



Courage & Conviction

news front

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

Agenda Arun back

Manoj Dahal

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

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

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

The Government has cleared many hydro

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

But the clearance of the project by the Government and entrusting it to the Australian company SMEK has triggered an under-current of protest in the congress party. "It is an issue that needs to be debated and endorsed by the parliament. But the Government has done everything in a hush hush manner," said Ananda Dhungana, a congress party member. "Government cannot ignore the parliament while taking decisions which involve natural resources," he added.

Although details have not been made public as to how the ambitious west Seti project would be executed, reliable sources say that SMEK would be involving Indian companies as partners. It has already arrived at a certain understanding in the form of power trade agreement in the South, the sources said.

The Government is fairly confident that the World Bank which had withdrawn from Arun Three project because of internal squabble over it would be favourably disposed towards the resumption of the project. ■



Inside Concealing rift on page 2

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Maoist Chief Prachanda

Concealing rift

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

■ nf correspondent

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

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

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

Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai were forced to assure that they would review the current pro-India line of the party, but

focusing more stridently on republic line will be more beneficial politically. In their assessment, 'Republic Nepal', and not so much the pronounced anti-India mantra will give the erstwhile rebels the maximum political mileage in the current context. As part of the game, Dr Baburam Bhattarai, the biggest influence on Prachanda now, has already declared that his party would go for a decisive, but peaceful movement for republic if the other seven parties did not support the line by the third week of May.

Maoists who used to lump India and U S together as imperialist and expansionist forces have of late been praising India saying, "its' current approach towards Maoists is friendly and different from the past." But the vocal members of the central committee did not concur. They felt that there has hardly been any change in the attitude of the Government of India towards Nepali Maoists. According their assessment, India wants to rid Terai of Maoists, an assessment that the leadership also concurred with, sources said. They added, Maoists would be adopting anti-India tone in days to come.

And Maoists' hard line for 'immediate declaration of republic' would be more intense for obvious reasons even though it goes against the earlier understanding with eight parties that the issue of monarchy will be settled by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. It has already instigated top Nepali Congress leaders, Ram Chandra Poudel and Sushil Koirala; but in Maoists' calculation, the tide of Republican is almost unstoppable now.

YCL on rampage

■ nf correspondent

In its new ruling avatar, the Young Communist League (YCL), youth wing of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) is behaving like the 'monarch of all I survey.'

The YCL cadres wearing red head bands are not only obstructing traffic and extorting, they are also dictating the agenda in some of the ministries in which their leaders have taken over as ministers. A police official said, "We have no instruction to stop or intervene in any such activities." Maoists had lodged strong protests with the Government to the extent of stalling parliament and demanding an apology from the Home Minister for raids conducted by the police in three of their offices in Kathmandu.

Some doctors and patients as well as their attendants in Om and Medicare

Hospitals in Chabel have lodged complaints with the police that Maoists are stopping vehicles from passing through the area and forcibly taking money. "We have not heard anything from the police. Nor have our complaints been acted upon," a doctor said.

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

"We have lodged a complaint with the Prime Minister that our officials cannot work under these circumstances, but he does not seem to have taken it up with the Maoist ministers," a joint secretary rank officer in one of the Maoist led ministry

told newsfront. Instead, the YCL cadres seem determined to acquire more backing by their ministers so that they could 'interfere easily in our day to day work," the official added.

Authorities who are quite scared complain that in some places YCL cadres have already begun collecting 'parking fees' in parts of Lalitpur without going through the necessary official formalities and bidding process.

Maoists' control over the private transporters is growing fast, mainly through terror by the YCL cadres and this worries the authorities the most. On Saturday, YCL cadres came out on the streets ostensibly to protest against manhandling of a driver by the police in Araniko Highway thereby paralysing vehicular movement for hours in the capital; and the Government machinery did not intervene anywhere.



YCL activists ruling the roads: They are stopping vehicles and forcing to pay for their organisation. The picture was taken by a terrorised victim from a distant.

Conspirator who?

■ nf correspondent

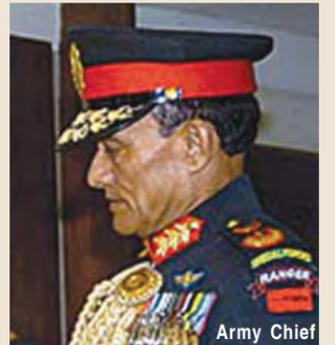
Senior Army officials are agitated about the top brass of the Defense Ministry after media reports quoting Defense Secretary claimed that Chief of Army, Rukmangat Katwal had a 90-minute long meeting with King Gyanendra on Friday night.

Army Headquarter refused to react to the reports saying, "our reaction will be routed through the Ministry of defense." But a senior official in the Defense Ministry said that Defense Secretary Bishnu Dutt Uprey is, "studying contents of the text sent to him through the army headquarter."

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

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

The sources said that the clarification from the army headquarter about the media reports was also coupled with the complaints against the Defense



Army Chief

Secretary charging that he deliberately delayed responding to the media reports.

Senior Defense Ministry official said that the Army Headquarter had taken strong objection to the content of the news reports as it was, "false, imaginary and misleading."

It also reiterated that the army was following each and every directive from the Government and the army chief strictly followed the process of seeking permission of the Government authorities prior to any meeting.

Prime Minister Koirala was assured that Nepal army would foil any 'mischief' to defame it. "It was always committed to uphold the sovereignty and democratic norms," reaffirmed Katwal, said a source.

The issue was raised in the cabinet meeting on Sunday, but it was not pursued further in view of the clarification given to the PM by the army. However, explanation will be sought from the army headquarter on the context of how and why the traditional gun salute was given to the King during his visit to Dakshinkali temple last week.

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

According to official sources, a Boeing 757 aircraft on its arrival from Malaysia last week was issued Aircraft on Ground (AOG) instruction soon after the snag was detected.

The Boeing Company is yet to send the spare parts so that the grounded plane could be dispatched for regular maintenance to Brunei.

"In fact, we already have one

engine sent for overhauling in China, but the work has not yet begun as NA management has not issued instruction for it," a NA official told newsfront, adding "the only aircraft operating is so over stressed that it can be grounded any moment."

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

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

period.

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

"We are very serious when we say that we cannot improve the situation without buying new aircrafts, a few at least. But that would require fast decisions by the Government at the political level," a board member who refused to be named told newsfront. There is however, no such indication from the Government level. This only indicates that the agony of Nepal Airlines will increase in days to come.

■ nf correspondent

Grounded

A series of NA board meetings in the past about purchase of new aircraft have remained inconclusive.



Palace, the target

King Gyanendra will be losing most of his trusted

The Government has asked the Royal palace secretariat to retire all its employees who have crossed 58 years of age, with immediate effect. The Government instruction follows the cabinet decision last year which had decided to scrap the Royal palace service cadre and make it part of the Public Service Commission.

If followed, King Gyanendra will be losing most of his trusted and prominent aides who have been getting extension of their services over years as it all depended on the discretion of the King. But the latest instruction of the Government routed through the Ministry of General Administration effectively annuls the practice and rights being exercised by the King in the past.

At least 51 officials of different ranks will be affected by the Government decision. Prominent among those retiring immediately among others include, Chief of Palace staff Sharada Prasad Pradhan, Private Secretary of Queen mother, Madhusudhan Rajbhandary and Chief Principal Secretary, Pashupati Bhakta Maharjan. "We are waiting for



response from the palace secretariat with a compliance report," an official of the General Administration Ministry told newsfront. The Government decision to retire palace officials comes at a time when the Government is considering the recommendation of the cabinet committee to downsize both military and civil administration attached with the palace secretariat. It had recommended reducing the size of the Nepal Army personnel to around 400 from existing 3,000 and that of the civil administration from

around 900 to less than 400.

There is however, a lot of confusion over the fate of many officials working in the palace secretariat, mainly on how they would be absorbed and treated in the civil administration. Despite recommendations by various administration reform commissions that the civil administration of the palace should be brought under direct command and supervision of the elected Government, no follow-up action has been taken as yet.

■ nf correspondent

News Brief

Queen's birthday



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

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

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

All Male Brahmins

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

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

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

Shameless

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



His most trusted lieutenant and Home Secretary, Umesh Mainali is now away for three weeks as part of the official delegation to the United States and Peru. Sitaula, Mainali and chiefs of the security forces have come under serious criticism for their failure to contain the violence in Terai. Another senior official of the Home Ministry is also away leaving Baman Neupane, a Joint Secretary to officiate in Mainali's place.

There are intense speculations over the fate of the Home Minister, Home Secretary and the two security chiefs once the Commission to probe Terai violence begins. Ineffectiveness of the police and the Home Ministry specially for their failure to improve the law and order situation has now brought Prime Minister Koirala himself into focused criticism within the 8-party ruling alliance as well as in his Nepali Congress party.

Surya Nepal's Springwood

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



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

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

■ nf correspondent



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Point to Ponder

Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things. **- Winston Churchill**

Hoodwinking people

GP Koirala made a tall promise as soon as the Maoists joined the Government that he will take personal responsibility to improve the law and order situation in the country. He even extracted a commitment from the Maoists leadership that not only the extortion and unlawful activities of the Youth Communist League will stop once Maoists join the Government, they will also return the private, institutional and Government property they had confiscated in the past. The two weeks deadline set for the purpose has long been over, but the extortion and other terror tactics on the part of the YCL continues under direct patronage of the Maoist leadership which is now part of the Government. Koirala's Home Minister indulged in a drama, through a public notification, that appealed to all to surrender all illegal arms to the Government; but not a single arm was submitted to the Government. Given the absence of authority that this Government has failed to display, the zero outcome on the weapon surrender issue was only expected.

With five Maoist leaders already occupying key cabinet positions, Maoists continuing to run the extortion racket publicly is a crime. The PM who publicly assured the nation that any such activities would be strictly dealt with as crime by the state, his inability to even take that into account, is a clear case of deception. It is a shame that the Government that has already spent nearly Rs. 800 million out of Rs. 960 million sanctioned for the upkeep of cantonments, meant for 'People's Liberation army' has failed to restrain them. It seems even the UN mainly the OHCHR has failed to take cognisance of such activities.

The YCL activities are in clear violation of the code of conduct and simple norms that the peace process should be conducted. The PM has been approached by senior bureaucrats and some of the political leaders including the ministers that Maoists must be stopped from these activities. They are particularly perturbed over YCL dictating their agenda on the officials in at least two of the five ministries under their party's charge.

The YCL activities expose Party Chief Prachanda who has time and again said that Maoist leadership is very sincere in pursuing the peace process to its logical end. A leader whose words are regularly contradicted by the actions of his cadres will ultimately be held accountable for the loss of image and credibility of the party he heads. It is about time that Koirala informed the nation about these criminal activities in which the members of one of the coalition groups of his Government are involved.



Letters

Hypocrites

The CPN (M)'s reaction to police raids on Youth Communist League office in Kathmandu is against the peace agreement, which sanctions state force on armed non-state actors spreading terror among the public. Going by their yardstick, the entire country should be out on the streets to oppose Maoist excesses, including abduction, extortion and torture on civilians.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and the party he unfortunately leads, is only proving their short sightedness and lack of trust in the rule of law. Why are the other parties not mustering enough courage to oppose the intimidation by the Maoists? The return of the confiscated vehicle used by their leadership is also an utterly shameful episode for the self-appointed guardians of society. It is a foregone conclusion as to whether these hypocrites can deliver socio-economic and political transformation.

■ Shyamal Shrestha
Kathmandu

More pages

Newsfront has already emerged as a leading weekly paper in English. Its editorial and opinion articles are full of variety. It appears objective and fearless.

Its news components and the way they are presented make it different from the existing weeklies. Photo features on 'connectivity' highlighting Nepal Army's role in building road in Karnali and connecting it with the rest of the country was an exemplary piece of journalism that newsfront did, and many others followed.

But having only 12 pages in your weekly issue is disappointing. You need to have more pages in it.

■ Lalit Bahadur Basnet
Advocate
Supreme Court, Kathmandu

Website

In my opinion, newsfront has created an impact on Nepali media. I hope you will maintain the quality and credibility of your publication.

In the recent issue, the news, PM dumps Sitaula, struck me as an interesting political story, where you have provided crucial inside information; as well as the news, New US Envoy. Thanks for providing space for Pradip Kumar Rai, known as Byakul Mahila. I also request you to provide newsfront web site. Recently, I discovered that your Nepali publication, Samay, is on website but not newsfront yet.

■ Bibek Pandey
Kathmandu

Be honest and transparent

The main story of newsfront issue 13 was really analytical. Nepal government has already spent 800 millions rupees for the management of the Maoist cantonments. It is not a small amount in our context. The verification of Maoist people Liberation Army is still not completed but the government has provided the amount they demanded. On the other hand, in my opinion, the Maoists spend the amount received from the government without any transparency. I have heard that Maoists have not submitted any bills, vouchers to the government.

Maoist leaders frequently lecture on anti corruption and good governance and creating a new Nepal, but they are not honest in practical life.

■ Manab Pokharel
Kathmandu

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Over 50 years of service

Mr Satya Narayan Goenka (born 1924) is the Principal teacher of Vipassana, the practical quintessence of the Buddha's teaching. He is a living proof that mental exercise of meditation is necessary for a wholesome and beneficial life.

Mr Goenka's success in service comes from being an inspiring example and an ideal, and of practicing what he asks his students to practice. "Develop purity in yourself if you wish to encourage others to follow the path of purity," he says. "Discover real peace and harmony within yourself, and naturally this will overflow to benefit others..... Throughout life, one encounters things that one does not like, and is separated from things one likes. The Buddha went to the root of this problem, and

discovered the solution (of Vipassana) for liberation from all misery. He realised that we keep reacting to the pleasant and unpleasant sensations we feel on the body, with craving and aversion. And due to these mental impurities or habit patterns, we remain agitated and miserable."

In Vipassana, Mr Goenka found the way out of his miseries experienced in his early life. Born in Myanmar, in a business family of Indian origin, he became one of Myanmar's ranking business leaders. He had outstanding success, but not inner peace. Instead, stress brought on crippling migraine headaches, which the world's best doctors could not cure. Mr Goenka said, that then, he was a very short-tempered, egoistic person making himself and others around him miserable.

While Vipassana is firmly rooted in the true teachings of the Buddha, Mr Goenka



emphasises that it is not a religion. "The only conversion involved in Vipassana is from misery to happiness, from bondage to liberation," he told an applauding audience at

the World Peace Summit at the United Nations, New York, in 2000. Vipassana is the practical essence of all religions, to develop the experiential wisdom to live a happy, productive life. In the words of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Goenka's teacher, Vipassana offers results that are "good, concrete, vivid, personal and immediate."

In 1969, U Ba Khin authorised Mr. Goenka to go to India and teach Vipassana, as his representative. After arriving in India, Mr Goenka soon retired from his flourishing business and devoted his full time teaching Vipassana. There is no fee for the teaching. Neither Mr. Goenka nor the assistant teachers get any financial or material gain from these courses.

Mr Goenka says, "No one should make the mistake, now or in the future, of turning a Vipassana centre into a commercial organisation." (www.vri.dhamma.org)

Devaluing Judiciary



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

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

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

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

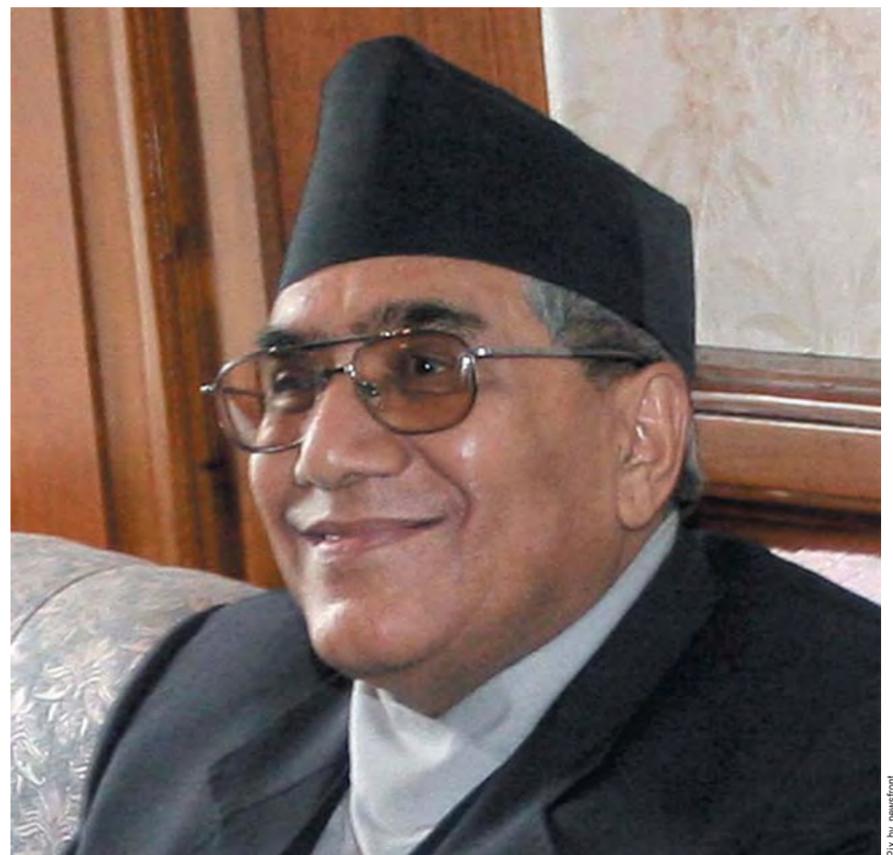
Terai that has resulted in the death of about 60 people in the past few months.

Why did the executive feel the need to emphasise on the appointment of a Madheshi judge? Is it because it thinks that only a Madheshi judge will be able to give justice to the people of the Madhesh? It should be kept in mind that criteria adopted in appointment of the inquiry commission will set precedence for future appointments.

G P Koirala's Government has moved a step forward than the Royal regime on the question of forming inquiry commissions for pursuing the political agenda. The Supreme Court, in a rare display of independence, courage and commitment to the constitution, scrapped the Royal Commission

on corruption formed by the King to try political rivals; but the Koirala regime refused to draw any lesson from it. In fact, it only followed the inglorious footsteps of the Royal regime. It formed the Rayamajhi Commission, out and out a political body, which acted as a pawn in the hands of the executive.

The Government apparently drew the list of those 'who were to be declared guilty', and Justice Rayamajhi endorsed that line. It is not Justice Rayamajhi's origin or association with a



Chief Justice

particular area and belonging to a particular community, but the commission was discredited because of its deviation from set standards while pursuing investigation.

Institutionalising politics of vendetta is a crime, and those perpetrating it are criminals. Both the Royal regime which appointed the 'Royal Commission on Corruption' and the present regime which formed the Rayamajhi commission would be ridiculed by any world body or the lawful organisation for the motive and method applied while setting them up.

Therefore, the commission on Terai should be formed with a fair intent and transparent

method under a capable judge, no matter which area or community he or she belongs to. Preferring a

judge of one particular community to try alleged excesses faced by that community will also go against the spirit of neutrality and objectivity, perceived pre-requisites for any probe. In any case, going by the precedence set by the Rayamajhi Commission, Koirala will be facing a major dilemma once the Commission on Terai killing is formed. He will be accused of being biased and unfair if the Government does not suspend the Chief of Civil and the Armed Police Force as had happened when the Rayamajhi commission was formed.

The OHCHR has already stated that these security groups have been found either over reacting or under reacting, while dealing with violence when it erupted in Terai. And what will be the fate of his favourite, the Home Minister who was directly commanding the security forces? Koirala politicised the Rayamajhi Commission and that might turn into his nemesis now.

Koirala cabinet's decision to have a 'Madheshi' retired judge as Head of the Terai probe commission would project judiciary in a very bad light. It questions the efficiency, fairness, impartiality and credibility of the non-Madheshi judges of the Supreme Court. Those with self-pride will not take this immature decision kindly. No judge can be assumed to be more fair to Terai and less fair to the hills, and the vice versa on the basis of origin. What Koirala has not understood yet is that people in Terai want justice done to them by the State and all its apparatus. Having a Terai judge heading the probe is not the way to ensure that.

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





Chola Lake

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

Lukla – Phakding

A 45 minutes flight takes one to Lukla, the gateway to the Everest region. At an altitude of 2,840 metres, it is a unique airport with a 33 degree slope, one of the busiest airports in Nepal. After landing everyone was seen talking about the nerve rending flight and the exhilaration felt after the safe landing.

We arrived at a quiet region, Lukla, a village with many lodges. It is predominantly a Sherpa village overlooking lofty mountains with friendly smiling people. One of the first things one observes is the Dzopa, the cross breed of yak and cow, used as carriers.

It is customary to hire porters if you have more than a rucksack's weight. By hiring someone to carry your luggage, you



Lukla

contribute to the people of the region. Porters are the backbone of the region and on it depends the livelihood of thousands of families in the region.

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

Phakding- Namche

Phakding (2,610 metres) is one of the



Everest base camp

important settlements that lies between Lukla and Namche. The trek begins with a gentle ascent through forests. Suspension bridges and narrow trails often create traffic jams of trekkers, porter and yaks which are the landmarks of the region. Numerous waterfalls encountered along the way are breathtaking.

There are rows of colourful shops in Bengkar, Monjo and Jorsale. After Jorsale, the climb is steep overlooking two pristine rivers of Dudh Koshi and Bhote Koshi. During this ascent, higher you reach, the better view and landscape you see. After 2-4 hours of exhausting trek Namche arrives.

Namche (3,440 metres) is more of an alpine resort than a Sherpa town. It has every facility a modern town with cosmopolitan touch should have, excluding road and flight connections. It is nestled in a concave hollow surrounded by mountains like Thamserku, Kangtega, Kyashar, Kusum Kanguru and others.

An enchanting town, Namche has plenty of hotels, restaurants, cyber cafes, and shops with trekking gears, banks, currency exchange counters, and the enticing German bakery offering a variety of breads, cakes and pastries. A fairly wide range of food is available but is very expensive. The fact that every conceivable household objects, food, grains, vegetables, gas cylinders and fuel supply, cases of alcohol that are physically carried up the mountain would perhaps justify the expensive price range of Namche. It has its own plant providing continuous electricity supply. The entire region seems affluent because of tourism.

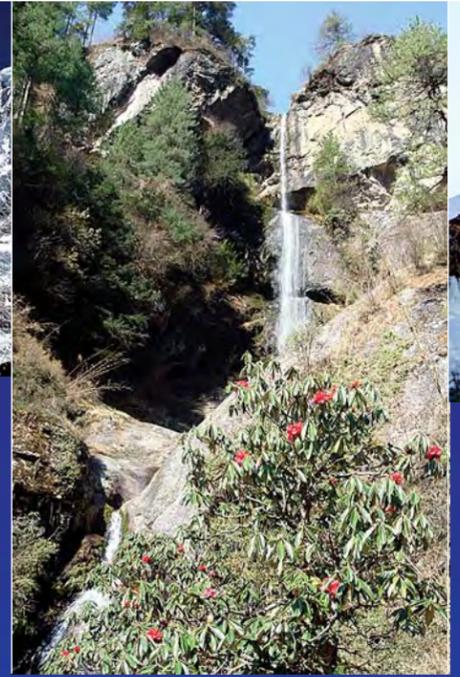
Avalanches cracking on the mountains can be heard during the day and helicopters often are seen flying high to Pheriche for emergencies.

Khunde – Khumjung- Syangboche – Everest View Hotel

A day for acclimatisation and rest is essential at this altitude after the two rigorous days. One of the golden rules in high mountains is, 'climb higher, sleep lower.'

A hike to surrounding villages and settlements is worth the while. Zarak with few good hotels at 3,600 metres is a nice point. Shyangboche has an airfield at 3,720 metres and few houses. A visit to the yak farm on the way is interesting. Khunde is a superb village at 3,720 metres overlooking surrounding mountains. It has a well managed and internationally supported hospital.

Khumjung, 15 minutes away is another settlement at 3,780 metres. Khumjung has a famous school popularly known as Hillary school. The village is situated below the sacred mountain of Khumbila. These settlements and the village seemed to me a model village. Every house is tidy, has green roofs and small patches



Waterfall

of land in front. Trails are exceptionally clean and well maintained. Sir Edmund Hillary, one of the first two conquerors of Mt. Everest, has contributed immensely to the region.

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

Namche to Pangboche

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

One of the few water driven prayer wheels can be seen here. A steep ascent nearly 700 metres through the pine and rhododendron forest is perhaps the hardest trail in the region. I often wondered what my reward would be after such a rigorous trek through the tortuous trail. At times, I questioned my endurance and capability to trek any further.

Yaks are found only above Namche while Dzopas are found in the entire Khumbu region. They are used for carrying heavy loads, their wool is woven for blanket and rugs; dung burnt as fuel after drying in sun and yak milk is taken as a nourishing drink.

Greenery decreases gradually as you go up.

EVEREST DIARY

■ Pramesh Pradhan





Everest

Fields that grow potatoes only, pine, fir and black juniper and rhododendron forests are remarkable to see. Yak bells and cool breeze rustling are the only sounds heard. After a couple of hours, one reaches famous Tengboche (3,860m). Here lies the Tengboche monastery, once famous for secluded meditation and is the cultural and religious headquarter of the region. It is a revered heritage for people of the region.

Further up lie Deboche and Pangboche. Just below the snow line, Pangboche (3,985 metres) is perhaps the highest settlement in the world. It has few lodges with basic accommodation and food. Here you feel how important a fire chimney is after the sun set.

Pangboche to Dughla & Frozen Cho lake

Beyond Pangboche, the trail follows alpine meadow above tree line. A gentle ascent starts the trek. In a couple of hours, the village, Pheriche is reached. Notoriously windy, this place has a hospital, few lodges and an Altitude Sickness Centre where oxygen supply etc is available at a price. Pheriche (4,240 metres) is a good resting place for acclimatisation.

An easy walk for an hour is followed by difficult climbing. Trek after this point is exhausting. From this point, one feels the tiredness of the high altitude because of the lack of oxygen supply which is below 60% and one realises the difference between walking below and above 4,000 metres.

The trail is barren that goes through the boulders of Khumbu glacier. After 4-6 hours of trekking, Dughla (4,620 metres) is reached. It has a couple of lodges. In an hour's distance, lies the frozen lake of Chola. It offers a magnificent view of Cholatse, Taboche and Arakam Tse peaks.

Dughla to Lobuche

A mild continuous headache prevented me from making an early start, however after a good rest and plenty of fluid intake I felt able to pursue the challenge beyond 5,000 metres.



Amadablam

As we ascend up, the atmospheric pressure gradually decreases, and we inhale fewer and fewer oxygen molecules. The body adjusts itself to compensate mostly by faster and deeper breathing. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) usually begins with headache but may have other symptoms as well. Drinking plenty of fluid, nourishment, proper rest, slow ascent and avoiding over-stretching your body are some of the ways to prevent AMS.

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

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

Lobuche to Gorakshep

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

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

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

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



Trekking

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I was amazed to see around 50 tents at the base camp. It was difficult to believe how anyone could erect tents in such a difficult location. Adding to my awe were a research laboratory and all sorts of ladders, pipes, instruments, communication equipment. What amazed me more was how these sophisticated



Namche

equipments were carried by porters or yaks. There was also a hospital with specialised doctors and modern equipments and facilities set by Red Cross team for mountaineers. The debris of an ill fated helicopter could also be seen in the glacier. It is worth trekking to EBC and see how a base camp looks and how technology has reached the extreme points on the earth.

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

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

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

I was fortunate to have good weather during my trek. A lifetime memory is with me to cherish the beauty of mountains and the people of the region. With the successful completion of my Everest trek, I have many precious impressions that I can treasure forever and share with others. ■



You realise the significance of blood only when you need it



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

What inspired you to donate blood at the age of 15?

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

What made you want to donate blood at regular intervals?

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

How frequently did you donate initially?

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

What was the reaction of your parents?

They came to know of the fact only after I had donated 35 times when I was commended for it by the then Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba. They were surprised but were quite

accepting and more so after they saw that I was in perfectly good health all the time. They have been supportive ever since. And my husband and three children too have been very encouraging. My son, who turned 18 donated blood for the first time on his birthday this year.

What keeps you going?

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

What was your reaction after you began to receive acknowledgments and publicity from various quarters?

I was happy I could do something for my country and my community. To hold a record as a woman makes me feel good.

Now you're trying to get your name into Guinness Book of World Records. What prompted that?

I got the idea from my relatives and friends who said why not try for it and I thought it would be great to have my name, as a Nepali woman, on an international book that would be read by future generations all over the world. I'm trying

for it but even if I don't get it, I will continue to donate blood. It has become a mission in my life to continue giving till I'm physically capable of doing it. I also donated my eyes 15 years ago and do not mind donating my kidneys once I'm over 50 years of age.

Do you follow any special diet?

Absolutely not. I eat as normally as any other family member and am normal as anybody else. (laughing)

Any special incidence that stands out in your memory regarding blood donation?

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

Do you have all the records of your blood donation? How will you validate your claim?

I've always donated blood to Nepal Red Cross Society. Before 1989, the blood banks did not have a system of giving donors any card as they do now. They used to have a written record

that they would get rid of at the end of the year since they did not have space to store it. But I've kept a track of it, have kept the cuttings of most publications where my donation was acknowledged and being a regular, I'm a known face at the donation centre where I know the doctors, the nurses and the old staff members. In those days, only labourers used to sell blood for money, there were very few donors then. Now, the bank has computerised records.

What does blood mean to you?

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

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

Only absolute peace works

Peace is indivisible. It has to be comprehensive and total.



■ Binod P. Bista

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

Today, Nepal seems to be in a fix despite its desire to progress under an all-inclusive democratic system chosen by the people at large. Nepal seems to be reeling under the pressure of various socio-political forces unleashed by the April revolution of 2006. Despite the formation of a parliament many months ago, and an interim government a month ago, which gave space to all dissenting parties including the CPN-



Maoists; the current state of stability in general and safety to common people in particular is placing Nepal's newfound peace at great risk.

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

The current state of behavior shown by top leaders and several associations hardly reflect

any sign of an orderly society under a democratic government. Many people are wondering whether there is a functional government in Nepal today. Timely measures are required to change the mindset of such a passive and dejected public who alone can make the planned change a success. However, the all-party government seems to have faltered in the first instance itself.

One of the striking features of the Common Minimum Program revealed by the Government on 10 April states that "schools and hospital premises will be recognised as zones of peace." Nothing can be surprising or absurd for a

government to be selective in terms of its commitment to peace.

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

Violence, abductions and threats perpetrated by some groups associated with the Maoists and others must stop whether the government announces the schools as zones of peace or not. Peace is indivisible. It has to be comprehensive and total. The new unity government of Nepal, composed of all political parties, which promised lasting peace and a prosperous future to all Nepalis, has no excuse to do less than to establish total peace. Piece meal peace is neither workable nor lasting.

(Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)

Bangladesh Crisis : Emergency might stay past 120 days

Ban on politics likely to be prolonged

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

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

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

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

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

Questions are now being raised about the coming scenario,

as the state of emergency is set to complete its 120 days on May 11. In absence of a parliament, many are questioning whether the state of emergency will be automatically lifted after May 11 or the president will extend it through another proclamation.

Some legal experts termed the prevailing situation as unique and suggested that the matter should be sent to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for explanation.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, Law Adviser Mainul Hosein however said the constitutional provision is not applicable to the present situation since no parliament exists. "We don't see any constitutional problem as there is no parliament. Now it depends on the government whether the state of emergency will be continued or not," said the law adviser.

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

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

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

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

A well-placed source in the caretaker government said the state of emergency might continue even till the holding of the next parliamentary election, which is likely to be held by the end of 2008 as the chief adviser had recently announced. Similarly, the



Exiled Bangladeshi opposition leader

ban on indoor politics also might not be lifted soon, the source added.

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

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

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

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

(The Daily Star, Bangladesh)



Bhutan holds fake national poll

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has taken a big step to end 100 years of monarchy by staging a mock election.

The idea was to familiarise the people of this isolated nation with the concept of parliamentary democracy before next year's national election. In 1998 the king gave up absolute power and in 2006 he abdicated to his son.

But many still hold much affection for the former king, who once said that Bhutan's priority was not its GDP but its gross national happiness.

For the nearly 700,000 people who make up the breathtakingly beautiful kingdom of Bhutan, Saturday's mock poll was a chance to experience what democracy might feel like.

Voters spread across this

landlocked country high up in the Himalayan mountains, trudged to their nearest polling station to choose from one of four mock parties - the Blue, Red, Green or Yellow Thunder Dragon Party, named after the country's national symbol.

The two most successful parties will compete in a run-off in May, in which high-school students will act as candidates.

Some 10,000 officials are involved in the logistics, with special observers from neighbouring India, which has helped train them.

It is all part of a process unleashed by the former king, Jigme Wangchuk, who has pledged to turn Bhutan into a parliamentary democracy by 2008.

(BBC News)

N-deal:

India will not cross 'red lines'

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

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

The 15th report of the standing committee on external affairs headed by Laxminarayan Pandey, Lok Sabha MP, was tabled in parliament

Thursday. In his statement to the parliamentary panel, Menon also stressed the bilateral pact will not compromise India's strategic deterrence and its three-stage civil N-energy programme.

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

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

Amid anxieties about the course of the civil nuclear deal, Menon heads to

Washington on a two-day visit April 30 to engage in the third round of negotiations on a bilateral 123 civil nuclear energy cooperation pact with Nicholas Burns, the US' chief pointsman on the nuclear deal.

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

(IANS)



Marshland flowers

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



■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

From the time of Sakyamuni till today many unbroken enlightened lineages continue to dispense the teachings of the Buddha. Many of the lineages like those of the Vajrayana of Tibet and the Himalayan belt, Zen Buddhism, Tendai (Chinese Tien Tai) and many others, and some Theravada practice lineages still continue to have enlightened Masters in each generation. Then there is the strong unbroken lineage of the monks in all the various traditions who have also helped in the dispensation.

Three months before the Buddha entered into Parinirvana, he clearly declared that he had already developed four categories of people who will continue to teach his teaching. The four categories are: the Bhikchhu Sangha, the Bhikchhuni Sangha, the Upasaka Gana and the Upasika Gana. He said that he knew that these four categories will continue his teachings.

When he passed away he left behind around more than five hundred Arhats and virtually the entire Sangha had entered Srotapanna, which means he left everybody who were his disciples as enlightened. It is through these enlightened Masters that generation to generation till today the Buddha's teaching has been ferried across the centuries.

To understand Buddhism, it is paramount to understand this concept of an unbroken

To understand Buddhism, it is paramount to understand this concept of an unbroken enlightened lineage. Buddha himself was enlightened. That is why he is called a Buddha. The word stems from Bodhi which means awakening, being enlightened.

enlightened lineage. Buddha himself was enlightened. That is why he is called a Buddha. The word stems from Bodhi which means awakening, being enlightened. In fact, the root of the whole of Buddhism is rooted in the enlightenment of the Buddha. I emphasise the words "Enlightenment of the Buddha" and not just enlightenment.

The English word enlightenment and the related Sanskrit words Gyan, Mukti, Bodhi have been used by many spiritual traditions since the time of the Buddha. Gyan and Mukti were used even before the Buddha. So it is of utmost importance to understand clearly that even though the words are the same they do not necessarily mean the

same thing. Therefore, just claiming so and so is enlightened does not necessarily mean the person has attained the same Bodhi as the Buddha and thus can be called a Buddha.

I have already explained that a Buddha does not arise like Morning Glories in spring time. The arising of a Buddha is not only unique and rare but follows a certain law: A Buddha arises only when the teachings of the Buddha before him vanishes completely; Only after a Yogavachar (practicing yogi) has practiced for three or four Asankhya Kalpas (immeasurable eons).

One immeasurable eon is equivalent to 10⁶⁰ Kalpas. According to Buddhist literature like the Lalit Vistar and others, a Buddha is the spiritually eldest sentient being even at birth itself due to his vast and deep practice. No two Buddhas arise at the same time or even as said before no new Buddha arises as long as the teaching of one Buddha is still alive.

Here we need to clarify a point. Buddhist tradition itself calls many of its yogis a Buddha. But here it simply means his mind has reached a very high stage of enlightenment and is thus like a Buddha. It does not mean that that yogi also has the 32 marks/ characteristics and 80 sub-marks of a Tathagata. But even such a thing can be applicable only to Masters who have come from an unbroken enlightened lineage stemming from the Buddha himself.

Any other person being called a Buddha would be using the language structure of the Buddhist tradition and giving it a different meaning. People have the freedom to use words as they like but then, it should not be assumed that the words Bodhi and Buddha used by such others mean the same thing as the meaning given to it by Buddhists. One cannot practice non-Buddhist practices and attain the Bodhi of the Buddha. This is in itself a profound topic and will be dealt with later as the parameters and paradigm of Buddhism becomes clearer.

Right now let us go to the explication of "Unbroken Enlightened Lineage." As I said Buddha attained Bodhi. This is called Samyak Sambodhi in Buddhist lineage. Now it is simple logic to say that it is only the Buddha who knows intimately what his Samyak Sambodhi (correct unexcelled enlightenment) is.

If I have tasted sugar, I know how sugar tastes and can lead people to taste sugar. And only when I give someone sugar to taste will there be a validation that what I have tasted and my knowledge of it is exactly the same as that of the person who has tasted it. When I stamp his "sugar-knowledge" as correct, I am validating that what he has experienced is the same experience as my experience. Herein lies the purity in experience.

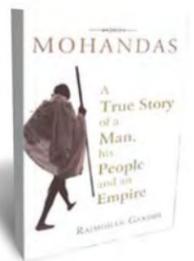
(To be continued...)

(Shridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)

Book Review

Gandhi like

Mohandas: A true story of a man, his people and an empire
published by Penguin/Viking



...To his mind, there was no difference between the thought processes that would lead to actions and the actions themselves.

■ Keshav P. Upadhyay

This book on Gandhi is easy to read and extremely insightful. The train journey in South Africa where he is thrown out of the train, the Champaran experiment, Dandi march, Quit India, Noakhali Yatra are some of the bigger events of his life which have sunk in the minds of almost entire population of South Asia. And yet these events are but a flash in the pan. The man, it dawned upon me when I finished reading the book, is so great that the sum total of the public events connected with his life does not seem to equal his whole personality.

The man is much greater. His anguish over Hindu-Muslim discord, his deep concern for the upliftment of untouchables, or Harijans to him, for whose emancipation he waged an incessant struggle with the Sanaatanists throughout his life, and his experiments related to Brahmcharya are some of the things which, to an average mind, seem outside strict political boundary. To him, they had more weight than mere political actions. In his mind, there was no difference between the thought processes that would lead to actions and the actions themselves. They were seamlessly merged into one whole personality. His urge to go on a fast to purify himself and also to motivate people to behave comes through the book in a powerful way.

Yet, his life's mission, independence of India, overrode everything else. He had to be active in politics and he demonstrated the astuteness of politicians time and again. He had the pulse of the Indian masses with him. Whenever the leadership of the Indian National Congress floundered over an imbroglio, he found a shot that invariably hit the target. It happened during the Dandi March. It happened again when he pressurised the Congress to pass a Quit India resolution. He demonstrated so much of his hold over the Indian public that despite their reservations about political wisdom of the step being considered, the Congress leadership went along with him. And every time it happened, the entire nation was electrified.

Yes, Gandhi was a true saint. But saints are difficult human beings. They judge others by their own high standards of morality. Gandhi's eldest son Harilal is a case in point. Harilal was deeply disappointed throughout his life for the alleged injustices done to him by his father. It started with one incident. When somebody had to be sent to London for a course in law, Gandhi sent his nephew rather than his son because he thought the nephew was more deserving.

Gandhi never concealed anything from his immediate family which meant fellow Ashramites and a band of political colleagues working in close consultation with him like Nehru and Patel. Even the slightest of emotional lapses he made would find a mention in his early morning confabulations. He was utterly frank in political matters and there was no place for willful deception in his scheme of things, either in personal or public affairs. He lived by the truth as he saw it and died because he did not compromise with his conscience.

The author, his grandson, has not shoved the difficult aspects of his personality under the carpet. Raj Mohan Gandhi has recorded quite objectively all facets of Gandhi's character traits in detail. This book is an honest biography of an uncompromisingly honest man. ■



YOUR GATE TO IT WORLD



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Mysterious planet

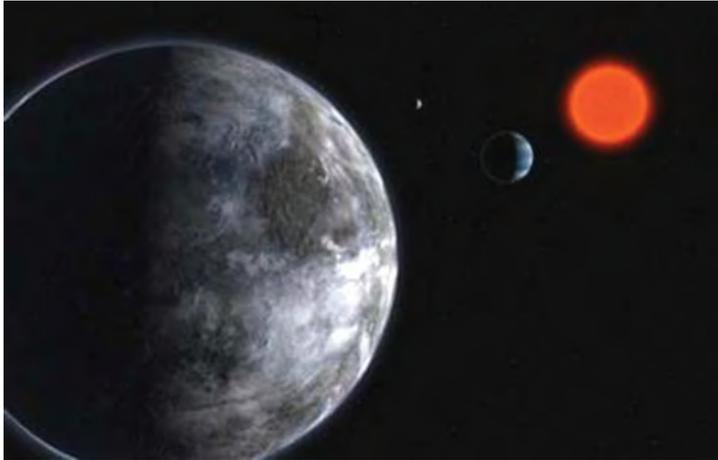
Astronomers found a new planet 20.5 light years away from the Earth. The planet is about five times as massive as the Earth. The new planet, which completes one orbit every 13 days, is the third one found around Gliese 581 – which is among the 100 stars closest to our solar system. The vast majority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

The team of Swiss, French and Portuguese scientists who found the planet estimate that its surface temperature ranges from freezing to 104 degrees Fahrenheit, the crucial range in which water can exist as liquid. "It's like the Earth and the most likely to be able to support life", said Stephane Udry, the astronomer at Switzerland's Geneva Observatory who led the team.

More than 200 planets have been found outside the solar system. Most of them are gaseous and giants like Jupiter & Saturn. But this one is like the Earth where the temperature is likely to range from 0 to 40 degrees Celsius (32 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit), according to Udry.

"I'm sure that in the future we will find even better candidates for planets able to harbour life," Udry said. "We see it as a step towards finding life in the universe." But some scientists do not agree with Udry. "This could be very important," said NASA astrobiology expert Chris McKay, who was not part of the discovery team. "It doesn't mean there is life, but it means it is an Earth-like planet in terms of potential habitability."

"This opens up an exciting new phase of extra-solar planet exploration, where we can begin to compare and contrast the atmospheres of planets around other stars," stated lead investigator David Charbonneau of NASA.



The conference of IAU in Prague declared the Pluto is disqualified to be a planet. So now there are eight planets in our solar system. Outside our solar system, scientists have found more than 200 planets around other stars. Almost all of these known 'extra-solar' planets are giant balls of gas. Such massive planets are relatively easy to find. They have a gravitational pull that makes their stars wobble, and when scientists see that wobble, they know there is a planet. Small, rocky planets cause less of a wobble, making them harder to find.

A report on the discovery of the new planet has been submitted to the journal Astronomy and Astrophysics, and other experts agree that it is a significant find. Alan Boss is a planetary scientist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. "This seems to be the first discovery of an Earth-like planet," Boss says. "It is not exactly an Earth but is close enough that I think it does deserve the title of perhaps the first Earth-like planet." Other small planets discovered in the past have been very hot or very cold. In many ways, though, this planet is a mystery.

■ Compiled by Dilli Acharya

Insight

'Loktantrisation' of democracy

Loktantra has been reduced to mere political slogan which has no impact on rooting of democracy.



■ Sushma Amatya

Loktantra, the buzz word in Nepal today means democracy and is a synonym for another Nepali word, Prajatantra. Both words essentially mean the same and that is democracy. Loktantra came into popular usage after the people's uprising in April last year when it forced the King to abdicate power in favour of the political parties.

One cannot conceive of Loktantra or democracy without the people. What Abraham Lincoln described it as: of, by and for the people, still is the most acceptable model of democracy today. Likewise, Loktantra is a notion and a process in which the interest of the people is held supreme and both in principle and practice they are involved, either directly or through their representatives, in all policy decision making processes.

For the past 15 years, we had democracy in which people played no part once they cast their votes. Our democracy has only come to mean people's right to vote, and nothing more. Even that right has been appropriated by the eight parties by not enacting necessary laws to create a favourable atmosphere for election to take place.

Yes, there are debates going on worldwide that democracy in practice has remained an elite dominated phenomenon. There are concerns being expressed that people's role in the whole political and policy formulating process should be enhanced. This means devising process and machinery to further empower people augmenting their right to vote.

But there has been no serious debate about all this when the rhetoric coming from all political spheres says they are out to strengthen democracy and build a 'new' Nepal. How can it be new when the mindset of those ruling the roost is actually old, outdated and closed? Can political parties deliver their tall promises when they are least bothered about creating a conducive atmosphere where citizens can cast their votes in a free and fair manner?

What is essential in a democracy is that the country and society are governed by rule of law and practice of accountability. Mere rhetoric, flaunting of new terminologies minus any accountability for the pledges made by the political parties to the people becomes a mockery as well as anti-thesis of democracy.

Whipping up sentiments of vulnerable people through hackneyed words, selling them dreams that show no signs of transforming into reality is easy and much indulged in by the party leaders. It might be difficult for them to learn not to tamper with fundamentals of democracy, respect human rights and civic rights of each and every member of the nation equally, but it is imperative they do so if they want to survive. Pompous and unfulfilled promises tend to invite people's organised wrath, and not always in a peaceful manner.

Party-centric politics without any role for the people, where only the parties and their bosses dictate and act as an authoritarian centre goes against the spirit of democracy. Loktantra has been reduced to mere political slogan which has no impact on rooting of democracy which was the basic responsibility that the mass movement gave to the leaders of political party last year.

Today in decision making processes only the eight parties are involved. A vast majority outside the political parties are completely left out of it. It is apparent there are two sets of laws in the country, one for the present 13 political parties and the other for the rest of the public for whom a pre-requisite of 10,000 signatures are required for anyone to be registered as a political party. This is reminiscent of legislated discrimination that was seen only in apartheid South Africa.

If the present leaders do not change, the whole exercise that the country went through might end up becoming counter-productive. The political leaders' failure would then be identified with democracy. This negative message might then be exploited by reactionary and regressive forces to portray democracy as a failed ideology in the country. Now the big question looms large. Does political parties' Loktantra actually mean democracy? What kind of democracy is it? ■

One cannot conceive of Loktantra or democracy without the people. What Abraham Lincoln described it as: of, by and for the people, still is the most acceptable model of democracy today.



Ecstasy is a hallucinogen

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

What is Ecstasy?

Sanjeev Rajkamikar
Jawlakhel

Ecstasy is marketed as tablets and often branded as Playboy, Bunnies etc. It is used as a mood enhancer. Ecstasy is a hallucinogen (drug that acts on mind to cause people to see or feel things that are not really there). These are some of the most dangerous drugs. Hallucinogens cause mind to record things that are both real experiences and those that are not real, which can mix up a person's memory.

A person can start thinking about scary or sad experiences from the past and not be able to stop thinking about it. This can result in permanent feelings of fear, sadness or other feelings that have nothing to do with what is happening in the person's present life. Users report that ecstasy also produces intensely pleasurable effects including an enhanced sense of self confidence and energy. These transitory effects also include feelings of peacefulness, acceptance and empathy. This makes the drug all the more treacherous.

Other effects include involuntary teeth clenching, loss of inhibitions, transfixion on sights and sounds,

nausea, blurred vision, chills and/ or sweating. It increases heart rate and blood pressure and seizures are also possible. The stimulant's effect enables users to dance for extended periods, which when combined with hot crowded conditions usually found at 'raves' or dance parties, can lead to severe dehydration and hyperthermia or dramatic increases in body temperature. Ecstasy damages cells in the brain resulting in users having problems with their memory.

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

Sharda Nepal
Naxal

Yes, drug related memories or mental images are environmentally triggered. An ex-drug user are prone to recalling past events triggered by events in the person's present environment. Drug users have traumatic mental images of drug use, and these pictures contain not only memories of drug use, but also circumstances surrounding it.

Things like where drugs were bought, who sold it to them, how they felt about buying it, and many more thoughts and feelings will be present in these mental pictures. A drug user

also stores in his or her memory all negative things they did while under the influence of drugs; along with moments of pain and betrayal mixed with moments of pleasure and bliss.

Once a drug user has used drugs for an extended period of time, he or she will have millions of subtle and obvious people, places and things in the environment that remind them or trigger the thoughts of drug use. Often, the strongest environmental triggers are those that are directly connected with the use of drugs. As such 'tools' of drug use are often very common objects, the person can come in contact with such tools on a day-to-day basis. Thus the potential for a drug user to be constantly reminded of the past is staggering.

What this means for the person who is attempting to quit using drugs is that everyday their attention can be involuntarily pulled away from what is going on in the present and become fixed on past drug-related memories. They therefore need a lot of help from their family and friends who should try their best to be supportive and understanding.

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



Team Australia

Spectators

Seven weeks of overs, and we're done

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

Many complain the cricket World Cup ran too long at a whopping seven weeks, but others might complain it didn't run long enough. The average American human brain, after all, cannot absorb cricket in seven weeks.

Seven months might suffice. Or, not. Australia became the first country to win the World Cup for a third straight time, cementing its dynasty with a 53-run defeat of Sri Lanka on Saturday evening, but with the use of the dreaded Duckworth-Lewis method.

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

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

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

That's because, after delays in stormy Barbados — and everyone can agree it's a bummer when you have a stormy Barbados

— the Australians celebrated their title, then learned from umpires that it wasn't complete, so they'd have to play on.

They played on a little bit more until darkness put the clamp on the day, whereupon they celebrated again.

Reported London's Daily Telegraph, "Nothing was visible except the electronic scoreboard which did not know what was going on. Nobody could see the celebrating Australians or the closing ceremony.

"A sport which produces such a chaotic climax as this is not a sport which is properly run."

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

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

Somewhere in there, one Adam Gilchrist had paced Australia, wringing a World Cup final record 149 from 104 balls, in the final match for one Glenn McGrath, retiring from a memorable career. With Gilchrist as bulwark, Australia reached 281 for four wickets in 38 overs.

Later, Sri Lanka reached 215, not enough to win under Duckworth-Lewis.

Thus did end one of history's most traumatized sporting events, stretching

through seven weeks in eight Caribbean nations. Two titans, Pakistan and India, had exited early and shockingly, but that proved hauntingly mild. After Pakistan's ouster, hotel housekeepers in Kingston, Jamaica, found its globally esteemed coach, Bob Woolmer, dead in his room on March 18. Four days after that, authorities ruled the death a homicide. The investigation continues.

After a pause for reflection, play resumed, and the Australians kept winning decisively, bringing their three-quadrant winning streak to 23 and their unbeaten streak to 29, their last loss coming early in the 1999 tournament. They have won four of the nine cricket World Cups held since the event debuted in 1975, and their stylish Tasmanian captain, Ricky Ponting, has graced the last four finals, winning three and captaining two.

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

Even sage cricket enthusiasts might not ever comprehend that.

(canada.com)

Honoured



Rukma Shumsher Rana, 70, honorary chairman of the Nepal Olympic Committee, has been conferred with the 'Award of Merit,' in recognition of his contribution to the Olympic movement.

Rana, second recipient of the honour in the country after the legendary Nar Shumsher Rana, was handed over the award by Olympic Committee Association (OCA) Chairman - Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah during the general body meeting of the OCA at Kuwait in the third week of April.

Others to receive the award along with Rana included Chairman of the China Olympic Committee and sports Minister Liu Peng, Chairman of the Doha Asiad, Crown Prince of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamam Al Thani and Doha Asiad General Secretary Sheikh Saud Abdul Rahaman Al Thani.

"This is the biggest ever award and recognition I have received in my life," Rana said. During his 13 year long association with the OCA, he has been involved in four Asiads, three Olympic and four South Asian Games. Rana who announced retirement from active sports life continues to be honorary president of the NOC.

■ nf correspondent

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