

Nepal Abroad

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58th Democracy Day: Celebration In Nepal



Photo: nepalhorizons.com

The government had organized a special function, on Tuesday February 19 '08, at the Army Pavilion to mark the 58th Democracy Day. Heads of constitutional bodies, ministers and senior officials attended the function. PM Koirala is seen addressing on the occasion.

US Defends Record Against Racial Discrimination

By Lisa Schlein

Geneva Feb 22 (VOA): A U.S. delegation has vigorously defended the U.S. record on efforts to combat racial discrimination before the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The committee has just completed a two-day review of the United States compliance with the 1969 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which it ratified in 1994. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

The U.N. Committee of 18 independent experts peppered the U.S. delegation with numerous questions. It challenged assertions that the government was doing enough to combat alleged racial discrimination in the detention of African-Americans and other minorities.

It questioned Washington's treatment of illegal immigrants and demanded answers to a range of issues including alleged disparities in housing, education, employment and health care.

The Committee members also expressed concern about issues such as racial profiling, alleged racial bias in the legal system and the sentencing of African-American juveniles to life long prison terms.

Acting U.S. Assistant Attorney General at the Justice Department's civil rights division, Grace Chung Becker said the delegation shared the Committee's concerns about police brutality.

"In the civil rights division, we have increased by 25 percent the number of cases that we have brought in this area and we have increased the convictions by 53 percent over the last seven years," she said. "In addition, on the civil side, we continue to pursue pattern and practice cases against police departments for what we perceive as unconstitutional policing. This can include excessive uses of force, as well as biased policing and unconstitutional searches and seizures."

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New Madhesi Strike Could Have Dire Humanitarian Impact

Kathmandu, Feb 22 (IRIN): International humanitarian aid agencies have expressed concern about the political crisis and the humanitarian implications for vulnerable communities in the Terai region of southern Nepal.

They said access to food supplies, health and other humanitarian services has been limited since 12 February due to an indefinite strike called by the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) - a coalition of political parties campaigning for the rights of ethnic Madhesis in the Terai.

"If the crisis in the Terai goes on for another week, we will see a considerable impact on

humanitarian programmes in terms of food security, the livelihoods of vulnerable communities and daily wage earners," Wendy Cue, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Nepal, told IRIN in Kathmandu.

Most markets have been closed in cities and towns across the Terai, Nepal's lowland industrial and agricultural heartland. The government-imposed curfew is exacerbating the situation, hampering civilians' access to public transport and markets, according to aid agencies.

Protests by pro-Madhesi groups in the Terai have been exacerbating political tensions also

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One Madhes, One Pradesh Not Acceptable: SPA

Kathmandu, Feb 23 (THT): Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) today asked the agitating United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) to help conduct the constituent assembly (CA) elections and to settle the issues of misunderstanding through talks.

A meeting of the SPA leaders held at Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar this morning also decided to hold CA polls on stipulated date at any cost. "The meeting decided to foil all kind of conspiracies being hatched against the elections," UML leader Jhalanath Khanal said.

SPA leaders also discussed the UMDF's six-point charter of demands and proposed to the government to concede the demands except declaration of one Madhes, one Pradesh with the right to self-determination. Meeting also expressed serious concern over the worsening conditions for people across the region with growing shortages of medicine, food and fuel.

Earlier, a meeting of the Maoists' central committee decided not to accept the UMDF's demand of one Madhes, one Pradesh with the right to self-determination.

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Editorial:

Indian Interference In Nepal's Politics

The last week developments in Kathmandu about the visit of Congress (I) delegation from India to assess the situation in Nepal, so that they can frame a new plan and a new way of looking at things in Nepal, was little annoying to many within and outside of Nepal. The annoyance reached its climax when it was reported on February 21 that the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu mediated talks between the leaders of Nepali Congress and the United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF) on Wednesday February 20, the report Indian Embassy denies.

And the fresh revelation by C.P. Mainali-President of the United Left Front in an interaction program at Reporters Club on Sunday stated that, India has been injecting huge amount of money to intensify the agitation in Madhesh to increase its bargaining power, clearly indicates the (Nepalese) leadership is all aware about the Indian design; however, hardly any one comes to the fore and talks about it.

These events clearly indicate that the Nepalese populations are not fortunate enough to determine the future of Nepal, but the grand designers in India and the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. Most of our leaders were excitedly reporting the developments in Nepal to the visiting Indian delegates. Comrade Prachanda even went to the extent of seeking their favor for his presidency in the new Nepal. When

all consider India a panacea for Nepal's problem, why talk about the threat to Nepal's sovereignty and nationalism in public.

It was further disappointing to see how the Maoists too were the accomplices to the negotiation between the NC leadership and the UDMF at the Indian Embassy. They were more vocal about the sovereignty and nationalism recently than others; hence it was natural for all to have expectation from them (in denouncing the event) when the sovereignty was at stake.

India also suffers from issues that Nepal encounters today. In fact, they have major crisis than what we do. Yet India is able to play its design in Nepal. The Nepalese people are aware about their insurgencies in the North East, crisis in states like Orrisa, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir. What if any group within the Nepalese society partners with those in India and abroad in return for the Indian design in Nepal? It might sound little awkward now, but its possibility cannot be denied. At a time when the presence of the government is so minimal, those seeking to harm India might be active and may exploit the situation. Therefore, instability in Nepal will impact India as well. Hence, a decent plan should be devised to help neighbor, rather than extracting benefits only. A strong neighbor makes India strong, and a weak neighbor always poses a security risk.

Letter to the editor

Ref: The Nepalese Ambassador in Washington DC

Dear Sir,

I have been closely following the activities of our Ambassador Dr. Chalise whom I had briefly met at the pier of Manhattan in Sep. 1994. He is, without doubt, a learned man fully aware of his grave responsibilities. We should be proud of him and must extend our utmost co-operation so that he can deliver the goods. Now we will wait and see how far he can materialize his plans and policies for the overall development of Nepal. Suffice it to say that I am immensely impressed by his commitments and public relations. So far he has represented Nepal as none had ever done before. Thank you.

Yours truly,

Ram Bahadur Chhetri
BurkeVA USA

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Maoists Accused Of Fomenting Political Crisis

Kathmandu, Feb 19 (IRIN): Former Maoist rebels are spreading fear and insecurity through intimidation, abductions, threats and extortion, and are responsible for the current political crisis; human rights workers and independent analysts told IRIN on 19 February.

"The [post-November 2006] peace process is becoming fragile due to constant violations by the Maoists," said a prominent human rights worker, Subodh Raj Pyakhurel. He said fear was gripping civilians and that they lacked protection as Maoist-affiliated groups defied law and order.

With national Constituent Assembly (CA) elections due on 10 April, the Maoists have been sending chilling messages around the country that they will seize power if they do not win, according to local media reports.

Leading national newspapers have become critical of the Maoists' "non-competitive" style of doing politics, saying it is a return to the tactics they adopted during their decade-long insurgency of 1996-2006.

Despite joining mainstream politics and the government in 2007, Maoist leaders have failed to deliver on their promise to abide by normal, competitive politics, according to local independent analysts.

Maoists "acting like rebels"

"The Maoists are still acting like rebels and not like a responsible political group. Their leaders are members of parliament but cannot control their own party members who disrespect the rule of law," said Pyakhurel. He said the Maoists were responsible for the present state of anarchy and lawlessness.

The Maoists signed a peace treaty with the Nepalese government (led by an alliance of seven national parties) in November 2006, giving rise to new hopes of rebuilding the nation, according to human rights groups.

"But 2007 only saw a series of violations of the peace

agreement at the hands of the Maoist rebels," said an independent analyst who preferred anonymity. He said the problems started after the creation of a new Maoist-affiliated group called the Young Communist League (YCL) which, he said, was responsible for most of the abductions, extortion and threats.

Other parties accuse Maoists

National political parties also accused the Maoists of violating the peace agreement and hampering the peace process.

"The Maoists have not improved their behavior," said Madhav Nepal, head of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, one of the country's leading parties.

He said the rebels were intimidating other political parties, assaulting and abducting politicians and preventing them from peacefully campaigning in the elections.

Denial

However, senior Maoist leaders deny any violations, saying other political parties could not abide seeing their support wane.

They said it was criminal groups, and not their party members, who were involved in extortion and abductions.

"We are committed to the CA elections. We will participate in the polls and we don't want to miss the opportunity," said Maoist chairman Prachanda at a mass meeting held recently in the capital.

Maoist leaders said that if there had been any truth in the

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Nepali Calendar

Sun Feb 24 / Falgun 12' 64

Tritiya

Mon Feb 25 / Falgun 13' 64

Chauthi

Tue Feb 26 / Falgun 14' 64

Panchami

Wed Feb 27 / Falgun 15' 64

Khasthi

Thu Feb 28 / Falgun 16' 64

Saptami

Fri Feb 29 / Falgun 17' 64

Astami

Sat March 01 / Falgun 18' 64

Nawami

Nepalese In Baltimore Raises Funds For Gilchrest

Baltimore Feb 10: More than seventy Nepalis and their friends from Baltimore and adjoining areas gathered at the local Mt. Everest Restaurant and raised \$3,000 for the reelection of Congressman Wayne Gilchrest on February 10. The event was organized by Dr. Shyam Karki, President of Nepali American Public Affairs Council (NAPAC) and Krishna Ghimire, President of Baltimore Association of Nepalis in America (BANA).



Krishna Ghimire and Dr Shyam D Karki with Congressman Wayne Gilchrest on Sunday February 10 '08

Program started with Dr. Karki introducing Congressman Gilchrest who represents the 1st Congressional district of

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Help Consolidate Democracy In Nepal: Ms Bloch



Photo: nepalhorizons.com

Ambassadors James F Moriarty, Julia C Bloch and Dr Suresh C Chalise are seen discussing on Tuesday evening.

Former US Ambassador to Nepal, Ms Julia Chang Bloch and The FUND for American Studies (TFAS) jointly organized a reception program to welcome Nepal's Ambassador to the US, HE Dr Suresh C Chalise on the evening of Tuesday

February 12 '08 at Ambassador Bloch's residence.

Talking to the attendees of the program, Ambassador Bloch stated that Nepal was going through a complex process and requested all

...Contd. on pg 6

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Calendar Of Events

Feb 17 '08: The Tamang Society of Greater Washington Presents Lochhar Sanjh 2844 (New Year Eve) on Sunday Feb 17 from 6pm at Holiday Inn 2101 Wisconsin Ave NW, Washington DC 2007. Raju Lama, Mongolian Hearts, Kumar Basnet, Renowned Folk Singer, Angels Band and other emerging local talents would be performing. For details, visit nepalhorizons.com

Feb 17 '08: For the first time, the Nepalese community in Gaithersburg-Germantown cordially invites all to attend a program to support the Nepalese Educational & Cultural Center (NECC)'s vitalizing action committee (VAC) on Sunday February 17 from 1pm to 5pm at Gaithersburg Library 18330 Montgomery Village Ave., Gaithersburg MD. More at nepalhorizons.com

Feb 22 '08: 'Badi Ko Sathi' cordially invites to 'An Evening of Wine and Education' on Friday Feb 22 from 7 to 10 pm at Vino Locale in Palo Alto, California. For details, visit badikosathi.org.

Feb 22 '08: The Nepalese Society of Texas is organizing an interaction program on 'United nations role in the current political situation of Nepal' with Madhuran Acharya, the permanent representative of Nepal to the UN on Friday Feb 22 from 7pm at Temptation Restaurant Belt Line Irving. For details call Ram C Pokhrel (H) 817 571 1495 (C) 682 521 7475.

Feb 26 '08: The Minnesota Council of Non-profits is organizing a workshop - 'Starting a Successful Nonprofit', designed to provide all the information needed to start a successful non-profit organization and other available opportunities, on Tuesday Feb 26 from 9am to noon, at 2314 Univ. Ave W, St Paul MN. mncn.org has details.

March 02 '08: Sagarmatha Television presents Nepali feature film Ankha Lovi Man Papi on Sunday March 02 from 1 pm to 4 pm at Loehmanns Cinema Plaza Falls Church VA. For details visit nepahorizons.com and www.sagarmathatv.us.

March 6 '08: The Nepal Educational & Cultural Center (NECC) cordially invites all to celebrate MAHA-SHIVARATRI at Pashupati-Buddha Mandir in Lanham MD on Thursday March 6. Pundit Sridhar Gyawali will be performing the Puja (from 7-9pm) and Rudri Abhishek. For details call 301 552 2299.

March 08 '08: America Nepal Women's Association of Greater Washington DC (ANWA) invites all community members to participate to mark International Women's Day on Sunday March 08 from 1pm to 4 pm at 2840 Graham Road, Falls Church VA 22042. Contact Madhavi Karki 703 609 7165 Bishnu Thapa 571 214 2267. For details, visit nepalhorizons.com

Nepali Class in MN: The Nepali language classes in Minneapolis MN would be held on the following dates at Mt. Olivete Church 5025 Knox Ave S, Minneapolis MN. Saturday Jan 12, Jan 26, Feb 9, Feb 23, Mar 8, Apr 5, Apr 19, May 3 and May 17. For more information contact any executive members at anmn.org

To list the scheduled event(s) of your organization on the Community Events above, please email us: enews@nepalabroad.com

Bhattarai Awarded Cosmos Club Scholarship

Sameer Bhattarai, a Ph.D student at George Mason University in Fairfax VA, is one of the five Mason grad students who were recently awarded scholarships from the Cosmos Club of Washington DC, reported The Mason Gazette on Feb 20'08.

The Cosmos program provides grants to graduate students at member institutions to meet unexpected, and sometimes unsupported, aspects of their research, reports Gzette.

The Cosmos Club is a private social club, incorporated in Washington DC in 1878 by men distinguished in science, literature and the arts. In June 1988 the Club voted to welcome men as members.



Sameer Bhattarai

Bhattarai is a student of Environmental Science and Policy, and his research project is 'Microtopography Effects on Vegetative and Biogeochemical Patterns in Created Wetlands: A Comparative Study to Provide Guidance for Wetland Creation/Restoration'.

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Religion and the White House

- By Adam Phillips, NY

February 18 is Presidents Day in the United States. It's a day Americans have set aside to honor past presidents and to examine their legacy and significance. One of the most intriguing aspects of this group of men is the degree to which religion has played a role in their leadership. VOA's Adam Phillips has more.

When it comes to religion, Americans tend to see the Founding Fathers in one of two stereotyped ways: either as pious churchgoing folk with Jesus and the Bible firmly at the helm, or as cool scientific rationalists who thought that Man could govern himself quite well without God anywhere in the picture.

In fact, most of the Founding Fathers and early presidents were Deists. Deism was a sophisticated 18th century religious philosophy that inferred the existence and nature of God based solely on reason and personal experience, not from faith as such.

"They believed in God, a benevolent god," Professor Gary Wills, the eminent American historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of nearly 40 books, explains. "They believed in Providence. In fact, that was their name for God, often. That's what George Washington called 'God' — 'Providence.'"

"[The Founding Fathers] didn't believe that Jesus was divine. They thought he was a great moral teacher," says Wills. "They didn't

believe in the efficacy of prayer. They thought 'God doesn't need our advice.'"

Among the many radical features of the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1787, was an amendment creating a formal separation between church and state. It was strongly supported by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who would become America's third and fourth president respectively. They saw it as a way to protect America's various religious denominations from domination by government power and ideology. They also believed individual conscience to be the supreme and final judge in spiritual and moral matters.

Wills says that this view made both men even more radical than the British political philosopher John Locke, who had advocated mere tolerance by the government of diverse religious beliefs. "They said 'No, no! Tolerance is 'top-down.' It means the authorities can tolerate you and it's up to their discretion. We should have it 'bottom-up.' That it's the right of the individual conscience that can't be coerced [and] that is the supreme judge on these matters.' That was their starting point."

Most educated 19th century Americans were well-versed in the Bible, even if, like Abraham Lincoln, they were not especially religious. According to Wills, when Lincoln took office in 1861, just before the Civil War, he had been a

skeptic most of his life, and was probably an atheist in his youth.

"But as he went on," Will says, "he became more profoundly religious. He had a much more Jewish concept of the whole people being the people of God, sinning as a people, being saved as a people, repenting as a people."

During the nation's first century, several presidents had proclaimed national Fast Days in order to turn the nation inward, and elicit divine sympathy for a cause. James Madison proclaimed one during the War of 1812. During one of the darkest periods of the Civil War, Lincoln proclaimed a National Fast Day.

"But he did it in a way that no other person had done," Wills says. "Instead of ratcheting up animosity, building up bellicosity, he ratcheted it down. He said in war 'everybody does things wrong. Every war has pillage and rape and senseless killing. And it's true of this war.'"

Wills calls Lincoln's Fast Day Proclamation "a proclamation of repentance. It was an amazing act of leadership we haven't seen in other presidencies."

While American presidents are required to remain technically neutral in matters of religion, the American people are not. In 1960, many were openly troubled by presidential-hopeful John Kennedy's Catholicism. They feared his loyalties might be divided between Catholic Doctrine and America's Constitution.

Kennedy said he'd resign if the two ever did conflict.

But Gary Wills, a religious Catholic himself, says presidents can easily avoid such dilemmas: they must separate their religious motivation for favoring a policy from the secular arguments they make to convince others to adopt it.

"For instance, a Christian who believes the gospel hears Jesus say 'Whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me.' [So,] love of Jesus is our motive for being good to the poor," Wills explains. "But we can't make that the state's motive." Instead, Wills says, "What we have to do with them is say 'it's just. It's a matter of human dignity to treat the poor well.' So your motive is not the same thing as your argument."

Even deeply religious presidents have usually respected the line between church and state. Jimmy Carter, for example, an evangelical Baptist who became president in 1977, never held a prayer service inside the White House during his four years in office. In contrast, in the opinion of Gary Wills, George W. Bush, a self-professed born again Christian, has inserted religion into public policy to an unprecedented degree.

Wills says that whatever the religious beliefs of future presidents, the Constitutional wall of separation was designed to be strong enough to preserve America's secular political tradition. (VOA 2/15)

Floriculture Industry Begins to Blossom in India

New Delhi Feb 24 (VOA): A nascent floriculture industry in India is cashing in on growing demand for roses overseas. Anjana Pasricha has a report from New Delhi.

It was just over a decade ago that a handful of entrepreneurs began to cultivate roses commercially in southern India, encouraged by the warm climate and a booming market for flowers worldwide.

Those investments have paid dividends. About 50 farms along a "floral corridor" between the southern cities of Hosur and Bangalore exported as many as 15

million red roses ahead of Valentine's Day earlier this month.

The head of the South Indian Floriculture Association, Najeeb Ahmed, says India's share of the world rose market is still tiny. But he says the country is making its presence felt in countries stretching from Australia and Japan to Britain and Germany.

"Indian quality of roses is as competitive in world market as roses from any other country like Africa, Ecuador, Colombia," he said. "We can grow roses round the year without artificial heating, lighting and cooling systems, and with abundant availability of manpower - this

industry requires a lot of manpower, and we are able to meet these requirements."

It is not just overseas markets that are driving the demand for roses. The domestic market is also booming, as younger people begin to celebrate events such as Valentine's Day with enthusiasm, encouraged by expanding middle class incomes and growing Western influence. Buying flowers for other occasions is also gaining in popularity in big cities.

The blossoming industry is encouraging floriculture companies to expand overseas. Last October, India's largest grower of roses,

Karuturi Networks, purchased the world's largest rose producer - a Kenyan business, for \$72 million. Kenya leads the world in rose cultivation.

Prasanna Pai, Karuturi's chief financial officer says business is soaring.

"This Valentine's Day has been very good for us. Compared to last year we have shipped four times the quantity we did last year," said Prasanna Pai.

Indian rose exports added up to approximately \$80 million last year. Industry experts estimate that floriculture is expanding by more than 25 percent a year.

Lochhar Sanjh 2844 Celebrated in Washington DC



Photo: nepalhorizons.com

The Tamang Society of Greater Washington DC presented 'Lochhar Sanjh 2844' on Sunday February 17 '08 at Holiday Inn Georgetown in Washington DC. The program was a great success, attended by a large number of people from DC, MD and VA area. The performers included Raju Lama, Kumar Basnet, and other local talents. Kali P Pokharel- the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Nepal was the chief guest. Shyam Lama (seen on the left) is the president of the Tamang Society of Greater Washington DC.

Canada: The Refugee System

(Courtesy: Citizenship and Immigration Canada)

Refugees and people needing protection are those in or outside Canada who fear returning to their home country. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and international obligations, Canada provides protection to thousands of people every year.

Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution or who may be at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, and are unwilling or unable to return to their home country.

Groups and individuals can sponsor refugees from abroad who qualify to come to Canada.

Refugee claims in Canada

Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution or who may be at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, and are unwilling or unable to return to their home country.

If you feel that you will be persecuted or otherwise at risk as mentioned above, if you return to your home country, you can seek protection in Canada as a Convention Refugee or a person in need of protection. To be eligible, you must apply from within Canada or at a point of entry to Canada.

Who can apply

Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution and are unwilling or unable to return to their home country.

If you feel that you will be persecuted if you return to your home country, you can seek protection in Canada as a Convention refugee or as a person in need of protection. To be eligible, you must apply from within Canada at a local Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) office or at a point of entry to Canada.

Convention Refugees

A Convention Refugee is a person who is outside her or his home country or the country where he or she normally lives, and who cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on:

- race
- religion
- political opinion
- nationality or
- membership in a particular social group, such as women or people of a particular sexual orientation.

Person in need of protection

A person in need of protection is a person in Canada, who is afraid to return to her or his home country or the country where the person normally lives, because of:

- a risk of torture
- a risk to life or
- a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

Some people are not eligible

Some people are not eligible to claim refugee protection in Canada. You cannot apply if any of the following conditions apply to you.

- You have been recognized as a Convention refugee by another country to which you can still return.
- You have already been granted status as a protected person under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act or its regulations, but have had your protected status removed.
- You arrived in Canada, directly or indirectly, from the United States and must comply with the Safe Third Country Agreement (see below).
- You are not eligible to enter Canada because of security, criminal activity or human rights violations.
- You have had a previous refugee protection claim rejected by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).
- You made a previous claim for refugee protection and your claim was found to be ineligible on security or other grounds.
- You started a previous claim, but you abandoned or withdrew it.

Safe Third Country Agreement

Under an agreement with the United States, refugee claimants must seek asylum (protection) in the first safe country where they arrive. For example, if you entered Canada at a land border from the United States, you will not be able to claim refugee protection in Canada. Sometimes there are exceptions (such as those who already have family in Canada).

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

If you are found eligible to claim protection as a refugee, your claim will be referred to the Refugee Protection Division of the IRB. The IRB is an independent body that makes decisions on immigration and refugee matters in Canada.

... to be continued next week

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58th Democracy Day Celebrated in Washington DC



Photo: nepalhorizons.com

On Tuesday February 19 '08, Embassy of Nepal organized a program to celebrate the 58th Democracy Day at the Ambassador's residence in Washington DC. The program saw the participation of people from around the DC metro area. On the occasion, Ambassador Dr Suresh C Chalise expressed his confidence about the progress Nepal would make in ten years time, should there be peace and democracy in the country, among other things.

Who Should Own...

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state can regulate individual firearms ownership as it sees fit," says Wittes. "But if it is an individual right, then you have this second level question, which is: What kind of an individual right is it? Does that mean the state can still regulate, but it can't ban? Does it mean the state has to respect your right to own it absolutely?"

Some experts say that because none of the justices of the current Supreme Court have ever presided over a Second Amendment case, any prediction about how the court will rule is little more than speculation. But others contend it is unlikely that the high court will cancel a right that is embedded in the ideas of self-reliance and self-defense, which is central to America's identity. (VOA Feb 8)

Help Consolidate Democracy...

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to help restore and consolidate democracy there.

Dr. Chalise talked about the future prospects of Nepal. He was of the opinion that elections of the Constituent Assembly were imperative to make democratic transition more smoother. He further claimed 'if democracy and peace prevail in the country, Nepal would take off very fast economically- in 10 years.' Ambassador Chalise also opined that the rising economy of neighbors- India and China was likely to impact positively on Nepal.

Also present on the occasion were James F Moriarty-former US Ambassador to Nepal (July '04-May '07), Officers from the South Asia Desk (Dept of State), officials from the embassy of China, Singapore and Nepal, members from TFAS, World Bank officials, Nepalese intellectuals and journalists.

Dr Chalise arrived in Washington DC to execute his assignment on November '07 and presented his credentials to President George W Bush on January 22 '08 at a ceremony in White House.

Ms Bloch was in Nepal as an ambassador from 1989 to 1993.

Maoists Accused Of...

...Contd. from page 2

allegations in the past, party members had now been told to stop any violations.

Media report abductions

However, local media continued to report abductions and people being forced to make "donations", as during the armed conflict.

Local civilians and businessmen told IRIN YCL members

were constantly issuing demands and making threats to get people to pay "donations and Maoist taxes".

A recent report by the UN Secretary-General in January also said the Maoists had largely failed to curb the excesses of the YCL. It said this trend reinforced growing doubts within Nepal about the Maoists' commitment to a peaceful negotiated solution.

Nepalese In Baltimore...

...Contd. from page 3

Maryland as a great supporter of the democracy and human rights in Nepal. He had worked with Congressman Jim Walsh (NY) in passing a number of resolutions in the House in support of democracy in Nepal during the Janaandolan. He strongly believes in helping the democracy and economic development of Nepal. He is a senior member of two congressional committees and four sub committees. Besides he is a leading member of the Congressional caucus which strongly believes in resolving the conflicts around the globe peacefully and by negotiations.

Popular folk singer Prem Raja Mahat sang a welcome song in English and was followed by congressman's speech. He thanked the Nepali community members for support and expressed his support for democracy and peaceful resolution of conflicts around the world. He also

mentioned that he will be willing to take a congressional delegation to Nepal if it helps the cause of democracy and peace in Nepal. He promised the Nepali community members his help in their struggle to transition to life in the USA.

This is the first time Nepali community members have organized fund raising even for election campaign of public officials. Both Dr.Karki and Mr. Ghimire are planning a series of programs to get the Nepali community members connected to the elected public officials.

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India To Help Bring Asian Highway to Nepal

New Delhi Feb 14 (HNS): The Indian cabinet today decided to ask the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to expand the highly-ambitious Asian Highway (AH no. 2) up to Nepal.

The cabinet issued a release saying it has decided to propose modification in the two proposed highways — H2 and H48. Joint secretary at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works Kamal Raj Pandey said the Indian government, during a meeting held in Delhi a few days ago for the construction of integrated security posts, had pledged cooperation to extend the Asian Highway up to the Mahakali section in western Nepal. The cabinet also okayed linking H48 with Bhutan.

The release said H48 will link Indian border town Jaygaon with Thimphu and

Phuentsholing, while H2 will connect India with Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. India hoped that these will promote regional tourism and trade. The government of Nepal has given consent in principle for the expansion of the highway through the Nepali territory.

The highway that is 1,41,000 km long will cover 1,314 km in Nepal. It will link 32 countries in Asia. The plan for this highway was drawn in 1959 with a view to expanding the international road network for development. Fund crunch hit its construction in 1975, the UNESCO said, adding that a total of \$26 billion has already been spent. "It still requires \$18 billion and the commission is working to secure assistance from donors," the UNESCO said on its website.

US Defends Record...

...Contd. from page 1

Vice Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Leslie Silverman, said the goal of her agency was to eliminate discrimination in the workplace. She said the U.S. has made substantial progress over the years.

"At the EEOC, we do believe that racial discrimination still occurs far too often in the employment context," she said. "And, we also believe that stereotypes and unconscious bias contribute to this problem. That is why this past year, we decided to take a new approach to combating race discrimination, which we call ERACE and it stands for eradicating racism and colorism from employment."

Advocacy Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, Jamil Dakwar, was not impressed. He said

the delegation presented existing laws, Supreme Court cases and other policies to justify their actions, but did not really address the questions and concerns of the Committee.

"So, I think at times the dialogue between the Committee and the U.S. delegation was a dialogue of the deaf," he said. "They were not communicating and there were sometimes attempts by the U.S. delegation to mislead the Committee on issues."

A coalition of 250 U.S.-based human rights organizations accuses the United States of persistent and systematic racial discrimination. The Committee based many of its questions on a 600-page report the coalition presented to it.

The Committee will present its final observations and conclusions in two weeks.

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New Madhesi Strike ...

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caused in part by the refusal of Maoist groups to abide by a November 2006 peace accord, according to analysts.

"Possibility of a humanitarian crisis"

"There is a possibility of a humanitarian crisis if there is no change in the situation," said Sanjeev Kumar Kafley, director of the disaster management department of the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), which has been helping to evacuate and provide medical aid to people injured in the Madhesi protests.

He said the humanitarian challenges were growing as marginalised and impoverished civilians were being affected by the protests: "Many of the destitute and daily wage earners are unable to find the jobs on which they depend for survival," said Kafley.

Aid workers targeted

A group of leading agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) said on 21 February that the operational room for manoeuvre was shrinking. "At the moment, the operational space in the Terai has been very much affected as development activities cannot be carried out," said a donor representative who preferred anonymity.

"The eastern Terai is especially looking very worrisome. All agencies are facing difficulties," said Phillippe Clerc, country director of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which is providing support to displaced people in Nepal.

Aid workers said the situation for them was becoming more challenging than during the decade-long armed conflict (1996-2006).

Even medical personnel and ambulances are being targeted and prevented from freely moving around by both protestors and security forces in the Terai, aid agencies said.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an ambulance carrying injured persons was vandalised in Mahottari District, some 130km south of Kathmandu. Medical workers had been assaulted and their medical kits seized.

However, Madhesi leaders deny they have placed any obstacles in the way of humanitarian work. Instead, they blamed government security forces for harassing aid workers.

Madhesi demands

The UDMF has said it will continue the strikes and demonstrations against the Nepalese government until its demands are met.

Most Madhesis - the dominant ethnic group in the Terai - continue to suffer from extreme poverty, high rates of illiteracy, unemployment and lack of citizenship due to past neglect of their plight and their exclusion from the development and political process.

The current campaign is designed to address the perceived wrongs of the past and improve the lives of the poor. Madhesi political groups have become increasingly successful over the past year or so in drawing attention to their plight, forcing political parties and the government to take note, according to independent analysts.

The UDMF has been demanding an autonomous region for the Madhesi people.

Apology:

We express our apology for not being able to publish Nepal Abroad last week (Saturday February 16 '08), and regret the inconvenience caused.
Nepal Abroad Management

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Exchange Rates in Nepal

Currency	Buying (Rs)	Selling (Rs)
US \$ 1	64.04	64.63
Canadian \$1	63.07	63.65
Euro 1	94.15	95.02
Pound Sterling 1	124.63	125.78
Australian \$1	58.65	59.19
Swiss Franc 1	58.43	58.97
Singapore Dollar	45.27	45.68
Japanese Yen 10	5.95	6.01
Chinese Yuan 1	8.95	9.03
Indian Rupees 100	160.00	160.15
Swedish Kroner 1	10.08	---
Danish Kroner 1	12.63	---
Hong Kong Dollar 1	8.21	---
Saudi Arab Riyal 1	17.08	---
Qatari Riyal 1	17.61	---
Thai Bhat 1	1.97	---
UAE Dirham 1	17.43	---
Malaysian Ringgit 1	19.83	---

[Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, 02.21.08]

Who Should Own Guns in America?

By Jela De Franceschi, Washington DC

Next month, the Supreme Court of the United States is expected to hear oral arguments on the 32-year-old law that restricts gun ownership in Washington, DC. It will be the first time in nearly 70 years that the high court will hear a case on whether the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees an individual or a collective right to own firearms.

Self-reliance as a feature of America's idea of liberty has deep roots in the nation's constitutional tradition. It begins, many experts say, with the country's frontier history, when muskets were used for hunting and protection by the first settlers in the New World. They add that self-defense and guns were also tied to America's Revolutionary War experience.

A Long History

"The American love affair with firearms is very old. It has to do with the fact that it was an armed citizenry that enabled the revolution against the British in the late 18th century," says Benjamin Wittes, Director in Public Law at the Brookings Institution here in Washington.

"At any given moment in American history, there is sort of a gun that kind of represents it — whether it's the musket in the hands of the militiamen or the Colt .45 in the Wild West or the Tommy Gun in the urban warfare of the gangster era," says Wittes.

"Then you tie in another dominant theme. From the very beginning in the United States, there was an enormous fear of what were called 'standing armies,'" says Ralph Rossum, who teaches political philosophy and the American Constitution at Claremont McKenna College in California.

"The Framing generation [i.e., America's Founding Fathers] was enormously suspicious of governmental power and wanted an armed militia. They worried about standing armies. Standing armies were often sources of corruption. And there was the fear that a standing army could be mobilized against the liberties of the people," says Rossum.

The idea of establishing militias was incorporated in the Second Amendment. The text consists of two clauses. One speaks of the necessity of creating "a well regulated Militia," the other speaks of "the right of the people to keep and bear arms."

Interpreting the Second Amendment

Most experts point to what they consider to be the ambiguous wording of the Second Amendment, which has resulted in two opposing interpretations of what it protects: individual liberties or states' rights.

The debate over whether it protects individual or collective rights

to possess firearms intensified in the second half of the 20th century. But in more than 200 years, the Supreme Court has rarely addressed the issue. The high court last looked at the Second Amendment in 1939.

But last year, the Supreme Court accepted a case that deals with the constitutionality of prohibiting private citizens from keeping guns in their homes. At issue is Washington, DC's 32-year-old law that bans the possession of firearms unless they are unloaded, locked or disassembled.

Eugene Volokh, who teaches constitutional law at the University of California at Los Angeles, says a federal appeals court ruled last year that the ban was unconstitutional.

"The DC Circuit [Court of Appeals], which is the federal court in charge of DC, held that in fact it is an individual right and that the gun ban violates that right. So now that there is this disagreement among courts, the U.S. Supreme Court has stepped in to decide the issue," says Volokh.

Supporters of individual liberties argue that in a free society each citizen must have the right to bear arms, and that this right safeguards all other rights Americans enjoy. But the opposing side contends that the Second Amendment has to do with the obligation citizens owe to the state to participate in a militia.

Legal scholar Eugene Volokh says such critics hold that the Second Amendment has nothing to do with individual rights. "Those who take a states' rights view argue that it is the right of the people as a collective entity acting through their states and state militias. So they focus on the first clause of the amendment, which is 'a well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free state'," says Volokh. "The individual rights view is that the purpose of the individual right is to maintain the armed citizenry as a means of protecting freedom against despotism. But the way that purpose is accomplished is by securing to individual people the right to keep and bear arms."

A Supreme Court Ruling

Volokh says the Supreme Court's ruling on the Washington, DC law - which is expected in the next few months - could be a landmark decision that answers the long-standing question of whether the Second Amendment guarantees an individual or a collective right.

But other scholars, including the Brookings Institution's Benjamin Wittes say that the case could be the first chapter in examining the constitutionality of gun control rather than the final word.

"If it is a collective right, then the issue goes away. Then any

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Canada: Government Expands Temporary Foreign Worker Services in Ontario and Atlantic Canada

Ottawa, Feb 11 (CIC): The Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, today announced an expansion of services to help employers in Ontario and Atlantic Canada meet their labour market needs with temporary foreign workers.

Two units are being established in Toronto and Moncton to serve as main points of contact for companies wishing to hire foreign workers in the two regions. These are in addition to three already established in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal.

"The addition of these two new temporary foreign worker units means that employers across Canada now have a dedicated point of service where they can get help getting the

workers they need," said Minister Finley. "The units will help make the process easier for employers, and will help strengthen local and regional economies."

Like the units in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal, the units in Toronto and Moncton will, among other things:

- provide advice to employers who plan to hire temporary foreign workers;
- facilitate the entry of workers in certain professions who do not require a visa and verification that there are no Canadians available;
- make the entry process smoother and more efficient by providing employers with accurate and up-to-date information;

- pre-screen supporting documents from employers to streamline the application process for such workers; and
- work with provinces to better meet regional needs.

Requests for temporary foreign workers for whom visas are required or who are in other professions would still be directed to Service Canada.

"Temporary foreign workers help support Canada's economic growth and prosperity, and I'm pleased that all regions of Canada will benefit from the exceptional service the units provide," added Minister Finley.

The units are one aspect of the Government of Canada's

Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which allows employers to hire foreign workers to meet their human resources needs when sufficient numbers of Canadian workers are not readily available. Recently, the government has taken a number of steps to improve the program. The 2007 budget provided \$50.5 million toward measures to further reduce processing delays and to establish mechanisms to monitor employer compliance with the terms and conditions of the program and address non-compliance.

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