



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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Maoist chief Prachanda at the stage in a public meeting in Gorahi, Dang. See Prachanda's interview on page 6 & 7

## Post GPK politics?

Nepal's politics and power without GPK is much closer than many think

■ Special Correspondent

Who after G P Koirala? It is an issue not debated publicly but a section of the Congress and Maoists seem to be maneuvering their way to such an eventuality. And going by their quiet preparation, Nepal's politics and power without G P K is much closer than many think.

That is the reason the Maoists are not only pestering the Prime Minister to 'decree' inclusion of a Maoist leader as the first Deputy Prime Minister in the interim cabinet, but also insisting

who the Congress should hand over the Defense Ministry to. Prime Minister G P Koirala shared his predicament, almost helplessly, with at least three politicians including the Speaker of the Interim Parliament, insiders told newsfront.

Maoists eyeing the first deputy prime minister's post, something which has not been discussed in the 8-party meeting, only indicates they are positioning as legal and constitutional successor as the Prime Minister, when G P K is

out of the scene. The status of his health condition is not known but there are intense speculations that he survives on steroids, and he himself has shared the fragility of his health quite often, saying, "my last wish is to see the success of the peace process".

The interim constitution has the provision that in case there is a vacancy to the Chief Executive's post, following resignation or

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demise, it will be filled by the senior member of the cabinet taking over.

But Koirala has been told very clearly by the diplomatic community unanimously that Maoists need to reform themselves to qualify to be a part of the interim Government. In yet another smart move, Maoists are also believed to have told Koirala that in the event K P Sitaula is removed as the Home Minister, Defense Ministry should go to him. Nepal army fears that

Sitaula's taking over as the Defense Minister would not only demoralize the Nepal Army, it will be the surest way to dismantle the institution. "Yes, this is what has been worrying the Prime Minister for some time and only the international community has come to his rescue at the moment. The UML and the Congress (Democratic) have unfortunately been taking ambivalent stance on this as they do not want to

displease the Maoists," an aide to the Prime Minister told newsfront.

Formation of the interim Government has been delayed by more than two

months now. While Koirala awaits verification of Maoists' arms, separation of the combatants from arms and installation of CCTV, alarm and other monitoring devices in cantonments where Maoist arms and guerrillas are lodged, Maoists are facing added pressure to 'behave' and reveal total number of weapons as the figure of odd 3000 was not believed as credible by the international community and the political parties. ■

'Stalemate delays Interim Government' on page 2

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Newsfront

# Stalemate

‘Let honesty prevail in what we have said and promised to do in the past.’

■ **Special Correspondent**

Authoring a new political line serves no purpose if past commitments are not honored in letter, spirit and action, said Prime Minister G P Koirala, albeit sternly to two of his regular guests—Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai—at his Baluatar Durbar on Saturday.

Koirala then left for Maharajgunj to

have lunch with his sister in law, Sushila Koirala. Before he left, he instructed the Maoist leaders and senior members of the Congress Working Committee to, ‘let honesty prevail in what we have said and promised to do in the past.’

PM’s disapproval of the conduct of the Maoists—in the face of international pressure that they should not be inducted in the interim

cabinet if they do not behave—has apparently triggered a chain of political reactions. The Congress Working Committee on Sunday asked the Maoists to stop violence and intimidation, immediately return forcibly captured private property and make credible the disclosure of the arms they have.

“We have made our points loud and clear. Maoists entering the Parliament with arms is reason enough for us to suspect they are serious about the peace process and eligible at this stage for entry into the interim cabinet,” a prominent member of the committee said.

Arjun Narsingh K C, another member said “we are for their early entry into the cabinet, but the Maoists need to be honest regarding the agreements made”.

The UML in what appeared like a wishy-washy approach asked for a joint meeting of the eight parties to decide on the issue of forming interim cabinet, but tried to put the blame on Prime Minister for delay in its formation. “The interim Government needs to be formed immediately and the date for the constituent assembly declared”, UML said after the meeting of its Central Committee on Sunday. But it was still silent on whether the international community and the Congress were wrong in putting pressure on the Maoists to behave, to qualify as a partner in the Government.

Maoists clearly on the defensive, specially in the wake of its cadres going on rampage in Kopundole and in Nepalgunj and then apologizing in public for attack on its rivals, only sees conspiracies in delay over the formation of the interim cabinet.

“Then let’s declare a Republic in the House now”, Prachanda told Koirala during his 10-minute meeting on Saturday. “That’s something we should consider later after you have fulfilled your pledges and commitments”, was how the PM responded, a source in the PM office told newsfront.

According to the sources, the Maoists are also considering to have Baburam Bhattarai installed as the Deputy Prime Minister instead of Krishna Bahadur Mahara as speculated earlier. ■

# Appointing finally!

■ **Newsfront correspondent**

After almost a year’s gap, appointing ambassadors seems to be the Government’s priority now. Nepal will have its ambassadors appointed to at least 14 countries within a week’s time. It can be done now as “we have Parliament’s foreign affairs committee in place”, K P Oli, Deputy Prime Minister who is in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said.

Many factors delayed it, and not having the Parliamentary committee to confirm or reject the appointment was the main one, he told newsfront. He refused to shoulder the responsibility for delay in the appointment of ambassadors, and the resultant invisibility of Nepal in the international arena, mainly in the friendly countries.

Oli said, “I was criticised for the delay but not spared when we took the process forward in consultation with the ruling coalition as well as with the Maoists.” Oli blamed them, including his own CPN-UML for double-talk. “And the damage to the national interest because of the delay in appointing ambassadors is far less than projected in the media and political circles”. He was particularly upset with the Maoists and some parliamentarians from his own party for not cooperating and denied that the PM’s illness had anything to do with the delay.

The Deputy PM claimed that Nepal’s friends understood the predicament and problems of the Government and, “every embassy has subordinate staff representing the country in an effective manner”.

Although the list of nominees for the ambassadorial position has drawn people from different political parties and career diplomats, Shital Niwas sources say that the ministry will be grossly understaffed once all work is done and officials currently attached to different missions return home. “We will have about 24 officials retiring and a few new ones will be posted abroad leaving us with far less people working in the already understaffed ministry,” sources said. ■



Deputy Prime Minister Oli

Braswor Ojha

■ **Newsfront correspondent**

Sun Heping’s 3-year tenure as China’s ambassador to Nepal has seen the northern neighbor’s fluctuating position vis-à-vis Nepal’s politics. On Saturday, Heping delivered a strong message which Maoists would not be taking very kindly to.

Almost echoing the international chorus, he said Maoists need to give proof of good behavior to qualify themselves to be part of the Interim Government. The ambassador who is to leave for Beijing by the end of this week, two months in advance, conveyed China’s disapproval of Maoist behavior when he paid a farewell visit to Prime Minister G P Koirala at Baluatar.

He was however positive in his response to the peace process and said it has moved ahead satisfactorily. Reiterating China’s consistent stand, he said China always stood by Nepal’s sovereignty and integrity, and appreciated Nepal’s policy on Tibet and Taiwan, Dr Suresh Chalise, Foreign Affairs advisor to the Prime Minister told newsfront.

# Friendly discard

“We welcome Maoists joining the interim Government, but they need to reform their conduct and behavior”, Heping said.



“We welcome Maoists joining the interim Government, but they need to reform their conduct and behavior”, he said, endorsing what U S Ambassador James Moriarty and Indian

Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee have been telling the PM more stridently.

Heping came to Nepal in the second half of 2002 when King Gyanendra had taken

executive powers and began ruling with nominated Prime Ministers since October 2002 clearly with the endorsement of the International community that included U S, U K, India and China. While the first three went against the king openly, following his total takeover in February 2005, China continued to support the king, something that Mao Dze Tung and the successive leaders did without any break. Indications of China trying to establish contact with Maoists was visible some six months ago, when a Chinese expert on Nepal, Dr Wang, with substantial clout on the country’s policy on Nepal, said in an interview that China has never called the Maoists ‘terrorists’.

Ambassador Heping welcoming the peace process shows a certain degree of optimism that Maoists will behave. But it is also a clear message that China is in no hurry to befriend the Maoists as feared by some in international quarters, that with the monarchy almost on the verge of losing its traditional clout, China might be cultivating the Maoists to expand its presence. ■



Pics by Bird Conservation Nepal



**This innovative service is an emergency measure to save vultures. According to environmentalists, due to the veterinary drug Diclofenac, three vulture species of Nepal, India and Pakistan are on the verge of extinction.**



After the success of the first 'organic restaurant' set up for endangered vultures, Nepali ornithologist Dr. Hem Sagar Baral and his colleagues are all set to expand their venture. The team started its first endeavor in Kawasoti, Nawalparasi district. Run with the support from the local community, the 'restaurant' serves its customers toxin-free meals. In its kitchen that is 520 square meters large, skin is removed from dead cows and the meat served in an open field by the banks of a river.

Dr. Baral told newsfront that the second of its kind would be opened soon in Bardaghat, Nawalparasi with the help of Swarnim Community organization. "We will open restaurants near Bardiya National Park, Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and in Dang District."

This innovative service is an emergency measure to save vultures. According to environmentalists, due to the veterinary drug Diclofenac, which is used to treat inflammation in livestock, three vulture species of Nepal, India and Pakistan are on the verge of extinction. The chemical contamination of

cattle carcasses which the birds feed on has been killing them.

Dr. Baral says, "Diclofenac is responsible for over 90 per cent mortality of the Slender-billed, White-backed and Long-billed vultures in Indian sub-continent." To save these birds, the team in Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) started this project to provide Diclofenac-free carcass to vultures.

The local management committee with the help of BCN buys old and weak cattle and takes care of them in the farm until their final days. A herder has been employed to feed and take care of the cattle. If an animal falls ill, it is treated with Meloxicam, a newly introduced vulture-friendly drug. When the animal dies, its skin is removed and the carcass is carried by a rickshaw and left in the open for vultures to scavenge on. Removal of skin makes it much easier for the birds to feed on.

Cattle given Diclofenac before they arrived in the farm take a week to detoxify. If the Diclofenac-treated cattle die before the passage of a week, it is made sure that the animal is buried. Dr Baral is excited by the success of the project, "Whenever they see the rickshaw, they

started to fly towards the field," says Dr. Baral, "We have counted up to 100 vultures of several species that have visited the field in Kawasoti."

Another ornithologist, Rajendra Narshing Suwal says that the system also serves to restore the Hindu tradition of leaving old and dying cows in Gaucharan (traditional pasture land for cows). "They used to leave old and dying cows in Gaucharan so they could die peacefully. It used to be good food for the vultures."

"The tradition of keeping large number of cows for religious reasons is also vanishing," says environmentalist Dr. Mukesh Kumar Chalise, "people in the Terai are selling old and dying cows to Indian traders, who smuggle it to Indian State of West Bengal for consumption, thereby creating a shortage of food for the birds."

Dr. Baral differs, "we have the capacity of keeping 80 cows, but we could not find more than 21 in the recent past," he says "shortage of food is not killing vultures, it is Diclofenac. It caused more than 95 percent decline in the population of vulture during the last 15 years. If 5 out of 1000 carcasses are contaminated with this drug, this situation arises."

Lab analysis of dead vultures concluded that

Diclofenac, widely prescribed by veterinarians to treat livestock in Nepal, India and Pakistan was indeed the culprit. When vultures feed on cattle carcass treated with the drug, they die of kidney failure within a week.

Some environmentalists doubt the sustainability of this project. But Dr. Baral says with confidence, "from each cow skin we earn 200 rupees. We also produce compost fertilizer, which is becoming popular among the locals. In addition, we are planning to build a watch-tower and visitor center, which will generate some funds to sustain these feeding centers."

BCN is also campaigning to clean up Diclofenac from the market. After a massive campaign against the drug, the Government of Nepal banned the import and production of Diclofenac. On 6 June 2006, the Government banned the import and production of the drug but not its sale. Thus Diclofenac is openly available in the market. "That means the vultures are still in danger," says Dr. Baral, "We have already bought Meloxicam worth 200,000 rupees in exchange with Diclofenac." The campaign goes on. ■

# Serving big birds

■ Rajesh Ghimire



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# Practice, don't preach

A democratic government is bound by its duty to protect the rights of its people, their freedom and dignity. In an ideal situation the human rights situation of a country should not be measured by lesser number of people dying in the country or by smaller number of human rights violations. A government that upholds the sanctity of true democracy holds itself accountable to a single death of its citizen or a single case of violation of its citizen's human rights. This is the expectation of the people from their elected government that ought to jealously guard their human rights.

That the government would stoop so low as to target political vendetta towards its citizens without any logical and legal explanation is not what any citizen would expect. But this is exactly what has happened in the country where human rights have been grossly violated and its norms ignored. The government appears to be clandestinely conspiring against a number of people who had supported the royal regime, by suppressing their movement. The restriction on their travels out of the country took place without their knowledge and minus any reasons.

A former Home Minister was arrested and detained twice till the Supreme Court intervened and had the person freed. Another ex-minister was forced to leave the plane he had boarded as a bonafide passenger. The former Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista is believed to have been 'advised' by the highest authority to not to leave the country when he was invited to China; and another former Prime Minister Tulsi Giri also seems to be one of those on the list who are barred from freedom of movement. No reasons have been given for this restraint as law would demand. This restriction on one's fundamental rights appears no different from constraints on speech and movement practiced during the royal regime. In fact, it's much more glaring crime when it is brazenly committed by a Democratic Government.

The government cannot escape its responsibilities towards its citizens, to people who participated in the pro-democracy movement, the UN and the international community. Once committed to democracy, it becomes answerable to any of its actions. Core values of democracy are the guiding principles that keep a government on the right track. Our government needs to act on it conscientiously. The public is increasingly getting disillusioned with the government that appears inflated with rhetoric and fails to follow it up with actions. ■



## Letters

### Voices of minorities

Newsfront, the newcomer in Nepalese print media has an excellent coverage of current political development, news and opinion/editorials. It has maintained its professional and journalistic ethics and values. In my perception, newsfront is free from any corporate interests. I think it should focus also on economics, voices of the minorities, art, literature, music, sports and entertainment issues.

**Bhim Bhurtel**  
 Social analyst  
 Maitidevi, Kathmandu

### Professional outlook

In newsfront, I find the pictures really touching and symbolic. Nepali Media generally suffers from the hunger of publicity rather than concentrating on actual analysis of event and building positive attitude for the welfare of nation. I feel newsfront is different from that kind of competition. In issue 5: Who killed my father, Ethnic time bomb, Spiritual corner, and Revelation were outstanding.

In the garbage story, it would have been better if medical waste management which is highly responsible for transmission of diseases, was explored.

**Dr. Rabindra Pandey**  
 Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Its own identity

Contents and coverage of newsfront is touching. Its simplicity in language and in-depth reports makes it very reader-friendly. The layout and pictures also look good. Newsfront has created a different identity due to its diversity in subject matter and effective team work.

**Dr. Shanker Sharma**  
 Economist

### Polish appearance

As long as you are guided by the principles of innovative and investigative journalism and clear on your objectives, you will certainly do well. Of course, the quality of a publication is judged by its contents not by its physical appearances but sometimes, appearance also counts to attract the masses.

You could still improve in terms of photography, layout and printing quality as well. The masthead doesn't seem to match the sentiments of the serious and intellectual readers. It seems to be little younger. The rest is perfect. Congratulations and best wishes on your maiden venture.

**R. P. Mainali**  
 Chief, Corporate Communication & PR Office  
 Chaudhary Group

### Dream on

Can you imagine a world without dreams or a world where you are not allowed to dream? What kind of a world that would be if you were one of those forbidden to dream because of race, religion, sex, ethnic background or caste. It would be a dark, gloomy, frustrating, unjust and cruel world.

The people of this country are beginning to dream. The shackles on their minds are beginning to loosen. Now that they are dreaming, are they fully awake? Let the light shine through and the sun shine on all. Let them dream of becoming anyone or anything. Let this country be where dreams come true. But will the present power holders share power with the people or will they retain their grip on it and allow only a handful to dream? Your paper should do its best to encourage the dreamers and expose those who crush dreams.

**Sibyl Solomon**

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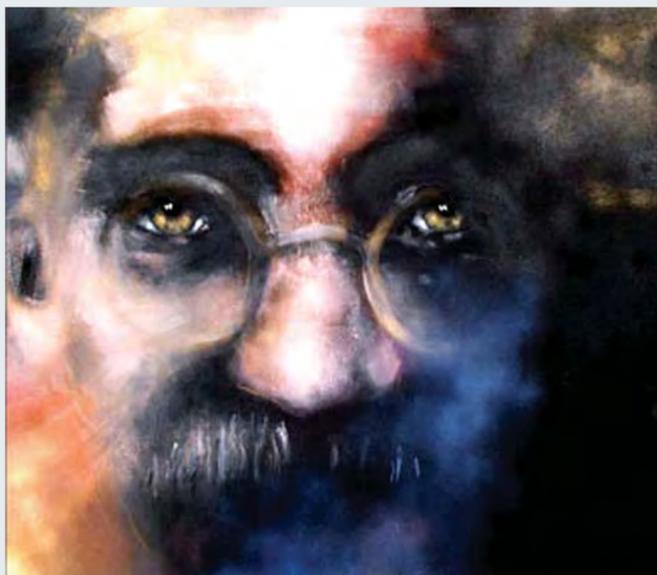
## Spiritual Corner

# Gandhi's words

### Non-violence as a World-force

True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated ahimsa.

Non violence is the most harmless and yet equally effective way of dealing with the political and economic wrongs of the downtrodden portion of humanity. I have known from early youth that non-violence is not a



cloistered virtue to be practiced by the individual for peace and final salvation, but it is a rule of conduct for society if it is to live consistently with human dignity and make progress towards the attainment of peace for which it has been yearning for ages past

### Truth in Speech and Non-violence

To say or write a distasteful word is surely not violent especially when the speaker or writer believes it to be true. The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word or act, i.e. an intention to do harm to the opponent so-called.

False notions of propriety or fear of wounding susceptibilities often deter people from saying what they mean and ultimately land them on the shores of hypocrisy. But if nonviolence of thought is to be evolved in individuals or societies or nations, truth has to be told, however harsh or unpopular it may appear to be for the moment

(Extracted by [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org))



Phropets armed: Maoist guerrillas in mass meeting in Nepalgunj

# Deterrorise Parliament



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Parliament, an august forum of people's representation, can best function in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear. That members should not feel coerced to express their views was possibly the idea behind certain democracies, like in the United States that dispensed with the practice of parties issuing whip to its members. It is unthinkable for members to have to discharge their duty as law-makers under threat or coercion of any kind.

The world's political history has been replete with instances of violence, assassination, mayhem and even massacre. In the past 43 years, charismatic leaders like John F Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi, Olof Palme and many others, all in vibrant democracy, have been victims of politics of arms and terror. School children have been targeted in Russia as well as the United States, just to cite some recent examples. All these issues have not only been debated and discussed in their respective legislature, but there have been assurances at the highest level of the Government that the guilty would be brought to justice. Parliament or the legislature often becomes the sole and solemn place to debate nation's agony and issue directives to the Government to act firmly against such crimes and criminals involved.

But what happens when parliament itself becomes unsafe, and members present in the House feel threatened from other individual members or groups of parliamentarians? No parliament in the world has the liberty for any member to walk in with arms. An aberrant case in the Indian parliament, where a respected member walked inside the house with a 'bullet free' revolver just to make a point, was not only condemned by the Chair and the entire House but the member himself was quick to realize the over enthusiasm he demonstrated in 'exposing' the Government's failure to check use of arms in the election.

Prof Madhu Dandavate, sometimes in the early 80s, wanted to hand over a revolver which he said was used by a political party during elections as a proof of authorities' connivance to rig the polls. "Professor, what happens if other members follow this and come to the House with arms?" the Speaker reprimanded Dandavate with a forceful voice and Dandavate did not take a second to "apologise

unconditionally". In another instance, S S Mann, a militant member of parliament from Punjab refused to take oath after his electoral victory. He insisted that he be allowed inside the House with Kirpan (sword) on religious grounds as Sikhs are expected to wear it always. Speaker Rabi Ray, in consultation with all parties, and going by the tradition, refused to grant such a permission, and Mann finally accepted to abide by the religion of parliament than by the religion of his community.

Two recent incidents that took in our parliament, that of MPs private security guards sneaking in with arms in the House and a member daring the Government to take action against him were hair-raising to say the least. And this happened, after the Secretary General had thoroughly briefed the Members belonging to the Maoist party a week ago that it will be a crime to enter the House with arms. It was a clear dereliction on the part of the House collectively

not deal with the matter seriously and instantly when it happened.

Not only did the House fail in this manner but the Home Minister too criminally chose not to inform the House about the

incident. In the first case he simply said "it has been sorted out". He apologized to the Maoist MPs for the inconvenience their 'security' had to face. Deb Gurung, Deputy leader of the Maoists Parliamentary Party, demonstrated the decency of apologising on behalf of Lokendra Bista, the errant member who had not only dared the Government to snatch the arm he was carrying inside, but also used derogatory and abusive language against fellow members.

Parliament's evolution and its norms take years to form. But condoning any aberrations in conduct and expression only would encourage other weak-minded to follow. Even just to uphold its norms, it is important that the House debates the issues, starting with the concerned member tendering an unconditional apology, the leaders of every parties expressing regret, and the chair giving a ruling - which means acceptance of the apology and closing the chapter once for all. A Parliament can make its journey towards glory only by acknowledging mistakes and demonstrating collective will to correct it and learn from it. ■

**Parliament's evolution and its norms take years to form. But condoning any aberrations in conduct and expression only would encourage other weak-minded to follow.**



Terrorising people



# Creating

**Shyam Tekwani and Ang Peng Hwa both Singapore based journalists and academicians attended the Public rally at Ghorahi in Western Nepal's Dang district on Feb 26. They interviewed Prachanda in a Hotel room after the public meeting in presence of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. Prachanda spoke in a mix of Hindi, Nepali and English. The interview, apart from political issues, also focuses on the Maoists' views on communication system as well as technology. Excerpts:**

**Q: Your impressions on the recent Maoists' rally?**

A: The rally was reminiscent of Jayaprakash Narayan's Social Revolution Movement in India during 1974-77. The rally not only lived up to our expectations, it actually exceeded it. The rally held the day before yesterday in Butwal was also big.

**Q: In 2003 you blew up the communication tower. What are your views on the restrictions on communications in February 2005?**

A: At that time the whole communication network was used by the State to oppress the masses. Therefore, we were forced to sabotage it. But we were not against it; we only wanted to make sure that we prevent the use of the system for oppression of the people.

When we sabotaged the system we used satellite phones for our own communications and networking. They were highly sophisticated

equipment. During the royal takeover on February 1, we were the only ones with an intact communications system. We could contact the BBC London directly from Rolpa. We had about two dozen satellite phones and were in contact with all commanders in all regions.

**Q: Did it surprise you when the King clamped down on the communications system in the country?**

A: Since he is an autocrat it wasn't surprising. It was foolishness on his part. We are not dependent on the system and that did not stop us from communicating with our comrades. Instead he angered the masses.

**Q: Looking ahead, would you encourage the growth and spread of telecommunications? What would be your telecom policy for the country?**

A: We don't know the exact technicality of all these things. We just know that the mobile phones are very costly and the masses are not able to use it.

**Q: Everywhere in the world competition has brought the prices of mobile telephone down and made it affordable. Would you allow for such competition?**

A: We will allow competition within the parameters of national interest, because we have already taken a new ideology of political competition. Our understanding is that without political competition a vibrant society cannot come up. Given the current situation, we would



# new mainstream

like to organize competition on political terms. When we agree with political competition it also means we agree with economic competition...to some extent. But priority will be given to the old networking system...we cannot compete with the big multinationals.

**Q. What would be your priorities in rural areas?**

A. Education, health, modernizing and developing the infrastructure and developing the communications system.

**Q. Your goals?**

A. To complete the political revolution. In the current political repression the focal point of repression is the monarchy. We have to finish the monarchy. Establish a democratic republic and move to on to a multiparty political system. And give all the oppressed masses a participative voice in the state's policy making.

After we accomplish this, then we look at our resources and develop them. The tourism industry can offer a lot more. We will develop our hydroelectricity potential after improving our general infrastructure. Hydroelectricity, tourism and herbal industries will require our early attention. We will transform the face of Nepal in 20 years. We will develop Nepal with the help of the two developing countries, India and China. It is in their interests to see rapid development in Nepal.

**Q. You have made references to the oppressed classes. Would the Madheshis come under that label?**

A. All the demands of the Madheshis are genuine. But the monarchy in a bid to save itself is exploiting the sentiment among the Madheshis

to spoil the situation for them. The genuine demands of the Madheshis like freedom, autonomy and representation on proportional basis must be addressed. But any penetration by the monarchy to exploit the situation needs to be exposed.

**Q. Now that you have entered the mainstream and with over a decade's experience of the conflict behind you, what advise do you have to offer similar ongoing movements in South Asia?**

A. Every movement is a product of prevailing conditions in a country. A revolution cannot be transferred. It is not an import-export commodity. It is the will of the people. I cannot comment on the Maoist movement in India but I can say what we are doing here in Nepal is in response to the specific situation prevailing here. And we are doing so in a scientific manner.

**Q: With all these issues still being debated, do you think election is possible in June?**

It is difficult though we are also saying that it should take place in June. If that is not possible, we want Nepal to be declared a Republic State. Yes, there will be pro-monarchy forces out to sabotage it. Interim Government is yet to be formed which indicates that election is not possible in June. Let the eight parties together declare Nepal a Republic as a counter-measure to any threats of sabotage. If there is an attempt by the king to sabotage this course, there is every possibility of a big movement surfacing against him. ■

(Pix by Shyam Tekwani)

## Why I interviewed ?

■ Shyam Tekwani

I have been studying conflict in South Asia and Nepal and need to get views of leaders everywhere. It was therefore necessary for me to meet the man behind the movement and hear it first-hand what motivates him.

My first impression of the man was, he does not try to hide his age and he is well groomed. He laughs several times during the course of the 40-minute interview. He also offered me lemon tea and biscuits.

I was seated on the dais which gave me the vintage point to look at the crowd and to observe every body at the stage. He displayed a diplomat's touch when responding to some of the questions and the only time his veneer broke was when he referred to the king as 'stupid' more than once. He seemed to enjoy dance and song by the Maoist troupe as they went past the dais saluting him.

What struck me odd was the display of portraits of communist leaders like Mao,



Pix by Bhawor Ojha

Stalin, Lenin and some 'Maoist martyrs' at one end of the stage, and at the other end, there was one huge poster of Prachanda. ■



# Make it hot for tourism



Bhaswor Ojha



■ Pramesh Pradhan

The meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions or MICE as acronym, is relatively a new segment of tourism for Nepal. It is a segment that could invite quality tourists, intensify international recognition and add revenue to national economy. Nearly 350,000 meetings are held globally and more than US\$7 billion spent on MICE related activities around the world. According to a worldwide survey, Nepal is one of the ten most favoured destinations in the globe for the purpose.

Our international image of the adventure and the cultural destination has always been our advantage. The infrastructure in the country has also developed to the level of hosting medium sized international conferences. As the result, almost all reputed hotels and resorts introduced banquet services and facilities. Event hotels are fairly equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Qualified Professional Conference Organisers, Destination Management Companies have been efficiently organising events. From world-class convention hotels and resorts to simple and

safe budget guest houses are available for accommodation. In this backdrop, hosting and organizing any medium sized international event is possible in Nepal. Thus, Kathmandu could be projected perhaps as a favoured destination in South Asia for the purpose.

Nepal could be planned as a destination even for low seasons because of optimum weather and geo-political location. Moreover, climatic changes do not play major role in this buffer segment of tourism, which means we can have tourists even in lean seasons. Our MICE infrastructure, flight connections to major international cities and our ancient culture, are all compatible for this purpose.

Hotels look forward to events as prospective providing substantial volume of movement and a powerful one-window tourism engine. More and more corporate professionals and executives are paid to go for recreation as incentive holiday packages. Usually those at the conferences bring their spouses and children along with them or towards the end and combine business with pleasure opting for tours or travel to Chitwan or Pokhara. They spend time shopping; enjoying diverse range of restaurants and some opt for mountain flights or the casinos.

Attracting more events into the country should be our national

objective. Bidding Nepal for meetings and conventions internationally has to be relentlessly executed. For MICE purpose, the targeted market is quality conscious, sensitive and likely to spend money more generously. As this generates a huge amount of revenue at a stretch, MICE tourism would flourish provided that the political and security climate continues to be normal and conducive. Due to the priority given to MICE tourism, there had been a substantial rise in the events in the last decade, which had given impetus to travel trade and hospitality industry.

If political pandemonium ceases and improvements are made on the environmental front, Nepal will have potentially a rewarding time ahead. Nepal cannot afford to have more political mayhem, garbage piled on streets, pollution and traffic mayhem.

Nepal has been a popular destination for Indian companies to hold their conferences. Stricter provisions, understandably, for mandatory document are posing a major hurdle for conference business from India, the prime source for MICE tourism in Nepal. Indian conference organizers complain Nepal is more expensive than several Asian counterparts. It is time for the national MICE players to analyze our failures in attracting events into the country and compare with other

competitors.

Nepal Tourism Board, tourism and business related associations and professional conference organisers should join hands to pull in more international events into the country. Healthy coordination among the MICE players, sincere planning and dedicated initiatives are needed. We also need to disseminate comprehensive and impartial information about Nepal including providing cost estimates, logistic information and recreational possibilities. Nepal's acceptance to international ATA Carnet system, a multi-national system of free movement of MICE logistics should be instrumental in facilitating MICE tourism. Two mantras for us to promote Nepal thus are: aggressive marketing and continuous improvement in the facility.

But, unless we create an atmosphere where MICE tourists and professionals can enjoy Nepal with ease and a sense of security, our entire efforts would be in vain. Developing tourism as an important part of overall economic development of the country and establishing Nepal on the world tourism map depends on us, our politics, vision and actions.

*(Pramesh Pradhan is a MICE activist.)*

**Nepal could be planned as a destination even for low seasons because of optimum weather and geo-political location. Moreover, climatic changes do not play major role in this buffer segment of tourism, which means we can have tourists even in lean seasons.**



Sudashan Ranjit

# Oscar and out

■ Albertina Lloyd

The wind of change was in the air at the 79th Annual Academy Awards Ceremony last Sunday. The traditional ceremony was still the glamorous, enamoured affair it has always been, but new mixed with old in the Kodak Theatre at this year's Oscars.

Legendary director Martin Scorsese finally had his night of glory winning his first Oscar after 32 years of nominations. It was also a night of triumph for 'Dreamgirls' star Jennifer Hudson who became the first actress ever to win an Oscar for her debut

Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck - who are now the proud parents of daughter Violet - arrived together, while Naomi Watts used the evening to announce her own new arrival.

The 'King Kong' star officially confirmed she is pregnant by showing off her baby bump beautifully in a pale yellow strapless Escada gown with a black sash under her bust.

A representative for the designer said: "The Escada gown set off Naomi's most precious new asset - the baby she is expecting with long-time boyfriend Liev Schreiber."

Naomi walked the carpet hand-in-hand with best friend Nicole Kidman who looked stunning in a bright red,

began stuffing their glittering clutch bags full of sweets.

Nicole said: "Can we have some of these? We're going to need them, it's going to be a long night."

Jennifer Hudson on the other hand was not stuffing her face with chocolates.

The Best Supporting Actress Oscar winner had endured a gruelling fitness regime for her red carpet appearance in a chocolate brown Oscar de la Renta dress.

The former 'American Idol' contestant drank only water at all the pre-Oscar events she attended, and didn't stay out late because she had to get up for an early morning



**Tom Cruise's arm was graced by new wife Katie Holmes, while his ex-wife Nicole Kidman brought along her new country singer husband Keith Urban**

performance.

And the event was presented for the first time by lesbian comedienne and chat show host Ellen DeGeneres, who received a warm reception.

It was also an evening of newlyweds treading the red carpet. Tom Cruise's arm was graced by new wife Katie Holmes, while his ex-wife Nicole Kidman brought along her new country singer husband Keith Urban.

halter-neck Balenciaga gown with a big bow at the side of her neck.

The Antipodean actress confessed she was still suffering from injuries caused by her recent car accident during the filming of a stunt scene for 'The Invasion'.

Nicole said: "We didn't know how I was doing at first. My ribs could have been fractured or not, but I feel it now."

When she and Naomi spotted an interviewer with a tray of chocolates on the red carpet the giggling girls

workout with her personal trainer.

The 25-year-old - who was also been named best supporting actress at this year's Golden Globes, BAFTAs and Screen Actor's Guild awards - wept as she accepted her Oscar, saying: "I have to just take this moment in. I cannot believe this. Look what God can do." Forest Whitaker also broke down in tears as he accepted his Best Actor Oscar for his part in 'The Last King of Scotland'.

Dame Helen Mirren reigned over

the evening after winning the Best Actress Award for her part in 'The Queen'. Before getting on stage the 61-year-old actress has revealed she had to force her director husband, Taylor Hackford, to give her a congratulatory kiss. She revealed she was not wearing any underwear under her Christian Lacroix gown.

But the evening almost certainly belonged to Scorsese who finally won the Best Director Oscar that had eluded him for so long. His film 'The Departed' also scooped Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay.

The Italian-American director has been nominated for Best Director six times in the last 27 years but was overlooked on every occasion.

When he accepted his gold statuette, Scorsese joked "Could you double-check the envelope, please?"

Shortly after Eddie Murphy lost the Best Supporting Actor Oscar to 'Little

Miss Sunshine' star Alan Arkin, he allegedly stormed out of the theatre.

After the ceremony comes the famous after-parties, and many stars decided they needed to refuel before embarking on a heavy night of partying. Penelope Cruz and Orlando Bloom, though yet to confirm they are dating, were spotted smooching at Prince's party, and got so carried away groping and kissing many guests averted their eyes.

Now with the parties over and the red carpets rolled up the Oscars are a fading memory. But for the winners the memory will shine on every time they polish their precious golden statuette, and Martin Scorsese can finally fill that space on his mantelpiece after all those years of walking away empty handed.

(Femalefirst)

## Indian sex workers want to pay tax

KOLKATA - The communist government of an eastern Indian state on Friday rejected a proposal by local sex workers that they pay taxes totalling as much as 400,000 dollars a month to end police raids.

"It sounds ridiculous that sex workers are offering tax to the government," West Bengal law minister Rabibal Moitra told AFP in the state capital Kolkata.

"The government has no plan to give legal sanction to prostitution. Police will continue to raid brothels to stop prostitution." Prostitution inhabits a legal grey area in India -- it is not banned outright but pimping, trafficking and solicitation of clients are illegal -- and sex workers meeting in Kolkata this week have been pressing for full legalisation.

In the latest bid, announced at a gathering Thursday in a park in Sonagachi, the city's biggest red light district, sex workers said they were willing to pay the government to leave them alone.

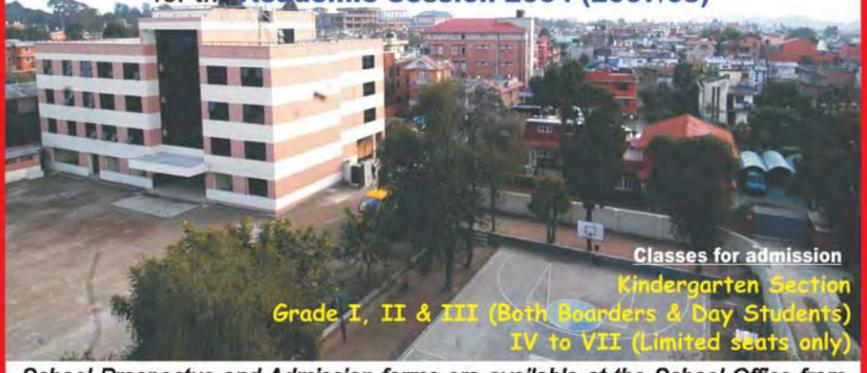
"Many of us earn a lot and we want to pay tax in return for legal protection, labour rights and social acceptability," said Bharati Dey, of the Committee for Indomitable Women, the state's largest sex workers' group. "We have accounts in a state-run bank and our accounts will speak of the amount of money we earn annually. If government receives tax from sex workers, the state exchequer will be fatter."

Each day, as many as four million clients visit the brothels of West Bengal, which employ about 00,000 women, according to a survey by the workers' group.

(Khaleej Times)



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The euphoria of the April revolution seems to be evaporating at a faster pace than expected. First, there was ethnic tension, and now there are a surprisingly small number of weapons being surrendered by the Maoists to the United Nations' observer. The emergence of such unexpected events has contributed to the waxing and waning of peoples' aspirations and rapid evaporation of the historic euphoria.

Is it a failure on the part of political parties, the people or a combination of both? The recent opinion poll, conducted from 22 December-13 January among 2,011 respondents in 21 districts by the research group, Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA), reveals interesting results that may be worth analyzing.

It shows that the Nepali people have a few core demands - peace, development, and livelihood issues. Although the poll was taken before the volcanic eruption of ethnic protests that started on January 19<sup>th</sup>, it clearly shows that approximately two-thirds of the respondents want to be identified as Nepali, and not by their ethnic group. That number may be lower now due to the rapid ongoing persuasion for ethnic identity by different ethnic groups. However, what it shows is that deep down somewhere, there is a strong sense of nationalism and national identity.

Among one's fundamental rights, the right to equality, property, freedom of expression, information, freedom to practice any profession, and assemble peacefully without arms are the most important, in order of priority. The poll shows that although the Nepalese people consider the right to equality as their most important fundamental right, the right to property ranks second, conveying a powerful, if subtle, message.

Interestingly, affirmative action for women and Dalits is considered far more important than

# Conflicting Choices



## Nepali people have a few core demands - peace, development, and livelihood issues

■ Dr. Hari Bansha Dulal

politically charged constitutional issues such as the need of secularism, republicanism, and federalism. Among constitutional issues, the fate of monarchy is identified to be the least pressing.

As far as voting during the Constituent Assembly (CA) election is concerned, the percentage of people that have either not made up their mind or do not want to disclose their preference accounts for 51 percent; those declaring that they would vote for the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Nepali Congress (NC), and the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) account for 16, 14, and 11 percent respectively. Although support for the Maoists seems to be downhill from 44 percent in a poll conducted during the September of 2006 to 40 percent in January of 2007, the untested politician that has never contested and sought the peoples' mandate in any election, Prachanda, stands tall as the most trusted politician.

The dissection of this recent opinion poll by

the IDA shows that Nepalese citizens are more interested in peace, development, and livelihood issues, issues that are detrimental to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of generations to come, than politically charged issues.

The majority of the respondents of the poll say that they are for fundamental rights such as the right to property, freedom of expression, the right to information, and the right to assemble peacefully without arms. However, in the very same poll, the CPN (Maoists) emerges as the favorite party of decided voters. In this light, when the CPN (Maoists) has made clear that its ultimate goal is to establish a proletarian communist state, the vote for the CPN (Maoists) may prove to be suicidal in the long run. Out of many incidents, the recent disruption of a mass gathering organized by the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) in Nepalgunj by Maoist cadres' shows just how tolerant the Maoists are when it comes to the peoples' right to assemble peacefully without arms.

As 51 percent of people have either not made up their mind or do not want to disclose whom they are voting for in CA election, there exists an opportunity for political parties that believe in inclusive multiparty democracy to solidify their base and enhance public support on their behalf. All they have to do is explain to the Nepalese people exactly what happens to the fundamental rights – the rights to equality, property, freedom of expression, information, freedom to practice any profession, and assemble peacefully without arms among others. In a proletarian communist state freedom of expression is mediated by the state, to maintain the 'integrity' of a proletarian communist regime. As far as the right to information is concerned, no such parallel exists in a proletarian communist society. One can find books on Marxism and Maoism in US bookstores and libraries but it is impossible to find a Ludwig von Mises volume in North Korean or Cuban libraries and book stores.

Now, all it needs on the part of social and liberal democrats & moderate communist groups such as the UML is to launch an effective campaign that can eloquently and efficiently counter the Maoist propaganda. They need to explain to the Nepalese people that strongly favor the right to private property, freedom of expressions, the right to information, and the right to assemble peacefully without arms what a proletarian communist state stands for and what it is capable of delivering to its people. If they can do that effectively, they will be able to regain the lost trust and political landscape faster than they can imagine. In a country like Nepal, where citizens are politically enlightened but economically deprived, it does not take long for public opinion to get swayed. ■

(Dulal is a lecturer of Environmental Science and Public Policy at George Mason University, Virginia, US)

# Media - arbitrator of peace

In the modern society effective utilization of knowledge provides extra power. But, the sociology of knowledge is not neutral in meaning, analysis and use.

Journalists derive knowledge and information from certain life-context, language, feeling, ideology and culture of citizens and interpret and report facts according to their own value preference, perception, knowledge and skills. Due to this fact, Nepalese journalists are located in several political spectrum—conformist, reformists and radical in orientation. Structural freedom for journalists is, therefore, essential for the evolution of a rational media grounded in a liberal political culture.

Media diversity can offer citizens multiple perspectives to increase citizens' ability to influence government's decision and enhance government's ability to get support for its policies. But, Nepalese journalists have a hard time in helping the growth of rational citizens because media is unevenly distributed and the high level of poverty in the country hinders citizens' equal participation in media discourse. A responsible media in a democracy forms the medium of conversational power, helps shape rational public opinion and enlarges the national constituency for peace.

Journalists can become a part of the conflict resolution if the



## A free and responsible media is crucial for conflict-sensitive reporting

■ Dev Raj Dahal

selection, analysis and evaluation of information they report is normatively-grounded. They can help minimize the intensity of violence by means of enforcing the accountability of human rights violators, exposing the wrongdoers and keeping conscientious public in a state of alertness. In a situation of violent conflict, media's role lies in debating normatively about the health of the citizens, framing and phrasing conflicts in a rational manner, offering concrete options rather than ready-made criticism of actors and furnishing practical options to the conflicting parties to resolve multidimensional conflicts.

Non-violent communication by journalists restores the nerve system of society and restores the normal functions of the state, market and civil society groups. A vision of a normative political order is possible if political power is mediated by daily conversation, public opinion and democratic will-formation. Media freedom thus provides an alternative mechanism to eliminate structural and cultural violence and allows the free flow of information for social reconciliation and peace.

Balanced reporting means identification of all sides in a conflict

and discovering common grounds for an understanding of each others' position and interest. This is essential to initiate changes in the conflict milieu and negotiate peace accord among the drivers, actors and stakeholders of conflict as well as allow them to return to a common vision of democratic peace.

Reporting violent conflict means taking up an agenda, revealing the motives of the conflict actors and equipping the public with conflict mitigation ideas, opinion, insight and knowledge. For this, journalists need to connect themselves with various sources of information and causal forces to cross-examine facts and perspectives so that it is easier to capture the truth. What kind of truth do they need, what should be suppressed and what are to be ignored in the transformation of conflict? These are ethical questions which require careful reflection because whatever journalists report at the center might influence citizens on the ground and can produce a chain of action and reaction.

Journalists can become messengers of peace if they follow a reasonable ethical code and follow the principles of professionalism and accountability. The most important mission of reporting events is to assume public interests

into account and renew human sensitivity during conflict. A legitimate government as an instrument of public power helps media more to assume this responsibility than coercing them to manufacture consent, produce false consciousness, and surrender to indoctrination and even manipulation of its audience by limiting its freedom of choice.

A free and responsible media is crucial for conflict-sensitive reporting. During conflict, gathering, processing and disseminating information requires journalists' safety and professional autonomy. Solidarity of journalists is equally essential to influence a particular course of action and organize the voice and visibility of victims. The main challenges for Nepalese journalists are how to make the peace process inclusive of the nation's various subsidiary identities struggling now for space, power, resource and identity.

In a multi-cultural society like Nepal, the watchdog function of media narrows the knowledge gap, helps capture the diversity of perspectives and gives voice to the voiceless' citizens' desire for visibility.

The role of democratic government lies in enhancing media freedom and competition, reducing restrictions on

the entry of independent media and establishing a reasonable regulatory framework. The pattern and identity of media ownership are other two important considerations for their conflict sensitivity. Conflict arises from greed, grievances and distorted communication. Peace building rests on restoring channels of free communication and sustained peace education to journalists who can simplify the arcane language of experts, researchers and academics to make the message and information clear, precise and understandable to the ordinary public.

Democracy offers the media to mediate contending perspectives through dialogue, non-violent communication and collective action. This means media should seek the unity of those connectors of society, rather than dividers, and attempt for a symbiosis in peaceful coexistence of diverse life-forms in the national state. But, the structures of peace become durable only if it is based on solid democratic principles and inclusive values rather than on power equation of dominant actors.

These components are important to respond to conflict residues through welfare measures, non-violent communication, establishing citizens' rights to know and breaking a culture of silence through a culture of articulation and peace. ■

# Teenager's mom-speak



**A typical homework routine involves a dozen disruptions throughout the evening. Sometimes I feel vulnerable, uptight and stressed observing the pandemonium**

■ Neeva M. Pradhan

We take certain precautionary measures to protect ourselves. I am not alluding to restricting speed limit when driving on a highway or avoiding trans-fat in our diet and steering off fast food chains. Nor am I talking about a sophisticated burglar alarm system to ward off thugs. I am referring to a seemingly benign act of curtailing proximity to my teenager's room. Explicitly I refrain from entering it during his study hours if I am to secure my sanity.

A typical homework routine involves a dozen disruptions throughout the evening. Sometimes I feel vulnerable, uptight and stressed observing the pandemonium until I am desperate for recourse. However, in teenage lingo and in their own self defense they characterize it

buddy, who has also just logged on.

Speed is of vital essence to accommodate a dozen plus conversations that is ongoing concurrently on IM. Witnessing his typing alacrity at eighty words a minute suggests potential carpal syndrome in his adulthood. While on instant messaging he utilizes acronyms such as 'POS' which stands for parent over shoulder. This warning is to signal censorship requisite while a parent is 'standing over the shoulder'. The code helps preserve teen privacy and support the very objective of multitasking.

Then midway through his work he logs onto the music site to play the latest Hip Hop. In the mean time his cell phone buzzes and it is the first call out of ten from a friend. At this

subtle hint to eschew confrontation.

However, some fear the proclivity of flitting from task to task can hamper the youth's ability to develop analytical skills. In one publication, Jordan Grafman, chief of cognitive neuro-science at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke emphasized that introducing multitasking in younger kids can be detrimental. One of the critical issues is that it is almost impossible to gain a depth of knowledge of any tasks while multitasking. Also the fear is that children will learn to accept and be satisfied with surface-level investigative knowledge.

I might hassle about the text messaging/IM/Hip Hop music/iPod/internet effect on Robbie's ability to retain the definition of socio economic



as multitasking necessity.

The computer is Robbie's best alibi. A senior at a high school in Virginia, he carries a vexing schedule and battles deadlines. The assignment posted on the school intranet or the 'black board' allows students to access their homework, communicate with their teachers and post their completed projects on line. From this approach his deployment of a computer is a necessary evil rather than luxury to accomplish myriad tasks.

An utter mayhem unveils as the machine is booted up and running. I visualize his brain presaging propensity for imminent multitasking at hand. A typical evening routine finds him in his room seated at his study desk. He has at least three text books open in math, social studies and economics. Simultaneously he signs onto instant messaging to engage in at least a dozen or so conversations online, discussing the probability of snow day school cancellation with his neighborhood

juncture the gyrating beat with less than appetizing lyrics, the printer spitting out history assignment, the continuous text messaging tone every half second and finally the cell phone playing a rap tune is adequate to signal a 'stay away' zone.

Behold, we have not yet encompassed the paraphernalia of projects he juggles. A half hour later he opens three websites. He scans the weather.com, volunteers for the Red Cross fundraiser as vice president, posts comments on Mike's Facebook page and checks out new field trip pictures posted by a friend. Somewhere in between, he will characterize Mr. Darcy's personality in his English assignment 'Pride and Prejudice' due next day.

Enough research has not been conducted to probe the long-term impact of multitasking on teenage development. Teenagers will convince you that multitasking is productive and eliminates stress. "Trust me mom..." blurts Robbie repeatedly, referring to his better judgment and provides a

studies. However, I am pressed against a few odds. It is a mute point to squabble with a teenager who has fulfilled a parental requirement to ace his subjects and secure early acceptance to his choice college. Besides, his trump card is allegiance from his older sibling, a graduate student who also grew up multitasking. Only then, it was a few notches rational.

These days the seemingly utter chaos in Robbie's room is not met with my obsessive compulsion to obliterate his indulgence. I have learned to live with the impossible by avoiding it. I exchange pleasantries with my teenager if and when I pay homage to his room in the evenings. He appreciates my tolerance of his multitasking practice.

Truthfully as parents, we have all succumbed to this plague. To preserve our energy, mental faculty and be considered an ally... you guessed it... the only choice is to embrace this teen mania that is here to stay! ■

Insight

## Culture of vultures



■ Sushma Amatya

The disturbance caused by Bandhs that began with the advent of democracy in Nepal around 15 years ago has succeeded in creating losses worth billions of Rupees for the Nepali population and the nation. Whether the reasons behind the Bandhs are justified or not, the resulting paralysis of the nation ends up rupturing not only the economic fabric but the psyches of the people as well who are forced to stay indoors just out of fear. It is but common sense that no matter the political scenario, the economic activity in a country should remain unhindered. When everything is forced to come to a standstill, the poorest of the poor, those whose survival depends on daily income are the ones to suffer the most. Their voices are never heard by the government, media or the political parties since they lack the organisation or the muscle power. And their silent predicament and misery are taken for granted, and they are projected as followers of the tide.

On the other hand, the government that has failed to

**The fundamental rights of every Nepali are to be free of hunger and poverty and they are being denied this basic right.**

understand that its agenda ought to be dictated by the common good and its activities should aim at the benefit of its people, doesn't seem to have learned the importance of being sensitive to the voices of the people. Its lack of foresight and inability to take pre-emptive measures has further compounded the already existing problems in the country. If the government is sensitive enough to address genuine grievances of its people well in time and not wait till it is forced to act after huge losses in lives and property, the culture of Bandh would either be irrelevant or defeated largely.

Such instances abound. Indian Railway's success is just one example. With the largest number of employees, Indian railway would see one or the other kind of strikes, mostly for pay hikes, until late 70s. Prof Madhu Dandavate, the veteran socialist leader and the railway Minister during the Janata Government in 1977 initiated a change in that culture through his very labour friendly attitude. When railway employees threatened to go on strike for pay hike, Dandavate was prompt to give them an option of accepting the government's support for housing and education of their children. The farsighted minister offered them more than what the employees could think. Naturally,

the workers opted for the latter that provided them a secure and dignified future, for them and for their children.

The continued combination of the visionary government and cooperative employees has created an extraordinary success story today. The Indian railways aim to earn a net profit of Rupees 20,000 Crores in the coming financial year under the leadership of Lalu Prasad Yadhav. This could only have come about through mutual understanding and support between the government and its employees.

On the other hand, the increasing culture of Bandh that disrupts children's education, adds to the suffering of the sick and ailing and brings the nation to a standstill is in no way different from the 'holidays' declared by the autocratic regime during the travels of the king in and out of the country or for other inane reasons. The irony is that similar patterns of the very shadow which is so popularly abhorred today is being enforced on the public albeit with a different name and purpose, by

different sections of the society. The end result of both has been the same -

forcing the public to stay home and lose a day of productive activity.

Equally criminal is the government's negligence in not responding swiftly to people's legitimate demands before they are forced to yield to the mass misconception that unless you disrupt everybody else's lives, you won't be listened to! After all a democracy must be consensus driven and serious about the problems of the people.

The fundamental rights of every Nepali are to be free of hunger and poverty and they are being denied this basic right. Of course, it would also need visionary socio-economic policies with human face to erase these evils. Remarkably no Bandhs in Nepal have been called for eradication of poverty and hunger.

Keeping the freedom of expression in mind and finding a better way to express those rights, calling for a moratorium on strikes/Bandhs would not be out of place in the present day context. To avoid further brain and resource drain out of the country, to prevent the nation from falling apart, it's high time to say 'no' to disruptive mentality that preys on the nation's existence and sucks life out of it. Protests are legitimate but it should not suppress other's rights to live and earn in peace. ■



Pic by Sushma Amathya

seated high Lamas of the Shakya lineage. The solemn ceremony was presided by His Holiness Sakya Trizin Rinpoche who traveled to Kathmandu from India especially for the occasion. The Rinpoche breathed his last on January 22 and entered the state of Tukdam, the spiritual practice of recognising and resting in clear luminosity of death, for 16 days. On the seventh day of Chogye Rinpoche's Tukdam, a rainbow appeared in the sky. During the whole period, no signs of decay were seen and his skin remained fresh as though he were still alive – signs of advanced meditation practice. He remained in the upright sitting position in meditation, his head leaning slightly forward and his eyes closed. He completed his spiritual practice of Tukdam on 6 Feb 07. A medical doctor who examined the Rinpoche's body was surprised by the lack of rigor mortis in the body and said he had never encountered a case like this.

Chogye Rinpoche's holy body (Kudung) was brought from his residence in Narayanthan to Boudhanath on February 9. The huge procession witnessed at the edge of Boudhanath, a vast rainbow at about 11.45 A.M. that encircled the sun and remained there until 4.30 P.M. The Kudung was enshrined and kept for public viewing till the last day and it was visited by thousands of devotees from far and wide.

Daily Pujas including the Kun Rig ritual of Buddha Mahavairochana, the Hevajra ritual and the Vajrayogini feast ritual has been continued through the 49 day period that began on January 29, a week after the Rinpoche began his Tukdam practice. The final day of the Pujas will be on March 18, 2007.

"While we may feel sad when our Guru leaves us, we should also let ourselves be at peace; there is no need to feel unhappy all the time..... Although your Guru has passed away, do not feel that he is separate from you. Your Guru is in the pure realm now, and this is something wonderful.....He will always take care of you, now and in the future", Chogye Trichen Rinpoche was quoted saying in Oral Instructions on the Practice of Guru Yoga.

Devotees of the spiritual master believe that he will be reborn among us to guide true devotees everywhere. The end of the great spiritual master was as unique as his simple but extraordinary life which he had dedicated to the service of all sentient beings. ■

■ Newsfront correspondent

Faithful devotees with tearful eyes and folded hands watched the burning Stupa in which Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's body was consigned to flames with elaborate Buddhist rites on Saturday. The centre-stage, the Stupa, was created specially for the purpose in the garden of Lamdre Lhakhang monastery in Boudhanath, Kathmandu. Bedecked with flowers, it was the focus of attention and prayers for a huge assembly of disciples and followers who had gathered to pay their last respects. Billows of smoke often wafted across the silent congregation, permeating the air with fragrance of sandal-wood that fed the flames along with myriad other offerings.

Facing the Stupa from four directions were



- 1 **Ambience of the event**
- 2 **Chogye Trichen Rinpoche**
- 3 **Sakya Trizin Rinpoche presiding over the ceremony**
- 4 **Setting fire on Chogye Rinpoche's Samadhi**



**Billows of smoke often wafted across the silent congregation, permeating the air with fragrance of sandal-wood that fed the flames along with myriad other offerings.**



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