At least two protestors were killed, about 30 wounded in Lahan as police opened fire to quell supporters of the Terai Janadhikar forum after they went on rampage attacking Government offices and security personnel at Lahan on Monday. The forum supporters have been on the agitation for the past five days demanding political autonomy for the region. The death toll so far has risen to three.

The Government imposed a 12-hour curfew beginning Monday evening as tension mounted and the forum threatened to intensify the agitation since the Government did not meet their demands - resignation of Home Minister K P Sitaula, apology from Maoist Chief Prachanda— by Monday afternoon, the deadline set by the agitators. The forum’s rage against the Maoists was a sequel to the killing of Ramesh Mahato, a local student by Maoist commander Shiaram Thakur on January 19, and his forcible cremation.

Ignoring all that Sitaula declared at a hurriedly called press conference in Kathmandu on Sunday to the effect almost absolving Maoists of the killing and accusing that the agitation in Terai was being instigated by the palace. “This is a total lie. We are for our political rights and autonomy under a federal set-up”, said Amaresh Narayan Jha, a forum leader who was released after three days detention in the capital on the charge of burning interim constitution. The Government, under pressure from the Maoists, hurriedly enforced the interim constitution on January 15 ignoring the forum’s demands. The forum is now being backed by two parallel Terai insurgent groups—Terai Janatantrik Mukti Morcha –both splinter groups of the Maoists. The Janadhikar forum is ostensibly the umbrella organization of the Terai right groups.

Of late, Maoist Chief Prachanda has been accusing that the Terai agitiation is being sponsored by the palace, something that Home Minister hinted recently whereas Maoist leader from Terai, Madhav Yadav says “both India and the palace are instigating it. There are also fears that the pro-Hinduva Rastriya Swamyam Sevak Sangh (RSS) elements in India who are not happy with Nepal’s recently acquired ‘secular status’ might create problems in Nepal using Terai areas which share border with India as base. There are also reports that fire up in the Terai came soon after the RSS family met in the Saraswati Sishu Mandir, educational wing of the RSS in Terai, in which the Madheshi Janadhikar forum leader Upendra Yadav, among others were participants. Altogether 17 people—14 protestors and three security personnel who were wounded in the clash in Lahan were brought to Kathmandu in a night vision army helicopter, and most of them admitted to the Army hospital on Monday itself. The Government however has not been contemplating to deploy the army yet, a senior government official said. “We are in the barrack as part of the understanding between the Maoists and the Government. But in their judgment, these parties decide to use our services, we are at their disposal”, said Brig Gen Bijaya Bahadur Thebe, Spokesperson of the Nepal Army.

The current round of agitation in the Terai emanated directly once the Government, under pressure from the Maoists, ignored their demands and unilaterally announced the interim constitution enforced on January 15. The Government action was retaliated by the burning of the constitution by the forum in Kathmandu. (With Shyam Sundar Yadav in Lahan)
Arbour's advice
Action not words enough to end impunity

Louise Arbour, UN High commissioner for human rights, was not at all a happy person when she last visited Nepal. She felt betrayed as King Gyanendra, contrary to the assurance given to her, took over all the powers and suspended all freedom days later. Her visit this time comes on a happy note now that democracy has returned.

Arbour's worries have reasons to grow.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is absent almost for eight months now and majority of the past 147 recommendations by the Commission's office have not been acted upon.

But challenges have not receded, and that's one message she has been conveying from every forum available.

And the loudest message she has delivered soon after she arrived on a six-day visit beginning Jan 10 is not something that would cheer the Government of the day and the Maoists who are waiting to be part of the interim government soon. "General Amnesty to those who were guilty of grave human right violations during the years of conflict can not be an acceptable way of long-term resolution of the conflict", Arbour said.

This clearly goes against the deal reached by the Government and the Maoists which empowers the cabinet to grant general amnesty to any convict.

Arbour's messages in public and private when she met Prime Minister and other leaders were without ambigram—End the culture of impunity, and prove it by taking actions against those who were guilty. She had first hand experience of agony of families who had lost their family members during the conflict.

In Bardia she spent time with such families and experienced their grief.

"The first priority of the present Government should be to make those from both sides accountable for the grave cases of human rights violations.

Human right groups echo her sentiments; "If steps are not taken towards ending the culture of impunity during the present transitional phase, the fire of conflict will spread faster than most people think.

In fact, representatives of the victims of Maoists excesses told Arbour that they were losing all hope of getting justice after the Maoists joined the interim Government. And this is something her special Representative Lena Sundh has to keep monitoring and putting pressure on the interim Government and scheduled CA election.

Arbour's worries have reasons to grow. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is absent almost for eight months now and majority of the past 147 recommendations by the Commission's office have not been acted upon. "Families of those who lost their lives and those who disappeared must be given suitable compensation and the guilty punished", Arbour said.

She was mostly positive and optimistic in her statements about the peace process, the guilty being brought to book.

But most of her suggestions expressed her deep concern about the inability of the Government to address the issues of deep-rooted inequalities and discrimination and establish durable peace". She also suggested that political parties needed to demonstrate will power to end social and all forms of exclusion.

Recovery Order
Koirala in CPP leadership

Govinda Pariyar

Prime Minister of the interim Government once simply legitimizes Koirala's continuation as the leader of the congress parliamentary party on Tuesday. Completion of the mere formality on one person has not been taken kindly by his own party leaders. Newly elected president of the Nepal Bar association, Vishwakanta Mainali has warned that the consequences would be serious if the Government did not amend constitution to ensure freedom of the judiciary.

While the arrangement under the interim constitution to have judiciary and legislature under control of an all powerful executive and the Prime Minister with sweeping powers has been criticized by the bar, concentration of power on one person has not been taken kindly by his own party leaders. Newly elected president of the Nepal Bar association, Vishwakanta Mainali has warned that the consequences would be serious if the Government did not amend constitution to ensure freedom of the judiciary.

"Once Koirala began acting as head of the state, he should quit as party chief", said Narayan Asharya, a prominent dissident leader and member of the working committee of the Nepali congresses. But Asharya is in minority, although the recent nomination of ten lawmakers by Koirala has raised serious concern people.

"The method Koirala adopted in selection of the MPs lacked transparency as well as democratic norms. It was purely his decision as an individual". Arjun Narasinh K.C, another working committee member of the party told newsfront.

Koirala's formalisation as the parliamentary party leader comes in the wake of criticism and controversy over his administering oath of office to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court without his having taken oath as the 'Interim head of the state'. With the interim constitution coming into effect from January 15, the king remains virtually out of job as all his ceremonial roles will be discharged by the Prime Minister.

While the arrangement under the interim constitution to have judiciary and legislature under control of an all powerful executive and the Prime Minister with sweeping powers has been criticized by the bar, concentration of power on one person has not been taken kindly by his own party leaders. Newly elected president of the Nepal Bar association, Vishwakanta Mainali has warned that the consequences would be serious if the Government did not amend constitution to ensure freedom of the judiciary. But the politics is taking precedence over constitutional issues at the moment.

"Once Koirala began acting as head of the state, he should quit as party chief", said Narayan Asharya, a prominent dissident leader and member of the working committee of the Nepali congresses. But Asharya is in minority, although the recent nomination of ten lawmakers by Koirala has raised serious concern people. The method Koirala adopted in selection of the MPs lacked transparency as well as democratic norms. It was purely his decision as an individual". Arjun Narasinh K.C, another working committee member of the party told newsfront.

Maoist retreat in Dhulikhel

Backfire

Hotel owners of Dhulikhel took an unprecedented assertive posture when the employees union affiliated to the Communist party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) padlocked nine hotels there demanding salary and other facilities at par with the five star hotels.

The lockout was however, lifted on January 22 after a perusal of the demands and facilities being enjoyed showed that the strike was not justified. The Hotel Association of Nepal mediated in the peaceful resolution of what could have snowballed into a major set back to the growing hotel business in Dhulikhel.

A hotel owner said that the HAN brokered peace agreed that there would be no increase in the salary of the employees for three years, but all those who have been on contract for more than 240 days would automatically be made permanent with effect from January 1, 2007.

Although the employees had demanded salary at par with the five star hotels, they would be entitled to monthly salary ranging from Rs 1250 to Rs 3070 depending upon the hotel category they belonged to.

"We had been paying all these facilities to the employees and Maoists demands were thoroughly unjustified. And we were determined not to accept unjust interference of the Maoists", a Hotel owner who participated in the tripartite discussion said in the meeting.

Interim Head of the state and the all powerful Prime Minister G P Koirala is all set to be elected leader of the congress parliamentary party on Tuesday. Completion of the mere formalities simply legitimizes Koirala's continuation as the Prime Minister of the interim Government once he joins it, some two weeks later.

Koirala's formalisation as the parliamentary
James F Moriarty: firm and flexible

James F Moriarty is perhaps the most vilified and hated diplomat in Kathmandu. Almost echoing top Maoist leaders, Home Minister K P Sitaula literally called him a 'liar' when Moriarty expressed fears that Maoists could take advantage of the porous Bihar-Nepal border to get old arms as the process of depositing Maoist arms in the container is underway. That hardly deters him. Last week, he repeated what he's been saying all along—that the U S welcomes the peace process and the latest decision of the Maoists joining parliament. But the Maoists, he insists, need to demonstrate conduct and behavior matching their words.

And in almost a challenging tone, he says no one will be pleased more than himself if he is proved wrong. And clearly the onus to prove Moriarty wrong lies on the Maoists. Is the challenge acceptable comrades?

Visibly young and tender looking guerrillas are posing tough challenge to the UN team which has begun verification of arms and armies in the designated cantonments of the Maoists. However, no one has been confirmed as a 'child soldier', information coming from the camps said.

"In case of any controversy over the age of the guerrillas, the issue will be sorted out by the team in consultation with the Maoist commanders", a Maoist source said.

So far around 2,200 Maoist guerrillas have been verified in two camps—Shahidkhor in Chitwan and Jhyaltung Danga in Nawalparasi. Arms verification which is to follow the completion of the guerrilla verification process is likely to be completed in the next ten days. A team of 20 including two from the UN special team, four from the UNDP and 14 from the retired Gurkhas of Indian Army is engaged in the verification process of the two places. Access has been denied to the media persons on insistence from the top Maoist leaders.

Although it has been officially stated that arms verification will begin soon after the guerrilla verification process is over, it has not disclosed the way it would be done. As per the information available, arms and weapons which Maoists captured from the security forces and private license holders, and the ones Maoists bought and manufactured would be segregated and deposited in containers under the single lock system with the key under Maoist possession.

Dipak Gyawali in Butwal

If openings of new banks is any indicator, Nepal's economy is in for an upward mobility.

At least three National banks - Global Bank limited, Citizen bank and the Prime commercial bank are joining the fast expanding banking industry in Nepal. Global Bank which is basically going to focus on 'remittance and foreign currency service' started its operation in Birgunj and Kathmandu recently.

Chairman of the Prime bank Narendra Bajracharya said, "we will start our operation within three months after we get the Letter of Intent from the Nepal Rashtra Bank." Both the Prime and Citizen banks will be located in the capital.

All the three banks will have 1000 million paid up capital and around 2000 million rupees authorized capital each.

That will qualify them to be a 'A Grade' commercial bank. The banking system in Nepal has largely been plagued by huge default as a result of which the total non-performing assets has almost touched the 30-billion rupees figure. As a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) Nepal had agreed to open the International Banks from 2010 making the sector more competitive.

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Arbour and impunity

Nepal has long been known, criticized and condemned at times both home and abroad for the culture of impunity that thrives here. That clearly means, certain individuals, families and class are not only beyond the reach of law, they are clearly above it. Impunity is the clear anti-thesis of rule of law without which Democracy cannot be an effectively functioning system of governance.

With the collapse of King Gyanendra's authoritarian rule in April and subsequent advent of democracy, one would naturally imagine that those who suppressed the people's movement and all those who were beneficiary of the culture of impunity would not be able to enjoy immunity any further. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour's emphasis to end the "long-standing practice of impunity" is both understandable and laudable. After all, Arbour has been a consistent and strong voice in favour of restoration of democracy when it was eclipsed, and what she advises the Government of the day will carry no less weight.

Culture of impunity can not be ended with the agenda of political vendetta and the revenge which the present Government is openly pursuing. The commission investigated to form into the 'issue of Government fund' and excessive use of force to suppress the April movement was not only political in nature and composition, its conduct was anything but transparent. It clearly acted as the persecution wing of the Government, specially the Home Minister, who arbitrarily pursued the politics of vendetta and reward even before the commission started its work.

The Government has refused to give a copy of the inquiry commission's final report to Arbour's local office. The reason for this refusal is simple. The composition and conduct of the commission, besides the method it applied in investigation are not only devoid of transparancy and impartiality, they were out and out political. In fact, political revenge has now emerged as the new culture of the Government. And this, at a time, when the interim constitution has totally done away with the principle of separation of powers bringing apex judiciary and legislature under the executive headed by an all powerful Prime Minister will only mean democracy today faces a threat as big as it did during the King's authoritarian regime. The country no doubt, is cautiously optimisitic about the outcome of the peace process, but the key political players are used to failing people.

The country is also waiting for the formation of a "Truth and reconciliation commission" so that those guilty of atrocities during the time of conflict are brought to book in one or the other form and that the healing process gets an institutional boost. While the Maoists participation in parliament has paved the way for the rebels joining the interim Government, there are fears, especially among the victims of Maoist atrocities that they would not get justice or compensation in any form. Arbour is undoubtedly the right authority to give a clear message that all the victims of the conflict—no matter which side the perpetrators of the crime belong to—are entitled to justice, and in the changed political set-up no one should be able to enjoy impunity.
Unravelling Inclusiveness:
Challenges Ahead

The Maoist movement made substantive contributions in raising and highlighting the issues related to the extremely alienated and marginalized peoples of Nepal. It will take a long time, protracted action and a consistent commitment from the Maoists to prove how genuinely they are inclined to addressing these problems. These apprehensions arise since the top leadership in the Maoist party is also dominated by high-caste individuals as in other out-of-gear “mainstream” political parties.

The inclusion debate, largely concentrated in the Kathmandu valley, is in fashion today. One sees that among academics, the media and the civil society, topped by funding from scores of clueless foreign missions. This monopolization of the debate by valley-based elite itself shows that nothing much is going to happen as their concerns have very often proved to be superficial. This is what happened during the making of the 1962 and 1990 constitutions. The first challenge for the Maoists today therefore is to take this debate to places far removed from the capital and make it as broad based as possible. Let the stakeholders from all these distant locations speak their minds and shape the outcome of the debate.

As in other crucial issues that pertain to Nepal today there has been no real debate or long-term vision on this crucial issue. In the name of debates one sees floating emotions, political compromises and blatant patronage. Nepal’s traditionally excluded and deprived populace do not require individual symbols of inclusion in the likes of Hembangs, Bewarokamas and Aneats. Such selective patronage, in fact, later become the edifice of further deprivation and marginalisation. This is what happened in India for many years. The recent Sancha Committee report on Muslims in India clearly shows the negligible impact on such attempts at inclusion when you have only elite Muslims within the nation’s inclusive matrixes. In fact, what the Nepali political elite has done for the last six decades is copy the tactics of such exclusive patronization of the Ranas and Shahs in the name of doing out something to the alienated lot. Whereas the criticality of the situation demands serious introspection, followed by a visionary policy and large-scale institutionalisation of the most trusted and acclaimed Secretaries was Theodre Manen, a Dalit. The Chief Minister of Sikkim is Pawan Chamling who was preceded by a Bihuta, a Gurung, a Limbu and a Chettri. The Gorkha National Liberation Front Leader is a Tamang and the speaker in the Assamese Assembly is a Rai. Chokila Iyer, former foreign Secretary of India, Louis Bankis, the Jazz musician and several Olympians, including C.S. Gurung, were the products of a genuine and fine freedom and accommodation with greater autonomy? Could it also mean the right to secede from the emerging “Republic of Nepal”? We only see vague interpretations of these declarations from the media but nothing that reflects a clear and deeper understanding of the issue by the Maoists. Was it merely a compulsion to make inclusion a major platform in order to mobilize their grassroots cadres?

Inclusiveness anywhere is a protracted and long-drawn-out process. The Indian Government regularly includes new castes and tribes in the scheduled lists. New states are being created and greater decentralisation made mandatory by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution. “Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth” is the theme of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). The impact of the debate on inclusion has shown definite results. Which country can boast of having a President (a Muslim) from a community that makes up 11.7% of the population, a Prime Minister (a Sikh) from a group that is less than 2% strong, and the president of the ruling party (a Christian) representing just 2.3% of the population. All three are actively functioning today. This is a genuine example of inclusiveness, religious-ethnic tolerance and respect for multi-culturalism. But despite all the liberal provisions in the constitution, the issue of the “other backward classes” is only just hotting up the debate on inclusion.

In all these respects, Nepal has a long way to go. There is always a huge gap between the cup and lip. The relevance of the Maoists coming into power would largely depend upon their being able to narrow this gap. 

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A Way of Life

Education that becomes a way of life each day and each moment and a right and a way of life for all was envisioned by Maria Montessori an Italian doctor turned educationist. She saw education in the future without traditional tests and replaced it with a holistic evaluation of the development of the child. In her approach, the outcomes of intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual development were to be evaluated with the broader picture in mind - how to tap the potential and purpose of each individual.

Maria believed that at an early age a child when observed in a prepared environment indicated his or her intrinsic strengths. When opportunities were provided to exercise choices and the will - with freedom of movement and choice - it led to wiser and maturer development. Her method inspired educational environments to address holistic development of a child with physical movement and development material, educational and technological materials, spiritual and psychological supports and a diverse range of social support. Anything short of the above were inadequate environments.

Education is not just limited to what is read, lectured, memorized and/or recalled. Education is what is learnt, experienced, reflected, assimilated and implemented in real life with consequences. Not all learnt theory can be practised in everyday life. Yet the process of questioning, discussing, reviewing, reflecting, experiencing needs to be given the respect that is due to encourage the process of development. Skills that are the essence of work - reading, writing and assessing are the natural processes in students that follow the natural thought process. Reference becomes a natural phenomena, the urge to know and learn, to search and find, to create and share with presentations becomes a way to consolidate the knowledge. A classroom then vibrates with interaction rather than controlled by silence.

Development becomes effortless and with concentration. Work then becomes a pattern of life when the drive comes from an inner source that addresses the interest of the learner. Teachers thereby become the presenters of lessons and the discoverers of the topic as they proceed to share and observe the development of the child. They know that they must address the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual need of the student to proceed on a journey that requires concentration, drive and respect from the participants. They can visualize the birth of the concept with clarity and yet are humble enough to turn and change for an improved form.

The trust in each human potential takes away from the traditional evaluation in grading, acceptance and rejection as per the test results. Equal opportunities are inevitable and the right to reach a highest potential and self-discipline. When an intrinsic evaluation and introspective participation is required from all in a group there is a sense of conscious ness, self acceptance that urges the student to self-commit to reach further and higher.

Smaller classes are vital to address the queries and practice of all in the group. Meaningful discussions and practice take longer to achieve results. Physical upkeep and agendas that address the healthy growth nurture positive involvement in other areas of study. Opportunities to express, address and share emotional issues during educational years of change and growth prove to be the foundation of strong individuals. Individuals who can understand their own selves and realize their own strengths and weaknesses will set clearer goals for their own lives and integrate their educational abilities towards their focus with self - motivation. Ample time and energy needs to be allotted for the various areas.

Teachers, administration and students then will all become a community that accepts the diversity of their own cultures and strengths and respect that of the others.

Teachers, administration and students will all become a community that accepts the diversity of their own cultures and strengths and respect that of the others.
Yubraj Ghimire

He was barely noticed by the media in the past four years since his retirement from the Royal Nepal Army. But suddenly Kumar Phudung has become the subject of debate, with some calling him a hero and others a ‘villain’, a ‘defector’, a ‘deserter’ and even a possible mole of the ‘terrorists’. Maj Gen Phudung is now a member of the interim parliament as a nominee of the Communist party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN-M).

So how does it feel to be on the other side? He has already learnt the art of not getting provoked by hostile reactions. He fondly remembers those 37 years he spent in the army, beginning with his rigorous but fruitful training in the Indian Military Academy back in 1965. “I was always keen that a realistic defense policy should replace the imaginary one,” he said, adding that he sincerely tried to do that as a military officer and failed. “If I can give my input from a different forum like the parliament—why should I not do it?” he told newsfront at his residence in Sanepa. Unlike most army generals, his living room does not have portraits of the Shah kings except one of King Tribhuvan, who had included Phudung’s father, Lakdhoj Limbu, in the royal advisory council in 1955.

As a village boy from Tehrathum in eastern Nepal, Phudung had never set his sights to join the RNA. He concentrated more on his studies having to trudge 12 km a day to school and back. But, after graduating high school, he completed an Intermediate in Science, a qualification that made him eligible to apply for a second lieutenant’s post.

As a colonel during a ‘brigade exercise’, he risked his job by challenging the futility of annual ritualistic debate as to what the army should do in case of external intervention. Phudung spoke for nearly 50 minutes to an audience held in pin-drop silence. Fortunately, his outburst did not attract any punishment even though it was contemplated upon. Years later, when the country faced the Maoist insurgency and the RNA became involved in it, Phudung like any other top general, was in favour of “Maoists being contained” militarily. He expressed his opinion to King Gyanendra when he was among the generals summoned. “I told the king that, of course, the Maoists need to be contained militarily, but they are fast making inroads in areas the state has not looked into. The Maoists are targeting to bring the oppressed, ethnic groups and the marginalized into their fold and the state can defeat them only through restructuring the present power-set up. The king, I guess, was impressed,” said Phudung.

But how did he suddenly attract the attention of the Maoists? Last year, Phudung started publishing his articles on the need for state restructuring that would include recognizing ethnic nationalities, thereby almost reaffirming what the Maoists have been saying. He, however, insists that it’s not an issue that only the Maoists have been raising. Singapore is an example of where this idea has been implemented successfully, he adds.

The point Phudung made through his articles may not have caught many eyes. But apparently it was enough to impress the Maoist leadership, with whom he claims he had had no contact of any kind previously. “Tanka Aanwahan, a district-level Maoist leader called me on Jan 4, asking me to fly down to Kathmandu as the Maoist leaders were keen to ‘see me’,” he says.

Two days later, he met Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai. He recalls what he told them. “I am willing to make my contribution towards formulating a national strategy for national defense and an independent foreign policy. But you will be wrong if you expect me to get the Nepal army on your side.” Even those who accuse Phudung of having betrayed the army believe he speaks his mind, at times without thinking of the consequences. Those who know him say that he is fiercely independent. After ten minutes, Prachanda conceded that Phudung would be working independently in the parliament and that he will not have to follow the Maoists’ party whip.

“The collective identities of its nationalities alone would give Nepal its national identity now,” he asserts. “I will be able to make small contributions in my own way.” But the general turned ‘comrade’ has many challenges to face and many accusations, including that of being a ‘traitor’ to answer to, as he begins his new career at the age of 60.
The emerging new institutional culture requires the youth to become innovative, skillful at multiple assignments and able to integrate diverse sources of knowledge into their political works.

Modern democracy flourishes with a culture of compromise among equal citizens while exclusion, vengeance and self-aggrandizement continue to characterize Nepal’s political culture. The youths have a role to play in the mediation of this growing chasm through the sovereignty of constitutional politics. If the progress of this productive human capital is squandered through lack of sound value framework, the optimum of Nepalese youth may turn into political confusion. This in turn may result in imbalance between the spirit of the young and needs of society which together may trigger a systemic polarization of politics.

A number of jarring concepts articulated by political class about democracy are diverting the attention of the youth much beyond their search for legitimate rights, recognition and dignity. The industrial-technological revolution has placed democracy on a nation-state scale as opposed to democratic city-state (Nagar Rajya), folk democracy (Loktantra) of grassroots organizations, inclusive democracy (Samabesi Prajatantra) as articulated by ecologists, radical left and anarchists, a nativist alternative (Gana Rajya) rooted in Hindu epics or federal democratic republic (Sanghyana Ganarajya) of Leninist variety. Only a framework of democracy at the national level can define the concept of citizenship, bring the benefits of globalization and address the suffocation of genuine civil society and a class of globally mobile elites not connected to national loyalties by ‘partycracy’.

Modern democracy requires the connection of citizenship with the nation-state, instead of a pre-political state of nature and anti-state democracy.

Say no to sycophancy

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The anti-systemic spirit of youth provides a corrective mechanism for democratic resilience. However, there is a need to reduce the partisan volatility of youth and socialize them into public politics. Without this, they cannot see, feel and experience themselves in a system. Transformation of subsidiary identities into equal citizens and citizens into a deliberative public is the way to link those who are refusing to acknowledge the systemic ties. After all, civic culture rooted in a vibrant youth politics alone can ensure a secure future.

The society faces a stark contrast. While democracy has given votes to all citizens, economy has given power to a few. To avoid this contradiction, a system of property rights to the poor, that of course includes voting rights must be established to avoid the inevitability—a future class conflict. Such conflicts can spoil the country’s vision and resolve the widespread generational and value conflict. This is also an option to link those who are refusing to acknowledge the systemic ties.

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A number of jarring concepts articulated by political class about democracy are diverting the attention of the youth much beyond their search for legitimate rights, recognition and dignity. The industrial-technological revolution has placed democracy on a nation-state scale as opposed to democratic city-state (Nagar Rajya), folk democracy (Loktantra) of grassroots organizations, inclusive democracy (Samabesi Prajatantra) as articulated by ecologists, radical left and anarchists, a nativist alternative (Gana Rajya) rooted in Hindu epics or federal democratic republic (Sanghyana Ganarajya) of Leninist variety. Only a framework of democracy at the national level can define the concept of citizenship, bring the benefits of globalization and address the suffocation of genuine civil society and a class of globally mobile elites not connected to national loyalties by ‘partycracy’.

Modern democracy requires the connection of citizenship with the nation-state, instead of a pre-political state of nature and anti-state democracy. Once national democracy is couched into local terms it not only reduces its universal potential rooted in human rights and public international laws, but also confines it to a local version of elite’s fiefdom. It is a rationalization of pre-modern politics of divide and rule which lack coherence between law and politics. Primacy of interest-based politics over constitutional principles undermines both the sovereignty of rule of law, human rights and social justice. Biological instincts rooted into anti-politics can easily undermine the very reconciliatory ideology of democracy.

In Nepal there is a great divide between the rural and the urban youth generated by geography, sociology, gaps in awareness and empowerment. Disparity in education, communication and economy have intensified this and weakened the potential of politics for social and system cohesion. The realistic and liberal values of the youth must be tapped upon to begin reconciliation in society. Isolation of the excluded youth also need to go hand in hand with developing technical skills, critical thinking, partnership and educational achievement to be able to move away from a political culture of clientlism.

The emerging new institutional culture requires the youth to become innovative, skillful at multiple assignments and able to integrate diverse sources of knowledge into their political works. This is essential to liberate them from a culture of unaccountable activism. Integrating the youth into national policy can increase their voice and visibility and enable them to exercise their citizenship rights. The state has a major responsibility to try to level the playing field for the rural and the urban youth so that the talented get opportunities to realize their potential.

The anti-systemic spirit of youth provides a corrective mechanism for democratic resilience. However, there is a need to reduce the partisan volatility of youth and socialize them into public politics. Without this, they cannot see, feel and experience themselves in a system. Transformation of subsidiary identities into equal citizens and citizens into a deliberative public is the way to link those who are refusing to acknowledge the systemic ties. After all, civic culture rooted in a vibrant youth politics alone can ensure a secure future.

The society faces a stark contrast. While democracy has given votes to all citizens, economy has given power to a few. To avoid this contradiction, a system of property rights to the poor, that of course includes voting rights must be established to avoid the inevitability—a future class conflict. Such conflicts can spoil the country’s vision and resolve the widespread generational and value conflict. This is also an option to link those who are refusing to acknowledge the systemic ties.

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No incentives for tourists

Despite the peace process in place, adverse advisory continues to discourage tourists – something the tourism entrepreneurs are not too happy about.

Madhusudan Poudyal

The fact that the Maoist rebels have joined the interim parliament and the appreciation expressed by the world community welcoming this development has hardly been reflected in the travel advisories put out by certain countries. Most countries led by the United States continue to send out warnings dissuading their citizens from visiting Nepal.

The US advisory continues to advise that Maoists have not given up abduction, extortion and intimidation, and that a quick bandh call is a possibility at any time. Other countries have not exactly followed the mode of the American warning, but they have nevertheless warned their citizens. As a result, Nepal has not gained much in terms of rising tourist numbers, even during peace, something the tourism entrepreneurs are not too happy about.

“Nepal is one of the safest destinations in South Asia,” well-known tourism expert, Karma Shakya, told newsfront, adding that not a single tourist was killed during the 10 years of insurgency, while a large number of tourists had lost their lives to terrorist attacks in many parts of the world. A joint request by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA) to the US embassy in Kathmandu to review the advisory has had hardly any effect. “All we were told was that the advisory simply reflected the reality of the situation as it existed today,” said Shakya.

The United Kingdom’s travel advisory appears moderate in comparison although it suggests that its citizens “must have medical insurance before visiting Nepal”. Australia, another major tourist exporter to Nepal continues to have Nepal’s “fluid political situation” in its advisory that acts as a deterrent to potential travelers. The New Zealand advisory talks about “some risks” and Canada alerts its citizens that “a high level of security carelessness is required” for those visiting the country.

Neighbouring India, a huge reservoir of tourists for Nepal, accounts for the 50 percent of total tourist arrivals. According to the NTB, India has not issued any adverse travel advisories regarding Nepal. But frequent ‘bandhs’ and incidents of violence in the Tarai region along the Indian border over the past couple of months have affected the flow of tourists from the south using the surface route, official sources said.

Tourism accounts for 10 percent of the total foreign exchange. The peace process which began some eight months ago has been accompanied by only a marginal increase of 2.3 per cent over the previous year. Tourist arrivals in the country was only 300,000 in 2006 against the country’s capacity to host and manage a million tourists per year.

According to the official information, while there was nominal increase in the number of tourists from Japan, China and South Korea, numbers from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, Belgium and Switzerland fell by around 40 percent during this period. For airlines like Bangladesh, Air Arabia, Korean Air and Air China, the fall in the number of tourists has come as a shock since they have already announced operations to Nepal in anticipation of the improvement in the situation.
Bangladesh poll

ULFA funding candidates

KOLKATA: Even as Indian security forces crack down on the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), it is reportedly funding select candidates in the now deferred general elections in Bangladesh, well informed sources say here.

The sources say that ULFA is providing money to certain candidates from a cross section of parties in the election expected to produce a stiff contest between the two main alliances led by the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and the Awami League.

According to reports from Bangladesh, ULFA, the most active insurgent group in northeastern India, is pumping over Rs.300 million (nearly $6 million) in the polls.

“ULFA has to pay protection money to candidates in Bangladesh said Barua’s funds are being managed and assisted by a senior functionary of one of the parties fighting elections. The ULFA leadership has managed to stay in the country for close to 15 years regardless of many issues including terrorism, the source added.

Chief K.P.S. Gill says that ULFA’s funds are being used to fund candidates in the election, but said that there is “no reason to feel threatened” by China’s space program.

According to reports from Bangladesh, ULFA’s funds are being used to fund candidates in the election, but said that there is “no reason to feel threatened” by China’s space program.
For nearly two weeks now, old and new media - print, radio, television, chatrooms, blogs - have been clogged with debates around Jade Goody's unseemly conduct towards Shilpa Shetty. The show has indeed highlighted the economic strength of Britain's Asian community - not only as consumers but also as wealth creators. The strength of what is called the 'brown pound' has become more important at a time when Indian investment has been flooding into Britain and creating jobs.

Shilpa Shetty will be long remembered for doing what the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and institutions have been struggling to do - put racism on top of Britain's public agenda.

In the past, the issue has been lurking around for some time but not under such blinding media light. That 'Celebrity Big Brother' show has come under the spotlight. The last time racism hit the headlines - not to this extent - was in 1999 when the inquiry into Afro-Caribbean teenager Stephen Lawrence's murder was in 1999. But large numbers of the white community have also voiced revulsion over Goody's 'colourful' comments. Driven by political correctness or not, Goody's unseemly conduct towards Shilpa Shetty touched a raw nerve in Britain's large non-white minority. The media has been flooded with debates around Jade Goody's unseemly conduct towards Shilpa Shetty. The show has indeed highlighted the economic strength of Britain's Asian community - not only as consumers but also as wealth creators. The strength of what is called the 'brown pound' has become more important at a time when Indian investment has been flooding into Britain and creating jobs.

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Beckham's move

Prayag Ghimire

At his prime, David Beckham was considered arguably the best footballer in the world. He was quick on the wings, his crossing was sublime and his free kicks were magic. But that was then. Now, at 31 years of age, Beckham has minimal playing time. Beckham has been booted off the English roaster and his only work at Real Madrid is warming up the bench, yet he is now the talk of football fans around the world. How did that happen?

There can only be two reasons why a player continues to be in the limelight. Either that the player is doing wonders on the pitch or it has to be something that has happened outside it. Looking at the form of Beckham is in now, the first option gets canceled out, leaving us with the other one which indeed appears to be the case. After not being offered a contract extension by Real Madrid, Beckham was shown the door. Many clubs were after his signature and one of them was expected to snap him up. The big clubs after him were Arsenal, Chelsea, Tottenham, New Castle and Celtic.

So it came as a shock when David Beckham announced that he had joined the MLS team LA Galaxy. Then came in the details of the deal. It was confirmed that Beckham had signed a 5-year deal with the team starting June 2007 for which he would be paid around 250 million dollars.

After the announcement, speculations have been rife as to why Beckham joined the LA Galaxy. Some said it was purely for the money and others disagreed. Beckham himself said that he had made the decision because his academy was in the U.S.A and that he would be there to promote the game. Well, by now every one has an opinion on this and I'm no exception. He may deny it forever but it looks like his first priority was the money. Beckham is already the richest footballer on the planet. And 50 million dollars a year is just too huge a temptation. He is also a marketing icon and earns a lot through advertisement. It has also been widely conjectured that David Beckham's wife, former spice girl Victoria, was the driving force behind her husband's decision. Victoria has long expressed her desire to settle in the U.S.A and this was the chance. Posh has earned millions of dollars in advertisements from American products; and her good friends like Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes also live there. There are also rumours that Beckham's next destination is Hollywood. Love for football seems to figure last on the list.

The MLS is not a huge league and an easier ground to play in than in the Spanish or English league. Beckham will surely be the biggest name in the MLS and he cannot be ignored. Beckham thus will be chosen for all the matches and will get lots of playing time.

His move is not without significance. David Beckham will not be joining the LA Galaxy until June which means Real Madrid has time to adapt without him on the pitch. For Beckham, it is a farewell from the top level of football and he will never get to play for England again. All said and done, he will be teaching the young ones and earning mega-bucks and so congratulations to him.

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