



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Flood Fury: Normal life has been badly affected in many villages in Terai. Pix shows flood marooned residents in Nepalgunj's Dhamboji Chowk using local equipments for necessary movements. (Details on page 2)

Damodar Bhandari

Stalling elections

Can interim parliament be turned into constituent assembly?

■ nf correspondent

Despite government's rhetoric that it is committed to hold elections to the constituent assembly on November 22, there is a high level conspiracy brewing to stall it. This intends to turn the existing interim parliament into constituent assembly after adding some more members, mainly from the Madheshi and ethnic groups.

The person playing his card close to his chest is none other than the Prime Minister, G P Koirala. Although he has not directly discussed this with any non-Maoist parties in the government, many have already guessed what he is up to.

Koirala is getting unpopular and unworthy of trust by the day. The international community and its representatives are sensing that he is

either reluctant or incapable of holding elections. Privately, India has warned him that in either condition, his legitimacy would be over and he would be treated no differently from the way king was treated after Feb 1, 2005.

The United Nations and the United

With no sign of improvement in the law and order situation and settlement of the Terai problem, conducting elections is looking increasingly impossible

States as well as the Election Commission have been warning the government that election must be held on time, but they have made it very clear that the present law and order situation must improve if elections are to be held.

In the past few meetings, Koirala has been asking Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) leader, Upendra Yadav to work out how many seats would his forum want in the existing parliament to call off the agitation. Yadav has been blunt in demanding that this parliament does

not enjoy people's mandate, and must be dissolved with a caretaker

government in place to conduct elections.

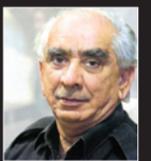
"I repeated the same view before the government headed by Ram Chandra Poudel when we met on Saturday," Yadav told newsfront. Sources said Koirala is willing to

accommodate with adequate representations of Madheshi, Janajatis and Dalit groups, first in existing parliament so that he could secure their support to convert it into the constituent assembly.

With no sign of improvement in the law and order situation and settlement of the Terai problem, conducting elections is looking increasingly impossible. In fact that was the concern UN secretary, General Ban Ki Moon and his special representative, Ian Martin expressed in New York recently. The quiet exploration to convert existing parliament into the constituent assembly looks like admission on the part of Koirala that effective governance and improving law and order is beyond his capability. ■

inside

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MJF leader, Upendra Yadav accompanied by his forum colleagues, prepares to hold dialogues with the high level government team headed by Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Ram Chandra Poudyal at Godavari on July 28. Yadav insisted that the parliament should be dissolved and a care-taker election government formed. The MJF- government meeting decided to settle the Terai issue by Aug 5.

Army vs. Maoists

The Nepal army and the Maoists have entered the third crucial round of fight with the Maoists accusing that the army is out to target its five ministers. Decision of the Nepal Army to change these ministers' guards is being taken as the basis of that claim by the Maoists.

"This is a routine exercise and such decisions are not at all taken at the prime minister's or minister's level. They are done at a much junior level," a senior army official said. He asserted that there is no motive other than providing security to the Maoist ministers, behind the posting of these new guards. A cabinet meeting scheduled on Friday was put off as the Maoist ministers wanted a fool proof probe into the

'security guard issue.'

Maoists' latest criticism of the Nepal Army follows two aborted ones in the past. In the first instance, they crippled normal lives in the country for hours claiming that Nepal Army's vehicles which were on the way to Kathmandu few months ago were carrying arms and ammunitions much against the peace agreement. But on verification, the vehicles were found empty.

In the second instance, Maoists were forced to withdraw their Bandh after PM Koirala, under pressure from the army, refused to shutdown the Birpur army camp located in Kapilvastu district of western Nepal.

Flood toll over 30

Swelling rivers fed by incessant rains have caused most parts in Terai and land-slides in the hills which altogether have taken a toll of more than 30 people across the country.

Home Ministry sources said flood has taken into its grip some 37 districts with at least 1 least 86,000 people belonging to 16,000 families affected.

Reports available here suggested that Dang, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Siraha, Banke, Sindhuli and Gulmi have been affected by the flood and landslides with casualties reported.

Standing crops have been ravaged in several areas, but the extent of damage is yet to be assessed, official sources said.

The Home Ministry which has been acting as a nodal agency for relief and rescue operation for the flood marooned people has however, kept Nepal army out of it. But the army is air-dropping relief materials and is engaging in rescue operation in coordination with the Red Cross and other UN agencies.

On Saturday, Home Minister K P Sitaula instructed the home ministry officials to gear up the relief and rescue operation, with an appeal to the affected people to approach UN agencies for necessary materials. He also asked them to work in close cooperation and coordination with the NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies.

The Home Minister's response followed serious concerns raised by the members of parliament cutting across party lines about the worsening flood situation which has endangered more lives and property. The MPs also decided to give their five days' salary for relief measures.



Maoist Ministers : Dev Gurung, KB Bishwokarma, Matrika Yadav, Hishila Yami and Krishna Bahadur Mahara

King vs. Shital Niwas



■ nf correspondent

Not all diplomats were keen to boycott the invitation extended by the royal palace during King Gyanendra's birthday in the first week of July. But Shital Niwas played a pro-active role dissuading ambassadors and honorary consuls to boycott the occasion.

Minister Sahana Pradhan spoke personally to some of the ambassadors saying their going to the palace would amount to granting legitimacy to the king at a time when the government has suspended him. Ms Pradhan spoke to the ambassador of Japan personally. All the honorary consuls who serve at the pleasure of the government, called the palace to express regret for their absence. Their going to the palace would have cost them their jobs.

But the palace is believed to have received few congratulatory messages on the occasion of the king's 60th birthday from the diplomatic

corps, and the Russian Ambassador is one of them. Andrew Hall who acts as head of the European Union here by virtue of his being the British Ambassador was the first to publicly announce that he would not be attending the birthday function at the palace.

Although, officially all the European country ambassadors have stated that it is for the people of Nepal to decide on the future of monarchy, some of them, thoroughly disappointed with the present regime, have started discussing about the possible relevance of the institution of monarchy, in private.

King Gyanendra is believed to have sent a message of congratulations to the newly appointed president of India, Ms Pratibha Patil who took the oath of office on July 25. Prime Minister G P Koirala who is the president of Nepali Congress also has been acting as head of the government as well as head of the State under the interim constitution.

Totally crippled

Nepal airlines' domestic and international operation comes to a halt.

All crews and the ground staff of the Nepal airlines in domestic sector have gone on a week-long strike beginning July 25 to press the government to buy more aircraft and inject life in the sinking airlines.

All the operations in ten domestic sectors have come to a grinding halt with no response from the government yet. The international operation of the airlines is also uncertain as one of its two aircrafts is going to go for a regular c-check to Brunei on August 1, and the other one is not in a good condition.

"It may perhaps be possible to shift the engine of the aircraft that

goes for c-check into the other one so that we have at least one in operation in the international sector," Nepal airlines sources said.

The airlines' condition has become more critical as it is on the verge of losing more and more trained pilots to the private airlines, and there are reports of Delhi and other sectors making huge losses. "We want the government to do justice to the flag carrier," a pilot in the domestic sector told newsfront, adding either the government should go for immediate purchase of aircraft or shut it down.

The Nepal airlines employees on

strike have warned the government that it could be prolonged if the government failed to come out with a positive response by the first week of August. Information reveals Delhi alone is accounting for nearly 20 million rupees loss per month and only last week they have asked for 45 lakhs of rupees from the head office to make urgent payments there.

In fact the move to have a Druk Airlines plane to fly between Kathmandu and Delhi from August 1 did not work as the aircraft was too small, able to accommodate only 80 people.



Newsbrief

Crying degree

Look how mighty Nepalis behave when they go southward. Amaresh Kumar Singh, the powerful Congress parliamentarian, not only burst into tears, but he cried bitterly asking for kind consideration of the teachers in Delhi's Jawahar Lal Nehru University recently. Singh however, succeeded in winning their favour at least for once.

As his regularity and works as a M. Phil student was not up to the mark, his current guide at the School of International studies in JNU, Prof Sahadevan told him it would not be fair to let Singh continue in his studies. In any case there is resentment in the faculty that Singh; a M.Sc. in Chemistry was enrolled as a M.Phil student in the international studies, thanks to the special favour that Prof S D Muni showered on him.

Prof Sahadevan's words came as a blighter to the doctoral ambition of the honourable parliamentarian, a hand-pick of G P Koirala. As there was no logic and defense that Singh could offer, all that he did was 'cry' for doctorate. A moved Sahadevan said he will take a decision after going through Singh's synopsis, but that is no guarantee of his continuation.

Sitaula vs Yadav

Home Minister K P Sitaula no doubt has police under him. But he has no qualms in performing the job of a police at times. Last month, he wrote a letter to the US embassy which literally was a 'do-not-give-visa' plea. He was against US embassy giving visa to Madheshi Janadhikar Forum leader, Upendra Yadav who had been invited by some organisations of the Nepali students based in New York.



But the embassy turned down Sitaula's plea although in most

countries of the world, any home minister would be taken very seriously. But what went against Sitaula in the their eyes? Perhaps because he is considered much closer to the Maoists and there was an obvious question mark: did he write this letter to appease the Maoists? Or else, what was his interest in writing this kind of letter against Yadav?

Lucrative Melamchi

While the fate of the multi-billion dollar Melamchi drinking water project hangs in balance, the project office being run by the Asia Development Bank here continues to be a lucrative posting. Minister for Physical Planning and Works, Hishila Yami, who has been largely responsible for the uncertainty of the project, has however, been generous in recalling government employees on deputation to the project, and deploying her favourites there.



Most of those who were on deputation there from the government have been withdrawn 'at the pleasure of the minister and new ones deployed,' informed source said.

Thanks to Yami, the project is under review of the ADB as she refused to handover the management of the drinking water supply of Kathmandu to Severn Stern, a British company, despite a cabinet decision earlier to do so by May 15. As a result the project is under review with ADB and some other donors are threatening that it would have impacts on other projects in Nepal as well.

Foot in mouth

It was PM G P Koirala's turn to be at the receiving end this time. He was challenged and cut-short by Yashwant Sinha, Bharatiya Janata party leader and India's former foreign Minister, when the Prime Minister claimed that pro-Hindu forces

in India were behind the unrest in Terai.

Sinha, a family friend of the Koiralas and someone who owes his entry and rise into politics to Chandra Shekhar, was here to pay homage to Sushila Koirala who passed away recently. "I will take it up in all sincerity with Vajpayeeji, but you must give me the evidence," Sinha told Koirala bluntly. And Koirala could not furnish any proof. The mumbling Koirala cut a sorry figure.



Sinha made it very clear to Koirala and all those he met that while Bharatiya Janata Party might have its own approach on Nepal, it will fully accept what the people here decide on the future of monarchy. Earlier, Prime Minister Koirala, Maoists and Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPM)'s Nepal hand, all had been consistently saying that the agitation in Terai is being instigated by the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, pro-Hindu outfits which are close to Bharatiya Janata Party.

Disposable syringe

Everest Med Pvt. Ltd. started a nation wide media campaign last week to create awareness for using safe and reliable surgical products

. Nepal's only disposable syringe manufacturer located in Dhadhikot, Bhaktapur has opted technical guidance from a reputed Korean company for its smooth operation and defect free production.

Fully equipped with latest manufacturing machines and testing equipment along with technically sound experienced personnel, the company has been certified by ISO - 9001: 2000 for its management system. The product, Lifeline Disposable Syringe is certified for its quality products. It was established in 2058 B.S. but operation started from





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Point to Ponder

To rule is easy, to govern difficult.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Maoists and press freedom

There have been several interpretations and misinterpretations of what the Jana-Andolan II was all about. But one thing that is universally accepted is that it was a movement for restoration of democracy in every sense of the term. One cannot conceive of a democracy without press freedom.

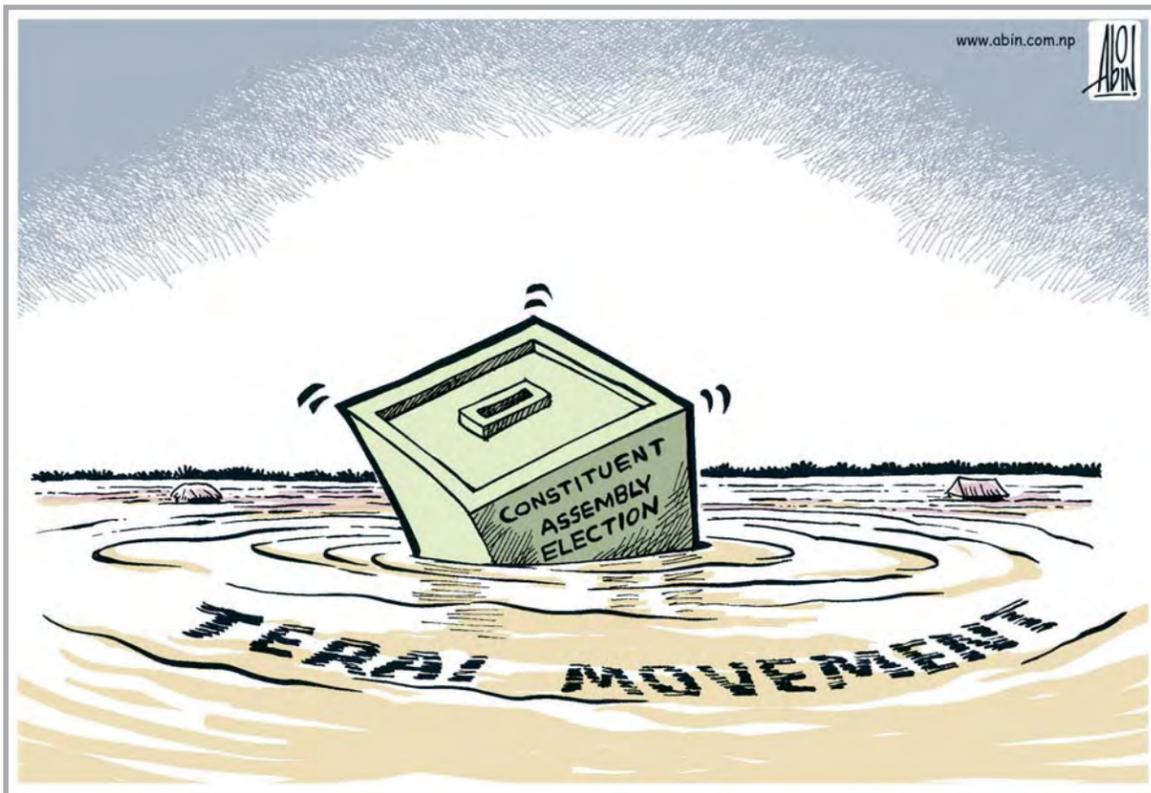
Maoists who are now a part of the interim government never got tired of proclaiming that they were the cause behind the success of the movement as they aligned with pro-democracy forces, civil societies and human rights groups. The media was one inseparable party to that cause and movement. It was only natural for everyone to expect that Maoists' alliance with those groups and the values they represented was not mere tactical, and that there was an acceptable dose of commitment towards those values.

But Maoists, through their brazen actions, are fast proving that they have no respect for those values and in pursuit of their authoritarian design; and they are willing to attack them. Media has now become the biggest target for their attacks.

The abduction and murder of Prakash Singh Thakuri - a journalist based in western Nepal, allegedly by the Maoists; a series of arm twisting tactics to disrupt distribution of newspapers and magazines one after another, and now sacking of about 50 journalists working with the Gorkhapatra Sansthan, a government corporation directly under control of the Maoists are all pointers that Maoists still derive pleasure in gagging the press.

Prime Minister G P Koirala and his government have pathetically failed to restrain the Maoists, a major component of the government. Koirala who only appears to care about his chair knows he cannot survive if he protests the Maoists' actions. Koirala's lust for power at the cost of press freedom is something that will eventually make him more unpopular than the king. Nepali media stood against the king when censorship was imposed and press freedom snatched. Although, the Federation of Nepali Journalist (FNJ) has lodged its protest in a routine way, and the so-called civil society is tacitly endorsing Maoists anti-press activities through its tactical silence, Maoists will have to face the ground-swell of the fury of the entire media and all freedom loving citizens sooner than later.

Just because the communication and the information minister happens to belong to the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists, it does not have the right to snatch the bread and butter of journalists working in the government sector, nor can it obstruct distribution of newspapers and magazines through forced unionisation. Maoists, and their current leader in the government, G P Koirala, have to prove through actions that their commitment to democracy and press freedom are absolutely genuine. Their failure to do so will not only mean they are dishonest to the core; they will also be taken as the emerging threats to democracy and press freedom.



Letters

Stand united

The new agitation in Terai has attracted the attention of all. Demands posed by Madhesi people are genuine and reliable but the method they are adopting for their quest is wrong. The country is in a transition period seeking sustainable solutions through constituent assembly but it has unfortunately been turned into a utopia for the ordinary, marginalised and backward people.

In my opinion, Madesh is not the only suppressed region in the country. There are many living in the hilly regions undergoing persecution by the so-called upper class people. Likewise, not only are the Madeshis, Dalits and Janajatis out of political and developmental mainstream but there is a majority out there lagging behind.

There is a section of society that weaves conspiracy to break the unity of people and apply the policy of divide and rule. We need to be aware of such conspiracy and unite all Nepali people be they from Madesh, hills or the mountains. We should not be labeled as Madhesi Dalits or Janajatis. There are also a majority of Brahmin, hill people living in pathetic conditions that are also suppressed, exploited and prosecuted.

We must stand united. The best solution is to hold peaceful and fearless elections to the constituent assembly. We need to participate in it and decide to elect those who will really act to root out the problems being faced by us all Nepalis.

Amrit Bhandari
 Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Maoist ministers alias chameleons

Well done Prachanda. Once again the Maoist leaders have publicised their chameleon like character by expressing their suspicions about the personal security provided by the government. On top of it all, I wonder why a single leader needs 10 to 15 security personnel?

Security forces have always shown restraint and adhered



to the orders and instructions of the government. Their contribution to the process of reviving peace and security in the nation is praiseworthy indeed. Security personnel are the true servants of the nation and the people. Why should Maoists doubt the integrity and loyalty of the security forces which fall under their own government? It is obvious now that Maoists ones again have started weaving a web of conspiracy.

If the Maoists have true intentions of joining the democratic mainstream, they should be able to generate confidence among the Nepali people. My sincere advice to the Maoists ministers is try to respect yourselves then only you will be respected, dear comrades.

Arjun Bista
 Dhapasi

Hail Diamond

The interview with Diamond Shumsher JBR was one of the finest pieces that appeared in newsfront # 26. At the age of 90, he has proved himself to be an avant-garde not only in rebelling but also in fiction-writing. I have not found any novel in Nepali literature which can compare with 'Seto Bagh' and 'Basanti' that were written by him. These two novels are the masterpieces of Nepali fiction. 'Seto Bagh' and 'Basanti' were not only translated into English, Japanese and French but in more than 20 languages.

I salute the legendary personality and wish for his better health.

Sulav Dahal
 Surunga, Jhapa

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Coming, going

Dogen was born in 1200, near Kyoto, Japan. When he was fourteen he was formally ordained as a monk and entered a monastery at the foot of Mt Hiei to begin his training. In 1217 he moved to Kennin Monastery in Kyoto and studied there until 1223. He then accompanied his abbot, Myozen, to China. The purpose of this journey was to engage more fully with Ch'an Buddhism, the Chinese precursor of Japanese Zen.

In the Chinese monasteries the main type of spiritual practice was the chanting and repetition of Koans. (Koans are short phrases which help to

focus the mind) However Dogen was rather disappointed with this type of practice. Dogen wanted to return to Japan but under the guidance of a senior priest, Rujung, he learnt the art of silent meditation. In this practice the goal was to silence the mind and lose awareness of mind and body. In this type of meditation the goal is to still the mind, thinking of neither good nor bad things.

With this new knowledge Dogen returned to Japan and started to write and teach about these new doctrines. In 1233 he opened Kannondori Temple in Fukakusa and was appointed to be head monk. Dogen was a prolific writer of both poetry and guidance on

Zazen meditation. Dogen states the key is to transcend desire. There should not even be a desire "to be another Buddha." He died in 1253.

Dogen - 1

On the treasury of the true dharma eye

Midnight, No waves,
 no wind, the empty boat
 is flooded with moonlight.
 On non-dependence of mind



Coming, going, the water birds
 don't leave a trace,
 don't follow a path.

Dogen - 2

Joyful in this mountain retreat yet still feeling melancholy,
 Studying the Lotus Sutra every day,
 Practicing zazen single-mindedly;
 What do love and hate matter
 When I'm here alone,
 Listening to the sound of the rain
 late in this autumn evening.

Blind leads the blind

For a long time, the western world looked at Nepal through the Indian prism.



■ Jaswant Singh

The 'non-Government' of Manmohan Singh, by 'outsourcing' India's Nepal policy to the CPI(M), may be wreaking the same havoc that Indira Gandhi had unleashed by subcontracting policy on Sri Lanka to a group of politicians based in Chennai.

The present non-Government in New Delhi has a non-policy on Nepal. I call it non-Government because of the extent of its not simply non-functioning, but also mal-functioning. I don't think there is an absence of policy with regard to just Nepal. It is also so with regard to all countries. It has an extremely limited focus, mainly on non-issues. For long, we did not even have a Minister of External Affairs. The Prime Minister chose to hold the portfolio himself. Finally, we now have an experienced Minister.

As a preface, I would like to say that it is a well-established fact that mistakes in the realm of international affairs affect many generations with the unresolved issues. In India's case, there are three issues that are still burning: Jammu & Kashmir, China and Sri Lanka. Now, coming to Nepal, our relations with that country are inextricably linked by geography and history. The devout do not consider pilgrimage to the four *dhams* as complete without a visit to Pashupatinath. You cannot obliterate it from the consciousness of the people of India.

I had, on several occasions, while witnessing Nepal's descent into chaos, appealed to Mr Manmohan Singh to take some initiatives to save Nepal. I also pleaded to him not to outsource the management of Nepal affairs to the CPI(M). Subsequently, out of frustration, I stated in Parliament that I once had the occasion to caution Mrs Indira Gandhi: "Madam please don't allow the foreign policies of India with regard to Sri Lanka to be made in Madras." What I said then was borne out by subsequent events. On more than one occasion, I had said the same to Mr Manmohan Singh.

Legitimacy of the present Nepal Government

Let us reflect on what has happened. The King has been unseated by what seems to be a groundswell of disenchantment. Thereafter, what followed was a series of events in which India was involved. But how were we safeguarding India's national interests to that they were not jeopardised in the evolving situation? The United States has become "active" in Nepal taking advantage of India's inaction. Britain was the only western power with a direct relationship with Nepal. India

had inherited that relationship.

For a long time, the western world looked at Nepal through the Indian prism. When the NDA was in power, the US used to publicly state that it was India that should influence the situation in Nepal and Sri Lanka. This was recognition of India's geopolitical relevance in the sub-continent. But now, under Mr Manmohan Singh, India has abdicated its role and totally withdrawn from Nepal. Naturally, external forces have moved in.

Henceforth, we will probably see more activism by not only the US, but also China, Pakistan and Bangladesh. What the present Prime Minister of India does not realise is that there cannot be a vacuum in international affairs. If India does not act, then others will move in. The American foreign policy platform is currently in a shell-shocked state. I believe their experiences in South Asia - Pakistan and Afghanistan - is not every encouraging.

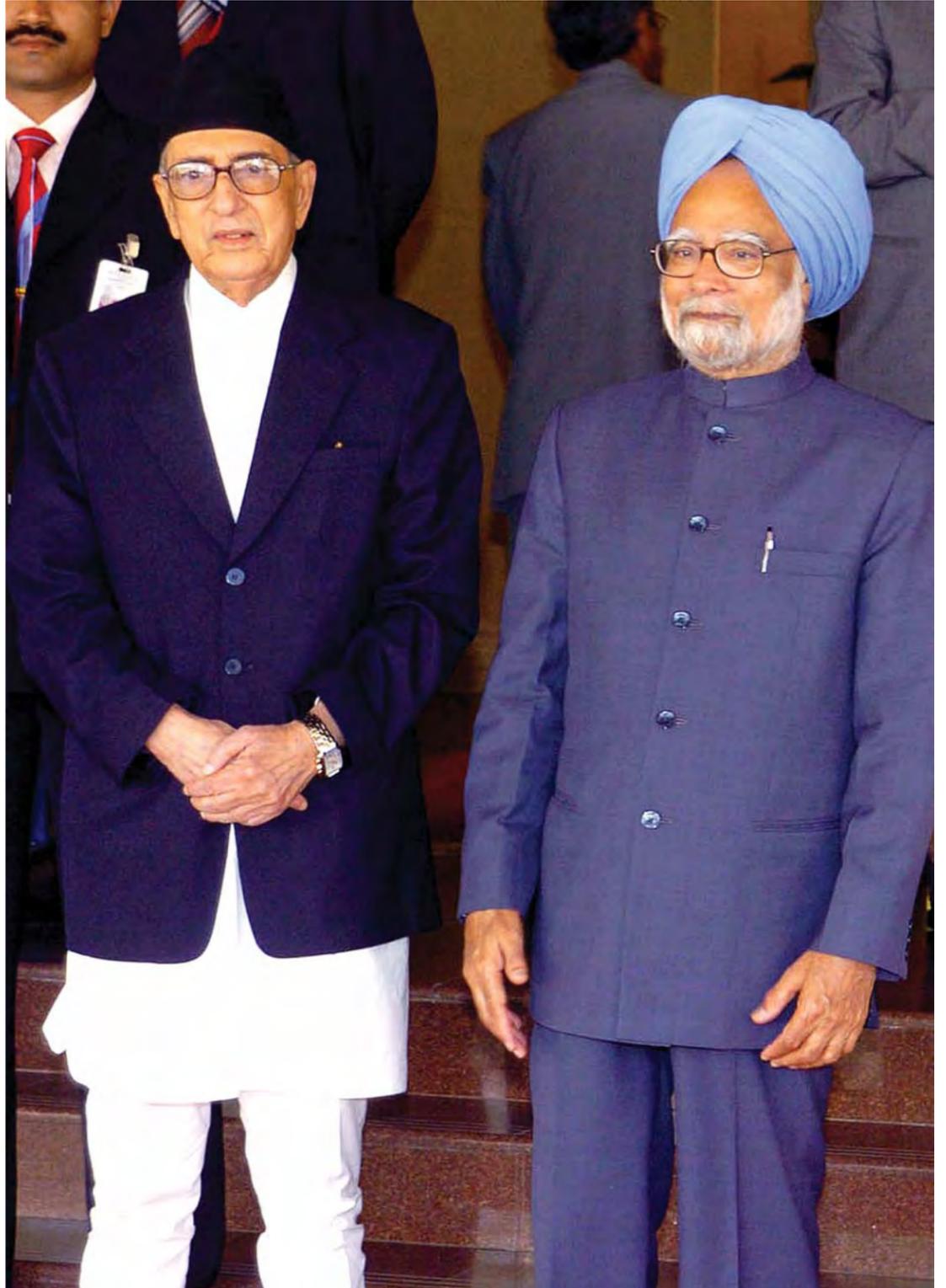
I don't think Americans have a Nepal policy as such. They have an *ad hoc* platform, which they wish to employ because now, for the first time, they are physically in the landmass of the sub-continent. They are in Afghanistan, they are in Pakistan. I am disturbed by their role in Nepal.

Dangers of the spread of Maoism

We must recognise the enormity of the challenge that we face today. I believe that the gravest internal challenge is the spread of Maoist violence. If the UPA Government permits this Maoist malignancy to combine with the Maoist element in Nepal, then that would be internationalising India's internal problem. I fear not only for the 168 districts that are currently recognised by our agencies as "disturbed" by Maoists, but the entire North-East.

I am not being alarmist, but simply underscoring a situation fraught with danger. It is the gravest internal challenge at the moment. How are we to recognise it unless we identify its contours and the dimensions and then address the many challenges it would throw up?

I also find it totally inexplicable that it has been found necessary to declare Nepal as a "secular" nation. If Nepal is not a Hindu nation, then what is it? It posed no challenge to anybody by upholding that status. Nepal has always been the most accommodative, unassertive country in the world. Anybody was welcome



The present non-Government in New Delhi has a non-policy on Nepal. I call it non-Government because of the extent of its not simply non-functioning, but also mal-functioning. I don't think there is an absence of policy with regard to just Nepal.

there. That is why it was home to the flower children, the hippies and the *Dum-Mar-Dum* types on the one hand, and the most ascetic, devout followers of *Advaita* on the other. I find the imposition of this new description a great loss. It was totally unnecessary. As in the case of India, you cannot just wipe out the consciousness of the citizens who are from the *sanatana dharma*. I believe that Nepal will always remain a Hindu nation and nothing less.

The future of the monarchy is really something for the people of Nepal to decide. It is my hope that they will decide wisely and with sagacity. I have always held the view that Nepal has two pillars of stability - a political and a social. A constitutional monarchy and an elected and responsible democracy. You cannot destroy either of these pillars and create a new Nepal from the debris. Both would give stability. Exactly what shape this constitutional monarchy would have is for the people of Nepal to decide, as, indeed, it is for them to work out how the future Parliament is

to evolve.

Elections to the Constituent Assembly are due in November. I have no direct source of information as to whether the conditions there favour the holding of polls. The UPA Government seldom shares information with us. It is well-known that the disarming process of the Maoists was only in name and only a third of the weapons were surrendered. The activities of the Young Communist League are indeed worrisome. There are questions about delimitation that continue to hang. How do you hold elections when the forces of law and order enforcement have themselves been disenabled?

It is time India paid heed to the warning signs coming from Nepal. Its present policy is one of the blind following the blind.

(Jaswant Singh, senior BJP leader and leader of the opposition in Rajya Sabha is a former foreign affairs minister in India.)

Courtesy: Pioneer Daily, N.Delhi



Chief of UN Mission in Nepal Ian Martin



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Failing Nepal ?

For the first time, Nepal's integrity and survival as a nation – along with that of democracy, has become a matter of speculation.

G P Koirala was crowned as the tallest statesman of South Asia. It was Dr Man Mohan Singh who bestowed that honour to Koirala. He was Jimmy Carter's hero as well. Koirala may not have disappointed Dr Singh and Carter yet, but he is no more the symbol of hope and change, at least for the people of Nepal.

Mal-governance or total absence of governance, corruption and Koirala's inability to hold elections to the constituent assembly in June, and doubts over his intentions and ability to do it in November - all indicate that Nepal's future is not safe in his hands. Koirala lacks vision, seriousness and sincerity about solving the Terai issue and getting Terai together with Janajatis, Dalits and Karnali onto the center stage of the emerging new power structure.

At the crux of it all lies the ongoing peace process. Koirala has failed to take the peace process ahead in a meaningful way. He is known for surrendering and making 'deals with Maoists' rather than using his stature to ensure durable peace by addressing the key socio-economic and political issues down to its roots.

But who is to blame for all this? The domestic culprits and the international community's role in it is no less. After all, access to Koirala that representatives of the international community have is far in excess compared to that of his closest ministers.

India, to a large extent, designed, facilitated and mediated the coming together of the seven parties and the Maoists way back in November 2005 in Delhi. In all fairness, India's role in the

peace process led and dictated mainly by Koirala and Prachanda has never receded.

The past one year has also seen the United Nations expanding fast in the country. Although, visibly not happy with the prevailing law and order situation, the UNMIN plays a crucial role in the peace process whose success or failure will influence how future Nepal will look at the United Nations' efficiency or relevance. For most Nepalis, UN is their only hope, and any failure on its part is sure to disappoint them.

However, without an effective and sincere government in place, there is hardly anything that the United Nations or the international community can do. For that matter, Koirala is almost going to prove to be more of a liability than an asset now for them.

UNMIN has already come into criticism, mostly from the Maoists, and sadly for having done its job sincerely. It took a firm stance that verification of the combatants and arms should proceed unconditionally. But Maoists are in such a situation now that they cannot unilaterally pull out from the peace process. Nor will its' most trusted civil society can side up with the Maoists against the UN.

But the deterioration in law and order situation, confrontation between one or more political parties in the government with the UN on one hand and total invisibility of the government on the other will not be a happy scenario for the UN to work in Nepal. After all, UN cannot substitute the government, nor will it be in a

position to fulfill soaring expectations of Nepali people at all fronts.

UN can succeed only if the government succeeds. And for the government to succeed, it needs a strong leadership backed by political parties rising above their narrow party agendas. Security agencies are demoralised. Supreme Court was never so vulnerable in the sense that G P Koirala, the prime minister of the day and president of one political party, is above law by virtue of his appropriating the power of the head of the state.

Maoists want their terror and criminal activities unchallenged and unpunished by the State. Koirala already enjoys above the law status. No democracy in the world pointed it out as an anti-thesis of democracy. They simply went into an irrational competition to call him a hero and a democrat. For the first time, Nepal's integrity and survival as a nation – along with that of democracy – has become a matter of speculation.

Koirala's time is running out. He has failed, and there is little chance that he will deliver. He failed understand one simple thing - that people long suppressed will ultimately rise in movement for their identity and existence. That is what is patently seen in Terai, and latently in hills among the ethnic groups and Dalits. He is hoping to solve them just by some cunningness - liberal promise and zero delivery. Time for that kind of politics is gone. And the international community will have its share of the blame. ■

Maoists want their terror and criminal activities unchallenged and unpunished by the State. Koirala already enjoys above the law status. No democracy in the world pointed it out as an anti-thesis of democracy.



Pic by Sushma Arnyala

Sarita Mishra, Masters in classical music, a teacher, and a proficient Tabla player is the only Nepali lady who has taken up percussion classical music as her career. The vivacious musician talked with newsfront about her life long passion recently.

What keeps you going?

My love for classical music keeps me alive. I live for it. It is everything for me – my passion, meditation, my livelihood. I play all percussion instruments and I also play Matka, the earthen pot.

When did you start playing?

I started playing when I was 12. My father used to play and there used to be gatherings in my house till late at night. I started training formally under my Guru Hom Nath Upadyaya about 19 years ago.

I believe both men and women are humans; and artists are just artists. But when I used to play, they used to remark, “oh it is only a woman who is playing,” if I played well.

What has been your outstanding experience while playing?

About six years ago, I played with a Mahatma from Gwalior till 2 at night and for the first time; I experienced Rag's Sargam walking. I felt what must have been the pinnacle of ecstasy then. That was amazing. Ever since, when I play, I feel one with the music.

I feel that I am not there. The day I don't feel that I don't feel good. It is meditation for me.

How long do you practice daily?

I can practice only 2 to 3 hours a day but since it is my work too, I'm involved in it the whole day. I can no longer find time to practice 8 hours as I used to.

How do you think classical music is perceived in Nepal?

Classical used to be synonymous with music of the old generation. It was looked upon as something boring since people did not have any knowledge about it. Once we, the young generation stepped in and took it up as a career, people here started taking notice and began to change their views. And there were people like Ganesh Man Singh who agreed to sponsor us and encourage us by having a group of us play in his house. Gradually I see more people interested in classical music and this makes me happy.

How are you contributing to promoting classical music?

I am acting as a coordinator in Guru Kul and organizing Sastriya Sangeet Sankranti every first day of Nepali month, since the past 14

months. To take classical music ahead professionally, we are paying attention to sales of tickets which is the only way to improve

the economic conditions of those involved in this art. Media contribution is also noteworthy in promoting our cause by spreading the message and educating the public.

The public needs to understand what we are doing require a lot of study, hard work, dedication and perseverance.

Once artists take up this as a career, very few among them seek out other avenues to earn their living. We are making efforts to get this art recognised but no matter how experienced we are as artists, we just don't seem to have the marketing know-how. We are no good at planning, management or administration. We need managers and agents but we are unable to pay them. But in future we do have plans to

Upbeat notes

Does a woman player play a note less than a man? It is the same scale, notes, same instrument that both play!

do that and we need the help of the younger generation too.

What about the economic aspect of it?

It is certainly not an area where one is guaranteed monetary success. I personally feel that those who are economically better off should pursue this field, because if those who need to struggle for their survival were to take this up as their profession, they will have to struggle and suffer more. This is not to say that all those artistically inclined should pursue only commercially viable fields.

How can the perception of art as poverty ridden career be changed?

A platform needs to be created for artists to perform on a regular basis. The large middle class also should start to embrace it as something worth investing time and money in. The money generated would help the artists. I see no other way.

What are the negative trends you see developing in your field?

When I was a student, we used to revere our Guru and even today I do not start my practice without paying my respects to my Guru. That is lacking today. And as students, we were in no hurry to perform and get on the stage. But today I see that students have no patience. They wish to learn today and get on the stage and start earning the day after. They want quick returns. This trend is harmful. This is not an art that you can perfect in two months and start earning. It requires a lot of love; it is the peak of love that can be understood only by those who have loved truly.

Do you face gender discrimination?

I believe both men and women are humans; and artists are just artists. But when I used to play, they used to remark, “oh it is only a woman who is playing,” if I played well. If I didn't play well, it used to be attributed to the fact that I was a woman. I did and do feel the discrimination.

In our society, there is a traditional distinction. Traditional roles of women are dancing, playing Sitar, working inside the house only. Playing Tabla, going out, earning money used to be men's domain. But I believe that in a creative world, there is no male or female angle. Maybe there is an advantage of added emotions in a woman's output but there is no difference.

Outwardly, there is a lot of sympathy and understanding articulated by the men folk but in practice it hardly exists. I can see from their eyes

that they are underestimating women all the while. But I have surmounted those obstacles and am surviving. I want to ask such people; does a woman player play a note less than a man? It is the same scale, notes, same instrument that both play!

Why are there not many women active as artists?

I have seen that women usually disappear from art, even after devoting a dozen years to it after they get married or under family pressure. There is a difference from being an artist and a woman. An artist needs to do more. Most women become content with just holding day jobs. The reason behind it is primarily the subservient roles they agree to take up.

I don't in any way say that one should disregard one's responsibilities. I too have mine but women just give themselves up. They are lazy too. They ignore their innermost needs, their capabilities and all that begins to rust staying home and being engaged in mundane activities day in and out. Finally, they end up regretting it and feeling sad about their lives. If a daughter in law is a good artist, then it should be a matter of pride to the family, not on the contrary. The fact is that women just do not try hard enough. They are to be blamed first for their status. No one can put you down if you don't allow it.

If you were married, could you have become what you are today?

There might have been a break of one or two years but I definitely would not have changed track; for I am the kind who knows what I want and will strive for it. I never married for I did not meet anybody whom I wanted to marry. I never believed in arranged marriages. I believe marriage is long lasting friendship where both really need to know and accept each other. But I am happy the way I am. ■



Realising the dream of millions

The issue of inclusiveness can again be left unattended for lack of proper government support.

Inclusiveness or lack of it has become the everyday 'mantra' of Nepal. It may not be out of context to state that the armed campaign of CPN-Maoists succeeded because this issue was understood by all, domestic and foreign minds. Exclusion solely on the basis of caste, profession, ethnicity or gender is a crime. The concept of exclusion defeats the very purpose of equality and equity in a free and liberal democratic society. One can see the mention of inclusiveness in every declaration and paper of the eight party government of Nepal. How is the state dealing with this issue that seems to be of paramount importance for the new Nepal?

Nepal government's budget estimates for 2007/2008 touches on the issue of inclusiveness in the opening part of the finance minister's speech when he says that "The constitution itself has guaranteed the representation of women, Dalits, indigenous and ethnic communities, Madhesis, and people from backward regions in the proportional elections for Constituent Assembly." Even so the issue of inclusiveness can again be left unattended for lack of proper government support.

The principal guideline of the budget, according to the government, is based on the prime goal of building a "prosperous, modern, federal, inclusive and just Nepal" as per the spirit of the people's movement. Of the five expressed objectives of the budget let us assume that two, namely, poverty alleviation & economic prosperity and human development are directed in



■ Binod P. Bista

some manner to the issue of inclusiveness.

One would expect direct and effective measures on the issue under 'targeted programs for poverty alleviation' of the budget. Identifiable measures relate to scholarship for Dalits and marginalised groups; support programs including preservation of endangered

Common minimum program of the interim government seems to be more focused on democratisation of Nepali army and integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants and nationalisation of royal property, besides the conduct of CA elections.

languages & scripts, literary programs etc, 20% rebate on land ownership registration for Dalits and the same for all women; increased posts for women and special programs in 40 districts for economic self sufficiency of deprived, ultra poor, Dalits, Janjatis and Madhesis.

On the human development front, some stress is given on the education related

employment with priority accorded to women, Dalits, and teachers training. Lacking focus the planned measures appear to be mere gloss over of real issues. It is not surprising to see that government support to inclusiveness, an integral part of change and perhaps the most important basis of creating a new Nepal, seems to be thin and scattered at best.

The highlights of the common minimum program of the interim government seems to be more focused on democratisation of Nepali army and integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants and nationalisation of royal property, besides the conduct of CA elections. Interestingly though, the common minimum program of Deuba led coalition government of 2004 had in it several special programmes planned for the excluded class including women.

It has never been easy to restructure and reform a traditional

society based on age old biases and discriminatory practices. India, as a federal democratic republic, has been trying her best to eliminate gender, caste and class-based discriminatory practices and realise all inclusive society for the past 60 years without desirable success. Two of the six basic principles of the common minimum program of the current government of India still give full emphasis on realising women empow-

erment in all spheres as well as full equality of opportunity, particularly education and employment for scheduled castes, tribes, other backward communities and religious minorities.

Acknowledging the fact that India's efforts for inclusiveness might have been affected for lack of adequate resources, let us have a look at the United States where special programs have been formulated in the name of 'affirmative action' under the executive order first promoted in 1965 after the civil rights movement of 1960s. There are mixed reactions to the very concept of affirmative action and some of the reports even suggest that not much has improved in the condition of African Americans even after twenty five years of purposeful efforts. A 1978 landmark Supreme Court case imposed limitations on affirmative action to ensure that providing greater opportunities for minorities did not come at the expense of the rights of the majority. Affirmative action was unfair if it led to reverse discrimination.

A long held problem generally requires a long term solution. However, a start must be made as soon as possible after providing full consideration to the pros and cons of every alternate action. The people in general, both privileged and deprived, must agree to a long term solution for its workability. When would the government see to it? Or, is it after the CA elections, similar to the expression made popular by Nepal's famed solo comedian of repute? ■



■ Bhim Prasad Bhurtel

After the April 2006 democratic upsurge, Nepal's political developments marked a substantive transformation in the relationship between the state and its citizens. A centralised Nepali state formed over the last two and a half century lost its identity built on unitary Hindu state, Hindu religion, Nepali language, monarchy and various cultural and religious symbols.

The institution of monarchy has now been suspended until the first meeting of Constituent Assembly (CA). The monarchy is under severe crisis and is gradually weakening. In the interim constitution it has no place politically as well as ceremonially. The state has been declared secular. The interim constitution has recognised the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural character of Nepalese society. The unitary character of Nepali state will no longer survive in the future since the second amendment in the interim constitution has provisioned for federalism. Interim constitution stipulates to build an inclusive, secular and modern democratic state on the consent of diverse people constituted as citizens through CA.

However, the extreme identity politics has lost the zeal of the modern democracy. This is not a good sign. Nobody wants to be citizens of Nepal but want to be Janjatis, Adibahis or Madheshi first at this moment. Nobody wants modern democracy and modern

Identity crisis

Nobody wants to be citizens of Nepal but want to be Janjatis, Adibahis or Madheshis.

politics but everybody wants pre-politics and ethno-democracy or folk-democracy. Consequently, Nepal is at the crossroad of progressive transformation, militarisation and possible ethnic cleansing.

The political leadership lacks the farsightedness to address the diversity and multiplicity of the ethnic and identity politics in Nepal. If the current diverse problems are not tackled within the framework of democratic polity, it may pose a risk to territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The image of 'our' Nepal conveys a contradictory message, thanks to the contradictions proven in the speeches and the actions of the political parties. The same ambivalence characterises the concept of a 'new-Nepal'. All political parties preach inclusive democracy but are doing the opposite in action.

Marginalised actors are still looking for a space to realise their mini-identities into a meta-identity of 'Nepaliness'. The transformation of the subsidiary identities into Nepali citizens and citizens into a deliberative public remain as a major challenge for the Nepalese leadership in the future.

The notions of marginalisation, peripheralisation, social exclusion, deprivation, oppression, suppression, distortion, exploitation

are permanent characters of the Nepalese society and polity. Today for a majority of the people of Nepal, under this so-called democracy with authoritarian tendency, lies a threat. Rhetoric of inclusive democracy and participation may be turned into manipulative tricks to involve people in struggles by the powerful political parties and imposing their will on the people. These are precisely the ways of authoritarian and undemocratic political parties. How can people believe in new forms of suppressive regimes if the sense of orientation

political parties preach inclusive democracy but are doing the opposite in action. By using uncritically such a loaded word, they are transforming it into a chronic condition. From the unburied corpse of so called 'inclusive' every kind of pest has started to spread. The chaos and problems of Terai is an example.

Nepal requires the citizens to forge a single national identity and the national characters as the representatives of all mini and micro-identities; an identity sustained by a democratic partnership among the stakeholders - the state, political parties, pressure groups, civil society and the ordinary citizens, to form macro-Nepali-identity. The greatest strength of polity lies in their capacity to enlist the confidence of ordinary citizens and the groups with grievances to shape the society and the nation.

Without a legitimate social contract through constituent assembly, unifying, strengthening the national integrity and establishing transparent, just and responsive governance cannot be realised. The tissues that link the citizens to governance, such as legislatures, political parties, civil society and a myriad of mediating social and economic institutions, now require trust, cooperation and collective action based on integrity and national character - that of being a Nepali first.

(Bhurtel is a political analyst.)

Isolated Musharraf reaches out to Bhutto

Benazir wants free and fair general elections, removal of the constitutional embargo on her becoming Prime Minister

Pakistan's newspapers speculate that Musharraf, unpopular and increasingly isolated, may be considering running some sort of political accommodation with former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, leader of the still popular Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

Bhutto fled to Europe amidst corruption charges in Pakistan after the collapse of her second government in the early 1990s.

Once a peaceful capital Islamabad is now a virtual fortress after a string of militant attacks that have only deepened the crisis for Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf.

Demoralized after losing a judicial battle with the country's top judge the General is being coaxed to seek an honourable exit by stepping down as army chief.

So on an official visit he took the unprecedented step of reaching out to one person who has the numbers to help him be re-elected as President later this year. Reports suggest that Musharraf held two rounds of talks with Benazir Bhutto.

Benazir is demanding corruption charges be dropped against her now and only then would she ask her Pakistan People's Party to vote for Musharraf in September or October.

However, Musharraf wanted her firm support and said the charges would be dropped only after the election.



Musharraf

Free and fair polls

Benazir wants free and fair general elections, removal of the constitutional embargo on her becoming Prime Minister for a third time.

She also wanted the President's powers to dismiss assemblies to go however, Musharraf made it clear he did not want to become a rubber stamp leader.

"Musharraf wants to be COAS and President for another five years. It is as simple as that. I think my own assessment is this that the government wants constitutional amendment in



Bhutto

which he can be army chief and President and in return has offered Benazir Bhutto prime minister ship a third time," said Najam Sethi, Editor, *The Daily Times*.

Many in official circles are calling it a 'successful meeting'.

"The deal was done before Benazir Bhutto and Musharraf met. They got the UAE Prince to mediate and to witness the deal, so the meeting took place, was like a summit, all the issues were decided before they met. Meeting was simply there to clinch it. I think those are the

facts and that is the logical conclusion we can draw," Sethi added.

Meanwhile, former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has rejected overtures by Musharraf's envoys, and is accusing Benazir of violating their understanding by dealing with a military dictator.

"The party leader Nawaz Sharif has very categorically stated that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has deviated from the charter of democracy because one of the main issue was to continue struggle against the dictatorship," said Sardar Zulfiqar Ali Khan Khosa, Punjab president, PML-N.

"And in that context nobody from among the alliance for restoration of democracy was allowed to make any contact directly or indirectly through emissaries or through person with a dictator and she has broken that," he added.

In an unexpected move the government has called in a session of the Parliament on Monday, political observers say the government's next move in Parliament will bring more clarity.

While the PPP and the government have denied these reports, it is now almost certain that such a meeting did indeed take place. What is not clear is the outcome of these meetings, an outcome that will determine the future political direction the country takes.

(NDTV.com)

Asean toughens advocacy for N-disarmament

The Association of South-East Asian Nations will strengthen a 10-year-old nuclear-free treaty in hopes of keeping the region safe from the scourge of nuclear weapons and threats of nuclear destruction. Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will top the agenda of the 40th Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Manila, which is scheduled to officially open on Sunday evening.

Romulo stressed that global weapons must be eliminated to ensure regional and global security. "The emergence of possible non-state actors that might be eager to the threat or use of nuclear weapons highlights the seriousness of the problem," he said as preparatory meetings for the AMM ended yesterday.

"We must attend to a crucial aspect of Asean's role as a pillar of peace and security in our region," he added. "We must secure the Asean community by

continuing our efforts to lead our region towards more effective security dialogue and cooperation." During the meetings in Manila, Asean was to review the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

The treaty, which was signed in Bangkok in 1995 but only came into force in 1997, does not only aim to work for nuclear disarmament but also to protect the region from pollution posed by radioactive waste and other toxic materials.

Romulo said Asean hopes to convince the five nuclear weapon states - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States - to sign the treaty as part of a "plan of action to better enforce" the agreement. "Part of the Asean's advocacy in the meetings here in Manila is to encourage nuclear weapons states to adhere to the protocol of the SEANWFZ," he said. The Asean foreign ministers were also expected to discuss the possibility of seeking the assistance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in implementing

the SEANWFZ.

"The IAEA has a set of procedures, safeguards that we want to be available to us and we will make use of it," Romulo said. "We will also seek the support of all countries, particularly the countries with nuclear power." Romulo said the IAEA could also help regulate the use of nuclear power for "peaceful purposes" such as energy.

"There are countries in Asia that are resorting to nuclear power for energy, for peaceful purposes and that's okay, but we want to ensure that it remains so," he said.

"We want to ensure that whatever nuclear powers Asean countries have, the countries do not allow the exportation of certain materials which could lead to development of nuclear power other than for peaceful purposes," he added.

The regional bloc would also bring its nuclear disarmament advocacy to the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), which will be held in Manila immediately after the Asean foreign ministers' meeting

(Gulf Times)

Taliban Demands South Korean Talks 'Speed Up'



One of the family members of the kidnapped South Koreans in Afghanistan reacts after she watches the news about them on television in Seoul.

The spokesperson for Afghanistan's Taliban is demanding that the pace for the negotiations for the freedom of the kidnapped 22 South Koreans be sped up, citing that most of the hostages are already ill.

It has been 10 days since the South Korean Christian group was kidnapped while traveling from the Ghazni province in a bus.

Spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi said, "Seventeen of the hostages are sick. If anything happens to them, the Afghan government and the South Korean government will be responsible." "They have to speed up the process of releasing our suggested prisoners."

The militant group said that it will resort to killing all the hostages should their demand of releasing eight Taliban prisoners in exchange was not done.

Recently, the body of one of the hostages was found riddled with bullets. He had been a Presbyterian pastor and the mission leader of the group. "We have given them (the government) our list and we are waiting for our prisoners to be released," Ahmadi added. Taliban commander, Abdullah Jan, told AFP, "We will accept no other solution but the release our eight prisoners."

(AHN)

Polls open in crucial Japanese election

Polls opened in Japan at 7 a.m. Sunday in an election for the upper house of Parliament that could be a key test for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The House of Counselors has limited power compared to that of the lower House of Representatives. But the Liberal Democratic Party could lose control of the upper chamber for the first time since the party was founded more than 50 years ago, Kyodo News Service



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

reported.

Preliminary results were expected to be available by midnight Sunday. Most polls showed the opposition Democratic Party of Japan making significant gains with LDP candidates even in some of the party's strongest areas having to campaign hard.

Half the seats in the chamber, 121, are at stake in this election, 73 in single- or multi-seat constituencies, and 48 chosen by national

proportional representation.

Abe's popularity has plummeted since he became prime minister 10 months ago. The LDP has been hit by a series of scandals that have led to the suicide of one minister and the resignation of two others.

The results of two by-elections for the lower house will not affect the LDP's significant majority there.

(earthtimes.org)

Correct factor wrong deduction

The lack of perception of casual observers like Isabel is doing untold damage to the cause of sustainable liberal democracy in Nepal and furthering the Maoist cause.

■ Kundan Singh Khatri

Psychologists believe that every biased viewpoint is first and foremost a reflection of some form of insecurity inherent in the character of the person or organisation expressing it. Such deep rooted shortcomings often cloud one's judgment and objectivity. They sometimes lead to situations where, to quote a Nepalese metaphor: one spots a tick on another's body, but misses the buffalo on one's own back. Isabel Hilton's article (Isabel Hilton, Friday July 20, 2007, The Guardian) regarding the visit of Nepal's Army Chief to the UK portrays that trait in abundance.

Her misleading observations are obviously based on very limited knowledge of the real situation in Nepal. It is a classic case of correct factor, wrong deduction. Her portrayal of a Nepal Army filled with only caste bound officers, for instance, is about four decades out of date. Indeed the only army that practices racial bias in the recruitment of Nepalese Gurkhas is the British Army. The national army of Nepal is open to all. In fact, some of the more militarily inclined minority tribes are actually overrepresented in terms of the population ratio. Similarly, India, which has more Nepalese in uniform than in Nepal, retains segregated infantry regiments, but openly accepts any Nepali in other parts of the army. Indeed, it is not improbable that the overall British perception of Nepal is prejudiced by an overrepresentation of the minority viewpoint.

Similarly, her simplistic interpretation of the Nepalese conflict as "Gyanendra's savage war" fails to acknowledge the fact that the Maoists were using innocent civilians as human shields, assassinating teachers and journalists and generally conducting a very effective ideological cleansing of the rural countryside a good seven years before Gyanendra, in hindsight quite inappropriately, took over the reins of power in a chaotic Nepal.

That the Maoists are, by their own account, still fundamentally fighting to establish a totalitarian communist regime vis a vis a competitive liberal multi-party democracy, appears to be totally lost on Ms. Hilton. Her inability or perhaps unwillingness to differentiate between the policy-driven, and in the case of the activities of their Young Communist League, ongoing atrocities committed by the Maoists and the criminal violations committed by individual soldiers, who are duly investigated and punished, makes her analysis vulnerable to exploitation by Maoist manipulators.

Her efforts to play on the sentiments of readers by eloquently narrating the tragic Maina Sunuwar story would have had real analytical value if it had only been balanced



against a similarly searching report about some of the thousands of Maoist human rights violators who have been awarded blanket amnesty as part of a political deal that naively hopes for peace at all costs. Sadly, misguided, and perhaps even willfully biased reporting like that, at the least, endangers the delicate peace and reconciliation process. At worst, it actually assists the Maoists in disguising their real and deadly intent.

In the interest of averting the catastrophic tragedy of a Maoist takeover of Nepal, perhaps it is time for the UK and others in the international community to admit that their previous zeal of focusing on human rights allegations and related pressure on the government forces was in part a natural extension of their wish to 'tame' the King. While perhaps too distasteful and incompatible with Labour's image of the UK to admit publicly, it is very much within the realms of what nation states do to further their interests. It was never really meant to support the Maoists game plan per se.

The King is gone and so is the utility of bashing him or the institutions that were previously useful as targets to weaken his position. It is time to move on and focus on the real threat at hand. The lack of perception of casual observers like Isabel is doing untold damage to the cause of sustainable liberal democracy in Nepal and furthering the Maoist cause.

The Nepalese Army, warts and all, stood firm against the ideological extremists who chose to overthrow the various governments of the day through force of arms. Despite the pitiful state of the economy and untimely disengagement by traditional allies like the UK, the Nepalese Army did prove unequivocally to the Maoists that they were never going to achieve their aim through fighting and helped force them onto the negotiating table. Today, as any democratic Nepalese politician admits in private, and as some like Foreign Minister Mahat assert publicly, the vastly more aware and responsible Nepalese Army remains the only hurdle against a forceful takeover by the Maoists.

However, if one rates its past credentials, today, the Nepalese Army is the last line of defense of democracy in Nepal. If it were not for the existence of a still intact army that PM Koirala can still mobilise, there would be no reason whatsoever for the Maoists to even pretend to want to try their hand at true democracy. In the final analysis, that is not really very different from how the British Army evolved and contributed to Northern Ireland.

As one Nepali language weekly put it, "Propaganda is a fine tool to use on select target audiences in the pursuit of well thought out objectives. Where it becomes fatally counter productive is when the practitioners and unwitting agents get so deep into the game that they start believing in their own bluff."

Marshland Flowers

...Presence of an authentic Master itself acts like a catalyst...



■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

We Nepalese tend to be like frogs in a well and believe whatever is in my well in the one and the only truth! This is a dangerous attitude as far as Buddhism is concerned. The Shasta himself said to Chanki in the Majjhima Nikaya that learned people should never say, "This is the only truth" and close their mind to all other possibilities.

Going back to Vipassana, there are many powerful Vipassana systems in Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka which are pure Theravada systems based on the Theravada Pitaka coming through long unbroken lineages. In fact, according to Nyan Ponika Thera, a German Theravadin Bhikkhu, the Burmese Sikkha Vipassana lineages all began from Jetavan Sayadaw about a hundred and fifty years ago. If this is true, none of the Burmese lineages are unbroken lineages.

But whether they are unbroken lineages or not they are based firmly on the unalloyed interpretation of the Buddha's teachings and are not mixed with other non-Buddhist views however the Pandit lineages and the Bhikkhu lineages of Burma are unbroken. But if these Burmese Sikkha Vipassana are not unbroken lineages (as pointed out by Theravada scholars themselves), then many fine points will be missing. The Marga is not a matter of just looking at Vedana or Chitta etc only.

There are many aspects of the Marga which is handed down in an unbroken enlightened lineage like the details of when to strive, when to relax, when to recognise that the winds are being disturbed by meditation, what are the medicines for the wind disturbances, what are the landmarks on the path and how to use them, the development of Sraddha which is equally as important to become an Arhat or

Bodhisattva etc.

There are thousands of such things which will be missing in a broken lineage. The richness of meditation lore, experiential lore handed down through the unbroken enlightened lineages cannot be compensated for by reading books or conducting seminars. The experiential richness of a Master cannot be compensated by any other means. The presence of an authentic Master itself acts like a catalyst for the transformation of the practitioner.

There is a story in the Theravadin tradition itself (Anguttara Nikaya) that the Master told one of his attendants not to go to retreat during the three month monsoon period (Varsabas); but disobeying him, the attendant nevertheless went for the retreat. After three months, he came back and told the Buddha that he had absolutely no experience in those three months of retreat. The Buddha told him, 'I told you not to go.' This episode tells us clearly that:

1. The path is not merely sitting down and meditating even if the meditation is correct.
2. Without the backing of a genuine enlightened Master, even if you really sit hard in meditation, nothing authentic is going to happen.

This is a good warning for all those who think they can read books and practice on their own and avoid any contact and interaction with another living being who has deeper experience than himself. This avoidance or fear of interaction with another personality is itself a neurosis, which will get one stuck wherever one is and is a sign of a big ego.

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

Romance of small stalls

A friend from abroad could not believe that I need not mention my street name, zone or city code for me to receive by post a packet containing a book of contemporary verse from Poland.

This simplicity of life seen in Nepal and

generally in South Asia is what you miss while traveling in the rest of the world - the small stalls, street vendors, little bazaars at the end of each street. Streets like New Road, Baneshwore, Putli Sadak, Koteswore, Kalimati, the people on the street with their whole world on stalls or on winnowing discs.

On my return the vendors in the street, the small open air shopkeepers give me a familiar look and even amicably ask the cause of my disappearance for few months. Nepalese literature is full of anecdotes involving life dramas of such characters that the writers encounter in the streets or open air market places.

The amazing fact remains that these vendors keep the mechanism of a high profile supermarket without spending a penny. You have everything you require from fruits and vegetables to mending shoes, sharpening knives, and local herbal medicines on the movable stands. That these anonymous figures carry on the work of a high profile supermarket without any set agenda or corporate motif seems mind-blowing. It reflects the diversity of characters and cultures and keeps the scene of our bazaars vibrant and colorful.

In Europe most of my friends often complained about the rise of the supermarkets and the way they controlled the lives of the people there. Few decades earlier the scene was different, some of them lamented. There were small shops and stores. There were vendors and small stalls. Our host in the



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

UK took us to the nearby Portabella market every week. Often the act of visiting the small weekly marketplaces seemed a heroic act and we were escorted to these open air markets with same serious intent that we would have while visiting our holy shrines. Also it had a ring of organic

food as ideal and healthy as opposed to junk food flown in from different parts of the world by the supermarkets. The working conditions of the people who produced the food were miserable and unhygienic, the activists complained.

In fact most of the activism in the West draws its energy, along with anti-war agendas from, to use the Chomsky's phrase, 'the tyranny of the corporate houses.' The Tesco, HM, Woolworth, Albert Heijn, Aldi, Lidl, Walmart, Sainsbury's and Asda remain the targets of attacks at most of the poetry jams and performing events in Europe.

The other day the sightings of a few supermarkets in New Delhi made me wonder if the drama is being repeated in Asia, in almost similar fashion. Within two years, there has been a sudden rise of supermarkets in India.

On TV the other day I saw a housewife in sari claiming to provide the customers with the best mangoes in the world with a wide smile. Reliance, the news goes, would hire a train which shall carry all that there is in India-- apples, mangoes, bananas and the vegetables and the rest. I am told Reliance is asking quotations from the leading publishers and distributors in India and shall be publishing selected titles in bulk along with groceries. Soon we would see supermarkets take over the vibrant world of small stalls and street vendors to empower the powerful and mighty, fresh gods of the century ushering in the corporate chaos of the highest order.

(The writer can be reached at writer@yuyutsu.de)



Real cause should be handled

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

I have only one son but unfortunately he has been into drugs since two decades. He has stayed in almost all centers of Nepal but still is not drug free. What should I do, send him to a center abroad? Do I really have a ray of hope?

□ ■ Mr. Shrestha, Nepalgunj

The first step towards healing your son is for him to accept that he is an addict. Frequently, addicts who check into centers for rehabilitation do not take responsibility for their addiction. Thinking that drugs are under their 'control' while in reality, it is not makes them unable to 'cooperate' with the rehab programme and so it does no good to them.

Your son should want desperately to get rid of his addiction. He should feel that getting into yet another rehab center is his last chance and so it is very important for him to follow the routine of the rehab and stay disciplined. Strengthening his discipline will prevent him from slipping into his old ways. Avoiding his old circle of friends and the areas they used to frequent is crucial. This will help him stay off the old traps.

It is also very vital to his recovery that he stays productive. If you think your son would be safe by just staying in the house and not going out, his condition will deteriorate. However small the work, by being productive, his morale will stay up. Please make sure he is doing something

worthwhile to help himself and his family.

Another reason why he is not clean by now could be that his real cause of addiction has not been identified. When the real cause is handled he will not relapse again and again. His attitude has to change during his rehabilitation. Unfortunately, sometimes your unconditional love for him can also become a hindrance to his recovery. When he knows that you will be there for him at the end of day, no matter what, he will not, 'grow up.'

It is very important that he becomes honest and not hide anything that he does wrong. If he is not honest, he will try harder to hide his wrong acts; will start to isolate himself from those who have been impacted by his wrongdoings; and will blame them so that his wrongs becomes less 'wrong' for him. Blind love from his parents will not let him realise his wrong-doings. He does need your support but he has to realise it and at the same time you should not be blind to his manipulations.

Another factor could be that he does not have confidence in himself. Addiction is powerful but he has to believe that he has the power to overcome it and stay clean. He has to convince himself that he can be drug free, ethical and productive. He needs determination.

Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to:

newsfront@bhrikuti.com (Your identity will be protected.)

Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



A new bridge across a river, Syangja, Nepal.



Lohan to face legal action?

Lindsay Lohan might be heading into legal trouble because a man whose foot she drove over is threatening to sue the actress. And two men who say Lohan drove off with their car are also taking her to court.

An intoxicated Lohan allegedly drove off to chase her former assistant Tarin Grahame through the streets of Malibu, California, one night last week.

Ronnie Blake who was in the car managed to get out before Lohan sped off, leaving his two pals, Dante Nigro and Jakon Sutter, fearing for their lives inside, hollywood.com reports. Lohan drove over Blake's foot.

The three men have now hired an attorney as they consider legal action against Lohan. Blake may seek damages for his injuries while Nigro and Sutter are considering pressing false imprisonment and stolen-vehicle charges.

(IANS)



Spears' guard charged

In more bad news for singer Britney Spears, one of her bodyguards has been charged with misdemeanor battery after an altercation in Las Vegas.

The scuffle occurred outside the Wynn hotel and casino when two photographers approached Spears and her entourage.

Spears filed a police report after the incident, alleging one of the paparazzi battered one of her two children.

Photographer Kyle Henderson allegedly bumped bodyguard Julio Camera, who was holding Spears' son 22 month old Sean Preston.

Camera handed the toddler to Spears and then ran after the photographers.

(Skynews)

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रिङटोन्सका साथ
नेपाल टेलिकम
र
मेरो मोबाइलमा

NEPALI RINGTONES

Ringtone	Album	RT ID
Resham firiri	Folk songs	N2005
Changu Narayan	Various Artists (Lok)	N2050
Trishulima buneko	folk songs by Kumar Basnet	N2006
Joban Sorako	Various Artists (Lok)	N2066
Meri aamai	folk songs by Mira Rana	N2009
Basa Tanma	Mann	N2104
Ishwor Tailee	Muna Madan	N2121
Sapana Ki Pari	Gajal	N2144
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