but basic milestones in that direction. Accommodation of diverse culture, ethnicity, caste, class, region and religion will not only inject a sense of togetherness, but will automatically make the context and acceptability of Nepali nationalism and nationhood much wider.

But all this will require state's visionary, honest and positive intervention and cooperation. State's fairness in this campaign will be the most crucial factor for the success of campaign. Despite fire having been brought under control in Terai, the negotiations have not yet begun. The issue of whether a Home Minister whose mishandling of the situation has cost at least 30 lives should resign or continue in the post should not be allowed to linger. The state, in this case the Prime Minister, should be able to set certain standards—political, administrative as well as moral for who should not be in the Government.

What the Government in principle conceded after the martyrdom of 30 people in Terai is that the era of dictate, by the king, or eight parties from the capital is over, and that people will want their say in Governance from the top to the village level. A fire brigade approach no doubt has contained the fire at the moment in Terai, but that definitely is not enough. The least the Government should do at the moment is to constitute an experts team to lay the principles and details for such governance across the length and breadth of the country within a reasonable time frame.



Letters

Stop double standards

Congratulations for the first three issues; they are getting better. I wish you all the best for the future issues with more different stories.

I agree with your news story titled "Prophesizing Moriarty". That is a really bad thing to happen to the Nepalese people who after many years of unrest want a lasting peace in the country. But the Maoists' controversial words (I wish what Gajurel said in Delhi is proved wrong!) are trying to shatter the hopes people have.

Maoists in many situations have displayed double standards. Their stance on Terai issue was a mistaken one. Although one would agree that there was invasion by the royalists and the extremist Hindubadis, the way they acted solve the Terai issue was far from a real political solution of the problem; and in no way was it justice to the Terai people.

Although Moriarty many times speaks crossing his diplomatic limits and interferes with the internal issues of Nepalese, the statements made by Comrade CP Gajurel provided fuel for his prophesy. So far there have not been any remarks against the statements made by Gajurel; the Maoist Supreme Trio have not made any comments regarding his remarks. This shows perhaps that the statements by Garurel could be right.

Maoists' should stop having double standards. People have real hopes towards Maoist leadership and want Maoists to act wisely and honestly. That will probably pave way towards making a New Nepal.

Dr Khagendra Dahal
Maharajgunj

More arts and entertainment

I would like to congratulate Samaya team for venturing yet another publication. I have read all the 3 issues you have published and they are all good. English readers in Nepal long needed a tabloid which covered news of the country and beyond, opinions and analysis on the current socio-political, economic and development aspects. The Newsfront has them all.

Although the content in general is good one; you could do the following to improve the quality of the paper. Although

you have included 2 pages for the news related to art and entertainment, you could include a variety of short news pieces – something on music, cinema, fashion and modeling.

Health issues need to be covered more. Although you have included some public health issues, genuine health related matters need to be focused on. There is very little emphasis on regional and international politics and affairs. Besides, you could have more inputs from the reputed freelancers on various national issues.

Finally, you need to rethink on price-versus-quality equation; either, give more contents to the people or decrease the price if that is not possible.

Parichhya Adhikary
Sukedhara, Kathmandu

More news research

Newsfront is a great achievement of Samaya team in Nepali journalism within a short period of time. The language is simple to read and easy to understand but the news are more comprehensive, awesome and time consuming. The layout should be more attractive and cartoon more impressive and space for children and public health, science and technology, sports and entertainment. Though it contains varieties in topics, there isn't enough researched based news.

Sashil Chapagain
Trichandra Campus

Thanks for reflections

Thank you for your reflections on Nepal and our region. We have much to be concerned about, but you give excellent examples of hope. Whatever our differences, we can talk to one another in a spirit of compassion, really wanting the best for all Nepalese. Let's put people where they belong, ahead of policies and ideologies.

Bill Robins
St. Xaviers, Jawalakhel

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to:
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Spiritual Corner

Peace begins at home

Each individual in a family and community should strive to live peacefully with others. Peace must begin in the home and in the schools. In the classrooms we must teach international patriotism — to love the world as Jesus, Krishna, and the great masters have taught, and not to do anything that would lead

to international discomfort. It is not our nationality or our color that we should be proud of, but our understanding. We should cultivate our understanding and use it to determine what is truly best for family happiness, national happiness, and international happiness. International happiness should include the well-being of the nation, the community, and the family. The standard of legislation should be merit, not color of skin or any other class distinction. These are the ideals to be taught to children.

So long as God's children differentiate, "We are Indians and you are Americans; we are Germans, you are English," so long will they be bound by



delusion and the world divided. Much war and suffering and destruction will be prevented if we cease to emphasize differences and learn to love all without distinction or prejudice. Be more proud that you are made in the image of God than that you are of a certain nationality; for "American" and "Indian" and all the other nationalities are just outer coats, which in time will be discarded. But you are a child of God throughout eternity. Isn't it better to teach that ideal to your children? It is the only way to peace: Establish the true ideals of peace in the schools, and live peace in your own life.

Paramhansa Yogananda
(Extracted by www.ananda.org)



Indrasarobar of Kulekhani

Switch on!



The only option that remains is the private sector. Is the private sector capable of investing almost nine billion rupees a year so that the rising demand of sixty megawatt of power per year could be met?

■ Keshav Upadhyay

As we are passing through a severe power crisis- three hours of blackout a day for every consumer connected to the national grid, which is going to increase shortly to six hours a day and may be more a little further down the road - the question that comes up to the mind is where did we go wrong?

Being one of the poorest of the poor countries in the world one would naturally assume that resource mobilization in the sector has not historically been adequate to meet the rising demand. The demand for power as well as energy has been rising at a rate of 8.5% annually for the last one and a half decade. One would, therefore, presume that the investment required for meeting this huge surge in demand is naturally beyond the capacity of a small and a poor country like Nepal.

Do facts support this assumption? No, it tells a different story. Since almost all investments

are financed through loans either domestic or external, long term loan of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) could be a good indicator for the quantum of investment in the sector. In 1992 the long term loan of NEA stood at a level of a little less than 11,000 million Rupees whereas in 2006 it was almost 52,000 million Rupees.

In this period the investment in generation side of the utility business has substantially gone to the private sector and therefore the investment by NEA is so much less. Even in such a situation an annual growth in investment by NEA has been to the tune of 11.5%, three percent more than the growth in demand for electricity.

Despite all this the fact remains that neither are new power stations being built nor adequate transmission facilities being added to the system. We have to find money to finance the new projects. One good source of finance could be NEA itself since it charges its consum-

ers a high rate of Rs.6.50 (9 US cents) per kilowatt-hour; it ought to have a surplus for the required investment. But for last half a decade NEA has been continuously in the red.

Let us look at the precarious financial situation of NEA during the last fiscal year, 2005/2006. Total revenue during this year was Rs 14,012.6 million. Total operating expenses were Rs.12,750.2 million including a hefty sum of Rs.6,575 million on power purchase alone. Therefore the operating surplus was Rs. 1,262.4 million. But whatever little the operating surplus, it was eaten away by interest on long term loans which was 3,281 million and other expenses which were Rs. 453.5 million thus bringing the situation to a dismal net loss of Rs. 2,472.6 million.

Next source of finances could be the government of Nepal but this picture too is not encouraging. All of us know that the civil war like

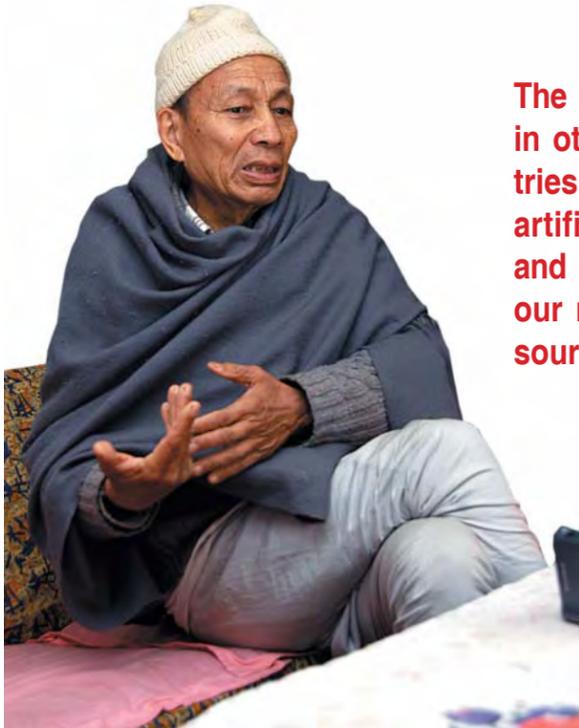
situation of the last decade has wrought havoc in government finances and almost all revenue goes to meet regular expenditure and hardly any money is left for development works. Moreover hydro power being a very capital intensive proposition, budget outlay for the project has to be concentrated during two or three years of its construction and therefore the essential outlays in social sectors would be adversely effected by it during those years. No popular government would like that.

The only option that remains is the private sector. Is the private sector capable of investing almost nine billion rupees a year so that the rising demand of sixty megawatt of power per year could be met? Does our banking system have this kind of money to invest in an industry where the return on investment starts trickling in only after a gap of minimum five years? Do the regulations by Nepal Rastra Bank allow this kind of investment by commercial banks of Nepal? These are some of the questions which need to be seriously debated upon.

Even if the answers to these questions are found to be in affirmative many more questions would spring up like who purchases the power produced by private developers or would they be encouraged to engage themselves in distribution side of the business too, a messy business to say the least. Questions of unbundling the elephantine NEA would have to be addressed. There are difficulties in the road, whatever road we decide to travel on.

But since the evenings are dark and the dark evenings do not provide any avenues of entertainment like reading or watching TV, let us hope, the exercise of serious introspection begins now. That may perhaps bring us the light. ■

(Upadhyay is former General Director of NEA)



The irony is that in other countries, they create artificial rivers and here we make our natural resources extinct

■ Satya Mohan Joshi

The present day scenario couldn't get worse and is the result of lack of governance where lawlessness is the rule of the day

■ Padma Sundar Joshi



Umpteen number of studies regarding rivers, sewage have been made but due to lack of political conviction it only remained in the papers

■ Iswor Raj Onta



Bagmati has been over exploited. If it is destroyed, Bagmati civilisation will be destroyed

■ Huta Ram Baidya



Manhora: Sand erosion and dry river bed



Dying li

■ Sushma Amatya

Water gives life. History cites development of major civilisations in all parts of the world along and around water sites. The indigenous civilisation of Kathmandu valley that grew around the Bagmati river was no exception. The people grew to revere the river they depended on for their survival.

Bagmati, the principal river of Kathmandu valley that has its source in the Mahabharat range rises at Bagdwar and drains out through the Chobhar gorge. Beginning its journey from the Shivapuri hills, 25 km north of Kathmandu, at an altitude of 2650m above sea level, its tributaries Bishnumati, Dhobikhola, Manohara, Tukucha and Nakkhu meanders through the valley, nourishing, sustaining lives in all its forms.

Bagmati is said to have originated from the locks of Lord Shiva. From time immemorial the Bagmati has been revered as a holy river, and it's Ghats as holy sites where main transitional points of life are marked and festivals celebrated.

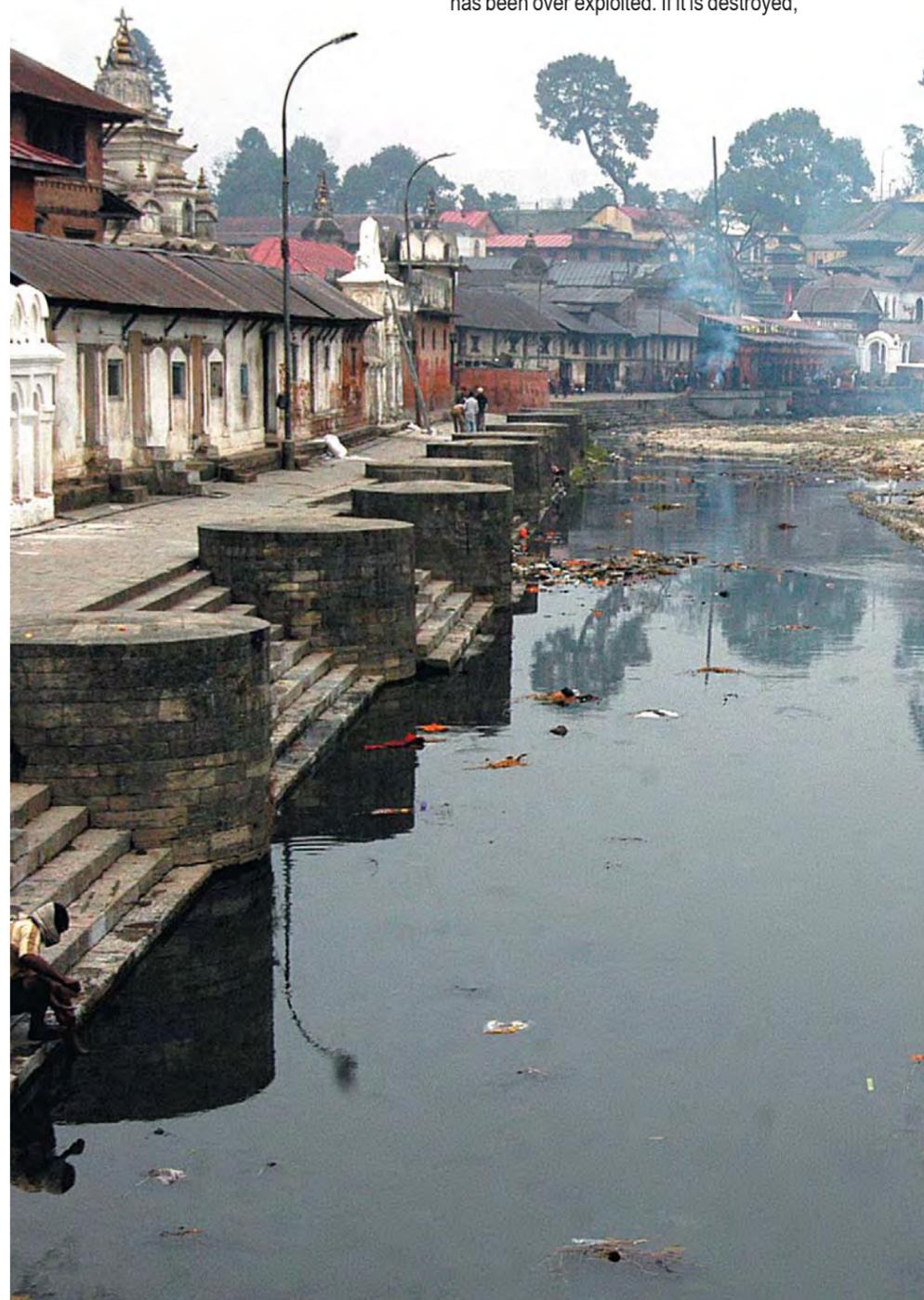
In an attempt to feel the pulse of the people regarding this issue, Newsfront talked with a few who have a special connection with the rivers and possess the know-how regarding the measures to bring it back to life.

The important feature of this valley still possessed it's pristine beauty about five decades ago, recalled Satya Mohan Joshi, 86, the well

known literature and poet. He recalled, "then, the water was fresh and was used for drinking too. Just look what we've turned it into now! When I went there for my mother's passing away rites recently, I watched human wastes floating on the dirty canal it's become. It's a painful sight for those people who grew up with Bagmati and whose lives revolved around it. Now, it's a place you visit out of compulsion when you have to burn your dead or when you have to perform the rites."

"A civilisation grew around Bagmati, agriculture prospered, culture evolved and a spiritual culture developed. It was a significant river especially for the dying and the dead for whom it provided a holy, peaceful ambience. The water was in plenty, it used to come up to the Bhakaris. But over the years, we've watched it die with all wastes getting dumped into it and irresponsible sand mining. Now the holy aspect of the river is disappearing. All loud political declarations have come to a nought", he said. Citing lack of city planning as well as lack of love of individuals for the river, he added sadly, "Bagmati was a source of beauty. The irony is that in other countries, they create artificial rivers and here we make our natural resources extinct."

Huta Ram Baidya, 86, agriculture engineer, who started one man campaign to save Bagmati civilisation 14 years ago through his articles, feels strongly about the river where he played, bathed and performed sacred rites. Bemoaning lack of reverence for the river, he said, "Bagmati has been over exploited. If it is destroyed,



Life givers

Sensitivities deadened by poverty and resulting frustration, they are worried more about their own survival than the fate of the rivers

Bagmati civilisation will be destroyed. The oldest civilisation of Nepal, Kathmandu valley and Swoyambhu, the oldest heritage all revolved around this river. Now we can see what we have done to it. It's so dirty people have stopped going to the river for their rituals for the dead. Do we have the right to pollute, do we have the right to destroy nature?"

Baidya continued, "We have to tackle the problem as a whole. It's wrong to build roads on either sides of the river, it's wrong to treat it as a dumping site. The media should publicise this problem. Schools and colleges should raise awareness regarding this issue among its students and take them for field trips. It's no use only blaming each other. Young energy should be channelised to protect this civilisation."

He added that destruction of the rivers would destroy the ecosystem too. "We don't see as many vultures that used to clean up the carcass in the rivers now. The whole eco chain is getting impacted negatively." He recommended not river control but river protection. "Start small and simple. Construct simple dams before rainy season, raise river bed by stopping sand erosion. There are many poor man's technologies that work. It's joint effort that's needed, not just talk."

Buddhi Raj Bajracharya, 70, ex-mayor and ex-minister, who has been working as a social worker for the past 50 years said the serious environmental and ecological challenges the rivers in the valley are facing today is solely due to the discharge of sewers, household wastes, hazardous wastes from nursing homes and private hospitals without primary treatment. "Due to the sharp rise in population and lack of

foresight on the government's part, we have turned our rivers into open sewers. The government has to undertake this massive project. Ordinary people cannot do it", Bajracharya said.

Actively involved in self created projects aimed at preservation of Sankhamul river and its surroundings, Bajracharya opined that construction of dams, filtering sewage and constructing large drainage pipes parallel to the rivers would help control the pollution.

Iswor Raj Onta, director of East Consult and chairperson of Nepal engineering council, said lack of sense of ownership and integrated perspective is to be blamed for the dismal situation of the rivers. "The mistaken notion that river purifies everything has proven to be it's downfall. A river can only take so much." He said that despite the sufficient rainfall of 2000 ml a year, drinking water and waste water management is a problem that has grown ominously. "In the past six years, population has risen steeply but planning, implementation of technical aspects is lacking severely. Water is everybody's business. Flora and fauna depend on it. We don't really seem to love nature, water. Therein lies the root problem."

Onta stated stakeholders' inability to work together and lack of concerted effort as reasons behind lack of proactive steps towards addressing the issue. "Umpteen number of studies

regarding rivers, sewage have been made but due to lack of political conviction it only remained in the papers. Major stakeholders must sit down with the government and make it a priority; they must invest, participation of stakeholders encouraged and the plan implemented." He added that community spirit is lacking in our society and individual do not get motivated unless their vested interests figure in it.

Onta prescribed strengthening already existing structures, get individuals to bear responsibility and find alternative ways to dispose of one's wastes. "Nature continues to give but our ground water level is drying up due to shallow tube wells dug everywhere. And we also need to reuse water around 40 percent of which is discarded after household use, as in other countries."

Citing examples of severe health repercussions arising from water polluted by hospital wastes and squatters settlements on the river banks that eventually affects every individual living in the city through the food chain, he said the only hope we have now is decisions and implementation at the policy level.

Padma Sundar Joshi, engineer, director of CIUD, center for integrated urban development, said, "the present day scenario couldn't get worse and is the result of lack of governance where lawlessness is the rule of the day. We do have the

technical know-how, resources and capability but the political commitment is lacking. I'm a technician, I can show technical alternatives but the decision makers have to take the decision. Just one single decision can get the whole wheel moving."

Joshi termed the present situation of the rivers as the tragedy of commons and said we all have contributed to the situation and so it's no use pointing fingers. "We need to rethink technically and begin investing in decentralised waste water management system." He explained alarming risks to health due to leakage of sewage water into ground water and drinking water due to broken pipes and shift septic tanks in homes that mostly do not conform to prescribed design and quality. He also recommended control in visual wastes of the plastics by declaring this zone plastic free area or charging more for waste disposal and less taxes on organic products.

The dismal scenario gets further clouded by the helplessness of the squatters who have created slum areas on either sides of the rivers. A resident in Bishnumati river said, "We are poor. This is the only place we can find to live in. Yes, we throw our wastes into the river. Where else can we throw it?"

Sensitivities deadened by poverty and resulting frustration, they are worried more about their own survival than the fate of the rivers. The question loom large, when will we begin to resuscitate life into the dying and dead rivers? ■



Bagmati: Swallows all insults thrown into her



Tukucha: which has almost become a synonym of filth



Alcohol gives a false sense of power



Ragina Shah, Supervisor of a Rehav Centre in Kathmandu responds queries on impact of drug, alcohol and way to get out of it.

Is alcohol a drug?

■ Bhawana Basnet, Banewsar

Today alcohol is one of the most commonly used drug. Being a legal drug it is socially accepted so is highly abused. In the beginning drinking may just begin with 'fitting in' with the crowd or for enjoyment. One never knows when it takes form of addiction, compulsion and obsession.

As with other addiction, a general negative outlook arises rooted in fear, insecurity and low esteem. Likewise a person is unable to stop this addiction on their own because of the false sense of well being and power.

Alcohol is poisonous to the body as it burns up large amount of vitamins in the body. Hence the tiredness and sickness of the body. Continual use brings illnesses such as chronic alcoholism gastritis and bleeding ulcers in the mucus membrane. Heart, kidneys, brain and the nervous system become weak, chronic alcohol hepatitis and cirrhosis is also very common. Excessive continued use of alcohol leads to withdrawal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, shaking of hands and feet, sweating and slurred speech when you stop drinking. Unable to confront these withdrawal symptoms a person continues to drink.

Alcoholism can often be more difficult to overcome than hard drugs like cocaine or heroin because of its availability and peoples' denial to its addiction. It takes a lot of effort to change this kind of behavioral pattern in our culture. Making people more aware of its

dangers is the first step.

How can I recognise somebody who's abusing drugs?

■ Ajaya Parajuli, Mahankal

There are various distinct symptoms to recognize a person abusing drugs: The person will not able to adhere to any form of routine. He/she will not have regularity of any kind, and will not be eating properly and will suffer rapid loss of weight. In the vicinity of an abuser, things which are of value to the person keep getting 'lost' and the things of the house will also be 'lost' or 'misplaced.' Such a person sleeps too much or not at all. A person using drugs has problems confronting anybody or anything. Communication is minimal, he will start avoiding family members and begin to stay aloof. He will spend less time with parents/family members and more time outside.

A person in drugs abuse will not be able to concentrate and will have very short attention span. He will start doing badly at school. Within 2-3 years into addiction he most probably will drop out of school. Because of the habit, he needs a lot of money to support it. He will be asking for money making many kinds of excuses.. An abuser will undergo massive attitude and behavioral changes and will start getting irritated or angry over small matters.

Queries related to addiction of any kind can be addressed to: newsfront@bhrikuti.com. Outstanding issues will be short listed and dealt with by Ragina.

Nepali Diaspora



■ Neeraj Pradhan

The old city is a place that I've visited many times before. I must have toured the Malla Palace Museum near Hanuman Dhokha and the Kumari's shrine at least a dozen times. My first time was when I was in the fifth grade; I distinctly recall slipping out from under the watchful eyes of family members residing at Ombahal Tole. Unnoticed, I sneaked out to take a meandering promenade about the Dhokha square. Weaving through cows, dogs, pedestrians, and vendors--unfettered by guides or nervous adults--I was able to admire the stunning tapestry of wooden roofs and turmeric-laden buildings.

For the city's natives, such an image of the square might seem pedestrian, even mundane. For that reason, it is perhaps important to explain why this enclave has continued to strike me over the years.

Visits back to Nepal, the homeland of my ancestors and more relevantly my own parents, have always been rushed: Family and social engagements are paramount, one right after the next. The torrential downpours of the monsoon season are rivaled by the never-ending surges of the wedding season. Nevertheless, maintaining these relationships is important, and it goes

Those times I spent in the square have helped me learn much more about life in Nepal

Right Outside My Door

without saying that it is this desire to remain connected that serves as the reason why most of us come back so often. Our family and our roots are here in the valley.

When I was younger, the categorical focus on family amused me. Sure, in America, family is viewed differently from household to household. The rules are local not universal. But it wasn't simply this difference of philosophy in family values and culture and how we were encouraged to behave that puzzled me about trips to Nepal. I cherished and still cherish the close family and friends I have. The fact of the matter was to me, it seemed as though history and country always had to wait to be consumed in bite-sized morsels; sadly there never was much time for exploration and adventure.

To the eyes and mind of a youngster raised on the stories of Verne or Dumas, to venture to a realm as organic and new as Nepal and not jump into adventure seemed a tragic loss to me. Flying across expanses of ocean and continent, getting disoriented through time zones and languages seemed a sunk cost if we were to be plopped in an historic valley of color and possibility only to sip tea and chat.

Impatience and curiosity finally caught up with me, and after a few trips, I decided to branch out. I didn't speak much Nepali when I was younger, which made being adventure-some all the more delicate an issue with family

members. (That was another thing that bothered me at the time: feeling over-protected.) Nevertheless, in the car, during drives between houses, I would mentally plot the landscape of the city, trying to cartographically map prime spots that I could later retreat to perhaps when older. I was searching for anything—a café, district, or scene—really a niche, a place to call my own.

It's funny that I managed to find that place at such a young age and so close to our family home for that matter. Hanuman Dhoka had always provided a refuge for me. It was real enough so as to provide glimpses of what this foreign world was like—the world beyond dinners, sequestered gates, and familiar faces.

All at once, it gave me what my youthful sense of adventure insisted and what my inquisitive questioning for answering demanded. Filthy goats, dogs, and birds were traipsing around on the holiest of grounds: the grounds of the ancient city temples from which the city derives its heritage and name. All colors of skin were juxtaposed, from the tanned fieldsmen from the Terai and southwards, to the city dwellers, to the northern monks, and, of course, the friendly zealous European travelers. All manners of exciting merchandise that even a frugal fifth grader could afford, from intricate hand woven trinkets to carved wooden stringed instruments, were neatly displayed on the side

walk. Within square footage that could not conceivably house a modest-sized stadium sat this mélange of absurdity, adventure, and history.

As I've gotten older, it's struck me how such a crowded, claustrophobic place like Hanuman Dhokha could have managed to be so intimate. You wouldn't catch me trying to escape away to a place like Times Square; nor would you find me trying to find peace on the Champs-Élysées, as exciting as those spots may be. If I were in New York or Paris, I'd much more likely be found somewhere more secluded and secret.

Those times I spent in the square have helped me learn so much more about life in Nepal than any book or conversation ever could. Rarely did I ever do more than just gaze and stare at the variety of people and animals that could choose to find solace and comfort in the same place. On trips, I used to be a somewhat bossy, impish child. Nowadays, whether I'm walking through the Dhokha or driving by in a cab, I remember how my own childish impatience gave me a picture of the city's true fabric that I otherwise might not have gotten. And to think it was just outside my door.

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



A trade show in China recently

More foreign investment in China

partnerships between Chinese and foreign companies could help pave the way for Chinese companies' inroads

Like anywhere in the world, skepticism about overseas investment's role in the national economy pops up in China once in awhile. Fortunately, and naturally, for a country determined to embrace globalization, such suspicions have never fundamentally changed the country's attitude toward foreign investors. The gate for them has opened wider steadily.

A report released this week by a major government think tank served as yet another proof that this country's mainstream economists welcome foreign investment. They are sober enough to oppose opinions that either downplay the significance of foreign investment in China's next stage of development or play up its perceived threat to the nation's economic security.

The 2007 Report on Transnational Corporations in China by the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, under the Ministry of Commerce, states that foreign investment's role can evolve as the Chinese economy moves to a higher level.

In fact, since the 1980s, foreign companies, while making handsome profits for themselves, have been contributing to the Chinese economy by providing financial resources,

fueling economic growth and introducing advanced technology.

Foreign investment continues to be needed, especially going to inland provinces, where its presence has been much smaller than in the country's prosperous coastal regions.

Foreign investment can also help promote the country's sustained growth and its further integration into the world economy.

Service industries will be a key area for the country's development in the next stage and foreign players' participation should be a catalyst for the service industries' growth.

Many international companies are pioneers in promoting environmental friendliness and resource conservation. These companies' operations in China should have very positive effects in helping transform China's growth pattern.

As an increasing number of Chinese companies attempt to go global, partnerships between Chinese and foreign companies could help pave the way for Chinese companies' inroads into international markets.

As the world's third biggest trading nation and its fourth biggest economy, China simply cannot afford to turn its back on foreign investors.

(China Daily)



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Harvesting ideas



■ Nabin Joshi

Nepal is going through pangs of re-birth as a nation state. The sense of unification seems to be getting lost in these fluid and turbulent days. This is the result of lack of any effort by any ruler beginning 1768 to date to integrate Nepal. We plodded along as a nation state of a loose cacophony of castes and communities earning respect of a small percentage of world population who knew Nepal as a delightful country with exquisite natural endowments, populated by incredibly naïve, tolerant, hospitable and intelligent people co-existing in an amazing fusion of ethnicity and features.

As we wait forever for that day of fair governance, burgeoning economy and vibrant participation of it by Nepalis across the length and breadth of Nepal, we can recall peace that had been a matter of fact to a greater extent in our living memory in Nepal. Instead of waiting endlessly for peace to prevail and for the government to wake up, there are people who know that this country abounds with umpteen economic possibilities and such people tap upon these resources and create opportunities to sustain themselves and not wait for the government to do it for them.



Fortune Cookie Ventures Pvt. Ltd. that was launched On 8th of February, 2007, is such a company led by a group of Nepali entrepreneurs with a background in information,

There are people who know that this country abounds with umpteen economic possibilities and such people tap upon these resources and create opportunities

communications and technology. This company is all about incubation of ideas as in hatchery where seeds of ideas eventually fledge into

chicken. The eggs are in the form of budding ideas in the field of information technology. Enter Fortune Cookie and its consultants who explore ideas of any aspirant and if they find it bankable and the person committed they would provide for physical resources to tinker with that idea and develop a prototype with assiduous mentoring within a time line and a schedule coupled with equitable contractual obligations.

The prototype would then move forward to morph into a product or a service supported by resources towards its enhancement. At the end of it, the aspirant would grow

into a budding entrepreneur, a part owner of the product that will debut for serious investment for mass marketing. And needless to add this company will not entertain any hair brained idea. The founders will face tons of business risks and challenges and will have to wade through a sea of details and improvise as they go along. Without any pretensions, the concept is a business and hopefully a few of its products will find market at a global level and eventually add serious value to Nepali economy. To retain brains and draw resources to Nepal with its reservoir of ideas and knowledge is the ultimate aim of this company. ■



■ Siddhartha Thapa

The answer to Nepal's problem does not seem to lie within her leader's grasp alone. Ironically, the solution appears to lie across the southern border. This is a fact that we Nepali must realize at the earliest. Now at this crucial juncture of history, the Nepali populace is viewing India's foreign policy with utmost anxiety and wondering how India would end the game for Nepal?

History exemplifies India's role in Nepal's changing political context with prominence. Be it 1950 where the Rana's were forced out of power, the 1960 coup, 1980 referendum, 1990 revolution and the 2006 revolution, India's role in ushering changes in Nepal has been paramount. What we can denote from India's involvement during critical changes in Nepal's politics is that New Delhi's foreign policy has

always prioritized stability versus zealous democratisation in Nepal.

The present turmoil in Nepal has raised many eyebrows and given rise to speculations regarding India's motive. Some Nepali observers suggest that India seeks to take over Nepal, while others suggest it is in India's interest that a status-quo be maintained so that India can maintain her hold on Nepal's internal affairs. The dilemma in New Delhi is more complex than we think it is.

The crux of the problem in New Delhi is due to the failure of the Congress to garner adequate seats in parliament to form a government of their own. As a result, the Congress was forced to seek help from CPI Marxist to form a government; who in turn have taken a greater interest in Nepal than the Congress. Consequently New Delhi's foreign policy vis-à-vis Nepal has been directed at the hands of leftist entrepreneurs, Yechury and Bardan, who have frequented Nepal with the interest of impacting changes in Nepal in keeping with the direction of CPI-Ms' interest.

The Indian Dilemma

The present turmoil in Nepal has raised many eyebrows and given rise to speculations regarding India's motive

Now that Nepal has slipped into a multifaceted political quagmire, alarm signals should alert politicians primarily at 10 Janpath and Race Course Road that the formula they envisioned for Nepal has failed. South Asia has proven a fertile ground for breeding leftist politics due to large scale impoverishment and caste based issues. Provided that centrist parties fail to address these problems and preach consensus based politics, the left in India and South Asia will continue exploiting differences among centrist parties to rise to power. Although the left parties including the CPI-M may have aligned themselves to democratic principles, deviation from democratic norms is inevitable once they acquire majority to form a government of their own.

Issues that require instantaneous assessment is the notion of foreign intervention. To some political pundits it is perfectly plausible that Yechury et al may remark and propose political solutions to address Nepal's political problems. Why then should it worry Puspa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Bhattarai that Moriarity has cautioned the Prime Minister about continued Maoist atrocities? After all the Maoist have signed voluminous documents for peace with the government. The critical question is what the definition of foreign intervention actually means

and how is it different from words of caution.

The prospect of a left government occupying center stage in South Asia is of immense significance. First, an ideology has no boundaries. The spread of communism across South Asia will trigger a new phenomenon; the demise of centrist politics and the resurgence of a leftist ideology. The consequence of a possible leftist resurgence has the capacity to alter the dynamics of South Asian politics invariably.

It is a point worth noting that the biggest losers of a probable leftist resurgence would be the Nepali Congress and UML in Nepal, the Indian Congress and BJP in India. At this stage it might seem practical to foster regional and national unity among centrist parties to thwart leftist design to re-map South Asian boundaries based on ideology.

The first task would be for the BJP and the Congress to reach a consensus on Nepal. The onus is on BJP to provide cover to the Congress in parliament vis-à-vis Nepal. Second step would be for the Congress to take Nepal's matter into its own hands. And the third and final step would be for the BJP to guarantee support to a minority Congress government on grounds of reaching consensus on the issue of national security based on the threat of a leftist resurgence. ■

Daddy, you tyrant

Miranda Seymour's astonishingly honest portrait, *In My Father's House*, is, by turns, fascinating and grotesque.

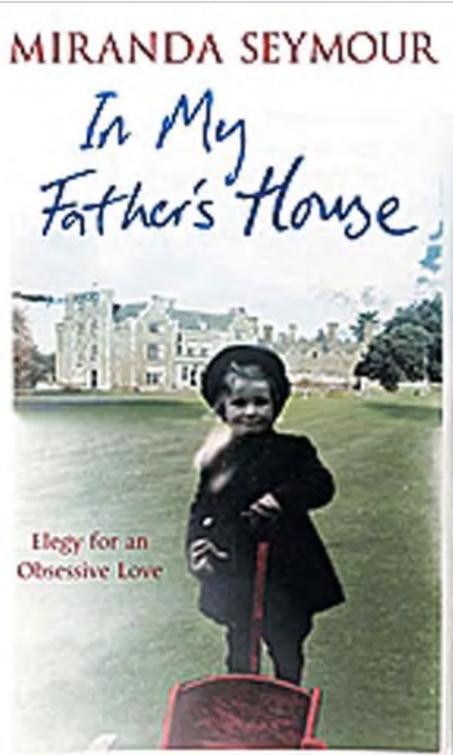
This is an extraordinary book. Miranda Seymour has written a family memoir whose honesty appals even as it compels, but its secondary achievement is to draw, almost from the corner of its eye, a portrait of Englishness in the last century that encompasses class, ownership, landscape, money, manners and clothes. It is consistently fascinating and occasionally horrifying and will make a good deal of modern autobiography look feeble and colourless in comparison.

At its centre is the story of George FitzRoy Seymour, the author's father, and his obsessive, crippling love for a house, a love that transcended anything he ever felt for his wife or his children. Born in 1923, George was a spoilt, priggish child, doted on by his mother but despised by schoolfriends for his airs and graces. (Despite his pretensions to the nobility, he never acquired the title he longed for.)

At the age of 13, he was advising his parents on wallpaper for the bathroom and velvet curtains for the dining room. Where such precocity would earn most small boys a clip round the ear, George was indulged, perhaps ruinously. When the war came, he was discharged from the army with 'effort syndrome', which Seymour learns from research was a valid condition affecting soldiers in the field, but a paltry excuse for a 19-year-old who'd done nothing but drill. The death of George's beloved cousin, killed in action, may have seeded lifelong feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

'I won't have you saying your father's a coward,' says Seymour's mother, whose plaintive interruptions become a counterpoint to her own voice. George died in 1994, but his baleful influence is still a vexed subject between them and while Seymour feels driven to write of it, her mother argues for silence and discretion.

What both women agree upon, however, is the absolute centrality of Thrumpton Hall, the house in Nottinghamshire that George, after years of coveting and wrangling, eventually acquired from a capricious uncle. It is no exaggeration to say that the house became his *raison d'être*. He



Miranda Seymour has written a family memoir whose honesty appals even as it compels, but its secondary achievement is to draw, almost from the corner of its eye, a portrait of Englishness in the last century that encompasses class, ownership, landscape, money, manners and clothes

devoted himself to its upkeep, determined that it would not suffer the fate of other grand houses left to dereliction after the war. Yet however much he played the squire to his tenants, the aristocratic connections he courted remained indifferent to him and, a Pooter of the shires, he waited for a social advancement that never came.

The first half of the book, dealing with the house, is remarkable enough; the second half, which recounts how this unexceptional, insecure man came to tyrannise his family, touches on the sensational and grotesque. George, who had so little knowledge of himself, turned out to know exactly the weak spots of his nearest and dearest. He mocked his teenage daughter for being overweight and cajoled her into

wearing a wig to cover her mousy tresses, with the consequence that her hair fell out.

He badgered her mother in a similar vein (she also wore a wig to please him) and instigated a family 'game' in which she would be humiliated for her paucity of charm. There is the occasion her mother proudly enters a party wearing a new sequined dress, the sight of which prompts George to ridicule her in front of their guests and insist she put on 'something that suits you'. The poor woman meekly complies.

Little wonder that Seymour likens her to Giulietta Masina, the sweet, put-upon waif of Fellini's *La Strada*, which she often watches with her and notes the look of 'enchanted recognition' transforming her face. Indeed, it's arguable that Rosemary Seymour is the real mystery of this book, and the deeper one reads, the better one appreciates why she would have preferred her daughter not to write it. If the wifely complaisance in her husband's bullying can be ascribed to the reflexes of her class and upbringing - don't make a fuss, keep up appearances - her attitude towards his midlife identity crisis passes all comprehension. This involved George donning leathers and biking around the countryside with Robbie, a young man he first met in Leicester Square and who would become his inseparable companion of his last years.

Crisis? Not for George, who blithely incorporated him into the family, but for his daughter, this near-illiterate stranger is a very incubus. 'Other than biking, I couldn't - I didn't want to - imagine what they might have in common.' Yet she confronts the implications with the same candour she has brought to bear elsewhere. Nor does she spare herself. Along with Thrumpton Hall she also inherited his excruciating snobbery: at a funeral, she notes a woman in a purple dress 'with a hatband that almost matched'; it's a chilling moment - you can hear George talking through her.

Seymour is too acute an observer not to spot this herself and too honest a writer not to include it. This story of a family colluding in its own unhappiness strives for the truth and something more: an elegance and wit to make it memorable.

A book review of In My Father's House by Miranda Seymour (The Guardian)

Revelation

Love heals

■ Sushma Amatyia



In the course of our lives, we sometimes get our head knocked out and hearts squashed by people we trust the most

In the sweltering heat of mid June the train stopped at a junction en route to Bombay. A young girl traveling alone in a second class compartment stepped out to buy an ice cream hoping for a quick respite from the oven like metal box. Hearing the whistle that announced the departure of the train in a minute, she hurried and struggled to stretch across the wide gap between the platform and the narrow steps of the train. With the cone in one hand, holding her handbag in another, she missed the step and down she fell on the tracks, a good four feet below the platform level. Numbed, for a second she envisioned her worst nightmare, that of being run over by the massive engine but she immediately heard somebody shouting for help and felt herself being pulled upward by several helping hands clucking their sympathy.

Somebody picked up her bag and another dusted her dress and somebody else patted her back and asked her if she was alright. Nodding silently, highly embarrassed, she climbed back to her seat and tried to avoid meeting concerned eyes. A middle aged lady next to her quickly whispered something to her husband who got up and went out. He was back with a cone of ice-cream in his hand just as the train began to move. He gave it to his wife who approached the girl and offered it, "Come Beta, please take this. You dropped your ice-cream and I thought you'd like to have one." The girl had no more appetite for the thing that already caused her so much problem but she didn't have the heart to say no and took the cone with a silent nod of thanks, fighting back sudden welling of tears at this show of unexpected concern. This incident that took place sometime in the late eighties still stands vivid in my memory. Ice-cream stopped making me happy since then.

Another overnight journey to Assam found me in an empty train compartment with an army man in his mid twenties. Having heard enough nasty stories about army men's misdemeanours I struggled to keep my anxiety under check and vowed not to shut my eyes through the night. The man seemed to sense my anxiety and chose a seat close to the door, the longest distance he could keep from me. After a while, he smiled and told me not to worry and go to sleep and that he would keep a watch over my luggage. Not believing him for an instant, I just nodded and continued to keep a wary eye on him. He said no more and went off to sleep.

When my destination arrived, I found him calling out to me. I had apparently dozed off sometime early morning. He helped me with my luggage and asked if there was somebody to fetch me. Realising there was nobody, I fished out the address and gave it to him. I realised I still had an hour of bus ride to reach my destination and was at a total loss as to how I'd go about it. But the man soon found somebody traveling the same way and requested the person to make sure I reach my destination. Having reassured himself that I was in good hands, he bid goodbye and continued his journey in the train that soon departed. Pleasantly surprised, I too went my way and reached my destination safely.

I don't recall the man's face anymore but the incident remains fresh in my mind. I'm ever so grateful to those and many others who extended a helping hand in different circumstances. They did it spontaneously, without expecting anything in return. Such people who appear out of nowhere and step in to help, seem to me another form of guardian angels. They come in different forms and most unexpectedly. A kindly act that protects you from trouble, a healing word that acts as a balm to your mind, or a genuine smile from a stranger that warms your heart. Those meaningful acts remain etched forever in one's memory and serves to inspire to act likewise.

When at the other end of the spectrum, in the course of our lives, we sometimes get our head knocked out and hearts squashed by people we trust the most; and we hurt, we just need to look back on such Dharma protectors and reestablish our faith in the goodness of human hearts. We can choose to tell ourselves that those who hurt us are only acting out of ignorance and from hearts that are constricted by fear and other negativities. We can extend our compassion for them and not feel sorry for ourselves. We can rise above it all and give back love to those who've hurt us knowingly, unknowingly. People who can't give love are in so much need of love. Only love can heal. ■

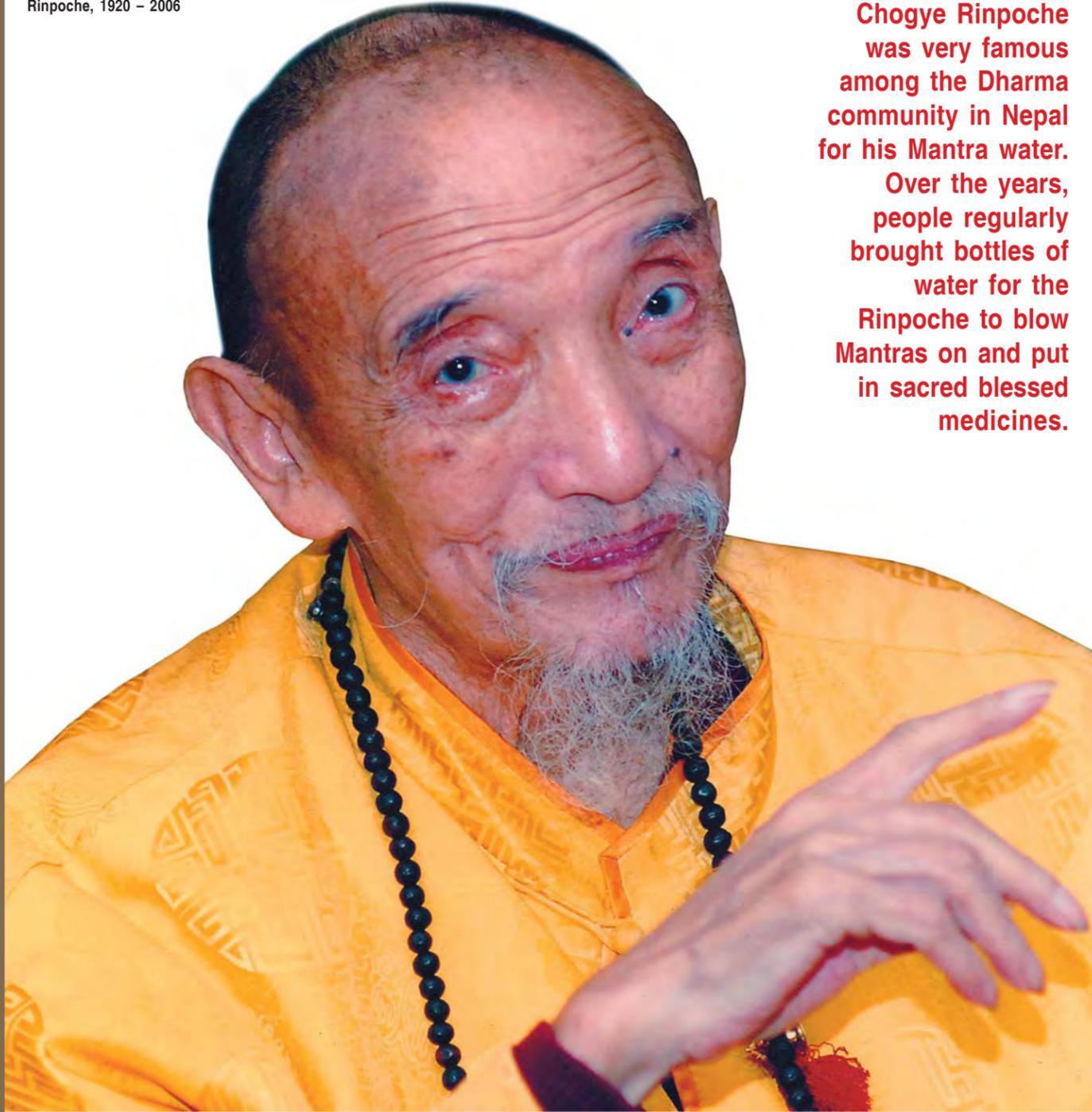


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H H Kyabje Chogye Trichen
Rinpoche, 1920 – 2006



Chogye Rinpoche was very famous among the Dharma community in Nepal for his Mantra water. Over the years, people regularly brought bottles of water for the Rinpoche to blow Mantras on and put in sacred blessed medicines.

and also a great scholar of literature, poetry, history and Buddhist metaphysics and a highly accomplished poet.

In 1959, he left Tibet and went to Mustang, Nepal where his elder sister was married to the King of Mustang. For several years from 1962, in accordance with the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he acted as the Secretary General of the Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala, India.

In 1969, he took leave from the Tibetan government and returned to Nepal to rebuild the Nalendra monastery and the seat of the Tsharpa school in exile. His Eminence founded two monasteries in Nepal, Tashi Rabten Ling Monastery in Lumbini and Jamchen Lhakhang Monastery in Kathmandu. He also founded a Tsharpa retreat center at Lo Gekar in Mustang.

Chogye Rinpoche was very famous among the Dharma community in Nepal for his Mantra water. Over the years, people regularly brought bottles of water for the Rinpoche to blow Mantras on and put in sacred blessed medicines. Even a small amount of this water was prized by people who knew its effects.

According to Karma Thinley Rinpoche, the Rinpoche had realised the Vajra body, the fruit of Tantric accomplishments, after completely exhausting all Kleshas, or afflictive emotions, all Karma, and all concepts into the nature of reality (Dharmata); and that he was one of the most rare living Buddhist masters who dwell always in that realised state. The Rinpoche maintained the style of a hidden yogi spending much time in meditation retreats and was regarded as a hidden master.

As a humble tribute to the master, here's an extract from the book he wrote, Parting from the Four Attachments, "...It is capable of evoking realisation as it is spoken, listened to, and learned. It is for this reason that we will use his precious words to understand the meaning of Manjushri's four – line teaching:

May the kind teachers and compassionate
tantric deities

In whom I take refuge from my heart
Please bestow blessings upon me.

(Newsfront Report)

Alive in our hearts

His Eminence Kyabje Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, head of Tsharpa branch of the Sakya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism passed away on 22 Jan at the age of 87 at his Drubkhang residence in Narayansthan, Kathmandu. He was a renowned tantric master, a dedicated practitioner, an outstanding scholar and primary teacher of H.H. the Dalai Lama.

His Eminence Sakya Trizin, head of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, described the great accomplishments of Kyabje Chogye Trichen Rinpoche: "There are many who have attained the wisdom arising from the study of the scriptures. There are some who have attained the wisdom arising from contemplation of the Dharma. There are few who have gained wisdom arising from meditation. His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is one who has attained all three wisdoms. One should consider oneself fortunate just to meet him, which is in itself a great blessing."

The Rinpoche stayed in a state of 'Thukdham' for 16 days. "His face remained as bright and fresh as when he

was alive", said a monk. Thukdam is a stage of life after death where the body lies in meditative state without decomposing. It is commonly practiced by high lamas of Tibetan Buddhism after death. It is also said that during that period the body maintains the inner air. Maintaining this state of body after death is only possible by people with divine spiritual powers. When his soul left his body on the 16th day, there was a heavy rain fall, considered an auspicious sign.

On the 21st day, his body was brought to Boudha. This event too was marked by several signs that manifest when great spiritual masters leave this earth. "There was a rainbow above Boudha and a halo around the sun", said Punya Prasad Parajuli, a Tibetan and Sanskrit scholar and practitioner.

The Rinpoche was born in Shigatse, Tibet in 1920. At the age of 12 he was officially enthroned at the Phenpo Nalendra Monastery in Central Tibet from where he completed his studies and mastered the monastic scriptural rituals, the rituals of Mandala, and the musical accompaniment of the rituals. He was a master in both Sutrayana and Mantrayana teachings



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