



Courage & Conviction

# news front

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In honour of innocent victims : Proposed memorial for victims of Madi massacre. The memorial is designed by Maoist leader and Architect Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. 39 people had lost their lives when a public bus was ambushed by the Maoist at Bandarmudhe in Chitwan's Madi area two years ago.

## Army in election

■ nf correspondent

In what appeared like a deviation from the eight-party understanding, PM G P Koirala has asked the Chief of Army, Gen. Rukmangat Katwal, to gear up his institution for a possible role in the election.

The meeting, described as routine from the PM's office, lasted for nearly an hour and half. But it attaches more political significance now as the meeting has taken place against the backdrop of criticism of the law and order situation, with the former US President, Jimmy Carter endorsing that assessment. Sources in the PM's office said that Koirala told Katwal that the army might have to assist civilian authorities in conducting free and fair polls, as well as in containing criminal activities that may vitiate the atmosphere needed for polls in November.

The peace agreement minimises and nullifies army's role in election. Near collapse of the law and order situation, and Maoists and YCL continuously vilifying the army, has triggered visible unease in the institution that is left without a political boss. The army's statement last week said it is not going to withdraw any camps set-up during the years of conflict under the prevailing situation. But Maoists are insisting that all military personnel and offices deployed in forest areas, national parks and the one in Chyangthapu in Panchthar, along the border with Sikkim be immediately withdrawn. Koirala's 'routine meeting' on Sunday, sources said, was meant to assure the army that he would support the army in light of the, 'unjust demands' of the Maoists.

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# Rescuing Melamchi

We honour our commitment - government to ADB

■ nf correspondent

The government has finally approached the Asian Development Bank asking it not to abandon the multi-million dollar Melamchi drinking project reaffirming its commitment to reform and encourage private stakes in it.

A letter is being dispatched to ADB in this regard following an understanding reached between the finance ministry and the physical planning and housing ministry. As a result, Hishila Yami who had opposed the project earlier, agreed to approach the ADB saying it should refrain from withdrawing from the project.

Yami was literally rescued by the Severn Trent International,

the company she hated, as it insisted on withdrawing its claim to takeover management of KUKL (Kathmandu valley drinking water limited) on the basis of a cabinet decision in May. Since finding a new company in place of STI would take some time as it means calling for a fresh bidding process, the government has requested ADB to delink this bidding process and that of tunnel construction.

Finance Minister, Ram Sharan Mahat told newsfront that with the clarity on the part of the government now, Melamchi would now be safe. Experts however say the fresh bidding process of the water management would take some more time, and would also fuel hike in the cost. ADB had been insisting for handing over the management of

water supply in the valley to a private company since government controlled KUKL, in the past one decade, could not act efficiently in spite of more than 100 million dollars of external assistance for the purpose.

While the last is yet to be heard from ADB, there are indications that the new proposal of the government would be acceptable to it, after senior officials of the two ministries concerned had a detailed discussion about it with the ADB headquarters in Manila recently.

As a sop, the government assured ADB that it stands by its commitment for reforms in the sector and was willing to involve private sector in KUKL which is likely to be bifurcated soon for administrative reasons, official sources said.



Minister Hishila Yami

## In the offing

Committee to monitor human rights, code of conduct next week.



Minister Ram Chandra Poudel

■ nf correspondent

The much awaited high-powered committee that will assess the violation of code of conduct by the Maoists and other parties during the conflict is likely to see the light of day very soon.

According to highly placed official sources, the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry headed by Ram Chandra Poudel has been asked to make the committee effective. It is believed that Poudel has discussed possible names for the committee with Ian Martin, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Martin is believed to have suggested Poudel to make the committee broader with prominent people from all spheres of society included.

The repeated violation of the

code of conduct as well as human rights go unaddressed in absence of the committee which should have been in place right from the day peace accord was signed. An earlier committee headed by former Election Commissioner, Birendra Prasad Mishra, resigned saying its terms and conditions as well as jurisdiction had not been defined clearly.

In fact, both UNMIN headed by Martin and the OHCHR are supposed to be assisting the official committee in monitoring human rights abuses during the peace process, but they have failed to do so in absence of a monitoring committee. "Minister Poudel and Secretary Janak Joshi are giving final touches to the committee and it should be in place by this week," an official said.



Bhutani Refugees at Kakarbhitta

# Indian apathy

Bhutani refugees' right to go back home

■ nf correspondent

The lure for settling in the United States or other western countries would continue to attract more Bhutanis in the refugee camps in Nepal, said Teknath Rizal, Bhutan's prominent pro-democracy and human rights leader in exile.

"There have been all kinds of luring factors. Some of the refugees were told each of them opting for a third country settlement would be paid 70,000 US dollars." This bait would only help the Bhutani authorities who would be happy to have every person of Nepali origin sent out.

Rizal was ventilating his anger at representatives of the South Asia Human Rights (SAHR) which has prepared a 34-page report suggesting that creating an atmosphere for their return to Bhutan was the best option available. The report was released by I.K. Gujral, former Prime Minister of India, in Delhi. Gujral heads SAHR.

A three-member team headed by the noted journalist and parliamentarian Kuldip Nayyar was here, coinciding with the release of the report, to interact with Bhutani refugees opposed to the third country settlement. Rizal and others complained that while the govern-

ment of India was still not willing to mediate in the refugee issue, it has gone to the extent of asking the UNHCR office not provide medical treatment to those who were injured as a result of Indian security personnel using force on them when the refugees were marching towards Bhutan.

The report admitted that while Indian media did not give due prominence to the Bhutani refugee issue, it said it is time, the government of India took up the issue with the King of Bhutan so that the refugees could go back to their country with their rights and honour intact, instead of forcing them abroad.



# Election must for democracy – Carter

Election can take place in free and fearless atmosphere only.



■ nf correspondent

Former US President Jimmy Carter did not reveal all that he had. Instead he collected what appeared like a plethora of demands from the Nepali side. He knew he was not in a position to give anything to anyone, so he kept quiet about most of what he heard.

Apparently some demanded that he intervene for more inclusion or representation of Dalits and ethnic groups in the constituent assembly as the proposed model of electoral system would not do justice to 102 ethnic groups in the country. Carter, a quiet listener, nodded his head without making any comment – as indicated by the reports gathered from various people who he met.

At least one of those who met him also complained about Home Minister, K P Sitaula, holding him responsible for the poor law and order situation and narrated how Sitaula has been helping young communist league and Maoist cadres in all kind of activities, clearly in violation of the peace process. Carter was also told that in several cases, Chief District Officials have been stopped by the Home Minister to initiate cases against 'criminals' because of their political leanings.

But as he appeared before the press on Saturday, Carter was cool, composed and measured in his expression. There was no element of criticism of the US policy about Maoists as he said, "it is better (for the US government) to have communication at some

level with everyone who participates legally within the political framework of Nepal

He said he was still concerned with activities of Young Communist League (YCL) such as demanding money from merchants and beating them. He said Carter Center would be monitoring activities of the YCL in the light of assurances Prachanda gave him that they would be controlled. "We will be monitoring the YCL closely to ensure that their future behaviour is in line with these promises," was his message that is nearly consistent with what the US government has been saying about the Maoists that their action must match their words.

Without referring to the complaints he received about the Home Minister, Carter said he was concerned that the absence of law and order was complete. "I think the police do not feel they have adequate political support. My hope is that the Prime Minister and other leaders will give such support". "he CDOs should be given unequivocal and clear authorisation to maintain law and order."

Almost endorsing the international opinion, Carter hoped that constituent assembly elections will be held in "open, transparent, honest, free and peaceful" manner. And based on his briefing and the policy that Carter Center pursues, the former US President stood in support of inclusive policy and politics. "For the first time in Nepal's history, marginalised people are exercising their democratic right to be heard and to participate fully and equally in Nepali society. Their concerns are legitimate and I support them." ■

## Newsbrief

### Yadav to travel

Madheshi Janadhikar Forum leader Upendra Yadav is likely to visit the United States very soon. Yadav has been invited to the US by the Association of Nepalis in America (ANA).

"Yes, I have been invited and will go there if I am given visa by the embassy here,"

Yadav told newsfront. "This will be a good opportunity for me to explain our views to Nepalis abroad," he added. He is scheduled to address the ANA in Washington DC and New York on June 27.

Yadav whom Maoists accuse of being a pro-palace and pro-Hindutva element of India, had recently met the left and Congress party leaders in Delhi. He explained that the Madheshi movement represented the mandate of the people for appropriate representation of Terai in parliament and political as well as administrative institutions. "I will do the same thing in the US. Those who are accusing me and the forum of being guided by other elements are insulting the people of Madhesh," Yadav said.

### Taming Goit, Jwala Singh

Prime Minister G P Koirala seems highly hopeful of securing support from the Madheshi Janadhikar forum, but wants Jwala Singh and Goit factions of the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha tamed.

In one of his recent meetings with Indian Ambassador, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, Koirala expressed his worries that the two JTMM faction leaders were directing their



criminal activities in Nepal from India. Officials said Mukherjee assured the PM that India would not allow its territory to be used against Nepal.

### Yadav irks PM

Prime Minister Koirala has patched up with Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam at the moment but he still seems miffed with the Forest Minister, Matrika Prasad Yadav.

This was clear since Koirala extracted an assurance from Prachanda last week that he would talk to Yadav and ask him to adopt a spirit and attitude of cooperation towards the PM. Yadav criticised Koirala in the cabinet meeting about three weeks ago for PM defending army what Yadav termed as, 'army of the king', and continued his tirade against the PM publicly.

Koirala is believed to have told Prachanda that it would be difficult to work with a minister who, "does not adhere to the basic norms of parliamentary democracy." Yadav, of late has also been asking the PM to remove Dilendra Badu, a Congress leader, from the post of Chairman of the Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and handover the post to him.

### Use and throw

For a change it was PM GP Koirala who was at the receiving end. And the person shouting at him was not from the Maoists or other left parties, but it was his long time loyalist and party colleague, Binay Dhoj Chand.

The incident took place last week in the PM's residence, watched gleefully by senior Congress leaders and at least one cabinet rank minister. The PM continuously denying him a ministerial berth seemed to agitate Chand who lost his patience and announced, "Mr. Prime Minister, you are in the habit of using and throwing people. I will



not take it any more."

Party sources say Chand, party's chief whip in parliament, had been assured by Koirala few weeks ago that he should be ready to takeover as the new home minister in place of K P Sitaula. What seems to have triggered the outburst of Chand was Koirala's inability to get his land returned from the Maoists.

### Blessed failure



GP Koirala has started a new parliamentary practice. Although he is the leader of parliament, he has begun the practice of sending congratulatory messages to parliament from home if some major legislation is passed.

That is what he did last week when the parliament adopted amendments bringing the King under the ambit of impeachment laws, and postponing the constituent assembly elections from mid-June to November. In all likelihood, the election is now to take place on November 26 as indicated by Koirala to House Speaker, Subhash Nembang.

But even in his failure to conduct election by mid-June as mentioned in the interim constitution, Koirala only emerged as a hero since no one raised the issue of accountability for the missed deadline while setting the new date for election. Instead, Koirala who was absent from the parliament when the amendment bills were carried out, chose to shoot congratulatory notes which only mean patting his own back.







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**Point to Ponder**

**Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.**

- Albert Einstein

# Say no to violence

Any form of violence in politics must not be condoned. There should be no space for violence in politics. Any political change that is realised through people's consent is more durable and worth fighting for, peacefully. Temporary power seized by use of arms and other forceful means will remain vulnerable and can be easily overthrown by other instances of violence. Positive changes that are backed by people work better and can be more lasting.

However remarkable the success of the people's movement last year may have been, certain factors that played a part in it cannot be ignored. OHCHR has said in one of its reports that provocative actions from the crowd during various political protests incited reactions from the security forces deployed; whereas in other places there were excesses committed by the security forces. The UN body also said that many children were used by the organisers of the demonstrations.

The culture of destroying private and public property and attacking people who are not part of demonstrations by the organisers is a highly deplorable act. Examples of this are visible frequently these days, and the people's movement last year was no exception. German Ambassador, Franz Ring, has revealed that he was targeted by the crowd during last year's Jana-andolan. What YCL did at Damak to Moriarty was just a continuation of that culture. That Loktantra or democracy does not give license to disrupt, destroy lives and property appears not to have been understood by many Nepalis.

When the Maoists declared to renounce arms it was taken as a welcome sign by the people who hoped that they would now start contributing to political and social transformation in the country. But after witnessing their legacy of violence still at large, especially by the YCL activists; disillusionment looms large over the common people's psyche that is gradually changing into anger. This proves that short term gains can be made through tactical attacks but to gain people's trust calls for peaceful far-sighted strategies made in the interest of the people.

This calls for collective introspection by all Nepalis today. It needs to be internalised by one and all that violence does not pay. It only destroys, and negates every thing that democracy stands for.



## Letters

### PM only fumes, no fire

It was interesting to read your news on the front page about fuming Koirala. The Prime Minister only fumes, but there is no fire. In fact, what we have witnessed in recent months is that every time Koirala fumes or takes a bold public stance, he makes certain undue concessions to the Maoists. Therefore, we now fear that he is going to make certain major and unconstitutional concessions to the Maoists once again.

We have heard him say before that the Young Communist League has many criminals in it. He called YCL criminals, apologised to the American secretary; and at the same time released YCL activists arrested in connection with the attack on UNHCR and US diplomats. All this is very contradictory and are signs of a confused mind.



**L B Chhetri**  
 Bagbazar, Kathmandu

### Dried hopes

It is a shame that Kathmandu most probably will be deprived of drinking water for some more years to come. Melamchi may meet the fate of Arun Three. But the nation and its people have a right to know from why the people deserve this fate.

Hishila Yami, as Minister for Physical Planning and a politician with an alternative political view, is justified in putting forward a new way of attracting donors' support for new water projects. But that needs to be backed by formulation of

sound policies on such issues and their implementation. This would need a wider debate among political parties.

Let Yami initiate the move but Melamchi should not be sacrificed before such a policy is formulated through consensus.

**Rumila Shrestha**  
 Kalimati, Kathmandu

### Government protecting crimes

Nepal government is unable to control crimes that are increasing by the day. Though the Young Communist League (YCL) is charged by the media for their attacks on diplomats and other illegal activities, the government is equally responsible for such shameful incidents. Since the Home Ministry did not react to their lawless activities, the government of

Nepal is to be blamed for not stopping their crimes.

By not bringing YCL under the rule of law and letting them do as they pleased, they were given the impression that the government cannot or will not be a hindrance to their criminal activities. This encouraged them to ignore law and order and they began to rule people as if they were their slaves.

Nepal government's failure is starkly visible not only in this aspect but also in other areas such as failure to control corruption at high places. Corrupted political leaders and top level officers are not arrested due to their connections at the so called, 'high places.' In such a scenario, do we have any hope that this country will improve?

**Dilli Acharya**  
 Salaura, Dang

## Spiritual Corner

### Blessed source of love

**St Francis of Assisi (1182 - 1226)**

His experiences of his illness and military service were instrumental in leading him to reflect on the purpose of life. One day, in the church of San Damiano, he seemed to hear Christ saying to him, "Francis, repair my falling house." He took the words literally, and sold a bale of silk from his father's warehouse to pay for repairs of the church. His father was outraged, and there was a public confrontation at which his father disinherited and disowned him, and he in turn renounced his father's wealth. One account says that he not only handed over his father his purse, but also took off his expensive clothes, laid them at his father's feet, and walked away naked. He declared himself "wedded to Lady Poverty", renounced all material possessions, and

devoted himself to serving the poor.

### Poems of St. Francis

#### He asked for charity

God came to my house and asked for charity.  
 And I fell on my knees and cried, "Beloved, what may I give?"  
 "Just love," he said.  
 "Just love."

#### Not to Hurt

Not to hurt our humble brethren (the animals) is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough.  
 We have a higher mission:  
 To be of service to them whenever they



require it.

### The Tree of Love

The tree of love its roots hath spread  
 Deep in my heart, and rears its head;  
 Rich are its fruits: they joy dispense;  
 Transport the heart, and ravish sense.  
 In love's sweet swoon to thee I cleave,  
 Bless'd source of love . . .

### Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
 Where there is injury, pardon.  
 Where there is doubt, faith.  
 Where there is despair, hope.  
 Where there is darkness, light, and  
 Where there is sadness, joy.



# Carter and conflict

Carter's assessment at the end of his visit was a mixture of hope and despair.

Carter did not exactly criticise Bush or the US policy or its current approach towards the Maoists during his 4-day visit here, but as someone who has devoted almost a quarter of a century to promotion of human rights and mitigation of conflict, he would naturally encourage dialogues between rival sides and settle the issue peacefully.



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Jimmy Carter may have lacked charisma as a low-profiled president of the United States, but he has been more visible, consistent and forthright on issues related with human rights, conflict and third world as an ex-president. From Cuba to Iraq, Palestine to Nepal, he has tried to give a message that the US should perhaps review its current policy to help discourage conflict. In the process, he has not only criticised President Bush but also Tony Blair in the case of Iraq; which is something ex-presidents would normally avoid.

Carter did not exactly criticise Bush or the US policy or its current approach towards the Maoists during his 4-day visit here, but as someone who has devoted almost a quarter of a century to promotion of human rights and mitigation of conflict, he would naturally encourage dialogues between rival sides and settle the issue peacefully. This is what he meant to do when he met the Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam, despite their being on the US government's terrorist list.

Maoists should not exaggerate the significance of this meeting since at no stage has Carter encouraged or justified their politics based on violence. As admitted by Prachanda

himself, Carter raised questions about YCL activities, which no doubt, contained his disappointment. In fact, Carter did succeed in securing Prachanda's promise that he would stop objectionable activities of the league. Secondly, his clear emphasis was on the need to hold election to the constituent assembly in a free and fair manner. He was equally emphatic that the prevailing law and order was not conducive enough to hold elections.

Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and his wife Dr Rita Thapa had the honour of being invited by Carter for a dinner at a restaurant in Thamel during his first visit to Nepal in November 1985. Twenty-two years down the line, Kathmandu having lost that Sangrila image, Carter could not imagine going to Thamel this time given the law and order situation; when the prime concern is how to save the country from ruining itself. "We have come to this stage after a combination of multiple failures from all sides - state and non-state actors, and may be internal and external causes," Dr Thapa told Carter during his brief meeting this time.

Carter's assessment at the end of his visit, as reflected in his press conference, was a mixture of hope and despair. But the hope was purely a

conditional one; that the leaders including the Maoists would behave, that they work together to make the election a success, and above all that violence would be a thing of the past.

He was also clear that the issues of inclusive politics, devolution of power and restructuring of the state needed much more intense debate so that a wider national understanding, if not consensus, could be built before the country went to the polls.

Yes, he might have gone a bit overboard, especially in eulogising G P Koirala as his "hero" and praising him for his "integrity." Koirala, no doubt, was the choice of history and at 82, he stood determined to fight back and get democracy back which the king had compromised. But he is showing signs of failing the nation during this latest round of his leadership which is still on probation.

Carter may not have said clearly in the language that most Nepali congress leaders would understand, but he clearly conveyed that the government had failed to maintain law and order and make people feel secured enough to vote. As far as the question of integrity of Koirala, if that includes probity in public life, this is an issue even Nepali Congress would not give

him that generous certificate. Yet, Koirala's biggest strength at the moment is that he is the only person acceptable to all the seven parties as well as the Maoists. Maoists have called him 'leader of the corrupt' but have no choice than supporting him as the Prime Minister.

Carter's moral authority is something that the US administration obviously will take into account. But he certainly does not have the final say on Nepal affairs, nor can he have the Maoists taken off the terrorist list even if he personally believed that Maoists do not deserve to be there any more. On that matter, the official channel of the US government, with Moriarty still here as ambassador or with him gone, would have a far more influential say.

For the terrorist tag to be taken off, violence, extortion, abduction and violation of human rights have to be done away with which would then convince the international community that they are changing as per their declared commitment to establish peace, democracy and prosperity in the country. Carter, at 84, perhaps might feel sorer than the rest, if the peace process suffered or failed; since he has always said he is friend of Nepal and that he would be happy to have his Carter Center playing a role in it. ■



Jimmy Carter with Commissioner Usha Nepal in Election Commission



All Nepali people suffer from the lack of security..

# Free and



Pix by Nijaj sapkota

**Regarding the law and order situation, it is the responsibility of the state to restore law and order and security. It is also an appeal to the Maoists, especially the Young Communist League (YCL) to abide by the agreements they have signed and not to disturb, intimidate and cause problems in the country.**

The German ambassador Franz Ring is known for making frank comments on issues he holds dear even if it is not palatable for the diplomatic corps that he belongs to. Newsfront talked to him in detail about the ongoing peace process, possibility of holding election to the constituent assembly and issues of bilateral cooperation.

**How do you view this peace process and what are the challenges you see?**

My assessment is that this peace process is formally on track although it has been delayed for some months. The deadline set for June was by far too ambitious. It was not only difficult but simply impossible. But when you take into account developments from last April to this year the process has made tremendous progress. Interim government and parliament were formed, interim constitution was finalised and arms management was agreed upon. I think Nepal should be very happy that after a certain phase of stagnation, the process has gained momentum again with the meeting of eight parties and the decision on the new time frame for the election to the constitutional assembly in Nov-Dec by the parliament is good news.

**Election does not look that impossible now?**

There are still many challenges. I want to single out two major problems. It is very important that law and order is restored in the country in order to allow free and fair elections to take place in a secure environment. It would be catastrophic for Nepal if elections cannot be held in a free and fair manner.

It would also put friends of Nepal and partners in development in a very difficult

position because if we support the peace process it means we support democracy. The other aspect is the development in the Terai, the Madhesi problem and the demands of the ethnic minorities. The question is whether and to which extent their demands can be addressed to resolve these problems.

Regarding the law and order situation, it is the responsibility of the state to restore law and order and security. It is also an appeal to the Maoists, especially the Young Communist League (YCL) to abide by the agreements they have signed and not to disturb, intimidate and cause problems in the country.

**Does that mean you are still doubtful about free and fair election taking place in the prevailing situation?**

I would agree with other observers that under prevailing conditions it would be impossible to have free and fair elections. This atmosphere has to change in order to allow free and fair elections to take place.

**We missed mid June election deadline, a constitutional commitment. How do you view the election being postponed?**

It was also a commitment to have the new government in place on the 1st of December last year which was not realistic. There were technical and legislative problems and the problems of the environment. It takes time to reverse the condition of violence, intimidation, extortion. This was a more important reason for the elections to be postponed.

**Is Germany assisting the election commission?**

The embassy already sent papers, a month





# fair polls crucial



back, to EC in this regard in order to explain our system. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is also involved in civic education in order to prepare for the election. You are a part of the diplomatic corps that signed a statement demanding that Nepal government provide enough security to the diplomats based here. Are you satisfied with the changes in the security arrangement?

I am very grateful to the ministry of foreign affairs that offered to take up this issue, and for establishing a system of assistance for us. There is a hot line and we can ask for police escort. But I would like to put this problem of security in a broader context. All Nepali people suffer from the lack of security; from Bandhs when they are not allowed to move around in cars, when they are forced to shut down shops, factories and schools. This is first of all a problem for Nepalis, and it is a smaller problem that the diplomats also suffer.

**During a meeting with Prachanda and Baburam, PM mentioned about a series of attacks by the YCL in which diplomats were targeted and your name also figured there. Did you face such an attack?**

I was never singled out as a specific target but we had cases where stones were thrown at our cars. A few weeks ago, one of our staff members was attacked by members of YCL. During Bandhs I always go out either in my private or office car in order to make myself aware of the situation and on many occasions I faced problems and in several instances, stones were thrown at my car.

Sometimes, I accelerated the car, at other times, I was hit. And this was by different groups, by Maoists and others. I do not think I was targeted as the German ambassador. And this has been happening since many months,

not just recently. I was also attacked when I was moving around in April 2006.

**You raised questions on YCL activities as well as other issues concerning peace process and overall security situation during your meeting with the Maoist leaders last month? Can you give us some details?**

We presented our concerns with Maoist leaders, Prachanda, Dr Baburam Bhattarai and their leader in parliament. Head of the missions of EU countries were also present there. We reiterated EU's stand on Nepal, welcoming the formation of the new interim parliament and

**Human rights abuses should be dealt impartially with. There should be no exception to the rule. Human rights violation issues should be addressed and culprits brought to justice.**

government and expressing EU's commitment to continue its support for the peace process.

We raised concerns about the peace process that had been stalled at that time and the internal political situation, underlining that it is difficult to imagine how free and fair elections could be held under the given circumstances characterised by an environment of violence, absence of law and order, growing anarchy, continuing human rights abuses, undemocratic behaviour and obstruction and disruption of parliamentary sessions.

We also expressed our serious concerns regarding: the establishment of Maoist's parallel government structures and so-called "People's courts," lack of Maoists' compliance with arms

management—their inflating the number of combatants with recent fresh recruitments, including underage personnel; allegations that Maoist hardcore combatants and weapons are outside the cantonments; and delaying the UN verification process.

Other issues were human rights abuses: allegations of abductions, large scale extortions, forced recruitment, including children and in general violence and obstacles caused by YCL. We also said clearly that political leaders and activists need to have a fearless atmosphere to return to their constituency and carry on their political activities.

**How does your assessment of the situation as it prevails today affect country's climate for industrial and economic growth vis a vis Germany's possible contribution to that?**

Well, it should not affect much on what we have promised. We want to continue with that. In general, I would say it is possible for us to continue with our projects. I am also happy to tell you that since the beginning of the peace process last year, we have been able to make certain constructions like access roads and other facilities in the cantonment sites. We are very happy that we are involved in providing direct and immediate help in this peace mission ever since it began.

**Some of the diplomats have been criticised in the media as well as in the political circles for commenting on what essentially constitutes Nepal's internal**

**matter. Your comments?**

I can only explain it from my position as a German Ambassador. We have no intentions of interfering with internal affairs of Nepal. As a friend of Nepal and partner in its development, we are in favour of democracy, upholding human rights and supporting the peace process. So in this regard, we voice our support and our concerns. Democracy and human rights are worldwide issues, not specific to any country and we do raise our concerns regarding it. I do not think that can be called interfering. We firmly believe that it is for Nepali people to decide on its destiny and deal with its political questions.

**Is there any position that Germany has taken on the issue of monarchy in Nepal?**

It is only for Nepali people to decide on that. That is my short and clear answer.

**What would you say regarding the delay in formation of the Truth Commission as mentioned in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; as also about the speculations that international community including the UN who have got certain stake in the peace process; is insisting on probe into excesses committed by the security agencies of the state, and not so much from the other sides?**

I think human rights abuses should be dealt impartially with. There should be no exception to the rule. Human rights violation issues should be addressed and culprits brought to justice. But it is again for Nepali people to decide how much of the reconciliation process would offer solutions to such violations. This is just a theoretical opinion. ■



# Mysterious environment, bogey elections



■ Siddhartha Thapa

It is now becoming increasingly apparent that the government will miss the election deadline for December yet again. Political parties need to urgently assess the law and order situation and consequently chalk out a realistic time table to conduct free and fair elections. As the political deadlock ossifies due to the failure of the Koirala government to conduct timely elections in June, new sets of political challenges now daunt the interim phase, hampering a smooth transition towards permanent peace and a functioning liberal democracy.

Quintessentially, the political parties need to urgently elaborate and clear any lingering ambiguities with the term "environment". Although senior leaders belonging to all parties keep thundering that a "conducive environment" is a prerequisite to polls, they fail to clarify their definition of this mysterious environment. On the other hand, the Maoists are adamant regarding holding early elections. However, increased YCL violence and their bullish attitude have proved to go well beyond the influence of the party leadership and as a result; the indifference will ultimately lead to a political crisis.

The recent attack on the American ambassador and the stoning of the German ambassador's car in Kathmandu, demonstrate the inability of the government to protect diplomats. These unfortunate events clearly reflect the actual state of

the law and order situation of the country. Early this week, Kantipur, the media house met with a crisis as the Maoists established yet another trade union within the parameters of a press establishment. Consequently, senior journalists and media houses fearing similar repercussions have concluded that the independence of the press is at stake, and are contemplating that it may be prudent to relocate south of the border, as a last resort to safeguard the independence of free press.

Worse still ordinary citizens have been traumatised by the step up in YCL extortion in all sectors. Even housing colonies in and around Kathmandu have not been spared. Interestingly even Nepali international UN staff has been targeted by the

Maoists' indifference will ultimately lead to a political crisis.



Maoist Chief Prachanda meeting with Jimmy Carter

Maoists and fallen prey to their extortion spree. Tragically, a large volume of UN staff members of Nepali origin have left Nepal due to insecurity. The political unease created by the rumor that senior Maoist leaders have gone underground and the fact that the Maoist militia still possess a considerable number of sophisticated arms, raises genuine concerns regarding the peace process.

It is encouraging to observe the positive role India has been playing to bridge the gap between the NC and UML and in tandem, aggressively

situation with no viable exit strategy. Therefore, it is imperative for Koirala to urgently re-assess the political situation with a broader view. Koirala needs to immediately take a stronger stand in order to be seen as firm and uncompromising regarding the law and order situation in the country. Yet, as the government continues to neglect the deteriorating law and order situation of the country, it becomes apparent the government is only touting the bogey of elections.

By October, the political predicament will have taken a clear shape and the failure of Koirala to make gargantuan policy changes in reference to security will have a final word regarding the probability of election in December.

Unfortunately, if Koirala fails to take concrete measures in improving the situation of the country, and as a consequence elections are postponed; the Maoists might opt to launch an armed urban based agitation. The Maoists would then be forced to negotiate with either the security forces or other authoritarian institutions for power sharing that will most certainly remove the parliamentary parties out of the equation.

Sensing the ability of the Maoists to launch an armed urban revolution that could force Koirala out of power; Koirala might come into a closed door agreement with them through which he would secure his post. In doing this, the fundamentals of the democratic process will be compromised. Therefore, it might make sense to predict that the present parliament will inevitably transcend into a constituent assembly, as an amicable compromise for both the Maoists and Koirala. ■

condemn the increased violence perpetrated by the YCL. At this stage, it will prove foolish to ignore India's renewed commitment to democratise Nepal. However, India must acknowledge that they had underestimated the Maoist's commitment to peace time politics in the past.

On the other hand, the international community backed UNMIN, is fast proving to be a disappointment. The failure by Ian Martin to adhere to bipartisan values from the onset is now apparent. But more interestingly, as Ian Martin and Lena Sundh cease to protect Maoists interests, it is foreseeable that growing resentment will build against UNMIN, invariably, resulting in growing hostility towards UN staff members in Nepal by the Maoists.

Koirala is now caught in a catch 22

# Radio for the people

Community radio acts as a catalyst of change in the society.



■ Pasang Dolma Sherpa

A community radio is a system of institutionalised mass communication system for community, operated by community efforts. Community radio is distinguished from other media as it emphasises on the maximum benefit to the local community with their participation in management and program production.

The main purpose of community radio is to promote language, culture, literature, art and traditional indigenous knowledge and skills. It empowers marginalised groups and addresses substantial social issues at community level; issues such as poverty, social exclusion, and unemployment. It helps to speed up the process of informing the community and therefore acts as a catalyst of change in the society. It encourages mobilising a both private and collective resource for

personal and community needs to promote national industries and markets.

Historically, the movement of community radio has been seen more active and effective in South America and Africa. Interest on self-updating on current affairs through

media has arisen among Nepali people since the restoration of multiparty system in 1990. As the expectations of rural communities and city people rose for a locally accessible and friendly media, Government of Nepal in 1992 brought a policy for allowing operation of radios by the private sectors under National Broadcasting Act 1992.

However, only in 1997 for the first time, the community radio, "Radio Sagarmatha" received the license in Nepal. Especially after the movement for Loktantra and Save the Independent Radio Movement in the year 2006, the number of licenses awarded has increased. Now there are more than 186 FM stations in the country, out of which 87 are community radios.

While growth in the number of radio stations is a healthy sign in dissemination of information, it is equally important that they are clear about the issues they raise and the quality they maintain. The

Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB) Nepal was established in 2002 to address these issues. It is an umbrella organisation of the radios to promote and protect community radios for dissemination of information and linking communication with development.

It is involved in imparting training facilities, building the capacities of community radios and advocating for pro-community radio policies. It has more than 85 community radios across Nepal as members of ACORAB Nepal, out of which 30 have gone on air.

ACORAB Nepal has already implemented various trainings on radio journalism, management, technician and production. It has plans to develop capacity building programs that help strengthen, promote and sustain radios in Nepal. It covers more than 90% of country's geography as well as

**While growth in the number of radio stations is a healthy sign in dissemination of information, it is equally important that they are clear about the issues they raise and the quality they maintain.**

the population and is emerging as an effective vehicle of social transformation and development.

In less than a decade, it has reached out to the grass root levels of marginalised communities, raising their awareness on issues like education, health, environment, local tradition, culture as well as relevant international issues. They have served as effective platform for communicating events of social relevance.

Ngima Pakhrin, the chairperson of the Community Radio Council (CRC) says it has had tremendous impact on the education sector. Parents started readmitting their children who dropped out, village folks have started talking about issues and more remarkably husbands have started listening to their wives on household decisions. Its impact on poverty reduction has directly benefited the people and has also promoted local technology to a large extent. ■



# TWO PATILS, one Rashtrapati



**Pratibha Patil's career and character have been such that she has no enemies, no rivals, no competitors, a good way to be away from the media glare.**

■ Kumar Ketkar

If she's a believer, Pratibha Patil could consult an astrologer just to comprehend what hit her on Thursday, June 14. Only the stars appear to explain her surprise elevation as the UPA-Left candidate for the president's post. An astrologer pontificating on a TV channel said that the reason her name appeared all of a sudden was that rajyog was very strong in her kundali. The stars were so configured that Sonia Gandhi, UPA and the Left had no option but to recommend her name unanimously! I am sure some other astrologer is consoling Shivraj Patil and blaming that Red Star. After all, communist stars always operate as extraconstitutional — or extra-celestial — centres of power.

Pratibha Patil's career and character have been such that she has no enemies, no rivals, no competitors, a good way to be away from the media glare. No wonder, most mediapersons were clueless about her profile when her name was announced on Thursday. They just knew that she was the governor of Rajasthan. Hardly anyone knew that she was married to Devisingh Shekhawat and therefore had a Rajasthani background. She had not changed her name to Pratibha Shekhawat.

Born in Jalgaon, the cotton-growing Khandesh region of north Maharashtra, she studied in Mumbai, has a residence in Amravati and was the youngest member of the legislative assembly. That was way back in 1962, when she was just 27 and unmarried. Her mentor was

Yashwantrao Chavan, then a towering figure because he was the first chief minister of the newly created state of Maharashtra and later Pandit Nehru's trusted defence minister. In 1967 she was made deputy minister in the state in the Vasant Rao Naik ministry and given the portfolios of public health, parliamentary affairs, tourism. In 1972 she was promoted to the cabinet status. All this while, Chavan's stars were in ascendance and, as his protegee, she too grew in stature in Maharashtra.

But she chose to remain with Indira Gandhi when the Congress was split following the 1977 defeat. In those days, to remain loyal to Indira Gandhi meant inviting political ridicule. It was a difficult decision also because her mentor had left Indira Gandhi. Even Sharad Pawar, Chavan's godson as he was termed, had left the Congress. Pratibhatai (as she's known in Maharashtra) chose to become leader of the opposition in the assembly, positioning herself against Pawar's ruling front.

Loyalty matters. Mrs Gandhi came back to power in 1980. The Janata Party had disintegrated and the Pawar government was dismissed. Today, the Left may be extolling her political virtues, but then the CPM and later even the CPI, were totally opposed to Indira and therefore even to Pratibhatai's politics. The Left has gone out of its way to describe her as "steadfast", but at that time it meant support to Indira and even to the Emergency.

Her being 'Patil' has confused many. In Maharashtra, 'Patil' does not necessarily mean a

Maratha. Shivraj Patil, for instance, is a Lingayat, and Pratibhatai is a Rajput-Maratha. Then there are Patils who are Kumbis and even Dalits. And besides the last name, there is really nothing Shivraj Patil and Pratibha Patil have in common.

Pratibhatai is a private, media-shy person but is open and communicative when in conversation. She is confident and restrained. Shivraj Patil is like a wax statue. He has a very synthetic smile and well-ironed clothes to match that artificiality. It is difficult to hold a conversation with him because he neither expresses an opinion nor challenges any view. He is reliable because he is like a sponge which absorbs water.

He has no primary group, no circle of friends, no personal following, no party network which he can call his own, no active media lobby and no comrades or colleagues in the Congress. He is a loner and has generally remained loyal to Indira-Rajiv-Sonia. Perhaps that is another attribute common between him and Pratibhatai. When Shivraj lost his seat in Latur, nobody had any sympathy for him. But there was shock in his constituency when he was chosen as one of the top cabinet ministers. It is truly a mystery how he rose to the level he has.

But that is a bit like the famous Peter Sellers' film, *Being There*. In it a gardener, serving in a millionaire's estate, having no knowledge of the world outside that estate, inherits all the wealth. Suddenly finding himself a rich man, he starts getting importance and a point comes when he gets nominated as a candidate for the presidency. He even goes on to become president of the US. He is clueless about how he came into power, or what to do with it. The last line in the film, which is also on Sellers' tomb, is: 'Life is a State of Mind'. For Shivraj, Life is a Virtual Reality. In this reality there is no contradiction between being a candidate and not being a candidate.

You just cannot have a conversation with him. He has been like this for well over the three decades that the media and the political class have known him. Nobody can quarrel with him. He never raises his voice. If a reporter asks him a question or if a local Congress neta asks for a favour, he shrinks back a little, fine wrinkles appearing on his face. But within a few seconds he recovers and becomes a wax statue again. He then turns to the reporter and says, "That's an interesting question." He promises to look into it. To the local neta, he shrugs, "I do not handle that issue." He also explains that he is busy with some nationally important policy matters. Both the reporter and the neta leave, neither impressed not dejected. For a while, they too feel that life is a virtual reality.

If Shivraj had indeed occupied Rashtrapati Bhavan, it would at least have been a great tribute to Peter Sellers.

(The Indian Express)

## Police Bus Bombing Kills 35 in Kabul

A bomb ripped through a police bus in a crowded civilian area in Kabul on Sunday, killing more than 35 people, officials said, in what appears to be the deadliest attack in the capital since the fall of the Taliban.

The police academy bus was carrying several police recruits when the bomb went off inside it, leaving several dead, said Zalmay Khan, the deputy police chief of Kabul province. At least 35 people were also wounded.

The thunderous explosion was heard throughout central Kabul at about 8:10 a.m. local time.

Ali Shah Paktiawal, Kabul police director of criminal investigation, said more than 35 people were killed, including policemen and civilians. He said dozens were wounded and sent to nearby hospitals.

Fazel Rahim, a doctor from a nearby hospital, said 18 dead bodies lay in the



hospital courtyard, while more than 35 wounded were being treated inside the building.

"Most of the wounded are in serious condition," said Rahim, whose hands and white coat were covered in blood.

The roof of the bus was blown off and officers were pulling a number of bodies from the wreckage, according to an Associated Press reporter at the scene.

The explosion twisted the bus into a charred skeleton, and bloody unidentifiable body parts littered the area as far as 30 yards from the bus. Hundreds of police and investigators were inspecting the scene.

The explosion appears to have happened in the front of the bus, which was more badly damaged than the rest of vehicle. Officials were trying to determine if it was a suicide attack or a bomb planted on the bus.

Wali Mohammad, an eyewitness who was driving his car just behind the bus, said "there were a lot killed and wounded, both police and civilian."

Mohammad said that he "saw a big fire and dust in front of me."

The blast happened at a crowded bus station, used by both police and civilians, near the Kabul governor's house.

Police and other Afghan security officials are commonly targeted by insurgents, who consider them tools of the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

The attack appears to be the deadliest attack in Kabul since the fall of the Taliban. Last September, a suicide bomb attack left 16 dead, including two American soldiers close to the U.S. embassy in the capital. Days later, a suicide attack near the Interior Ministry left 12 people dead and over 40 others wounded.

(abcnews)

## Thai government reaches out to Thaksin

Thailand's military-installed government offered Saturday to negotiate with ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra over his recently frozen assets, as thousands of people protested in support of the former leader. Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said Thaksin was welcome to come return to Thailand

"I am ready to negotiate," Surayud said in an interview with a government-owned television station. "An important issue which Thaksin wants to negotiate will be about his assets and family." The government froze more than \$1.6 billion in assets belonging to Thaksin and his wife on Monday over suspicion the money was obtained through corruption.

From exile in London, Thaksin denounced the decision in a video message broadcast to 13,000 supporters demonstrating at a Bangkok park Friday.

"I will fight for my honor to prove my innocence," Thaksin said. About 10,000 Thaksin loyalists protested again at the park Saturday, with huge posters of Thaksin and signs demanding the military-installed government step down. The anti-government protests, while slowly growing, have so far failed to have a significant impact on political affairs. But they have stoked worries of a confrontation between Thaksin backers and those who overthrew him for alleged corruption and abuse of power.

Noppadol Pattama, a lawyer



and defacto spokesman for Thaksin, has said the asset freeze would not affect Thaksin's decision to stay away from Thailand for the time being. Thaksin was abroad during the September coup and never returned home. He has been splitting his time between London and traveling around Asia.

Last month, a court ordered his Thai Rak Thai party dissolved for election law violations and barred its entire leadership of

111 people, including Thaksin, from public office for five years.

"I already said that I'm retiring from politics, but I am just asking that my family and I live with dignity," Thaksin said.

Thaksin made his fortune largely from a government-granted cell phone operating concession. His net worth is difficult to tally, because much of the money is kept in the names of family members, and because it is unclear how much is kept in Thai baht and how much is in other currencies. But Forbes magazine, in a listing in July 2006 of Thailand's richest people, put Thaksin and his family in fourth place with an estimated fortune of \$2.2 billion.

(chron.com)



There is little or no help to assist creative ventures of these writers...



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

"You have decided to walk the path we chose decades ago," Upendra Shrestha, a senior Nepali writer, addresses a young, upcoming Nepali writer and wheezes, "victory be yours!"

Without fail, Upendra Dai visits Kavi Kuna, the poets' corner every evening, sharp at 5 o' clock, where a seat is reserved for him. To us, Upendra is the last link to our literary past. In spite of his candid words and invectives, he remains our wandering book of wisdom. The history of Nepali literature speaks through him. Obsessive and abusive, he is the unacknowledged Guru narrating the forgotten chapters of Nepali history and culture. He is the last book we can read to learn all that happened in the past when the poets walked the formidable path which saint poet Kabir refers to as: 'If you can burn your hut, come with me and be a poet...'

The editor of Nepali journal Tanneri, Bidur Gautam enters with a bagful of copies of his just published journal. Free of charge, he distributes copies of the journal to almost all the poets present there. The writers accept the books as earned prizes and even welcome the treat of free tea from him. Most of them have had their works already published in the journal or intend to in ensuing issues.

This is a familiar scene in the arena of Nepali

# Poets' shop talk



Nepal Academy

publishing controlled primarily by author-publishers. The writers play the dual role of being the mouth and the eye. He is the book and the reader, the maker, and the thing made. Almost every alternate day I receive a gift of a book published by a Nepali author. The scene seems vibrant and vital.

That Nepali literature thrives and flourishes without any institutionalised support is magic in itself. There are no art councils or promotion centers. No publishers are genuinely interested in promoting the cause of written words. Nepal Academy or Sajha Prakashan remains just a tool to recompense the semi-literate party

workers loyal to their respective leaders for their services in the past. The fact that there is little or virtually no help to assist the creative ventures of these writers and their low income does not make the scene less interesting.

To a western reader this might seem pure madness. But this is the norm here. A book is gifted like refreshments after the reading. You accept it as a reward for being present at the ceremony, without any guile or guilt. Only rarely do you buy a book.

It is usually the lower middle class in Nepal who buys literary books, consider themselves to be a part of the creative world, and circulates it

among their friends and family members. Buying a book is a rare thing. Once a Nepali reader buys a book, it seems to become like a scripture. The reader hands it down from generation to generation. The book is worn out through multiple readings. It is bound, and rebound by posterity.

A good Nepali book once bought moves like a mantra in a monastery from one mouth to another. It appears to me that over time it envelops the readers, and becomes them, the bread and breath of their sacred frames.

*(Yuyutsu has published seven books of poems, including The Lake Fewa and a Horse.)*

# NEWS ON YOUR CELLPHONE

## 2722

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### NEWS

Keyword	Result
NEWS	NATIONAL NEWS
LIVE	BREAKING NEWS
INT	INTERNATIONAL NEWS
SPO	SPORTS NEWS
BIZ	BUSINESS NEWS
ENT	ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
OFF	OFF BEAT NEWS
NEWS HELP	HELP

### HOROSCOPE

Keyword	Result
AST ARI	ARIES
AST TAU	TAURUS
AST GEM	GEMINI
AST CAN	CANCER
AST LEO	LEO
AST VIR	VIRGO
AST LIB	LIBRA
AST SCO	SCORPIO
AST SAG	SAGITTARIUS
AST CAP	CAPRICORN
AST AQU	AQUARIUS
AST PIS	PISCES

### STOCKS

Keyword	Result
NEPSE	INDEX
SHG	TOP 5 GAINERS
SHL	TOP 5 LOSERS
SHH	HELP

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### FOREX

Keyword	Result
FOREX SELL	SELLING RATES
FOREX BUY	BUYING RATES
FOREX	DESIRED CURRENCY
FOREX HELP	HELP

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### GAMES

Keyword	Result
GITT	Tic Tac Toe
GHM	Hangman
GITT HELP	TIT Manual
GHM HELP	GHM Manual

### CRICKET

Keyword	Result
CRI	CRICKET SCHEDULE & LIVE SCORES

### THOUGHT

Keyword	Result
THOUGHT	THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

### JOKES

Keyword	Result
JOKE	JOKES
JOKE SANTA	JOKES

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Keyword	Result
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# Marshland Flowers

There are no short cuts to Buddhahood

Pratyekbuddhas arise only in the gaps between the teachings of two Buddhas. They do not appear at other times. For example, when the dispensation of Sakya Muni has become completely extinct, there will be a gap between the extinction and the coming of Maitreya Buddha. It is during this period that Pratyek Buddhas will arise. They are those who have already practiced in many lives with other Buddhas and they will practice based on their memories of the teachings of the Buddhas under whom they practiced before, when the Buddha's teaching have become completely extinct.

It is said that at the moment when they attain Pratyek Bodhi, no matter what their get-up was they will miraculously be transformed into full fledged Bhikkhus along with the Bhikkhu dress. These Pratyek Buddhas do not teach like Arhats or Buddhas. They are loners or live in groups of Pratyek Buddhas and only answer questions when asked but do not formally teach. Needless to say, there are no Pratyek Buddhas now at this period when the dispensation of Sakyamuni is still alive. Nor has anyone heard any particular person miraculously turning into a Bhikkhu with all its regalia at the point of his enlightenment.

And this is correct, because Pratyek Buddhas will not arise until Shakyamuni's Sasan (dispensation) has completely died out. Now let us talk about Samyak Sambodhi which is the enlightenment of a Buddha. First of all a Bodhisattva (i.e. a being destined to be a Buddha in the future) begins his career by making the resolve in front of a living Buddha, that he too has determined to become a Buddha like himself to be able to free immeasurable sentient beings from sorrow. Then his career begins.

The career or path of the



■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Bodhisattva is practicing the six Paramitas (sometimes also called the ten Paramitas). These six Paramitas are practiced from three to four Asankhya Kalpas during which period the Bodhisattva crosses through the five paths called the Pancha Marga. Various lineages like Theravada, Mahasangikas, Sarvastivadins have different categorisations in order to explain the path of the Bodhisattvas; but they are not really different in essence.

Here, however, we shall use the explanation of Mahayana-Vajrayana which is similar to that of the Sarvastivadins. It is only these who make the resolve to become a Buddha in front of a living Buddha

and practice the six or ten Paramitas for 3 to 4 Asankhya Kalpas, who become a Buddha as a culmination of their path and not others. No other person, no matter how intelligent and how great a meditator, can and should be called a Buddha.

To become a Buddha one must cross the Pancha Marga (the five paths) and these may take a longer or shorter time but there are no short cuts to Buddhahood – as some have misconceived. Perhaps an explanation of the Pancha Marga (five paths) will clarify the above statement; but let us finish with the unbroken enlightened lineage issue first.

(To be continued...)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)



## Drugs and alcohol may irreversibly harm your child

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

**Will drinking a little when pregnant harm your child?**

■ Ranju Gautam, Itahari

Giving birth to a child is creating life that is precious. So, it is important for a woman to be aware that drinking or using any drug during pregnancy, be it occasionally, for social purposes or any other reason may irreversibly harm her unborn child.

Even consumption of drug and alcohol before conception is a cause of concern but immediate halt in intake of these substances show significant improvement. These acts of using drugs and alcohol not only impact on the well being of an unborn child but also on the health and well-being of a mom-to-be. These are serious problems that may jeopardise pregnancy and hinder a mother's ability to take care of her child afterwards.

So, why do some pregnant women still drink alcohol? There could be several underlying reasons. Lack of information or misguidance could lead a woman to underestimate the effects alcohol will have on her unborn child. If a pregnant woman is an alcoholic, she may be unable to quit her addiction on her own. She may also be in denial, thinking that she is simply a social or an occasional drinker.

It is important to understand that every pregnancy is different. Alcohol may barely affect the first child, whereas it may cause severe disorders in the second. The best way to prevent any problems is to stop consuming all types of alcoholic beverages, without any exception. Marijuana use during pregnancy may slow foetal growth and increase risk of premature delivery.

Cocaine causes low birth weight; increases risk of miscarriage and trigger pre-term labor. Low birth

weight babies have a higher risk of dying in their first month of life than normal weight babies. They also are more prone to lifelong disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and mental retardation.

Other drugs such as heroin, amphetamines and a majority of prescribed medications are equally harmful for pregnant women. Any medications, however vital, should only be consumed after consulting a doctor. If you are unsure about the prescribed medications you are using or have any other concerns regarding drugs and your pregnancy, do not hesitate to contact a health professional. It may prevent you and your baby from long term suffering.

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

Insight

# Humane yearning

China of today has lost a vital link with China of yesterday.

■ Sushma Amatya



It is common to see reckless spirit of youth and not so young trying to forge new identities by breaking all ties with their past under influence of some ideology or the other; only to seek out their roots once the heat of rebellion has died down. To understand your roots, is to understand and accept where you came from, to recognise what factors played their parts to create a large part of your being.

It also means to see things as they are be they positive or negative; and by doing so it helps you learn lessons from it – that can be used to improve the present. Examining your roots objectively gives a better understanding of what made your parents and their parents the way they were; and helps one see a clearer picture of the community, the society you were born in.

The clarity of perspective gives you a sense of belonging in the sense of being inter-connected with not just with your family members but with the long tradition of faith and values from which were derived the strength to endure all changes and hardships of life. All this would apply if you were born in such a society in which faith and tradition played a significant role, no matter what it was and in which manner it was practiced.

But imagine what source would one use to comprehend one's background if there was only a blank, an erased wall, to refer to. This vacuum of knowledge about one's past appears to be felt by a large number of Chinese today, as a result of the Cultural Revolution of the 60s that tried so hard to raze all remnants of the ancient civilization, all signs of faith, knowledge and history in their country.

Although economically prosperous today and a power to reckon with, China of today has lost a vital link with China of yesterday; that was replete with stories, magic, memories, artifacts, literature, religious texts – all in all a storehouse of knowledge of their past which belonged as much as to those who destroyed it as it did to their predecessors. Though the impact of the absence of the connectivity on societal level would call for extensive research, it definitely seems to have created a sense of emptiness on personal levels.

Chinese tourists of all ages, make up a large number of those visiting Lumbini, a major Buddhist pilgrimage site in Nepal. They are also the ones who buy a large number of Thankas depicting Buddha and other Buddhist deities. And their amazement at Nepali familial ties

that are so intricately woven with culture needs no articulation. Surrounded by the relics of yesteryears, some get very emotional too.

All this makes one wonder if amidst all man-made structures and comforts, their souls are not seeking its nourishment that cannot be drawn from intellectual pursuits or material advancement only.

Though China declares itself as a secular state, it has basically an anti-religion approach. It is in sharp contrast with India that also calls itself a secular state, is not anti-religion and where people from all religious background is given freedom to practice. Could it be due to the freedom of soul that drives people from all corners of the world seeking treasures of mind to the chaotic city like Benaras or to far flung corners of Himachal Pradesh?

A human soul needs more than just food, shelter, health insurance and a job. This need expresses itself in many ways through creative expressions of different kinds – arts and literature being just one of them. It seeks something intangible, inexpressible and taps on all existing sources to inspire it to explore, question, create and expand its consciousness.

Suppression of this age old desire manifests itself in nagging dissatisfaction, an emptiness inside that leads to frustration and depression; not to speak of mere mechanical existence. To become whole is difficult, if not impossible when an integral part is missing. ■

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## Angelina: More baby

Angelina-Brad Angelina Jolie's "rainbow family" of adopted and biological children is not finished yet - not by a long way.

When US chat show host Jon Stewart asked the Hollywood actor how high she and Brad Pitt might go, Jolie said: "It fluctuates between seven and 13 or 14." Stewart: "Wow, I'll tell you this, I

admire that because two is kicking my ass." Jolie: "Yeah, I understand that. Four is kind of kicking our ass, but we kind of feel like, 'Damn it, we're up for the challenge!'"

Jolie, who is on the promotional trail for her latest film *A Mighty Heart* has been the subject of reports that she is considering adopting a child in the Czech Republic, where she made her last film.

The rumours come only months after she adopted Pax Thien, a three-year-old from Vietnam. His surname was changed to Jolie-Pitt in the US, acknowledging Pitt as his father.

The Hollywood stars now have four children - Maddox, Zahara, their

biological baby daughter Shiloh, and Pax.

Although 32-year-old Jolie has proudly revealed plans to add to her extensive brood, she and Pitt have been less than enthusiastic about sharing personal details during interviews with journalists.

Ahead of her promotions for *A Mighty Heart* Jolie's representatives insisted each reporter had to sign a contract before speaking to her - which she told Stewart was "excessive".

*A Mighty Heart*, which was produced by Pitt, is based on the real-life kidnapping and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl. Jolie plays Mariane Pearl in the film, which is due for release in Australia in October.

(Starpulse.com)

## Boss of bollywood?

Officially the highest paid actor, but Sivaji Rao Gaekwad never conquered Bollywood

Poonam Dhillon remembers him for his antics on and off screen. Anupam Kher is in awe of his screen presence. Filmmaker Pankaj Parashar calls him The Man. Dimple Kapadia recalls the method in his madness. When it comes to applause, fellow actors and directors of Rajnikant have lots to say about him, especially now that he's taking home a wad of Rs 20 crore for Tamil film, *Sivaji—The Boss*.

"In Indian cinema, if there is a face to 'untouchable', it's Rajnikant. He's probably India's biggest brand," says Poonam Dhillon, his *Dosti Dushmani* co-star. In that sense, he is untouchable; even top Bollywood actors don't pocket more than Rs 12 crore per film.

Yet, though he is Kollywood's undisputable King, Bollywood never really saw Rajnikant as a hero, except for Anil Sharma's *Farishtey*, J Om Prakash's *Bhagwan Dada* and *Wafadar*, which were forgotten soon after. Rajni was often the bridesmaid in

projects like *Hum*, *Chaalbaaz*, *Insaniyat ke Devta*, as he shared screen space with Amitabh Bachchan, Rakesh Roshan, Sunny Deol, Vinod Khanna, Hema Malini, Sridevi and Kamal Hassan.

"Rajnikant mania hit Bollywood in the late 80s and early 90s. Suddenly there was a sea of films one after the other, with people he knew, like K C Bokadia, Parashar and Om Prakash," film analyst Indu Mirani notes. But except for his crisp Tamil accent, a Romeo-style red scarf, a cowboyish swagger, there was little to write home about his Bollywood career.

"At that point, Rajnikant earned about Rs 18 lakh to Rs 20 lakh per film. But, of course, I'm talking 1989. Yet, money was never a criterion for Rajnikant. For him, it was a friendly gesture; I still say he was helping me out," *Chaalbaaz* director Parashar recounts.

(Expressindia)



## Queen knights RUSHDIE

Author Salman Rushdie, who was forced into hiding for a decade after Iran's spiritual leader ordered his assassination, is to receive a knighthood in the latest honors list, Buckingham Palace has announced.

The "Midnight's Children" author, along with CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour as well as a KGB double agent and perhaps the government's toughest human rights critic are on the list marking Queen Elizabeth II's official birthday Saturday.

"I am thrilled and humbled to receive this great honor, and am very grateful that my work has been recognized in this way," Rushdie said in a statement. Rushdie is one of the most prominent novelists of the late

20th century and is known for his unique mix of history with magical realism. His 13 books have won numerous awards, including the Booker Prize for "Midnight's Children" in 1981. In 1993 the novel won the "Booker of Bookers," a special award honoring the best novel in the 25-year history of the prize.

He went into hiding after Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued a 1989 fatwa, or religious edict, ordering Muslims to kill the author because his novel "The Satanic Verses" allegedly insulted Islam. The Iranian government declared in 1998 that it would not support but could not rescind the fatwa. Rushdie says he receives a "sort of Valentine's card" from Iran

each year on February 14 letting him know the country has not forgotten the vow to end his life.

Ian Botham, one of England's most successful 20th century cricket players, was also made a knight.

CNN's Chief International Correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, government lawyer-turned human rights campaigner Shami Chakrabarti, Glastonbury Festival founder Michael Eavis and comedian Barry Humphries, who created the character of Dame Edna Everage, were all named Commanders of the Order of the British Empire, or CBE.

One of the most remarkable names on the list is former KGB agent Oleg Gordievsky, who like Rushdie lived for years under the threat of assassination. British intelligence recruited Gordievsky in the 1960s and he later became invaluable when Moscow assigned him to its London embassy to spy on Britain in 1982. But three years later, his cover was blown and he was arrested while in the Soviet Union. He was released due to a lack of evidence and he escaped by secretly boarding a train to Finland.

Gordievsky was appointed a Companion to the Order of St. Michael and St. George, or CMG, an honor for individuals who have rendered important services related to Commonwealth or foreign nations. Author Ian Fleming wrote in his novels that the queen gave the same appointment to his fictional spy, James Bond. Other famous names on the list include singer Joe Cocker, soccer player Teddy Sheringham, Agent Provocateur fashion label founders Joseph Corre and Serena Rees, and actor Peter Sallis, the voice of Wallace in the "Wallace and Gromit" films.

(SI.com)



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