

US brings anti-China equipments in Nepal !



WM correspondent

Some key revelations about the furtive landing of a cargo plane belonging to the US air force on the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) on March 6 and the cargo it carried have

been surfaced.

Last week, The Weekly Mirror had come up with a brief news report questioning the flippant muteness on the part of the concerned authorities about the sneaky entry of the air force

cargo flying from New Delhi and the mysteriously special privileges it enjoyed at the TIA.

Following the news report, a vernacular weekly has brought out some amount of information regarding

the controversial issue.

According to the Dristy weekly, mouthpiece of the CPN (UML), a major ruling party, "the air force cargo was carrying unknown 'diplomatic luggage' which was moved out via the gate of the No 14 Battalion of the Nepal Army stationed at the TIA."

The weekly quoted Lavaraj Shrestha, customs chief at the TIA as saying, "The 'diplomatic luggage' carried by the air force cargo did not even reach the customs office for necessary clearance."

"It is also learnt that the US embassy had formally asked the ministry of defense to arrange special security for the goods carried by the air force cargo."

"Undoubtedly, the unjustifiably excessive leeway the air force cargo enjoyed at the TIA has given an ample space to raise suspicions over the actual motive behind its entry into Nepal."

"Some knowledgeable experts choose to link this concealed and controversial incident with the 'Free Tibet Movement'."

"Given that the US is fully backing

the elements indulged in carrying out anti-China activities, there is every possibility that the secret arrival of the air force cargo might also be a part of the plot to equip the 'Free Tibet' activists."

"It is not a blurred fact that the US intelligence agency CIA in connivance with the Dalai Lama clique has long been using the Nepalese soil with a malicious motive to separate Tibet from the mainland China."

"Of course, it was the CIA which furtively plotted the 'Khampa rebellion' some three and half decades back in Nepal to wreck havoc with the territorial integrity of the northern neighbour."

In the light of these realities, the suspicion that the US might have been again attempting to equip anti-Chinese elements by using Nepali soil sounds plausible.

The lackadaisical attitude being displayed by the government towards the secret entry of the air force cargo is sure to provoke external forces to continue to execute their nefarious designs at the expense of national interests of Nepal.

Foreigners bent to fish in troubled waters?

Growing acrimony

WM Correspondent

United Nations under Secretary General for Political Affairs B Lynn Pascoe was straight in his opinion while defending the blame labeled by the ruling parties that the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) is predisposed to please the Maoists.

He termed the ruling parties' accusations as 'cheap shots' and 'boring argument' by claiming, "The ruling parties are indulging themselves in undermining the UN special mission just to conceal their own failures."

Not surprisingly, the cabinet meet dubbed the Pascoe's remarks as something that mocked the diplomatic limitations and norms.

It is the first time the government openly launched a tirade against the

'biasness' on the part of the UN from the cabinet.



The leaders of ruling parties have long been spitting venom against the UNMIN for "its inclination towards the Maoists".

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WM Correspondent

Nepali Army (NA) is worried about possible influence of foreigners in the national security in the name of army integration and security sector reforms.

During the consultative meeting of top army generals this week, the generals stressed that the government should monitor the institutions.

The army's stance has come at a time when a non-governmental organization (NGO) run by the foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal prepared the report on integration and rehabilitation plan of the Maoist combatants.

The NGO that prepared to plan is Nepal Institute for Policy Studies led by Prime Minister's advisor Rajan Bhattarai. The NGO is reportedly funded by UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

Any person enjoying any sort of



government position is not legally allowed to affiliate himself/herself to a NGO.

Ironically, it seems the Prime Minister himself is not at all bothered about maintaining laws in the country.

The peace accord has entrusted the responsibility of framing such a policy to the Special Committee for integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants.

But, PM Madhav Kumar Nepal himself ridiculed the peace accord. Obviously, foreigners have long been furtively fascinated with the position of the army integration.

Various bilateral donor agencies

have organized different seminars on the issue expressing keenness to help the integration.

The DFID even made an attempt to take the army generals and Maoists to a foreign country to make them acquainted with international experiences regarding army integration.

The then Girija Prasad Koirala led interim government threw cold waters on this plan as Koirala opposed it with the British officials.

Be that as it may, how fervently India, barring aside other external power centers, is interested in the integration issue does need any testimonials.

The role played by the southern neighbour was no less significant when the Maoist-led government was dislodged over the row related to the sacking of the then army chief.

The interests of other external powers in the issue are also strikingly visible with huge flow of fund flowing in the name of helping the integration process.

Disarray continues to dominate



WM correspondent

It is probably the first time: the Nepal Army (NA) deems it fit to publicize its views vis-à-vis the integration of the Maoist combatants in the security institutions including the NA, per se.

Former Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Rukmangat Katwal was roughly outspoken against the Maoists even during when the former rebels were at the helm of affairs.

He had made political statement regarding the integration of the Maoist combatants time and again, thus becoming the bitterest person in the

Maoists' psyche.

They decided for his expulsion, which subsequently led to the prevalent political mayhem.

The current chieftain of NA Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, who has established his image not quite like that of his successor, has also been drawn into controversy after he openly spoke against the proposition of integrating the Maoist combatants with the army in bulk.

The army chief advertised his opinion on the integration soon after his meeting with UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs B Lynn Pascoe.

The two had decided "the entry of the politically indoctrinated personnel into the army could divide the institution and lead to national disintegration".

The NA chief even argued, "The NA is the most disciplined, professional, competitive and apolitical institution whereas some Maoist combatants were highly politically indoctrinated."

The army chief said, "The commitment on the part of the Maoists regarding the integration process

appears dubious".

The army also suggested that the individual combatants should be allowed to choose various options even outside the integration with the security agencies

Not surprisingly, the latest gestures displayed by the army chief ruffled the feathers of the Maoist leadership.

It is not for nothing that vice chairman of UCPCN (Maoist) Baburam Bhattarai accused the NA of being unethical.

The army could have forwarded its official stance on the Maoist integration to the concerned agency through its own channels.

But, it chose to aggressively publicize its stance following the rendezvous that took place between the army chief and the UN official.

The principal staff officers of the NA during their consultative meet also spoke against the entry of the combatants into the NA in bulk.

They also discussed on threat to national security from different sectors including regional and ethnic politics and the impact on the integration of combatants and security sector reforms.

The Maoists will not allow the integration and constitution making process to take final conclusion until it gets some political dividends to justify its political standing especially on army integration.

Their repeated remarks that the integration and constitution making process should go hand in hand has much to do with this fact.

Other parties however believe that the constitution cannot be promulgated at all without completely managing the Maoist fighters in cantonments

The prolonged political crisis engulfing the whole nation is a result of the unwarranted hubbub between the two sides on the issue of army.

The somersaults being displayed by major political parties seem that they are only serious about winning the blame game, which they are sure to play, if the new constitution is not promulgated by May 28.

As the political race is totally directed towards pocketing partisan and parochial interests, the delivery of the new constitution within the deadline is appearing elusive.

Conundrum of government change

WM Correspondent

The attempts on the part of the United CPN (Maoist) to call a special session of the parliament to reportedly topple the incumbent coalition have triggered a new round of hullabaloo in the political market.

The party, which forms the largest block with 40 percent seats in the Constituent Assembly (CA), however termed the allegation that it is calling a special session to float a non-confidence against the government as absolutely fallacious.

The Maoist stalwarts have, time and again, been loudly saying that the change of the present government is simply mandatory to deliver a new constitution.

Various leaders belonging to the ruling parties have also explicitly expressed their discontent with the performance of the coalition.

Whether the Maoists would be supported by these dissatisfied politicians to lead the next government is hard to ascertain.

However, the former rebels undeniably want to see the current coalition losing a majority so they can again ascend to the power corridors.

The interim constitution has not enshrined a clear cut provision regarding what would be the status of incumbent government if the ruling side lost majority and the main opposition failed to muster enough support for leading the next government.

But, in such a situation, the Prime Minister will certainly lose moral authority to continue to steer the government.

The two major ruling parties-Nepali Congress (NC) and UML- have ganged up against the UCPCN (Maoist) fearing

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Editorial

Failure of political leaders at its height

The May 28 deadline for the nation's new constitution is fast approaching. Unfortunately, Nepal's political forces are so engrossed in just fulfilling their trivial partisan interests that the deadline is becoming elusively dreadful by each passing day.

Nepal's three major parties are locking their horns in the special assembly formed to draft the constitution over the structure of a proposed federal system.

The United CPN (Maoist), which forms the largest block with 40% of the seats, is insisting that federal states be carved on an ethnic basis. On the other hand, the ruling Nepali Congress party and its coalition partner are of the view that the federalization should take place on a geographic basis

Likewise, the Maoists favor an executive presidency, while the Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist are floating the proposition of a parliamentary system.

At the same time, National People's Front (Rashtriya Janamorchha), a small left-leaning party, is engaged in anti-federalism campaign saying federalism is bound to disintegrate Nepal like the former Yugoslavia.

The royalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-Nepal), is calling for a national referendum on federalism, as well as on secularism and a restoration of the monarchy.

With the tempo of political hubbub showing no signs of recession, the country's future is increasing being clouded by uncertainties.

The subordination of political ideology to the ethnicisation of politics to which political parties have almost capitulated is hampering the recourse for future development.

A big question that has emerged today is whether the state is shrinking instead of playing the role of transformation. And, undoubtedly, it due to the failure of the leaders of the major political parties that people's demands for their long denied rights have remained unattended.

Nepal's political leaders are also responsible for the failure of the Nepali state in almost all spheres.

It also shows the failure of the Nepali state in all spheres for which Nepal's political leaders have to take the blame.

Demarcating the country on ethnic grounds and the lack of capacity of the political leaders to settle the outstanding issues concerning federalism and other components of restructuring the state can cast blight on the unity and integrity of the Nepali state.

And, the failure of the political leadership to reach out to the people with more positive ideas and initiatives is only augmenting the anxiety on the future of the country.

The road ahead for Nepali peace in 2010

By Surya B. Prasai

The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) has been operating on a very tight deadline to meet the failing demands of Nepali peace. The recent visit to Nepal of UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe underscores the increased confusion and heightened suspicions among Nepali political parties vis-a-vis UNMIN.

Pascoe's whirlwind tour of Nepali political party headquarters and private residences of the top leaders has revealed the truth that prevailed five months back, when UNMIN's renewal was being discussed. Not many were in favor of it, including former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. Now more seem confused, not by UNMIN, but by the political actors own definition of the end to Nepal's peace process. The contradiction lies herein: the Maoist insistence on a verified and logical conclusion without divulging the actual number of ex-combatants in the various UNMIN supervised camps is considered unacceptable by various political parties' leaders, as much as being a cause of suspicion in the Nepal Army, the rest of the disciplined forces, human rights groups and civil society representatives. The media already has a rough estimate of the numbers, based on previous speeches of Prachanda, it is not expected to be that large and cumbersome for various donors to support in the rehabilitation process.

Mr. Pascoe's frustration is well echoed by various diplomatic quarters in Kathmandu who find a resolute Nepali peace in 2010 a true Himalayan mirage, let alone the writing of a laghu (shortened) constitution fulfilled. Yet, UNMIN's role must be considered useful, imperative, irreversible and desirable to the point of drafting a new Nepali constitution, the deadline which now can be counted in days. After Mr. Pascoe's visit, the UN Security Council will now need to deliberate the Nepali peace process more carefully, be it part and parcel of hard and soft aid in favor of further stabilization of Nepali democracy itself, if aid money

can help. On the other hand, the Maoists alone cannot bear the brunt of all failed national grand designs or be the scorn of national political vendetta that is pouring in especially from NC and UML. The Madhes parties for one have been totally sidelined, despite one third Madhesi representation in the parliament. The lack of transparency between Girija babu, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Prachanda is also largely to blame, despite their earlier democratic commitment to a high level political coordination mechanism to sort out existing political differences.

Mr. Pascoe's visit has made it clear that it is not easy to think about Nepali peace without considering the multiple arguments for a federal state structure. Nepal is only in name a Federal Democratic Republic, there is still a strong undercurrent in Nepal's ruling elite, including the children and clan of the very elite leaders themselves holding a belief that a constitutional democratic monarchial system which Girija babu and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai had pro-actively argued for and got in the form of the 1990 constitution of Nepal, is still suited the best. Many are now interpreting ex-King Gyanendra's actions as being patriotic, in saving Nepali democracy which he did not see working to the people's desired satisfaction, and a defense of true Nepali liberties. His only weakness was not tying in with the then Seven Party Alliance Movement for democracy, which could otherwise have seen the continuity of constitutional monarchy, reinforcing the twin pillar theory of democracy and monarchy working side by side. It is known that King Gyanendra was also actively pursuing modernization of monarchy with the greater Asian democratic movement vis-avis other Asian monarchies. Ex-Panchas thus necessarily need not advocate inclusion of Monarchical representation in some form in a new constitution, it is already felt and accepted by even those within the Maoist leadership as a true ground reality which cannot be obliterated with a mere constitutional draft.

Mr. Pascoe's recent trip to Kathmandu is also a good lesson for the UN in peace building. The Nepal model ought to succeed and a secular peace be contained within the tiny ex-Kingdom's mystically enchanting borders. The UN might not be at its persuasive best when it comes to convincing Nepali political parties to draw on a laghu (short) draft constitution, but the UN's political role in Nepal is still well liked by Nepali human rights and civil society representatives, the G-8 and a few others, though UNMIN could work closer with Nepal's neighbors north and south, for whom Nepali peace and geo-political stability matter most.

The Maoists for one, will continue enjoying the total sympathy of UNMIN, which will ensure its own continuity in Kathmandu. Mr. Pascoe in his three day visit to Nepal did hold frank meetings with Nepal's top political leaders who seemed bifurcated in their own vision for Nepali peace, laying more blame on UNMIN's delayed peace procedures as some interpreted rather than their own political shortcomings, which Mr. Pascoe thought. Pascoe's visit also coincided with the resignation of Rijwan Ansari as state Home Minister, citing differences with his ex-boss Bhim Rawal. The reason Ansari gave for his parting of ways with Home Minister Bhim Rawal was the worsening national security situation and an inability to tackle it. A 'good instance' was when Singha Durbar police failed to stop a Nepali journalists' delegation from protesting in front of Rawal's office recently. Rawal got truly infuriated to the point of transferring the Singha Durbar police head and those on duty at that time with his own residence security guards, an unheard technocratic confusion in Nepali disciplined forces history.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal is also known to be in a quandary about the current lax security situation and prefers a more active role for the Nepal Army in maintaining national security. Nepal Army which truly abides in fulfilling the Nepali people's democratic

aspirations, however, is hesitant to meddle in political issues though it has exhibited its willingness to step up security measures if need be. The well known fact is, given the deteriorating internal security situation, both India and China have been maintaining closer relations with the Nepal Army. Other western countries are also doing the same, though not in a public manner.

Pascoe's visit nonetheless came at a right time when Nepal politicians were busy discussing among themselves the true contributions of UNMIN to the Nepali peace process. Pascoe had brought along with him experienced interlocutors who had worked the Nepali political scene before. Prime Minister Koirala for one was known to insist that Nepali people be given the opportunity to solve their own internal political differences and there was building peace in the country. Prachanda too had expressed similar thinking in the past, though he has expressed his ideological clash with Prime Minister Nepal, being closer to his adversary Jhala Nath Khanal, the powerful UML politician who commands the party's internal foreign policy workings and finds some legitimate voice in UNMIN's stay. Pascoe overall reiterated the position of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon which is that Nepali peace can only be as good as the commitment shown by various political actors working for it.

Nepal's civil conflict which occurred between 1996-2006 is now over, an inglorious chapter in the country's otherwise peaceful history, but the search of long term peace and a new constitution befitting the Nepali people's democratic, cultural and economic aspirations endure. UNMIN could be a catalyst to both, but there must be stronger advocacy effort on UNMIN's part to develop further trust in the UN's political mission in Nepal backed by a surge in humanitarian assistance to the Nepali people. This is the only way out for the UN to build a long lasting peace in Nepal so that future civil conflicts may never occur and the Nepali peace model prove a true global standard for other countries to follow suit.

Multiple problems marring economy

By Nirjal Dhungana

The country's economy is mired in multiple problems. Almost all key economic indicators are going down hill.

A sharp drop in remittances coupled with surging exports in contrast to declining imports has ballooned country's balance of payment (BoP) deficit, depleted foreign currency reserve and worsened liquidity in the market.

The growth of remittances, which has long been helping the shaky economy afloat, is forecasted to be at a mere 10 per cent this fiscal year compared to 19.5 per cent of the GDP in 2008/09.

The demand for Nepali labor is on the decline in countries such as Malaysia and the Gulf.

The trade deficit till the end of the month of Poush of the current fiscal year swelled by an alarming 58.4 percent (Rs 56.83 billion) compared to the same period of the previous year.

According to the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the country's export trade plummeted by 12 percent while the volume of import grew by a massive 40 percent during the said period this year.

During the time, imports grew six times more than exports. The country exported goods worth Rs

30.82 billion while the arithmetic value of its imports was Rs 187 billion.

The exports of Nepali carpets and readymade garments, which once were substantially contributing to the economy, have hit the rock bottom.

Export of carpets declined by as much as 40 per cent in the first six months of this fiscal year alone. It sounds appallingly alarming as the carpet industry has shrunk as much as 70 per cent compared to its flourishing days.

Similarly, the export of handicrafts plummeted by 12.5 per cent compared to the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

Industrial sector is stagnating and the agricultural productivity has seen a ceaseless downward spiral.

Apart from labour unrest, bandhs, strikes, excessive load shedding, gross economic flippancy on the part of the government is responsible for this sorry state of affairs.

The lackluster performance of the industrial sector, the second largest employment generator after the agricultural sector, has resulted in an alarming rise in job losses and

pushed the unemployment rate to over 10 percent.

The severe power shortage has already forced hundreds of medium-sized enterprises to go kaput. Of course, the energy crisis, with daily power cuts of up to 12 hours a day, has wreaked havoc to the entire range of production activities.

Experts fear that high unemployment rate reserves a high possibility of triggering a social unrest.

The agriculture sector, which accounts for 33 percent of GDP, is estimated to grow by 1.12 percent, half of the annual population growth rate.

The already fragile economy has also been hit hard by soaring inflation that touched 11.8 percent by the end of first six months of the current fiscal year.

In fact, the consumer price-based inflation has constantly hovered around double digits for last two years.

On the other side of picture, the capital market is also in dire straits due to depleting confidence amongst investors. Nepali people have opted for investing in gold, the price of which has gone up in

international market, because of the absence of alternative investment avenues. For the same reason, a massive amount of capital flight is suspected to have taken place even through the banking system. Over Rs 15 billion has been transferred to India in the first five month of this fiscal year alone.

The increment in government revenues by around 30 percent during the first half of current fiscal year is perhaps the only one thing that deserves appreciation.

It will be no more than absurdity to be content with the increase in the imports of luxury and consumer goods, according to experts.

Moreover, it will further adversely affect economy if the collected revenue is spent to finance regular expenditures at the cost of developing import substitution strategies.

Of course, several factors related to the economic and monetary policy operations- apart from political mess- have pushed the entire economy to the verge of collapse.

As such, the identification of missing link between political and economic processes could be a pre-requisite to sort out the economic problems, argue experts.

What have we done to Democracy?



By Arundhati Roy

often wondered whether the attempt to always be precise, to try and get it all factually right somehow reduces the epic scale of what is really going on. Does it eventually mask a larger truth?

Today, words like "progress" and "development" have become interchangeable with economic "reforms," "deregulation," and "privatization." Freedom has come to mean choice. It has less to do with the human spirit than with different brands of deodorant. Market no longer means a place where you buy provisions. The "market" is a de-territorialized space where faceless corporations do business, including buying and selling "futures." Justice has come to mean human rights.

While we're still arguing about whether there's life after death, can we add another question to the cart? Is there life after democracy? What sort of life will it be? By "democracy" I don't mean democracy as an ideal or an aspiration. I mean the working model: Western liberal democracy, and its variants.

So, is there life after democracy?

Attempts to answer this question often turn into a comparison of different systems of governance, and end with a somewhat prickly, combative defense of democracy. It's flawed, we say. It isn't perfect, but it's better than everything else that's on offer.

Whether democracy should be the utopia that all "developing" societies aspire to is a separate question altogether. The question about life after democracy is addressed to those of us who already live in democracies, or in countries that pretend to be democracies. It isn't meant to suggest that we lapse into older, discredited models of totalitarian or authoritarian governance. It's meant to suggest that the system of representative democracy — too much representation, too little democracy — needs some structural adjustment.

The question here, really, is what have we done to democracy? What have we turned it into? What happens once democracy has been used up? When it has been hollowed out and emptied of meaning? What happens when each of its institutions has metastasized into something dangerous? What happens now that democracy and the free market have fused into a single predatory organism with a thin, constricted imagination that revolves almost entirely around the idea of maximizing profit?

Is it possible to reverse this process? Can something that has mutated go back to being what it used to be? What we need today, for the sake of the survival of this planet, is long-term vision. Can governments whose very survival depends on immediate, extractive, short-term gain provide this? Could it be that democracy, the sacred answer to our short-term hopes and prayers, the protector of our individual freedoms and nurturer of our avaricious dreams, will turn out to be the endgame for the human race? Could it be that democracy is such a hit with modern humans precisely because it mirrors our greatest folly — our nearsightedness?

Our inability to live entirely in the present (like most animals do), combined with our inability to see very far into the future, makes us strange in-between creatures, neither beast nor prophet. Our amazing intelligence seems to have outstripped our instinct for survival. We plunder the earth hoping that accumulating material surplus will make up for the profound, unfathomable thing that we have lost. It would be conceit to pretend I have the answers to any of these questions. But it does look as if the beacon could be failing and democracy can perhaps no longer be relied upon to deliver the justice and stability we once dreamed it would.

A Clerk of Resistance

As a writer, a fiction writer, I have

been raped, tens of thousands widowed. Half a million Indian troops patrol the Kashmir valley, making it the most militarized zone in the world.

How does a government that claims to be a democracy justify a military occupation? By holding regular elections, of course. Elections in Kashmir have had a long and fascinating past. The blatantly rigged state election of 1987 was the immediate provocation for the armed uprising that began in 1990. Since then elections have become a finely honed instrument of the military occupation, a sinister playground for India's deep state. Intelligence agencies have created political parties and decoy politicians, they have constructed and destroyed political careers at will. It is they more than anyone else who decide what the outcome of each election will be. After every election, the Indian establishment declares that India has won a popular mandate from the people of Kashmir.

In the summer of 2008, a dispute over land being allotted to the Amarnath Shrine Board coalesced into a massive, nonviolent uprising. Day after day, hundreds of thousands of people defied soldiers and policemen — who fired straight into the crowds, killing scores of people — and thronged the streets. From early morning to late in the night, the city reverberated to chants of "Azadi! Azadi! (Freedom! Freedom!)". Fruit sellers weighed fruit chanting "Azadi! Azadi!" Shopkeepers, doctors, houseboat owners, guides, weavers, carpet sellers — everybody was out with placards, everybody shouted "Azadi! Azadi!" The protests went on for several days.

The protests were massive. They were democratic, and they were nonviolent. For the first time in decades fissures appeared in mainstream public opinion in India. The Indian state panicked. Unsure of how to deal with this mass civil disobedience, it ordered a crackdown. It enforced the harshest curfew in recent memory with shoot-on-sight orders. In effect, for days on end, it virtually caged millions of people. The major pro-freedom leaders were placed under house arrest, several others were jailed. House-to-house searches culminated in the arrests of hundreds of people.

The minute elections were over, the establishment and the mainstream press declared victory (for India) once again. The most worrying fallout was that in Kashmir, people began to parrot their colonizers' view of themselves as a somewhat pathetic people who deserved what they got. "Never trust a Kashmiri," several Kashmiris said to me. "We're fickle and unreliable." Psychological warfare, technically known as psy-ops, has been an instrument of official policy in Kashmir. Its deprecations over decades — its attempt to destroy people's self-esteem — are arguably the worst aspect of the occupation. It's enough to make you wonder whether there is any connection at all between elections and democracy.

The trouble is that Kashmir sits on the fault lines of a region that is awash in weapons and sliding into chaos. The Kashmiri freedom struggle, with its crystal clear sentiment but fuzzy outlines, is caught in the vortex of several dangerous and conflicting ideologies — Indian nationalism (corporate as well as "Hindu," shading into imperialism), Pakistani nationalism (breaking down under the burden of its own contradictions), U.S. imperialism (made impatient by a tanking economy), and a resurgent medieval-Islamist Taliban (fast gaining legitimacy, despite its insane brutality, because it is seen to be resisting an occupation). Each of these ideologies is capable of a ruthlessness that can range from genocide to nuclear war. Add a

reincarnated Russia, and the huge reserves of natural gas in the Caspian region and persistent whispers about natural gas, oil, and uranium reserves in Kashmir and Ladakh, and you have the recipe for a new Cold War (which, like the last one, is cold for some and hot for others).

In the midst of all this, Kashmir is set to become the conduit through which the mayhem unfolding in Afghanistan and Pakistan spills into India, where it will find purchase in the anger of the young among India's 150 million Muslims who have been brutalized, humiliated, and marginalized. Notice has been given by the series of terrorist strikes that culminated in the Mumbai attacks of 2008.

There is no doubt that the Kashmir dispute ranks right up there, along with Palestine, as one of the oldest, most intractable disputes in the world. That does not mean that it cannot be resolved. Only that the solution will not be completely to the satisfaction of any one party, one country, or one ideology. Negotiators will have to be prepared to deviate from the "party line."

Of course, we haven't yet reached the stage where the government of India is even prepared to admit that there's a problem. Let alone negotiate a solution. Right now it has no reason to. Internationally, its stocks are soaring. And while its neighbors deal with bloodshed, civil war, concentration camps, refugees, and army mutinies, India has just concluded a beautiful election. However, "demon-crazy" can't fool all the people all the time. India's temporary, shotgun solutions to the unrest in Kashmir (pardon the pun), have magnified the problem and driven it deep into a place where it is poisoning the aquifers.

Is Democracy Melting?

Perhaps the story of the Siachen Glacier, the highest battlefield in the world, is the most appropriate metaphor for the insanity of our times. Thousands of Indian and Pakistani soldiers have been deployed there, enduring chill winds and temperatures that dip to minus 40 degrees Celsius. Of the hundreds who have died there, many have died just from the elements.

The glacier has become a garbage dump now, littered with the detritus of war — thousands of empty artillery shells, empty fuel drums, ice axes, old boots, tents, and every other kind of waste that thousands of warring human beings generate. The garbage remains intact, perfectly preserved at those icy temperatures, a pristine monument to human folly.

While the Indian and Pakistani governments spend billions of dollars on weapons and the logistics of high-altitude warfare, the battlefield has begun to melt. Right now, it has shrunk to about half its size. The melting has less to do with the military standoff than with people far away, on the other side of the world, living the good life. They're good people who believe in peace, free speech, and in human rights. They live in thriving democracies whose governments sit on the U.N. Security Council and whose economies depend heavily on the export of war and the sale of weapons to countries like India and Pakistan. (And Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia, the Republic of Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan... it's a long list.)

The glacial Taiwan melt will cause severe floods on the subcontinent, and eventually severe drought that will affect the lives of millions of people. That will give us even more reasons to fight. We'll need more weapons. Who knows? That sort of consumer confidence may be just what the world needs to get over the current recession. Then everyone in the thriving democracies will have an even better life — and the glaciers will melt even faster.

Terrible pedestrian infrastructure in Kathmandu

By By Charina Cabrido

A study undertaken by Clean Air Network Nepal and Clean Energy Nepal has revealed that pedestrian facility in Kathmandu is in a worse condition and is not user-friendly to physically disabled people.

The field survey was conducted in commercial, public transport, educational and residential areas covering a total of 48 road stretches with a combined length of 59 kilometers. Based from the survey results, the walkability index of Kathmandu City is 559. When compared with other cities, Bangkok is 121. An index that comprises a single ranking number is regarded to be a more walkable city. Residential areas in Baneshwor Height, Kuleshwar, Khushi and Lainchaur to Lazimpat have the highest walkability scores in the following variables: availability of walking paths with maintenance and cleanliness, availability of crossings per stretch, grade crossing safety, motorists obeying traffic laws and security from crime. The commercial area in Ason road has



the lowest walkability scores in almost all variables: availability of walking paths, availability of crossings per stretch, grade crossing safety, motorists obeying traffic laws, amenities, disability infrastructures and security from crime. It was registered that significant modal conflict in walking path mainly comes from vendors occupying the footpaths that make walking inconvenient. The public transport areas in Ratna Park and Kalanki have the highest number of pedestrian users and obtained the highest score in walking path modal conflict.

As a first step towards encouraging and helping cities improve their pedestrian infrastructure, the Asian Development Bank through the Clean Air Initiatives for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia) and its partner network, Clean Energy Nepal (CEN) has conducted the walkability survey in Kathmandu City to collect data about the city's pedestrian environment.

The overarching goal of the project is to improve pedestrian's safety and mobility and promote walking as a sustainable transport. Prior to the survey, CEN conducted the walkability training in Kathmandu City last January 13 on fifteen youth volunteers known as Walkability Ambassadors. The training included a methodology in assessing the pedestrian environment based on safety and security, convenience, policy support, study area selection, city boundary, street selection, and time of day considerations.

The Walkability Ambassadors were divided and deployed to five areas: commercial, public transport, residential, educational and stakeholders group. About 305 pedestrian interviews were conducted to analyze travel behavior (time that pedestrians spend for each travel mode), pedestrian preference in terms of infrastructures, degrees of exposure to air pollution and socioeconomic profiles. Field survey forms were collected to examine road stretches around the city that includes availability of walking paths, motorist behavior, amenities, obstructions, and security from crime, among others.

When we asked pedestrians to rate the existing pedestrian facilities in the city, 46 percent said that the situation of existing infrastructures in the city is in its worst condition. There was no observed consistency in design in terms of width, height, and continuity of footpaths or road-crossings. A number of footpaths are just a meter wide, forcing the pedestrians to use the main roads. Other amenities such as lamp post and greenery occupy the footpaths and existing guard rails are in poor state. Pedestrian signboards and crossing marks are fading that gives longer waiting time for people to cross the other side of the road.

About 94 percent of all the surveyed road stretches has no existing facilities for persons with disabilities. In terms of improvements in pedestrian facilities, this is the utmost priority perceived by majority of the respondents, followed by improved street lighting and wider, level and clean sidewalks.

Almost 80 percent of the stakeholders and government respondents said that there are no clear laws on jaywalking, traffic calming and roadside advertisements. The Metropolitan Traffic Police claims that traffic enforcement is regularly being implemented. However, their data reveals that the total accident for the year 2065 to 2066 (Nepali Calendars) accounts for 2765 in which the total fatality is 137; the total number of seriously injured is 7265 and minor injuries reported is 2448. Based from the results derived from stakeholder and government surveys, the main barriers in improving the pedestrian facilities include lack of awareness on the importance of pedestrians safety, policies and investment for pedestrian friendly infrastructures and guidelines, linkages of all authorities working on pedestrian issues, poor urbanization plan and weak agency implementation.

The strength of a city's pedestrian network affects the overall pedestrian experience. In most countries advocating sustainable modes of urban transport, the methods of planning are redesigned so that these are integral part of the sustainable transport planning. Priorities are shifting towards less environmentally damaging modes and improved vehicle technology and optimizing the use of existing capacity

As a way forward, CEN wants to disseminate the results of the walkability survey in Kathmandu City and work on an integrated approach towards sustainable urban transport in the city. Beginning third week of March, various activities are scheduled as follows: Youth sharing sessions with students, Cycling Marathon, Training on UNEP Toolkit for Vehicle Emission Testing and discussion with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Physical Planning and Works and other concerned officials regarding planned initiatives in encouraging people to travel on foot. Improving the pedestrian facilities has many societal benefits. More often than not, the environmental, social and economic development of the city is entirely dependent on safeguarding the key pedestrian routes.

Capitalism is dying a natural death

By Siv O'Neill

The curtain is going down on the lone-superpower world we know and it is now a most urgent question if and when and how forces for true democracy, human rights, peace and civilization can come out and dissipate the cloud that has spread over what was once an almost decent way of life.

The long-time descent into totalitarian capitalism and neglect for anything but corporate profit has just about finished its course. The party is over. Bankruptcy is next. What we don't know yet is how far-reaching this economic freefall is going to be.

Predecessors such as the German Reich are brought to mind, but the similarities are far from parallel. The hypocrisy is on the same scale but the inhumanity is even worse than in the Nazi era. Hypocrisy rules the world. No slogans the rulers of the United States or the rest of the Western world pronounce as their ideologies and goals can be taken for their face value. Lies are the only things that come out of the mouths of our so-called leaders and that is the way they have set up the sordid game to their own advantage.

We the people are not supposed to be aware of how we are being treated like dogs to be discarded. The powers that be imagine that, as long as we are not told the truth about how we are being cheated out of our birth rights, we will lie down like whipped dogs and lick the feet of our torturers.

How far we have come from the somewhat civilized society that the Founding Fathers had in mind for the people of the thirteen states can only be measured if we consider the abysmal lack of basic needs and basic rights that is now the norm in the United States. In fact, there are no areas left in the year 2010 that have been spared from the general decline, cultural, economic or humane. Human rights are in tatters, the standard of living for the vast majority of American families can go nowhere but further downhill, the voices of the people are left unheard, the standard of cultural institutions, quality education and all the privileges that are linked to it are being starved out of existence.

The prostitutes of the right-wing media are making the utmost possible din so as to effectively drown the voices of reason. The general sluggishness of people is being enhanced by the non-stop propaganda fed them through the mass media, the fake view of the world as a place where satisfaction can only be had from over-consumption and from participating in the violence that is constantly displayed to us as a model of life via these mass media, the artificial uppers and downers that are offered to us by the entertainment industry to fill in the void of our souls.

The environment is being plundered savagely with no concern whatsoever for the survival of mankind, the survival of the planet and all its millions of different species. Biodiversity is a forgotten concept, except for the rare rebels who go against the stream and try to make their life-saving voices heard over the din of the machines of the killer corporations. Those predators are clearly only out to maximize their profits without the slightest concern for the catastrophic effects on the environment.

The majority of people never see what the real world is all about. How can they? The distorted 'values' that money can buy are the only ones that are real to them.

A sunrise over the ocean, a maple leaf swirling in clear spring water, the little hand touching your cheek, the beauty of words coming from a writer's soul - what happened to the marvels of life? What happened to the real world?

Capitalism, the way it is playing out today, is incompatible with true democracy. This insanity, this absurd form of capitalism is altogether negating a humane system of running the world with any consideration at all for the people on the planet.

Free Market capitalism, the Chicago School of Economics professor, Milton Friedman's brainchild, globalization, the catchword for the Empire's total domination over the rest of the world, Washington's New World Order, enriching the very few and strangling the masses - call it what you like but

it's a fantasy that is now finally crumbling. It all amounts to 'screw the people' and 'greed is the power that makes the world go round'. The religion in the U.S.A. is greed and it's the only true religion there is.

However, the giant is crumbling. A fast-spreading gangrene is eating away at the interior of the nation, its elite-oriented and half-starved educational system, its sad excuse for a working healthcare system, its decaying infrastructure. The very souls of the people are withering away, as their jobs are lost, their homes are foreclosed, their constitutional freedoms no longer respected, civil rights being increasingly downplayed by the police and federal authorities.

All this is adding to and interacting with the economic meltdown and the destruction of the environment, which at this point doesn't even guarantee a livable future for the coming generations.

A multi-lateral world can not be stopped, as the giant is playing out its last trumps - in case it has any left. Emerging countries are becoming emerged countries. There have not been any signs of awareness of this evolution of the geopolitical reality from President Obama, but rather a continuation of the Necon imperialism, which will, if allowed a free rein, lead the planet to disaster. It will render the environment unlivable and thus destroy the way of life of the billions of people all over the world. With the environment in ruins, there is just no way back. The corporations whose greed is responsible for the current situation do not seem to realize or care about the direction in which they are steering our planet.

The Free Market was set up with unilateral power for the giant in the West and unheard of wealth for the very few as its unique goal. The tools would be the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which were working on the single track of stealing the national resources of the greatest number of countries possible and squeezing money out of financially strapped nations by lending their

governments' money at a high interest rate. The ultimate condition for the nations in dire economic straits, was always the cutting back on social services, devaluing the national currency and increasing taxes on the already half-strangled people, thus starving the beast. Such is the ever-present major strategy of these Washington henchmen; the super-tools for U.S. world domination. And, of course, along came the accumulation of further wealth to add to the already astronomic wealth of the corporations. Madness! To what end?

Countries which had previously enjoyed a fairly good standard of living, but had gotten squeezed by the Free Market economy, free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, CAFTA, FTAA and bilateral agreements, saw their relatively comfortable lives wither away, such as many Asian nations in the nineties during the Asian financial crisis. Poor 3rd World nations were suddenly rendered more impoverished than ever before, having their national resources taken over by the multinational hydras. Wherever the heavy boots of the IMF and the World Bank get a foothold in a financially troubled nation, they manage to suck the blood out of the nation's resources and their financial independence.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated, the U.S. suddenly found itself bereft of a handy target to blame the evils of the world on. A new enemy had to be created and we all know how the 'War on Terror' came about, based on the absurd theory, touted hysterically, that the Muslims were now all set to take over the Western world. Al Qaeda may well have been a creation by Washington but, as could be expected, it then became a reality. Continuous war is of the essence to a superpower to sustain the fear that is necessary to keep the people in blinders. Hysteria and ignorance are the sine qua non for an eternal war. Non-stop propaganda is also a major tool without which the slogan 'Pax Americana' would have been a laughing stock from its very creation. And of course the mass media played the game since they were being paid to do so.

China rejects siren song on yuan

By Francesco Sisci

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's press conference with foreign media at the end of the National People's Congress on Sunday delivered a slap in the face to those in the United States who are calling for the appreciation of the yuan against the dollar to help stem the ongoing global economic crisis. Wen reiterated China's position on the thorny issue: Beijing will keep the exchange rate stable.

The value of the Chinese currency is an extremely sensitive topic for Beijing. The central government has already raised the possibility of revaluing the yuan by about 10%. With reserves worth up to US\$3 trillion, according to some estimates, such a revaluation would result in a theoretical loss of \$300 billion. A 40% revaluation, as some American economists request, would be worth an astounding \$1.2 trillion.

Given these figures, the Chinese government is certainly very worried. Revaluation of the yuan would hit exports and have a direct impact on the level of employment at companies reliant on overseas markets. Government calculations suggest a 1% appreciation may correspond to a 1% reduction in exports - and hence to an exponential decline in jobs.

Furthermore, there are a few complications. China has been asked to buy American government bonds and thus it has helped finance the huge US recovery plans. But now it is required to take a big cut in the value of this debt to extend its assistance.

While it is true that China's purchases of dollars helped to keep the yuan artificially undervalued - thus supporting Chinese exports - this policy can't go on forever as the size of the loss China would shoulder is staggering. Thus Beijing drags its feet, and is held back by more general concerns.

For more than a year, Washington has been promising new rules and regulations to control Wall Street banks, which contributed to creating the current economic and financial crises. These regulations, however, still aren't in place. Nor are the parameters for a new global economic order that was to have been born from the ashes of the crises. China, which contributed some 50% to global growth last year, still has weak representation in economic organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Beijing wonders why China should trust the US on the revaluation while Washington has not yet brought order to its own affairs.

Finally, the revaluation recipe itself is doubtful. In the 1980s, the US pressed Japan for a revaluation of the yen, and that contributed to ensuing economic stagnation in the country. The same could happen in China.

Today, in a state of continuing crisis, a significant move to appreciate the yuan could have destabilizing effects and unpredictable outcomes, both for China and throughout the world.

One immediate consequence could be a massive inflow of foreign capital into China, betting on further appreciation of the yuan. This could make the present financial and real-estate bubbles in China even bigger and increase inflationary pressures. If the bubbles burst, the ensuing flight of capital would plunge the Chinese economy into chaos.

That would be a disaster not only for China but for the rest of the world, which could crash in depression since by itself the fall in the dollar's value could not pull the American economy out of its doldrums.

Chinese economist Huang Yiping argues:

Let's imagine some scenarios in which [American economist Paul] Krugman gets what he asks for: the US Treasury Department names China as a currency manipulator and the [Barack] Obama administration launches a trade war against China. If this were to happen, the most likely scenario is that China would then stick to its current exchange rate regime and retaliate with trade sanctions against America. This would reduce trade between the two countries but, more importantly, seriously damage investor confidence worldwide. A trade war between the two largest economies is a non-trivial event for the world economy. In the face of a much more uncertain economic future, investors would scale back their investment plans and consumers would cut back their spending.

Besides, Beijing doubts that people in Washington want to export their crises to China and to make China the bogeyman to stir public opinion and push the US for protectionist measures against 'mercantilist' China.

A trade war between the economic giants would cause all countries to sink into a depression far more acute than the ongoing one. Because of this, cooler heads on both sides of the Pacific call for calm, cooperation and understanding of each other's problems.

Yet there is a further twist in this story. Until the crisis, China took the US financial and economic system as the undisputed model. The crisis has shaken that trust and the performance of the Chinese economy in the past two years has eroded it further. Some in China are wondering if something is deeply flawed in the US economic model.

Most important, besides the cycles of the international economy, is America able to lead the way out of the crisis? Isn't China better suited to find its own way out of troubles? The past 30 years of reform, the experience of last year and the history of failed advice from US pundits - to Japan in the 1980s and then to Asia after the 1997 financial crisis - have strongly dented America's intellectual leadership in times of crisis.

If the Krugmans of this world are unable to fix the problems in the US, what credibility do they have in dictating mantras for recovery to China on the value of the yuan?

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, many see arrogance in China. In Britain's Daily Telegraph, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard wrote:

China has succumbed to hubris. It has mistaken the soft diplomacy of Barack Obama for weakness, mistaken the US credit crisis for decline, and mistaken its own mercantilist bubble for ascendancy. There are echoes of Anglo-German spats before the First World War, when Wilhelmine Berlin so badly misjudged the strategic balance of power and overplayed its hand.

His seems not to be an isolated voice, and the room for mutual understanding seems shrinking in recent weeks as mutual distrust grows - so the room for compromise might become increasingly narrow.

China is becoming surer of itself, verging on arrogance. Beijing doesn't trust American leadership in the crisis. And in turn, the US feels snubbed and reviled as its intellectual leadership through a time of global economic distress cuts less ice in China. It maybe ultimately is an issue of a clash of moods. But, only the totally arrogant fail to pay attention to the mood of others.

Pakistan-India Détente- Possibilities and Prospects

By Alam Rind

A sizable population in Pakistan and hopefully people in the same proportion in India wish for peace in the region. Aman ki Asha is a reflection of their true desires. To make it a reality a lot of efforts have to be made at different levels of which the most important would be commercial links and people to people contacts. These links will definitely exert pressure on the Governments of the two countries to patch up their differences. However, the relations between the two countries can only prosper if based on the principles of equity and mutual respect. The single most important factor that will help in building lasting relations would be addressing irritants while shunning egoistic stances and approaching the same as per internationally accepted norms and aspirations of the people.

To tackle the issues in earnest, the two major countries of the subcontinent will have to build their relations based on mutual trust. In a win-lose environment this trust is hard to come by. The reasons can be many but the most damaging is the desire to dominate. Historically, the two major communities Muslims and Hindus have lived together for centuries so theoretically they should be able to peacefully and harmoniously coexist even now. But the matter of fact is that the two communities maintained their individual identity throughout. It seems that the centuries of living together instead of bridging the gaps rather

reinforced the competitive spirit between the two communities. That is again quite natural because they lived as masters and subjects. Therefore, to bring about a meaningful change the present mindset which is based on the desire to dominate and mistrust will have to be changed.

Tackling the problem of mental predisposition is one of the major challenge social scientists have to face in order to win peace and harmony for the Indian Subcontinent. We ought to do it without really suffering too much. While drawing parallel of European Union (EU) with Indian Subcontinent it can be said that if Polish people after having suffered six million casualties at the hands of Germans can patch up, why India and Pakistan can't do it. That will be too simplistic an approach. A single solution cannot be applied to two fundamentally different situations. In Indo-Pak scenario the relations are infested by deep rooted differences which are a continuous source of dissent between the two countries. India driven by her hegemonic ambition and at the same time being fearful of spin over effect is highly reluctant to grant freedom to the people of Kashmir. In fact, she has back tracked from her commitment at UN General Assembly to hold free and fair plebiscite to accord right of self determination to the people of Kashmir. India is working since long to divert water of the rivers

originating from Kashmir in violation to the provisions of *Indus Waters Treaty* signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President of Pakistan Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan. Her involvement in funding and arming dissident elements in Balochistan as a counter weight to have Kashmir issue resolved on her terms is an open secret. The concerns were voiced even by Gen Stanley McChrystal, the top US and NATO commander regarding Indian activities in Afghanistan and its negative fallout on Pakistan. Recent rhetoric about cold start strategy by Indian Army Chief Deepak Kapoor can be construed as a direct threat to the sovereignty of Pakistan and his assertions regarding the ability of Indian Army to combat and defeat China and Pakistan simultaneously reflects on their hegemonic mind set. Lately her reluctance to restart comprehensive dialogues speaks of her intent.

History plays a major role in shaping perceptions and what we have is the most excruciating past. The fall of Dhaka and assertion by Indian leaders that, "We have taken revenge of a thousand years", destruction of Babri Masjid, massacre of Muslims every now and then and their unabated atrocities in Kashmir are what our history is construed of. To really bridge the bloody history and trust deficit the two nations will have

to embark upon tangible trust building measures. The matter of fact is that we are far away even from the starting point of such activities. We should shun the idea that the other party can be subjugated through coercion rather it will be dreadfully dangerous course of action. It seems that the impact of nuclearisation of the Subcontinent has not been fully comprehended.

With such developments probably it is not possible to bridge the trust deficit. The time is not ripe to really launch initiative on the lines of European Union. First we need to work on creating the right kind of environment which would facilitate such mega changes. It will only be possible if we are somehow able to change the present mental predisposition of Indian ruling elite. The notion of dominating the Indian Ocean and playing the role of a regional power needs to be changed with that of a senior partner facilitating mutual development. Being the biggest state of the region, India needs to radiate confidence among smaller partners by generously resolving regional issues.

All this seems to be a distant and a remote possibility, but certainly is achievable. What the people and the governments of the two countries need to understand is that they can win prosperity and peace for their people if they abide by the internationally accepted norms and respect the aspirations of the people. Such a transition can usher into an era of peace and development for the region.

Region :

India savors Russian friendship

By M K Bhadrakumar

The morning after can be as significant as the day before. What strikes the eye are two developments, in Moscow and Delhi, the morning after Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin left the Indian capital on Friday after an eventful working visit.

There is no country outside Russia where Putin is widely admired as a statesman as in India. He strikes chords in the Indian psyche that are difficult to explain except in the totality of what has come to be known as "Putinism" and his historic role in Russia's resurgence.

During Putin's visit, Russia stitched up multi-billion dollar contracts in the military and civil nuclear sectors. The list of contracts and agreements is truly impressive:

- \$1.5 billion deal for the supply of 29 additional MIG-29 Fulcrum D-based fighter aircraft.

- An agreement to sign a contract on the joint development of a new fifth-generation fighter.

- A revised deal of \$2.3 billion on the upgraded *Admiral Gorbokov* aircraft carrier with a displacement capacity of 45,000 tons, a maximum speed of 32 knots (59 kilometers per hour) and a range of 13,500 nautical miles (25,000 kilometers) at a cruising speed of 18 knots.

- Deals to establish a joint venture to produce navigation equipment for GPS (global positioning system) and its Russian equivalent Glonass, and the use of Glonass signal for military use by India.

- An array of agreements for the construction of up to 16 nuclear power plants in India worth tens of billions of dollars at the very least.

Priority lies with US ties

However, life moves on. No sooner than Putin returned to Moscow, than the Kremlin announced that US President Barack Obama had phoned his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev to discuss the "final stages of preparation" of the new Strategic Arms

Reduction Treaty and they agreed that "it is now possible to talk about specific dates" for initiating the agreement.

The Kremlin is eager to start the "reset" of Russia-US ties and may well drop its demand that any new arms reduction deal should be linked to the US's missile plans in Central Europe.

In Delhi, too, the government has mooted a new legislation on Monday whose unstated purpose - some say, sole purpose - is to enable the US nuclear industry to secure multi-billion dollars worth business in the Indian market.

The US-Russia-India triangle offers a great study of paradoxes. Russia and India are advocates of a democratized international system, which they hope to influence. Neither is a satiated power, while both see a window of opportunity in the emerging polycentric world order.

Yet both estimate that the US's pre-eminence as the sole superpower is not under any serious challenge, and neither has any doubt that its equations with Washington shall remain its foreign policy priority.

Putin's successful visit to Delhi needs to be seen in perspective. India and Russia drifted apart in the 1990s and both went through transformative periods that saw the birth of new elites and economic models and societal changes.

Delhi, Moscow and Af-Pak

Indian opinion today is supportive of the rising curve of the country's post-Cold War strategic partnership with the US. Russia has a constituency of cold warriors, but it is a dwindling tribe and meanwhile, Moscow's aspiration too is to retain its privileged status as Washington's interlocutor on issues of global strategic balance.

Therefore, when the Indian leadership expresses its desire to Putin for an intensification of consultations with the Kremlin regarding the Afghan problem, Delhi's intentions are quite

pragmatic. Delhi does not seek strategic defiance of the US in Afghanistan and it knows that for Russia, Afghanistan is not only about al-Qaeda and Taliban but is also related to its search for a new era of "post-Euro-Atlanticism".

An al-Qaeda problem may or may not appear in North Caucasus and Russia would be worried if Afghanistan once again becomes a revolving door for international terrorism. But India's concerns are tangible, very specific and are primarily related to its adversarial relationship with Pakistan.

Moscow can help by alleviating Delhi's near-total diplomatic isolation over the Afghan problem and putting the brakes on a Taliban takeover in Kabul that is fine-tuned by Pakistan. By virtue of its role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has a say in any Afghan settlement.

Putin suggested while in Delhi that Indians' view of Pakistan as a state sponsoring terrorism needs to be mollified. From the Russian perspective, Pakistan is a key player in the great game in Central Asia. Moscow (and Beijing) will remain wary of driving Pakistan into isolation as a client state of the US.

Ideally speaking, Delhi should gain from Russian or Chinese efforts to moderate Pakistan's adversarial mindset, but Delhi depends almost entirely today on the US. Curiously, India's dependency on the US is only helping to strengthen Pakistan's geopolitical positioning.

Islamabad estimates that the US regional strategies in Afghanistan can work only with its cooperation and it expects in return that Washington accommodate its aspirations as a regional power.

The Obama administration on one hand needs to get Pakistan on board as a key regional ally, since without Islamabad, plans for the stabilization of Afghanistan and the enlargement of

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will get nowhere. But on the other, Washington still needs to string India along.

So far, the US has heavily counted on the fact that Delhi has not explored other options than going along with it, given India's disputes with China and its atrophied ties with Russia. But if a fine comb is run through Putin's visit to Delhi, a sense of frustration is discernible in the Indian mind about the US's regional policies.

Over and above, Obama shows no sign of a rethink on the US's embargo on the transfer of "dual-use technology" to India. While India no longer takes to Cold War-era rhetoric to air its differences with the US, there is disquiet in Delhi about the US's military assistance to Pakistan.

Against this backdrop, Delhi's move to revive ties with Moscow stands out. Delhi cannot hope to source from anywhere else the advanced military technology that the Russians willingly offer - the global navigation satellite system, aircraft carrier, nuclear-powered attack submarine, state-of-the-art missiles and fighter aircraft.

Ironically, the nuclear deal India signed with the US in 2008 lies unimplemented due to Obama's reluctance to transfer "dual-use technology" to India, but it provided just the international non-proliferation framework Moscow needed to boost cooperation with Delhi on a range of sensitive areas such as reprocessing technology, joint thorium fuel cycle nuclear power projects and fast-neutron reactors.

In short, the Indian leadership has returned to a precept that it ignored: namely, that with a world power like Russia, it is not possible to cooperate except on the basis of special relations. However, the realization is yet to dawn on the elites in Delhi that an optimal foreign policy vis-a-vis the US will still continue to elude India in the absence of a profound dialogue with China on regional security.

Inviting any regional power to settle the country's internal problems amounts to further erosion of the rights of Nepal to decide her issues as an independent nation.

Conundrum...

its possible attempts towards dislodging the government without managing the Maoist combatants.

It is due to this anxiety that Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has started hobnobbing with other coalition partners.

The government's decision to bestow the chief of a party that has just a single seat in the parliament with a four-wheeler is the manifestation of reckless antics being played by the PM to lure the coalition partners.

Of course, only the domestic political somersaults will not determine the fate of the wobbly coalition.

It is crystal clear that New Delhi, in no way, wants to see the reemergence of the Maoist-led dispensation.

The downfall of the previous government dominated by the Maoists has much to do with the manipulations executed by New Delhi mandarins.

Pakistan sharpens its focus on militants

By Syed Saleem Shahzad

While al-Qaeda-led militants are making powerful statements with attacks such as those last Friday in the Pakistani city of Lahore and in Swat in North-West Frontier Province the next day, Washington is preparing a large canvas for a war in which the Pakistani military will play a leading role.

The end game is seen as the elimination of al-Qaeda and its associated Pakistani militant groups, the arrest of Afghan Taliban commanders and the subsequent isolation of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, which it is hoped will force Mullah Omar into reconciliation talks with Washington leading to America's exit from Afghanistan.

In this plan, the chief of army staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kiani, will be Washington's point man and the stage is set for him to become one of the most powerful people in the history of the Pakistani armed forces as well as in the political structure of the country, without derailing the existing democratic setup in Islamabad.

In Lahore, the capital of the largest province of Punjab and the iconic city of the ruling establishment, two suicide bombers attacked army vehicles, killing 45 people and injuring nearly 100, including 10 soldiers. The next day in Mingora, the main city in Swat, 14 people were killed, including two soldiers, two policemen and a child, when a man detonated a bomb near a check point outside the district court. More than 30 people were injured.

This is a stark reminder to the Pakistani establishment that the next phase of the US-led war in Afghanistan will be fiercely contested across the border in Pakistan to counter the Pakistani army's new operational role in assisting the Americans. Over the past few weeks, Pakistan has rounded up several key Afghan Taliban leaders and commanders while at the same time stepping up military operations in the tribal areas of Bajaur and Mohmand and most recently, starting last weekend, in Orakzai. In Orakzai, the Pakistan Air Force attacked militant hideouts as a prelude to a ground operation.

The next phase will be to step up operations in the North Waziristan tribal area, the headquarters of al-Qaeda's global network and the home of one of the most dangerous Afghan Taliban commanders, Sirajuddin Haqqani.

The US is itching to escalate action against militants inside Pakistan as they feed directly into the conflict in Afghanistan. Pakistan, a sovereign nuclear state, will not allow direct American intervention beyond US drone attacks, which is already a highly sensitive issue.

What Washington can do, though, is back efforts to empower its most trusted Pakistani, Kiani, with a new role to command the war against militants inside Pakistan.

Kiani as a new iron man

Kiani is due to retire on November 27 and he has already taken steps to keep his team in place. In an extraordinary development he extended the terms of four lieutenant generals who were due to retire, the most important being the director general of Inter-Services Intelligence, Ahmad Shuja Pasha.

Before Pakistan started a new round of support for the American war in Afghanistan the army attacked several conditions, including setting aside any Indian role and the extension of Pasha's service.

At the same time, Kiani and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee, General Tariq Majid, are resisting moves by President Asif Ali Zardari to select his own man to replace Kiani, even though Zardari, as president, is the supreme commander of the armed forces. Zardari's connections with the military are not strong and he relies on advisors, notably two aviation pilots, Captain Nadeem Yousofzai and Captain Obaid Jatoi.

However, this is not the real issue: Washington does not want to have to deal with a new army chief or even see Kiani's term extended. Instead, it is backing the idea of elevating Kiani to chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee.

At present this is a ceremonial position at the head of the three branches of the military - army, air force and navy. The chairman does not command any authority except during war. It is now envisaged that with a constitutional amendment the chairman (Kiani) would command the three branches, using them as he saw fit in the fight against militants without fear of any one branch objecting.

One reason for empowering the position of chairman of the joint chiefs of the staff committee is a possible serious security downturn in the region that would require the US to use Pakistan's bases for air sorties, as well as its naval facilities for logistical purposes. After September 11, 2001, the then-chief of air staff, Mushaf Ali Mir, opposed a decision to allow Pakistan's bases to be used by the Americans, but General Pervez Musharraf, then president, forced the decision.

Welfare, transfers and postings and promotions in all three forces would also be under the chairman, leaving each of the three branch commanders with the responsibility of conducting operations and training.

There is a consensus in London and Washington that Kiani is the right person to hold this all-powerful new position in the next phase of the war and the political leadership, already under pressure from the military chief, would de facto be subservient to the chairman.

Kiani is to date a success story. He has succeeded in negotiating the military's central role in the "war on terror" and in sidelining Indian's role in Afghanistan. He has mounted military operations in the tribal areas and in Swat, where he has to a large degree rolled back the militants' advances.

Under his command, the army has surprised much of the world with the arrests of top Taliban commanders, yet he has allowed the Americans only limited interrogation of important captures such as Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Moulvi Abdul Kabber, Mullah Mir Mohammad and Mullah Abdul Salam - they are in safe houses in Islamabad. These men will be kept as bargaining chips to guarantee Pakistan's strategic interests in Afghanistan now as well as after the US exit.

Kiani has been chosen as the man to make all of this happen. His record is good, but as the attacks in the past few days indicate, the militants have ideas of their own that could derail the best-laid of plans.

Growing ...

These developments have created doubt over the presence of the UN mission in Nepal until the peace process ends.

Its extended tenure is set to expire on May 15.

The acrimony between the government and the UNMIN actually started with the exposure of the Shaktkhor video in which Maoist chairman Puspka Kamal Dahal said that the real size of the Maoists combatants were just 7-8 thousands not as many as 19,000 currently housed in different cantonments across the country.

The relation between the two sides has hit rock-bottom with the recent refusal of the UNMIN to provide details about the combatants to the government.

The UNMIN turned down the government's request to provide the same citing that the agreement on the management of arms and army

provisioned has made it mandatory to keep the information of both the Nepal Army (NA) and the combatants secret.

On the other hand, the government suspects that about 40 percent combatants have already vacated the cantonments and the money given by the government for them might have been misused.

There is every possibility that if the UNMIN gives information regarding the combatants to the government, the Maoists may demand similar information on the army.

This will further worsen the situation.

As such, it is not illogical on the part of the UNMIN to keep the information on the combatants secret till the conclusion of the peace process.

The UNMIN was not wrong when it said that the government could float a proposal for obtaining such information in the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC), which is represented by the government, the Maoists and the NA.

The JMCC was constituted in order to discuss technical complications regarding the peace agreement.

But, the government chose to clamour for the details of the combatants from the UNMIN instead of the JMCC.

The UNMIN enjoys a limited amount of leeway and it has no authority to dictate any party involved in the peace process.

So, it is more than bewildering to see the parties making attempts to leverage the UNMIN in their respective favour.

The UNMIN was set up as per the decision of the Security Council which was made at the request of Nepal.

The member countries of the Security Council have not taken the postures being displayed by current government towards the UNMIN positively.

Any attempts to force the UNMIN go out of Nepal before the completion of the peace process will prompt external power centers to carry out skulduggery in the country.

It is no secret that India is bent to hold sway over Nepal politics as well as the peace process more viciously.

Bankariyas merged with chepangs

The minority Bankariya community which is on the verge of extinction and who live only in Makwanpur has been included under the Chepang community.

The high-level taskforce constituted by the government to revise the list of indigenous nationalities took this decision. It is stated in a report the taskforce prepared and submitted to the government that the Bankariya

community who live only in Makwanpur has been included under the Chepang community.

A team comprising sociologists including the taskforce coordinator Prof. Dr. Om Gurung visited Handikhola-7, Twangra in Makwanpur, an area predominantly settled by Bankariyas, and studied the inter-relationships between the Bankariyas and the Chepangs.

गलत सूचनाको सम्प्रेषण अपराध हो,
यसैले सूचनाको तोडमरोड नगरौं ।



नेपाल सरकार

सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय

सूचना विभाग

The Human Rights record of the United States in 2009

The State Department of the United States released its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 on March 11, 2010, posing as "the world judge of human rights" again. As in previous years, the reports are full of accusations of the human rights situation in more than 190 countries and regions, but turn a blind eye to, or dodge and even cover up rampant human rights abuses on its own territory. The Human Rights Record of the United States in 2009 is prepared to help people around the world understand the real situation of human rights in the United States.

Property and Personal Security

Widespread violent crimes in the United States posed threats to the lives, properties and personal security of its people.

In 2008, U.S. residents experienced 4.9 million violent crimes, 16.3 million property crimes and 137,000 personal thefts, and the violent crime rate was 19.3 victimizations per 1,000 persons aged 12 or over, according to a report published by the U.S. Department of Justice in September.

The United States ranks first in the world in terms of the number of privately-owned guns. According to the data from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), American gun owners, out of 309 million in total population, have more than 250 million guns, while a substantial proportion of U.S. gun owners had more than one weapon. Americans usually buy 7 billion rounds of ammunition a year, but in 2008 the figure jumped to about 9 billion. In the United States, airline passengers are allowed to take unloaded weapons after declaration.

In the United States, about 30,000 people die from gun-related incidents each year. According to a FBI report, there had been 14,180 murder victims in 2008. Firearms were used in 66.9 percent of murders, 43.5 percent of robberies and 21.4 percent of aggravated assaults.

Campuses became an area worst hit by violent crimes as shootings spread there and kept escalating. The U.S. Heritage Foundation reported that 11.3 percent of high school students in Washington D.C. reported being "threatened or injured" with a weapon while on school property during the 2007-2008 school year.

Civil and Political Rights

In the United States, civil and political rights of citizens are severely restricted and violated by the government.

The country's police frequently impose violence on the people. Chicago Defender reported on July 8, 2009 that a total of 315 police officers in New York were subject to internal supervision due to unrestrained use of violence during law enforcement.

Abuse of power is common among U.S. law enforcers. In July 2009, the Federal Bureau of Investigation put four police officers in the Washington area under investigation for taking money to

protect a gambling ring frequented by some of the region's most powerful drug dealers over the past two years.

Prisons in the United States are packed with inmates. According to a report released by the U.S. Justice Department on Dec. 8, 2009, more than 7.3 million people were under the authority of the U.S. corrections system at the end of 2008.

The basic rights of prisoners in the United States are not well-protected. Raping cases of inmates by prison staff members are widely reported.

After the September 11 attack, the U.S. government, in the name of anti-terrorism, authorized its intelligence authorities to hack into its citizens' mail communications, and to monitor and erase any information that might threaten the U.S. national interests on the Internet through technical means. The country's Patriot Act allowed law enforcement agencies to search telephone, email communications, medical, financial and other records, and broadened the discretion of law enforcement and immigration authorities in detaining and deporting foreign persons suspected of terrorism-related acts. The Act expanded the definition of terrorism, thus enlarging the number of activities to which law enforcement powers could be applied.

The so-called "freedom of the press" of the United States was in fact completely subordinate to its national interests, and was manipulated by the U.S. government. According to media reports, the U.S. government and the Pentagon had recruited a number of former military officers to become TV and radio news commentators to give "positive comments" and analysis as "military experts" for the U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan, in order to guide public opinions, glorify the wars, and gain public support of its anti-terrorism ideology (The New York Times, April 20, 2009).

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Poverty, unemployment and the homeless are serious problems in the United States, where workers' economic, social and cultural rights cannot be guaranteed.

Unemployment rate in the U.S. in 2009 was the highest in 26 years. The number of bankrupt businesses and individuals kept rising due to the financial crisis.

The population in poverty was the largest in 11 years. The Washington Post reported on September 10, 2009, that altogether 39.8 million Americans were living in poverty by the end of 2008, an increase of 2.6 million from that in 2007. The poverty rate in 2008 was 13.2 percent, the highest since 1998. The number of people aged between 18 to 64 living in poverty in 2008 had risen to 22.1 million, 170,000 more than in 2007. Up to 8.1 million families were under poverty, accounting for 10.3 percent of the total families.

The number of people who lacked "food security," rose from 4.7 million in 2007 to 6.7 million in 2008. About 15 percent of families were still working for adequate food and

clothing. Statistics showed 36.5 million Americans, or about one eighth of the U.S. total population, took part in the food stamp program in August 2009, up 7.1 million from that of 2008.

The number of people without medical insurance has kept rising for eight consecutive years. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Sept. 10, 2009, showed 46.3 million people were without medical insurance in 2008, accounting for 15.4 percent of the total population.

The number of homeless has been on the rise. Statistics show that by September 2008, an upward of 1.6 million homeless people in the U.S. had been receiving shelter, and the number of those in families rose from 473,000 in 2007 to 517,000 in 2008. Since 2009, homeless enrollments in the six counties of Chicago area had climbed, with McHenry County seeing the biggest hike - an increase of 125 percent over the previous year.

The Rights of Women and Children

The living conditions of women and children in the United States are deteriorating and their rights are not properly guaranteed.

Women do not enjoy equal social and political status as men. Women account for 51 percent of the U.S. population, but only 92 women, or 17 percent of the seats, serve in the current 111th U.S. Congress. Seventeen women serve in the Senate and 75 women serve in the House (Members of the 111th United States Congress).

Women have difficulties in finding a job and suffer from low income and poor financial situations.

Women are frequent victims of violence and sexual assault. It is reported that the United States has the highest rape rate among countries which report such statistics. It is 13 times higher than that of England and 20 times higher than that of Japan.

American children suffer from hunger and cold. A report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that 16.7 million children, or one fourth of the U.S. total, had not enough food in 2008.

Children are exposed to violence and living in fear. Child farmworkers are prevalent. An organization devoted to protecting children's rights disclosed that as many as 400,000 children are estimated to work on U.S. farms.

U.S. Violations of Human Rights against Other Nations

The United States with its strong military power has pursued hegemony in the world, trampling upon the sovereignty of other countries and trespassing their human rights.

As the world's biggest arms seller, its deals have greatly fueled instability across the world. The United States also expanded its military spending, already the largest in the world, by 10 percent in 2008 to 607 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for 42 percent of the world total.

According to a report by the U.S. Congress, the U.S. foreign arms sales in 2008 soared to 37.8 billion U.S. dollars from 25.4 billion a year earlier, up by nearly 50 percent, accounting for 68.4 percent of the global arms sales that were at its four-year low. At the beginning of 2010, the U.S. government announced a 6.4-billion-U.S. dollar arms sales package to Taiwan despite strong protest from the Chinese government and people, which seriously damaged China's national security interests and aroused strong indignation among the Chinese people.

The wars of Iraq and Afghanistan have placed heavy burden on American people and brought tremendous casualties and property losses to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. The war in Iraq has led to the death of more than 1 million Iraqi civilians, rendered an equal number of people homeless and incurred huge economic losses.

Prisoner abuse is one of the biggest human rights scandals of the United States. A report presented to the 10th meeting of Human Rights Council of the United Nations in 2009 by its Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism showed that the United States has pursued a comprehensive set of practices including special deportation, long-term and secret detentions and acts violating the United Nations Convention against Torture.

The United States has been building its military bases around the world, and cases of violation of local people's human rights are often seen. The United States is now maintaining 900 bases worldwide, with more than 190,000 military personnel and 115,000 relevant staff stationed. These bases are bringing serious damage and environmental contamination to the localities. Toxic substances caused by bomb explosions are taking their tolls on the local children. It has been reported that toward the end of the U.S. military bases' presence in Subic and Clark, as many as 3,000 cases of raping the local women had been filed against the U.S. servicemen, but all were dismissed.

The United States has been maintaining its economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba for almost 50 years. The blockade has caused an accumulated direct economic loss of more than 93 billion U.S. dollars to Cuba. On October 28, 2009, the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba," with a recorded vote of 187 in favor to three against, and two abstentions. This marked the 18th consecutive year the assembly had overwhelmingly called on the United States to lift the blockade without delay.

We hereby advise the U.S. government to draw lessons from the history, put itself in a correct position, strive to improve its own human rights conditions and rectify its acts in the human rights field.

NRB sans governor: How long?

WM correspondent

The government continues to be flippant towards the urgency of picking up a new governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB).

The country is suffering from economic pains and the prolonged absence of a governor with strong leadership quality is only further worsening the situation.

As both the major ruling parties CPN (UML) and Nepali Congress (NC) wanted their loyalists to head the central bank, the cabinet meetings held over the last two months failed to appoint the governor.

The UML wants Yubraj Khatriwada, vice chairman, National Planning Commission (NPC) to lead the NRB as he is loyal to the party.

On the other hand, the NC is insisting to elevate incumbent deputy governor Bir Bikram Rayamajhi to the post of governor for obvious reasons.

Khatriwada, Rayamajhi and Finance Secretary Rameshwor Khanal are three prospective candidates to steer the NRB.

The NC has been enjoying excessive leeway as far as appointing its loyalists as NRB governor appoint its loyalists since the restoration of 1990s.

However, this time the UML also does want to lag behind to bestow its loyalist with the post of governor. It is the only party failing to endow its supporters with the chance of heading the central bank.

In fact, it would be sheer naivety to think that the UCNP (Maouis) is totally neutral in this matter.

It did not miss the opportunity to appoint its loyalist Dipendra Bahadur Chhetry as governor last year.

Khatriwada was also the proposed candidate from the UML five years back for the post of governor.

But, Khatriwada failed to possess required qualifications to become the governor as prescribed by the law and Bijay Nath Bhattarai assumed the post.

Bhattarai got the chance to take the charge of the NRB since the UML did not support another candidate proposed by the NC.

The lack of governor who can effectively deal with financial and monetary issues is seriously hampering the efforts being made by the central bank to thwart economic crisis facing the country.

The banking system has been reeling under the yoke of liquidity crunch for more than four months.

The businesses are not getting credits. The lending rates have soared excessively, thus making many industrial and hydropower projects unfeasible.

There is no sign that the banks will get adequate deposits to cope with the situation.

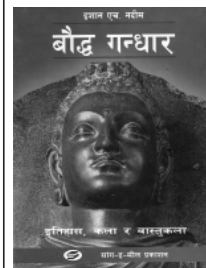
On the other side of picture, the trade deficit has reached a whopping Rs.153 billion.

The balance of payment deficit has also surged to an alarming Rs. 19 billion. The growth of remittances, which was keeping the shaky economy afloat, has slowed down significantly.

Apart from slower growth in remittances, the dwindling exports in contrast to surging imports have caused a huge balance of payment deficit in the country.

The NRB sans governor will not be in a position to decide on maintaining worsening economic stability.

Buddha Gandhar released



Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal-Pakistan, the Pakistan Study Centre in Kathmandu released a book titled "Buddha Gandhar"—history, culture and sculpture—in Nepali language.

Minister Dr. Mindra Rijal released the book amidst a function last Thursday.

The book, originally authored by Ishan H. Nadin, has been translated into Nepali by journalist Rajan Karki. The book along with the description about the history of Gandhar, the life of the Lord Buddha, different stories based on Lord Buddha's life, art and sculpture of Gandhar, etc has historical images related to Lord Buddha.

The Pakistan government has made remarkable contribution in preserving the historical site of Lord Buddha.

Syed Abrar Hussain, ambassador of Pakistan, and other intellectuals highlighted on the preaching and life of Lord Buddha and the Pakistan government's efforts to preserve the Buddhist religion.

The function was chaired by Madhav Rimal, a senior journalist and chairman of the Centre.

Small industries hit hard by load-shedding

Small industries located in Birgunj-Pathalaya industrial corridor have seen a sharp decline in their productions after Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) started cutting electricity for 12 hours daily of late.

The production of these small industries has almost come to a halt due to the long power outages in the area. The Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industry said some 60 industries located in the corridor have stopped producing due to the load-shedding.

Industrialists here say the State loses revenue of more than Rs. 1 million daily due to the halt in the production.

They said although they have been demanding that the industrial area be declared load-shedding free area, it has so far fallen on deaf ears.



San Miguel BEER

International :

China will keep yuan basically stable: Premier Wen

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao reiterated on Sunday that China will stick to a stable yuan and opposes other countries pointing their fingers at

for devaluing the renminbi, or its currency yuan, to earn price advantages. On March 11, U.S. President Barack

Obama pressed China to embrace a "market-oriented" exchange rate for the world's biggest exporter at the end of 2009, is under increasing criticism

decades. China, which overtook Germany as the world's biggest exporter at the end of 2009, is under increasing criticism



its currency policy, despite increasing pressures on yuan appreciation.

"A country's exchange rate policy and its exchange rates should be decided by its national economic situation," Wen said while meeting the press after the annual parliament session.

Wen said China will further improve the yuan exchange rate formation mechanism and keep the yuan exchange rates basically stable at a reasonable and balanced level.

Foreign pressures will not help the currency reform, the Premier said.

He said a stable yuan has played an important role in facilitating the recovery of the global economy from the worst financial crisis in decades.

China began its currency reform to unpeg the yuan against the U.S. dollar in July 2005, the yuan has appreciated 21 percent against the U.S. dollar, or 16 percent in real terms, Wen said.

"We did not depreciate the RMB from July 2008 to February 2009 when the global economy was in extreme trouble, but it appreciated in real terms by 14.5 percent," he told hundreds of domestic and foreign journalists.

During this period, Wen said, China's exports fell by 16 percent but imports only dropped 11 percent and its trade surplus decreased 102 billion U.S. dollars.

China has counted exports from 37 countries to it last year, of which 16 countries witnessed increases.

China has become a major market for exports from its neighboring countries, including Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), as well as Europe and the United States.

China, which overtook Germany as the world's biggest exporter at the end of 2009, is under increasing criticism

Obama pressed China to embrace a "market-oriented" exchange rate for the world's biggest exporter at the end of 2009, is under increasing criticism

for devaluing the yuan to earn artificial price advantages. China's Premier said that the country's exit strategy on economic stimulus should be very cautious and flexible in order to shore up the hard-earned economic recovery.

We must maintain the continuity and stability of macro economic policy, which means we will continue implementing proactive fiscal policy and moderately loose monetary policy to consolidate the trend of economic recovery, Wen told reporters.

Wen said the government will make more efforts to keep its policies flexible while keeping close watch on domestic and international economic changes.

He noted it is a very difficult job to properly handle the relations between maintaining economic growth, adjusting economic model and managing inflation expectation this year.

Although it is a tough job, it should be addressed," he said.

Wen said agriculture is the life-line of the national economy, and it plays a decisive role in ensuring economic growth and managing inflation expectation.

Premier Wen Jiabao said that he is quite concerned about a bubble in the country's economy, which will undermine social stability if inflation arises, along with unfair income distribution and corruption.

Chinese Premier Wen said that he is still worried about the safety of China's assets in the United States, urging the U.S. government to take actions to assure foreign investors of its treasury bonds.

The instability of the U.S. dollar is a great concern for China's foreign assets," he said at a press conference. He was "a little bit worried" about

the country's foreign reserve investment," Wen said, noting that China cannot afford any mistake in the management of the country's financial assets.

Wen expressed hopes that the United States could take concrete actions to ensure the security of the assets and assure its foreign investors, as the safety of U.S. treasury bonds are guaranteed by its national credibility.

According to the U.S. Treasury Department, China held 894.8 billion U.S. dollars in U.S. treasury bonds at the end of last year. This figure, revised up from the previous 755.4 billion U.S. dollars, means China remains the largest overseas holder of U.S. treasury bonds.

China will make institutional arrangements to turn the country into a "fair playing ground" for foreign investors and grant foreign enterprises "national treatment," said Premier.

China welcomed foreign investors to do their business in line with the Chinese laws. He also encouraged them to bring more research and development centers into the country so as to improve the efficiency in the use of foreign capitals.

China will stick to the policies of opening up and economic reform.

China's development will not affect other countries, Premier Wen said.

The country has never sought hegemony in the past, and would never do so as a developed country in the future, he said.

But China has always been steadfast in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, even when it was still poor, the Premier added.

Commenting on calls for China to shoulder more responsibilities in international affairs, Wen stressed that China is currently still a developing country.

"Although China's economy saw fast development in recent years, the country still has problems such as unbalanced development between urban and rural areas as well as among different regions, a large population, and a weak economic foundation," he said.

The country has to wait till the middle of this century to become a developed country of medium level, Wen said, adding that it might take a hundred years or even more to realize modernization.

The country's aid to developing countries has been unconditional, he said.

Shining India.....?

Wajih Kiran Butt

A beautiful phrase has been drummed by western and indian media into the heads of millions of people all around the world to build an image of India as a fast growing and responsible country, having potential to become a world power in near future. But a question arises here, does this beautiful phrase "Shining India" has any link with reality?

The uplifting images of India as a fastest growing economy in S.Asia and the greatest democracy of the world are getting world recognition. But just step outside these glorious images for a moment, and look into the fringes of the picture, which actually make up the background. Having second largest population of the world, India is home to roughly one-third of all poor people living on this earth. India, according to the new estimates, had 456 million people or about 42% of the population living below the new international poverty line of \$1.25 per day. The

number of Indian poor also constitute 33% of the global poor, which is pegged at 1.4 billion people.

India also has 828 million people, or 75.6% of the population living below \$2 a day. Sub-Saharan Africa which is considered the world's poorest region, is better — it has 72.2% of its population below the \$2 a day level. Economists say millions of Indians still do not have access to potable water, electricity, decent housing or even good roads. Agrarian crisis and worsening food security for the poor across the country is growing with every passing day. There are daily reports of starvation deaths and increasing numbers of suicides by indebted farmers unable to cope with the strain. In rural areas the majority of Indian citizens live in more fragile, vulnerable and insecure material circumstances than a decade ago.

The collapse in employment generation is creating depression in youth while the huge population is providing a large number of workers

every year. Beside these facts the situation of human rights in India is very complexed. India consider itself a secular and democratic republic and its constitution provides basic human rights to all citizens. For any civilized person, its hard to believe that Indian Dalits or untouchables are still suffering from centuries old inhuman caste system. Indian media is also under strict control of the government and cannot portray the real picture.

In 1975 Mrs. Indira Gandhi said that All India Radio is a government organ and it is going to remain a government organ. That policy is still existing. Large scale Human trafficking is also a major concern over human rights situation in the country. Each year nearly twenty five thousand women and children from Bangladesh and ten thousand women from Nepal are trafficked to India for commercial sexual exploitation. Religious violence is another major problem for people living in India. The anti Sikh riots in 1984 and anti Muslim

riots in 1992 and 2002 are just the example of minorities situation in India. On the other side the poor safety measures adopted by Indian nuclear management authorities are making India a greatest threat to the natural resources and environment of South Asia.

India is currently facing the worst insurgencies of Naxalites, Kashmiris, Nagaland, Sikhs and other minorities all over the country. Millions of people are struggling to get rid off evil imposed on them by the Indian government. To look at the dramatic increase of difference between rich and poor, the worsening human rights situation for minorities and the up rising of insurgencies in the country, a very different picture emerges. Indeed India is shining for a very small proportion of its population, the rich and the richest but for the ninety percent of population India is on a fast way to decline. With the current policies, it will take centuries to turn existing India into shining India.

Iran's natural gas riches: US knife to the heart of world future energy

By Finian Cunningham

The scheduled start of drilling this month by China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) in Iran's South Pars gas field could be both a harbinger and explanation of much wider geopolitical developments.

First of all, the \$5 billion project - signed last year after years of foot dragging by western energy giants Total and Shell under the shadow of US-led sanctions - reveals the main arterial system for future world energy supply and demand.

Critics have long suspected that the real reason for US and other western military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan is to control the Central Asian energy corridor. So far, the focus seems to be mainly on oil. For example, there have been claims that a planned oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea via Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea is the main prize behind the US's seemingly futile military campaign in those countries.

But what the CNPC-Iranian partnership shows is that natural gas is the bigger prize that will be pivotal to the world economy, and specifically the dual flow of this fuel eastwards and westwards from Central Asia to Europe and China.

Michael Economides, editor of the Huston-based Energy Tribune, is one of a growing number of industry observers who is convinced that natural gas will supplant oil as the primary energy source, not only in the coming decades but over the next several centuries.

He points to the recent forecast by the International Energy Agency (IEA), based in Paris, which has dramatically revised its estimates of recoverable global natural gas reserves by 100 per cent. Economides ascribes this huge upgrade to rapid technological improvements in tapping hitherto inaccessible gas fields. He says that the IEA estimates of natural gas amount to 300 years of supply at current world demand. "If one only just fantasises any future contributions from the orders-of-magnitude larger resource in the form of natural gas hydrates, it is easy to see how natural gas is almost certainly to evolve into the premier fuel of the world economy," he adds.

The rising importance of natural gas as an energy source has been steady and inexorable over many years. Between 1973 and 2007, oil's contribution to world energy supply dropped from 46.1 per cent to 34.0 per cent, with the increasing use of natural gas accounting for that decline, according to the IEA. Other sources, such as the US-based Energy Information Administration (EIA), predict that global natural gas consumption will treble between 1980 and 2030, by which date it will mostly likely become the primary energy source of choice for industrial and public needs.

There are sound scientific reasons why natural gas (methane) is becoming the kingpin of fossil fuels. Firstly, it has a much greater calorific value than either oil or coal. That is, more heat is produced per unit of fuel. Secondly, it is a cleaner fuel, emitting 30 per cent less carbon dioxide when burned compared with oil and 45 per cent less compared with coal. Thirdly, gas is more efficient for transport, both as a raw material in compressed form along land-based pipelines, and as a fuel to drive transport.

All energy industry agencies recognize that far and above the premier sources of future natural gas are the Middle East and Eurasia, including Russia. The US-based EIA puts the natural gas reserves in these regions as nine and seven times those of North America's total - the latter itself being one of the world's top sources for that fuel.

Within the Middle East, Iran is the undisputed top holder of gas reserves. Its South Pars gas field is the world's largest. If converted to barrel-of-oil equivalents, Iran's South Pars would dwarf the reserves of Saudi Arabia's giant Ghawar oilfield. The latter is the world's largest oilfield and since it came into operation in 1948, Ghawar has effectively been the world's beating heart for raw energy supply. In the soon-to-come era of natural gas dominance over oil, Iran will oust Saudi Arabia as the world's beating heart for energy.

Both Europe and China stand to be arterial routes for Iranian and Central Asian gas generally. Already, the infrastructure is shaping up to reflect this. The Nabucco pipeline is planned to supply gas from Iran (and Azerbaijan) via Turkey and Bulgaria all the way to Western Europe (signaling an end to Russian dominance). Iran also exports gas via pipelines separately to Turkey and Armenia and it is also following up export deals with other Gulf countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Another major arterial route is the so-called peace pipeline from Iran to Pakistan and on to India, through which Iran will export this fuel to two of the region's most populous countries. But perhaps the most tantalizing prospect for Iran is the 1,865-kilometre pipeline that supplies natural gas from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan into China and is due to operate at full capacity in 2012. Turkmenistan shares a 300-kilometre border with Iran to its south and already has a gas export deal with Tehran. If the Iranian-Chinese South Pars gas field development can be incorporated into the above transnational pipelines that would confirm Iran as the beating heart of the world economy in which gas is the primary energy source. This is amplified further by rapidly growing demand for gas by China which the EIA predicts could be dependent on imports for over a third of its natural gas consumption by 2030.

In this context of a major realignment in the world's energy economy - one where there will be a continuing diminished role for the US - Washington's blustering rhetoric about democracy and peace and war on terror or alleged Iranian nuclear weapons can be seen as a desperate attempt to conceal its fear that it stands to be a big loser. Encircling Iran with wars and threatening gas supplies to possibly the world's top future gas customer - China - is the real deal. US actions are more accurately seen as putting a knife to the energy arteries of a world economy that it will no longer be able to dominate.

A further twist in this tale is the position of Russia. With its own vast reserves of natural gas, it can be seen as a competitor to Iran. Arguably less well positioned than Iran to supply both Europe and China, Russia is a nevertheless a major player and has been assiduously courting China with an export deal since 2006. However, as Economides observes, "negotiations between the two countries have been on and off, especially, the pipeline construction has been painfully slow".

But Russia's ambitions to expand its natural gas exports may explain why it has shown itself to be such a mercurial ally to Iran. Moscow's ambivalent position towards US-led sanctions against Iran, suggests that Russia has its own agenda for hampering the Islamic republic as a regional energy rival.



Buddhist Art of Gandhara

Min Bahadur Shakya*

I. Introduction:

Historical Background
The ancient kingdom of Gandhara stretched across parts of present-day

The Gandhara art played an important role in the dissemination of the Buddha's image throughout Asia. It was from Gandhara that Buddhism,



Afghanistan and Pakistan. It denotes the region comprising the modern

at the beginning of Christian era, began triumphal progress across Central Asia



district of Peshaver and Rawalpindi etc. Anguttara nikaya mentions it as one of the sixteen Mahajanapada.

The river Indus divided the whole Gandhar region into two parts: eastern and western. Taxila was the main city of Eastern Gandhara and Puskalavati was the 3 chief city of western Gandhara. The entire Gandhara was divided into seven parts. They were:

1. Taxila
2. Puskalavati
3. Nagarahara
4. Swat valley
5. Uddyana
6. Kapisa
7. Bamiyan
8. Balkh (Bamiyan)

For a time, Gandhara also was a jewel of Buddhist civilization. Scholars of Gandhara traveled east to India and China and were influential in the development of early Mahayana Buddhism. The art of Gandhara included the earliest oil paintings known in human history and the first — and some of the most beautiful — depictions of bodhisattvas and the Buddha in human form.

During the 2nd century B.C., it was here that Buddhism was adopted as the state religion which flourished and prevailed here for over 1000 years, starting from 2nd century B.C., until 10th century A.D.

During this time Taxila, Swat and Charsaddah (old Puskalavati) became three important centers for culture, trade and learning. Hundreds of monasteries and stupas were built together with Greek and Kushan towns such as Sirkap and Sirsukh both in Taxila.

It was from these centers that a unique art of sculpture originated which is known as Gandhara Art all over the world.

to the Far East.

In Gandhara, Buddhist faith and Greek Culture met and intermingled, resulting in the peculiar hybrid art which is called Graeco-Buddhist. It became popular in the regions of Afghanistan and Taxila.

II. The Significance of Gandharan Art

Nearly 2,000 years ago, artists of Gandhara began to sculpt and paint the Buddha in ways that have influenced Buddhist art ever since. Earlier Buddhist art did not depict the Buddha. Instead, he was represented by a symbol or an empty space. But Gandharan artists pictured the Buddha as a human being.

In a style influenced by Greek and Roman art, Gandharan artists sculpted and painted the Buddha in realistic detail.

1. His face was serene.
2. His hands were posed in symbolic gestures.
3. His hair was short, curled and knotted at the top.
4. His robe was gracefully draped and folded.
5. It reveals the impact of Hellenistic influence. Form is strongly Hellenistic while matter is yet Indian.
6. Artistic effects are evidently Buddhistic icons, legends and monuments together with their motifs.
7. Ancient motifs such as atlantes, fantastic creatures, griffons, fauna and flora of India, new motif of vine, acantus, cupids, garlands
8. New elements of hippocampus, triton, marine divinities, gods of Olympus

9. It reveals the impression of the Imperial Roman styles especially thick folded draperies.

10. Another contribution is the figure of Bodhisattva.

11. The artist worked in stone,

stucco, terracotta and clay, polychrome and gold.

12. Abundance of images of Harii, Pancika

13. Seductively beautiful women

14. Highly ornate crowns

15. Masses of jewelry

These conventions spread throughout Asia and are found in depictions of the Buddha to this day.

III. The appearance of the Buddha image

The greatest contribution to Buddhist art resulting from the union of Hellenistic genius and Buddhist piety is the representation of the Buddha himself. The appearance of the Buddha image was an event of the utmost importance in the depiction of the Buddha that had not previously been endorsed by tradition.

Sometime between the 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE, the first anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha were developed.

These were absent from earlier strata of Buddhist art, which preferred to represent the Buddha with symbols such as the stupa, the Bodhi tree, the empty seat, the wheel, or the footprints.

But the innovative anthropomorphic Buddha image immediately reached a very high level of sculptural sophistication, naturally inspired by the sculptural styles of Hellenistic Greece.

The Gandhara school of art has a distinct place in early Indian art history. The art findings of this school are mainly Buddhist in origin. The sculpture in relief mainly relate the events of the life of the Buddha, the jalaka stories

etc. These themes are depicted in small and medium sized stupas in monasteries showing the Buddha in human form. The sculpture in relief which illustrates the various incidents of the life of the Buddha are much in chronological sequence in comparison to the reliefs of Bharut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Nagarjnakonda. For example: the representation of Maya's dream, birth in Lumbini grove, Return to Kapilavastu and so forth.

IV. Introduction of Buddhism in Gandhara

It is very difficult to determine when Buddhism was introduced in the Gandhara region for the first time. Taxila, then capital of Gandhara, was famous center of learning in various sciences and arts. Papanacasudani mentions that King Bimbisara of Magadh had friendly relation with the king King of Gandhara, Pukkusati. Once Bimbisara sent him a letter containing the news of the appearance of the Buddha, dhamma and sangha in the world. Getting the news, the king became so impressed that he decided to be a convert in Buddhism and in a short period he ordained himself as a monk. Subsequently he left his kingdom and went to savatthi to see the Master. Mahavamsa mentions that after the completion of third council, held at Pataliputra, Buddhist missionaries were sent to different parts of the country to propagate the dhamma. Thera Majjhantika was the incharge of the Kasmere Gandhar region.

Xuazang mentions that he had seen only a few stupas erected by Ashoka near Puskalavati.

Tradition traces Buddhism first appearance in Gandhara/Afghanistan to the time of Buddha. The merchant Tapussa & Bhallika, the first to meet the Buddha after enlightenment at Buddhagaya are regarded as natives of Balkh (Bamiyan?) who became Buddha's disciples and introduced Buddhism to their homeland. Xuazang related that they carried home with them hair and nails paing giben them by the Buddha and built two stupas over them.

Another tradition links the Sakyas to the royal lineage of Oddyiana. When Kapilavastu was destroyed near the end of the Buddha's life times, one of the sakra princes made his way to Oddyiana, where he eventually became a king. After Parinibana, the sakra king's son uttarasena obtained relics of the Buddha and enshrined them in a stupa in Uddyiana,

Chandragupia left the Mauryan



Empire, which included the territory of Gandhara, to his son, Bindusara. When Bindusara died, probably in 272 BCE, he left the empire to his son, Ashoka. Ashoka seemed to have spread Buddhist teachings to the land of Gandhara through his missionary activities.

Ashoka's empire included almost all of present-day India and Bangladesh as well as most of Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was his patronage of Buddhism that left the greater mark on world history, however.

Ashoka was instrumental in making Buddhism one of the most prominent religions of Asia. He built monasteries, erected stupas, and supported the work of Buddhist missionaries, who took the dharma into Gandhara and Gandhara's western neighbor, Bactria.

It is said that Sthavira and Sarvastivada tradition flourished in Kashmir and Gandhara regions while Mahasanghika schools were most numerous in Balkh and Bamiyan.

After the fall of the Sakas and Scythians, Gandhara came under the control of the kushanas who were great patrons of Buddhism who helped in the spread of Buddhism to central Asia and beyond. Kanishka constructed a huge stupa and a monastery at Peshaver which has described in various accounts. Kaniska was instrumental in convening 4th council at Kashmir or Jalandhar under the presidency of Vasumitra in which extensive commentaries were composed on the sutras, Vinayas & abhidharma in Sanskrit.

Kaniska's coin contains the figure of the Buddha & Maitreya with the great legend " Boddo ' sakamano Boudo' Metra Boud.

Prolific figures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were made during his period both at Gandhara and Mathura. Buddhism did not totally vanish from the Gandhara regions at least up to the seventh century, proved by the records of Chinese travelers.

V. Museums for Greco-Buddhist art

Major collections

Today the Gandhara Sculptures occupy a prominent place in the museums of England, France, Germany, USA, Japan, Korea, China, India and Afghanistan together with many private collections world over, as well as in the museums of Pakistan.

1. Peshawar Museum, Peshawar, Pakistan (largest collection in the world).
2. Lahore Museum, Lahore, Pakistan.
3. Taxila Museum, Taxila, Pakistan.
4. National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan.

5. Mathura Museum, Mathura, India.

6. Musée Guimet, Paris, France (about 150 artifacts, largest collection outside of Asia).

7. British Museum, London, Great Britain (about 100 artifacts)

8. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan (about 50 artifacts)

9. National Museum of Oriental Art, Rome, Italy (about 80 artifacts)

10. Museum of Indian Art, Dahlem, Berlin, Germany.

11. National Museum, new Delhi

VI. Conclusion:

The Gandhara School drew upon the anthropomorphic traditions of



Roman religion and represented the Buddha with a youthful Apollo-like face, dressed in garments resembling those seen on Roman imperial statues.

It now seems clear that the schools of Gandhara and Mathura each independently evolved its own characteristic depiction of the Buddha about the 1st century AD.

The schools of Gandhara and Mathura seemed to have influenced each other. The Gandharan craftsmen made a lasting contribution to Buddhist art in their composition of the events of the Buddha's life into set scenes.

Later it became the source of inspiration to the artist of Central Asia and Far East.

It created bonds and influenced Buddhist art of Central Asia, China, Japan, Indo-china, and Indonesia including Nepal.

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