After the possibility of an army coup became a subject of intense fear and discussion in the political circles, Prime Minister G P Koirala had a long and fruitful discussion with the Chief of Army Rukmangat Katawal, recently.

A key aide to the PM told newsfront that Katawal pledged that the Nepal army would always back the forces of nationalism and democracy, and that the fear of army coup was false and baseless. The meeting which took place last week at the PM’s residence attaches significance in the light of the stand off between the Maoists and the Nepal army with Prachanda publicly stating that Katawal was still guided by the palace.

Koirala, on his part is believed to have told Gen. Katawal that the government trusted the army, and that he would tell Maoists and other constituents of the government not to bring the army into unnecessary controversies.

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The fear of army coup does not seem confined to the local political circles alone. A biannual get together of the Oberoi Hotel group’s executives (called 1974 group) debated the possibility of such a coup taking place while considering Kathmandu as the venue for the meeting sometimes in the middle of August. It however decided to hold the meeting here, come what may.

While there have been many occasions in the past in which the army and the Maoists have come into open confrontation, this is the first time that a possible coup by the army is being widely debated. The first tussle came when Maoists obstructed the movement of the army vehicles meant for repairs in Kathmandu last year on false allegations that they were carrying arms and ammunitions. The second incident was in early June when the army turned down Maoists’ demand to remove their camp from Birpur in Kapilvastu.

In fact, in his first press conference at PM’s residence in Baluwatar, Prachanda had declared army as the institution of ‘corrupt and rapists,’ a comment which he withdrew later faced with wider criticisms of his remarks.

Katawal says army is for democracy

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Mahat struggles with strained coffers...

An unprecedented high demand from the election commission...

Minister Mahat

Another round about why Koirala agreed to the joint election rally

Koirala and Prachanda agree on a joint election rally
No compromise
Nepal Army will never compromise with terrorism, extremism and anarchy.

nf correspondent

Nepal army came out with a veiled threat that it was not bound to carry out all orders of the government if that meant supporting anarchism, terrorism and extremism. This is for the first time that the Army Chief has openly laid down the institutional support to the government.

Chief of the Army staff, Gen. Rukmanagt Katalaw said that Nepal Army will never compromise with terrorism, extremism and anarchy, and that it will be solely guided by democracy, people’s right and human rights. “In course of carrying out orders given by the state, the NA will never compromise with terrorism, anarchism and extremism that hijacks people’s right, attacks human rights and believes in violence and want to threaten democratic system or attack the system preferred by the Nepali people.” Gen Katalaw said addressing his soldiers and officers at No 7 Brigade in Kulekhani on Saturday. He added that army was committed fully to national integrity, sovereignty and democratic system and it would not make any compromise on these.

There are indications that what Katalaw said had been cleared by Prime Minister G P Koirala who also holds the defense portfolio, and comes in the wake of India’s Prime Minister 5 Muni openly, “guiding some political parties in Nepal even the votaries of pro republic state did not quite appreciate.”

Katalaw’s unusual outburst follows Home Minister KP Sharma’s announcement that armed police force, and not the army, will be used in the elections; a message that army did not receive well. As anger, frustration as well as a sense of dejection rose high in the institution, Koirala rushed to the army headquarters on Sunday to assuage their feeling.

According to the sources, the army top brass raised the issue of what Sharma had said and complained that the minister was systematically provoking the security institution. Koirala, the sources said, gave a clear hint that he would take necessary measures to dispel that impression, but gave no definite hint of what he meant by that.

Verification struggle continues

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Baby King Theory

Vishwambhutha Thapa, a veteran royalist insists that abdication by King Gyaneendra and his son Paras will go a long way in giving a fresh life and continuity to the institution of monarchy. He is the author of the theory of baby King that suggests Prince Hridayendra should be enthroned.

But he did not quite cherish the way Prime Minister Koirala raised the issue in Delhi a couple of months ago, and recently with Pakistani journalists. “What the King did after Feb 1, 2005 it did not quite go with the interest of the nation and the people. But as someone who took all executive powers, it is for him to own moral responsibility and act accordingly,” Thapa said, adding, “the King should avoid a situation of being penalised by others.”

Thapa feels strongly about the need for the monarchy as an institution continuing in the country. As someone who keenly studies the trends of politics and development worldwide, Thapa feels that the political alliance between the democratic forces and the Maoists is not at all a natural phenomenon and will only be a temporary one. “Look at what happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Democracy has followed the demise of communism,” he said. “Nepal’s case will not be different,” he added.

“Either the communists will prevail or democracy,” he said, strongly advocating for “pro-democracy forces” coming together with G P Koirala as its leader. Thapa also warned that the consequence of this kind of alliance not taking shape soon will be disastrous. He feels that Nepal is being dictated by external forces more than ever. “It has already become like something in between Bhutan and Sri Lanka,” he said without elaborating, but was definitely concerned with the number of meetings Indian ambassador has had with the FM in recent days without the country knowing what transpired between them.
Editorial

Laws control the lesser man... Right conduct controls the greater one. - Mark Twain

Genuine elections, true democracy

The date for the polls to Constituent Assembly (CA) has been finally decided upon as per the demands of the political parties and the international community. The announcement comes as a welcome step as it somehow diverts growing fear that the government is not serious about holding election even in November. And the fears were not unjustified. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chief Prachanda were responsible for not creating necessary laws and conducive law and order situation required for the mid-June elections as pledged by them through the interim constitution. By settling the new deadline, these two leaders have ensured that the failure to hold elections by mid-June would not perhaps be an issue at this stage. Having CA elected in a free and fair manner without any kind of fear in the general public is something that the last year’s people’s movement envisaged. Not respecting that would totally be a negation of the movement’s mandate as is apparent today by the way the ruling coalition partners including the Maoists are behaving today.

Citizens have the sole right to frame a constitution and to elect or dump a government as they see fit. Elections that are fair and representative demand certain preconditions. From Carter to Sundh, dissatisfaction have been expressed over the prevailing law and order situation and they have warned that elections that are free and fair may not be possible in the existing condition. The State’s authority has totally collapsed and the PM has miserably failed to bring order back into the country. The extent of demoralisation is visible in the police force, and the compulsion of the army to remain in barracks has injected fears that any interested group that wants to manipulate the outcome of the election can easily cause bloodshed without the government machinery being able to take any preventive or punitive action. Announcing a new poll date is no doubt a welcome step but that alone is not sufficient in the given scenario.

The eight party government also has to ensure that people’s right to elect or reject their representative falls solely under their domain and any move by political parties in power to debarr certain political parties from contesting polls by merely amending laws amount to tampering with fundamental principles of democracy. Election just for the sake of it and legitimising all forms of legislated discrimination will not help in establishing peace and democracy in the country. The eight party government also has to ensure that people’s right to elect or reject their representative falls solely under their domain and any move by political parties in power to debarr certain political parties from contesting polls by merely amending laws amount to tampering with fundamental principles of democracy.

Protect journalists

In a short span of time newsfront weekly is progressing fast along with its parent magazine Samay Saptahik, I wish success to both. I wish to say that after the April uprising, the situation of Nepal journalists is not good. They have to face various problems from various uninvolved as well as responsible people. India, the world’s greatest democracy is also causing problems to Nepali journalists. For instance, the journalist, Dayaram Dahal (Sulav), related with CPM Maoist, was arrested by Indian police for collecting news of Bhutan refugee’s long march in Mechi bridge, Jhapa. During his 21 days spent in an Indian jail, Dahal suffered beatings and trauma at the hands of Indian police. This should be highly condemned by journalists all around the world.

Save Kathmandu

I am a UK citizen who is in love with the mountains of Nepal and come here at least once a year for trekking and to enjoy life in Kathmandu valley where I have good friends. But I regret to say that in the past ten years, the situation of this valley has been deteriorating rapidly. Every time I come, I see more air and noise pollution, dirtier rivers and streets (plus the stench), unruly traffic and a sense of growing insecurity. Where once I could go for long undisturbed walks, now is jam packed with people, vendors and of course traffic. There is no place for a peaceful walk within the valley now.

Point to Ponder

I go back, I tell myself perhaps this will be my last time here. I feel extremely sad to see what once was such a beautiful place getting destroyed so fast! How could the government and the people allow this to happen? Now this city has begun to look and feel just like any other crowded city in Bihar. Sorry, but this is the truth as I and my friends see it. Please do not let this city die.

Chris Whittington
London, UK

Letters

As usual with an anticipation, I looked at the second last page to see what is it this time that features in the Insight column of Ms. Amal, only to be disappointed by a small picture, which though interesting had lost its impact due to its small size. I would like to request the writer to continue with her remarkable columns.

Suresh Basnet
Budanikantha, Kathmandu

Stop not writing

Therefore the charges of political ethnocentrism are unfounded, as are the intercommunal tensions, for in the heart of the Indian state, Unnao in the Uttar Pradesh, there is no one who has the slightest claim to being a political leader, who would not be willing, who would not be a party to compromise, to unity, and to have the love and the peace of the region, which is at the heart of the Indian state.

Suresh Basnet
Budanikantha, Kathmandu

Unborn, unchanging

Jetaun/Milarapaa, (1052-1135), one of Tibet’s most famous yogis and poets was a student of Marpa Lotsawa, and a major figure in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. After practicing very diligently for twelve years Milarepa attained the state of Vajradhara (complete enlightenment). Milarepa is famous for many of his songs and poems, in which he expresses the profundity of his realisation of the Dharmas with extraordinary clarity and beauty. The ‘hundred thousand songs’ of Milarepa is an important spiritual scripture for Tibetan Buddhism.

Milarapaa’s poem:

I have forgotten

My mind has never strayed to seek such distractions.
Accustomed long to contemplating love and compassion, I have forgotten all difference between myself and others.
Accustomed long to meditating on my Guru as enthralled over my head, I have forgotten all those who rule by power and prestige.
Accustomed long to meditating on my guardian deities as inseparable from myself, I have forgotten the lovely fleshly form.
Accustomed long to meditating on the secret whispered truths, I have forgotten all that is said in written or printed books.
Accustomed, as I have been, to the study of the eternal truth, I’ve lost all knowledge of ignorance.

Accustomed as I’ve been, to contemplating both nirvana and samsara as inherent in myself, I have forgotten to think of hope and fear.
Accustomed, as I’ve been, to meditating on this life and the next as one, I have forgotten the dread of birth and death.
Accustomed long to studying, by myself, my own experiences, I have forgotten the need to seek the opinions of friends and brethren.
Accustomed long to applying each new experience to my own spiritual growth, I have forgotten all creeds and dogmas.

Accustomed long to meditating on the unborn, the indestructible, the unchanging, I have forgotten all definitions of this or that particular goal.
Accustomed long to meditating on all visible phenomena as the Dharmakaya, I have forgotten all meditations on what is produced by the mind.
Accustomed long to keeping my mind in the uncreated state of freedom, I have forgotten all conventions and artificialities.
Accustomed long to humbleness, of body and mind.

I have forgotten the pride and haughty manner of the mighty.
Accustomed long to regarding my fleshly body as my hermitage, I have forgotten the ease and comfort of retreats and monasteries...

Suresh Basnet
Budanikantha, Kathmandu

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I am ending my assignment at a pivotal moment in Nepali history. Democracy and peace are within view but hinge on a Constituent Assembly election on November 22 that is free and fair. My hopes that the current peace process will lead to a democratic Nepal are great but my concerns about that process are equally great. The prospect of a better future for the people of Nepal faces two increasingly serious threats: the worsening security situation and threats to free and independent media.

Worsening security situation

Basic law and order are key factors in establishing a stable democracy. Individuals and institutions must feel secure in their lives and missions, or the society will stop moving forward and risk collapsing into a failed state. For over a decade, Nepal stagnated during the Maoist insurgency. Supposedly, peace is now here and the fighting has stopped—but only on paper. Killings, kidnappings, and intimidation are on the rise.

The Terai is awash with political violence, carried out by extremist Madhesi groups that are tearing the region apart with horrific fighting and heightened ethnic tension. Threats and violence by the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) are affecting citizens at all levels of society. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights underscored YCL abuses in a report released in June. The report points out that these criminal acts appear to have increased since April 1, when the Maoists joined the Interim Government.

While everyone from the Prime Minister to former President Carter and, I might add, even Puja and Dahal, has spoken about the intolerable security situation, action is missing. First and foremost, Dahal must keep his many promises and stop his cadre, young or old, from continuing their reign of lawlessness. He must show the people of Nepal whether his words carry any value.

Secondly, the government of Nepal must follow through on its basic duty to its people to enforce law and order, effectively using the enforcement agencies and resources at its command. And third, the extremist groups in the Terai must come into the political mainstream or be treated as common criminals.

When law and order is respected by all, then the hard work of building a democratic federal state can proceed freely for the benefit of all. Fiery speeches, such as C.P. Gajurel’s June 25 outburst in Bharahawa that threatened a return to arms by the Maoists, are irresponsible and call into question the Maoist commitment to peace. The Maoists are in the government and claim to support the democratic process. As of today, however, their words are hollow and everyone knows it.

Threats to the free media

Now, more than ever, the media have a weighty role to play in establishing a democratic system in Nepal. In an environment of constant change, Nepali citizens desperately need unbiased information to make informed decisions. Nepali media have flourished since the overthrow of royal rule in April 2006. In the last few weeks, however, private media have faced sustained intimidation, including threats to individual publishers’ and journalists’ lives. Just two weeks ago, a Maoist-affiliated union shut down the daily newspaper Nepal Samacharpatri and its smaller evening sister publication for several days. Attacks on journalists in the Terai are occurring at an alarming rate, causing some journalists to go into hiding.

Democracy in Nepal will not survive without a free media. Certainly the media will play a key role in the Constituent Assembly election. Independent news and free public debate are key components in any successful, developed country, whether the model is Switzerland, South Africa or the United States. For a nation that aspires to democracy and prosperity, free media is the key. Nepalis must demand an end to Maoists’ aggression against the media and threats from any corner.

All Nepalis deserve to live in a safe place with free access to independent information and no threats to their families or livelihoods.

Violence in refugee camps

While not a Nepal-wide concern, another security challenge greatly concerns my government and other friends of Nepal as well. I refer to recent violent outbreaks in the Bhutanese refugee camps. The refugees have lived 16 years in primitive conditions with little hope of creating better lives for their children. They cannot own property or start businesses, and the prospect of returning to Bhutan is as dim now as it was when they were forced out.

And yet, elements inside the camps are increasingly using violence in an attempt to keep these poor refugees in a continuing state of helplessness for political aims. This is blatant political manipulation of a population that has already suffered too much. For the first time in 16 years, to an offer of resettlement from the United States and other nations, the refugees will have a choice regarding their futures. Each refugee family has a right to decide its own best future based on the choices available. No group or individual should be allowed to take away this right through violence or threats.

Nepal has taken commendable and significant steps in its nascent democracy. As the early history of the United States confirms, young democracies face many challenges. Now is the time for leadership, national unity, and a clear vision. All Nepalis deserve to live in a safe place with free access to independent information and no threats to their families or livelihoods. As diplomats say, these conditions are non-negotiable.
Disastrous West Seti

Our people near the border area would be forced to live virtually in swamps throughout the year.

A farmer affected by Laxmanpur Barrage

People of Nepal and particularly those living in Western Terai would be forced to bear the disastrous consequences if the West Seti Dam Project is implemented without resolving the downstream benefit issues and the worsening flood problems in the Western Terai associated with the Saryu Canal (that includes Laxmanpur Barrage) which is in reality a further extension of the West Seti Dam Project.

Any decision to implement West Seti Project, which is clearly a multipurpose project, without the approval of the parliament might be in violation of the present interim constitution since this project has the potential to provide our country an opportunity to share with India a very large proportion of the downstream benefits. Apart from these issues, there is a need to conduct a thorough checking of the engineering design of West Seti dam, which appears to be riddled with a great deal of uncertainties.

The total net discounted power benefit of the project could be 486 million US Dollars according to a study. Similarly, based on the feasibility study of the Karnali High Dam Project the total net discounted irrigation benefit of West Seti Project at 1989 price level for the reference year 2003 could be as high as 720 million US Dollars. It implies that the net irrigation benefit of West Seti Project could be greater than the net power benefit.

India must be approached to share with Nepal a certain percentage of the downstream benefits to accrue to that country from the use of the regulated flow of West Seti. It is a practice followed by the US and Canada while implementing the Columbia River dam in Canada. At present Canada is receiving 50% of the net downstream benefits from the US in perpetuity for the use of the regulated flow of the Columbia River in the US. It should be noted that Canada had declined to take a decision to implement the Columbia River project until the US agreed to sign a treaty on downstream benefits sharing.

A few years back it was reported that the government of India had appointed a three-member task force headed by the former Power Minister, Suresh Prabhu. The task force was expected to address the issue to obtain the consent of Nepal (also Bhutan) through a revenue sharing pact to divert water of the major rivers for irrigation across India. Until that time India was seen to be hesitating to accept the idea of buying water stored in the reservoirs proposed to be built in Nepal.

The year round operation of Saryu Canal, that starts from the Grijapur Barrage in India and ends near Indo-Nepal border after crossing the Banganga River, depends on availability of the regulated flow from the proposed storage reservoirs in Nepal. The construction of Saryu Canal, that started a long time ago, is still continuing at a snail’s pace perhaps due to uncertainty about the date when West Seti Project would be ready for operation. Nevertheless, it appears that Saryu Canal could be made fully operational at a short notice after the completion of the West Seti Storage Project because most of the structures of Saryu Canal might be already ready. After that our people near the border area would be forced to live virtually in swamps throughout the year.

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The total length of Saryu Canal running almost parallel to Indo-Nepal border is about 230 km. In the original design the barrage across Saryu River was at a location about 328 meters to the south of the railway bridge at Nanpara. Later, the design was modified and the location of the barrage was shifted 10 km to the north from the original site.

Saryu Canal crosses three main rivers - Saryu (Baba), West Rapti and Rohini (Banganga). Normally siphons are provided to deliver canal water across the river. An altogether a different type of structure has been devised for reducing the average slope of Saryu Canal that would allow the canal alignment to be pushed as far as possible north close to Indo-Nepal border. Barrages have been built across the rivers to divert water to such a level that would allow free passage of canal water across the river into the canal taking off from the other side of the river. The contentious Laxmanpur Barrage is one of such structures devised to deliver the water from Grijapur Barrage across West Rapti.

It would be necessary to maintain the pond water upstream of the barrage above certain fixed level all the time, to keep Saryu Canal running at desired capacity. Thus the pond would always be full, with the result that a sizable area of lands in Nepalese territory could remain perpetually submerged. When the river is in flood, the water would be spreading out onto lands that were never before regarded prone to flooding. It was recommended that a panel of renowned foreign experts be formed and their opinion sought on this matter. It was also proposed that any further action in the direction of taking the decision to implement the project should be deferred until the panel gives its absolutely positive opinion.

(A.B. Thapa, Ph.D is former member and executive secretary, Water and Energy Commission.)

Anand B. Thapa
Interview

2-8 July, 2007

Shapalya Amatya, Ph.D., a distinguished historian and cultural heritage expert worked in various positions in the archaeology department and ministry of culture and tourism for 30 years. He has written extensively on the issues of cultural conservation and preservation of Nepal art. He talked with newsfront about his work and experiences recently.

What occupies you after your retirement?

I love writing and spend most of my time writing. My biggest wish is to disseminate the knowledge that I have gained. I do not want to die with it. Sharing knowledge is my motto. Although I am a writer, I base on my experiences of work in various sectors – museum, excavation, monumental restoration and diplomatic activities. I have written around 17 books and my latest book, Monument Conservation in Nepal, my Experience with World Heritage Site in Kathmandu Valley, will be published in October this year.

What inspired you to take up writing despite your busy working schedule?

As a student of history, I used to guide tourists in Kathmandu. One such tourist, an elderly professor, Scho菲尔 from Wisconsin advised me to start writing about my heritage and that is what inspired me. I must add that writing and getting published here is a big challenge and for the common people, buying a book is a big proposition. It is difficult to buy a book with limited resources. Sadly, there is also a lack of good libraries here, since most that we have are propa-ganda libraries. So, it is difficult for people who want to study and research.

How were the seven sites in Kathmandu declared as World Heritage Sites?

After Nepal opened its doors to visitors in 1951, Kathmandu art and culture was much appreciated and admired by all who visited this valley. They were all impressed by the concentration of so much cultural heritage in such a small valley and especially because they are living heritage. The seven sites of the valley – Pashupati and Changu Narayan temple; Swyambhunath and Boudha Stupa; Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square, were enlisted as the world heritage site in 1979.

In 1975 UNESCO helped Nepal to prepare a protective inventory of the monuments in the valley. That inventory acted as a base for establishing Nepal’s heritage around the world. At the behest of UNESCO, support was gathered from many donor countries for the restoration and preservation of monuments which were in dilapidated condition. This also acted as a gateway for many missions from UNESCO to come and start working here.

Campaigns by the organisation resulted in a lot of assistance that resulted in a lot of work in survey and restoration and also holding exhibitions on our heritage around the world. This naturally increased the flow of tourists. A review committee was also formed to monitor the activities and strategize future plans for preservation of physical environment of the sites and culture.

What does physical environment mean?

When we talk about preservation, most think it means only the monuments. But it is equally important to preserve the sites around the monuments. Preservation of built heritage site is something we have not been able to accomplish. Due to our ignorance, we have destroyed many old houses around the heritage sites and continue to do so.

When from 1994 onwards, international voices started getting vocal about preserving it, a lot of damage had already been done. Just look at Hanuman Dhoka where there are so many concrete tall structures. The public have not understood the importance of preserving our heritage. Rapidly growing urbanisation and destruction of ancient urban fabric pose huge challenges. There are a set of laws to ensure that people do not disturb the facade or build over a certain height but they are frequently ignored.

What kind of challenges did you face in your work?

The department of archaeology is a very small department which has no policing power. It requires help from police and the municipality. Our major problem was that municipal officials would never go against any locals for fear of losing votes in elections.

This is a small society where everybody knows everybody and someone is connected to somebody. And so somewhere or the other, a process of taking action is disrupted. Illegal constructions get built overnight and roofs built. After a roof is built, a building cannot be brought down according to our rules; and that was/is taken full advantage of. There are more than 1000 illegal houses in these seven heritage sites today. The common trend is to show one building plan, get it passed and make something entirely different in reality.

When I look action as the director general of the department to bring down an illegally made house within the Patan heritage site, it was only with media support that I could prevent the house from being built. I also prevented Kathmandu University from being built close to Changu Narayan. It was a long struggle but I took a firm stance and did it. A university would never go against any locals for fear of losing votes in elections.

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Interview

Protect our TREASURES

If something goes wrong during the mass meetings the heritage sites will be easily destroyed.

What imminent dangers do you see facing the sites today?

Unruly and uncontrolled growth of buildings is number one problem. Another dangerous trend is the public gatherings that have been taking place in the heritage sites. If something goes wrong during the mass meetings the sites will be easily destroyed. Mass gatherings in such areas are illegal.

The vendors too harass tourists so much that any tourist would hesitate to come back here again. There are no facilities and no toilets in heritage sites for the visitors. I remember escorting a visiting dignitary who was taken straight to Swyambhunath from the airport and he desperately wanted to visit a toilet. Luckily I could send him to a toilet in a monastery nearby.

What can be done to improve the situation?

The locals need to understand that it is their house in world heritage site and they should be proud of it. It does not belong to any ministry or official. They may be more worried about economic returns but they need to understand that even by retaining its authentic form they can get some economic benefits. They should not take maintaining an old structure as a burden. The government also has given subsidies for buying the traditional building materials. Lack of public support is a big problem and that is because lack of awareness and knowledge. This can be dealt with by spreading messages to the public from an economic point of view. That will surely work here. We Nepalis have to understand that it is our own heritage, responsibility and only we can protect it. ■

Photo: Niraj Sapkota

TREASURES
Exceptional ways of YCL cannot be executed outside of law in a civilised society. Every Nepal knows that institutionalised corruption has set firm roots in Nepal. The nexus between the politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen is so entrenched that it might be virtually impossible to eliminate corruption in the conventional manner. It is one of the exceptional areas that require exceptional ways to make it work. However, exceptional ways cannot be executed outside of law in a civilised society. Taking the anti-corruption objective of YCL at face value, it would be up to the party and lawmakers (CPN-Maoists in the parliament) to transform the working style of YCL to an acceptable degree so that its performance can be commended by all in Nepal and abroad. Political corruption and related issues of protecting and preserving national interests are better left with the political parties and the Nepali government of which Maoists are an integral part. By acting as a role model in all areas of involvement, the Maoists can bring a desirable change to the culture of political corruption with impunity. However, YCL can always make its case peacefully, similar to all other members of the civil society, against foreign intervention. Countering criminals by force, checking instances of abductions and hoolliganism by counter force can only lead to further incurrences of violence and conflict in the society. As two wrongs do not make it right, YCL's forceful and illegal actions can hardly attain the goal that it has set for itself.

The central objective of YCL for unemployed youth of Nepal is a praiseworthy goal if appropri- ate means are employed. Unemployment is directly related to lack of economic growth in all countries including Nepal. Short term relief can be given to unemployed youth by creating additional jobs by a partnership between the government and business community. However, the problem many a time is the lack of meritocracy in recruitment of qualified youth. This can be corrected only with transparency and rule based policies that must be adopted by all organisations in the government as well as private sector. YCL can act as a watchdog for correcting the existing problems. However, YCL needs to redefine its central objective which can make a lasting impact in the Nepali society. If it is playing the role of a Marshal, such as the system practised in the US, for apprehending a person wanted by law, then it needs to obtain the authority from a designated court and act lawfully. For YCL's acceptability at large, revamping its working mechanism is the need of the hour. (Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)

Gross national silliness

Bhutanese want a lasting solution to the crisis which seeks their dignified and safe return to Bhutan and nowhere else.

According to the report made by a media mission sponsored by South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) that visited Nepal to assess the miserable plight of Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal, they do not consider themselves anything but Bhutanese nationals, with a right to return to their homeland. They are victims of political apathy on the part of the totalitarian government of Bhutan led by despot King, who does not consider them Bhutanese nationals, and is not interested in ensuring their repatriation.

The report says that Nepal government has “erroneously” stepped in as a bilateral player and has held 15 rounds of talks with the Bhutanese establishment. Nepal is not in a position to assimilate them into the country and has now made it quite clear that the problem is between the Bhutanese govern- ment and the refugees. India has the most influence on Bhutan to push for a solution that might be amenable to the refugees but has steadfastly refused to get involved. The refugees entered Nepal through India and originally it should have been the problem of India. Strange to note, they are Nepali speaking people but millions of Indians are also Nepali speaking people.

To tackle the problem, the US has come up with a resettlement proposal in the US, Australia, Canada and some Nordic countries, which according to respective ambassadors to the US are acceptable to refugees as a segment of the refugees. However, the proposal has sparked off a controversy and several refugees say that it has created confusion amongst them. What they want is a lasting solution to the crisis which seeks their dignified and safe return to Bhutan and nowhere else. Another issue of concern is the fear that camps could become a fertile breeding ground for violence and terrorism and the US is more concerned about a possible Maoist insurgency. The report concludes that the US proposal is only a temporary solution while recognising that the humanitarian solution proposed by the US and other countries are welcomed. In fact, there are two issues: one related to ushering in democracy in Bhutan, and the second related to the situation of the refugees. It needs to be always borne in mind that it is the democracy deficit in Bhutan that has resulted in the refugee issue in the first place. The report emphasises on India’s role as crucial. As the biggest democratic nation in the region, it certainly is in a position to correct the atrocities done to the refugees. The issue of the refugees in Nepal is undoubtedly an issue of justice which demands that Bhutan not only does not get away with the expulsion of its citizens, but also makes sure that the refugees get back to their country and their right to live a normal life. The present monarch introduced ‘one nation, also makes sure that the refugees get back to their country and their right to live a normal life. The present monarch introduced ‘one nation, Bhutanese establishment, Bhutaneses, Lhotsampas (Southern Bhutanese) were persecuted. It also mandated dress codes, cultural and social etiquettes demanding ethnic homoge- nity. Lhotsampas held public demonstra- tions to resist the implementation of this policy but the dissenting voices were dealt with iron hands. They were branded as anti-nationals, illegal immigrants and were imprisoned or executed.

To examine, ‘Gross National Happiness’ - whose happiness is it? How can there be happiness when one-sixth of the country’s population are refugees demanding safe return to their home country; when the Lhotsampas inside Bhutan are secretly and systematically persecuted; their lands are expropriated, their language withdrawn from school curriculum, text books burnt in the public and when their children are selectively denied citizenship and education? How can there be gross national happiness when the Lhotsampas and other minorities are still living in the dark, when there is a delayed education, employment, business opportunities and are excluded from development? Is there a problem under the Gross National Happiness (GNH) repeatedly. According to the King, the four pillars of his GNH are the promotion of equitable and sustainable economic development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance. During mid 1980s there was peace, equality and justice in Bhutan. In mid 1980s the present monarch introduced ‘one nation, one people’ policy and enacted new citizenship act under which Lhotsampas (Southern Bhutanese) were persecuted. It also mandated dress codes, cultural and social etiquettes demanding ethnic homoge- nity. Lhotsampas held public demonstra- tions to resist the implementation of this policy but the dissenting voices were dealt with iron hands. They were branded as anti-nationals, illegal immigrants and were imprisoned or executed.

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In 10 years, Hong Kong seems to have changed less than its owner, China. On the day this longtime British colony returned to Chinese rule 10 years ago, even the sky seemed to be crying over the territory’s uncertain future.

The heavens opened as the colonial masters waved their farewells and sailed away on the ship Britannia. At daybreak, another downpour drenched the soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army as they crossed the border. By that wet summer, half a million people had fled Hong Kong in search of safer quarters. But neither has the territory’s future.

The flow of people goes both ways. About 500,000 Chinese residents now live in Hong Kong, up its end of the bargain to leave Hong Kong alone. They crossed the border. Streets protesters waving anti-government slogans remain a way of life in Hong Kong. But even as they strive to keep a distance, the people of Hong Kong also have come to embrace the motherland.

When the territory’s economy hit the rocks in 2003, Beijing came to the rescue by opening the borders and making it easier for mainland visitors to spend their money here. The comments by Bakhsh came after protests said they had washed through chest-deep water from outlying areas to voice their anger about the shortage of relief aid. They said they received only packets of biscuits and bottles of water. “Every family is looking for one or two members. They are all missing,” said Chaker Baloth, who walked more than 25 miles through the night to reach Turbat, a town of 150,000. Bakhsh said the official death toll in Baluchistan was 17, with an unspecified number of people missing.

But, Farooq Ahmed Khan, head of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, said Friday accurate figures were unavailable due to poor communications in stricken areas. Khan told reporters in Islamabad that the military had rescued about 1,600 people. The floods also killed more than two dozen people in a northeastern tribal region, forcing the temporary suspension of the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said Friday.

More than 2 million Afghans still live in camps along the border. Floods also have ravaged four eastern provinces of neighboring Afghanistan, causing at least four deaths, a Nato statement said. Monsoon storms have claimed more than 120 lives in neighboring India. Bakhsh estimated that 500,000 houses were destroyed or damaged in Baluchistan, and many people needed more aid. “Despite bad weather, we are trying to ensure the supply of relief aid to the needy people,” he said. (dnews)

Small territory, GREAT INFLUENCE

Pakistanis troops and rescuers struggled Saturday to help 1.3 million victims of monsoon-triggered floods in the country’s southwest, officials said, a day after villagers rioted over the slow response. The death toll from the floods in worst-affected Baluchistan province rose to 17, an official said, with local media reporting that more than 200 people have died across the country after about four days of rains and flooding.

At least four people were injured Friday when police fired tear gas and bullets into the air to disperse villagers who rammed the mayor’s office in the flooded southwestern city of Turbat, driven by anger over a lack of relief aid. It was the first such protest since Tuesday, when floods triggered by rains from Cyclone Yemyin began causing havoc in Baluchistan province, which includes the coastal town of Turbat, about 400 miles southeast of Quetta.

However, Khudai Bakhsh, the relief commissioner for Baluchistan, said Saturday that the situation was now under control in Turbat and that officials were trying their best to get food to victims. “Pakistan’s army is using transport planes and helicopters to ferry aid to the flood-hit areas in Baluchistan, he said, adding the storm and floods had affected 1.3 million people in the province.

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The announcement of elections date is a bold step. However, it is pertinent to question whether or not elections are possible at this point of time. Unfortunately, the ground reality is vastly different from what our leaders actually think. The law and order situation is appalling and as a consequence the country is moving towards a political crisis.

The Maoists who have supposedly quit violence have failed to mend their ways. In the past year, they have attempted to seize power early this winter when the Prime Minister's attempt to seize power early this winter the Prime Minister's health was known to be bleak. The winter when the Prime Minister's attempt to seize power and intervene aggressively to foil a probable Maoist take-over.

The Maoists have been forced to stringently regulate the economy of the country; they have been forced to refrain themselves. Nonetheless, the move is a tactical one that aims to decieve the international community. The rumours suggesting a change of hearts in Maoists' thought regarding the senior leaders shamelessly and positioned People's Liberation Army (PLA) around Kathmandu valley at strategic points. But, fortunately, the international community has not weighed their threat to the Maoists government and intervened aggressively to foil a probable Maoist take-over.

Koirala has gambled his political career by compromising with former terrorists and his interest is to give space to all political forces in the country.

In tangent with their desired objective, the Maoists made a second attempt to seize power early this winter when the Prime Minister’s health was known to be bleak. The latest attempt to seize power was after it became apparent that the government was in position to conduct elections on the 20th of June. Instead of taking collective responsibility for the failure to conduct elections in June, the Maoists made the PM the scapegoat and concurrently created serious disorder throughout the country. But, the media is against the Maoists and influenced public opinion against them.

The Maoists are desperate to buy the international community in their favor. Although their goals are intact to nationalise private properties and stringently regulate the economy of the country, they have been forced to

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Perspective

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Marshland Flowers

Importance of authentic unbroken enlightened lineage

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Importance of authentic unbroken enlightened lineage

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Marshland Flowers

Importance of authentic unbroken enlightened lineage

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Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

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Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche
What is Methadone?

Methadone is a synthetic, narcotic analgesic pain reliever. Often used by and associated with the treatment of heroin addicts it is also used for other medical purposes such as relieving pain. The drug has characteristics of morphine and acts in similar ways to it and other narcotic medications. However, with methadone the gradual and mild onset of its effects prevents the user from getting high and experiencing extreme effects.

Doses of methadone used in heroin treatment vary based on a person’s body weight and tolerance, but proper dosage is measured and determined by a patient’s decline in craving of heroin. It is prescribed primarily in oral forms, including tablets, powder, and liquid for treatment of narcotic addiction. Although methadone is primarily used for treating narcotic addiction, users can still experience negative physical effects. Careful monitoring and a close relationship to between a doctor and the patient are essential for its proper use.

To understand the dynamics of a nation’s literature, a closer look at the vocation of most of the creators is crucial. The question bothered me when I was editing a special Dutch issue of the magazine, Pratik with Dutch poet Harry Zevenbergen as the guest editor.

Out of the twenty-four Dutch poets including legendary Simon Vinkenoog, Diana Ozon, Bart FM Droog, Tithe Hoffman and Hans Plomp that we decided to include in Droog, Tjitse Hofman and Hans Vinkenoog, Diana Ozon, Bart FM Droog, Simon Vinkenoog, Tithe Hoffman and Hans Plomp to include the guest editor.

Some of them had held several assorted positions as barkeeper, canvasser, drauffer, pub manager, industrial cleaner, panel beater, shipyard worker, scaffoldier and civil servant. Others remained ardent travelers, hippies, farmers, songwriters, bandleaders, public gardeners, telephone operators, medical couriers, dolphin keepers, bookkeepers, bank tellers, and animal protectors.

Most of the creators in Nepali literature recall that their teachers were journalists or civil servants. The Nepali writers until 1950 came from the upper class. Bai Krishna Sama, Jagadhish Shumsher, even Siddhi Charan Shrestha and Laumi Devkota came from upper class and had considerable influence over the rulers of their times due to family ties and other social connections. After the 1950 democratic upsurge, over the decades the middle class writers have started slowly appearing in Nepali literature. However, lower middle class and the working people, Dalits and women from the lower, marginalized section of Nepali society have yet to make their mark in the Nepali literary arena. Why would Nepali writers come from upper middle classes and classes only? Is there a lack of education? Is western education a prerequisite to be poets or storytellers? Has the ordinary Nepali writer yet to make an entry in the literary arena? What would a truck driver, sweeper, porter, carpenter, farmer, manual laborer or a blacksmith write? The questions are intriguing. I am simply wondering if the people involved in real life events like their Dutch counterparts will ever enter this world.

The issue is important because it offers an answer to another serious question - the question of authenticity of writing. For the lack of authentic details in Nepali literature seems to stem from this phenomenon of western journalists/civil servant dominated literary world. Most of the creators do not come from the lower strata of life and do not engage in real life works due to social status and caste bias, it becomes very difficult for them to immerse themselves in the heat and dust of the world they are describing. A second hand accounts made to dramatise stories and experiences heard arbitrarily appears to be the major cause of Nepali literature’s deplorable state, be it fiction or criticism.

That is why very ‘provincial’ flavor appears to be available in the Nepali literary works, especially from recent fiction. For their failures to delve deep into the content and lacking in authentic details, major Nepali novelists such as Druk Chandra Gautam find it fit to dabble in the murky waters of senseless experiments in name of post-modernism and reconstruction.

The writer can be reached at writer@yoyutsu.de
Before leaving for USA after finishing his term as the US Ambassador in Nepal, James P Moriarty was enjoying one of his last evenings at Nepalaya's newly established office at Kalkasthan, Kathmandu to be a part of the musical programme, 'Palenti.' Renowned lyricist, Ratna Samasher Thapa, 68, was there to describe the background of his songs which he wrote, some of which were almost 50 years old.

A crowd of around 100 with a large number of renowned personalities and classical music lovers listened to Thapa's old numbers. Palenti is a series of classical Nepali music program where an artist revisits his/ her past. Thapa was there to witness the two new singers Suraj Thapa and Shila Bista who were singing his masterpieces. In his white shirt and grey hair Thapa was flashing his few white teeth in happiness, obviously recalling his past.

Nepalya started Palenti series three years ago and has been receiving enthusiastic response from the lovers of classical music. Aavas, a 38 year musician, composer and singer, and the coordinator of Palenti, ran the series for one whole year, singing and composing. Last year renowned Nepali singers from India and Nepal mesmerised the audience in Palenti series. Avash said that this year, they have planned to bring celebrities from all three sides that go to create a song - musician, composer and singer. In the first program of Palenti series this year, last month, singer Phattelman delighted the audience with his numbers. In this second program, Thapa overwhelmed the people. He remembered the famous singer Narayan Gopal who chose Thapa's words to enter the field of music almost 50 years ago.

"It was the stage of Trichanda College where Narayan sang his first song, Swargki rani, mayaki khani," recalled Thapa, fondly. Friendship between Narayan Gopal and Thapa was unique since the latter always has been a teetotaler and the former could not do without it. "I never met him when he was drunk," Thapa explained.

Suraj and Shila, the young singers sang almost one and half dozens of songs created by Thapa including 'Goreto tyo gaunko' originally sung by Premdhwaj Pradhan, 'Tyo kholako' and 'Kholanala sang' by Manikratna, 'Arkhai ma rat gal' by Nalikaj, and 'Jati hansu bhanichhu' by Deep Shrestha. Nepalaya organises 'Palenti' every last Friday of the English calendar. The renowned musician, composer and singer, Bharat Jangam will appear in Palenti the next month.