Targeting Diplomats

Maoists only confirm US Ambassador’s worst fears.

Maoist leadership has been vehemently defending any attacks, be it verbal or physical on US officials or property, but the one on Ambassador Moriarty and UNHCR Representative, Rahman Rahman at Damak on Friday might prove to be very costly.

The incident also exposes the government of Nepal for its failure to give necessary protection to diplomats serving in the country. Ambassador Moriarty, in company of Rahman Rahman, had gone to the UNHCR office to meet the camp officials after announcing that the US would be giving twenty million dollars to the World Food Programme (WFP) meant for the refugees. “We had no inkling they would pelt stones,” a senior police official told newsfront confirming that the headquarters had prior information of possible black flag demonstration. Embarrassed by the event and the international flak it might attract, Home Minister K P Sharma spoke to the Police Chief asking that culprits be arrested and punished at any cost. The government’s embarrassment only increased since the media representatives, especially the camera persons waiting at the UNHCR office provided detailed accounts with video footages of the violent protest where almost every person is identifiable.

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The local police office, under instruction from Kathmandu, made the first arrest over the incident around mid-night, and three more in the next twenty four hours. But the Foreign Ministry sources anticipate that it would not be considered enough.

Maoists had once even demanded that Moriarty should be recalled for his ‘blatant’ interference in internal politics of Nepal. Subsequently, Maoist Chief Prachanda also made a public statement that the palace was hatching a plot to kill some US officials and put the blame on the Maoists, but when Moriarty challenged him to provide evidence to authorities, he backed out.

It is not yet known whether PM Koirala has taken up the issue with Prachanda since he is in charge of the YCL, but the attack is being condemned by a much wider political spectrum. YCL has many Maoist combatants who are meant to be in the designated cantonments. It also has people like Dilip Maharajan who have publicly acknowledged having killed former Armed Police Force Chief in January 2002.

Incidentally, the Damak attack comes barely forty eight hours after Prachanda asked the YCL leadership to behave responsibly and not do anything that goes against the code of conduct.
Eye-wash
Yet another farce in the name of Inquiry Commission

The commission will have one month to investigate and recommend action against those involved. While the government has secured the consent of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Dilip Poudel, for entrusting the responsibility of the probe to Justice Regmi, other members were appointed by Koirala on recommendation of Home Minister Sultana, the person whose resignation is the pre-condition set by some Madhesi agitation groups. There are clear signs that the commission would be acting under executive, especially under the Home Minister’s guidance and control since at least two of his trusted Home Ministry officials, Shah and Jha have been inducted as the members. Apparently, Shah as Eastern Region DIG may have to face the probe himself since the first killing during the Terai movement took place on January 19 in Lahan. “We will accept only a free and fair probe,” Madheshi Janadhirak Forum leader Upendra Yadav told newsfront over the phone. Secondly, there are fears that continuation of Sultana as Home Minister and Om Bikram Rana and Beaudh Bikas as Police and the Armed Police Chief respectively might influence the course of investigation as the Home Ministry’s handling of the situation has largely been criticised by many parties as one of the principal causes of Terai flare up.

“The composition and conduct of the commission has to be above board,” Minendra Rizal, leader of the Nepal Congress (Democratic) told newsfront. Sultana had suspended the chiefs of Nepal Police and the APF, along with other seven senior officials when the government appointed Rayamajhi Commission to probe into excessive use of force and government money to suppress the movement for democracy that saw loss of 21 lives last year. His argument was that their continuation in the post might influence the course of investigation. The Terai movement has taken a toll of 60 lives so far.

Salvaging Melamchhi
Mahat softens Prachanda

There are still some chances that Melamchhi water project could be saved, but the Maoist Minister Hishila Yami is desperately looking to save her face. And if speculations in the Maoist camps are correct, the Severn Trent International (STI) could well provide her with it, by quitting on its own. Yami did not press for review of the project to Hishila Yami, is a question now to Hishila Yami, is a question for the purpose. Prime Minister G P Koirala asked Yami and other ministers not to speak in favour of or against the Melamchhi project in public for some time and iron out the differences on the matter.

The Maoist flexibility on the issue follows a quiet meeting between Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat and Maoist leaders Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, brokered by congress parliamentarian Amresh Singh on Thursday evening. Mahat is believed to have explained that Asian Development Bank withdrawing from the project as a result of government “defaulting” on the question of awarding contract to STI would mean a lot of international donors blacklisting Nepal. Moreover, exploiting alternatives to STI, the lone bidder for the valley water supply, may result in escalation of the project cost by several million dollars.

The meeting which has been kept a guarded secret so far, saw Prachanda a bit toned down as he assured Mahat that “although we have taken a stand on the matter, I will get back to you after consulting with my party colleagues.” Prachanda had earlier met an ADB representative as well. Prachanda subsequently announced that he is not opposed to ADB and that his party and ADB could work together. Yami not pressing for review of the STI contract related proposal in the cabinet meeting on Friday appears to be the direct result of the Prachanda-Mahat meeting.

“[I]t seems the project will go ahead undeterred now,” Amresh Singh told newsfront. But what happens now to Hishila Yami, is a question being debated in political circles. She has been firmly resisting singing the contract with STI saying, “It is a notorious company chased away from several other countries.” But what comes as a solace to her is the fact that the British government or the embassy have not been pressuring the government here to award the contract to STI.

During a meeting with Finance Minister Mahat last week, Ambassador Andrew Hall is believed to have said he would not advise the STI to insist for the award given the prevailing situation. “If that happens, that would be a great face saving for Yami,” a government official said, adding, that would pave the way for looking at other potential companies.

Army for democracy?
Belatedly, PM sees only virtue in Nepal Army

PM Koirala hardly responded when Maoist Chief Prachanda used his official residence to charge that Nepal Army was nothing but, “a bunch of corrupt and rapists.” A year down the line, with army more concerened then even before, Koirala has now started to sing virtues of Nepal Army. “It is a great army and people need to dispel their wrong impressions about it,” Koirala said while inaugurating a Rehabilitation Centre built by the Nepal Army at khangu Narayan on Friday.

“Nepal Army apart from maintaining law and order, defended country’s integrity in difficult times. It is also committed to defending the fundamental rights and democratic values,” Koirala, who also holds the defense portfolio, said. His torrent of praise of the army comes at a time when not only the Maoists, but his own party ministers have still been treating the army as a tool of “political regression.”

Koirala’s praise comes in the wake of top brass army officials questioning the PM the justification of unilaterally investigating alleged excesses by the ‘Nepal Army’ during the years of conflict, but not that of the Maoists. The government has also been delaying appointing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as pledged by the government and the Maoists through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) way back in November.

TRC is supposed to be investigating excesses committed both by the state and the Maoists during the years of conflict and recommend appropriate actions against the culprits. The Rs 90 million project envisages providing medical treatment and imparting skills and vocational training to army personnel, their families and other civilians to make them economically independent.

“There are questions being asked on whose side Nepal Army stands. The army is present everywhere from roads to hospital construction. All doubts should be eradased about the army now,” he said. Interestingly, there was no participation from the Ministry of Home or other security agencies during the function.
**News Brief**

**YCL rampage**

Young Communist League is not only terrorising and attacking people but also acting like a kangaroo court which Maoists say they have shut down. YCL activists are now giving ‘instant’ justice and imposing penalties that include imposing fine on those they declare ‘guilty’.

On Friday, YCL activists gate crashed at Samata School in Jorpati, and slapped its founder, Uttam Sanjel on face which was seen by the public. The activists also left a notice in the school asking Sanjel to pay Rs 5,700 as penalty to YCL. He was held guilty for defying the school shut-down call by the pro-Maoist teachers. Sanjel, apparently terrified, refused to talk about the incident with newfront.

In yet other glaring examples of YCL highhandedness, its cadres issued written ‘instructions’ to shut down an adult education center in capital’s Manamaju area, but the locals stifled resisted the anti-education dictates of the League.

**Fuel drought**

Fuel shortage hit the country severely last year as a result of political instability and disturbances in the country. The exigency of the moment is to ensure that there is enough fuel to meet the demands of the people. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the fuel crisis is managed in a transparent and equitable manner.

The government has imposed a fuel shortage, which has led to the closure of many businesses and industries. The government should take immediate action to address the situation and ensure that the fuel crisis is not repeated in the future.

**Speaker’s dilemma**

Old loyalty dies hard. That is what is being observed with regard to the leadership of the CPN-UML. The party, which has a long history of internal conflicts, is currently facing a crisis of leadership. Thapa, the party’s leader, has been known for his pragmatic and inclusive leadership style, which has helped the party to stay afloat and grow.

The current leadership crisis is a major challenge for Thapa, as he is faced with the task of bringing the party back to its roots and ensuring that it remains united.

**Unfazed**

Maoris may be terrorists for US Government, but not for Jimmy Carter

Former US President Jimmy Carter has savaged his stateeman’s image at the cost of his own country. But his impending visit to Nepal is likely to surpass all that.

During his three day visit beginning June 13, he is likely to meet Maoist Chief Prachanda, the person who figures as a terrorist in the State Department’s list.

Entertaining a ‘terrorist outfit and its head’ is something normally avoided by those who have held high offices. But as Carter Center here has confirmed that the former President is keen to have a meeting with Prachanda, the embassy’s involvement as such could be restricted to extending courtesies and protocol formalities. It is understood the US embassy will provide administrative and other support for the former President while Carter Center oversees the substance of his visit. President Carter, who frequently has criticized his successors’ foreign policies, may meet the Maoist leadership, even though the Maoris remain on the US government’s terrorist list. While this cannot make the United States government happy, it most likely will not be a surprise either. There has been no word as yet from the embassy here on the visit.

Carter Center has been taking lot of interest on the conflict in Nepal and even wrote to King Gyanendra, way back in April 2002, offering its expertise and services to resolve the conflict. While the Center could not get any response at that time, a team of about a dozen representatives from the Center a couple of months ago, was told by Maoist Chief Prachanda that his party would appreciate a much bigger team of observers from the Center when the election to the constituent assembly takes place.

The team headed by former US diplomat Peter Burleigh was also told that the Center’s team of observers should have at least 80 people, if not more.

Just like week, Carter had criticised British Prime Minister Tony Blair for supporting President Bush on Iraq accusing that the world would be seeing the US differently today if Blair had opposed the war on Iraq, Carter, the US President between 1976 and 1980, has also been meeting Hamas leaders embroiling the US government. Carter visited India as the President in January 1978, but visited Nepal only in November 1985, years after his second bid to the White House suffered a set-back.

He had to cancel his scheduled visit to Nepal in early May following confusion over the tussle between the King and the pro-democracy forces in the country.

**Fuel drought**

Thanks to government’s repeated promises and its appetite for breaking them, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has slashed fuel supply to Nepal resulting in most petrol pumps in the capital running dry.

Even the ones run by army, Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police that have very limited reserves have stopped giving petrol to people who do not belong to their organisations. If the parched tanks are not replenished soon, vehicular movement might just come to a standstill, a Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) source told newsfront.

Commerce Minister Rajendra Mahato said a sum of Rs one billion would be paid to IOC requesting unobstructed supply of fuel to Nepal. The amount constitutes nearly one fifth of the arrears due to the company.

There are clear indications that the government might soon be hiking the price of petrol to around Rs 80 to minimise the loss for its having to buy petrol at a higher price from IOC and selling it at a much lower rate of Rs 67 at present.

**For bright future**

Jyoti Devkota

The 5 day long second edition of Ambition ‘2007’, an exclusive mega education and career expo that concluded Sunday saw more success than last year. More than 8,000 students visited the expo, whereas Raj Pokharel, the coordinator of ‘Ambition’ ‘2007’ said.

In a short span of time, Ambition has established itself as a center catering all career and educational demands of the country. In the expo, more than two dozen educational institutions offered courses ranging from management, medical education, arts to biotechnology and many more.

There were three hundred educational consulates that provided counseling to students for studies abroad. The expo focused on helping students in their college hunt, providing them a forum where they could answer all the queries and questions and where they could find guidance in determining their career.

Apart from academic institutions, over a dozen study and career consultations were present in the expo to help students choose the right field, study and subject. "I am here to find a good institute aboard,” Shova Shrestha said. Every year thousands of students go abroad seeking a bright future. “We are giving free counseling here for those who wish to study in a film school in India” said Sandeep Sharma, General Manager of NILM School of Business in India.

The consultancy services help students prepare for tests like IELTS, TOEFL, SAT and GRE which are important testing methods for gaining admissions in international universities. “We hope this event helped those who were seeking quality education, good jobs and careers,” Pokharel said.
**Editorial**

"Water is life’s matter and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water.”

- Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

**Capital dehydration**

Free flow of water from Melamchi to dehydrated Kathmandu has long been promised but not delivered by governments who have come and gone. A ray of hope sparked when the Melamchi project actually started and the successive government managed to secure commitment from ADB as the lead financier. The royal regime caused many hiccups to the project when the King took an interest in it in a quest for personal vendetta against the then Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba who was sacked and arrested on corruption charges involving the project. Then, the international donors, suspecting that the King’s intentions were not fair, withdrew from the project. It came back only after the seven party government backed by Maoists returned to power last year.

Giving responsibility of distribution of drinking water to the capital to a private company in a fair and transparent manner, as a more efficient substitute to the present arrangement under the government, pending completion of the Melamchi project, was a condition set by the ADB and agreed to by the government. Renewed hopes that the return of democracy would see the people’s thirst quenched, are being belied since Hisila Yami, the Infrastructure and Housing Minister appears to be following the King’s footsteps. She is determined not to sign the agreement for valley water supply with Severint Trent International which won the contract legally. ADB appears all set to withdraw from the project as a result of PM Koirala not being able to honour his own decision. Money that is virtually made by the country defaulter and discredits it internationally.

Minister Yami is right when she says that there should be transparency in awarding of contracts and only companies with reputation of being clean and efficient should be given responsibility of managing essential services. This however has to be a government policy and should not rest on mere whim of a minister. She has to follow certain ways and processes to influence government policy and should not rest on mere whim of a minister. Similarly, dilapidated roads from Dharma Path to Jhochhen and from Om Bahal to Lagan Tole are inconvenient to locals and tourists alike. The government, which is ostensibly sitting on unused funds, should invest on city roads that enhance the image of the localities. While farcical traffic weeks are observed each year, wouldn’t it be a good idea to relocate the hawkers from New Road to Brikuti Mandap so that pedestrians from Om Bahal to Lagan Tole are convenient to locals and tourists alike. The government, which is ostensibly sitting on unused funds, should invest on city roads that enhance the image of the localities.

For instance, take Kathmandu Durbar Square and its vicinity, which has become congested due to traffic, vendors and also has become a frequent platform for political parties. The traffic police have put a ‘no entry’ sign for all traffic towards Hanuman Dhoka area but they cannot enforce this simple rule. Every evening, the square becomes crowded with hawkers and consumers who litter the areas adorning the heritage sites.

**Point to Ponder**

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**Protect forests**

The editorial on timber trade is highly relevant in the present context. Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation, Matrika Yaadav has said that if the Home Minister helped, more and more red sandalwood smugglers could be captured. It has been crystal clear from his remark that the higher-ups including ministers seem to be primarily involved in supporting smuggling of forest products and biodiversity overexploitation.

The Forest Minister’s statement clearly indicates protection of smugglers from high places and a strong nexus between the criminals, police, politicians and others. It is not a new thing. The news of amnesty granted by the government in the past to rhino poachers is still fresh in our minds. Maoists are protecting cartels who are clearing off community forests and smuggling precious natural products like Yanshagumba. Be it Maoists or any parties, there seems sheer negligence on biodiversity related issues.

Sadly, natural resources has been the most neglected aspect in this naturally rich country. High level politicians need to be aware of the value of the forests and biodiversity: and know that if the last tree is cut and the last river is polluted, our survival will be threatened. So, please take protection of natural resources seriously.

B K Dalit, President Team for Nature and Wildlife, Kathmandu

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**Letters**

Lollypop

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

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**Spiritual Corner**

**I celebrate myself**

Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892) was born in the Ward Hills of Long Island, New York. Young Walt, the second of nine children, was withdrawn from public school at the age of eleven to help support the family. At the age of twelve he started to learn the printer’s trade, and fell in love with the written and printed word. He was mainly self-taught. He read voraciously, and became acquainted with Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Scott early in life. He knew the Bible thoroughly, and as a God-intoxicated poet, desired to inaugurate a religion uniting all of humanity in bonds of friendship.

Extracts from Walt Whitman’s poetries:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you... All truths wait in all things, They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it, They do not need the obstetric forces of the surgeon... The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it appears less, It comes on it’s legs behind, It comes from its embower’d garden and looks pleasantly on itself and endorses the world... Man and woman: different entities? I am the poet of the woman the same as the man, And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man... I dream’d in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth, I dream’d that was the new city of friends, Nothing was greater than the quality of robust love, it led the rest, It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city, And in all their looks and words...
Politics of deceit and plunder

Politics of dual standards has already led to many compromises.

Nepal Democracy Forum has been a most watched site for debates on issues that confronts Nepal. The site launched by Nepali youths in the United States to promote democracy often debates on topical issues. An on-going one is whether Home Minister K P Sitaula should resign over the Madhesh issue.

Clearly, the members are divided, with some favouring that he should own the responsibility for killing of more than 60 people in Terai, step down, face a commission of inquiry as per the precedence he created by setting up Rayamajhi Commission - over the killing of 21 people during the movement for democracy last year. Some others ask, why Sitaula and why not the prime minister? And others in his defense ask, will his resignation solve the problem?

Certainly all the questions are valid and have a point. But what is missing in the debate is viewing things in a proper context. What was promised to new Nepal, in the name of Jana-Andolan II, was that we will bury deep in the past, the culture of impunity; that we will have a system of governance where accountability rules supreme; and we will not have a system where certain people would be above the law. That is why the first declaration in parliament said that not only the earnings of the royal family including that of the king for all misuse of power and funds of dual standards has already led to many compromises.

...
With its spectacular panorama of mountains, nature in its vibrant colours, Manang is one of the best travel destinations in Nepal.

Wild, wonderful MANANG
Flying to Manang, you get to view the lower part of the trans-Himalayan region and it is a vision that will stay with you for long. There are 13 villages in Manang, seven of which are in the upper part of the region. When you land at the upper part of Manang, a mere 40 minute flight from Kathmandu, you feel that you have arrived in a new world. The beauty is mind blowing. With its desert like features, villages like Pisang, Ghyaru, Ngawang, Braga, Manang, Tenki and Khangmar look different compared to other mountain villages in Nepal.

No roads go to Manang and there are no regular flights. To reach this unique place, you need to ask Manang Youth society to arrange a chartered flight; and if you are fond of trekking, start walking from Beshisahar, Lamjung. It takes four days to reach upper Manang from Beshisahar and you will walk up from less than 1000 meters height upto 3540 meters. If you want to cross Thorang-la or want to experience the wonderful Tilicho Lake, the highest elevated lake in the world, in the altitude of 4912 meters, by walking from Beshisahar you will acclimatise yourself. Although there is a scheduled flight thrice a week from Pokhara to Humde - the Manang airport that lies at the height of 3300 meters, the Nepal Airlines flights are pretty unreliable.

Ponies are the only form of transport available in Manang. They are seen everywhere in this part of Nepal which is called Nyeshyang valley in local language. Very few people live in Manang and even in the upper parts; the population is not more than five thousand. Every year around 13 thousand tourists visit this part of Manang. As it lies on the way to Annapurna circuit, tourists take this way to cross Thorang-la, one of the most unique passes. BBC has listed the Annapurna circuit as one of the 50 things you should do before you die. The Himalayan range viewed from upper Manang is not in the north as is commonly mistaken. The peaks seen from Manang are Tilicho and Chulu, and you should look southwards to see the views of Annapurna range from upper Manang.

Manang starts from a height of slightly more than 1000 meters and extends up to 7134 meters. The Tilicho peak is the highest part of Manang. But Thorang-la at 5415 meters and Tilicho Lake are the most challenging points while trekking in Manang. The rest of upper Manang is not easy to trek either. When you reach ice lake that lies at 4564 meters, walking up from Braga village, it is easy to give up and go back. At this point, Manang people and people from other parts of Nepal have set their bases to collect Yarchagumba, a rare and expensive herb now much sought after for its aphrodisiacal qualities. They climb up hundreds of meters to collect this herb. It seems climbing up and down the steep mountains for them is no effort at all.

Once at the lake, it feels as if you can touch the Annapurna range. The feeling that you get here cannot be expressed in words. It is heavenly to say the least. Gangapurna Lake, close to Manang Village flows directly from Gangapurna Peak which has religious and spiritual values.

Manang is the land of traders. Called ‘Manangi’ they comprise mainly of Gurung community. Today, almost two thirds of Manangi people do not live here but are settled in Kathmandu, other cities of Nepal, Europe or America. But most of them make it a point to participate in the development of Manang. One sees many bridges, good houses, newly built monasteries and much more to prove it, and which goes to show that Manang is not an undeveloped region.

Best time to visit Manang is March to May or from September to November; but if you want to see Manang aglow with the reddish hue of the fields of flowering buckwheat, you need to choose autumn season. However, flora and faunas of the upper Manang flourish during spring time.

With its spectacular panorama of mountains, nature in its vibrant colours, Manang is one of the best travel destinations in Nepal. The vibrant colors of nature, wild flowers, herbs, tranquil lakes simply take your breath away. Richly endowed, Manang provides you with plenty of opportunities for adventure outdoors.

Gangapurna lake flows directly from Gangapurna peak.
Excerpts from the interview:

about his work with newsfront recently.

Nepali society through self contemplation and raising spiritual awareness naturally imbibed what he strove so hard to

Deen Bandhu believes in adopting virtue and gaining victory over evil. I

literature, Deen Bandhu believes in religion and work.

The home environment was such that I

were shot dead by Maoist assailants in June 2005. I

 died. His friends and co-workers

encouraged me to take on what he left behind.

What does your typical programme look like?

My team consists of three artists, five musicians and one co-worker. In my dis-

courses I talk about the essence of what all religions teach that is useful and applicable to

modern day life. My presentation is such that people can relate to the teachings drawn from scriptures such as the Bhagavat Gita that I

primarily draw from. I link the events in the scripture with real life events, taking one issue at a time and then reach a conclusion as to

how best to resolve that particular issue. The musical presentation, hymns and a character that enact different roles make it interesting

for the crowd.

Do you enjoy doing it?

I thoroughly enjoy it and now I realise this is what I was meant to do. Though it has only been a year that I have begun doing this work, I find tremendous positive changes inside me, especially the growth in my devotion. Now I understand why my father

looked at this challenging work. It is highly satisfying.

What kinds of people attend your programme?

They come from all kinds of background. An interesting difference I have seen is the composition of the crowd. My father usually

had audiences that consisted of about 75 percent of elderly crowd whereas more than 60 percent of my audience is the young people. Perhaps they are attracted to my programmes because I am relatively young.

What inspired you to take on this line of work?

My father was truly committed to serving the society through peaceful means. From the money he raised from religious discourses, he

contributed a lot in areas of health, education, supplied drinking water and built roads. He was highly respected by everyone who knew him and I too was in awe of his personality and work.

The home environment was such that I

naturally imbibed what he strove so hard to

teach, that is peaceful co-existence, develop-
ing moral code of conduct and discipline, adopting virtue and gaining victory over evil. I was very interested in what he did. After his tragic
death, his friends and co-workers

encouraged me to take on what he left behind.

What do you plan to do anything for the young people?

I have observed the need for taking programmes of this kind that is orientated towards the young minds; in its content and presentation. The sooner one is made aware and educated spiritually, the better one’s life becomes. Keeping that in mind, I do plan to reach out to more young people and perhaps one day train some too, to do what I do.

What keeps you going?

My happiness with what I’ve been able to do so far. I am already booked for various programmes across the country for one year. Through the monetary contributions I receive, I contribute to social welfare like my father did. I believe that only when a person finds peace within him/her can a society find peace. Only through peaceful societies can a country find peace. To get that peace, spiritual under-

standing is important. So, if I can help generate that understanding in the people who come to listen to me, it means a lot to me.

You mentioned about your wish to declare your father as a religious martyr?

Yes, I requested the present government regarding that and also sent a petition to the home ministry but no decision has been taken till date. It is sad to see that illegal demands voiced by burning tyres, declaring Bandhs are being tolerated; and valid ones just getting ignored. I believe that renowned personalities who worked for the society, such as my father, who was murdered for no known reason, and whose murderers are not yet brought to book, should be acknowledged. The government should not strive to erase history but should protect it. Significant contributions of any member of the society should not be underesti-

mated.

Does the thought that your life too might be at risk of senseless attacks strike you?

Yes, sometimes. Memories especially of that kind do not fade away so easily. But now, I feel that if my life has to end while doing good work, so be it. Fear will not hold me back from my work.
Thousands rally for ousted Pakistani judge

Pakistan lawyers and opposition party members rallied outside the Supreme Court here on Saturday to support the judge at the centre of a row threatening President Pervez Musharraf’s hold on power.

Chanting “Go Musharraf, go” and “We want independent judges,” the crowd of about 3,000 burst into applause at the arrival of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

Chaudhry, whose suspension by Musharraf on March 9 has triggered violent protests, was  to speak to lawyers and diplomats at the court’s auditorium. Outside, supporters of the country’s mainstream opposition parties waved their colourful party flags and denounced military ruler Musharraf.

Hundreds of police were deployed around the court complex but the crowd remained peaceful, witnesses said.

Chaudhry’s last planned address — in Karachi two weeks ago — was cancelled after his arrival at the local airport sparked savage fighting involving opposing political factions and ethnic groups that left 42 dead. Pro-Chaudhry rallies in Islamabad have previously resulted in angry scuffles between paramilitary troops and protesters outside the Supreme Court, when police were fighting an ongoing legal battle to retain his post.

Munir A Malik, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, told AFP that some lawyers had reportedly been prevented from entering the court for the meeting.

With the threat of new U.N. sanctions looming, senior European officials met Friday with aael official who — like diplomats agreeing to discuss the meeting with The Associated Press — spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks were not public.

Still, they suggested that the meeting was positive in demonstrating a joint effort to try to return to negotiations over Iran’s enrichment program to try to stave off further sanctions — and a potential escalation of the crisis.

The meeting this week moved two aircraft carriers and seven other ships into the Persian Gulf in a show of force. Iran, meanwhile, has detained at least two prominent Iranian-American citizens.

Council sanctions against Tehran, and a European official warned against undue expectations from Friday’s talks.

“It was a stocktaking session,” said the official.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry attending the event. “We have reports that police stopped groups of lawyers from travelling to Islamabad from northwest Pakistan,” he said. “Despite the hurdles we expect a very large number of lawyers to be present. “We know we are doing it at the risk of our lives, facing threats and intimidation from the rulers. This speech by Chief Justice Chaudhry will be historic.”

Musharraf says Chaudhry was suspended for misconduct, but the president’s opponents say he wants to weaken the courts ahead of any legal challenges to his bid to remain army chief past the constitutional time limit of the end of 2007. Musharraf’s dismissal of Chaudhry has become a focal point for disparate opponents of the military regime of the general, who seized power in 1999.

Chaudhry has received rousing welcomes from lawyers and opposition supporters in cities across Pakistan. In his address in Lahore three weeks ago, Chaudhry appeared to issue a direct challenge to Musharraf, declaring the “era of dictatorship is over.”

Musharraf later countered with a rally in Islamabad, where he warned: “Do not challenge us. We are not cowards like you. We have the power of the people.” Chaudhry will talk on “the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary” — a theme at the heart of Pakistan’s current troubles.

Musharraf has blamed Chaudhry and his supporters for the carnage in Karachi, saying that they had politicised the judge’s fate and stoked up tensions.

Two days after the riots, Supreme Court deputy registrar Syed Hamad Raza, who served as Chaudhry’s personal assistant, was killed by gunmen.

(Reuters)

Officials try to defuse Iran nuke standoff

With the threat of new U.N. sanctions looming, senior European officials met Friday with a

suspension in line with the arrangements of the municipal government,” said a spokes-

man with the government of Minhang District in Shanghai’s southern suburbs. An official with the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress confirmed a major reason for suspending the project was the magnetic radiation concerns raised by residents living along the proposed route. “The government is working on the issue,” said the official on condition of anonymity. Approved by the central government in March 2006, the 35- billion-yuan (4.5 billion U.S. dollars) maglev train track was to be 175 km long and trains were expected to reach speeds of 450 km per hour. Many thought the line would be operating by 2010, when Shanghai plays host to the World Expo. The Shanghai-

Hangzhou maglev line would have been the world’s second commercial high-speed maglev track. Shanghai operates the world’s only commercial maglev system on a 30-km run between Shanghai’s financial district and its Pudong airport. “The petition office told us early this month that construction and all the plans to relocate residents (along the route) had been suspended,” said a resident in Xuhuagang township in Minhang. “We had been looking forward to this.” The 28-year-old expectant mother, began to petition in March, shortly after

she learned the maglev route was to run through her community. “I was worried the radiation could harm my baby.” The planned maglev route was to be separated from communities along the route by a greenbelt only 22.5 meters wide, although a blueprint at the local government indicated a protection belt 150 meters wide would be built on either side. German specifications require a 300-meter freeway on both sides of the track. The local government has been under huge pressure over the past months, with crowds of petitioners knocking at their doors every day as thousands of complaints were received online. The Minhang District government alone received more than 5,000 petitions in a single day in March. According to the designer’s blueprint, the new maglev route would have run southwest from the existing maglev station in Shanghai’s financial center. It was to then pass the Shanghai World Expo venue and cross the Huangpu River to the Shanghai Southern Railway Station.

(www.chinavisit.cn)
Lacking necessary observance of the rule of law, a nation turns itself into a domicile of the lawless. Be it an existing independent country or a newly established nation, constitution is the primary source from which the people obtain everything else including their fundamental rights. The nature and scope of the political, economic and social systems are all embedded in the constitution. In order to make it operational, judicial and legislature play a critical role.

In most countries today, practicing democratic governance, which is supposed to give highest regards to fundamental human rights, among others, rule of law is an essential component which makes the system work. At a time when Nepal needs to build on the rule of law for the establishment and sustenance of a new Nepal, the situation today appears to be exactly opposite.

Nepal’s interim constitution, worked out after a long and arduous exercise among political parties of different ideologies, is the sole basis of governance for Nepal in today’s context. Until a new constitution is approved by the members of the Constituent Assembly, which is to be created after the CA elections in near future, Nepalis, despite their differences, must abide by the interim constitution that they have approved.

Attempt to introduce new provisions to the constitution by the framers themselves, within a short span of less than one year, looks out of place. What is highly dangerous is the manner in which certain political groupings are trying to persuade the interim government with their demands. Violent protests, regular disruption of business, taking law into their own hands by groups associated with legal political parties and members of government, and the ongoing extortions, threats and violence are taking a high toll on Nepal’s newly found freedom.

Important tasks remain unattended owing to postponement of the meetings of the parliament. In spite of some indications that the CA polls will be held sometime in November of this year, delay in its announcement is causing a lot of anxiety and unrest.

Current exhortations of CPN-UML chief for persuading the existing body of election commission for failing to hold the CA election in time is a classic example of Nepali propaganda. The existing body of the election commission, the only organ that can provide legitimacy to the ongoing elections of the CA, was nominated by the government and its appointment confirmed only after the parliament went through its public hearing process. The election commission has been clearly stating that it cannot proceed further in the absence of necessary legislations to be enacted by the parliament.

The recently registered proposal of CPN-Maoists also demanded immediate integration of PLA members into Nepal Army, writing off all debts of farmers, postponement of all decisions regarding nation’s water and natural resources until the CA, besides declaring Nepal as a republic. All of the demands put forth by the Maoists, even if they were within the bounds of the interim constitution, would require careful analysis, timely preparations and suitable conditions for execution.

Humiliations suffered by top civil personnel such as the governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, prevented from attending a regional meeting in Bangladesh, reflect that the present government is yet to find its standard bearings. The recent grilling of the governor of the central bank of Nepal not only damages the prestige and dignity of the central bank but also raises an all important question with regard to independence and credibility of our national level institutions.

A series of questions arise with the implication of the central bank governor on the charges of unlawful transactions for suppression of the April uprising. First and foremost, it has to be clear whether the governor of central bank acted beyond his authority provided by law. If so, was he a party to the group that tried to suppress the uprising? It would be difficult to assume that the functionaries of government, central bank, and all other institutions are anti democratic in nature and acted against the law.

If so proven, all of them must be fired without any delay. Furthermore, there are departmental provisions under every ministry, and the central bank would have necessary provision to sanction its staff, including the governor, for misconduct or illegal actions.

The CIAA (Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Authority) need not have waited for referral from the Rayamajhi Commission to start investigation and take appropriate actions against the high official of the Central Bank, which clearly falls under its jurisdiction. Tampering with established standards of rules and regulations is no less harmful than non-abiding of law.

(Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)
To study the tenets of Vajrayana

Till the 12th century, Tibetans came down to the hot plains of India. Till then, 75% of Indian subcontinent and 75% Asia was Buddhist. From the time of the Buddha and especially from the 1st/2nd century till the 11th/12th century, when the Vajrayana form of Buddhism was in sway, Buddhist art, philosophy and logic developed to its fullest potential. It can certainly be said that it was the golden period of Indian culture as a whole and Indian Buddhism specifically. This was also the period when, as a result of interaction with Buddhism, Hindus also developed to its full. It will be remembered that Sankaracharya who is considered as the cream of Hinduism by an overwhelming majority of the Hindus, was a product of the 7th/8th century and many ancient Hindu like Bhaskaracharya etc even called him Prajnaparamita (wisdom) of (Buddhist). Why did these Hindu pillars call Sankaracharya a crypto-Buddhist? This is not because he, quite often, tarried with the sects like the Jains and the Buddhists.

In the 11th century, Dharmakirti literally changed the logical system of the Indian subcontinent with his Buddhist logical tenets. Another big confusion is that the Buddhist Tantra was a result of the influence of Hindu Tantra on Buddhism. But the famous Indian iconographer Banabhatta who has simply proven it is the other way round. Hindu Tantra developed after Buddhist Tantra (Vajrayana) reached its acme in the Indian subcontinent. One of the oldest Hindu Tantric literatures the Pitru Tantra also called the Rudrayamala and the Brahmayamala clearly states that Vasistha went to Mahachaha (Tibet) to study the Tantric methods with Shivarupi Buddha. Till the 12th century, Tibetans came down to the hot plains of India to study the tenets of Vajrayana in the great learning houses like Nalanda/ Bodhishrastra etc. This means this oldest Hindu Tantra was written after the 12th century and not before. It was written after Vajrayana vanished from India after the Islamic invasion. Although Hindu Tantra developed as a result of the influence of Vajrayana on the entire subcontinent, the two are only apparently similar. A deeper probe into both of them exposes a tremendous difference not only of the paradoxes on which each is based but also on the principles on which each is based, the path followed by each and the final goal of each. The entire Hindu Tantric systems are themselves diverse: some based on Shakti, others on Shiva and some on Visnu. The objective of most of them is to unite with the deity and finally attain Brahma. Parasamvih and Sambhava developed as the dualistic Tantras, they are all varieties of Advaita Vedanta where other names substitute the Brahma of the Vedanta. Most of them are geared towards the realisation of the eternal unchanging self called the Atma in the entire Hinduistic system. Now the whole of Buddhist Tantra is geared to the realisation of emptiness (Sunyata) which is a subtle form of Anatma. (To be continued...)

"(Sudhir Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)"

Alcohol is often a cause of death

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

My cousin suffers from convulsions even though he has been drinking alcohol. Why is that?

Ram Dixit, Jakhelwah

This symptom is called Delirium Tremens. It is an acute episode of delirium that is usually caused by withdrawal or abstinence from alcohol following habitual excessive drinking especially when the person does not eat enough food. DT can also appear after a rapid reduction in the amount of alcohol being consumed by heavy drinkers. It only occurs in individuals with a history of chronic, long-term alcohol consumption. It may also be triggered by head injury, infection, or illness in people with a history of chronic alcohol use of alcohol. DT typically manifests about 16 to 24 hours after discontinuation of alcohol consumption, but can appear two or three days after stopping drinking. The main symptoms are confusion and agitation. Other common symptoms include intense hallucinations such as visions of insects, snakes or rats. These may be related to the environment, e.g., drawings on wallpaper that the patient would perceive as giant spiders attacking them. DT hallucinations are primarily visual. It can sometimes be associated with severe, uncontrollable tremors of hands and feet and secondary symptoms such as anxiety, panic attacks and paranoia. DT is a severe form of alcohol withdrawal that can lead to death and severe mental or neurological changes. It is most common in people who have a history of alcohol withdrawal, especially in those who drink a heavy dose every day for several months. It also commonly affects those with a history of habitual alcohol use or alcoholism that has existed for more than 10 years.

How does alcohol affect my teenage children as also my drinking?

Saurav Bista, Baluwatar

Knowing and recognising symptoms of alcoholism is an important step toward seeking treatment before alcohol abuse progresses to alcoholism. Early intervention is particularly important to prevent alcohol dependence in teenagers. Alcohol use among teens increases dramatically during high school years, and reaches its peak in the late high school years for serious consequences for many teens. Each year all over the world, alcohol-related automobile accidents are one of the major causes of teenage deaths. Alcohol is often a cause of teenage deaths besides drowning, suicide and homicide.

Teens who drink are more likely to become sexually active, have sex more frequently and engage in risky, unprotected sex than those who don’t drink. For young people, the likelihood of addiction depends on the influence of parents, peers and other role models, susceptibility to advertising, how early in life they begin to use alcohol, psychological need for alcohol and genetic factors that may predispose them to addiction.

You can help prevent teenage alcohol use by setting a good example with your own behaviour and attitude towards alcohol use. Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to: newsfront@bhrikuti.com (Your identity will be protected).

Hawkers overtaking space meant for walking is nothing compared to the marathon of spitting, urinating even defecating around the corners that is visible for all to see. Through road garbage out on the streets, in rivers or in your neighbour’s yard is yet another popular example of uncivilised behaviour indulged in by many once the sun sets. ‘Forgetting’ to flush the toilet even where water is plentiful is another gory evidence of gross lack of sensitivity towards others.

That freedom and democracy come hand in hand in responsibility, respect for others’ rights and is closely intertwined with a code of conduct and self discipline has apparently not been understood by most of us. This ignorance leads to friction between individuals, disharmony in society; it can also get distorted, be dangerous and self destructive in the long run.

Civil societies in our country appear partial to political affairs only. They need to understand that major political issues arise out of seemingly simple, harmless and thoughtless acts of individuals which is not only to be far sighted and spot such irregularities and act on them through individual and collective efforts than wait for it to grow out of proportion – before treating it as an issue. Politics is just one aspect in peoples’ lives; there are other equally important and serious issues that impact on their well being.

Pointing fingers at top policy levels or down at the masses is easy but it does not solve the problem. Being aware of these behind the scenes and thus making the necessary positive changes is as important as watching how your family behaves and influencing them to cultivate a sense of responsibility and develop respect for other citizens. At the same time, the importance of keeping social order and polishing civil sense need to be realised at the policy levels whereby effective rules and regulations could be specified and endorsed. To create a civilised nation, it is important to learn to be civil to each other first.
Sparks Wins 'Idol'

The best days may still be ahead for Jordin Sparks, but the same may not be said for “American Idol.” The 30.7 million people who watched Sparks win on Wednesday was a sharp drop from the 36.4 million people who saw Taylor Hicks in last year’s finale, according to Nielsen Media Research.

Industry observers said chances are that the 2006 season will stand as the peak for audience interest.

A lackluster pool of contestants, the general malaise among viewers this spring and the simple laws of TV gravity are all factors.

“People are getting tired of it,” said Marc Berman, an analyst for Media Week Online. “I know I am.”

Mind you, most TV shows would kill for this kind of “bad news.” The Fox phenomenon was still TV’s most popular program this season. Barring a major surprise, it likely will be again next year.

Fox executives cautioned against counting “Idol” out. For the season as a whole, “American Idol” ratings will be slightly down or even identical to last year, when DVR viewing is taken into account. To some degree interest is driving by the personalities involved, and a whole new cast of characters join next spring, said Fox’s Scott Gorgen.

This year’s finale compares to the 30.3 million who watched in 2005, and 28.8 million in 2004. The showdown between Clay Aiken and Ruben Studdard in 2003 attracted 36 million viewers, Nielsen said.

For the first half of this season, ratings outstripped last year. When water-cooler favorite Sanjaya Malakar was voted off in April, much of the interest left with him.

“The competition down at the end didn’t have the excitement that it had in years past,” said Tim Brooks, author of “The Complete Directory to Prime-Time Network and Cable Television.” “It’s kind of a rehash to viewers.”

Producers have tweaked the show each year to keep it fresh, this season adding a songwriters’ contest and charity drive for those starving in Africa. In past years, famous musicians were brought in to work with the singers.

Coke Found in Lohan
DUI Investigation

In a press conference this afternoon about the arrest of Lindsay Lohan, cops say they found a “usable amount” of a drug at the scene, which they say was cocaine. Lt. Mitch McCann of the Beverly Hills Police Department would not say where the drug was found, but it was “not on her person.”

Police told that 20-year-old Lohan and two other adults were in her 2005 Mercedes SL-65 convertible when she lost control and crashed into a curb and trees in Beverly Hills around 5:30 AM. After the crash, police say Lohan got into another car and was driven to Century City Hospital where she was treated for minor injuries that involved “something to her upper chest area.” Police said the two other people in her car were not hurt.

Officers received a 911 call about the accident and “tracked Ms. Lohan to the local hospital, where she was ultimately placed under arrest” for investigation of misdemeanor driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Lt. McCann said if it appeared as if Lohan was speeding and lost control. Lohan was cited and released and will have to face a judge.

A rep for Lohan could not be reached for comment.

(www.TMZ.com)