**Jolt for elections**

‘Stabbed’, Prachanda bleeds and cries.

**nf correspondent**

The fear that Maoists want no election for the Constituent Assembly in November has come true. Maoist Chief Prachanda made it very clear on Friday that it is better to have the election in April than in November.

The reasons Prachanda cited was that his party has been ‘stabbed at the back’ and the ‘pain’ he has been facing is, ‘enormous.’ He added that there are both national and international conspirators at play against the Maoists, and elections in such circumstances were best avoided and rescheduled.

To watch Prachanda change his hitherto rigid stance on November polls came as a surprise to many, but those who know the latest developments in the Maoist party claim that Prachanda was only repeating what Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal had said in the recently concluded plenum of the party.

“Are we going to ask for votes even though we have failed to find out the disappeared people and get compensation for those families whose sons and daughters were sacrificed? Will they vote for us?” Prachanda borrowed this point from Badal but concealed a couple of things that the new head of the party’s central organisation bureau had raised in the midst of 2000 plus delegates during the plenum.

Badal was critical of the life style of ministers belonging to the Maoist party and also raised the fact that only a small part of the money actually got to the cantonments - from the Rs.3000 per month per head allotted by the government.

Prachanda however, skipped that reference and mainly delved into conspiracy theory that domestic and international conspirators were out to finish them. However, as criticism against Prachanda mounted as a result of his postpone election plea, information minister, K.B. Maharaj, even at the cost of being seen as contradicting his leader, asserted that elections will be held under all circumstances in November.

There are still speculations on why Prachanda chose to speak to representatives from various walks of national life. Maoist sources claim that he was doing all this to project it as an outcome of a larger democratic process.

Although the central committee more or less had come to the consensus that it was not in the party’s interest to adopt a hostile policy towards India, Prachanda almost identified India as a key conspirator like the United States, against the Maoists.
Enough is enough

Elections alone will give legitimacy to the government - Army Chief

In a speech that carried an undertone of disapproval, Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Rukmangat Katawal said, no army personnel should be penalised for carrying out orders of political masters in the past. 

The message, loud and clear, was aired through a programme organised at the army headquarters by the Army Command Staff College on August 23. In the clearly formulated approach of the army, Gen Katawal said, “no officer should be penalised for having worked under the previous political regime.”

The assertion comes in the wake of the demand for action against certain army officials as per recommendation of the Rayamajhi Commission for their roles during the people’s movement. Reading between the lines, the army chief’s assertion raises questions regarding political accountability in cases of human rights violations during the insurgency.

He also indirectly suggested that the government should take up the issue of reforms in the security forces only after the election, after they have secured legitimacy from the people. While reaffirming that the army will fully cooperate with the reforms agenda of the government, he asserted that such a government should come from the ballot and not from the bullet.

Justifying the past as well as the present of the army, he said, “Nepal Army has been away from politics always and does not take sides.” He added that at the same time, it could not be treated as an ‘ideologically indoctrinated and politically motivated combatant force,’ - a barb thrown at the Maoist guerrillas.

He said that along with human rights, a timely reform of the army was something that he would welcome. “In fact, the army would want to be a part of the solution than being a part of the problem,” he said. He promised institutional support to reforms, but made it clear that topics like Security Sector Reforms (SSR) and Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) should be clarified and understood in proper context.

“We commit ourselves to the civilian command,” Katawal said. “We will abide by the government that comes from the ballot and not bullets,” he added. This comes as a response to the Maoists who are demanding unilateral action against Nepal Army for alleged violations of human rights during the years of insurgency and abuse of power during the royal regime.

Katawal’s assertion comes in the wake of his two official visits, first to London at the invitation of the government and second, to Sydney to participate in the meeting of the army chiefs of Asia and pacific region recently.
**Nationalisation hoax**

The government’s announcement of seven royal palaces having been nationalised has only turned out to be a hoax. “Now all these palaces belong to the Nepali government,” KB Maharaj, Minister for Information who is also the government spokesman, had told media after the cabinet decision, last week. “But that is simply not true. All these palaces including the Narayanhiti palace already belonged to the government,” an official of the archaeological department said. “It is just like saying we have nationalised St. Paul’s Cathedral” he added.

“Was it to defame the emerging star of the Maoist top five leaders or just a coincidence? Badal’s wife Nankala Thapa has been appointed the chairperson of the National Women’s commission on the recommendation of the Maoist Party, something that might bring him into controversy for having promoted ‘nepotism’ in the party,” Nankala, party sources say, was not as active as Hisham Yarr, but is definitely much more involved in the party affairs than Prachanda’s wife Sita Poudel. She also holds a graduate degree, the minimum qualification required for the post.

**Maoist nepotism**

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**Fleeing ‘emissary’**

Amar Singh, the all powerful man of Prime Minister G P Koirala is now running the Janataatarik Rashtriya Muki Morcha (JTRM), Jwala Singh group. Parliamentarian Singh’s proposal that JTRM leader Jwala Singh must talk to the PM for settlement of the Terai problem got a very curt and threatening response from the latter.

“You have become a lawyer by mortgaging the interest of Terai. First I will finish off traitors like you, and then think about the dialogue with the government”, Jwala Singh was believed to have said. Since then, Amar Singh, a self-proclaimed powerful man in the Koirala and Delhi durbar has been maintaining a low profile. He has been given public security at par with a member of the council of ministers, courtesy Home Minister K P Sitaula.

**Fresh assault**

The National Trust for Nature Conservation, earlier known as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, has come under fresh assault of its chairman. Mitraka Yadav, who resigned recently as the minister for forest continues as the chairman of the trust. On Friday, Yadav affected major changes in the board of the trust axing people like Ambika Shrestha and Niranjan Koirala. Although he retained some foreigners like Morito and Marita who have made axing people like Ambika Shrestha and Niranjan Koirala. Although he retained some foreigners like Morito and Marita who have made significant contributions in terms of raising money for the trust in the past, he has packed the board with pro-Maoist activists.

To the surprise of many, the letters of appointment (or nomination) of the board members were dispatched to the office of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) in Baneshwar. This is the second time in less than four months that the board has been reshuffled.

**Upset PM**

It was not so much Prachanda’s suggestion to put off November elections, but threats of ‘physical action’ against some top Nepali Congress leaders that Prime Minister Koirala took strong offence to. Koirala strongly objected to the remarks made by Maoist ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai that Maoists would resort to physical actions against people like Khum Bahadur Khadga, Govindanj Joshi and those involved in the Lauda kickback case. Koirala lodged his protest with KB Maharaj, the minister in charge of information and communication regarding Bhattarai’s remarks aired through Nepal Television.

Bhattarai’s list of the imminent target of his party cadres’ physical action included PM Koirala, since his name had prominently figured in the Lauda case. “I will not meet him if that is what he is up to,” Koirala is believed to have told Mahara when he suggested that Koirala talk to Prachanda about it. Instead, Koirala asked senior secretariat staff of the Nepal Congress, Shobhakar Parajuli, to issue a strong statement criticizing Maoist leaders for the threat meted out to senior Nepal Congress leaders. Prachanda seems determined to catch on me,” Koirala told party leader, Govindanj Joshi who with senior leaders like Lakshman Ghimire and KB Gurung went to Bakewalter on Thursday to know PM’s reaction to Maoists’ threat. Koirala’s loss of trust and anger at the Maoists increased further after Prachanda demanded postponement of the constituent assembly election. But a series of developments followed. Indian Ambassador Shivi Shankar, Mukhejore met Prachanda and Baburam on Saturday to convince them that they must commit themselves to November election if they want recognition by the international community as political forces. The same evening, Home Minister K P Sitaula and Congress Working Committee member, Shekhar Koirala also talked with the Maoist leaders to clarify the misunderstanding arising out of Prachanda’s speech at Hyatt Hotel.

But the home minister has not yet been able to secure Maoists’ assurance that his party leaders, Joshi and Khadka would not be targeted by the Maoists. Both Joshi and Khadka have not only been critical of the law and order situation in the country, but they have also been demanding that for the peace process to proceed, the Maoists must return property they confiscated during the years of conflict. Joshi and the group also objected to the use or misuse of government media including Nepal Television and Radio Nepal by the Maoists as their propaganda machinery.
Dying twice

A leader lives through his thoughts, words and deeds. Those whose words match their ideological commitments with actions are remembered and respected even after they die. Those who live and lead with deceit only invite disrespect and hatred from the people.

Nepal’s political history and its present day show that it bears the burden of leaders whose words do not match. Only last year, as a powerful mass movement catapulted GP Koirala and his team to power, the man in his 80s pledged on behalf of his political team that they would not be redemption of any mistakes in governance. And that the government led by him would have constituent assembly elected by June end.

But with collective dishonesty and deliberate inaction, elections were put off for November 22. Now, with less than 90 days left, there are doubts both from inside the government as well as outside about Koirala and company’s sincerity to hold the elections.

Prachanda, the head of the second largest party in parliament and the government, revealed on Aug 24 that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) was opposed to the election taking place as scheduled. As the head of a political party, Prachanda is free to suggest postponing elections citing any reasons; but his move does not look that simple or innocuous. It smacks of a larger conspiracy, and gives enough ground to suspect that Prachanda and PM Koirala are together in it to not let election take place under some pretext or the other.

Prachanda’s demand, made public that says election be deferred till April, and let country be declared a republic by the international community before election can be held. This claim is clearly a fig leaf to camouflage his inability to hold elections, and is an excuse for his not being able to hold election in the face of discomfiture that the international community has shown when they sensed an early sign of such a closed-room deal.

If that happens, G P Koirala will be surpassing all his past records of sticking to the chair at any cost. Not facing people or not going to the people and yet continuing as the head of the government, revealed on Aug 24 that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) was opposed to the election taking place as scheduled. As the head of a political party, Prachanda is free to suggest postponing elections citing any reasons; but his move does not look that simple or innocuous. It smacks of a larger conspiracy, and gives enough ground to suspect that Prachanda and PM Koirala are together in it to not let election take place under some pretext or the other.

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Debating development

The past 15 months have only proved that the entire decision making process has been hijacked mostly by the gang of eight, away from the public gaze. The past 15 months have only proved that the entire decision making process has been hijacked mostly by the gang of eight, away from the public gaze. One major reason why Prachanda is now scared of facing people is because he started hobnobbing with GP Koirala who has conspired against the spirit of the mandate of the people and made many compromises for power. Undue interests of the foreign powers increases in a scenario where politics is away from the reach of the people and power becomes the outcome of the deal among leaders.

Foreign influence will automatically be reduced if leaders start creating a conducive atmosphere for election and start going to the people; and if they stop making deals with diplomatic corps, in black or alone. Why do the Maoists and UML need a Swiss diplomat to explore their unity?

Delhi became the venue for and the key architect of the 12-point agreement, a basis for eight parties understanding; because they failed to do it themselves and left it to Delhi to define their role and responsibility towards promoting peace, democracy and economic prosperity in Nepal. Strong and visionary national players alone can reduce the undesirable roles of foreign forces.

It is also the time that the ever expanding UN agencies started serious introspective exercises about their role. The UNOHCHR which came here to monitor human right situation and enjoys free access to areas it wants to go under an agreement with government of Nepal is silent on Rayamajhi Commission, something that acted as persecution arm of the government. Is it because it wants to appease the powers that be, and wants to prolong its presence? Can UNOHCHR be a witness to unfair persecution and punishment of many just because a politically composed and motivated commission claims it as their findings?

UN bodies like OHCHR and UMIN, not only have to work transparently and impartially, but also as per the mandate they have got. Any compromise at any point of time will only make them vulnerable to public suspicion and criticism. But again, the onus to make them work as per the mandate and not cross their limits largely falls on the national players.

Thus, it is not enough that Prachanda and others raise these issues of foreign interference only as a matter of tactic, they should be able to raise it out of conviction and commitment, and that will only come after they start listening to their own people, and honour their right to vote and reject those who they do not want to see in power.
Today, it looks like the very process of peace is threatening to take Nepal into yet another bout of political confusion. The situation has now come to such a pass that the unity and integrity of the country itself is in danger. There are various factors contributing to the present state of affairs. Among them, the Madhesi issues and the Terai disturbance is one of them. The Madhesi society indeed is a very complex group of people to understand. For years they have been suppressed and subjugated and they suffer from an acute identity crisis. This situation in Madhesh was not the creation of the collective Pahadi community as wrongly perceived by many, but it was the creation of successive rulers of Nepal, who always doubled the loyalties of these people for the simple reason that they live close to the Indian border and speak the same language that they live close to the Indian border. No doubt the Maoists are the ones who infused a sense of nationalism among the Madhesis in an organised manner for the first time ever, by forming the Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha. Through this platform, the Maoists were taught how to fight for their democratic rights. But the Terai terrain being different from other hill districts, the CPN-Maoists could not establish camps and centers to effectively ground their ideology. As such, the following they had in Terai was more of symbolic nature, depending largely on the popularity of the leader who headed the Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha. In other words, they were mostly fence sitters waiting to jump on the greener side.

Prachanda’s assertion was a case of misplaced understanding about the party’s influence and popularity among the Madhesis. His remark about India with regards to helping Madhesi to marginalise his party is also an insult to the Madhesi people. However, to be fair, the blame should not go to him alone, but to the entire party, who again tried to understand Madhesi without understanding them.

Among national players, Charman Prashanda is not the only one who chooses to see Madhesi people from a distance. Even mainstream political parties, including the Terai based parties, Naradhiwara Party, frame their party policies on Terai based on the inputs provided to them by urban base local leaders who never visited the remote areas. The approach of the international community towards understanding Terai is no different either. They try to figure out the problems by speaking to a few people in district headquarters and do not reach out to the people. During my recent visit to Rautahat, Dhanusa, Sarlahi, Rupandehi and Nepalgunj, people asked me questions like: Why is the UN so active in Terai? Will UN prolong the Terai problem as they did in Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq? Will UN bring in Indian security forces to maintain law and order? Clearly, the intentions of the international community are now doubted in Terai, particularly after UNMIN’s recent differences with the Maoists. Six months ago, the UN was seen as the only hope for the Madhesi people. There was a collective belief that this world body could help resolve the lingering Terai issues. Today, doubts are being expressed even by those who interacted regularly with UN representatives. They feel that the organisation is not transparent enough to share their intentions. The reluctance of visiting officials to openly discuss issues also increases this skepticism.

Rightly or wrongly, many feel that Terai problem cannot be solved without India’s active involvement. By active involvement, they meant New Delhi’s insistence on Nepal government to trash out Terai issue through talks and negotiations, and without favoritism and partisanship. Presently, India is only talking of elections and no clear cut policy has been spelt out. In the process, India is accused of not doing enough by the Madhesh, while the Paharis doubted India’s hand in the Terai trouble. Again this is a classic case of misplaced presumption. Both Madhesh and the Paharis see their southern neighbor from a traditional stand-point. They do not realise that in the changed scenario, particularly after April 2008, India’s approach towards Nepal is people-centric.

The best course of action to end the impasse would be for the people of Nepal to thrash out their own problems. The Prime Minister must ensure that all grievances are addressed as much as is possible with a positive intent. Parties must reach out to the people instead of relying on caterers with vested interests. As a well-wishing neighbor, India must continue to lend possible support towards resolving the differences. As a monitoring agency, Ian Martin and his men must confine their roles to pointing out where parties to the peace process go wrong. They should clap and applaud the efforts, rather than trying to fish in troubled waters themselves.

For reasons known only to the state, the Madhesh were never given the opportunity to actively participate in mainstream affairs in spite of their willingness. Over the years, most Madhesh leaders somehow exploited this situation. Instead of trying to unite their people, they blamed Paharis for everything, and tried to gain sympathy from India by projecting that Madhesh are being exploited by the dominant community. This being the case, there is mutual suspicion on the part of many Paharis as well. They always doubted Terai people of being more loyal towards India than Nepal. On the other hand, India’s Nepal policy has always been Kathmandu centric. All the goodies extended to Nepalese were confined to the people in Kathmandu. It is just since last four years that India started covering Terai areas in its economic cooperation agenda. Hence the Madhesh have always been watched from a distance, and no one really tried and understood the various difficulties of the community. Today, Madhes are able to understand the party’s influence and popularity among the Madhesis. His remark about India with regards to helping Madhesh to marginalise his party is also an insult to the Madhesi people. However, to be fair, the blame should not go to him alone, but to the entire party, who again tried to understand Madhesi without understanding them.

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Lastly, all national and international players would be very well advised not to try and understand the Madhesi people overnight. In doing so, they may end up wrongly diagnosing the ailment, and the wrong medication may result in a chronic disease.
Pricing Melamchi water

Shanker Man Singh

Water delivery and treatment are highly capital intensive businesses. God provided the water, but not the pipes.

The problem of flooding does not stop at the bordering districts and states of Indo-Nepal border.

Water delivery and treatment

Water is one of the five largest markets in the world. It is estimated that over $350 billion is spent annually in general and delivering water for human consumption, industry and agriculture. As water demands grow and sources shrink, new technologies are needed to increase the supply. This year alone over $50 billion will be invested in infrastructure and technological solutions in an attempt to meet the challenges of growing water demand.

Water is the commonest substance on earth, but 97 percent of total is sea water, unfit for human use. Of the three percent that is fresh, two thirds is locked up in glaciers and ice and snow around the poles. Only one percent of the entire world’s water is available for human consumption. Without water life could not exist. But even one percent of the earth’s available water should be enough for all.

Experience suggests that in the public utilities like water supply, the only way in which the minimum economic worth of investments can be determined is by giving consumers themselves the chance to let authorities know how much they value the service concerned by being charged by a price that reflects the full economic cost of supply.

As regards the pricing rule, it should be transparent and verifiable steps should be adopted in setting the level. It is to be ensured that everyone pays at least their incremental costs, and the utility earns only normal profit. Water delivery and treatment are highly capital intensive businesses. God provided the water, but not the pipes. Wherever that capital investment comes from, somebody has to pay.

Building embankment on one side of border is temporary and less helpful when flooding is more likely to occur every year during monsoon. Without a comprehensive measure, supported by all three governments, the poor people of the area are bound to live in constant threat of flooding again and again. It hardly behits the stature and dignity of the emerging regional superpower India to shut ablind eye to the suffering of its people and those of its closest neighbors.

The local as well as national leaders of the three affected countries cannot continue their rhetoric and populist campaigns endangering the harmonious relations among the nations involved. Flooding in South Asia is a reality, especially during monsoon season. It happened last year, many successive years before that and it is bound to happen next year and in many years to come. The gesturing and posturing by leaders and governments during natural disaster periods can hardly create an atmosphere for purposeful talks. If the governments are serious in resolving the crisis, the talks must be held when things are normal and no country is under pressure.

The issue calls for helping each other to fully understand the gravity of the situation, sit together to work out workable plans and projections, and sharing costs commensurate to the countries’ capacity. As with the funding of the United Nations and its missions, capacity to pay is an agreed principle for collective action.

Apart from additional current financial benefits that accrue to the area with improved irrigation facilities from the continuous flow of water, it has also been providing employment and livelihood to a huge number of farmers. Stopping the water from taking its natural course by any country for any reason would be against the international norms, standards and conventions. However, proper management of water is required for the sake of safety and security of the population that lives there.

Given the wealth of experience acquired by every country in the management of water during emergency situations such as flooding, it is high time that the users and experts sat together for a viable solution of the continuing crisis. Only the governments of Nepal, India and Bangladesh can create an enabling environment for such meetings to take place, take initiative with/without external assistance to put the ideas into actions, and secure the lives and livelihood of the families who have nowhere else to go.

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Water is best treated as a normal business. But some critics are against all forms of privatisation; other work for public sector unions so they have an axe to grind. Many think that because water falls from the sky, it should be free.

For it, if it is not the users, then the tax payers or aid donors.

Water is best treated as a normal business. But some critics are against all forms of privatisation; other work for public sector unions so they have an axe to grind. Many think that because water falls from the sky, it should be free. Others argue that, as ‘water for all life’, it is wrong to sell or trade it for profit. It is notable that those who most enthusiastically hold such beliefs often come from countries such as Canada, rich in both money and water.

Nepal is a different story. The real opportunities for the private sector lie in poorer countries like Nepal where public provision has so often been inadequate. There have been successes as well as failures with public private partnerships. The key requirement is good governance, right institution and effective regulation framework. Unless these requirements are met, private companies may continue to be unenthusiastic about projects in developing countries.

In Kathmandu, tariff end shall be charged for the first time from the nearly 1000 stand pipes. This, it is hoped will be filled with meters and groups formed to share charges for water consumed from each tap. In the particular milieu of Nepal, the tariff structure prepared with Asian Development Bank funding proposes a 15 percent raise in tariff every year, which was, however, not implemented after 2004.

According to the proposed tariff structure for metered consumers, the block subsidy of Rs. 50 for the first 10,000 litres remain constant, while charge for every 1,000 litres consumed thereafter should have gone up from the existing Rs. 15 to Rs. 19 in July; from the existing Rs. 360 to Rs. 435 in July 16, 2006; and Rs. 552 in July 16, 2006.

Similarly, for the stand pipes, the tariff for every 1,000 liter, applicable from the first 1,000 litres, should have been Rs. 6.55 in 2006 and Rs. 16.10 in 2007. Currently, it is the respective municipalities and not the consumers that are supposed to pay for water consumed from standpipes in the valley. However, even the municipalities have been defaulting payments. With tariff remaining unchanged in 2005 and 2006, it is likely to go up by over 53 percent, based on the previous assumption.

If everything had gone as proposed in the ongoing Melamchi project, it was presumed that no later than September 2007 tariffs would be increased. However, the provision for the water supply tariff fixation commission was also crucial to approve the proposed tariff or not. To have the committee been formed and it is hoped that there are lot of opportunities along with the challenges. It is now for them to consider both human development aspect and commercial aspects equally.
The right to information bill, once enacted, will ensure transparency of the government and increase its accountability to the people, said information and communication minister Sudarshan Shrestha while piloting it in parliament. The scope of the bill, however, appears more limited in nature. It recognises the right to ask for information, but does not guarantee a definitive response.

This argument has special relevance to Nepal, as the scheduled November election as political rhetoric gains steam regarding the model of electoral system. The bill will not have any bearing on the secretive manners in which deals have been struck by top leaders of the party. What type of electoral system was agreed at the closed door meeting of the top leaders? However, considering the Chief Election Commissioner’s statement on 9th August that preparations were in their final stages, it is apparent that one variant of the many proportionate representation systems has already been agreed.

Yet citizens are in dark about how we are going to vote, what are the options we would have, and do we choose people affiliated to parties or the parties themselves. And where are we going to vote, what are the preparations for the elections? The EC and the UN electoral expert monitoring team must see the CA election process beyond security concerns to make it free and fair. Likewise, the UNDP which is providing logistical support and covering UNMIN activities with much fanfare should use its social mobilisation expertise to generate awareness about procedural issues related to the elections in its programme locations.

If people are central to its development initiatives, the UNDP has to make aware people of their rights as an eligible electorate. As much as conducive security environments are preconditions for free and fair elections, people’s understanding of the systems under which they vote to reflect their preferences should be assessed before the elections.

It is very crucial that each voter is informed about at least about the electoral system immediately. Political bickering and party negotiations investigations into conspiracy theories and lack of transparency and awareness cannot take a backseat. Judging by the scattered outreach of the media and the decoding capacity of the electoral system to their voices, it is valid. However, public information and publicity for the elections appears to be on the bottom list of EC priority statements on 9th August that preparations were in their final stages. As much as the EC and the media must get working to inform the people on the electoral system to their voices, it is valid.

For any election to ensure people’s participation, voters have to understand the voting process and the type of election.

Sudarshan Shrestha

For any election to ensure people’s participation, voters have to understand the voting process and the type of election.

Opinion

What, why, how election?

The opportunity to shadow a winning Member of the Scottish Parliament Alex Neil of the Scottish National Party and also visit more than 15 polling stations in the run up to the 3 May elections, people’s understanding of the voting system even after 18 years of sustained public campaign. The 22 November CA election is clearly going to be an experiment as well as challenge for Nepal. It is going to involve two systems; First Past the Vote and Proportional Representation. Yet, our preparations, especially in educating the voters, are invisible. The political class, civil society and in particular the Election Commission (EC) must address the people’s right to information at least about the electoral system immediately. Political bickering and party negotiations investigations into conspiracy theories and lack of transparency and awareness cannot take a backseat. Judging by the scattered outreach of the media and the decoding capacity of the electoral system to their voices, it is valid.

However, the political analysts and the intelligentsia believe UNMIN and OHCHR undertaking or exploring such responsibilities are incompatible to the spirit of UN charter and much against the scope and ambit of the current mandate they have in Nepal. The terms of reference, guiding principle and principal mandate to UNMIN and OHCHR is the spirit of UN charter. The spirit of UN charter is reflected in the Article 2 of United Nations, the principles of UN. The first principle states that the organisation is based on the principle of the sovereignty equality of all its members and respect of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the state parties.

Similarly the UN Security Council has established UNMIN, unanimously adopting resolution 1740 (2007) on 23 January 2007. The resolution clearly says “Reaffirming the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Nepal and its ownership of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement”. Likewise OHCHR also is here on the ground of the agreement between OHCHR and the then his majesty’s government of Nepal. Any proceeds of the OHCHR and UNMIN cannot go beyond the spirit of UN charter.

On these grounds OHCHR and UNMIN are not supposed to contact these separatist groups or be a part of contact on any ground. A separate agreement between UN and Nepal government is reached to mandate an office; or these separatist rebel groups and government of Nepal agree to formally call UN as the third party mediator. Any one in favor of the UN involvement may argue citing the right to self-determination provides such a space to the UN. The article 4 of the right to self-determination may be the pedestal of this kind of logic. The article 4 of right to self-determination says all armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected.

However the Nepal case is not a case of colonial independence. The Terai was the integral part of Nepali territorial integrity, both geographically and historically. So, the right to self-determination is no longer valid in case of Nepal.

Even if we hypothetically assume that the case is valid, the article 6 of the right to self-determination clearly states that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the charter of the UN.

Similarly the article 7 of the right to self-determination clearly concludes that at all states shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the charter: the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of all states, and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity. Accordingly UN officials should observe this spirit.

These separatist groups are seeking arbitral means of UN to legitimise their separatist demand formally. Reports that one of the cabinet ministers and a member of parliament from Terai are believed to have responded to GO is not public yet. Reliable source says that Nepal respond to GO is not public yet. Reliable source says that Nepal agree to formally call UN as the third party mediator.

Mr. Ian Martin, the chief of UNMIN to mediate. How Mr. Martin has responded to GO is not public yet. Reliable source says that Nepal Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has established close contacts with these separatist factions. A cabinet minister and member of parliament from Terai are believed to have responded to GO is not public yet. Reliable source says that Nepal agree to formally call UN as the third party mediator.
blasts claim 42 lives in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: About 70 people remained in hospitals here Sunday as the death toll from the worst terror blasts in this southern city overnight moved to 42. The near simultaneous blasts at Lumbini Park near the state secretariat and at Golak Chat, a famous eatery, killed several people instantly while others succumbed to their injuries in hospitals, where doctors said many were still in critical condition.

Hyderabad, an IT hub and one of the fastest developing cities of India, remained shell-shocked - even a day after the worst terror attacks in its history. Both the Lumbini Park and a fast food joint were as usual teeming with weekend crowds when the powerful blasts went off, snuffing out the lives of many unsuspecting people including students and tourists.

While one blast ripped through an open air auditorium at Lumbini Park on the banks of picturesque Hussain Sagar Lake in the heart of the city at 7:45 p.m., three minutes later and five kilometers away another blast rocked Golak Chat, a fast food joint at Koli, a busy commercial hub.

Officials said the blast at Golak Chat claimed 32 lives while the one at the park killed 10 people. The dead include eight women and two children. Police officials and doctors warned that the toll could go up further as the condition of many of the injured in different hospitals was stated to be critical.

Hours after the blasts, two unexploded bombs were recovered - one at Mosarambagh and another at a cinema theatre in Dilsukhnagar. This, police said, indicates that there was a conspiracy to cause large-scale mayhem. Both the blast sites presented terrible sights in the immediate wake of the explosions. Bodies were strewn around. The heads of a few were severed while some bodies were disfigured. Plates of human flesh, blood stains, footwear as well as plates and other utensils were found strewn all over Golak Chat.

There were heart-rending scenes at the blast sites presentations of the dead in the immediate wake of the blasts. Bodies were brought to government-run Osmania Hospital where 32 bodies were brought. Wailing relatives of the dead and the country - and the government-run Osmania Hospital where 32 bodies were brought. Wailing relatives of the dead and the hundreds of others injured.

The government imposed a curfew in capital Dhaka and some other cities since then, and closed all the public universities and colleges in the city.

The situation in this Andhra Pradesh capital remained tense but peaceful. No untoward incident was reported from any part of the city, though a mob staged a demonstration soon after the blast in Koli.

Union Home Minister Shriprakash Jaiswal and a team of officials from his ministry are expected to visit Hyderabad Sunday. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy has convened an all-party meeting.

An alert has been sounded across Andhra Pradesh. Police have beefed up security at vital installations, places of worship and public places.

Additional security measures have been made for some 30,000 weddings taking place across the state Sunday, which many consider an auspicious day. The latest attacks came after the May blasts at the historic Mecca Masjid that killed nine worshippers, with the police saying that followed claiming five more lives.

The Saturday blasts have proved wrong those who had dismissed the mosque blast as an isolated incident. They have also raised serious questions about the efficiency of the intelligence machinery because there are indications that the same terror group involved in the Mecca Masjid blast could be behind attacks Saturday.

The Saturday bombings did not appear to target a particular community and only Hindus and Muslims frequent the two places. The dead included people from both communities.

“Bomb blasts are the cruellest act against humanity. The perpetrators of such an act can have no religion or ideological or national identities.” — Xinhua
Aboriginal dreamscape and animal spirit guides

Silence has its own chaos, its own music and sounds.

I have never been to Australia so I have no idea as to why I should have dreamt about these Australian aborigines and their symbols. Perhaps I will understand their significance some day. Aboriginal people are indigenous Australians. They tell stories in words and pictures about how the world began. They call this Dreamtime. Their stories are called Dreamings. The Australian Aborigines pay great attention to the dream state as they believe they are spiritual messages from their ancestors who are a part of nature. This harmony between human existence and other natural things was expressed by Silas Roberts, first Chairman of the Northern Land Council, as: "Aborigines see themselves as part of nature. We see all things natural as part of us. All the things on Earth we see as part of human. This is told through the ideas of dreaming. By dreaming we mean the belief that long ago, these creatures, made their pains from natural materials from the desert. A common creature featured in all the paintings is the snake or serpent. This reptile for most seem to denote negativity but it is best assured that the snake or serpent in all my paintings signify new life, rebirth, change, and a new beginning. Mythological, in almost all cultures ranging from the Mayan, Egyptian, Greek, Mexican, Roman, Welsh, Russian, Indian and aboriginal, the serpent signifies regeneration as the snake is the only animal that rejuvenates and regenerates itself by shedding its skin. Briefly, the animals are representations of messages for example: turban/tortoise signifies longevity, wisdom and knowledge, fish denotes strength, agility and speed, moth/butterfly means metamorphosis, change, progress, a new beginning and new life. It is often said that the snake is the eternal symbol of the earth mother, a great spirit, celestial wisdom and perfect power. Some of the aboriginal symbols I had done in my initial hospital sketches without understanding their meanings, which I later looked up, signified a lot. It would seem fit to define these dreams in medical terms by using psychological reasoning and terminology such as hallucinatory experiences were very real to me. I lived through them and I survived as a result of them. I can truly say that the mind and body have an amazing will to heal by itself. (Sanchita, 44, painter and writer currently works from her studio at Gurgaon, Haryana, India. She can be reached at: sanchitasroy@gmail.com and sanchitasroy@yahoo.com)

Sanchita Sinha Roy

Marshland Flowers

Shila is important because if followed properly it cools the mind... A mind beset by Klesha (emotional defilements and neurotic tendencies) cannot attain Samadhi.

Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

These great creatures are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature as we are. Our connection to all things natural is spiritual.

In many of my dreams I was always constantly on the move, travelling from one place to another, from one destination to another. It was as if I was familiar with the landscapes and the horizons but needed a little guidance. Often animals would guide me. Sometimes it would be horses. I never had conversations with the people that I met in my travels but they shared food and water with me and I took part in their rituals, dances, songs, celebrations and silences. I appreciate the fact that silence has its own chaos, its own music and its own sounds.

Sometimes I would travel for days with just the horizon in front of me. Except for the painting "My Animal Spirit Guides" all the other paintings are done with earthy reds, browns, oranges, blacks and whites - this is because the range of colours comprised of such colours. Aboriginal art uses earth colours. Why? These are the colours of the desert. Aboriginal artists made their paints from natural materials from the desert. A common creature featured in all the paintings is the snake or serpent. This reptile for most seem to denote negativity but it is best assured that the snake or serpent in all my paintings signify new life, rebirth, change, and a new beginning. Mythological, in almost all cultures ranging from the Mayan, Egyptian, Greek, Mexican, Roman, Welsh, Russian, Indian and aboriginal, the serpent signifies regeneration as the snake is the only animal that rejuvenates and regenerates itself by shedding its skin. Briefly, the animals are representations of messages for example: turban/tortoise signifies longevity, wisdom and knowledge, fish denotes strength, agility and speed, moth/butterfly means metamorphosis, change, progress, a new beginning and

and edged me on to recovery. Precisely nine paintings have been done in this series using pen and ink and acrylics on cartridge and handmade paper. These paintings are basically a record of what I saw in my dreams while I was very ill a few years ago. I will not be doing such a big series of paintings again. My mind was beset with Klesha (emotional defilements and neurotic tendencies) cannot attain Samadhi. If followed properly it cools the mind. A cool mind is the stepping store to the next Shikchya (training). Although all the three Shikchyas (trainings) are emphasised in all forms of Buddhism, it is often said that the Theravada system of South and Southeast Asia is better known for its special emphasis on Shila. Tibet better known for its special emphasis on Pragya while China is better known for its special emphasis on Samadhi.

Chinese Buddhism has historically been well known for Samadhi till today. Tibetan Buddhism for the development of Pragya in all its three levels (Srimay, Chintmay or Bhavanmayi) and the Thervadav tradition for laying great emphasis on Shila. This does not, of course, mean that there is no Shila or Samadhi in the Tibetan system or no Pragya and Samadhi in the Theravada system. We are talking about the emphasis given to one of the three Shila in terms of the historical direction the system took. (To be continued.)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)
Tiger from inner forest

Robin Metz

American poet Robin Metz’s poem deals with the political upheaval of contemporary Nepal. The fact that this remains his first poem about Nepal and evokes the vision of Nepalese poet Gopal Prasad Rimal appears more intriguing. Robin’s first impression of this once famed Shangri-La is vivid, violent and awesome. This seems the typical response of a sensitive visitor who enters the valley to the chaotic roar of the shuddering streets.

The tiger is patient. The tiger is prowling in Thamel. That Nepal carries in its image this duel image of a place of political turbulence and shamantic mystery seems a matter of little concern to political analysts. A segment of the outer world sees Nepal from a different angle, an angle that media in Nepal in specific and south Asia in generally dismisses as irrelevant and awkward. Normally Nepali media also sees shamanism as pure nonsense, more of witchcraft than a spiritual discipline and psychotherapy. It is disheartening to see scores of reports and news highlights that describe shamans as evil witch doctors.

The fact that this remains his first poem about Nepal from a different angle, an angle that media in Nepal in specific and south Asia in generally dismisses as irrelevant and awkward. Normally Nepali media also sees shamanism as pure nonsense, more of witchcraft than a spiritual discipline and psychotherapy. It is disheartening to see scores of reports and news highlights that describe shamans as evil witch doctors. A regular reader of Nepali newspapers will often find such news about shamans as evil agents propagatingblind faith and superstition. Often there are reports of a shaman being hounded in the villages. The other day I saw as breaking news on an Indian TV channel portraying a practicing shaman as the most fraudulent thing ever seen on this earth. The news reporter described the shaman as a fake sadhu trying to outwit the literate victims by pretending to be a snake spirit or a monkey spirit.

The problem is that the western education that concentrates only on the body refuses to see the role of soul in healing the human body. And oddly enough the fact that the same western world in recent years has slowly started seeing shamanism as a great discipline is no news to the ignorant media I described above. In addition to introducing Nepali writers and poets to Robin and Pascale, my foremost job at the moment also remains finding shamans if any left hiding in some dark caves and corners of the Himalayas. People including my family members give me strange looks as I make inquiries about the whereabouts of these first spiritual leaders of humanity hidden in the heart of the Himalayan forest.

Insight

Water vessels in a Mro house, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Sushma Amatya

Counseling by drug therapist, Ragina Shah

Watch out for signs

I worry that my teenager boy might be into drugs. How do I know the truth? Mrs. Mandira, Sunakoti

Parents often complain that they had no idea that their teenagers were drinking or using drugs. That is usually because they have been oblivious to the telltale hints all around them. By watching out for some signs, you can prevent this from happening to you.

The nose knows: If your teenage son breathes into the house after a night out, make a point of having a conversation with him—without shouting. Try and have a normal face-to-face conversation. If your child has been drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana, the smell will be on his breath. You should also be suspicious if your son enters the house chewing gum, or smelling of freshly applied perfume. He most probably is trying to cover up a telltale smell.

Take a closer look: Pay attention to your children’s eyes since they tend to reveal any substance use. If they have been smoking marijuana, their eyes will be red, heavy lidded, with constricted pupils. If they have been drinking alcohol, their pupils will be dilated, and they may have difficulty focusing on you. In addition, alcohol has the effect of giving a red, flushed color to face. Intravenous drug use leaves track marks, usually on the arms. Wearing long sleeves in scorching hot summer heat may be an attempt to hide something.

Mood changes: How are the teenagers acting after the night out? Are they loud, rude or laughing hysterically? They should be on the lookout for unusual or extreme behaviour. Something is going on if they have become silent, angry, withdrawn and uncommunicative; and this has lasted for at least a few weeks. They may get angry if you try to reach out, and they will insist that you leave them alone.

Deceit or secretive ways: Suddenly you find your normally honest child telling you to keep all the time. Her evening and weekend plans are starting to sound a little fogy. And she seems to have a seemingly endless line of excuses to justify her behavior. Even if you find evidence of substance use, she has someone or something else to place the blame on. When excuses fail, she will respond to your inquiries by telling you that it is none of your business.

Increased motivation: Your child’s grades start falling and there is no obvious reason for it. He gives you a weak explanation and assures you he can handle the situation, but he does not. He may be skipping school and spending less and less time on his homework; and he appears to be losing interest in other activities as well. Not putting in any effort in studies is a sign to watch out for.

Missing money or valuables: Those who want to buy drugs or alcohol will steal from their parents’ wallets, and also steal valuables like jewelry and other things from the house.

Change in friends: You notice that your teenager is suddenly hanging out with a different group of friends. Perhaps these new friends are older and more independent, with less parental supervision and less interest in school. Whatever the case, your teen will probably defend her new choice in friends, saying her new friends are more fun and understandable.
Salman Khan, one of Bollywood’s top actors on Saturday became ‘prisoner no 343’ at the Jodhpur Central Jail after he was arrested and jailed for five years for hunting an endangered chinkara deer in 1998.

Salman, 41, looked subdued and was mostly quiet as policemen took him into custody on his arrival from Mumbai by a Jet Airways flight and rushed him in a police jeep to a courtroom before sending him to jail.

The dramatic jailing, which drew hundreds of his fans to the court and the prison complex, came a day after a district court upheld the five-year jail term given to Salman by a lower court.

Salman has been convicted of poaching a chinkara deer at the Ghoda farm near Jodhpur on the night of September 28, 1998 while filming Sooraj Barjatya’s blockbuster Hum Saath Saath Acha. The court had found Salman guilty under the Indian Penal Code and the Wildlife Protection Act in the 1993 Mumbai bombings. He is currently out on bail.

Although the killing of the deer by Salman and his friends had evoked widespread revulsion, there was no dearth of Salman lovers on Saturday.

“He is my hero and is suffering because of his celebrity status,” insisted Rupali Singh, a college student who described herself an ardent devotee of the Bollywood actor. According to legal experts, Salman will have to spend at least two nights in jail as the court does not sit on Sunday too.

When he landed in Jodhpur, Salman was dressed in a white T-shirt, jeans and sporting sunglasses. Accompanying him were his brother Sohail, bodyguard Shera and his counsel Dipesh Mehta.

A large number of journalists and fans gathered at the airport and later outside the court and jail to catch a glimpse of the star. The police had a tough time controlling the crowds.

“We took him into custody and took him to court, which ordered that the actor be taken to Jodhpur Central Jail,” a police official told. Salman is the second Bollywood star to be jailed in a span of a month. Sanjay Dutt spent 23 nights in Mumbai and Pune prisons after being convicted under the Arms Act in the 1993 Mumbai bombings.

Sanjay Dutt acknowledged photographers before leaving his residence.

SALMAN KHAN
prisoner no 343

His food would also be similar to what is given to other jail inmates,” the official said. Other sources said this would mostly be chapatis and lentils. But since the actor had been sentenced to undergo “simple imprisonment”, he would not have to do any hard labour.

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