Maoists may have to deposit more arms by the next week to take the process of the formation of the interim Government to a credible direction. Prime Minister G P Koirala is likely to raise the issue with Maoist Chief Prachanda in view of mounting concern and doubts at home and abroad that the quantity registered by the Maoists with the U N team led by Ian Martin was far too less compared to what they have.

What the Prime Minister wants, his key aides say, is that Maoists should deposit anywhere between 800 to 1000 pieces of weapons besides explosives. ‘Maoists should not be averse to doing that’, Prime Minister Koirala is believed to have assured some diplomats and visiting dignitaries when they called on him recently.

Registration of only 3000 plus arms with the U N does not account for nearly 781 pieces of weapons which Maoists had captured from security agencies during the decade of conflict and clashes. Maoists are reportedly also to be in possession of Chinese revolvers and explosives which they have not disclosed. ‘Many killings outside the incidents of direct clashes have been attributed to revolvers. There cannot be an atmosphere of election free from fear and intimidation without the revolvers being registered along with explosives’, Minister for Physical Infrastructure Planning and Construction, Gopal Man Shrestha told newsfront.

Koirala’s assertion in Biratnagar on Saturday that Maoists must behave to qualify to be part of the Interim Government stemmed from his confidence and Maoists ‘positive’ response about registering more arms, diplomatic sources said.

‘There are reasons for Koirala to insist for this. Prachanda’s recent statement that palace was plotting to kill some American officials has embarrassed the Prime Minister to the hilt’, a top security official told newsfront, adding, ‘disarming’ every group with arms will be the logical first step before the Government, and Maoists fall in that category.

Koirala’s return from Biratnagar is likely to see himself in command of the security agencies. ‘You should not be surprised if Nepal Army is mobilized in case there is deterioration of situation in Terai’, PMO sources said. ‘Yes, Koirala nearly gave that indication to us when he complained about the virtual absence of the Government when we met him in Biratnagar’, a local businessman told newsfront.

Koirala also told them that he would fire Home Minister K P Sitaula in minutes if the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) leader Upendra ‘Yadav convinced him that he is in control of the situation and could stop the movement at will. ‘I will remove him if Yadav suspends the movement for a week’, the businessman quoted Koirala.

But MJF is apparently suspecting a foul play—that the Home Minister is trying to cause a split among the Terai forces by engineering a new axis of Maoists, a part of the Congress party and Nepal Sadhbhavana Party—Anandi Devi in support of the bill moved in parliament to give more power and representation to the Terai. ‘This would trigger a dangerous revolt as 47 members belonging to different major political parties sort of rebelled by defying the whip in parliament during the voting on the bill’, a MJF leader said. ‘If Maoists are brought to the interim Government without addressing the Terai problem, Government will go ruthlessly against us and that will have far more serious impact not only on the law and order situation, but on the integrity of the country’, MJF warned.
Adoption awareness

International Conference on Inter-Country Adoption that began Sunday in Kathmandu takes place amidst controversies arising from irregularities and alleged corruption in adoption of the Nepali children by foreign nationals.

The conference takes place in the wake of France suspending ‘adoption’ effective from January 2007 in Nepal although the general trend in the past five years has noticeably increased.

The conference organized jointly by the Government of Nepal and the Child NGO Federation, are intended to encourage transparency and uniformity in the child adoption business. UNICEF hopes the conference will lead to the ratification of The Hague Convention on Inter-Country adoption and the adoption of national laws and mechanisms to regulate in-country and inter-country adoption. Ms. Gillian Melsop, UNICEF’s Representative in Nepal said that adoption should always be the last resort for the child since every child has the right to know and to be cared for by his or her own parents, wherever possible.

Serving the underprivileged

Vicki Educational and Development Foundation (VEDEFON) plans to set-up educational institutions, mainly schools, in different parts of the country while continuing with its current level of involvement in the capital.

This was announced by the Head of the Foundation, Vicki Subirana, during a Science Exhibition in Nepal Kathalbhata School, at Manamaju, Kathmandu. The school which is being supported by the foundation for more than 15 years imports free education to children from socially and economically backward families.

Vicki Subirana, Spanish by birth has prescribed and practiced an alternative model of education in the capital. She said, “...the Government will be extending all help in spread of this pattern of education which we want to follow.”

VEDEFON has supported hostel facilities, skill development and micro-finance programmes for women belonging to backward groups apart from supporting schools and informal education schemes.

Another milestone for Surya Nepal

Surya Nepal has been conferred with the SA 8000-2001 Social Accountability Certification from Det Norske Veritas (DNV) for the first time, based on the audit carried out by DNV in December 2006.

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The categorisation by the company, Vicki Subirana, Spanish by birth which it operates, “...the US disposes GOOF-UP...
Bhutanese refugees in Patthi camp

The Government is all set to expedite the process of third country resettlement for the Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal for the past 15 years. Prime Minister G P Koirala assured the visiting U S Assistant Under Secretary of State for Management, Henrietta H Fore, that the process of third country settlement should begin immediately.

The U S has offered to absorb a bulk of 60,000 refugees with EU, Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and Australia taking a sizeable part of the remaining 40,000. The green signal given by the Prime Minister has not however found favourable response from Bhutan. “This is a total reversal of all that Nepal stood for during the past 15 years. This is a negation of the bilateral ministerial level exercise,” a foreign ministry official told newfront.

“Yes, this is indeed a reversal of our stand,” Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, who represented Nepal several time in the bilateral discussions, told newfront. The critiques of the latest stand of the Government policy has one common point—that not only does it condone Indian approach of giving its territory for the pretext of Bhutan, but it gives a clean chit to the King of Bhutan for having pursued the politics of ethnic cleansing.

The Bhutanese refugees, owing allegiance to their leader Teknath Rai, are opposed to the latest decision saying it takes away their rights as a citizen of the country they belonged to. But the Association of Human Rights Activists Bhutan (AHURA) is more critical of the Government of Nepal while it supports the third country resettlement. AHURA leader Ratan Gajmere went to the extent of demanding that the Government of Nepal should call for its counterpart to resolve the refugee problem.

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Midnight knock

Nepal Police is generally slow to respond in containing crimes or nabbing criminals. But it’s much faster, than many think, when it comes to acting out political vendetta or appeasing its political masters.

Rajendra Bahadur Singh, an Additional Inspector General of the Police, a victim of Home Minister K P Sitaula’s repeated vengeance with the tacit backing of Prime Minister Koirala, has now moved the Supreme Court, challenging Government decision to retire him. He is the only police officer denied the two-year extension on completion of 30 years in the service, which has been granted to every officer during the past 11 years.

His miseries have only increased after he challenged the Government in the court. A possession of force visited his home in Budanilkantha around ten p.m. with oral instructions from the headquarters that he should return the official vehicle and three security guards right there and then. The normal practice allows a retired official to retain such facilities for a month. “I do not want to say anything at this stage as I have moved the court for justice,” Singh told newfront.

Singh, Head of the Operation Department and number two in seniority in the force until early May, was suspended from the service at Sitaula’s behest. A letter from the Government to Rayamajhi Commission has been appointed to probe excess use of force by the Government to suppress the Jana-Andolan, Singh’s presence might help in tampering with the evidence, according to the police sources.

Sitaula’s first cousin, Basudev Oli who headed the Operation Department of the Armed Police Force was not only promoted as the Chief but will also be deciding what kind of actions should be initiated against his subclasses “found guilty” by the Commission which has already submitted its report to the Government.

Eye witnesses said the police force which went to Singh’s house also pasted a notice of the Home Ministry regarding his retirement on the compound wall. “All that was in a bad taste. It was purely an act of revenge by the Home Minister who for some very personal reasons always hated Singh and humiliated him,” a joint secretary in the Home Ministry told newfront.

The incident created ripples in the canteen of the parliament house building, if not inside. Ajrun Bahadur Singh, a former Minister, asked Sitaula if that was the level a minister should be stooping to. A red faced Sitaula said, “I have no idea about the incident of Singh’s security and official car withdrawn in that manner”. Sitaula took out his cell phone, feigned dialing the number of Home Secretary Umesh Mainali to correct the ‘injustice’. But the situation remains as it is.

Downsizing the Royalty

The process to assess and compile details of the private property owned by the king and his family members has begun. The cabinet committee headed by Gopal Moriarty sent a notice to Chief Principal Secretary of the Royal palace, Pashupati Bhakta Maharjan, on Wednesday to furnish details of the Royal property at the earliest.

The cabinet committee is to finish its task of submitting details of the Royal property within a month. Subsequent to the parliamentary declaration in May, all income of the Royal property has been brought to the tax net.

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King Gyendantra at Pashupatinath

News

12 Mar-18 Mar, 2007

Bhaswor Ojha

NF Correspondent

NF Correspondent

NF Correspondent

NF Correspondent
Respect people’s rights

Formation of the interim Government with Maoists as a respectable partner will be the best guarantee for the peace process to move towards the desired direction. Prachanda’s assurance that they will soon return the property that the Maoists seized forcibly to the rightful owners is no doubt a positive statement. But it sounds too good to be true. Given repeated non-compliance of such assurances in the past, it will now be believed only when accompanied by verifiable action.

Unfortunately, like Prachanda and the Maoists, like any existing political parties in the country are fast losing their credibility through repeated violations of the code of conduct and by using arms to terrorise political rivals and ordinary citizens of this country. The way Maoists confiscated private property was illegal as there was no due process of law or legally applied. It was all done at the gun-point without the victims even getting a chance to respond in the Maoist run Kangaroo court which purely runs on the dictates of the political and guerrilla leadership of the organisation.

In fact, returning the property should have been the first step, or the first evidence that Maoists would now begin to honour the rule of law. No party should enjoy the luxury of having private security apparatus, private army and privately set-up parameters of law and yet seek to join the Government on its own terms.

Any Government should be free to make laws which will have effect on distribution, relocation and ownership of property and resources after involving a national debate and fully involving a democratically elected parliament.

The first thing that the Maoists need to do at the moment is qualify itself to be part of the interim Government. To do that, it has to shun violence, truthfully deposit arms to the United Nations and the lay people doesn’t establish their commitment towards the political and guerrilla leadership of the organisation.

A Maoist with a gun in the political arena. The theme of the last issue was timely, however, the Newsfront team should be cautious on some of these aspects. The Maoists are welcome in the interim Government and that is a positive step towards the ongoing peace process. But practicing democracy should be based on respect of philosophy and principles of co-existence. A Maoist with a gun in the Parliament and using threatening language in the House does not show it. On one hand they are showing enthusiasm to enter the Government, on the other hand they are not doing enough to make people feel secure. Their terrorising the lay people doesn’t establish their commitment towards the peace process. Rather, it costs them a lot in their support pool.

Our efforts now should be to help Maoists see their mistakes and get them domesticated. But, overemphasising on their wrongdoings might be viewed as an effort to make them unpopular in people’s eyes. The Newsfront should refrain from that if by any chance it intends to do that. But if its intentions are to help Maoists develop the culture of political endurance, then, you are welcome. Keep writing.

Practical paper

I find newsfront to be very practical and balanced in giving space for the features generally ignored by other Nepali practitioners and commoners alike. It also needs to desist from realising tax when a huge sum of money contributed by the taxpayers and donors is being spent on the Maoist guerrillas. Prachanda’s claim that this would stop the moment they are part of the interim Government only exposes his attitude of taking the people for a ride. If Maoists are not willing to honour the code of conduct all these months, will they become honest just by joining the interim Government? One sided impunity and liberty to break the public pledge will not only discredit the Maoists but the entire peace process will run the risk of being held in hostage. On the other hand, it is also an opportunity for the Maoists to dispel growing doubts over their intentions by simply returning the property to the rightful owners and begin acting within legal and moral parameters of politics as well as peace process.

Work for peace

I would like to congratulate Abin for the cartoon in the last issue. It aptly depicts the ongoing stalemate in the Nepalese political arena. The theme of the last issue was timely, however, the Newsfront team should be cautious on some of these aspects. The Maoists are welcome in the interim Government and that is a positive step towards the ongoing peace process. But practicing democracy should be based on respect of philosophy and principles of co-existence. A Maoist with a gun in the Parliament and using threatening language in the House does not show it. On one hand they are showing enthusiasm to enter the Government, on the other hand they are not doing enough to make people feel secure. Their terrorising the lay people doesn’t establish their commitment towards the peace process. Rather, it costs them a lot in their support pool.

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Dr Khagendra Dahal
Kathmandu

Important event

Thank you very much for publishing one of the highly important event of the rituals and explanations on one of the important event of the rituals and explanations on one of the very high level guru, late HE Chogyam Trichen Rinpoche in newsfront. We really appreciate your balanced approach generally missed by other publications in Kathmandu. Such endeavours in the future will certainly upgrade the status of your already esteemed publication among the spiritual practitioners and commoners alike.

Harsh Bhandari
Kathmandu

Poems by Thich Nhat Hahn

Kiss The Earth
Walk and touch happiness every moment. Walk and touch happiness every moment. Each step brings a fresh breeze. Each step makes a flower bloom. Kiss the Earth with your feet. Bring the Earth your love and happiness. The Earth will be safe, when we feel safe in ourselves. You Are Me. You are me and I am you. It is obvious that we are inter-are. You cultivate the flower in yourself so that it will be beautiful. I transform the garbage in myself so that you do not have to suffer. I support you you support me. I am here to bring you peace you are here to bring me joy.

To Meditate
To meditate does not mean to fight with a problem. To meditate means to observe.

You smile proves it. It proves that you are being gentle with yourself, that the sun of awareness is shining in you, that you have control of your situation. You are yourself, and you have acquired some peace.

Drink Your Tea
Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the world earth revolves - slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future; Live the actual moment. Only this moment is life.

Be A Bud
Be a bud sitting quietly on the hedge. Be a smile, one part of wondrous existence. Stand here. There is no need to depart.

- Poems by Thich Nhat Hahn
Although the election to the CA is central to the peace process and impending state restructuring, there is much confusion as to what exactly the CA entails and how it is going to make Nepal a better democracy and a stable state. Even more disturbingly while much debate on the nature, structure and function of the CA remains far from elaborate and discursive, the election of the CA itself has become a major impediment to the peace process as illustrated by the serious objections raised by Janajatis (ethnics) and Madhesis (regional identity). Both groups want apportionable representation (PR) system in the election to the Constituent Assembly election which is seen as the best alternative to the perceived failure of first past the post mode of winner takes all electioneering in the past.

The social inclusion of the Maoists as one of their agenda to launch the ‘people’s war’ against the Nepali state is tied to the PR in the polity. This political warfare is being ‘stream strongly advocated by the Maoists as one of their agenda to launch the ‘people’s war’ against the Nepali state’.

Hence, PR system of election may very well be relatively more representative than the direct election, but it is very premature to state that the merits and demerits of PR be transparently made available to people. On the positive note, the PR system, makes possible the representation of minority role count and provides an excellent design for both inter-party and intra-party democratic competition. However, on a very adversarial role for inclusive and egalitarian democracy; it not only perpetuates the social schisms, but also deepens it especially if the voting is based on identity. On purely democratic perspective of popular choice, it also negates the possibility of the election of a more moderate and inclusive candidate with appeal to the broad based constituencies.

So the focus ought to be on the objective of state transformation: what kind of Nepal is to be re-structured into? Is it the objective of the political forces to eventually coalesce and congeal a collective state identity? Or, is it to perpetuate the exclusionary politics of identity?

The intensity of political bargaining and ready amendments of ICoN 2007, as is being done on the pressure of dangerously ethno-populist agendas opens it to even more political manipulation, ultimately undoing the very purpose of the constitutional framework of governance. The de-constitution and un-governability goes in tandem, as is being witnessed.

This double helix of downward spiral if not abetted leads to anarchy, which is what the current scenario is giving hints of, with almost incessant shutdown and general strikes. The logical course of action then is to gear towards holding CA election and let the most legitimate and democratic apparatus of state building decide its own polity. It is worth noting that the electioneering process alone does not make a polity more representative of its constituents. More importantly, the electioneering, being the product of deliberate design, churns out the result, however it is intended to be.

The focus ought to be on the objective of state transformation: what kind of Nepal is to be re-structured into?

Chief Election Commissioner
Bhojraj Pokhrel

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Although the election to the CA is central to the peace process and impending state restructuring, there is much confusion as to what exactly the CA entails and how it is going to make Nepal a better democracy and a stable state. Even more disturbingly while much debate on the nature, structure and function of the CA remains far from elaborate and discursive; the election of the CA itself has become a major impediment to the peace process as illustrated by the serious objections raised by Janajatis (ethnics) and Madhesis (regional identity). Both groups want apportionable representation (PR) system in the election to the Constituent Assembly election which is seen as the best alternative to the perceived failure of first past the post mode of winner takes all electioneering in the past.

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In this scenario, the pre-determination of a Federal State based on identity alone without much popular deliberation shows ample political opportunity. The role was denied in the absence of a wider debate among the legislative members before the promulgation of ICoN 2007.

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However there again remains much confusion, disinformation and general ignorance on the nature, structure and essence of electioneering and its consequential impact on the constitutional engineering. In this scenario, the recent violent protests in Terai surrounding the call for amendment to the interim Interim Constitution of Nepal (ICoN) 2007 appears not only tragic but also clearly avoidable, had there been a vigorous discourse on the electioneering and constitution making.

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Unfortunately, however, the Constituent Assembly is being preempted by ad-hoc political bargaining that is appearing to reduce it to the Constituent Convention. The directly elected assembly of people, on whom the sovereignty is vested, alone has democratic legitimacy to define and structure a polity. As such, the role of Constituent Assembly is much more expansive and intense than the comparatively less democratic Constituent Convention, which is basically a political arrangement.
On Friday, a group of 20 Maoists warned the principal of St. Xavier’s school in Jawalakhel that if he did not close the school for the day, he would have to pay a heavy price. Since taking the risk involved the security of hundreds of students, the school had no option but to shut down and the traumatised children, witness to the strength of muscles, had no option but to go home.

Though Maoists at the moment could be considered a breed above the law, they are not the only contributors to the capital’s crime graph. There are others too. Evidence suggests the police are either demoralized or indifferent to crimes leaving the field open to the criminals.

Recently, a police at Boudha expressed his helplessness to a television journalist and said all his belongings were looted by a group of criminals. He advised, “please tackle the situation carefully.” Armed intruders attempted a daylight robbery at the residence of Kulshekhar Sharma, former Chief Secretary, at Baneswar Heights on Wednesday. They fled the scene after someone raised alarm in the neighborhood. At least one of the three intruders carried a pistol.

Such incidents are not confined to particular areas of the capital only. Armed criminals broke into a house at Tahachal around 4 A.M. last month, took what they wanted to and left with a warning they’d come back after a few days to collect a certain amount of money. Another family in Naya Baneswor was shocked to find their house ripped apart and everything of value taken away when they came back from a trip. This incident occurred around three months ago. The incidents were reported to the police but the culprits are still at large.

The sharp rise in the crime rate contradicts the claims of the Police Chief and the Home Minister that the crime rate is on decline in the capital. Armed criminals are suspected that Maoists are remotely involved in the crimes, we keep our hands off” he narrated a series of instances in which the Home Minister directly instructed the Police Chief, that nothing ‘that would hamper the peace process should be done’, even if that meant turning a blind eye to the crimes; and the message was relayed down the police ranks.

“It is only but natural for criminals feel a bit safe during the transition phase and the crime trend here is not unusual,” said Dhak Bahadur Karki, Superintendent of Police, Kathmandu. But this certainly comes as no assurance to the victims of the crimes.

Doctors, school operators, business persons and retired bureaucrats seem to be the targets of both groups, according to the information available from the crime investigation department.

In any civilized country ruled by democracy, children’s safety and right to education should get the top most priority. If the Government is not able to save children from being traumatised and bullied right in front of the school, no one will feel safe,” said Deep Prakash Pande, Secretary of the Swastha Sikshya Abhiyan, a voluntary organization.

Given the increasing sense of insecurity in the capital, U.N and some diplomatic missions are even believed to have unofficially discussed how safe it is to have their family members living in the country. “We have not yet decided anything about it, but safety of our family members is certainly uppermost in our mind and we may have to take appropriate decisions if the crime rate continues at this speed,” a U.N official said.

Physical attack and extortion are two very common modus operandi in cases where Maoists and mafia groups are involved. “We cannot possibly check crimes unless Maoists stop these activities since that will make sure that those continuing to commit crimes are with no political links,” says a senior police officer reported to the police but the culprits are still at large.

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“If it’s a political crime? That’s what we try to analyse as soon as we get any information,” a Police DIG told newsfront, adding, “If it’s trend here is not unusual,” said Dhak Bahadur Karki, Superintendent of Police, Kathmandu. But this certainly comes as no assurance to the victims of the crimes.

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partly because of threats from the criminal groups and partly because people no longer have faith in the police. Others view this situation as a political tool in the hands of the Home Minister. “We feel handicapped at times because of lack of physical infrastructure and professional training,” said S P Karki.

Many insiders openly state that absence of inspiring leadership, too much political interference and resulting demoralisation makes reform in the police institution almost impossible. Political interference in the recent days, especially regarding promotion, transfer and unjust denial of opportunities to many deserving candidates seem to be the root causes behind the apathetic condition in the police force. As a result, Kathmandu moves fast forward to the apathetic condition in the police force. As a result, Kathmandu moves fast forward to the apathetic condition in the police force.

The incumbent Home Minister has focused his attention not on strengthening law and order situation but on humiliating and de-motivating the law enforcement apparatus in the name of promoting peace process. In the whole history of Nepal, this Senator takes the cake for being the most useless. The Inspector General, also under the command of the Home Minister, has not only been demoralized further but has been paralysed and rendered totally useless.

The security officers who found weapons on frisking the bodyguards of Maoists members of parliament were taken action against and were immediately removed from their duty by the Home Minister. This is just one of the many examples of how the Minister has been exploiting his position. When one of the members of the parliament from the Maoists party was found carrying a gun in the House, law enforcement failed to take any action. Home minister again interfered and held back the police from taking any action.

When Maoist cadres marched with arms in Udayapur in uniform, the law enforcement simply reported to their superior officers and was compelled to stand by and watch. When they badly tortured and beat up Microbus workers in their office in Kupandol, Lalitpur, there again was no action from the State. The Home Minister then simply declared, “peace process might derail if you take action against the Maoists for violating the rule of law.”

This makes you wonder, peace at what cost and whether it’s peace at all. People today are living under the shadow of intimidating and terror of the Maoists. Police officers are humiliated by the Maoists cadres in districts and villages. Maoists force them to leave their posts in villages if their presence doesn’t help them in anyway. These are just some instances of how law enforcement is an absolute failure today.

The Inspector General, also under the Minister’s thumb, is unable to raise any issues with the Home Minister. Sympathy, breaking rules, manipulation of power is just one of the few ways how the Minister and his cohorts are functioning today. Due to the chaos reigning, thousands of trained law enforcement officers are left without a direction and minus genuine leadership at the centre.

And this has led to further deterioration of law and order situation in the country. Crime rates have gone up by leaps and bounds. Gun running is a very common phenomenon in Kathmandu now. House breaking and looting is rampant. A top ex-general’s house was looted at gun point in Kathmandu recently. This just goes to show how helpless ordinary citizens must be and how insecure they must be feeling in such an environment.

The local law enforcement managers are not held accountable for taking it easy to bring to book the perpetrators of crime. In the name of promoting peace process, law enforcement has been forced to compromise itself through a pitiful state. It is a mockery of law and order in the country going by the numbers of executions and looting taking place regularly in the valley and elsewhere. The public who well know how useless the law and order system of the country has become, do not even bother to report such crimes, out of fear of reprisal from the perpetrators of crimes. This increasing anarchy in the country spells out loud and clear, the failure of the Government which just cannot escape the responsibility of protecting its citizens. Talks of constitutional assembly polls in such a situation appear such a farce, a pipe dream.
Having learned to accept himself as he is, Amrit Ratna Shakya, 41, is a happy person today.
Suresh Khatta

MCLEODGANG: The Dalai Lama on Sunday sought to bridge a very difficult emotional gap for Tibetans when he praised Chinese President Hu Jintao in his statement on the anniversary of Uprising Day, sending a clear signal that he is willing to look ahead after letting the past come in the way.

“President Hu Jintao’s continued call for a harmonious society is laudable. The basis for the realization of such a society is to foster trust among the people, which can take place when there is freedom of expression, truth, justice and equality. Therefore, it is important that officials at all levels not only take heed, but also implement these principles,” said the Spiritual Leader of the Tibetans in his statement issued on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the Tibetan people’s uprising.

The Dalai Lama has been more open to talks on regional autonomy and engaging the Chinese leadership towards a peaceful solution. But in praising Hu, he has sent out a very significant message. Hu is regarded by Tibetans as the most ruthless administrator of the Tibet Autonomous Region. As Party Secretary in the region between 1988 and 1992, he is said to have come down very hard on Tibetan protesters.

Tibetans in-exile claim that near 400 peaceful Tibetan protestors were killed by Chinese forces in a span of three days in the early part of his tenure. He quelled the rebellion and that is said to have earned him recognition among the Communist Party ranks. Deng Xiaoping then identified him to be groomed as Jiang Zemin’s successor. In this backdrop, the Dalai Lama has travelled a fair distance through this statement. It may be recalled that Tibetans came out in large numbers to protest Hu’s visit last year to India.

Expressing concern over the “vilification campaign” launched by the Chinese regime against his people, the Dalai Lama said not all the recent changes in China were negative.

“In 2006 we witnessed both positive and negative changes in the People’s Republic of China. On the one hand, the hardline position was intensified with a campaign of vilification against us, and more disquietingly, there was heightened political restriction and repression in Tibet. But on the other hand, in China itself, we saw some improvement with regard to the freedom of expression,” he said.

He said there was growing belief in religion in general, and Tibetan Buddhism in particular, and that there were many who wanted him to make a pilgrimage to China and preach there.

Maintaining that the Tibet issue could be resolved through dialogue, the Dalai Lama said the Tibetans and their government-in-exile had adopted a “middle path approach” which would address the immediate and long-term interests of both Tibetans and Chinese.

“In the five rounds of talks with the Chinese that have taken place since 2002, both sides were able to express in clear terms the suspicions, doubts and real difficulties,” he said. “These rounds have helped create a channel of communication between the two sides.”

(The Indian Express)

TRACIE ROZHON

Seattle: Not since the Victorian age of starched sheets and starchy manners, builders and architects say, have there been so many orders for separate bedrooms. Or separate sleeping nooks. Or his-and-hers wings. In interviews, couples and sociologists say that often it has nothing to do with sex. More likely, it has to do with snoring. Or with children crying. Or with getting up and heading for the gym at 5:30 in the morning. Or with sending e-mail until well after midnight.

In a survey in February by the National Association of Home Builders, builders and architects predicted that more than 60 per cent of custom houses would have dual master bedrooms by 2015, according to Gopal Ahluwalia, staff vice president of research at the builders association.

Some builders say more than a quarter of their new projects already do.

According to the National Sleep Foundation in Washington, 75 per cent of adults frequently either wake up in the night or snore—and many of them have taken to separate beds just for those reasons.

“Couples today are writing their own script, rewriting how to have a marriage,” said Pamela J Smock, a University of Michigan sociologist. “The growing need for separate bedrooms also represents the speed-up of family life—women’s roles have changed—and the need for extra space eases the strain on the relationship.”

Nevertheless, Professor Smock said husbands were less willing to change familiar patterns. “Men are supposed to be one, dominant, and two, sexual,” she said. “Their wives might be thrilled to have their own bedroom, and see it as a romantic thing—going back to their romance, going back to dating, to intimacy, but the husband might not see it that way.

No matter what the reasons, architects and builders say they know enough not to call them ‘master’ bedrooms anymore.

“Women are buying more homes, and women are sensitive to that terminology of the ‘master suite,’” and they’re opting for the term owners’ suite,” said Barbara Slavkin, an interior designer in St Louis.

St Louis couple the Peppers agree: separate bedrooms have added spice to their relationship. “It’s more exciting,” Mrs Pepper said, “when you can say: ‘Your room or mine?’”

(NEW YORK TIMES)
Nepal is at the crossroads of change in need of new vision, new institutional arrangement and commitment. Changes in the conduct, action and behaviour of political parties, judiciary, security and bureaucracy are preconditions for materialising the much anticipated changes in Nepal. In this context, understanding the role of security sector reform (SSR) is vital to meet the new challenges.

Security sector is one of the fundamental pillars of any state and it has particular importance in the post conflict situation. SSR is a common concept globally used in the post-conflict literatures. It is a process of reforming the organizations having legitimate authority to use or order the use of force such as police, army, paramilitary, local security units, intelligence and other legally defined arrangements. Changing roles, responsibilities and actions of security actors consistent with democratic norms, values and principles of good governance are some of the basic elements of SSR, which Nepal desperately needs at present.

Fundamental principles of SSR are civilian control and parliamentary oversight of security organisations, right sizing, modernisation of security forces, respecting rule of law and facilitating transition to peace. The aim of SSR is to strengthen the democratic states and institutions based on rule of law. It is a concept of reforming the shortcomings and weaknesses of the existing security sector with new vision and neutrality that demands honest commitments and impartiality from both civilian government and security professionals.

Appropriate trainings - both military and human rights, capacity building and technical competence, mainstreaming security issues into development policy and programmes, delocalise balance between confidentiality and transparency, strong co-ordination and operational mechanisms, relationship between military and civilian, building public awareness, strengthening constitutional and legal frameworks, periodic review of performance of security sector and strengthening of independent oversight mechanisms (e.g., public complaint bodies like human rights commission, auditor general, legislative and judicial bodies, etc.) are some of the important elements of SSR that Nepal needs to promote.

SSR is not only related to security aspects but also with social, political, economic, international and development issues. It therefore has to address policy, legislative, international relations; structural and oversight issues set within standard democratic principles and values. The classical security approach mainly focuses on legal monopoly to use the security instruments and security force for safeguarding people and national security specifically to defend against external threats. This conventional state-centric approach of security operation is narrow and ignores modern notion of security that relates with holistic framework of human rights, livelihood security, environmental security, energy security; in other words, broader human security with peoples’ rights for dignified life. Hence, democratic governance is a central element of SSR which is so far seriously lacking in Nepal.

The case 4.7 of the section four of the Comprehensive Peace Accord has mentioned the demilitarisation of Nepal army and the Article 144 (3 and 4) of the Interim Constitution has stated similar provisions. This means that the new political context has envisioned restructuring of the existing army structures. However, neither the Comprehensive Peace Accord nor the Interim Constitution is able to visualize the comprehensive need of SSR which includes holistic approach, i.e., developing national security policy by complementing international relations, defence policy, economic policy and establishing a supreme and powerful national security council, reforming state’s intelligence, restructuring army, civilian police, armed police force and other security apparatus. Isolated efforts on restructuring of one component of security sector alone cannot produce expected results and therefore the need to opt for holistic approach.

Often the need of SSR arises from transition from war to peace, fundamental political changes in a country and unanticipated security related crisis. In any of these situations, important interrelated elements are economic, political, security, economic international relation, territorial security, human security, environmental security, livelihood security and energy security. This means that SSR has also to incorporate good governance framework, economic and development policy of the state.
Architect of Modern Nepali Poetry

Sarad Pradhan

The news of demise of the poet Mohan Koirala took me down the memory lane when I interviewed Mohan Koirala. He was 70 and though frail, he was still energetic and optimistic about poetry. “I wrote long poetries like Sarad Pradhan (The Hill region) to show how people that poetry can be written in prose as well, because earlier critics were skeptical about the existence of prose poetry” he said.

When the soft spoken poet came into the limelight in late fifties, the stalwarts of the earlier period were still dominating the literary scene and the literary movement like Tsero Arya, was about to make its entry into Nepalese literature. Because of his prolific and inspiring poetic career, he overshadowed some of them and established himself as a one of the leading poets of the modern Nepali poetry.

Unlike with T.S. Eliot, the fact remains that he never imitated Eliot and he set his own new trend in Nepali poetry which can be justifiably termed modern, both in theme and style. “TS Eliot is a world poet, and his style is different from others. I may have been influenced by him sometimes but I can’t say that my whole poetic career has been influenced by him. Since my poetry writing is about complete fifty years, how can I say I have been influenced by him all over these years. My poems like Suryadan and Nadi Kinarka Majhi (Boatmen of the River bank) have Nepali themes and conception...” he said, rule out all allegations.

His book Nadi Kinarka Majhi was awarded the prestigious Madan Puraskar in 1982, and he received Sajha Puraskar twice for his books, Mohan Koirala ka kavitaharu Nadi Kinarka Majhi, Ritu Nemnathu ka Patar ko pat (leaf of Patar), etc. Lastly, in his memory, a quote from one of his poems: A man who relives daily, without regalation And benefit of an editor – that’s me. A Notice, and an ad, a communiqué of the day.

Buleolu printed anew, A story short-lived as a wrapper of a bundle of thread. Some poster-blocks of an attractive movie That’s what I am.

Mohan Koirala set his own new trend in Nepali poetry which can be justifiably termed modern, both in theme and style.
Makers

James Brown laid to rest

James Brown, the “Godfather of Soul” who died on Christmas Day, has been entombed at a private family ceremony presided over by the Rev. Al Sharpton, the minister’s office said in a statement.

Brown, who died in Atlanta at the age of 73 on December 25, was laid to rest in a temporary place pending the completion of a public mausoleum in an as-yet undisclosed location. Sharpton’s office said.

Local media reports said the singer’s body was placed in a crypt at Beech Island, South Carolina, where one of his daughters lives.

Brown’s children, close friends and other family members were with Sharpton and other clergy.

“The children used their own funds to pay for their father's entombment so that their father could be put to rest without further delay,” Sharpton, who was a friend of Brown, said in the statement.

Brown had left “a substantial estate and substantial holdings, which are currently being disputed in court,” and Brown’s children “wanted to see their father entombed in a resting place without delay, rather than await court decisions,” he said. The body had been kept in a temperature-controlled room at Brown’s home in South Carolina in the bronze and gold-plated coffin used for his funeral in Augusta, Georgia, on December 30, a funeral director told Reuters in January.

Brown’s music, with its staccato horns and guitars and his often explosive vocals, brought funk into the mainstream and has influenced pop and dance music since the 1950s. Hip-hop artists revere him, often using his beats in their own songs.

(Amos B. Brown of Newsfront)

A foot in two worlds

The Namesake is an understated picture that draws a viewer completely into the world it presents.

Family life and the immigrant experience are the focus of Mira Nair’s engaging film, The Namesake. The movie, which skips between Calcutta and New York, is based on the bestselling novel by Jhumpa Lahiri.

In Calcutta, a marriage is arranged between Ashima (Bollywood star Tabu) and Ashoke (Irfan Khan), a young engineer who has moved to America. Seen through Ashima’s eyes, the couple’s move to New York — in winter — is a cultural slap in the face, but she slowly adjusts to this new culture while simultaneously maintaining the old. It’s a balancing act conveyed with gentle humour, but Ashima’s confusion and isolation come through loud and clear.

Eventually, Ashima and Ashoke have a son and a daughter and make a move to a suburban neighbourhood. As time passes, the focus of the film turns to the son, Gogol Ganguli (Kal Penn), who is determined to be 100% American.

Gogol and his sister are typical teenagers and keen to dodge their parents’ old-world, old-fashioned influences. Gogol (named after the Russian novelist) studies to become an architect and moves into adult life in Manhattan seemingly shed of all traces of his parents’ culture. Certainly, he doesn’t understand the significance of his name or how his father came to give him a name he can’t wait to change.

His girlfriend (Jacinda Barrett) is a sophisticated New Yorker; she is also clueless about anything outside her own culture. Her encounters with Gogol’s family are as cringe-inducing as you’d expect, but Nair has a delicate touch in all this, and the elements of cultural clash are subtle and often humorous.

Family tragedy leads Gogol back to his roots and eventually to a South Asian woman, but that’s not a solution either. The Namesake is about the experience of being caught between two cultures, never feeling fully at home in either. It’s also a film about family. Gogol and his sister are raised to maintain the connection with family in Calcutta while also growing up with an enviable collection of “aunties” and “uncles” in the extended family his parents create in America. The story shows how much is lost in one generation.

The Namesake is an understated picture that draws a viewer completely into the world it presents. As the parents, actors Tabu and Irfan Khan give the sort of superb performances that carry the film over any weak spots, and Kal Penn is so good as Gogol that it’s hard to believe he’s best known for Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle.

Nair presents India, Calcutta especially, with fantastic colour and beauty and activity. America looks somewhat bleak in comparison. It seems safe to assume that’s not a mistake.

(Toronto Sun)

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