



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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A volunteer viewing film poster on the last day of the first ever Nepal international indigenous film festival held in Kathmandu. The three day festival concluded on 24 June.

The D-Day

CA elections on Nov 22 (Mangsir 6)

■ nf correspondent

After prolonged confusion, debate and discussions, the government has fixed 22 November as the date for holding Constituent Assembly (CA) election. This was decided by the cabinet meeting which Prime Minister G P Koirala chaired in Singha Durbar on Sunday.

Along with the date for the poll, the government also decided to refer the report of the constituencies' delimitation back to the same commission which A P Singh, the retired judge of Supreme Court had headed. The commission has been given three months time to look into its own report, and amend, finalising the total number of constituencies when the country goes to the poll for CA, first ever, in Nepal's political and history.

The date was announced in midst of warning by senior coalition leaders that failure to do so by Sunday will end Prime Minister Koirala's political relevance. Moreover, the election commission also made things easier for the government as it said it would take a pragmatic view on transfer and posting of officials for election purposes, something the model code of conduct stops after the date for the poll is announced.

Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokharel said that the commission would be taking leniently the issue of transfer and posting

of officials this time since all the parties had a common interest of electing the CA and it was different from the election to parliament where parties are pitted against each other.

Right at the outset of the cabinet meeting, Koirala said that he was committed to holding the polls in November and added that all security measures were to be taken and law enforced strictly. The new date for the poll follows an amendment carried in the interim constitution which states that the election which could not take place by mid-June as slated earlier, will now be held by middle of December.

Koirala agreed to shoulder all the blame in case the election does not take place as per the new schedule. He was obviously responding to the public statement by UML General Secretary, Madhav Nepal that Koirala should quit the post in case the election does not take place.

But the coalition partners have already begun the race for influencing transfer and posting of officials—both civil and police, to suit their electoral interest in their respective constituencies. As per the information available, Communist party of Maoists has asked for Chief District Officers (CDOs) who will be acting as the returning officers during the election in 31 places. The Home Minister is believed to have agreed to offer at least 26 districts to the Maoists, which constitutes little more than one third of the total districts. ■

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a great flying experience

End monarchy immediately

■ nf correspondent

Maoist Chief Prachanda has threatened to pull out of the government if the 'conspiracy' to save the monarchy continues. He said he wants the end of monarchy immediately for election to the constituent assembly to take place on schedule and in an atmosphere free from conspiracy. His latest assertion comes in the background of PM G P Koirala favouring the concept of a minor King recently.

In an interview with the 'Devils Advocate' programme telecast by CNN-IBN, a Delhi channel on Sunday, Prachanda said the conspiracy galore might force his party's exit from the government soon. He was critical of PM Koirala and Army Chief Rukmangat Katawal saying they were still in favour of the king. He has however, not set a deadline for the withdrawal of his party from the government.

What Prachanda said to the Indian channel is however not totally inconsistent with the line that he has been advocating here. The Maoist first seemed to be supportive of the idea that the civil society led by



In an interview with the 'Devils Advocate' programme telecast by CNN-IBN, a Delhi channel on Sunday, Prachanda said the conspiracy galore might force his party's exit from the government soon.

Devendra Raj Pandey should lead the 'third Jana-andolan' while Maoists would be supporting it from the background.

As the civil society came into much bigger controversy and suffered a split after it refused to criticise Maoists for YCL attack on the media, Maoists have now been contemplating the idea of leading the movement themselves, ostensibly for a republic Nepal as a precondition for their participation in the constituent assembly elections.

The party's central committee meeting held six weeks ago in Kavre had authorised Prachanda to decide the timing of withdrawal from the government if that politically suited the Maoists.

In the meantime, Maoists and Nepal army have come to an open confrontation after the army resisted the Maoists' move to have several security camps withdrawn from different parts of the country. Katawal took a categorical stance that none of the existing camps set-up after a thorough assessment of the security situation during the years of conflict would be removed 'in the prevailing law and order' scenario. ■



Sharif Shrestha, Little Mister Nepal 2007 from Gems School and Namrata Pandey, Little Miss Nepal 07, from VS Niketan School celebrating their young success.

Madi - Prachanda's waterloo

This was the second time in less than a year that Prachanda's visit to Madi has been called off.

Badarmude, Madi



■ nf correspondent

Courage seems to have failed Prachanda once again as he called off his much trumpeted visit to Chitwan's Madi, at the last minute. Madi was waiting for Prachanda's apology on Saturday for the killing of 39 people, mostly locals, when the Maoists ambushed a public transport two years ago.

This was the second time in less than a year that Prachanda's visit to Madi has been called off.

The stand off between the local Maoists and the surviving victims of the Madi massacre on how to conduct Prachanda's visit ultimately led to cancellation of the trip.

A survivor, Krishna Adhikari, vice-chairman of the Bandarmude Victims Committee went public saying that the local Maoist leaders warned them that the surviving victims would be executed if they insisted on unreasonable demands. "You must accept whatever the party leadership offers, failing which the consequence could be serious," they said as

quoted by Krishna. There is also a dispute over the content to be inscribed in the 'memorial' that Dr Baburam Bhattarai has designed.

While there is agreement between the two sides that all those who lost their lives, and all who are wounded would have their names inscribed in the memorial; Maoists are firm that they should not be listed as killers or as the cause of the massacre. Local newspapers and FM radio however quoted Maoist local leader, Madhur as saying that Maoists were not involved in meting out any threat to the local survivors. "It is not our policy," he said.

Madi massacre, the most tragic incident as well as a moral defeat for the Maoists could well prove to be a waterloo for Prachanda for various reasons. Firstly, Prachanda is from Chitwan; secondly, he has defaulted on the issue despite his claims; and those responsible for the massacre have neither been brought to justice nor any disciplinary actions taken against them.

Prachanda admits YCL excesses

"...These YCL actions do not conform to the original intended role of YCL, and the organisation is also looking at steps to deal with these abuses,"

■ nf correspondent

Maoist Chief Prachanda said Young Communist League (YCL) has gone beyond the job given to them. This was what he stated when Lena Sundh, Special Representative of the office of the UN Human Right Commission, OHCHR, when she confronted him with facts, figures and details of YCL excesses in the country last week.

"...These YCL actions do not conform to the original intended role of YCL, and the organisation is also looking at steps to deal with these abuses," an OHCHR report released on Saturday said quoting Prachanda. It however, does not give details of what the original role meant for the league was.

Prachanda's admission of the wrongdoings by YCL came in the wake of Sundh's assertion that as an integral part of the CPN-M structure, YCL is responsible ultimately to CPN-M leadership, and that confidence in CPN-M's commitment to human rights in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) will remain seriously undermined if effective action is not taken to address these concerns.

OHCHR had gathered details about 24 individuals abducted by YCL since 28 May; at the rate of at least one per day. They were taken to places which were not official detention centers, interrogated, in some cases beaten and threatened before being released or handed over to police after a short period in captivity.

The report said, "The human rights abuses committed by YCL are contributing to a climate of fear and intimidation. They also act as a constraint on legitimate political, journalistic and other activities particularly related to freedom of expression and assembly....As part of the government, the CPN-M has a duty to ensure that the human rights provisions of the interim constitution as well as international human rights treaties to which Nepal is a party are met."

The report added, "lack of effective law enforcement has created a vacuum which is easily exploited both for political and criminal interests. It has also created the conditions for violence and abuses such as those included in this report, and for those responsible of carrying them out, knowing they will not be held accountable." ■

Newsbrief

Sahana to visit Israel

Foreign Affairs Minister, Sahana Pradhan will be the first Nepali minister to visit Israel in the past 15 years. She is scheduled to reach Israel on July 11 since Nepal is now planning to open its embassy there.

B P Koirala who was the architect of Nepal-Israel diplomatic relation way back in 1960, much against the trend in South Asia was the first Nepali dignitary to visit the country. G P Koirala undertook an official trip there as Prime Minister in 1992.

Ms Pradhan who is going to Turkey on July 9 to participate in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) meeting will also attend the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Nepal and United Arab Emirates in Cairo on July 15, soon after she completes her three day visit to Israel.



Safety first

British Ambassador Andrew Hall did not mind canceling his trip to Janakpur on request of the local authorities there on June 19. The advice, 'please do not come' was given in the light of the Madhesh Bandh call and uncertainty over law and order situation by the local authorities, apparently under instructions from the Home Ministry in Kathmandu. Hall instead chose to go to Nepalgunj, following cancellation of his trip to Janakpur.



Hall happens to be the first diplomat to alter his programme for security reasons after the government recently assured diplomatic corps in Kathmandu that they would be given full security if the government has advance notice about their travel plans.

Keep quiet

Inquiry commission has been set-up to look into the cause of Gaur massacre on March 23 in which 29 Maoist cadres lost their lives following an attack by the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum.

But there are doubts being expressed if the commission could be bold enough and fair while investigating the cause of the clash with both Maoists and the MJF authorised to hold parallel public meetings close to each other.

Madhav Ojha, the then Chief District Officer of Rautahat, is believed to have told the PM recently that the district administration was forced not to deny permission to the Maoists to hold rally close to the venue that was already allotted to MJF. Koirala was informed that the Home Ministry at the highest level instructed the district administration, not to deny permission to the Maoists.

Badu out

Dilendra Prasad Badu who PM G P Koirala sacrificed as Minister for information during the April 1 reshuffle has finally bowed out of the Nepal Conservation Trust - the Loktantrik version of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC).

Badu who was appointed its chairman by Koirala in his capacity as the patron of the trust was forced out after Forest Minister Matrika Yadav staked his claim for the post saying Forest Ministry should have the first right over the trust. Badu however, managed to continue for more than a month, even after the cabinet decided way back on April 15 that he was being replaced by Yadav.

Trusted sources say Badu not only managed to sign a couple of important orders even after his ouster, he also took a substantial sum of money in advance to, 'study conservation activities' in west Nepal's Darchula, the area he belongs to.



NHRC Chief

Kedarnath Upadhyay, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, will be the new chief of the National Human Rights Commission. He was chosen after his older brother, a much respected man from the judiciary, Bishwanath Upadhyay declined to accept the post saying he would not want to appear before the parliamentary committee as provided in the interim constitution.

NHRC has remained without chief and other commissioners for more than a year, as a result of which human right abuses have continued without any machinery taking cognisance of it.

Matrika shown the door

...Party's central leadership chose to axe him since he had been critical of the party for having compromised on the Madhesh issue.

■ nf correspondent

The simmering differences in the Madheshi National Liberation Front (MNLF), affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal—Maoists (CPN-M) came to the fore as Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Matrika Yadav stepped down under instruction from the party leadership.

Yadav, arguably, the most articulate as well as controversial of the Maoist leaders, has been replaced with Party's parliamentarian, Ram Kumari Yadav, which front sources believe, could be an ad hoc arrangement. Yadav and another front leader, Prabhu Shah, were at loggerheads for months now, with the anti-Yadav groups, openly demanding his head.

There are also indications that Yadav will be more cornered in the party as well as in the government in days to come. Known for his outspoken and uncompromising character on issues, Yadav has annoyed Prime Minister Koirala, India and his own leadership at the same time. But the party's central leadership chose to axe him since he had been critical of the party for having compromised on the Madhesh issue.

As party leadership was having discomfiture over his stance on Terai, Prabhu Shah told the party leadership clearly that Matrika Yadav vetoed the party's regional level's decision not to mobilise Young Communist League (YCL) cadres in Gaur in March when the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) was going to hold a rally. An attempt by the Maoists to obstruct MJF meeting by holding a parallel one led to the clash between two sides in which at least 29 Maoist activists died.

While PM Koirala has already asked Prachanda to tame Yadav, it is too early to say he might be out of the cabinet as well. But there are clear indications that his



relationship with the party leadership is getting embittered by the day. He is the only Maoist leader India has ignored as per his own admission. He publicly stated that while Chinese Ambassador met him twice, he failed to have any meeting with the Indian ambassador.

As a minister, he has not only called the PM a leader of the 'corrupt,' he is also believed to have expressed his frustration with his 'party comrades' that he is not getting enough support in his crusade against the system both from the government and his own party. But Madhesh watchers say the change of leadership of MNLF may only create more problems for the Maoists in Terai, as a divided front will have to face hostile and militant rivals like Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) factions, led by Goit and Jwala Singh besides MJF.

Sundh's farewell Nepal

Lack of public safety and YCL's activities might jeopardise elections...

■ nf correspondent

Lena Sundh, Special Representative of the OHCHR for Nepal, left the country on Saturday more skeptical and uncertain about the future of democracy and human rights than the time she took up the assignment in place of Ian Martin, nine months ago.

The State's inability to ensure public safety and Young Communist League's activities were clearly the two issues she mentioned as something that still might jeopardise the possibility of holding polls to the constituent assembly.

Despite her disappointment and skepticism, she recommended that some basic measures should be taken to ensure the end of culture of impunity, and the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to achieve those goals. She however, warned that the TRC should not be substituting for prosecutions for serious human rights violations. It could only be one of the



many possible transitional justice mechanisms to address human rights violations and thereby facilitate sustainable peace and reconciliation in Nepal, she added.

As fears spread that both Maoists and the government are not serious about bringing human rights violators to justice, she said, "holding perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes accountable is a fundamental step in rebuilding effective law enforcement and rule of law in Nepal. Without sustained action by the State to bring perpetrators to account, there is a risk that other steps to

improve law and order, such as training and more resources, will have only a cosmetic effect. Ending impunity is the foundation for rebuilding rule of law and public trust and for ensuring the dignity of the institutions," Sundh said in a statement released during her farewell press conference.

Apparently, James Moriarty was not the only one to express concerns about the Young Communist League activities. Sundh added, "The YCL has taken upon itself to perform law enforcement activities without legal basis and in a way that is totally unacceptable." She said that traditionally marginalised groups must commit themselves to only peaceful means of advocacy and protest. Sundh also expressed her worries about growing violence against women, their lack of access to justice, especially in the rural areas, and about widely visible practice of authorities forcing women to accepted mediated solutions even in crimes like rape. ■



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Point to Ponder

We need a free media, not just freedom of speech.
 - Tom Scholz

Press freedom in peril

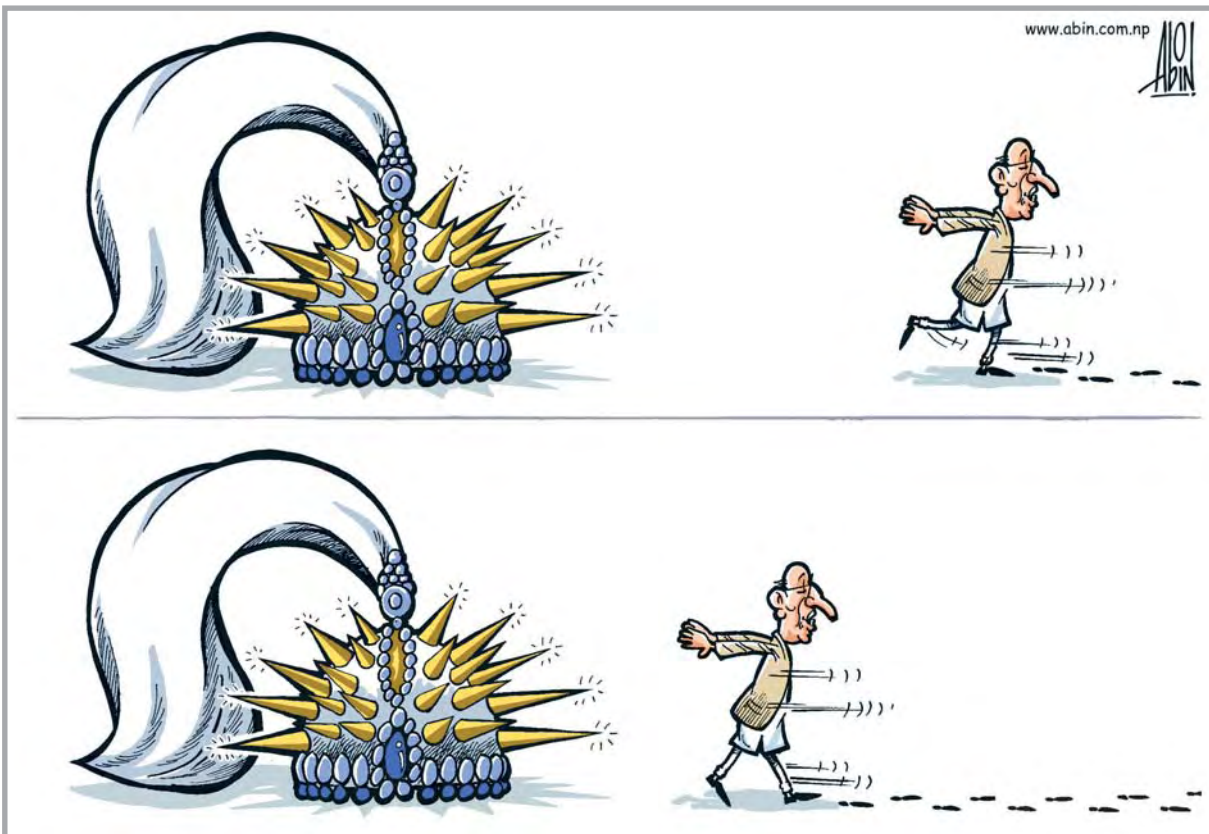
Nepal once again is emerging as an unsafe place to work and live in, especially for a journalist. The recent incidents against the press are both dangerous and deplorable which are being instigated by a faction of the government. The international community is more worried to find that the return of democracy does not quite mean press freedom, and that those posing a threat to it can do so without any accountability. Human rights bodies have already come out sharply against the threat meted out to the media by Maoist activists while the European Union, United States and other democratic countries are apprehending that this is going to be a systematic campaign to gag the press. Nepali media is now increasingly realising that their freedom is at peril, and that they need to fight together against the perpetrators of this crime.

Threat to media continues to increase by day. Those who harbour political ambitions of appropriating powers through undemocratic means have every reason to fear free press, just like the King did, and just like the Maoists are doing now. Various Terai agitation groups have posed similar threats to journalists.

Maoists, in the guise of their labour-friendly policy, are coercing media houses to allow 'trade union' formed with people who are not their employees. As can be predicted, this is aimed at taking total control of the editorial control at a latter stage. Nepal Samachar Patra and its sister publication, Mahanagar, were forced to suspend their publication for the past few days. PM G P Koirala's response was nothing more than a ritual in the entire episode. Koirala's as well as other political parties' silence or ritualistic response indicated their lack of commitment to press freedom.

This conduct was grossly deplorable. They should not forget that it was largely because of the crusade that media launched for restoration of democracy that Koirala was 'enthroned' as the all powerful Prime Minister and the seven parties became a part of the power. Nepali media deserves all the support for the commitment they are increasingly showing towards professionalism and freedom of press, after the heroic role they played in restoration of democracy. Koirala, Maoists or any other party cannot take away this freedom.

Media has to be more vigilant and introspective now that the tendencies of blackmailing and yellow journalism; and at times media houses' anti-labour policy can be used as a handle by political and other organised groups to sabotage its growth. But none of this would give Maoists the right to gag the press; and the government's silence would only mean its criminal endorsement of the assault on the media.



Letters

Dignified and punchy

Newsfront has established itself as a very professional paper in such a short span of time. The team deserves all praise and support for this. But one distinct section that makes the paper dignified and yet punchy is the cartoon section. Abin Shrestha has emerged as one of the leading cartoonists in the country. Keep it up.

Rashmi Rai
 Sanepa, Lalitpur

Great cartoonist

Batsayan had almost been reigning Nepal's 'cartoon journalism' for more than three decades. Nepali media having realised its importance is giving space to cartoons and illustrations now. Abin's drawings in newsfront are not mere continuation of that legacy. It has stood out in putting across Nepali politics and its fallacies in perspective highly effectively. We salute him and newsfront.

Mukesh Shrestha
 Bagbazar, Kathmandu

Fair journalism

Newsfront has emerged as a different newspaper in such a short span of time. It is bold, objective and takes a fearless stand on issues. It has not spared Maoists for what their Young Communist League cadres have been doing taking law into their hands. The country wanted Maoists to come in as a legal and constitutional force and that is what the peace process is all about.

But YCL's activities only prove that they want to rule as an extra-constitutional force. And despite all these, newsfront was the paper to publish Baburam Bhattarai's design of the proposed memorial at Madi. Now, that is fair journalism. But



let newsfront come out in a bigger size. Paying Rs. 25 for 12 thin pages is something that at least I do not feel comfortable with.

Tejendra Karki
 Paknajole, Kathmandu

Carter's visit

Too much has been sought to be made out of Carter's visit to Kathmandu. Let us recall, he has been keen to engage his Carter Center in the process of conflict resolution in Nepal. Secondly, his visit here has taken place in the background of a series of meetings Carter Center arranged in the United States and in Nepal in which Maoists had direct or indirect participation. For someone interested in the conflict resolution like Carter, avoiding meeting with the Maoists would be unthinkable.

Therefore, let us not make too much out of this meeting to the extent of projecting as a point of departure from the policy that Bush administration has been pursuing now.

Let us also understand that the US Policy on Nepal vis a vis Maoists is not a permanent one. For the US to take them off the terrorist list, Maoists certainly need stop terrorist activities altogether. Carter's success lies in dissuading Maoists from that.

Deep Khatri
 Minnesota, USA

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Soul of light

Swami Vivekananda is often viewed as the patron saint of modern India. He was a close disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who lived during the 19th century in a suburb of Calcutta, India. Vivekananda proved to be the articulate and powerful messenger of Ramakrishna's god realisation.

In 1893 he accepted an invitation to participate in the world parliament of religions to represent Hinduism. Here Vivekananda spoke with great effect on the harmony of world religions and he became well known throughout the US. He returned to India after three years

and helped form the Ramakrishna Math and institute. He died in 1902 leaving behind a considerable collection of writings on spirituality.

Poetry by Vivekananda

"All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction.
 Love is therefore the only law of life.
 He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying.
 Therefore love for love's sake,
 because it is law of life, just as you breathe to live.

Light

I look behind and after
 And find that all is right,



In my deepest sorrows
 There is a soul of light.

The cup

This is your cup - the cup assigned

to you from the beginning.
 Nay, my child, I know how much
 of that dark drink is your own brew
 Of fault and passion, ages long ago,
 In the deep years of yesterday, I know.
 This is your road - a painful road and drear.
 I made the stones that never give you rest.
 I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
 And he shall come like you, unto my breast.
 But you, my child, must travel here.
 This is your task. It has no joy or grace,
 But it is not meant for any other hand,
 And in my universe hath measured place,
 Take it. I do not bid you understand.
 I bid you close your eyes to see my face.



Karnali river in Jumla

Rivers of opportunities

Ignoring upper Karnali hydropower potential would be a great loss to Nepal

■ Ananda Bahadur Thapa

The 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project is the most attractive hydropower project among the projects identified so far in Nepal. It would be a great tragedy for Nepal if our government does not reconsider its decision to push ahead the plan to allow private developer to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project which precludes the development of the 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project.

This project can provide our country an additional net bonus benefit to the tune of about US \$250 million per year which is approximately the gross value of the total annual production of the paddy in the whole Nepal estimated between 2.5 million to 3 million tons at present price of about US \$ 100 per ton. Such opportunity would vanish forever if our government continued to stick with its decision to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Project which prevents the development of the 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project.

The Karnali river makes a big loop in its lower reach near a place called Asare. From here the river flows in the south-east direction for about 25 kilometers, after which the river makes a complete reversal in its direction. It comes back to a point just two kilometers away from its earlier position near Asare. There is a drop of about 150 meters in Karnali river bed elevations between these two positions merely two kilometers away from one another.

The project to utilise this bend for power generation is known as the Upper Karnali Project. There are very good sites to build a large storage dam at the beginning of the bend. Thus, it makes the project far superior to the 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project in terms of per unit capacity investment cost because its hydropower station would be operating at a firm head two times greater than that of the latter though the total length of the waterway of both these hydropower plants would be almost exactly the same.

Design guidelines, 1989, approved by the American Society of Civil Engineers- a document used throughout the world for the design of

hydropower, has given simple reasoning that would help to explain why the Upper Karnali Project operating at a head about two times greater by comparison with the Chisapani hydropower could be built at far less per unit installed capacity cost.

"Very simply if one doubles the head the quantity of water needed to produce a certain amount of energy is halved, thus, for like site energy development the conduit area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and

machinery costs. This fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads." Needless to mention that the lower investment cost means the generation cost of the electricity would also be less.

By comparison with the mammoth 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project the firm head of the Upper Karnali Storage Project would be almost two times greater. It can be derived based on stage A optimisation study data of the World Bank financed Karnali Project

(Chisapani) study report that per KW installed capacity construction cost of the Upper Karnali Storage Project could be only about 70% of such cost of the project at Chisapani.

If such comparative cost reduction advantage is treated as additional bonus to accrue to Nepal on top of normal royalty to be received from private developer then our country might be able to earn per year at present cost of peaking energy about US \$ 250 million as extra bonus which is equivalent to gross value of the total annual production of paddy in the whole country considered to be between 2.5 to 3 million tons at a price of about US \$ 100 per ton.

The 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project can provide our country an additional net bonus benefit to the tune of about US \$250 million per year which is approximately the gross value of the total annual production of the paddy in the whole Nepal.

The pre-feasibility study has clearly explained that the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project and the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project is mutually exclusive. To cite a relevant excerpt from the report:

"Even when assuming that the KR 1 A run-of-river project (it indicates the small 300 MW Upper Karnali project) is a sunk cost, it will be seen that a single large power plant (4180 MW) associated with the major storage project is less costly than the combined cost of smaller plant at the same location (3532 MW) and a second power plant at the foot of the storage dam (408 MW) discharging directly into the KR 1A run-of-river project head pond. Based on this assessment, it appears that the later development of the major hydro storage project at Site KR 1 (4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project) would cause the KR 1A run-of-river project to be effectively discontinued. There may be limited opportunity for secondary energy generation during the periods of spillage."

Our grandiose national plans to develop our water resources to uplift the economic condition of our country would be nothing more than an empty rhetoric if we failed to intervene in time to save the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project. We should not hesitate to invite competent foreign experts for advice if we find ourselves not capable to make correct judgment on this very important matter.

(A.B. Thapa, Ph.D, is the former member and executive-secretary, water and energy commission.)

Maestro and mentor

If you have not walked the path, suffered, lost, experienced, how will you show any quality?



Pix by Niraj Sapkota



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Ambar Gurung, 70, the veteran musician, composer and singer, devoted his life to music from a very early age and never regretted it despite all the hardships he faced. The master of music has sung around 100 songs, written around 300 songs and has innumerable music compositions to his credit. The articulate artist talked about his passion with *Sushma Amatya* recently.

You are now busy composing music for the new national anthem?

Yes, I was asked to submit three pieces but I am getting around a dozen tunes ready for it for them to choose from. Structuring music for national anthem is a big responsibility.

How did you decide to relocate to Nepal from Darjeeling?

My name started getting popular in Nepal through Radio Nepal and I used to be invited to Nepal for King Mahendra's birthdays since he liked my songs. I used to come and go and finally, after living in Darjeeling for 30 years, I relocated to Nepal on advice of my good friends for my career advancement. Here, I worked in Sahitya Kala Academy for 28 years where my job title was changed four times. I worked as a music specialist, music arranger, music chief and then music director.

What challenges did you face as an artist?

Gaining livelihood through art has always been difficult for artists all over the world. Even in developed countries, they have to struggle. If your work is not understood and appreciated, life becomes difficult. To say the least, I did undergo a lot and through my experience I can say that suffering makes a person very strong, it enhances your experience and gives you a choice; a choice of opting out and taking the easy way out which is usually the wrong way, or persevering and emerging a better, wiser person.

Suffering does not kill. It did not kill me. But during difficult times, I did remember what my father who was against music as my career,

used to tell me time and again that one cannot make a living out of music. And that reminds me of his utter shock when I received Gorkha Dakshin Bahu, a special award then 35 years ago. He just could not believe it that it was given to a singer/musician.

Were you self taught?

Yes. There were no teachers, books or schools that I could rely on. Now, thinking back, I think music was in me from childhood. Perhaps it was my destiny, my mission in life. I had to work very hard for it and now I can say confidently that one can learn if one wants to and where there is a will there is a way. Of course, it was difficult in the beginning but got easier as I progressed.

What does music mean to you?

Music is everything to me. It is my life and soul. My Dharma and Karma is my music. Music is the pulse of human civilization that expresses its sensitivity, aesthetics and creativity. It is not just song and dance; it is also an art, a science, mathematics and technology. It is a huge world full of possibilities. We should not discriminate music based on language, country or style. It has no boundaries.

Do you still practice daily?

I used to practice around 12 hours daily but now I teach around six hours a day and that too irregularly. I am not praising myself but music needs a dedication that one is born with and a lot of perseverance. Most aspiring artists are driven away by small obstacles, unable to overcome it. Now I'm retired but I teach and record songs and just do not sit around waiting for death.

What did you sacrifice for music?

Everything. I tell my students that music calls for sacrifice, dedication and hard work. An artist has to observe and have a good heart. That does not mean one become a renunciate but having humane feelings reflects in your work. What you have inside shows in your music. If you have not walked the path, suffered, lost, experienced, how will you show any quality? Your heart is like a CD, what is written there, will be played back. Positive cerebral strength and emotional support adds value to it. A good blending of

both can create a masterpiece.

What inspires you?

To be very honest, when I was young, my friends' praise and especially girl-fans' love letters used to suffice. Now, some of my work then makes me cringe and I laugh at it. But with time, after extensive study, effort combined with knowledge and experience, one becomes able and confident; and can draw on one's inner reserves for inspiration. Most of the time, creativity is spontaneous, it cannot be predicted or forced upon. At other times, I create music befitting the situation that is called for.

Who are your outstanding students?

In Darjeeling I with some other friends who were as crazy as me started an art academy where we groomed talent. Aruna Lama, Gopal Yonjon, Jitendra Bardewa are a few names that instantly crops up in my mind among others who were protégés of that institute.

What is your opinion on Nepali music today?

We Nepalis have to work for our music. Who else will do it for us? We have to document and preserve our cultural heritage such as the folk, traditional or classical music; take it to the people and educate them via frequent talk shows, programmes and through the media. Nepali songs have to be taken to the international arena; and we have to develop the art of appreciating music no matter the language or its country of origin. We also need to develop the culture of promoting music through art patrons as in other countries where the government is hardly involved in the sphere.

What do you have to say about pop music of today?

It is also creative but requires more substance, research and study. If I were born today, I may also have turned out to be a pop artist. It is the result of times that are changing fast. It is an international phenomenon. But music without quality has no staying value, it carries no message. Like trends, fashion, it comes and goes without any impact. It keeps evolving.

How can people be made aware of quality music?

It is common to see today people seeking mere entertainment without understanding music and there are many trying to be popular quickly with little effort. But not all hope is lost. If people want to cultivate taste for good music, they can. Mere mechanical, technical creativity and creating music is not the same. Of course, anybody can become an artist for ten minutes. Even bathroom singers are artists for five, ten minutes. There is a misconception that just strumming a guitar is music. Knowledge of music requires one to know what a particular instrument is, what are its chords, strings, progression, musical range, pitch etc.

What controversy did your first hit song, Nau Lakha Tara generate in India?

The song became popular by fluke. Sometimes, songs become popular because the audience understood it and at other times, it becomes popular because they did not. At that time all workers in the tea gardens of Darjeeling used to be Nepalis who were mostly illiterate. Gradually, with increased literacy and awareness, a democratic situation was created in the politically sensitive area.

All Nepalis came together with one common language no matter what their background was and their interest in literature and music increased. Voiced were raised against what was perceived as step motherly treatment meted out to them, through drama and songs. But that particular song was not political, I wrote nothing against India but it was banned and so were all my other songs for some time.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Situation in Nepal today is very fragile and uncertain; I can say that although I have no interest in politics. We must not sacrifice our integrity and duty to our country. United we must stand. ■

Road to serfdom

People and the politicians need to understand that 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions.'



■ Krishna Pokharel

Nepal's earlier trysts with democracy have been short-lived and fraught with setbacks. The first one, back in the 1950s, barely lasted for a decade and the second one, in the 1990s, lasted a little more than a decade. It is rightly attributed that on both the occasions the institution of monarchy played the spoilsport- though the popular zeitgeist would inform us that the political parties blithely prepared the grounds for it. With the success of the 'people's movement' in the April last year, democracy is back in the reckoning. Many desperate hopes for lasting peace and prosperity are at stake and Nepal's current experiment with democracy cannot just simply afford to fail.

But the time, past and present, is littered with many sweet intentions gone utterly sour and many great dreams shattered. Democracy will neither deliver with mere good intentions nor is it a magic wand as the politicians would have us believe.

In his 2002 bestseller, *The Future*

of Freedom, journalist and writer Fareed Zakaria makes a valid point that the greatest threat to democracy is from within the democracy. Opinion makers from both the political left and right may seem to have been convinced of the virtues of unalloyed democracy; and its universal acceptance as the most benign form of political system makes it a sacrosanct entity. But the catch remains, and continues to elude the intellect of most of our politicians, that democracy is a false promise unless it is backed up by constitutional liberalism espousing free enterprise, personal liberty and the rule of law. In the lack of it, democracy becomes a tool for demagogic politicians to gain power and ride roughshod over people's aspirations for freedom, peace and prosperity.

Constitutional liberalism - freedom of speech and expression, personal liberty, limitations of power and the rule of law need to be firmly ingrained in the political culture of the



April movement-2006

nation, for democracy to be stable and to deliver.

In his article 'Putting the People First' in *The International Herald Tribune* the economist Prof. Christopher Lingle strikes a cautious note that sans individual freedom flowing from the rule of law, democracy becomes, "a hollow vessel that allows populist politicians to usurp the freedom and wealth of citizens."

This healthy cynicism about the tendency of democracy to become a tool of oppression and controlling the 'destiny of people' by the elected political elites is required to guard democracy of its ills. This is not to undervalue the greatness of democracy as the best possible political arrangement to check the modern Leviathan but to ensure its long future by mitigating the threats to it from within itself so that its enemies- totalitarianism and tyranny in all their political variants, can be permanently put at bay and the

welfare and the freedom of people be suitably enabled and reinforced.

One year down the road since the uprising last year, Nepal is still a dangerously confused nation - politically and economically. The social fault lines based on castes and region that were hitherto been existing but not acknowledged to have been politically significant are now showing up. Various marginalised groups and communities are clamouring for their rightful share in the nation's social and political pie. Maoists might have entered the mainstream politics but they are still to sort out men from boys among them when it comes to their participation in the parliamentary democracy. They are Jekyll and Hydes of Nepalese politics. And the political capital of the eight political parties is fast depleting with the growing skepticism in the public of their ability to hold a peaceful, free and fair election for the constituent assembly.

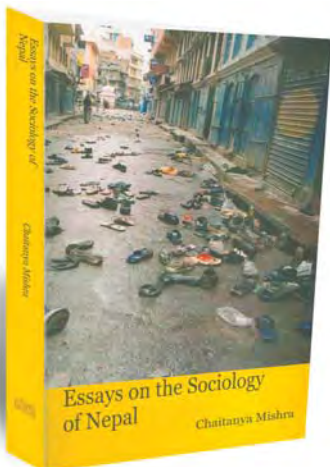
The greatest casualty of all this messy politics which is going to have serious consequences on the nation's future continues to be the country's economy. The economic growth rate is at two percent, exacerbated by continuing strikes, road closures and Bandhs. It has been eating away at the confidence of the hardworking and enterprising Nepalese individuals who are becoming less and less sanguine of a peaceful and prosperous future. And that is a sure way to fail a nation by robbing the citizenry of the confidence in themselves and making them resign to the status quo- making them feel that they are not in control of their own destiny.

As Austrian economist and political philosopher F.A. Hayek would put it, the journey down the road to serfdom is the political state in which everything would be planned and decided by the all-powerful politicians, including the 'destiny' of the people.

(Krishna is a student of journalism in Maharaja Agrasen College, Delhi, India.)

Book Review

Nepali society through Marxist lens



The *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal* speaks of a story of continual engagement of Professor Chaitanya Mishra with it for two and half decades. It is may be regarded as a native Marxist manufactured sociology. It is

not easy to engage within a lone disciplinary matrix for 25 years. However, Mishra has proven that he is a pertinent Marxist sociologist and development thinker.

The volume is a collection of articles written in the past 25 years. Some of the articles are still relevant in both theoretical schema and substantive scope. Marxism is a scientific epistemology for production of knowledge and Mishra has applied it to analyse Nepali society. Nobody can construct the ultimate reality, the truth in sociology. The reality depends upon who tells the reality and who listen at what political condition.

The essays comprise a wide range substantive and thematic aspect of Nepalese society. The development strategies in the past, migration and population dynamics, causes and destiny of Maoist insurgency, foreign aids, NGO movement; structural adjustment program, privatisation,

liberalisation and globalisation in Nepal, Indo-Nepal relations and research methodology in sociology are a few categories dealt with.

It is worthwhile discussing, "The Development and Underdevelopment: A Preliminary Sociological Perspective." This paper is the paramount theoretical schema that deals with the economic stagnation and roots causes of underdevelopment of Nepalese society. Mishra has analysed the developmental problem of Nepal using world system theory of Immanuel Wallerstein. He has also well referenced Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin and V.I. Lenin. But the article fails to prescribe remedies to heal the disease of underdevelopment. As an option, Mishra argued the socialisation of national political economy and repairing the damage. However, there is skepticism that socialisation of national political economy is mere contemplation in the era of corporate globalisation's Junta.

With the striking logic that is his trademark, Mishra dissects Nepal's underdevelopment and economic stagnation, causes and the fate of Maoist insurgency. He writes clearly how the most recent manifestation of Maoist people's war is manufactured by the continual marginal peripheralisation economy and the society. His argument long ago that the Maoists must come to the central-stage politics rather than continue with armed struggle seems convincing.

The rigorously and thoroughly documented essays are a critical and far-reaching work of the author. This is a must read book for students of social science, academicians, development thinkers and practitioners, researchers and journalists as well as general readers who want to understand the complexity and multiplicity of Nepalese society, economy and polity from Marxist lens.

■ Bhim Prasad Bhurtel

Road to Everest

The news on China's plan to build a road up to a base camp of Mount Qomolangma (known as Mt. Everest in the West) has drawn sustained media attention overseas. Quite a few Western media organs have voiced worries about the environment in their reports, whereas in India, China's giant neighbor to the southwest, there are also a lot of worries for the "security reason" in addition to those concerns about environment protection. Ranking officials of some Indian political parties openly claimed that China wants to erode Indian territories despite the irrefutable fact that the world's highest peak is located on the Sino-Nepalese border instead of being on the Sino-India border.

It has been learned that the construction would turn a rough, 108 km (67 mile) road stretching from a 5,200 meter base camp at the foot of Mount Qomolangma to the joint section of the No. 318th Chinese national highway with the China-Nepal highway. The road surface is at an average altitude of over 4,600 meters above the sea level, with a maximal altitude of 5,200 meter. A formal a single-lane gravel path with poor traffic norms, it neither ensures the Olympic Torch's journey to the summit of the Himalayas, nor guarantees the safe traffic for a growing number of travelers. Therefore, the Chinese government has allocated a special fund of 150 million yuan (some 20 million US dollars) to have it renovated or rebuilt. The improvement project plans to take four months and, its road surface will widen to six meters upon its completion in late October this year. The route will be



asphalted and installed with wave-style railings for the sake of safety.

Such concerns and worries from overseas media units imply some sort of no-confidence in China, including misunderstanding and bias, and even jokes or some aliens' ulterior motives. A job of normal preparations for the 2008 Olympics has given rise to so many doubts and noise interferences, and this really merits our ponderation and serious approach so as to cope with them.

China will spend about 20 million US dollars on a project to pave 108 km (67 mile) rough and even route in Tibet, noted an Associate Press in a news dispatch, which is being built

to ease the Olympic torch's journey to the base camp of the summit at 5200 meters above the sea level.

Taking the Olympic torch to the top of the mountain, it added nevertheless, has been seen as a way for Beijing to underscore its claims to Tibet. Meanwhile, the AP report asserted that some environmentalists express concerns and worries about the effect on the environment in the region.

Meanwhile, the "Guardian", a prestigious British newspaper published since 1821, acknowledged that China is said to construct a plateau highway across the world's most secluded region, which will be good for

people's safety but would it somewhat discount the man's adventuring spirit?

the response of the India media, nevertheless, are fiercer. Some media moguls and leaders of a few political parties whipped up a noise on the "security issue" with an ulterior motive. The alleged that this move of China's was designed to beef up the country's presence in India-China border. Bharatiya Janata Party spokesman has been quoted as saying a statement that China, in planning to build a road up Mount "Everest", will not only bring the devastating consequences to the biological environment and, what is more serious, the country also has another intended scheme to enhance its control of the Sino-India border.

Furthermore, as an opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party also attacked the ruling National Congress Party and slammed its government for the failure to get somewhere in the case with respect to China's "whole plan and ambition".

Foreign media reports are seen to have misconceptions about China. The first questioner at a press conference held by the State Council Information Office Wednesday, or on June 20 was a Dutch TV reporter, who had been misinformed about the road to be built up to the base camp of the world's summit, said instead that Tibet has planned to build an expressway to Mountain "Everest" before 2008. On this question, Qiangba Puncog, chairman of the Tibet autonomous region government, had to give a flat denial.

(People's Daily)

Peace and democracy in Nepal

Details of senate committee hearing of Nancy Powell, ambassadorial nominee of US for Nepal

Sen. Kerry: Thank you very much, Ambassador. Ambassador Powell, there's probably a little deja vu for you in all that, huh?

Ms. Powell: A little -- (inaudible). Mr. Chairman, I'm deeply honored to have --

Sen. Kerry: Remember which country you're here for. (Laughter.)

Ms. Powell: As the president's nominee to serve as U.S. ambassador to Nepal, I thank both President Bush and Secretary Rice for their confidence. If confirmed, I will have the privilege of returning to a region that has been the focus of much of my career, and to an embassy where I spent my second tour in the Foreign Service. However, much has changed since that time. Nepal is at a critical juncture in its history. Its government and people are simultaneously working to end a devastating decade-long Maoist insurgency and to establish sustained multiparty democracy. They are also struggling to emerge from poverty and to address the issues of discrimination and inequality that have long plagued Nepal.

Peace and democracy in Nepal would directly serve U.S. interests in stability and democracy in South Asia. The Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists who together comprise the interim government have agreed to a political roadmap that, if fully implemented, has the potential to deliver peace and democracy to Nepal. There has been much progress to date but success is far from assured. Although the Maoists joined the government on April 1st, they continue to violate commitments they have made in the course of the peace process.

Unrest in the lowlands along the Indian border has further complicated efforts to restore law and order and the authority of the government throughout the country.

The security vacuum and the political stalemate precluded free and fair constituent assembly elections from being held this month as originally planned. They are now expected in November or early December. In order to assure these -- (inaudible) -- are free and fair when they do take place, the government must urgently restore law and order throughout the country, complete the legislative and logistical groundwork for a well-administered election, and reach out to disaffected groups to ensure their adequate representation and peaceful participation in the political process. If confirmed, I will continue our active support of Nepali efforts to these ends.

Although democracy and stability are among our strongest interests in Nepal, they are far from the only ones. Nepal's magnificent art and architecture as well as its scenery continue to make it a favorite destination of American travelers and the provision of services to American citizens is a responsibility that comes ahead of all others. Also, achieving durable solutions for the 108,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal continues to be a U.S. priority.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the government of Nepal to implement current plans for a voluntary resettlement program that would accommodate at least 60,000 of these refugees. I will also encourage the government of Nepal to ensure that the rights of all Tibetan refugees, resident in or transiting Nepal, are re-

spected.

There remains room for improvement in Nepal's efforts to prevent and prosecute human trafficking, and to ensure its security forces uphold the highest human rights standards. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the government on these issues as well. Foreign assistance is and will continue to be the most useful tool at our disposal to influence developments in Nepal along the full spectrum of our national interests there.

From technical support intended to strengthen Nepal's nascent democratic institutions to health programs that improve the daily lives of many Nepalese, as well as humanitarian assistance for refugees and conflict victims and training for Nepal's military that is focused on improving its human rights record, and working under civilian authority, our aid provides a critical programmatic complement to our diplomacy. I take seriously the responsibility to ensure that American taxpayers receive high returns on their investment in Nepal.

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting closely with you, Mr. Chairman, all members of the committee and your staff throughout my tenure in Nepal. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the committee today. Thank you.

Sen. Kerry: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.



Afghan slams civilian deaths

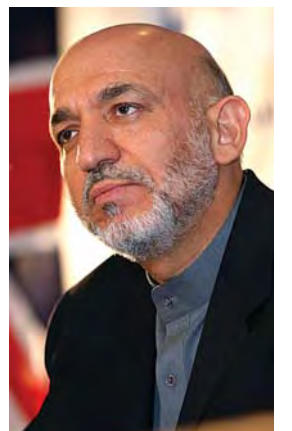
Somber, impatient and angry, President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan on Saturday accused the U.S. military and its NATO allies of carrying out "careless operations" that lead to civilian casualties, asserting that "Afghan life is not cheap and should not be treated as such."

His remarks, made on the front lawn of the presidential palace, came in response to a week in which more than 100 civilian deaths have been reported from airstrikes and artillery fire against the Taliban.

"The extreme use of force, the disproportionate use of force to a situation, and the lack of coordination with the Afghan government is causing these casualties," he said. "You don't fight a terrorist by firing a field gun from 37 kilometers away into a target. That is definitely bound to cause civilian casualties. You don't hit a few terrorists with field guns."

More than 50,000 foreign troops are operating in Afghanistan, the bulk of them Americans. The Taliban insurgency has employed guerrilla tactics that include attacks on police stations, aid workers and schools. The Taliban commonly hide among civilians, and NATO officials insist that it is the insurgents who deserve blame when innocents die.

(Birmingham News)



Marshland Flowers

Buddha said that extinguishing emotional defilement is a slow and gradual process.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Thus there are three distinct 'Yanas' i.e. vehicles of which there are no unbroken lineages of the Pratyek Buddhas. The remaining two, the Sravakayana and the Bodhisattvayana were both taught by the Shakyamuni and their unbroken lineages continue till today. The teachings and lineages related to Sravak Bodhi continued to grow after the Parinirvana of the Shasta, and in later centuries developed into 18 distinct lineages called Nikayas.

Some scholars say that they developed into 24 lineages. These were the Sravakayana lineages whose methods produced Arhats. Arhathood was the final stage of these lineages and not everybody was called an Arhat the moment he experienced some extraordinary state of mind. In fact, people go through four stages of enlightenment in which they become progressively free from Klesha until they become completely free of all Klesha (emotional defilements).

It is only those who have become completely free of all Klesha, whose Klesha have been completely destroyed, that are called Arhats. In the Sravakayana it is the progressive experience of Nirvandhatu (Pali: Nibbandhatu) that is called enlightenment. And the first glimpse of Nibbandhatu cuts off three major Klesha and is called Srotappatti. It means he has entered the stream (Srota) which will carry him towards Arhathood. And he has become enlightened but not fully enlightened.

There are two more stages of enlightenment

before he becomes a fully enlightened Arhat. Many non-Buddhist systems in the bazaar call the experience of thoughtless awareness as enlightenment and some go even further and call people who experience such thoughtless pure awareness by itself as Buddhas. Needless to say, that is not even what the Srotappanna experiences; least of all an Arhat.

There seems to be a lot of confusion about this point in the spiritual market especially in Nepal. So let us make this point clear once and for all. No form of Buddhism, Sravakayana or Bodhisattvayana claims that the experience of pure awareness by itself / pure thoughtless awareness / watcher as the enlightened state. So people who experience only such states are not ever considered as enlightened let alone Arhats or Buddhas. Experiencing such states is relatively easy and quick. That does not make methods which produce such mind-states or awareness as the quick, short path.

The path to Arhathood or Buddhahood is a slow and gradual path. The Buddha himself has said that extinguishing the Klesha (emotional defilement) is a slow and gradual process and therefore becoming an Arhat or Buddha is a slow and gradual process. People who experience only the pure awareness by itself do not become permanently free of any Klesha even after experiencing such a state which I have said is relatively easy to experience for anybody who has a mind.



So let me recapitulate once again, just experiencing a thoughtless pure awareness by itself is not any kind of enlightened state nor is the ability to remain in that state an enlightened

state. We shall speak in more detail about this point when we talk about the Buddhist enlightenment.

(To be continued.)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)

An American on peace mission

Mr. Carter found the security situation prevailing in the country as 'unacceptable.'



■ Binod P Bista

One of the former presidents of the US, Jimmy Carter, expressed extraordinary pride in the accomplishments that Nepal had made in the period following the April uprising and on the commitment of all parties for ensuring constituent assembly (CA) elections on time. This welcome news, coming from a person of Carter stature, can be considered as the long awaited breakthrough for sustainable peace in Nepali politics amidst confusions galore. For a person who has dedicated his time and energy for realising peace in conflict situations all over the world during the post presidential period, this must have been a gratifying moment to him for his untiring efforts. It was also worth the risk that he assumed by communicating with the leaders of CPN-Maoists in spite of his government's current policy against it.

President Carter lent his support unequivocally to the issues raised by the agitating and ethnic groups which he found as genuine. Stressing on the need to follow through on the issue of inclusiveness of the marginalised groups that the momentous change had brought in Nepal, Mr. Carter found the security situation prevailing in the country as 'unacceptable.' Assuring the Nepali public that his center would be monitoring the activities of the Young

Communist League and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum with a view to assessing the groups' compliance to the rule of law and promises of their leaders, Jimmy Carter has left an important mark on the Nepali psyche.

He has given much needed hope to the Nepali people that there is a strong possibility of holding the upcoming elections in a free and fair manner. Addressing GP Koirala as his hero, he believed that the current PM of Nepal would conduct the elections successfully.

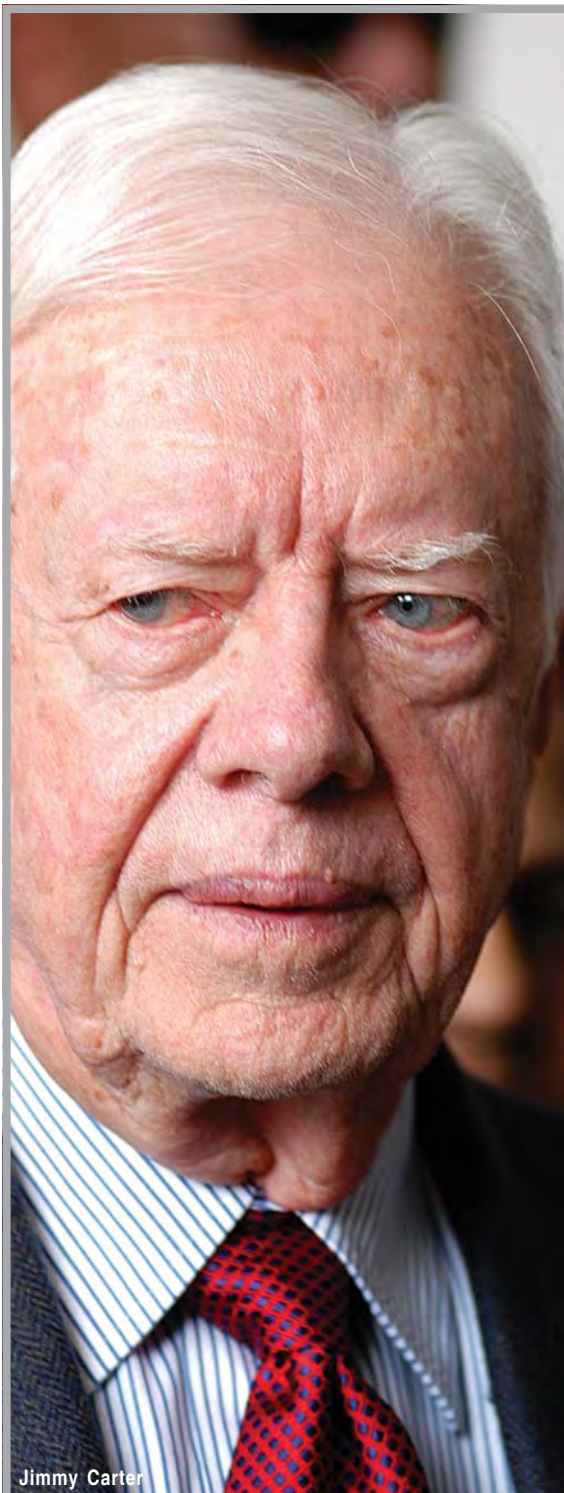
Concerning the question of US government stand against the CPN-Maoists, Carter told the press that his preference is that the US does have communication with all parties here who are performing legal roles. He has also stated clearly that he would submit his mission report on Nepal to the president of the United States.

Being one of the oldest and functioning democracies of the world, the United States has as much of moral authority as other countries which have not succeeded in giving momentum to comprehensive democratic governance. Some of the hasty actions taken by this country in pursuit of eliminating international terrorism as well as resolving long standing conflict in the Middle East, although outside of international norms and law, cannot wipe out the achievements that the country has made in furthering democracy and rule of law globally. Obviously, the US needs to come out of the quagmire that it has put itself into in order to reestablish its moral authority as the global leader.

In the Nepali context, there is a clear possibility of the Maoists coming on top of the CA elections similar to the Hamas led faction in Palestine. Would then the US acknowledge and support the CPN-Maoists as the legitimate representative of the Nepalis? Even if the Maoists were not to secure absolute majority, there is still a greater possibility of a coalition among the communist parties led by the Maoists. This question assumes greater importance at this stage as the second most important phase of the building of new Nepal hinges on the support of the international community led by the US.

Any type of economic sanctions by the US and its allies would negate all the achievements of the April uprising. Beleaguered country Nepal, fighting hard for its mere survival, cannot afford to wait for years if not decades for improving the lives of its majority. The wise initiative of President Carter coming as a 'preference' for opening of communication between the US and the Maoists becomes the necessary imperative at this time.

By the same token, would the US also open a channel of communication with King Gyanendra, whose legal role given to him by the interim constitution of Nepal is to have no role until the CA elections? Whether the legal roles accorded by the interim constitution to all parties including King Gyanendra have been fully adhered to by all concerned remain an open-ended question for now. Let us hope that President Carter would present a comprehensive report covering all aspects including the long term perspective on Nepal. ■



Jimmy Carter

Gurkha poet warriors

How could a fierce warrior be a poet? What lies behind the web of words that these warriors weave in the battlefields of fire? Why would hands that hold guns lift pens and worship at the alter of the muse?



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

Corpses stalk the streets these days. I am utterly anguished to see the lines of corpses all around me. I wonder watching these corpses have I been translated into a corpse!
(Jagat Nabodit, "Reading Corpses")

These lines are penned by a Nepali poet currently based in the British Army. Another poet, Biswas Deep Tageli voices similar fears of war and violence, "Enough! Let's now stop slaughter, harvest of violence."

Senior Nepali poet and fiction writer Raksa Rai, also a British Gurkha, expresses his torment more artistically, "In the spring of sands I have been turned into a green passport's blue tree."

Reading these poems, several questions corrode my consciousness. How could a fierce warrior be a poet? What lies behind the web of words that these warriors weave in the battlefields of fire? Why would hands that hold guns lift pens and worship at the alter of the muse?

The paradox of warrior writers became clear to me when I arrived at Folkstone near England's legendary Dover Beach where the British Gurkha soldiers were having their annual cultural meet. This was like coming home, even if all they offered included traveling expenses and accommodation only, and no reading fee.

It was such a pleasure to be in company of people whose roots were in the mountains I celebrated in my writing. After five-month Europe travels, I was face to face with the true voices from Nepal. For a second, I became envious of their poetry replete with real life heroism. I could never write such words because I have never been in a battlefield.

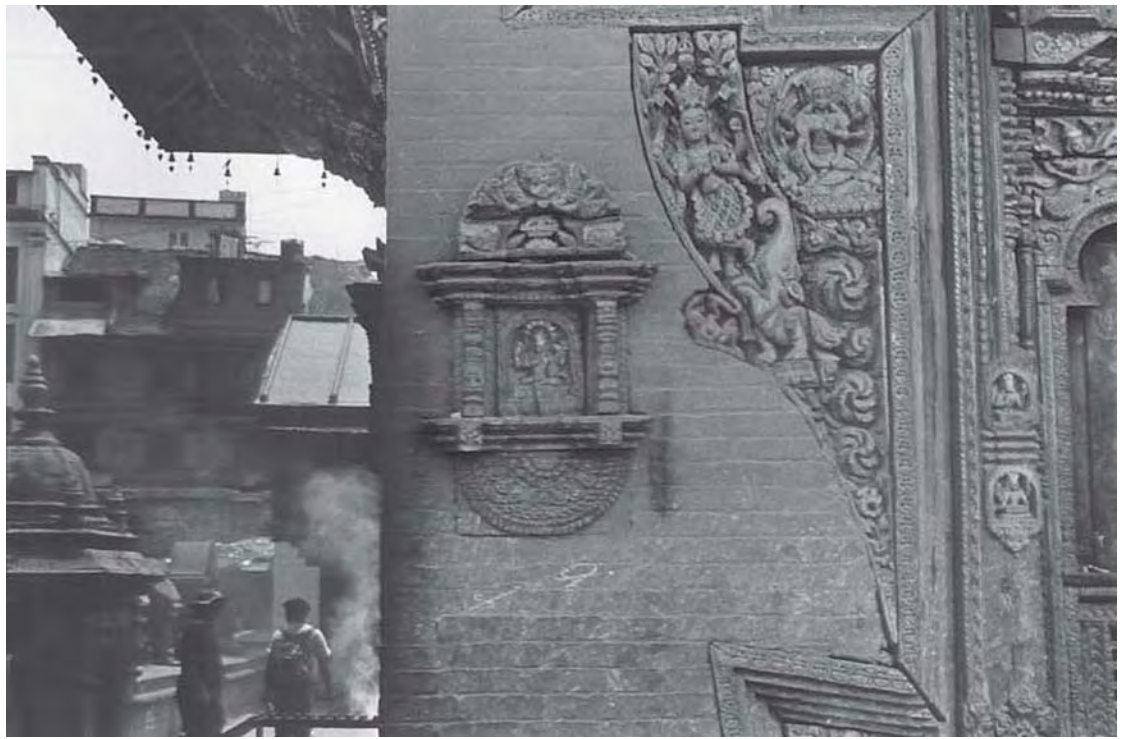
The poet in front of me recited a poem set in the Iraq battlefield. He remembered his little baby back home in the small Himalayan village before bombs blow up the entire unit, leaving several dead and the poet injured. The poem touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes. Another poet read his poem written in Afghanistan about a dead soldier from the enemy's camp whose family waited for him back home.

The poems I saw represented a true picture of Nepal's humane face. These young poets were also good readers of Nepali literature who recognised the value of our literary heritage. It seemed literature had entered their souls and made a special niche there. Even in a foreign land, they remained rooted to their soil and that is what made them true poet warriors who were cultured, kind and full of compassion even for those who allegedly were their enemies.

(Yuyutsu is a poet and a writer.)

Insight

■ Sushma Amatya



An old temple in Patan struggling to survive the onslaught of new matchbox like structures that threatens its very existence.



Addicts are solely responsible

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

Why do drug users stay away from their families and why do they blame their parents for everything?

Rabina Joshi, Bhaisipati, Kathmandu

In people using drugs, there is gradual decrease of personal values and morals which lowers their basic survival abilities. Knowing that their harmful acts invite negative consequences and result in negative 'non survival consequences,' they constantly withhold or hide their actions; and this requires a lot of energy and attention. One of the most destructive effects of drug use on the users is the enormous amount of attention and energy they must expend hiding many harmful actions they do and this causes them much pain and struggle.

Every time they come in contact with their family, they are reminded of their negative actions and so actively restrain themselves from telling the truth. This is one of the reasons they start pulling away from

people who they find difficult to face; and avoid places where they have committed harmful acts. Finding it difficult to be around their parents they restrict themselves in their rooms or stay away from their homes.

Other tell-tale sign that follows any harmful acts is 'justification.' They try to relieve themselves the burden of their acts on their consciousness by shifting the blame of their negative acts on others. For example, when they steal money from their parents, they will hold their parents responsible for their act by saying that their parents were mean to them.

Here, the negative act was stealing money and the target of the act becomes the parents.

Regardless of the way parents treat their drug addicted children, the addicts know deep down inside that it is wrong to steal and feel guilt and shame despite their attempts to make their parents feel responsible for their misdeeds. Parents often wonder why their child who is using drugs is constantly fighting with them and blaming their drug use on the family. This is merely a process of

justifying the drug user's wrongs by attempting to reduce the goodness or importance of the target i.e. the parent.

There may be some degree of truth in addicts' justifications regarding their parents' mishandlings of certain situations or failures in the past. But addicts will repeatedly target past events and use it to justify their current wrong doings. If family members of addicts are not aware of this process of justification, they will often conclude wrongly that the addicts are right and begin holding themselves responsible.

The truth however remains that despite any degree of responsibility any family may hold for problems that occurred in the past, drug users need to accept the fact that resorting to drugs is not right. We all need to be aware that any addiction is not caused by others and that any addiction is ultimately the responsibility of the addicts only. Families can only extend a helping hand and be careful not to take the blame on themselves. ■

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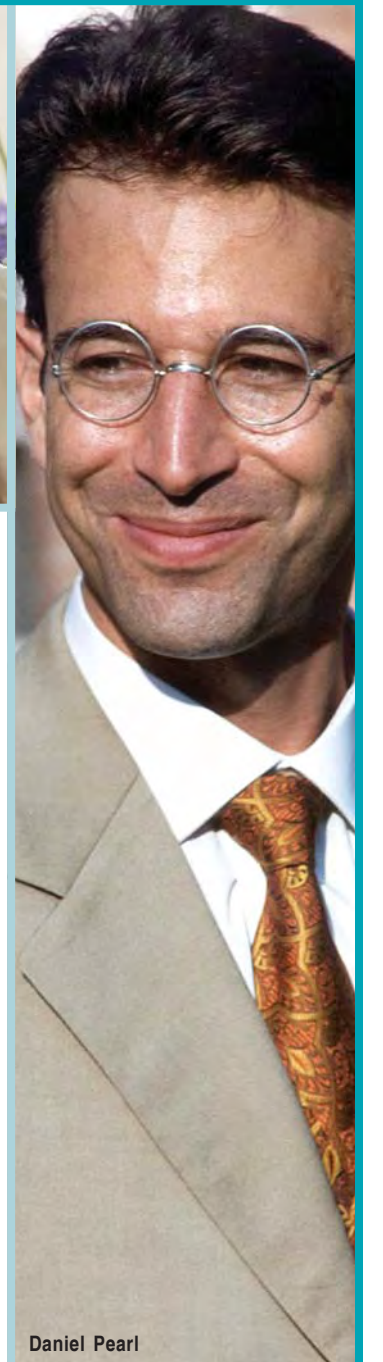
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Jolie as Mariane and Dan Futterman as Daniel Pearl

Honoring a murdered journalist

Documentary style is key to 'A Mighty Heart'



Daniel Pearl

The filmmakers behind the Daniel Pearl drama "A Mighty Heart" wanted to honor the slain journalist by doing what he did best -- tell the straight story, unadorned by opinion, ideology or bias.

Starring Angelina Jolie as Pearl's widow, "A Mighty Heart" unfolds in docudrama style, its just-the-facts approach putting viewers in the midst of the anguish, hope and heartache that family, friends and colleagues underwent in the weeks after his kidnapping in Pakistan in January 2002.

Sympathies clearly are with Pearl and his loved ones as victims, but "A Mighty Heart" does not preach or condemn, does not take sides or point fingers. Like last year's Sept. 11 saga "United 93," the film simply tells what happened, chronicling the horror and humanity experienced by one family in our new world of terrorism.

"We were making a film about a journalist and felt we should try to reflect that," said "A Mighty Heart" director Michael Winterbottom, who often applies documentary style and improvisation to heighten the sense of authenticity in his films, which include "Welcome to Sarajevo," "In This World" and last year's "The Road to Guantanamo."

Though "A Mighty Heart," which opened Friday, features Jolie and was produced by her romantic partner Brad Pitt, the film is notably free of Hollywood trappings.

Jolie buries herself in the role of Mariane Pearl, a French radio journalist who was six months pregnant with Daniel's son at the time her husband was kidnapped.

What follows is a harrowing four weeks in which Jolie's Pearl copes with false hopes and false alarms, frustrations with the multinational collection of investigators and bureaucrats on the case and packs of reporters covering her husband's abduction.

Based on Mariane Pearl's memoir "A Mighty Heart: The Brave Life and Death of My Husband, Danny Pearl," the film begins on the day of the Wall Street Journal reporter's disappearance.

Daniel Pearl -- played by Dan Futterman, the screenwriter of 2005's "Capote" -- told Mariane he might be late for dinner, as he had a meeting with a sheik for a story on Islamic militancy. He never came home. Authorities later determined the meeting was a ruse by Islamic militants to kidnap Pearl, who later was beheaded by his captors.

Almost overnight, Mariane Pearl's circle of friends and associates widens to include U.S. diplomats, Pakistani authorities and dozens of others who take a deep interest in bringing her husband home alive.

Winterbottom had his actors spend time with their real-life counterparts, allowing the performers to get a better handle on their characters and also giving them insight into how many lives the Pearl story touched.

"When you hear them speak about that event, personally it's changed their lives forever," said actress Archie Punjabi, who plays Daniel Pearl's Wall Street Journal colleague Asra Nomani. "Each one of those people is somebody's son or daughter or husband or wife. Each one of them stopped their entire life to focus on Danny, and when you meet them, you can see how the events affected their lives."

One of those affected was the Pearls' son, Adam, born in France months after his father died. Futterman said he felt great responsibility playing Pearl, knowing the film could one day convey a sense of the man to his son.

(The News Journal)

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