In a move that might act as a morale booster for those supporting B P Koirala’s policy of national reconciliation within the Nepali Congress, party’s only surviving founder member K B Bhattarai said that alone will safeguard Nepal’s nationalism, independence and democracy.

Issuing a statement on the eve of B P Koirala’s 90th birth anniversay, Bhattarai said that a prolonged differences between the king and the democratic forces will only weaken the country and its opportunities to prosper, clearly asserting that a republican Nepal was much against everything that the Congress party stood all along.

That also means he remains opposed to the dictate G P Koirala gave to the Congress party manifesto committee that the party should go republic.

“Late BP Koirala and Ganeshman Singh came back to Nepal from India in 1976 ending their eight-year long exile with the call for national reconciliation. They were clear in their minds that a prolonged difference between the king and the democratic forces will only weaken the Nepali nationalism, independence and democracy, besides the enormous economic opportunities the country has. Policy of national reconciliation and the spirit it represented is valid even today as it was before. I have no doubt that this will remain valid for quite some time to come. Let us not destroy our history and legacy which generations together have built,” said he. In a brief chat with newsfront, Bhattarai hoped that the leaders of the Nepali congress, mainly the central committee members would take a wise decision in the context of our nationalism. A senior central committee member of the party said *we have more than 25 out of the 35 members who feel exactly the way Kishunji has expressed himself* Bhattarai also had a piece of advice to the king. "Now it is high time to remember again that the monarchy truly acted as a unifying symbol of diverse religions, culture, ethnic and political groupings within a truly democratic set-up.” He said Nepal’s transition needs a safe landing which is possible only through unity and reconciliation. In a Gandhian spirit, he said, “politics of hatred and denial dictated by undemocratic desire of revenge will only sow seeds of disintegration in the country, and it is our responsibility to defeat those designs together. Let us be guided by our lessons of the past and collective thoughts for future, and not by anything else including republicanism.”

He said the country is passing through an unprecedented crisis. "Any such crisis will demand collective wisdom and dedication on the part of the people so that it does not sweep away everything that makes Nepal,” he said, adding; political parties, especially the Nepal Congress has a crucial role to play as a true representative of the people. "As a founder member of the party, I am proud to state that our party has always stood in favour of nationalism, independence and democracy against all odds right from the day it was founded."

KP for monarchy
The only surviving NC founder refuses to go republic

*af correspondent*

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Army's warning
Maoists may sabotage elections, but we will protect democracy

The Nepal Army fears that the Maoists are active to sabotage elections to the constituent assembly scheduled in November. This was the dominant view, based on "information-based" assessment of the existing situation at a top-level meeting of the army officers in the capital recently. The meeting attended by about 17 senior generals, commandants of the regions and those based in the headquarters, was near unanimous that the activities of the Young Communist League (YCL), directly under control and guidance of party chief Prachanda, were clearly aimed at creating a situation in which holding polls on November 22 would not be possible.

There was anger expressed over home minister K P Sitaula's activities that encouraged the YCL and Maoists to do whatever they liked and at the same time, "demoralised the army and cast it in a poor light." The meeting was also unanimous that the activities of the Maoists have already violated this undertaking as a sizeable number of their combatants are out in action in the guise of YCL," a general told newsfront. But the army also made it clear "that only means election will take place on schedule if Koirala agrees to declare Nepal a republic in the next few weeks, or before the process of nomination begins," a member of the Congress central committee said, adding, "I am not sure if Koirala and Maoists have struck such a deal already."

Prachanda made his remarks on the fate of the election while his party was almost invariably, the PM conceded to the wishes of the Maoists. "That only means election has triggered the uncertainty given a series of instances in the past where almost invariably, the PM was ready to deliver a message to the people whenever desired. Army's offer to be kept in the barracks until the peace process is completed. "We have been honouring this. But the Maoists have already violated this undertaking. Army's offer to play a role in the election comes in the wake of more and more leaders, including Puma Bahadur Khadka of Nepal Congress-D, Pradeep Nepal and Mahendra Pandey (both UML), demanding that they should be deployed for election purpose as in the past. The agreement between the government, Maoists and the United Nations special office, UNMIN, however, makes it mandatory for army to be kept in the barracks until the election is completed. "We have been honouring this. But the Maoists have already violated this undertaking as a sizeable number of their combatants are out in action in the guise of YCL," a general told newsfront.

The conflicting stance between PM Koirala and Maoist chief Prachanda over the fate of the election has triggered the uncertainty given a series of instances in the past where almost invariably, the PM was ready to deliver a message to the people whenever desired. Army's offer to be kept in the barracks until the peace process is completed. "We have been honouring this. But the Maoists have already violated this undertaking. Army's offer to play a role in the election comes in the wake of more and more leaders, including Puma Bahadur Khadka of Nepal Congress-D, Pradeep Nepal and Mahendra Pandey (both UML), demanding that they should be deployed for election purpose as in the past. The agreement between the government, Maoists and the United Nations special office, UNMIN, however, makes it mandatory for army to be kept in the barracks until the peace process is completed. "We have been honouring this. But the Maoists have already violated this undertaking as a sizeable number of their combatants are out in action in the guise of YCL," a general told newsfront. But the army also made it clear "that only means election will take place on schedule if Koirala agrees to declare Nepal a republic in the next few weeks, or before the process of nomination begins," a member of the Congress central committee said, adding, "I am not sure if Koirala and Maoists have struck such a deal already."

Prachanda made his remarks more on the issue of Nepalgunj on Saturday when he insisted that the election in November would only be an exercise in futility if held without declaring Nepal a republic, and asked his party cadres to go for an agitation to stall such a drama. His call for agitation also comes as a challenge to the home minister who has been instructing security officials to act sternly against any person or group if found indulging in activities that will disturb the atmosphere for election. "We are very upset with these developments. We have been asking the political party leaders to promote an atmosphere for healthy polls," one of the election commissioners told newsfront.

The EC on its part is busy dispatching election materials beginning with ballot boxes to approximately 9,000 polling booths. It has finalised the list of returning officers and is engaged in regular consultations with the government on security arrangements to be made. "But the commission has not been able to issue the model code of conduct because the government has not been able to make necessary key appointments within the time frame that the commission has given," the commissioner said.
Bizarre politics

Anandi Devi, Chief of Nepal Sadhbhavana Party (NSP) and widow of its founder leader, late Gajendra Narayan Singh, has become not only an object of amusement in the coalition politics but there are also indications that she might soon be suspended from the post. The party is likely to adopt a resolution expressing lack of confidence in her leadership. The latest round of development was triggered by her recommendations to PM Koirala, the second in less than a month’s time, to remove Rajendra Mahato from the cabinet. Industries and commerce minister, Mahato represents her party in the cabinet. But Koirala refused to act on her recommendation following information that the “simple village woman” was being used by certain leaders or factions of the party.

Mahato and Hridayesh Tripathi are pitted against each other in the NSP leadership race, and there are indications that the party may soon split with the two factions parting their ways. On Saturday, Koirala even refused to see Anandi Devi who had gone to Baluwatar along with some anti-Mahato group leaders to plead that he should be dropped from the cabinet right away.

Sarita Gir, the party’s spokesperson said, “given the fact that she was acting against the interest of the party, a no-confidence motion has been moved in the party and appropriate actions would follow on that."

Paras fine

Crown prince Paras who underwent emergency coronary angioplasty last week in Norvic Hospital is stable and fine. According to the hospital sources, he will be discharged any time now as his progress is satisfactory. He spent the first three days in the coronary care unit (CCU).

He was admitted to the hospital on Thursday following chest pains. Subsequent tests revealed that one of the arteries had 95 per cent blockage leading to circulatory problems. Dr Bharat Raul led the team of surgeons that conducted angioplasty.

Hosts of visitors and well wishers visited the hospital to wish him speedy recovery. Except former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai and former speaker Taranath Bhattarai, none of the senior leaders from the current ruling coalition visited him.

Caught lying

Education and those who have excelled in the field do not appear to mean much for PM Koirala. The event on Saturday showed how less he cared for them and the day also caught him lying.

Koirala, in his capacity as the ‘officiating head of the state’ and ‘officiating chairman and members of the National Human Rights Commission. The 28-member special committee of parliament discussed and approved the findings of a nine-member sub-committee which looked into some of the major complaints against Gir’s elevation. The committee on Sunday decided to invite Gir on Tuesday for his explanations on at least three major rulings that he delivered as a judge in the past.

They include endorsement of the government action in curtailing rights of the PM radio to broadcast news and current affairs programmes during the royal regime and exonerating one industrial house in the tax default case related with Mahalakshmi Sugar mill. Gir is also likely to be asked about circumstances in which he was physically assaulted by the person last year in relation to a judgment that he delivered. But all these delays had a toll on the functioning of the Supreme Court as the apex judiciary went without a leader. In fact, committee members appeared sharply divided over Gir’s appointment and the understanding that emerged, was in favour of interrogating him in some controversial cases before asking him about his plan to make judiciary more accessible, transparent and worthy of people’s trust.

The new experiment with the country’s judiciary also leaves one major question unanswered. Will Gir continue to serve as the judge if the committee refuses to confirm him? “It is a gray area. There is a moral question involved. But the law is silent on this,” a prominent lawyer said.

Besides, completing on the hearing on the CJ appointment case, the first after the interim constitution has come into effect, the committee will take up the cases of appointment of the ambassadors as well as the chairman and members of the National Human Rights Commission. Some members of the committee are unhappy with the nomination of Shalini Acharya as ambassador to India on the ground that she was too soft on the king after he took over power in February 2005.

Country without CJ

Parliamentary committee takes time to decide on new Chief Justice

Nepal goes without chief justice as the parliamentary committee in charge of confirming CJ designate Kedar Prasad Gir felt the need to grill him over some of the controversial judgments he made.

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Avoid Par hearing: Dhawan

An eminent constitutional expert from India has warned that the system of parliamentary confirmation for appointment of Supreme Court judges in Nepal will not be a healthy practice towards promotion of independent judiciary.

Dr Rajeev Dhawan who is here to participate in debates and discussions on independence of judiciary in a federal set-up said, “to say a judge should go before the house committee is like throwing baby out with bath water.”

“Ask anything about public and private life of the judge, grill him on anything, there is no end to it,” Dr Dhawan said amidst applause from the members of the bar. “Entire process has the danger of a political witch-hunt.”

Interestingly, Chief Justice designate Kedar Prasad Gir was sharing the dais with Dr Dhawan along with Bar Association chief Vishwa Kanta Mainali, attorney general Y M Banjare and advocate Prakash Rawal.

Congress groups fail BP

The long expected unity between the two Nepali Congress groups could not materialise on the birth anniversary of BP Koirala on September 10, a deadline set earlier for the purpose.

The unity was to come as an offering to the memory of the late leader, a week after his brother GP Koirala decided to dispense with the policy of consultation that envisaged a constitutional king and Congress party working under an understanding. Koirala has already instructed that the Nepali Congress should go republic through its manifesto which will be finalized this weekend. Similarly, an agreement has already been made on who will be the vice presidents, general secretaries and senior office bearers of the unified party.

The two sides have also agreed to have an enlarged central committee, but the two top leaders, G P Koirala and Deuba will be appointing the supreme body which will decide on the selection of candidates for the forthcoming election to the constituent assembly.
Purpose of unity

Splits and reunions are regular features in Nepal's politics. Those responsible for a split almost always find imaginative explanations with an ideological façade and they are quick to come out with equally idealist explanations behind the need for a re-union.

Two parties, Nepal Congress and the Nepali congress (D) have once again come out with statements, heavily loaded in favour of democracy, saying they are taking this constructive move to save the country and democracy and they are going to leave their past behind.

Ironically, personal as well as ideological differences between G P Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba, initiators of the present unity move, had to be found in the United Nepal Congress five years ago. Koirala, as chief of the party, was trying to dictate the government led by Deuba, and the latter, fearing Koirala would expel him from the party making his continuation as Prime Minister impossible, recommended dissolution of parliament in a surprise move. The political crisis and vacuum that followed, and the cost that the nation had to pay were painful.

There are many forces both inside and outside the country that argue that consolidation of pro-democracy forces alone can checkmate the rise of authoritarianism, be it in the form of absolute monarchy, or Maoist one-party dictatorship in the country. But the unity at the top level of the two parties will be meaningless without real commitment and without a permanent machinery to address the root issues of the split in the party. The separation of jurisdiction as well as the area of coordination between the party and the government has to be clearly defined.

One major reason for this clash of personality, and it will cease to play a destructive role only if the united party encourages inner party democracy and promotes grass root leaders instead of sycophants. Can Koirala, as leader of the united party, act like a democrat? Too much concentration of power as the head of the government, head of the party and also his appropriating the role of head of the state - are clear indications that his lust for power have little or no parallel in the history of Nepal, perhaps with the exception of Jung Bahadur Rana, the founder of oligarchy.

This union would only be a travesty in the name of consolidation of pro-democracy forces and would amount to nothing unless the united party would be confined to making more or bigger claims of share in power. This union will only mean something, if it successfully leads the country to a meaningful and functional democracy where the people will not only elect their government in a free and fearless atmosphere, but will also have a much larger say; and where the people will not only vote for a truly free and fair election, and hence a just peace in this country.

If the three major parties are all for republic, it is unlikely any other smaller parties will root for any form of monar-chy, or that they will be effective even if they do. This means that this election is going to be a choice-less election. The people will have to vote for a republic of oligarchy. What is this if not a farce? What’s the point of having an election if there is no real choice? The people, the large and silent majority, supported the election believing that the political candidates would represent our views in the constituent assembly.

Now the politicians’ views and agendas are being forced down on us, and we’re being asked to rubber-stamp it. There is no option now but to have a referendum on the monarchy concurrently with the elections. If we allow this farcical election to take place as it is, then the politicians will forever rule “new Nepal” in a farcical manner. If one illegitimate and unjust act is allowed to pass, more are bound to follow.

In order to teach the parties, once and for all, that they are here to represent our views, not to force theirs on us; to teach them that we did not fight the king’s authoritarianism to save the country and democracy and they are going to leave their past behind.

Kudos to Limbu

R D Limbu’s presentation of the current political as well as social situation and realities of present day Nepal was a very powerful expression and articulation of the realities. He deserves all praise for putting forth his views, in the form of a subtle warning to the rulers that they should not behave like Othirarashtra of Mahabharata epic.

This also could be a reference article for most of those who have been writing on the political as well as ethnic issues, that you can be objective, to the point and powerful without being virulently communal. I hope to see Mr. Limbu more often in the newsfront column.

Sunil Khadgi, Kishor Raj Panta & Ramkrishna Rana
Nepal, at the moment has escaped a debate whether it is failing or a failed state. But political pundits have begun fearing the worst. Nepal perhaps qualifies to be listed as a ‘captured state’ where some powerful personalities and groups or parties have monopolised or captured the state power as well as privileges without people’s mandate.

Any differences or quarrels among those who have captured power at the moment is not so much because they are opposed to it, but simply because they want an increased dose of power, perhaps at the cost of other partners. The government is purely running on a contract system where principle of collective responsibility or accountability has become the casualty. It is a weird system of politics and governance where government’s powers have been clandestinely transferred to political parties or individuals and their decisions are final. Personalities are getting stronger at the cost of the institutions.

With elections to the constituent assembly around the corner, the government is hardly bothered about maintaining law and order. Instead, the home minister has been given sole monopoly over the institution of the police and the armed police force. Similarly, cabinet or the prime minister would have no right to interfere in what Hishita Yam will be doing on Melamchi. Almost all the government hospitals and their management, top level recruitment as well as transfer are in the sole hands of Girin Maji Pokharel and Shashi Shrestha, the ministers who represent Jana Morcha.

The most classic example of this contract system that has surfaced, in the so far incomplete attempt to appoint secretaries to the government departments is that; each party prepared a list of ‘loyalists’ from among the bureaucrats. Assessment of their pro-people credentials, efficiency or performance was not at all the criteria for considering their promotion. Jamuna Krishna Shrestha, the senior-most joint secretary, tendered his resignation from the post after he got to know that he did not figure in any of the political parties’ list for promotion. The fact that he did not act as a politician, and only acted as a bureaucrat went against him at the end of his career. Yet, he showed guts that bureaucrats rarely display.

Maoists did not behave differently from the Congress and the UML during several rounds of meetings and lobbying, for who they thought were their loyalists, for wings up the posts of ambassadors and commissioners for the National Human Rights Commission. Such a brazen appropriation of the authority and power of the states, by individuals and political parties weakens the state, and may become the cause of its fragmentation in the long run.

Maoist Chief Prachanda has declared that the Kangaroo Courts have been reactivated. KB Maharaj, the government spokesperson as well as the Maoist leader in the cabinet, is in favour of such parallel private courts’ effective existence. On the other hand, parliament’s special committee is now going through the process of hearing chief justice’s appointment case. Naturally, and justifiably, Maoist legislators are a part of this committee. But conducting parallel courts under their parties violating the authority of the state, and having a substantial say in appointing the chief justice of the country’s legitimate apex court is ridiculous and a contradictory exercise in any country allegedly practicing democracy.

When ruling parties appear more in favour of going republic than having a constitutional monarchy; it obviously means putting the king under an effective control of law. Might is right has already become the mantra for the key political players and the parties. The state has totally abdicated its role and responsibility to the private political parties and the gang of eight that rules through the coalition now.

As a result, the country is moving towards a civil war. Parties are defying the traditional and constitutional norms of exercising power with responsibility and accountability. In absence of involvement of the people in the business of political parties, their chiefs are gradually turning into tribal chieftains and acting like one, some even questioning the basis of integration of the society. That is just one step before the era of war-lordism begins.

Strangely enough, absence of rules and refusal on the part of the government leaders to adhere to established norms do not raise eyebrows of the international community anymore. Instead, they have resorted to the politics of appeasement of the national players, and in a way, recognised their way of governance. There has been no concern expressed over the threat that an independent judiciary is facing over a period, or about unfair trial and persecution by the state, through its regular agencies, or the ones created for a particularly motivated purpose.

The home minister has now admitted publicly that there were some lapses on the part of the commission in recommending action against two officials, the then CDO of Dang and Superintendent of Police of Jhapa. But it was the ministerial committee in which the home minister himself was a member that scrutinised the report and recommendation actions against 201 people including the two, who he now says are innocent.

At this only shows that the state authorities and power under Koirala indulged in a game of persecution. And the international community, mainly the designated UN bodies, which were so dutifully vocal during the king’s regime against the state’s persecution campaign, is now mysteriously silent. This indicates that these bodies are as responsible for the current state of mess witnessed in this hijacked country. Hopefully, UN Security Council will soon be taking stock of the situation and the role of its designated agencies in Nepal, so that they could play much more positive and constructive role in retrieving the situation before it is too late.

As of now, UN bodies’ silence over these malpractices committed by the state will mean that they have endorsed it. It will also mean that the international system will be fast discredited in the same proportion as the current political dispensation in Nepal. The first mistake of the international referees as well as the designated UN bodies was to keep mum when the executive began systematically violating the principles of separation of power and independence of judiciary.

Secondly, their silence over the new eight-party regime monopolising every political process by literally excluding the rest of the population has created an impression that the UN system at times endorses policy of persecution as well as exclusion of political minority. And finally, it has not been able to prove itself effective enough in putting pressure on the government to have monitoring committee for an effective evaluation of the peace process as well as the code of conduct.

The outcome of these failures is all the more dangerous and in Nepal’s context, it will mean endorsing hijacking of the state apparatus by the high and mighty, with the people having no role in it at all.
Learn from world history

Countries adopting step-by-step reforms are found to be more successful

A 12-part documentary on ‘The rise of Great Powers’ released by the China Central television had attracted a good deal of attention of the global community not only for the contents of the film but also its relevance in the context of China’s rise. The CCTV documentary identifies nine big powers as Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United States leaving out Italy and some others.

The media seems to have tried to support the wishes of Chinese political leaders who wanted to draw lessons for the benefit of China’s modernisation. Once dubbed as ‘China’s peaceful rise’, China’s success story is now known as ‘China’s peaceful development’ and also called ‘harmonious development’.

Although there is continuing discussions on the ‘great powers’ film in China, and there are admirers as well as critics on the issue, one of the notable factors of the film for countries like Nepal is the selection of countries included on the series. Many of the countries listed as great powers do not match the population or territorial size of big countries but yet exerted their influence globally.

The main themes have to do with convergence of various social forces and blending of modernisation with tradition. One of the striking examples of these themes has been China’s adhering to the emperor system during her modernisation to preserve social order and stability.

Also, it gives a dear message to the world that countries adopting step-by-step reforms are found to be more successful whereas others which introduced radical changes faced setbacks and defeats. Though China and Japan shared similar feudal background, with Japan’s road, completely different to China, it led to successful modernisation.

Now there is no dearth of critics who opine that the underlying theme of the documentary was to stress the point that economy is the key of all world powers, but without proper political system it can hardly last. China needs to reform in many areas as her rise to become a world power is nearly a reality.

In Nepal today, we seem to be going for radical reforms in many areas without properly assessing the impact it could have on the society as a whole. In the name of uprooting feudal mindset, we are trying to adopt a new political system. We are also making efforts to put monarchy away from the national scene without being due regard to the Japanese lesson.

Since Nepal, too, has to follow a path of modernisation for the benefit of her people, all things must be considered in a careful and serious manner. The aura of building a new Nepal rests with the constituent assembly members who must not only be representative of the entire people of Nepal but also work hard to come up with a constitution. It is needless to state that the new constitution must find a balance between ground realities and pragmatism.

Past lessons offer ample examples that incremental process of development involves all stakeholders and it is long lasting. Whether it is a political system or economic policies or social development, unless the people are at the core of these activities and have a say in the state affairs, any new exercise is bound to fail. People of Nepal did not go to the extent of sacrificing their lives, enduring sufferings for a long time just to place a select section of the people at the helm acting irresponsibly.

Constitution making exercise is neither the preserve of legal professionals nor political activists. Economists, social scientists, engineers, doctors and everybody from all professions must take part in it. A system must be devised by the members of constituent assembly to involve every common man, especially those who have difficulty in understanding the complicated speeches and manifestos. It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against senseless terrorism. Unless we want Nepal to mirror Baghdad, it has to stop.

As they waited for the bus to take them home, their life seeped away in that crowded bus stand. The taporing monsoon gave way to a climate of fear. Terrorism has raised the macabre head amidst us again. It is not the first time; alas, it probably will not be for the last time either. We now struggle to come to terms with the bombings of September 7 in Kathmandu. Do we accept them as just another symptom of the making of a ‘New Nepal’? Do we label them for what they are – attempts to achieve political ends by unacceptable methods of violence against innocent Nepalese?

A few days have passed since the bombings. A few obscure organisations have allegedly taken responsibility for them. The police say they have some suspects. Meanwhile we, the general public, try and go about our lives with the impermanence of life haunting our sub-conscious. The news says that the target of these bombs is the constituent assembly polls. But who gives the perpetrators the right to use innocent civilians as fodder for their objectives?

It is unfortunate that the sanctity of human life and the traditional peace-loving nature of Nepalis have been violated repeatedly over the past 11 years. The gun culture popularised by American western films or the incessant modern Jihadis is now no stranger to this land of the Buddha. The current lack of security and the incapacity of the security forces to do anything about it have driven many a Nepali to arm himself in order to defend his life, family and property. We are turning fast into an armed nation, even though the national army is ironically confined to its barracks.

The other troubling phenomenon is the rise of communalism. Is there anyone anymore who considers himself/herself a ‘Nepali’? We now comprise an ethnic mosaic with pointed classifications such as Madhesis, Newars, Tamangs, Bahun, Chestra, Limbus, Khatis, Newars, Thakalis, Janajatis, Dalits and on and on – each fighting for that last pound of flesh from an emerging democratic polity.

Somewhere down the line, the ‘unity’ of this country has been placed in the back burner. While, for example, the European Community is increasingly united by its monetary unit and international perspective, we Nepalis are fragmenting ourselves, stapling ethnic and inter-communal labels on our identity. Our national anthem that speaks of a united Nepal, likening it to a garland of 100 flowers, pays but lip service to today’s reality.

Any keen observer of contemporary Nepali politics is fully aware that there are those who would benefit from the postponement or even cancellation of the November polls. There has been the recent alarming proposition to convert the current interim parliament to a constituent assembly. Different political parties have put other preposterous proposals forward. There seems to be an ongoing competition on who can come up with more demands. The futility of this demand-based politics is obvious when the supply of goods and services to be provided by the government is so scarce.

The necessity of the elections is sacrosanct, if Nepal is to be a multi-party democracy with a legitimate elected government. Politics is certainly the art of compromise, and political decisions will never please everyone equally. The 1990 Constitution was hailed at the time as one of the best in the world. Today that same constitution is being shredded by haphazard amendments and on its way to being defunct. One wonders about the fate of the new post-polls constitution given the fickleness of our leaders.

No matter who planted those bombs, the fact remains that it was wrong – morally, socially as well as politically. Unless we want Nepal to mirror Baghdad, it has to stop. Those who believe that they are achieving political ends must ask themselves whether the means they are using are justified. The question is whether the entire Nepali population is to be held hostage by a few terrorists. As long as this climate of fear persists, the future of Nepali democracy is bleak.

It is time we, the common Nepali citizens, speak out against mindless terrorism. Unless we want Nepal to mirror Baghdad, it has to stop. Those who believe that they are achieving political ends must ask themselves whether the means they are using are justified. The question is whether the entire Nepali population is to be held hostage by a few terrorists. As long as this climate of fear persists, the future of Nepali democracy is bleak.

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Floods in South Asian countries are a major setback for the regional and national economy. Directly and indirectly affected poor and middle income people cope with the loss of asset and livelihood in formal and informal ways. Directly affected people have a chance to get some relief and recovery support from government, state authorities and non-government sources and few of them might get compensations but indirectly affected people do not have any chance to get any kind of support. There is no effort to identify indirectly affected people by floods in South Asia or to bring them under flood adaptation schemes by NGOs and governments.

Poor and middle income people take loan mostly from informal sources and use social capital to overcome the grave situation and start a new life. But they cannot repay the loan due to continuous loss and are forced to migrate and are displaced to more remote places or to cities and towns to survive.

Although South Asian states and non-government actors focus mainly on visible causes behind the high level of impacts, especially on the women, children, aged, excluded groups like sex workers, HIV/AIDS people, ethnic minorities, lower castes, fisher folk, and day laborers. Meanwhile flood control has become a buzz word and high profile political agenda in all of the four countries of South Asia affected by flood in 2007. But there is no clear effort to develop a strategic plan focusing on the vulnerable and regularly affected people, their livelihood and the state level recovery system to prevent the hunger, loss of food production, properties and assets. Public action is limited to adhoc level or at piloting level in a micro-area for last fifty years.

To find solutions, these measures could be implemented:

1. Civil society as a part of public action can do advocacy on the rights of the riverine people and rights analysis of state and non-state laws, acts, regulations and interventions.
2. An energetic media can play more proactive role to raise the issues of continuous damage due to flood, increasing poverty among poor and mid-income people and reflect the people's voice for a regional flood resilient planning in South Asia.
3. Social and political organisations can play an effective role in introducing an efficient and systematic mechanism and functional procedure to predict damage to protect livelihood security of poor at national and regional level.
4. Develop micro level informed planning and implementation of flood protection programmes through community centered regional strategy.
5. Flood affected communities are heterogenous entity due to their different socio-political and economic condition as well as cultural position within the South Asia societies. During last 30 years of response planning by the public in South Asian states against flood has been dominated by homogenous thoughts rather than recognising the diversity of the issue.
6. Corporate thinking and planning without political wisdom for flood protection will replace the remaining weak chain of social security in the South Asian societies and will force many more poor and marginalised communities to live in more vulnerable and insecure areas, increase the number of displaced people and flow of migration to the big and small cities and towns.

Floods are inevitable in South Asia and they are the source of regenerating life and fertility along the flood plains in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Structural public actions like dams, protection walls or embankments on the rivers and tributaries increased the extent of flood related vulnerabilities and damage.

South Asian states and political organisations jointly with social organisations should recognise flood as a regional issue. They should also recognise flood related vulnerability to agriculture, health, education and other sectors linked with hunger and under-nutrition.

We can resist the threat of floods if we promote the social and political movements jointly by the people centered non-government entities, various social and political organisations and an active non-corporate media.

(Saadi is a climate change expert.)

Shashanka Saadi
Avoid genocide in Nepal

It is in everyone’s interest to ensure that the political conflict does not transform itself into an ethnic one.

Although I don’t have exact number of how many Nepali nurses are working abroad, it is a fact that they are doing well there. America, Britain, Canada, Australia, China are the main destinations of Nepali nurses. And they are doing well there.

Nursing and midwifery are two noble professions. A heart-wrenching movie, Hotel Rwanda, released in 2004 is based on one of the most terrifying events in modern history – the Rwanda genocide. The movie realistically captures the scenes of horrific killings. The killings started soon after the murder of the Rwandan President by the Tutsi rebels in April 1994. In retaliation, the Hutu government ordered its army to kill all the Tutsis. In the first three months of the genocide, some 800,000 citizens, mostly Tutsis, were killed, over a short period of three months. Nobody, including the UN could control the rapid escalation. The widespread massacre, the human tragedy shocked the world.

Clear message from the movie is to take lessons from the Rwandan genocide and work towards preventing such horrific crimes. Indeed, there is a lot of anger and frustration among the marginalised and suppressed individuals and communities. Every oppressed person seeks freedom from domination. But, it is important that we weigh up the costs against achievements. It is perfectly justifiable, for various groups in this country to pursue liberty and equality. But they should be clear about the ways and means of going about it. Their movements should not be directly or indirectly fuelling communal hatred; else we might end up in a mess that would benefit nobody.

Nobody can be sure that ethnic tensions would not reach a boiling point in Nepal. Never in our widest imaginations did we think a decade ago that a bloody communist revolution in Nepal would cost some 13000 lives. Still, people are not fully assured that the armed movement is over. Many other.

Women have contributed in the social and political spheres.

In this regard, the Nepal Medical Council has played a crucial role. The legal framework has helped the women in gaining certain rights and privileges. But, overall the opportunities for women to pursue a career in the field of medicine are limited. Women often face discrimination and prejudice in the workplace. They are often paid less than their male counterparts for doing the same work.

Women Nurses in Nepal

Women nurses in Nepal have made significant contributions to the healthcare sector. They have played a crucial role in providing primary healthcare services in remote and rural areas. However, women nurses still face challenges such as gender stereotypes and lack of opportunities for career advancement.

According to the Nepal Medical Council, there are currently 15,000 registered nurses in Nepal. Of these, about 90% are women. Women nurses are more likely to work in rural and remote areas, where access to healthcare is limited.

Women nurses have also played a vital role in responding to health emergencies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women nurses were on the frontlines, providing essential care to patients.

However, there are still barriers to women nurses’ full participation in the healthcare system. Barriers include gender biases, lack of access to education and training, and inadequate compensation.

It is crucial that we work towards removing these barriers and ensuring equal opportunities for women nurses in Nepal.

Source: Nepal Medical Council
Meeting of the New Champions, dubbed investment of US$2.5 billion.

Ceremony of a computer chipset plant in Dalian, grown and international software companies. The Chinese market is huge. It is the largest communications market in the world. Saturday, “The Chinese market is huge. It is the biggest. With its infrastructure and outstanding support for foreign investment, the thriving city of Dalian represents a key city for Citibank’s expansion plans in China,” said William Rhodes, chairman of Citibank NA, at the meeting. Citibank is among several major international banks that are ramping up presence in China, particularly after the country fully opened its banking sector to foreign banks in December last year to fulfill its WTO commitment.

Among other business leaders brought together by the three-day meeting, many said that business prospects in China are good.

Craig Barrett, chairman of the US computer chip maker Intel Corp said at a panel session on Saturday, “The Chinese market is huge. It is the second largest computer market place and the largest communications market in the world. There is a huge opportunity for both home- grown and international software companies.”

Craig Barrett later attended a groundbreaking ceremony of a computer-chipset plant in Dalian, the corporation’s first in Asia with a record investment of US$2.5 billion.

At the beginning of the Inaugural Annual Meeting of the New Champions, dubbed Summer Davos, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao pledged to maintain the country’s fast growth while tackling such problems as trade surplus, environment issues and energy consumption. “We are confident that with enhanced macro regulation, the giant ship of the Chinese economy will continue to surge ahead steadily,” Wen said. Sir Martin Sorrell, chief executive of the UK-based advertising giant WPP Group Plc, said choosing Dalian as the host for the Summer Davos is a recognition of China’s economic achievements, and more importantly, the Chinese economy will be sustainable and there are immense potentials.

“We will definitely redouble our efforts in China, including time, investment,” said Sorrell.

Truck crash kills 86 pilgrims

JODHPUR, India — The toll in one of India’s worst road accidents, mounted to 86 on Saturday as one of scores rescued from the mangled wreckage of a truck that fell into a ravine died in hospital, police said.

Some 200 people were crowded into the truck travelling to a religious fair in the desert state of Rajasthan in western India. “One person has died in hospital. This takes the number of dead to 86,” said police superintendent Rupinder Singh in Jodhpur district.

Nearly a dozen cranes were scrambled to find survivors and recover bodies. The smashed vehicle had been driven by a driver who was going and he told us to come and rescued us.” Passers-by also alerted the nearest police post.

A district official Shikhar Aragwal, who was driving by soon after the accident, “The wireless phone was not working so we could not even call for help from there. We started sending people to hospital in private cars.”

Police said that he objected to the exile duration and had agreed to reduce it to five years. He added that Hariri then asked him to sign the papers.

Nawaz denied that former US president Bill Clinton was involved in brokering the agreement between him and Gen Musharraf.

‘We will definitely redouble our efforts in China, including time, investment,” said Sorrell.

Nawaz said that Hariri visited him after a week and told him that Saudi King Abdullah had also objected to the exile duration and had agreed to reduce it to five years. He added that Hariri then asked him to sign the papers.

Nawaz said that the agreement stated that there would be no bar on the Sharif family to move anywhere (except Pakistan) from Saudi Arabia during these five years. “But Musharraf violated the understanding under which the Sharif family would have to remain in exile for 10 years in Saudi Arabia. The former PM said that he objected to the duration of the exile and insisted that it be reduced to five years. Nawaz said that Hariri then visited him after a week and told him that Saudi-King Abdullah had also objected to the exile duration and had agreed to reduce it to five years. He added that Hariri then asked him to sign the papers.

Nawaz said that he had tried his best to refrain from saying anything on the “agreement” due to its sensitive nature, but Hariri’s press conference in Islamabad had compelled him to disclose “some hidden facts.”

Nawaz said that Hariri visited him in Attok Fort in 2000 with an understanding under which the Sharif family would have to remain in exile for 10 years in Saudi Arabia. The former PM said that he objected to the duration of the exile and insisted that it be reduced to five years. Nawaz said that Hariri then visited him after a week and told him that Saudi King Abdullah had also objected to the exile duration and had agreed to reduce it to five years. He added that Hariri then asked him to sign the papers.

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Marshland Flowers

It is said that great Gurus like Gampopa (the disciple of Milarepa) took his breath in at sunset and let it go at sunrise.

After their fifth plenum, the Maoist leadership came to a conclusion that holding elections would severely damage the party.

The bomb blasts in Kathmandu last week prove that the law and order situation of the country has taken a nose dive. Contrary to the fact that government authority is virtually non-existent throughout the country, the government is still adamant about holding timely elections. The Home Minister during his parleys in the parliament conceded to the fact that the government would need to recruit an additional 30,000 troops for the Nepal Police to ensure security for the polls. On the other hand, in past elections Nepali Army provided the backbone for the security arrangements during elections; however, the present peace agreements prohibit the deployment of army for any purpose. Therefore, how the Prime Minister envisions conducting timely elections is still a mystery.

To add to the PM's worries, CPN-Maoist - one of Koirala's major allies has now stated that elections are impossible given the deteriorating law and order situation of the country. Although the legal aspects are completed, the administrative work is still a mystery. Therefore, how the Prime Minister envisions conducting timely elections is still a mystery. The Maoists actually do not want elections. After their fifth plenum, the Maoist leadership came to a conclusion that holding elections would severely damage the party. The Maoist leadership has come realise that their position in the Terai is extremely weak and their position in the hills is no better. Therefore, the leadership has decided to explore alternative avenues to end the law and order situation.

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Prayer in mountains
Would bombs enter her poems?

Fragile my eyeglasses,
Fragile and foreign, I take them off;
On the mule path I see
a speck of a scar in them.

From the balcony
of a sun rise in the clear sky of my life.
I see the Annapurnas.

On the mule path
I take them off;
Fragile and foreign,
Fragile my eyeglasses,

The whole landscape of green paddy fields
sprinkled with yellow flowers looks like wary beard
of an ascetic. Poet Robin Metz keeps mumbling
prayers for this nation as he sees the breathtaking
landscape. This is just the beginning, I tell my
guests. Tomorrow we would go into the lush
greasy landscape of perennial waterfalls.

Tomorrow we would see real Nepal. Tomorrow
we would see Annapurnas, the place where soul
of the gods lives. You will see smiles on the faces of people.
Mules will shake their head gears and the song
of the whistling thrush will sing in the valleys of
your hearts and then there we shall utter a
prayer for those who became victims of the
terror. And a prayer for our own beloved one
who passed away, without a warning:
This is where last spring
a rainbow appeared
and seconds later the sun set at the same spot.
A huge sun-sized moon
crest from behind the mountain
and lingered like a cherry-faced child
peering over the courtyard of Annapurnas,
the gorge of the River Modi.

Fragile my eyelids;
Fragile and tainted with the speck of a bleeding
of my mother who left me lately.

It is not true. This is a myth created by people
who sell drugs and the users themselves, ignorant of the harm
and consequences of marijuana smoking.
Marijuana damages lungs, nerves and brain.
There are 400 chemicals in marijuana smoke.
60 of these have been proven to cause
cancer. The chemicals can stay in users’
body for months or even years.
Marijuana contains THC, a neurotoxin (a
poison that damages nerves), which causes
memory loss.

When people use marijuana regularly, their body
start tolerating the chemical in the body
and they will need to take higher doses of it to get
the high that they used to get before. This
usually leads to other drugs like brown sugar.

Lack of knowledge and awareness among
students make them think that smoking pot or
tobacco is harmless. But marijuana is fatal and
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New Delhi - From “Pyar to ab to aaja” to “Dum maro dum” and “Kambakht ishq”, singing diva Asha Bhosle has been enthralling listeners with her vivacious and versatile numbers for more than six decades. And the singing legend, who turned 74 Saturday, is still going strong.

From Madhubala to Helen in the older films to newer actresses Urmila Matondkar and Kareena Kapoor, from Pune to Kolhapur and then to Mumbai, Asha and her elder sister, Lata Mangeshkar, started singing in films to support their family.

She sang her first film song “Chala chala nav bala” for the Marathi movie “Maha Bat” in 1943. Her first Hindi song was “Saawan aaya” for Hansraj Babu’s “Chunayya” in 1948.

The year 1957 was the breakthrough year for Asha when O.P. Nayyar used her to sing the heroine’s songs in “Tumsa Nahin Dekha” and “Naiya Daur”. The same year the legendary S.D. Burman had a rift with Lata Mangeshkar. This came as a blessing in disguise for Asha, who soon became his favourite female singer. In the 1970s Asha came closer to another legend of Indian music, R.D. Burman, who gave a new hip and happening sound to her singing. The songs “Pyar to ab to aaja”, “Dum maro dum” and “Chura liya hain tumne” were a result of this combination.

But it was her immortal ghazals for Muzaffar Ali’s “Umrao Jaan” that fetched her huge accolades. The songs “Dil cheez kya hai”, “I aakhir ki maat”, “Yeh hui jagah keh doost” not only proved her versatility but are still all-time favourites. For her contribution to music in Indian cinema, Asha was conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke Award, the highest title in Indian cinema in 2000. She is a source of inspiration for wannabe singers.

“Asha-ji has always been a great source of inspiration for me. In fact, she inspires all budding singers. She is so versatile and her voice is so young that even today she lends her voice to any actress, the song becomes a chartbuster,” Abhijeet Sawant, the winner of “Indian Idol 1”, told IANS.

“I am one of Asha-ji’s biggest fans. We go to any actress, the song becomes a chartbuster,” Abhijeet Sawant, the winner of “Indian Idol 1”, told IANS.

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“Nowadays when established singers don’t want to take a chance with pop albums she comes up with an album every year. She is so enthusiastic and always open to work with youngsters. I wish her many happy returns of the day and also that her blessings should always remain with us,” added Sawant.

Her popularity is not confined to Indian shores! She has collaborated with artists like Boy George and Stephen Lusscombe. In 2002, she teamed with Michael Stipe on the track “The Way You Dream” on the self-titled album by 1 Giant Leap. In 1997, the British band Cornershop paid tribute to Asha with their song “Brimful of Asha”, an international hit which was later remixed by Falboy Slim.

(RNS)

NEW YORK - Ralph Lauren took a well-deserved extended bow Saturday night as he both presented and celebrated his 40th anniversary collection. Lauren sauntered down the runway at a tent erected just outside the Conservatory Gardens in Manhattan’s Central Park to Frank Sinatra’s “The Best Is Yet To Come.” A crowd that included Sarah Jessica Parker, Martha Stewart, Diane Sawyer and Barbara Walters gave the designer a standing ovation. Fellow top-tier designers Donna Karan, Carolina Herrera, Diane von Furstenberg and Vera Wang, who once worked for Lauren, also were at the black-tie event.

The theme of the spring collection, debuting during New York Fashion Week, was a day at the races. Some models were oversized hats with garden-party dresses — one of the best being a pale-blue floral printed silk phase gown with a halter neckline and ruffled jabot — while others wore menwear-style jackets, ascots and tailored trousers. Spaltike shoes completed the look.

The jockeys were even represented with crystal-embellished jodhpurs, a yellow jersey dress with an equestrian print, and a bright pink eques- trian-print taffeta jacket with splashes of blue, white, green and yellow, and a peplum at the hip.

Spring ‘08 features more colors than Lauren has shown in years.

The clothes, however, were secondary to recognizing Lauren’s long tenure at the top of an industry always looking for the next big thing.

Lauren is one of the “nicest, warmest and loveliest” in the fashion world, said von Furstenberg, president of the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

“He is so successful because he lives his fantasy with such passion. I just love him,” she said.

(RNS)

[Image]