



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Although Pro-Maoist organisations have often shut-down schools, children belonging families of disappeared sat on 'dharna' outside the PM House demanding that conflict affected children be given quality education.

Koirala fumes

PM not to tolerate Maoist highhandedness any more

■ nf correspondent

In a meeting that lasted barely five minutes, Prime Minister G P Koirala, gave stern warning to Maoist leaders to make a distinction between criminal and political activities.

Still recuperating from his eye problem, Koirala told Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai that he did not believe Young Communist League's activities were independent without their leadership endorsing it.

This was their first meeting after the rift between the PM and the Maoists widened following his public declaration that YCL is a bunch of 'criminals.' According to the information newsfront gathered, Prachanda requested the PM to understand the political background of YCL and assured that he would look into his grievances.

Koirala vent out warnings and fumed, "How many times have you given me the list of criminals to arrest? Where does YCL get this authority to take law into its hands?" Speaking in an, 'enough is enough' tone, Koirala also told Maoist leaders, "You not only attacked two diplomats in Damak but German ambassador has also been a victim of assault by your groups in Kathmandu."

After giving his piece of mind, the PM asked

Home Minister K P Sitaula and his nephew, Dr Shekhar Koirala to have a thorough discussion on issues with the Maoist leaders that needs to be addressed soon. "We discussed on formation of various commissions including the one on disappearances by the State, National Human Rights Commission, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the committee to monitor peace process," Dr Shekhar Koirala told newsfront, adding that a final decision would be taken soon on these matters.

"Yes, we discussed YCL activities as well and Maoist leaders have promised to look into their activities," he added; and Dr Bhattarai said,

"YCL is serving people, but if there have been some excesses, we will look into it."

It is not yet known how Maoists will respond to the warning given by the PM but analysts say that it may certainly increase

their anxieties. The PM is also believed to have told them that while the Armed Police Force would now patrol highways, the security apparatus would be put on high alert signaling that he might have to opt for "deployment of army," if Maoists' activities continued.

According to Dr Shekhar Koirala, Maoist leaders have also been asked to start returning lands confiscated by the Maoists in western Nepal like they did in Dang though, partially. ■

Still recuperating from his eye problem, PM Koirala told Maoist leaders that he did not believe YCL's activities were independent without their leadership endorsing it.

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Inside

Army calls Maoists 'antisocial'

on page 2

Carter suggests pragmatic solutions

on page 2

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Confrontation

After a prolonged silence, Nepal army has reacted sharply to the Maoists' demand to have its base removed from Katurbetwa in Kaplivastu's Birpur Village Development Council. In a strongly worded statement, the army headquarter said no such base could be removed in the prevailing situation.

Nepal Army's reaction follows an indefinite strike imposed by the Maoists on the western highway that paralysed entire traffic movement during which they damaged and burnt about a dozen private vehicles. Maoists called off the strike on Sunday since public anger seemed to be building against them.

The army termed the organisers of the Bandh, "anti-social elements" and said, "They seemed to adopt a tactic to dislodge the current security bases so that the presence of the government could be minimised through such activities."

The statement said, "in

deference to the national interest and security, and in order for the ordinary citizens to feel secure, no security bases established in the country through due process of law is going to be removed."

Significantly, the army statement which also justifies establishment of certain new bases in the course of the conflict was issued after Prime Minister G P Koirala cleared it. Sources said the Chief of Army Staff, Rukmangad Katwal, had also briefed the PM about the need for continued presence of this camp.

The camp in Katurbetwa, the source said, was set-up in view of the security situation that prevailed during the years of conflict. None of the bases set-up during the period was meant for protection of particular individual or group of individuals as it was meant for general people as a whole. The Maoists wanted the base removed on the plea that the one in Kapilvastu was located at the house of a vigilante and had no justification in its continuity.

Commission in Koirala Raj

The Commission of Inquiry into incidence of violence in Terai appears more of a sociological study in nature. It has no right or jurisdiction to recommend action against the people it finds responsible for causing violence and loss of property eastern Terai.

The commission headed by Justice Khilraj Regmi, a sitting judge of the Supreme court, will assess the loss of life and property, find and analyze its cause and effect, and recommend what steps should be taken not to let such incidents recur in future.

According to the official sources, the commission will find out details about the loss of human life in the month of Magh (Jan 14 to Feb 13, 2007) as a result of clashes between

groups in course of protest demonstrations in Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara and Parsa districts of Terai. The commission would have no jurisdiction to go into Lahan incident, which claimed the first life as a result of Maoist attack on pro-Terai groups, on January 23.

Home Ministry sources said the commission would also go into the loss of lives following attack on police posts, or in the process of maintaining peace and order. Besides, it will assess the loss of government, private and institutional property and go into their causes. "It will make recommendations for formulating policies, and taking necessary actions so that these kinds of incidents do not recur," said the source.

Indian shift?

In what looks like a marked shift in India's policy towards Bhutani refugees, Foreign Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said it was more of an international problem now. India so far had been maintaining that it was a bilateral problem that Nepal and Bhutan should sort out.

But as the current round of agitation by determined refugees to enter Bhutan has been temporarily suspended on advice of Indian authorities, Mukherjee's latest version gives some hope that India would be part of the international initiative to sort out the 16 year old stalemate. There are more than 107,000 Bhutani refugees living in different camps in Jhapa, and they are divided over the UNHCR authored and US backed proposal to settle the willing refugees in third countries.

Media reports originating from Calcutta quote Mukherjee as

telling West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Saturday evening, "It is an international problem," and that the government of India was trying to work out a solution.

Bhattacharjee is believed to have told Mukherjee that refugees' attempt to return to Bhutan via West Negal territory was creating a law and order situation in his state as something 'not acceptable,' and asked Mukherjee to initiate a dialogue between Nepal and Bhutan. Bhattarajee's appeal appears like an endorsement of Nepal's line that India mediate on the issue.

At least two refugees lost their lives when Indian security personnel opened fire on refugees as they crossed the Mechi Bridge as part of their 'long march campaign' to enter Bhutan two weeks ago.

■ nf correspondent

Diplomats' safety

Excellencies, let us know where you are going

■ nf correspondent

Diplomats' safety and security has emerged as a priority agenda after the humiliating experience of the Prime Minister having to apologise to the international community over the attack on its members a fortnight ago.

On June 8, Foreign Affairs Minister, Sahana Pradhan, joined by top level civil and police officials assured the diplomatic community that they are safe in Nepal and that Damak incident would never be repeated.

The assurance came in response to the virtual demand of a majority of the diplomatic missions in Nepal that the government, in spirit of the Vienna Convention, should ensure that diplomats are safe and protected in Nepal. The strong and unprecedented letter was a sequel to the attack on UNHCR Country Representative, Abraham Abraham and U S Ambassador, James Moriarty by the YCL activists at Damak when the two were on their way to the local camp office. Interestingly, Abraham Abraham was not invited by Ms Pradhan during the meeting.

While Pradhan assured the diplomats that stern actions would be taken against those responsible for the attack, she concealed the fact that all the four YCL activists arrested on the charge of attacking the two had been released on personal bond. "The government



Foreign Affairs Minister Sahana Pradhan

was compelled to release them as the YCL threatened that they would obstruct the public meeting of the Prime Minister if the four were not released." Koirala's meeting passed off peacefully as they had been released a day earlier.

Koirala had personally apologised to the visiting US Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Labour and Human rights, Barry Lowenkron, last week for the attack on diplomats including ambassador Moriarty.

The foreign minister had requested Home Minister K P Sitaula and his Secretary Umesh Mainali to be present in the meeting; but they sent Joint Secretary Baman Neupane as their representative. Minister Pradhan however, made her point gently that she expected diplomats

to follow the normal practice of informing the government whenever they had to leave the capital. Security at the diplomats' residence and during their movement would be beefed up with their vehicles having hotline telephone connection.

Besides Damak incident, there have been a couple more such instances in which diplomats have been obstructed while discharging their duties by various mobs including the Maoists. German Ambassador is believed to have told the minister that while the diplomatic corps was concerned about the attack on its members, it was also equally concerned over the plight of Nepalis who are badly affected by kind of Bandhs and obstructionist attitude of one group or the other.

Statesman Carter

Carter suggests pragmatic solutions

■ Manoj Dahal

If it is Carter, he has to be different. This fact is not only valid in Iraq and Israel but also in Nepal and the former US president does not really seem to mind opposing the US official line. His proposed meeting with Maoist leaders still under US terrorist list might be an act which the US government may not feel comfortable with.

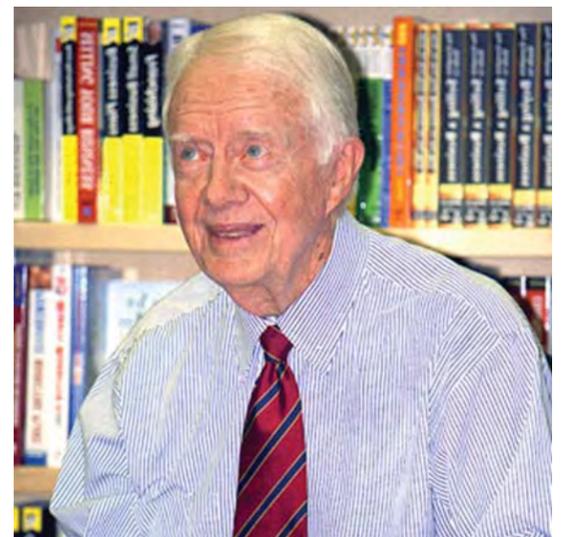
In what is a clear shift from the U S policy, he is bent on meeting Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai among other top political leaders during his four day visit beginning June 13.

He seems cautiously optimistic but firm that a proper electoral atmosphere has to be created for a free and fair poll to the constituent assembly. He recommended enactment of election laws, sustained focus on electoral preparedness, addressing demands of marginalised groups for a smooth poll.

A statement issued by the Carter Center said, "The Center encourages the government of Nepal to focus on the common purpose of creating a conducive environment for constituent assembly election, including action on all outstanding electoral legislation and decisions together with the new election date," after widespread consultation.

It made forthright comments coupled with its worries that there was a striking absence of political and electoral activities at the local level. But it avoids going into details of young communist league and Maoist activities that include attack on rival political groups.

Given Carter's stand, that clearly goes against that of the Bush administration; the U S embassy in Kathmandu



seems to be extending only administrative assistance during the former president's activities here.

But there were no hostile comments by Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy Human rights and Labour, Barry Lowenkron, when scribes asked him about Carter's meeting with the Maoist leaders. He only acknowledged Carter's activities and campaign in support of human rights, peace and democracy worldwide.

The Carter Center is the only U S organisation that Maoists have invited so far, along with the government, to come in a much larger number as observers for the election to the constituent assembly, now slated for December. ■

Biz News

Nokia announces

Nokia, the world leader in mobile communications, has recently announced plans for its business operations in Nepal.

"Being the world leader in mobile telecommunications and the most preferred brand in Asia requires an excellent understanding of the markets that we operate in as well as having a culture of taking care of our partners and consumers," said Prem Prakash Chand, General Manager, Emerging Asia.

Nokia claims to offer consumers a rich choice of devices from its portfolio that gives them the right balance of technology and design that is affordable, reliable and functional. From the variety of entry-level feature-filled devices such as the Nokia N series, Nokia E series and the Nokia 8800 Sirocco edition, there is a device to match the needs and desires of any mobile phone user.

Bajaj Platina at Rs. 50 per day

Hansraj Hulaschand Co. Pvt. Ltd, the sole authorised dealer for Bajaj, has come up with a new idea effective for customer satisfaction. After the recent ground breaking initiative of including the banking sector in a two-wheeler financing scheme which brought down the interest rates by 4%, the company has put forward yet another offer with the punch line – "Rs.50 Ma Platina."

Priced at Rs.1, 02,900, the Platina is now available at 30% down payment, 0% interest and maximum loan tenure of 4 years. Under this scheme, each monthly installment comes to just Rs.1, 499. Simplified, it is just Rs.50 a day, which according to the company, is the sum that an average commuter traveling by public transportation spends everyday.

Not shifting

UNICEF's regional office is contemplating various cost-cutting measures, but re-locating it to Bangkok as being speculated in certain quarters, seems a remote possibility now.

"There is no serious move to shift as is being speculated, although organisational review is on," official sources said.

UNICEF's regional office (ROSA) refused to comment on the issue saying, "the person authorised to speak is away in Bangkok." But knowledgeable sources say that the matter was being debated seriously though informally and many South Asian countries including India favoured the ROSA office continuing to operate in Nepal. "We have not been informed as to what



kind of organisational reviews are being contemplated upon," Dinesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told newsfront. Any decision regarding the issue is however, unlikely before September.

In fact, Nepal has already lost some of the regional offices of the UN to other Asian countries under some pretext or the other. The regional office of the UN disarmament was shifted to Colombo in reversal of the decision to set it up in Kathmandu some four years ago. Similarly, another UN related office which had even sent a skeletal staff to Kathmandu, and had the potential to provide at least 200 white collar jobs to the locals was also re-located.

Middleman minister

Minister K B Mahara has certain affable qualities such as the fact that he listens more and talks less. His party boss Prachanda has another reason to be happy with the minister as he is loyal and works as per his 'dictates.'

As the cabinet was going to release funds for Maoists cadres, numbering 30,000 plus in the cantonments as allowances, at the rate of Rs.3,000 per month to each 'combatant,' Mahara objected and forced the government to make the payment in the manner Maoist leadership wanted. Prachanda's instruction was that the entire amount should be handed over to the Maoist minister, and not to the individual Maoist cadre. The government could only comply when Mahara communicated what his boss had asked him to do. ■



CJ's anger

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Dilip Kumar Poudel, is known as a soft-spoken person. But he lost his cool over the criticism of the judiciary by civil society and the media.

"They have lost their balance and are unfairly criticising the judiciary; little realising that over and unwarranted criticism of the judiciary would only endanger democracy and the peace

process." Reacting to the Global Corruption report 2007 prepared and published by the Transparency International, CJ Poudel said, "It was biased and prejudiced."

Nepal's judiciary figures in the corruption index of the report in not as honourable as it has been listed as one of the more corrupt institutions of the state.

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ENT	ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
OFF	OFF BEAT NEWS
NEWS HELP	HELP

HOROSCOPE

Keyword	Result
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AST TAU	TAURUS
AST GEM	GEMINI
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CRICKET

Keyword	Result
CRI	CRICKET SCHEDULE & LIVE SCORES

THOUGHT

Keyword	Result
THOUGHT	THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

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Keyword	Result
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Point to Ponder

Preconceived notions are the locks on the door to wisdom.

- Merry Browne

Legislated discrimination

Almost a year after the King handed back the power to the political parties in the aftermath of the people's movement, the euphoria that was driving the country seems to be waning. The realisation not too late that euphoria cannot take the country to desired destination is a positive sign, as it signals that culture of introspection among the present rulers is not completely dead.

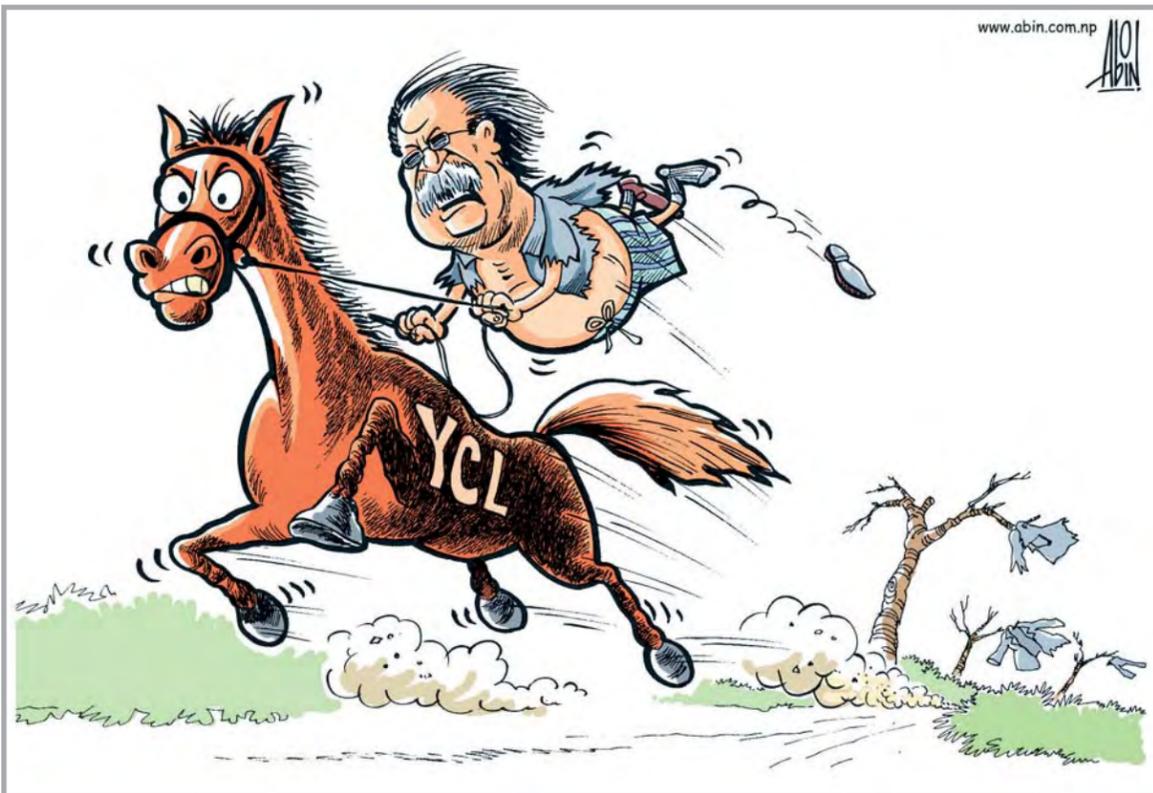
A move to seek amendment to the constitution to remove Prime Minister with a two third majority of the House and inserting provision in the constitution of having leader of the opposition are welcome steps as they are essential and integral features of parliamentary democracy.

But it is too little if not too late. There are far more important issues yet to be addressed. The interim constitution is still draconian and violates the basic principle of equality before law without which the rule of law cannot be implemented. By the latest amendment, the 8-party government seeks to debar political parties and individuals who the Rayamajhi Commission has found 'guilty' of suppressing last year's movement from contesting election to the constituent assembly.

There are not only basic flaws in this move but if implemented would make a mockery of democracy and the principle of fairness of the state. Firstly, Rayamajhi Commission is not a judicial entity with the right to convict an individual or political party. It was out and out a political commission which followed an avowedly partisan and biased conduct while carrying the so called investigation on misuse of state power and funds to suppress the movement. If at all the government wants to take such a draconian measure, the minimum that it ought to do is to refer the matter to the Supreme Court.

Secondly, except in the case where the court has disqualified certain individuals and parties from contesting election on proven guilt, any such step by the state or parliament would be arbitrary and negates freedom that democracy guarantees. Therefore, it has come as a challenge that not only the affected individuals and political parties but any law-abiding and democracy loving citizen has to take up.

This amounts to eight parties hijacking citizens' right to reject or accept the political parties through ballots. The election to the constituent assembly would be a farce if the process of elimination of parties and candidates begins through legislated discrimination much before the election takes place right under the gaze of international bodies including that of the United Nations.



Letters

YCL, media play lawmakers

YCL abducted Sitaram Prasai on June 03, 2007 from his office. In response to this the Prime Minister changed YCL's acronym from Communist to Criminal for which he deserves praise. YCL's action amply re-enforced that status.

The media too had a field day covering this case but for me, there are unanswered questions: Who gave YCL the authority to abduct Prasai and hold him hostage for 24 hours? Who authorised this group to act as lawmakers? In any lawful society there is a basic assumption that a person is innocent till proven guilty. Prasai has been labeled a "fraud," and "criminal," without having gone through due process of law.

The police and Rastra Bank have not been able to provide sufficient evidence till now on this case. They have asked for additional time. Did the bank have sufficient grounds to ask the police to issue an arrest warrant against Prasai? Or are they scrambling around for information now. Was the warrant issued at all? In absence of such a warrant, was one particular media house justified in projecting him as an absconder and vilifying him?

The Central Bank has enough rights to supervise or even take over a financial institution or bank under its supervision. Why was not that done in the case of Prasai's bank? Does one person solely run a bank? Everyone including the media missed out on the fact that Nepal Rastra Bank i.e. our country's Central Bank is not only a regulator but also a major shareholder in Nepal Cottage and Small Scale Industries Bank. It has 10% of the shares till today since the bank's inception. What was it doing if things were going wrong in that



bank?

The abductors took Prasai to the open air theatre for public humiliation where he was mobbed by more YCL activists. The head of the mob read photocopies of articles from a media house whose chairman himself was an 'absconder' once when their case was being proved by the CIAA. Can the nexus between a media house and YCL be enough to declare anyone a fraud?

I, for now would like to listen to Prasai's story. The sole media house attacking Prasai does not convince me. Let Prasai's case be an eye opener for all those who believe in the rule of law. Glorifying such acts by the media would invite dangerous consequences.

Now the responsibility lies on the government to take strong action

against YCL. Letting YCL continue with every thing they do and getting away it, signifies forgiving their crimes. That will give them more liberty to do as they please, with help from the one media house that indulges in biased reporting. In that case why would we need the police, judiciary or the government?

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

What is found now is found then

Kabir Das born in 1398 AD, was one of the medieval Indian saints of the Bhakti and Sufi movement whose compositions figure in Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. Legend says that he relinquished his body when he was about 120 years old. There is a famous legend about his death; when he died, his Hindu and Muslim followers started fighting about the last rites. When they lifted the cloth covering his body, they found flowers instead. The Muslim followers buried their half and the Hindu cremated their half. In Maghar, his tomb and Samadhi still stand side by side.

Kabir's life was centred around Kashi, also called Banaras (Varanasi). Legend has it that he was actually the son of a Brahmin widow who abandoned him and that he was found by

a Muslim weaver named Niru, who adopted the boy and taught him the weaver's trade.

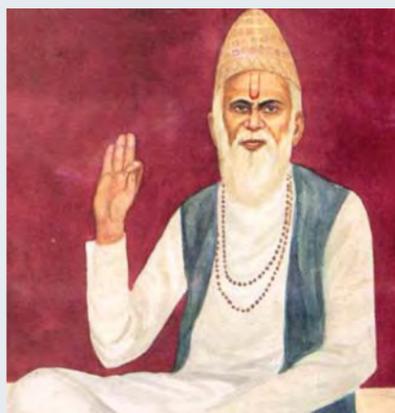
Kabir through his couplets not only reformed the mindset of common villagers and low caste people but gave them self-confidence to question Brahmins.

Kabir's poems:

To be a Slave of Intensity

Friend, hope for the guest while you are alive.
 Jump into experience while you are alive!
 Think...and think...while you are alive.
 What you call 'salvation' belongs to the time before death.

If you don't break your ropes while you're alive,
 do you think
 ghosts will do it after?



The idea that the soul will join with the ecstatic just because the body is rotten - that is all fantasy.

What is found now is found then.

If you find nothing now,
 you will simply end up with an apartment in the city of death.

If you make love with the divine now
 in the next life you will have the face of satisfied desire.
 So plunge into the truth, find out who the teacher is,
 believe in the great sound!

When the guest is being searched for,
 it is the intensity of the longing for the guest that does all the work.
 Look at me, and you will see a slave of that intensity.

True to the saying, "History is written by the old but made by the young," the credit for the political change that Nepal recently experienced also goes to the participation of young people in the people's movement. It is now clear that Nepali youth are committed to serving as a force for transforming the old political and social order and create a new Nepal; where people of all caste, creed and gender enjoy equal rights for their individual growth and development and participation in nation building. As Nepal's population is predominantly young, youth constitute a real factor of change in support of a new democratic Nepal. Education of youth therefore must be made an integral part of a broader agenda for political democratisation. Since education is both a source of individual advancement and a mechanism for achieving community empowerment and real democracy, education and literacy should top the list of priorities in the new government.

Major problems

In the field of education, we are confronted with two major problems: firstly, a great number of youth are still out of school and secondly, a great majority of those who are in school do not receive quality education. The direct result of this is a continuing polarisation of Nepali society into groups with sharply different educational experiences and post-school opportunities.

The way to address the problem of out of school youth is to launch a massive nationwide literacy campaign on a war footing, involving school teachers, college and university students and young or prospective members of political parties. Neo-literate young men and women who have the potential to go further should be given bridge courses to ultimately mainstream them in the formal general or vocational/technical education system.

In order to motivate disadvantaged children to remain in school rather than dropping out and in general making the school experience more meaningful and enjoyable, teaching in children's own native language or adopting bilingual programmes where appropriate, is essential. Socio-economic programmes and educational incentives targeting poor, women, ethnic and linguistic minorities and Dalits are also needed. Although education in our society has been

understood as a major gateway out of poverty and it has served this function admirably for some, academic success has been elusive for large number of young people, who are economically poor or culturally and racially different from the 'mainstream' or both.

State's role in education

There are certainly a significant number of private schools which are driven by genuine desire to educate children, rather than by a raw profit motive. Such schools offer competition and keep public school system in its toes. Private schools that run as profit making business are however, a different story. They are incompatible with the concept of education as public trust for future generations.

Ideally, all children should be offered a common educational experience. This however is easier said than done. It calls for massive improvement in teaching and learning conditions in government schools and overall improvement in our education system, which requires heavy government and public commitment to the public education system. Once it is ensured that everyone has an equal start in life, post school education need not be left solely at the hands of the state. Nepal like many other developing countries is already moving away from the culture of privilege to expanded higher education system. The massification of higher



■ Kedar Bhakta Mathema

education, a result of demographic growth and of increased access of lower educational levels has made it increasingly difficult for the government to finance and support universities.

A tragic consequence of inadequate budgetary support to higher education has been the virtual disappearance from higher education institutions of exactly those inputs that make physical infrastructure and academic staff educationally productive.

Government must invest more in higher education particularly since it promotes (beyond the income and employment gains accruing to individuals), nation-building through contributions to increased social cohesion, democratic participation and open debate, trust in social institutions and appreciation of diversity. It is in this respect, shifts in budgetary allocations from defense to education should be a clear choice for the future government.

This however, does not mean that public universities should be solely dependent on government financing alone. Nor does it mean that the government should be the sole provider

of higher education in the country. Government must encourage the development of private higher education institutions as a means of managing the cost of expanding enrolments as well as broadening social participation in higher education. Since purely private system will not adequately safeguard the public interest, a mixed system of public and private institutions of higher education could be the answer to Nepal's needs.

Potential role of private sector

Private sector can also play an important role in promoting non-university higher education institutions. Non-university institutions include short cycle professional and technical institutes, undergraduate colleges and distance education and open learning programmes. Their lower cost programmes make them both attractive to students and easier for private providers to set up. We are already seeing some private initiatives in this sub-sector. It is government's responsibility to develop appropriate policy to encourage such private initiatives and at the same time create a mechanism for academic auditing of educational programmes.

Conviction and commitments

We have made mistakes in the past by not according education the priority that it deserves and the public commitments it demands. We have failed to learn lessons from East Asia and to realise the importance of education for national development and democratisation of our society. The cost of continued complacency on our part includes a widening of economic and social disparities, decline in the quality of life, deterioration of social cohesion and a reduced ability to compete effectively in regional and global economies. Our aim in school education should be to create a consistent standard throughout the country and give each boy and girl education that equips them with creativity, problem-solving skills and a passion for learning. Our aim in higher education should not be limited to producing 'man-power' required by the market but to create a learning society, one in which lifelong study as well as training and retraining are possible.

(Courtesy: Society and Education, Occasional Journal of Popular Education, Vol 1, 2007) The author is former Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University.

Power of education

Education and literacy should top the list of priorities in the new government.





PM Koirala with FNCCI president Chandiraj Dhakal



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Irrational anger

Obviously, short-sighted cunningness does not pay for long.

Democracy was chosen as the political process and instrument to take the country towards economic prosperity. Why does Prachanda suspect foul play by Delhi now and not then? Prachanda, in post Delhi understanding phase, did not tire of talking about how Delhi was behaving as a true friend now and that it could not be compared with the United States any more.

Angry is comrade Prachanda with Prime Minister Koirala for having branded young Communist League (YCL) as criminals. "Koirala is the leader of criminals," said Prachanda in a meeting. And in his room in Baluwatar surrounded by his coterie, Koirala retorted, "Yes, I am because I am also the leader of Prachanda and his ilk."

Prachanda was venting fumes at another Prime Minister as well and that was Man Mohan Singh. Prachanda smelt rat when Singh, during a meeting with UML leaders including Madhav Kumar in Delhi, expressed similar worries regarding YCL activities. And the remedies that anyone would prescribe to check such activities are obviously: strong governance, consolidation of democratic forces and a government in place with people's mandate through election.

That is exactly what Delhi's message was when Prachanda and his party, through an initiative of the South, came together with the Seven Party Alliance (SPA). Through the 12-point agreement, Maoists had publicly pledged, first to Delhi, then to Nepalis and then to the rest of the world that they would transform themselves into a democratic force, give up arms, and resolve conflict peacefully.

Democracy was chosen as the political process and instrument to take the country towards economic prosperity. Why does Prachanda suspect foul play by Delhi now and not then? Prachanda, in post Delhi understanding phase, did not tire of talking about how Delhi was behaving as a true friend now and that it could not be compared with the United States any more.

He went out of his way to appease India by disclosing in Delhi in November that he turned down the ISI offer to help the Maoists movement. Obviously, short-sighted cunningness does not pay for long. It was nothing but naivety

on his part to think that his words would change India's consistent suspicion about their nexus with Indian militant left outfits, and that the giant neighbour in the South would dump other Nepali political parties and institution easily.

Maoists, no doubt, had an opportunity as well as an advantage over other political parties in Nepal to transform themselves as a democratic force domestically, and influence outside opinion, through behavioral change. Occupying one fourth of the parliamentary seats with the grace or folly of G P Koirala; annoying parties like UML and Congress (D) had given Maoists the numerical strength in parliament as well.

But they chose not to act differently than what they were doing as an underground outfit. Creation of YCL, extortion, threatening industries with closure, trial by kangaroo courts only helped the international community in reviewing their approach towards the Maoists, with much disappointment. What Man Mohan Singh told UML team was an expression of that disappointment.

Maoists cannot escape the responsibility of acting in a peaceful and democratic manner in conduct of their politics in the aftermath of Delhi accord. Being part of the government cannot be the source of legitimacy for all kind of criminal activities. Nor can its cadres and leaders be given immunity on all these matters.

It is not hard to understand that Maoist leadership, mainly Prachanda is under tremendous pressure to take anti-India stance. Prachanda realises that going back into anti-India politics would perhaps cost him his leadership in his party. That is why he now has tried to be seen and accepted as an anti-Indian leader as before the Delhi accord, at least within his party.

He needs to understand that politics can be run only on positive agenda. Yes, as a party or

part of the government, Nepal's interest with India might sometimes clash; but any inference that anti-India stance alone would make Maoists or any political party into a nationalist force has been proved wrong many times before.

If anti-Indianism alone would pay, UML would have won all the elections in post 1990 Nepal. But again, it is for the key political parties in the country to decide how much to involve India or any other country or international bodies on what are essentially domestic issues.

The day Maoists and other political parties show capability and strength of character; prove that they can sink their differences and work together on larger national issues; Nepal will be able not only to develop a healthy relationship with India, but will also command a lot of respect from the South as well as other friendly countries. If that becomes our national character, it can reduce the current level of financial dependence as well.

But accepting the deal brokered by India in November 2005 and taking a holier than thou attitude now would expose Prachanda more than Madhav Nepal. There should be no shame in accepting any external assistance in establishing peace, provided it comes transparently, in good faith, and without any strings attached.

This nation cannot be self-reliant by dropping Melamchi or Severn Trent in the manner it was handled. Nor can it happen by accusing India in the manner Prachanda is doing now. If he and his party become sincere in the peace process and start the culture of seeking people's endorsement, instead of depending on terror tactics of YCL cadres, things will be different for the better of all. Prachanda then perhaps may not have to lose his sleep when Madhav Nepal meets Man Mohan Singh, George Bush or any other person. ■

Military RULE

There is no likelihood of military junta at the moment.

Is there any possibility and viability of military or military backed technocrat ruling in the present situation of resistance of the masses, in donor dependent and economically poor Nepal? In 'civilised' democracies, the role of the military is to protect the nation from foreign menace and domestically be of assistance in rescue and reconstruction in natural catastrophes. However, in the third world, the military has often assigned itself to the task of preventing the nation from collapsing due to failure of politicians either by imposing military vision by force or by simply taking over the government.

The agencies of corporate globalisation want to replace politicians by technocrats by branding conventional politicians as corrupt and as anti-development pathogens. It is a strong belief that traditional politicians decide politically and on the contrary, technocrats adopt a rationalist outlook which is prerequisite to economic development.

In this vein, in greater South-East-Asian basin, many nations like Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand, Fiji and Bangladesh are bastions of the military junta. Myanmar, long a bastion of military junta, recently escaped censure by the United Nations Security Council. China and Russia, two permanent members of the Council, vetoed a draft resolution sponsored by the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Myanmar's junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has obviously benefited from the interplay of great power equations.

As a result, the SPDC is again beginning to broaden its engagement in regional affairs after a lull.



■ Bhim Prasad Bhurtel

It's certainly aware of economic benefits and military-related goodies it could hope to gain from globalisation. As a result, Senior General Than Shwe and General Soe Win, have been trying to make marginal adjustments to their isolationist policies. After all, SPDC has endeavored, to a significant extent, in projecting itself as a friend of the larger international community in its drive against terrorism.

Similarly, Pervez Musharraf, Pakistani coup master is backed by reasons such as the failure of political leadership, rampant corruption and lack of governance, strong sense of nationalism among the Pak people against its traditionally rival India, and also because Pakistan is bona-fide limb of war against terror after 9/11. Many believe that recent Thai coup was the sole outcome of the Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatras' authoritarianism and bad governance. Not surprisingly, this event was bloodless and a welcomed coup.

Last December in a bloodless coup, General Frank Bainimarama collected enough courage to tell the people in Fiji that it was the best way to restore democracy there. As on April 2, he could count on the solid political support of the key ethnic Indian leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, who had found himself toppled as a result of a chain of political events that followed a 'civilian coup' against him by George Spade in

2000.

Bainimarama became the Prime Minister, with plenipotentiary powers, in January and inducted Chaudhry as the Interim Finance Minister. However, the elected Government of Laisenia Qarase, which Bainimarama overthrew, was also seen to have been "less than friendly" towards ethnic Indians. Ethnic cleavage of Fiji and partiality policy of Qarase and corruption cases against his regime were some reasons that put the red carpet to junta.

Bangladesh tells a slightly different chronicle. Two rival Begums were engaged in political games which triggered political instability. The international development agencies especially World Bank and IMF were worried about the political instability, rampant and notorious corruption and their investment. After failure to hold election on January, President Iyadudin Ahemad took over the regime with military backing and appointed former World Bank consultant Fakarudhin Ahemad as his chief advisor.

A number of military coup masters have often set short timelines for restoring democracy and returning to the barracks. More often they have not, by one stratagem or another, nullified such deadlines and promised restoration of democracy.

In Nepal, it is a political fantasy that military can take over the democratic transition. There is no likelihood of military junta takeover at the moment. The reasons behind it are: the present strapping level of the resistance of the people and the lack of adequate credibility of military leadership, still considered loyal slave of the feudal monarch. The military leaders also lack optimality of performance to run the regime.

However, if political leadership is unable to cope with the present political stalemate and fails to show vision, will power and commitment to bring the peace process to its logical end, the country will give way to political mayhem. If political leadership cannot solve the present problems within the framework of democratic polity - sovereignty and territorial integrity will be threatened. Then, the politicians themselves may feel compelled to call for a military rule. ■

The aftermath of the Jana Andolan-II saw a dramatic rise in the number of disruptive and often violent protests, strikes and Bandhs. Various groups, including some historically marginalised ones have been calling the strikes. What has the government learnt from its experiences of dealing with these strikes so far? What are its holistic future plans for dealing with the existing troubles and the possible new ones?

Although the processes and methods are still unclear, it is hoped the state will sooner or later adopt affirmative actions to ensure a better representation of different caste, ethnic, regional and other groups. The unprecedented Terai uprising has shown that it is simply too dangerous for the state to maintain its status quo. The recent violent uprising

analyse the past events and learn lessons from them. It should objectively study what went wrong and what went right in the prominent incidents. Which parts of the machinery did not function properly and how they could be reactivated. For instance, the Terai uprising could be an excellent sample to study objectively what caused such a large scale death and destruction. In what way has the government response improved or deteriorated the situation?

Had the government negotiated with the agitators right in the beginning of the unrest, would fewer lives would have been lost? It is simply easy to get away by blaming the parties involved but it is the primary duty of the state to protect its citizens. If it fails in its duty, as demonstrated by a number of strikes



■ Uday Pariyar

LESSONS not learnt

of the Gujjar community in Rajasthan, India is just one examples of the fact that such troubles do not just go away even after adopting affirmative actions. This is because one or the other group will feel neglected and alienated at the end.

Experts agree that the way the government has been dealing with the protests is basically flawed. Apart from its hopelessly weak security situation, the state tries to deal with the agitators on a random basis. There is no coherent and consistent policy or plan for dealing with the mushrooming strikes.

Worse is the fact that it tends to listen to only those groups that resort to terrorising people and disrupting public life. For instance, the government is trying its best to address the concerns of the Madhesis following the violent uprising whereas it continues to neglect the long-standing issues of the Dalits. This is a dangerous approach that is likely to provoke other peaceful groups to opt for rather violent means.

This is time for the government to

and violent movements, then there is something seriously wrong with it. It would be a good beginning for the government to start analysing its own weaknesses and drawbacks. .

On top of that, we have an odd situation where the government ministers themselves are found announcing strikes. This is a very bad precedent. If the government members themselves orchestrate the use of force against the state, what would stop others from following suit? The parties in power need to show their minimum respect to the nation by putting an end to their dual roles of acting as ruling and opposition parties at the same time.

Learning lessons from the past events is something seriously lacking in our governance. It is simply not enough continuing with the fire brigade approach alone. This is time to do some serious homework and reflect on the past experiences and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with the future troubles. This will be a key to improving the law and order situation. ■

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Security reform urgent

Corruption is one such very popular evil that gets security apparatus malfunctioning

■ Rajen Wasti

Nepal needs to work hard at reforming the security sector without delay to respond to the challenges in the post conflict situation. In the present scenario, it appears that the rule of law during the Maoists conflict was more effective than the present post conflict situation.

This situation can be attributed to the misunderstanding of the international community regarding the real need of security sector reform of Nepal. People are now being intimidated by the Young Communist League (YCL) cadres who apparently were the hardcore fighters during the conflict. A majority of them have joined this front leaving a handful with the newly recruited militias and job seekers in the cantonments.

The total security component of the country is in a big mess today. This needs to be reformed completely to undo the non-performing and demoralised security institution; to reshape them with new ideology and perception; and to be instrumental in addressing post conflict security concerns of the country. Security sector reform is one very important component of the whole post conflict scenario. Reshaping the system of criminal justice has become very crucial which if not taken seriously will have disastrous consequences in coming days.

There are several issues including reintegration of Maoists militants and militias into the



Law and justice privatised : Public presentation of Sitaram Prasain by YCL in Tudikhel

national armed forces. Some kind of credible process should be established and ground work should start in order to address this issue in a harmonious way. Foreign assistance to the security sector reform becomes crucial during this phase. While studying conflict in other countries, it is seen that the international community has put in substantial efforts to security sector reform in order to make it efficient in post conflict situation.

In Nepal no such approach has been made so far. Department for International Development of United Kingdom and American Embassy had brought in teams to conduct

feasibility study proposing some funds for security sector reform. With the inclusion of Maoists in the interim government this project got abandoned and it seems likely that there will be no such offer in the offing.

The interim government has no clue whatsoever regarding reforming the security sector. Without security sector reform; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration cannot be complete. UNMIC Chief seems to be trying to shape exit strategy just by over exaggerating the positivism of Nepal peace process thereby focusing on election of constituent assembly. Election will not be the

end of the problem.

After each bloody conflict the existing security machineries have not been able to work if we look at the case studies of other countries. Corruption is one such very popular evil that gets security apparatus malfunctioning. Nepal Police is an evident case study of such rampant corruption practices. There needs to be greater level of reform brought about to build the capacity of the ailing security agencies.

Maoists even after joining the government are not behaving themselves and are the ones responsible for the chaos in the country today. They may have changed their strategies and tactics but not their goals of establishing a communist republic. Their vocal commitment to pluralistic politics and democracy is far from definite. Ideologically, they define the peace process as a transitional phase in which they can destroy the old regime and restructure the state.

Their massive mobilisation of YCL is to unseat the existing criminal justice system to pave way for the long designed strategy to fail the state mechanism justifying their strategic vision. Nepal in the midst of such uncertainties needs to redefine and strengthen its security sectors to meet the dangerous moves being made by the Maoists. The weaker the security sector institutions are, the easier it becomes for the Maoists to meet their illegal goals.

(Wasti is a security expert)

Young speak



■ Garima Bastola

Stinking toilets – no, no!

Have you ever seen a Nepali peeing in Times Square?

Lack of clean public toilets is one of the pressing needs of urban Nepalis today. Why do we need hygienic public toilets in our country? We all are humans and there arises urgent situations when we have to empty our bladder on the spot. Looking at the condition of the toilets here, most of us do not seem to mind the stinking toilets in hospitals, restaurants—even the ones in Durbar Marg and airports.

This issue needs to be talked about not only for keeping alive one's aesthetic sense but also to protect one's health. You never know what kinds of diseases are spread by sharing such poorly or hardly maintained toilets. It looks like the public not only enjoy eating out in a Bakery Café, but also don't mind the stink from the tiny toilets there. It seems people running businesses fail to understand that one can do without eating for sometime but cannot do without clean toilets.

I experienced that the toilets of Royal Nepal Airlines, flying from Shanghai to Nepal was suffering from water scarcity and was unbearably smelly. How do they expect tourists to re-visit the country if you put them through such torture? People have to hold their breath while crossing the toilets of big hospitals such as Kanti, B and B and Patan hospital where even a skunk would faint.

How can hospitals ignore such basics of fundamental hygiene? Do they want to create more patients? Or is it because they know how few a hospitals we are blessed with and so think people have no choice but to put up with their lack of such essential services? Why should passengers pay airport tax, if the management fails to provide necessary facilities like maintaining clean and hygienic toilets for passengers?

Water scarcity and lack of awareness may be the main reasons behind the lack of clean toilets but something can be done about it. If there is not enough water, make it a public issue so that enough water is provided for all. Children as well as adults – mostly men, should be taught that urinating on others walls, on bushes or in corners of alleyways is not right. A fine needs to be imposed on such people who water freely. Have you ever seen a Nepali peeing in Times Square? No, they will pay to use a public toilet; they will even queue up for it.

Women again suffer more in this aspect since self respect and social propriety stops them from unloading their bladder whenever and wherever. They have to hold on endlessly till they reach back home or find a toilet that is usable. A visit to toilets in gynaecologists' clinics or inside the delivery room surely adds to

already suffering women's nightmares. But do the management of the clinics or hospitals care about the needs of their patients who pay through their noses to keep such establishments running? No, the fact is there for all to see how the establishments as well as the doctors act as if they are doing their patients a favor!

Customers need to speak up and complain about it. They need to walk out when the first thing that greets them is the stink from toilets when they enter restaurants. Why eat next to such foul surrounding! With such poor hygiene sense, how can one trust the kitchen and the way food is handled! We do have a choice and we need to make it. Or what difference would there be between pigs who eat anything anywhere and humans? Why do Nepalis tolerate such indifference that impacts so much on their health!

A good business idea would be for people to start having sparkling toilets that is maintained around the clock, has enough water, toilet paper and of course a big sign board inside and outside the cubicles instructing the users how to use it, in language the users understand. Happy users could put in some loose change into a tip box that can be an added incentive for those employed to maintain such toilets. New Nepal calls for new and improved toilets too.



G8 summit ends in finger pointing

The G8 summit wrapped up here Friday with Canada being accused of dragging its feet on increased aid to Africa and Prime Minister Stephen Harper raising questions about America's environmental commitment and China's progress toward human rights and democracy.

Leaders of the eight top industrialized nations reconfirmed their 2005 pledge to double aid to Africa by 2010, but anti-poverty activists were disappointed they did not commit to more aid, or specify how they would reach that goal. U2 singer Bono, in fact, accused Canada of "blocking progress" at the summit.

"I said some years ago that the world needs more 'Canadas,'" said Bono, a powerful voice for African development. "I can't believe that this Canada has become a laggard." Harper, however, dismissed the comment. "I can say with absolute certainty that Canada was not blocking anything on this," the prime minister told reporters. Harper, who declined a private meeting with Bono on the grounds that hobnobbing with celebrities is not his "schtick," insisted Canada is meeting its obligations under a pledge made by G8 nations at a summit in Scotland two years ago. The leaders agreed to increase aid to developing countries by about \$50 billion per year by 2010, half of which would be earmarked for Africa.

"Canada's on target to meet those obligations," Harper said. "I think we're the only country on target to meet them, and to meet them early, in fact."

The Prime Minister's Office was unable to provide documentation to prove his claim. A senior Canadian official said Canada's aid budget for Africa will amount to \$2.1 billion in 2008-09, but DATA, an aid agency co-founded by Bono, estimates Canada will need to increase aid by \$479 million this year and next to meet its commitment. Only Japan and Britain are on track to meet their promise, DATA says.

Aside from aid to Africa, a key summit objective was to discuss targets to cut the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming. G8 leaders committed to "substantial" emissions reductions but, because of U.S. resistance, Friday's final summit declaration omitted precise targets or timelines.



Before leaving this exclusive Baltic Sea resort, Harper delivered his sharpest criticism yet of U.S. President George W. Bush's refusal to accept binding targets. "One of the things about climate change and emissions control is that they're a lot simpler if everyone does them," he said. "If everyone does them, there's nobody gaining competitive advantage over the others as a consequence. Then I think the real benefits of technological change and adaptation can come to the fore - changes by which I think Canada can be a huge beneficiary."

Harper challenged the U.S. to show leadership on climate change, noting that Canadian companies will be at a competitive disadvantage if America does not set targets for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

"The truth of the matter is, it is difficult to meet targets if your major trading partner - and a partner with whom you share a common air shed - doesn't have targets, so it's a concern," the prime minister told reporters.

Even so, he said he is "confident that the United States as a whole understands the necessity to deal with this problem and to be part of a world community that moves as one. And I think, frankly, we need not only American participation but American leadership to do that."

The Canadian government has said it plans

to impose mandatory emissions targets on Canadian companies that will, by 2020, cut Canada's overall emissions by 20 per cent below 2006 levels.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel pushed for the G8 summit declaration to support a target of halving global emissions by mid-century. Canada - along with France, Britain, Italy, Russia and Japan - supported Germany's proposed target, which only the U.S. opposed.

On the final day of the three-day summit, Harper also met with Chinese President Hu Jintao. Afterwards, he warned that, as China's power grows, the country will come under "increasing pressure" from the international community on issues such as democracy and human rights.

"As it grows in importance and wealth, it will face increasing pressure from the world community on issues of democratic development and human rights, on issues like climate change and environmental protection, and on issues of corporate social responsibility, in particular the responsibilities of Chinese enterprises and commercial activities in the Third World," Harper warned. China is not a member of the G8 but, as a major developing country, it was invited to attend, along with India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa.

(canada.com)

'Tough road ahead for U.S. nuclear deal'



India's prime minister has warned that tough negotiations lie ahead if New Delhi is to seal a landmark nuclear energy pact with the United States, preferably before September, newspaper reports said on Sunday.

The deal, agreed in principle in 2005, would allow sales of U.S. nuclear equipment and fuel to India, overturning a three-decade ban on such trade with New Delhi. India has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has tested nuclear weapons.

"I think some tough negotiations will be required before we can see the light at the end of the tunnel," Manmohan Singh told reporters traveling back with him from Germany where he met President George W. Bush on the sidelines of the G8 summit.

"There are some difficulties but I think both of us expressed determination to overcome them. President Bush was much appreciating of our concerns," the Sunday Times reported.

Asked if the deal could be sealed by September, Singh said: "Why September? Why not earlier?," a report in the Hindu newspaper said.

Singh's comments follow recent inconclusive talks between top Indian and U.S. officials over what India says are new conditions such as Washington threatening to end nuclear cooperation if New Delhi conducts another nuclear test and refusing to allow reprocessing of spent fuel.

U.S. officials say some of these conditions are required by American laws. But India sees this as a shifting of goalposts and is wary of any compromise in the face of fierce opposition at home from political parties and nuclear experts.

The nuclear deal would help New Delhi meet some of its soaring energy needs and has raised hopes of firming up a new, strategic partnership between the United States and India, a rising Asian power, which were Cold War adversaries.

In a major push last December, Congress in Washington passed an amendment to a U.S. law to allow the deal. But the two sides have since struggled to finalize a bilateral pact that is required to govern the terms of nuclear trade.

(abcnews)

Dalai Lama warns of 'lost' Tibet

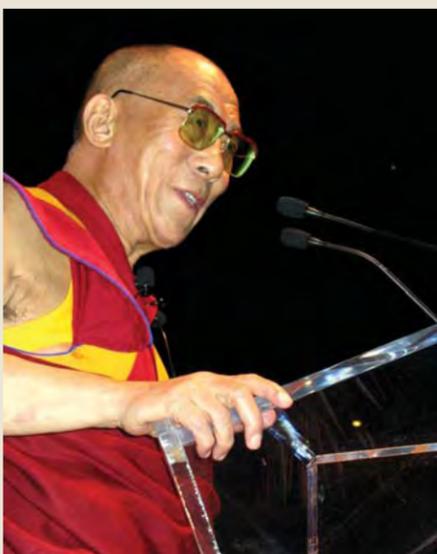
The Dalai Lama, reiterating calls for autonomy for his Tibetan homeland, has warned of the impending loss of Tibetan culture if the region continues to be denied self-rule by China.

Without significant change from the current course, the exiled Buddhist spiritual leader predicted that the Tibetan way of life could be "finished" in 15 years.

"Our approach is not seeking independence," he said in Melbourne. "We are seeking genuine autonomy to preserve Tibetan culture, Tibetan language and the Tibetan environment." The Dalai Lama, 71, said many Tibetans were growing impatient with the lack of progress in talks with China. "If the present situation is the same in 15 years then I think Tibet is finished," he said.

Chinese warning

The Dalai Lama's visit to Australia has



sparked heated debate among Australian political leaders over whether to risk upsetting important trade ties with China by meeting the Tibetan leader.

The Dalai Lama is set to visit Canberra later this month, prompting the Chinese foreign ministry to warn Australian officials against meeting with the Tibetan leader.

John Howard, the Australian prime minister, is unlikely to meet the exiled leader, with officials citing a tight work schedule.

Commenting on the issue, the Dalai Lama said on Thursday it was "no problem" if Howard

did not wish to meet with him.

"China is a very, very important country, and trade with China is certainly very important," he said. "So, there's no question that is why the prime minister finds it a little difficult, that's understandable." Australia is enjoying an economic boom built on the back of record Chinese demand for natural resources.

'Splittist'

The Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in 1959 following a failed uprising, is one of the figures most reviled by the Chinese leadership, which has labelled him a "splittist", accusing him of waging a clandestine campaign for formal independence.

Chinese communist troops occupied Tibet in 1951 and Beijing continues to rule the region with a heavy hand.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese rule and now heads a Tibetan government in exile in the Indian Himalayan town of Dharamsala. China says it has ruled Tibet for centuries but many Tibetans maintain their homeland was, for most of that time, an independent state.

It regularly expresses displeasure when foreign leaders meet with the Dalai Lama.

(mwcnews)

What are they doing here?

V. Carroll Dunham, an American anthropologist, herbalist, author, filmmaker and entrepreneur has lived in Nepal for the past 25 years. She shared her story with newsfront recently. Excerpts from the interview:

What inspired you to found Wild Earth?

I came here in 1984 to conduct a research on women and development issues. I did my earliest research in a Buddhist nunnery on the other side of Swoyambhunath. I was very fascinated by the spiritual traditions - the other kind of development. When I was supposed to study women and development, I ended up learning the language and I had this shift in my focus.

After this I worked in Humla for 3 to 4 years. I was fascinated to know what polyandry meant from women's perspective. I then wrote books and made some films. Soon, I felt that there was something extractive in the process of anthropology and I really needed to get more engaged with the community. I could not just sit there and observe, after hearing so many stories of enormous suffering and witnessing it.

When I asked the women what I could do, they replied that if they could have money, they could do a lot for their children and community. This led me to found Wild Earth that creates herbal products that are sold abroad. This essentially began as a way to generate income for the women of Humla.

How did you gather knowledge of herbs?

I went around talking with traditional Ayurvedic doctors and Amchis, the traditional Tibetan doctors. What I found was a very simple version of aromatherapy - the theory of how scent affects the mind and body. I found that Himalayan Aromatherapy based on old tradition existed right here. We started off making home made hand crafted herbal products and herbal pillows.

What made you target the high end market?

We started with mass orders from companies like Body Shop but we realised that dealing with big companies made us very vulnerable and it was not a good fit for a small organisation like us. We did not want to compete with machines. So we tried to go very high end market that can give value to hand made products. This also helps Nepal's branding of its products and make it known that Nepal also sells some of the highest

Intoxicating and wild

The Himalayas are storehouse of wonderful smells

quality products relying on its fantastic heritage. We shifted our focus to making the very best of the very finest for a very select market.

How are giving back to the community through your work?

We are helping promote the value of indigenous knowledge of herbs; and finding a place for women in the areas of health and healing so that these traditions do not die. We decided to use economics to try to protect their resources and make the communities believe there is value in protecting it. We utilised what was available locally to service needs of people outside. We also developed treatments for Spa products based on traditional knowledge after interviewing traditional Newar midwives, Ajis who are an incredible source of knowledge, and other healers. We are recommending training people in different districts for head and foot treatments, adapting the principles of traditional healing. We want to give respect to the people and create based on what Nepal already has. This has helped spur local herbal industry in Nepal and can be a career path for Nepalis.

We also trained a group of Amchi, the Tibetan healers for free to help them take their skill and knowledge as healers and apply that for market economy; by expanding their vision and ability as healers not only in their communities but helping globalise it. We also help translate their terminologies to what people understand, helping them explain their cultural narrative - and as a result enabling foreigners see their illness in a whole new way. In a way we are helping transform them as traditional health care specialists. They can give good preventive advice in terms of meditation, yoga etc and other techniques, in terms of mind in which they are great experts.

What are other prospects for indigenous Nepali products?

Nepal has great food heritage and many traditional foods and can respond to the huge

movement in the West for organic foods. Urban elites there do care what they eat and they can pay for it. Here we have tiny micro diversity, different strains of rice and whole lot more which we sell with proper packaging, story telling to the urban elite who can pay for the transport.

How do you ensure you do not strip away the mountains?

Sustainability is our priority. Since a majority of farmers in Nepal are subsistence farmers with small diverse plots that are safer than big farms with one product; we take little from different communities keeping sustainability in mind. The same applies for wild herbs. The irony here is that there are a lot of unidentified wild edibles that people are not gathering. We work with 90 different varieties of wild edibles and herbs.

What prevents villagers from getting greedy and selling all they can lay hands on, to others like you?

This is where community forest user groups are so important. Now, that China is building big roads in the north; unless there is proper community strategy, all herbs could go out. The community as a whole should set the standards; and decide which year to let the land fallow, which year to come back and harvest. Harvesting training is essential.

What are the challenges you have faced?

In the herb sector, there is a great tragedy in that it lacks a government structure and governmental accountability and Nepal does not issue free sales certificates.

It is still an extraordinary place to live in and not without a lot of pain because of the extraordinary amount of suffering you see all around. It has been very hard and painful for us outsiders during the years of conflict. Sometimes it is easy for us to be considered as a part of the problem.



Any work on cultivation, preservation and protection of herbs?

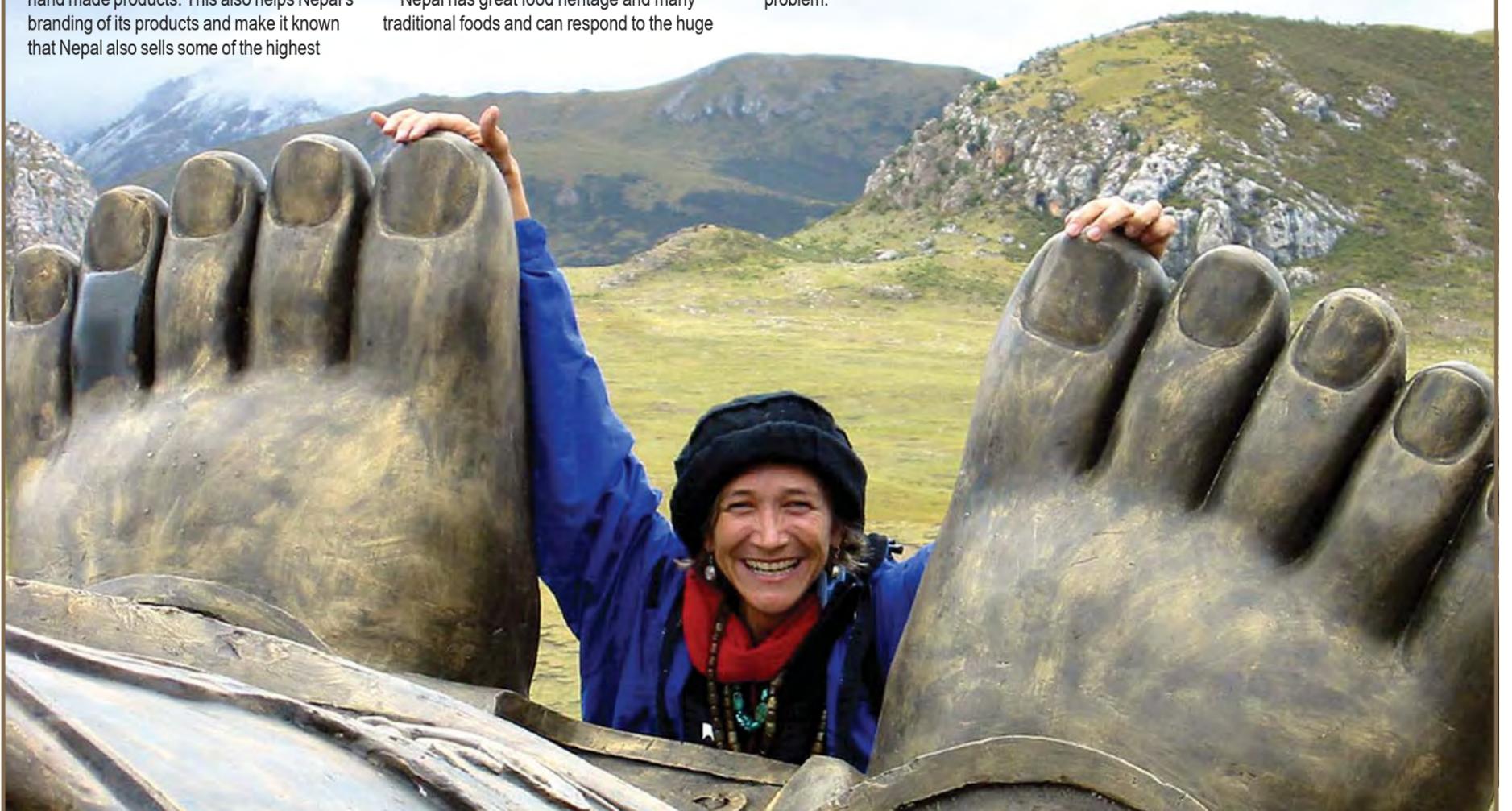
We are trying to cultivate wild herbs that are growing demand. We are trying to grow vulnerable high Himalayan herbs that have a huge value in the market. Scientific research needs to be done on high Himalayan plants. Nepal is extraordinary for its micro-diversity. There is a huge potential in it. The Himalayas are storehouse of wonderful smells.

With it arise issues of intellectual property rights and protection. Nepal has to first learn to recognise and value its indigenous knowledge and tradition. As for patenting, I know big companies, the bio prospectors from abroad who came here 15 years ago to do just that. They were taking genetic material for their research. This is a serious global issue that needs looking into. We need to provoke and inspire everybody to wake up to their rich cultural heritage and make their own products. Nepalis need to understand the value of work that is done by hands and develop the skills and knowledge that is not confined to the literate.

How has living in Nepal been like for you?

When I first came to Nepal I felt like Dorothy in Wizard of Oz. It is a rich country in heritage, culture, history and traditions; complex and dynamic place with so many different ethnicities and its richness which is the greatest joy of being in Nepal.

I'd like to add that it is a great tragedy to see people considering private sector as evil. Like Bill Gates said recently, we need to develop compassionate capitalism; and use business as a tool for social change. In the past decade of conflict, I would like to ask who ran the country, the government or the private sector?



Marshland Flowers

...Buddhism says there are three different enlightenments which may be similar but not exactly the same...

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Let us go back to the unbroken enlightened lineages. Within Buddhism from very ancient times, and in fact according to the Buddhist notion, even in the times of former Buddhas there were three distinct highways. They are called: the Sravakyaana, the Pratyek Buddhayana, and the Bodhisatvayana also sometimes called the Samyak Sambodhiyana. The goals of each of them, which is the enlightened state, though similar, are not exactly the same.

Thus the enlightenment of the Sravakyaana is called Sravak Bodhi which is the enlightenment of the Arhat, and this is not according to Buddhism the same as the Pratyek Bodhi which is the enlightenment of a Pratyek Buddha; and both of the above are not exactly the same as the Samyagsambodhi of a Samyak Sambuddha.

Now here within the Buddhist tradition itself we find three different enlightenments and this is something we have found that most non-Buddhist teachers were totally unaware of. Here we shall take up the issue with all those who believe or claim that the enlightenment taught by the Buddha is the same enlightenment as taught by other non-Buddhist Masters; including those who claim to be Buddhists or teach Buddhism but do not stem from any authentic Buddhist lineages.

If Buddhism itself says there are three different enlightenments which may be similar but not exactly the same how can others claim that non-Buddhist enlightenment and the enlightenment of the Buddha are the same? It is not even clear which of the three Bodhis they are talking about when they claim that their enlightenment is the same as the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Not only that, according to the Theravadin Sutta, Samyukta Nikaya (which is a form of Sravakayana) the two Agrasravakas (foremost disciples of the Buddha, Maudgalyayana and Sariputra) had penetrated Dhammadhatu (in Sanskrit - Dharmadhatu) which even the other Arhats had not penetrated. So to claim that whatever other non-Buddhist Masters call enlightenment (Bodhi) is the same enlightenment as the Buddha and his disciples is to display gross ignorance about what Buddhism is all about.



The goal of Sravakyaana is Sravak Bodhi which is the same as to say to become an Arhat. An Arhat is someone whose Kleshas (emotional defilements) have become totally extinguished. Unless a person has become totally free from all Kleshas; to claim that she/he is an Arhat is like a fox claiming that she/he is a lion. There are two different types of Arhats, those who become Arhats through Samatha and Vipassana practice and those who become Arhats through what is called Sukkha Vipassana/Vipassana which means practicing Vipassana after attaining only the first Dhyana.

The former have Pratiharya (miraculous powers) whilst the latter usually have less of it. Now these Arhats are neither Buddhas nor is their Bodhi (enlightenment) considered as Samyak Sambodhi, i.e. the enlightenment of the Buddha. Now what can be said about the enlightenment of non-Buddhist systems? Likewise there is the enlightenment of the Pratyek-Buddhas called Pratyek Bodhi which is neither the same as the Arhats' nor that of a Buddha

(to be continued)
(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)



Alcohol abuse gets worse over time

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

Can painkillers be addictive?

■ Pravesh Hamal, Tungal

The internal numbing effect that painkillers produce prevents one from experiencing physical pain and discomfort. Since painkillers mask pain, it is used commonly for several painful ailments. However, this very action of blocking or numbing pain and discomfort can create a fertile ground for any existing disease to worsen, create new disease as a result of the drug's side effect and also result in addiction. There are many drugs that block the nervous system's ability to communicate messages of pain from different parts of the body; and these are meant to be taken as warning signs so that the root of the problem can be located and treated.

It is worth remembering that many illegal drugs were originally discovered and manufactured by pharmaceutical companies as prescription drugs. Though such drugs may help a person suffering from major injuries; with continued use, they tend to have a negative impact.

Due to the numbing effect of painkillers, a person can be really sick with some disease but may be completely unaware of it if he/she is using painkillers for the painful symptoms being given out by the disease. This suppression of symptoms leads not only to addiction but also results in disease related deaths.

How does one become an alcoholic?

■ Paramshila Yadav, Bhaktapur

Most drink for the good feeling that ensues after drinking but when one develops the need to drink at all times, it is a sign of alcoholism. Alcoholics think about drinking a lot and will drink with any excuse, alone or in a group; and they cannot stop drinking till they become drunk.

Such people may not realise they are turning into an alcoholic or already have become one; they may think they can stop anytime but when they do realise, it already has become a problem. An alcoholic continues to drink even after experiencing negative events such as causing accidents, becoming victims of drunk

driving or causing social embarrassment for oneself and one's family.

Abusing alcohol is not something the alcoholics do because they are bad or weak. It is also a disease that can be passed down from a parent to a child. One can also drink a lot without turning into an alcoholic but if one continues to drink, one can turn into an addict soon. Alcohol abuse gets worse over time and people die from it.

Major symptoms of the addiction are: the need to drink to get over from a hangover, a liking to drink alone, making excuses for one's drinking, having blackouts when drunk and not recalling what happened when drunk, not feeling like doing anything except drink, drinking to get rid of stress, fear or shyness. Alcoholics also become more moody, angry, jealous and violent after drinking. It would be highly advisable for those suffering from these signs to seek professional help quickly.

Send questions on drug/alcohol/smoking addiction to:
newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Insight

Let not ancient art die

Destroying, spoiling national heritage should be declared a criminal offence.

■ Sushma Amatya



Temples centuries old, incomparable craftsmanship left behind by unknown artists ages ago belong to us only in the sense that we appreciate its value, respect it and be responsible for its safety and preservation; not just extol its virtues to the tourists and then take no further notice of it.

Lack of funds for restoration is an obvious reason behind the dilapidated conditions of most temples and its treasures of what still remains today in and around the valley. Ignorance and lack of respect for art and architecture are major contributing factors to destroying what had been preserved through the generations. Again, the very attitude combined with insatiable greed is largely responsible for allowing a great number of our art pieces to be stolen and smuggled abroad.

The ancient frescoes on the walls inside the courtyard of Bijeswari temple next to the Vishnumati River are simply superb works of art; but now most of the fading painting is buried under scribbles made by pen or chalks. The horrific display of names and signs of love written all over the walls proves the sheer carelessness and lack of deference for the priceless legacy.

This rising trend is visible to any discerning eyes in most places where the public has free access to and where there is nobody to prevent anybody from expelling one's negative tendencies in such a vulgar manner. For anybody to visit such historic places and to commit such sacrilege shows how idiotic, thoughtless and ignorant they must be. That is adding insult to injury to the remnants of our history.

The point is brought home in full public view in Kathmandu Square where the centrally situated temple that has been renovated very recently now bemoans chalk marks shrilly shouting its perpetrator's names on the wooden shafts. It makes one wonder what kind of love the perpetrators of the crime are declaring for self or each other by marring what was created out of pure love that has lasted through centuries; only to be defaced today by those who can read and write.

The ageless beauty of the numerous deities carved on various mediums, the environment that still echoes the sacred spirit with which they were created, further reinforced by the faith of devotees

Lack of funds for restoration is an obvious reason behind the dilapidated conditions of most temples and its treasures of what still remains today in and around the valley.

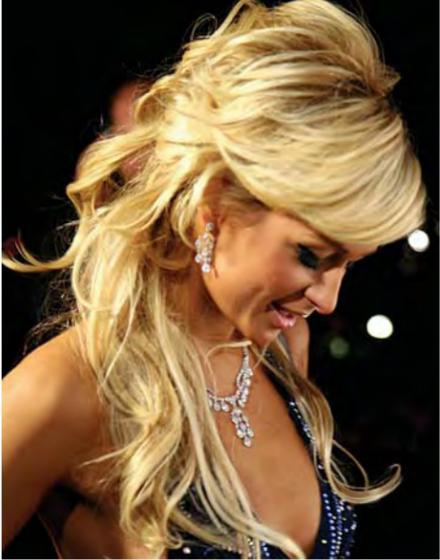
through the years are meant to be cherished and protected. Deliberately trying to ruin it by scribbling over it is sheer heartlessness. Destroying, spoiling national heritage should be declared a criminal offence.

There are surely better ways to express one's sentiments than to deface one's heritage or stoop down to dirtying public property. A creative mind finds a thousand and one ways to do things in an innovative way and not cause any harm to anybody and anything as a result of it. Nepali minds today need to find those ways and start getting more productive and give up its destructive ways. Just because something does not belong to you personally does not give you the right to destroy it.

Today, if one seeks to breathe some fresh air walking through the ancient Kathmandu Square; it should be done by early morning. Hawkers of flowers, fruits and vegetables and the crowd are part and parcel of the place; but the traffic that runs through it and the racket that ensues throughout the day and till late in the night definitely puts off anybody seeking to feel the ambiance of years gone by. Now, one better be a die-hard Momo lover or a trinket fan would endure the atmosphere that saturates the air every evening in the Square and Basantapur area – that used to be so lovely to walk through, not so long ago.

If we consider those sites significant enough to be preserved, we need to impose certain rules that would save the place from dying. Turning the peaceful walkways that are meant for people who come to appreciate, enjoy or study the heritage sites into a cramped, unruly, smelly and dirty market place is something to be condemned. We are great at copying life styles from other countries, why do not we copy something positive, like their reverence for art and heritage?

Hilton back in Los Angeles jail



Paris Hilton awoke behind bars again in a maximum security detention center where she was believed to be undergoing medical and psychiatric evaluations.

The hotel heiress, in tears and screaming for her mother, was taken to the downtown Twin Towers detention center Friday after a judge ordered her back to jail, ending her brief stint under house arrest at her Hollywood Hills home.

The evaluations will help determine the best

jail to keep her in as she serves the rest of her sentence for violating probation in a reckless driving case. A day earlier, "The Simple Life" star had been escorted from the courtroom shouting "It's not right!"

Hilton's lawyers sought to keep her out of jail on grounds that the 26-year-old was suffering an unspecified medical condition. Superior Court Judge Michael T. Sauer suggested that could be taken care of at jail medical facilities.

Los Angeles County sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore declined to discuss details of Hilton's case Saturday, including the state of her medical evaluations, citing laws against revealing such information on inmates.

"All I can say, as with all the inmates in this facility, they are monitored continuously," Whitmore said. Although Whitmore would not discuss Hilton's condition, Sheriff Lee Baca indicated at a news conference Friday that it was psychological.

He said she arrived at her original jail with a condition he had not been apprised of and that it immediately began to deteriorate to the point that he feared for her safety. "When you're talking about psychological problems it's far more complex and it does require a more complex medical approach," Baca said. "We didn't have all of our information."

(agencies)

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a great flying experience

Nepal CSID Bank Ltd. (B.S.) Facts as they speak

Regulatory authority of financial institution, Nepal Rastra Bank, had declared our bank as "Problematic Bank" on 2063/05/04 (20/08/2006) and gave direction to inject additional capital fund of Rs.11.20 crores and recover Rs.11 crores from clients as categorized bad loans from them. Considering the unrest and adverse situation of the country all the financial institutions have been experiencing difficulty in recovering their dues and to top it all a local newspaper reported that our clients had been reported to the police for investigation. This false report resulted in the absconding of our borrowers.

The bank was unable to contact the borrowers at that time for the recovery of its dues.

Now, the borrowers have been coming to the bank for payment/negotiation for the regularization of their accounts with the bank. Against all odds after 2063/09/01 (15/12/2006), the bank has managed to recover Rs.10,52,47,486.62 towards the principal and interest. Similarly, the bank has paid Rs.7,25,52,027.61 against the corporate deposit of various institutions. The bank has paid all its interest obligations of its depositors including corporate.

According to the directive of Nepal Rastra Bank for injection Mr. Sitaram Prasai had already deposited Rs.1,40,00,000.00 against the total share of 1,40,000 in his name. Other Board of Directors are in the process of depositing the share amount against their name. The bank has already decided to sell its right to a new firm, institution, individual or professional if the existing promoters do not deposit the sum till the end of Jestha, 2064. This decision has been taken to fulfill Nepal Rastra Bank's directive.

In the above situation, despite his ill health, Chairman of the bank, Mr. Sitaram Prasai has been regularly attending board meetings at the bank, which is when several vital decisions are made in connection with the recovery of bad loans. A board meeting was scheduled for June 03, 2007 at 5p.m. When Mr. Prasai did not show up, we were shocked to learn that he had been kidnapped at 4p.m. an hour before his scheduled board meeting. We strongly condemn the kidnapping and public humiliation of Mr. Prasai.

Nepal CSID Bank Ltd. (B.S.)