



Courage & Conviction

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Pashupati Shumsher Rana inaugurating the National Conference of the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party at BICC, Kathmandu on December 9.



Bhaswor Ojha

No Politics

COAS visit to Delhi to re-establish institutional relations

■ nf correspondent

Chief of Army Staff, Gen Rukmangad Katawal left for a week-long trip to India at the invitation of his counterpart, Gen. Deepak Kapoor, signaling that the traditional ties between the army of the two countries will be restored.

After the initial confusion, the government of India has finally decided to confer the title of Honorary General on Gen Katawal, a practice that India had stopped as a mark of protest against the takeover of power by the King in February 2005.

Gen JJ Singh who retired as the Chief of Army Staff of India last month, did not pay any visit during his tenure to receive the honorary title of the Nepal Army; that came as a deviation to this practice of conferring the title on a reciprocal basis.

Gen Katawal's visit, mainly to participate in the Platinum Jubilee celebration of the Indian Military Academy, also paves the way for return visit of Gen Kapoor to Nepal where he will be receiving the title of the Honorary General of the Nepal Army.

There are indications that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had some reservations about the honour being conferred on Katawal 'now', and it was said to be in favour of Nepal Army's democratic credentials being established. Apart from receiving the honorary title from the president of India in

her capacity of the Supreme Commander, Gen Katawal is also likely to call on PM Man Mohan Singh.

Gen Katawal's visit to India however has triggered more political speculations at home as it comes at a time when some senior Maoist leaders have expressed fears about 'takeover' by the army. "We are aware of such speculations but Nepali army has a history of serving the nation and its people under legitimate authorities," a senior official told newsfront, asserting 'no politics will be discussed as it is not on our agenda'.

A former minister and senior politician told newsfront, "No army coup can take place in Nepal without India and the US endorsing it, but with larger international presence in the country, such a possibility does not exist any more."

But there are indications that the army headquarter is clearly against the 'integration' of the Maoist guerrillas in it without Maoists facing the polls.

"Moreover, they must renounce politics of violence including abduction and extortion, accept rule of law and seek legitimacy from the people through process of election and accept the economic order that the world at large and our region has accepted.... This is our stand at the institutional level and once Maoists fulfill it, it will not be a problem for us to abide by what they say," army sources said, adding, "This will be our stand both at home and abroad." ■

"No army coup can take place in Nepal without India and the US endorsing it, but with larger international presence in the country."

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Prachanda



Pix by Newsfront

No election!

Contradictory political messages and a clear-cut assertion from the top Maoist leadership make election to the constituent assembly increasingly uncertain even though top leaders of seven parties continue their mirage chase for a political consensus.

Maoist Chief Prachanda's recent advocacy for understanding with the 'royalists' and party key ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai's assertion that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) would not accept the verdict of the constituent assembly polls if Maoists are

defeated, have created further political confusion.

"I would not react to what Prachanda has said at this moment, as it will take some days for me to judge their (Maoists') political consistency," said former PM Surya Bahadur

Thapa. Prachanda has of late been saying that since there are many nationalists among those who supported the monarchy, the party would want to work together with them in the national interest.

Prachanda's statement is also being seen by the security agencies, mainly the Nepal army, as a clever ploy to create confusion in the security system and take advantage out of it. "First, they have to prove that they are a democratic party with respect for rule of law, and only after that their commitment to nationalism will convince us," a senior official in the police department said.

Prachanda's willingness to go with the 'royalists' has however attracted flak from Home Minister KP Sitaula, who has so far shown unflinching loyalty and devotion to Prachanda, facing criticism from his party, the Nepali Congress. "My illusions about Prachanda are disappearing now," said Sitaula in response to Prachanda's new political call.

But as PM Koirala has been insisting that all the seven parties including the Maoists must announce a fresh date for CA polls by mid-April, Baburam Bhattarai's public stance that any outcome of the polls that goes against the Maoists will not be acceptable; for the party has once again made the ruling coalition suspicious of the Maoists' commitment to the peace process and democracy.

Speaking at a programme organised by a Maoist-affiliated body, Bhattarai said that any outcome that would see Maoists defeated will be absurd and meaningless. "How will that election matter, if the Maoists, who have been able to establish their political agenda as the national agenda, lose?" He also tried to justify Prachanda's latest vision of working together with the royalists as something, intended to ensure that future Nepal will have everyone playing a role for peace and development.



Sahana Pradhan

Embassy sale row

Foreign Minister asked to reveal details

■ Kiran Bhandari

The Foreign Affairs committee of parliament has decided to seek clarification from the government on the controversial move to sell embassy property in London. Initially, the committee will be asking Foreign Minister, Sahana Pradhan to give details about the proposed sale.

Narayan Man Bijukchhe, senior most member of the committee told newsfront that the decision to ask for details from Pradhan was taken by House committee in its meeting held on December 7; after the Samay Weekly broke the story about Prime Minister GP Koirala and Foreign Minister Pradhan having instructed Ambassador Murari Raj Sharma to sell the embassy located at Kensington Palace Garden at the earliest. But the House committee's move might now put a spanner in the whole deal which appears guided more by lust for commission than in the interest of the nation.

"We will get the government to give full details about the proposed deal and see what is in the best interest of the country," said Bijukchhe responding to newsfront's query. So far, the PM's office as well as the Foreign Ministry is trying to justify the move to sell the embassy property purely on

the basis of a letter, sent by former Ambassador Prabal Shumsher Rana, that said selling the property would be a better option than going for repairs which would cost around 45 million pounds. But officials in the Foreign Ministry assert that the cost of repairs was deliberately inflated in order to justify its sale.

The issue has already triggered a national debate as there is information that the government proposes to sell the property at a much lower price, anywhere around 45 to 50 million pounds, while the going rate for that kind of property is no less than 80 million pounds.

Moreover, the entire property, a part

of the crown property, was handed over to the government of Nepal way back in 1934 as a token of appreciation of the friendship between the two countries. The property is currently on renewed leasehold of the government of Nepal for a period of 99 years beginning 1977. "We will not let this government sell our embassy in the manner it is trying," a member of the House committee said.

Along with the embassy sale controversy, the committee has also asked the government to take up with the government of India, the impact that the proposed roads with high-dams across the border, could have on water resources and rivers in Nepal. "We have also asked the government to specify how and on what parameters the ambassadors are being appointed."

The issue assumes significance following PM Koirala's decision to appoint Shailaja Acharya as ambassador to Delhi even after the house committee refused to confirm her nomination. Besides, at least four ambassador designates have not yet been accepted by the host countries - Denmark, France, Malaysia and Australia since all these nominees belong to the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M).



Not quiet anymore

China may be more visible in Nepal now

■ nf correspondent

Known for its quiet and transparent diplomacy with non-interference in Nepal's internal affairs as the bottom line, China may now opt for more visible role given other internal and 'external' factors at play in Nepal.

That its days for quiet diplomacy watching other 'external players enhance their presence and role in Nepal' should now be over, is the message that high level officials in Nepal have gathered following the visit of a high-level Chinese delegation led by Wang Ziarui, Minister for International Development.

Chinese authorities are particularly worried about the growing violence in Nepal's Terai region; something they feel is 'unusual', implying that any external factors aggravating the situation there might have a chain effect in the whole of Nepal and China, across the north as well.

Minister Ziarui, at the end of his visit, simply said that China was closely watching developments in Nepal; but in the series of meetings that he held with politicians, from PM Koirala to Maoist Chief Prachanda, he was more candid in expressing his worries. Of late, there are also indications that China is getting more convinced that Nepal, without monarchy in some role in it, might fall prey to a host of forces - both internal and external, that are detrimental to its unity and integrity.



"Yes, Chinese have given their message in their own way very clearly without mincing words," a cabinet minister told newsfront. "There could be more high level visits from the north, and their involvement in developmental and infrastructure sector might increase," he added.

China which maintained close link with the palace right from the days of Mao Dze Tung and Chaon En Lai, had supported the royal takeover in February 2005, but of late had been keeping silent regarding the political turmoil in Nepal. On record, it said, it is in favour of election to the constituent assembly taking place on time. But with less clarity on the part of the Maoists on their future politics, China has not found a suitable promoter of its legitimate interest in the event of Nepal going Republic. Neither the visiting Chinese authorities nor the ambassador here, however, have met the king after the political change that took place 18 months ago.



Rebellion

GPK must stop acting like an authoritarian

The simmering fissures within the Nepali Congress is fast turning into an organised revolt with senior leaders including parliamentarians warning Prime Minister GP Koirala in public that he had no right and authority to by-pass the party, and that he 'must' act according to the mandate he has received from the party's delegate session.

Any such move on the part of the PM, the leaders warned, would be defied, both within the parliament and the party organisation. The message was delivered through an open meeting in which more than six dozen parliamentarians and central committee members in addition to around 400 party representatives from different part of the country participated in the symposium - 'Threat to democracy and the way to defeat it,' held under the aegis of the BP Koirala Research Centre.

The warning came as PM Koirala, under pressure from the coterie led by Home Minister KP Sitaula and the Maoists, was said to be eager to

'declare' Republic from the parliament. "It will not be acceptable to us," the meeting chaired by party General Secretary KB Gurung said, that set the tone for the four hour long debate. One after another, leaders including former Speaker Taranath Ranabhat, former home ministers - Govinda Raj Joshi and Khum Bahadur Khadka, Congress central committee member - Sunil Bhandari, former ministers - Bijay Gachhedhar and Chirajivee Wagle said that Koirala cannot be defended at the cost of 'democracy'.

This is being interpreted as their mood to rebel against Koirala if he continues to adopt the policy of 'surrender' towards Maoists and accepts their conditions for declaring 'Republicanism from the House and going for the proportional representation system' of election. "It is time government ensured that Maoists return the property they have been forcibly occupying in different parts of the country," said Khadka. He also came in defense of the security agencies who, "fought and laid their

lives on our order.... This government is treating them badly and ignoring their sacrifice."

The meeting stated clearly that the king should not be pushed too far just because Maoists or 'Sitaula' wanted it. King's role and relevance should be reviewed positively in a spirit of conciliation and accommodation, said former Speaker Ranabhat, warning that a hasty declaration of 'Republicanism' will lead the country to disintegration. What comes as a shock to PM Koirala is the open secret that the party Working Committee President, Sushil Koirala, despite his not being present in the symposium, lent his support to it.

But in a signal that almost amounts to rejecting the threat from the rebels, PM Koirala appointed KP Sitaula as the spokesperson of the government. Most speakers in the meeting had demanded for Sitaula's dismissal as the Home Minister calling him 'incompetent' and someone who was working more for the interest of the Maoists than that of the country.

Newsbrief

Firmly for monarchy

Rabindra Nath Sharma, Chairman of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal has turned down the invitation of Rastriya Janata Party (RPP) led by Pashupati Shumsher Rana to attend its national conference as a 'friendly party.'

Sharma turned down the invitation saying he would not attend the conference as the RPP led by Rana has adopted a pro-republican line recently. Rana's party not only dropped its 'support to the constitutional monarchy' from the party constitution, but he also went along with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the CPN-UML in favour of the proportional representation system, during the voting in the parliament last month.

VOITH turns 40

Vaidya's Organisation of Industries and Trading Houses (VOITH); a leading industrial house in the country and an umbrella organisation of several subsidiaries, turned 40 on December 7. The day was observed as the foundation day of VOITH as well as the 77th birthday of its founder and president, Dr. GN Vaidya, at Godavari village resort in which the employees, management representatives, family and friends participated.

VOITH is credited with initiating and expanding automobile sale and maintenance, beginning with Toyota, in Nepal. Outstanding employees were rewarded on the occasion based on company's assessment of their performance.

Corruption in democracy

Since PM GP Koirala never gets tired of 'firmly establishing democracy in Nepal', the country under his leadership is making a record in the field of corruption in the world. Transparency International has listed Nepal in the list of the 'most corrupt' countries in the world, placed at 131st position, only 32 below the highest point.

The annual report, 2006 published by the Transparency International, brings to the public the index of corruption in the world. Sadly for Nepal, the corruption index in the year that GP Koirala and pro-democracy parties ruled has gone up by 12 points compared to its position in the annual report of 2005.

Mafia who?

The national flag carrier, Nepal Airlines is under the control of the Airlines Mafia, declared Civil Aviation Minister, Prithvi Subba Gurung, but he made no effort to identify them.

"They are too strong and dangerous. They have always used the corporation to serve their interest," Gurung told the media on December 8, and asserted he would go for a phased programme to resurrect the airlines.

But in the process, he made it clear that right from GP Koirala's earlier tenure until now, the mafia were actively sabotaging the growth and expansion of the corporation. "They were everywhere from Dhamija to Lauda." Award of General Sales Agency for Europe (GSA) during his first tenure as the

PM and then going in for a contract with Lauda eight years ago had brought Koirala under criticism of the media and the political parties; since a huge kick-back and high level corruption was suspected in both the deals - all this at the cost of the national exchequer.

Minister Gurung said he is aware of the challenges he faces today. To begin with, his priority will be to convert the corporation into an autonomous company, and let it acquire the aircraft and expand business on a more competitive basis.

Vacate Susta

As the government is under pressure to take up with India the issue of its additional encroachment on fresh areas in Susta under Nawalparasi district, Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan has asked her Indian counterpart, Pranab Mukherjee, to respect the Nepali sentiment and immediately vacate the area. She also wanted India to treat the matter with utmost urgency and respect Nepalis' sensitivity.

Pradhan raised the issue with Mukherjee in Delhi where she is participating in the SAARC foreign ministers conference. "Mukherjee has assured that India will look into Nepal's concern," a government official said.

India has occupied fresh areas measuring around 12 Bighas in Susta recently dislodging some 50 families; while the earlier encroachment of around 1500 hectares remains unsettled. Apart from the directive of the parliamentary committee, media groups, youths and student groups belonging to various political parties including the young communist league, have criticised India for the encroachment.



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Point to Ponder

I will have naught to do with a man who can blow hot and cold with the same breath. - Aesop

Bombshell

Maoist Chief Prachanda has once again dropped a political bombshell by declaring that his party would be willing to work with the nationalist forces or individuals in the country's politics ahead. As expected, his speech has already triggered a fierce debate in politics with none less than Home Minister KP Sitaula, who has long been servile towards the Maoists, questioning Prachanda's political honesty.

No one knows the reason why Prachanda said so in a meeting organised by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, but he definitely wanted this issue debated and taken seriously. Otherwise, he would not have chosen a venue of the journalists.

In principle, it will be a welcome step on the part of the Maoists, if what Prachanda stated was an outcome of deep analysis and realisation that politics of exclusion of certain forces, or politics that gave monopoly to only seven parties all these months, was wrong and that it was not going to bring any political stability in this country.

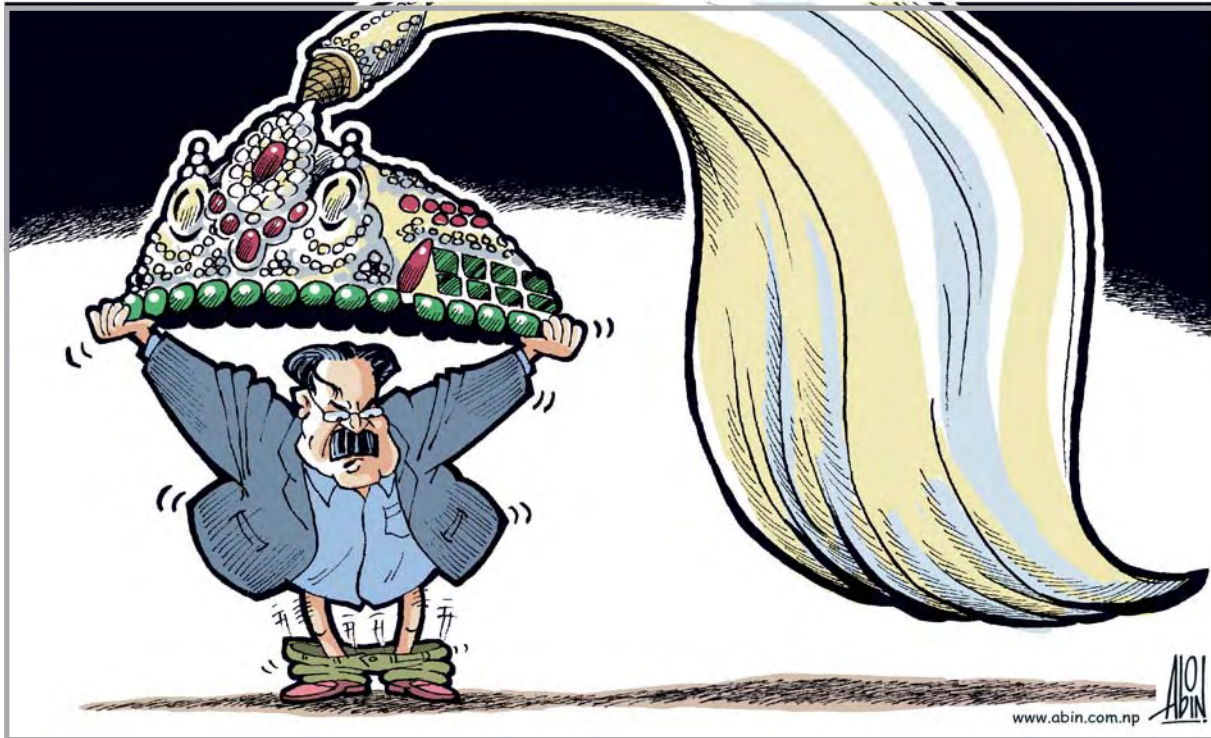
In fact, seven political parties, mainly GP Koirala did make a lot of compromises in their political ideology and commitment in the name of opposing authoritarianism. How on earth would it be possible to oppose the authoritarianism of the king or that of Maoists' one party rule if a great 'democrat' like G P Koirala is to lead a seven party authoritarianism?

Any regime, not accountable to a legitimate parliament and not wanting to secure people's mandate, can be termed authoritarian and undemocratic. If he had agreed to head the government for a limited transitional period to conduct election for the constituent assembly, he should have quit immediately after October 5 when he announced indefinite postponement for the second time. By not doing that he only gave proof that he wants to prolong a rule that has no mandate of the people for the sake of power in an authoritarian fashion. Just because he belongs to the Nepali Congress does not make him less authoritarian if he continues to exercise absolute power without any accountability to people.

In any case, this executive's stated accountability to parliament is a farce as the legislature is only a rubber stamp of the three top leaders. In fact, not long ago, BP Koirala came forward with the call of national reconciliation as he thought bringing the king and democratic forces together alone would make this country more independent and sovereign in the real sense, purely within the framework of a democratic constitution.

There is apparently a debate going on within the Maoists party that it must recognise Nepal's own fundamental features; since otherwise, it could lead to country's disintegration. This fear is now being expressed by all. The seven parties together have not been able to assure the people of this nation that the country is safe in their hands. So what has caused this situation and why has this uncertainty been increasing in the past 18 months?

What Prachanda has said must be explained and put forward for a larger debate among the people. But it will cost him heavily if what he said is just one more inconsistent speech that he makes one day, and negates through words and action the next.



Letters

Commission politics

The government policy of selling embassies abroad proves lack of farsightedness and shows commission oriented dealing in governance. The political leaders who are involved in it seem to be more concerned about personal benefits. The sale of Nepali embassies reveals cunningness of the power holders and their hypocritical nature.

■ Krishna Chandra Dahal
Kupandol, Lalitpur

Stop sale

It was shocking to read in newsfront as well as its sister publication Samay, about the news of our embassies in London and elsewhere, on sale. It is indeed a matter of shame that the likes of GP Koirala and Sahana Pradhan are more interested in the deal that might earn them some money, than the country having a decent place to run its embassy abroad.

From all the details that newsfront has brought in public, it is clear that there is a commission game going on. Any deal should be transparently done. If at all the sale of the property is necessary, it should be publicly notified. But first, the government must answer publicly why it is necessary to sell the property in London. Secondly, what is the lower amount fixed for the sale; and lastly, where is the alternate site for the embassy and how much does it cost? After all, GP Koirala must know that once the US government acquired new land and built the embassy in Kathmandu, it notified the sale of the property earlier used as the embassy.

Sale of our embassy in a clandestine and corrupt manner is like selling the country. GP Koirala is only a caretaker PM for a limited purpose and that is to hold election to the constituent assembly. While he runs the risk of losing chair following his failure to hold elections twice on deadline, he cannot be allowed to behave like the owner of our country's property in Kathmandu and elsewhere and sell them in the manner he



likes. Our ambassador in London also should be held accountable if he succumbs to clandestine order of the PM. Is that the price he paid for getting the plum posting?

■ Name withheld
An employee of the foreign ministry.

Nepali embassies on sale?

I am a regular reader of newsfront that I find informative and interesting. I would like to thank you for making public the news on sale of Nepali embassies. It is interesting as well as saddening to know that the government is considering selling off at least four embassies on grounds of high maintenance cost.

It is really shocking news that PM Girija Prasad Koirala himself has

taken keen interest in selling the embassies. The embassy established in London is a token of gift given to the Nepal government in appreciation of Nepal's military support many years back. So, particularly in this case, the impact of selling off that embassy will not leave a good impression. The matter should also be viewed in light of the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Such a hasty decision shows naivety and greed for kick-backs during the transactions.

In my opinion, Nepalis home and abroad should raise this serious issue as it is a matter of public concern. I think the PM should re-think before taking any decision on this particular matter which carries national and international significance, or face wide criticism.

■ Pragya Ghimire
Bafal, Kathmandu

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

Spiritual Corner

Soul's power

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893 – 1952) was born in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India into a devout Bengali family. In his youth he sought out many India's sages and saints, hoping to find an illuminated teacher to guide him in his spiritual quest, that ended when he met his guru Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, at the age of 17.

In 1917, Yogananda founded a school for boys in Dihika, West Bengal that combined modern educational techniques with yoga training and spiritual ideals. A year later, the school relocated to Ranchi. This school would later become Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, the Indian branch of Yogananda's American organisation.

In 1920, he went to the US, as India's

delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. For the next several years, he lectured and taught in the east coast and in 1924 embarked on a cross-continental speaking tour. The following year, he established in Los Angeles, California, an international headquarters for Self-Realisation Fellowship, which became the spiritual and administrative heart of his growing work. On March 7, 1952, he attained Mahasamadhi.

Yogananda taught his students the need for direct experience of truth, as opposed to blind belief. He said that "The true basis of religion is not belief, but intuitive

experience. Intuition is the soul's power of knowing God. To know what religion is really all about, one must know God."

Echoing traditional Hindu teachings, he taught that the entire universe is God's cosmic motion picture, and that individuals are merely actors in the divine play who change roles through reincarnation. He taught that mankind's deep suffering is rooted in identifying too closely with one's current role, rather than with the movie's director, or God. He taught Kriya Yoga and other meditation practices to help people achieve that understanding, which he called self-realisation:



"Self-realisation is the knowing in all parts of body, mind, and soul that you are now in possession of the kingdom of God; that you do not have to pray that it come to you; that God's omnipresence is your omnipresence; and that all that you need to do is improve your knowing."

Kriya Yoga is a set of yoga techniques that are the main discipline of Yogananda's meditation teachings. Kriya Yoga was passed down through Yogananda's guru lineage. Mahavatar Babaji taught Kriya Yoga to Lahiri Mahasaya, who taught it to his disciple Sri Yukteswar, Yogananda's guru. Because of ancient yogic injunctions, the actual technique must be learned from a Kriyaban or Kriya Yogi, according to Yogananda.

Until recently, nothing came between the people belonging to different religions and cultures.

Losing common sense?

Except perhaps during the prehistoric times, when everybody fought, chased and even killed one another all over the world; Nepal, the land of Janaka, Buddha and many other illustrious personalities, was never found wanting on patience and perseverance that strengthened harmony and brotherhood among her people. From the time of sage king, Janaka, who has been portrayed as the key character to support and strengthen Rama's resolve towards his duties in the Hindu epic Ramayana, to the time of lord Budhha who spread the message of compassion to the Asian continent, Nepal has been always portrayed as a peaceful nation in South Asia.

Until recently, nothing came between the people belonging to different religions and cultures. Sadly though, everything that was built with patience and courage seems to be tumbling down rapidly now. Worst of all, the change lacks neither direction nor purpose.

Ever since the success of Jana Andolan II, Nepal is said to be trying to build an all-inclusive democratic society with full regard paid to human

rights of every citizen. This certainly is an objective that every developing, as well as developed country, aspires for. While on one hand, Nepal seems to be making some effort to involve the downtrodden and other groups excluded in the development process; on the other, the political leaders in power refrain from the slightest notion of involving the political parties that have a long history of siding with monarchy. How then can an all-inclusive society be created without the participation of all the people of Nepal?

Strong reactions to a recent comment made by Maoist Chairman, Prachanda, of forging ties with 'nationalists royalists' indicates that there might be a hidden campaign in Nepal to unsettle and disrupt everything aimed at preventing the coming together of the Nepali society peacefully. Although one can always argue that the comment, coming from the Maoists as it does, is aimed at weakening the only tested democratic party, the Nepali Congress. Whatever might be the motive of this statement at this time, the fact remains that without all the Nepalis coming together, the dream of a new

democratic nation would remain unfulfilled.

The continuing violence in several cities, quickly spreading in the Terai plains, does not give any respite to the millions of peace loving people. Lack of any progress in the activities of the truth and reconciliation commission, that can be made instrumental in healing the wounds of the common man; postponement of constituent assembly elections, and the lack of understanding between the six political parties and the Maoist led party, hardly provides any hope for a future that is secure and certain. Everyday extortions, torture, kidnapping and killing of innocent civilians including the civil servants, reflect the image of an utterly disorderly nation.

Increasing attacks against journalists, medical professionals, businesses and others are taking the sap out of Nepali life. No amount of justification, mostly hindsight, can work for such behavior. Most amazing is the behavior of the political and social leaders of the country who seem to be mysteriously quiet at this time of need.

Immediately following the brutal

murder of John of Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States of America in Dallas, a Mr. Allan Maley, Secretary Treasurer of AFL-CIO Council, had remarked "There are powerful leaders who have encouraged or condoned or at least remained silent while the preaching of hate helped condition a citizenry to support the most reactionary sort of political philosophy". The Americans, though hurt, found enough courage through other leaders to come to terms with reality and resolved to build the country they loved. They stopped from any sort of hate campaign against Dallas.

That was one city in the USA. But, Nepal seems to be brewing hate campaigns against selected persons virtually in every city and towns. Yet the powerful leaders keep their silence in public but are alleged to confide in private. This behavior is more dangerous to the society and the nation as a whole. At this juncture one can only hope that some day soon, the Nepali leaders would wake up with enough courage and conviction to do what they have been promising since long. ■



■ Binod P. Bista



All hopes turned into a mirage when the election was yet again deferred, indefinitely, citing the discrepancy between the same coalition partners who seemed to have agreed on all the vital issues previously. Cancellation of the polls had the obvious backlash against the Maoists as they posed new and rigid demands at the eleventh hour. At best, it has caused a new hassle on achieving a positive reform through the polls. And worst will be the scenario if there are any buried intentions from any side to obscure the chances for election to take place at all.

The contradiction among the major political elites towards the proposal for fully proportional voting and declaration of republic prior to the election has posed another obstacle. The prospect of unfruitful polarisation between the political left and right due to the parliamentary rift, out of these latest bids has surfaced. But ironically, parties, both opposing and favoring the proposal, maintain that their standpoints would 'ultimately' prove to be favorable to nation, as they try to sound hell-bent to serve the 'people's desire.' Does this mean that the country could see a constructive turn only at the cost of an untoward political polarisation?

Nepali Congress (NC), opposing both the proposals, has been asserting that the fully proportional electoral system would communally break the nation and its outcome would snatch individuals' liberty. It has also maintained that declaring republicanism right away without waiting for the polls would imply

■ Shirish Ranabhat

Whether it is many rounds of unsuccessful peace negotiations among the leaders of Seven Party Alliance (SPA), the unclear stance of Nepali Congress (NC), the baffling political posture of Unified Marxists-Leninists (UML) or the ridiculously erratic and irrational political demands of Maoists, most Nepalis realise that we are in deep political dilemma now.

It is no longer a secret that the interaction between political parties and various political leaders are out to protect their self-interests rather than to serve the common good. Past experiences show that many efforts to subdue current political crises turned into blame games. No one trusts in solving problems through dialogue and there exists deliberate silence and factual distortions. As a result, democratic accountability is perverted in our country.

It has been said that a child who is made to earn a toy most often takes better care of it than a child who was simply given the toy. Well, our nation has become a nation of children who have been given free gifts of freedom and democracy. And we are abusing these gifts with our relentless apathy and ignorance.

Nepalis, specifically the political leaders, have become pre-disposed to engaging in the blame game. No matter what the

End the impasse

Is another Jana Andolan needed to revive that vigor and hope?

contrary to the democratic norm of respecting people's verdict and its outcome would be unsustainable. In contrast, the Maoists insist that fully proportional electoral system would only ensure the wholesome representation of the less privileged people; and not declaring republic would give leeway for the institution to play foul and disrupt the CA polls.

However, both these assessments should be warily scrutinised among political pundits, intellectuals and the general public. People should be made clear whether living up to one or two of the proposals or discarding them completely could give a most reasonable and best way out. Finding a way between the demands of the



■ Amit Pyakurel

Maoists and utter disapproval of the NC, could also be a good option.

What is lacking is enough elucidation on the way-out to end the political deadlock. Indefinite continuation of political instability, plus the ensuing violence and lawlessness, has not only betrayed the people regarding their hope for peace in the country, but also posed untoward possibilities for any national or foreign foul players

to fish in this dirty water and push the country into a deeper quagmire.

No rule can sustain if the universally accepted democratic norms, more precisely the individual liberty, are made to pay in the pretext of any kind of reform. King Gyanendra's autocratic tactics did not work. It will not be different if the Maoists try to follow a similar strategy. Fundamental democratic values are not only the most legitimate foundation for any political faction but also their greatest source of power. Stronger the democratic structure of a country is, the more trust of people leading factions can enjoy, opening the doors of reform more easily.

It's already clear that any attempt

to safeguard the monarchy or to establish an absolute (communist) totalitarianism on the vague pretext of "ensuring rights for all," will not be accepted by the people. We need a true democracy where each person has a basic share of privileges provided by the state and everyone, irrespective of their political or social status, can express their discontent.

Regrettably, the people-consented rule by the current political alliance of seven parties would gradually lose its significance and legitimacy, as it is only distancing itself from the people. Is another Jana andolan needed to revive that vigor and hope?

If there is an open and sincere discussion on the discrepancies taking place, it would not be hard to find a solution, given that every partner in the current alliance realise the people's desire and rights stand above all else. The underlying posture of all the leading parties seem to contain a common ground, i.e. to ensure peace, complete democracy, and equal rights to all Nepalis. But this very idea also seem to be misinterpreted, basically in line with the presumed strategic gain or loss of the parties, especially by the Nepali Congress and the CPN (Maoists).

However, time demands that both the sides need to come out of their political egotism and get flexible on their demands to rescue the nation. Unity and reciprocal understanding is the only beneficial way-out in the current context.

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spite of the potential problems that may or may not come with declaring a republic state or abolishing monarchy, the greater mistake is not been able to conduct the CA election in time. The government needs to work hard on restoring law and order situation in the country and the SPA leaders must compromise reasonably to conduct the elections without further delay.

It is time to start taking responsibility for our own apathy and inaction. We, the people, must take responsibility for the dismal government that we have and for believing in these dishonest leaders. Only when we stop blaming each other, and embrace our civic responsibility and refuse to patronise any propaganda that our country will start to heal.

The reforms that the people seek must be made through the time honored tradition of the primary process, the election. The primary burden on all of us is to build the pressure on the government to conduct the CA elections as soon as possible. Let us search out good candidates, support them and stand behind them. Let us all find a middle ground to resolve all the differences.

(Sirish is Executive Member, Nepali Janasamparka Samiti, and Coordinator, Policy and Research Department, NJS-USA)

Blame game continues

We are abusing the free gifts of freedom and democracy with our relentless apathy and ignorance.

problem, they always conveniently find someone, some thing to blame. This game is delaying one of the immediate reforms that the people want to see happen – Constituent Assembly (CA) elections.

A delay in the adoption of reforms is an important issue in politics. This issue is of particular relevance when the government is a coalition and the country is in a transitional phase. Delays arise because coalition partners have different interests and because of lack of trust. Thus, it is necessary for coalition partners to reach a consensus to adopt a reform.

The recent debate over republicanism, monarchy, and the CA elections shows the SPA leaders are now looking

It is time to start taking responsibility for our own apathy and inaction. We, the people, must take responsibility for the dismal government that we have and for believing in these dishonest leaders.

for someone to blame for the mess we are in. It has become a high stake political game. Maoists' recent change of stance on their agendas and their non-negotiable attitude has fueled the accusatory nature of the game.

Sadly, the acrimonious game is motivated by the leadership of all political parties for the purpose of gaining, or retaining political power. It does not approach a true debate over one of the fundamental rights - the people's right to vote. The mistakes made by SPA are obvious, but the effort to blame each other confuses the real issue.

Obviously the interim government failed to meet its constitutional obligation regarding CA elections. In

Self-reliance is possible

Begging bowl and borrowed funds cannot do much in the long run.

Swoyambhu Ratna Tuladhar is a seasoned businessman who has experienced the weather in the economic climate in Nepal fluctuate with wild abandon. He recently received the national level award for remarkable success in export performance and also the title of 'Commercially Important Person'. Excerpts of his talks with **Sushma Amatya** recently:

What does this recognition mean to you?

The national level award we received in Nov 07 was given for silver jewelry export by the government of Nepal, based on our performance in 2004 - 2005. I only received the honour on behalf of all those hardworking people who have been collectively contributing to handicrafts. This award has great value in our business and can be used as a tool for business promotion.

How is your organisation, Yak and Yeti, different from others in the handicrafts industry?

Yak & Yeti Enterprises Pvt. Ltd., was founded in 1983 with the intent to provide a means of support for the artisans of Kathmandu valley. Since most of craftspeople were farmers they could not support themselves solely through their farming. So our main goal was to bring their products to the world market and fill the under-employment void while making a fair profit at the same time. This tradition continues to this day as we utilise over 100 plus artisan families who supply us with their products.

Manufacturing/export and wholesale of silver jewelry with semi-precious stones is our main specialty. We also export a wide variety of other Nepali handicrafts. Silk and Pashmina fashion garments and many more accessories feature in our product range which is popular in the international market today.

What challenges you as a businessperson have been facing in the recent political environment in the country?

The unfortunate political situation is hindering our economic growth. We can do a lot and generate more employment and grow tremendously, if a favorable working environment is restored in our country. Foreign buyers are losing their faith in Nepal and taking their business out. If there is no improvement in our current situation, business will die out and there will be an uncontrollable growth of poverty level.

Economic activities and politics should be totally separated from one another. These two are like water in oil. You cannot mix them together. It is a law of nature. They function smoothly if they do not mix.

What might be the consequences if the situation does not improve?

I cannot escape from what is happening here today. What affects others also affects me. It is a pity what is happening here politically. If every political party has the same goal for our country; then I wish everybody followed the three big Cs to resolve our problem once and for all; which means - consensus, cooperation and coordination. Then only can all Nepalis enjoy economical growth. I do not even want to think about the consequences if the situation does not improve.

We were getting on with hopes of peace and by understanding the natural law of impermanence. Nothing can continue forever. Even our business will come to a halt if we fail to incorporate the need of time. And we thought our ball must keep rolling and we did it with all the experiences of the hardship that we faced in the past 25 years of establishment and especially during the 11 years of conflict. Unfortunately the condition is still unstable and there is no indication of any light

to be born in this country, how beautiful this country is, how nationalistic we are, etc., etc., will remain just that - empty jargon. After all, begging bowls and borrowed funds cannot do much in the long run.

What suggestions do you have to improve our economic growth?

We should aim to sell more than we buy from other countries. Productive areas should be improved

Agro industry has one problem that I see now hindering its growth. We always have a slogan and policies like land reforms but the question is, it helping? I think what we require is not land reform but land management. We also need to learn from our neighboring countries that are growing economically regardless of their political situation.

How can young generation artisans be trained better, in larger numbers and how can



What are the most pertinent issues the business community in Nepal is facing today?

We have faced ups and downs and have passed through many vulnerable situations. We literally sweated out our blood during the conflict ridden years. But we were continuing with what we were doing no matter what came our way. We never gave space for frustration to enter our minds. The livelihood of many people depends on what we do, so we do carry a huge responsibility.

The reality is that our trade deficit is alarming and unfortunately we have revenue driven economy. Something needs to be done about this fast.

at the end of the tunnel.

How did the years of conflict impact on the economic condition of the country?

The number of people flying out of the country everyday under pretext of foreign employment or studying abroad says a lot. This situation could have been reversed with some foresight. Lacking that, a huge chunk of brain and brawn power is going out for good. I strongly believe that a large number of those who left due to instability in the country would come back happily if they are convinced that peace is here to stay and if they are reassured of unhindered, healthy economical growth. But sadly, this is not the case.

The reality is that our trade deficit is alarming and unfortunately we have revenue driven economy. Something needs to be done about this fast. Everybody should start thinking about a self sustainable economy. With the current economic condition in our country, all the rhetoric about how fortunate we are

to help everyone grow in every possible ways. Our society is caught between modern materialistic life style and the socio-cultural bindings; and needs and expenses of every individual are growing. But we are draining out our economic strength and only helping improve other countries' economy.

I see no clear national target for economic growth. I do not believe good revenue collection is in real sense an economic growth. So we should think of sustainable economy and shift our focus from depending on funds and loans.

I do see a couple of resources we have within our reach. Agriculture products, tourism industry, natural resources and handicrafts are areas that require only good policies and suitable environment; where every paisa of every individual can be invested with confidence. If we target these areas, money will start flowing; and the government will have very little burden to bear. We should also have a separate department for export business.

they be drawn into handicrafts?

Young generations of artisan families are already learning to be competitive in quality and services. They are even bringing in new technologies and improving works of art. It is just a matter of broadening the market area to attract more people in the line. Economic activities will attract anybody at any level; it is just a matter creating opportunities. If you look at the handicraft business in the past the growth difference now is enormous.

Our young generation is very smart and innovative; but we must think what kind of policies we have laid down to attract them. We all know the young generations want to be more independent, so they require support for project loans. Policy makers need to think about targeting the young entrepreneurs for their help in national economic growth. From what I see now, almost all business people are skeptical regarding growth investment and are in a limbo. Time is fast running out on us. ■

UNMIN in need of immediate reform

UNMIN is in Nepal to do what the Nepali people deem is right for their own country, not what UNMIN deem is right for Nepal.

■ **Kamal Tamang**

Months before the November 22; UNMIN, political pundits, their minions and Nepali civil society all understood that holding elections under continued Maoist duress would be impossible. It was fear of acknowledging this false reality fabricated by these very actors, that the alarm bell was not rung in time and the Nepali people were betrayed once more.

Where the setting of false election expectations is concerned, UNMIN and every high-ranking UN official who flew in and out of Nepal, is guilty as charged. They were all responsible for exacerbating a lie that intentionally subdued glaring challenges and highlighted peripheral progress. Ian Martin routinely presented hyped versions of UNMIN's "progress" to his superiors in New York, as evidence of UNMIN's success. Regardless of how Ian Martin chooses his play on words or how he attempts to re-interpret UNMIN's mandate in Nepal, the fact remains that Martin and his "army" of advisors were incapable of executing even the narrowest interpretation of UNMIN's current mandate – helping set the stage to ensure constituent assembly elections.

Everyone understood what the setting of Maoist preconditions

meant for CA elections. And even with UNMIN as their vanguard, no one dared practice any of the high-minded morality or democratic conviction that accompanies populist rhetoric in Nepal. Ironically, populism and "democratic" activism in Nepal, have become one in the same. Instead of advising the Maoists to change course, Nepal's self-professed democratic stalwarts turned the other way.

The connection between UNMIN and Nepal's disillusioned civil society is this, both find themselves in a symbiotic web of conspiracy driven agendas, diverted development dollars, and foregone conclusions. They profess allegiance to a higher cause; speak of process, of rights, of empowerment and rule of law. All the while, what they practice rarely re-enforces that which they preach. Neither UNMIN nor Nepal's civil society is accountable, transparent, or flexible enough to view Nepal's political landscape through any paradigm other than their own preconceived notion of what the landscape should look like.

The seven party coalition and the Maoists should produce a set of target objectives that need to be met, in order for CA elections to be held. These objectives and their associated dates should be shared with UNMIN and its engagement sought in an advisory capacity.

Once all parties are in agreement,



UNMIN should allocate its resources to ensure that agreed upon milestones are met and should produce weekly reports on its website that outline progress-to-date, challenges/obstacles and upcoming milestones. Should the danger of missing any milestones become obvious, the information should be shared with the Nepali people and the international community-at-large, in a transparent and public manner.

UNMIN's practice of inflating progress by subduing hiccups should be halted immediately. All agreements, official and unofficial, between

UNMIN, the SPA and the Maoists should be shared in the public domain. For example, Ian Martin's revelation after the arms verification process had begun; that details on Maoist arms, numbers of verified combatants, etc., should be kept from public disclosure is the kind of practice that UNMIN should be reprimanded for enforcing.

In order to avoid the plethora of excuses of the past and repeated discussion of its mandate, Ian Martin should once and for all, tell the SPA and the Maoists the common minimum set of conditions UNMIN requires, to effectively carry out its responsibilities.

Fortunately for UNMIN, Nepal's peace process has yet again arrived at a juncture where Ian Martin can better negotiate the terms of UNMIN's engagement. Martin should take full advantage of the lessons he has learned and negotiate a more effective mandate for his mission. A restructured versus an expanded role is what Ian Martin should focus on.

The perception that the UN alone can help Nepal navigate its peace process is a myth. The nature of conflict has morphed drastically since the UN's inception. With these transformations have emerged numerous institutions and think tanks that may not be as well funded but are intrinsically better structured to

handle discrete components of Nepal's peace process.

Because independent oversight is desired, it is understood that in Nepal's case, the existence of the incestuous relationship between UNMIN and known civil society actors, incapacitates civil society as the sole, logical source of unofficial governance. Employment arrangements in particular, hamper the independence of most vocal opinion makers in Nepal's case.

With all the double standards that have been practiced, the time to carefully re-evaluate UNMIN's most effective application is now. It is important to revisit the fact that UNMIN is in Nepal at the behest of the SPA and the Maoists, but is accountable to the Nepali people. UNMIN is in Nepal to do what the Nepali people deem is right for their own country, not what UNMIN deem, is right for Nepal.

Nepalis need to wake up to these facts and stop elevating UNMIN onto a pedestal where it does not belong. For all the progressive politics that Nepal's elite allegedly represents, its constituents should take a moment to dissociate their wallets from their professed morals and take a good look in the mirror. It is at this point of dissociation where the chasm that defines the failures in Nepal's peace process lies. ■

■ **Pasang Dolma Sherpa**

Ang Maya Sherpa had to bear the agony of her husband's death in close succession to the loss of her mother. This meant added responsibilities and unlimited challenges, both financial and social to her. Apart from having to raise her three children, she also had to look after two sisters orphaned by her mother's death. While looking after five dependents was not something that dampened her spirit, the burden of expensive funerals, a rigid social custom, coupled with having to inherit heavy loan her parents had taken, only painted a bleak future for her.

What one spends on social customs like funerals in Nepali society, especially in the Sherpa community, is not what one can afford easily. One's social status and existence is judged by how much you spend on such occasions. Ang Maya plunged into fresh financial crisis, as she borrowed more to give a decent funeral to her mother and husband. There was a time when the community members would contribute to such occasions so that the poor would not feel the financial burden but it has changed now.

Ang Maya not only pledged to take up any kind of job to earn

Courage to defy norms



Ang Maya Sherpa working in her 'greenhouse farm'

enough to maintain the family, but also decided to take up the cudgels against expensive social customs that had ruined many families. She also knew it was not something that could be changed overnight and by her alone. Yet she began her mission in a modest

way and has never looked back.

Today, after six years, Ang Maya is a proud owner of Maya lodge in Thamo, in Namche Village Development Council (VDC) in Solukhumbu. She is also an already recognised

social and environmental activist and a community leader. She is an inspiration for many; and the credit goes to her hard-work and perseverance. Unlike most people in the area who normally migrate to new and undisclosed places under the burden of loans, she chose not to leave.

Ang Maya was married when she was only 13, and a class five student. Her misery began soon after marriage since her husband, a mountain climber, would spend all he earned in alcohol and expensive travels. "I never experienced any happiness during years of my marriage as it neither turned into financial support nor social security. There was nothing to feel satisfied about..."

Educating her children has become her priority now. She has also been leading a campaign to educate all the children in her village. She is the chairperson of the village school management committee that invited all parents to compulsorily send their children and defying it would mean a fine of Rs 100 for each day of absence; which resulted in cent per cent enrolment and children's punctuality in the class. Looking back, Ang says, "I used to get so scared of facing the public and speaking in some programmes earlier.

But I have no hesitation in speaking my mind now."

But the real focus of her mission which was to change extravagant expenses in rituals and custom is still to take shape. She has already started performing all the rituals in the family that would traditionally be done only by male members.

One's social status and existence is judged by how much you spend on funeral ceremonies.

Culture and traditions need to be preserved as a factor that unify the society and give its members a sense of belonging for generations. But they not only need timely reviews but discarding superstition and extravagant expenses are also very important. If not checked, such traditions will encourage the entire society to be highly materialistic, all in the name of preserving culture and customs.

The flight of a large number of educated youths to the west; some of them bankrupted by such expensive rituals and others who saw no future in Nepal - proves how empty this society is becoming. While policy makers and social planners have not yet thought about the perils that evils of so called culture may cause, small efforts like Ang Maya's have begun to make its impact. ■

Bhutto, Sharif threaten poll boycott

Former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif have said their parties could boycott the January 8 elections if their demands to ensure free and fair polls were not conceded by the government.

For its part, the government has said that some of the demands that the parties are making, like the reinstatement of judges sacked following declaration of emergency in the country, were "not negotiable".

Political analysts, however, feel that it is the political parties and not the Musharraf government which is on a weak footing since Musharraf has secured his place as president and the ruling coalition is set to give the opposition parties a tough time in the polls.

"What is more of a question is how united the opposition parties are," commented analyst Javed Iqbal. Many say that while Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif may seem to be presenting a united front at present, the chances of a political alliance



"We have decided to present the charter of demands to the government. If the government accepts our demands, all opposition parties will participate in the elections, otherwise they will resort to boycott."

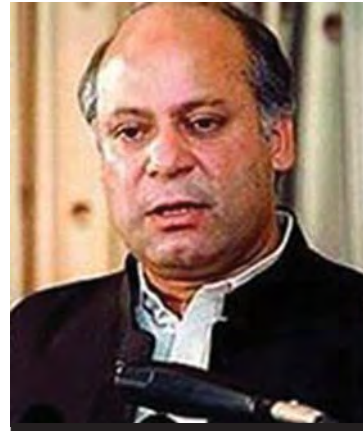
working against the Musharraf government in the long term are dim.

Sharif has accepted that the opposition alliance needed to sort out its differences before it could present a united front before the government. "I am aware of the problems but we are working in a manner that we want to take all political forces along and this will only happen through talks and consensus," he said on Tuesday.

In a major development, the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy and the All Pakistan Democratic Movement on Monday night decided to give the government a "charter of demands" to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

"We have decided to present the charter of demands to the government. If the government accepts our demands, all opposition parties will participate in the elections, otherwise they will resort to boycott," Sharif and Bhutto said after a three-and-a-half hour-long meeting.

At the press conference, Sharif



"I am aware of the problems but we are working in a manner that we want to take all political forces along and this will only happen through talks and consensus."

announced that an eight-member committee would be constituted. "The committee has been tasked to start work from Tuesday morning and complete the charter of demands within two to three days so that it can be presented before the government," he revealed.

Benazir Bhutto said the ARD and the APDM discussed many points and agreed that the elections could not be free, fair and transparent in the present circumstances. Replying to a question, Benazir said they did not want postponement of the January 8 polls. She said the charter of demands was being presented to the government to ensure that free, fair and transparent elections are held.

Sharif told the press that the opposition did not want to boycott the elections but if their charter was not accepted by the government, they would be forced to stay away from the polls. He said: "The rejection of my nomination papers exposed the 'fairness' of the elections." ■

105 confirmed dead in N-China coal mine gas blast

In this photo released by China's Xinhua news agency, the Rui Zhiyuan coal mine in Hongtong county near the city of Linfen in coal-rich Shanxi province is seen.



TAIYUAN—A State Council investigation team confirmed on Sunday that 105 people died in the coal mine gas blast in Hongtong County of north China's Shanxi Province. Headed by Li Yizhong, director of the State Administration of Work Safety, the investigation team was formed at 9 a.m. Sunday.

The gas explosion occurred at 11:15 p.m. Wednesday at Xinyao Coal Mine, a village-run coal firm in Hongtong County, Linfen City, while 128 miners were working in the shaft. According to Li, the colliery managers delayed reporting the accident to local authorities while sending another 37 workers down to the shaft for rescue operations. In this way, the mine let slip the first opportunity for rescue efforts.

In addition, the mine owner and other chief executives escaped after the accident, causing great difficulties for rescue operation. Of the 60 rescued miners, 18 were injured, including four in serious condition, Li said. Police have so far detained 35 people, instead of previously reported 33 people, who are alleged to be relevant to or responsible for the fatal gas explosion.

Among those detained were the mine's manager Gao Jianmin, Wang Hongliang, the mine's legal representative. The mine's license has been sealed and its bank accounts frozen. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Security has issued a class-Barrest warrant for the owner of the mine. Meng Xuenong, acting governor of Shanxi Province, said on Sunday Shanxi should draw lessons from the accident and improve work safety, especially in coal mines.

The accident is believed to be the nation's second deadliest mining disaster so far this year. In August, 181 miners died when heavy rains flooded two mines in eastern Shandong Province.

(Xinhua)

Clean-up of Korea's Worst Oil Spill Continues

TAEAN, South Korea— Coast Guard officials Sunday were struggling to clean up crude oil leaked from a supertanker in the country's worst oil spill that has blackened some of South Korea's pristine western coast and endangered wildlife.

Spillage from the tanker was completely stopped early Sunday, 48 hours after the leak began after a ship collision in waters off Taeon County, South Chungcheong province. The government has declared a state of disaster for the region.

Kang Moo-hyun, minister of maritime affairs and fisheries, said the containment will take at least two months, considering the size of the vast oil slick along the 150-km shoreline of the Taeon county.

"Even if some fish and maritime products survive, they wouldn't be sellable for quite a while," Kang told reporters, "Whatever measures are taken are

leaked into the western waters.

"The large size of the spill made the containment difficult, but the oil won't expand more given the tides and wind and their speeds," Lee Bong-gil, a pollution management official in the Korea Coast Guard in Seoul, said.

The oil was leaked after a 146,000-ton tanker collided with an 11,800-ton crane-carrying barge from Samsung Heavy Industries. The crane hit the Hong Kong-registered tanker and punctured holes in three of its five containers. In two of the damaged containers, oil leaked into waters mostly on Friday, but leakage from the

third container was only completely stopped early Sunday after repairs were made.

The accident spread fear among farmers of grave damage. The South Chungcheong provincial government said

and dispersants were sprayed to contain the leak.

Of the 10,500 tons of oil that were leaked, only 100 tons have been collected, officials said.

The police were questioning officials of Samsung Heavy Industries, the tanker owner, as well as the tanker captain and crews of the barge, and Fisheries Ministry officials overseeing the control tower. Some witnesses have reported a communication failure between the tanker and the control tower, the police said.

The oil spill, the largest in South Korea's history, is about twice the size of the leak of 5,035 tons in 1995.

The leaked oil formed a round shape as wide as 20 km, while a 10-meter oil slick was created about 17 kilometers from the seashore. Pushed by tides and the wind, the spill has already reached some beaches and is threatening fish farms in Taeon County.

Some coastal areas such as Simnipo and Mohang have been turned black as the crude oil has soaked into the sand.

The disaster is expected to deal a heavy blow to tourist businesses and oyster and abalone farms in the ecologically pristine Taeon County.

All major candidates in the Dec. 19 presidential election have traveled to the disaster area to encourage containment efforts and express sympathy for farmers.

The accident could cause compensation payments of as much as 300 billion won (US\$330 million) from British Lloyd P&I, the insurance company for the barge, and from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds, an intergovernmental organization that provides compensation for damage caused by oil spills.

In the 1995 accident in which a tanker struck a reef, its insurer and the international organization provided payments of 50 billion won.

(Korea Times)



Fishermen raise oil barriers to protect their seaweed farm from oil after a Hong-Kong registered oil tanker accident on the sea in Taeon, about 170km (106 miles) southwest of Seoul.

necessary to prevent the oil from hitting the shoreline."

Some 90 vessels and six airplanes were dispatched to the scene of the accident and 6,650 soldiers and police have been working to contain about 10,500 tons of oil

some 3,570 hectares of fish farms, more than half the entire 5,650 ha in the region, will be damaged.

The spill has already hit some 20 km of the coastline where damage is extensive, officials said. An 11.8 km oil fence was built

The democratic mirage



■ Siddhartha Thapa

It is imperative that Koirala chalks an exit strategy...

Prime Minister Koirala is running against both time and fate in seeking an amicable solution to the problems that have surfaced recently. Hopefully, he will succeed in providing a political outlet by building national consensus. However, there are only four months left to the end of the Nepali calendar year and a lot has to be accomplished if Koirala is indeed serious about holding elections within March-April.

But the main problem with Koirala is that; neither does he have an exit strategy and nor has he envisioned a victory strategy to challenge the ascending left hegemony. The only strategy that Koirala seems to be toeing so far is the strategy of survival – an act to appease ideological opposites to stay in power.

It is imperative that Koirala chalks an exit strategy and, the appointment of Sushil Koirala as the working party president was in fact a bold strategic move by GP Koirala. The unity of NC and the appointment of Sushil Koirala have strengthened the position of Koirala invariably. This is because after the unification of the two Congress and the appointment of Sushil Koirala, a broader perspective has developed within the Nepali Congress vis-à-vis the Maoists and the peace process. Concurrently, Sushil has also reactivated the Congress CWC and this in return has energised and reactivated the rusty Congress brains.

What all of this means is that Congress is finally asserting its rightful hegemony in Nepali politics and in tandem; the growing influence of the NC CWC and the acting president have forced GP Koirala to break his reliance on sycophants within NC who were working closely with the Maoists. Similarly, GP Koirala would help himself if he comes closer to the truth that even without him Nepali Congress and the nation will survive. He has to overcome this myth and if GP thinks he cannot steer the country towards stability, peace and democracy, it is time he hung his boots.

GP Koirala must gracefully resign and

back any second generation Congress because the second generations Congress are articulate, assertive and competent. The most important thing is that the second generation has a common threat and they have the capacity to work in a team and build coalitions – it's about their survival and their future.

On a different level of analysis, it is important that Koirala prepares a victory strategy. If Koirala were serious about holding elections, it would make sense for him to start preparing for the elections that have been speculated for March-April.



Besides developing an electoral manifesto for the Nepali Congress; Koirala needs to look at the bigger picture – growing left hegemony. Therefore, Koirala needs to devise a separate electoral strategy that is political in nature and is centered on containing particularly the Maoists and other radical outfits during the elections.

But first Koirala needs to announce election dates at the earliest. He then needs to shift the political debate on the Maoists court and show the world that it is actually the Maoists who do not want elections. The Congress then needs to explore possibilities of a broad based democratic alliance against the left. Both

RPP and RJP have removed constitutional monarchy from their party stature, so these two parties should be approached to form a democratic alliance.

Similarly, other ethnic fronts should be brought into confidence and made to participate in the broad based democratic alliance. This will prepare ground for political mobilisation to counter left machismo in the streets. This move would also compel the Maoists to respect the views of other parties as their cadres will be outnumbered in the streets and in conjunction this move would force the Maoists to participate in the elections fearing both domestic and international isolation.

The present survival strategy that Koirala is toeing is short sighted and suicidal both for democracy and the Nepali Congress. Under this strategy, there will be no elections and no solution. And what is worse is that the stalemate will continue and the dependency on the armed forces will grow. And at last, GP Koirala will be blamed for all the failures by the left who would want to see Nepali Congress, democracy and GP Koirala all go down together to the rubble of Nepali history.

The clock is ticking incredibly fast and it seems that Koirala has lost track of time. Koirala has an uphill task and we must all give him the benefit of the doubt for one last time. The next four months are his last as the prime minister, and they are crucial times not just to him but also for the survival of democracy in Nepal. However, his success is linked with his ability to come to terms with reality.

But on a larger scale, the future success of the democratic forces is correlated with NC's ability to build a broad based democratic alliance that aims to prepare ground for political mobilisation to counter growing left hegemony. Also equally important is the ability of Koirala to improve the law and order situation to conduct free and fair elections. Time is against Koirala. But if he truly wants to seal his share of immortality in Nepali history, he must act now. ■

Food for thought

The booklet titled, *From Authoritarian Leader Party to Mass Membership Party*, under review is not focused on a particular country or continent.

Written by a prominent German citizen with a strong academic career, it deals with issues around the political parties which need to retain the relevance of democracy worldwide. Professor Meyer discusses the transition of political parties from the ones directed in an authoritarian manner to the ones having base on mass membership. The preference of the author, for the latter variety, is clear as one goes on reading his observations and interpretations spread over 28 pages.

"Political parties are the motors and the most important means of making society democratic, but only if they are democratically organised themselves," is how the author begins his treatise. The second part of this statement carries a lot of food for thought

to those politicians who have led their parties in an arbitrary manner, ignoring the importance of inner-party democracy as well as transparency of its activities and funds used to carry them out.

Professor Meyer alludes to three types of political parties: Authoritarian leader party, dignitary-centred party and mass-membership party. It will be useful for Nepal's leaders of Seven Party Alliance (SPA) to figure out the nature of the party each one of them is heading. The author briefly presents the case of Germany's social democratic party and the cohesive leadership Willy Brandt gave to it for an extended period.

While taking up the case of civil society, Professor Meyer leaves no room to speculate that the civil society can ever take the role of political parties. The civil society is separate, and meant to be a separate movement. The civil society, nevertheless, works side by side with political parties where party members provide the necessary "link". Civil society activities are, says the author, determined by a pledge for voluntary involvement, self-organisation and predominant orientation towards common good.

Political parties would be more effective, contends the author, only when they are made to be participatory entities, having foundation at the grassroots level. An lively civil society movement can make significant contribution to make the parties what they basically expected to be: "Political parties are people's institutions," writes Dev Raj Dahal in the foreword to the publication brought out by the Nepal Office of Germany's Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The booklet that says a lot succinctly is worth a read.

■ Reviewed by Dhruba Hari Adhikary



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Mind potential

Suppression of emotional defilement is not freedom from emotional defilements.

■ Mahayogi Acharya Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

This detour into the altered states of mind and scientific studies into them, including the various levels of meditations, was mainly to show that various phenomena are possible in various specific states of the mind. Thus, just because what are called Riddhi-Siddhis or Pratiharyas in Buddhist language are not available in the beta state or what is more commonly called waking state; it does not mean they cannot be available in other altered states. Many things are state specific and are not available to the ordinary waking state of beta waves. And most of all, it does not make them automatically unscientific as some writers have tried to posit.

It must be reiterated that the Buddhist scripture are replete with such miraculous powers of the Buddha and his immediate disciples – be these scriptures

Mahayana, Theravada or Sarvastivadin. In fact one of the two major disciples called the Agra-sravakas of the Buddha himself was very famous for possessing such miraculous powers.

The life of the Buddha himself is also replete with manifestations of such abilities which are paranormal. And many other Arhats like Saugat, Aniruddha and Mahakashyapa were also endowed with such abilities. The Buddhist scriptures go into great detail into not only describing them but also categorising

them and also explaining how they are obtained.

As I have said, such abilities of the mind are developed through the type of meditation called Samatha in Buddhist terminology. In fact, these are only potentials found in the mind itself which are awakened or developed as the mind becomes more trained and cleaned of emotional defilements. The more the person is free from emotional



self-righteous way by hook or by crook. Such suppression of emotional defilement is not freedom from emotional defilements, and thus even though the person seems to maintain his Shila in front of others, this is not true maintenance and will not contribute to a cool and quiet mind which contributes to Samadhi which awakens the paranormal potentials of the mind.

If anything, such a person's inner state will normally be in a greater turmoil than that of the common man. A good clue to his inner turmoil, according to Gestalt therapy is that such a person is very self righteous and extremely critical of other peoples purity. In short his own impurity or inner turmoil, which he has learned to suppress so well that for all appearances he seems to be someone that is free of emotional defilement, is projected out onto the screen of the world out there.

Thus he sees all others as impure; but in fact he is looking at his own emotional defilements. Needless to say such people will not have such paranormal capacities which are so dependent on the maintenance of a pure Shila. And that is not what is meant by maintaining a pure Shila.

(To be continued)
(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

defilements (Kleshas in Buddhist terminology) the more such potentials manifest.

According to Buddhism even those who have very pure Shila manifest some such capacities. But

this is not really a new thing as Samadhi is deeply related to emotional defilements and that, in turn, is intimately related to Shila. It must be said that here, we are not talking of maintaining the Shila in a

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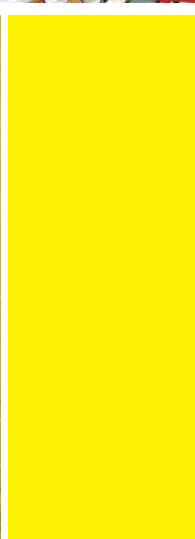
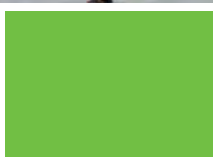
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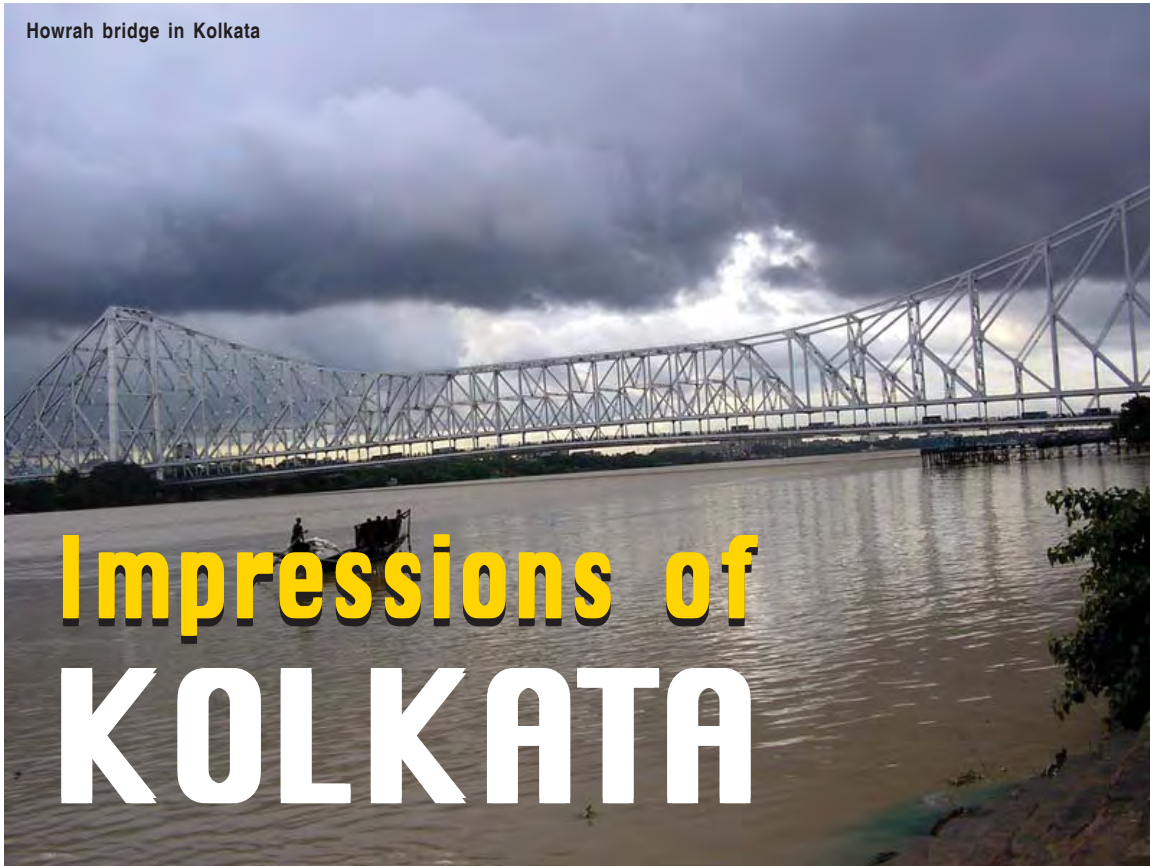
■ Raman Grandon

We arrived at Howrah station in Kolkata after almost 27 hours of train ride from Hyderabad. The train was two hours behind schedule. We tried to match our strides with hundreds of other passengers through the people-packed platform. The first thing every traveler notices while getting out of the station is obviously the Howrah bridge. It lay to our left, barely 100 yards in the air, shining against the pitch-black sky. More than the engineering miracle, it is the height and the bulky steel structure supported by cantilevers that captures your attention. Howrah is the world's busiest bridge with 60,000 vehicles plying on it every day.

But down in the street, it was a lot more chaos than you could imagine with run-down lodges, old and shabby buses, heavy traffic and a deluge of crowd. We tried to get a room in nearby hotels but could find none. After traveling for almost a week by now we knew only too well that asking the help of a cab driver is often fruitful. We caught a cabby who drove us to Kyd Street close to Esplanade, a 15 minutes drive. For just IRS 550, the rooms you get there are very simple with attached bathrooms. The provision of water and electricity here, like in any other metro cities, is more than enough.

Kolkata is famous for its fish cuisine so we wanted to try out some. After going through a list of 20-25 varieties we chose Rui & silver fish, which cost us not more than IRS 12; and a plate of rice and curry cost us IRS 8 and 9 respectively. The food was cheap,

Howrah bridge in Kolkata



clean and tasty. The following day we saw all those buildings that were veiled in the darkness of the previous night. As we passed the street for a morning stroll, I noticed a little placard hung outside a house nearby. It read, 'Here was born novelist Robert Maugham in 1881.' It seemed the building has not undergone any changes since the British era. With high rise buildings and better urban planning, the city that gave India's four noble laureates out of six, no longer seems as shabby and dirty as from the Tagore days.

Like Mumbai, Kolkata is also a

mélange of old taverns and new sky liners telling a very uncomfortable state of transition. I felt sorry for the run-down state of trams that somehow still manage to drag through the withering steel tracks. I also found the underground metro of Kolkata- the oldest in India- rusty but it still carries thousands people on the move in a cheap, fast and environmentally friendly way.

Unlike in other cities, arranging a sightseeing tour in and around Kolkata was pretty time-consuming. So we decided to take the matter in

our hands and hired a taxi for the whole day for IRS. 600. Our first tour of Indian zoo was a complete disappointment as everything inside the zoo seemed in need of immediate repair and where were the animals, anyways? Most of the time you had to look in for quite sometime before you realised there were none. I saw a 15 foot python, for all its immense size, having to curl within a room of barely 5ft by 10 ft. While some cages were overcrowded, others were just empty.

The other two popular places the city are Nicco Park and Science City.

Nicco Park is a completely fun-filled entertainment park for children with attractions like merry-go-around and tons of water sport activities. The next stop was the Science City, a store house of knowledge about science from space shuttle, light years and pre-historic dinosaurs to simple application of laws of physics.

Our next stop was the Indian National Museum at Jawaharlal Nehru Road. It is one of the best museums I have ever visited in India. It takes at least two hours for you to take a complete tour around the museum if you are seriously considering acquainting yourself with one million exhibits on display! It was worth depositing IRS 50 for the use of camera inside the museum on top of the entrance fee of 20 rupees. The 10,000 sq. feet area in the museum houses rare artifacts related to botany, geology, zoology, art, anthropology and archaeology. There are specimens of flora and fauna, 17th - 20th century furniture, utensils, carpets, Egyptian articles, Indian statues of gods and goddesses, precious stones and antiques, geographical excavations, the treasures of Maharajahs and Rajahs, East Asian earthenware, African treasures and so on.

Some of the items that captured my interest were the remains of the first Indian dinosaur excavated from Gujarat, three million year old tree log, the replica throne of Egypt's Pharaoh Tutankhamen and the statues of Avalokiteshwara from Nepal and Tibet. But I wished they could have displayed it all in a much more attractive way. The trip for the day was exhausting but we enjoyed it. ■

देशको तात्कालीन
कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं
के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण
कार्यक्रम

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सगरमाथा

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