



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Ani Choying Dolma performing at the National Academy in the capital on Dec 15 to raise funds for the National Kidney Centre headed by Dr. Rishi Kumar Kafle.

Bhawanee Chha

Double speak

G P Koirala down, but not out

■ nf correspondent

Finally, GP Koirala seems to be able to prolong his rule marred by defaults and poor delivery at least till April based on a power-sharing formula, which will cost billions to the state exchequer. But dual talks on the part of the Maoists have triggered fresh uncertainty regarding his stewardship.

On Dec 15, Koirala heaved a sigh of relief as Maoists agreed to go the polls to fill up the enlarged constituent assembly with 601 seats, that will have 240 seats filled under the first past the post system, another 335 under the proportional representation system leaving the remaining 26 to be nominated by Koirala who will be both the Prime Minister and the officiating head during the interim period.

But barely 18 hours later, Maoist Chief Prachanda said, his party has not given up the demand for 100 per cent PR system of election. Instead, he was engaged in a long and intense informal discussion with his senior party colleagues on Sunday, to find ways to defeat 'foreign forces' out to create problem in Terai and influence the entire political process in Nepal.

Prachanda's somersault comes after his party together with other six constituents of the ruling coalition, agreed to declare Nepal a 'Republic state through the present parliament' which will be enforced by the Constituent Assembly 'to be elected by mid-April'. Everyone was taken by

surprise when Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai agreed to have 335 of the total 601 seats elected under PR system as it fell far short (around 58 per cent) to their demand for a cent per cent PR system. It was only after the Maoist leaders had agreed that the government moved a resolution in parliament seeking to amend the constitution that primarily seeks to fix the new deadline for CA polls. If this fails, Koirala's moral as well as political legitimacy to continue will come under severe scrutiny.

Confused by Prachanda's statements that his party has not given up the demand for 100 per cent PR system, he called some senior party leaders as well as parliamentarians from Madhesh requesting them not desert the party as he was serious about solving Terai problem. On December 16, he met former Minister and party leader, Bijay Gachedar asking him to continue in the party with a veiled promise that he would be accommodated in the government.

Like Prachanda, PM Koirala has also begun suspecting India's role in fuelling the crisis in Terai, and he was more guarded when he met the leaders and parliamentarians from there. Gachedar is believed to have told Koirala point blank that he and his colleagues cannot wait indefinitely as Koirala promised many things and did nothing for Terai in the past. "But the uncertainty caused by Maoist game-plan needs to be sorted out immediately to enable the PM to take necessary decision on Terai as well," a Central committee member of the Congress party said. ■

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Rukmangad Katawal

COAS returns

No to PLA integration 'now'

The first thing that Gen Rukmangad Katawal, Chief of Army staff, did on his return from a week-long visit to Delhi on Sunday, was to say 'no' to Prime Minister GP Koirala's willingness to 'integrate' People's Liberation Army in the Nepal Army.

Highly placed sources in the PM's office told newsfront that Katawal said this cannot happen 'now' without Maoists giving proof of their 'commitment' to democracy, by words and action. Sources also said that in fact Katawal even spoke to the PM a few times from Delhi saying that integration as wanted by the Maoists will not be acceptable to the Nepal Army. "That is not on the cards," Koirala however is believed to have assured Katawal.

The army was agitated after Home Minister KP Sitaula said publicly recently that the process of 'integration' of the combatants in the Nepal Army will begin as soon as the verification of combatants being carried by the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) was over.

During his seven-day visit to Delhi, COAS Katawal was conferred with the honorary title of the General of the Indian Army, in keeping with the tradition that two countries have maintained on a reciprocal basis for long. His visit assumed significance as it took place amidst speculations that the Nepal Army will

have a behind-the-scenes role in future political setup in Nepal as the existing government has failed. The visit also fuelled rumours that it was intended to secure support from India on such eventuality.

A senior official of the Nepal Army said it was only a figment of imagination, and, "Nepal army has never been a political arm. It is committed to protection of the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, democracy and service of the people."

A source in the PMO claimed that Koirala, during his discussion with Prachanda last week had assured the latter; that the combatants will be integrated in Industrial Security force, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and the Nepal Army. Out of 31,000 combatants initially placed in seven cantonments and 21 sub-cantonments, at least 7,000 are already believed to have deserted. Another six to seven thousand are likely to be disqualified on basis of age (below 18) and for being recruited after May 6, 2006, when the peace process began.

KB Mahara, spokesman of the Communist party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) said that the government must treat the issue of integration of the PLA as importantly as it treats the issue of holding election on time. He stopped short of saying that the integration is a pre-condition for holding CA polls.

Not simply a pill

Among the 70,000 HIV infected Nepali people, currently 1250 people are receiving ART...

■ Manish Gautam

HIV intervention efforts in Nepal are evolving. Initially the intervention efforts revolved mostly around HIV prevention activities; but now, there is emerging strong advocacy for HIV/AIDS clinical care and treatment. Among other valid issues on AIDS, access to Anti Retroviral Treatments (ART) is at the core center.

Among the 70,000 HIV infected Nepali people, currently 1250 people are receiving ART for prolonging life. But hundreds of other HIV infected Nepalis still lack access to ART and are desperately waiting to gain access to it.

Even for those on ART, it is not an easy way. ART is not as simple as taking any other drug. One needs to go for a CD4 count test, deal with counselors and medical doctors; before one can be placed on the waiting list for ART. The process is time consuming and unaffordable for the poor and there is no facilitation from the government to make it easily accessible.

ART services are concentrated only in cities and have not reached the neediest rural population. If we consider far western region of Nepal – the huge population migrating to India, face the highest risk of HIV infection. A HIV infected person from Achham needs

to travel to Dhangadi, Mahendranagar or to Nepalgunj where ART is provided. Travel from Achham to these places takes from six to 12 hours of bus travel, and added to it the cost of travelling.

Once enrolled for ART, it is a life long process that makes it appear intimidating to most patients. And there are many other complexities that need to be addressed. For example, HIV infected people get easily tired and so it takes a lot of effort for them to travel a long distance every month to get the drugs. Others drop out as they do not understand the difference between taking ARV and taking medicines for cold or fever. If these issues are not dealt with, it could easily lead drug

resistance.

Among the estimated 4000 Nepali children infected with the virus, 10 percent are in urgent need of the treatment. According to National Centre for AIDS and STD Control, currently only 59 children are on ART. The government has been providing the children with broken down tablets intended for adults; thus creating chances of under and over dosing of the drugs, which will ultimately create resistance to the medicine and side effects. A pediatric AIDS diagnosis and treatment guidelines draft was developed in September 2005. Two years have been passed but pediatric formulation ARV drugs have not yet been introduced to ART centers.

Although in policy, women have equal access to ARV treatment, the social and cultural structure of Nepal has been a major obstacle for the women to access the services. The deep social conditioning and fear prevent women from disclosing their HIV status. Thus they remain in the dark.

To ensure equitable access, the coverage of treatment sites has to be nationwide. In Nepal currently 16 sites are providing ART. There is inaccessibility of diagnostic test of HIV. There are 96 VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing) sites in 40 districts but what about rest of 35 districts? Universal access to ART requires better accessibility to HIV tests and counseling.

The government, international donors, civil society, private, public organisations and local communities need to collaborate in building local capacity to forecast the need, procurement and supply of ART and develop models for the community level provision of ART to increase access to it. All the stakeholders must confront the socio-cultural and economic conditions which pose obstacles to protecting oneself from HIV/AIDS, testing oneself and seeking counselling and treatment if tested positive. ART needs to be well integrated into AIDS related healthcare all over Nepal urgently.



Not to be outdone



Many think comrade Baburam Bhattarai looks too intense that gives him an angry look and gives the impression that he does not care what people think of him. But recently, he gave a message on the contrary by emulating what his leader Prachanda does at times.

At a public meeting in Janakpur on December 12, Dr Bhattarai, the hill-boy from Gorkha, occupied a seat in the dais, dressed in Dhoti and Kurta. He apparently wanted to be seen as a 'Madheshi' in Madhesh, signaling that he was gradually learning the art of appeasing the locals at no cost, like Indira Gandhi was known for doing in India, donning locally traditional attire wherever she went.

Only a few months ago, Prachanda's photograph in the Gurung attire had been circulated in the party and some of it was used by the media as well.



Rebuked

Koirala wants unconditional extension of his rule

Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) is known for his inconsistency and self-contradictory statements quite often. This time around, he tried to be firm but was not persuasive enough when he said that GP Koirala should not continue as the Prime Minister beyond April if election does not take place.

Koirala not only disregard Nepal's opinion but also shouted back at him saying, "So you will begin a movement to disrupt election so that I have to resign?" In fact, Nepal got no backing from his own party colleague, Bharat Mohan Adhikary, when he suggested that Koirala must commit in writing before the seven party leaders expressing his commitment to quit, if elections are not held by the new deadline. All through, Adhikary maintained a silence.

Koirala's point blank refusal to quit the post in the event of no election

injects enough uncertainty about the CA poll taking place within the new deadline. About 200-km south west in Chitwan, Nepal also vented out his anger against Maoist chief Prachanda, saying, "Maoists cannot go to the polls as long as they have their combatants," he said at a public meeting organised by the UML "A political party cannot have an armed wing, nor can it go to the polls so long as its combatants are not settled."

Speaking at a party function in Bharatpur on December 15, Nepal was critical of the Maoists for having continued with its politics of terror, and advised Prachanda that he must stop that immediately. Despite Nepal's public criticism of the Maoists, there are indications that he is still exploring some kind of working understanding with the Maoists as their support is necessary for his succeeding Koirala in the event of his exit.

Although Koirala made it very clear to

Nepal at his Baluwatar residence that he would not give in writing committing his resignation in the event of his failure to hold elections in mid-April, Koirala assured the leaders of the seven parties that he would not contest the polls to CA, as his last 'desire' was to conduct it in his life time, and obviously under his own leadership.

"If I give that in writing, all that your party needs to do is launch a movement or strike and ensure that election is disrupted," Koirala retorted even though the lone Nepal kept insisting, "You cannot lead the government without accepting accountability."

In fact, both the PM and his influential nephew Shekhar Koirala have time and again taken the stance that the responsibility for not conducting elections twice on schedule should be shared by all the coalition partners, and that the PM alone cannot be held accountable.

Newsbrief

Learning democracy

Although it is not yet certain whether the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) is going to embrace democracy in Nepal, it has been able to establish some cordial ties with the Maoist parties operating abroad under the democratic system that has a monarchy as the head of the state.

Former Minister and Maoist leader, Hishila Yami is currently in Norway, at the invitation of the Maoist Party of Norway, which has a single member presence in parliament apart from visible presence in some local government that includes occupying Mayor's post in some.

Scandinavian countries are involved in encouraging Maoists to join the democratic mainstream. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai had visited Norway in early July where he had met high level officials including the ministers as well the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Honoured



For Dr Sanduk Ruit, it has been a season of 'honours' after years of struggle, perseverance and outstanding contributions to the field of medical science. Ruit, Director of Tilganga Eye Hospital and Centre, was conferred the Honorary Order of Australia - the highest civilian Australian honour to be given to any foreign national, on December 14.

Australian Ambassador to Nepal, Graeme Lade, handed over the award at a special

function organised at the Australian embassy in the capital.

Dr Ruit and his Tilganga team have provided medical help restoring eye sight to millions in many countries of the world. He is also the recipient of the Magassassay award for the year 2005. The Australian honour is in recognition for the Tilganga team's success in providing simple, less expensive and effective eye treatment that has given vision back to millions around the world.

Grounded

That Nepal Airlines aircraft is grounded should not be making news anymore, but it still matters to those who booked its flight. There will be no external flight of the airlines for two weeks beginning December 18. The suspension of the service during the peak season is estimated to cost more than half a million rupees every day.

The suspension comes amidst fears, based on official assessment that it might go bankrupt if it is allowed to continue under the government management. One of the two aircrafts is lying without engine in Hong Kong while another engine has been sent to Brunei for C-check. "All this might take at least a couple of weeks and the service till then would be suspended," a Nepal Airlines source told newsfront. Similarly, in the domestic sector, only three out of seven aircraft are in operation.



Loss of face

International community has lots of doubts on the new poll date

■ nf correspondent

Prime Minister GP Koirala may have pulled through the crisis this time around, but his ability to hold election in the new deadline is under the scanner of the international community. "We will support the initiative for the polls, but we will have more questions about its success rather than total faith in the government's ability," a western diplomat told newsfront - an impression that many others from the diplomatic community share in private. The level of frustration in India is said to be much deeper over the repeated postponement of election with the entire political system's legitimacy under question.

In fact, the repeated postponement of the polls has also come as an embarrassment for some countries, mainly the Scandinavian ones, as they have pumped in enough money for the election process. Denmark, for instance, has expressed its unhappi-



ness with the government and warned that it may have to retrieve the assistance it gave for election purposes if elections are postponed once again. A Shital Niwas source told newsfront quoting Danish embassy officials as having conveyed to the government, "What Nepal has been given is Danish tax payers' money and that it cannot be spent for purposes other than what it is meant for."

Similarly, the government of Norway is assisting the management of cantonment and promised support

in the process of integration of the combatants in the security agencies, mainly the Nepal army. It is not only the issue of financial assistance for timely conduct of polls, but many governments have also faced embarrassment for spending huge amount of money in funding observers for a pre-assessment of the November 22 polls. "All this has left bad taste," a representative of the donor community said.

Sources say that the former United States President Jimmy Carter's visit in November despite the election having been put off, took place largely because many donor agencies had already funded Carter Center's visit here, and his not coming here would have meant having to return that money.

This, many think, will mean some kind of slackness on the arrival of observers, at least for the April election, and they would rather wait for 'objective' assessment of the diplomatic community from Nepal.

South watch

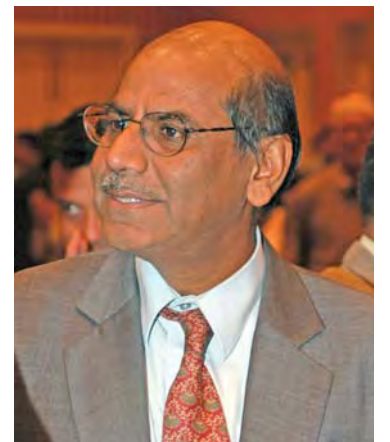
Shyam Sharan, India's former Foreign Secretary, and now special advisor to Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh, on Nepal affairs, is all set to visit Kathmandu, which will bring Delhi's concerns to the highest level here.

Sharan was here in the second week of October, just a week after the government had postponed the polls for constituent assembly slated for November 22. The visit this week is likely to coincide with the government setting a new time frame, mid April, for the CA polls.

Sharan who was ambassador here during the Royal takeover in 2005 is credited with bringing seven pro-

democracy parties and the Maoists together under the 12-point agreement in Delhi. According to South watchers, Sharan comes here to give Delhi's piece of mind, which is that Koirala's legitimacy will be over if he misses the new deadline. Unity among the seven parties and resolution of Terai issues politically and justly are some of the suggestions he is expected to make as necessary conditions for holding election.

Sharan's visit comes at a time when leaders from Koirala to Madhav Nepal and Prachanda have said in one way or the other, that the unrest



in Terai is somehow being fuelled from across the border. In the meantime, India's ambassador to Kathmandu, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, who has been posted as High Commissioner to London, is likely to leave Nepal around the second half of January.



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Point to Ponder

Most people would die sooner than think; in fact, they do.
 - Bertrand Russel

Brazen politics

A regime without mass support, purely care-taker and transitional in nature is not expected to take major decisions that would have far reaching consequences. But over a period of time, Prime Minister GP Koirala has not only crowned himself as the head of the state, but also as the 'legitimate dictator' without any role and involvement of the people. He derives more and more personal advantage and power as the nation moves towards an irreversible trap. For him, his inefficiency is an added bonus and opportunity to grab power.

Unfortunately, the political parties which are partners in the regime, have also proved to be partners in crime against democracy, as they have always gone a step forward in fulfilling Koirala's ambition. As Terai burns, and the situation gets worse there with four senior leaders deserting the national parties they belong to, all that Koirala showed interest in was to grab more power.

He knows that he cannot hold election without addressing the issues of Terai as well as that of the Dalits, Tharus, Muslims and every other ethnic and marginalised group within a wider comprehensive package of Nepali nationalism. But he has shown least interest in it. It could only be called political and mental bankruptcy of his alliance partners who have chosen Koirala's continuation at the cost of democracy and country's sovereignty.

Mahanth Thakur, the senior minister who resigned from the cabinet as well as the Nepali Congress, was humiliated by the ilk of KP Sitaula and Ram Chandra Poudel when he wanted to use his influence in solving the Terai issue earlier. It was a deliberate design on Koirala's part to sideline Thakur. All that Koirala has told some leaders in private was that India was playing the game in Terai; and his refusal to make Nepal a Bhutan as per India's wish is responsible for the southern neighbour's rage against him. But Koirala is known to make all compromises for the chair and so it is now difficult to believe him.

Koirala knows election to the constituent assembly cannot take place as long as the law and order remains in the present state, and Terai continues to be in flames. He has deliberately not even bothered to form the high level commission for restructuring the state. He is a dictator, so he would not want an institutional mechanism and process to dilute his power. He simply wants to continue in power without any accountability. He is already above constitution.

Thakur's quitting the party is Koirala's own doing. He refused to treat Terai with utmost sensitivity and concern when violence erupted there. But all this has made him more powerful. He is a party chief, prime minister and also a 'king' in waiting, through brazen unconstitutional manipulation. He seems to have one single agenda of destroying every value that holds this nation together. It will be the same, if the alliance partners - especially UML and the Maoists, as well as those in the Congress, who pride themselves as being called 'nationalist and democrats' allow Koirala's unashamed ambition to push this country to the brink of disintegration.



Letters

Culture bites

I truly agree with Pasang's story of Ang Maya in the last issue of newsfront, where the bitter reality of the Sherpa culture, especially in the Khumbu area is exposed. Culture is our identity and we should conserve it without a doubt. But in present days it has become a means of projecting ones prosperity and competing with each other how much wealth they can trash. This is more common in wealthy families but however, the impact it creates can be seen in all walks of life.

This extravagant culture has become a social compulsion making the poor people poorer. Culture should be preserved for a right reason but not as a burden and ostentation. I don't mean the whole package is useless but we as humans should make use of our conscience to sort out what should be kept and what should be dropped for our own good.

■ Ngima
 England

Special qualities

I appreciate newsfront publishing Pramesh Pradhan's articles on heritage sites in Kathmandu that are highly informative. I liked his piece on Changu Narayan the most. Although I had visited the temple earlier I did not really know what to look for. I do now, thanks to his article, which I have printed out from the website. Now, that I'm in Nepal, I will go there one day and look at all the details that he has mentioned in the article.

Newsfront in my opinion is a quality weekly that gives an all



round balanced perspective not only in current affairs but also in other areas that are equally important. I look forward to the in depth interviews that feature diverse personalities from different walks of life. In my opinion I have yet to come across another newspaper that so acknowledges the voices of people other than the boring politicians and celebrities. Special indeed are the spiritual column by Sridhar Rinpoche and the spiritual corner that gives us readers so much to think about. Thank you.

■ E. Wetzel
 Kathmandu

Hidden potential

The story of Ang Maya highlights how the potentials of a person gets hidden and emerges when the obstructing elements are removed. Thank you for sharing it with us.

■ Dhruva
 Kathmandu

Dark side

Pasang's article based on the true story of Ang Maya revealed the unspoken dark aspects of our culture. It was great.

■ Kaji Kisan
 Kathmandu

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

newsfront@bhrikuti.com

Spiritual Corner

Interdependent world

His Holiness, Dalai Lama often says, "I am just a simple Buddhist monk - no more, nor less."

He follows the life of Buddhist monk. Living in a small cottage in Dharamsala, he rises at 4 AM to meditate; then pursues an ongoing schedule of administrative meetings, private audiences and religious teachings and ceremonies. He concludes each day with further prayer before retiring. Explaining his greatest sources of inspiration, he often cites a favorite verse, found in the writings of the renowned eighth century Buddhist saint, Shantideva:

For as long as space endures

And for as long as living beings remain,
 Until then may I too abide
 To dispel the misery of the world.

Dalai Lama's sayings:

Happiness
 Happiness can be achieved through training the mind. The fact that there is always a positive side to life is the one thing that gives me a lot of happiness.

Beliefs and values
 The need of the day is a warm heart and some sense



of humanity. My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness. Unlike science, the religious tradition teaches the concept of forgiveness, tolerance and compassion.

Scientists cannot help you change your emotion, only religion can.

Relationships

The need for simple human-to-human relationships is becoming increasingly urgent ... Today the world is smaller and more interdependent. One nation's problems can no longer be solved by itself completely. Thus, without a

sense of universal responsibility, our very survival becomes threatened. Basically, universal responsibility is feeling for other people's suffering just as we feel our own. It is the realisation that even our enemy is entirely motivated by the quest for happiness. We must recognise that all beings want the same thing that we want. This is the way to achieve a true understanding, unfettered by artificial consideration.

Knowledge, learning

I learn as much from a turtle as from a religious text. You might consider things like old age and death as negative, unwanted and simply try to forget about them. But eventually those things will come anyway.

Once again, this parliament which is not an elected one has pledged something to the nation which will prove to be a lie. A Prime Minister, who has defaulted at least twice before the nation in the past 18 months by not holding Constituent Assembly (CA) election on time, has been given a fresh lease of life 'legitimately' at least till mid April. But no one including those who are promising election in about 100 days from now actually believe that they are serious about it. The only thing the leaders of the seven parties have proved once again is that, all that they want is sharing of power among them by keeping the citizens of this country away from the entire political process.

The country with a population of about 26 million will have a CA with 601 members because the seven parties have said so. There was no larger debate and discussion before coming to the magic number which is 56 more than that of India's Lok Sabha representing around one billion people, and 166 more than the House of Representatives of the United States. The House of Commons in the United Kingdom has only 529 members.

As if having to look after the existing 330 plus members of the house is not enough, one of the poorest countries of the world and its people will be facing the burden of feeding a total number of 601. And all this is being done by an interim parliament whose right to exist has come under question increasingly. Mahanth Thakur and Upendra Yadav, to name few, have already put on record their demand that this house be dissolved. After all, what has this parliament done except rubber

Chasing a mirage

Election by April is only a fresh lie told to the nation.

stamping the seven political Zamindars who decide parliament's agenda at PM Koirala's house?

Long before Koirala set a new deadline for CA polls, there were very clear indicators that Maoists want an election which guarantees their victory. Baburam Bhattarai, the most powerful and apparently the deciding

the law and the constitution. He is not only the president of the Nepali Congress, but also the PM and the officiating head of the state having the authority to solely nominate the Chief Justice as well as the judges of the Supreme Court.

Even judges in the Supreme Court feel irritated over the way Koirala



■ Yubaraj Ghimire

Long before Koirala set a new deadline for CA polls, there were very clear indicators that Maoists want an election which guarantees their victory.

voice in the party said recently that there was no point having an election if his party's victory was in doubt. GP Koirala wants election only if he has the Home, Finance and Defense portfolio for his party in the cabinet, and if he continues to remain above

appointed Kedar Prasad Giri as the Chief Justice without referring the matter back to the constitutional council once the house committee refused to confirm his name through consensus as required under the constitution. This raises a question

mark how an obliged apex court will dare give judgment against the government on crucial matters. At personal level, it has damaged the image of the Chief Justice undoubtedly.

And sadly, the UN bodies and international community who came out openly and rightly, in favour of an independent Human Rights Commission as well as inclusive politics have ignored the issue of judicial independence all together. An executive controlled judiciary and a government not accountable to the parliament with PM above the constitution are under no circumstances allowing Nepal's transition to democracy. This has become doubly certain with no sign of election taking place yet again under the prevailing law and order situation.

People's role or stake in democracy is likely to be diminished to the extent that they will have no ownership on any major decisions on behalf of the state. Nepal's shift to secularism, and seven party imposed agenda that the future CA 'shall' implement what the present un-elected parliament has to say on 'republican,' are already the indicators of institutionalised authoritarianism - all in the name of democracy. All that these parties can do legitimately is deciding within the parties that they would go republican, and seek people's endorsement of the manifesto when the country goes to the poll for CA. Leaving people and future legislature with a fait accompli is dictatorship.

As Terai is in an assertive mood, it will inspire many more marginalised groups within Terai like Thaur and Muslims, just to name a few, for their rightful share in future power

structure; and similar demands would be heard from the hills, mid-hills and Himalayas in organised or unorganised ways. This will not only undo Nepal's unification, but will also trigger the process of dismemberment of the nation into caste and ethnic groups. Koirala and Prachanda, especially, have not been able to see possible declarations of 'republican provinces' on caste and ethnic lines immediately, which will also be followed by their challenging the 'centre's hegemony'. In fact, he has been able to create new problems to deal with and the election in mid-April will in fact be a non-issue.

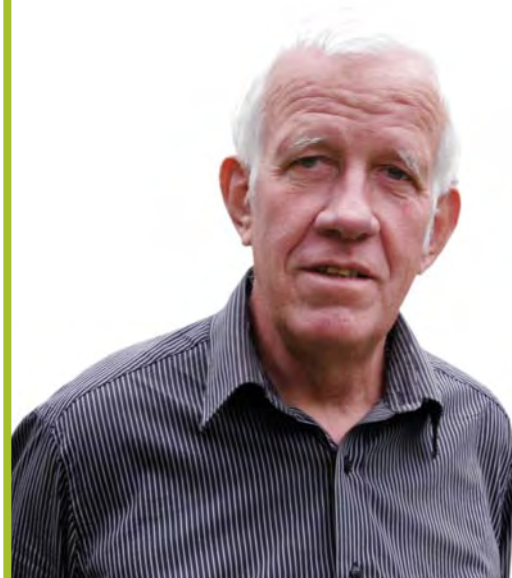
In fact, there is already visible contempt lining collective cynicism of the people for Koirala, Nepal and Prachanda. But once people realise that their right to vote and right to take decisions are being totally undermined by these leaders, they will rise to dislodge the present government, and the means may not always be legitimate. If and when it happens, the person who will have to bow out of office as a total failure and as an example of dishonesty will be the all powerful GP Koirala and the government he leads.

Since the Maoists can assess this emerging scenario, they are trying to find excuses not to join the government in a hurry. They want to cash in on the failure of the Koirala government and be seen as its alternative. But given their anti-people stance and refusal to honour the rule of law and democratic norms, it is still hard to believe that they will inspire people's faith in them. That is why they became a party to setting a new deadline for election knowing fully well that it is not going to take place. ■

Political leaders from Terai community announcing the formation of new party



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artisans by paying what
they deserve.



IN LOVE WITH RICHES



Niels Gutschow, 66, an architect and a committed conservator, loves to do what he does, and does only what he loves to do. He described his connection to Nepal and his views on Nepali heritage without mincing his words to **Sushma Amatya** recently, at his residence in outskirts of Bhaktapur. His typical Newari house that has been renovated; stands at an elevated spot, a short walk through a narrow path through the fields, and the house has no boundaries around it.

What attracted you to Nepal?

I came to Nepal first in July 1962 on my way to Burma and Japan, where I learned carpentry. Returning home I studied architecture in Darmstadt and returned to Nepal in September 1970. Then I saw the ruins of the Pujari Math in Bhaktapur, for which the German Government presented a gift of 100,000 Deutschmark on the occasion of the marriage of the Crown Prince Birendra. I worked on the site in 1971 with my friends from Darmstadt - the first bilateral conservation project in Nepal.

Then I completed my PhD in 1973 on Japanese cities and returned to Nepal and from 1974, I received a scholarship to work in Nepal on issues of "urban space and ritual" because we young architects were extremely fascinated by the complexity of urban space in Nepal. We saw, what we in Europe had lost. It was a kind of romanticist approach out of which serious research grew.

At that time, the only way to travel to Bhaktapur was a bus that ferried passengers three times a day. The environment here then, for us youngsters was experiencing our own history. We were beginning to fight against traffic back home and here there was none. We felt like coming home to the past really. It was like that for our generation in our profession at least.

Tourists who come here always see the dirt first and then they want to return home. I don't see dirt first because I have other things to see. 30 years ago the streets of Bhaktapur were full of shit but it did not bother me because I saw other many other beautiful things.

What was your work in Kathmandu valley like?

In 1972 our Darmstadt group of architects invented the Bhaktapur Development

Project (1974-86) and was successful in persuading the Ministry of Cooperation to establish a project, but we youngsters did not get the job. Anyhow, I worked extensively in Bhaktapur in 1974-76 before I joined a Municipal Conservation Office in Germany to gather more experience in practice.

I returned to Nepal in 1980 under a new programme of the German Research Foundation with subsequent architectural survey in Gorkha and Nuwakot, as well as Buddhist architecture ("The Nepalese Caitya", published 1997). In the nineties I conducted architectural surveys in Mustang (Kagbeni, Te etc.) and even Mugu.

Besides research I faced actual conservation practice with the reconstruction of the Cyasilin Mandap in Bhaktapur (together with Goetz Hagmueller), again a 'present,' brought by Chancellor Helmut Kohl on the occasion of his visit in 1987. At the same time I made the Swayambhu Conservation Master plan (1990) with Goetz Hagmueller, in cooperation with Ramesh Jung Thapa and Shaphalya Amatya, two outstanding contributors in the field of conservation in Nepal.

In the early nineties we (with Goetz Hagmueller and Erich Theophile) invented the Patan Conservation and Development project. In 2000 I guided the conservation of Chusyabaha in Kathmandu and in 2003 the conservation of Itumbaha in Kathmandu. For 2008 we are expecting the German Foreign Ministry to support the conservation of the Bhandarkhal tank behind Sundari Chowk in Patan.

Where do you live mostly?

I live in both worlds, in Germany (around eight months a year) and in Nepal (four to five months a year) on a tourist visa! There is no other chance for those who love this country, strangely enough; we even have to pay our entry fee in Bhaktapur although we belong to that place which I call home.

Living in two worlds really sensitises one towards human, social and political problems. And my fascination with urban life in Bhaktapur never ceases!

Are you happy with what you have achieved?

I am extremely happy with what I achieved, having published almost a dozen books on Nepal. A really

Living in two worlds really sensitises one towards human, social and political problems. And my fascination with urban life in Bhaktapur never ceases!



S OF NEPAL

monumental one is in the making, trying to cover "The Architecture of Nepal" on 800 pages. I work for myself. I do something because I want to do it, and feel I have to do it. This working attitude that is not so common in Nepal. If my work is useful for others, it's good, if not, it's okay too. What we are doing here now, nobody else is doing; it is serious work in history of architecture of Newars. Over the past 36 years, I've collected such a lot of documents; I have to put it together.

What is your take on conservation in the valley?

The situation of architectural heritage conservation is bad, but whom to blame in a country which has other problems. I insist on remembering that in Germany we had similar problems, with conservation gaining popularity only in 1974 in the context of the European Heritage Year. Reconstruction after the war over, the upper middle class suddenly started to buy houses in historic centers, running away from the boring suburbs, with squares being pedestrianised and cars banned. Eventually that will happen in Nepal. Although there is no future

without the past, every generation has to find out what it means.

Nepal faced considerable problems with the World Heritage Sites, which were in fact inscribed in 1979 after having been identified by a travelling expert from the USA. UNESCO desperately needed signatures! We should not forget, Nepal inherited the British legacy in conservation. Till today the department is named Department of Archaeology, although the Newar heritage has nothing to do with archaeology.

Even the idea of architectural conservation is a western import Nepal has problems to cope with. Where traditional support fails - the outcome of the land reform, the death of the Guthis; the state has to take over but we have to admit that is a long and difficult process. On 23rd August 2007 for example, the state took over the palaces although we never heard that a king did anything for the Patan palace since generations. But what does it mean, after all, that a state that claims to be secular "owns" the palaces with architectural, cultural values?

What are the challenges of working here and how do you overcome it?

The work I'm currently involved in, producing a book, goes on without any problems but when it comes to conservation of architectural heritage, there are lots of problems since nobody in the ministry wants it. It is an old attitude in the ministry - you sit tight doing nothing, you are safe and if you do something it is not right. It is a general sickness in government offices.

You need time to overcome such trouble and quarreling, which is a habit here. We have learned to wait for six months and start again. But it does get so tedious! I no longer am involved in conservation now since ten years. The ministry does not have any money. We bring in the funds trying to help and the money goes through Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust where any donors are invited to contribute.

Actually, people do not learn from mistakes. All that is happening is a process one has to go through. You degenerate and transform. There is always a kind of apocalyptic thinking prevailing but you don't die really. Nepal is in a painful situation now but how can you tell your politicians to be serious? I have hope for the next generation but where are they?

It is a social process really, although difficult to justify. First you have to drive a motorbike, a car, then you get bored and then you realise there is something else.

You work with the cream craftsmen here. How can their numbers be increased?

The richness of Nepal is the craftspeople, the artisans who are so good. They don't need computers. I enjoy working with them. I am nothing actually, they do everything. In Germany there is nobody who can do this kind of work. Today, the youngsters there do not even know how to sharpen a pencil; they all work on computer programmes. May be later, down a decade, the skill will diversity and the interest in working with hand will be regenerated.

Paying is promoting. Encourage artisans by paying what they deserve. There are many upper middle class in Kathmandu who either do not pay the artisans at all or do not pay enough. They treat artisans like untouchables. A Chitrakar is a poor little nothing for them. Appreciate these people and pay. In India, a crafts person is treated with respect but not here.

About stolen artifacts?

Much has been talked about stolen artifacts but we should remember this is done all over the world. In Germany, a lot more have been stolen from the churches. How to stop theft is a difficult issue. It's disease all over the world. Keeping a record of photographs is good. Once it is photographed, and if the artifact appears in any magazine, you can claim it. Claiming is also hard work. There are two large pictures in a collection in New York and everybody knows it belongs to Itumbaha in Kathmandu but how to mobilise the foreign ministry, is a lot of work. But it has to be done.

On preserving our heritage?

If only the department of archaeology would really appreciate the heritage, it would be a lot. But corruption, sharing money is a huge problem, the root of which is material poverty. The government servants earn so little, how can you expect somebody to survive with that? This interim government is worse than any other government before. We have hundreds of thousands of dollars waiting in pipeline but just because a document has not been signed by the authorities, it is stuck!

What irritates you the most here?

Ugly signboards that warn people of white complexion that certain courtyards are "for Hindus only." Who is actually a Hindu? Some people look like Hindu, others not. Moreover, all conventions of UNESCO tell us that the heritage of mankind belong to all! In Nepal these "all" are divided.

People who look like Hindus own obviously more and those who review the heritage in the name of UNESCO have never realised that such properties can never be subsumed under a World Heritage Site. This has nothing to do with religious sentiments, because banning people who do not "look like" Hindus is again a legacy from British India, mirroring the practice at the Vishveshvara temple in Benares.

The Ranas had tried hard to make the life of the British Resident in Nepal difficult. The Rana Legacy hovers over Nepal and while the country struggles for democracy it is all about power; and not a single issue of this all-pervading veil, reminding us of the Rana autocracy, is addressed.

The world heritage sites belong to you and me and we both should have the pleasure to see it. Just because I'm a white does not automatically make me a Christian. What does it mean to be a Hindu, or Christian or whatever? We are only human beings!

Final thought?

I come here with my experiences from my world and I go back with experiences from here. I do not belong to the generation who comes here to tell others what is good or bad. People like me are not helpers. Helpers are actually selfish. I'm not a missionary. I just do what I can and what I'm passionate about. ■

The world heritage sites belong to you and me and we both should have the pleasure to see it. Just because I'm a white does not automatically make me a Christian.



Our dignity and humanity

Any opinion which deviates from the oligarchic governments' is politically denigrated as regressive, anti-democratic and worse.

■ **Roop Joshi**

December 10, Human Rights Day, is celebrated annually across the world to honor the UN General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Human Rights Day 2007 marks the start of a year-long commemoration of the 60th anniversary of UDHR. The theme for 2008, dignity and justice for all of us, reinforces the commitment of UDHR to universal dignity and justice. UDHR, for the very first time in the history of mankind, codified a common standard of human rights for all peoples and all nations – a true milestone in the progress of civilisation.

Unfortunately, the term "human rights" has been bandied about by all and sundry so much that it has begun to lose its meaning. A concept meant to safeguard the dignity and worth of every individual has been used haphazardly by politicians and pressure groups. Even the industrialised countries use it regularly to pick on the developing world. It is worthwhile here to recall the words of Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the occasion of Human Rights Day in 2006:

"Today, poverty prevails as the

gravest human rights challenge in the world. Combating poverty, deprivation and exclusion is not a matter of charity, and it does not depend on how rich a country is. By tackling poverty as a matter of human rights obligation, the world will have a better chance of abolishing this scourge in our lifetime...poverty eradication is an achievable goal."

These are not empty words of a UN bureaucrat. They embody the essence of the most pressing human rights need of today. Indeed, fighting poverty is not charity. At the social and humanitarian level, it is helping the disadvantaged. At the economic level, it is the most prudent action to preserve and expand wealth. At the political level, if we keep on amassing wealth ignoring the poverty surrounding us, we should not be surprised when the 'have-nots' rebel against the 'haves'.

A recent survey cited Nepal, along with China, as having the widest gap between the rich and the poor in Asia. China's galloping economic growth accounts for this; Nepal has no such excuse. For at least the last three years, poverty alleviation and development in general has taken an unfortunate back seat to politics in Nepal. Moreover, even excluding the issue of poverty, our brand of politics has paid scant attention to human rights.

It is remarkable to note that the National Human Rights Commission has received no less than 186 complaints of human rights violations since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. Gaur, Kapilvastu, Birendra Sah are only some of the examples that make headlines; day in day out, the human rights of the ordinary Nepali is abused and there is nowhere to turn to for justice.

Let us examine the relevant articles among the 30 Articles of UDHR as they apply to so-called "New Nepal". We are supposed to be entitled to our rights without distinction of political opinion (Article

It is remarkable to note that the National Human Rights Commission has received no less than 186 complaints of human rights violations since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

2). Yet we are castigated for any opinion divergent to that held by the Seven Party oligarchy. We are supposed to have the right to life, liberty and security (Article 3). Security is one commodity that none of us, except those with unauthorised weapons, have.

We are all to be equal before the law (Article 7). What law, I ask! The police have been cowered by lack of support and direction from the Home Ministry. The army is locked away in their barracks. So that leaves the streets to gangs of unruly mobs. We are entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal against any criminal charges (Article 10). Yet so many turn to non-governmental "tribunals" having lost all faith in the government judiciary system. We are to be safe from arbitrary interference in our privacy, family and home (Article 12). Tell that to the criminals and politically motivated mobs that attack private homes.

We are to be safe from being deprived of our property arbitrarily (Article 17). The numerous persons displaced during the past 10 years who are yet to return to their homes bear testimony to failure on this count. We should be able to express our opinions freely (Article 19). Yet any opinion which deviates from the oligarchic governments' is

politically denigrated as regressive, anti-democratic and worse. Finally, we are to be safe from being compelled to belong to any association (Article 20). Perhaps the folks deserting the cantonments have heard of this one.

UDHR remains, in Nepal like in many other countries, an archaic peace of writing concocted by diplomats at UN Headquarters while sipping cocktails and shedding crocodile tears for the woes of the world. But that is not the way it has to be, certainly not the way it should be. It is unfashionable these days to harp on the right of every individual to basic dignity. You take away a person's dignity, and you take away that person's humanity. The very first article of UDHR states "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

At the risk of sounding overly idealistic and even quixotic, this humble piece is an appeal. An appeal to reason, to compassion – before it is too late for all of us. Martin Luther King once said "Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere." So let us consider seriously the Human Rights theme for this coming year and breathe life into the words through action. ■



■ **Siddhartha Thapa**

Savvy streets in Tokyo are hoarded with Oxygen bars; this is where the concept of the Oxygen bar first originated in the world. The high intake of oxygen enhances your stamina and in tandem reenergises your body and refreshes your mind.

Today, expensive bars and even night clubs around the world provide facilities of an oxygen parlor. This dramatically has enhanced the party goers' ability to dance all night long. Similarly in Nepal, while the country blatantly seems to be falling apart, the prime minister on the other hand is very optimistic – he even told a foreign dignitary that he would hold elections on the eve of the deferral of elections. Perhaps, the PM is high on oxygen and has lost his grip on reality.

Over the last one month, at least 300 civil servants resigned en masse in the Terai. The Maoists have already come up with a new set of demands as a prerequisite for their participation in the polls.

The country is plummeting towards anarchy and this claim can be validated by the apparent lawlessness throughout Nepal; and the very democrats who talked highly about democracy are falling in the Maoists' trap once again. And Girija is of course oblivious to all of this.

The Terai is burning and the problem has morphed significantly

these ethnic groups, the Maoists have put on a lot of pressure on the government not to talk with the agitating Terai groups. This is primarily because the Maoists have lost their base in Terai and are in no state of mind to allow other groups to prevail there.

Perhaps it is naiveté; but even now the political pundits and the

High on OXYGEN

If the country is declared a republic without the mandate of the people, the decision can be reverted at any time in the future.

from what it was in the summer. The inability on the part of the government to exhibit political authority has eroded its own capability to leverage any influence in the Terai. In the absence of government authority, radical ethnic groups have filled in the vacuum. While it would make sense for the government to directly negotiate with

civil society leaders boast of taming the Maoists. Ironically, the reality is the exact opposite. The biggest problem in Nepali politics is the inability of the political class to understand the complexities of a communist insurgency and the dogmatic ideology it stands for. Even if the parties yield to two of

the Maoists' key demands, it is only foreseeable that the Maoists will put forward a new set of demands as a prerequisite to their participation in the polls.

Just like Sher Bahadur Deuba chose to ignore the 40 point demands put forward by the Maoists in 1996, Girija and his aides have failed to realise that the Maoists have 20 other demands that have to be met by the other political parties. Ignoring the 40 point demands by Deuba, resulted in a decade long war. This time around, the inability of Girija to comprehend the nefarious scheme of the Maoists to sabotage the political parties in their 22 point demands is a ploy to ultimately overwhelm the political parties and storm to absolute power.

Perhaps Girija's outburst in the cabinet and ordering the home minister to prepare a security plan within 24 hours might have amused many in the cabinet. No sane man would want a government to chart a security plan in 24 hours. But the hours passed and there is no concrete security plan in sight. His priority, every one knows, lies in chalking conspiracies to defame perceived political opponents. And corruption in the police has skyrocketed under him.

Together with that, he is busy setting or dictating country's political agenda that includes declaring

country Republic. Koirala has indeed gone too far in trusting and shielding Sitaula and in the process; he has birthed a Rasputin in Sitaula.

If the country is declared a republic without the mandate of the people, the decision can be reverted at any time in the future. A lasting solution can only be achieved when the people of Nepal vote to decide on whether or not they want a republic in the country. But if the country is declared a republic abruptly without going to the people, the move contradicts democratic norms and values.

Equally disturbing and embarrassing was when Dr Shekar Koirala, the prime minister's nephew declared that "a referendum would give the king the benefit". This cowardly statement only signifies that the political parties are seeking ways to end the monarchy by either refusing the people to vote or by initiating electoral mechanisms that are designed specifically to guarantee the desired results. Who knows what Girija has under his sleeves, but he sure does not seem to have a plan. He has failed repeatedly to live up to his assurances and his time is certainly running out. ■

After an agonizing 42 days, President Pervez Musharraf has finally revoked the state of emergency and repealed the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), restoring the country's constitution, thus bringing Pakistan back on the rails of some form of rule by the book as against the embarrassing and internationally unacceptable rule by one man. But what can initially be said about the highly complicated legal and constitutional orders issued to revert to the pre-Nov 3 position is that the book by which the country would now be governed is no longer the same.

It has been amended, for some still a highly controversial and debatable issue, to fully protect and indemnify all acts, decisions and orders issued during that 42-day extra-constitutional period. The order to revoke the emergency and repeal the PCO clearly states it shall not invalidate, nullify or render ineffective any order passed or action taken during the emergency and all such acts shall be deemed to have been validly and legally done notwithstanding anything contained in the constitution or any other law for the time being in force.

Back to the constitution



It also states that the revocation of the proclamation of emergency or the repeal of the PCO shall not affect any right, privilege, obligation or liability acquired, accrued or incurred under the original proclamation orders of the emergency or the PCO and the oath of judges. Thus an attempt has been made to cover the tracks as far as possible and if there is any problem in future, a provision has been kept which provides that if any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the provisions, the president may

make more such provisions and pass such orders as he may deem fit.

While these constitutional steps would be analyzed by the legal community and relevant experts in detail in due course of time, what is obvious is that the entire exercise was undertaken by the president on Nov 3 to pre-empt the Supreme Court of Pakistan headed by Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry from creating legal and constitutional hurdles in his re-election as president of Pakistan for the next five years. Once the then General Musharraf decided to take the huge plunge and the unconstitutional decision to dismember the Supreme Court was taken, it was probably decided to fix some other institutions, including the media, as

well without caring much about legalities, criticisms, international pressures or such irritants. President Pervez Musharraf has, to his credit, been admitting all this publicly, but he has been arguing that the constitution is not more important than the country itself. It is also now clear that his earlier explanations that the emergency was imposed because of the security situation in Swat or the Tribal Areas were not meant to be taken seriously.

So the bizarre derailment of the country from constitutional tracks for 42-days saw many undesirable actions, events and situations which will never be remembered favourably. These otherwise avoidable days will be seen as something inevitable which many tried to resist but many others began to enjoy. Also the question whether the dark days are gone for good can only be answered in the future.

What is important is how the

country will be governed now that fundamental rights have been restored, some pretence of rule of law has been established and apparently one-man rule has given way to a system run under some written codes and clauses. Though it is true that President Musharraf has secured his flanks, inducted a new pliant and cooperative judiciary in the centre and the provinces, corrected the legal and constitutional language wherever he felt it was necessary and now feels more confident, it has yet to be seen how the people react in the upcoming polls and before. If Mr Musharraf moves fast to undo the excesses committed during the 42-day rule, he may pacify many sections of the society. Release of the deposed judges, lawyers and political prisoners comes at the top of these essential corrective actions. Restoring media freedom is another immediate and essential step to restore confidence.

(The news international)

Britain set to hand over Basra



A British soldier in Basra, Iraq

The last province under British military control in Iraq will be handed over to homegrown forces in a major milestone on the road to full withdrawal. Responsibility for security in Basra Province will pass into Iraqi hands, more than four-and-a-half years after Britain joined the US-led invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

The widely-anticipated move will be formalised with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between British forces and the provincial governor at a simple handover ceremony held amid tight security. Basra is the last of the four provinces once controlled by British troops to do so - after the handovers of Muthanna, Dhi Qar and Maysan to full Iraqi control - and by far the most significant.

The move clears the way for UK troop numbers, already on course to fall to 4,500 by the end of the month, to be slashed to just 2,500 next year. A total of 174 UK servicemen and women have died serving in Iraq since the invasion.

British forces will continue to provide an "overwatch" capability to assist Iraqi troops - if called upon - from their last base in the country, at Basra Airport outside the city. The handover is being hailed as a positive move by British military authorities but critics say it delivers the Iraqi second city into the clutches of competing extremist Shia militias and gangsters.

(The press association)

The Bali roadmap : main points

AFTER a 13-day conference in Bali, staged by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a strategy to tackle global warming was drawn up.

The key points are:

The preamble notes the "urgency" of scientific evidence that global warming is unequivocal and that a delay in reducing emissions increases the risk that the impacts of climate change will worsen.

The Roadmap sets the framework for negotiations for a long-term agreement on emissions cuts, including the United States, which the only industrial power to remain outside the UN's Kyoto Protocol.

The negotiations are to wrap up in Copenhagen at the end of 2009, to give parties time to ratify the treaty so that it takes effect at the end of 2012, following on from current commitments under Kyoto.

Four meetings are scheduled in 2008: in March/April, June, August/September and finally in December, in Poznan, Poland.

The Roadmap does not specify any clear emissions goal, nor suggest which countries should make emissions cuts or how deep these cuts should be.

But in a footnote in the preamble, it refers to scenarios by the UN's Nobel-winning scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which include a goal of halving global emissions by 2050, compared with the level for 2000. Rich countries would have to cut their emissions by 25-40 percent by 2020.

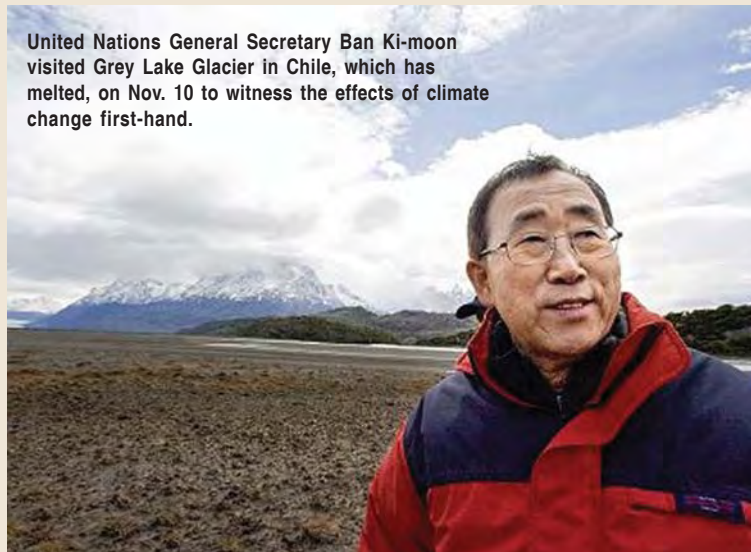
Developing countries will be urged to meet "measurable, reportable and verifiable" steps for tackling their emissions, supported by cleaner technology,

financing and skills-building.

The Roadmap includes possible financial support to halt deforestation and forest degradation, which account for roughly a fifth of global greenhouse-gas emissions today.

Other decisions from Bali

The conference agreed on the mechanism for governing and administering the Adaptation Fund, set up under the Kyoto Protocol to



United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki-moon visited Grey Lake Glacier in Chile, which has melted, on Nov. 10 to witness the effects of climate change first-hand.

help poor countries cope with climate change. The Fund will be sourced by a levy of two percent on projects under Kyoto's carbon-market innovation, the Clean Development Mechanism.

The Bali conference also took steps for setting up mechanisms to encourage the transfer of cleaner technology to countries to help them reduce or avoid carbon pollution.

Carbon capture and sequestration, a prototype method of piping off carbon dioxide from fossil-fuel-burning power plants and pumping it into geological storage chambers underground, also gets a small boost.

The conference asked its scientific and technical body to report back in December next year on the possibility of integrating schemes into the clean development mechanism after 2012.

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(news.com.au)

Within your reach

Psychic powers are not limited to the Buddha and Arhats

Marshland Flowers

■ Mahayogi Acharya Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Pure Shila cools the mind, such a mind becomes soft, gentle, loving and understanding of the pains, sorrows and the human weaknesses of others; and certainly not a mind that is critical and sees only the loopholes and breaking of the Shilas by others. However this is not to condone losing Shila. In the journey of spiritual growth, Shila is the very foundation upon which all higher experiences of the spiritual path depend.

Before we go into the details of the explanation of psychic powers and the like, as found within Buddhist texts, I would like to say that psychic powers are not limited to the Buddha and Arhats or Buddhist Mahasiddhas and yogis. Stories of the manifestation of psychic powers are to be found in abundance amongst Hindu yogis, Sufis, Christian saints and Jewish mystics of the Kaballa and the like, as well as in Taoists and Kahuna masters and Shamans all over the world.

If such things were fakes and totally fabricated, such stories would not continue through the ages, generations after generations in all cultures. These are not stray stories found here and there but across all cultures and across all times. And especially within



Buddhism those who recounted such stories were highly educated scholars who had studied logic and philosophy etc. anywhere from 10 to 20 years and they were not simple country bumpkins. Such a phenomenal amount of stories across all cultures and times cannot be lightly waived away as superstitious stories.

With this in the background we shall now go into the Buddhist classification of such phenomena according to the Abhidharma. The Abhidharma is that part of the Tripitaka which classifies into categories the Buddhist view of reality. The Abhidharma is that part of the Buddha's teachings which classifies his teachings into various categories and enlists its philosophical aspects.

In short, it is the analysis of the Dharma. Dharma here in Buddhist terminology does not mean 'religion' as in Buddha Dharma or Hindu Dharma but rather phenomena. Thus the Abhidharma is that part of the Tripitaka wherein are recorded those teachings the Sakyamuni gave, in which he has analysed the phenomena and philosophical tenets

(To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

Stories of the manifestation of psychic powers are to be found in abundance amongst Hindu yogis, Sufis, Christian saints and Jewish mystics of the Kaballa.

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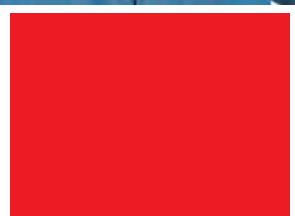
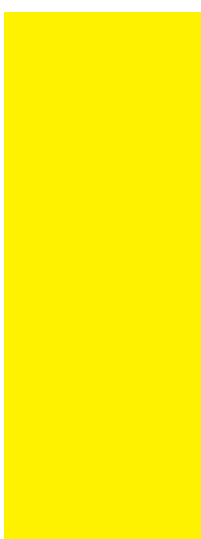
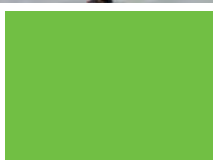
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Love and war



■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma

Forty years separate me from her. I could have wandered in the desert, longed for the flesh pot, eaten quails God dropped, down from the clouds. I could have passed by Mount Nevo, been a spy, seen a whore in Jericho. I gave it all up for the war in which the booty was the word "father."

Translated from the Hebrew by Vivian Eden

Translating Hebrew poet Ronny Someck's poetry into Nepali can be an interesting experience in many ways. Living in Nepal one can feel the sense of loss and indecision writ large on the nation's face. Ronny's poetry evokes the deep hidden frustration and agony of an individual living in a nation reeling under the ruthless chariot of violence and bloodshed. For this reason my days spent in translating this vibrant voice from Israel became an exhilarating experience.

In Ronny's poetry strikes a familiar cord in the Nepali language. His fusion of Israeli history and his own Iraqi roots with icons and images of contemporary times bring a strangely familiar world that has gone into the making of Nepali and other languages of the subcontinent.

Translating his book of poems into Nepali was like sitting before a hearth with a cauldron of mixed materials- East and West, Baghdad where Ronny was born and the Israel where he grew up, and many more incarnations of Ronny's past and present: I was born on the date the movies were born / in my previous incarnation /I was Charlie Chaplin's cane, Marilyn Monroe's panties, Gary Cooper's pistol, a wheel on James Dean's motorcycle.

Boiling this cauldron of many

forms and fragments, I had every night all my family members adding fuel to the fire, supplying words, Nepali equivalents, so much so that even my eight year old son, Yugank and daughter Sukrity started suggesting words and expression to translate this dazzling blend of public and private, domestic and dogmatic expressions: I'm a pajama Iraqi, my wife's a Romanian gal /and our daughter is the thief of Baghdad/ my mother still boils the Euphrates and the Tigris, /my sister has learned how to make piroshki from her Russian mother-in-law /all of us are workers fired from the scaffoldings of the tower we wanted to build in Babel.

It's fun to translate the Whitmanesque extension of the line that takes a magical twist, leaving you spellbound. In times of endless conflicts, the family and the self become the most precious items and Ronny ingeniously employs both to produce startling effects.

Not many Nepali poets with the exception of Rimal and Krishna Bhakta Shrestha have been able to take the poetic line to such profound dimensions. Ronny's line extension works like magic of the Arabian nights, or more like Asian riddles encompassing the dualities and complexities of war and peace, love and violence, eloquence and silence.

Often his line extends with the focus on the reported speech, ignoring the self, a serpentine flow of the hillside creek that goes underground to gush forth more vigorously in its end extension as in the short poem, "That" : That the mind is the body's commander-in-chief /that the prisoner is a broken tooth in the mouth that shouted the command/ that the command knows neither limit nor border/ that the border is stretched taut like a sock/ that the sock is silent/ that the silence unravels threads from the tangles of words/ that in the mind words are stuck like a fence/and that behind them nothing is left to discuss.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)



Town of glory

It was Kirtipur therefore to be struck first and the hardest.

■ Pramesh Pradhan



There are numerous interesting places close to Kathmandu that have remained isolated and less explored. Kirtipur is one of them. A natural fortress situated at a hillock at the south-western part of the Kathmandu valley, six km away from the centre of Kathmandu, Kirtipur is renowned for its ancient monuments and diligent people known for their bravery in many historic battles. Kirtipur literally means, town of glory. History

describes Kirtipur as being founded by Shiva Deva in 11th/12th century as the western outpost of Patan. It was from time to time in history, a part of Patan or Kathmandu before being finally conquered in 1767 by Prithvi Narayan Shah, after several defeats.

Newari in character, Kirtipur is a harmonic convergence of Buddhist and Hindu communities and has three geographic segments; eastern, central and western. Western and central parts are primarily Hindu and eastern part has more Buddhist characters. Prithvi Narayan planned to conquer Kirtipur first since a hilltop

position would be instrumental in defeating the Malla kingdoms of the valley. It was Kirtipur therefore to be struck first and the hardest. Humiliated by the pain and defeat his forces had endured earlier, he ordered that the tip of nose be cut off of every male inhabitant over 12, in the town. The barbaric revenge at gun point considerably discouraged inhabitants of other kingdoms to fight against the conqueror. The inhumane revenge by Prithvi Narayan Shah became one of the successful war tactics for easier conquests of Kathmandu, Patan and finally Bhaktapur.

Chilanchu Vihara, on the eastern part, has a big stupa in center and four smaller ones around. In central Kirtipur near the pond is a triple roofed pagoda temple of Bagh Bhairav temple dedicated to Hindu God Shiva in the form of a tiger. Locals call it Ajudeo (the grandfather god). It is a war memorial decorated with swords and shields of the Newari troops defeated by Prithvi Narayan Shah. The temple's main image is Bhairav in the form of a tiger. Legends say Bagh Bhairav temple is located where a tiger image of Bhairav once killed a goat.

HERITAGE SITE

There are numerous monuments around the site.

Uma Maheswor temple is a beautiful pagoda temple situated at the highest point of the town towards the east. The main image is a standing Uma and Maheswor. Built in mid 17th century and known also as Bhawani Shanker temple, it was built in 1673 and had four roofs until the earthquake in 1934. One of the newer attractions in Kirtipur is a Thai styled stupa of Theravada Buddhism in the eastern part of the town. It also houses the four roof replicas of the four holy sites of Buddhism: Lumbini (where Buddha was born), Bodhi Gaya (where Buddha was enlightened), Saranath (where he first taught) and Kushinagar (where Buddha left his body).

Ancient streets lined with artistic houses and temple squares, people known for their skill in building and weaving make up this small town. Worth watching are the Indrayani and Ganesh festivals which are paraded through the town. A rich live museum indeed is Kirtipur.

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HEALING: FORGIVING, ACCEPTING, REALISING

■ Subrath Shrestha



The post-conflict era of Nepal has been the center of attention for all. Human right activists and organisations, law makers and politicians have been excited with the launching of Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There are and perhaps can be a lot to inquire and learn about the development of this commission.

One of the vital ideas of the commission is to bring together

perpetrators and victims during the period of conflict in a forum, and develop mutual understanding between them. When addressing perpetrators and victims one should not ignore stress and traumas caused during the period of conflict; generated due to threats and tortures given to the victims or their family members, which leaves deep psychological scars.

Significantly age, sex, and ethnicities of victims varies. There are children who have witnessed their parents, brothers and sisters being

threatened, tortured or killed. Exposure to violence at such early ages impacts on their psychological development. There are men and women who have faced threats and torture and have lost their partners. For widowed women, along with cultural challenges, there are psychological challenges in coping with the loss, sustaining livelihood and supporting their children.

Threats and tortures not only violate one's human rights, it leads to vulnerabilities in mental health of

victims. It is the nature of the commission to reconcile perpetrators and victims; therefore one must understand that it is not possible without addressing feelings such as fear, grudges, guilt, hostility, pain and revenge in their minds. These feelings can be channeled in constructive and positive ways, through structured mental health care such as counseling and psychotherapy, which includes individual and group therapies.

Counseling process can support victims and prepare them to forgive perpetrators. Similarly the process can help perpetrators acknowledge and accept their wrongdoing. Counseling can be effective in dealing with various stages such as the denial stages that includes denying forgiving on victims' part or denying the offences on the part of the perpetrators. Where people have witnessed their loved ones tortured or killed right in front of them, grief therapy can be an effective treatment approach. If the commission is pragmatic, mental health issues of victims and perpetrators should be facilitated. Without intervening mental health issues the success of the commission is questionable.

Professionals such as clinical counselors, psychologist, and psychiatric social workers can be good facilitators. The process of structured counseling should in fact start prior to bringing victims and perpetrators together. The interventions that include individual, group and family therapy can be screened

depending on nature and uniqueness of each case. Here facilitators should be cautious that they do not mix up victims and perpetrators in the same group while providing counseling. While intervening, specific as well as eclectic counseling approaches can be implemented.

Since a majority of victims can have issues related with stress, torture and trauma; post traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and adjustment disorders etc can be identified. Treatment plans can be developed for them, using stress management modules and specific therapy such as cognitive behavior therapy, person centered therapy, solution focused brief therapy and motivational interviewing.

For perpetrators, existential therapy, cognitive behavior therapy and psychoanalysis can be effective in exploring and intervening their issues such as denial of offense, guilt and aggression, to name a few.

The importance of mental health perspectives in the commission should not be ignored. The government cannot afford to be indifferent to the needs of clinical counseling in the process of reconciliation between perpetrators and victims of the conflict. If the government takes the required measures in providing clinical counseling to both the populations as one of the primary and prior steps, it would be a great start for the commission.

(Subrath@gmail.com)

देशको तात्कालीन कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?

अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?

शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK मा

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा

सगरमाथा समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव