



Courage & Conviction

# newsfront

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**Bhutani refugees in Long March to Bhutan crossing Mechi Bridge. The procession was fired upon and dispersed by Indian security personnel when they entered Indian territory.**  
*News on page 2*



Om Adhina Rai

# Tame or dismiss

## PM tells Prachanda: YCL has criminals in it

■ **nf correspondent**

He had enough reasons to fret and fume. Having to tender unqualified apology to an American official and face international community's protest has not been an easy job for Koirala. He took it upon Maoist Chief Prachanda and his comrade-in-arms Baburam Bhattarai with a warning, "You either tame Young Communist League (YCL), or I will deal with them, like a state should be dealing with criminals."

Koirala's anger was triggered off by pressure on him to ban YCL for its various activities detrimental to the peace process as well as the law and order in the country. "Maoist leaders have even been given names of criminals active in YCL," a Prime Minister's Office (PMO) source told newsfront.

Koirala, sources said, is also going to pressurise Prachanda to apologise

personally to Abraham Abraham and Moriarty for the attack on them. "He must apologise to them. Why should I hang my head in shame and say sorry to every diplomat for the crime YCL commits," Koirala has been telling his regular visitors, mainly Nepali Congress leaders during the past few days.

**Koirala's anger was triggered off by pressure on him to ban YCL for its various activities detrimental to the peace process.**

A Congress working committee member who does not want to be identified, quoted Koirala as saying "I had thought that Prachanda had realised the mistake when he stopped repeating the public statement he made earlier about the King hatching

a plot to kill some American diplomats. But what YCL is doing is worse."

Quick to read the meaning behind this anger, YCL, apparently under instruction from Prachanda declared that it would soon get on to 'cleaning Kathmandu' and 'arresting sandalwood smugglers'

campaign to earn a clean image. "But that would not be enough this time. Media is also largely responsible for helping Maoists get a Robin Hood image. Koirala has

asked Prachanda to fast bridle YCL as promised and retain his political credibility," the source quoted Koirala.

From attacking the UN and US diplomats in Jhapa and Congress leaders in Nuwakot, YCL has also

been kidnapping businessmen for ransom as per the official reports from western Nepal. "If YCL activities continue in this direction and pace, they would be the biggest obstacle in conducting election to the Constituent Assembly", said Dr Shekhar Koirala at a public meeting in Jhapa on Saturday in presence of the Prime Minister.

Sources claim that the PM had sent Shekhar at least three times to talk with the Maoist leaders asking for a firm deadline by which they have to curb YCL's criminal activities or face the government wrath. ■

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# Getting impatient

16 years has been too long a wait in vain

■ nf correspondent

Since a long and patient wait for 16 years seemed to be leading nowhere, it was only natural for the Bhutani refugees to carry on the 'long march' in a do or die spirit. The march and the run up to it last week has already cost four lives - two died from bullets shot from Nepali side and two from the Indian security authorities. There are fears that it could be the beginning of an ugly turn of events that India, Nepal and Bhutan did not anticipate.

More than 36 refugees are admitted to hospitals, mostly in Dharan. About ten of them are in critical conditions since the Indian security personnel showered bullets on them to foil their march to Thimpu last week.

"We have suspended the march for a fortnight beginning May 29 following assurance from Indian authorities that the government of India would give its response within that period," Bhutani Movement Action Committee said. The promised 'response or reaction', for the Bhutanis, simply means that India might reconsider its consistent approach that the problem related with the refugees is essentially a bilateral issue which Bhutan and Nepal should sort out.

For the first time Nepal extended its moral support to the political movement of the refugees for democracy and human rights in Bhutan. Home Minister K.P.Sitaula expressed the support in Jhapa on Saturday.

Nepal, ever since the beginning of the problem, has unsuccessfully been seeking

Indian mediation for simple facts that the refugees, now around 107,000 in number, came to Nepal through Indian soil without their being given the 'refuge' that India had been giving to Bangladeshis and Sri Lankan Tamils. "India stopping them now in the name of boarder encroachment is wrong," opined Yadav Kant Silawal, former Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Trouble started in Beladangi camp in Jhapa on May 27 when a group of Bhutani refugees aided and instigated by the Maoists attacked rival group which has been supporting the third party settlement move initiated by the UNHCR and supported by the US, European Union, Australia and Scandinavian countries. Police intervention in Beladangi camp resulted in the loss of lives of two refugees.

The tension took an ugly turn on Monday when Bhutani refugees on the long march to Thimpu were stopped and fired upon by the Indian authorities across the boarder. "Our struggle is for peace, democracy, human dignity and for our right to settle down in our country as equal citizens. We urge upon India and other countries to extend their moral support in our struggle," Tek Nath Rizal, Bhutan's well known pro-democracy and human rights leader told newsfront.

Action committee sources say that if there is no change in India's attitude and it continues to support the King of Bhutan in his campaign of 'genocide', refugees will have no other option other than taking the march to its logical conclusion.

# Overhaul passports

■ nf correspondent

Nepali passport might soon be outdated and 'unacceptable' for world outside if it is not changed into a 'machine readable' - an easy verifiable one. The government is under pressure to switch to the new variety since the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has indicated that it would not allow people to travel with the existing version of passport beyond year 2010.

"Yes, we are aware of the ICAO instruction, but the move to have a new set of passport that is machine readable is yet to begin since there is no decision taken at the minister or cabinet level. We cannot start it on our own," a joint secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told newsfront.

Foreign companies interested in undertaking printing and supplying new type of passport following the ICAO decision have already approached the ministry and even conducted a 'demonstration' on May 23. Thomas Dellarue, a UK based company, is believed to have offered the government to undertake passport printing and supply for USD 50,000 (35 million Nepali Rupees), but the matter has not received serious attention from the government, official sources said.

There have been complaints from different countries that Nepali passport holders are already facing trouble since immigration authorities at many international airports have sometimes detained Nepalis, or made long queries on whether their

passport is a genuine or a fake one. Although the ministry did not have exact number of such cases, it has been confirmed that such incidents are taking place.

Although Shital Niwas decentralised passport distribution system in all the district headquarters authorising the Chief District Officer (CDO) to issue passports, it is done in the name of the Chief Protocol Officer, and there is no representation or involvement of the protocol section while issuing passports outside the capital.

"Nepali passport containing hand-written particulars of individuals are not even easy to read. It needs to be replaced urgently and immediately," said an official in the protocol division.

The cost of replacement would not be high at all, officials claim. Roughly more than 300,000 passports have been distributed already which would need to be replaced. In fact, the passports distributed during the past few years are not uniform in shape, size and appearance; as a result of many previous ministers experimenting with passport system and changing printing press. Replacement of the existing passport would sort out that discrepancy, sources said.

According to the Shital Niwas sources, while the present passport for which each individual needs to pay Rs. 5000 may not actually cost more than one dollar, the electronic machine readable ones might be worth some five Dollars; and it is for the government to review the passport fee if the existing Rs.5000 is not enough.

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## News Brief

## A soldier wins again

He won both the times. It was his valour, war-skills, Khukuri and other conventional weapons that made him a winner the first time. The latest victory came around after a prolonged exchange of letters that forced the British government to reverse its earlier decision refusing him visa for medical treatment.

For the first victory, he won Victoria Cross, the highest military award that UK offers; and for his second he gets a visa to UK for medical treatment, and perhaps medical expenses for multiple ailments he suffers from in his old age.

Tul Bahadur Pun (84) had been awarded VC for his gallant display of bravery during the Second World War when he fought against Japan and for the British. He hoped that the country he fought for, risking his life would be generous enough to grant him a settlement visa which he had requested mainly on medical grounds. He has been suffering for long from asthma, diabetes, heart problems as well as high blood pressure. But to his disappointment, the response from the UK government earlier was negative.

Its stand was that Pun failed to demonstrate that he had strong ties with the UK to qualify for the visa. But to his surprise and happiness, the previous decision was withdrawn and he was granted visa on June 1 as an exceptional case.

"The circumstances surrounding Tul Bahadur Pun's case are clearly exceptional and in light of this, Home Secretary John Reid and I have reviewed the case and made the decision to grant Mr. Pun a settlement visa immediately," Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said.



Tul Bahadur Pun

## No Politics, Mr. IGP

Hobnobbing with politicians, especially in power, is neither new for our policemen nor are the politicians seen to be discouraging it. That PM Koirala gave his piece of mind to Armed Police Force Chief Basudev Oli recently, certainly comes as something new and perhaps surprising as well, as none other than G P Koirala has been accused of politicising the police and the armed police force.

The occasion was the wedding reception of Congress party's nominated parliamentarian, Amaresh Kumar Singh recently for which the APF club was the venue. But it was Oli who received and saw off most politicians including PM Koirala, Maoist Chief Prachanda and most others in power who were the Singh couple's guests. A visibly agitated Koirala bluntly told Oli, "It is not your job to do what you are doing."

The warning seems to have had a subtle effect. The IGP told few senior officials that it was perhaps time that the policy of giving APF club for politicians on rent for celebrating social occasions is reviewed. But the overwhelming suggestion was that: the APF could follow the Army and Police club model where their respective clubs are given on rent for such functions; and all that needs to be ensured is that APF bosses do not become the master of ceremony themselves, like the one witnessed during the wedding.

## Dual approach

The Home Ministry seems to have observed one set of rules for civil and another for security officials while handing them the 'letter of warning' on the basis of findings of the Rayamajhi Commission which probed misuse of state power and money to suppress the people's movement last year.

As a result of a ministerial committee headed by then Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Oli, the Home Ministry decided to hand-over the letter to the officials, both from civil and security side. The civilian officials were simply handed over the letter which stated that they should be more concerned and committed towards the human rights in future.

Whereas the letters to civilian officials had no copies forwarded anywhere, the copies of the letters given to security officials have been forwarded to several other officials including the record section. "It must have been done by the Home Ministry on its own. We did not recommend this dual approach," a member of the ministerial committee told newsfront.



Khadga Oli

## Act of deceit

Diplomats say our safety is govt. duty

■ nf correspondent

G P Koirala's understanding of diplomacy seems limited since he appears to think that saying one thing and doing just the opposite will not invite trouble for him. He apologised and promised to bring those guilty for attack on Ambassador James Moriarty in Damak on May 25 when the visiting U S Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human rights and Labour (DRL), Barry F Lowenkron called on him on June 1. But his government acted on contrary to the promise made.

By the time, Lowenkron came out of the meeting, happy and satisfied with Koirala's assurance; an order had been sent out for all the four Young Communist League (YCL) activists to be released, thanks to Koirala's Home Minister K P Sitaula, who could not resist Maoists' pressure. The Chief District Officer of Jhapa, Jaya Mukunda Khanal, was instructed to release the four immediately, although they will have to face the trial.

Since the government's promise and action did not match, ambassadors and mission representatives of eight countries including U S and India have condemned any and all, "attempts to harm, threaten, or interfere with foreign diplomats working in Nepal." It also reminds the government that it has a duty to protect them.

A joint statement issued on behalf of the diplomatic corps in Nepal said it is deeply concerned by the upsurge of security incidents in recent weeks



Prime Minister Koirala

that have either threatened foreign diplomats or impeded their work in the country. "Targeting or threatening diplomats in Nepal on their countries' official business is unacceptable. The diplomatic corps urges all political groups and activists to respect customary norms and reject violence or intimidation. We also remind the government of Nepal of its role to ensure security and safety for diplomats."

Those issuing the statement include embassies of the United States of America, France, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Denmark, Israel, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, United Kingdom, Bangladesh and Finland. China, North Korea and Sri Lanka are

waiting for the approval of their government to endorse the statement.

The quiet release on June 1 of the four YCL activists, Bishnu Budathoki, Navaraj Subedi, Raj Kumar Dhimal and Renuka Karki who had been arrested within twenty four hours of the attack on a United Nations vehicle in which UNHCR Country Representative Abraham Abraham and Moriarty were traveling goes against what the government promised.

Home Minister Sitaula who gave an assurance to Moriarty during a meeting between the two, prior to Lowenkron's visit had also promised that the government would be acting tough on those guilty for the attack on the diplomatic community. ■

## Yami relents

Government to ask Severn Trent to continue

■ nf correspondent

Severn Trent International (STI), the controversial British Company that was the lone bidder for managing drinking water supply to Kathmandu for six years as part of the ambitious Melamchi drinking water project is in all likelihood going to be asked not to pull out.

A formal approach will be made to STI by the cabinet when it meets this week. The government move appears guided more by the interest to save international image and donors' good-will than its love for the company, a senior government official told newsfront.

STI had declared that it would withdraw from the project after the Maoist leader and Physical Planning and Housing Minister, Hishila Yami, said publicly that at no cost would she want the "defamed" STI to be part of the project.

As a result, the government failed to sign the award of contract with STI on May 15, the stipulated deadline for the purpose. "We will ask STI to continue with the project, and think about other alternatives only if it refuses," Finance Minister Dr Ram Sharan Mahat told newsfront. Mahat, warned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other donor agencies that they might withdraw from many developmental projects in Nepal if the government fails to honour its commitment about handing over the management to private parties for supply of drinking water in Kathmandu, has been shuttling between donor agencies, Maoist leaders and



Hishila Yami

the Prime Minister to save the project at any cost.

It is not yet known how Yami would take it personally once the cabinet decides to ask STI to continue, but the Maoist leadership and the party are now said to be convinced that inviting a 'defaulter's image' for the country might prove to be a risky affair. Only refusal by STI to start the project could save her face now.

PM G P Koirala, in his longish discussion with Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam, is believed to have explained that withdrawal of STI at this juncture would not only lead to cost review or escalation of the Melamchi project, it would also delay its completion.

The Melamchi project, a victim of government apathy and contradiction among various coalition partners in power so far, will be a separate authority with government-private partnership on its completion, as envisaged by the law already passed by the parliament.





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### Point to Ponder

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 'Lumpenising' democracy

The perceived strength of democracy and rule of law were the only factors that succeeded in bringing together the seven parties and the Maoists to sign the 12 point Delhi agreement; as an alternative to King Gyanendra's autocratic regime. The understanding that together they would build a prosperous Nepal led to the formation of the interim parliament and interim government; the major steps towards holding election to the constitution assembly. Peace and democracy were accepted as the way forward. That meant, all the signatories including the Maoists said good bye to violence, terrorism and illegal activities through the agreement.

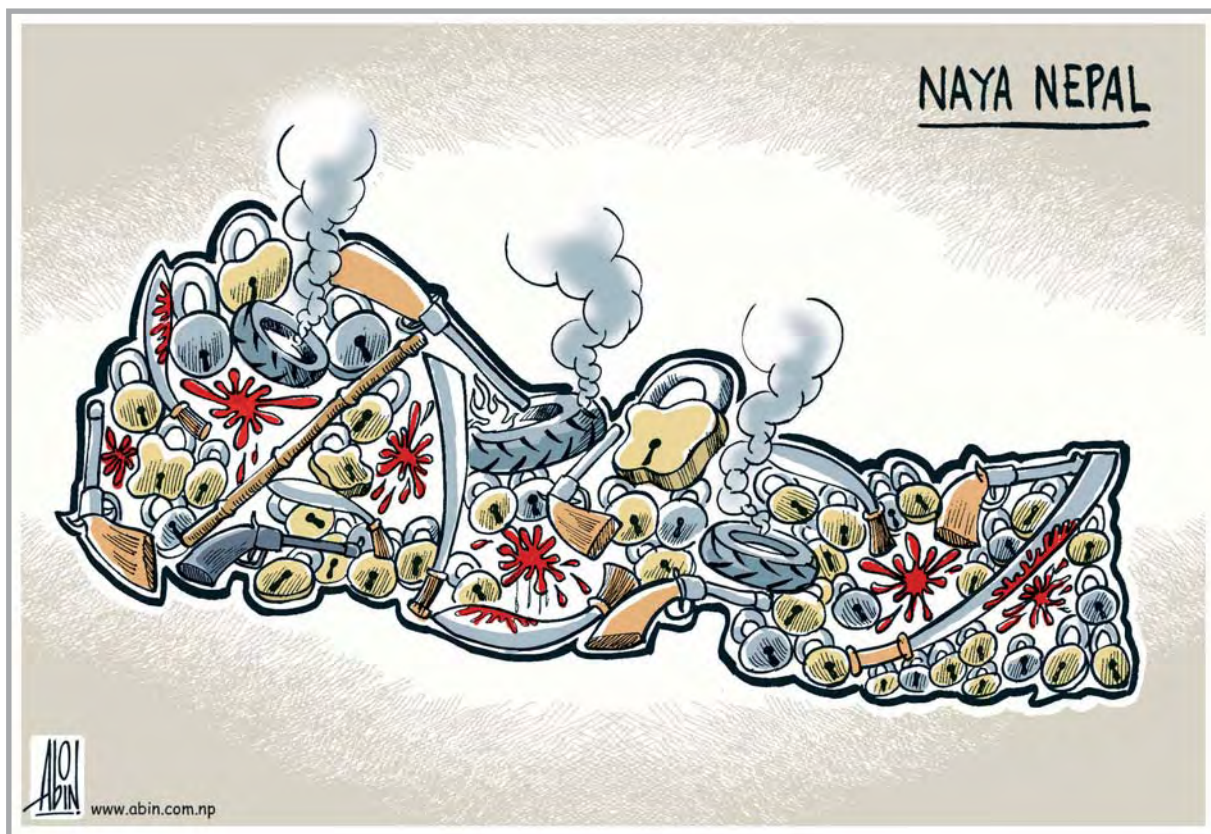
The recent activities of the Maoists through its newly formed terror wing, YCL, therefore goes totally against the letter and spirit of the commitment made. An example of its latest misdemeanor was its attack on a UN vehicle carrying UNHCR Chief Representative, Abraham Abraham and U S Ambassador James Moriarty at Damak. This was an act of perfidy to say the least.

Through these terror tactics YCL has sent out a negative message that not even the diplomatic community, including the UN will be exempted in pursuit of their brand of 'politics'. Maoists must understand that the shocking acts indulged in by them do not improve their image in the international community.

This further gives credence to the fear that not even the UN community may be safe here. Representatives of the diplomatic mission in Kathmandu have already condemned the attack while Prime Minister G P Koirala has apologised to the U S government. But his challenge lies in bringing the guilty to book, and ensuring that the Damak incident becomes a thing of an ugly past.

Commitment to peace process cannot be just a tactical approach. It has to reflect in one's behaviour. The Damak incident warrants outright condemnation of YCL and Maoists. It should also be a challenge for Maoist leadership to dismiss the league as an unwarranted organisation. If Maoists let YCL continue in current form and method, it will amount to endorsing total 'lumpenisation' of politics in the name of democracy and peace process.

The recent attacks also call for the Maoist leadership to apologise unconditionally to the international community in general and to the UN and American diplomats in particular. This will help in transforming the current image of Maoists into that of a political party that follows norms of democracy which are – accountability and justice.



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## Letters

### Waking up civil societies

Thank you, Ms. Amatya for highlighting a topical issue in your last column, 'Under-developed civil sense'. Your opinion has given me hope that citizens do care about issues that affect society as a whole.

Nepal is at a cross-road but public debates on pressing issues - besides politics - are ignored at our own peril. For instance, Kathmandu is the most polluted city in South Asia but are our 'leaders' worried about this? Kathmandu's heritage is endangered due to rapid urbanisation while road accidents are a leading cause of death and disability. As a citizen, I am extremely concerned about the existing state neglect and public apathy that will jeopardise our collective future.

Can we procrastinate addressing these issues ad infinitum - until the constituent assembly elections, after a new constitution is formed, after a new government assumes office and after so and so forth? We will have wasted precious time and the cost will be too high. As part of the civil society, journalists should generate greater public awareness so that actions are taken by the concerned authorities to resolve the problems. Civil societies in other countries are able to influence public opinion on civic issues; and we should be able to do the same here.

**Shyamal Shrestha**  
Economics Officer  
Asian Development Bank  
Nepal Resident Mission



### Unsafe Nepal

This refers to newsfront story, 'Unsafe Nepal.' The attack on UNHCR vehicle by the young communist league activists in Damak with its country representative Abraham Abraham and U S Ambassador, James F Moriarty, are ample examples for the UN community to think that they are perhaps not very safe in Nepal.

The attack got high publicity because of the persons targeted, but this is certainly not for the first time that it has happened. And there must have been reasons behind the UN contemplating security measures for their staff in Nepal.

The incident offers a challenge to both government and the Maoists. It is the duty of the government to give protection to the diplomats and their mission located in Nepal. Secondly, it is also necessary that Maoists and their leaders act in a more responsible manner. Prachanda must learn to differentiate between Madi massacre and the attack on diplomats. He cannot simply say, "We will look into it," or "it was against our party's central policy" and get away with it.

**N B Gurung**  
Ghattekulo, Kathmandu.

### Corrigendum

In our last issue on the front page news, 'Unsafe diplomats,' UNHCR Representative's name, Abraham Abraham was mistakenly written as Rahman Rahman. The error is regretted. - Ed.



## Spiritual Corner

### Dance of inner contentment

Mira was born around 16th Century in Chaukari village in Merta, Rajasthan, India. Swami Sivananda said of Mirabai: "It is extremely difficult to find a parallel to this wonderful personality - Mira, a saint, a philosopher, a poet and a sage. She was a versatile genius and a magnanimous soul. Her life has a singular charm, with extraordinary beauty and marvel."

Precise information about the life of Mirabai is hard to verify. However with the help of her poetry and writings of others; historians have pieced together the different elements of her life.

#### Mirabai's poetries:

### A great yogi

In my travels I spent time with a great yogi.

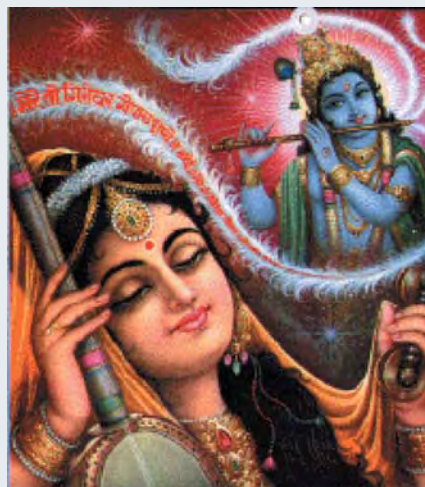
Once he said to me.  
"Become so still you hear the blood flowing through your veins."

One night as I sat in quiet,  
I seemed on the verge of entering a world inside so vast  
I know it is the source of all of us.

### Strange is the Path of love

Do not mention the name of love,  
O my simple-minded companion.  
Strange is the path  
When you offer your love.  
Your body is crushed at the first step.  
If you want to offer love  
Be prepared to cut off your head  
And sit on it.  
Be like the moth,  
Which circles the lamp and offers its body.

Be like the deer, which, on hearing the horn,



Offers its head to the hunter.  
Be like the partridge,  
Which swallows burning coals

In love of the moon.  
Be like the fish  
Which yields up its life

When separated from the sea.  
Be like the bee,  
Entrapped in the closing petals of the lotus.  
Mira's lord is the courtly Giridhara.  
She says, offer your mind  
To those lotus feet.

### Impenetrable Realm

Go to that impenetrable realm  
That death himself trembles to look upon.  
There plays the fountain of love  
With swans sporting on its waters.  
There the company of holy men is available,  
And one may talk of spiritual knowledge.  
There one can meditate on Shyam  
And purify one's mind.  
There one may bind on  
The anklets of good-conduct,  
And dance the dance of inner contentment.  
There one may adopt a headpiece of gold  
And the sixteen kinds of adornment,  
Let there be love for Shyam  
And indifference to all else.





Bhaswar Ojha

The significance of civil-military relation should be understood in correct perspective. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic or civil service control, but, essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, General Mac Arthur, the commander of both US and UN forces in Korea, publicly criticised the limited nature of the war effort and sabotaged the administration's efforts to initiate negotiations.

Enraged by the challenge to his authority, President Truman relieved Mac Arthur of his command. Despite strong Republican and public support for Mac Arthur, the Joint Chiefs of Staff backed President Truman, and the challenge to civilian authority posed by this 'old soldier' quickly 'faded away'.

No less dramatic is our own case of the controversial Holery incident, in which the Prime Minister had ordered the Army Chief to mobilise the troops for the rescue of the police men who were attacked and kidnapped from a police post by the Maoists.

In this incident, troops were mobilised as per the capability of the army, but, unclear missions of the army, misunderstanding, communication gap, incomprehensive legal provision for the

# Civil-military relations

Conventional wisdom suggests that democracy flourishes where 'truth and justice' and not the 'group' prevail.



■ RD Limbu

mobilisation of military, political problems facing the country, serious problem during the rescue operations, and the need for maintaining secrecy of operations led to serious damage in the civil-military relations. And the relation that developed following the take over of power by the King hit the lowest point in the history of civil-military relations.

There are no universally acceptable criteria for assessing civil-military relations as healthy or unhealthy. Some scholars suggest that good civil-military relations exist when the military stays strictly within its professional realm. However, the definition of what constitutes professional realm could be debatable.

Conventional wisdom suggests that democracy flourishes where 'truth and justice' and not the 'group' prevail. Stable civil-military relation develops when military roles are clearly defined. In this sense, military doctrine could serve as a mirror of the civil-military relation, because, those roles are derived from the military doctrine, which follows government constitution/policy.

Where a nation faces purely conventional external threat, military missions tend to be clear. Under such circumstance, the civilian leadership adopts what Samuel Huntington terms as 'objective control', which means granting the military substantial autonomy in the narrow military realm in return for complete political loyalty. Huntington argues that such objective civilian control is most likely to produce healthy civil-military relations, because external threat orientation makes the military less likely to meddle in domestic politics.

In contrast, if a country faces significant internal threats, military missions tend to be unclear, and it is most likely that the civil authority will be weak and divided. According to Huntington, civilian politicians in such situation adopt

'subjective control', which means controlling the military by politicising it and 'making it more closely resemble the civilian sector'. He argues, civilian politicians, in such turmoil facing the country, are often tempted to involve the military in the domestic politics to: support their particular faction in the struggle with the rival groups and; ensure their group's control of the military. History testifies this.

Throughout the 1960s, and 1970s, various Argentine civilian politicians requested the army for support against other civilian politicians. In Brazil, the civilian opponents of the incumbent regime actively encouraged the military to play active role in domestic politics. In Chile, Allende himself politicised the military by involving military officers in his popular unity govern-

ment. In short, ambiguous military missions could produce the worst pattern of civil-military relations.

Intellectuals, genuinely feel that 'future problems in civil-military relations in new democracies are likely to come not from the military but from the civilian side of the equation'. They will come from the partisan politics leading to failures of democratic governments to promote economic/social development and maintain security. They will also come from weak and fraction ridden political institutions, and ambitious political leaders who may abuse the 'military as their accomplices in undermining or destroying democracies, as Alberto Fujimori did in Peru and as Boris Yeltsin, Lech Walesa, and others might be tempted to do in their own countries'.

To conclude, too loose control of military could result in interference in politics, but, too tight control is certain to make it an ineffective organisation. An ideal civil-military relation should be a stable and enduring relation which is compatible with the national interest and ensures genuine military subordination to civilian authority. To achieve this, the nations transitioning to democracy must allot highest priority to establish a clear defense policy based on ground realities, and formulate practical military doctrine.

With advice from military experts, the government must decide: military roles and missions that are clear and specific; the type of military force needed and; level and type of resources the military needs to carry out its missions. Effective implementation of this defense policy and military doctrine require civilians who understand the military issues.

To this end, the government must establish indigenous institutions where civil and military leaderships can: discuss and share ideas about

**if a country faces significant internal threats, military missions tend to be unclear, and it is most likely that the civil authority will be weak and divided.**

national interests and international issues; know each others' limitations and capabilities and; develop realistic understanding of vital issues impacting on national interests.

Governments must also establish clear legal guidelines for military involvement in domestic

security matters and non military tasks. Such assignments should not adversely affect preparedness for primary military tasks. Another very important issue is the need for legislation regarding the declaration of a state of emergency or the mobilisation of the military, as per the constitution.

This is an extremely sensitive issue requiring precise legal guidelines. Besides, higher defense control organisation must: have a practical composition; be incorporated in the constitution and; be elaborated in the military doctrine. Last but not the least, both variables (civilian and military) of the equation must truly belong to the nation-state ensuring the continuity of national interests under all circumstances. ■



# Wonders of divinity

Devaluing culture and nature is turning Kathmandu into a crass, depressed, isolated consumer society.

ELLEN COON WAS FIRST IN NEPAL IN 1970 WHEN SHE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD. HER FATHER WAS THE US AMBASSADOR TO NEPAL FROM 1981 – 1984. HER LOVE FOR NEPAL AND ITS CULTURE BROUGHT HER BACK AGAIN IN 2004 ON A FULBRIGHT GRANT AND SINCE THEN HAS BEEN DOING RESEARCH FOR HER BOOK, NEWAR NARRATIVES OF FEMININE DIVINITY. ELLEN IS MAGNA CUM LAUDE GRADUATE OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION. NEWSFRONT TALKED WITH HER ABOUT HER WORK RECENTLY. EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

Ellen Coon is doing research for her book, Newar narratives of feminine divinity







Pix Niraj sapkota

**Newar culture rivals that of renaissance Italy. People don't know that. It's in danger of being lost. Scholars have no idea that right under their nose there is something so complex, so beautiful.**

**What brought you to this line of work?**

I entered the life of Newars who treated me very lovingly, courtesy of a best friend. I then came to know about mediums, mostly women – called Dyamas, who are possessed by different deities and heal people. I was also intrigued about the amazing civilization of knowledge of the traditional Ajimas, the midwives.

In the 1980s, I came back here for three summers doing interviews with traditional midwives and mediums that heal when in trance. Some of these women have extraordinary voices, are so articulate and they give us a glimpse of a subjective inner world of religious life from a female point of view. I am researching for a non fiction book, informed by all academic reading that I've done.

**What changes have you observed from the time you first came to Kathmandu and today?**

Then, all the images that I saw of females were sacred. I was extremely influenced by that as a child. I saw all around me, female goddesses in temples in divine forms which had a positive effect on me. Female qualities were not devalued in anyway; they were not objectified or cheapened but worshipped. This changed the course of my life actually.

Today, I find that hundreds and hundreds of sacred images have been stolen with cooperation of Nepali higher ups and the western greedy elites and art collectors; who have no idea of how shameful their activities that rip away the objects of worship of living cultures are.

Now we see all around us the devalued imagery of the feminine. Females are reduced to body parts just like in the west - breasts, behind; objectified and reduced to consumer objects. It is deeply saddening to me. In goddesses, we see female quality of wrathfulness, anger that is aroused when things are unjust. That is the holy anger, wrathful energy to

make things right. And I feel that anger right now!

**What insights have you gained through your work?**

We must not for a minute assume that Dyamas are ignorant and primitive people in any way. They have one of the most sophisticated minds living in one of the last living traditional Tantric religious cultures in the world. This culture has resources and values that if the rest of the world knew about would be highly useful for them.

If we look at the purpose of Tantric religion, it is getting close to divinity, meditating upon Dya (meaning god - divinity sans gender). It is all about getting close to divinity through worship, meditation and by receiving god into your body. The purpose of it is that as we get closer to god, through all these means, you awaken your own divine nature and become more and more god like by becoming wiser, more compassionate and unselfish.

Tantric religion allows for ongoing revelations that can occur in dreams, deep meditation and visions. When I watch fresh divine revelations through Dyamas, I am filled with awe and

**Tantric religion allows for ongoing revelations that can occur in dreams, deep meditation and visions. When I watch fresh divine revelations through Dyamas, I am filled with awe and respect.**

respect. Ongoing revelation is necessary and desirable and works hand in hand with literate ritual specialists like the Gubajus.

Working with traditional and religious Newars, many of who are very sophisticated and intelligent, I also realise that Newars are rather reticent people not good at blowing their horns. Due to this they are mostly misunderstood and unnoticed.

**Tell us more about Dyamas.**

With Dyamas, there are many stages of human consciousness that we don't understand. We can't dismiss them just because we don't understand how they work. So, possession by deities is ubiquitous in Newari culture and these include people with Ph.Ds. I've met around 50 Dyamas in and around Kathmandu. Why mostly women? Maybe we women have quicker access to our intuitive states of consciousness.

The Dyamas that I work with are possessed on a regular schedule by different deities, most often by Harati Mata, a Buddhist goddess with animist roots. While these deities are speaking through Dyamas, they diagnose and cure sufferings of people who come to them. It is a regular healing practice. I've seen a lot of

healing taking place. I've also seen things that can't be explained from a western point of view.

**How do people choose which Dyama to go to?**

Just as we prefer a doctor over another depending on how it works for us; people seek out different Dyamas depending on how it works for them. Secondly, how the deity was invoked, whether it descended in the human body naturally or it was invoked through Sadhana, through Tantric practices, seem to matter. People seem to believe more in those Dyamas who are blessed with deity's presence naturally - most of them simple, illiterate women.

Third issue is the motivation that drives Dyamas. Is it power, notoriety or material gains that drive them? Though Dyamas never ask for money and they treat for as little as one Rupee, how pure their intentions are does make a difference in how people perceive them. Personally, I've seen that some Dyamas are one of the purest human beings I've come across.

**Is there any connection between black magic and Dyamas?**

No, I have never met any Dyama who does that. Here in Nepal, people do accuse each other of witchcraft and there have been poor, vulnerable old women accused wrongly. This is something that should end. Dyamas are a wonderful force for caring, serving, getting along with people; it is not for creating harm. At the same time, they

do not encourage women to put up with abuse and become victims of injustice. I admire that.

I do not want to paint a romanticised picture of traditional healing but it is a fact that some part of it is guided by the highest Hindu and Buddhist values. About 70 years ago in this society, women who wanted to be literate or who wanted to lead a religious life were called either a prostitute or a witch. Those were the words used to suppress them.

**What is special about Kathmandu?**

Possession by deity and deity worship is ubiquitous across Nepal but you have a unique Tantric culture concentrated in Kathmandu. It was not only an ancient trade route but also a point where realised Tantric practitioners from Tibet and India gathered. This is an incredible jewel of a valley that has no equal anywhere. Agriculture and wealth surplus allowed elaboration of art and religious civilisation to a degree that I don't think has been matched anywhere except for renaissance Italy.

Newar culture rivals that of renaissance Italy. People don't know that. It's in danger of being lost. Scholars have no idea that right under their nose there is something so complex, so

beautiful. Instead we are allowing this valley to turn into an ugly polluted city. We have to do something.

**What would you do if you could?**

I would immediately impose strict rules against water, air, soil pollution, pesticides and chemical dumping and save the environment first. There have been instances of thriving societies completely wiped out in a space of century or two; because they abused environment and went beyond a 'tipping point.' Abuse environment beyond a tipping point and it vanishes very quickly. You see people fighting over ideologies and abusing nature; but when it gets too much, no matter the politics, no matter which ideology is correct, everybody dies.

Nature is divinity. Gods are embodying natural forces on which we depend for our lives. Devaluing culture and nature is turning Kathmandu into a crass, depressed, isolated consumer society. I accept that people need material goods to lead a comfortable life but we have to look at the way we do it.

**What are the warning signs regarding preservation of this culture?**

I see Tantric Newari culture being strangled. I can talk on and on about the sad state of Guthi Sansthans and how non-Newar government nationalised all land endowments that used to fund temples, religious Jatras (festivals). Now it is run exclusively by non-Newars and handled inadequately to say the least and most of the Guthis are dying out slowly.

Often educated, democratic people seem to get a bad taste in their mouth when they talk about Tantrism because they think about the King going and offering sacrifices at Dakshinkali and doing things to stay in power. They don't need to have that association. The King is a political person and religion is engaged in publicly by political persons for political ends. We only have to look at our own Presidents having endless prayer breakfasts to realise that. You don't have to let our view of a beautiful religion be corrupted by political expressions. The essence of spirituality is free of all those trappings.

**You plan to go to the US to hold a special event for your father in Newari style?**

Yes, I plan to perform an adaptation of Newari 'Buda Janko', a passage of rite, for my father who is turning 80. I got these beautiful carvings made in Bungamati for the Palanquin on which my father will be carried by all his children and grandchildren. It is an imagery I love, that of a flying horse. As you are being carried by your physical descendants on this earth, your mind becomes free like a winged horse that roams through the sky. We don't honour our elders in the west. There is a lot that Newar culture can teach us. ■





# CARTER CENTER CAN DO MORE

The Carter center was invited by the government, political parties, Maoists before they joined the government...

The Prime Minister of Nepal has been reiterating that Constituent Assembly elections would not be possible in the absence of peace and security in the country. He is one hundred percent right. Although significant achievements such as instituting the interim constitution, formation of a new and innovative parliament designed with a view to supporting the lasting peace, setting up camps for UN monitoring of Maoists combatants and arms have been successfully accomplished, creation of a new government led by PM GP Koirala, amidst serious reservations from many quarters including the lone super power, is yet to bear fruit.

Nepali political leaders took this bold step of integrating the Maoists in the current government not only because of their demand but they had also hoped that Maoists as parliamentarians and members of cabinet would abide fully by the peace agreement. Even after two months of joining the government, there is still a sense of unease and uncertainty in the workability of the peace agreement as Maoists actions do not fully match their promises.

The recent country report released by the United States government not only maintains its designation of Maoists insurgency in Nepal as a terrorist organisation but it has also noted the disturbing trend of Maoist-splinter group named 'Janatrantik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM)' which aims to bring about the secession of Terai from Nepal. Mostly the report cites the continuing killings, abductions, extortion, and violence carried out by the Maoists.

American Ambassador to Nepal, who has remained the major voice against Maoists induction in the cabinet prior to them denouncing violence, and completion of arms management process by the UN, has expressed serious concern over the unbridled atrocities by the Maoists across the country. He puts the blame on Maoists for the delay in the start of second phase of PLA verification.

International Crisis Group has come up with a report stating that the Maoists could still resort to physical confrontation should the peace process stagnate. The report comes with reservation on the success of the peace process as it sees Maoists, "joining the parliamentary parties and pushing for a bourgeois 'democratic republic' is just a

stepping stone towards a true people's republic" as they are now arguing that a peaceful revolution is true to their aims which further reflects new political realities.

The report goes on to add that the 'decision to join mainstream politics stemmed from an analysis of the Maoists' own strategic weaknesses' of misplaced belief on military victory, acknowledgement of likelihood of international opposition and lessons from failures causing collapse of many communist regimes in the twentieth century.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter center boasts of its achievements of the past 25 years when it could improve the lives of people in many countries by resolving conflicts, advancing democracy, human rights, economic opportunity and preventing diseases. President Carter has become a legendary figure who seems to always reflect compassion, understanding and support to the people mired in near intractable internal strife in the developing countries.

The Carter center was invited by the government, political parties, Maoists before they joined the government, and the election commission for the purpose of observing the polls. The Center has not only established its election observation office in Kathmandu since January of this year, set up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to



■ Binod P Bista

the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

Although some progress is being achieved, albeit slowly, in all fronts, skepticism and doubts on the state of peace and security by national as well as international agencies place Nepal in

**President Carter, a trusted friend of Nepal, can do more to ease the hurdles in the peace process as he has the confidence of all parties actively involved today.**

a very precarious situation today. Apart from the continuing skepticism of the American Ambassador to Nepal, the recent announcements of the World Bank of its likelihood of stopping activities in places of increasing conflict as well as daily reporting of violence, extortion and extra legal activities by groups affiliated with

the Maoists casts a doubt on the workability of the current peace agreement.

Timely elections to the Constituent Assembly alone can provide the exit to the current impasse. At the same time it is equally essential for all parties in the government to follow in letter and spirit the peace agreement under the interim constitution. Unilateral activities outside the law by any party, however commendable, cannot substitute the due process of law as established. There is no point in engaging in hasty actions since democratic governance demands transparency and accountability under the rule of law.

President Carter, a trusted friend of Nepal, can do more to ease the hurdles in the peace process as he has the confidence of all parties actively involved today. His life time experience of the understanding of relations between the international community and the developing countries, and his hands-on experience on resolving conflicts in many parts of the world including election monitoring is an invaluable asset that Nepal can hardly afford to ignore at this time. ■

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



■ Siddhartha Thapa

## Electoral alliance

communists are aiming to destroy and cleanse the existing social cultural fabric of the country.

The Congress and the Maoists are poles apart but they cannot afford to remain rigid. Koirala has gambled his last card by inducting the Maoist into the government and the Maoist know there are no other viable legitimate alternatives to the present set up. The success and failure for both Koirala and Prachanda largely depend on their commitment to adhere to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in November 2006.

Nonetheless, a chill has already sunk into the eight party alliance. It might be realistic at this stage to conclude that the unity is superficial and perhaps just a façade. While it is imperative to keep the eight party alliance intact within the government to conduct the polls, differences amongst the electoral alliances may eventually lead to divisions in the government.

Four incidents that are likely to give shape to Nepali politics over the next few months, include; the call for a left unity during Lenin Day, axing of Constitutional Monarchy in the party statute by Rashtriya Janashakti Party and then Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the Madeshi alliance initiated by Nepal Sadhbhavana Party. These three will lead to

the Janjatis to open a fourth front.

The call for left unity should not come as a surprise. This was predictable from day one, but much of the leftist alliance hinges on how the UML demonstrates its flexibility to unite with the Maoist and other fringe left parties. In retrospect, the leftist unity poses some tough question to the UML and the Maoists.

Even though UML is seen as a vociferous proponent of republicanism after February 1st, historically speaking, it had never removed republicanism from their party's statute. In fact, they had strategically accepted constitutional monarchy as a base to consolidate the cause for republicanism in the future. It may, however, be possible that the social construct of the party leadership and its rank and file, will ultimately obstruct the desired goal of left unity.

Although the left might unite over the issue of republicanism, it will be intriguing to observe whether or not Madhav Nepal will commit a political hara-kiri by forging a long term alliance with the Maoists, but that will only be at the cost of UML and moderate left politics. Equally important, will the Maoist ink a compromise transient from their ideology of radical communism?

The axing of Constitutional Monarchy from

the party statute of RJP and then RPP is also symbolic. Following RJP's move, journalists and political pundits were quick to call for early abdication of King Gyanendra. However, the Royalists failed to grasp the significance of this. By axing constitutional monarchy from the party statute both RJP and RPP, are in a position to align with the Congress for elections.

Theoretically speaking, the strategic move initiated by RJP Chief Surya Bahadur Thapa, makes his party an equal to the Congress ideologically. The survival of democratic parties will be determined by their inclination to forge political alliances, which will oppose and challenge the Left wing parties during elections. It is important that this democratic force, unanimously devises electoral alliances and stratagems which will keep the Maoist as their focal point. The survival of democratic discourse depends on the unity of democratic forces initiated by G P Koirala.

Gopal Kiranti, a Maoist leader in Dhankuta, voiced his party's opinion when he declared the ethnic movement in Nepal was "dollar funded". The notion of self-determination, based on ethnicity, as espoused by the Maoists, has become their biggest political nightmare. It must be noted that the Janjatis and Madeshis

supported the idea of 'self determination' with the idea of promoting and preserving their religion, culture and an increased participation in the State.

However, communism as propagated by Karl Marx and Hegel, advances the philosophy of an 'end of history', which basically envisions a classless society, that directly contravenes with what the ethnic minorities actually want.

The biggest threat to the ethnic minorities comes from communists that are aiming to destroy and cleanse the existing social cultural fabric of the country. The Madeshi and the Janjatis are both initiating dialogue to form an electoral alliance, as they fear such repercussions. However, they seem to be equally disappointed with the centrist forces.

Nonetheless, the presence of Pradip Giri in Delhi as a facilitator and Upendra Yadav's revelation that his forum was ideologically closer to the centrist forces must have comforted some of the nervous democrats in Kathmandu. The Janjati front is yet to emerge as an electoral option but it might be prudent to note, that with time, even their allegiance will be closer to the centrist forces. ■



# More clashes in volatile Rajasthan

Arterial highways were blocked as tension continued in Rajasthan on Thursday with reports of official property being torched coming in from various parts while the government grappled to find a solution by holding nightlong talks with Gujjars, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

There were indications that the government might give in to the demand of the large farming community, presently classified as other backward classes (OBCs), and send a recommendation letter classifying them as STs by July 1.

Sources said the government had conveyed to the community in the talks, which began around 2.30 am and went on till after 4 am, compensation of Rs 500,000 and jobs would be given to the families of those who died in Tuesday's firing - when 17 people were killed in the ethnic upsurge for government sops in education and employment. The talks were led by Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's close aide Satyanarain Gupta. The second round is to be held at 11 am on Thursday.

"It was held in a cordial environment and we are hopeful of an amicable solution to the crisis," a senior state government official said.

The situation continued to be volatile with early morning clashes between police and Gujjars. Reports of protestors torching government properties and vehicles came in from Kota, Sawai Madhopur and Dausa, where the trouble started on Tuesday. Putting further pressure on Vasundhara Raje, Panchayati Raj Minister Kalu



Lal Gujjar and five legislators of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have threatened to resign in the wake of Tuesday's violence in Bundi and Patauli near Dausa.

The death toll in the violence that is spreading to newer areas has touched 17 and at least seven policemen have been reported missing.

Security arrangements have been beefed up across the state following the Gujjar community's call for a complete shutdown. As a result, the Rajasthan Pre-Engineering Test (RPET) that was to be held on Thursday has been postponed. Army and paramilitary forces have been patrolling Bayana in Bharatpur district, Patauli and Bundi. They have also been patrolling the Jaipur-Delhi highway.

Thousands of travellers have been stranded for the last three days as Gujjar protestors have blocked the Jaipur-Agra, Jaipur-Delhi and Jaipur-Kota highways. All bus services between Agra-Jaipur, Delhi-Jaipur and Jaipur-Kota have been suspended as a precautionary measure.

Several trains between Delhi and Jaipur have also been cancelled.

"I have been stranded here for the last two days, there is no way I can go from here as the road is blocked. I do not know when I will be able to go from here to Delhi," Naresh Sharma, a resident of Delhi who had come on a pilgrimage to the religious town of Mehandipur, told IANS. About 9,000 trucks have been stranded at various points along the national highways passing through the state. According to estimates of the Federation of Rajasthan Trade and Industry (FORTI), the loss of revenue per day for the government is estimated to be nearly Rs 50 million.

Meanwhile, the problem for Raje government seems to be compounding. The Meena community, which is presently alone in Scheduled Tribe category in Rajasthan has opposed any move to grant Gujjars the ST tribal status. Meena's are a dominant community in Rajasthan and have been classified as tribals since 1953. "We would oppose this tooth and nail," a statement by the community, which doesn't want to share the quota pie, said.

There have been reports that some members of the Meena community have burnt and damaged a few private vehicles in Dausa and nearby areas in protest. The Gujjars constitute four to seven per cent of the state's 56 million population. They are presently classified as other backward classes (OBC). ■

(IANS)

## 'China, U.S. to open hotline'



China will in September finalize issues concerning a hotline with the United States for handling emergency, a senior Chinese military official told the Sixth Asia Security Summit here Saturday.

Zhang Qingsheng, deputy chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army of China, also the highest-ranking Chinese officer to have attended the three-day security summit, known as the Shangri-La Dialogue, made the remarks at the second plenary session titled "India and China: building international stability."

He said the technical issues had been settled and he would attend a meeting in Washington in September to "finalize" the agreement. On China's defense budget for 2007 of 350.921 billion yuan (about 44.9 billion U.S. dollars), he said the figure is "true and authentic".

Then he elaborated on the issue in response to the audience's question, saying that China is a large country in terms of territorial size and population, so it needs a proportionate military capability.

He also said that in August 2.3 million army men will change their uniforms and that the spending will be a large part of the increased budget.

"China also has another problem, which is the Taiwan issue," he said, adding that "some people in Taiwan are still dreaming about secession. So Chinese military must be prepared to cope with this kind of threat. If anything happens, China's military must be prepared to respond."

He said that China's defense policy which is defensive in nature is prescribed politically by the peace and development model.

"It is armed to develop limited military power," he said, adding that "it is a peace policy."

The three-day Shangri-La Dialogue, organized by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, opened on Friday. It gathered defense ministers and top officials from 26 countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe to address major regional security issues and defense cooperation. ■

(People Daily)

## 34 Taliban killed in gun battles 60 Afghans die in boat capsizing

An estimated 60 people, including several Taliban militants, died when a boat sank while crossing a river in Afghanistan's dangerous Helmand province, while 34 other suspected Taliban extremists were killed during a military operation in the same southern region on Saturday, the Afghan Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The boat sank while crossing the Helmand River, which snakes through the province the world's leading opium poppy-producing region and site of the fiercest battles in Afghanistan during the last several months. Hundreds of Taliban insurgents are believed to be hiding in Helmand.

The Afghan army is currently investigating the matter to determine how many of the dead were Taliban and many were civilians, the ministry said. The brief statement did not clarify the cause for the boat's capsizing. Defence

Ministry spokesman General Zahir Azimi said that Afghan troops saw the boat sink from an Afghan military helicopter, which suggests that those on the boat may have been involved in a battle with Afghan forces, reported the Associated Press. Azimi also said that he was unaware of how many people on the boat may have been Taliban fighters.

Meanwhile, an Interior Ministry statement said that 34 suspected Taliban were killed during several gun battles over the last two days in Helmand province's Kajaki district, near where a US helicopter went down on Thursday, killing five American, one Canadian and on British soldier.

The statement said four Taliban group commanders were among the 34 killed although it did not mention how the ministry had counted the number of dead or if retreating militants had left the bodies behind. The Defence Ministry

said two Afghan soldiers were killed and two others wounded in the operations.

Separately, suspected Taliban militants attacked a local police commander's home early on Saturday morning, killing five of his family members and initiating a gun battle with local police that left 10 insurgents dead, an official said. The attack, which occurred in the south eastern province of Ghazni resulted in the deaths of the commander's wife, his two sons and his two nephews, said Interior Ministry spokesman Zemer Bashary. He said the commander was part of Afghanistan's auxiliary police, a system of backup officials who supplement the country's regular police force during times of crisis.

Other auxiliary police called to the scene fought the insurgents and killed 10 of them, Bashary added. ■

(Daily Times)

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# Marshland Flowers

Words like Mantra, Dhyana, Samadhi are common to both but do not necessarily mean exactly the same thing.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Hinduistic Tantra is based on the experience of an eternally existing, unchanging entity called the true self or true Atman, whereas the entire Buddhist Tantra is based on the experience that from the very beginning there is no eternally existing, unchanging self. Both experiences are a non-dual experience.

In the Hindu system one merges non-dually with the eternal, unchanging self and that is the non-dual experience. In Buddhist Tantra one sees through that there is no eternal, unchanging self as opposed to the changing world. So there is no two, i.e. Advaya. Many scholars have been confused by similar words like Advaita/Advaya and many others used in both the systems and believe that they are two versions of the same thing. Nothing could be further away from the truth.

There are also many differences in the path; but that would require detailed technical details which is not the purpose of this article. All forms of Mahayana Buddhism within which Vajrayana lies, uses Sanskrit as its lingua franca. Since Hinduism and Hindu Tantra also uses Sanskrit, and because Buddhism and Hinduism developed first and foremost within the cultural milieu of the Indian subcontinent, it is not surprising that similar words are used in both system.

For example, words like Mantra, Dhyana, Samadhi are common to both but do not necessarily mean exactly the same thing and one must not be fooled by the use of such common words to conclude that Buddhism and Hinduism are the same. One famous Nepalese Brahmin scholar saw that the word Bhairava is used in the Mantra of Bignantak and used that as a proof that the Buddhist worship Bhairava and thus they are the same.

In the Buddhist context the word only means wrathful and not any particular deity as is the case in Hinduism. The two Tantric systems of the Indian subcontinent are as different from each other as Theravada is from Vaisnavism. Only the name Tantra is the same but even the exact definition of Tantra in each system is drastically different. So these are some of the myths about Buddhism rampant amongst non-Buddhists of Nepal.

These rampant confusions exist amongst the non-Buddhists of the Indian subcontinent



because it has been over nine centuries since Buddhism was erased from the memory of the Indian subcontinent. It is commonplace for absurd rumors to spread like wild fire in the absence of authentic information.

The people of the Indian subcontinent came to believe that Buddhism had died out completely and did not exist at all; so each was free to interpret it according to one's own predilections. But in reality Buddhism continued to survive full fledged in other lands where it was taken by the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent themselves.

Buddhism is still alive and dynamic in Central Asia, Mongolia, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, Bhutan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, the Cis – Himalayan regions of Nepal and India, and in Kathmandu Valley.

But remarkably enough blinded by their own cultural preconceptions, biases and prejudices even the non-Buddhists of Kathmandu Valley who could not but rub shoulders with it constantly, were completely oblivious about its reality and continued to subscribe to the rumors made up by their Indian Gurus. In Nepal where Buddhism never died, the non – Buddhist populace virtually know nil about authentic Buddhism.

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

## Challenges to peace process

■ Dr Dhurba Rizal

Huge are the complexities, contradictions and interplay of the present peace process. The SPA and the Maoists seem to be more concerned about power-sharing arrangements, less about consolidating peace. Otherwise, they would not have spent much of their time and energy on just two political issues: the dissolution of reinstated parliament and the formation of an interim government and an interim parliament.

On the surface, the SPA and the Maoist harbor many dissimilar and often contesting visions about the nature of the state, the status of monarchy, modality of elections, economy, nationalism, foreign policy and power-sharing arrangements. These continue to pose as barriers to cooperative action.

Pro-king forces are questioning the legitimacy of the eight party establishments and dubbing its actions dictatorial. New polarisations between the left and the democratic forces, republican and monarchist forces and between nationalistic and subsidiary identities are certain to make the transition to democratic peace difficult. The peace process has so far delivered an oligarchy of party leaders rather than a popular democracy.

Party leaders have shown little appetite for pluralism. The interim legislature has no official opposition, and consensus decisions leave most power in the hands of party leaders. Ad-hoc pre-negotiation of important issues threatens to undermine the constitutional process. Mainstream parties have devoted scant consideration to the difficult questions of procedure involved in constitutional reform. Few have embarked on internal changes to tackle their own problems of corruption, patronage and exclusion that have fuelled support for the Maoists.

The principal challenges facing the peace process include issues such as too much focus on political issues ignoring totally the economic and socio-cultural issues; problem of peace ownership by security forces, reforming both the armies and technical matter associated with political package of arms management. And there are problems of dealing with Maoist behavior and attitudes; the contentious issues of state restructuring and reconstructing the rule of law; weak governance,

continued prevalence of widespread insecurity and challenge of preventing relapse into armed conflict. These and other myriad problems may pose significant hurdles, which will exacerbate and dog the peace process.

Political parties and the Maoists are increasingly marginalising the monarchy, security and traditional forces; and they continue to jockey for position, power and public favor in an environment, where any miscalculation could quickly lead again to renewed conflict.

The prize of sustained peace is clear - allowing Nepal to build a genuine democracy with full human rights, and to start a real process of development and move away from present malaises. The foundation of change is unity in diversity supported by inclusive democratic system with accommodating democratic leadership. This can strengthen internal unity and external distinctiveness to protect the sovereignty and security of Nepal.

Sustainable resolution of conflicts requires wider participation of all the parties - those that are left out, potential and actual stakeholders, and their interest mediation, rather than just those of conflicting parties. Peace cannot be created, if the outcome of negotiation creates its own enemies. Emanuel Kant, one of the world's greatest thinkers, in his treatise "Perpetual Peace" asserted, "No treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war."

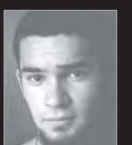
Accordingly, unless the root causes of the conflict and emerging challenges are addressed and the Maoists democratised, long-term sustainable peace in Nepal cannot be achieved and conflict may very well reignite. Peace is not just the absence of war, but also epitomises economic prosperity, social harmony, unity and brotherhood among the multi-ethnic Nepali people.

The present peace process of Nepal also remind others about the relapse of armed conflict after peace agreement in conflict-torn states such as Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Liberia, and Angola to name a few. Thus, in order to consolidate peace process, parties on all sides should keep their nerve and their commitment to peace and genuine democracy.

(D.Rizal teaches management at Tribhuvan University)



## Democracy



■ David Bross

How much tears and blood Nepalese people must again pour to see your shadow ?

How many days, months or years will you take to install yourself in this country ?

Are you not tired of watching so many wives, kids and men fighting and struggling in your name?

Nearly twenty million Nepalis believe in you and they are still waiting ...

Democracy, the time is now. For you to come and stay !

(David Bross, 20, is a French photo reporter who works for a French newspaper – 33T.)



# The Himalayan ancient mariner



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

*A poem I write for him, in my dream and forget and then later, wake up, in pain, alarmed at the loss of a coin of a word, Revolution, that this poet polished, tirelessness in the dark hours of nation's bleeding history*

Coming back to Kathmandu after a six-month gap, I find myself in the heat of the nation's most excruciating history. The fire line seems to snake through the corridors of nation's polity endlessly, consuming in its flames the proud pagodas of nation's reputation. The struggle for the right form of government and system and wavering vision of forthcoming elections mark the crucial question that the nation seem to be confronting at the moment. Words like democracy and republic have been scribbled on the national horizon.

I was invited to the 97th birth anniversary of a legendary poet, Siddhi Charan Shrestha. They asked me to read a poem on Siddhicharan who all his life had polished the precious word called 'revolution'.

Ruthless Rana regime sentenced this Nepali poet to life imprisonment for introducing the word 'revolution' in the history of Nepalese literature.

Only today, I understand the significance of having been in the company of a poet like Siddhicharan.

One of his Newari poems mentions the word, 'kranti/shanti'. When the 1950 upsurge upstaged Rana regime, Siddhicharan was released after a few years and in the post-Rana rule emerged as a major poet.

I was fortunate to meet this poet about two decades ago. It was at Nepali poet Bimal Nibha's bookstore at New Road that I first met Siddhicharan. As Bimal introduced him as one of Nepal's historic figures, I wondered how this unassuming bony old man in Daura Suruwal could have caused an uproar in the corridors of history.

In the restaurant we met, the first thing he asked me to do was to take out blank paper and write down one of his poems about the sun and popcorn. Without a question, I obeyed and started to scribble the poem like a dutiful disciple, even if I did not quite understand what he was saying. I did not have courage to annoy or refuse orders of this elderly bard that I had luckily met.

Only today, I understand the significance of having been in the company of a poet like Siddhicharan. He had this in him, this knack of making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagalal was Siddhicharan's

disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Gangalal was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.

On his 97th birth anniversary when we sat in the gardens of Dharahara tower, a procession passed by, mildly disturbing the recitations of one of my friends at the venue. Someone on stage was discussing Siddhi's character, Mangalman, the one who even after the 1950 revolution finds no solace and is ignored by corrupt party leaders.

At that moment, I remembered meeting the poet at his deathbed about a decade ago. Much to my surprise, he asked me, "Will you translate my Mangalman into English? You are the one who can do justice to it. Let the world know my Mangalman."

Guilt overwhelms me now. Caught up in the vicious circle of my life's struggles, I had forgotten these chapters of my past life. On stage, I saw the famous poet, Durga Lal Shrestha accept the award established in Siddhi's name. As he recited a poem, I knew somewhere behind the Dharara tower in the face of the blazing sun, the poet watched us all.

*(Yuyutsu is a poet and a writer.)*  
*(www.yuyutsu.de)*



## Former addicts can suddenly be back

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

**Why does a person go back to drugs even after quitting for months?**

■ Tsering Tenzing, Boudha

When very busy, craving for drugs could be a passing thought but at other times, craving for drugs gets so overwhelming, the urge can get so strong that the ex-addict finds it difficult to control it and ends up using it. Craving for drugs is the main reason that causes relapse. Fighting the urge on an hourly or daily basis can get pretty humiliating and is a frustrating battle for those who seek to get rid of their addiction.

If drug craving is not completely under one's control, the craving can keep arising and the person can go on using drugs off and on for the rest of his/her life. Despite being equipped with logical reasons why drugs must not be taken, the desire to go back to using drugs is something that most people find difficult to fight.

Let us take an example of a man who has been using drugs/alcohol for years and now somehow manages to stop. He is currently sober, but his thoughts are constantly fixed on drugs/

alcohol. Although he is no longer using drugs to solve his problems, he does not have the ability to solve his problems without drugs. He is usually miserable and life is a constant struggle. His thoughts are consumed with the battle against drugs and when the compulsive desire gets the better of him, he then decides that he would rather use drugs and 'feel good' than be depressed without it.

Thus former addicts who have been clean for months or years can suddenly find themselves back to using drugs/alcohol as a result of their failure to control themselves. So it is very important to be aware of this danger and make sure to get rid of toxins lodged in the body with professional help.

**My niece is using drugs. I have tried many ways to help her but failed. Please advise.**

■ Neelam Kafle, Thimi

An addict is powerless over the addiction. Although an addict thinks it is his/her problem alone and that it is not harming any other person, in reality the addiction affects family, friends and the whole society around such a person.

Actually, people around addicts suffer sometimes as much or more

than the addicted ones. The greatest suffering for those who love the drug users is mostly due to the helpless feeling of not knowing how to keep the person from destroying his/her life with drugs and to watch them fall into a bottomless pit.

Usually, those who love and care about the addicts are willing to help the person but often lack the knowledge of what it is they are dealing with. Therefore many efforts to help drug users to quit drugs are not successful and then it ends up in sheer hopelessness.

Fortunately no matter how hopeless or helpless it may seem, addiction can be fought with complete understanding of addiction and the proper tools to fight it with. Equipped with this knowledge and tools, almost anyone can rid themselves of the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol and lead a productive and drug free life. But you have to realise that it cannot be done alone. You can help your niece by seeking professional help from reputed rehab centres.

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

Insight

## Meaty thoughts

...most of us have been desensitised by the sight of blood and gory acts of killing and cries of helpless animals



■ Sushma Amatya

Love for one's life is as strong in other creatures as in humans. That it hurts animals unbearably when killed is visible and audible, when you watch a bird or an animal screeching with agony and terror, its body writhing helplessly. Imagine the electric charges acting up wildly in such animals being sacrificed for meat or for religious purposes; imagine the extremes of fear and pain each and every cell of such creatures must be experiencing just before and when it is getting cut, and on its last throes before it is finally dead. The meat surely is impacted with the extremes of negativities the creature experienced. What good would such meat do to human bodies?

Sacrifice of animal for religious purposes are common in several religious traditions and rituals. Many animals are sacrificed around the year to celebrate various religious events and traditional rituals in Nepal. When offering animals, they are not killed in one clean sweep but cut slowly so as to offer the blood to the deities. This which inflicts so much pain in the animals is contradictory to what all religions teach regarding respect for life of other creatures, not inflicting pain or harming living beings.

There are special Tantric rituals that demand blood with its own significance but how many of those who drag black goats to temples practice Tantrism in its entirety or understand why they are doing it? This surely is an aberration in understanding of the actual meaning of the religious texts. As the Vipassana teacher, S.N. Goenka explained, when the goddess Kali is shown killing a black buffalo, it is meant to teach ordinary humans that they need to kill the darkness of ignorance, ego that acts as devils in their minds. How can we kill the demon that lurks deep in our minds by mere cutting of jugular veins of other creatures?

If killing an animal or bird were to bring you good luck and get rid of all misfortune, all those who do not kill must surely be beset with all calamities. And if sacrificing really did invite auspicious circumstances, we surely should have a large section of society basking in peace and prosperity – which in reality is not the case.

Vaisnavites practice absolute non-violence as does Buddhism. Apart from these and

a few unorganised voices we hear very little for animal rights since they do have a right to life and not be tortured. If we are unable to give up meat for taste, pleasure or for religious beliefs, the least we can do is to inflict less pain and not prolong their suffering.

Maneka Gandhi, an animal rights activist in India succeeded in partially dissuading King Gyanendra from offering a sacrifice of 108 animals to a shrine in Kamakhya, Assam in July 2002 and brought the number of the sacrificial creatures down significantly. In Nepal, where human sacrifice has been wrought at large, talking about lessening suffering of animals might appear rather off beat; but the time has come for all of us to get rid of violence in our minds, speech and body – for peace. Resolving not to cause any suffering to any living being and doing it, cultivates a lot of compassion in our hearts and invites peace of mind.

Deeply conditioned by our social beliefs and cultural experiences, most of us have been desensitised by the sight of blood and gory acts of killing and cries of helpless animals that rent the air in holy places. It is a sensitive issue that directly relates to the communities regarding its practices in the name of tradition and belief. The law can hardly enforce any rule on such practices. The awareness and understanding of the meaning behind all these rituals and kindness towards other creatures need to arise from the concerned communities.

When the country is all poised to say goodbye to politics of violence, is it not time to think about protection of those who cannot speak? In a lighter vein, there is an old age saying that you become what you eat. Should we opt to become silly chicken, daft sheep, lethargic buffaloes, pigs and the like? A worrying picture indeed.

**If killing an animal or bird were to bring you good luck and get rid of all misfortune, all those who do not kill must surely be beset with all calamities.**





Mark Pollock, a blind person from France participating in the marathon. His coach is assisting him to run.



# CELEBRATION EVEREST

■ Bhaswor Ojha

Athletes participating in the 5th edition of Tenjing Hilary Everest Marathon started running from Everest Base Camp, 5364 meters to Namche Bazar, 3440 meters on 29th May. It is the world's highest elevated marathon. The event was to mark the 54th anniversary of the ascent to Mt. Everest by Hillary and Tenzing.

