



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Connectivity: Jumla villagers happy with opening of the motor road in conversation with Army Chief Katwal (See photo feature on Surkhet-Jumla road on Page 6&7)

Trapped

Maoists have already started taking aggressive postures

■ **nf correspondent**

Prime Minister G P Koirala appeared beleaguered since a major coalition partner has asked him to step down owning full responsibility for the failure to hold election to the constituent assembly within the June 15 deadline. Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) put the blame entirely on Koirala reminding him that he himself had pledged to quit the post if elections were not held.

Yet, there are indications that the UML demand was more of a political positioning and it will not be pressing formally for Koirala's resignation. "We are clear Koirala must own the responsibility. We leave it to him to choose his way of doing it," Jhahnath Khanal, party's senior leader said.

But that does not indicate an easy way out for Koirala. The EC announcement has left the coalition partners reacting in different ways with no consensus in sight. The resultant effect has, however been the erosion of Koirala's authority. The tactical demand of UML for his resignation on one hand and Maoists' demand that the country be immediately declared a 'Republic' on the other, indicate that Koirala's hold over the coalition is gradually weakening. The UML has revived its old theory that referendum should be conducted immediately to decide the fate of monarchy.

The central committee meeting of the Maoists on Sunday weighed various political options in the

aftermath of the EC announcement that among other includes its ministers resigning en masse. But at present, they would want to be seen as dictating the political agenda of the coalition by having Nepal declared a Republic through parliament. "If that does not happen, the entire basis of the unity among eight parties has become in fructuous," Prachanda told the committee members, and later shared it in public. His speech had an undertone of threat, that Maoists would not be averse to breaking away from the alliance if the demand for Republic was not accepted by the rest.

Response from the coalition partners is still pending. Maoists have, however, already started taking aggressive postures with the much feared Youth Communist League (YCL) running parallel Government under various names in parts of the country much in violation of what the Maoists pledged at the time of joining the interim Government early this month. In Pokhara, the YCL has already begun functioning as the people's Government. YCL's growing presence provoked police in Kathmandu to raid at least three of their offices on Sunday. Sunday's eight party meeting at the PM's residence took stock of the general situation in the light of the EC announcement but could not take any decision as the suggestions and demands by the parties were too diverse and wide. Koirala however, appealed to the coalition partners to formulate their stance so that coalition could work together. ■

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Behind the curtain



Prime Minister G P Koirala

■ nf correspondent

If what Prime Minister G P Koirala told some Indian leaders in private are true, he seriously suspects Maoists' credentials in the peace process. Koirala's doubts, conveyed in strict confidentiality to some top leaders including Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh about the Maoists, was in contrary to the public posture he has been maintaining regarding the former rebels.

In his longish on-the-record discussion with former PM and Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, together with two other senior leaders, Yashwant Sinha and Brajesh Mishra, Koirala mainly sought Indian help in containing the Madheshi Janadhikar forum. "Yes, the Prime Minister told BJP leaders to dissuade Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) from supporting the Terai movement in Nepal," Shekhar Koirala, a close political aide and nephew of the Prime Minister told newsfront.

But Koirala said much more when Vajpayee's two aides excused themselves as the former desired to have a 'one-on-one' conversation with the BJP leader.

There are all sorts of speculations about the discussion ranging from monarchy to Maoists. Reliable information suggests that the BJP leader wanted to know if Koirala was serious about demanding that King Gyanendra and Crown Prince Paras abdicate. Koirala is believed to have said that while the Nepali Congress had not yet adopted the pro-republican line, his suggestion about 'abdication' was based on what he thought the people of Nepal wanted. He was also asked if he had any plans to ensure 'settlement of the two' with their lives, dignity and property secured.

Koirala put the blame on the King's allegedly increased political activities and hardening attitude of the Maoists, for his change of stance from a pro-ceremonial monarchy line to possible republic. He could not convince the Indian side that his partnership in power with the Maoists would transform them into a democratic force. Koirala assured the Indian side that his views will continue to remain private since, "changing terrorists and transforming them into democratic forces is a tough job."

Information also revealed that several steps that Maoists have taken in clear violation of the code of conduct indicated that they were not serious about the peace process. "Koirala was definitely skeptical about many activities of the Maoists as he listed a plethora of complaints about them," a source, wishing to remain anonymous, said. On the other hand, India's clear message, both from Singh and Vajpayee, was that Nepal's Terai should be free from 'militant presence' which could mean that growth of anti-Maoist Madheshi forum was something that India was not worried about.

There was also a veiled message that he would appreciate if Indian side put more pressure on the Maoists to behave and honour several commitments they made during the peace process. Election, he assured all of those he met, would not be postponed and added, "taming and disciplining Maoists," was necessary.

Reiterating the obvious

■ nf correspondent

If what the election commissioners including its Chief, Bhojraj Pokharel said and did during the past three weeks was any indication; the message that election by June 15 deadline was not possible was loud and clear. It was however, formally conveyed only on April 12 when the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) dispatched a letter to Prime Minister G P Koirala since all the top leaders of the ruling eight parties kept reiterating that election would be held well within the deadline.

Leaders including the PM apparently feigned ignorance about the possibility of the commission going to that extent, but each of the top eight leaders had been informed through commissioners that election to the constituent assembly had to be deferred as there was neither a conducive law and order, nor electoral laws in place. The PM was also conveyed that the entire team of the commission was ready to quit, "if the Government wanted to have another team conducting polls within the deadline," a commission source told newsfront.

During several rounds of informal discussions the commissioners had collectively agreed to face 'impeachment' if the eight parties so desired for the commission going against their

political pledge. In another worst case scenario, if the Government was bent upon having the election conducted by another team, "we will quit without any grudge," was what the commissioners decided.

CEC Pokharel and commissioner, Nilkanth Uprety had conveyed this fact to CPN-UML General a couple of days before the formal announcement. Pokharel made similar pleas to Koirala on the eve of his visit to Pokhara. As per the request of the CEC, Koirala refrained from mentioning anything about the election date during his lengthy political speech in Pokhara. The only leader who publicly said that election was not possible within the declared deadline was Congress (D) President, Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Commissioner Ayodhya Prasad was deputed to explain on similar lines to the Maoist leaders Prachanda and Babu Ram Bhattarai. Time constraints, lack of preparedness and poor law and order situation in the country would come in the way of conducting elections within the mid-June deadline and it had to be postponed, he is believed to have told them categorically. "Perhaps they did not take us seriously," a commissioner told newsfront. He also complained that the parliamentarians never pursued the commission's request to have electoral laws in place urgently.

CSR - Yeti Airlines Model

■ nf correspondent

Yeti Airlines, a pioneer in its field, handed over about a million Rupees to four NGOs as part of its corporate social responsibility on Sunday. The Chairman, Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa handed over cheques of Rs 222,094 each to four NGOs who have contributed in the field of women and child rights and led the campaign against leprosy in Nepal.

The NGOs included Maiti Nepal, TEWA, Nepal Leprosy Relief Association and OCCED with a pledge to 'build the society together.' On the occasion, the airlines also declared that each year on Baisakh 10, women traveling by Yeti aircraft will be getting 30 per



Newsfront

cent rebate to commemorate scaling of Mt. Everest by Pasang Lhamu Sherpa, a national icon.

The airline is proud to be serving as the life line for remote areas of Nepal and linking people across the country. ■

Agenda number one



Education Minister Pradeep Nepal

■ nf correspondent

Education Minister, Pradeep Nepal has clearly charted out what his priority agenda is. He wants vice chancellors appointed in all the five universities as the vacancy at the top academic posts have not only derailed exams and other schedules, it has resulted in the loss of academic calendar.

Minister Nepal, who took oath of office on 1st April, has turned down almost all invitations saying he will start accepting invitations once the vice chancellors are appointed and academic calendar brought back on track. Nepal has given a month's deadline to the Prime Minister who is also the chancellor of the universities to fill-up the post by April end.

Nepal's predecessor, Mangal Siddhi Manandhar, had blamed the PM for not appointing the vice chancellors despite the Education Ministry having submitted the recommended list. According to the official sources, the

Congress and the CPN-UML were engaged in a hard bargain over the share in top academic posts that besides vice chancellors include rectors and registrars.

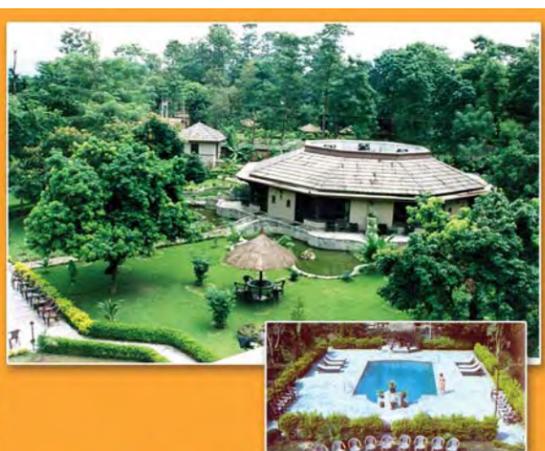
While CPN-UML, the party which controls the Ministry of Education is keen to have at least three of the five vice chancellors, PM was rigidly against it. His opinion was that since most of the university teachers association was controlled by the Nepali Congress, it should have a maximum number of VCs and other senior administrators.

In fact, Koirala and CPN-UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal had a heated argument over the issue on March 29 at the PM's residence in Baluwatar. Nepal told Koirala that delaying appointment of VCs was a political move on the part of the PM to portray UML Education Minister as inefficient and insensitive to students' problems.

The issue got diverted when a nominated parliamentarian from the Congress Party sitting by Koirala's side told Nepal bluntly, "you can have two vice chancellors appointed as I have already told the PM to do it." "It was such an extra-constitutional command and it was a shame that the PM who was right there bore it in silence," a UML leader told newsfront. But UML hopes that Pradeep Nepal will have his way, and not relent to the 'delaying tactic' of Koirala. ■

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Andrew Hall

in the wake of Maoists being part of the interim Government, and a British Minister's meeting with top Maoist leaders during his visit here. As a result, Maoist ministers have also been invited by the British Embassy during the Queen's birthday celebration on April 23.

Although the U S has still maintained that it would have no direct contact with Maoist led ministries, it is believed to have continued inviting those on its contact list, especially the ones who have been to the U S on one or the other officially sponsored programmes. Malla K Sunder, a Maoist parliamentarian, is one familiar face in the U S official programmes as well.

No National Anthem

Not having a national anthem perhaps does not mean much for Nepal, but it does at least for the British. The embassy here notified Shital Niwas about the custom of playing national anthem of two countries as part of the ceremony to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's birthday, and wanted to know what to do this year since Nepal does not have one now.

Sources in Shital Niwas said the Minister and the Secretary had no clue about when or if at all Nepal will have a national anthem. Accordingly the response given to British Embassy was innocuous and simple, 'do as you may please in your premises.' That in all likelihood would mean British playing only, 'God-save the queen' tune on April 23.

The Government has been sitting for over a year on a decision of the high-level committee led by eminent author and historian Satya Mohan Joshi that had recommended a

composition by Vyakul Maila as the new national anthem.

Greetings

In what appeared like a virtual political somersault, Prime Minister G P Koirala, endorsed the Royal address to the nation on the occasion of the Nepali New Year 2064. The text sent by the Press secretariat of 'His Majesty the King' was approved by Koirala with a couple of minor changes before it was released to the media on Friday night.

In a brief but still politically significant address, the King wished the success of the peace process and institutionalisation of democracy in the country. He also sent greeting cards to all members of the council of Ministers including those from the Maoist party. Maintaining the tradition, the palace secretariat also sent greeting cards which contained Royal family photograph to security agencies including Army,

Police and the Armed Police force to high-ranking officials.

However, the senior officials complied with the verbal instruction of the Home Ministry not to send any greeting cards, or acknowledge the one sent by the palace. "As a result, our IGPs did not send a greeting card to the palace for the first time," a senior Home Ministry official said.

Toyota at 40



It has been four decades that Toyota Motors first came to Nepal. The occasion was celebrated with much fanfare in the capital.

At a special function held at Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza on the New Years day, Suraj Vaidya, President of the United Traders Syndicate, Toyota's distributor, called it the realisation of one man's dream and added, his father Gajananda Vaidya was determined to bring Toyota to Nepal way back in 1967 when there were only very few roads, and still fewer number of people who could afford to buy cars.

Tokuichi Uranishi, Executive Vice President of TOYOTA was the guest of honour during the celebration of 40 years of Toyota in Nepal.



Cozy meeting

Andrew Hall, like the Americans had stuck to the decision that Maoists would not be entertained at the ambassador's level. But with the Maoists joining the interim Government, Hall chose not to go the Moriarty way any more.

Last week, he had a quiet meeting with Maoists Chief Prachanda and key strategist Baburam Bhattarai at a Radisson Hotel Room, but definitely noticed by many. Hall had one chance meeting with Maoist Foreign Affairs Chief C P Gajurel about six weeks ago at a television center.

But the latest meeting, a planned one, followed review of the British Government policy

You have to grow in business

We are always concerned about what we can do legitimately

Adel Ali, Chief Executive of Air Arabia was in the capital last week to explore expansion of his services in Nepal. He believes that Nepal provides a wonderful opportunity to explore tourism potential on wildlife, nature and adventure.

Ali spoke to newsfront correspondent Madhusudan Poudel on the airlines' future plans. Excerpts:

How was your experience in Nepal?

It has only been around six months that we began our operation here. It is too short a time to make any assessment, but we are happy over the response we have received. We are particularly delighted that the Airlines has acted like a link between Nepal's tourism industry and the Middle East.

Are you going to expand your operation in Nepal?

We are exploring such options. We are always concerned about what we can do legitimately in any country. We have approached the authorities here, and if things move favourably, increasing our flight frequency from the current four in a week is something that we are keen on.

How close are you to doing that?

I met the Minister of civil aviation and other authorities. I found them very positive. What I found was they have a clear understanding that Nepal's tourism industry must grow. Once our proposal gets approved, we will get into action.

Do you have any specific plans for expansion of the tourism industry from

your side?

Air Arabia is an 'economy budget' which will give its customers value for money. Hotel facilities is another area which is essential to support the tourism industry. We do not view Nepal purely as a market for labour export. Nepali tourism has other fundamental aspects like adventure, wild life and its rich nature. We have been encouraging people from our areas to visit Nepal, and the response has been positive.

Any plans to go into joint venture here?

We are in the business, always willing to explore areas of mutual interest. But we do not have any immediate proposal to go in for a joint venture. We have very good relations with our local partner, we have similar business philosophy and are open to expanding business together.

Where do you place yourself vis a vis two other airlines, Gulf and Qatar, with their base in the Middle East?

We all are in the business and are each others' competitors. But we have our own business principle with a very positive approach. We operate from the United Arab Emirates. At present we fly ten destinations, all to a maximum of five hours duration. We hope to buy new fleets of aircraft, altogether 234 in number.

Is that not very ambitious?

In business you have to grow. That may sound ambitious but it's also very realistic.



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Point to Ponder

The only stable State is the one in which all men are equal before the law.

- Aristotle

Commendable

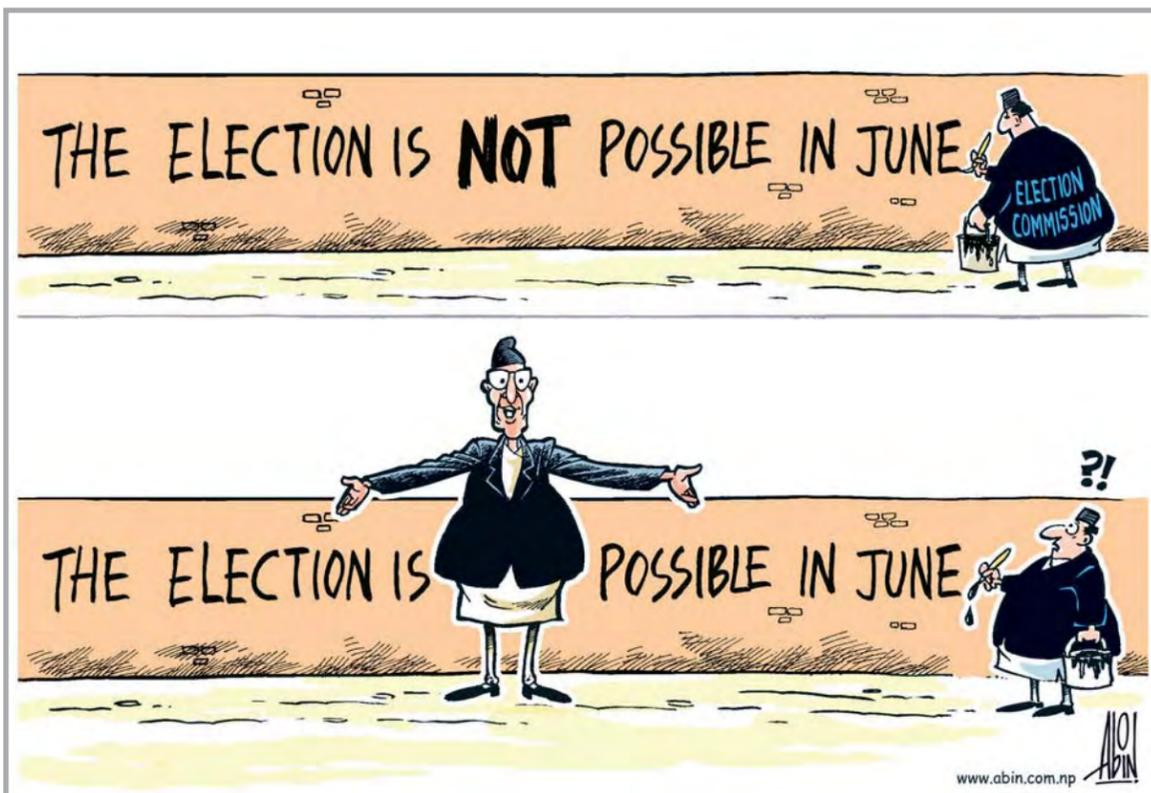
By postponing elections to the Constituent Assembly, Election Commission simply called the bluff. It exposed the leaders of the ruling coalition who were simply trying to reduce Election Commission into a pawn at the executive's hand. It was sheer miscalculation on the part of the present regime, especially Prime Minister, G P Koirala that Bhoj Raj Pokharel and his team could be commanded to replicate the election pattern held (municipalities election) during the King's regime.

Democracy is guided by norms of rule and accountability. As a constitutional body, Election Commission is directly accountable to the people by conducting a credible poll in an atmosphere free from fear and intimidation. Moreover, citizens of this country who demonstrated their undiluted faith in democracy, at the cost of several human lives and casualties last year, have a right to decide on the pattern of devolution, delimitation of constituencies, inclusiveness and empowerment, before the country goes to the poll.

Neither the Prime Minister, nor leaders like Prachanda, Madhav Nepal and the rest belonging to the eight party ruling coalition were keen on empowering the people. They were keener, as events in the past few months unfolded, for their plum share in the Government. Their politics was guided more by greed and ambition rather than the mandate of the people to hold election to the Constituent Assembly on time. It was evident from the fact that these parties did not even come together on passing the electoral laws without which the Commission could not proceed further on more vital issues related with election.

Prime Minister Koirala simply reiterated that he was committed to hold the polls on time, and will be fully responsible if things went differently. He little realised that best of his intentions or verbal assurances, despite his holding the power of King and a Prime Minister, would not substitute for electoral laws. As country stands at the cross-roads of history, and as anything done today will create precedence for future, Pokharel and his team acted heroically and honestly, by telling the Executive that election could be anything but farce.

In absence of a credible election, democracy cannot take root. It is high time that eight parties go through an intense self-introspection process, and fulfill the conditions for a credible manner in deference to what the commission said.



Letters

Useful information

I find the wide coverage of socio-political and other issues in newsfront interesting. Spiritual corner is another ornament of this weekly which encourages us to walk on the right path. In the last issue (9-15 April) Bhaskar Koirala's analysis about 'SAARC-China dynamics' and Chandani Kirinde's 'SAARC needs to walk the talk' were very useful articles for the new generation to know the about the South Asian region. I hope newsfront will continue to play a vital role in Nepal's Peace Process.

Madhav Dhakal
Motherland Academy
Kathmandu

different issues regarding economic development, social form and collective values of the society in his article. My thanks go to him. I think these are fundamental components for restructuring of the State.

Majority of the parties are in favour of federal republic system and even those who were very close to the palace in the past have recently removed the constitutional monarchy from their manifesto and they are ready to adopt the changes. But there are obstacles in the republican passion due to confusion created by the party leaders. So, the leaders need to clarify issues regarding Madhesi, Janjati, Mahila and other minorities in the federal republic system.

Rabin Paudel
Kathmandu

Distribute soon and cover more

Thanks for the wide range of coverage of opinion, news analysis published in the newsfront that are of high standard. However, I have some suggestions. Firstly, newsfront is not available in the market easily. Sometimes it comes early in the morning, other times in the afternoon. I think distribution system needs to be more efficient.

Secondly, I find that this paper is mostly capital based. It should give equal priority and space for news and ideas from outside the valley.

Chandra Karki
Kathmandu

Thanks for book review

Thanks to newsfront for giving space for book review. In issue 11, the book review entitled, 'Nationalism' written by Anthony D. Smith was quite impressive. I expect reviews of more books which are focused on political, social, literature, economics and other issues. As far as the review by Tara Dahal is concerned, analytical part is powerful, but lacks criticism. Coverage of literature is few in newsfront and I hope to see more of it in future.

Sushila Sharma
Kathmandu

Sizzle and chill

In Newsfront issue 11, I found Saubhagya Shah's article, "April sizzle and February chill" realistic. It was an in-depth analysis of our current political and social scenario of the country from anthropological perspective. Shah has raised

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology. Jung's approach to psychology emphasised understanding the psyche through exploring the worlds of dreams, art, mythology, world religion and philosophy. Much of his life's work was spent exploring other realms such as alchemy, astrology, sociology, literature and arts.

Quotes by Jung:

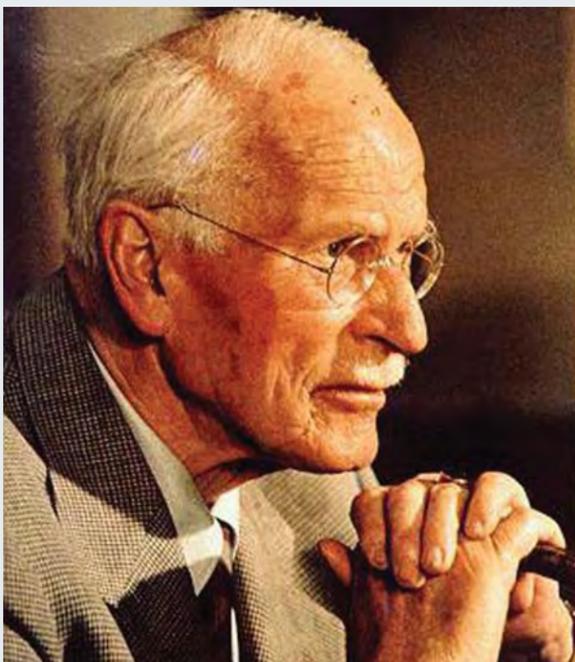
Awaken within

"Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. . . Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens."

Loving self

"That I feed the hungry, forgive an insult, and love my enemy.... these are great virtues.

But what if I should discover that the poorest of the beggars and the most impudent of offenders are all within me, and that I stand in need of the alms of my own kindness; that I myself am the enemy who must be loved? What then?"



Stand independent

"It is the individual's task to differentiate himself from all the others and stand on his own feet. All collective identities . . . interfere with the fulfillment of this task. Such collective identities are crutches for the lame, shields for the timid, beds for the lazy, nurseries for the irresponsible. . ."

Being just to self

"If people can be educated to see the lowly side of their own natures, it may be hoped that they will also learn to understand and to love their fellow men better. A little less hypocrisy and a little more tolerance towards oneself can only have good results in respect for our neighbor; for we are all too prone to transfer to our fellows the injustice and violence we inflict upon our own natures."

Courage for adventure

"Whenever there is a reaching down into innermost experience, into the nucleus of personality, most people are overcome by fear and many run away.. The risk of inner experience, the adventure of the spirit, is in any case alien to most human beings. The possibility that such experience might have psychic reality is anathema to them."

Chief Election Commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokharel



Pic by Bhaswar Ojha

Refusing to be rubber stamp

Unfortunately, prudence and propriety have not been the strong points of our leaders

A single compromise on norms and principle at the institutional level will have a lasting chain effect. The consequences of such compromises could even prove disastrous at times. Last week when members of parliament, cutting across party lines, firmly stood against Executive's move to stifle the independence of the legislature, Speaker Subhash Chandra Nembwang sensed the mood of the House and acted with maturity and prudence. Government's move to have eight-party leaders' joint programme and policy endorsed by the House was opposed by all sides saying it should come in the proper form of a Government resolution.

Unfortunately, prudence and propriety have not been the strong points of our leaders. Prime Minister, G P Koirala, recently asked Nepali journalists in India to address King Gyanendra only by his name. This is not the first time that he has committed impropriety of this nature. Not too long ago, he had publicly stated that 'Maoists are the creation of India and the palace.' Just because his relationship with Maoists has changed, and he is happy with the South at the moment, does not change the matter on record.

Seeking external recognition even on what is essentially a domestic issue has been the biggest weakness of Nepali politicians, from the Kings (past and



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

present), Koirala, Madhav Nepal to Prachanda who is following their not so illustrious foot-steps. Madhav Nepal chose to criticise China during one of his many visits to India in the aftermath of King's takeover in Feb 2005. Prachanda chose to 'expose' Pakistan's ISI thereby claiming that he had declined to accept 'ISI' support to the Maoist movement.

Koirala was perhaps trying to play 'India card' for his advantage in domestic politics when he made the comment on monarchy. There are speculations that he probably wants to make a deal with the King during elections by dangling that 'card'. King Gyanendra will perhaps understand the game that Koirala intends to play as he has done the same against the parties in the past. One single act that made India furious with the King was his successful initiation at the behest of his foreign minister, Ramesh Nath Pandey, to have China accorded SAARC's observer status in Dhaka last year. It was out and out an unwise move considering the geo-political realities that neither did any good to the country nor to the institution of monarchy.

India's disapproval of Nepal playing China

card is understandable. But Nepali Prime Minister trying to give an impression that 'India does not want King Gyanendra, that is why I am giving that indication from Indian soil itself,' is not only undiplomatic but unfortunate to say the least. By doing what he did, he has also kept alive the 'conspiracy theory' with all pervasive India around it.

But those who know Koirala do not take his comment on face value. It may have been a different political tactic. If he ever sees that he cannot trust Maoists any more, he can still go to the King, use India card and say that despite the mighty Southern neighbour not wanting him to continue, Nepali congress continues with B P Koirala's policy of national reconciliation. In return, he might hope to get the support of those who still want monarchy retained in one form or the other.

Postponement of election has already caused a ripple within the ruling coalition with CPN-UML now putting the blame entirely on Koirala, even demanding his resignation. More radical elements within the Maoists might even suspect Koirala - Election Commission nexus responsible for the unilateral declaration of Bhoj Raj Pokharel on Friday that election cannot be held within the June 20 deadline set by the eight parties. Obviously, Maoists world view would see 'imperialist United States' and the King behind

this conspiracy.

When politics is guided more by conspiracy and hidden agendas as well as ambition, impropriety becomes rule rather than exception. And for that matter, neither any major political party nor its top leaders are the exception. It is simply the very honourable members who acted differently and saved the House from being reduced into a rubber stamp of the Executive.

Individuals like Narayan Man Bijukchhe displayed their courage and conviction in the process. When party leaders were hankering for power in the aftermath of Royal takeover beginning October 2002 directly or indirectly, Bijukchhe was a lone furrower. When power knocked on his door with the offer a Deputy Prime Minister's position after Koirala's takeover last year, he was the only one to turn it down. But that act has inspired many which was evident when members from all parties criticised their own Government.

It should be realised by the politicians that ambition not matched by ability and required support in politics, either leads one to make all sorts of compromises or ends up creating a dictator. Character, conscience and courage are its antidotes. By invoking these virtues, members of parliament have stood head and shoulder above their leaders who were into the business of committing 'impropriety' deliberately. ■





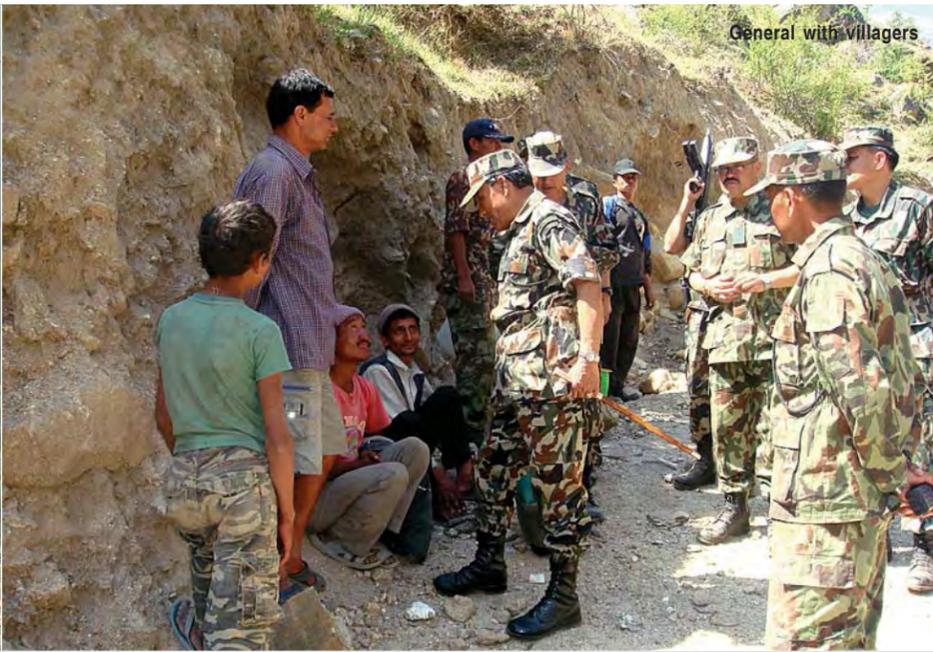
Dawn of de

It was like a farewell gift to remote Karnali. A fleet of ten vehicles plied on the 88-Km Dailekh - Kalikot stretch of the Jumla - Surkhet highway on April 13, eve of the Nepali new year 2064 B S. Chief of Army staff, Gen Rukmangat Katwal led the opening ceremony of the road built by the Nepal army.

Vehicles rolled on the bridge over Sherighat and at Namgha in Jumla where Gen Katwal assured the people in Jumla that Karnali would be connected with rest of the country very soon.

Although the army began its work in 2002, various obstacles, mainly the resistance by Maoists delayed it. Nepal army is currently undertaking 13 such road construction projects which are under various stages of completion.





Development



Nature hits back

■ Madhav Thakur

Climate change is one of the most complex issues that the world will face in this century. Concentrations of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide in particular) in the atmosphere have already reached levels unprecedented, causing changes not only in global temperature but also resulting in observable impacts throughout the world. These changes are happening more quickly than expected. Scientists predict that further increases in the concentration of greenhouse gases from human activity will allow less heat to escape the earth's atmosphere, thus increasing average global temperature.

Climate change threatens the basic elements of life for people around the world – access to water, food, health, and use of land and the environment. On current trends, average global temperatures could rise by 2 - 3°C within the next fifty years or so, leading to many severe impacts like more frequent droughts and floods.

Melting glaciers will increase flood risk during the wet season and reduce dry-season water supplies to one-sixth of the world's population, predominantly in the Indian sub-continent, parts of China, and the Andes in South America. Declining crop yields, especially in Africa and in mid to high latitudes, crop yields are likely to decline.

Ocean acidification, a direct result of rising carbon dioxide levels, will have major effects on marine ecosystems, with possible adverse consequences on fish stocks. Rising sea levels

will result in annual flooding which, apart from uprooting people, will pose increased risks and challenge for coastal protection in South East Asia, small islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and large coastal cities.

Worldwide deaths from malnutrition and heat stress will be other fall-out. Vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever could become more widespread in absence of effective control measures. Large scale displacement of people is also expected by experts by the middle of this century.

Global warming will result in more frequent droughts and floods, declining crop yields, worldwide deaths from malnutrition and heat stress; give rise to diseases such as malaria and dengue.

Ecosystems will be particularly vulnerable to climate change, with one study estimating that around 15 – 40% of species face extinction with 2°C of warming. The consequences of climate change will however, be disproportionate, but certainly more damaging with increased warming. Higher temperatures may trigger abrupt and large-scale changes that lead to regional disruption, migration and conflict.

Warming may induce sudden shifts in regional weather patterns like the monsoons or the El Niño, directly affecting water availability and flooding in

tropical regions. Melting or collapse of ice sheets would raise sea levels and eventually threaten, as experts estimate, at least 4 million Km² of land.

A global consensus now exists that climate change represents a significant potential threat to the world's well-being. But there is disagreement about how and when to address that threat. What is less widely appreciated is the magnitude of the challenge of

stabilising those emissions at levels that are not catastrophic to the global life support systems. The challenge is particularly acute when viewed in the context of rising projected world population, incomes and demand for energy.

The industrialised economies, with the exception of the United States, agree upon a particular approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Yet the exceptions are crucial - an effective framework for reducing greenhouse gases will eventually require the participation of the United States and some of the developing countries. And despite the opposition of the United States to the current target reduction levels, some observers argue that the targets should be more aggressive.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that fossil fuel based carbon dioxide emissions are the roots to global

warming. The only way to check the warming is through reduction of the emission of carbon dioxide. Majority of carbon dioxide pollution is released when fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas are burned for transportation, heating or for the production of electricity.

Coal is particularly damaging, as it produces 70% more carbon dioxide emissions than natural gas for the same energy output. Electricity generation is the single largest source of manmade carbon dioxide amounting to 37% of worldwide emissions. Kyoto Protocol in particular is one of the highly accepted global treaties to reduce emission. Kyoto has provided individual reduction levels to different countries according to their emission potentials. The reductions crafted at Kyoto are however, far less than needed to stabilise atmospheric concentrations at today's levels.

With the celebration of Earth's Day 2007, we must strongly propagate awareness and consolidate actions toward climate change. Understanding the risks and opportunities posed by climate change and sensitising others who are unaware is the first step towards taking corrective measures. The next step is reducing the output of greenhouse gases and this will require strenuous efforts by all stakeholders.

Developing countries are the most to suffer calamities from the adverse climates. Glacial Lakes are very vulnerable to bursting at higher temperature which can be catastrophic in case of Nepal. Crisis management is the best defense left, if far-sighted approaches are ignored. ■

Climate change challenges

■ Shashanka Saadi

"The poorest developing countries will be hit earliest and hardest by climate change, even though they have contributed a little to causing the problem. Their low incomes make it difficult to finance adaptation. The international community has an obligation to support them in adapting to climate change," Nicholas Stern, chief economist to the UK government.

Nepal is ranked sixth in the Climate Risk Index (CRI). The indication is clear; less developed countries are proportionally more affected by weather-related extreme events.

The direct and indirect symptoms of climate change are: changed rainfall pattern, more heat waves, less snow in the upper valleys and reduced glacier extent, sea level rise, increased risk of uneven coastal flooding, drier summers and increasing risk of severe droughts, increasing ocean acidity, increased frequency and severity of uneven and untimely river flooding, severest cyclones and increasing tornados in unpredicted areas, changed water quality and quantity etc.

As a result, water resources are drying up, agriculture and forestry loss productivity, food security has been challenged and unsecured, human death toll increased, infrastructure and settlements damage increased, industries and energy sector facing major loss, people have been displaced or become climate-refugee and cost of disaster response and recovery increased. Most crucial is, loss of livelihood of more poor and marginalised groups and

thinning right to education and knowledge of children due to climate change forced drop outs from schools.

People, more specifically the poor women and marginalised groups in the climate change affected locations within the state boundaries are the primary and forgotten sufferers from hazards triggered by the climate change. Measuring the impacts of climate change is not just a matter of sole area of technical experts. It is understandable through measuring the loss of asset and livelihood options of poor and marginalised people due to the uneven flood and erosion, landslide, cyclone, tidal surge, hailstorm or flash floods.

The affected people cannot cope or adapt with the extreme events as these are beyond their local and indigenous knowledge. The pattern has been changed, severity increased and prediction becomes unavailable. They have been exposed to adverse impacts of those changes. The degree of impact of any extreme event depends on the resilience of the people.

The poor and marginalised become most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to the lack of access to the information on ongoing and predicted climate change.

Nepal and most of the countries of the world are signatory to the KYOTO protocol which directly emphasised the importance of reducing carbon emission rapidly and within a short period. However, the report on the achieving the current targets of cutting off the emission rate is not at all encouraging and that is more clear from the frustration of international community except USA and its allies towards good practices in climate change mitigation.

Climate Risk Index 1995-2004

Country	Index Value	Rank death toll	Rank deaths per 100,000 inhabitants	Rank total losses	Rank total losses per GDP	For comparison: Rank in HDI 2003
Honduras	11.00	7	2	25	10	116
Bangladesh	17.50	5	34	14	17	139
Somalia	19.00	20	12	36	8	-
Venezuela	19.50	2	1	28	47	75
Nicaragua	21.00	16	3	50	15	112
Vietnam	21.25	8	30	24	23	108
Dominican Republic	22.00	11	8	41	28	95
France	24.75	4	11	5	79	16
India	26.25	1	44	9	51	127
China	27.50	3	79	2	26	85

Table 2: The Climate Risk Index (CRI) - the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2004 and in the period 1995-2004 [Global Climate Risk Index 2006, Germanwatch.]

Country	Index Value	Rank death toll	Rank deaths per 100,000 inhabitants	Rank total losses	Rank total losses per GDP	For comparison: Rank in HDI 2003
Somalia	8.50	14	11	7	2	-
Dominican Republic	9.00	6	5	14	11	95
Bangladesh	9.75	4	20	5	10	139
Philippines	16.75	5	13	26	23	84
China	16.75	2	48	3	14	85
Nepal	17.00	10	18	28	12	136
Madagascar	17.25	8	10	35	16	146
Japan	18.25	11	42	2	18	11
USA	18.25	7	48	1	17	10
Bahamas	20.00	51	7	15	7	50

At the national level, we need to take immediate steps. We should classify the national concerns on climate changes and share the information with the people. We need to pinpoint the climate risks and vulnerabilities associated with the climate change challenges. Our goal should be bi-linear, that is, joining the platform of the LDCs to put pressure on the international community for climate change mitigation and taking immediate measures for adaptation to reduce national level vulnerabilities.

A people-centered national adaptation programme can be the first step to

mainstreaming the climate risk management in the development growth programmes.

At the same time, we should initiate an information and knowledge sharing process on climate change risk and vulnerabilities at the school level through developing simple but informative and pictorial curriculum for the children.

Understanding the risk and vulnerabilities associated with climate change is a precondition to development and we should not ignore that.

(Saadi is a development worker and a disaster reduction expert)

US reacts cautiously to Agni III missile test

Washington: The United States has reacted cautiously to the test-firing of Agni III missile by India, stating that countries in the region should not take any action that would destabilise the balance in Asia. It also urged all nations in Asia to work within the parameters of agreements on prior notification with respect to missile tests.

"The Indians do have an active missile programme. And, typically what they do under their agreements with the Pakistan government is there's a prior notification. I can't verify for you at this point that did take place in these circumstances," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

"What we have — what we urge all the governments in the region to do, India, Pakistan included, is to work within the constraints of the agreements that they have regarding notification and also not take any actions that would be destabilising to the balance in the region," he said.

Asked if the test could be considered an action that would destabilise the region, he said: "I'd have to check to see if this is something that is technically different or goes

beyond the previous technical, demonstrated capabilities of the Indian Government, the Indian military in launching the missile". "I'm not aware that it does, but I'll be happy to check for you," he said.

Asked if India should be test-firing a nuclear capable missile at a time when Washington is trying to dismantle the nuclear programme of Iran and North Korea, Mr. McCormack said "... it's not the first time they've done this, to my knowledge, test-fired missiles."

India is trying to enter into a different kind of relationship with the rest of the world vis-a-vis its nuclear programme.

India is trying to enter into a different kind of relationship with the rest of the world vis-a-vis its nuclear programme. We are in negotiations with the Indian Government about that; currently

ongoing," the spokesman said.

"They have, in certain international fora, demonstrated a certain level of responsibility with respect to preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction technology, including nuclear technology. So India certainly is trying to, I would say, enter into a different kind of relationship with the rest of the world than it has previously had on the nuclear issue," Mr. McCormack added.

Promote peace: China

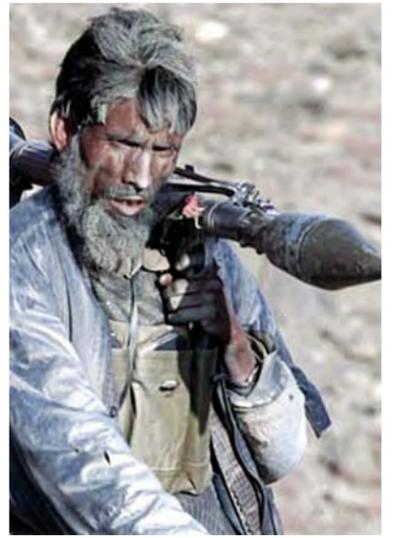
A report from Beijing says that China has urged India to promote peace and stability in Asia after New Delhi tested Agni-III.

"As for the ballistic missile test of India, we have noted the reports," Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said.

He said: "we hope that India, as a country with an important influence in this region, can work to maintain and promote peace and stability in the region."

"We hope they can make a positive contribution in this regard and play a positive role."

(The Hindu)



French hostages' plea

KABUL, April 14: Two French aid workers kidnapped by Taliban in Afghanistan have made a tearful appeal to Paris for help, saying otherwise they will be beheaded and their heads returned to France.

"Please do what they want," said a Frenchwoman who identified herself as Celine in a video CD on Saturday. "Do what they request because they told us that they would kill us. They would, they would cut our head (off) and send it back to France."

Celine and male French companion Eric, working for Terre d'Enfance, were kidnapped on April 5 with three Afghan colleagues in Nimroz province.

The Taliban have not detailed any ransom demands and the French pair did not say what was needed for their release. Terre d'Enfance focuses on education and other projects for children.

The video also shows the three Afghan hostages, named by the French pair as Hazrat, Rasoul and Hashim, crouching and blindfolded, with a man whose face was hidden by a traditional black and white Afghan scarf standing over them with a gun.

Eric, with a light beard and looking drawn, said: "I ask to the prime minister, to parliament, to the president, to answer all the demands of the Taliban. If you don't answer, then we will be killed."

(Dawn, Pakistan)



Agni II missile

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newsfront

Special Offer

SAARC-China dynamics

The bilateral relations of Nepal and China must necessarily address many different concerns and activities



■ Bhaskar Koirala

...Historically speaking Nepal, particularly Kathmandu, as entrepot, had been at the forefront of trans-himalayan commerce for hundreds of years.

The first Ministerial Conference of the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum held in Nadi, Fiji, in April 2006 reveals a pattern to China machinations pertaining to its strategy and commitments to regional forums.

In contemporary times of conflict, terrorism and sharp antagonisms around the world, it is reassuring when states jointly dialogue and pronounce--as China and Pacific Island states did last year--that they are "committed to peace and development through cooperation and that they shall strengthen friendship and mutual trust on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence."

What were some of the 'hard' outcomes of the forum? They would include, among others, the establishment of the China-Fiji Islands Trade and Economic Cooperation Commission, Y121V aircraft lease-purchase contract between China and Fiji, the understanding on CDMA System Cooperation between IPBC of Papua New Guinea and Huawei of China, and the Agreement on Setting up a Floating Fishing Wharf between China and Vanuatu.

At the time China had also extended roughly US\$371 million of preferential loans to Pacific Island countries and provided zero-tariff treatment to the majority of exports to China from these countries. All told, an astonishing 25 cooperation documents were signed by the related parties, laying in the process some concrete groundwork for a conducive implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and serving as a fresh example of South-South cooperation.

Following successful forums held in the Pacific Islands and then in Beijing with African countries, China made its way to New Delhi to participate in the 14th SAARC Summit as an official observer. The great importance that China

appeared to attach to the SAARC forum was demonstrated clearly by the dispatch of China's Foreign Minister, Mr. Li Zhaoxing, to the Indian capital.

The combined population of South Asia and China approaches a staggering figure of 2.8 billion. It is therefore a matter of substantial consequence that China has established institutional linkages with South Asia as an official observer at SAARC. China's steady integration with the South Asian region can be readily appreciated by even a cursory assessment of the level of trade exchange and other noteworthy developments.

In 1990, for instance, trade between China and South Asia stood at approximately US\$1.2 billion, which witnessed a massive increase to US\$12.1 billion by 2003 and registered around US\$20 billion in 2005. India, the largest economy of South Asia, has initiated a very large number of investment projects across China in pharmaceuticals, software, automobile components and IT through some of its leading firms, in much the same way that China is actively investing around India. Suffice to say at this juncture that China's interactions with the entire South Asian region are already varied and deep-seated and by any account the trajectory is expected to climb only upwards.

At the 14th SAARC Summit meeting in New Delhi, China enunciated a comprehensive five point plan for enhanced engagement with South Asia that includes proposals establishing a cooperation mechanism for poverty alleviation and exploring with SAARC the possibility of establishing a China-SAARC regular meeting mechanism on disaster relief and mitigation, and intensifying cooperation in the infrastructure and energy sectors.

Why is Nepal important in the context of

China-SAARC relations? There are many different reasons (some already alluded to) but an important one, historically speaking, is that Nepal--particularly Kathmandu (as entrepot)--had been at the forefront of trans-Himalayan commerce for hundreds of years. The sole formidable barrier of the Himalayas that served to segregate China from the South Asian landmass, was in some sense 'tamed' long ago by Nepalese and Tibetan traders who used mules and horses to traverse terrain that is now very easily passable by macadamised highways and high speed trains.

Contrary to certain assertions that China is attempting nefarious incursions into South Asian space, it must be said that the two regions have always organically been a part of one another and are very natural allies. And that brings us to the present times. Nepal and China must work together to bring not only continuity to history but to utilise advances in technology to attain new milestones and most important of all, to promote cooperation and peace in the tradition of the Buddha whose legacy also served (indeed, continues to serve) to stitch together greater South Asia with China and the larger Central and East Asia.

The bilateral relations of Nepal and China, within the framework of China's engagement with SAARC, must necessarily address many different concerns and activities: the environment, social and economic development, infrastructure, culture and religion, natural resources and energy and so on and so forth. China's great interest to coalesce with regional arrangements is simplified vastly in the South Asian context by its very long organic history with Nepal which should be continuously nurtured and expanded.

(Koirala is a member of the China Study Center Nepal)

April sizzle and February chill

The enfeeblement of the Nepali state in its external relations is only matched by degradation of its capacity for internal governance.



■ Saubhagya Shah

With the fall of the royal authority and the ascendancy of the eight party alliance, there was the real possibility that the broad-based internal unity would be able to lay the foundations of a strong state that would have been able to say no to external diktats, undue influences, and resist subversions that had been crippling this nation in the past. Inexplicably, the new dispensation appears to be more compliant to a new condition of 'shared sovereignty' like never before. Even the seemingly

routine appointments, details, and internal differences have to be deferred to Delhi Durbar's discretion.

Strangely, despite the scale and depth of the historic upheaval last April, the country produced no moral giants to look up to. If anything, the internecine strife proved to be the deathbed of all heroes, both past and present. Our ruined political center stage, littered with the maimed and the cripples, is now dominated by a few tall Firangis and their Desi Baboos as our moral saviors, political adjudicators, and material Messiahs.

The externalising of the moral initiative is perhaps one of the subtlest asymmetry established by the current round of struggle in Nepal. With that task accomplished, the local dispensation can only consolidate as another clientalist regime within the post 9/11

global order.

Such are Nepali paradoxes - domination at the precise moments of liberation. With the proto-nationalists against the wall and the Indocentric formation regaining supreme, Shyam Sharans, Sita Rams, Ian Martins, Lena Sundhs dictate who is minister and who should be prisoner.

They lockup our arms and 'cantonise' the troops. Yet, even in the face of such overwhelming odds, it is surely Gorkhali heroics at its best for some to claim that they just restored national sovereignty and liberated the people! The good thing is with sovereignty as such, we will never know what domination is. And this is precisely what makes the 21st century so unique: empire by civil invitation, not military intervention.

The enfeeblement of the Nepali state in its external relations is only matched by degradation of its capacity for internal governance. Any group that can create enough heat on the streets is now literally getting away with murder.

There is a rush to reward even the outright unfair and illegal demands when it is backed by sufficient degree of public rampage and intimidation while the door of due process is closing on the law abiding citizens. When a reporter recently asked the Home Minister to explain the apparent spike in Bandhs and violence that was paralysing and demoralising the country, the cocky Minister told the journalist to take it all as the beauty of Loktantra - the new found democracy. It is not clear from the dispatch whether the Minister intended it as a sincere article of faith or a stab at dark humor, but he did reveal a gem of an insight. Democracy, after all, is a state

of mind. Not being a physically bounded object but a social construct, it is what we make it to be.

The relative nature of things can inoculate us against the new cycle of cynicism and melancholia seeping back into the national psyche. Apart from the new hegemonic mode and rituals to generate consent, what can the new Loktantra deliver that was not possible in 1950, 1960, and 1990 if the context is the same weak state setting and poor economic base? Comparing our fate with the performance of the West does not do justice to our infant Loktantra, it just sets unrealistic expectations that inevitably come crashing down to fuel riotous despondency.

Instead, focus on the democratic destinies in the broad swathes of Africa, Latin America, and Asia and there is enough room for hope and inspiration. In our own neighborhood, if Bhutan can be idealised as heaven on earth despite its autocracy and ethnic cleansing by no less an authority than BBC and other connoisseurs of Gross National Happiness; and, if India can wear the mantle of being the 'largest democracy' with 300 million people sinking below the poverty line, half-a-dozen insurgencies, and periodic communal and criminal orgies; Nepal certainly has the credential to claim the title of being the highest democracy. Thanks to our generous tectonic protrusion, we need not feel that low after all. So cheer up, New Nepal. ■

(Harvard anthropology Ph.D. Shah teaches at TU.)

Marshland Flowers



■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Having humbly offered marshland flowers to the Master of gods and men (sst deva manushynm), the god of gods (Devadideva) the yogi of yogis, I humbly begin this series on Buddhism. Nepal is the land where the Buddha was born and it was the first country outside India where Buddhism spread. A vast number of Sakyas had become Buddhists at the time of the Buddha himself. However, leaving aside the Himalayan ethnic minority, the vast majority of the Nepalese people, including those who are supposed to be Buddhists by birth, know very little about both the Buddha and Buddhism.

To the vast majority of non-Buddhist Nepalese, the Buddha-legend is based on myths coming from non-Buddhist cultures. So the Buddha becomes an incarnation of Vishnu and that's about all that is known about the Buddha. In this age and era when Buddhism is spreading like wild fire across the seven seas and becoming the talk of the intellectuals across the world, Nepalese intellectuals fumble and mumble about the Buddha being born in Lumbini before their knowledge about Buddhism dries up, whilst the more orthodox try to cull up what other famous Hindu yogis had said about the Buddha – most of which are purely fabricated story, historically unsound and alien to any form of Buddhism around the world.

So, putting the horse before the cart, who or what is the Buddha or a Buddha according to the Buddhists themselves? This story goes back three asankhya kalpas (innumerable eons) ago. There was a powerful yogi with all the siddhi and riddhis called Bhikchhu Sumedha. It is

said that even though he was already a powerful yogi with siddhi – riddhis (miraculous powers) he resolved to make the aspiration (pranidhn) to become a Buddha, in front of the Buddha Dipankara. And that was the starting of the making of a Buddha.

This point is based on the words of the Buddha Sakyamuni himself as recorded in the Jatak which is one of the scriptural texts found in the Tripitaka. The Jatakas are collection of the stories of Sakyamuni's former lives as told by him. Then Bhikchhu Sumedha practiced sadhanas for three asankhya kalpas under many Buddhas like Kashyapa etc. until finally he became a Buddha. Whether we regard this story as mere myth or real, it is the Buddhist version and speaks abundantly about the Buddhist culture related to who or what a Buddha is.

Even if it be considered as only a myth it is the Buddhist myth as opposed to non – Buddhist myths about the Buddha. But myth or not it does tell us a lot about who or what a Buddha is to the Buddhists and about Buddhism. This story says that a Buddha is a sentient being who is the acme of spiritual development, as he was already a powerful yogi when he began his journey to Buddhahood. Thus he is the king of all yogis. Also he is not some kind of a God or incarnation of a God, but rather a human being who started on the long journey to become a Buddha. In the process, the Jatakas tell us he was born many times as Devas like Indra etc, many times as humans etc.

This opens up the Buddhist concept that there is not much difference between the Gods and men and animals in terms of cycle of existence, because the continuity of the same mental continuum can be a Deva at one time and a human at another time. So Devas in Buddhism are not eternally fixed Devas but can die and be born as humans etc. depending upon the Karma they have accumulated. This means Karma is not fixed thing bestowed upon men by some super gods but rather the actions one's own self has perpetrated and the result one's own self has to experience and is changeable by one's ownself.

So a Buddha is not a God come down to help mankind but a person that has reached the acme of spiritual development. That is why he called himself "Sasta deva manushyanam" which means the Spiritual Guru or Master of Devas and humans. Being born as a human, he was a human but having become a Buddha he was no more a mere human, but the Sasta/Guru/Master of humans and Devas in terms of spiritual development. He himself clearly said in the Drona Sutra of the Anguttara Nikaya that he was not a Deva, not a Yakchhya, not a Gandharva and not a human as well.

The Buddha is certainly not a God or an emanation of any God by any Buddhist account but then if he is not a human too what is he? He is a Buddha. What is the meaning of the word Buddha and how is a Buddha different from being a human? *(to be continued..)*

(Sridhar Rana Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

Insight

Counsel of fools or wise?

Will G P Koirala's fate be different? Will he refuse to be a Dhritarashtra?



■ Sushma Amatya

Vidur, the legendary chief advisor of Dhritarashtra (in the epic Mahabharata) always gave the King the right advice even if they were harsh and unpleasant. Vidura kept pleading till the last moment that the King should not be blindly fulfilling Duryodhana's ambition to succeed him at the cost of Pandavas. Whether Dhritarashtra actually ever existed or he only symbolised unbridled or blind ambition on one's part is debatable but the lessons the legends imparted are timeless and from Vidur's example we learn the importance of a good advisors that surround rulers.

This is a pertinent issue worth examining today in Nepal when we are experiencing the brunt of being ruled by rulers who are blind and lacking any advisors true to its name.

The role of advisors has always been held in high esteem since days gone by. Be it the legendary sagas of King Akbar and his wise Minister Birbal or King Arthur and his knights, which were successful examples of visionary rulers who had the wisdom to ask for good advice and the courage to take it when given to them. The important advisory role played by Kalu Pandey during the successful reign of Prithivi Narayan Shah is also not too far off in Nepali history, replete with palace intrigues.

Even in post fifties Nepal, there were advisors to the rulers who dispensed advice worth its weight in gold, based on moral grounds and made with the intention of the general good of the people and the ruler. And such people who contributed a lot preferred to remain invisible, only the impact of their good advice came to be known. K P Bhattarai, himself a scholar of scriptures, followed that tradition when he became the interim Prime Minister in 1991. He appointed Sardar Yadu Nath Khanal as his advisor on Foreign Affairs. Khanal's association with Kings Mahendra and Birendra and formulating in Nepal's foreign policy was not a disqualification for his assimilation in the democratic regime.

A high-quality advisor is selected on the basis of his/her merit, character and credentials. Superior level of knowledge, intellect and absence of ego are other characteristics of a good advisor. An advisor who knows his/her job is willing to get over-ruled on right grounds and not afraid of presenting opinion that goes against the tide. They are not mere employees and who sway with every change in the political weather. When one is fortunate to have a good advisor, it is imperative that the advice dispensed is heeded, or else it becomes mere ritual, a titular post.

These may appear idealistic in present day scenario where in the name of advisors we see people who are self seeking and ambitious to the point of becoming blind to ground realities. Such sycophants are interested more in power concentration, on their personal gains and ignore the common people's plight. In our own context such characters stood between the palace (read King) and the people. What happened to King Gyanendra is his own doing, but one major part of the blame should go to his lack of ability to have advisors who could warn him about the consequences of his high political ambition.

Will G P Koirala's fate be different? Going by over concentration of power unto himself, he is already a King without crown, with all the powers and privileges that Gyanendra held until last year. Will he refuse to be a Dhritarashtra? Very unlikely because there is no Vidur visible around him and clearly, he has not been able to check his ambition.

Unbiased and worthy intellectuals and experts from various walks of life could still play a role. But politicians alone cannot be blamed for the quality of advisors around Prime Ministers and Ministers. In fact, there is a cause for concern not only to see the lack of it but also to see that there is an increasing trend of compromise among the intelligentsia. Most of them appear to be affiliated to one or the other political parties or backed by some unseen powers. Such off the rack intelligentsia are not averse to mortgaging their identities.

Politics here has come to mean mere privilege and power. Sadly, service to the people has begun to sound arcane, idealistic when the very essence of politics is to serve the people one represents. The mad rush for short term gains ends up creating long term suffering for a country and its people. It's there for all to see that the eight parties are neither rooted in the realities nor behaving very wisely.

The urgency of the rulers to be surrounded by the wise and intelligent is all the more pressing as is the necessity of doing away with sycophants. Vidur, the wise advisor signifies not an individual but a system based on truth that works, no matter what age it is. ■



Drugs make a person less aware

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

Why does my friend relapse often?

■ Anup Sunuwar, Galfutar
When an addict tries to quit, cells in the brain that have become used to large amounts of these metabolites are now forced to deal with greatly decreased amounts. Even as the withdrawal symptoms subside, the brain 'demands' that the addict take the drug. This is called drug craving. Craving is a powerful urge and can cause a person to create all kinds of 'reasons' why they should begin using drugs or start drinking alcohol again.

The addict gets trapped in an endless cycle of trying to quit, craving relapse and suffering fear of withdrawal. Since deposits of drug or alcohol in fatty tissues, release back metabolites into the blood stream for years; craving and relapse remain a major cause of concern. Left untreated, the presence of metabolites even on

microscopic amounts cause the brain to react as if the addict has again taken the drug and can set up a cycle of craving and relapse even years after sobriety.

What are the dangers of drug use?

■ Sita Pariyar, Gyaneswor
Drugs numb the nervous system. People use drugs thinking that this could be a solution to get rid of unwanted feeling like sadness, boredom or fear; since drugs appear to block off pain and other unwanted feelings.

In each and every one of us, there exists one huge world of wanted feelings. We experience the world around us through sensory channels such as smell, sight, touch, hearing and taste. These sensory channels are like microphones and camera lens of our mind's video camera that receive the sensations and perceptions we use to handle our environment and function in day to day life.

For a drug user who is used to blocking off unwanted feelings with drugs, any kind of feeling becomes difficult to experience. The person may also act like he doesn't care about anything or anyone around him. Without the inability to sense the environment a person can become a great danger to themselves and others around them.

Drugs make a person less aware of what is going around him. He will become slower, not as quick to think or move or react. So he can get into accidents and other dangerous situations more easily when into drugs. Often, the person isn't aware of this change in himself even though other people may notice it and try to point it out to him.

Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to: newsfront@bhrikuti.com (Your identity will be protected.)

A 'War' for Inclusion

Hispanics seek a role in the new Ken Burns film



Ken Burns

When Raquel Garza watched a short preview in November of the upcoming World War II documentary "The War," by acclaimed filmmaker Ken Burns, she was impressed. "It was very cool, definitely very interesting," says Garza, project manager for the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project at the University of Texas at Austin. The 14-hour series examines the conflict through the eyes of 40 people in four American towns. But Garza's enthusiasm dimmed in a question-and-answer session with Burns and co-director Lynn Novick. When a Navajo veteran asked if Native Americans were included in the film, the directors said no. Garza asked Novick afterward if they'd included Latinos, 500,000 of whom served in the war, by some estimates. The answer, again, was no. "It was just one more thing we would be left out of," she says.

Garza wasn't the only one disappointed. After Hispanic veterans attended other previews of the documentary, the complaints mounted. It didn't help that the series is scheduled to air in September,

Hispanic Heritage Month. The resulting grass-roots protest grew to include scores of Latino organizations and members of Congress. Their demand: that Burns and PBS, which is airing the documentary, incorporate new material in "The War" that reflects the Hispanic experience. Last week the filmmaker and PBS announced that they would shoot new footage about Latinos and include it at the end of each episode or in the breaks. Splicing in new material would undermine the narrative structure of the documentary, they said. But Burns's comments—that the new material would be like "an amendment to the Constitution"—ranked many. "I don't think of the Hispanic community as an amendment to anything," says Sen. Robert Menendez. "An addendum, in my mind, is not an appropriate response."

Latino leaders say they will keep up the pressure. Though several Hispanic groups hailed Burns's proposal as a victory, many continue to demand that the filmmaker re-edit the original documentary. Menendez and Sen. Ken Salazar have called for

a meeting with PBS president Paula Kerger. And this Wednesday, a coalition of Latino groups will brief members of Congress as part of a "Hispanic Patriots on the Hill" event. "We owe it not only to those people who died on those battlefields," says Antonio Gil Morales of the American GI Forum, "but also to the hundreds of thousands of veterans who came home to the same discrimination and segregation that were there when they left."

Burns has seemed surprised by the uproar. "We have been saddened that some organizations and individuals have been upset," he said in a statement. But he clarified that "the film was never meant to be a definitive or comprehensive treatment of the subject." The documentary does feature blacks and Asian-Americans. When Burns and his crew traveled to the four towns in the film, they sought to reach potential profile subjects through historical societies and veterans groups. But, according to a Burns spokesman, no Latinos responded. For its part, PBS has tried "to balance the desire for the inclusion of more content" with the filmmaker's "artistic vision," says John Wilson, the head of programming at the network. He insists that the additional material isn't an afterthought and will become a permanent part of the broadcast, including the DVD set.

Garza says the oral-history project could have furnished plenty of profile candidates. Among the 550 her group has interviewed: William Carrillo, a Los Angeles native who lacked the college degree necessary for the Air Corps cadet program and wrote on his application that he'd attended the "College of Hard Knox." He ended up slipping through anyway and went on to fly 55 B-17 missions in Europe. He was shot down over Berlin, imprisoned in a POW camp in Poland and was eventually rescued in Munich. "All of these guys had fantastic stories," says Garza. Perhaps they'll find their way into a different documentary.

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