

Intra-party scuffle at its peak



WM correspondent

If anything, the resignation of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has triggered a great deal of internal strife in the major parties for the sake of the premiership. The UCPN (Maoist) saw a pretty interesting strategy adopted by its chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal to strengthen his party position.

The leaders close to Maoist chieftain Dahal have been maintaining that the party has not opened door to seek alternative to Dahal to lead the new government. On the other hand, those who belong to the camp led by Bhattarai claim the party is ready to go for an alternative to Dahal. Although there is no certainty on

whether the UCPN (Maoist) will lead the new government, the largest party in the constituent assembly (CA) is diverting its whole energy into discussing who will be leading the next government from the party.

The situation is not quite different in Nepali Congress (NC), the second largest party. The establishment faction led by acting president Sushil Koirala and Ram Chandra Poudel wants to abort

the dream of Sher Bahadur Deuba to assume the prime ministerial berth. And, the Deuba camp is also equally fervent to foil the desire of Poudel, who is the parliamentary leader of the party, to become prime minister. The clout that Deuba used to enjoy in the party has waned to some extent. Poudel defeated Deuba during the election for parliamentary party leader and lately the Deuba faction failed to form Tarun Dusta, a militant youth wing, due to stiff opposition on the part of the establishment faction. The coterie under the command of Deuba also recently proposed for sharing of the posts of Prime Minister and party president for the two factions, which the establishment faction rejected outright. UCPN (Maoist) is also reeling under intra-party scuffle over the formation of the new government. Party chairman Khanal is harbouring a great deal of keenness to the grab the helms of affairs while the opposite faction led by K.P Oli is more comfortable with the idea of enabling the NC to lead the new government.

Chairman Khanal and Oli are bent to wage a war of attrition against each other. The parliamentary party of the UML has already alerted the top leadership not to go for a majority government as successive majority governments had pathetically failed to live up to the national aspirations and expectations. But the party is mired in big confusion and clash over the viable form of new government. With the intensity of inter-party and intra-party struggle regarding the forming of new government getting more compounded, the chances of early end of the current political deadlock appear very slim. The parties have lately speeded up discussions with each other to forge consensus. However, if they again indulge in cunning arithmetic games to create new political equation as per their parochial desires than it is sure to prove disastrous to the country. The continuous incongruence in the national politics will also only facilitate the foxy foreign powers to meddle more in the internal affairs of the country.

Mirage of consensus

WM correspondent

Reconciliation amongst the major political parties for the sake of formation of a new consensus government continues to appear elusive although the exit of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal was supposed to pave the way for the same. The big three-UCPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN (UML) are so fervently smitten by power struggle for the top executive post that they are only pronouncing the word "consensus" in a way that best suits their respective trifle interests. The seven-day deadline set by president Dr Ram Baran Yadav for the parties to form a national consensus ended on Wednesday. But, Dr Yadav extended the deadline for the same by five more days upon a formal request of the 25 parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (CA). The prevalent political deadlock has much to do with the cavernous gulf between the Maoist and the non-Maoist parties over the issue of integration of

the Maoist combatants. The other parties want to see the total amputation of such fighters from the structure of the UCPN (Maoist) to create a climate for consensus. Nevertheless, the Maoists are not ready to comply with this notion at the moment. The May 28 agreement, reached amongst the three parties for the one year extension of the tenure of Constituent Assembly (CA), clearly states that the parties are committed to move forward with consensus and cooperation to take the peace process to a meaningful conclusion, to carry out all the remaining works related to the peace process and to accomplish the historic responsibility of completing the task for writing the new constitution. The formal rebels first want the formation of the new government under their leadership rather than the cessation of their over the combatants. But, the other parties desire just the opposite of that. The Maoists are most likely to give in to the

WM correspondent
The failure on the part of the caretaker government to bring a full budget for the next fiscal year 2010/11 is sure to hamstring the development activities across the country. It will be bringing an advance budget, which will allow spending only 33 percent (Rs 95.31 billion) of the total size of the current fiscal years' budget (Rs 285.93 billion) as per the interim constitution. It is the second time the government is presenting the advance budget. Earlier, former Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat had done the same owing to political stalemate after the constituent assembly (CA) elections. In the absence of a full-fledged budget, the required legal procedures to kick-start new projects will be delayed, thus resulting in low expenditure of budget allocated for development activities. The low investment in development endeavours has clearly dogged the economic expansion of the country. Finance Ministry records show that the government has failed to spend the budget earmarked as capital expenditure over the last two years compared to previous years.



The government hopes to spend around Rs 87 billion out of the total of Rs 106 billion allocated for the development activities in the current fiscal year. It had spent only Rs. 76 billion in the last fiscal year against the set target of Rs. 96 billion. In the past, the gap was not so cavernous. In the fiscal year 2007-08, the

government had spent Rs. 53 billion against the set target of Rs. 55 billion. Similarly, it spent Rs. 39 billion against the set target of Rs. 45 billion in 2006-07. Although the successive governments tried to present the budget before mid-July to speed up development activities from the beginning of the new fiscal year, they failed to do so due to political disorder.

The then Maoist-led government came up with ambitious budget on September 19, 2008, which also proved poor in terms of spending in development activities. As a result, economic growth confined to 3.9 percent against the prediction of Rs. 7 percent and the inflation stood at an alarming 13 percent in contrast to the target of 7.5 percent. Officials say that current fiscal year was relatively easier for spending development budget although the budget was endorsed four months late after the announcement. This can be ascribed to the preparedness adopted by the ministries on how to take forward the development activities, they say. The government is not in position to change the tax rates which will surely affect the revenue collection. As the government is planning import substitution measures in the new budget to cope up with huge balance of payment (BoP) deficit and trade deficit, it cannot change the tax rates. The BoP deficit currently stands at a shocking 17 billion and trade deficit amounts to Rs. 259 billion. The government has planned to introduce

Let there be no room for anti-China plots

■ Prem Kumari Pant

The government recently took a politically correct decision by barring the CA members to attend the 75th birthday ceremony of the Dalai Lama, the exiled "spiritual" leader propagating for "Free Tibet". As a response to the brazen visit of some CA members to Dharmasala, India to meet the Dalai Lama, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed the CA secretariat to restrict the CA members from attending the ceremony as it will be a slur to the "One China Policy" adopted by Nepal. China is utterly concerned about unfettered plotting of "Free-Tibet" activities in Nepali soil that simply went out of proportion right before the start of the Beijing Olympic in Nepal two years back.

The Dalai Lama clique in connivance with some foreign countries has been capitalizing upon the sensitive geo-political state of Nepal to openly orchestrate anti-China somersaults in the country's territory. The presence of the Dalai Lama in India and the dual role she is playing on the Tibetan issue no doubt has full western backing. There are increasing indications that the US, India and Western countries are waging a proxy war against China using Tibetan refugees, dubious CA members and self-styled human right activists in Nepal as their Trojan horse. The foreign countries are making continuous attempts to keep the free-Tibet pot on the boil, on the assumption that the care taker government will not

able to resist the pressures from those who wish, in one way or another to destabilize a rapidly rising China, in keeping with their grand strategic designs to clip her wings and bog her down in Tibet. With public morality at an all-time low, corruption at an all-time high and it is natural that those, who mean harm to China, and are keen to weaken it not snap Nepal's good relations with her northern neighbour, have availed themselves of this golden strategic opportunity. India has for long been adopting a policy of double dealing vis-a-vis the Dalai Lama and China. While on the one hand it publicly says that the Dala Lama is merely a guest in India on the other she has been encouraging him to increasingly resort to political activities.

On the other hand, the Chinese authorities are restive and unhappy because of the unremitting conduct of free-Tibet activities on the Nepali soil, despite Nepal's assurances that its territory will not be allowed to be used for anti-China activities. Many Tibetan protesters have been found illegal refugees unequivocally indicates that they have been craftily dispatched from India to launch anti-China activities in Nepal taking the advantages of the open border between Nepal and India. Despite the tight vigil, the Tibetan exiles organised meets in Jawalakhel refugee camp in Lalitpur and other monasteries during the Dalai Lama's birthday programs. Police carried out random checks on the roads and arrested around 400 refugees and

dropped them at their respective refugee camps and monasteries after detained them few hours. But police did not interfere their closed door programs. Some so called human right activists also participated in the program and even invited Dalai Lama to visit Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha. They spoke against China and criticised Nepal government. When Nepal is in transitional phase, the growing anti-China activities of Tibetan refugees in Nepal have also pushed Nepal to a difficult situation. Any support to the anti-China activities of Tibetan refugees amounts to backing the hedonistic interests of the western countries as well as India who want to flare up the Tibet issue to debilitate the northern neighbour. The political parties should take

Nepal's repeated commitments that the country's soil would not be used against its neighbours in a serious light. Otherwise, it would only tarnish the country's image apart from severely jeopardizing its national interests. In this regard, the request made by UCPN (Maoist) to all 601 CA members not to accept the invitations by the Tibetan community to attend the birthday celebration programs could be deemed as a prudent political move. The other parties must also display a required degree of sagacity vis-a-vis the Tibetan issue so that the country will no longer be a safe haven for those who are bent to blow the trumpet of "Free Tibet" to fulfill their own rapacious and self-centric desires at the expense of the legitimate and sensitive national interests of Nepal.

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Editorial

Power struggle continues to raise its ugly head

The three major parties- Unified CPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) - are indulging themselves in an intense wrangling to grab the helms of state affairs.

As they are leveraging their total energy just to stake claim to government leadership, the July 7 deadline set by President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav for formation of a national consensus government as per the Interim Constitution is appearing elusive.

This vicious push and pull between the parties which is all set to turn nasty with time looks all set to delay government formation, which is sure to further jeopardize the already fragile constitution drafting and peace process.

A layer of CPN (UML) leaders has forwarded the proposition of making party chairman Jhala Nath Khanal the next prime minister.

The NC also seems to be zeroed in on taking the reins of the government citing that both CPN (UML) and UCPN (M) have failed to ensure constitution and peace.

Likewise, the United CPN (Maoist) is trying to rope both UML and small parties into supporting them to form a national consensus government under their leadership at the earliest.

According to the former rebels, since NC has been awarded the presidential post, UML has enjoyed the post of Constituent Assembly chairperson and MJF has the vice-presidential post, they should be naturally entitled to the post of prime minister.

With the inter-party struggle showing no signs of early mitigation, the chances of meeting the July 7 deadline set by President Yadav for formation of a consensus government are tenuous.

The brazenly myopic struggle amongst the three major parties staking claim to the leadership of the government is further entangled by intra-party squabble for the same privilege.

The cacophonous fight amongst the leaders of the single party to get a chance to spearhead the new government is also further marring political disorder.

While the majority of UML lawmakers don't want their party leadership to take the leadership of a new government, another section is divided over party chairman Jhala Nath Khanal.

Even though the Maoist politburo has recommended party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal as the prime ministerial candidate, it has also opened doors for discussion on an alternative candidate from the party for the same post. A new powerful coterie that has emerged inside the Maoist party is now backing party vice-chairman and ideologue Dr Baburam Bhattarai for the prime ministerial post.

The intensification of the inter and intra party struggle in the current national politics has only eclipsed the urgency to accomplish the constitution writing and ongoing peace process, thus pushing the entire nation into yet another fix.

It may not be completely irrational to say that myopia, hedonism and irresponsibility of other political parties (NC and UML) helped in establishing the Maoists as a hope for better Nepal. That is why Maoists also gained wider support from the people during April 10 Constituent Assembly (CA) poll campaign as they relentlessly promised total transformation of the country. The long suffered general people succumbed to the Maoists' promise with hope that the country would enter into the era of sustainable peace and socio-economic progress. As the Maoists successfully invigorated their presence in the country's political realm, other major political parties (especially NC) of the country were roped into changing their long political ideology established by B.P. (constitutional monarchy and multi party democratic system) to republic.

Expectations were high when the Maoists elevated themselves to power, who promised drastic reorientation of social and economic fundamentals of the country to come to power, have even failed to bring an iota of positive change in daily lives of the people. It seems that the failure on the part of the Maoists to prove themselves any different from other parties has created a great deal of depression among those who are in dire need of change.

Similarly, the sheer inability of political stalwarts of the country to rise above their partisan interest is bound to make the constitution drafting process more messy and time consuming.

The security situation in the country is deteriorating day by day. The reports of abductions and killings and murdering cases are on the rise. Impunity: It could be described as a political summary rescue of wrongdoers.

In fact, ordinary people were optimistic to some extent that the country would be propelled into the path of peace and prosperity, eliminating the ills of our society to sow the seed of conflict again. But, unfortunately, people have again now been dejected as our political parties have pathetically failed to find a common ground and reaffirm our national unity by giving up partisan interests and animosities.

The people have assigned the political parties with the momentous task of reorienting the entire political, economic and social fabrics of the country. So, the broader collaboration among the political parties is a must to inoculate the country against any possible disaster during its sensitive, transformation.

There are high sounding slogans that sovereignty has been transferred to people and that will bring miracle in the country remained a fallacy, because they spend their precious time while in the leading position in government putting blame on others. As the Maoists are required to take lead in ensuring smoothness in constitution drafting process as well as peace process, they must have realized the essence of people verdict without any let up.

Nepal's Maoists must search for a new democratic role

Surya B. Prasai

The much hyped pro-people 13 month old UML government bowed out this week after Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal opted for a live broadcast on Nepal Television to tender his resignation, denigrating the Maoists for the cabinet's past failures. The beleaguered UML government had failed on two major counts: forging consensus on possible Maoist integration into the Nepal Army (of which nearly 8500 to 18000 ex-combatants still reside in UN supervised camps), and its inability to tackle growing public insecurity.

Will the Maoists form the next government after reaching a new democratic tie-breaker or consensus? Will the democratic credentials of Nepal as a new young republic still hold true and will Pushpa Kumar Dahal, the Maoist supremo also known by the nom de guerre Prachanda find a new supra political role for himself as a democratic negotiator rising above the CPN-M fold to reach ties with those estranged and bitter about his past words? Prachanda knows if he fails to find the national consensus government which he eagerly looks forward to, a majority government led by the Nepal Congress or one of the fringe Terai parties could take shape, permanently sidelining the Maoists from the national political scene. Time is of the essence for Nepal's Maoists to forge democratic understanding that can sustain Nepal's peace process, bridge the development gap, and permanently rehabilitate and re-integrate the ex-Maoist combatants.

Before Madhav Kumar Nepal became Prime Minister, Pushpa Kumar Dahal had been forced to quit the PM's chair after an open clash with President Ram Baran Yadav on firing ex-Nepal Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal. General Katawal was accused of disobeying Prachanda's orders to freeze hiring of new army recruits. The Maoists wanted Katawal replaced with the more pliable number two Gen. Kul Bahadur Khadka. Prachanda eventually quit after two of his coalition partners deserted him, Khadka was retired, and the number three in Nepal Army, General Chitra Man Singh Gurung, who has close family ties with the NC, was appointed the new Chief. Gurung is highly respected by all the major

political party leaders in Nepal, the President and the Maoists as well.

One must note, in context, Prime Minister Nepal's resignation was more intra-party oriented with Jhal Nath Khanal emerging a portending contender to head both CPN-UML and aim for the PM's berth should a no-consensus scenario emerge within. This was propelled by the Maoists' refusal to push forward the new fiscal year's budget after making it a precondition for UML to step down first.

Thus, President Yadav while courageously saving Nepali democracy for the second time in less than fifteen months, was forced to abide by a more strict political timeline this time. The political parties must forge an absolute consensus by July 7, 2010, to form a new Nepal government based on Article 38-1 of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, or else the President will call for the parties to prove their majority in the CA itself, which surprisingly could see smaller parties contending for the leadership berth.

Leaving behind the Katwal incident, the Maoists are expected to honor the President's democratic wishes this time. After all, Prachanda had resigned earlier 'to protect Nepali democracy and peace' in his own words. Since the Katwal incident, the Maoists had been using the phrase 'restoration of civilian supremacy' their catchword in coming back to power. However, this writer has always insisted otherwise, that the CPN-M had the right to form a new government all along, given their highest polled CA seats.

The integration of the Maoists into the Nepal Army is an entirely different issue though. It is shaped by Nepal's geo-strategic neutrality interests, as much as by Nepal Army's own apolitical image as a principal UN peace keeping contributor and a professionally oriented disciplined force, a role that the United States, the UK, G-8 and Nepal's two neighbors, India and China have always wished to see continue no matter what the changed political context might be from Monarchy to Presidential system. The support of the Nepal Army, which fully backs President Yadav and any ruling ex-officio Prime Minister, is nonetheless an important harbinger for any

political party wishing to capture Baluwater, the PM's residence in the current fray. The UML led Nepal government had largely failed maintaining public security, despite repeated assurances of Home Minister Bhim Bahadur Rawal, and despite Nepal Army and Police Chiefs security briefs on the deteriorating law and order situation to the President, the Prime Minister, the Defense and Home Ministers, the diplomatic community and U.N. heads, all to no avail. The U.S. had only recently issued a travel advisory on Nepal given the growing political confusion, unrest and several incidents of public insecurity reported in Kathmandu and other locations.

Among the contending candidates, the three major parties figures whose names have surfaced are: Sher Bahadur Deuba a two time Nepal Congress democratic Premier (but ironically under whose last Premiership human rights violations, political intransigence and anti-Maoist actions increased to such an unprecedented level that ex-King Gyanendra had to sack him); Ram Chandra Poudyal, a senior NC leader who has held various ministerial and ex-National Assembly positions but has been continuously sidelined by the Koirala family for his open political ambition; and K.B. Gurung the oldest member of the current Constituent Assembly who believes his age presumably will get him the position. The Maoists also have their own internal rivalry brewing since their last major meeting in Paris Danda, Bhaktapur: Pushpa Kamal Dahal, a principal architect of the Nepali peace process and of the Prachanda middle path doctrine has brought the ex-guerrillas into Singha Durbar from the jungles of Nepal and is best known for stopping late Girija Prasad Koirala from being Nepal's first president through his clever Machiavellian politics; he is also the leading contender to be Prime Minister. Prachanda has highly principled views on the New Nepal, which sometimes sounds more polemical than achievable. The other two possible CPN-M contenders are: Babu Ram Bhattarai a bright JNU product who has a pragmatic view on army integration respecting the continued role of Nepal Army and its UN role; and Mohan Vaidya Kiran, who is Prachanda's ideological guru

of sorts but has dwindling supporters within the CPN-M fold given his ultra left views. At the moment, the Maoists are tight-lipped on how they will go about seeking a new leader or fulfilling their leadership challenge, but according to a close inner party source known to this writer, so far everyone is backing Prachanda's bid for a comeback.

There could be obstacles on the way. NC's Ram Chandra Poudyal has been openly campaigning for a new NC led government thinking it is their turn to sit down on the musical chair sidelining the Maoists. The Terai parties, on the other hand, are tethering their hopes on a loosely formed coalition, through which they can leverage as many ministerial berths as possible. UML's Jhal Nath Khanal has not entirely discounted heading the UML in the future coalition government should that opportunity exist and the Maoists fail to reach a democratic tie-breaker or national consensus, which they ultimately aim for. Khanal has excellent rapport with both New Delhi and Beijing.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly which failed on its two year mandate to write a new constitution received a new lease of life on May 28, which again has been subject to media bashing due to the constituent members' sole focus on forming a new government rather than constitution writing. The CPN-M had strongly resisted giving the CA a new lease, but the increased diplomatic-UN role play in Kathmandu, forced them to review their stance. The overarching obstacle to Nepal's democratic future still remains forging national consensus for a new constitution that truly represents the sentiments and social unity of all Nepalis, including Janjatiyas, and hopefully culmination of the present peace process which can only be achieved through rehabilitation and redeployment of the ex-Maoist combatants into some industrial security force or else a development volunteers group, should their end integration into the Nepal Army fail. The latter is one option the donors and the UN might want to consider seriously in carving a future potential role for UNMIN which hopefully will stay until the final commitments are penned down from all sides on the current peace process with the Maoists fulfilling their end of the promises in action, not just rhetoric.

So what Madhav went?

Basanta Lohani

Madhav Nepal's lateral entry thirteen months ago reminds me of

Newton's third law. What has Madhav Nepal got to do with the great scientist Isaac Newton? The two have nothing in common except that both are human beings. But his third law makes sense in terms with the way he catapulted into the premiership and the way he was jettisoned as national politics became dangerously unstable. Unlike Newton's law the time lag in our case has been thirteen months - a colossal waste of time. No, it is the loot of an extremely decisive and precious time of our nation for somebody's experiment.

Those who were put aboard were extremely grateful and were competing to pay for the blessings while looting the national coffers and devouring anything they found - be it forest, water resources or road projects. This was all for ferrying the Nepalese people to blissful New Nepal. Never in history, has what I have always been describing as the

triangular collusion between the politicians, businessmen and criminals, been as strong as we have witnessed within these three years in strangulating the Nepalese people in the sequence of dream trading scenario. With Madhav Nepal's exit, we are again back to square one. And, these looters are busy in passing the buck.

The Maoists want their own government, the UML is just discharged while the Nepali Congress is caught a little unprepared amidst its two leaders in the high voltage post dinner drama for the premiership. Again, the government may be similar to Madhav Nepal's - a government with a simple majority.

What is the fate of us as we the nation? At this point I remember poet Tennyson's following lines: *So runs my dream, but what am I / An infant crying in the night / An infant crying for the light / And with no language but a cry*

This is exactly how we are reduced to and pushed to a situation where we can only cry without a voice. It is a silent cry. The common people who wanted to toil the land that belonged to them with dignity, and to that end, braved not in one but in two Janandolan find themselves nowhere. Besides economic hardship, it is a double jeopardy - no stability, no security. The apparatus is breaking apart.

Like the way our rivers are harnessed, be it Koshi or Gandak, the unceasing flow of our leaders, deputy prime ministers and ministers are harnessed so that the change of guards can be screened in a dance sequence in a tune composed by the pied piper. To set the parliamentary arithmetic in order, the parties can be split, united, reunited, joined, grouped or purged. In this process, the politicians have become more like employees. If we are to accept the

Peter Principle that postulates that 'every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence', then most of the present breed politicians who are in the driving seat have already demonstrated appalling incompetence. They are like willing horse prepared to get engaged in a day to day basis.

The chronic stage of intra and interparty conflict is the root cause of our present ailment. Yes, politics is a game of conflict. There is nothing wrong in it so long as it also gets resolved in line with safeguarding the broader national interest. This should be the bottom line. But our leaders have no bottom line. Thus, national interest has become the backwater. Every one who can lay claim is hell bent on being on the saddle with the blessings from outside. And, for this blessing, they are willing for anything. This paradigm is to be changed if they call themselves as politicians. Otherwise, so what Madhav came? So what Madhav went? The misery is the same.

Nepal's Maoists poised for pragmatic role

Madhav Kumar Nepal knew his days as prime minister were numbered, but he didn't want the public to believe he was quitting under pressure from the Maoists. He announced his resignation on national television on Wednesday afternoon, less than a week before his interim government was to submit its annual budget to the legislature. Nepal was well aware the opposition intended to disrupt those proceedings right from the start.

The grandness of his departure was at odds with his own party, the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) and his unpopularity over his reluctance to promptly step down. As agreed by the three main parties, he was due to go on May 28, when the nation's Constituent Assembly extended its tenure by one year, but hung on for a month.

"Ultimately the puppet regime has collapsed," thundered the pro-Maoist newspaper Janadisha on Thursday, alluding to the fall of a coalition that Nepal had headed since May 2009. The paper also ran a 17-point charge-sheet alleging the government had been inept, corrupt and subservient under his leadership.

While not all neutral media outlets similarly dubbed the outgoing premier a puppet of India, very few offered him support. It seemed that the "sole concern of his government was to be in government itself, with little concern for governance," said a Kathmandu Post editorial.

Despite the criticism, Nepal's

resignation has created a way out of the ongoing political impasse between the Maoist and non-Maoist groups in the legislature, which was headed perhaps towards a more serious confrontation.

"To find an atmosphere for a negotiated settlement of the issues at hand is indeed a great relief," Dipkumar Upadhyay, an elected legislator of Nepali Congress, a major democratic party.

President Ram Baran Yadav promptly accepted Nepal's resignation and asked him, as is customary, to continue in office until an alternative arrangement is made. On Thursday, Yadav's office issued a statement appealing for consensus, by July 7, on who should lead the next government.

The next premier will need to facilitate the peace process and by May 2011 oversee the writing of a new constitution that institutionalizes the transition from monarchy to a republic - Nepal's monarchy was abolished in 2008. They will also need to resolve the Maoist demand that members of their "People's Liberation Army" (described in official documents as former Maoist combatants) be integrated with the Nepal Army.

Should the nation's 25 political parties fail to find a common candidate by the deadline, Yadav will need to invoke a provision of the interim constitution that requires election of a prime minister on the basis of majority in the 601-member assembly.

Dhruba Adhikary

Yadav could have directly called for the Maoists' majority political party, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal, to bring about a consensus, since they held a majority of 229 seats in the assembly. However, he has instead taken the neutral step of appealing to all, a move experts say is constitutionally correct and taken in consideration of his own position.

It is a widely believed that the best successor is a coalition led by the Maoist party and headed by Maoist leader, the former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda). Since the president is a former Nepali Congress leader and the assembly speaker belongs to the UML, the Maoists expect to be given the post of prime minister.

Analysts like former speaker Daman Dhungana say it essential that the former rebels, who could still be a potent military force, are offered positions of responsibility. Once in power, the Maoists will need to address both domestic and external concerns, and as part of a coalition of several parties they cannot take major policy decisions alone. The interim arrangement will only last one year.

Some sections of Nepal's intelligentsia saw it as unwise to keep Maoists out of the hierarchy. But others fear that, despite the peace accords concluded in 2006, the Maoists may not quit power when required to do so.

There is also deep cynicism in the so-called "democratic camp" about the

viability of a communist system in Nepal. Those opposing the idea of putting the Maoists in power cite dire historical precedents in China, North Korea, Cuba and Cambodia. They appear reluctant to see the changes China underwent after the Mao Zedong era ended.

A lust for power seems to be overtaking other considerations, with premiership candidates emerging from the Nepali Congress and the UML. Even regional leaders from the southern border have staked a claim. Opposition to the country's largest political party taking charge doesn't seem solely based on genuine domestic concerns.

Of the two contenders from the Nepali Congress, Ramchandra Paudel is considered a serious competitor. His rival, former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, has a tainted image because of his past links with former king Gyanendra. UML president Jahlanath Khanal is another aspirant. A known critic of the outgoing Nepal, Khanal could be accepted by Maoists as a compromise candidate.

Despite their personal differences, Nepal is also likely to support him if there was a chance of the UML retaining the leadership of the coalition.

Concerns over - and involvement in - Nepal's political transition has been building since 2006 among the international community, including the United Nations. Whoever emerges as the eventual winning candidate is likely to have already earned their important trust.

How I wish I was

Fidel Castro

Those who determine every step of the worst enemy of humanity - United States imperialism, a mixture of ignoble material interests, disdain and underestimation for other people inhabiting the planet - have calculated everything with mathematical precision.



In the Reflection of June 16 I wrote: "Diabolical news is filtering little by little between games and games in the World Cup, in a way that nobody is paying much attention to it."

The famous sports event has entered its most emotional moments. For 14 days, the teams made up of the best footballers from 32 countries have been competing to advance toward the second round; afterward the phases of quarter finals, semifinals and the final of the event come in successive stages.

Fanaticism for sport is growing incessantly, captivating hundreds or millions and possibly billions of people all over the planet.

On the other hand, one would have to ask how many of them know that, since June 20, U.S. military vessels, including the Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier, escorted by one or more nuclear submarines and other warships with missiles and cannons that are more powerful than those of the old battleships utilized in the last world war from 1939 to 1945, have been navigating toward Iranian coasts via the Suez Canal.

The yanki naval forces are accompanied by Israeli military boats, with equally sophisticated armaments, to inspect every vessel that leaves to export and import commercial products required for the functioning of the Iranian economy.

At the proposal of the United States, with support from the United Kingdom, France and Germany, the UN Security Council approved a harsh resolution that was not vetoed by any of the five countries which hold that right.

Another harsher resolution was approved with the agreement of the United States Senate

Subsequently, a third, even harsher one was passed by the countries of the European Union. All of this took place before June 20, which prompted an urgent trip to Russia by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, according to the news, to meet with the head of state of that powerful country, Dmitry Medvedev, in the hope of negotiating with Iran and avoiding the worst.

Now it is about calculating when the naval forces of the United States and Israel will be deployed facing the Iranian coasts, and joining up there with aircraft carriers and other U.S. military boats which mount guard in this region.

The worst part is that, just like the United States, Israel, its gendarme in the Middle East, possesses extremely modern bomber aircraft and sophisticated weapons supplied by the United States, which has converted it into the sixth nuclear power on the planet given its firepower, among the eight recognized as such, including India and Pakistan.

The Shah of Iran had been defeated by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979 without using a single weapon. The United States imposed the Shah after the war on that nation with the use of chemical weapons, whose components it supplied to Iraq together with the information needed by its combat units and which were deployed by them against the Revolutionary Guards. Cuba knows that because, at that time, as we have explained on other occasions, it was president of the Non-Aligned Movement. We know very well the devastation that it caused among the population. Mahmud Ahmadinejad, now head of state in Iran, was chief of the sixth army of the Revolutionary Guards and chief of the Guard Corps in the western provinces of that country, which bore the brunt of that war.

Today, in 2010, after 31 years, both the United States and Israel are underestimating the one million soldiers in the Iranian Armed Forces and their capacity for fighting on land, and the air, sea and land forces of the Revolutionary Guards.

In addition to these, there are the 20 million men and women, aged from 12 to 60, selected and systematically trained by its diverse military institutions, from out of the 70 million people who inhabit the country.

The government of the United States drew up a plan to instigate a political movement that, supporting itself on capitalist consumerism, would divide Iranians and defeat the regime.

That hope has become innocuous. It is laughable to think that with U.S. warships plus those of Israel, that they can arouse the sympathies of one sole Iranian citizen.

Analyzing the current situation, I initially believed that the battle would begin in the Korean peninsula, and that that area would be the detonator of the second Korean war which, in its turn, would immediately lead to the second war that the United States would impose on Iran.

Now, reality is changing things in an inverse sense: that of Iran will immediately unleash that of Korea.

The leadership of North Korea, which was accused of the sinking of the Cheonan, and is all too well aware that it was sunk by a mine that the yanki intelligence services succeeded in placing in the hull of that corvette, will not hesitate for one second to act as soon as the attack is initiated on Iran.

It is quite right that the football fans should enjoy their craving for the World Cup competitions. I am only fulfilling the duty of exhorting our people, thinking above all of our youth, full of life and hope, and especially our marvelous children, in order that events do not catch us completely unawares.

It pains me to think of so many dreams conceived of by human beings and the astounding creations of which they have been capable in just a few thousand years.

At a time when the most revolutionary dreams are being fulfilled and the homeland is firmly recovering, how I wish I was wrong!

Asia Focus: Ups and downs on political arena in Asia-Pacific region

Leaders or governments of some Asian-Pacific countries have changed recently for various reasons, with Australian and Japanese prime ministers being forced to step down, while the Nepali prime minister and the Maldivian cabinet resigned, and the new Philippine president was sworn with challenges ahead.

Rudd quits

The Australian ruling Labor Party toppled its leader Kevin Rudd on June 24 and his deputy and challenger Julia Gillard became Australia's first female prime minister.

The move came after Rudd's plan to boost taxes on the mining industry has deepened a slump in opinion poll with his disapproval rating hitting a record level of 55 percent. His party had lost faith that he could win a second term in the national elections due in April next year at the latest.

Hatoyama resigns

On June 2, embattled Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said he would no longer serve as the nation's leader as pressure mounted within his own party for him to step down ahead of key upper house elections in July.

Just eight months since Hatoyama took office, plunging approval ratings caused by his bungled handling of a plan to relocate a U.S. marine base in Okinawa and political funding scandals left the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) little choice but to find a new leader as the public and his peers had clearly lost faith in him.

Last September, Hatoyama's DPJ brought an end to almost 50 years of unbroken Liberal Democratic Party rule in Japan in an historic election victory, and the nation had high hopes that the new ruling coalition led by Hatoyama would effect the

changes they had promised to the electorate to secure their votes.

However, it did not take long for cracks to begin to appear in the newly elected DPJ, with many political commentators quick to jump on the fact that the ruling party collectively had very little political experience and as news of funding scandals involving both Hatoyama and DPJ heavyweight Ozawa came to light, the nails in Hatoyama's coffin began to be hammered in one-by-one.

The final nail in his coffin and the one Hatoyama will be remembered for is his decision to side with the U.S. on a deal to relocate an unpopular U.S. marine base from a crowded area in Okinawa Prefecture to a coastal location on the island, despite repeatedly pledging to move the base "at least" outside Okinawa, which hosts 75 percent of U.S. forces in Japan.

This deal with Washington was a complete turnaround on his election promise to move the base off Okinawa and eventually led to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) quitting the Hatoyama-led tripartite coalition and actively positioning themselves to oppose the DPJ in upper house elections expected on July 11, in which the DPJ must secure a majority to consolidate their power and pass bills smoothly.

Aquino III win presidency

Benigno Aquino III took his oath in Manila, the Philippines on June 30, becoming the 15th president of the southeast Asian country.

Aquino III, the only son of Philippine late Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. and late former President Corazon Aquino who were both regarded as democratic icons of the country, won a landslide victory in the

presidential election on May 10.

During his campaign, he vowed to bring positive changes to the Philippines and put the battle against corruption high on the agenda, for he deemed corruption the root cause for poverty and people's lack in trust with the government.

His anti-corruption stance was widely welcomed because corruption had infested for years as a hindrance to economic development, analysts said.

Nepali PM steps down

Nepali Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal announced his resignation on June 30, saying he wanted to bring an end to political stalemate and move the peace process forward.

Nepal has been under pressure to resign for some months by the main opposition Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) which as the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, blocked the passage of budget until the formation of a national unity government under its leadership.

His resignation comes a month after his governing coalition and the Maoist party agreed to extend the deadline by one year for the country to write its first constitution after it turned into a republic two years ago.

"I have decided to resign from the post of prime minister so that the peace process can be completed, a new constitution drafted and the current political deadlock resolved," Nepal said in a televised speech.

Nepal succeeded Maoist leader Prachanda as prime minister in May last year after Prachanda quit following a row with the president over the firing of the army chief.

Nepal accused the Maoist party of refusing to fulfill their commitments to the peace agreement which includes

integrating their former fighters into the national army and disbanding their paramilitary wing.

The Maoist party insisted on leading the new unity government but other parties are not ready to accept the Maoist leader as prime minister, arguing that the Maoists have not transformed themselves into a civilian party.

Nepal resigned in a compromise to end the political stalemate, but the peace process needs more actions among the major political forces in the young republic of the South Asian region.

Conflict between executive and legislative

The Maldivian cabinet resigned en masse Tuesday afternoon to protest the behavior of opposition legislators who they said were "hijacking" the powers of the executive and making it impossible for the cabinet ministers to discharge their constitutional duties and deliver the government's election manifesto.

Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed told the local press that "the Majlis (parliament) is preventing the cabinet ministers from performing their legal obligations. Majlis members are behaving against the spirit and the letter of the constitution," according to a statement issued by the presidential office on its official website.

The president and vice president are elected directly by the people in a popular vote. President Nasheed and Vice President Mohammed Waheed Hassan were elected in October 2008. They are due for re-election in 2013.

(Xinhua correspondent Qi Wei in Tokyo, Liu Peng in Manila, He Xianfeng in Kathmandu and Chen Zhanjie in Colombo contributed to the story)

Is China or India aging better?

Chinese and Indian demographics will be rather different three decades from now. What kind of economic outcomes are the differences expected to create?

With 1.4 billion and 1.2 billion people, China and India account for 37 percent of the world population today. Thirty years later, they are expected to account for roughly the same percentage of the world population. The overall numbers, however, hide some fundamental changes that would have occurred by then.

In another 20 years, India is expected to catch up with China in terms of population. The UN projections of population indicate that in 2030 the two countries are expected to have about 1.4-1.5 billion people each, with India marginally ahead of China. The period between 2025 and 2030 will be significant in terms of China's demography, with the rate of population growth reducing to zero during that time.

By then, China would no longer be making net addition to its population. The number of births will match the number of deaths, with the latter gradually overtaking the former to push China into a negative rate of population growth after 2030. This will be the culmination of a remarkable

Amitendu Palit

demographic transition in China. It will mark the end of a period comprising almost seven decades during which China would have reduced its rate of population growth from 2.6 percent (mid-1960s) to below zero.

India's population, on the other hand, will continue to grow. At the time when China is expected to have negative population growth, India's population is projected to be growing by about 0.6 percent a year. Indeed, India is not projected to reach a zero rate of growth in population for more than two decades after China does. It will have about 1.6 billion people in 2040 compared with China's 1.4 billion. The combined China-India population is expected to increase from the present 2.6 billion to 3 billion by 2040, with most of the increase coming from India.

These big demographic changes will be accompanied by more subtle demographic transformations. The most discussed and familiar of these is the change in the relative weights of the working-age population (15-60 years) in the total population.

India will remain a younger country than China in 2040, with a median age of 35 years compared to 44 years in China. China's population is expected

to age faster over the next three decades, with the percentage of 60-plus people in total population projected to increase from 12.3 percent in 2010 to 27.5 percent in 2040. The corresponding increase in India is expected to be from 7.5 percent in 2010 to 15.6 percent in 2040. The difference in ageing will influence the proportion of the working age population to the total population in each country.

At present, the proportions of working-age people in the China's and India's total populations are 67.8 percent and 61.7 percent. China has the "demographic dividend" of having a larger workforce today. Come 2040, the proportions are expected to reverse, to 62.4 percent for China and 64.6 percent for India.

One needs to be cautious in claiming that the change will give a decisive economic edge to the Indian economy vis-à-vis China. In absolute terms, the proportions imply that in 2040 there will be about 1 billion working-age people in India compared with 0.9 billion in China. Given the sizes of the two economies, the difference is marginal. But given that India will continue to experience net additions

to its population well after 2040, its working age population is expected to increase further. Hence, India's expected higher returns from the demographic dividend vis-à-vis China are likely to grow over a three-decade-plus time horizon from now.

These evolving demographics bring with them a complication for India, usually overlooked in the euphoria over the demographic dividend. The density of India's population (people per square kilometer) is projected to increase from 369 to 476 from 2010 to 2040. During the same period, China's population density will rise from 141 to 152. India will have to handle the challenge of accommodating its population growing at a faster rate than China's within a land area that is much smaller than China's.

The obvious implications of an adverse land-per-head ratio are greater pressures on natural resources and public goods. Inadequate supply responses on these fronts can easily erode much of the demographic dividend.

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(Source: China Daily)

Strikes in Nepal's efficacious highway

Hari Prasad Shrestha

Foreign affairs and international travel institutions of many developed countries, issue warning and recommendation notices about travel of their nationals in the time of protests and Bandha (strike) in Nepal. In this connection, usually four types of warning and recommendation are issued by them, which are - exercise normal and security normal precaution, exercise high degree of caution, avoid non-essential travel and avoid all travel.

Protests and demonstrations are frequent recurring event in Nepal and any occasion can turn violent. Political meetings and rallies take place throughout the country. Tension between rival political groups can happen any time. Sporadic incidents of politically motivated violence may continue to occur throughout the country.

The Bandha is a serious form of civil disobedience where roads are forcibly blocked off, preventing the flow of food, medical supplies and passengers.

This is popular form of political expression and occurs frequently on short notice throughout the country affecting access to services. Road transport is often disturbed by general strikes. Highways have been major centre point for Bandha and rallies in Nepal.

It is well established in the history of South Asia that Bandhas were also very effective tool for independence movement in the early 20th century. There has been long history of Bandha culture in this region.

Highways in Nepal are considered to be one of the key places for demonstration to fulfill demand of protestors, and it appear to be powerful than any other means or organizations due to its peculiar quality in the time of protest and unrest. There is no alternative to the "East West Highway", the only one highway in Nepal connecting eastern Nepal with its western part. This highway, most of the year suffers from tribulations, protests and strikes. This is ideal place for rallies and oblige to the government fulfilling demands. The obstacle and mass movement in this highway means high chances to accomplish the demands. The average duration of stir in highway has been one week period. It depends on enormity of demand. If demand is stern and vital, one month period to stop vehicular movement is normal phenomenon.

After people's movement 2006, there have been regular rallies and protests by numerous political and non-political groups. Each time after negotiations with government most of the demands have been fulfilled and thereafter highway operation becomes normal. Even the Constitution of Nepal has been amended after long strikes in the highway, too.

Nepal is in process to formulate new constitution after successful constituent assembly elections. Every regional group want their rights to be incorporated in new constitution. And this highway is playing role of equalizer or leveler in social and political perspective through Bandha and rallies on it. But the economy of Nepal is slowing down due to strikes. This form of protest is extremely damaging to the economy as well as to the everyday lives of individuals who rely on surface transportation.

Actually, it's Mountains

Geography, it has been famously said, is the most fundamental cause behind political fortune because it is the most unchanging. The truculent personalities of Prussia and czarist Russia, to say nothing of their successor states, had much to do with their being land powers with few natural

Robert D. Kaplan

geography is so overpowering and unchanging a factor in a state's destiny, there is a danger of taking it too far. So rather than believing that geography inevitably dooms states to failure, think of it as yet another complexifying factor

least at the southern extremity of -- the Sahara. Although Africa is the world's second-largest continent, with an area three times that of Europe, its coastline south of the Sahara is about a fifth as long and lacks many good natural harbors. Few of tropical Africa's rivers are navigable from the ocean, dropping as they do from interior tableland to coastal plains by a series of falls and rapids. The Sahara hindered human contact with the north for too many centuries, so that Africa was little exposed to the great Mediterranean civilizations. All this has combined to afflict Africa with the burden of geographic isolation.

Unlike the most remote African countries, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia have, thanks to their proximity to the Indian Ocean, had access to global trade from the Middle East and Asia since late antiquity and the Middle Ages. But these countries have their own problems related to geography. Kenya is burdened by tribalism in its interior, Ethiopia by its mountainous and drought-prone landscape, and Somalia by the fact that it constitutes sprawling desert populated by clans that have little or nothing in common. Somalia also has the longest coastline on mainland Africa, close to major sea lines of communication. And given that piracy is the maritime ripple effect of anarchy on land, it is no surprise that Somali piracy has become an international problem.

Yemen, on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Aden from Somalia, is equally burdened. Its 22 million people are running out of groundwater, and thus its prognosis is not good. Like Ethiopia, Yemen is riven by mountains, meaning its central government has difficulty accessing vast reaches of this deeply fragmented country. The regime must keep peace through a fragile balance of tribal relations because no one tribe or sect has been able to establish an identity for the Yemeni state. The defining aspect of Yemen is the diffusion of power rather than the concentration of it. For example, since ancient times, the Wadi Hadramaut, a 100-mile-long oasis in southeastern Yemen surrounded by great tracts of desert and stony plateau, has through caravan routes and Arabian ports maintained closer relations with India and Indonesia than with other parts of Yemen itself.

Iraq, 1,400 miles to the north, combines the Kurdish mountains with the Mesopotamian plain and desert, putting ethnic groups together that either were previously on their own or part of a multinational empire. Keeping them united in an artificially conceived state required levels of force unseen even in the Arab world, as evinced by the rules of Saddam Hussein and the previous military dictators going back to 1958.

Head east to Afghanistan and Pakistan, whose geographic woes are such that neither country's borders have much logic. In the west, Afghanistan is an extension of the Iranian plateau. In its northeast, the Hindu Kush mountains separate the Pashtun tribal belt straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan from the demographic homelands of the Tajiks and Uzbeks; Afghanistan's most natural borders are thus situated in the middle of the country. Pakistan is an artificial puzzle piece that, unlike India, has no logical frontiers, so different, territorially based ethnic groups exist uneasily together.

To the southeast, Burma's geographical predicament is equally precarious. The country, though rugged and underdeveloped, is as large as France and is formed around the lush cradle of the Irrawaddy River valley, surrounded by highlands on three sides. In general, ethnic Burmans live in the valley, and the minority ethnic groups such as the Karen, Karenni, Shan, and Kachin live in the sprawling hill country. It was to control the irregular armies of some of these tribal groups, which make up a third of the population, that Burma's military took power in the first place in 1962. So, behind Burma's benighted, authoritarian regime lie structural problems of ethnicity and geography.

And it's not just rivers and mountains that complicate the development of fragile states. For African countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sudan, as well as Iraq and Burma, there is the geographic factor of oil, natural gas, and strategic minerals and metals to contend with. Political elites often fight over the spoils, only adding to instability.

None of these places is doomed. Human agency can triumph over determinism. But we should not be naive either: Geography is one more strike against them.



borders to protect them, whereas Britain, the United States, and Venice could each in its own way champion liberty because they have had the luxury to be protected from meddlesome neighbors by expanses of surrounding water. Precisely because

for the weakest of countries. Their difficult geographies should spur us to action, rather than lead us to despair.

And difficult they are. Consider Africa, where nearly half of the top 60 countries in the Failed States Index are located, in most cases south of -- or at

Himalayan rivers to dry up within 20 yrs

Himalayan river basins in China, Bangladesh, India and Nepal will face a massive water depletion within 20 years, leading to a decline in food and mass migration, a research group warned on Monday.

Due to natural reasons like glacial melting, the four countries would lose almost 275 billion cubic metres of annual renewable water in the next two decades, more than the total amount of available water in Nepal at present, India-based Strategic Foresight Group said in a report.

"What we are looking at here is a major catastrophe ... going to happen in 20, 25 years," the group's president, Sundeep Waslekar, told a seminar at the Singapore International Water Week.

Water scarcity and effects like desertification and soil erosion would bring rice and wheat yields in China and India down by as much as 50 per cent by 2050, the report said.

"China and India alone will need to import more than 200 to 300 million tonnes of wheat and rice," it said.

"This will create a havoc in the global food market ... for people everywhere, because the prices will go up substantially," Waslekar said.

Water depletion in the river basins would displace millions of people in the four countries by 2050, he said.

"We are looking towards a disaster of more than 100 million migrants," he said, "and conflicts within and between countries."

The report called for more cooperation between the four nations in the management of the river basins.

The basins of the rivers, including the Yellow River and the Yangtze in China and the Ganges in India, are home to 1.3 billion people.

April 13 target for constitution drafting

The three major parties - UCPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) - have agreed to finalize the calendar of events for constitution drafting in a way so that the country will have a new statute by the end of Chaitra month (April 13).

A meeting between the three parties held at the Constituent Assembly (CA) hall, New Baneshwor in the presence of CA Chairperson Subash Nemwang reached a decision to this effect.

After failing to promulgate the constitution by May 28 this year, the three parties had, in a last hour agreement, extended the deadline for constitution writing by one more year after reaching a three-point deal to complete all the remaining tasks of the peace process.

Emerging from the meeting, Nemwang informed that the three major parties have finally reached an agreement to finalize the calendar of events in order to give a new constitution to the country by the end of Chaitra month.

He further said that this agreement between the major parties will also be discussed with the fringe parties represented in the Constituent Assembly as they have been feeling left out of all the decision making process concerning constitution and running of state affairs.

Similarly, there was also agreement between the three major parties to form the much-awaited State Restructuring Commission (SRC) by July 17.

Maoist leader Post Bahadur Bogati said that the three major parties have decided not to create any obstruction in the work of the SRC or object to any decisions it takes.

Maoist Vice Chairman Naryan Kazi Shrestha and senior leaders Dev Gurung and Post Bahadur Bogati, senior NC leader Ram Sharan Mahat, NC chief whip Laxman Ghimire and UML leaders Bhim Acharya and Agni Kharel were present at the meeting.

सवारी साधन चलाउदा र बाटो काट्दा
नियमहरू पालना गरौं, आफू पनि
जोगिउ र अरुलाई पनि जोगाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार

सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय

सूचना विभाग

Region:

Tamil North Sinhalisation: What does it mean?

Chandi Sinnathurai

Ceylon Tamils - both the diasporic and the citizens of the island Sri Lanka, in the Southern tip of India, must be empowered to ask honest questions. If at all anything, Tamil social thinkers ought to awaken the masses to discern the wood from the trees. On the whole, people cannot be casualties to spin and propaganda.

At one stage, when the end of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the armed Tamil outfit who were fighting for a separate state) was becoming clear, Tamil media including the pro-tiger websites adopted a stance that the tigers are invincible - sadly the masses gobbled it without much thought. When eventually the end did come, and the whole top-level tiger leadership was wiped out, the propaganda machine pumped out stories that none of this was true and the leadership was safe and sound. A few Indian Tamil politicians also joined-in the chorus of spin including the militant Tamil poet Kasi Annandan. This was indeed a complete abuse of trust. It revealed there was hardly any journalistic integrity - but simply a factory of jingoistic fairy tales.

When the tiger gun runner "KP" was captured by the Rajapaksha regime the crack began to show. Stories of leadership wars within began to spill over. At one point "KP" was going to lead the spin-doctored Tamil Transnational Government. Within some Tamil quarters, "KP" was the true heir to the throne. But he was blatantly a faceless underground manipulator. Now we are told by the same people who heralded him as the great leader that "KP" has turned into a government collaborator. Rudrakumar residing in the US, is currently the "interim" leader of the Trans-national Government. Interim for what? Government of the diaspora? Can he claim diplomatic immunity as well? A novel idea might it be. But it all looks a bit of a pie-in-the-sky, certainly. An intricate fable of power struggles.

Of course, when you repeat a lie again and again, then it almost pretends to be true. As this writer has penned numerous times before that, the Tamils - particularly the diaspora cannot live on a 'Staple' diet of spin, propaganda and thin air. Such a project is immoral and unethical and unpalatable.

It is however, a grave cause for concern that the Colombo plan is bent on Sinhalisation. This is bad news especially when the President Rajapaksha is talking of reconciliation and healing of wounds and scars.

The TamilNet website reports under the lead caption (28 June 2010), Colombo schemes Sinhalised capital for North:

"Similar to the Sinhalisation of Trincomalee, the capital of the East, Colombo plans for a new, Sinhalised capital for the North too at K'ilinochchi, administrative sources working for Colombo on the project said. K'ilinochchi is being prepared for that with an extensive military cantonment along with airstrip, new Buddhist temples and by not allowing the local population to their lands. For every three people there is one military personnel at present. When resettled, the local Tamils will be herded into pockets and there will be a new population, considerably Sinhalised, the sources said adding that with the completion of the plot, there won't be even one city or administrative centre existing for Tamils in the island."

This piece cites no sources, or any evidence (perhaps for security purposes). But colonising Tamil lands by previous Sinhala administrations is an ill-conceived idea. Implementing such a secretive land-grabbing will not win the hearts and minds of Tamils, especially at this crucial juncture. One has to be balanced however, that the Tamil lands are not exclusively for the Tamils. But a militarised style "Occupation" can and will bring all the difficulties that springs out of an occupied territory. The tigers were too late when they realised that the expelling of the Moslems out of Jaffna - the Ceylon Tamil cultural capital in the North, was a step too far. A badly advised colossal error. On the other hand, Colombo must take every effort to educate the Sinhalas in such a way that racist ideologies are weaned out of them. Sinhala can be learnt by Tamils while the Sinhalas also learn spoken and written Tamil. Such compulsory education will eventually yield a harvest of mutual understanding. The presidential address given in Tamil was indeed a

paradigm shift. However, it's only a start of a long journey to freedom. The current Rajapaksha Government must also 'walk the talk.'

In a pluralistic society, in this day and age, building temples/churches/mosques/or non-religious venues shouldn't cause any concern when proper planning permission is given. Equal rights should be interpreted on the ground - as much as a Tamil religious body has got the privilege to build places of worship in the far Sinhala South. Equally, a Sinhala-Buddhist religious body should also have the privilege to do the same in the far North. It has to be done though with the spirit of mutual respect and trust, but never with the militaristic thrust.

Buddhism is neither a private property of the Sinhalas; nor is the Tamil Land an exclusive piece of real estate of the Tamils. All citizens must have equal rights to live anywhere they wish. Both Tamils and Sinhalas can glean lessons from their shared history. If they choose to harp on the past and do not have the capacity or the will to move on to a new paradigm then no one will be free. But the will to move on can only be hindered by an insecure leadership that chooses to be blind.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery's words rings true: "I know but one freedom and that is the freedom of the mind."

One has to be careful not to permit the clouding of our reasoning faculties and allowing propaganda to condition our mind-set.

"Ceylon Tamils" refer to the fact these Tamils are indigenous to the North and East of the country. There is also the so-called "Up country Tamils." They were brought in to the country as indentured workers from India to work in the tea/coffee/rubber plantations by the British. Many of the latter were disenfranchised by the SWRD Bandaranaike racist policies in the 1950s. Some were repatriated to India with hardly any compensation paid for their 'slave labor.'

One of the aspects of the independence [from the British] movement was that it was very much a Sinhalese movement. As a result, the Sinhalese majority attempted to remodel Sri Lanka as a Sinhalese

nation-state. The lion in the national flag is derived from the banner of the last Sinhalese Kingdom, which, to the Sinhalese majority, is a symbol of their fight against British colonialism. One single strip of orange on the left part of the flag represents the Tamil population, and it is seen by many Tamil as a symbol of their marginalisation.

In 1956, the Official Language Act (commonly known as The Sinhala Only Act) was enacted. The law mandated Sinhala, the language of Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community, which is spoken by over 70% of Sri Lanka's population, as the sole official language of Sri Lanka. Supporters of the law saw it as an attempt by a community that had just gained independence to distance themselves from their colonial masters.

The immediate (and intended) consequence of this act was to force large numbers of Tamil who worked in the civil service, and who could not meet this language requirement, to resign. An attempt to make Buddhism the national religion, to the exclusion of Hindu and Islam, was also made. Affirmative action in favour of Sinhalese was also instituted, ostensibly to reverse colonial discrimination against Sinhalese in favour of Tamil. Many Tamil, in response to this deliberate marginalisation, came to believe that they deserved a separate nation-state for themselves.

From 1983 to 2009, there was an on-and-off civil war against the government by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a separatist militant organization who fought to create an independent state named Tamil Eelam in the North and East of the island. Both the Sri Lankan government and LTTE have been accused of various human rights violations.

On May 19, 2009, the President of Sri Lanka officially claimed an end to the insurgency and the defeat of the LTTE, following the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran and much of the LTTE's other senior leadership.

After the civil war was over, the government of Sri Lanka called for redevelopment of the nation. The final stages of the war left some 300,000 people displaced. By 2 May 2010, 214,227 IDPs (74%) had been released or returned to their places of origin.

India exploiting non-State actors

Sultan M Hali

Pakistan decided to actively participate in global war against terrorism in the post 9/11 era. Consequently terrorism engulfed Pakistan as terrorists frequently and forcefully hit Pakistan's major cities including vital military organizations like GHQ and Military hospitals, police training centers, schools, mosques and markets meant for women shopping.

Terrorists also made tribal areas of Pakistan as the hub of their heinous crimes. To eliminate terrorists/ extremists, Pakistan armed forces launched various military operations in FATA/Swat and approximately 1,47,000 troops are still deployed in the insurgency hit areas. Hostile propaganda has allegedly portrayed Pakistan as an epicenter of terrorism. Unfortunately, hostile intelligence agencies have been linking all terrorist incidents taking place in different countries with extremist network in Pakistan. It has now come to light that the infamous Indian intelligence agency RAW has been exploiting non-state actors to destabilize as well as terrorize Pakistan. Government of Pakistan has made sincere efforts to probe the cases of Ajmal Kasab and Faisal Shahzad to uncover the truth. Investigations revealed that non-state-actors are behind the Mumbai attack and Time Square incident in USA, in which India has a major hand. Indian involvement in the tribal region is to a large extent dependent upon exploiting the simplicity of the Pashtun as well as playing the non-state actors in their heinous plots against Pakistan.

In a detailed four part report by Tariq Saeed, 'Pakistan: The Final Solution Frenzy', the painstakingly gathered facts reveal that religion is used to distort the plain folk. Tastes of vodka and Indian prostitutes are supposedly provided as simulation of what to expect in paradise. The expose reveals that India has increased its support for the movement to create an independent Ismaili state in the northern areas, now re-designated Gilgit-Baltistan province. The supposed leadership of the movement is sitting in India. A heinous plot is revealed that the takeover of the Swat valley by the so-called Pakistani Taliban was a dry run to cut off Pakistan from northern areas when a real attempt is made to create the Ismaili state. India recently staged fights in some provinces of Afghanistan not far from the Central Asian states to convince them of the usefulness of allowing Indian military bases on their soil. Their main aim was to intimidate Tajikistan where India has vacated a base it once had. The recent skirmishes in Badghis and Farab provinces were in this category. The Indian embassy in Kabul has thwarted negotiations between Brahmadigh Bugti, the grandson of late Akbar Bugti, and the authorities. A Baloch, who is a lawyer by profession, was acting as middleman in these talks.

Saner elements in the US like Senator Christopher Bond have concluded that he had seen no hard evidence of a Pakistani group directly involved in the failed Times Square bombing. The US Defence Secretary Robert Gates' statement that US-Pakistan relationship had improved significantly and that US respects Pakistani's sovereignty is noteworthy; simultaneously, the US President has also praised Pakistan's anti-terrorism commitment and underlined the vitality of sustained engagement with Pakistan towards grappling with the extremist challenge in the restive Afghan border region. US President Obama has pointed out that Pakistan has offered huge sacrifices in its fight against homegrown terrorism. Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants have spilled over into its border areas from Afghanistan following US invasion of Kabul in late 2001. President Obama has also emphasized that Pakistan will only be secure if Afghanistan is secure. He also stated that Afghanistan, Pakistan, United States and the international community should all be working together to reduce the influence of extremists in those regions.

The important fact is that Pakistan is an Islamic country and different factions have been living with religious harmony since its creation. Sectarian sentiments erupted as the slogan of Islamisation was used for political reasons. Time and again and now with renewed intensity, the sectarian violence has been used by anti Pakistan elements as a tool to disturb law and order in the country. Two main sects of Shia and Sunni have been the victim of target killing and many religious leaders lost their precious lives. Foreign intelligence agencies have been behind such sectarian violence. The same needs to be condemned and an environment of sectarian harmony is created for obvious reasons. The recent attack in Lahore on the mosques of Quadianis was used as a wedge to divide public opinion against the minority group. Spurious but heartlessly malicious e-mails were sent to Muslims congratulating them on the slaughter of the Quadianis during their Friday prayer. Sectarian clashes have been well controlled by the government by including the Ulema/religious leaders to play their role in removing the hatred between people of different sects and making efforts to create inter-faction harmony. On the other hand hostile intelligence agencies have their vested interests as they follow anti Pakistan agenda of their own country. Hence, they use heavy amounts of money to bribe the anti Pakistan elements including the terrorists to create sectarian rift and the consequential unrest in Pakistan. Terrorist attacks on religious processions, target killing of religious leaders and recent attack on Pakistani Ambassador in Iran, MB Abbasi are the latest examples. Government should take stern actions against the perpetrators. Moreover, religious leaders of different factions should also play more effective role to counter this menace. There is a dire need to create awareness amongst general public to develop religious tolerance and live in peace while frustrating the vested interests of hostile countries.

We can clearly conclude that India is using Afghan soil to sponsor terrorism in Pakistan. Indian intelligence agencies are providing financial assistance and weapons to the terrorists for their terrorist acts to be conducted inside Pakistan. Similarly Indian decision to send additional troops to Afghanistan is also causing serious concerns for Pakistan. India has set up secret training centers in Afghanistan where her military personnel in collaboration with RAW have been imparting training to the innocent Pashtun against Pakistan. Indian designs show that the cliffhanger of Ajmal Kasab sham show become a fodder to breed anti-Pakistan sentiments. RAW carried away 1300 Taliban and Pakistani prisoners from Bagram air base jail to be able to brainwash them and subsequently use them as Pakistani Taliban against Pakistan Army.



Peace sacrificed in shrine attack

Syed Saleem Shahzad

The twin suicide attacks on Thursday on the shrine of a Sufi saint in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore in which more than 40 people were killed and nearly 200 injured will most likely force the government to reluctantly take action against Punjabi militants while also derauling Washington's efforts to open dialogue with the Taliban through Pakistan.

The attacks in the capital of Punjab province - also known as the country's cultural capital - took place in the late evening, with the first bombing in the basement reserved for ablutions followed a few minutes later by one in the major prayer area. The shrine is dedicated to 11-century Persian Sufi saint Syed Ali Hajveri, also known as Data Gunj Baksh, who significantly contributed to the spread of Islam.

The attackers managed to penetrate a highly secured area to sow their destruction in the crowded shrine. Sufism, a mystical movement that relies on music, poetry and dancing to spread the word of Islam, includes Shi'ites and Sunnis. Radical groups consider it to be un-Islamic.

Operation in Punjab looms

The attack on the very soul of Lahore leaves the military

establishment and the government of Punjab, which have steadfastly refused to act, little option but to crack down on al-Qaeda-linked Punjabi militants

Their inaction, despite international pressure and calls from secular political parties, stems from fears of causing chaos in the country, which might create the grounds for foreign forces to intervene.

Now the masses are enraged against militants, and operations against their hideouts in southern Punjab along the Indian border can be expected. These militants are considered the most dangerous of all, with most of them having been trained by the Inter-Services Intelligence's India Cell to fight Indian forces in Indian-administered Kashmir.

After action in this disputed region was scaled back, the militants turned to al-Qaeda and now they are the main strength behind the Taliban-led resistance against foreign occupation forces in Afghanistan, where they have changed the dynamics of the war by adding a high level of sophistication. Thursday's attack comes close

to the heels of talks between former US commander in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal, Pakistani army chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kiani and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

The main topic was to get some Taliban leaders taken off a US terror list so they could set the ball rolling for talks in Pakistan and Afghanistan on a reconciliation process. This initiative would be complemented with increased action against al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

If indeed strong action does now take place against Punjabi militants, the resultant crisis in the country would stall any serious dialogue process with the Afghan Taliban.

Foreign footprints

Asia Times Online has learned from high-level security contacts that private US defense contractors want to operate in Punjab to trace militant networks and then make recommendations for penetrating them.

Despite intense opposition from the military establishment, a few days before the shrine attack over 50

foreign nationals, including officials of a private American defense contracting firm, arrived in Pakistan - even though they did not have security clearance from Pakistani intelligence agencies.

According to the contacts, these nationals had earlier been denied visas by the Pakistani embassies they first approached, including in the US, Britain and India. However, they were apparently subsequently given visas by the embassy in Abu Dhabi and the consulate in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. This was done without the prerequisite clearance from the Pakistani Ministry of Interior, the Defense Ministry and the security agencies.

"These included over a dozen US nationals who had already been denied visas by our embassy in Washington on suspicion of them having links to Blackwater [Xe Services]," a source told Asia Times Online, adding that the visas had been issued for periods of six months to two years, although usually visas are only give for 90 days.

Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts.

G8 must make way for new system

Over the years, there has been a crescendo of voices from the US and the EU urging that large emerging economies such as India and China be "responsible stakeholders in the international system".

What is left unsaid is that such voices expect Delhi and Beijing to be responsible to Washington and Brussels. They would like the leaders of both Asian giants to adopt (or to agree to) policies that harm the interests of their own citizens, and promote the interests of a few in the US and the EU, such as the large financial institutions that have almost destroyed the world economy by their greed, or oil and copper companies who assist speculators to drive up prices of raw materials in a way that harms the economic interests of the 2.5 billion people of India and China combined.

Take the example of the EU. This huge association seeks to shut the door to competition from the big emerging economies, by putting in place numerous tariff and non-tariff barriers to entry. At the same time, they seek to maximize the sale of luxury cars and other high-priced items to the Asian markets. Clearly, for the EU mandarins, "Free Trade" means freedom for the EU to sell goods to Asia, but no freedom for Asian entities to have reciprocal privileges in European markets. It is the

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same with human beings.

Both Europe and Asia should follow the same policies on giving each other market access and welcoming migration, rather than the one-way traffic that is the norm presently.

When the G8 was expanded into the G20, it was expected that the new forum would set right the imbalance in global consultations on financial matters by ensuring that the voices of China, India and Brazil are heard before policy gets decided. In other words, just as the G7 became the G8, the G8 would become the G20.

Instead, the G8 has continued, and has imposed a format whereby they meet in advance of the G20 summits and work out a common position that they then ask the other 12 countries to accept. The G8: G20 format has become a means to influence the big emerging nations to once again accept the policy leadership of the US and the EU, rather than being a forum to reconcile the needs of both the developed as well as the emerging countries.

If the G8 continues, then the "G12" need to meet in advance of such get-togethers the way the G8 does, so as to seek to find common positions on global issues.

Both the developed economies as well as the big emerging economies

need each other for mutual benefit and common prosperity. Both need to work in harmony and conciliation. However, the present situation is that the G8 still seek to impose their views on the rest of the world.

They need to understand that the world has changed since the 2008 financial crisis. Till then, the developed countries could pretend that they were responsible and successful in ensuring steady growth, at least for themselves. They could pretend that they had higher moral standards than emerging nations.

Rating agencies fed such an illusion by giving Triple A ratings to the sovereign debt of countries that we know now to have been bankrupt at the time (and still are), while giving much lower ratings to Asian countries that have a much healthier fiscal record. Anti-corruption watchdogs used to call the countries of North America and Europe highly principled and honest, while they called several Asian countries corrupt. The 2008 crash showed that the extent of corruption and greed in the US, the UK and other so-called "honest" countries dwarfed in its scale the graft that exists in Asia.

How many of the officers of the financial institutions that together cheated tens of millions of investors out of more than \$6 trillion have been

arrested? Just a handful, while most have got huge bonuses out of their flawed activities, rewards that they have been allowed to keep. Many are still in their jobs, and more than a few are in high positions in governments. In contrast, several have paid a far higher price for graft in China, as have in India. After the unethical underbelly of the developed world has been exposed by the financial crisis, it is no longer possible for them to dictate terms to Asia.

It needs at this point to be remembered that in the 1997 Asian financial meltdown, countries such as Indonesia and Thailand that faithfully followed the advice given by New York and Frankfurt saw an economic collapse, while countries that ignored such advice escaped.

The developed world needs to accept that it can no longer dictate to the big emerging countries. They need to understand that a win-win solution means that both sides share both the pain and the gain.

The G8 needs to disband itself so that both developed and emerging countries can together work to resolve the problems facing humanity. Should it continue, then we need a G12.

The author is vice-chair, Manipal Advanced Research Group, UNESCO Peace chair and professor of Geopolitics, Manipal University. (Source: China Daily)

How water raises the political temperature between countries

Fifteen years ago Ismail Serageldin, an Egyptian who was vice-president of the World Bank, shook politicians by predicting that the wars of the 21st century would be fought not over oil or land, but water.

So far he has been proved wrong, but escalating demand for water to grow food and provide drinking water for burgeoning urban populations has raised political tensions between many countries.

In Asia, there are disagreements over the right to dam shared rivers. India and Pakistan are in semi-permanent dispute over hydro-power on the river Indus. China, Nepal, India and Bangladesh all spar over the rivers rising in the Himalayas and which flow through neighbouring countries, providing water for nearly 500 million people on the way.

Tensions run high between Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, as well as the severely

John Vidal

depleted Aral Sea. Argentina and Uruguay have taken their dispute over the river Plate to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, while Mexico and the US argue over rights on the Rio Grande and Colorado.

Last month, Baghdad demanded that Syria cease pumping water for the Iraqi portion of the Tigris. Elsewhere in the Middle East, Palestine and Israel, and Iraq and Iran, row over water supplies from the Shatt al-Arab waterway and Turkey's dams.

In Africa, the Chobe, a tributary of the Zambezi, has caused tension between Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while there have been incidents between Mauritania and Senegal over control of the Senegal. Shares of the Niger, Volta and Zambezi are all disputed.

According to the UN, there are more than 250 internationally shared rivers covering nearly half the total land surface of the earth, as well as

innumerable shared aquifers. Around 300 potential conflicts around the world have been identified but history suggests very few if any are expected to develop into armed conflict. In the last century, only seven minor skirmishes over water were documented.

However, nearly all the world's major rivers are expected to come under increased pressure to provide farming, industry and drinking water for the three billion extra people expected to be born before the world's population starts to drop. By 2025, says the UN development programme, nearly one in three people will live in countries that are affected by water shortages. These already affect 450 million people in 29 countries, and according to the World Water Forum, tensions over water rights and allocations are expected to mount.

Last year the Pentagon predicted that water disputes would rise up the

agenda in global politics in the coming years. It argued that water was central to border disputes. Conflicts in Chad, Yemen and Somalia, it said, have all been linked to water scarcity.

The disputes are not just between countries but between states and rural and urban users. The Yellow river in China, the Ganges, the Mekong and other Asian rivers do not always reach the sea in dry seasons, leaving farmers short and blaming factory users higher upstream.

The river Kaveri is the bone of serious contention between Tamil Nadu and neighbouring Karnataka states, and water from the Vansadhara river is disputed between Andhra Pradesh and Orissa states.

Suicide cases rising across the country

More than ten persons commit suicide in a day on average in Nepal, a recent study has shown.

According to a report prepared by Nepal Police, 677 persons committed suicide across the country in the period between mid April and mid June. At this rate, almost 4000 persons commit suicide in a year.

Releasing the report at a programme in police headquarters, Naxal, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Bigyan Raj Sharma said, the trend of committing suicide has risen across the country in the recent months due to poverty, depression, unemployment, break up in love affair and torture, among others.

Sharma said, most of those committing suicide were males in the age group of 15 to 40 from rural area.

He also informed, police were contemplating to form a suicide helpline to reduce suicide cases.

Journalist Pradhan passes away

Noted journalist Jasuda Pradhan, 52, passed away on Monday due to a major heart attack.

Pradhan, who was managing editor of the People's Review Weekly, had created an image of bold scribe for herself with the reckonable commitment for nationhood.

She is survived by her husband Puspa Raj Pradhan, who is also the editor of the Weekly, along with a son and a daughter.



Journalist Pradhan had also served as a central member of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) and, acted as the founder vice-chairperson of FNJ. She also worked as a member of the board of directors of Nepal Television.

She was also associated to different social and academic and other institutions in various positions.

We, at The Weekly Mirror Family, grieve the sad demise of a journalist with mission.

~ News ~

Illegal arms trade flourishes in tourist area

The central Kathmandu tourist district of Thamel has become a centre for illegal trade in guns and small arms.

Kathmandu's police chief said the area was becoming increasingly violent because of its popularity with the city's drug dealers and criminals.

With cheap restaurants, backpacker hostels and shops, Thamel has long been the tourist capital of Nepal.

Most tourists spend at least a day here before heading out into the country to go trekking or rafting.

But in recent years, the cafes selling banana pancakes and vegetarian food have been joined by strip bars and dance clubs, many of them employing underage girls who have been trafficked into the capital from the countryside.

"Problem remains" "We're finding a lot of criminal transactions are taking place in Thamel," said Superintendent of Police Ramesh Kharel.

"We're trying to contain the growing gun culture, but the problem remains." Thamel shopkeepers say that criminal gangs are gaining more and more power in the district.

"They come here at night and fight and even fire their guns," said one shopkeeper who refused to give his name out of fear.

"We're all scared, we want freedom from this, but there are too many of them," he said.

Superintendent Kharel said that many of the guns used by the gangs were smuggled over the border from India, in particular from the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Kabeli 'A' hydropower capacity to go up

There is high chance that production capacity of the popular Kabeli 'A' hydropower based in Mechi zone may go up by 10 megawatt.

Though the primary survey demonstrated that the hydropower project can generate power up to 30 megawatt, probably the production may go up to 40 megawatt by the completion of the project or the final survey.

According to Public Relation Officer of Construction Company Butwal Power, Krishna Das Shrestha, the World Bank has bear US\$ 35,000,000 which is 40 per cent of the total construction costs.

Rest 60 per cent investment will be made by Canadian, Chinese, including other companies.

French company bags MRP contract

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded the printing contract of Machine Readable Passports (MRP) to a French company called Oberthur Technologies on Tuesday. The French company was selected out of the total four companies that had filed applications.

The French company had filed for application for MRP printing contract at the lowest cost US\$ 3.59 per copy.

The ministry finalised the MRP bid after its MRP evaluation team headed by Mukti Nath Bhatta, chief of protocol, submitted its report to foreign secretary Madan Kumar Bhattarai.

When the ministry opened tender on May 18, at least four international companies officially expressed their willingness to contest the bidding for MRP. Indonesian state venture Perum Peruri, De La Rue from the United Kingdom and Singapore-based 3M Technology had participated in the bidding along with Oberthur Technologies.

The ministry's special evaluation team reported that 3M quoted its bid at \$ 4.50 per copy while De La Rue and Perum Peruri quoted \$6.99 and \$5.99 respectively.

Meanwhile, Perum Peruri and De La Rue have filed their joint protest note at the ministry Monday claiming that the French firm lacked several requirements while submitting its bid.

Earlier, the government was forced to withdraw its decision to award the MRP contract to an Indian government owned firm after being accused of putting the national security at risk. There were also concerns of irregularities over the MRP deal with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) asking the government to terminate the contract with the Indian firm.

Nepal has already missed International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO)'s two deadlines to introduce the MRPs and recently sent a request to the UN body to extend it till end of this year.

Student unions to agitate against PCL phase out

Student unions affiliated to various political parties have urged Tribhuvan University (TU) to begin the admission process for Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) and warned of agitation if PCL is phased out.

A meeting of 13 student unions including Nepali Congress affiliated Nepal Students Union (NSU), Maoist affiliated All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) and UML affiliated ANNFSU held Tuesday urged TU and the education ministry not to phase out PCL until setting up economical and accessible option to it.

After the meeting, representatives of the student unions held talks with representatives of education ministry after the meeting.

They demanded with the authorities to establish at least one community higher secondary school with all streams including permanent positions for at least five subject teachers and four staff in all constituencies and fix a ceiling for the fees charged by private higher secondary schools before phasing out PCL.



San Miguel BEER

International :

Afghan war: Petraeus expands U.S. military presence throughout Eurasia

On July 4 General David Petraeus assumed command of 142,000 U.S. and NATO troops in a ceremony in the Afghan capital of Kabul. He succeeded the disgraced and soon to be retired General Stanley McChrystal as chief of all foreign troops in Afghanistan, those serving under U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A)/Operation Enduring Freedom and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

He now commands military units from 46 official troop contributing nations and others from several additional countries not officially designated as such but with forces in or that will soon be deployed to Afghanistan, such as Egypt, Jordan and Colombia. Neither the Carthaginian commander Hannibal during the Second Punic War nor Napoleon Bonaparte in the wars that bore his name commanded troops speaking as many diverse tongues.

That Petraeus took charge of soldiers from fifty nations occupying a conquered country on his own country's Independence Day has gone without commentary, either ironic or indignant. In 1775 American colonists began an eight-year war against foreign troops - those of Britain and some 30,000 German auxiliaries, the latter a quarter of all forces serving under English command in North America. Currently the three nations providing the most troops for the nearly nine-year-old and increasingly deadly war in Afghanistan are the U.S. (almost 100,000), Britain (9,500) and Germany (4,500).

Petraeus's remarks on the occasion of accepting his new dual command contained the standard U.S. and NATO characterization of their war in Afghanistan as aimed exclusively against armed extremists, in particular those portrayed as fighters from other countries. A representative quote states "al-Qaeda and its network of extremist allies will not be allowed to once again establish sanctuaries in Afghanistan."

Petraeus arrived in Kabul on July 2, direct from Belgium where he had addressed NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the 28 member states' permanent representatives in the North Atlantic Council and representatives of 46 ISAF contributors at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

In reference to General Petraeus taking up his new duties, Rasmussen stated at a press conference with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado that "It has been a change of command but it will not be a change of strategy."

A week after Stanley McChrystal's resignation as head of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, an ephemeral scandal that disappeared as quickly, which is to say instantaneously, as it developed, the U.S. Senate voted as it customarily does in matters of foreign policy - unanimously - and in a 99-0 vote confirmed Petraeus as the new commander of the world's longest and largest-scale war.

A few days earlier he said of

Rick Rozoff

President Barack Obama's proposed date for beginning the withdrawal of American and NATO troops from Afghanistan that the meaning of that pledge by the president, Petraeus' commander-in-chief, was "one of urgency - not that July 2011 is when we race for the exits, reach for the light switch and flip it off." Last December Petraeus asserted that there was no plan for a "rush to the exits" and that there "could be tens of thousands of American troops in Afghanistan for several years." Afghanistan falls within CENTCOM's area of responsibility and the war in that country is a mechanism for extending the Pentagon's military contacts, deployments, acquisition of bases and general warfighting interoperability with scores of nations both within and outside CENTCOM's formal ambit.

As commander of CENTCOM and superior to General McChrystal in Afghanistan, Petraeus methodically laid the groundwork for expanding the scope of the greater Afghan war throughout his command's broad geographical reach, the heart of what has been deemed the broader Middle East - from Egypt in the West to Kazakhstan in the East, taking in Iraq and the rest of the Persian Gulf region, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and all of Central and much of South Asia.

On January 2 of this year he traveled to Yemen and met with President Ali Abdullah Saleh after the Christmas Day airline bomb scare outside Detroit, though Petraeus had also been in Yemen the preceding summer. Pentagon assistance to the Yemeni government, administered under what is described as a counter-terrorism program, had grown from \$4.6 million in fiscal 2006 to \$67 million in fiscal 2009.

While in Iraq the day before his departure for Yemen in January, Petraeus stated, "We have, in fact, spent about \$70 million in security assistance last year. That will more than double this coming year."

At the time leading U.S. officials and those of its NATO allies strained to link their counterinsurgency wars - overt and otherwise - in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden regions as extensions of the Global War on Terror from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Yemen and Somalia. Then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown even affirmed that "The weakness of al Qaeda in Pakistan has forced them out of Pakistan and into Yemen and Somalia."

In May the New York Times revealed that last September Petraeus had authorized covert special forces operations under a directive called the Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force Executive Order.

"The recent disclosure that the U.S. military is expanding its covert operations in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa is widely seen as a dangerous precedent, with Iran as one of the main targets.... Officials stressed that the directive...permits operations that could pave the way toward possible

military attacks against Iran if the confrontation over Tehran's nuclear program worsens."

This March the U.S. Defense Department's website featured an article entitled "Centcom Looks Beyond Iraq, Afghanistan, Petraeus Says" in which, in addition to discussing counterinsurgency operations in Pakistan and Yemen, "Petraeus told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the United States must remain vigilant in overseeing broader security challenges throughout the region."

"Petraeus called Iran the 'primary state-level threat' in the Middle East. He told the panel that Iran undermines security throughout the region in its efforts to gain nuclear weapons, which threatens a broader arms race, and uses its paramilitary force to influence Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, Afghanistan and the Gulf region."

Two months before he announced the U.S. was maintaining several Aegis class warships in the Persian Gulf, ships equipped with advanced missile radar and Standard Missile-3 interceptor missiles. "The U.S. positioned eight Patriot missile batteries in the Middle East and Aegis ballistic missile cruisers in the Persian Gulf, Gen. David Petraeus, the U.S. Central Command leader, told the Institute for the Study of War on Jan. 22."

In early March Petraeus was in what is now crisis-stricken Kyrgyzstan, less than a month before President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was overthrown in a bloody uprising. He had arrived in Kyrgyzstan on March 10, one day after "the U.S. embassy said [a] \$5.5 million anti-terrorist center would be built in Batken in southern Kyrgyzstan - where Russian and Kyrgyz officials had earlier said Moscow might consider building a similar military facility." It would appear that Petraeus and the Pentagon once more beat Russia to the punch.

"Kyrgyzstan had been under pressure by Russia and China to close the U.S. air base. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional security treaty dominated by Russia and China, has called on the United States to close its military bases in Central Asia."

"According to the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, Washington has committed \$5.5 million toward the completion of the counterterrorism center."

In early June a report titled "Pentagon Looks to Plant New Facilities in Central Asia" disclosed that the U.S. is "preparing to embark on a mini-building boom in Central Asia" and "the US military wants to be

involved in strategic construction projects in all five Central Asian states, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan."

In what was described as the major component of the project, the aforementioned training center in Kyrgyzstan, the report also stated, "The facility was originally intended to be built in Balkan. But now it appears that it will be situated in Osh."

Three days after the above excerpts appeared online the city of Osh erupted

into violence, a deadly conflict between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks which cost hundreds of lives and led to hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks being displaced.

Petraeus's visits to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in April followed up on trips to the same three Central Asian nations last August, to Tajikistan in October and to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in January of last year.

What his visits have focused on and in large part accomplished is to secure transit rights and, as has been seen above, a military foothold in the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Starting in earnest with his tour of Central Asia in January of 2009, Petraeus has solidified what is known as a Northern Distribution Network for the Afghan war, a three-prong project that takes in a majority of the fifteen nations that formerly constituted the Soviet Union and that circumvents Pakistan, hitherto the main land route for U.S. and NATO supplies into Afghanistan but one which is more endangered by attacks with each passing day.

The first route starts in Latvia on the Baltic Sea and proceeds overland through Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The second starts at the Georgian Black Sea port cities of Poti and Batumi and moves south and east to Azerbaijan, then across the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan, from there to Uzbekistan and then to Afghanistan. A third option bypasses Uzbekistan by going, as the first does, from Latvia through Russia to Kazakhstan, but then from the last country through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan.

As commander of Central Command Petraeus oversaw a proxy war on the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen and in conjunction with NATO engineered the military buildup against Iran in the Persian Gulf.

He also to varying degrees pulled the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan deeper into the Afghan war nexus. Even nations outside of Central Command's area of operations - Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Latvia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and now Russia - are part of the network. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine have troop contingents serving under NATO in Afghanistan, with Moldova likely to provide troops soon. Of the fifteen former Soviet republics, then, only Belarus would remain completely aloof from the war.

While speaking outside NATO headquarters in Kabul on July 4, General Petraeus stated "We are in this to win." Only four days before, the deadliest month of the war for NATO forces ended and with it the lives of over a hundred foreign soldiers.

Petraeus's 150,000 U.S. and NATO troops are not going to turn the tide in America's longest, and NATO's first ground, war. Nor will the conflict be shortened by pulling more nations, with almost a third of the world's already embroiled, into the Afghan vortex.

government has also failed to control the rising inflation over the period. The country saw 13 percent inflation, the highest in the last 17 years although the government sought to keep it at 7.5 percent. Supply side constraints were one of the key reasons behind the global rise in food prices behind skyrocketing inflation in the country. As long as political uncertainty remains, the constraints marring the supply of the goods and services to general public will get more vicious.

Private sector also plans their activities in line with the announcement of the budget. The delay will create difficulties for them to chalk out their actions for the New Year as well. Giving the increasing role of private sector in the national economy, the nagging delay in unveiling the full budget is simply unwarranted.

~ News ~

Sri Lankans besiege UN office over war crimes panel

There have been chaotic scenes outside the UN's Sri Lanka offices, where protesters are demanding the UN end investigations into alleged war crimes.

Most UN staff managed to leave after police tried to break the blockade in Colombo, before being ordered to leave themselves by the government.

Several senior staff, however, remain inside and the protests, led by a government minister are continuing.

Sri Lanka says an inquiry is not needed and denies troops committed war crimes.

The government has refused to grant visas to the UN advisory panel's three members, saying the investigation violates its sovereignty.

Speaking from New York, a UN spokesman told the BBC the organisation was doing all it could to ensure the safety of its Colombo staff.

"The UN has registered its strong objections to protests organised outside UN offices... which prevented staff and visitors from entering or leaving the premises," spokesman Farhan Haq told BBC Sinhala.

"While respecting the right of citizens to demonstrate peacefully, preventing access to UN offices hinders the vital work being carried out by the United Nations each day to help the people of Sri Lanka.

"The government has provided assurances for the safety and security of our staff and for their full access to their offices. We will be closely monitoring developments and trust these commitments will be honoured."

There have been consistent allegations that both the army - and Tamil Tigers rebels who troops routed last year - committed crimes at the end of the war.

About 7,000 civilians died in the last five months of the war, according to the UN.

It says the panel, announced last month, will report back within four months and will advise on how to deal with alleged perpetrators of abuses.

"Irresponsible actions"

Hundreds of flag-waving protesters, led by Housing Minister Wimal Weerawansa, descended on the UN offices on Tuesday. They burned an effigy of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outside the buildings, the BBC's Charles Haviland reported from the scene.

They also threatened to go on hunger strike to press their demands.

Police arrived in the afternoon and there were clashes with protesters when they attempted to break the siege. Police managed to escort several vehicles of UN staff out of the compound.

An angry Mr Weerawansa then called up the president's brother, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, and put him on the speaker phone, our correspondent reports.

Mr Rajapaksa ordered the police to leave and soon hundreds of police officers obeyed. Scores of protesters still remain outside the UN office, our correspondent says.

The protesters, many of them Buddhist monks, say their action will continue until the UN disbands the panel. The UN said there were no plans to disband it.

Mr Weerawansa told the BBC that "patriotic Sri Lankans" did not support the three-member panel.

EU move

Meanwhile, the detained ex-army chief Sarath Fonseka, who led the security forces in fighting the Tamil Tigers, has said he is not afraid to face the UN panel.

"As the then army commander I can candidly say the war was waged in line with international covenants and conventions. I fully support the military in this case," Sri Lanka's Daily Mirror newspaper quoted him as saying.

There has been much international concern over the conduct of both sides in the latter stages of the war, which ended in May 2009.

Sri Lanka says it will hold its own internal inquiry, but the exact terms of reference are not clear.

International human rights groups are sceptical about the ability of the government to investigate claims impartially. They are demanding an independent investigation.

On Monday, the European Union announced it was withdrawing Sri Lanka's preferential trade access to EU markets after it failed to improve its human rights record.

Top Chinese legislator leaves for European visit

Top Chinese legislator Wu Bangguo left Wednesday for an official good-will visit to France, Serbia and Switzerland from July 7 to 20.

Wu, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, will also attend the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Geneva during his stay in Switzerland.

Wu is invited by Speaker of French National Assembly Bernard Accoyer, French Senate President Gerard Larcher, Serbian Parliamentary Speaker Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic, President of the National Council of Swiss Federal Assembly Pascale Bruderer, President of the Council of States of Swiss Federal Assembly Erika Forster-Vannini, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) President Theo-Ben Gurirab, and IPU Secretary-general Anders B. Johnsson.

UK troops in Afghanistan 'to move out of Sangin'

British troops in Afghanistan are to hand over responsibility for the Sangin area of Helmand province to US forces, the BBC understands.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox is expected to tell MPs on Wednesday the move could happen by the end of the year.

Almost a third of the 312 UK deaths in the war have happened in Sangin, a volatile northern district at the heart of the opium-growing industry.

Last month Britain handed over command in Helmand to a US general.

Maj Gen Richard Mills, of the US Marine Corps, assumed control of all Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) troops in Helmand on 1 June.

Mirage of ...

proposition of bringing the combatant under the Special Committee for Supervision and Integration of the combatants if they are allowed to take the reins of the new government.

They harbour fear that the other parties might conspire to ostracize them if they first abandon the command over the combatants.

The non-Maoist parties however are insisting on a clear road map to determine the modus operandi of integration and rehabilitation before forming the consensus government.

According to the Maoists, the combatants should be asked about their choice as an initial step while deciding about their future.

Contrastingly, the other parties say the determination of the number of

combatants to be integrated should be the primary task.

A news report about the secret deal between the outgoing Prime Minister Nepal and Maoist chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal says that they agreed to integrate 5,000 to 7,000 combatants in the security agencies.

It is said that Dahal demanded forming a separate force of combatants while Nepal stressed on the recruitment on an individual basis.

However, the authenticity of this deal is yet to be proved.

Be that as it may, integration is the most sensitive and cardinal issue of the peace process. But the both sides seem to be inclined towards leveraging the issue in line with their self-centric interest.

The Army establishment is also an important factor related to the integration conundrum. It has long been maintaining

that the induction of Maoist fighters in the higher echelon of the army higher will be something unpalatable.

That's why: creating a broader agreement on integration has emerged as very taxing and tough job. Thus, the amiable resolve of the issue very much hinges on the formation of consensus government not a majority one.

Two successive majority based governments over the last two years could not accomplish the two most important jobs-completion of the peace process and constitution writing as they failed to do a scintilla of meaningful job to tide over the integration row.

Politics ...

special programme for meat, fruits, cement and dairy as a measure to substitute import as country's export sector has taken a steep nose-dive. The

Attractive tourist sites in Terai



Lumbini

Shakyamuni Buddha was born in Lumbini, in southern Nepal, twenty-five hundred years ago. Since his time, Nepal has been a sacred ground for Buddhists as the birthplace of the Buddha. Lumbini is a small town in the southern Terai plains of Nepal, where the ruins of the old city can still be seen. Shakyamuni Buddha was born to a royal family. Lumbini has been a holy ground for Buddhists all over the world. The restored garden and surroundings of Lumbini have the remains of many of the ancient stupas and monasteries. A large stone pillar erected by the Indian Emperor Ashoka in 250 BC

Development Trust, a non governmental organization dedicated to the restoration of Lumbini and its development as a pilgrimage site. The plan, completed in 1978 by the renowned Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, will transform three square miles of land into a sacred place of gardens, pools, buildings, and groves. The development will include a Monastic Zone, the circular sacred Garden surrounding the Ashoka pillar and Maya Devi temple, and Lumbini Village, where visitors will find lodges, restaurants, a cultural center and tourist facilities.

An important archeological site near

dating back to the eighth century BC. A must for archeological and historical buffs! Besides its religious and historical significance, Lumbini offers cultural insights into the village life of southern Nepal.



bears an inscription about the birth of the Buddha. An important part of Lumbini is the temple of Maya Devi. It has a stone image of Maya Devi giving birth to Lord Buddha as she holds onto a branch. The tree is believed to have been well worn by the strokes of barren women hoping for fertility. To the south of the temple is a pool where Queen Maya Devi is said to have bathed and given her son his first purification bath.

A quiet garden, shaded by the leafy Bo tree, and a newly-planted forest nearby lend an air of tranquillity which speaks Buddha's teachings. Lumbini is now being developed under the Master Plan of the Lumbini

Lumbini, Kapilvastu evokes the ancient palace where Lord Buddha spent his formative years. Scattered foundations of the palace are abundant, and archeologists have by now



discovered 13 successive layers of human habitation



Today, Lumbini is beginning to receive travellers' and archeologists' attention after centuries of neglect. Serious preservation work has only just been started in the latter half of this century and Lumbini as a slice of history is worth seeing and worth preserving.

Access: Most of domestic airlines fly regularly to Bhairahawa, near Lumbini, and bus services are available from Pokhara and Kathmandu also. Accommodation: There are several good hotels and lodges in Lumbini, and nearby cities.

Chitwan National Park

Surrounding Chitwan National Park in southern Nepal is one of the best planned and most intelligently developed tourist areas in Nepal. Not only does it offer a wide variety of resorts and lodges, it is also easy to

reach - by road or by air. Regular flights are scheduled by Nepal Airlines and other airlines to Meghauli, Simara and Bharatpur. Many resorts provide coach service. Local buses offer a choice between a night ride and a day ride.

Chitwan National Park is perhaps the best park in Nepal for seeing animals in the wild. In the earlier part of the century, when rapid deforestation was devastating Nepal's southern Terai belt, Government of Nepal intervened and proclaimed the Chitwan area a national park.

The Government of Nepal declared the Chitwan region a national park, outlawed settlement and deforestation within its boundaries, and a campaign to save the animals began. Projects carried out with the help of

mugger peckers and many other birds are found in Terai. Janakpur has become a



plenty in these forests. Elephant grass, five to six feet tall, provides excellent camouflage for animals. This grass serves as food for the gaur (a local bison), rhino and other herbivores. Once a year, local people are allowed into the park area to cut grass. The grass is

great pilgrimage site for Hindus today. The most sacred sites are the Janaki Mandir, dedicated to goddess Sita, the Ram Sita bibaha (marriage) mandir, built over the spot where Ram and Sita were said to have been married, Ram Mandir, dedicated to god Ram and the holy pond

friendly nations have revived the animals that remained. Though the Terai is certainly not what it once was, the preserved portion within the Chitwan National Park is still a treat for animal lovers.

Royal Bengal tigers roam the region; one-horned rhinos can be seen charging through the underbrush, feeding and

dried, and used to thatch roofs or stored for food for the domestic animals during the dry season.

Janakpur

Named after the legendary King Janak, Janakpur was the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Mithila, the native country of goddess Sita, the wife of the Hindu god Ram and the

Dhanush Sagar. Hundreds of Nepali and Indian devotees come here every year to pay their respect to the goddess at this temple.

Besides the religious importance, Janakpur is also the center for the revival of the ancient Mithila art and craft. As a tradition, Mithila women have always been decorating the walls of



even courting. The Rapti River has been dammed to form a man-made lake called Lamital where water-birds and marsh

heroine of the great Hindu epic Ramayana. Today Janakpur stands as one of the interesting places among all the towns of

their houses with paintings depicting figures from Hindu mythology in abstract forms, sometimes resembling a mandala.