Maoist Chief Prachanda has objected to the way the United Nation’s special office headed by Ian Martin had been carrying on the verification process in Maoist cantonments. His advice to Prime Minister Koirala was to stop the verification and go for the integration of the Maoist combatants in the Nepal Army straightaway.

Prachanda, accompanied by his comrade in arms Baburam Bhattarai, conveyed his message to the PM on Thursday at his Baluwatar residence. He said what the UN was aiming at was demobilisation and disarmament of the combatants, which was, “not acceptable to us.” His alternative suggestion was to go for security sector reform right away, ignoring the United Nations if necessary.

Responding to Koirala’s query, Prachanda tried to clarify that the first step was the integration of the Maoist combatants in the Nepal Army, something Koirala felt was not practical. Prachanda’s tough stance with Koirala on Thursday was echoed by another senior Maoist leader, Prabhakar, on Saturday when he accused the United Nations of conspiring to disintegrate the People’s Liberation Army, something not at all acceptable to the Maoists.

The stand off has posed the biggest ever threat to the UN process as the verification now remains stalled for more than two weeks. Prachanda’s assertion for giving up the verification process follows the Maoist Chief’s statement in Switzerland that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) need not wait for their reintegration through the usual process of demobilisation and disarmament.

Prachanda’s meeting with Koirala had followed his detailed discussions with UNMIN Chief, Ian Martin, who the Maoist sources say, was overruled by the Maoist chief when Martin insisted that both sides of the conflict should honour the mandate they gave in writing to UN.

After registration of the arms and combatants, verification was the next logical step. The Maoists seemed to be irked by UNMIN’s disqualification of hundreds of cantonment inmates, which triggered fears that the fate of other combatants in other camps and sub-camps would also not be very different.
Prime Minister G P Koirala has lodged a feeble, on camera, complaint about Indian territory being used by some of the Nepali ‘terrorist’ groups. He lodged this protest when Shyam Sharan, former Foreign Secretary, made an unscheduled visit to Kathmandu and called on Koirala last week.

According to the sources, Koirala gave detailed information about the activities of the Janatantrik Terai-Mukti Morcha (JTMM) leaders which was aimed at disintegrating Nepal. Sharan was categorical in his assurance that India would not allow its territory to be used against Nepal. He also went a step forward to pledge all assistance at its disposal to ensure that elections to the Constituent Assembly takes place on November 22 as decided by the government of Nepal.

Although Indian Embassy played down the significance of Sharan’s visit, Koirala shared a bit of what transpired during his meeting with Sharan when he met Maoist leader Prachanda and UML General Secretary Madhav Nepal.

Koirala is believed to have got copies of Tehelka.com, a weekly tabloid published from Delhi as evidence about the presence of JTMM leaders in Indian territory and their directing activities against Nepal. JTMM-Goiit leader Jaikishan Goit, in his interview to Tehelka had said that Terai was a separate country, independent of Nepal and India.

Earlier, Koirala is also believed to have raised the issue of various Terai groups having met in Patna in presence of some Indian officials in which a plan to have Terai as a separate country was discussed.

“I am sure the issue or the fate of monarchy might have been discussed as well, but your guess is as good as mine,” a cabinet minister who was not willing to be identified told newsfront.

Sharan was the architect of the 12-point agreement in Delhi that brought the Maoists and the seven party alliance together in favour of ‘peace, democracy and prosperity.’ Sources said Shyam Sharan pledged that India would act sternly against such activities of the Terai groups, but asked the PM not to delay settling what the people from Terai are demanding. And his emphasis was not to postpone elections at any cost. The ultimatum issued to two Terai groups by Home Minister K P Sharma, a man trusted by India despite his poor performance, is being linked with the assurance Shyam Sharan gave to Koirala that India had no love lost for Goit or Jwala Singh.

Sharan was last here accompanying Dr Karan Singh, a special envoy of Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh, in an effort to bring about conciliation between the king and the seven political parties when the people’s movement was at its peak. Indian proposal that the parties accept the king’s offer of the political parties forming their government was however turned down by the seven political parties, saying nothing short of revival of the parliament and the people as the sole source of sovereignty would satisfy them. The movement was called off after the king conceded to these demands through a second proclamation.
Moriarty’s departure

All throughout his tenure, he spoke on behalf of the United States government. But he is a little devalued that from that practice the day he left Nepal after completing his 3-year tenure as US Ambassador to Nepal. In personal capacity, James F Moriarty suggested that King Gyanendra should take up some dramatic steps to save the institution of monarchy, even though it might have been an act done in the heat.

He did not suggest who King Gyanendra should abdicate in favour of. But that was a clear endorsement of what KP Oli had stated a few months ago; first in Biratnagar, then in Delhi and later in Kathmandu when speaking with Pakistani journalists. But Koirala was in favour of Prince Hishyadendra, King Gyanendra’s grandson, ascending the throne.

Moriarty however said that the official position on behalf of the US President and the US government was unchanged; and that it is for the people of Nepal to decide whether they want monarchy or a republican set-up. His position on the Maoists remained totally unchanged. He maintained that they were terrorists and only their conduct should be taken as proof their changed behavior. Moriarty is likely to be taking up his new assignment in Bangladesh as its ambassador.

Sitaúla’s new deadline

Home Minister K P Sitaúla is known for making promises and not fulfilling it. His repeated promises in and outside the ministry to improve the law and order situation, and his inability to show any result is just one example. But that did not deter him from renewing the pledge. On July 14, he served an ultimatum through media representatives in parliament to extremist Terai groups that said, “come to the negotiating table within two weeks, or face the fury of the State.” Sitaúla said the government would dispatch security forces to deal with the extremists if they did not heed his appeal. He named Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha, Goit and Jwala Singh groups as the ones facing State’s wrath if they did not come forward for the dialogue.

He however, did not clarify if the government was contemplating dispatching Nepal Army or the Armed Police Force in Terai. His warning comes almost two weeks after Prime Minister G P Koirala had asked Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Rukmanagad Katalwa, to keep the army on standby to meet any eventualities in Terai.

Minister in charge of Peace and Reconstruction, Ram Chandra Poudel who has been assigned to talk to the Terai groups has not been able to take the dialogue to a positive direction so far.

P M approaches Ramraja

Prime Minister G P Koirala has approached Ven. Tirath Ramraja Prasad Singh to work for peace in Terai. Prime Minister’s nephew and political aide, Dr Sheikhir Koirala, next Singh at his residence in Banseshwar on Thursday with a message that he should work for peace and settlement in Terai. Singh has come into prominence after both Maoists and non-Maoist groups approached him separately to lead them. While Madheshi Janadikath Forum and various factions of the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha approached him in Patna few months ago to be the first president of an ‘Independent Madhesi’, Maoists were keen to have him in the cabinet as their minister. Singh however, turned down both offers stating he was opposed to Nepal’s disintegration and both groups should publicly affirm to ‘raison d’être’.

Maoist minister’s simplicity

Matrika Yadav has proved time and again that he is a minister with a difference. The latest proof came when he traveled to Bangkok for medical treatment with his wife. Although entitled to travel business class at government expense, Yadav insisted that he would travel only in economy class. Requests from Thai Airlines and his officials were in vain.

What Yadav did was in contrast to the luxury his leaders, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, availed of during their recent travels to Norway and Switzerland. According to a Maoist source, Yadav who continues to live a simple life had protested against the Mercedes Benz car being given to him as a minister. But he used that in absence of an alternative arrangement by the government.

India’s new ambassador?

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China a love

China, Nepal’s northern neighbour, is not only trying to be visible politically and diplomatically in the country, but also is trying to be visible economically and commercially.

China has already started engaging with the Nepal Government in order to encourage more Chinese tourists and entrepreneurs from China, in making preparations to review the Air Service Agreement with China and do away with the 367 per week seat limit for air passengers. Once this revision is formalised, additional air services between China and Nepal will be a reality in near future, officials said.

China which had declared Nepal as one of the nine most preferred tourist destinations among three years ago, however, had not shown the kind of interest it is showing now. Chinese entrepreneurs have taken under their management the Thamel based Mangal Hotel besides hiring two floors in Ganjip Hotel in Lazimpat.

‘We believe they have signed at least four other contracts,’ an official in the tourism department said. Some Chinese entrepreneurs have also shown interest in starting hotels in Lumbini and other sites outside the capital, sources said.

Direct to Colombo

Nepal and Sri Lanka are close to finalising some deals to promote tourism in both countries. The move comes in the wake of assessments from both sides that pilgrim tourism has a lot of potential to link the world with Buddhist heritage here. Besides reviewing the existing Air Service Agreement (ASA), the government of Nepal is also likely to permit Sri Lankan entrepreneurs to set up big hotels in Lumbini and other places of their choice.

Prakash Shrestha, head of the three-member jury to select new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has resigned in protest against a minister’s interference in the process.

Shrestha resigned in the midst of the selection process after Tourism Minister, Prithvi Subba Gurung insisted that Juddha Gurung, a UML leader, should be appointed as the new CEO. Juddha Gurung, a conservation expert, had contested elections to the parliament unsuccessfully on UML ticket and now remains a full time politician. There are five candidates in the race including the acting CEO, Subhash Niraula.

NTB sources were keen to let a fair trial proceed so that one of the three candidates including Gurung could be selected on merit without any political interference. But he quit after the minister wanted a commitment from Shrestha that his nominee would ultimately be selected. The post of CEO has been lying vacant for some months now after Tek Bahadur Dangi’s tenure ended last year.

Redeeming honour

A senior judicial officer protests and quits

Jaya Prakash Man Singh Maskey, a special class judicial officer, created a history by resigning as member secretary of the Administrative Court, after a junior official superseded him as its chief.

Maskey who still had more than four years to go in the service put in his papers a month ago after the Koirala government appointed Kashiraj Thapa as chief of the court. “I did what my conscience asked me to do,” Maskey said in his brief response to newsfront query. Of his leaving, Nepal’s ambassador to London shot out a letter as soon as Dahal’s appointment came through on June 15. “I cannot work under someone who has been my junior all through,” he wrote to the law minister and forwarded a copy to the PM last month. He also requested that his resignation should come into effect the day Dahai who was earlier a registrar in the Supreme Court joined the office.

A law minister official said the decision to supersede Maskey was not some thing that originated from the ministry. That was a decision imposed from the top, he said, making it clear that it was the PM himself who was responsible for this.

Madhesh’s Janadikath Forum approached him in Patna to support them in their movement. This brings to an end a career which began as a section officer in the ministry some 25 years ago. In his impressive career graph, Maskey served as joint secretary in the Judicial council for five years, two years as its active secretary. Dahai had worked under him there, and earlier in the ministry as well.

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Costly indifference

The country is confronted with the gravest ever crisis with a couple of violent outbusts demanding separate states carved out of Nepal. These demands, clearly favouring secessionism, are something 25 million people are opposed to. And the fact that they are being rated by individuals either from the Indian soil, or purely as propaganda without any backing from the people shows a lack of seriousness. But this is something the government of the day can ignore only at a heavy cost. Total absence of governance, collapse of the law and order situation and authority of the State, highly centralised power structure and political apathy towards all these issues will take a heavy toll on the integration of the country.

The end of more than a decade-long armed conflict was a welcome event in Nepal’s politics but it also came with certain danger signals. If the present and future governments are not effective and responsive enough towards genuine issues of rights, representations and inclusiveness in power structures, no one can stop the use of violence in politics from increasing in days to come; when people will take up arms at a slightest provocation or without any provocation.

The demand for separate Madhesi by a couple of Terai groups or their leaders and the mushrooming growth of armed outfits, already around a dozen now, shows that the government is not at all effective, and is very unclear about how it wants to go about empowering people from all regions. The government also needs to take urgent steps towards building a national consensus about defeating such fissiparous and secessionist tendencies. Absence of such an initiative will also trigger an ugly political competition in which every group, individual or party, visible or invisible, may embark on radical demands advocating disintegration of the country.

A large share of the blame for the present day situation should also go to the Maquis for what they demanded as rebels yesterday. They demanded autonomous zones based on ethnicity with the right to self-determination which in principle meant supporting secession. It is time that they make their position clear about it.

Chennai, 16-22 July, 2007

Yubaraj Ghimire

Editorial

In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act. - George Orwell

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Yubaraj Ghimire
Utility of military force

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Niraj Sapkota
Interview

How long have you been working as an ornithologist?
I have been working as an ornithologist for around 50 years now. I am still studying and working in the field. That which began as my hobby is now my work through which I have earned my livelihood. My fascination for birds began when I was very young. Nobody taught me anything about it. I was self-taught.

How did you start your education in this field?
I did not have any equipment in the beginning. I learned how to use a slingshot first and began handling guns when I used to accompany some people I knew who used to hunt. I learned how to use the sling shot first, then a rifle and began handling guns when I used to accompany my friends who used to hunt. With difficulty, I found a book that helped me catalogue the names of the species. I clean and preserve the birds myself and this is something only somebody with genuine interest can do.

I have trekked extensively in Nepal and have spent half of my life walking and still do. I am writing a book based on my experiences which will be published in near future. How were you viewed by others for your unique work?
Life certainly was not easy, financially and otherwise. The villagers who used to observe me climbing trees and watching birds used to think I was crazy. Even now I am considered a bit out of ordinary so you can imagine what people used to think of me 50 years ago. Are rare birds smuggled out of Nepal?
Rare species might be smuggled out although I have not come across any concrete proof of it yet. Take the recent case of the birds that were flown in from Pakistan and were destroyed. Nobody knows what kinds of birds they were and why they were destroyed without much as a photograph of the birds. There have been several cases where smugglers were caught and it is said that Nepal is a base for foreigner to smuggle birds.

How can birds be protected from extinction?
Their natural habitat, be it swamps, forests, dried tree trunks and so on need to be left untampered. Different birds live and thrive in different kinds of habitat. Green habitat conservation is very necessary to protect the species and for it to flourish. Air, noise and water pollution also play a major role disturbing the birds and causing them to relocate. Keshtar Mahal in Kathmandu used to be a hub of different birds’ habitat and migratory birds but now due to intolerable conditions, they moved out to friendlier environment. Birds and animals are very sensitive to disturbances in environment and humans should heed the warnings before it becomes too late for their own survival!

Many species have disappeared and have relocated elsewhere due to lack of ideal habitat here in the valley. Here in Thamel, there was a swamp behind and birds called ruby throat used to come here but now with houses all around, they are not to be seen anymore. Species will start disappearing if their habitats are destroyed and this is true for all areas in the 14 zones. In Nepal, no areas have been separated for conservation of birds. It has not caught the attention of the government yet. Preservation of birds should be in the interest of Nepal, not of organisations outside. The real people doing the actual work in Nepal should be acknowledged and the credit given to them and not to outsiders with money, as is the common practice.

Has any survey been done on birds in Nepal?
No extensive research; counting has been done in Nepal yet since such a survey takes a lot of resources, time and man power. So no accurate data on birds in Nepal exists really.

How important are birds to the ecosystem?
In an ecosystem, from a tiniest insect, every single species is important. Disappearance of one species affects the whole cycle. With this in mind the government should start taking interest in it and make policies to preserve birds’ habitat all over the country. It would be a way to attract more tourists. Recently I assisted the ex-president Jimmy Carter on a bird watching trip and he enjoyed it.

It is no use creating a model habitat only although it has its own purpose for education but it is most important to create awareness in peoples’ minds about the role of birds in the eco-system that affects all the people.

How do you feel while watching birds?
I feel very happy, it makes me euphoric. I feel trapped when I cannot go out for long durations. I could spot birds from long distances but now I need my glasses. To spot some birds it requires two to three people since they move so rapidly. I myself have found 25, 20 new bird species.

Obviously you need a lot of stamina in this work?
Yes, a lot of hardship is involved in this work where you face unpredictable weather conditions, scarcity of food and water and have often to sleep out in the woods. I have faced problems like porters running away with supplies. It all is part of the job.

A lot of courage, dedication and tenacity are required to survive in this field. It does not come with money. I will die, then the Ranas of the yore who used to hunt so much would have a good collection by now. But instead so much has gone out.

Are there bird fans in Nepal?
Yes, though they are only a handful, they are increasing but the number is peanuts compared to those in western countries where there are hundreds of thousands of people whose hobby is bird watching.

In Nepal people tend to concentrate only on their work, be it business or office work. Most of them have no hobbies that they can pursue in their free time. We need to develop that trend of having a hobby which keeps you constructively occupied.

What are your future plans?
My wish is to go on working, walking and finally I hope to die in Mustang. I love that place. I am happy with the way life has turned out for me. I wish more people would enter this field and persevere in it.
Education for competence and virtue

Khagendra Prasai
Principal, SM College

What should be the purpose of education?

I am of firm conviction that education should be directed towards creating a virtuous and knowledgeable citizen of society, nation and the world. A similar idea is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that education should be directed to the full development of personality and to the strengthening of human rights and freedom. Rig Veda says, “Education is what liberates” (sa bidhya ta bimuktaya). To put it simply, education should build and enhance competence and virtue in individuals.

What would you advise students who are choosing their subjects?

Students should keep in mind their own potential and the opportunities for higher studies that the subjects offer. Today, natural science, management, humanities, social sciences, all offer good opportunities if students are committed to achieve good results and they can develop the confidence required in their respective fields.

What should students consider while choosing a college?

Firstly, they should know in which areas the college has invested, such as laboratory, library etc. which directly or indirectly benefit students. Secondly, the teaching method adopted is the method conducive to building and enhancing their ability to learn and develop their personality? Thirdly, they must consider whether the college motivates students to make progressive achievement in score, competence and development of personality. Many colleges proudly publicise high scores of their students, but little attention has been paid on whether any progressive achievement is being made by students or not. I have seen many students being misguided and duped by exaggerated and false advertisements of colleges. Sometimes students are deluded by glittering facades of college buildings and the like. Keeping all these factors in mind, students can make a wise and rational decision.
It seems highly unlikely that the growth target projected at 5% for next fiscal year can be reached.

National budget of Nepal has been announced for the fiscal year 2007/2008 by Nepal’s finance minister of a government led by eight coalition partners. This budget is believed to be the first one for the three-year transition period. The transition period can last longer as per current conditions of instability and lawlessness as well as lack of understanding and harmony among the present leadership.

Understanding it, it is a complex exercise which had to be carried out for running day to day affairs of the nation even if Nepal were not facing the Constituent Assembly elections in the near future. It would require a good amount of study and deeper understanding of the elements of the budget prior to making informed comments. Nevertheless, economic survey of the past period provides a good basis to start discussion on the budget.

The government of Nepal has pointed at two major factors for its lack of performance (achievement) of its estimated 4.5% growth for 2006/2007. The revised estimate of the GDP growth last year as 2.5% only. The major factor, as per the speech of the finance minister, has been the state’s lack of improvement in law and order and investment climate. With the current situation of law and order, which seems to be worsening progressively, and lacking serious efforts from all sides, particularly the conflicting groups affiliated with major political parties in the all powerful parliament, it seems highly unlikely that the growth target projected at 5% for next fiscal year can be reached. Let us hope that the finance minister’s assessment relating to adverse impact of law and order last year on economic growth was wrong.

While the first factor is fully in the hands of people of Nepal, especially its current leadership, the second important factor lies with nature. For countries like Nepal, adverse weather conditions always come in handy to be blamed for lack of growth. One wonders why we must base a large part of our projections on nature’s ways which has ever remained mysterious and unknown even to the most learned.

On the revenue side, the government expects to generate 16 billion 605.9 million Nepalese rupees from domestic sources as against a mobilisation of 86 billion 135.5 million (as revised) in the last fiscal year. A jump of over 10% in domestic revenue without a stable environment encouraging increased investment from domestic and foreign sources can be anything but a “lack of improvement in law and order and investment climate.”

The merger of the government party and the Maoist party for the eventual surrender of their arms was expected to create a political atmosphere conducive to the peace process. The recent失败 of that merger demonstrates the lack of commitment by the major political parties to the peace process. If this were not the right time to help Nepal, when would it? The government should try to obtain this rightful concession from its leaders, which will make a huge difference in streamlining its budget for this year and successive years in the interim period. The United States, the EU, Japan, China and India should take the lead to make it happen.

Their tactics, strategy might have changed, but not their goals.”

“Equally difficult to digest is the planned capital investment of 75.252 billion Nepalese rupees, which is more than double the outlay under this head last year. Besides the uncertainty in realising the commitment of donor countries, and likely delays in working out loan proposals with regional/international financial and monetary institutions, expected to raise 44.828 billion Nepalese rupees as foreign aid (grant plus loan), the absorptive capacity of a country cannot be raised overnight. That is unthinkable in a state of transition. If it is not possible to increase revenues and make investments as desired, can then the government cut down on certain expenses? From the face of it, this proposition also looks to be difficult. The government must ensure the CA elections on time, the extended one in November. Law and order must be secured in order to carryout the elections. A fair and fair manner. General administrative expenses, particularly on security agencies, need to be adequately apportioned. Lacking any support from the national military, as per the agreement among the coalition partners, the cost to equip the police force is an added extra.

Finance Minister Dr Ramsaran Mahat presenting the annual budget-2004

Nepal has to pay nearly 15.561 billion Nepalese rupees to the foreign lenders in the fiscal next year. As an excellent borrower Nepal has been successfully meeting its loan obligations at all times voting itself out of one of the crucial criteria established for highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) for writing off all loans. Presently, Nepal has been following a path of all-inclusive democratic governance with full regard paid to human rights as per advice and encouragement of the international community. If this were not the right time to help Nepal, when would it? The government should try to obtain this rightful concession from its leaders, which will make a huge difference in streamlining its budget for this year and successive years in the interim period. The United States, the EU, Japan, China and India should take the lead to make it happen. (Bista is a development economist, works with Boao Forum for Asia in China.)

Bhouthik siddhartha Thapa Nepal’s political discourse has entered the decisive phase where the future of tomorrow’s Nepal will be charted through a Constituent Assembly. Throughout history social conflict has been the foundation of popular revolts and by paralyzing or more likely by destroying the morale of the existing state security apparatus. Similarly in Nepal an intense debate has ensued regarding the merger of a politically motivated armed outfit – People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the Nepal Army. However, the state must strongly resist the pressure either domestic or international for the amalgamation of PLA into Nepal Army. In the unfortunate event that the merger takes place, prior to Constituent Assembly polls, it would be accurate to conclude that Girija is indeed preparing for the eventual surrender of power to the Maoists.

As the International Crisis Group states in its report vis-à-vis the Maoists, “their tactics, strategy might have changed, but not their goals.” The Maoists today appear to be the only political party with a game plan. On the other hand the Nepali Congress is under an illusion that the merger would render the largest democratic party in the country, the people will vote for them. Nonetheless, the realistic picture of Nepali politics is vastly different from what our leaders have been portraying.

A few days ago senior of the Eight Party Alliance, Raghu Pant, Binay Dhak Chaud and Dinarpandhi Sharma conceded that the
Each succeeding generation manifests the accumulated culture of generations that have preceded them while also embodying the attributes resulting from their own interactions with the natural, social, political, social, scientific and religious world. Each generation gives continuity to change as it carries past culture and experiences blended with new ideas. 

Youths of Nepal are no exception. Their different personal life experiences blended with common new ideas have developed a common characteristic among Nepali youth. Even though Nepali youth have multiple identities there have a lot of things in common. Regardless of their caste, class etc., Nepali youth have been discarding the status quo. They have got quality imagination, temper of will, and appetite for adventure and a yearning for progress. They are visualising an economically decent, politically and socially participatory, naturally and religiously harmonious, spiritually and philosophically dignified life. They are dreaming of a democratic republic Nepal. They are for change, better life conditions, opportunities, better society and a better nation. They want it to happen in their lifetime. For that they want things to start happening right now. The migration of large number of youths in pursuit of material goods or the active participation of youth in the April uprising is an example of it.

They headed in a eucharistic stage after the successful April uprising. They were hoping that Constituent Assembly would be a platform for an equitable and just society, a peaceful and prosperous nation. With time their hopes have begun to shatter.

Society, a peaceful and prosperous nation. With time their hopes have begun to shatter. They are dreaming of a demo-cratic republic Nepal. They are for change, better life conditions, opportunities, better society and a better nation. They want it to happen in their lifetime. For that they want things to start happening right now.

They are for change, better life conditions, opportunities, better society and a better nation. They want it to happen in their lifetime. For that they want things to start happening right now.

They are dreaming of a democratic republic Nepal. They are for change, better life conditions, opportunities, better society and a better nation. They want it to happen in their lifetime. For that they want things to start happening right now.
North Korea has shut down its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, a US state department spokesman has said. Sean McCormack said that the US had been informed of the shut-down by North Korea and was now awaiting verification from the UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA.

A team from the International Atomic Energy Agency is in Yongbyon overseeing the closure, taking place under a deal agreed in February, but much delayed. Under this deal Pyongyang got its first heavy fuel oil shipments on Saturday.

“We welcome this development and look forward to the verification and monitoring of this shut-down by the International Atomic Energy Agency team,” Mr McCormack said in a statement as the news was announced.

If confirmed, the shut-down would be the first step in disabling the North’s nuclear programme. The IAEA’s 10-member team are to decommission and seal equipment at the reactor and plutonium reprocessing plant. It may take the inspection team up to three weeks to complete the task, says the BBC’s Kevin Kim in Seoul. In nuclear talks held in Beijing in February, North Korea was promised heavy fuel oil in exchange for the Yongbyon shut-down.

The deal was delayed amid a wrangle over North Korean funds frozen in a Macau bank account. But the first ship of oil arrived in the North Korean port of Sonbong on Saturday, loaded with 6,200 tonnes of heavy fuel oil.

On Friday, the chief US nuclear envoy Christopher Hill emphasized that the closing of the Yongbyon reactor was only the first step though. Mr Hill said he expected a full list of the North’s nuclear facilities within months - as agreed in the February deal. North Korea tested an atomic bomb for the first time last year, and has repeatedly said it needs nuclear weapons to fend off a US attack.

Talks involving South and North Korea, Russia, Japan, the United States and China are set to resume in Beijing on Wednesday to map out the next stage of the process.

Pakistan has tense after suicide blast kills 24 troops

Pakistan on Sunday braced for more backlash violence to the army’s deadly raid on a hardline mosque last week after a suicide car bomb attack killed at least 24 troops in an Afghan border area.

Pakistan Army trucks carrying more troops rumbled into northwestem mountain areas after President Pervez Musharraf last week vowed to crush extremists and “root them out from every corner of the country.”

There were unconfirmed reports of fighting between militants and government troops in the Swat valley of North West Frontier Province early Sunday.

Pakistan’s radical Islamic minority has called for “holy war,” infuriated by the siege of the pro-Taliban Red Mosque in the capital and the army assault that ended it, claiming 103 lives through the week, mostly of militants.

The interior ministry said the bodies of 10 unidentified foreigners and seven children were among the charred remains found in the devastated mosque complex, according to a state media report published in the Dawn daily.

In Saturday’s suicide blast in North Waziristan, the attacker rammed an explosives-packed car into a paramilitary convoy, also wounding more than 20 troops, said chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Ashraf.

Besides the blast and a spate of attacks on troops in recent days, there has been political fallout in the region amid the heightened tensions triggered by the Red Mosque raid.

Qazi Hussain Ahmed — powerful head of the six-party Islamic alliance the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal — said he would resign from parliament to protest the army raid and the ongoing army build-up in border regions.

In North Waziristan, pro-Taliban militant commander Abdullah Farhad threatened to end a peace deal struck last September between the army and tribal leaders unless the army left newly-set up checkpoints by Sunday.

“If the government troops do not vacate the checkposts by July 15, we will end the existing peace agreement with the government and launch a guerrilla war,” Farhad told AFP by phone from an undisclosed location Saturday.

The United States has raised pressure on its ally Musharraf, the army chief who grabbed power in a coup eight years ago, to do more to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgents hiding in Pakistan’s rugged Afghan border lands.

New US intelligence reports suggest Al-Qaeda is gaining strength and has established a safe haven in remote tribal areas of western Pakistan for training and plotting new attacks, the Washington Post said last week.

White House national security adviser Stephen Hadley said Musharraf had failed to contain al-Qaeda and said the plan to give tribal leaders more autonomy “has not worked the way it should have,” speaking on US television.

General Musharraf has in recent days sent additional soldiers and equipment into parts of the troubled North West Frontier Province.

“Troops have been deployed in Swat district and in Dera Ismail Khan following instructions by President Musharraf to beef up security to counter the threat of extremist forces in the region,” a military official said. (France 24)
Poet on an island

I am a poet on an island
I dip my finger in the sea
and his Irish sky.

The attachment to landscape, his seashores, his boats,
Johnston is a poet with a faith in the woman and kept writing tirelessly on cats, Yeats fell in love with a beautiful

I still believe in poetry,” says the

In the beginning users

Poet on an island

I am what is on the sea
and below the sea, and above the sea
the sun roped to my shoulder
black my Pythagorean sail
wind is the breath of the world in the sky
I am hailed by name from the stone quay.

A brief chat with Johnston made me realise the supremacy of cultural guards that Irish society has raised for over the years. Johnston not very long ago had to lose his job at a prestigious newspaper for reviewing a contemporary woman writer with influential friends in the media in negative light.

Johnston had stated the view that many young woman writers were being published just because they were women. Most of them did not have true poetic value or literary merit.

“it's very important to observe,” opines Fred, “Ireland is a very conservative society. I feel it is not. It's very rural and Dublin is not its true representation.” Johnston believes a writer should engage fearless against the politics and the making of contemporary society. "Writers are not strange spiritual beings, isolated from the rest of the world." remained his mantra.

The writer can be reached at
writer@yuyutsu.de

Being ethical and productive keep ex-addicts clean

Counseling by drug therapist, Regina Shah

My cousin overdosed herself with tranquillisers recently. Why did she do it?

Yes, it could be addiction.
Unhappy, hopeless people are more prone to drugs (tranquillizers or sleeping pills are also drugs).
Their negative emotions, feelings and situations problems for them since they do not want to feel, experience or face it.

Their problems appear overwhelming without any solutions.

When anybody tries to deal with their problems with help of drugs, it could be considered as the beginning of addiction. No one likes pain or discomfort and we all instinctively try to avoid those feelings.

By using drugs, somebody like your cousin may feel good for sometime but with time, her body begins to lose the addiction of the chemicals and increases its tolerance to the drugs.

In the beginning users experience an initial feeling of well-being or a ‘high’ but with time, the intensity of the pleasurable feeling they are seeking lessens and the physical and mental’ low’ intensifies when the effects of drugs start waning off. To overcome it and get that

‘high’ again, they start increasing their drug intake. This is how overdosing takes place.

Another reason could be that your cousin may be seeking attention. She may feel that she is deprived of attention and sympathy from others and may be trying to get it from others through this act of overdosing.

This is a psychological problem and needs to be treated by psychotherapists. To determine the exact cause and to find the right treatment, she first needs to be checked by a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist.

What does a recovering addict have to do to stay drug-free for the rest of their lives?

Gambhir Kayastha, Battisputali

“Once an addict, always an addict” is a false and discriminating attitude prevalent in our society. But this can only be true if addicts in recovery do not follow certain rules to remain drug-free.

They have to stay away from areas where they used to spend time and from friends they used to hang out with while using drugs; since such company or environment could trigger craving for drugs. This will lead to, “just a few sips of alcohol” or “just a puff” and soon they are back to being addicts and worse than before.

Going into those areas of past and meeting those friends re-stimulate those moments of pleasure and thus ex-addicts easily get caught up in the cycle of addiction again.

To stay drug free, ex-addicts have to be taught to fulfill responsibilities to themselves and to others. They have to be ethical and honest. When they are doing good and not hiding anything they will find it easy to establish communication with everybody. But the moment they become unethical they will start avoiding others.

Thus being ethical is the way to drug free survival. Being productive is also very important.

When they start taking on useful projects and complete it, their morale gets boosted and they start doing better; but if their achievement status stagnates, they start going downhill. Thus, it is important for all big or small, they have to be engaged in something constructive.

These steps may sound very ordinary, but they are the most essential steps for a recovering addict to follow if they want to stay off drugs.

Please address any queries you have about drug addiction to
newsfront@bhrikuti.com (Your identity will be protected.)

Insight

Not just a writer

Writers worth their salt, true to the spirit of their art never sought to align themselves with any corrudners of power.

It is interesting to note comments made by prejudiced academicians about writers. An academician who considered herself to be on the top rung of the academy ladder commented that her rival had earned more like a BBC reporter than an academic paper! Personally, if at all I was inspired to read an academic paper, I'd reach out for the scented paper than a bagful of academic jargon that prides on its indecipherable antiquity and value.

Being ethical and productive keep ex-addicts clean

As the history of the world shows, writers worth their salt, true to the spirit of their art never sought to align themselves with any corrudners of power.

There are unplean examples of writers, painters, poets whose lives were mixed in poverty and its vicious claws gripped them till their very last breath. Such writers have always been critical of tyranny, sycophancy, hypocrisy and have not been afraid of speaking out what they think and feel, even if it makes them an ugly duckling in a pond full of white painted swans.

This lack of association with power has caused the society at large to view principled writers through distorted lens. The magic writers create by delving deep into the recesses of a human heart and soul; the joyful light it sheds on troubled hearts and blank minds casting a glow of hope, seem to pale before the scepter of power and the modern-day throne of money. It is akin to the soft glow of candle being overshadowed by the harsh glare of neon light.

Any profession that is associated with money and power commands much respect, almost reverence in the eyes of people, especially in Nepal. Since we hardly have seen any writers in Nepal who have become successful industriously the tendency to look down on those who choose this art for living comes naturally to most people. But writing as a profession deserves as much if not more respect as any other money guzzling professions. That it is synonymous to penury is because of our ignorance, large scale illiteracy and increasing mercenary attitude resulting in lack of appreciation for this art.

Writers give a lot to the society. They prod, awake hearts and minds to see, feel, empathise, listen and act. Through their writings are the darkest fears, stark realities, unadulterated passions, supreme courage, deepest sorrows revealed; that otherwise would have remained hidden, unrecognised in the tunnels of mind. It is more through stories than anything else that human nature, its peaks of brilliance and cesspools of dark sides are most revealed. Legends, myths, the mysterious that inspire and guide, survive through generations through story telling and writing. And they remain long after the creators have gone.

Art & Society

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Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix introduces several new characters to the screen from the book series. Most notable, perhaps, is Isadora, too-like Dolores Umbridge—at least, that’s how she’s described in J.K. Rowling’s book. In the film, she’s played by Imelda Staunton—the Oscar-nominated actress from “ Vera Drake.”

The director, too, is new to the series, but he’s sticking with it: David Yates, best-known for his BBC television work, already has begun pre-production on the next film in the series, “ Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.” He follows Chris Columbus, who directed the first two films, Mike Newell and Alfonso Cuarón.

Here are some new friends and foes, Harry, Ron, Hermione and company will contend with in film No. 5: Dolores Umbridge (Imelda Staunton)—The Oscar-nominated actress, recently seen in the inspirational film “ Freedom Writers,” plays a doting, newly enrobed work in Dolores Umbridge, who was brought to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to question what Harry knows to be true. The evil Voldemort and his followers have returned. Umbridge tortures Harry, both mentally and physically, while trying to keep him quiet.

Beth Lestrang (Helena Bonham Carter)—A disciple of Voldemort and therefore an enemy to Harry, Bellatrix is worse for wear after doing a stint in Azkaban Prison. She also is the sister of Narcissa Malfoy, aunt to Draco Malfoy and related to Harry’s true guardian, Sirius Black—a relationship that has dire consequences. Carter has lately been seen and heard in projects with her partner, director Tim Burton, for whom she played Mrs. Lovett opposite Johnny Depp in the upcoming film version of “Sweeney Todd.”

Luna

Lovegood

(Evanna Lynch)—A Hogwarts schoolmate, her father is a tabloid publisher, and she takes gossip as gospel. Harry is one of the few classmates to befrend the bespectacled, often annoying Luna, who proves steadfast in troubled times. This is Evanna’s film debut.

Kreacher (voice of Timothy Bateison)—A magical creature known as a house elf, Kreacher belongs heart and soul to the Black family’s dark side. When Sirius Black was the only male member of his family left, Kreacher was forced to serve him, although reluctantly. Kreacher despises Sirius because the elf sees him as having betrayed his mother, who was adored by the elf. Like Dobby, the house elf in previous films, Kreacher will be a computer-generated creation.

“ Kingsley Shacklebolt (George Harris) and Nymphadora Tonks (Natalie Tena)—Both characters are Aurors (skilled in defense against the Dark Arts) and members of the Order of the Phoenix. Author J.K. Rowling describes Shacklebolt as a tall, bald black man who has a deep, calming voice. Harris has worked with Laurence Oliver, who was an early mentor, Harold Pinter and on films with Ridley Scott and Steven Spielberg. Tonks (she hates her first name) spaces things up with a youthful vitality, not to mention purple hair. She’s also a metamorphmagus, who can change appearance at will. Tena’s previous films include “ About a Boy.”

Who’s new to the Potter

PUBLICATIONS

Like circus elephants on parade, J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels have lumbered past a dazzled young public for the last 10 years. Now the beloved fantasy series is ending with the publication of the 7th volume, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, at midnight July 21. Media coverage is at an all-time high and millions of fans are arguing and obsessing over the fate of young Harry in his struggle with the dark wizard, Lord Voldemort. Others in the world of books and reading, meanwhile, are contemplating the end of the historic series. Besides wondering what, if anything, could take its place, they are reflecting on the impact the books have had on reading, book-selling, and publishing for the young.

The adventures of the bespectacled boy at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry have achieved sales far beyond any comparison with normal books. More than 325 million copies of Harry Potter books have been printed worldwide, in 66 languages. Scholastic Inc.’s first U.S. printing of the 14th novel is an unprecedented 12 million copies, and Amazon.com has already received 1.6 million advance orders.

Publishing revolution

Author J.K. Rowling, 41, did more than sell a lot of books. Her character “revolutionized publishing for middle-graders and above,” said Betty Groban, vice-president and publisher of Houghton Mifflin’s children’s division. “Harry Potter made it cool to read a big, fat, complicated book. Before Harry Potter, that sort of book was the hardest sell,” Potter, said Judi Reamer, a New York children’s literary agent, “led to an explosion in the middle-grade world. Agents who only represented adult work now also represent middle-grade fiction.”

With the burgeoning genre of hardcover fiction for children that began with Harry Potter, the New York Times created a separate children’s hardcover bestseller list for its website in 2000, because Harry Potter and other hardcover children’s novels were repeatedly ensonced atop the adult hardcover list. As with any craze, imitators have tried to cash in. “With 70 percent of the manuscripts submitted to us, we’re told it’s just like Harry Potter,” said Holly McGhee, a New York literary agent who handles children’s books. “The character is the same, it’s fantasy, it contains magic.” Potter broke all rules. Boys as well as girls liked the books. Length was no problem — the longest novels in the series run nearly 800 pages. “It used to be the mantra of teachers and librarians that a book of fiction has to be thin or kids won’t read it,” especially not boys, said Terri Schmitz, owner of a children’s book store.

The subject matter changed after Potter, too. “When I was a kid, if you read fantasy, you were a geek,” said Barry Goldblatt, a New York children’s literary agent. “With Harry Potter, you could have a book on your desk with dragons and knights on the cover and no one made fun of you.”

Many credit Rowling with creating a whole generation of new readers. “The effect on kids’ reading has been huge,” said Elizabeth Bluemle, owner of The Flying Pig Bookstore in Shelburne, Vt. “Kids discovered they can read harder and longer books. They need to have their books on their desk with a youthful vivacity, not to mention purple hair. She’s also a metamorphmagus, who can change appearance at will. Tena’s previous films include “ About a Boy.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Seventh volume of Harry Potter will appear on July 21.

 were hardly even buying it,” said Kristen McLean, executive director of the Association of Bookellers for Children in Boston. “Now the independents are getting shafted. They have to stock it, but they can’t be competitive.”

Some say the enormity of the Harry Potter phenomenon has eclipsed other kinds of children’s books, especially for younger children. “Picture books have suffered tremendously, and the quality is pretty sad,” Schmitz said, “because no one wants to take a chance on them.”

While there is much talk in publishing about what will be the “next” Harry Potter, no one has ever been able to predict even a normal-sized bestseller. Few believe that another 10-year, 325-million seller is over the horizon.

(The Chronicle Herald)

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