



Courage & Conviction

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April uprising: Janajati protestors being stopped by police in front of Singhadurbar on Sunday



Bhaswar Ojha

Impropriety

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister G P Koirala may have many virtues, but propriety is not one of them. Back from India after attending 14th SAARC summit, he is now accused of having breached simple norms of a leader and of having committed impropriety. The list of such acts is long, but the gravest of them was asking journalists on foreign soil not to address Gyanendra as "King." "It might make some people including Maoists

happy. But it was an act of treachery and impropriety," a Supreme Court advocate fumed.

The language that Koirala spoke has not been appreciated even in his own party circle, but King Gyanendra's unpopularity and anti-democratic credentials, apparently makes many people reluctant to criticise Koirala.

But no one supports the PM either. He is ridiculed even in the bureaucratic circles where his criticism until a few days ago was almost taboo. A source in Shital Niwas said, "His

actions give enough space for suspicion. He asked his own foreign secretary; his advisors and others to get out of the room when a senior dignitary from India visited Kathmandu after Koirala became the Prime Minister."

Koirala's Delhi visits in the past have also brought him into controversy, beginning with him signing the Tanakpur agreement, and later misleading parliament by saying he only signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding.'

Apart from what he said about the King, and his conscious efforts at keeping his own Foreign Minister, Sahana Pradhan, away from all important business, especially during the meeting with Indian dignitaries is also being taken as lack of minimum courtesy. In all his meetings with Indian leaders, Prime Minister chose the company of his daughter Sujata. Sahana was to be seen nowhere. After returning, she is believed

to have lodged a strong protest with Koirala as well as CPN-UML provoking UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal to suspect 'Congress—Maoist' secret deal against his party.

Some of the think-tanks in India including South Asia security expert, Prof S D Muni who is close to Nepali Congress and Maoists believe that UML does not want the monarchy scrapped. "And Koirala probably wanted to give his anti-monarchy image from India, under the influence of those quarters," a UML leader said. He added, "We will be publicly speaking about the humiliating treatment meted out to our leader Sahana Pradhan by Koirala once we discuss the issue in the party."

Koirala was not happy with the nomination of Sahana Pradhan as Foreign Minister by the UML, but had to give in as the ministry fell in the UML quota. ■

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Ambassadorial Tug O' War

Shital Niwas sources claim that PM is now in favour of invoking parliamentary hearing only for filling-up the constitutional posts.

■ nf correspondent

The tussle between Prime Minister G P Koirala and Speaker Subhash Nembwang over the appointment of Ambassadors to more than a dozen countries appears headed for a major show-down.

The Prime Minister seems to be keen on by-passing the provision of the interim constitution which makes it mandatory for the Special Committee of the House headed by the Speaker to confirm (or reject) the Government nominees for the Ambassadorial appointment.

"Violation of the constitutional provision may not send the right signal," Speaker Nembwang is believed to have told the PM recently. That amounted to the Speaker not endorsing PM's suggestion to bypass the hearing and confirmation by the House Committee. "The emerging tussle is likely take the form of a confrontation between the executive and the legislature if Koirala insists upon skipping parliamentary hearing," a Joint Secretary in Foreign Ministry told newsfront.

Koirala seems to have already changed the earlier list of Ambassadorial nominees with Murari Sharma replacing that of Bhagirath Basnyat for the United Kingdom. Similarly, the Government is also contemplating sending Surya Kiran Gurung who holds the status of special class officer in his capacity as the Secretary General in parliamentary secretariat as Ambassador to Moscow, where normally a Joint Secretary rank officer is posted.

Shital Niwas sources claim that PM is now in favour of invoking parliamentary hearing only for filling-up the constitutional posts, and since ambassadors do not fall in that category the House hearing can be done away with. The Speaker,



Prime Minister Koirala and Speaker Nembwang

despite his reservations, did not challenge the Government when Koirala appointed Arjun Prasad Singh as Chairman of the Commission for delimitation of parliament constituencies in Terai with the rank of a Supreme Court Judge. "As the issue was urgent and the commission's tenure was only two weeks, the Speaker did not object. But now Koirala seems to use that as precedence for other appointments," parliament secretariat source said.

In fact, the provision of the mandatory hearing and confirmation by the House Committee came in the way of appointing Chief of the National Human Rights Commission. Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Bishwa Nath Upadhyay, is believed to have agreed to head the commission on request of the PM, but he refused to appear before the House committee, according to the sources in the PM's office. "I am not

going to appear before the House committee and tell members that I am qualified for the post of NHRC Chief, and therefore please confirm me," Upadhyay is said to have told Koirala.

The ongoing row between Koirala and the Speaker, however, is likely to delay all pending appointments especially in the diplomatic services as well as the constitutional bodies.

A Shital Niwas source divulged that the confusion regarding as to whom the envoys coming to Nepal should submit their credentials has been sorted out, only after a couple of ambassador designates had to go back disappointed. Canada's ambassador designate was one such victim of confusion. "Now it will be submitted to the PM in his capacity as the Head of the State. And the first to do that will be new Chinese Ambassador who is due to arrive here on April 11.

Beauty and Mahara

■ nf correspondent

Being in the Government calls for many compromises, it seems. No one would have realised it more than the new Information and Communication Minister, K B Mahara. From day one, he was clear about one thing and that was, beauty contest should not take place and the television and radio under him should not give the coverage even if it was held.

But just the opposite happened. Beauty contest sponsored by Dabur took place. The Government police even applied force to chase away those, mostly Maoists, who had gathered around Birendra International Convention Centre at Baneshwar, the venue of the contest. Mahara even had to pacify his party workers who were wounded when the police used force. And he quietly ignored his party colleague, led by Minister Hishila Yami who went public saying beauty contest is nothing more or less than body-show and its commercialisation.

Minister Mahara's dilemma began when he was shown the long term contract between Dabur Vatika, the sponsor and Nepal Television. Any breach of contract, by any side would mean incurring huge penalty. Mahara chose to let Nepal Television telecast the contest live in deference to the



Minister Mahara

contract rather than having Government or his Ministry to pay the penalty as a defaulter.

Familiar Bed-Fellows

■ nf correspondent

They may not be strange bed fellows; but if what Dr. Shekhar Koirala, Prime Minister G P Koirala's powerful nephew said, can be trusted, the Nepali Congress and Congress (D) will be united in a month's time.

That would mean G P Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba coming together, with the latter either as the Working President or as the first Vice President. The possible hierarchy in the united Congress will also ensure that Sushil Koirala will be third in the line of succession to the elder Koirala.

"Yes, Prime Minister is very serious about it and wants to expedite the process," Dr Shekhar Koirala told newsfront. There is, however, neither any formal committee nor proposal moved by the two political parties for the unification. The Nepali Congress had split in May 2002 at the height of Koirala-Deuba tussle.

But there are basic differences in the approach of the two parties. The Nepali Congress (D) wants certain issues like "JAMADAMA" (Janajati, Madheshi, Dalit and Mahila) empowerment under a common formula; and Nepali Congress is keener to formalise the merger and settle the issues



Shekhar

later. "We were one party before and the split was triggered more by personality differences than differences on issues," said a Congress Working Committee Member.

"We have discussed the issue few times but we have not reached any conclusion so far. Let's see how things move," Deuba told newsfront. While there seems to be an understanding in principle that the two parties should unite ahead of the election to the constituent assembly, the division among the rank and file and existence of the committees of the two parties at the district and committee levels have made things difficult. Pending serious merger initiatives, the two parties will separately approach the Election Commission for their registration with different symbols and party programmes.

Royalty watch

■ nf correspondent

Will King Gyanendra come out with the customary address to the nation on Nepali New Year day on April 14? Breaking or continuing with the tradition will be viewed as politically significant.

There are intense speculations about different possible scenarios - the King might declare, almost in continuity with the core message he delivered on Democracy Day on Feb 19, that he owns moral responsibility for everything good or bad that happened during his direct rule, but that was a sequel to the failure on the



part of the political parties.

No one thinks that he would declare abdication, but what many still desire to hear is that he could at least admit to the nation now, that the takeover was wrong and that he was waiting for the people's verdict on the fate of the monarchy.

In the event of any speech that the political parties might find offending, a resolution to remove him might be moved in the parliament. Maoists have already given enough hints that they would not tolerate any politicking by the king. There are speculations that the palace is weighing the cost and benefit of 'total silence' as well.



NFIN on street

NFIN Miffed

The NFIN which has 59 affiliate organisations across the country miffed with civil society.

■ nf correspondent

The National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN) will dissolve its negotiating team which means its withdrawal from the dialogue with the Government.

"This Government is not sincere about the dialogue, and there is no point retaining the negotiation team we formed," NFIN President Pasang Sherpa told newsfront. "And if the Government holds elections in June without ensuring our representation in the Constituent Assembly, we will boycott that election. That would just be one more election like the one which took place during the Royal regime."

The NFIN which has 59 affiliate organisations across the country was also miffed with the civil society for cold-shouldering the demands of the federation. "Instead of supporting us, top leaders of the civil society came to us on behalf of the Government. And they are all sold out...We will expose such elements," Pasang said. He however, refused to divulge the names of the leaders who had

approached him on behalf of the Home Minister to stop the movement.

NFIN which at one point of time was considering going for a joint movement with the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) for more political rights and representation in the constituent assembly under a federal set-up is however, not keen to do so. "It is not possible now as the Gaur massacre showed they do not believe in peaceful movement."

Pasang however, said the NFIN will continue to lobby with the political parties to include in their agenda the representation of Adivasis, Jananatis, Dalits and other marginalised groups in the power structure.

NFIN is opposed to convert the body which has been registered as a NGO into a political outfit. "We will continue to work for socio-economic and political awareness besides right based issues. But the money we get from donors for this will not be used for political activities like Bandhs and other activities," Pasang said. "That has to take place entirely on the strength and support of our people, and not on donors' money." ■

News Brief

Still not enough

Occupying nearly one fourth of the parliament and cabinet berths will not qualify Maoists to avail training and orientation course conducted by the United States or any of the state funded agencies.

To qualify, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) needs to be taken off the terrorist list by the U S Government. As a result, the Nepal Chapter of the National Democratic Initiative (NDI), a U S Foundation, will not be inviting Maoist parliamentarians for any of the programmes it conducts. NDI has run a series of programmes for training Nepali parliamentarians on parliamentary rules, business, conduct and conventions.



At loggerheads

What has come to be known as Civil Society, especially in the context of the April uprising, seems to have suffered a vertical split. Two of its stalwarts, Dr Devendra Raj Pandey and Krishna Pahadi, have parted company.



Not together any more

Pandey and his followers within the society have long been accused of siding with the Maoists and the Home Minister, while the other group insisted that over-identification with one group will be suicidal for the vibrant civil society. For the last two months, Dr Pandey has avoided participating in the meetings conducted by the Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES).

Political grapevines suggest that two leaders clearly had divergent views on the question of joining the Interim Government. "As a civil society, we will continue to go to the people, we are for peace and human rights and we are opposed to anarchy," Pahadi told newsfront, adding "if one does not participate in the routine civil society activities, it is escaping responsibility."

All pervasive conspiracy

Maoist Chief Prachanda's list of conspirators is ever expanding. The latest addition to his list seems to be Ian Martin, Special Representative of the U N Secretary General.

Hours after his meeting with Martin on Saturday, Prachanda announced publicly that the U S and Western countries, and now U N want to postpone the June elections saying an early election would lack credibility. "This is a conspiracy, and all should unite to defeat it", he said.



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NATURALLY NEPAL
ONCE IS NOT ENOUGH

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Point to Ponder

Nothing is more destructive of respect for the government and the law of the land than passing laws which cannot be enforced.

Albert Einstein

Capital crime

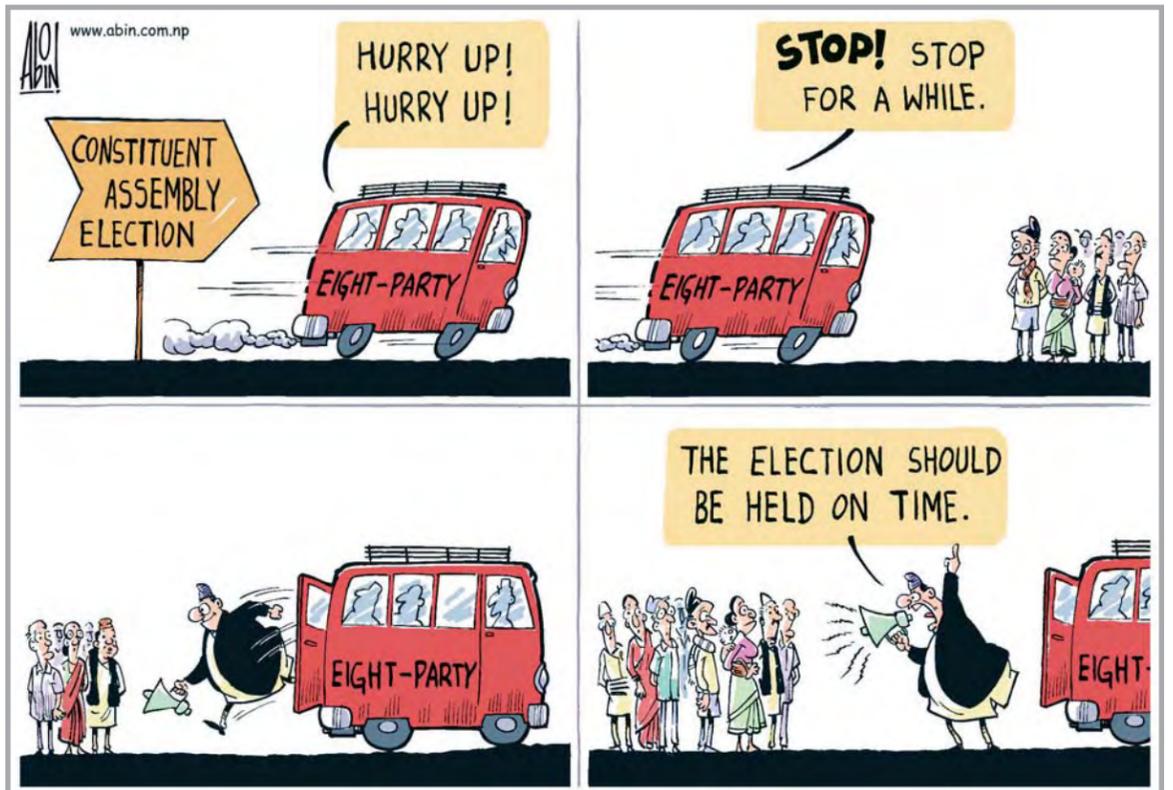
An efficient law and order system is the basic necessity of any society to grow. In a country where people feel insecure, where crime becomes the rule of the day rather than an exception, its growth potential will be badly hindered.

Any Government or machinery of State, like the police ends up becoming abhorred when they cannot fulfill the core responsibility entrusted to them. Nepal Police that bore its share of lives lost in the years of conflict, was simply not trained well enough to combat what many constituents of the present Government called, 'the terrorists'; appears still ineffective when faced with the current security crisis being faced by the people.

In a modern democratic State, the police, that is run by the tax payers money is expected to play an effective role by preventing crimes, investigating the ones that take place, ferreting out criminals and persecuting them under the rule of law. In Kathmandu, in the past 11 months, the crime rate has shot up and the police have failed miserably to apprehend the criminals and to check the crime rate. The police force appears to have turned into a pocket-borough of the Home Minister where the decision makers appear busy politicking than paying attention to their duties.

Less than a decade ago, Nepal Police had declared that Nepal would be the safest capital in South Asia but today burglary, murder, crimes on women and children are rampant. The recent case of burglary in a diplomat's house in broad daylight exemplifies how weak the hands of the keepers of law and order have become. About the same time, there was an announcement of the capture of a few allegedly local agents of an international crime syndicate. It is but obvious that they should be taken to court with enough evidence and prosecuted.

The alarming growth of crimes seems to indicate not only political interference but also points to a political, police and criminal nexus. Politically speaking, this may have a direct bearing on the elections to the constituent assembly. Accountability to this situation has to be borne by those holding the responsible positions. The Prime Minister owes an explanation to the people on this and needs to take firm decisions on how to check the deterioration, before the whole system fails completely.



Letters

Want sports

I have been following newsfront from the very first issue and I find it really promising. I liked the idea of Spiritual Corner. Kudos to Sushma Amatya for her thoughtful article on MPs. It has really helped us to scrutinise the present MPs. The variety of the article has been increasing and it is always good news for the readers like us. It would be better if few contributors can be from different regions (nationally and internationally). I was happy to find 2 April- 8 April issue with more literature compared to previous ones. Can't we have something on sports?

Rajesh Adhikari

Coordinator, Chelsea International Academy

Space for environment

I found newsfront very analytical and the most contemporary among the few English newspapers in the market. I am impressed by its coverage of current affairs. But there is less coverage on environment. I'd like to request newsfront to provide more space to environmental issues regarding global warming, decline of rhinos and effective methods for conservation of wildlife.

Angfuri Sherpa

Critical ecosystem partnership fund, WWF Nepal

Globalised beauty contests

The annual beauty pageant held at the Birendra International Convention Centre Saturday evening, went off peacefully despite much heated debate that surrounded it.

After waging a battle to abolish the throne, Nepal's Maoists are now fighting to scrap the crown as well, the crown that is earned after a tough competition. Nepal's best-known and oldest beauty pageant, the Miss Nepal contest, is now under blockade from the Maoists' women's organisation that is seeking to have the program axed on grounds that it treats

women as sex objects.

At present, Maoists are in the mainstream and participated in the interim government by accepting the phenomenon of globalisation. Beauty pageants, very much a part of globalisation should not thus be made an object of their censure. I see no harm in something that develops young talents. But the whole competition definitely needs to be made more systematic and transparent.

Sharmila Pant, Kathmandu

Brawn contest demand

Beauty and brains or beauty minus brains might work equally well for males to ogle at and applaud. But in this democratic country, where equal representation is being sought after in all spheres of life, there exists stark disparity in such contests. Only women are put on stage. When do we get to see Mr. Handsomes on stage flexing muscles and brains if they have any?

Zarina Shakya, Kathmandu

Stop fat kids adverts

Thanks for your wide coverage with different issues and subjects. I like your analytical write ups and news. Keep up the spirit. One of the news even though it was downloaded from the Internet caught my attention - TV ads make kids fat.

In my opinion, the news is the eye opener for Nepalese parents. Obesity is considered one of the serious problems in the world today and it is getting to be a problem in Nepali society too.

Bipin Adhikari, Kathmandu

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh, Afghanistan. He was a brilliant theologian, one of Persia's greatest poets and a Sufi master. A vast body of his works was transcribed and survives today. Extracts from his poems:

Bad dreams

One day you will look back and laugh at yourself.

You'll say, "I can't believe I was so asleep!
 How did I ever forget the truth?
 How ridiculous to believe that sadness and sickness Are anything other than bad dreams."

Find shortcoming

If ten men want to enter a house, and only

nine find their way in, the tenth must not say: 'This is what God ordained'. He must find out what his own shortcoming was.

Beloved lives

Deafened by the voice of desire you are unaware the Beloved lives in the core of your heart. Stop the noise and you will hear His voice in the silence.

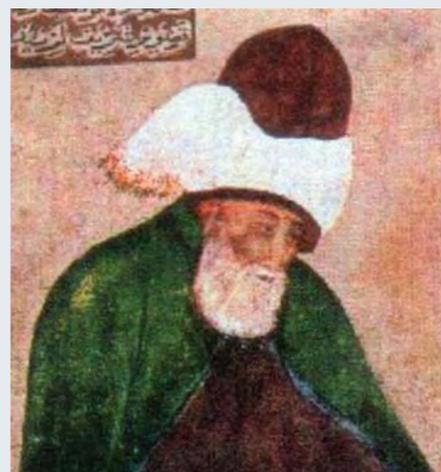
The Intellectual Quest

The intellectual quest is exquisite like pearls and coral, But it is not the same as the spiritual quest.

The spiritual quest is on another level altogether, Spiritual wine has a subtler taste.

The intellect and the senses investigate cause and effect.

The spiritual seeker surrenders to the wonder.



Visit the Sick

Visit the sick, and you will heal yourself.

The ill person may be a Sufi master, And your kindness will be repaid in wisdom.

Even if the sick person is your enemy, You will still benefit, For kindness has the power to transform Sworn enemies into firm friends. And if there is healing of bad feeling, There certainly will be less ill will, Because kindness is the greatest of all balms.

Love is the cure

Love is the cure, for your pain will keep giving birth to more pain until your eyes constantly exhale love as effortlessly as your body yields its scent.

SAARC-China dynamics

Nepal finds itself in an enviable position to not only advance overall China-South Asia relations but to serve as a key player in helping to further 'globalise' the South Asian landscape.



■ Bhaskar Koirala

China-South Asia relations have lagged considerably in comparison to China's embrace of essentially all of distant Africa in one sweep and similarly with seven Pacific Island countries in 2006, not to mention China's now robust engagement with ASEAN.



The People's Republic of China has successfully established institutional linkages with virtually all regional organisations around the world encompassing ASEAN, the European Union, MERCOSUR, the Africa Union, APEC, the Arab League and Pacific Island nations. The truly global span of China's attention to regional structures is further manifested in the environs of Nepal itself, with China having obtained observer status at the 14th SAARC Summit meeting in New Delhi. The importance of the South Asian region to Chinese foreign policy, in addition to its economic and trading interests, cannot be underestimated.

South Asia is not only the world's fastest growing region (with more than 7.5% GDP growth over the decade), but is also home to one third of humanity and a burgeoning middle class, and five nations of the region share a common border with China (Bangladesh would appear to be sort of the sixth with its access to China via India and Myanmar). Migration has occurred across these borders for hundreds of years which seem to further substantiate the need for a larger China-South Asia ambit in contemporary times.

Unfortunately, China-South Asia relations have lagged considerably in comparison to China's embrace of essentially all of distant Africa in one sweep (in the China-Africa Summit) and similarly with seven Pacific Island countries in 2006 (at the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum), not to mention China's now robust engagement with ASEAN. As China's cooperation with South Asia accelerates in what appears inevitable, it may be an opportune time to reflect on what role Nepal may play in this process and how it may simultaneously advance its own bilateral relations with Beijing.

The geographic position of Nepal lends her a great capability to serve as a sort of

'window' or 'conduit' for both the larger South Asian region and China to conduct substantive exchange and interaction for mutually beneficial purposes. Nepal shares an approximately 1,440 kilometer border with China and nearly 1,700 kilometers with India. Nepal can be traversed north-south as the crow flies in merely a 150 kilometers, a spectacular range that touches on the 'Hindi heartland' on the south to a colossal Chinese state which includes a distinct Central Asian character represented by the Tibet Autonomous Region on the north, with a diverse medley in between.

Moreover, Nepal is separated from Bangladesh by only 15 kilometers of Indian (West Bengal) territory, and similarly from Bhutan by only 88 kilometers of Sikkim, which renders Nepal second only to India perhaps in its ability to straddle a significant portion of South Asia at one end and Central and East Asia in the form of China at the other end. Nepal therefore finds itself in an enviable position to not only advance overall China-South Asia relations but to serve as a key player in helping to further 'globalise' the South Asian landscape.

The about-turn taken by Nepal in recent months towards a peaceful and inclusive future by way of a largely internally-driven peace process, plus Nepal's generally undisturbed religious and communal harmony combined with the country's universally excellent relations with all its South Asian compatriots and with China, is reason enough for Nepal to assume active leadership in promotion of a dialogue that is bound to acquire increasing relevance over time.

The success of China's engagement strategy with African and Pacific Island regions illustrates the 'win-win' and non-zero sum equations that have emerged, in addition to furthering mutual understanding and arguably producing intricate linkages that are

vitaly important to staving off conflict between states and allowing for a 'give and take' mechanism to address tensions when they do surface.

The recently held China-Africa Summit in Beijing was a reminder of this: China had unveiled US\$5 billion in preferential loans and credits, doubled aid to Africa by 2009, revealed ambitious targets of raising Sino-Africa trade to US\$100 billion by 2010, signed commercial contracts and agreements worth US\$1.9 billion with the continent covering natural resources, infrastructure, finance, technology and communications.

An important passage of the declaration at the conclusion of the Summit indicated that "We propose to enhance South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue to promote balanced, coordinated and sustainable development of the global economy." The Summit also allowed China and Africa to express their stance on important international and regional issues, and to support each other and closely coordinate in international affairs to safeguard the interest of developing countries.

It may be argued that larger than the sum total of the various critiques leveled against the Summit is the underlying spirit that China and African nations seemed to embrace as a sort of affirmation of Article 52 of the United Nations Charter which states that "Nothing in the Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate...provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations." ■

(to be continued)

Koirala is a member of the China Study Center Nepal.

Troubling water

Is the minister opposed to the principle of privatisation or is she trying to earn a pro-employee image with an eye on the coming election..?



■ Binod P. Bista

Acute water shortage in the city of Kathmandu for the past several years has been primarily blamed for corruption and indifference in the state run utility agency. A decision by the Government two months ago to hire a private contractor for dealing with the problem met with hostility from the employees. The charge was obvious—there was corruption involved in the deal. Angry employees of the agency who, besides mounting the protests, cut off water supply to important places including the ministers' residence.

In their view, hiring a private agency would increase the cost of water to general public. Within days of formation of the interim Government, the minister in charge of water supply, who represents CPN-Maoists announced that she would not give in to privatisation of Nepal's water supply management. Let us not forget that the previous Government had all the present constituents except the Maoists when the decision to hire the private contractor was taken.

This is not a simple matter and needs a detailed analysis. Was the minister trying to

project the independence of her party by taking a different stand than the other seven political parties? Was she simply trying to earn the support of the protesting employees by acceding to their demands? Does she have a better knowledge about the water supply agency than others? Can she ensure that the agency under the Government would produce a better outcome than a private contractor? Is she opposed to the principle of privatisation or is she trying to earn a pro-employee image with an eye on the coming election to the Constituent Assembly?

Considering the present state of affairs, and the fact that the Government is formed under common Minimum Programme, it is imperative for every Nepali official, especially the minister, to make clear and unambiguous statements. It is the inherent duty of all coalition partners to inform the people, in the best possible manner, of their plan of action for carrying out the constituent assembly elections. After all, Nepalis as well as the international community would like to reassure themselves that the conduct of constituent assembly elections would be free and fair.

Although the preferred state in this regard would be to conduct elections without the presence of any regional or international election monitoring groups, similar to what South Africa achieved from just three general elections since the dismantling of apartheid, the present state of mistrust between political parties and weak bureaucracy in Nepal does not



Minister Hisila Yami

instill enough confidence yet. Nevertheless, it is of utmost priority and importance that the upcoming elections be conducted in a free and fair atmosphere for the permanent resolution of major issues facing the nation today. It's therefore expected that Ministers refrain from playing politics on vital issues like supply of drinking water.

Let us give benefit of doubt to the minister. May be in all probability, she made that announcement with a view of resolving the problem of water supply, without which it could have only added to the existing issues hindering the successful conduct of CA elections. But, regardless of the ideological and operational differences between the coalition partners, the present government must try to act as a unified unit guided by the basic common programs agreed between them. The minister's individual approach like in the water deal case, only go against that spirit.

Although timely preparations are required to

get along with development agendas in the political, economic as well as social fields, it might be too hasty to come up with development plans at this stage except taking up of the urgent issue of rehabilitation of the internally displaced people and construction of basic infrastructure damaged in the conflict. Even there, lack of firm commitment on the part of the CPN-Maoists to follow the norms of civil political party. For that Maoists need to denounce violence and stop all illegal activities.

General state of peace and security all over the country is a prerequisite for the conduct of any election. The credibility of the government alone, a unified stance of coalition partners on policy approach is one fundamental requirement that can ensure the success of the CA elections. Encouraging all political parties and voters to take part in the mother of all elections in Nepal will be another important task. ■

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

Promising the moon

Private Sector has brought drastic changes in the standard and quality of education

■ Chhatra Karki

"A world class education with international curriculum," Ullens School, in Kathmandu, promises in its brochure. "We are trying to assimilate our values and western technology in teaching methodology," Sudhir Kumar Jha, Principal of Chelsea international school advocates. "Our school is technically supported by Dr. Thomas Wittwar, University of Jena, Germany," said Birendra Karki, the founder of St. Paul School.

In the past one-year, at least half a dozen schools promising global quality have come up in the country. Some have even started attracting students from some other countries. This might even reverse the trend of a large number of Nepalis students going abroad for schooling each year if the promises of international standard education are delivered here.

Each year, on an average, six thousand students go to Darjeeling, Dehradun, Nainital, or even down to South Chennai and other parts of India in search of quality education. Many others go abroad, mainly the United States, Australia and Netherlands. The amount of money spent on

exploring education trips is enormous; some estimate it to be around two billion Rupees a year. There is, however, no exact data available for this. Nepal's conflict had its own impact on education and the continued exodus. But with peace back and hopefully here to stay, initiatives are on to check that trend.

BN Sharma, Vice president of PABSON said, "We are working out to establish SAARC model school, here in Kathmandu." Around 10 thousands students go to India every year and at least 80 Crore Rupees goes out from the country. Altogether, 125 students left for India this year alone from a single school, LRI School in Kathmandu. The school principal and founder, Shivaraj Panta said, "We can check this if we establish global quality institution here."

Private Sector has brought drastic changes in the standard and quality of education, although they continue to face the accusation that their main motive is 'profit.' But there are hardly any effective initiatives to get these private schools to contribute towards creating a good environment across the country. "As time and situation demands, private schools are spending a lot on creating better physical infrastructure and academic activities," said Thakin Kumar Gurung, Principal of Greenland School, Kathmandu.

Education tourism is another concept that is no more alien to Nepali education entrepreneurs. Not only America, Canada, Australia, UK, New Zealand, but even China has invited foreign investor in the education sector. That is something, which has created hope that Maoists joining Government in Nepal will not discourage the private sector already in the education sector.

There has been a vast change in teaching methods with many adopting the Montessori pattern. More practical and project works, yoga, meditation and brain storming activities are part of it so that learning becomes fun.

With suitable climate, quality and competitive rates promised, attracting foreign students may not be that difficult. "But for that we need hassle free policy from the Government," said Principal Karki of St. Paul school. Chelsea Principal Jha goes a step further, "in collaboration with renowned international educational institutes, world class academic programmes can start this moment, but the Government has to create an environment for foreign investment."

And an effective law and order environment, a policy of no-interference in schools by the Government and political parties is the key to delivering the promise in the education sector. ■



Channelising riches

"Education is the key to freedom and empowerment"



At 72, Ullens now visits Nepal two to three times in a year. Having keen interest in education sector and children's home, he is now exploring how quality education can be made more accessible to both who can and cannot pay for it.

■ Yubaraj Ghimire

"Are you crazy?" was Guy Ullens' simple poser when Mimi, his wife told him about her mission then. Mimi wanted to get into non-profit activities in Nepal where she found people simple, happy and deserving. Ullens who had a stake in a large family company with its outfits in different parts of Europe and China, realised soon after that Mimi was very much in her senses and that philanthropy was a much more fulfilling and satisfying vocation. Beginning 1992, the journey continues.

At 72, Ullens now visits Nepal two to three times in a year. Having keen interest in education sector and children's home, he is now exploring how quality education can be made more accessible to both who can and cannot pay for it. He is publicity shy, refuses to talk about family matters, and gives most of the credit to what has been achieved to Mimi and the Nepali team involved in those activities. He likes to be called just 'Guy', not Mr. Ullens or Baron Ullens as he would be called in the part of the world he belongs to.

Mimi first heard about Nepal and the plight of economically weaker children through Agnes Jacquemin, a Belgian who has been living here for decades now. She had a different

development of this country with so much potential", said Guy. In Suresh Raj Sharma, Founder Vice Chancellor of Kathmandu University, he found an ideal partner. Guy now funds University's Engineering Department and is very happy with the progress it has made. "Education is the key to freedom and empowerment", he said.

It was again through Olga that he met in 1997 two young Nepalis, Som Paneru and Medini Lamichhane, who he calls future leaders in the education sector. He arranged to send and finance some bright young people as future teachers to Bank Street College in New York, so that they would come back and apply that philosophy of education in the school here.

"Medini did so well. Almost every one talked about him as an example in Bank Street," said Ullens. Ullens have now started Ullens School at Sat Dobato with Som Paneru as the Chairman and Medini as the Principal. This, he hopes will one day be a model of excellence in learning. Ullens now plans to set up a center for training teachers with the quality of Bank Street; and recycle the teachers in public and private schools so that no area in Nepal is deprived of quality teachers.

"Of course, the Government schools should not be paying for this kind of training," opined Ullens. The job has been entrusted to the Ullens School team to set up the teacher's training school soon. "Nepal and New York

are so physically away from each other, but there are so many similarities." He added that educational potentiality is one common factor and admitted that though there are uncertainties given political and other factors, the need for education transcends every barrier.

Ullens have moved to Switzerland now, but their interest in Nepal, as well as China where he represented his company for years until early 2000 has not diminished. He stayed on in



Photo by Bhaskar Ojha

Beijing to promote Chinese arts. "Chinese contemporary art is as good as anywhere in the world." He organised exhibition of these arts called Paris-Beijing in different parts of France beginning with Paris in 2002 that gave a huge exposure to Chinese Arts and attracted a lot of interest.

He has now bought a former armament factory in Beijing with a

sprawling compound, which he is planning to convert into a World Class Arts Centre. "I have got excellent cooperation from the Chinese authorities," said Ullens excited about the centre where exhibition of top Chinese and world-class arts would be a regular phenomenon. Apart from other things, he also plans to set up a school for curators there. "It is

really meant for students, architects, museum managers and collectors."

Ullens' interest in Nepal is however only philanthropic. To him being rich provides an opportunity to face challenges and fulfilling needs besides delivering wide range of services to the more deserving people. And Nepal fits in that category. ■

Ullens have moved to Switzerland now, but their interest in Nepal, as well as China where he represented his company for years until early 2000 has not diminished.

way of helping Nepali children. She would spend most of her savings from her micro-projects on children sheltered in an orphanage. Mimi's first visit and stay in Nepal brought her to close proximity with an American lady, Olga who has helped many Nepalis, mostly socio-educationally and economically deprived girls from western Nepal. The joy of helping has brought the three of them together as a team.

"Education is very important for the



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Nraj Sapkota

Overhaul Nepal Police force

The people have lost their faith in the police and see no point in seeking their help

■ Rajen Wasti

Well functioning and competent civil police is the backbone of democracy which guarantees efficient enforcement of law of the land. Building well trained and professionally functioning police is crucial for any nation.

Nepal Police has been the victim of bad politics for over a decade and half. The police force has been exploited a lot by the governing political parties ignoring the basic values of policing. They were forced to fight the Maoists insurgency without proper training and resources. Police managers were coerced to serve the interests of political parties and leaders instead of focusing on strengthening the organisation to provide services to the community.

The eight party Government should rethink and commit to do away with the past malpractices of massive political interference in Nepal Police for the larger interest of the nation.

Police institution was used to influence the elections, to bring down the Government and to collect donations from business communities for election purposes. Political party activists were recruited into the service that tarnished the discipline and chain of command of the organisation. As a result, many police officers ended up having no qualms taking favors from political parties for their career development; and the professional and honest officers suffered as a result. The successive Government never thought about reforming the police force. Because of total mismanagement Nepal Police was not successful

in delivering the community service which resulted in them becoming unpopular in the eyes of the public.

The leaders in the service never paid attention to the organisational development but concentrated on their personal interests only. The seven-party Government that came to power last May politicised Nepal Police beyond any limits, increasing low morale and frustration in the entire police workforce. The internal mismanagement and political interference of the past one and half decade has brought the Nepal Police force on the verge of collapse. Absolute chaos and confusion reigns supreme.

Promotions, transfers, training opportunities are based on the recommendations of the government ministers and politicians. The chain of command, internal discipline and code of conduct of service has become absolutely ineffective. When the current Chief of Police tried to take up these issues with the Home Minister, he was forced to keep shut with a one liner, "You would not have made it to the top if merit and seniority counted."

Internal oversight and investigation system has become almost non-existent. Officers committing crimes are not reprimanded. Once a very efficient internal disciplinary unit, Nepal Police inspectorate professional standard system is now almost unproductive. Just to cite an example, an inspector who tortured to death a detainee in Kathmandu Police station has not been brought to justice because of his

connection with the politicians.

In the past one week seven businessmen from the Kathmandu were kidnapped by criminal gangs and that was not reported to the police. Business men compromised and paid ransom to free their associates, simply because the people have lost their faith in the police and see no point in seeking their help.

Now the eight party Government should rethink and commit to do away with the past malpractices of massive political interference in Nepal Police for the larger interest of the nation. The upper rank managers of this organisation have been rendered absolutely useless as they are handicapped due to interference from top political levels. This organisation needs to be overhauled and restructured.

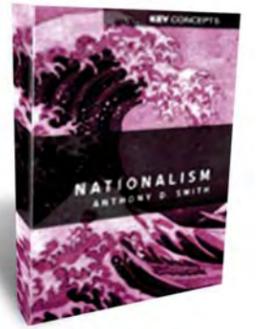
The servile and corrupt upper stratum of this force, those who are sycophants of their political patrons - who continue to resist changes within the organisation should be retired for the good of the country. Such regressive forces are blocking the normal career development of a majority of young officers and hindering the development of emerging leaders of the future. It is high time the young generation is given a chance to salvage the institution that is at the verge of total collapse.

The country should pay proper attention to ensure that her law enforcement agency is competent, impartial and diligent. Only by rebuilding the institution can the Government reassure its people that they are indeed in safe hands. The people need to be convinced that the police will deal with any challenges that may arise. ■

Book Review

Spectrum of nationalism

Anthony D. Smith,
Nationalism: Theory, Ideology and History
(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), Page 182, Rs. 375.



The author has related modern, medieval and ancient histories of the nation with theories and master paradigms and connects micro and macro variables that gave rise or lead to the decline of nations.

■ Tara Dahal

At a time when globalisation and sub-national forces are challenging the key functions of the state Anthony D. Smith brings a very influential book on nationalism. This book has analysed different spectrum of nation-state by introducing central concepts, such as meaning of nationalism, ethnicity and nation, national state and national identity. The book under review primarily focuses on nationalism as ideologies, social movement and symbolic language.

Nation and nationalism unite the native people with the people of the world under the pressure of modern, rational scientific development. The author elaborates nationalism as an ideology in which patriotism is a central social value. It fosters loyalty to one's nation as a conscious emotion, common destiny, common goal and common responsibility for all citizens of the nation while nation is an autonomous territory and delimited political grouping with national character.

The author has critically analysed the ideology, social and political movement, symbolism with its proposition and structures. National ideology incorporates territorial unification, cultural identity and collective self-rule. He brings the distinction between "organic and voluntarist," ethnic/civic approaches and delineates instrumentalist critic which regard nationalism as an argument to articulate, seize and retain sub-elites' interest, a distinct vision, strategies and enhance one's power in the modern state. Anthony analyses the histories of nations of rival paradigms and exposes the theoretical debate about the hybridisation of nations within globalisation process. The core theoretical arguments come from industrialism, reason and emotion, politics and culture and construction and reinterpretation.

He has also focused how rational choice and ideology have constructed the nation and its ideological current—nationalism. The author also brings theoretical and empirical prospects on nationalism and ethnicity relating them with four paradigms and the problem of nationalism in the last three decades of the 20th century.

The author has also related modern, medieval and ancient histories of the nation with theories and master paradigms and connects micro and macro variables that gave rise or lead to the decline of nations. He also establishes the relationship between modernisation and pre-modern nation-state through symbols, memory, myth, vernacular language, culture, value and tradition.

Anthony sees the possibility of the revival of nation and nationalism in postmodern era and envisages that ethnic reemergence has hybridised identity within globalisation epoch. The book compiles several case histories of nations. For him, one crucial challenge of nationalism is to preserve virtue of nation which overrides all other virtues by internalisation of national characteristics of nation and building up national pattern of personality.

The emergence of new states indicates that the world is moving towards more pluralism and there is possibility to enlarge the domain of nationalism making it more egalitarian in the distribution of goods, inclusive of multicultural values and even orient towards the redressing past injustice for the people. To him, so long as nation-state persists its core values—nationalism, political ideology, public culture and political religion will be destined to flourish and constitute the architecture of world order.

The contesting arguments of the book are innovative, broad, comparative and contentious. The book is also interdisciplinary insight. The author has used insight from social sciences like political science, sociology, history, anthropology, etc and combined them with his own ethno-symbolic approach. ■

SAARC needs to walk the talk

Terrorism was on top of the agenda for many of the South Asian leaders

■ Chandani Kirinde

Indian film idol Shah Rukh Khan and cricketing hero Sachin Tendulkar made it to the headline news in India in the two days that leaders from eight South Asian nations were gathered in the capital New Delhi to discuss better co-operation among the nations in this impoverished region.

Hour after hour 24/7 Indian news channels flashed news of Shah Rukh's Khans wax doll being unveiled at Madame Tussauds museum in London and the raging conflict between Sachin Tendulkar and his team mates and their coach Greg Chappell while the dignitaries attending the SAARC summit managed to get a few minutes of airtime in between. The print media too adopted a similarly step motherly treatment towards the summit pushing it out of the front pages in many publications.

One reason that SAARC leaders who represent more than one fifth of the world's population get a lukewarm reception from the media and fail to attract the attention that they should is the grouping's past record of being only a "talk shop". "Will this be just another gabfest, all atmospherics and no substance, as has been the pattern with past meets?", an editorial in The Hindustan Times queried on April 3, the second day of the summit.

The answer to that won't be known immediately but it is evident by listening to the leaders of the SAARC nations that they too are well aware of what ails the association. Its past record of talking the talk but failing to walk the talk is what the present torchbearers of SAARC want to see changed from now on. In their joint declaration issued at the end of the Summit on Wednesday, the Heads of State or Governments emphasised that in its third decade of existence,

there was an urgent need to move SAARC from declaratory to the implementation phase.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa in his opening address to the summit emphasised the matter. "While endorsing and fully subscribing to the values of SAARC, we badly need to be action orientated rather than dependent on rhetoric. Merely saying good things about each other and ignoring the reality will take it nowhere," he said.

Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh too underscored the need to translate words in action stating in his opening address that after several years of effort, the time has come to move SAARC from a declaratory phase to action and implementation while the Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said the time was right for a paradigm change in thinking and attitude among leaders in South Asia if the aspirations of the people of the region were to be met.

Terrorism was on top of the agenda for many of the South Asian leaders and on this all member nations agreed that terrorism was a threat to peace and security in the region and called for the implementation of international conventions relating to combating terrorism as well as the SAARC Convention on the Suppression of terrorism and for urgent conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Another issue the leaders addressed was corruption which was viewed with serious concern and the leaders agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption to effectively address the problem. This was included in the final declaration along with several ambitious pledges meant to overcome the challenges of poverty, disease, natural disasters and terrorism, better economic co-operation and a better life for the



South Asian leaders on the forum of SAARC

people of the region.

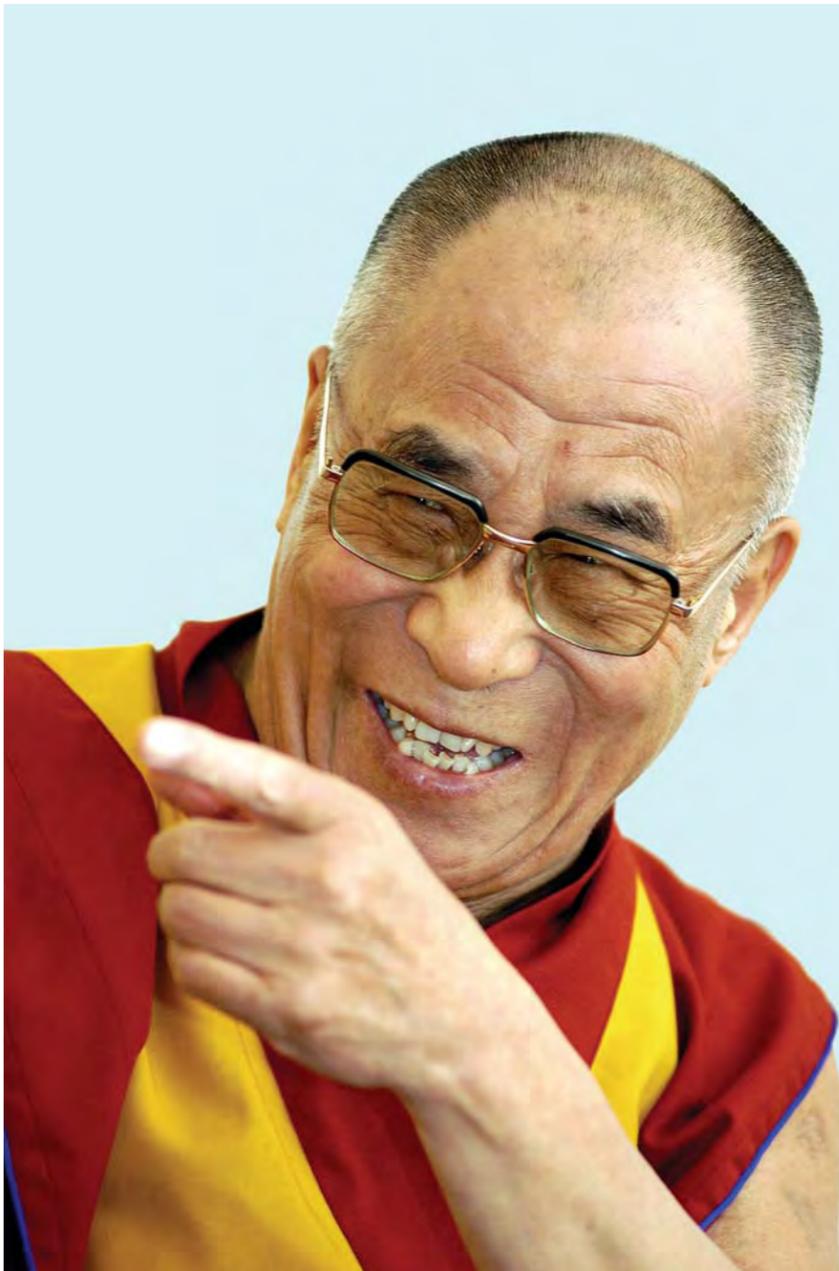
The problems are very real but do the leaders of these countries have the political will to act on the pledges. While there is unprecedented economic growth in the regions, there is also growing turmoil.

The India-Pakistan rift over Kashmir was the highlight on the sidelines of the summit with Pakistan once again stating that it as the key issue for better relations between the two neighbours. The induction of Afghanistan into SAARC was welcomed by all members but the opening remarks by Afghan president Hamid Karzai calling for a ban on extremism and terrorism in all forms and sources, including political sponsorship and financing, was an obvious veiled reference to the role of Pakistan whom the Afghan leader has accused of helping the Taliban to destabilise his government, an

issue which received much media converge in India. Grappling among these countries, smaller nations like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan had to work hard to get their grievances heard.

The founding fathers of SAARC envisaged co-operation among the countries to work together towards finding solutions towards their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and mutual understanding and to the creation of an order based on mutual respect, equity and shared benefits. It is time to make a concerted and genuine effort to build on these principals if co-operation among the South Asian nations is to reach the levels to which organisations such as the European Union (EU) and ASEAN have climbed and have in turn reaped immense benefits to their people. ■

(Sunday Times, Sri Lanka)



Dalai Lama seeks more autonomy for Tibet

The Dalai Lama said there was growing frustration among Tibetans, particularly the youth in and outside Tibet, while the stalemate over their homeland continued.

China should give Tibetans responsibility for all their administrative affairs except foreign relations and defence, the Dalai Lama said.

Opposition to Beijing's control over the Himalayan region would not vanish with his death, the exiled 71-year-old spiritual leader said in an interview with an Indian TV news channel, and it did not matter if he never got to return home.

"As long as the Tibetan people remain, this issue, unless you solve it properly, realistically, will remain," he said.

The Dalai Lama said there was growing frustration among Tibetans, particularly the youth in and outside Tibet, while the stalemate over their homeland continued.

China and the Dalai Lama's envoys have been engaged in a slow-motion dialogue since 2002 which analysts say is partly driven by the fear that if the spiritual leader dies in exile, it could lead to trouble in Tibet.

Visitors to Tibet, including many Chinese, felt "Tibet is actually ruled by terror", the Dalai Lama said in the interview with CNN-IBN, which is due to be broadcast on Sunday.

"At present, on paper there's autonomy

but in reality every key position is occupied by Chinese who have no idea of past events, of Tibetan culture or Tibetan habits or mentality," a statement from the channel quoted him as saying.

"The Tibetans should have the final authority, except foreign affairs and defence."

The Dalai Lama fled into exile in India in 1959 after a failed uprising against Communist rule, nine years after the Chinese army marched into Tibet.

He says he has accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet but wants greater autonomy, not independence, for his predominantly Buddhist homeland. Beijing considers him a separatist and accuses him of continuing to promote Tibetan independence.

In the interview, the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize winner said he was an optimist and hoped to see Tibet again.

Asked if he would die an unhappy man if he didn't, he replied: "No problem at all. I am a Buddhist monk. I am over 71 years old. These seven decades I have trained my mind according to Buddha's teachings. It doesn't matter." ■

(Agencies)

April sizzle and February chill

A system of quota and reservation for the disadvantaged sections and regions in education, employment, welfare and representation has been raised.



■ Saubhagya Shah

Despite the fiery rhetoric, why is there a sudden pause in the certitude of republican passion? The ambivalence amongst the leadership now is causing perturbation among even the most ardent constituencies which had answered the call to overthrow the regime last April. At the end of December, the Janajatis, Madhesis, various oppressed and exploited groups, and elements of civil society were in one way or the other accusing the political parties of stalling or even deviating from the promises made during the height of the April uprising.

The perceived betrayal of the great expectations - republic and autonomy - cultivated during the Janaandolan, people's uprising, has already manifested itself as unprecedented riots with a communal edge in the Terai while Janajati rumblings have just become audible deep in the hills. Politicians in a hurry to get to the top ought to beware of what they pledge; the people might just be plucky enough to want to check it out for themselves.

As if the economic front was too daunting to contemplate, the politicians - with due prompting from interested foreign parties have shifted their full attention to the state as an object of reform. Under the somewhat vague rubric of "restructuring the state", various designs for 'de-Hinduising' the nation, federalising the unitary state, and allocating different groups into the state structures or its resources have been offered.

Interestingly, the only hurdle in this project might be the nature of the political parties themselves that have been championing the Mantras of republicanism, federalism, proportionate representation to entice the various constituencies.

Most of the political parties now in power are highly centralised organisations monopolised by high caste male elites, it is not clear why they will want to compete or share power with local entities that might turn out to have different ethnic or ideological composition. The Terai is a burning example that just exposed this hypocrisy: when some folks actually wanted the republican autonomy, the parties dominated by hill elites were loathe to grant it!

A system of quota and reservation for the disadvantaged sections and regions in education, employment, welfare and representation



has also been raised as part of the new state restructuring agenda. If the affirmative action is designed as an enabling opportunity and not as a self-perpetuating categorical entitlement, it can be the basis of a just society. One caution here will be to avoid using the state restructuring agenda as a tool for creating permanent electoral constituencies on the basis of faith and primordial identities, imagined or otherwise.

While our rich ethnic heritage and cultural diversity is to be celebrated, it is civic democracy that needs to be cultivated in Nepal, not a tribal one. It is rather paradoxical that while the nation-state has been 'secularised,' it is the communal and ethnic currency that has begun to dominate the political marketplace.

Tinkering with the state form - while not undermining its decorative value - is always a second best if the goal is to create a prosperous and just nation. The state, pace Marx, is a mere superstructural reflection of the underlying economic relations in society. Even with divine intervention, one can stretch the given loaves and fishes only so far.

To restate the obvious, the problem in Nepal today is stability and growth and without addressing this central problematique, the polity here will not exit the vicious cycle of self-consuming competition and incapacitating

disorder. Although much is made about the affluence of the West and the poverty of the rest, what actually distinguishes the First World from the Third World condition is not economic wealth but the relative degree of order and purposive coherence they enjoy.

While the nature of the economy gives form to the state, it is also equally true that the substantive character of the state guides economic development, social form, and collective values. Some have even gone as far as to argue that a strong and competent state is a sine quo non for material advancement and social progress. A cursory glance at the European past and the Asian tigers today vindicates this relationship.

Thanks to a sustained campaign of external subversion, Nepal has never been allowed to mature into a stable and competent nation-state that can carve out its path to peace, progress, and dignity. Whenever a possibility for internal unity and harmony seemed imminent, a Fifth Column has been raised to scuttle our best hopes. It happened in 1960, 1990, and to borrow Yogi Barra's unique expression, it is de' javu all over again. ■

(Trilogy - 2)
(Harvard anthropology Ph.D. Shah teaches at TU.)

Thinking beyond boundaries

if we strictly limit ourselves to our national identity for a sense of security and belonging, then in the process we might lose our sensibility to the common bonds of humanity.

Just before boarding my flight for the United States from Nepal, an airport security officer asked me when I would be coming home again. Frankly, I had no idea, so I just said "I don't know." He then looked straight at me and said "Remember no matter where you go in the world there is no other place like your country." Curious, I asked him, "Have you lived in a foreign country for a long time?"

He answered "No. I just want to serve my own nation and not somebody else's." The passion in his voice made me realise the intense patriotism he had for Nepal; then suddenly, I found myself wondering how different nations affect their citizens and their identities.

As author Samuel P. Huntington mentions in his book, 'Who Are We?' a nation is based on a political contract among individuals lacking any other commonality. A nation consists of diverse individuals from different races and ethnicities bound together in a given territory because of their political commitment with the group, which in turn gives them their national identity as citizens.

This identity is indeed very special to human beings because it fulfills their innate desire to connect themselves with their fellow humans. A nation also allows its citizens to



■ Pragya Lohani

connect to their history and culture through their territory. As citizens from the same nation, individuals also share similar cultures and values. It is because of this aspect of nations, that citizens from the same country find it easier to relate to each other and, thus, form their own community even when they are living in a foreign land. Therefore, a nation definitely gives its citizens an opportunity to unite and relate to each other because of their unique commonalities.

Nations also play a role in dividing human beings. In a sense, nations put an invisible wall between people from different countries in terms of their ability to communicate and understand each other. Many times in history we have encountered the concept of nation state being used as an instrument to create a feeling of "we" and "they" that emphasises differences rather than commonalities.

When this trend is encouraged by the dualism of power and politics, we tend to forget our

common humanity and get caught in adverse relationships that can only lead to conflict and war. This was the scenario when Nazis in Germany tried to differentiate themselves as superior to their fellow human beings, which resulted in mass destruction. Therefore, after exploring the commonalities and divisiveness of the concept "nation", one can realize that in today's modern heterogeneous society the use of our national identity is very circumstantial, largely depending on the interaction between different nations. This is where the much talked about globalisation comes into play.

Globalization has allowed citizens from various nations to think beyond the boundaries of their nation. The phenomenon of globalisation has made a huge impact on national identity since it has a tendency of altering the set of people with whom we interact.

It also forces us to evaluate our preconceived notions about people from other countries other than our own and see the commonalities in hopes and aspiration of people from different parts of the world. At the same time globalisation can be very unsettling, since it is all about interaction with strange foreign cultures and values which may heighten our sense of differences and even lead to a feeling of superiority over other people.

Therefore, one can say that dividing the world under different nations has its own pros and cons. The concept of nation which initially evolved to meet human desires for contact has, over the years, developed a sense of competition among the nations because of which innovation, development, multiculturalism and globalisation has been possible. At the same time, it has caused conflicts between different national identities creating many problems for individuals. Today a citizen from a particular nation might feel a threat to his life only because of his nationality.

Personally, I feel that even with my different set of culture and beliefs, I am very much similar to everyone else because underneath all these nationality labels all of us are united by similar emotions. But if we strictly limit ourselves to our national identity for a sense of security and belonging, then in the process we might lose our sensibility to the common bonds of humanity. This will in turn imply a distinct possibility for our being an instrument for ugliness, violence and war. Maybe next time when I run into the Nepali officer at the airport, I will let him know all my reasons for thinking beyond the boundaries of my nation.

(Pragya is a student at Southern Methodist University, TX.)

Nature striking back



scientifically, it is readily accepted that global warming presents many problems for the earth and our society that serve as barriers from bringing forward a coherent and timely solution to the table.

■ Neeraj Pradhan

Ever since the era of ecological responsibility began, the United States has historically dragged its feet in the push to reform its energy usage. Over the past 25 years, compared with East Asian and Middle Eastern countries, the US has released nearly three to eight times as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Even members of the EU—historically industrial countries—have scaled down their emissions leaving their numbers 75 percent lower than that of America's.

This is why the recent legal push in the US for ecological responsibility has been welcomed, although unexpectedly by many segments of American society. The US Supreme Court, the highest judicial body in the United States, recently ruled that the federal government has the right to regulate emissions in the country in order to curb carbon dioxide emissions.

The recent push by the Supreme Court does not absolve the US from its past reticence on the issue, nor does the fact that the US has one of the highest emission rates excuse any of the world's other industrial nations.

The new century brings many new challenges to the global agenda. This is a century where all aspects of life from politics to trade and now pollution are becoming global issues. Indeed, the topic of global warming is one that all countries, developing and advanced, need to engage with.

Perhaps it is worthy to mention why the issue of greenhouse emissions has become such a vexing topic. The entire impetus for this issue from scientists and lobbyists has been the ongoing research and evidence that greenhouse gases and pollution arising from burning of fossil fuels for energy purposes have been linked inextricably to the phenomenon of global warming. Global warming is simply, the gradual warming of the planet's temperature.

But the consequences are graver than just simply a higher average temperature throughout the year. This ecological change can distort weather patterns and biological environments of plant and animal life throughout the world, ultimately altering our existence. It is not known with any degree of certainty what effects the changes in climate will have on our standards of life or how severe they

might be, but what is known is that our lives will change.

This is already becoming apparent in various parts of the US. This past winter brought, simultaneously, some of the warmest and coldest days in recorded history, with record levels of snow in some parts of the Eastern and Midwestern United States. The hurricane season of last year brought unparalleled rains and destruction to the Gulf Coast region. This trend in inexplicable and unprecedented weather patterns is becoming common throughout various parts of the world.

Though, scientifically, it is readily accepted that global warming presents many problems for the earth and our society, there are social, political, and financial problems that serve as barriers from bringing forward a coherent and timely solution to the table.

In its simplest form, one can outline three main problems with trying to phase out fossil fuel usage that stand in the way of policy makers and activists. The first obvious impediment is that the world has become incredibly dependent on fossil fuels. Research and development for new sources of energy is ongoing, but reliable sources of clean, renewable energy are still not yet possible as a permanent solution in the immediate future. Another pressing problem is that the politics and money involved in the energy sector has made it difficult for politicians to make any meaningful progress on the issue of phasing out fossil fuel usage, at least in the United States.

The well documented power and influence of the oil industry and lobby in America has made it impossible for legislators to have any sort of meaningful progress on the issue in the recent past. The other, more pressing problem is the fact that so many developing countries cannot yet afford newer and experimental forms of energy.

As ecological and political organisations gather over the next few years to try and set pollution standards, the international community should be especially concerned with trying to coordinate efforts to make the consolidated switch to newer forms of energy. This drive should be fueled by a desire to preserve the planet's ecosystems and also by a desire act sooner rather than later. This new issue is one that cannot be underestimated.

(Neeraj is a student and currently lives in southern California.)

Insight

Mindful treasures

In our society a majority tends to focus more on using money to impress others.



■ Sushma Amatya

An ascetic, Shyam Chaityanya Baba who used to live behind Pashupatinath temple handed over a tin box full of money, collected over his lifetime, to Dr. S.K. Pahadi, asking him to use it to start a medical college. The money amounted to 106,000 Rupees. The doctor, spurred by the generosity and who wished to keep the promise he made to his Guru who soon passed away, established Nepal Medical College in Jorpati center.

The medical college is the result of the humble man's selfless aspiration. Though far removed from worldly affairs, he was very concerned about the welfare of the society and preferred to remain unacknowledged for any of his acts. Difficult though it may be to live like him, it would be wonderful to learn and be motivated by from his life and others like him, who owned little but were very rich.

Complaints about lack of money must be as old as gold, as is mankind's craving for riches. The common concept is that one can be happy if one has money. We need to hear it from the experienced, like David Geffen, the billionaire American record executive to get a different perspective. He said, "Anybody who thinks money will make you happy has not got money."

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India is oft quoted saying that money makes a good servant but a bad master. Money can be a good tool to fulfill your needs and made to work to benefit yourself and people around you or it can turn into a demon that rules you, creating hatred and suffering all around. It depends upon how you approach money, and the whole economic dimension of our lives. To be able to wield tools of self-awareness, responsibility, love and generosity is to be the master of the money that comes our way.

In our society a majority tends to focus more on using money to impress others. It is rare to see any affluent member using money to generate happiness. The fact that happiness cannot be bought is realised by few. We need to learn to free ourselves from the concept of social status that appears to hang over us perpetually like sharp swords over our lives. The idea of being respected and admired by others by sheer dint of flaunting money ends up making fools of those who are fortunate to have deep pockets but unfortunately lacking any common sense.

Money minus wisdom and compassion ends up inflating one's ego to dangerous proportions, harming themselves and others around them. In vain, such people grope in darkness; often falling victims to high-end brand consumer items, striving to pursue television inspired exclusive life style. In the rat race happiness eludes them even further. Any happiness generated from this drama would belong to the companies that sell their ideas and products under the guise of impressing others with one's status, success, beauty etc., again misleading one to think that all that would make one happy.

Faster one learns to break free from the clutches of the invisible demon called social status; sooner one can relish the fruits of living within your own means, creating your own standards. By thus being independent of the misconception of having to conform to materialistic expectations of others, one also becomes safe from manipulation by those with ill intent. Sooner we learn to share what we have in however small ways, the better chances we have of inviting happiness into our lives.

By setting examples for our children to follow, we can instill in them the knowledge of difference between economising and miserliness, between saving and stashing away dead treasures – that could be brought to life by sharing it with others who can use it. We are badly in need of living examples of the rich in mind – minds that are not tainted by pride, not bloated by self-importance. Once rich in mind, it is but inevitable that it attracts unbounded riches, be it material things, creativity or friendship.

A quote by Dalai Lama is relevant here, "A true friendship develops on the basis of genuine human affection, not money or power. Of course, due to your power or wealth, more people may approach you with big smiles or gifts. But deep down these are not real friends of yours; these are friends of your wealth or power."

If we approach money with an attitude polluted by greed, craving, hatred and other delusions, the resulting dark forces can blind you, drive you insane and create cycles of suffering. It all boils down to mastering the idea of money. Money like anything else has a tendency to elude you the more you pursue it. When we decide not to be a slave to money, then no matter how much we have, we open ourselves to the unlimited potential of creativity, energy, self confidence that are inherent in each and every one of us.

The end result of this inevitably is happiness, a sense of well-being, no matter the external circumstances. Poverty may breed many vice but insatiable greed and hunger for power and money is the ultimate source of all evils. No amount of money can resuscitate life into those suffocated by sheer poverty that exists deep in their minds. Poverty ridden minds remain impoverished no matter how great their façade may appear on the outside. ■



Heroin user can't concentrate on anything

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

What is Heroin?

■ Bikash Thapa, Kathmandu
Heroin is a highly addictive narcotic substance in powdered form. It is derived from poppy plant and was used as painkiller and sedative in the olden days. The word, heroin, is derived from the Greek word Hero because of the feeling of power and euphoria it creates. In Nepal we find heroin in white form which is its pure form and in brown form that is less potent.

Use and sale of heroin is illegal and punishable by Nepali law. Sold by drug peddlers, we find impure forms of heroin that is a mixture of starch, milk powder, cleaning powder, sometimes even glass powder, coffee and strychnine (a poisonous substance). Dealers cheat their customers by mixing substances like Horlicks, Ghee in heroin to increase its quantity.

The effects of heroin are dependant on the purity of the substance. Addicts use heroin by heating and sniffing it, termed 'chasing the dragon' in their language. It is also used mixed

with water or by injecting. A heroin user is highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C and tetanus. Heroin users are prone to sudden drops in blood pressure and bouts of fainting. Their respiratory system weakens steadily and so they tend to 'drift off', for minutes or hours. They are unable to concentrate on anything and become very slow in responding. The pupils of their eyes become very small and they become increasingly passive.

How can we stop someone from taking drugs?

■ Chanda Kafle, Mandikatar
The most important and effective step we can take is to spread awareness, imparting correct information about impacts of drug use. It has been found that most adolescents between age 12 - 18 venture into drugs due to sheer ignorance about its consequences. As adolescents, they are full of curiosity and desire to experience new things, wish to be seen as adults or try to imitate those who they admire.

Taking awareness programs to students, parents and teachers would make them understand the factors,

risks, associated with drug abuse. Subtle mass marketing campaigns through entertainment programmes via TV and movies that encourages smoking and drinking in young people, impact on vulnerable minds leading them to imitate what they see on screen. Children must be educated on these and other ways how drug mafias reach out to coax new victims.

Encouraging a child to participate in family activities and contribute in their communities in small ways would help them get busy in constructive activities, leaving less time or opportunities to deviate. A child can be coaxed into 'criminal behavior' when he/she is only receiving and not contributing. Open lines of communication with children and monitoring their activities would help detect any early signs of odd behaviour. If despite all this, a child does become a victim, our duty is to help the child fight and overcome the habit or addiction.

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



Niraj Sapkota



Beauty n' Brains

Sitashma Chand, Bandana Sharma and Sweta Shah won the first, second and third place respectively in the Miss Nepal beauty pageant 07. The event took place amidst much hullabaloo created by the protesting Maoists led by Hisila Yami, who termed it commercialisation of female bodies. Among the 19 participants on the stage, more than half were from Kathmandu and ten were from Newar community. Questions have been raised regarding lack of participation by women from outside the capital, once again creating another forum for debate regarding equal participation.

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