



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Finally, Nepal has a National anthem after a gap of more than a year. Parliament was the first forum where the National anthem was played on August 3. Poet Pradip Kumar Rai alias Byakul Maila and Amber Gurung who composed the music for it, with Speaker Subash Nembang in parliament on the occasion.

Revolt and defiance

Discontent comes to the fore in Maoist conclave

■ nf special correspondent

Defiance and open criticism of the leadership marred the 'extended meeting' of the Maoists, still in session, with a minister turning down the request of the Maoist chief to withdraw the resignation he tendered from the council of ministers.

Forest Minister Matrika Yadav returned the official vehicles, security guards, all official belongings including a laptop and vacated his ministerial bungalow even though the party's official version quoting Prachanda claimed that he had withdrawn his resignation. "News reports saying I have withdrawn my resignation are just not true," Yadav said in a statement.

A sizeable number of those who participated in the meeting criticised the leadership, especially ministers, for their, "life of comfort," and "defiling the blood that martyrs shed during more than a decade long people's war."

In yet another jolt to the Maoists, Lakshman Rajbanshi, leader of the Maoist-affiliated Tharuwan Mukti Morcha, joined hands with powerful Maoist rebels like Rabindra Shrestha and Mani Thapa to open a front to, "oppose, expose and rebel" against the policy of compromise pursued by the Maoists. The group has decided to form armed battalions as well.

A Maoist source said it was hard for Prachanda to convince the participants who asked pointed questions like whether Maoists should continue in the government or quit. Prachanda and Bhattarai were also accused of complying with Indian interests and allowing themselves to be dictated by it. However, all indications suggest Maoists are unlikely to withdraw from the government immediately.

"Prachanda's answers were wishy-washy and his demand that only a republic Nepal will lead to the constituent assembly on time was more of a tactical stance," a participant told newsfront.

But it was the resignation of Yadav and his turning down Prachanda's request to withdraw it that dominated the extended meeting, participated by about 2,000 representatives from central to district level of the party that followed a two-day meeting of the central committee.

Yadav was miffed mainly with PM's behaviour and also with Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai over his unceremonious removal as chief of party's Terai wing last month. He also attacked Home Minister K P Sitaula, a close ally of the duo, for not cooperating in tracking down the sandal wood smugglers despite his repeated requests. He made it clear that all these need to be rectified if he is to continue as a minister.

Yadav also made his reservations clear about Maoist leadership's endorsement of the dialogue between the government and the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum led by Upendra Yadav, who he described as the head of the criminal groups backed by India and the palace. ■

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Govt-MJF talks put off indefinitely



Maoist inclusion in the official team irritates MJF

Chandra Poudel announced that the government wanted to include three more members in the team that included Jhlanath Khanal of CPN-UML, Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat (Cong-D) and Deb Gurung (Maoists).

In fact, inclusion of the Maoist minister in the official team follows insistence from the Maoist leadership that it cannot be excluded from the process of finding a solution to the Terai problems. But MJF is upset with Gurung's inclusion as the Maoists have been regularly branding MJF as criminals and India-palace sponsored outfit.

The meeting which was held in the Park Village resort on Sunday ended after MJF leader Upendra Yadav demanded to know the progress in the 26-point demand that the forum had put forward earlier. In addition, the forum insisted that Home Minister K P Sitaula must own full responsibility for the loss of life in Terai and quit. There is no point talking about the

Rayamajhi commission report, and not holding any accountability of the killing of Terai people.

"The talks are indefinitely postponed," Yadav told newsfront, adding "government does not seem to have done its homework at all." The 26-points submitted earlier demands among other things, a federal set-up with full autonomy to the provinces with the right to self-determination and proportional representation system of election. Yadav said the forum also demanded that the current parliament should be dissolved after the election process gets started.

Minister Poudel on his part tried to convince the forum that they should not read too much in the inclusion of the Maoists in the committee. "It was incomplete and we had to give it a wider representation," he said. He added that the government would soon get back to the forum with its response to some of the demands. ■

nf correspondent

The government - Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) talks abruptly ended on Sunday with MJF objecting to the inclusion of a Maoist

minister in the official committee saying it was aimed at disrupting the talks. MJF and Maoists are engaged in bloody fights in different parts of the country with the latter calling MJF an Indian and palace sponsored

outfit.

As a result, the earlier decision to have the Terai issue resolved ended with no solution in sight in near future. The government leader, peace and reconstruction minister, Ram

Commission of compromise

nf correspondent

In a clear act of betrayal, the government led by G P Koirala is all set to set up the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the power to withdraw cases of violation of gross human rights and that of international humanitarian laws. The move has brought the government in direct confrontation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR).

The OHCHR has objected to the provisions of the draft bill that empowers the proposed commission to withdraw such cases. "OHCHR-Nepal is deeply concerned about provisions which would amnesty the perpetrators of gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), including extrajudicial execution, torture and disappearances," a statement issued on Friday said. "These provisions which prevent prosecution for these offences are inconsistent with Nepal's obligations under international law," it added.

The move, human rights groups say, will only help in continuation of the culture of impunity, adding this can be used to absolve those who have committed grave crimes of human rights both from the government as well as the Maoists' sides. In fact, provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by Prime Minister G P Koirala and Maoist Chief Prachanda in the presence of UN and diplomatic community's representatives in Nepal in November clearly states that the cabinet will have the power to



withdraw any case against anyone and such decisions can be challenged

before any court of law.

OHCHR also makes a point that the provisions of the draft bill came as a damper to what the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon had stated recently; that the UN neither had a policy of endorsing or condoning amnesties for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or gross violations of human rights; nor undertaking or encouraging activities that might foster them. It also says the draft bill does not guarantee enough safeguards for independence, impartiality and diversity of the commission.

The government and the Maoists had earlier agreed to set up the TRC with a mandate to investigate violations of human rights and crimes against humanity committed during the course of the armed conflict between 13 February 1996 and 21 November 2006. The commission, which will consist of up to seven commissioners, will have two years, with a possibility of a 12-month extension. It will then provide the government with a report of its findings, and recommendations as to reconciliation, prosecutions, amnesty and reparations.

"The creation of TRC is a very important initiative that can assist a nation in building a culture of peace and reconciliation based on truth, justice and reparation," it said. ■

All season corruption in NA

nf correspondent

Nepal Airlines (NA) now faces doomsday thanks to ever proliferating corruption within its corridors. Even though its external operation has come to a halt, a major scandal that has already cost nearly 400,000 Hong Kong dollars has come into the light.

A spare engine of the Boeing, is lying at a warehouse in Hong Kong for which Nepal airlines has been paying around 1800 HKG dollar per day for the past eight months for storage and preservation, according to NA sources.

Mystery shrouds the deal further as the decision to have it stored with HAECO in Hong Kong was taken after the airlines cancelled its decision to send the



engine for total overhaul to AMECO, a Chinese company, which had won the tender. The engine has remained defunct for the past eight months.

"May be because of the huge cost - around Rs 40 crores needed for engine overhaul, the airlines decided to have it put in the storage, but even that has cost the company a fortune," an official said.

NA which has suspended its international operation now because of want of aircrafts is likely to press one of its aircrafts back into the service

sometimes this week "We have got the engine of the aircraft which has been sent for C-check to Brunei back here and are in the process of fitting it into another aircraft," NA sources said.

But as another engine is also due for change in December, the Nepal Airlines faces imminent prospects of shut-down that will result in a huge loss to the already sinking airlines during the peak tourist season.

Moreover, the airline has been regularly flouting the instructions of the Boeing by flying the ageing aircrafts for extra hours. Against the instruction that they should not fly more than ten and half hour daily, the aircrafts here are flying in an average of 16 to 18 hours. ■



Mass breastfeeding at Kalanki, Kathmandu organised by Chhimeki, an organisation of community mothers (mostly with small children) is based on neighbourhood support principles. The NGO works on mother-child health particularly nutrition and is supported by Swiss NGO Terre des Hommes.

Newsbrief

NTNC's third member secretary

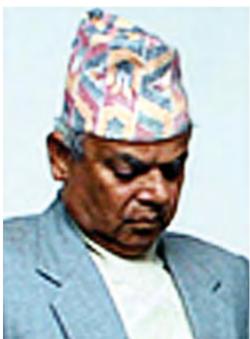


The Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) has seen three member secretaries in less than six months. The latest head that rolled was that of Siddhartha Vajracharya who had replaced Niranjan Koirala less than a month after he was appointed as member secretary of the trust.

Bimal Bania, senior official in the National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC) has been appointed as the new member secretary with immediate effect. The member secretary is the main executive post in the trust which has prime minister as the patron and forest minister as the chairman. Before last year, the trust which used to be known as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) used to have King Gyanendra as patron and Crown Prince Paras as the chairman.

Frequent change of member secretary, according to NTNC employees, is a reflection of politics dominating the trust which might ultimately discourage the donors. Niranjan Koirala was removed mysteriously within a month of his appointment following a feud over the post in the Koirala family. To appease a section of the congress led by Ram Krishna Tamrakar, Siddhartha Vajracharya, a relatively junior executive of the trust, was elevated to the rank of member secretary. There is no word yet officially as to why Vajracharya was removed.

E-fund poached



Ministry for agriculture and environment may not be so visible in terms of what it has done in the past one year after the great political change. But the depletion of the

environment fund is something that is very visible in the ministry.

According to the information available, around two crore rupees have been disbursed to various NGOs from the fund that is meant to conserve environment and control pollution. While about one crore rupees was spent during the first eight months after the political change, almost an equal amount has been disbursed after Mahantha Thakur took over as the minister in April.

The fund disbursement to the NGOs is done on the recommendation of a committee headed by the ministry secretary which has members from the ministry of finance and planning commission. But there are questions about the veracity and eligibility of these NGOs - who are they and which political party are they affiliated to? The general perception is that most of them are affiliated to the congress party which Minister Thakur also belongs to.

COAs meet

The Chief of Army staffs of Nepal and India are likely to meet in Sydney this week bringing the two face to face almost after a gap of 28 months. Gen. Rookmangad Katawal and his Indian counterpart J J Singh will be meeting at the Asia Pacific Security Chiefs gala assembly at Sydney this week.

India not only suspended the supply of arms and ammunitions to the Nepal Army effective from February 2005, it also suspended all normal and traditional



relationship with it. As a result, there have been no visits by the chiefs of two sides to the other side to receive the title of Honourary General - almost breaking

half a century old practice.

COAs of India is believed to have sent feelers to Gen Katawal proposing such a meeting when both of them are in Australia. Gen Katawal just completed his official visit to London indicating that business with the United Kingdom is as usual.

Calling it a day

Ram Pradhan has decided to quit the Himalayan Times as its founder editor.



"Ram Pradhan wishes to call it a day and retire", THT quoted him telling his colleagues on August 2.

Pradhan, one of the seniormost journalists in the country, served as editor of the Rising Nepal and Independent during his career spanned over four decades. He joined the THT six years ago.

Dollar MD in Kathmandu



Managing Director of Dollar India (Bhawani textile) Vinod Kr. Gupta visited Kathmandu this week for business meet. In the meeting with

business-persons in Nepal, he claimed that despite being a new brand in the market, Dollar is becoming a success as no.1 innerwear and winter-wear in India and Nepal. He added that due to its quality material and reasonable price, Dollar products are gaining popularity in Nepal.

As festival season is approaching in Nepal, Dollar products will be coming in more variety and at affordable prices. Gupta claimed that their product is as popular and as fit as Salman Khan who is the brand ambassador for this product. ■

Koirala warned

Hold CA election on time or you will be non-entity



A quiet move on the part of Prime Minister G P Koirala to have existing parliament converted into the constituent assembly has backfired. Koirala has been warned both from international community as well as leaders from Nepali Congress and other coalition partners not to cheat people.

India has taken the lead in discouraging such a move. According to informed sources, India's External Affairs Minister, Pranab

Mukherjee spoke to Koirala, NC (D) leader Sher Bahadur Deuba and some others over the phone that such a move would destroy legitimacy of the political system and credibility of the leaders entirely.

The move which Koirala discussed with some of the Maoist leaders and close aides in Nepali Congress, has also been criticised by senior leaders like Arjun Narsingh K C. "I will join the revolt against such a move which seeks to take away people's right to participate in the election," said he. Koirala's assertion that he is committed to hold elections to the constituent assembly as scheduled in November comes in the wake of disapproval of his move to short-circuit the CA poll.

"This conspiracy is on. And we cannot accept it. This will destroy democracy for ever," former PM and Janashakti leader, Surya Bahadur Thapa said. It is believed that while Koirala discussed in details such a plan with Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai in detail, he only gave a broad hint about this to UML Secretary General Madhav Kumar Nepal. In fact, Prachanda's latest precondition for CA election in November - a proportional representation system of election and Republic Nepal soon - many believe, somehow reflects Koirala's grand design to convert existing parliament into the constituent assembly.

"We have been hearing such moves from outside. And it will be a total betrayal of the people and therefore (will) not be acceptable to our party," Minendra Rijal, Member of the Central committee of the Nepali Congress (D) told newsfront. ■

An appeal to be aware of false propaganda and conspiracy against Salt Trading Corporation Ltd.

Everyone is aware of the credibility and reputation that the Salt Trading Corporation has earned over a period of time. The corporation, which has set quality, availability and low price as its aims, has plans to improve its services throughout the country in future. But some people clearly busy rocking their own ship are busy spreading false canards against the corporation now.

An attempt is being made to defame the iodised salt duly certified by the appropriate authority of the state, as 'not fit for consumption.' The corporation has supplied the salt to the market only after the authority of the state had issued certificate about its quality.

Against the normal practice of having 30-PPM iodine in salt in other countries, Salt Trading Corporation has been mixing 50-PPM iodine in the salt for sale in Nepal. They are distributed among consumers through dealers and offices in sealed packets.

It was solely with the intention of a conspiracy against the salt, the then Executive Head, after he had been divested of

all his executive authorities, raised questions regarding the quality of the salts through a circular sent to all zonal offices on 2064-4-6. We request to all our customers and authorities concerned to be aware of such conspiracies that claim everything is right when in power, and nothing is right once out of it.

The Department of Food and Technology and Quality Control of the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperative (Government of Nepal) had analysed the salt last imported. Its report made public on 2064-3-6 showed Sodium Chloride content at 99.5 per cent and Iodine PPM at 60.2 per cent. No salt has been imported after that.

Therefore, we request all concerned not to give credence to the campaign of conspiracy and defamation against the Salt Trading Corporation, a model of excellence of public-private partnership. We also want to reiterate that we will continue to give utmost priority to the issue of public health as well the quality of salt and other commodities while conducting our business.



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Point to Ponder

You will never do anything in this world without courage.
 It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor

- Aristotle

Nefarious design

A dictator is one who wants to rule without people's mandate. An authoritarian government cares little about submitting itself to the parliament. It would want to avoid elections, and yet wants to stick on like limpet, in power. By all definition, Prime Minister G P Koirala, is behaving like an authoritarian. There are clear indications that he does not want elections to the constituent assembly scheduled to be held in November. Instead, he seemed toying with the idea to convert the existing parliament into a constituent assembly after accommodating some Dalits, Janajatis and Madheshis in it.

If at all, his sinister design does not find any taker, the initial credit for this should go to India which is quite involved in Nepal's peace process. India currently believes that legitimacy of the entire political system in Nepal will collapse if the elections are postponed or stalled. But this does not mean that Koirala will give up so easily. He might try to rope in domestic allies to move on this design. Surprisingly, one can conclude through conjectures that Maoists are equally keen to toe the Koirala line. By demanding that Nepal should be declared a republic now, and that the model of elections should be based entirely on proportional representation system, the Maoists are only making elections in November impossible.

Secondly, both demands not only undermine the previous political understanding between the Maoists and other seven parties, but overrule them altogether unilaterally. It raises enough suspicions that maybe Koirala and Maoists have reached a secret understanding to ensure that elections do not take place in November under any circumstances.

No doubt, Koirala acted as an absolute PM under an ad hoc arrangement in the past 15 months, but it would be a political suicide on his part to try to continue as an authoritarian ruler. Past 15 months have seen Koirala totally undermining the parliament, being absent in it during crucial times. On Friday, he chose to fly to Biratnagar when the new national anthem was being played and the Rayamajhi Commission was being tabled in the House.

Why does Koirala want to run away from elections? It is high time that the constituents of the ruling coalition

warn him against stalling elections under any pretext.

Maoists also owe an explanation if the central committee's demand for proportional system of elections was an outcome of the pact with Koirala - to covert the current parliament into the constituent assembly without facing the poll. It is time for Koirala to quit if he has lost courage to face the people.



Letters

Shame, Mr. PM

Newsfront has made its mark on the political circle. Its last issue revealed that G P

Koirala, despite the public pledge he took along with other leaders that they would not repeat their past mistakes, has not changed a bit. He is conspiring to turn the existing un-elected parliament into the constituent assembly.

This is a matter of shame that Koirala does not trust the electorate of this country, does not reveal his plan to them, but consults India and other countries for endorsement of his dictatorial ambitions. How is he different from King Gyanendra?

■ Sudhir Dahal
 Ghattekulo, Kathmandu.

Undemocratic Koirala

G P Koirala may have fought for democracy, but he has never been a democrat. He was almost going to join the Panchayat regime and was negotiating for that with King Birendra. After his infamous Tanakpur treaty with India got exposed and parliament discovered that he had signed the treaty keeping Nepal in dark, he forced an unwarranted mid-term poll in the country in 1993. He betrayed K P Bhattarai forcing him to quit as PM in year 2000.

In past 15 months, he has failed on all fronts. Corruption and opaque deals have been made. He became the PM pledging that elections to the constituent assembly will be held by June 2007. The date has now been postponed to November. And yet, he seems to be conspiring to stall that election. He can compromise and sacrifice every thing for power. The man has just not changed.

■ Naresh Pradhan
 Jyatha, Kathmandu.

Interesting interviews

Newsfront has been bringing out interviews and profiles



of the people that are much more readable than the politicians who get so much media coverage in Nepal. What's the use giving them so much space when all that our leaders have done is to plunder the country and betray the people?

The interview with Diamond Shumsher Rana not only brings out the persona that he is to the public, it also reveals what an amazing character he is at 90. His self-pride and respect, his commitment to democracy and his uprightness are worth something and the country should feel proud of it. Why can't our political leaders learn something from him?

■ Srijana Sharma
 Baneshwar, Kathmandu.

Maina Sunwar case

It was a bit disappointing to see the article of Kundan Singh Khatri in newsfront. Was the author trying to justify what the army did to Maina Sunwar? Army Chief's visit to the United Kingdom came in the background of many atrocities committed by the 'Royal Nepal Army' in the years of conflict. But the army has to take accountability for the Maina Sunwar case as well as other cases.

Of course, political leaders especially those who have been prime ministers and home ministers have to take the responsibility as well. But that does not absolve the army of their hands in gross violation of human rights.

■ Ram Wasti
 Kalanki, Kathmandu.

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual

Sit and practice

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910 - 1991) was a Vajrayana master, scholar, poet, teacher, and head of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism from 1987 to 1991.

He was born in the Denhok Valley at Kham Derge, Eastern Tibet in 1910 to a family directly descended from the ninth century King Trisong Detsen. When he was seven years old, he was publicly recognised as the reincarnation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo by Shechen Gyaltsep Rinpoche (1871-1926) at Shechen, one of the six principal monasteries of the

Nyingmapa school. During the next few years Dilgo Khyentse received full schooling from various tutors, in addition to training in meditation, and in the study of the Dharma in general, and of Tantra specifically.

Excerpts from his book:
 Enlightened Courage:

Consider all phenomena as a dream:

...If we have an understanding of impermanence, we will be able to practice the sacred teachings. But if



Corner

we continue to think that everything will remain as it is, then it will be just like rich people still discussing their business projects on their deathbeds! Such people never talk about the next life, do they? It goes to show that an appreciation of the certainty of death has never touched their hearts. That is their mistake, their delusion.

The Mind:
 ...What shall we say about

these so-called thoughts?... You can find out whether the mind exists solidly or not by just turning inwards and reflecting carefully. You will see that the mind does not begin, or end, or stay, anywhere; that it has no color or form and is to be found neither insider nor outside the body. And when you see that it does not exist as a thing, you should stay in that experience without any attempt to label or define it. All suffering comes through not recognising ego-clinging as our enemy. ...It is thoughts like these that keep us so busy—and all so uselessly! This is the reason why we are not on the path to liberation and Buddhahood. ■

Why another cultural policy?

This supremacy and Brahmanbad attitude prevailed in the country till recently.

The Nepal government has announced in its policy and programme document for the year BS2064/65. It says a new cultural policy will be implemented for managing the protection and promotion of traditional rites and rituals, languages and cultures of all castes and ethnic groups throughout the country.

This is not at all a new thing in the country. Since early 1970s three cultural policy documents have been drafted and somewhat implemented as well. All the three above mentioned cultural policy documents have given emphasis on these matters categorically. But we all know that in practice how the previous governments have implemented them.

The politicians and ministers have used the treasury of the country for the benefit of their own constituency and for the protection and promotion of their own cultural heritage or those of their masters for long. The annual programme prepared by the bureaucrat envisaging the over all balance for maximum number of districts and communities have always changed its track on the whims of the politicians or ministers. How can a bureaucrat challenge the politicians or ministers who have been ruling this country autocratically since long?

We should be clear that haste in drafting and implementing a new cultural policy at this juncture of time will be useless and suicidal. Let the election of Constitution Assembly finish and let a new constitution for Nepal be promulgated. In this new constitution certainly there should be some clauses which give guarantee for the upliftment of language, cultural and traditions of all Nepalese.

In Nepal since the beginning of the fifth Five Year Plan period (1975) cultural heritage preservation has been receiving some sort of recognition from the government. Every year in the official address of the king and in the budget speech of the finance minister; a line or two on the issues relating culture and cultural heritage are being mentioned and budget allocated.

For a long time some acts like the Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 2013 and the Guthi Undertaking Act have been fulfilling the vacuum of the absence of cultural policy in the country. Till 1983 nobody gave any attention and thought for the need of formulating a cultural policy for the country. That year a high level committee called Cultural Policy and the government formed Program Drafting Committee.

This committee submitted its report and recommendations in the same year, which was not at all materialised by the government. In 1991 the government set up a National Cultural Policy and Program Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Isvar Baral, the then vice-chancellor of the Royal Nepal

Academy. This committee has submitted its report and recommendations in 1992 but those recommendations are also not yet fully implemented.

Whether the officials of the Ministry of Culture have seen all these above-mentioned documents or not, is not known. It is recommended they read these reports before finalising their plans and programs for this plan period. Both culture and cultural properties is the product of history and time. Numerous generations of rulers and people of our country have been contributing in enriching our culture since ages. The Kathmandu Valley is the best example of it.

The valley culture is not only our glory, prestige, and recognition in the international world but also our bread and butter through tourism industry. If we open all the cultural assets of this valley to tourism, it would be easy to generate employment to our youths and develop home industries such as service and handicrafts. What we need is a broad national perspective and policy for developing cultural tourism in the country. This ultimately demands a broad cultural policy and rational plans and programs.

This century is the age of ethnic revolution. Minorities and ethnic populations of every country are fighting for their recognition and cultural upliftment. This is a very sensitive issue. If we cannot satisfy and pacify them they can be the cause of national disintegration. We have examples of Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia and numerous other countries.

In Nepal too, our ethnic minorities have been suffering a lot since ages. They are poor, illiterate, and have always been dominated and deprived of opportunities by upper class privileged majorities. If we look into the civil service cadre more than 80



■ Shaphalya Amatya

The valley culture is not only our glory, prestige, and recognition in the international world but also our bread and butter through tourism industry.

percent people belong to this class. This class has been controlling legal profession, teaching profession, politics and even businesses of the country.

History says that after the formation of unified Nepal in 1769 the *Thar Ghar* who came to Kathmandu from Gorkha with King Prithivi Narayan Shah became all-powerful. With the rise of the Thapas under the leadership of Bhimsen Thapa the family belonging to the *Thar Ghar* gradually lost their hegemony in Nepali politics. For many decades Nepali court politics entered into the period of turbulence or struggle for power till the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1848.

The Ranas and their kith and kin ruled the country despotically for more than a century. During the Rana regime the Brahmins received maximum benefit. The Ranas ruled the country arbitrarily with the help of the Brahmins. They were even exempted from execution even if they had committed heinous crimes. This supremacy and Brahmanbad attitude prevailed in the country till recently.

We should never forget that the wrong doings of previous politicians and governments and their short sightedness and narrow attitude towards the culture of minorities have helped in augmenting separatist movement in the country in the names of Newar Mukti Morcha, Madeshi Janaandolan, Chure-Bhawar Andolan and so on. A sensible democratic government should always try to balance this type of unharmonious situation and establish harmony and peace in the society.





■ Binod P. Bista

Are we dying ?

It is truly baffling to see that such problems are not even noticed by the ever active civil society of Nepal, much less acted upon.

Nepal, the darling of neighbors and overseas friends, particularly of the new actors which are ever ready to promote their agendas vigorously during internal strife, support timidly during execution of ideas, and ignore conveniently afterwards, appears to be losing control of everything including its newfound freedom and democracy. The death of a small and insignificant nation may not matter much to the global actors as there is no dearth of activities that present themselves on a daily basis owing to a variety of reasons, the foremost being the state of poverty and deprivation.

It would certainly be an unfortunate event to the common people of Nepal who have placed their trust unconditionally to the promises of reform made by the major political parties in power today. They have also believed fully in the assurances of the international community that the new Nepal would not only correct the problem of exclusion but also give them full power to build their country in a free and fair manner. So much so that they seem to have buried their pains and sufferings of the past one decade from the atrocities of the Maoist insurgents and agreed to accept the CPN-Maoists as one of the saviors for the new Nepal.

What do they get in return for such an act of magnanimity and valor? In the domestic front, the old political parties in power seem to be

going their old ways of indifference and self centeredness. The new face (CPN-M) seems to be following its own agenda without any regard given to the very people who have been pinning their hopes on them.

In fact, it appears that the most important issue taken up by the Maoist leadership these days is not whether they can work together with the other parties to conduct the CA elections in a free and fair manner but when to launch their proposed 'people's revolt'. Besides, the signals

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

transmitted by the Maoist leadership on its proposed foreign and economic policies seem to be driving international financial institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank away from Nepal.

The lone global institution, the United Nations, still hopes to achieve its mission in Nepal despite

mounting odds. However, as the UN can be as strong or weak as its member states want it to be, waning interest of the lone superpower in Nepal can change the entire equation overnight. A senior Maoist leader appears to have stated in a recent interview that "there are countries which are doing fine even without US assistance", indicating that if at all it came to that the Maoists in power would run the affair of the state without the US.

Although it is hard to find an appropriate

example on this matter except a few countries rich in oil resources, all other communist countries following 'proletariat internationalism' are prospering in large part owing to their close economic relations with the United States, particularly trade and investment.

If the Maoists are serious in their intent, then

a free and fair CA election on time will not be able to help Nepal should they come to power. For Nepal lacks the important resources sought out by the world at large—the oil and gas.

Nothing seems to be working smoothly in Nepal today. This situation is totally incomprehensible considering that the present government (and the parliament) is formed by the parties which also drafted the interim constitution and later amended it. There are scores of problems still out in the open. The government does not find enough time to do things that must be done in time. Intra and inter party squabbles are symptomatic of the years of bad governance of the 1990s. Armed gangs going after individuals, businesses and civil servants have become a symbol of new Nepal. It is preposterous to observe that such illegal behaviors are not only defended by the parties in power but also sanctioned frequently.

It is truly baffling to see that such problems are not even noticed by the ever active civil society of Nepal, much less acted upon. The expression made public by a senior BJP leader of India and his question posed to his countrymen as well as Nepalis and the international community, "How do you hold elections when the forces of law and order enforcement have themselves been disenabled?" says it all. Are we completely blind to issues seen clearly by others? ■

Challenge for Nepalis

It is up to us Nepalis to chalk out our own destiny and build our constitution that reflects our aspirations.

At present Nepal is faced with the greatest political challenge in her history. Every time Nepal is confronted with a political crisis, a new constitution has been touted. However, given the prevailing political fiasco and a crisis of confidence, it is likely at this stage that Nepal might eventually miss yet another chance to draft a people oriented constitution. In fact, the Maoists, Nepali Congress and UML have moved closer on agreeing to convene the present parliament into a Constituent Assembly (CA) if the EPA (eight party alliance) government fails to conduct credible elections this November.

Shyam Saran's (former foreign secretary of India) abrupt visit to Kathmandu has enormous significance. First, Shyam Saran has made it clear to the prime minister that the government must hold elections in November so that the option of convening the present parliament into a constituent assembly is erased out of the political equation. However, what India and the international community must clearly understand is that if the law and order situation does not improve, and as a consequence the government cannot conduct free and fair elections, the whole electoral process will prove to be futile.

It is inevitable that India is going to have a loss of face given its present policy in Nepal. Now that Nepal's politics is reaching a climax, most Nepali citizens hope that India and the international community will not



■ Siddhartha Thapa

remain silent about what they really visualise for Nepal. More importantly, India cannot afford to remain in a gray area. It is imperative that the government of India categorically states in its policy whether they want democracy or autocracy. Just maintaining the line, "we respect

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

the verdict of the people" will not suffice. Many scenarios need to be considered here: what if the elections are fraudulent, what if the elections turn out to be only reasonably fair and the Maoists won? Would India accept a totalitarian state chosen by the people?

The fundamental problem plaguing Nepalese politics is that the people have failed to take ownership of the constitutional drafting process. Be it 1950, 1959, 1990 and even 2006,

constitutions have been drafted as a compromise between two opposing sides that in effect were said to be representing the people. For instance, in 1950 after the Rana regime was overthrown, a constituent assembly election was promised but it never happened. In fact, a handpicked team drafted the constitution.

Similarly in 1990, the agitating parties and the palace inked a constitution but that too failed. And now although the present constitution is an interim one, it has been amended twice. The real problem with constitutions that are drafted by a handpicked team is that the constitutional

forces responsible for drafting the constitution have consistently abrogated the constitution. For example, King Gyanendra's misuse of article 127 and even elected prime ministers have all abrogated the constitution in one form or the other for their

survival in the last sixteen years.

There are gargantuan challenges to the constitution drafting process. First, the ethnic violence has to subside and the political issues raised in the Terai should be solved sympathetically. Second, the government must arrest the present situation of lawlessness. Third, the government has been unable to assert political authority and as a consequence the Maoists are still operating as an extra constitutional force.

Therefore, the government must generate political will if it wants to contain the Maoists within constitutional parameters and conduct credible elections in November.

It is up to us Nepalis to chalk out our own destiny and build our constitution that reflects our aspirations. At the end of the day, foreigners will just hop into aircrafts and wave goodbyes if the situation spirals out of control leaving us alone to fend for our democratic rights. India's support is paramount because of our countries' historic ties and also because they are a regional power. And China because they are not to be ignored geographically and America because they are the only super power in the world today preaching democracy aggressively while the others maintain a double standard.

On a domestic level, our politicians from the ultra left to ultra right must agree on conducting credible elections in November by forging national consensus; there is no alternative to this. Therefore, we Nepalis for a change must draft a constitution that reflects the majority's aspiration rather than inking a deal by ignoring the electoral process. However, a favorable environment is an absolute pre-requisite for credible elections. On the other hand, if the Nepali polity fails to conduct free and fair elections and convenes the present parliament into a constituent assembly, democracy in Nepal will indeed suffer a major setback. ■

One with nature

There was a time when we believed that we were able to speak with animals.

There was a time when we believed that we were able to speak with animals. We are closely intertwined with nature. We have totems, just like you have deities.

Sahpo Muxika, also known as Crowfoot, former Head Chief of the Blackfoot Nation



Patricia Atkins, 59, a natural resource instructor at the Blackfoot community college was here in Kathmandu on a study trip. Newsfront talked with her recently about her life experiences as a member of Blackfeet, a tribe of Native Americans.

The Blackfeet Indian Reservation or Blackfeet Nation is an Indian reservation of the Blackfeet tribe in Montana in the United States. It is located east of Glacier National Park and borders Canada to the north. Studies show that Blackfeet lived in an area west of the Great Lakes. They were partly nomadic and were part of the Plains Indians culture in the early 1800s. There is also evidence that they were near the rocky mountain front for thousands of years before European contact.

How did you feel traveling in Nepal?

Bandipur, Chiwan, Daman are the names of the places I can remember now which we visited. It was nice to see the country besides Kathmandu. It is a beautiful country.

Tell us about your college.

Blackfeet Community College is one of 31 tribal colleges in the United States and 1 of the 7 in Montana. It was formed in 1974 by the Blackfeet tribe and the college became an independent institution in 1979. It was fully accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges in 1985.

What is the meaning of Blackfeet? Where did it originate?

The Piegan Blackfeet are a tribe of Native Americans. It is one of the three tribes of the Siksika or Blackfoot confederacy. Many members of our tribe live in northwestern Montana, out population centered in Browning. The term Blackfoot is said to have originated from our blackened soles of our moccasins after walking long distances. Now we have four confederacy tribes, three in Canada and one in Montana.

How many members of Blackfeet exist today? What is their life situation?

We have 16,000 enrolled members out of which 7,000 to 8,000 live in the reservations; where we suffer from domestic abuse, drugs and unemployment of 80 percent. Through a relocation programme, there is a number who have left for big cities, went to good schools and hold good jobs. As for jobs in the reservations, during summer time we are able to go fire fighting, or work in national park service.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up with kerosene lamps and no toilets. There used to be many trips to the river, filling water in cans, fishing. Nature was our teacher and the buffalo was our staple food. We were always playing games outdoors. I see it in sharp contrast to kids these days who just sit and watch the TV. All the stories I heard, I've written it all in a book called, The Ways of the Blackfeet.

Did you face discrimination while growing up?

Yes, it was hard growing up as a minority. White kids used to call us prairie nigger and

other names. Discrimination still exists.

How did you cope with changes, with western lifestyle?

It was very hard. They took our land, slaughtered our buffaloes, forced us to attend mission schools and took away our oral ways of life. We were forbidden to speak our language and follow our way of life. We had and have a lot of depressed people.

How are you stopping from your indigenous culture from dying out?

Blackfeet language and ceremonies are taught in colleges. To preserve culture, it is important to preserve language. We are trying to bring back our language. We also have a tribal council set up in 1930s by the government. We have museums, colleges and have some old ways of life like the sweat lodges that are built with logs, covered with hides, a fire pit in the centre and water is put on hot rocks to get steam for steam bath.

Most of us still practice our traditional rituals.

Preserving one's culture is largely an individual effort, it is developing one's self awareness. It does not depend on the government.

What challenges do you see the Native Americans facing today?

I see the population and the chaos prevailing all around us as challenges. I fear that when one day survival at large is at risk, the day might come when our reservations will be the target for trees and wild animals for food to feed the masses outside. Present problems are getting government jobs and we are still fighting for our education and health care.

Are there any similarities you see between your community and those that you observed in Nepal?

Our colouring and sometimes features are similar. There are also similarities in the sense of our values, especially that of respecting our elders.

What values do you hold dear?

Honesty, caring for others and treating others the way you would like to be treated.

Do members of your community still harbour any negative feelings towards those who invaded your land?

The feeling of animosity still exists. But we all have to get along, adapt and forgive to survive.

Tell us about the connection between nature and the Native Americans.

There was a time when we believed that we were able to speak with animals. We are closely intertwined with nature. We have totems, just like you have deities. Totems are our guides. Mine is grizzly bear and my brother has cat. We find it out through our dreams and interpret it with help of medicine men and old wise men. The totems could be birds, moon, sun or star or anything in nature.

Are traditional healing, medicines still in use?

Yes, we use traditional medicine along with modern ones. ■



Piegan Blackfeet family

The harlots of anarchy



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

Rimal ...spent the rest of his life, roaming insane in the streets of Kathmandu.

Times of the dark ones came and passed away -Gopal Prasad Rimal

Over the past decade Nepal's image has undergone a dramatic change. Known as a little sequestered kingdom and God's own land, currently Nepal is known for its political upheavals and makes news worldwide everyday with its fast changing political scenario.

displayed by so called sham suitors of true democracy. Rimal's epoch making poem, 'The Story of My Love' weaves this mysterious tales of his affairs with political parties of his times. First, "the dark ones who couldn't dare to face the /magnificent daggers of my gallant grace" and then after 1950 revolution, "the white ones who labored to save me from myself, like in dreams they tried to tame me."

creative organisation called 'Praja Panchayat' to raise voice against the suppression of Nepali people by autocratic Rana rulers and was imprisoned on several occasions for his involvement in the movement.

Rimal played a pivotal role in making the 1950 democratic movement successful but soon grew disillusioned. His dreams of democratic Nepal were shattered as harlots of anarchy in the garb of democracy started dancing in the castles of filth. Rimal lost his mental balance and was sent to an asylum in Ranchi. There doctors pulled a rib from his back and Rimal was brought back to Nepal to spend the rest of his life, roaming insane in the streets of Kathmandu with the dream of true democracy seething in his heart.

Rimal foresaw Nepal's struggle with the political systems. His legacy shows how poetry and politics are inseparable in Nepali society. He also saw the inherent corruption in politics and how writers become mere tools in the hands of clever and corrupt leaders and are often sidelined. Moreover, Rimal defines a writer's role as an outsider, marginalised but supreme, above all parties and political systems. He sees writer as a separate entity and an authority above all ideologies and that's what makes him the greatest poet of this bleeding nation in search of a truly democratic set-up.

I am thirsty of revolution.
I am its ardent lover.
Revolution has yet to make love to me.
I am hungry.
It has yet to
serve the storms of my hunger—
Rimal

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

Marshland Flowers



those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness...

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

But from what I have known, the Laos and Sri Lankan and Thai lineages are unbroken. Even Sri Lankan Theravadin scholars have objected that the Burmese Sikkha Vipassana is the true teachings of the Buddha. But in spite of these Theravadin scholars' objections the Burmese Kalyanmitras spread their system throughout the world.

These are facts most Nepalese, including those who are supposed to be experts in Vipassana, are blissfully unaware of. The word Vipassana in the Theravadin scholastic system means to 'see' in a special way 'Visesena Passati' or to see it holistically from many angles 'Vividena Passati'. This is the same definition found within the Mahayana tradition. Various forms of Vipassana (the Sanskrit version of the Pali Vipassana) exist in the Mahayana tradition too and are equally pure teachings of the Buddha.

We shall deal with this matter when we come to the Bodhisattvayana lineages. Also within the Theravada system, the form of Vipassana which emphasises looking at the sensations (Vedana) is only one kind of Vipassana and it is certainly not more special than other forms of Vipassana which lay emphasis on looking at the body (Kayanussati) or mind (Chittanussati) or mental – factors (Dhammanussati).

Nor is Vedananussati the one that Shasta emphasised as the root practice of all practice. There are no Suttas in the Theravada tradition to validate that. In fact, it

is stated that in the Visuddhimagga that the exercise of mindfulness of the body had never been practiced before the advent of the Buddha, nor does it come within the scope of any of the other religious systems.

It is praised in various ways by the Buddha in different Suttas; for example, "there is one state, monks - which being developed and repeatedly practiced conduces to great religious emotion, great benefit, great freedom from bondage, great mindfulness and self-possession, the attainment of knowledge and insight, the happy state in this visible life, the realisation of the fruit of knowledge and release. What is that one state? Mindfulness of the body ..."

Again, "those who do not enjoy mindfulness of body do not enjoy deathlessness (Amata); those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness. Those who have not enjoyed mindfulness of the body have not enjoyed deathlessness; those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness; those who have not neglected mindfulness of the body have not neglected deathlessness." – (Anguttara Nikaya I 43-45).

Nagarjuna says that Kayagatanusmriti is the most important meditation taught by the Shasta. (To be continued.) (Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)



Decades ago, poets like Gopal Prasad Rimal heard the sound of the thunder of the forthcoming storm and write succinctly about the drama being enacted today in the corridors of power. Rimal's poetry is prophetic, like a true bard he spoke of what was to come to Nepal, the struggle against undemocratic regimes and what shall follow - the dance of anarchy in the corridors of power.

Rimal's love poem artistically brings forth the events of 1950 revolution ending with the demise of Rana regime and consequent corruptions

This poem shows a poet's life and his nations interwoven in a highly imaginative form. Rimal during his adolescence came under the influence of revolutionaries who were aspiring to overthrow the despotic Rana rulers. Though Rimal began his career in 1930 and as playwright in 1940, it was in 1941 that the real Rimal remerged on centre stage of Nepal's literary and political arena.

In 1941, the brutal execution of patriot Dashrat Chand and his friends fired Rimal's imagination and then revolution became the bedrock of his creative imagination. He founded a

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Bhaskar Chha

Friendship – what does it mean? Are we prepared to spend the time, thought, energy and emotion necessary to truly understand one another? What happens when we become aggravated with our friends or are misunderstood by them? Do we give up, distance ourselves and run away? Do we judge our friends or ask ourselves what brought on the misunderstanding? If we only project our ideals onto the other person, we prevent ourselves from perceiving

them. Therefore we inhibit our ability to form a true, deep friendship. Let me give an example of what I mean.

When I came to Nepal many years ago as an educational volunteer to Bal Mandir, a new world lay before me that was strange, unexplainable and totally different from my previous experience. I quickly realised that my earlier research of the country, culture and religion though helpful, had not truly reflected daily life in

My love and respect for this beautiful country has not diminished, but has transformed due to the deep connections I have developed with some people there.

In Nepal, as in my own country, many people are unable to develop their capacity for respect, freedom and love.

Enduring connections

Nepal. I walked as though in a dream through Asan Tol, overwhelmed by new and indescribable experiences, until reality called me back to my mission.



■ Elsbeth Wetzel

Of course I tried to change too much, too quickly, and this led to many misunderstandings. My colleagues would agree to certain goals in a limited amount of time, but somehow these goals were never quite met. I felt aggravated and frustrated, because although my co-workers would say “Ho, Hajur, Memsab” to satisfy me, the words were empty of the will to turn my request into action.

Soon I understood that I was overwhelming my colleagues. “Why change something that has been done the same way all these past years?” If a VIP came to visit however, disorder was quickly put in order, the house cleaned and children freshly dressed. Superficial improvements were made to impress the higher-ranked people, but they were not prepared to make profound changes to improve on the work at hand, that most impacted on their lives.

Eventually I started to cut back on my demands, and started to pay more attention to my co-workers as individuals. I thought more about how they felt, having never been given the opportunity to develop confidence in themselves, only ever to react submissively to the will of someone stationed in a higher rung in life than them.

This realisation helped me to understand and change, mentally. Only through the awareness of my own thoughts and development of empathy toward my colleagues could I understand and work towards developing a connection with them. I tried hard to help them awaken abilities in themselves and raise their level of self-confidence.

In Nepal, as in my own country, many people are unable to develop their capacity for respect, freedom and love. A close human connection, however, can only be possible if these elements, as well as maturity, self-knowledge and courage are present.

Almost forty years have passed since my first encounter with Nepal. My love and respect for this beautiful country has not diminished, but has transformed due to the deep connections I have developed with some people there. We have learned to be aware of ourselves, and our future. We have shared happiness and grief. This kind of friendship ends only with death.

(Elsbeth is a child psychologist based in Zurich, Switzerland - elsbeth.wetzel@bluewin.ch)

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STATUTORY DIRECTIVE: SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Asian floods displace 25 million

Nearly 25 million people have been displaced by flooding and 1400 killed in South Asia as the worst monsoon rains to hit the region in decades continued to wreak havoc on Saturday.

Northern India, Bangladesh and Nepal are the worst affected according to officials dealing with the crisis, with many people falling victim to disease.

In India alone, the number of dead topped 1100 by late Friday, the United Nations' child welfare agency said in a statement.

"According to government estimates, the cumulative number of human casualties stands at 1103 in 138 affected districts," said UNICEF.

Northern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states and north-eastern Assam were among the worst off, with 10-million people hit by floods in Bihar alone, according to a Press Trust of India news agency report on Saturday.

In Uttar Pradesh, 19 more deaths were reported overnight taking the toll there to 119, state relief commissioner Umesh Sinha, said.

Some 2400 villages are under water, he said, adding that boats were put into service to deliver aid.

Downstream in West Bengal state, "Large swathes of land were flooded Saturday as two rivers breached their embankments," relief minister Mortaza Hossain said.

Almost 16 000 people were suffering from water-borne diseases "as clean drinking water has become scarce in the flood-affected villages," Hossain said, adding that medical teams have been rushed to the area.

In Assam state, 5.5 million were displaced in



26 of the state's 27 districts, chief minister Taun Gogoi said.

"Teams of doctors and paramedics are on full alert and visiting flood-hit areas, although there are no reports of any major outbreak of waterborne diseases," he said.

Floods were also wreaking havoc for 1.4-million people in Uttar Pradesh, officials said, with further heavy rains expected.

The monsoon, which lasts from June to September, regularly brings flooding to South Asia but this year has witnessed some of the worst conditions in living memory with the north

and east particularly hard hit.

"The situation we have now is unprecedented in the past 30 years," A.K Chowdhury, Bihar chief secretary, told AFP by phone.

Two Indian Air Force helicopters started airdropping food to villagers marooned in Bihar's worst-hit Darbhanga district.

As many as 24 people died in the state on Friday, PTI said, and early estimates from officials suggest losses of 450-million rupees (\$11-million) to the state exchequer.

Bangladesh said the situation this year appeared to be worse than floods in 2004,

which inundated more than a third of the country.

"In the last 15 days, all major rivers rose above danger levels and their water has already inundated some 40 per cent of the country's total land area," said Saiful Hossain of Bangladesh's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

Deaths from monsoon rains there topped 200 on Saturday, with at least 16 more fatalities reported overnight, according to the Bangladesh food and disaster management ministry, taking the monsoon toll this year to 207.

"It's a major flood and one of the worse in years. In some places the situation is far worse than in 2004," said Hossain, referring to floods three years ago when 38 percent of land was inundated, forcing millions to flee their homes.

This year, 7.5-million people have been either displaced or marooned in villages as the floods washed away or damaged about 89,000 mud-built or tin-roofed houses.

Of those an estimated 255 000 have been moved to government shelters.

The government has mobilised thousands of military, public and private volunteers to distribute relief supplies including dry food and water purification tablets, but a lack of boats has hampered their efforts.

In Nepal, the home ministry said the toll from monsoon-triggered flooding and landslides stood at 91 on Saturday, with most of the deaths in the Terai plains region on Nepal's southern border with India.

(*lafrica.com*)

Karzai, Bush to meet amid SKorea hostage standoff

South Korea said Sunday it hoped a meeting between the Afghan and US presidents could break the apparent deadlock in negotiations for the release of 21 aid workers held hostage by the Taliban.

President Hamid Karzai left early Sunday for two days of meetings with George W. Bush to discuss a range of issues -- from the US-led "war or terror" being played out in Afghanistan to the country's booming opium production.

But the Camp David meeting risks being overshadowed by the South Korean hostage drama in which Kabul, apparently backed by Washington, is refusing the Taliban's demand for the release of jailed militants.

The headline Islamic militia has murdered two men in the group of church aid workers kidnapped in volatile southern Ghazni province on July 19 and has warned more could be killed. "We are hopeful of any positive outcome from the meeting," an official at the South Korean embassy in Kabul said hours after Karzai left for the United States with some of his most senior officials.

"It is the decision of the Afghan government. We want to solve this in a peaceful and constructive way," the official said, requesting anonymity.

The official and families of the captives in Seoul refused to comment on an emotional plea for

help Saturday from a purported hostage whom a Taliban spokesman put into contact with AFP.

"I don't want to die. We want to go home," the woman said by telephone from an undisclosed location. "I don't know how long we can survive."

There was no way to verify that the woman in fact belongs to the group seized 17 days ago on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, considered a no-go area by many foreigners amid deteriorating security across the country. The call appears to have been aimed at intensifying pressure on the Afghan government as talks on the fate of the hostages seem to be stalled.

Afghan negotiators again Saturday ruled out a prisoner exchange and said any deal to free the group would have to involve a ransom payout. Talks were now being conducted mainly by a South Korean delegation, said Mahmood Gailani, a member of the Afghan negotiating team.

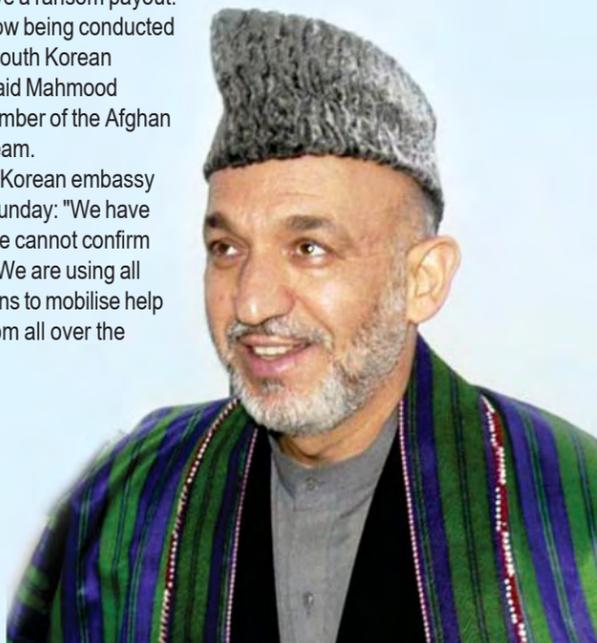
The South Korean embassy official said Sunday: "We have contact but we cannot confirm the channel. We are using all possible means to mobilise help or support from all over the world."

Islamabad had been approached for assistance, he said, but refused to comment on an allegation by Ghazni governor Mirajuddin Patten that Pakistan's powerful state intelligence agency was "interfering" in the crisis.

Afghan officials have long alleged that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency is involved in the Taliban insurgency, having helped the Islamic organisation to power in 1996.

The insurgency has grown stronger each year since it was launched soon after the hardliners were driven from power in a US-led invasion in late 2001 for sheltering the Al-Qaeda group behind the 9/11 attacks.

(*Brisbane Times*)



Crowds greet release of Musharraf foe

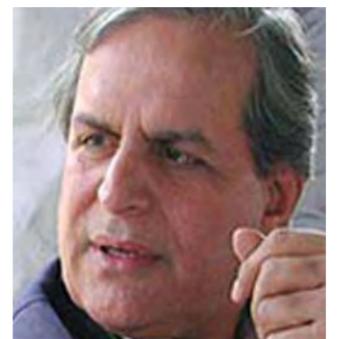
Hundreds of jubilant supporters of a top Pakistani opposition leader yesterday chanted slogans against President Pervez Musharraf as they greeted him on release from prison after serving around four years for sedition.

Javed Hashmi, a member of the National Assembly and acting president of Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), was sentenced to a consolidated jail term of 23 years in 2004 on treason charges for criticising the army. He had been accused of distributing a letter which he said was from army officers against Musharraf.

A three-member panel of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, on Friday granted him bail, saying that he had served enough time to qualify for release under prison rules. Hashmi's supporters showered rose petals on him and released pigeons in the air as he walked out of the Kot Lakhpat prison in Lahore, capital of central Punjab province. They also chanted slogans such as "Go Musharraf, go."

"Our struggle for the freedom of 160mn Pakistanis will continue till we get rid of the military dictatorship," Hashmi told the crowd. "The prison bars cannot shake our resolve to restore democracy in the country."

He was scheduled to lead a rally travelling through PML-N-dominated areas of Lahore, which is regarded as the power centre of Pakistani politics.



Hashmi's release is read by many as a sign of the growing independence of the Supreme Court, which recently reinstated Chaudhry by overturning his suspension ordered by Musharraf.

The court can pose further challenges to the embattled president, whose authority is constantly being challenged by the growing Islamic militancy in the country, particularly in the North-West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan. The apex court is scheduled to hear several petitions challenging the legitimacy of Musharraf's rule in the coming months. In addition, Musharraf's opponents say they plan to consult the court on the president's controversial plan for re-election for the next term from the current assemblies.

The rejuvenated judiciary has also encouraged exiled former premier Nawaz Sharif — whom Musharraf ousted in a bloodless military coup in 1999 — to petition the court to rule him eligible so he can return home to contest next year's general elections.

(*Gulf Times*)

"Becoming" a literary legend

Most of the female protagonists in Jane Austen's early 19th century novels were given poor circumstances, complicated love lives and last minute happy endings (mostly in the form of successful marriages). But Jane Austen's own life? Not so much.

To most female literature lovers, seeing "Becoming Jane," the new drama about the early life of Jane Austen, will serve as the biggest literary hard-on they've come across since Colin Firth donned tights and fell head over heels for Elizabeth Bennet. (I don't mean to leave the fellas out here, but let's be honest—the only guys I saw at the movie's screening had that forced-dragged-kicked- "I better be getting laid for this" expression on their faces. And who can blame them? Jane Austen is the original, be-all-end-all of chick lit lore.)

But "Becoming Jane," while it lives up to the needs of die-hard literature lovers and chick flick fans alike, varies from Austen's own tried and tested form in one crucial way—there is no happy ending.

I don't feel I'm giving anything away here. Anyone who's read Jane Austen in a ninth grade English class knows that while she wrote of great romance and class divisions, in her own life she never married and died at the young age of 41. The movie, being a biopic *very loosely* based in fact, can't change the prolific author's history, and thus "Becoming Jane"

sets itself apart from the "Pride and Prejudices," or even the "Bridget Jones's" of the world because, well, it is based in real life. And real life (and love) doesn't always end happily.

The plot of the movie follows the loosely documented early years of Austen's life, right before she sat down to pen her first novel, "First Impressions" (later to become "Pride and Prejudice"). She is living in a country estate with her family, including a deeply in debt reverend father (James Cromwell), a marriage-minded mother (Julie Walters), an engaged sister and deaf brother. Jane, like many of her future literary characters, feels the pressure to marry for money and help her family out of their impending destitution. But, also like her characters, Jane refuses to marry without affection.

Enter the hero Tom LeFroy, one Irish "whore-mongering layabout" (played by James McAvoy, who seriously gives Colin Firth a run for his money) who is sent to the sticks as punishment from his lawyer uncle. The cocky Mr. LeFroy and the witty (but naïve) Jane almost immediately share a mutual dislike of each other, which of course develops into a romance.

But in 19th century England, having undisputable good looks and amazing chemistry doesn't necessarily provide for an easy engagement. Money matters, and unfortunately our two main characters have none.

Obstacles arise, and unlike in



Austen's fiction or in the by-the-numbers romantic comedies of today, they are not so easily overcome.

Which gives rise to even more interesting insights into the life of one of the greatest literary legends of all time. That Jane Austen may have written love stories known the world over, without ever knowing such a thing for herself, offers great insight not only into her own psyche but into the heart of what writing is.

Is it necessary for Austen, or for anyone, to experience something before putting it on paper for the world to experience as well? And if real life does not work out the way we would like, is it okay to live through fictional characters? The movie subtly raises these questions and one more: If Austen's own love story had ended differently, she may not have authored her classic works that have affected the lives of millions. But was that worth her own happiness?

(Lumino magazine)

Insight

Hit and kill

We lack humanitarian laws that value life.



■ Sushma Amatya

A truck driver hits a scooter and the lady driver falls, recovers from the shock and tries to stand up. The truck driver reverses and runs her over and kills her. In another case, a man driving a motorcycle gets hit by a water tanker and falls down. Lucky for the man, there are students in a nearby college watching the incident. The driver is quickly stoned by the students as he tries to reverse and the police called in. The motorcyclist escapes a certain death.

These are true incidents that took place in different parts of Kathmandu just a few years ago; seen by witnesses. In yet another recent case, a young man riding a scooter back home late night was hit by a car. The car ran away leaving the victim unconscious. The driver is unidentified till date. The victim, a 30 year old man has already undergone four throat operations in a hospital in N. Delhi since his case could not be handled by doctors here. He has a silicon pipe inside his throat to help him breathe and he is unable to speak normally since the accident damaged his voice box.

Accidents like these where numerous lives are lost or damaged; untold sufferings caused to the surviving victims and their families are common stories that are made on the highways of Nepal and roads of Kathmandu. Though these stories did not hit the headlines and the surviving victims of such accidents did not take out rallies and call for Bandhs; the fact remains that precious lives were lost or impacted adversely due to carelessness and callousness of the drivers.

Why are such drivers of bigger vehicles known to kill and not leave the victims of such accidents alive? Because the law in Nepal states that if you kill, then you pay a fine of Rs. 17,000. But if the victim is hurt you have to pay the hospital bills and pay for the maintenance of the person if maimed for life. Since killing works out cheaper, they opt for it. After all, life seems to have no value here. Letting them survive would be expensive. Just goes to show how direly we Nepalis are in need of reviewing our justice system, the existing laws. We lack humanitarian laws that value life.

Accidents do happen and it is not always the fault of the bigger vehicle, as is assumed here. But no matter whose fault the accident is, pre-meditated murder it is when someone comes back to kill a fallen victim. But these instances of cold blooded murder will not stop unless and until the law is changed. A thorough investigation as to whose fault it is needs to be carried out and the guilty duly charged, depending on the circumstances and severity of such cases.

Drivers who reverse and kill must be tried for deliberate murder. Simplistic laws lacking foresight, such as those we have now, have huge loopholes through which many murders have been and will be committed. Vicious roots of corruption that has its grips at all levels is another major factor that hinders justice. Fear and intimidation keeps witnesses from speaking out or testifying.

Drivers of any vehicle, big or small, public or private, must be made aware of value of life before they are given the permission to drive on the roads. It is imperative that they have full appreciation for lives of others out on the roads as well as those they may be carrying in their vehicles. Without this sense of responsibility and without a sound training in traffic rules, it is lethal to let loose ignorant, untrained drivers out on the roads.

Rampant corruption prevailing in granting of driving permits must be stopped. Stringent rules must be imposed to stop license from being sold or obtained through the back doors. Violators of traffic rules must be brought to justice and the law has to remain above muscle or money power. License of traffic rule violators should be revoked, withheld or drivers disqualified as is practiced in western countries. It must be drilled into the citizens' minds that in case of accidents, no matter whose fault, the first step is to rush the victim to the nearest hospital. Only by implementing firm measures can sanity in our roads be regained.

Granted that the present day chaotic condition in our roads reflects the attitude of the majority but there has to be a beginning to redeem what is lost before it is too late. This starts with taking small steps. Just talking about it is not going to help. Starting by learning to treasure other's lives as much as one's own is the first step. ■

Accidents do happen and it is not always the fault of the bigger vehicle, as is assumed here. But no matter whose fault the accident is, pre-meditated murder it is when someone comes back to kill a fallen victim.



Blind love - dangerous

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

My husband blames me for my son's addiction. Is it my fault? What can mothers do to prevent their children from being addicts?

■ Mrs. S. Bhatia, Biratnagar
It is not your fault. In our society, a mother becomes a punching bag for husbands and children when anything goes wrong. But the fact remains that despite any roles addicts' families might have played to contribute to problems of the past, addicts know that drug use and destructive actions that accompany drug use are not ok and that their addiction is not caused by their families.

Your son is responsible for his own actions. However it is the mother who can spot changes in her child first. Thus, it is very important for mothers to watch closely the actions of her children and be aware of any changes. If there are signs of mood swings, dishonesty, lying to family and friends, distancing from others, depression in your child, you should know that there is a problem.

Some mothers get blinded by their love for their children and even when she knows they are doing wrong things, she tries to

protect them and hides it from others. By doing so, she pushes the ones she loves the most onto a destructive path. We should remember that whenever a child is not reprimanded for his/her wrong doings, we are encouraging him/her to repeat the mistakes and become worse.

Giving children more money than needed and getting them in company of 'spoilt' kids could expose them to chances of addiction. It is easy for children to fall into promises of 'fun and pleasure' by other addicts. It takes a lot of self awareness to resist such temptations.

What is hashish?

■ Yadav Jha, Birgunj
Hashish (commonly called hash) is a form of cannabis produced by drying the most potent material that marijuana plants naturally generate as part of their growth cycle. It is then compressed into a variety of forms, such as balls, cakes or sheets. Pieces are then broken off, placed in pipes and smoked.

The female marijuana plants are a rich source of THC (the primary chemical that causes intoxication when ingested). Hashish is a concentrated form of THC in which most plant matter found in cannabis plant is taken out. Therefore, hashish

is more potent than marijuana.

Short term effects of using it are muscular disorientation, slurred speech, nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea and reddening of eyes. Concentration, short-term memory, balance, ability to process information and judgment are all markedly impaired. Outside symptoms of the users is that they feel calm, relaxed, talkative and giddy temporarily.

Appetite, reaction time, pulse rate and pupil size are increased. Sense of time and space are distorted. Other symptoms are fearfulness, laughter, anxiety, and depression. Hash users also experience hallucinations, paranoia and panic reactions with larger doses and symptoms worsen in persons with psychiatric disorders. Long term effects of hash increased risk of cancers in oral cavity, etc. It also affects respiratory system, menstrual cycle and sperm count adversely. There is a lot of damage to brain and nerves so a person will have problem while recalling things and will have decreased motivation.

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

Papa's got DNA-tested children

DNA testing on about a dozen people who claim soul singer James Brown was their father has found at least two of them are telling the truth.

The numbers may rise as although several tests have come back negative, others are still pending, said Buddy Dallas, a former adviser to the music legend.

Dallas refused to identify the two people whose DNA showed they were Brown's children but LaRhonda Pettitt, a 45-year-old retired flight attendant and teacher from Houston, showed newspapers a report that says there is a 99.99% probability she is Brown's daughter. She would be the oldest of Brown's children.

Brown picked out Pettitt's mother from the crowd at a show in Los Angeles in the early 1960s, and she became the singer's girlfriend, sometimes ironing his shirts before shows, Pettitt said. But she became pregnant, split up with Brown and moved back to Houston. She would point to the television when Brown was performing and tell her daughter the singer was her father, Pettitt revealed.

She added she had met Brown at concerts and spoke to him over the phone, but he never acknowledged being her father. "I was angry

that he was out there making all this money, and he wasn't doing anything for my mother and me," Pettitt said. "I could have had a better life."

Brown died on Christmas Day last year of heart failure, aged 73. His body was entombed in a crypt at the home of one of his daughters in March. Brown's will, which is being disputed in court, names six children.

One possible child of Brown's who has not undergone a DNA test is six-year-old James Brown II, the son of Tomi Rae Hynie. Hynie was one of Brown's backup singers and said she is the singer's fourth wife. But Brown's attorneys continue to dispute that claim, and the boy and his mother are not in

A 45-year-old retired flight attendant showed a report that says there is a 99.99% probability she is Brown's daughter.

the singer's will.

Whether Pettitt makes a claim to Brown's estate will depend whether the will holds up, said her lawyer, Jim Griffin. He would at least like Pettitt's two daughters to be eligible for a trust the singer set up to pay for his grandchildren's education, he said. Pettitt said she has grown less bitter about Brown as the years have passed.

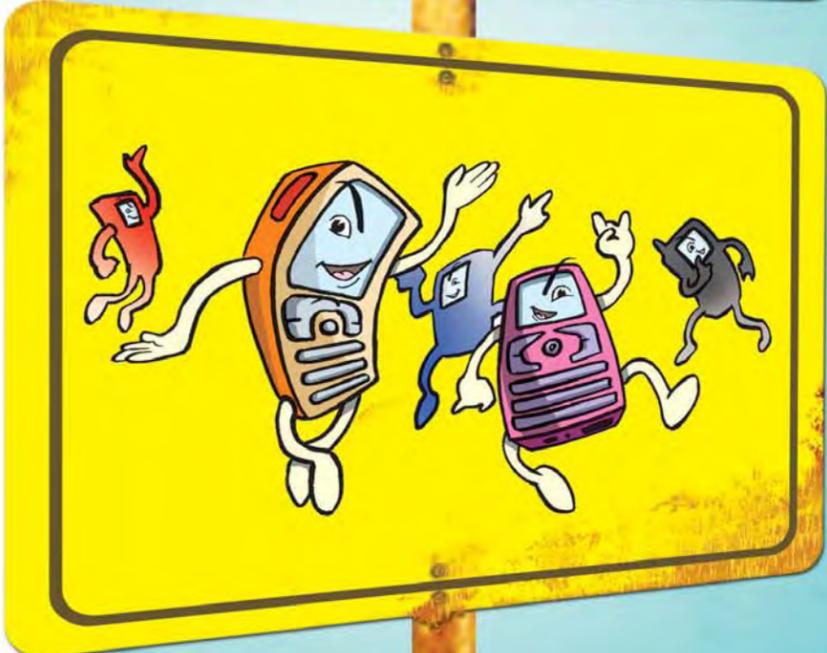
(NEWS.scotsman.com)





नेपाली रिङटोन्स

रेशम फिरि रेशम फिरि





अब उत्कृष्ट नेपाली गीतहरूको रिङटोन्सका साथ नेपाल टेलिकम र मेरो मोबाइलमा

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