

Kathmandu | 25 Nov-1 Dec, 2007 | # 42 | Price Rs. 25



Osho Sanyasis Swami Yog Nityananda (Anil Nepal) and Maa Osho Arpita (Smarika Rijal) tying the knot at Tapoban, Kathmandu on Nov 25, in presence of fellow Sanyasis and invitees.

Inside

Koirala may ask for ministers' resignation

page 2

Madi victims say, Prachanda is a liar

page 3

New condition for CA polls

page 3

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Carter ignored Koirala Overruled

■ nf correspondent

Former US President Jimmy Carter was received warmly and heard patiently by Nepal's key political actors during his recent 3 day visit, his second in six months, but his ideas and suggestions made no apparent mark in Nepal's politics.

Prime Minister GP Koirala was apparently 'unhappy' with the visiting dignitary for his having overruled his suggestion that he refrain from going public on his prescription regarding what type of electoral system should Nepal be adopting for the constituent assembly.

Informed sources from Baluwatar told newsfront that Koirala had requested Carter not to make public his suggestion for 70:30 component of the proportional and first past the post system. Koirala is believed to have advised Carter not to go public on this when the two met at the PM's residence on November 24 morning. But Koirala was overruled and ignored as Carter went public on the issue when he met the press before he left for the United States the same day.

However, the Nobel Peace laureate was clearly rejected by the Nepali actors, not the PM alone, if their initial response to his suggestion of - mainly an enhanced dose of proportional representation system and adoption of a resolution in favour of Republican Nepal to be endorsed by the Constituent Assembly yet to be elected, is any indicator. Carter met Koirala and Prachanda twice separately, listened to others

like Madhav Nepal and some of the ministers in between. He also met Chief of the Army staff Gen Rukmangad Katawal mainly to discuss status of the Maoists' demand for reintegration of the Maoist guerrillas into the Nepal army.

In an exercise different from last time, Carter also interacted jointly with leaders of three parties - Nepali Congress, UML and the Maoists, but there was hardly any consensus he could encourage on the issue of Republican and proportional electoral system being adopted immediately to facilitate early election as recommended by the Maoists.

"We are flexible and may reconsider our stand if Maoists prove that they are sincere in conducting election to the Constituent assembly," Minendra Rizal told Carter. Clearly, the UML representatives also doubted Maoists' sincerity about going to the CA. Carter also wanted to know from Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat why the combatants in the cantonments were not being paid as promised. Mahat's answer was simple, "Maoists are demanding payment even to those who have already deserted the cantonments or those who are disqualified to be there."

In fact, thanks to Carter, he revealed before parliamentarians that around 10,000 combatants were found disqualified in the UN verification process. And against the total 31,000 combatants who had entered the cantonments, only 24,000 are living there now as the rest have deserted the camps. ■

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Koirala may ask for ministers' resignation en masse Operation Rescue



Pix by Newsfront

nf correspondent

As Koirala's legitimacy has come increasingly under question both at home and abroad, fuelled by his inability to maintain law and order in the country and hold elections to the constituent assembly on schedule, spin doctors in the party are making a last minute effort to salvage his position.

An effort to have the ministers resign en masse to give him a free hand to hand-pick ministers of his choice, at least from his Nepali Congress, is on. "The PM is seriously considering it," a prominent member of the Congress Central Committee told newsfront, adding, "this may happen soon."

"We are hopeful that his failure to do so in the past has thoroughly discredited him and he will take the suggestion seriously now," he said. Apart from others, party's Working President Sushil Koirala is also believed to have asked the PM to go for the much needed change in

An effort to have the ministers resign en masse to give him a free hand to hand-pick ministers of his choice, at least from his Nepali Congress, is on.

the party.

In any case, there are many seats lying vacant in the council of ministers, since at least four ministers from the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) who resigned nearly two months ago continue technically as the ministers, as their resignations have not been accepted and notified by the government yet.

Although it is a coalition government and those in the council of ministers are nominees of the coalition partners, the PM is supposed to have asked UML General Secretary, Madhav Nepal to spare

Khadga Oli in the ministry once again. Similarly, he is understood to have told some Congress leaders that he is now considering going to the polls even without the Maoists, if the former rebels, "create obstacles one after another in conduct of the polls."

Koirala, sources claim, has now arrived at the conclusion that the Maoists are not at all keen to face the polls and they are changing their goal posts, by putting forth newer demands. But Koirala faces criticism within his own party with at least four dozen leaders including parliamentarians telling him that he must improve the law and order situation before the country goes to the polls.

Party central committee members, Binay Dhoj Chand, Govinda Raj Joshi and Lakshman Ghimire told him recently that if he was not going to make any minister accountable for the current mess, he must at least get all to resign and, "form a government which can go to the polls with an image of efficiency and ability to deliver." ■

Demolishing judiciary

The very concept of the independence of judiciary has been demolished.

The interim constitution has undermined the importance and principle of the rule of law as well as the independence of judiciary as the basic pre-requisites of democracy, a senior judge of the Supreme Court has said.

"Democratic governance, values and commitments cannot be promoted without an independent judiciary and the interim constitution - 2063 has somehow missed this point," Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhi said.

In a paper, 'State's role and responsibility in enforcing verdicts of independent judiciary' presented at a programme organised by the Administrative Court on November 24 in the capital, Justice Rayamajhi said that the interim constitution has almost demolished the concept of independent judiciary.

"The government has armed itself with the power to depute the Chief Justice as well as other judges to any other assignments

and enhanced its representation in the judicial council in a way that gives more say to the executive in appointment of judges.

Moreover, introduction of the new system of the Supreme Court having to submit its annual report to the prime minister and absence of right to the judiciary to conduct its affairs autonomously all go against the concept of independent judiciary....In fact the very concept of the independence of judiciary has been demolished," the paper said.

Justice Rayamajhi, known for his straightforwardness and commitment to independent judiciary also demanded an immediate amendment to the constitution to rectify these lapses. "I am hopeful that the constitution this country is going to adopt in future will not entertain any provision that will adversely affect or demolish the concept of independent judiciary." Justice Rayamajhi is in the line of succession as the Chief Justice when the incumbent CJ, Kedar Prasad Giri retires. ■



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Kasthmandap Distribution Pvt. Ltd.
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Combatants integration into army - new condition for CA

Deposing Koirala

■ nf correspondent

Maoists have now put forth a new demand - reintegration of their combatants in the Nepal Army, as the pre-condition for going to the polls to the constituent assembly. Absence of a prompt 'yes' to the demand from Prime Minister GP Koirala will set the political movement for his ouster, declared Prachanda, Chief of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists.

"Koirala will be deposed as the PM if he fails to include our guerrillas in the army with full honour and respect," Prachanda announced while addressing his party controlled People's Liberation Army (PLA) at Chitwan's Shaktikhor area on the occasion of the 7th anniversary of its foundation on November 24. The declaration not only makes Koirala's continuation as the PM uncertain, but it also pushes the agenda of CA polls far beyond mid-April; since reintegration of the guerrillas in the Nepal army without other political issues being settled looks almost impossible.

Koirala's failure to integrate the guerrillas into Nepal Army will only provoke the Maoists to launch a fresh revolution which, Prachanda said, will not stop until its goal of republicanism is achieved. "We are ready to fight 40 years or more if needed but we will not give up our demands," he said.

Amidst cheers from the combatants lodged in Shaktikhor cantonment, Prachanda said the government had already violated the letter and spirit of the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) and other agreements which formed the basis of the Maoists joining the peace process. The PLA has not been granted facilities at par with the Nepal Army although all these agreements have recognised PLA's equal status with that of the army.

Maoist cadres had used their resources and strength to mobilise common people and ferry them to the venue. Apart from



Prachanda, Maoist leaders including Baburam Bhattarai, Mohan Vaidya, Badal, Hishila Yami along with guerrilla commanders and some UNMIN representatives attended the impressive function. The PLA also offered a gun salute to Prachanda who remains their military chief.

In a slightly conciliatory gesture with a political undertone, he also admitted that the Maoists were on decline in Terai due to growing incidents of violence there and it needs to be tackled. "To that extent, Nepal Army and the PLA should together defeat those elements," he said. But a senior official of the Nepal Army told newsfront, "We act on the legitimate government's orders and instructions only."

Prachanda also accused Koirala of lately treating Maoist guerrillas as did the king Gyanendra. "Koirala had called me to stall election saying that the king was conducting municipal election on February 8, 2006 at any cost", Prachanda disclosed. He added, "Credit goes to the PLA for snatching power from the king as a result of which Koirala became the PM."

He further declared, "They can remove you as well," Prachanda's message to the PM was loud and clear. Prachanda also declared that the two set of demands: immediate declaration of Nepal as a republic and enforcement of proportional representation system - that his party has advanced now would be achieved at any cost and said, "We are not going to compromise on that." ■

Newsbrief

Nepalis killed in Kashmir

Kargil, once feared as a nuclear flashpoint, when India and Pakistan went in for a third war within a span of 52 years in 1999, has now turned into a grave for three Nepalis during peace time.

At least three Nepalis - Mochha Ghale, Suku Ghale and Bir Bahadur Ghale of Nuwakot district, died instantly when a live shell went off in Kargil on November 22, according to the reports. Their mutilated bodies have been recovered. Earlier, two Nepalis labourers were killed by the militants about a decade ago in Kashmir for which the government of India paid Rs two lakhs each as compensation to the next of the kin of the deceased. Many other Nepalis serving in the Indian army had perished in the Kargil war.

Nepali authorities believe that the insurgency fuelled conflict in the country for the past 12 years has driven many Nepalis, especially the able bodied ones from rural Nepal to India, and take up all kinds of risky jobs as the one they are doing in Kargil. According to United News of India (UNI), a national wire service, there are around 2,000 Nepalis living in Kashmir region including Kargil. They are engaged in various menial jobs, and some are engaged in risky work like scrap collecting. UNI quoted security officials confirm that the three Nepalis died near the army firing range while collecting scraps. They suspect that the live shells might have been lying there since the time of Kargil war.

intimidation on journalists are reported. The decision to have Nepal on its watch list, 18-months after the return of democracy was taken during IPI's executive board meeting held in Germany recently. Other countries included on the list include Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Russia and Zimbabwe. IPI's Director, Johann P Fritz said Nepal is a very dangerous place for journalists and needed to be on its watch list.

"The IPI watch list is a list of countries in which press freedom conditions have rapidly deteriorated. The guiding principle behind the list is to open up a dialogue with these countries before they slide into repression," a statement by the IPI said. "Widespread disrespect for press freedom still strongly affects journalists and media outlets' ability to report freely. This makes Nepal a very dangerous country for journalists." Nepal's inclusion on the list comes in the wake of Maoists abduction of two journalists, Prakash Singh Thakuri and Birendra Saha, and the latter's murder in captivity.

Purification drive

In a clear admission that the Young Communist League (YCL) has become more of a liability than an asset for the Communist party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M), the party has decided to launch a purification drive to weed out 'bad elements' from the YCL.

The decision to this effect was taken during a central committee level meeting of the YCL in the capital on November 24 which was attended by CPN-M chief Prachanda besides other leaders. YCL is under direct command of Chairman Prachanda. "It is not the party's cadres, but infiltrators from outside who are indulging in criminal activities. They need to be identified and punished," a Maoist leader said. ■

Journalists at risk

Nepal continues to be on the watch list of the International Press Institute (IPI), a media rights watchdog, as more cases of threats and

Conspirators who?

Crippled victims of Maoist atrocities in Madi said they felt that Prachanda is a liar.

■ nf correspondent

As Prachanda stood as the most powerful and protected leader amidst hundreds of gun wielding guerrillas in Shaktikhor on November 24, a group of unarmed - some of them crippled victims of Maoist atrocities, barely 25-km from there, said they felt that Prachanda is nothing more than a 'liar.'

Courage failed the all powerful Prachanda this time as well since he could not undertake the promised trip to Madi where at least 38 villagers lost their lives and about a dozen sustained serious injuries, some of them with permanent disability, when a public transport bus was ambushed by the Maoists nearly 30 months ago.

"We tried to provide a relief package for the victims, but conspirators foiled that," Prachanda said publicly in Pokhara without identifying who the conspirators were. He also blamed the same

elements for his Madi trip not materialising so far. "Prachanda is still shedding crocodile's tear for what happened in Madi's Bandarmude area. He must expose those who were involved in the conspiracy and its execution to the public," Madi victims say.

Krishna Adhikary, one of the survivors of the massacre asked Prachanda to reveal who was stopping him from going to Madi or to announce the relief package? She appeared before the Sajha Sawal programme conducted by the BBC Trust in Chitwan with the poser that made Prachanda almost speechless.

There were many angry faces from Madi grilling Prachanda. He responded to most of them evasively, saying his going there may have an adverse bearing on the ongoing peace process. Madi victims have been calling him a coward or inhuman since he has been frequently visiting different parts of Chitwan but always avoids going to Madi despite his promises. ■

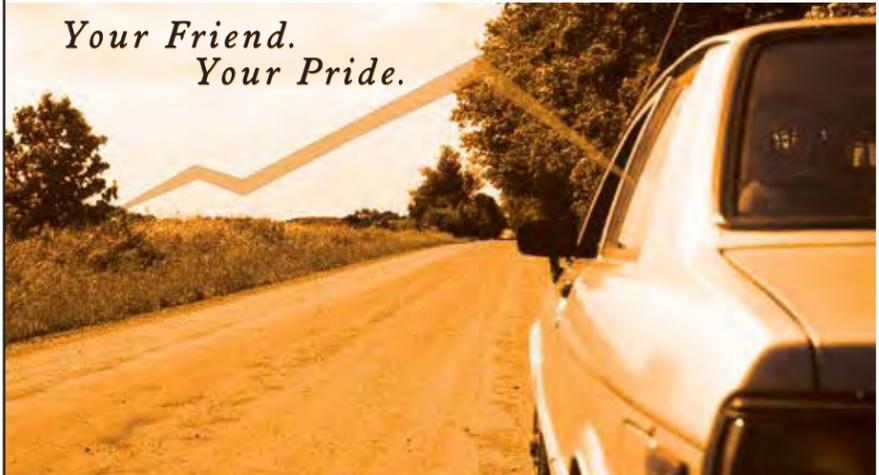
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Editor & Publisher : Yubaraj Ghimire
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 Address : PO Box: 8830, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel : 4443888, Fax : 4421147 (Edt.), 4411912 (Mkt.)
 Email: newsfront@bhrikuti.com, marketing@bhrikuti.com (Mkt.)
 Printed by: Express Color Press, Buddhanagar, Tel.: 4781810, Distribution: Kasthamandap, Tel.: 2010821

Point to Ponder

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Bungled

It was a year of hope for peace and democracy in Nepal which together could have led to economic prosperity. Nepalis hoped that the 13 year old conflict and politics of violence that caused the loss of 13,000 precious lives would be over for good, and then they would own their country's future destiny.

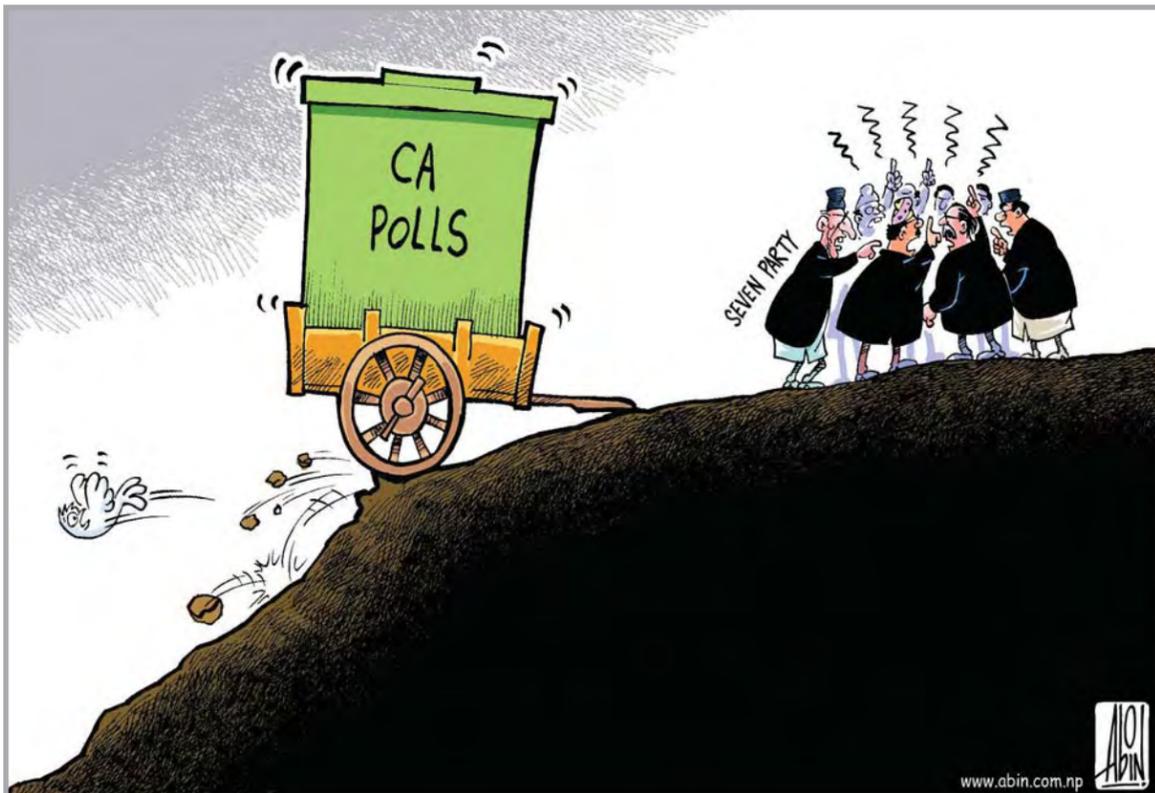
But November 21 and 22, the first anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Maoist Chief and the Prime Minister, and the day Nepalis were hoping to cast their votes to elect the Constituent Assembly, passed off like any other day. That the CPA's future is in mess and so is the uncertainty over CA elections has not only injected enormous dose of frustration among the people, but has once again proved that Nepali politicians have not changed a bit, and that this country's future is not safe in their hands.

Except that the Maoists joined entered the interim parliament and the interim government, no other provisions of the CPA was implemented. Through circumstantial evidence or conjecture, one can easily say that the top leaders who signed the CPA behaved more like dealers to secure their immediate narrow gains at the cost of the nation's interest. Maoists were granted immunity for every crime its cadres committed.

They did not push for formation of the high-powered commission for state's restructuring seriously; and never was a serious debate held in the country regarding the kind of devolution including federalism; to ensure that the people long suppressed - belonging to certain class, caste, ethnicity, gender, religion and region have a larger stake in the emerging power structure.

The government that included Maoists in it after April 2007 never formed the monitoring committee to ensure that the code of conduct as agreed by the two sides would be implemented in letter and spirit. Maoists never actually returned the property and assets they had illegally confiscated despite their commitment to do that. Yet, they kept imposing and dictating new conditions that had the effect of discrediting the CPA as well as other agreements of the past. With their demand for 100 per cent proportional system of representation and republican Nepal immediately, the prospect of people being able to exercise their right to elect the CA has become totally uncertain.

The international missions and their commitment to assist in the peace process and development and the new slogan of new Nepal, that once raised some hope, are fast collapsing. The year that we bungled, warrants an honest review of the role of political actors with full accountability. The key provisions of the CPA should be implemented at least, so that the entire process does not become a casualty. ■



Letters

Punish criminals

Your editorial, 'criminal who' was very bold and it represented our anger at the Maoists for abducting the journalist, Birendra Saha and killing him. Unfortunately, there is no visible regret or repentance on the part of the Maoist leaders over the murder and all they have been saying is that they will punish the guilty. Home Minister KP Sitaula has all along been acting like someone aiding and abetting these crimes. Can the fate or life of any citizen be safe with him as the Home Minister?

This also points fingers at the political parties especially the Congress and UML who pay so much lip service to the issue of press freedom, but it was there for all to see how they ignored the issue of abduction of journalist Saha. There is every possibility that another journalist, Prakash Singh Thakuri also has met his end at the hands of the Maoists.

Sitaula never bothered to initiate any search for journalist Thakuri who was kidnapped five months ago. Even the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) chose to keep silent on journalist Thakuri's case on the ground that he was perceived as pro-palace. If Sitaula, FNJ and the current regime have a common understanding that only certain elements with certain political belief have a right to survive and that the machinery of the state should not bother about the safety of the rest, then that will only lead to a civil war in this country.

Only by bringing the 'murderers' to justice, can these situations be prevented from arising again.

Bishwanath
 Kamalpokhari, Kathmandu



Thank press

It has been confirmed that journalist Prakash Singh Thakuri's abduction was done by CPN (Maoist)'s sister organisation, YCL. Maoist cadres killed journalist Birendra Kumar Saha on the date of his abduction but that information came in after a month of suspense. After these two anguishing event, I am wondering why Maoists are anti-journalists and against press freedom. However, acts like these will only jeopardise the political existence of the whole party. It would do well for the Maoists to remember that they have been able to climb the political ladder thanks to the huge support of the press and the media.

Sulav Dahal
 Surunga-5, Jhapa

More Umravatis

In reference to the article by CK Jha I would like to appeal to the public to unite and thrash these politicians who are defining democracy and their principles as it suits them. The government and the political parties have become merry spectators and turning a deaf ear to the problems of the country. If this continues, there will be more journalists and non journalists killed and there will be more Umravatis.

Rajib Kumar Deo,
 Kopundol, Lalitpur

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Pure freedom

Sri H.W.L. Poonja, known as Papaji (1910 – 1997) was born in Punjab. He realised the truth when he was 8 years old and it blossomed in his early 30's when he met his Guru, Sri Ramana Maharishi, the sage of Arunachala. He left his body in September 1997.

Excerpts from his teachings:

The knowledge is supreme, and if you cannot assimilate it, you cannot get it, then you have to take up austerities for a long time, not for one age but many incarnations; to purify your mind and get ready to receive knowledge. As all rivers enter the ocean, so all the austerities, practices, will lead you to knowl-

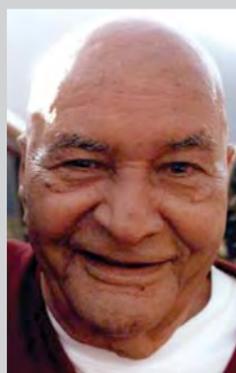
edge. So whatever time we are spending here, it will not go a waste. Surely you will be rewarded.

No need of leaving the kingdoms and going to the forest now. Only get rid of your impediments, and simply stay quiet. With a burning desire, like somebody who is burning, and will run to a well, or a river, or a stream only for water. Someone who is burning must go to the water; he will not go anywhere else. Like this, if you have the burning desire to be free, in this life, before the end of this life, then you will be successful.

You will have won the game and you will be very happy always because freedom, happiness and bliss go together. All kinds of

other pleasures that we seek fade away immediately with their contact itself. As soon as you contact any touch, any pleasure, it will bite like a serpent. Any pleasure, any rose that you pick will have a thorn underneath. Like this, when you enjoy any sense pleasure it will bite you.

Therefore we have to search for very pure freedom, where there is no unhappi-



ness. Otherwise in the world there is sometimes happiness, sometimes unhappiness. They go on alternating and this is called the world, and this is the experience of the ignorant ones. When there is unhappiness, they don't like it; when there is happiness they like it.

So in the case of wisdom, there will be only serenity. There will be total peace. Peace is something else. It has got nothing to do with pleasures and displeasures that belong to the contact of the senses. Bliss has got nothing to do with the senses or the mind or the intellect or even the personality, the Jiva or individual soul. This is a transcendental, fourth state. Not waking, dreaming or sleeping. That fourth state is called Turiya in yoga terminology. This state is always available to everyone. ■



■ Binod P. Bista

Sidelining Nepal's party and people

If the present political parties in power feel it necessary to receive India's and other countries' blessings... Nepal is better left with anything but the self-styled democracy of today.

If the current remarks made by Jimmy Carter were to provide any indications, a massive campaign seems to be underway to sideline the only democratic party of Nepal, the Nepali Congress, and thus the people of Nepal who believe in multiparty democratic system.

The role of Carter center in the past several months in Nepal, especially after Jana Andolan II, in trying to provide support to the ongoing peace process is well acknowledged. Yet the latest remarks on proportional representation as well as republic, despite a defeat of these issues in the parliament voting, casts a serious doubt on Nepal's democratic exercise in-the-making.

It is quite baffling to understand Carter's remarks after he expressed doubts on Maoists participation in constituent assembly election. As if to support Carter's doubt, Maoist leader Prachanda, appears to have stated that he does not believe in parliamentary system of democratic governance.

Carter is right on his statement about the comprehensiveness of the peace process in the sense that the CA elections and the peace process are inseparable and must be carried out together. It is virtually unthinkable to achieve one without the other. Deferral of CA elections twice in a row, gives testimony to the fact that without an excellent understanding among all parties, including the Maoists, there can neither be elections nor peace in Nepal.

However, recent statements coming from Nepali political parties (Maoists) regarding India's agreement/disagreement on a republic in Nepal, prior to the necessary

Carter is right on his statement about the comprehensiveness of the peace process in the sense that the CA elections and the peace process are inseparable and must be carried out together.

democratic exercise, is adding insult to injury suffered by the honest, peace loving people of Nepal. If the present political parties in power feel



it necessary to receive India's and other countries' blessings before even starting the democratic process, then Nepal is better left with anything but

the self-styled democracy of today.

The international community, represented in the World body - the

United Nations, does not appear to be different from the regional and global powers represented in Nepal in one form or the other. UNMIN's

Mr. Martin should rather focus on the progress of human rights condition in Nepal if he is desirous to assume more responsibility.

chief in Nepal, Ian Martin, has been aggressively pushing for an expanded role of that mission in Nepal. Present Secretary General of the UN has already spoken on the issue. Current role given to UNMIN is appropriate and as per the need of the country. In this regard, the recent decision made by the present government while considering the extension of UNMIN mandate comes as a pleasant surprise amidst confusions galore.

It may do well to both the chief of UNMIN and his boss to remember the significant event that took place during the 1990s when the then Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, wanted to create and maintain a standby force of the UN. If the UN chiefs were to support Nepal government's desire to reform the Nepal Army through appropriate trainings, the same can easily be achieved by the existing mechanisms of the UN under its department of Peace Keeping Operations.

Present under-achievement of its mandate by UNMIN is an outcome of the lack of understanding and commitment of the Nepali political parties in power. Therefore UNMIN does not need to justify its role and performance, or its lack thereof during past one year. Its purpose is genuine and its mandate clear.

Mr. Martin should rather focus on the progress of human rights condition in Nepal if he is desirous to assume more responsibility. Politicking by any external agency is undesirable and if it comes from persons responsible to maintain global peace and security, it is wrong.

A time may have come for the Nepali themselves to make their own decision without leaning on foreign powers for advice, support and strength. Every Nepali party in power (including the Maoists) boasts of its sacrifice in support of the people of Nepal. The seven parties have coexisted, albeit with some differences, for almost 18 months at the helm in trying to resolve the problems besetting Nepal today. They have somehow managed to prevent any derailment of the ongoing process.

The peace accord signed between the Prime Minister, as head of the government that represented seven political parties and Prachanda, as chief of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) remains intact. There is no reason why they cannot find a solution on their own to steer and push the peace process ahead, for the benefit of all. ■

Tejshree Thapa

Reflections

Strings of thoughts all connected to what life has become today - what used to be, what is and what can be done, still...



"History, despite its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage need not be lived again." - Maya Angelou

We all are aware where the twists and turns of our nation's history have taken us and being a part of it; we know how we have managed to live, and how long we can act as if we are living, bearing the pain. Do we have the courage to continue? Yes definitely. One isn't born with courage but circumstances and experiences energise and expand it.

Political scenario has transformed a lot in our life time. I still have a fresh memory as an eight year old child sharing with my younger sister the fear of my father being eaten by a tiger when he used to return home late. Since my father was a hunter, for every two months during schools winter vacations, I used to be with my dad in hunting camps. My childhood fear was him getting killed by a tiger. It had such a deep impact on me.

Then at the age of 14, a shocking incident occurred which was new for all the Kathmanduites. People were rushing to the Kalopul (a black bridge that still exists in Sifal) to look at a dead body, stabbed and thrown into the Bagmati river. It created a sensation in the valley and everybody was shocked by the killing of a human being.

It clearly picturises how peaceful our country was then.

Fast forward to today and the scenario is horrifying. Last year, I had gone to my sister's place where all the children were playing. The youngest, aged eight was acting like a security officer and few were playing the role of insurgents. They all had toy guns shooting at each other. Suddenly one of the boys threw a big grapefruit in the middle and everyone went hiding under the couch and chairs shouting 'bomb explosion'. It was disturbing to witness the negative

psychological impacts on these young minds.

Another incident relates to a little boy aged 13 from Ramechhap who used to live with his mother in my house. One day, in his room, I found six empty bottles of Coke all stuffed with strip of papers mixed with matchsticks. He was trying to make a 'socket bomb', the boy proudly explained in response to my curiosity. He mentioned the names of various types of bombs ranging from Pan Parag bomb to pressure cooker

bomb. As someone from insurgency affected area, he had witnessed the art and technique of bomb manufacturing.

This goes to show that it clearly requires more efforts on our part to give a sound, peaceful and healthy atmosphere to safeguard the rights of our children. Frequent strikes by the political parties and others have taken away the 'right to education' from our children. Little schools boys returning happily back home from their bus stops talking about Bandhs, burning

tyres in the streets, vandalism, pelting stones and other disturbing activities which they have witnessed have affected their minds. This should be a matter of concern to all mothers.

We have before us the saga of all those war widows from both sides. Last year on Valentine's Day, I saw an article in a local paper with a happy picture of a top comrade and his wife. The comrade was quoted saying that everyday with his wife is a Valentine's Day. I then visualised the innocent

thousand faces in white clothes mourning for their husbands killed in the insurgency, thinking how envious they would be if they had seen this picture. Things would have been different if the comrade and his loving wife had understood the meaning of 'love' a little earlier.

In our joint family, every evening all the children used to be running around playing all sorts of games but I used to love to be with my father, uncles and other senior neighbors who used to gather at our garden in the evening. They used to discuss mainly politics and share their views. The main issue of the discussion one day was the critical condition of our country because of being small, weak and being manipulated by a 'big brother'. As a kid, I wondered what that meant. Last year when I listened to an autobiography of BP Koirala abridged and read by Khagendra Nepal, I clearly picturised the vision of a big brother and its role in my country.

Competition among responsible people whose pitiful race towards power without any self respect makes one feel utterly ashamed and disillusioned. Crimes abound but criminals are neither brought to book nor does anybody own up the responsibility. John. F. Kennedy at the time of Bay of Pigs, Cuba invasion, while owning up the sole responsibility of defeat said that victory has hundred fathers but defeat is an orphan.

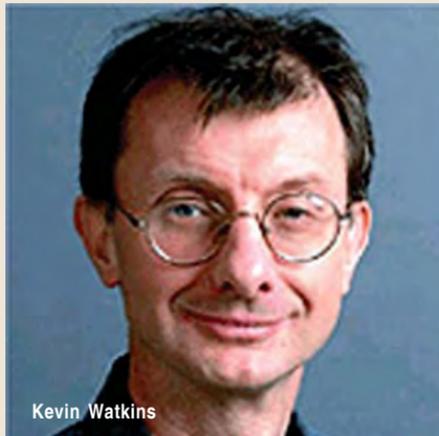
It is expecting too much to look for such a nationalist leader here but I think it is high time we women at least now unite and act to protect our children and bring about positive changes in our country. Women are powerful forces as history has proven through many examples. To quote E Roosevelt, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face... you must do things which you think you cannot do." ■

Climate change- a real threat

Climate change in Nepal will bring severe problems due to glaciers melting in the Himalayas...

Manish Gautam

Kevin Watkins, director of the UN's Human Development Report (HDR) office and the lead author of - *Human Development Report 2007/08 Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a divided world* - has given a clear message to the world that governments need to get real about the consequences of climate change. A senior visiting fellow with the economics governance program at Oxford, he recently shared his experiences with Asian journalists in New Delhi, India.



Kevin Watkins

Climate change as now projected will create livelihoods risks and vulnerabilities in South Asian countries. According to Watkins, the nature of these risks and vulnerabilities will vary between and within countries. Exposure to droughts, floods and extreme weather events is one category of risk. Snow retreating in Himalayas is another. As developed countries have invested huge political, institutional and financial backups in

adaptation, other developing and poor countries lacks technology, knowledge and skill to cope.

He said, "The rich world has the capabilities to protect citizens from the impact of climate change while the poor and the vulnerable population of developing countries have very limited coping mechanism... We should talk

about the aspects of social justice and the equity dimension of climate change that being the greatest polluters, the rich world need to compensate these vulnerable population of the developing countries."

He suggests that the governments of developing countries need to be united to pull the resources to respective countries for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

"The early warning signs are already visible. Today, we are witnessing at first hand what could be the onset of major human development reversal," Watkins added.

Climate change has resulted in glacier melting and has triggered outbursts of glacier lakes in South Asia. Decreasing number of rainy days, overall increase on rainfall intensity has increased the risk of dry spell and more intense tropical cyclones in the region. This eventually impacts on human health, water resources and agriculture.

While considering Nepal, the greatest impact

of climate change will be on agricultural sector on which the majority of the populations' livelihoods depend. According to Watkins the HDR has projected very deep reductions in large areas of rain-fed agricultural activity in South Asia. The end result of climate change in Nepal will bring severe problems due to glaciers melting in Himalayas which is not a distant future threat. Similarly it is affecting agricultural practices as the emergence of extreme weather patterns.

There are no sufficient researches and studies to show how the rural populations are already exposed to the effects and if at all they recognise this issue. It is urgently needed to bridge this knowledge gap regarding climate change at grassroots level.

Let us hope that the HDR releasing on 27 November will prove an opportunity to view and review climate science and understand what it means to the poor of this globe who lack technology, knowledge and skills to cope with the impacts caused by climate change.

Time for CHANGE

Our leaders fail to comprehend that foreign brokered alliance will never yield positive dividends.

Rarely does a moment come in history when the political leadership is provided with an unchallenged authority to govern in the name of its people. Similarly GP Koirala and the seven parties had been vested with gargantuan responsibilities to steer the country towards stability and peace. However, GP and the seven parties have failed to seize this golden opportunity. It is comical to observe the lackluster performance of this coalition government even when it had such enormous powers, no opposition to fear and lastly an unchallengeable international mandate to steer the country out of the quagmire.

Today, yet again our leaders have unfortunately succumbed to the murky politics that has plagued the progression of Nepali politics for the last five decades. Therefore, it would be accurate to conclude that it is only through our active participation in the political concourse can Nepal progress towards stability and peace. Hence, it would prove detrimental if we Nepalis are to sit quietly and allow our leaders to steer our country towards further disintegration by falsely interpreting our concerns and voices.

Without any further delay, we

Nepalis should ask ourselves some fundamental questions regarding the future of our country. What has been most hurtful is the fact that our government sat silently when the statue of Prithivi Narayan Shah was mutated by the Maoists. All across the globe, in all countries the founders regardless of their background are held in high esteem. We might loathe at King Gyanendra, but we cannot escape from the reality that without Prithivi Narayan Shah there would be no Nepal – this is a fact and our history.

It has become equally important for all of us Nepalis to ponder over the founding principles of our nation. This is important because without identifying the principles that founded Nepal, we cannot defend the principles that founded Nepal. A country like Nepal that is so diverse had functioned harmoniously despite some deficiencies. Unfortunately, we are at the brink of disintegration and chaos. Therefore, it is important for us to understand the logic behind Prithivi Narayan Shah's call for social harmony and unity. It is social harmony, unity, moderation and toleration that are the founding principles of our nation. And the diversity component has only added



to the uniqueness of the nation.

But for Nepali politics to evolve progressively it is important that the younger generation now takes over the mantle. Consequently, a political consensus must be developed and a home grown solution must be founded where the people are invited to take ownership of the constitutional process through elections.

The present leaders are responsible for the present state of affairs and they are incompetent. It is wishful thinking for us to expect them to deliver when they have failed repeatedly. Nepal is on the brink of disintegration and even when a forceful radical communist party like

the Maoists has posed challenges to the existence of democracy and in tandem disrupted social harmony in the country; even then our leaders remain divided.

There will be no democratic alliance, there never has been one and there will never be one as long as the leaders of the older generation remain in politics. It is only when youthful leaders belonging to the democratic parties and ethnic groups prevail will there be an alliance. I say this because; we non political Nepalis have a common enemy: Maoists and radical ethnic groups.

Politics in Nepal is a catalyst through which politicians and their



■ Siddhartha Thapa

beneficiaries have consumed enormous amount of wealth. No matter who becomes prime minister, the situation will remain just as grim since the players who aide the prime ministers are the same people who have failed again and again. And deep down the Maoists know for a fact that these leaders can be bought, so, until and unless, there is no change in the leadership, the Maoists will continue to throw generous baits at our leaders and prepare for an eventual takeover.

Our leaders fail to comprehend that foreign brokered alliance will never yield positive dividends. Examples are plentiful - Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine to name a few. Therefore, a solution must be indigenous and an alliance must formalise after parties agree on a common threat based on the ground reality. For that matter, the 12 point agreement is anti-national and hence, it now makes sense as to why the peace process and the prospects of holding elections have failed so miserably.

We know for a fact that our leaders will never rise to the occasion to save our country from further disintegration. They are too consumed with wheeling and dealing. An alternative can be found when the younger generation of politicians, businessmen, entrepreneurs, jourmos, civil servants, the youth, and younger army officers unite identifying a common threat. It is only then will Nepal move towards permanent peace, stability and economic prosperity. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Federalism and Multi-Ethnic Societies: Opportunities and Limitations

Stella Seibert
Colombo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005

Stella Seibert articulates various aspects of the abstract and dynamic concept of federalism. She also provides the underlying critical strictures and offers insights of various federal countries to follow ideal type of federalism that can yield desired result.

Federal political system is a shared sovereignty, power and resources between central and regional governments at various degrees depending on the nature of the societies and histories. Central governments have authority in deciding principle issues that affect the whole country, such as banking, defense, foreign policy and the signing of vital treaties and agreements with other states

though two levels of authorities - central and federal, control the same territory.

Federalism is a form of government that expresses multiple identity and diversity in specific common political system by sharing legislative, executive and judiciary powers to sub-units and arranges unity in diversity. It presumes several levels of institutional actors for the realisation of shared rule. Some federal states share only executive and judiciary while others divide also legislative powers.

The book introduces the concept, meaning and role of federalism to mitigate ethnic ridden turmoil of Sri Lanka and issues of federalism in peace negotiation process. It offers experiences of various countries to the reader by explaining a variety of federalism and contextual success and failure of different models adopted in a number of countries such as Australia, Brazil, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, and

Switzerland.

It elaborates the important terms with brief comparison, such as centralised unitary state, decentralised unitary state, the federal state and con-federal state with core attributes. She says that self-rule and shared-rule is missing in centralised unitary state. In a decentralised unitary state self-rule exists without right to self-organisation.

It broadly analyses the advantages and disadvantages of federalism, identity, resource and justice sharing arrangements at the state, political

Stella Seibert articulates various aspects of the abstract and dynamic concept of federalism.

parties, public institutions and civil society realms as well as in multi-level governance. It highlights the possible success of federalism and its contribution to development.

The advantages of federalism are: power sharing, power dispersion and political control, empowerment of regional voices, opportunities for participation, creation of regional political elites, opportunities for specific policy promotion, flexible solution of problems, efficient management, etc.

But, there are also disadvantages of federalism such as tyranny of minority, fragmentation of political power, political immobility, democratic deficit due to unaccountability and non-transparency in decisions, downgrading of other groups and issues, etc. These attributes suggest that leadership has to be very cautious in adopting the model of governance.

Many countries have provided

huge lessons to show that keeping the less powerful ethnic communities and social groups out of the centre of economic, social and political opportunities can lead to poverty, instability and unrest situation which can contribute to the development deficit, weaken democratic institutions and generate conflicts of various sorts.

The central problem of any regime is, therefore, to make power accountable. In this, sense, it misses one critical point: what kind of federalism is suitable to confront the single global market and growing internationalisation of social forces? The book is very useful to the Nepali society where federalism is emerging as a burning issue and provides food for thought to reasonably discuss the suitability of the model of state system - unitary, decentralised or a federal one.

(Reviewed by Tara Dahal)

Examining Zen meditation

This definitely shows that the Zen Samadhi and the Raja yoga Samadhi are not exactly the same.

■ Mahayogi Acharya Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

In 1966, Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Hirai made a study of Zen meditation in Japan in terms of the wavelengths etc. produced by the brain during Zen meditation. They asked the Zen master to categorise the level the 48 students had reached.

These subjects were classified into three groups. Group one had 20 disciples who had meditated from one to five years. Group two consisted of 12 disciples who had meditated from five to 20 years and group three had 16 monks who had over 20 years of experience. Besides these, 18 others from age 23 to 33, and men aged between 54 to 60 years who had no experience in meditation were chosen as control subjects.

Marshland Flowers

It is interesting to note that another study made of two Raja yogis - B.K Ananda, G.S. Chhina and Baldev Singh showed that the final stage of Kundalini yoga meditation was delta wave which is akin to deep sleep state where too

It was found that in the Zen master, before he started meditation there was normal beta waves of the waking state. Within 50 seconds of starting meditation, the well-organised alpha waves began in all the regions of the brain. Then after 20 minutes or so, the brain waves began functioning between low alpha waves, going at times into theta waves. At the end of the meditation, alpha waves were seen continuously and two minutes later, alpha waves still persisted. This kind of similar pattern was found in another Zen master also. The result of the EEG study on the Zen master was divided into four stages:

Stage I: a slight change which is characterised by the appearance of alpha waves in spite of open eyes. (In Zen as in most of Mahayana meditation



methods, eyes are kept open unlike in Hindu and Theravadin methods where eyes are closed); stage II: the increase in amplitude of persistent alpha waves; stage III: the decrease of alpha frequency; and stage IV: the appearance of the rhythmical theta train which is the final change of the EEG during Zen meditation, but does not always occur.

It is interesting to note that another study made of two Raja yogis - B.K Ananda, G.S. Chhina and Baldev Singh showed that the final stage of Kundalini yoga meditation was delta wave which is akin to deep sleep state where too delta waves predominate. This definitely shows that the Zen Samadhi and the Raja yoga Samadhi are not exactly the same.

Then when other Zen disciples were tested and graded, it was found that there was a very close relationship between the master's evaluation of their stage and the degree of EEG changes in them. From these findings it was found that the degree of EEG changes during the Zen meditation of the Zen disciples were parallel to the disciple level in proficiency as categorised by the Zen master.

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

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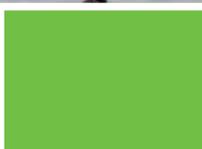
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Sharif returns home

Former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif arrived in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Sunday after seven years of exile, Dawn Television said.

Ousted by army chief General Pervez Musharraf in a bloodless military coup in 1999 and exiled to Saudi Arabia a year later, Sharif tried to return home in September, but was sent back to Saudi Arabia within hours.

But this time Musharraf, who imposed emergency rule on November 3, reluctantly agreed to allow Sharif back from exile in Saudi Arabia to lead his party in a January 8 general election.

Police detained supporters of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and sealed off the airport ahead of his planned return Sunday from exile, stark reminders that the emergency ruled imposed by his nemesis President Gen. Pervez Musharraf remains in effect. Sharif was due in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore on Sunday afternoon. He took off from Saudi Arabia during the day with family members, according to a security official at the Saudi airport who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk with the press.

Saudi Arabia is where Sharif has spent most of the past eight years since Musharraf overthrew him in 1999.

Ahsan Iqbal, a spokesman for Sharif's party, said some 1,800 activists were detained in a crackdown since late Saturday in Punjab province, of which Lahore is the capital.

However, federal Information Minister Nisar Memon said he was exaggerating.

"There are no arrests as such," Memon said. "About 100 people have been confined so that they do not create any issues. We don't want the same mess as there was in Karachi."

He was referring to the huge rally that greeted another former premier, Benazir Bhutto, when she was allowed to return to Pakistan last



month. Bhutto's homecoming procession was torn by a suicide bombing which killed about 150 people.

Both Bhutto and Sharif are seeking to return to power after Jan. 8 parliamentary elections. But the ballot, which the West hopes will produce a moderate government able to stand up to Islamic extremism, has been thrown into confusion by Musharraf's Nov. 3 seizure of emergency powers.

Memon said leaders of Sharif's party would be allowed to greet him at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport and drive with him into the city.

But Sharif's entourage was suspicious.

"The police action and massive deployment shows that something fishy is going on. They've blocked every single vehicle carrying supporters of (Sharif's party)," said Sayed Hafeezuddin, a lawyer for the exiled leader.

Thousands of police were deployed at the airport, some of them manning metal and barbed-wire barriers on approach roads and sidewalks. Passengers with tickets were allowed through.

On the streets of the city, several welcome posters and banners of

Sharif were on display, but there was no sign of supporters gathering to greet him.

Authorities have issued no warnings that Islamic militants bitterly opposed to Musharraf and Bhutto for their pro-U.S. police might target the more conservative Sharif.

However, his arrival comes one day after suicide bombers killed up to 35 people in nearly simultaneous blasts at the heart of Pakistan's security establishment in Rawalpindi, a garrison city adjacent to the capital, Islamabad.

It was not clear who was behind the explosions — which targeted a bus carrying intelligence agency workers and a checkpoint near army headquarters — but authorities said suspicion rested on Islamist militants who are fighting an increasingly bloody insurgency against government troops in the northwest of the country.

The army said Sunday that 30 pro-Taliban fighters and one Pakistani soldier died in an operation to capture militant positions in the Swat valley, a former tourist destination just 100 miles from Islamabad.

Musharraf cited rising religious extremism as a reason for his declaration of a state of emergency. However, many of those targeted under the crackdown have been political opponents, lawyers and members of the media.

More than 5,500 people have been detained since the crackdown began, but authorities insist virtually all have been freed since last weekend, when visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte urged Musharraf to restore the constitution.

Sharif's return could prove challenging for Musharraf, particularly if the former prime minister makes an alliance with Bhutto and the two boycott the Jan. 8 elections. But it is also a potential boon for the general, allowing him to claim that he favors a genuine return to democracy.

(The Times and Democrat)

Newsbrief

Hindus, police clash in Malaysia

More than 5,000 Hindu protesters met water cannons and tear gas in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, on Sunday while demanding equal rights and consideration from the government. Ethnic Indian protesters are sprayed with water by Malaysian riot police in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Despite clashes with police, there were no reports of injuries during the planned protest. Some protesters threw rocks at the water cannon trucks, but others were urging peaceful demonstrations. Public transportation into the city was stopped, hindering protesters from coming in.

Police stopped protesters as they tried to take a petition to the British High Commission. Talks were under way for authorities to allow six protesters to deliver the petition, should the crowd disperse.

6.2 quake strikes Sumatra

A strong earthquake struck the western coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island Sunday morning, but there were no immediate reports of damage and structural damage, seismologists said. The quake measured 6.2 on the Richter Scale with an epicentre in the Indian Ocean off the western coast of Bengkulu province, struck at 9:05 am Thailand time (which is the same as Indonesia time), said Indonesia's National Meteorology and Geophysics Agency. It was located about 28 kilometres south-west of Mukomuko district city, at a depth of 55 kilometres.

There were no tsunami warnings issued nor immediate reports of injuries or structural damage following the quake, the latest of a series of shocks to rattle the western coast of Sumatra in recent weeks. On September 12, a powerful 8.4-magnitude quake hit western Sumatra, killing at least 24 people and injuring scores of others. It was followed by a series of strong aftershocks and prompted several tsunami warnings.

Army in control, says PM

Prime Minister Fuad Saniora sought to calm the Lebanese on the country's first day without a president, assuring them that the military, which has vowed to stay out of politics, is on the streets to prevent violence while deadlocked factions work to resolve the crisis.

In his first comments since President Emile Lahoud stepped down without a successor, Mr Saniora defended his Western-backed government, saying it will continue to function according to the constitution.

"Our main goal in the coming stage, which we hope will not take longer than a few days, will be to exert all possible efforts... to end this situation as soon as possible," he said.

His comments came after a meeting with Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, head of the influential Maronite Catholic Church. Under Lebanon's division of power, the presidency is held by a Maronite.

Mr Saniora dismissed a declaration by Mr Lahoud, who before departing the presidential palace said he handed over security powers to the army, saying the country is in a "state of emergency".

"There is no state of emergency, and there is no need for that," Mr Saniora said. "There is absolutely no need for any Lebanese to be concerned about the security situation. The army is doing its work and is in full control of the situation on the ground."

So far, the 56,000-member military has successfully kept this tiny, fractious country together, surviving one crisis after another since the February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Death toll 31 in China landslide

The death toll rose to 31 Sunday from a landslide in central China that buried a bus full of passengers and a team of construction workers, state media reported.

Most of the bodies were found on a bus that was passing through mountainous Badong county, Hubei province, when the landslide occurred on Tuesday, Xinhua news agency reported, citing rescue workers.

Half a mountainside appeared to have collapsed onto the highway, photos of the scene suggest.

The weight of the landslide reduced the bus to a wreckage only 50 centimetres thick, and the bodies recovered from the interior were so badly crushed that they could be identified only by DNA, Xinhua added.

Earlier Sunday the body of a 32-year-old man, one of a team of four construction workers working on the road when the accident happened, was pulled from under tonnes of mud and rock, bringing the number of dead to 31, the news agency said. He was the second of four construction workers to be found dead. One was injured but survived while another is still missing. The road connects the eastern city of Shanghai with Tibet. The bus was en route from Shanghai to Lichuan, a small city in Hubei province.

Iran produces nuclear fuel

Iran has produced nuclear fuel pellets for its 40-megawatt heavy water nuclear reactor, Vice President Gholam Reza Aghazadeh said.

This was a technological advancement in the cycle of nuclear fuel, according to the state news agency.

"Fuel pellets to be used in the 40-megawatt Arak research reactor have been produced," IRNA quoted Aghazadeh as saying.

Iran has gone a long way in building a 40-megawatt heavy water nuclear reactor in Arak, central Iran, which the US fears could be used to produce plutonium and build nuclear weapons.

UP cops get crucial leads

A day after a series of blasts rocked three cities in UP, India, the Special Task Force (STF) of the state Police have managed to unearth crucial leads to the terrorists behind the plot.

Police department sources told DNA that one of those behind the blasts had been identified as Shamim, a close associate of Waliullah, the main prime accused in the March 2006 Sankat

Mochan temple blast in Varanasi. The UP police have asked the CID Branch of the West Bengal police for help.

Police have also released sketches of three of the suspected terrorists, two related to the Faizabad blasts and one suspected of involvement in the Varanasi civil court blasts.

Meanwhile, agencies reported that the state's principal secretary, home,

India court blasts



JN Chamber in a press conference said the blast were targeted at lawyers. He referred to the lawyers' assault on three JeM militants, arrested from the state capital recently, while being produced in the court, as possible reason for the blasts.

Lawyers had refused to represent the accused in the Sankatmochan

temple blast in Varanasi and the main accused was assaulted in the

Varanasi court while being produced there in April 2006, he said.

Also the lawyers of Faizabad had refused to represent the accused in the Ram Janambhoomi complex blast in July 2005 following which the case had to be shifted to Allahabad, Chamber said. Police have also confirmed that RDX had been found in the live bomb

recovered in Lucknow.

The owner of a shop, from whom the cycle that was mounted with explosives was bought, has been detained for interrogation.

In Faizabad also, police said they have tracked down the shop from where the cycles used in the blast, were bought.

(DNA)



Pic. by Niraj Sapkota

The sacrifices at Dasain almost took me away from all non-vegetarian food. Reading books while the family had fun with great food and fanfare and integration became the norm for me.

Neena Rana, the educator of the Montessori Method is a seeker, somebody who practices what she says and a unique personality that has survived many storms in her life. She shared her story with Sushma Amatya recently.

Tell us about your early life.

Convent of Jesus and Mary a school in New Delhi and a boarding stint in a convent in Moussorie in Uttar Pradesh had a major influence on the conscious awareness of my life's values. My thoughts on morality, ethics, justice and an intrigue around the lives of those that were the outcasts of normal lives led me to question everything in life, very early. I knew early that being a girl would mean a greater struggle and I spoke in the masculine gender for the first few years of my life.

I was boyish, mostly angry, tough kind of girl who took things into her own hands. Maybe the determination and invincible strength grew with me over the years and I now am a great believer in self-construction.

An Indian by birth I married a Nepali 'aristocratic' intelligent and suave eldest son of a general and realised there was a world out there that 'ruled' but differently from what I had learnt; the power of social status and heritage, the life of aristocratic style in all practical matters of attire, food and living.

My 'missionary' style perspective surprisingly

Journey

Children reflect their parents. They

took to it all like a duck to the water and I learnt the language straight from the most authentic teacher, my mother-in-law – complete with art of wearing chiffon saris with diamonds, social skills with all the intricacies.

I was a graduate from Lady Shri Ram College, spoke a little French and had worked with AFP, and had already been a disc jockey for several years through college. I had spent hours doing oil paintings on canvasses that are still on the walls of my mother's home. I did not date like other young folks and was often the alibi for friends who did. It was a unique mélange that led to the emergence of introspection on what then would be the best values of practical life on the birth of my first son.

I realised that I wanted him to be able to stand out as an individual with his own mind and realised early that the only way to do that was to let him exercise choices and face consequences for his decisions. For all practical purposes I was determined to allow him simple nutritious food, home stitched sturdy clothes and hours of thinking skills and communication.

The challenges you faced as a non native and a woman in this society and the lessons learned.

In India or at least in my part of the world in New Delhi a sort of invincible attitude can emerge that drives one through many diverse situations and challenges. That also adds to the flexibility that is required to be in touch with challenges of culture and related social issues. However it took me little time to adapt to the life in a Rana household with a protective and peace loving husband and traditional family members, while learning to string Potays or cooking Alu-tama.

The sacrifices at Dasain almost took me away from all non-vegetarian food. Reading books while the family had fun with great food and fanfare and integration became the norm for me. I was a mother of two boys in the first four years and took to that role with a zest I now understand as a natural journey to my evolution. I realised children come as gifts to take parents to a level they never deemed possible. They were instrumental in my growth and provided support and love I yearned for.

I did and still have a great relationship of mutual love and affection with the members of the family. Yet as the odd man out I had to mellow down and convince relatives of the solid commitment and genuine interest in the welfare of the countrymen I lived with. Sometimes I was held in awe for the very simple things that actually later became the pillars of strength in the school, Montessori House that I created to give direction to the children of these privileged family lifestyles.

It gave me great peace that the basic infrastructure I lived for the healthy growth of my own two boys in the midst of the impressive and somewhat 'fraudulent' cultural style could be shared with other children who took to the school. The awestruck attitude of others created a sense of alienation that I fought with vigour while establishing and maintaining my children's and other children's individual growth.

When the husband fell prey to alcohol and yet maintained his gentle peace loving personality I committed myself further to the 'destiny' of life. After his acknowledgement a drive to pass the message of individual growth through one's own sense of responsibility came to the fore with a vigor that took me through Montessori training and the establishment of the Montessori House in Kathmandu. I knew this was the message I was sent here for, since most other places where I could start such a school already had such an establishment.

I knew that it was here the message to take responsibility for your own life with conscious choices was most needed. It was here that the faith in a higher power to guide you in each moment of life needed to be nurtured from childhood as opposed to the following of rituals and rote-prayers. I do not believe in coincidences and realised that even more strongly when I spent two years in Calcutta learning Montessori way of education and the intricacies of business management and educational leadership.

A two bedroom flat and two cases of original Montessori equipment along with the two children and certificates formed Montessori House in 1987. We had every nationality enrolled in the first few years but the local Nepali enrollment took on only much later. Now we serve a majority of our diverse Nepali community in the school.

The second most important lesson learnt was that adults fall prey to addictions when time lies heavy on their hands in daily life. All daily life practical skills were managed by household staff while a sophisticated style of life bars the family member from doing any household chores or from taking responsibility for their own life' direction, choices and decisions. Individualism is scorned rather than encouraged; and often roles family members' plays are dictated by the position of the individual in the family or by the expectations of 'unresolved' dreams of an elder.

Exercising control over an educated and self driven woman in the family was unsuccessful from the beginning and definitely created envy; while the faith in the power stood me strong in the face of any challenge. Determination to reach the potential innate in me helped me establish a school that became a success story. And it often created a rough social terrain in my life with some isolation. The staff of the school once trained in similar values of life also felt they were in an oasis in the desert of rituals and status led life.

How is Montessori Method better than other methods of education?

Montessori encourages individualism and freedom of choice within a structured prepared environment where individual pace and space and endeavors pave the path of self - construction of the child. The child progresses from one activity to a higher plane through his own effort and concentration and coordination in a non-competitive and multi-age setting.

The child feels psychologically and physically safe to explore and discover concepts and forms solid foundations to build further development. There is a conscious self-driven

with a purpose

do not comply to the “don’t do as I do – but do as I say” dictates.

attempt to take responsibility and a self-evaluation in all progress. Social cohesion reflects fairness to the group rather than to profitability of one member.

How would other schools in Nepal benefit by adapting Montessori Method?

Education happens within the mind and the soul of a person. No teaching or learning ever happens without a conscious participation. All schools need to recognise that rote learned concepts are not internalised and are limited in their application in life's complex experiences. They limit the progress of a child and the future of mankind to physical survival.

If schools in Kathmandu were to become magnet schools that will imbibe the Montessori philosophy and allow the child his right to learning through meaningful experiences with quality resources (right of the child) and adults who care about them and not for them (not as servants to the child's body), allow and respect individual pace and self-evaluation rather than external tests we will create a whole new progressive culture of progress, peace and respect for each other.

Much more meaningful learning will take place as compared to fear filled memorisation of facts. Teachers and administrators will find more meaning and passion for the teaching profession. Parents could then find their own role of nurturer less challenging and more enjoyable and purposeful and a spiritual gift to be enjoyed. More happiness and peace will ensue rather than a burdensome responsibility. The birth of a child will then be rejoiced for its meaningful contribution for the evolution of mankind rather than an event to 'party' or a burden to bear.

How important is primary education for a child's development?

The first six years of a child's life form the foundation and the solid personality he/she is intended to be. A carefully structured environment, trained adults and a range of original Montessori materials and or resource materials with a 'Montessori' spiritual philosophy to create a nurturing environment for the child is imperative for the foundation and growth of the child who we must remember is the father to the man. Nature and its resources are the fundamental needs for a child's growth.

In your observation, in which areas do most parents lag behind when it comes to contributing to their child's education?

Most parents are not aware although their intentions are meaningful. They do not seem to have enough opportunities to socially address their interests and concerns about the development of their children. Social stigmas prevent open and frank interactions about life styles. Although religious there is a lack of introspection around the meaning and understanding of the values and terms and practical ways to be followed by the parents.

A parent walks in with a servant carrying their own little one to school and expects the little prince to be independent and confident. The little 'servant' carries for the child, puts shoes on for the child and follows all the bossy instructions

that the 'prince' dictates (considered cute). The child has low language skills, poor movement skills and retarded social cohesion with the group.

The child does not want to come, does not want to eat vegetables, and does not want to sleep on time. It is almost as if the parent has never heard the difference between wants and needs. Many such parents need to realise their own wants vs. their needs before they actually can parent. Children reflect their parents. They do not comply to the “don’t do as I do – but do as I say” dictates.

Parents actually feel proud to have their child drive the car by sitting on their laps when they drive while all international law dictates that the only safe place for a child is at the back in a car seat with the seat belt on.

You place a lot of emphasis on training of teachers at regular intervals. What difference has it made to your school?

There is no school that can conform to an ideal state of teaching and learning without consistent and progressive training of teachers. Teachers need to interact, learn and orient themselves to effective teaching methods and to internalise that which has been effective. They need to grow with this learning by practicing with resources and people that is to be implemented in school.

They have to grow with the support of the school community and all this requires time and resources. Orientation is a regular process in all educational institutions abroad and we need to understand and respect this need for our educational infrastructure. Training in physical, psychological and spiritual curricula is the nutrition of the teachers who then extend their healthy strong selves in the service of the child.

We see many Montessori schools around in the city today. It must be quite confusing for parents to decide which one is the best. Your advice to parents on what to look for while choosing a school?

There are three main points to consider in the selection of a Montessori School – It must have three years vertical age enrollments in each level which means the 0-3 year olds are grouped together as are the 3-6 year olds (nursery, lower KG and upper KG) and the 6-9 year olds (class one, two, three); the 9-12 year olds (class 4,5,6) and the 12 to 15 year olds (class 7,8,9) - and in this group they need to have academics with life-skills such as the combination of learning all subjects with learning how to launder, basic cooking, socialisation, spiritual discussions etc., and then the 15 to 18 year olds or the grades of 10,11, and twelve.

This prevents competitiveness and eliminates external testing as opposed to internal self evaluation. Individual progress with self construction and self evaluation becomes the norm. Besides social cohesion develops and older teaching younger and being role models while the younger experience the levels ahead and build a self-motivation for more challenges.

Most importantly, the teachers must be Montessori trained with a full certification and

show validation for the same not just having attended any courses. There must be a full set of Montessori equipment from a licensed manufacturing unit only (it is scientific) not any equipment sometimes locally made at cheaper costs.

How satisfying is educating as a career?

People develop 90 % when they teach someone else; because they communicate in word and implement in action, 80 % when they implement what they know, 70% when they communicate.

If the search is for happiness for mankind then what better a way than to search and share with a developing community of children.

Children are natural learners and have internal drives to reach a potential dictated by an inner direction. And as a teacher if you can recognise that the child will show the way to self-development and as an adult you can follow his path and provide the prepared environment to nurture that spirit there is a journey of self discovery for the teacher beyond their own. It is like an actor that has the opportunity to witness diverse roles.

How can the issue of increasing commercialisation of education today be dealt with?

This country needs genuine thinkers and introspective educationists who will fulfill the emerging roles of the role models of this country – educationists being one of them. Training, support for teachers, resources, and schools spiritually dedicated to the development of the child may be the only way to light up this very aesthetically and spiritually rich country.

The leaders need to follow the path in a cohesive setting (non-religious) and then follow the training that teachers have a right to know for effective teaching and provide the entire infrastructure the educationists need. They need to start thinking of the benefit of the whole rather than of a segment.

The education sector is growing at an alarmingly random manner. It needs to have a direction. Rabindra Nath Tagore's saying, “The river would never reach the sea without its boundaries” applies here. The leaders need to introspect and frame a structure for this extraordinary country to follow.

Final word?

The Montessori Method is a spiritual message. Give it your support, let your child grow in it. It is the divine light that respects the individual and provides the way for self construction and helps realise that we are rich when we realise how little we need for ourselves. We can take responsibility for our lives, our thoughts and actions, and shine with the light that we are born in the image of a divine power inside us.

A true Montessori school provides the environment for such intrinsic spiritual, intellectual and physical growth. Maybe the leaders of the country could join a few sessions at a Montessori Method to realise their impressive inner potentials.

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On Dec. 7 New Line Cinema will release "The Golden Compass," starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, the first movie in a trilogy with the massive budget and family blockbuster potential of "The Lord of the Rings."

Yet, even before it opens, "The Golden Compass" finds itself at the center of a controversy. The Catholic League, a conservative religious organization, launched a campaign

series, "The Amber Spyglass," climaxes in an epic battle to destroy God. Some of the book's villains are referred to as the Magisterium - a term used to refer to the Catholic hierarchy. The British author, Philip Pullman, has said openly that he is an atheist, and Donohue charges that his books are designed to eradicate faith among children.

But this is a sad misreading of the trilogy.



God in the dust

on Oct. 9 calling on all Catholics to boycott the film. The group also published a lengthy pamphlet attacking the story and distributed the pamphlet to Catholic schools across the country. Other groups have joined the fray, including the evangelical nonprofit Focus on the Family, whose magazine Plugged In urged parents to keep kids out of theaters showing the film. And the Christian blogosphere is alive with warnings not only about the movie trilogy, but also about the series of books it is based on.

Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, charges that the books, known as the "His Dark Materials" trilogy, are deeply anti-Christian. Donohue says he fears that the film will inspire parents to purchase "His Dark Materials" for their fantasy-hungry kids on Christmas, unaware that the third book of the

These books are deeply theological, and deeply Christian in their theology. The universe of "His Dark Materials" is permeated by a God in love with creation, who watches out for the meekest of all beings - the poor, the marginalized, and the lost. It is a God who yearns to be loved through our respect for the body, the earth, and through our lives in the here and now. This is a rejection of the more classical notion of a detached, transcendent God, but I am a Catholic theologian, and reading this fantasy trilogy enhanced my sense of the divine, of virtue, of the soul, of my faith in God.

The book's concept of God, in fact, is what makes Pullman's work so threatening. His trilogy is not filled with attacks on Christianity, but with attacks on authorities who claim access to one true interpretation of a religion. ■

"I will not cut my hair or beard on the day I have to play."

Sporty quirks

■ Binita Adhikari

A large number of Nepali players believe in what others would call superstition and prefer to go by astrological advice when they set out for important matches at home and abroad. Some avoid travelling on a particular day, and others skip shaving and getting haircuts as it may bring bad luck.

Hari Khadka, a national level player of the Nepal football team said, "I will not cut my hair or beard on the day I have to play." He also distributes sweets among his friends to solicit good-luck before going to the ground." Khadka is the only Nepali player who has participated in the international game for ten years without any break and scored 12 goals for Nepal.

Others players visit temples and go through rituals or worship the gods they have faith in. Upendra Mann Singh, another football player said he worships his jersey before going to the field. Singh is a former national captain and considered as one of the best goal keepers. Players like Binod Das, Tashi Ghale and Neri Thapa also go through their

own kinds of rituals. Binod said, "I do not eat non-vegetarian food once I set out for a game. Besides I always wear a locket believing that it brings me good luck."

Golf player, Tashi Ghale said, "I avoid traveling on Saturdays." He said something

or the other has always obstructed him from playing whenever he left home on Saturdays in the past. He recently secured second position in the 9th SAF golf championship.

Neri Thapa, captain of the national ladies' cricket team has a habit of wearing her sports dress and watching sports on television before she descends on the field. Neri is a national badminton player and has played in the 10th South Asian Federation (SAF) held in Sri Lanka.

But there are many others who do not believe in all that. Sangina Baidhya, the only Nepali participant in the Olympic

so far, is one of them. Jhanta Katuwal national recorder of weight lifting said, "If we have ability, confidence and passion in the game, fortune will favour us and we can win any game." ■



देशको तात्कालीन
कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं
के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण
कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK

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हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे
मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा



सगरमाथा

समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव