

President, politicians disgrace themselves

WM correspondent

When former foreign secretary of India Shyam Sharan landed in the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) for his four-day emergency visit to Nepal, the government was not clear about the diplomatic protocol he carried with him.

Sharan, who was also former Indian envoy to Nepal, himself tried to justify the diplomatic validity of his visit by saying he came here as special emissary of Indian prime minister.

Interestingly, contrary to traditional diplomatic practices, officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) didn't reach the TIA to receive Sharan.

Only Indian ambassador to Nepal made a rush to the airport to welcome the special envoy.

Another uncommon character of the Sharan's political pilgrimage to Nepal was that the Indian embassy took a lead in arranging his meets with political leaders, a shift from the tradition of only MoFA carrying out such task.

In fact, Nepali leaders have already ceased to display an iota of seriousness towards the diplomatic protocol when it comes to meeting with foreigners who can bless them with power and privileges.

This time, even President Dr Ram Baran Yadav himself undermined his position as a head of the state though his two illegitimate meetings with the illicitly conceived visit of Sharan.



The Nepali state had not formally recognized Sharan as special envoy of the Indian Prime Minister because he didn't use state-to-state channels for his visit.

The parliamentary Committee on International Relations and Human Rights also concluded that the Indian embassy breached diplomatic norms by not providing information on the recently concluded Sharan's visit to the Nepal government formally.

So, what prompted the first president of a nascent republic to lay red carpet to the agent of New Delhi whose entry into the country was

clearly a blatant violation of both diplomatic and political norms?

Was not it a big disgrace to his status and the dignity of the entire nation?

According to observers, the legislative-parliament must not continue to shy away from shackling the president if he dares to overstep his limits.

"Dr Yadav had already mocked the sovereignty of the people by nullifying the decision of the then popularly elected Maoist-led government to sack the former army chief.

"Again, he met twice with the foreigner whose visit to the country was illegally dubious," they added.

Moreover, the meet between the Sharan and Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Chhatraman Singh Gurung also does not augur well to the independent image and professional reputation of as sensitive institution as Nepal Army (NA).

Be that as it may, out of their neurotic obsession with petty political gains, Nepali politicians have indulged in subjugating themselves and the sovereign status of the entire nation to the foreign conspiracy and coerciveness.

It is this appallingly amazing trait of Nepali politicians, which emboldened Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood to hobnob with them even before

submitting his credentials to the president.

Equally interestingly, this time the Sharan's mission and its outcome was also so "sacrosanct" that the Indian embassy did not bother to organize a press meet to let public know the reasons behind his visit.

However, the surprisingly Sharan, upon his arrival at TIA, had indirectly reasserted the Indian hegemony in Nepali political affairs by stating that he came to Nepal to help solving Nepal's political crisis.

On the same day, UCPN (Maoist) decided that the foreign intervention in government formation was simply unacceptable to them.

With the mandarins of New Delhi detesting the proposition of Maoists leading the next government, his first objective obviously was to prevent the former rebels from ascending to the power corridors.

During the third round of prime ministerial election, Maoist chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal was close to attaining support of Madhesi parties with some Madhesi Janadikar Forum (MJF) leaders crossing the floor to vote in favour of him.

As the Indian establishment sensed the danger of Maoists forming the new government, it sent Sharan to Nepal to block them from dominating the next dispensation.

That's why: he first met with Rastriya Janashakti Party chairman Surya Bahadur Thapa who is considered very close to India.

Then, he threw a lavish dinner party to the Madhesi parties at the Indian embassy to propel them to act as per the South Block's orders.

Eventually, this cunningly weaved schemes worked.

Those Madhesi lawmakers, who had crossed the floor in the earlier voting, remained neutral in the fourth round of election.

The latest onset of Sharan in Nepali political sphere was solely to reaffirm the long-standing Indian clout on it. And, to what extent his sermons to Nepali politicians will work will be clearer in coming days.

Hegemony at its worst

WM correspondent

The recent death threat against Maoist lawmaker Ram Kumar Sharma by an Indian embassy official named Subrat Das has once again corroborated the obvious fact-The brazenness on the part of the southern neighbour knows no boundaries when it comes to dictating the Nepali politics.

Even though the embassy termed the issue of threat as concoction, the fact that the number from which Sharma was threatened was registered in the name of the embassy gives an ample space to raise a strong suspicion over the justifications furnished by Lanchaur.

Regarding the alleged death threat, the Committee for International Relations and Human Rights of the

Legislature Parliament not only summoned Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala but also directed unanimously the government to expel Indian consular Das from the country for committing such act.

The committee also decided that Indian embassy should apologize for the matter.

In any parliamentary democracy, it is simply imperative for the government to implement the decision made by such committee.

But, the caretaker government is yet to take any step towards this direction.

According to lawmaker Sharma, he did not only receive death threat after abduction but was also told that his daughter would be expelled from a school run by [Cont. on page 6]

WM correspondent

So far, four attempts have been made to elect a new prime minister to succeed Madhav Kumar Nepal and, unfortunately, all of them have ended in ignominy.

The parties are still sharply divided among and within themselves on who should lead the new government.

The role of the CPN (UML), which remained neutral in the last four rounds of elections for a new premier, will be crucial to decide the very conception of the next government.

The party isolated itself from the competition for the most coveted post claiming it wants the formation of a consensus dispensation not the majority one.

Injured hopes



The UML central committee meeting held recently discussed on four topics to build a consensus government: candidacy withdrawal from both UCPN (Maoist) and Nepali Congress (NC) to pave the way for new beginning for consensus, opening



doors for new candidate by changing Parliamentary Working Procedures, implementing the six point agendas identified in last January and, lastly, power sharing among the parties.

The party's latest posture is tilted towards the integration methods and

modules of Maoists combatants, possible ways of power sharing and, resolving debates in the state writing process

The decision on the part of UML to make a move for a consensus government came at a time when the party leadership itself is marred by internal strife over the new government.

One faction headed by chairman Jhulanath Khanal is in favour of continuing the party's neutral position while the other commanded by K.P Oli and Madhav Kumar Nepal wants to support NC candidate Ram Chandra Poudel to lead a majority government.

Khanal has stated that the UML's decision to continue its neutrality has also prompted [Cont. on page 6]

Maoists in internal mess



WM Correspondent

Two rival factions of the UCPN (Maoist) have launched tirade against each other over the issue of hobnobbing between the party's vice-chairman Baburam Bhattarai and the

Indian premier's 'special envoy' Shyam Sharan during the latter's recent visit to Nepal.

Central committee member Barsa Man Pun, who is close to chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal, scathingly

criticized the meeting between them saying, "Bhattarai would have to furnish details about the same to the party".

However, Bhattarai also swiftly reacted by terming the comments aired by Pun as a manifestation of childish

waywardness.

He also claimed that he met with Sharan as per the suggestion of the party chairman.

Dahal, undoubtedly, deems Bhattarai as the biggest challenge to his supremacy in the party.

The reluctance on the part of Maoist chieftain to allow his party enemy to assume a prime ministerial berth augurs well this fact.

While speaking to his cadres in Lalipur Dahal a few months back, Dahal also tried to indirectly depict Bhattarai as someone loyal to New Delhi.

Even though the Maoist chief later made attempts to dilute his controversial allegation, it also showed Dahal is so jittery about the possible political consolidation of Bhattarai "through the backing of India".

In fact, the Maoist ideologue Bhattarai has been accused of

harbouring personal proximity with India by his own party time and again

As such, Bhattarai showed passiveness in generating a required support for the formation of a majority government under the command of Dahal.

And, the Dahal faction had criticized such tendency on the part of Bhattarai.

He also came under the fire from his rival comrades for "undermining" the candidacy of Dahal for the post of prime minister by stating that only a consensus government not the majority one will be a viable solution for the political deadlock.

Interestingly, the followers of Dahal also blamed the Bhattarai faction of informing the media about the "attempts made by the party establishment to horse trade Madhesi lawmakers at Hotel Sunset in New Baneshwor, Kathmandu" to form a new government led by Dahal.

The lawmakers had reportedly run away from a secrete way after they detected the presence of the media in the hotel.

On the other hand, the Bhattarai faction alleged that it was Dahal who blocked Bhattarai from becoming Prime Minister when the Madhesi parties were supportive to him to lead the new government.

The rival coterie of Dahal also thinks that he is cunningly agile to pit Bhattarai and another party's vice chairman Mohan Vaidya against each other to maintain his leadership.

The largest party in the Constituent Assembly (CA) has so far been able to prevent its internal strife from blowing out of proportion. But, it may prove pernicious to the party as well the peace process of the country as a whole if the Maoist stalwarts continue to squabble over relatively trifling issues.

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Editorial

Political ridiculousness at its peak

No person in his/her right frame of mind could dismiss the failure of the legislature-parliament to elect a new Prime Minister through the four elections in one month as something natural.

The politicians who never get tired harping on the democratic norms and values have once again presented themselves in a preposterous light with their perennially deliberate inability to comply with normal legislative exercises.

Stalwarts of three parties - UCPN- Maoist, Nepali Congress, and CPN UML and small parties appear not genuinely concerned with the urgency of acting together to accomplish constitution-writing and peace processes by the extended deadline.

It was their gross myopia and the filthy flippancy towards the legitimate interests of the people and the nation that prevented the country from witnessing a timely completion of the mentioned two processes, on which the raison de etre behind the CA rests.

The task of drafting a new constitution has completely lost momentum and the whole process of change and transformation of our socioeconomic order lurches from one corner to another without any sense of vision and direction.

It is the people who have become the ultimate victims of the insecurity, uncertainty and economic turmoil inherent in this process.

What is being enacted in the political stage is an almost neurotic obsession for power no matter what the costs.

There is an urgent need to shift the focus from power-exercising politics to problem-solving politics so that the center of attention is on new constitution rather than the post of the prime minister. However, there are no indications that the same will take place anytime soon as the political pendulum continues to tilt towards personal and parochial interests.

The possibility of trust deficit that now exists among the political parties deepening further and the country receiving more crafty political mentors from our neighboring countries to "fix the problem" at the cost of the very independence of the country is simply high.

The sudden entry and unannounced exit of former Indian Ambassador and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran amidst the row and confusion over the new premier provides an ample space to say that Nepali politicians are happy to the country being a vassal state of India.

More distressing is the fact they are still choosing to resort to falsehood, lie and concoction in their frantic bid to absolve themselves from the felony of pushing the country into the current appalling state.

The prolonged political crisis coupled with worsening law and order situation, bleak industrial outlook, power shortage have also taken a heavy toll on the socio-economic fabric of the country.

Continuity of Indian design in Nepal

Yuba Nath Lamsal

Last week, Shyam Saran came to Kathmandu acting as a special emissary of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with the purported objective of further strengthening India's long held desire to keep Nepali politics under its tight grip. During his stay in the Nepali capital, the former Indian foreign secretary held a flurry of meetings with leaders of different political parties in which Saran prescribed Indian agenda to heal the Nepali political ill. He conveyed the sermon of the Indian establishment to the Nepali parties and leaders to continue with the present 'democratic (pro-Indian) alliance'. This makes it clear that Saran's mission was to weaken Nepal's nationalist forces and keep them out of power and give continuity to the government that is composed of 'pro-Indian elements'. But it is yet to be seen how far the Indian prescription and design work in Nepali politics.

Some Indian mainstream media portrayed Saran's visit to Kathmandu as a mission to mediate and bring the squabbling parties together in the wake of their failure to form a new government. Saran, too, confirmed this as he, speaking to the media right after he arrived in Kathmandu, said that he was here to facilitate Nepali parties to 'forge national consensus so that Nepal's peace process would be complete and successful'.

In a practical sense, Saran's visit was not aimed at facilitating the peace process in Nepal. The real intention of India is to ensure that the 'pro-Indian coalition' does not break. Most importantly, the Madhesi parties, which are the creation of India in general and Shyam Saran in particular, remain together so that India's interests are best served in Nepal.

The unsolicited advice Saran tried to impose on Nepali parties is a blatant interference in Nepal's internal affairs. So far as the mediation, as some Indian media have reported, is concerned, mediation is normally takes place upon request from the two quarrelling parties. However, it is not understood how India got the mandate to mediate in Nepal's politics as none of the parties, to our

notice, had ever requested our southern neighbour to do so. Saran's self-styled mission of mediation was, therefore, unwarranted, which the entire country and people should have opposed in a collective and united manner.

India has always tried to keep a tab on Nepali politics through conspiracy and coercive approach. The paramount objective of New Delhi's diplomacy in Nepal has been to ensure that Nepali politics and the government do not go out of Indian influence and grip so that India's strategic and security interest are well protected in Nepal. To ensure this, India applies all kinds of tactics and techniques-moral or immoral, legal or illegal and diplomatic or otherwise. The Indian design on Nepal was long spelled right after its Independence from British raj which included bringing Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal under Indian union by 2015. India has already occupied Sikkim and has taken over Bhutan's security and foreign affairs. Guided by this grand strategy of Sikkimization and Bhutanization, India's Nepal's policy is being formulated and executed.

The recent developments in Nepal have sent a message to Indian establishment that the politics in Nepal is slowly slipping out of India's grip. This conclusion was reached following the sudden resignation of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal even without prior notice of India. India had expected that Mr Nepal, who was installed on the seat of prime minister with India's assistance, would duly consult before taking such a decision as New Delhi was for the continuation of non-Maoist coalition comprising the Congress, UML and Madhesi parties'.

It is perceived in the diplomatic circle in New Delhi that India's Nepal's policy has failed after Rakesh Sood was sent to Kathmandu as ambassador. Sood's style of acting and approach are not liked by many in Kathmandu even by 'India friendly people'. Many India watchers comment that Sood behaves as though he is here

as a 'viceroi of British raj' but not a diplomat. A Nepali diplomat is of the view that Sood's 'coercive and arrogant attitude' has been counterproductive for India in Nepal, which must be reviewed and corrected by Indian establishment if Nepal-India relations are to be made friendlier, cordial and cooperative. Sood's coercive approach was well validated by the threat on life of a lawmaker allegedly by an official of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. Ram Kumar Sharma, who was elected to Constituent Assembly on Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party and later defected to the Maoist party, claimed that a senior and responsible official at the Indian Embassy issued a threat on his life for his defection. As Sood and Indian establishment were out to keep the non-Maoist alliance in power and marginalize the Maoists, lawmaker Sharma not only defected to the UCPN-Maoist but also played a crucial role in bringing some other Madhesi lawmakers into the Maoist fold. As a result, eleven lawmakers of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum defied party's decision and voted for the Maoist chairman in the third round of election for prime minister. His move was seen as a direct threat to India's design to keep the Maoists out of power. If Saran had not intervened, there would have been further fragmentation in the Madhesi parties and Prachanda would have been elected as prime minister in the fourth round of election.

The government of India hurried to send Saran to Kathmandu with the realization that India's grip in Nepal's politics is slowly starting fading, which could be well sensed following the split in the Madhesi parties on the issue as to which candidate they should support during the election for premiership. The floor crossing by some lawmakers of the Madhesi parties and voting in favour of Maoist candidate was a matter of serious concern for India. It was perceived as a failure of current Indian Ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood in keeping Madhesi parties under India's control. If Madhesi parties went

bizarre, India's best bait in the entire game plan and its strategic perspective to keep Nepal under its grip would go out of hand.

After the signing of the 12-point agreement that brought the Maoists into the peaceful political mainstream, the South Block had expected that the only anti-Indian force would now be silenced and be in their side. It did not happen after the Maoists went to power following the Constituent Assembly election two years ago. This was more pronounced when the Maoists quit the government following the row with the president on the issue concerning the sacking of the army chief. The Maoists openly criticized India for interfering in Nepal's politics and vowed to fight back. Since then the relationship between the Indian government and the Maoists has strained.

The Indian establishment looked for a suitable candidate who could handle the situation and make some damage control. Shyam Saran was chosen as the suitable candidate to do this job because of his past record and background. Saran is familiar with the Nepali politics and political parties as he also served as the ambassador of Nepal. He played a key role in bringing the Maoists and parliamentary parties together to sign the 12-point agreement in New Delhi. Saran was, therefore, perceived to have better understanding with the Maoists as well. Similarly, it was Saran's initiative to create Madhesi parties in Nepal and his role could be effective in uniting the Madhesi parties together once again.

Saran's visit was, thus, aimed at keeping the non-Maoist forces together so that the Maoists are out of power. The first priority was to unite the Madhesi parties in which Saran's mission has been successful. Now India has ensured that the Maoists would not be able to go to power unless they make significant shift in their policy towards India. Saran's mission was neither to help consensus building nor complete the peace process but to ensure that politics in Nepal may not go out of New Delhi's hand.

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Maoist aversion to pluralism puzzling

Ritu Raj Subedi

It puzzles everyone that UCPN-Maoist is declining to write the term 'pluralism' in the new constitution. While coming into peace process, the Maoists made commitment to multi-party system, human rights, periodic election, independent judiciary, rule of law, press freedom and other principles of democracy. Even in the 12-point deal, struck between the then 7-party alliance and the Maoists on the eve of April Uprising, they have agreed to embrace pluralism in addition to giving up violence, integration of their combatants, acceptance of the co-existence of competing forces and recognition of political diversity.

But, now, as the parties began to brainstorm the contents of the new statute, there arose about a dozen of issues in which the parliamentary and the Maoist forces have failed to agree one. The concept of pluralism is one serious topic which the Maoists oppose to incorporate in the constitution. Experts are baffled over the Maoist aversion to pluralism, one of the core values of democracy in the 21st century.

Pluralism is an acknowledgment of diversity and recognition of the rights of minorities. It ensures the peaceful coexistence of different interests, convictions and values. The people are not forced to assimilate to anyone else's position in conflicts that will naturally arise out of diverging interests and positions. "Pluralism is connected with the hope that this process of conflict and dialogue will lead to a definition and subsequent realization of the common good that is best for all

members of society," said an expert.

No any political party that claims to do politics for the interest of the people dares to reject pluralism that gained much currency following the collapse of totalitarian systems in early 90s. Although the idea originated from capitalist and western democracies, pluralism is now an accepted form of democracy. In Nepal, several political revolutions were carried out in the past, whose one main goal was and is to guarantee the pluralistic democratic system.

In Nepal, almost all parties have accepted pluralism. But, the Maoists are resisting it. On one hand they are accepting multi-party competition, on the other, they are opposed to the idea of pluralism. In holding such contradictory position, the Maoists are either not free from the hang-over of their authoritarian attitude or fail to understand the essence of pluralism. Their objection to pluralism gives the lie to their commitment to multi-party democracy, peace process and freedom of ideas. This gives an impression that they are just using the parliament as a platform to meet their broader strategic goal. Their hesitation to be disarmed before going to power offers ground to the critics that the Maoist are guided by their long-term goal of imposing the communist dictatorship in the country.

Going by the statements of the top Maoist leaders, it seems, they are not ready to accept political, cultural and ideological diversities, which are not

compatible to their views. "We do not allow feudalists and imperialists to function in the political system that we have envisaged," said Maoist vice-chairman Mohan Baidhya. They may be talking about such a society where multiparty system is practiced but the political parties with opposite ideology are not allowed to operate as practiced in some one-party ruled countries.

If one takes into account the ideas which the Maoists catapulted into the Nepalese politics, it looks odd seeing them to protest pluralism. They advocated inclusive democracy and proportionate representation of the disadvantaged people. They were ones who raised the voices of dalits, ethnic, madhesi, women and other marginalised classes during their insurgency. Cashing in on the grievances of dalits and ethnic communities, the Maoists enticed them into their 'people's army' and launched a decade-long war against the state. It is true that Maoist ethnic-based politics generated communal feelings and riots but their other agenda reflect the spirit of pluralism.

In essence, pluralism is the recognition of the divergent ideas. In the Nepalese context, pluralism recognizes the voices and roles of all-political parties, civil societies, student unions, workers, businessmen, media, professional associations, intellectuals, women groups, dalits, ethnic communities, Madhesi, third genders, and disappearing communities like Chepang and Kusundas. The pluralistic

society promotes and protects the neglected voices and activism of citizens, who in turn act to democratize the political parties, politicians and all organs of the society. The message of Janandolan-II was also the restoration of pluralistic democratic system and defying the autocratic systems of any sort. The people were and are not for the domination of single political ideology. There should be the healthy, fair and fearless atmosphere wherein divergent ideas could flourish, function and sustain.

The Maoists are still swayed by their dogmatic views of communism despite their full-fledged formal commitment to democracy. As one political scientist said, the Maoists hesitate to accept to the idea of pluralism as it primarily came from USA.

"The Maoists look reluctant to accept pluralism as the concept evolved in the United States," said one political scientist.

Because of their antagonistic relation with the US, the Maoists may be shrugging off the idea, he claimed.

If they sense of the smell of imperialism in pluralism and falters to embrace it, it will be their myopic view and failure to grasp the wind of change. The Maoist democratic credential is still under the ring of suspicion as they are not willing to the quick solution to the controversy besetting the integration and rehabilitation of their fighters. If they go against the spirit of pluralism, national and international community will further suspect their inner intention. Their transformation into a credible democratic will be also delayed.

The pioneer food producer and revenue collectors of Tarai

Much has been said that Tharus are the ancestors of Lord Buddha. There is strong belief that Tharus of Nepal they are connected with the Shakyas

Shankar L. Chaudhar

immigrants mostly elite hilly people. Many of the immigrants used their education, and their castes and kinship

availability of land for cultivation (and hence for revenue) if only settlers could be found. Many of the revenue



lineage of ancient Kapilvastu of the days of king Shuddhodana, father of Gautama Buddha. The Tharus tilled the land of Shuddhodana.

At the end of 19th centuries and beginning of 20th centuries, Tharus were wrongly publicized and criticized. The class consciousness in the Tarai, those who are poor, backward and exploited are the Tharus (Guneratne, Arjun, 1994). But old evidences clearly indicated that Tharus reigned in this land for more than two thousand years ago. Old kingdoms have risen and fallen for at least 2000 years. Chinese pilgrims from 5th to 7th century, namely Fa-hien and Hieun Siang in search of Buddhist shrines give a sound idea of the impermanent landscape of the Tarai.

Tharus have been great pioneer food producers, creators and revenue collectors of rich farmland on the fringe of the forest. Tharus peasants were valued agricultural labor force. They always kept themselves busy in the settlement of barren and forested land (kalabanza). If other hard working Nepalese the so called military tribes became valued cannon fodder for the British, the Tharus stand out as the best farmers (Gisele, K. 1987).

Under agrarian condition and interms of land privileges, Tharu society was certainly a hierarchical one. This society is an open society and invites other hard working groups to work with them. They are always in search of good land suitable for farming where water was available, means they are earlier explorer of suitable land for farming and settlements. The ready availability of land in the Tarai had left most Tharus with little appreciation of its value. The most immediate consequences to Tharus through out the Tarai of the Malaria eradication program were that they lost land. The situation was particularly devastating in some of the western districts especially Dang (Guneratne, A. 1994) where much of the land formerly controlled by Tharus passed into the hands of

affiliations with local government functionaries to appropriate Tharu land. **As land settlers:** Clearing forest into cultivated land was the old tradition of Tharus. Land clearing and colonization were carried out under the leadership of one man. Particularly head of the village clearing and farming were a collective affair, a village affair, and not as in shifting agricultural societies, a clean affair. Most of the Tarai were swamps, barren or forest areas. Water was flowing without any use. They settled in this area where water was flowing and cultivated land was sufficient. Much of the Tarai abounded in swamps and rivers, allowing easy flooding and irrigation of paddy field. The Chaudhary administrative area or parganna was generally bounded by rivers and management of water and irrigation was one of his responsibilities. The settlement of village was chosen according to the availability of water close to major river-beds, where many old Tharu settlement are still found today wetland swampy areas and flowing rivers all suited to the Tharu way of life, as it was good for fishing and growing for paddy rice. This was all environmentally suitable atmosphere. The abundance and pasture land encourage Tharus to raise livestock for meat and milk. There was time when Tharu had surplus in milk and meat production and even wool from local sheep raising. This attracted the neighboring states of India as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, popularly the Ahir community. Consequently they maintained tight relationship with the Tharu in Dang valley (Kurt Meyer, 2001). The Tharus not only augmented food production in the Tarai even in sick period of Malaria when it was in great epidemic, but boosted the revenues in the government treasury. The growing importance of the Tarai to Nepal lay not only in its forest produce, such as timber and elephants, but also in the

collectors recruited by the state to collect the land revenue in the Tarai and undertake the work of agricultural development were locally important Tharus (Guneratne, A. 1994). Also it is the Tharu community who domesticated elephant the biggest animal of the earth. They have got several Lal Mohars, Medal, Lnad, Birtas and other prestigious prizes for the bravery works of elephant catching. Nepalese forest was favorable for growing elephants. The value of elephant between Tarai leader and their overlord, was great. The oldest document of the collection relating to elephant was issued to Hem Chaudhary of Saptary district in 1783. Excellent farmers, the Tharu have tilled the fertile Tarai lands for centuries feeding their countrymen and enriching the royal treasury with taxes (Kurt Meyer, 2001). According to M. C. Regmi (1978) the highest revenue in the country was collected alone from Saptary district during Rana regime.

Socio-economic approach: Very scanty information is known about the socio-economic status of the Tharu at the macro level. In general they are considered as one of the deprived or disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country. This condition is mainly based on the existence of widespread bonded labor systems in the Tarai in general and among Tharus in particular.

Habitat concentration: Tharus are highly confined and concentrated in the Tarsi. According to population census 1991, 97.3% of the total Tharu population is living in Tarai, 2.6% in hills and 0.1% in the mountain. Like wise Tharus contribute more than 15% of the total Tarai population. The highest concentration of Tharu population is found in mid - west and far western region and combining together account for 50.6% of the total Tarai Tharu population.

Literacy status:

Poverty is widespread and multi-faceted phenomenon. Literacy can be considered to measure advantaged or disadvantaged status of ethnic groups. The prevalence of high illiteracy is indicative of relative deprivation. A comparative study of literacy status between Tharu and non-Tharu shows that the literacy rate is low among Tharu. It is 27.3% for Tharu and 37.7% for non-Tharu. There is also wide regional variation in it. The rate varies from 19.9 to 39.4%. It decreases from east to west (Shiva Sharma et al, 1998)

Age scenario and Child dependency:

Demographically the Tharu population is younger than non-Tharu. One indicator of it is the proportion of children 0-14yrs of age compared with other groups. Tharus have higher proportion of children. Of the total Tharu population (Tarai) 44.7% are below 15yrs of age, whereas the percentage of non-Tharu is 42.3% only. In a reverse way, the proportion of adults or productive proportion (15-64 yrs of age) is lower among Tharus and higher among non-Tharus i.e. 52.7% for Tharus and 54.5% for non-Tharus. The higher burden of children among Tharus has wider implications or several dimensions of poverty as child labor, child illiteracy, and infant mortality. Among Tharu this ratio is 84.8% and for non-Tharu this is 77.6%. There is big regional variation in child dependency ratio among Tharus.

Labor involvement:

Labor involvement rate among Tharu is higher (54.8%) compared to non-Tharu (46.9%) and Tarai average is 48.6%

Labor involvement in agriculture:

Farming is the way of life for almost all regions of Tarai for Tharu community.

It is most important economic activity. According to 1991 census Tharu labor participation is 82.8% for Tharus and for non-Tharus is 72.5% in agriculture.

Engagement in white collar jobs:

The involvement of Tharus in white collar job is minimal. The involvement in white collar job is 2.3% among Tharus and 7.9% among non-Tharus. Numerically Tharus are the most dominant ethnic groups in the Tarai and no other groups are comparable to their mass. Within the Tarai they are dominant considerably in mid-west and more in the far west Bardia, Kailali, Dang and kanchanpur. The socio-economic condition is far worse in the west compared to the east. Irrespective of higher participation in agriculture their economic condition is deplorable. The perusal of data so far seen above envisage more space to the researchers especially social scientists to work more on this aspect and to rectify and there by to improve their socio-economic conditions at large.

The making of a Prime Minister: test 4

R.K. Regmee

Two issues - floor crossing in parliamentary voting and Maoist drive in recruiting combatants of People's Liberation Army - are making the fourth round of Prime Ministerial poll on Friday in the Legislature Parliament more sensational. The monotony that the election had in the first three run-offs is sure to give way to thrilling experience this time, say politicians. Both carry profound potentiality of impacting Nepali politics particularly peace and constitution in varying ways.

Candidate Prachanda, the opposition leader, enters the fourth round with tacticians' confidence generated by the way he could broaden his support base to 259 in the third round. Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party opted for backing him while 11 Madhesi Jana-Adhikar Forum-MPs chose to defy their party whip and floor-cross to vote for Maoist contestant. Prachanda will also wear a look of militancy on the day because of his party's decision to recruit more combatants in Maoist People's Liberation Army.

Poudel, another challenger, joins the run-off with more focus on the agenda of power for civilian party vs regime for party with armed outfit. His call for the cause of healthy parliamentary practice could wake up his own party Nepali Congress for more vigorous campaigning for him. The same may push other parties which are under so called democratic alliance and in no way tolerate negative impact on the mission of parliament.

The parties pursuing non-voting neutrality in previous rounds appear compelled to review their approach. Analysts hope they will have political wisdom to understand how floor crossing pollutes the parliamentary practice and how militancy victimizes peace-building efforts underway in the country.

CPN UML chief Jhala Nath Khanal who withdrew as a candidate minutes before the first round voting might take the fourth round with some more home-work to explain how consensus would be worked out if Prachanda and Poudel exit the race as per his call. There is a chance which might make him feel the hurt that his party's neutrality has caused in the latest parliamentary process.

Counseling by a friendly country

The mess that has dead-locked Nepal parliament and made it unable to pick up a government leader for quite some time has drawn attention of friendly neighbour India. It has also been a matter of concern for other friendly countries. The Prime Minister of India has sent his special envoy for counseling the politicians on multiple impact of that mess on Comprehensive Peace Agreement and constitution drafting. His reminder would in its own way help the parties to be more active in ending indecisiveness in parliament.

Political parties in Nepal often stand against any sort of what they call foreign intervention in internal political matters. But their way of handling politics invites it from time to time in various forms. Whether the southern neighbour took initiative to counsel on its own or some Nepali political party approached it for the same at this particular point of time is something political analysts might research in future.

Disturbing factors

The act of defying the party-whip that took place in the third round of PM poll has rocked Nepali politics. It indicates horse trading, complain politicians warning such practice would spoil the parliamentary practice in the Constituent Assembly. However, those who crossed the floor claim "it is just a technique to make political parties conscious of how important it is to be decisive in formation of government." The Maoists who benefited from such practice also deny any sort of financial manipulation in it.

Floor crossing, like all parliamentary exercises, has both sides - negative and positive. Some take it as a tool to undermine political accountability. Others pooh pooh it as something that damages the spirit of participatory democracy. Most political scientists take floor crossing as a method of making parliamentary system dysfunctional. Many emphasize the need to relate it to the issue concerned. Floor crossing is banned in some democracies by anti-defection law while in others it is selectively tolerated.

In the context of Nepal's Constituent Assembly, which has a dual responsibility of acting like the top legislative House and serving as a forum to finalize the constitution of the Republic of Nepal for institutionalizing peace, the floor crossing would be politically infectious. It could undo everything that Nepal did after People's Movement II for democratic freedom.

Similarly the sense of competition that Maoists are showing in recruitment of fresh personnel in their forces cannot help the process of evolution of civilian party. It does not fit the parliamentary outfit of the opposition party which has an obligation to safeguard the cause of the Constituent Assembly as its single largest component. Whether this point further enhances Maoist support base in parliament or erodes it is something that voters would validate in parliament on Friday.

Some burning issues emerging after the third round of Prime Ministerial poll would make the test-4 taste differently. But whether the same would be able to deliver the third Prime Minister of the Republic of Nepal or not would depend on how parliamentarians use or do not use their privilege of voting in CA.

SAsia-China Study Center to be set up

The two-day workshop for the South Asia- China Culture Forum concluded on Monday with a decision to set up South Asia-China Study Center in Kathmandu.

According to an official attending the workshop, South Asia- China Study Center will be set up by the Confucius Institute at Kathmandu University which will provide a platform to foster intellectual collaboration,

knowledge sharing and people to people communication.

Anoop Ranjan Bhattarai, President of Nepal China Executive Council, who is one of the organizations of the workshop, said that the proposed study centre would be set up very soon at Kathmandu University.

The study center will focus on the joint research projects, enhancing the study on Buddhism,

disaster management and economy trade and many other common issues.

"We are also making efforts to translate some great works of literature such as myths, famous stories of each nation," he added.

The center will work in capacity building of Nepalese business communities, researchers, academicians, educationists to explore opportunities on economic

cooperation and development.

Various scholars presented their respective papers highlighting the culture, education, trade and also different facts about their country.

The workshop was attended by various officials from South Asian Countries including scholars from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation member states Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Nepalis held hostage in Libya

12 Nepali job aspirants, who had reached Libya four months ago, have been held hostage since five days, Kantipur reported Tuesday.

According to a hostage Ritu Bhattarai of Budhabare of Jhapa district, the captives have been without food from Friday as they were fired from the job on the same day.

Bhattarai telephoned Kantipur and reported that Devraj Meche, Amar Barkoli and Tanva Subedi were among the captives.

Support Manpower in Birtamod had sent them for Libya assuring a monthly salary of LYD 750. However, the service provider was not ready to accept them for more than LYD 400, Bhattarai said.

Foreigners Disobeying the Laws of Nepal

(With special reference to Labour and Immigration Laws of Nepal)

In every country in the world, foreigners are required to have an employment permit from the respective government. If they do not consequences, such as immediate repatriation along with huge fines and imprisonments and even long term restriction in entry to the country can be implemented. In most of the country, the work permit is regulated by the joint mechanisms of the Labour Department and the Immigration System or something similar. Of course, the police is part of that, and a law enforcement agency can take immediate action if they find any foreigner working without obtaining the necessary labour/employment permissions from respective authorities.

Nepal is a peculiar country in the world where massive numbers of foreigners have been working without obtaining necessary employment permit and appropriate visas. It is not limited to the private sector, but also in government-owned and popular multinational companies which have huge numbers of foreign employees against the provisions of Labour Law and the Immigration Law of Nepal. Massively, tourist visas and "not right visa" holders have found being employed by various government and non-governmental sectors including hotels, restaurants, construction, and telecommunication, hydropower, banking areas and other systems of Nepal.

According to Labour Act, 2048 (1992) and Labour Rules, 2050 (1993), if a Nepalese citizen could not be available for any skilled technical post even after publishing an advertisement in a national-level public newspaper and journal, the manager may submit an application to the Department of Labour along with the evidence of such fact for approval to appoint a non-Nepalese citizen. If it is found, in conduction of an inquiry upon the submission of any application pursuant, that a Nepalese citizen would not be available for the skilled technical post mentioned in the application, the Department of Labour may, on the recommendation of the Labour Office, grant approval to engage a non-Nepalese citizen at work for a maximum period of up to five years not to exceed two years at a time and, in the specialized kind of skilled technical post, for a period of up to seven years. The manager who engages non-

Krishnahari Pushkar

Nepalese citizens shall have to make arrangements for making the Nepalese citizens skilled and for replacing the non-Nepalese citizens gradually by them."

There is no concrete statistics on how many foreigners are working and being employed against the provisions of the Labour Law and Immigration Law of Nepal. It is estimated that more than fifty thousand foreigners are working and living illegally in Nepal without obtaining appropriate visa and permission from the Department of Labour. The Labour Law is equally applicable to all those foreigners who work in any factory, company, organization, association, firm, or group thereof, established under the prevailing laws for the purpose of operating any industry, profession or service where ten or more workers or employees are engaged (Labour Act, 2048). But who cares?

Unfortunately the state is under transition and suffering with the dilemmas of a conflict/post conflict situation where everything is fragile. The state is not currently capable to regulate with impunity the foreigners and its employees.

There are rare histories and stories where Immigration, Police or Labour Departments' authorities have tried to regulate or monitor the issue. It should be the matter of concern for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs too, but no efforts have been found against such impunity of foreigners. Many times the media has reported that international criminals and smugglers have been using the territory of Nepal as their safe home since no productive regulation, monitoring, observation and surveillances are being used to manage the presence and activity of foreigners.

Unfortunately, in the port of entry or in diplomatic missions of Nepal, we issue visas to almost all foreigners without analyzing and assessing the applications and their backgrounds in most cases. Very often we do not verify the negative list that comes from the international or national security surveillances or intelligence system. In practice, we just issue tourist visas to all foreigners who seek to enter Nepal, no matter what their purposes are, and how long, and where and how they want to stay.

In most developed countries of the world, labour or employment permits are being obtained either by the

employer or by the potential employee in advance as a precondition before applying for employment/work visa. And in some of the countries, the selected foreign employee gets a short term non-tourist visa in the port of entry or can obtain it from a respective diplomatic mission after furnishing all necessary documents. Afterward the visa gets extended after arrival once the employees or respective employers fulfill all terms and conditions and obtain employment permits and approval from the department of labour or similar authorities. In most of the countries immigration authority issues, like a renewal resident e-card, contains the information detailing the status of the particular foreigners, so they do not have to carry the passport and visa all the time.

In Nepal, there is pitiable coordinating among the respective authorities on the issue. The Labour Department, Immigration Department and other sectorial department and ministries rarely share and coordinate the information, or even use joint efforts to address the issues of disobeying and impunity of foreigners that would compel them to respect and follow the laws of Nepal.

The national security mechanism, including the Chief District Officer, Nepal Police, and National Investigation Department are also among accountable authorities to control and manage the unlawful acts and presence of foreigners, but these are not effective and never come into action against the foreigners till they commit serious crimes or are involved in aggressive public demonstrations, activities and issues of public interest that affect the public and nation on a massive level.

It is neither the employer nor the foreign employees in Nepal themselves who are serious about Immigration and the Labour Law of Nepal. Some of them don't even know about the laws.

Additionally, there is also corruption, manipulation and irregularities that exist in the system that empower and gives courage to foreign employees and their employers in Nepal to ignore the spirit and provisions of the law.

Also, the law is itself faulty in a sense of clearness and procedural aspects. These laws can be easily manipulated, defined and executed in accordance with the discretion of authorities. The respective law enforcement authorities cannot execute

it properly because of lack of resources, trained human resources, ICT, and scientific service delivery culture. So, the government should immediately address the problems and difficulties by arranging joint efforts for betterment, effectiveness and efficiency of these laws and the concerned authority.

Some immediate actions are essential: first, the government should instantly issue a public notice describing the provisions in terms of appropriate visa and labour/employment permissions along with times detailed. Secondly, a joint operation team can be formed containing the representation from necessary law enforcement authorities that need a massive operation in various sectors and geographical areas of Nepal especially in potential sectors and areas where foreigners are illegally and irregularly employed. Indeed, the Department of Immigration and Department of Labour should start regular and strategic inspections and monitor work to check and control illegal and irregular activities and the presence of foreigners. The employment/labour permits should be made mandatory before-hand to issue or extend visas for a particular period. By Law, both employees and employers should be made equally responsible for the labour/employment/permit and appropriate visas.

Furthermore, the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Department of Labour must share the detailed information on the presence and job activities of foreigners who are employed or seeking to get employment in Nepal. At the end of the every year, the Department of Immigration and Labour should produce a yearly report describing in detail the employers who have recruited foreigners and also about the foreign employees themselves, their work detail and how long they are in Nepal under the definition of employment.

The horrible trend should be controlled immediately otherwise it will be a threat on governance systems, the socio-economic situation, national security, sovereignty, and the financial system. Therefore, the government should immediately get rid of any disobeyers of the law. However, in the long-term, the Government of Nepal needs to form a team or commission of experts to review, revise, restructure and improve the overall system of Immigration and Employment Management of foreigners in Nepal.

~ National news ~

NC leaders intensify lobbying for general convention

As the dates for the 12th general convention of the party approaches, Nepali Congress (NC) leaders have started announcing their candidacies for various posts and started lobbying for support.

Acting president Sushil Koirala and senior leader Sher Bahadur Deuba have announced their candidacies for the post of party president. Another likely candidate, Ram Chandra Paudel is mum so far on his candidacy at the general convention as he is in the fray for the post of Prime Minister. Paudel is likely to either support Koirala or stand himself for the post.

Six candidates have announced candidacy for the post of general secretary. Khum Bahadur Khadka, Bimalendra Nidhi, Ram Sharan Mahat, Arjun Narsingh KC, Prakash Man Singh and Sujata Koirala have announced candidacy for the post of general secretary and started lobbying for support.

Earlier, Khadka had said he would stand for the post of president in the upcoming general convention. General Secretary is the second most powerful position after the party president. The amended party statute, that has a provision of an elected general secretary, gives more authority to the general secretary.

As per the previous statute, the general secretary used to be nominated along with other office-bearers by the party president.

Out of the six candidates who have announced candidacy for the post of general secretary, Khadka and Nidhi are from the Deuba camp and the other four are from the Koirala camp.

Sources say, there has been an informal understanding in the Deuba camp to forward one of Khadka or Nidhi as a general secretary candidate in the general conventions and nominate the other if Deuba becomes the president.

Each of the other four candidates, Mahat, KC, Singh and Koirala have claimed to be the official general secretary candidate of the Koirala camp. Among them, Sujata Koirala is in a mood to stand for the post even if Sushil Koirala does not take her in his panel, according to her close aides.

The upcoming general convention is significant for two reasons. First, the party leadership is going to second generation leaders for the first time after the formation of the party. So far, only the leaders who were involved in the formation of the party 60 years ago were at the helm of the party. Second, the party is adopting a multi-post leadership with more elected members in the Central Working Committee (CWC) than the nominated members. So far, the party used to run under a presidential model where the number of CWC members nominated by the party president would be more or equal to those elected. Thus, the party president, the only elected office-bearer, used to have a lot of influence in the party policies and decisions.

This general convention is also the first after the unification of Nepali Congress and Nepali Congress (Democratic). Deuba and other leader of his camp had formed Nepali Congress (Democratic) by splitting from the mother party a decade ago. They merged into the mother party after the third people's movement in 2006.

In the run up to the general conventions, Deuba has opened a contact office at Bishalnagar to facilitate meetings and discussions of his camp.

NC's village/town level conventions and constituency level conventions have already been completed. The district conventions are taking place Thursday.

Over 2,800 general convention representatives have been elected from the constituency level elections held earlier this month. The general convention representatives play a decisive role in shaping up the central level leadership. Reports from various districts say, new faces have been elected as the general convention representatives from most of the districts.

Meanwhile, NC leaders are contemplating adding the number of office-bearers from that passed by the General Council (Mahasamiti) in November, last year. The amended statute passed by the General Council has provisions for one vice president, two general secretaries and one treasurer.

Office bearers are preparing to add three new posts-two vice presidents and one general secretary-taking the total number of vice presidents and general secretaries to three each. However, the provision will come into effect only if the general convention representatives approve it with majority.

Four candidates have announced candidacy for district president in Kathmandu. Dhyani Govind Ranjit, Lokesh Dhakal, Bhimsen Das Pradhan and Rajan KC have announced their candidacies for the post of district president in Kathmandu. NC leader Prakash Man Singh, who has a strong hold in the Newar community of Kathmandu, has backed KC.

KC was the NC candidate in constituency no. 10 of Kathmandu, where he lost to Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Pradhan was also a candidate in constituency no. 6 of Kathmandu.

Nepal's support to democratic struggle in Bhutan

The caretaker Prime Minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal Tuesday said that the government of Nepal would always extend its support for the democratic struggle of Bhutanese citizens.

"We are always of the opinion that there must be genuine democracy in Bhutan," PM Nepal told a delegation of Druk National Congress (DNC) Bhutan that met him. "Nepali people have deep sympathy for the suffering of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal," he added.

DNC president Rongthong Kunley Dorji, who arrived in Nepal after the rejection of his extradition case to Bhutan by Delhi High Court, briefed PM Nepal about the current political situation in Bhutan and the hardships facing refugees in the camps as regard to limited facilities from donor agencies.

PM Nepal further said he was happy to meet with Dorji, who is in Nepal after 13 years of confinement in India. "It is good that you are here in Nepal completing your long confinement in Delhi," PM Nepal told him.

Meanwhile, Dorji informed the caretaker PM that Bhutanese leaders were working to establish a contact office in Kathmandu, expecting cooperation from Nepal to run the office.

"The establishment of genuine democracy in Bhutan, repatriation of refugees and strengthening of people-to-people relationship between Nepal and Bhutan are our priority," Dorji told the PM.

Appreciating the support that the party received in the past, the DNC delegation also requested the government to issue travel documents for refugee leaders to simplify their local and international travel.

New monetary policy perplexes 'forward-looking' financial institutions

The new monetary policy for the current fiscal year has put those financial institutions (FIs) seeking to upgrade their class through their capital increase in confusion.

Besides capital adequacy, the policy has emphasised on other various factors like professional viability, competition, institutional capacity and market situation, among others, as new criteria for the class upgrade of such institutions.

The FIs, which had applied for upgrading their organisational status before the announcement of the new policy, argue that they should not be denied their promotion because of the introduction of new criteria.

According to related provisions, there will be no share trading of those FIs submitting application for enhancement in their respective class in Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse).

In line with such provisions, the share trading of Annapurna Development Bank, Sanima Development Bank and ILFC, among others, is currently stopped.

According to the development banks which applied for promotion, their financial status will grow strong if they are allowed to carry out tasks related to foreign exchange and others based on commission through their upgrade to 'A' class commercial banks.

Development banks belong to 'B' class financial institutions while the finance companies fall in the category of 'C' class.

Many finance companies are also engaged in expanding their capital base as well as branch offices with an aim to establish them as 'B' class financial institutions.

Talking to Nepalnews, Gopal Kafle, spokesperson, Nepal Rastra Bank, said the new monetary policy has prudently dealt with the issue of class upgrade of FIs.

"Capital adequacy will not be a single yardstick while authorising even those FIs which had applied for promotion before the new monetary policy to upgrade their status," he added.

Kafle, however, divulged that the central bank has initiated dialogue with such institutions in order to find a viable solution.

Ram Shant Shrestha, president, Nepal Finance Companies Association, told Nepalnews that the new monetary policy should not be applied while allowing those FIs which had sought to upgrade their class before its announcement to act as per their application.

He, however, expressed belief that the provisions about class upgrade of FIs incorporated by the new policy are in the interest of general depositors.

Sashin Joshi, president, Nepal Bankers' Association, also argued that the new policy should not be applicable to those FIs asking for class upgrade before its release.

Alcohol destroyed

Police destroyed 3,000 liters of home-brewed alcohol worth Rs.240,000 in Bhaktapur on Monday.

According to Police Inspector Shreeram Bhandari, the chief of the Municipal Police Range, Jagati, 140 gallons of illegal alcohol was confiscated in the period of three months while it was being taken to Kathmandu and Nagarkot from several places of the district including Ashapuri area for sale.

Police conducted checks at various areas under the campaign launched to seize illegal alcohol, he informed.

The contraband was destroyed in the presence of the representatives from the District Administration Office, the municipality, the revenue investigation office and the police and media persons.

The campaign will continue in the future too, informed Bhandari.

Region:

America & West's malicious intent

The leak of 92,000 classified documents on the war in Afghanistan seems to be the handiwork of Jewish lobby, necons, CIA and opposition - Republicans - who have malicious intent against Pakistan. They want that Obama's strategy of dialogue with the Taliban if they disown Al Qaeda should fail.

They also do not wish to see Pakistan taking credit for brokering peace in Afghanistan so that they continue their plunder and benefiting from drug trafficking; and last but not the least to ensure a role for India. Among other things, the documents highlighted attempt on the life of President Hamid Karzai by Pakistan's ISI with a view to stoking tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the leaks, it has been admitted that there was "low-level assessments about Pakistan's ISI secretly supporting Taliban insurgents based on Afghan intelligence", which in cahoots with Indian RAW and Israeli Mossad continue denigrating Pakistan, its military and premier agency ISI. It is worth mentioning that out of 92,000 documents only a few hundred relate to Pakistan and its agencies, whereas the major thrust or focus has been on America and NATO forces' failure during the last nine years. The documents also carried reports about killing of innocent Afghan citizens, which was an act of war crimes. In the wake of reports that the US was running a secret war in Pakistan, two anti-war congressmen - Dennis Kucinich (Ohio) and Ron Paul (Texas) - had moved a resolution in the House of Representatives demanding the withdrawal of US troops from Pakistan. They had taken the plea that any war effort not approved by Congress violated the War Powers Act. However, the resolution was overwhelmingly rejected.

The vote took place days after newspapers published leaked documents suggesting that Pakistani intelligence had cooperated with extremist groups while simultaneously accepting US aid to fight terror. Such

Nazia Nazar

reports are prompted by Indian RAW and Afghanistan's intelligence agency. The nexus between India and Israel is too well known, and international media controlled by Jews helps India to continue its vicious campaign against Pakistan. In his recent article carried by Opinion Maker titled "Framing Pakistan: How the pro-Israel media enables India's surrogate warfare" Moidhc O Cathail writes: "The media component of India's alliance with Israel affords India a powerful weapon to wage surrogate warfare against Pakistan and enables both Tel Aviv and Delhi to pursue their common objective of destabilizing the nuclear-armed Muslim nation".

However, Pakistan's foreign office and Pakistani media should effectively counter Indo-Israeli propaganda. Anyhow, ever-increasing defence cooperation between India and Israel, and their efforts to destabilize Pakistan are a matter of serious concern for Pakistan. Both are using their influence in Afghanistan against Pakistan by helping anti-Pakistan elements to destabilize Pakistan with a view to projecting it as a state which cannot protect its strategic assets. In July 2009, Afghan defence minister had visited Tel Aviv in a bid to modernize Afghan army.

Australia and Germany have already acquired armoured vehicles and UAVs from Israel for Afghanistan. Gordon Duff, senior editor of Veterans Today, revealed in a recent interview: "We have very little doubt that the Indians and the Israelis, that are all over Afghanistan with German passports pretending to be military contractors, are operating 17 camps along the Taliban regions training and arming terrorists." He knocked the bottom of Indian pretence and exposed Indian-Israeli unholy alliance against Pakistan by writing: "The Pakistani Taliban is in close cooperation with India and Israel who supply, finance, arm and train them to attack Pakistan." The nexus between India and Israel is too well known, and international media

controlled by Jews helps India to continue its vicious campaign against Pakistan. India's RAW is reported to have sent 1,200 operatives to Afghanistan with a view to producing anti-Pakistan emotions and also to further its plans to destabilize Pakistan. Already, Indian RAW is operating from consulates in Afghanistan and Zahidan-Iran to fund and to supply arms to Baloch dissidents and militants. In Afghanistan, there is a free flow of lethal weapons whereby India, America and Israel are planning to test their weapons in the forthcoming operation in Kandahar or elsewhere. At least, once there was suggestion that nukes would be the only way out in Afghanistan, as the US and NATO forces cannot defeat the Taliban fighters with conventional weapons. At the time of invading Afghanistan, America and ISAF forces had reportedly used uranium-tipped bombs in addition to daisy-cutters.

Some reports suggest that some new-born babies have similar defects that had developed after the US dropped bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the other hand, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke and other members of US administration continue their tirade against Pakistan. They insist that Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders are in Pakistan. The question is that when they are killing Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives in drone attacks, what stops them taking on the top leadership of Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Recently, Mike Mullen had said that if any 26/11-like incident happens there could be war between India and Pakistan. In fact, these are blackmailing tactics and a hint that India would be justified in retaliating, should there be Bombay-like attack. Though, Mike Mullen acknowledges that Pakistan has given sacrifices in the war on terror, yet he says things to appease India and pressurize Pakistan to do more. Mike Mullen also supported the statement issued by US

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton about the presence of Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan. He claimed that the tribal belt on Pakistan's western border had become the global headquarters for Al Qaeda. But in December 2009, Mike Mullen who has been in uniform for 40 years said: "We are not winning, which means we are losing, and as we are losing, the message traffic out there to insurgency recruits keeps getting better and better and more keep coming." Ahmad Qureshi in his recent article has exposed America's sinister designs stating: "Instead of brooding over the American failures and war crimes that have been neatly hidden from the world for eight years, the mainstream US media chose once again to indulge in anti-Pakistanism which is rampant and endemic within the US media and among think-tank types. A British journalist, Declan Walsh, couldn't help but notice this anti-Pakistan streak in how the Obama administration handled the leaks". In fact, there is a long list of America's war crimes. Since World War II, the US dropped bombs on 23 countries - China, Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lebanon, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan. US-led NATO forces had targeted civilian-infrastructure in Yugoslavia. Declassified documents point out to the US war crimes in Iraq, and in addition to bombing civilians. It had also destroyed drinking water supply and sanitation system, which is violation of Article 54 of Geneva Convention. America was also instrumental in coups in at least 20 different countries. Despite the fact, there are dozens of war criminals: none has ever been awarded punishment under war crimes act. Having that said, Pakistan's elected leadership and military leadership should put their act together to frustrate the designs of US-India-Israeli-Afghanistan quartet, and should not be taken in by their so-called gestures of goodwill.

World starts raising voice for

The situation in Occupied Kashmir is assuming new dimensions with the passage of every day because of atrocities by the occupation forces, who are using all sorts of brute power at their disposal to crush the legitimate demands of the Kashmiri people for right of self-determination. Massive human rights abuses including shooting of peaceful demonstrators, custodial killings, gang rapes and systematic destruction of homes and businesses of Kashmiris have once again forced the local population to stand up against the tyrannical rule.

India has imposed curfew in a bid to silence Kashmiris but a peep into the eyes of the protesting men, women and children conveys their unparalleled determination not to compromise on their birthright. New Delhi has sent thousands of additional troops to suppress the voice of Kashmiris. In this perspective, it is somewhat encouraging that at long last some members of the international community have started taking note of the state terrorism in Occupied Kashmir. Apart from the UN Chief Ban Ki Moon, some other countries have also issued statements expressing concern over deteriorating situation there. But it is all the more significant to note that voices of solidarity are now also being raised within India, which shows growing realization that Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris and they must get their legitimate rights. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) has saluted the Kashmiri protesters for their resolve in securing their rights while Naxals have equated the stone throwing youth of Kashmir to the bow and arrow equipped tribals of dandakaranya. This is of far more importance as these are sentiments of people within India and hopefully these would prick the conscience of champions of human rights like the United States and the United Kingdom to shun the tendency of closing their eyes to state terrorism in Occupied Kashmir just because of their commercial interests.

[Pakistan Observer]

US plans another Kyrgyzstan base

The US is planning to construct a USD 10 million military base in the southern city of Osh, Kyrgyzstan, where more than 300 people died in deadly clashes in June.

The US Defense Department says the base, called Osh Polygon, will feature a range of facilities and weapons training services, including a secure garrison compound with officers' quarters and barracks for enlisted personnel, range facilities, crew-served weapons and explosive ordnance.

US officials raised the issue of the base under ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev for training Kyrgyz troops for alleged counter-terrorism operations.

According to US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, Kyrgyzstan is still highly unstable as tensions continue to rise between Kyrgyz government soldiers and the Uzbek minorities living in the southern part of the country.

In a speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, Blake expressed concern about the security along the southern border as some militants from Afghanistan might try "to come up through that border."

Keeping the other US base in Manas near the capital Bishkek is a national priority for Washington, as it serves as the entry and exit points for US troops in Afghanistan.

The United States has paid USD 45 million to the Kyrgyz government this year and USD 13 million in fees for use of the Manas base, according to the Bishkek embassy website.

Osh was the site of a bloody uprising in June against the new Kyrgyz government, which reportedly claimed more than 300 lives. The unrest had reportedly forced more than 300,000 people across the border into Uzbekistan.

The inter-ethnic violence was the worst to hit the country in years.

Russia bans grain exports

The wildfires burning all over central Russia have destroyed millions of hectares of crops.

Russia's prime minister, Vladimir Putin, has announced a ban on grain exports after millions of hectares of crops perished in the worst drought in more than a century.

High temperatures, lack of rain and wildfires have devastated more than a third of cultivable land in Russia, the world's fourth largest grain exporter. News of the ban pushed wheat prices to a 23-month high on commodities markets and raised concerns about a boost in food prices worldwide.

The announcement came as firefighters continued to battle hundreds of fires caused by the heatwave across European Russia, where daytime temperatures have been well above 30C since June.

Wheat and barley have shrivelled, sunflowers have wilted and sugarbeet has barely reached half its normal size.

Officials in Moscow had earlier indicated that they would be able to contain internal grain prices using existing stockpiles. But it appears the government decided to step in to protect the agricultural sector and prevent hikes on the price of bread and other staples - a sensitive political topic in a country.

Russia Accuses US of Breaking Disarmament Agreement

Moscow has accused the US of breaking a disarmament agreement between the two countries, the Russian foreign ministry.

President Dmitry Medvedev and his US counterpart Barack Obama signed the most wide-ranging nuclear arms control treaty for decades in Prague in April, and Russian-US relations seemed to have improved.

The infringement of which Russia is now accusing the US concerns the April agreement's predecessor, START-1, which expired December 1, 2009.

The US had reequipped, in contravention of the agreement, five silos previously used for intercontinental ballistic missiles at the Vandenberg air base with interceptor missiles, the ministry alleged.

The reequipping of US bombers was also a cause for concern.

"The US has not yet provided any convincing proof that remodelled bombers could not be rearmed with nuclear weapons," the foreign ministry said.

Washington had also violated terms of the agreement on biological and chemical weapons.

The new face of Kashmiri women

The freedom movement in Indian Held Kashmir has received fresh impetus with its women taking up the cause of freedom. The situation in Kashmir has greatly deteriorated since the death of a 17-year-old student, who succumbed to his injuries after being hit by a teargas shell. Protest rallies have been baton charged, teargassed and brutally fired upon, with more than 50 lives being lost. However, just as the freedom struggle seemed to be stagnating, the women emerged on the streets, beating on their utensils, throwing stones at the Indian forces and chanting slogans for freedom.

Over the years, Kashmiri women have played an important role in the struggle for freedom. Names like Asiya Andrabi, who led protest rallies comprising Kashmiri women, have filled volumes. However, the image of Kashmiri women in the liberation struggle has been mostly of wives, mothers, sisters or daughters mourning over the dead body of a relative, who embraced shahadat as a result of the atrocities of the Indian army. The new face of the Kashmiri

S.m. Hali

women is unparalleled. Hundreds of women and girls, many in shalwar kameez, have since been regularly out on the streets chanting "we want freedom!" and "blood for blood!" Indeed, their message is loud and clear. Although the Indian army has not refrained from targeting the unarmed women, dealing with female protesters is a fraught challenge for the police and paramilitary troops. Many women who do not directly take part in rallies carry drinking water to the protesters and also direct youths down escape routes as they flee from baton charges, teargas and gunfire.

Exasperated by the deteriorating situation in Kashmir, India's Interior Minister P. Chidambaram has alleged that Pakistan may have instigated these protests. This is the first time New Delhi has linked Pakistan to the recent spate of violence in the Kashmir Valley that began on June 11. Earlier, India had said Pakistan-based militants were inciting trouble in the region.

"Pakistan appears to have altered its strategy in influencing events in Jammu and Kashmir," Chidambaram told the Indian Parliament during a debate on the protests. India, however, remains confident that it can foil Pakistan's "evil designs" if it is able to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Mr Chidambaram, or for that matter all Indian leaders, should know that the only way to win the hearts and minds of the Kashmiris is to accede to the UN Resolutions and grant them the right to self-determination: let them choose their own fate; whether to join Pakistan or India. History is replete with examples that a group of people cannot be forced to continue its existence in bondage and subjugation. Sooner or later the just struggle for freedom has to reach a conclusion. Blaming Pakistan for its woes and hiding the facts of its state terrorism, violence and atrocities against unarmed and hapless Kashmiris is not going to bear fruit.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's recent statement on Kashmir was encouraging. His spokesperson Farhan Haq stated: "In relation to the recent developments in Indian-administered Kashmir, the Secretary General is concerned over the

prevailing security situation there....The Secretary General welcomes the recent resumption of Foreign Minister level talks between India and Pakistan. He encourages both sides to rekindle the spirit of composite dialogue...and to make renewed efforts to address outstanding issues, including on Jammu and Kashmir..."

The statement was well received in Pakistan, but not so in India. The Indian media attacked the UN Secretary General's spokesperson tooth and nail, highlighting his Pakistani origin. Surprisingly, succumbing to Indian pressure, the UN Secretary General disowned his remarks, even though his spokesman had officially issued them. India should now realise that every Kashmiri woman who has lost a near and dear one to Indian tyranny has finally emerged from the shadows. It is high time the Indian government took cognisance of the writing on the wall and gave Kashmiris their just and legal rights, before the cauldron spills over. Turning its army's guns on unarmed women, will not only risk international opinion, but also cause them to lose support back home in India, especially among human rights activists like Arundhati Roy and many others.

The writer is a political and defence analyst.

[The Nation]



Obama's popularity sinking

U.S. Democrats' front man President Barack Obama's plummeting ratings could spell trouble for the party in the mid-term elections as his dropping popularity can start dragging the party down with him, experts said.

"High unemployment and Obama's dropping popularity creates real problems for congressional Democrats," said Darrell M. West, vice president and director of Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution.

While Obama's approval ratings stood near 70 percent during his 100th day in office last year, they have since fallen and stood at an all-time low of around 45 percent.

Some observers contend that certain Democrats are even distancing themselves from the president, noting the absence on August 2 during Obama's visit to Texas of Democratic nominee for governor Bill White.

John Fortier, research fellow at the

Matthew Rusling

American Enterprise Institute, argued that Democrats in some Republican leaning and swing districts will not welcome the president to campaign with them.

"Obama is not disastrously unpopular or as unpopular as George W. Bush was for the final two or three years of his presidency," he said. "But he is still on the unpopular side and will be a drag on Democrats' fortunes."

West said voters are dissatisfied with the status quo and blaming the majority party for the dismal economy, which puts many Democrats at risk and creates opportunities for serious GOP gains.

While experts forecast a few months ago that Democrats would merely lose seats, analysts now predict the party could lose large swaths of political territory - even control of the House of Representatives.

Other notable analysts, such as Dick Morris, former advisor to President Bill Clinton, said Democrats could even lose the Senate, although that is not the consensus of most experts.

With the incumbent party's hammering by this worst economy since the 1930s, even an uptick in jobs may not help the embattled Democrats.

"Most research shows that people form their opinion of the economy several months in advance of the election. A last minute improvement in an unemployment rate does not change their minds.

At this point the chances of losing the House are about 50-50, Fortier said, but emphasized that a GOP takeover of the Senate is less likely.

Gallup, a polling company, said on Monday that history has not been kind

to the parties of presidents whose approval ratings fell below 50 percent around the mid-term.

Most of them saw their parties lose on average 36 seats in Congress since 1946, Gallup said.

And even for presidents climbing above the 50 percent rung, their parties lost an average 14 House seats, as mid-term voters tend to regard the majority party regardless of the president's popularity, Gallup said.

Since World War II, only President Bill Clinton in 1998 and President George W. Bush in 2002 saw their parties gain seats in a mid-term.

While each boasted ratings above 60 percent during those elections, the parties of the other three presidents whose ratings topped 60 percent - Dwight Eisenhower in 1954; John F. Kennedy in 1962; and Ronald Reagan in 1986 - lost seats, according to Gallup.

Washington's bond with China's neighbors

In recent months, the US has been busy cementing alliances in Northeast Asia and inking a new agreement with China's Southeast Asian neighbor Vietnam. The US intention is clear: to stir negative sentiment against China among its neighboring countries.

Recent news reports that the US and Vietnam are discussing a nuclear energy utilization agreement, including allowing Vietnam to proceed with

uranium enrichment, which is an essential step for making nuclear weapons.

The US is trying to consolidate its scattered influence in the region. To some extent, it can manage to do so, given its geographic detachment, its global influence and its economic might.

The US power play caters to the fact that China's neighboring countries are on guard against its growing influence.

Quickly after the US stated that the South China Sea is of US national interest, Vietnam began intensifying its protest against China's legitimate activities in the disputed waters.

Will the US-Vietnam alliance bare fruit? There are reasons to doubt it will, like the short-lived Soviet-Vietnam alliance in the 1970s.

The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty Organization, initiated by the US in the Cold War era to mainly

counter China, disbanded in 1976 due to internal disagreement and inconsistent policies.

China should step up efforts in persuading its neighbors of its peaceful rise and do its best to win regional respect. Its economic power has benefited the smaller economies in the region and set up a growth model that they may also follow.

Any attempt to counter China by relying on US diplomacy and its military would result in paying an economic price.

Traditionally, China was the central power broker in the region, backed by its cultural influence and advanced productivity.

China needs to win friends and allies in a similar way. In modern times, this includes providing economic aid and helping to stabilize the region during times of emergency.

China is promoting tighter bonds and trust in the region. The China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, for example, can be an effective cushion against a collective confrontation against China. ASEAN also includes members that do not have territorial disputes with China and is in line in sharing China's view of a stable regional situation.

The US is returning to Southeast Asia with a clear political agenda. It is trying to expand US influence and strengthen cooperation with countries in the region, but seeds of distrust are also being planted with its attempt to contain China. Countries around the region must see these tactics for what they are.

Global Times

China, Nepal celebrate 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties

China and Nepal celebrated the 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties at a reception in Beijing 2 August evening.

Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFC), and Nepalese embassy in China.

cooperation as well as frequent high-level exchanges.

Political, economic, trade and cultural relations were closer than ever, Chen said.

The two nations, which treated each other on an equal footing, had harmonious coexistence and long-term friendship.

Nepalese Ambassador to China Tanka Prasad Karki said that Nepal and China, as good neighbors, all-weather and reliable friends, as well as partners of common development, had maintained sound bilateral ties.

Nepal wanted to further learn from China's experience in social and economic growth and enhance its mutually beneficial cooperation with China.

China and Nepal forged diplomatic ties in 1955. They established a comprehensive partnership of cooperation at the end of 2009.



More than 300 guests, including Chinese government officials and foreign diplomats in China, attended the reception, which was co-hosted by the China-Nepal Friendship Association, the Chinese People's

Chen Haosu, president of the CPAFC, said in a speech that the years since China and Nepal forged diplomatic ties had witnessed continuous development of their traditional friendship and friendly

Injured ...

the Maoists to think to withdraw their claim for the post of prime minister.

During their recent meeting with NC, the Maoist leaders had said both the parties should also think to withdraw their respective candidacies if that paves the way for the fresh beginning of a new process.

Nepali Congress (NC), however, gave a thumbs down to the proposal of withdrawing candidacy from both the sides stating that there first must be a sufficient ground for new government formation for doing so.

Both NC acting president Sushil Koirala and Prime Ministerial candidate Ram Chandra Poudel have said that the withdrawal could create

a much bigger void in the political arena.

On the other hand, the faction of UCPN (Maoist) led by chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal faction is also not in mood to withdraw candidacy although Dahal himself proposed the same.

Another Maoist camp under the command of Vice-chairman Baburam Bhattarai is clamouring for the withdrawal of the Dahal's candidacy, which could open doors for Bhattarai to be the next party candidate for premiership.

The most contentious issue is the amalgamation of the Maoists' People's Liberation Army with the security apparatus and it will be very hard to find a common ground

regarding this.

Both NC and UML are seeking for UCPN (Maoist) transformation into a 'civilian party' with its disarmament.

So, the chances of Dahal leading the government without settling the issue of integration are very slim.

Likewise, Poudel is also unlikely to get elected in the next round as the UML is more inclined towards the notion of consensus government.

As the date for the fifth round of election has been scheduled for August 18, the parties have enough time for building consensus if they go for sincere negotiations on outstanding issues.

However, as the politics continue

to present themselves in a preposterous light because of their neurotic obsession with power, the possibility of them coming together for the greater good of the country is also fleeting away.

Hegemony...

the embassy and his CA (Constituent Assembly) membership would also be nullified.

He also said that even Indian envoy Rakesh Sood diplomatically warned to him stay away from "anti-Indian activities."

While revealing the sequences of his death threat, he even claimed, "New Delhi has long been indulging in bullying the parties and their leaders in a very naked manner for its vested

~ National news ~

Systematic management of foreign employment

Speakers at a programme Kathmandu Monday stressed the need for proper management and systematization of the foreign employment. Foreign employment has contributed 25 per cent of the country's gross national income (GNI) with over three million Nepalis in foreign employment.

Speaking on the Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Loktantrik Foreign Employment Entrepreneurs' Forum, they said foreign employment should be systematic as foreign job seekers were facing various problems.

They underscored the need for monitoring the overseas companies, booking the fraudulent companies, managing proper trainings to the foreign job seekers and utilizing the remittance in the productive sector.

On the occasion, Nepali Congress acting president Sushil Koirala called for respecting the foreign employment sector as it has assisted in the country's economy.

Vice-president of the NC Gopal Man Shrestha alleged the UCPN-Maoist for being involved in horse-trading during the political fluidity.

NC leader Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat urged the UCPN-Maoist to abide by the democratic path and stop the foul game in parliament.

Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Chiranjibi Nepal said that remittance makes the nation dependent and results in passivity in the economy despite its contribution to economy.

Tourist arrivals up

Foreign tourist arrivals increased in the first six months of 2010, the Department of Immigration said.

Data provided by the Department shows that a total of 272,940 tourists from several countries including India, China, America, Britain and Thailand arrived here from January to June.

Department's Director General Narayan Prasad Sanjel said somewhat improved security situation in the country and gradual improvement in India-China diplomatic relations are attributed for the increment in the tourist arrivals.

Similarly, the publicity policy brought by the Tourism and Civil Aviation Ministry targeting the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 also helped attract the foreign tourists, he informed.

The Department said 39,101 tourists visited in January, 47,454 in February, 57,454 in March, 40,517 in April, 55,192 in May and 33,222 in June.

The largest number of tourists visiting Nepal during that period were from India. Fifty-four thousand three hundred and thirty-three Indian tourists came to Nepal during that period followed by 19,673 Chinese tourists, 16,672 American tourists, 15,473 British tourists, 15,291 Sri Lankan tourists and 13,077 Thai tourists in that order.

A total of 221,836 foreign tourists had visited Nepal during the corresponding period in 2009.

FNCCI bemoans acts of terrorising business community

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has lamented that illegal activities to terrorise the entire business community are increasing every passing day.

After an explosive device at Acharya Emporium, Nepalgunj, owned by Damodar Acharya, past president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), was found on Monday night, the apex body of Nepali business fraternity came up with the statement to this effect.

Issuing a press statement, it also said that the same kind of incident had occurred at Satish Chandra Agrawal's enterprises a week ago - also a past president of the FNCCI.

The same kind of case also occurred in the house of the president of the Surkhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently.

"The issue is serious and we urge the government to bring the criminals to book," said the FNCCI.

Meanwhile, the FNCCI has also expressed serious concern over misbehaviour by some people in the name of small tea farmers towards factory owners in Jhapa.

It said the recent activities could worsen the relationship between farmers and factory owners.

International :

"Liberating" The women of Afghanistan

TIME magazine must be experiencing a severe case of amnesia, judging by the cover of this week's issue which asks, "What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan." At best, this effort by TIME is irresponsible slick journalism; at worst, it is one of the most blatant pieces of pro-war propaganda seen in years. The world owes Afghanistan's women an honest

By Huda Jawad

that Muslims - particularly the male gender - are cruel and behave scathingly towards females. In the case of the Taliban this is the truth, and it's an insult to Islam that such vile characters claim adherence to it. However, equally insulting is the notion of the US being in Afghanistan to

being thrown on her face. Instead, the rights of women becomes a breaking point only when the Afghan government and US make undignified concessions to the insurgency regarding women's rights, in order to maintain a cease-fire with the insurgents or to obtain more political leverage.

The United States shows such grave concern for the plight of Afghan women that they continue to ensure support for Hamid Karzai, even deeming the latest elections "legitimate" despite the apparent fraud and voter intimidation that keeps him in power. In addition to open negotiations and concessions with the Taliban, Karzai is also gaining concessions from Hezb-i- Islami (Islamic Party) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyia - a faction whose attitude towards women rivals that of the Taliban in cruelty and oppression. There is another myth being promoted by the Afghan and US policy makers that some form of moderate Taliban exists; in reality, it is the same group of terrorists responsible for making life an utter hell for millions of Afghan women, but with more power and money.

The numbers sold to the media paint an upbeat picture of the state of Afghan women. In reality, these statistics are a cruel joke and do nothing to improve the social standing of women. Ten years and 300 billion dollars later, the United States has done little to empower females in the war-torn country. In the Uruzgan province there are officially 220 schools, but only 21 of them function. According to researcher Rachel Reid in Kabul for Human Rights Watch, "only four per cent of secondary school age girls reach grade 10." Instead of bringing democracy and social equality to Afghanistan, the US helped turn it into the world's largest opium producer, at 93% of the world's opium produced. That is hardly shocking when we consider that Hamid Karzai's brother is the country's biggest drug dealer. While the warlords are profiting from the neocolonialism brought forth by the occupation, the most recent United Nations Human Development Index ranked Afghanistan 181 out of 182 countries. Around twenty million Afghans live on less than \$2 a day. For many mothers in impoverished Afghanistan, the situation has led them to consider selling their children due to their inability to feed them.

Only in Afghanistan can child rapists and war criminals be allowed to enter negotiations with a so-called democratic government, and to top that - with US support. Take the rise of Mohammed Mohaqiq into political power for example. In 2001 and 2002, Hezb-e Wahdat began a systematic targeting of Pashtuns in Afghanistan

due to their ethnic ties to the Taliban. As a result, whole villages of civilians were attacked and young girls were abducted on their way to school by Mohaqiq's armed thugs. In 2002, Mohaqiq landed himself a position as the Vice-Minister of Planning in the new and "democratic" Afghan government. In 2007 he masterminded the Afghan amnesty law which granted total protection and forgiveness to Taliban warlords. The law was not passed in 2007, but during the 2009 Afghan elections - an event which history will forever paint as the paragon of the corrupted - Mohaqiq threw his support behind Karzai who promised him a new position in the new government. Interestingly enough, Karzai would also quietly place in effect the Afghan amnesty law in 2010, subsequently forever immunizing Mohaqiq and his criminal counterpart for their crimes against women.

The "let's save Afghan women" rhetoric looks terribly hypocritical, considering that the US and NATO stood by idly as Karzai and the warlords mounted the biggest voter fraud scheme in modern history. The TIME article ponders the fate of Afghan women once the US stops sending down packages of humanitarian aid on them in the form of drone attacks on civilian populations and attacking wedding parties, among other dangerous targets. However, in defense of the US army, once you legitimize the Taliban and even enter secret negotiations with them, they aren't really your enemy anymore - so why not bomb the civilians to death? In Afghanistan, the very presence of a foreign army has brought with it indiscriminate bombings by the "forces of freedom," massacres of civilians by US troops, and wide-spread public corruption by US-installed stooges.

It is an unforgivable sin by the US media and policy-makers to continue shamelessly claiming they are in Afghanistan to liberate its female population.

Perhaps it makes sense for the US and Taliban to enter into agreements, considering that they both have a knack for killing innocent civilians in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Instead of asking what happens if we stay in Afghanistan, TIME is jumping on the pro-war, right-wing media juggernaut and throwing its weight behind the continued destruction of Afghanistan's social and civil infrastructure. The US owes it to Afghanistan's women to at least cease to insult them by claiming that making their living conditions more reprehensible is somehow "liberating" them. These women and young girls have been through enough. Let's not make them the poster children for more airstrikes on civilian neighborhoods.



answer as to why we apathetically allow their condition to deteriorate from horrible to simply unspeakable. Instead, TIME is willingly deceiving readers into thinking that the condition of Aisha - the woman pictured on the cover - is a product of the Taliban 10 years ago. It is not Aisha's scared face is a heart-wrenching reflection of the state of Afghan women today in the year 2010, and under the absurd assertion of democracy and the presence of thousands of US and NATO troops in the country.

Aisha was attacked by the Taliban last year, the same time that thousands of foreign troops were running around the country under the guise of liberating it. TIME is repeating the inexcusable and now redundant mantra used by the Department of Defense and by just about every neocon politician: We're in Afghanistan to save the women. Here's the problem: as US troops remain in the country and have dominated it for the past 10 years, violence against women in Afghanistan has been increasing - not decreasing. The actions of the Taliban have been reprehensible and the farthest thing from Islamic doctrine; however, TIME magazine and Katie Couric (who gave a humiliating endorsement of the cover and succeeding article) seem intent on fueling the fire of Islamophobia using such images.

The media incessantly teaches us

protect the women from the Taliban, which was created and funded by the United States during the Cold War against the now-defunct Soviet Union. Those absurd enough to propagate that the US is out to liberate Muslim women seem at a loss to explain why the US is not currently sending F-16's into Saudi Arabia to free its women from the chains of oppression, and from the threat of honor killings and child marriages. Then again, the United States has no qualms about supporting Saudi Arabia with billions of dollars in military aid each year - in addition to whiskey and other unmentionables - in order to maintain the status quo that currently operates the Middle East for American interests.

The same misogynistic warlords and drug lords responsible for mass murder in Afghanistan are now running the government, thanks to the US support they enjoy. Perhaps the only difference now is found in the suits they wear and the masks of so-called democracy. There are currently three major parties at play in determining the fate of women in the country: the US-installed government, the Taliban-influenced insurgency, and the US itself. Here's a wild thought: at those top secret meetings between these three altruistic set of agendas, the last thing they concern themselves with is whether or not little Fatima or Aisha is allowed to go to school without acid

Russia hard hits by heatwave

A thick haze of acrid and choking smoke from wildfires mixed with car engine emissions blankets Moscow. A record heat wave has engulfed most of European Russia for more than a month with temperatures exceeding 35 degrees Celsius.

According to official figures, by August 4, wildfires had killed 48 and destroyed 1,267 homes. Some 240,000 have been mobilized to fight the fires, but weather forecasters do not promise rain or any lull in the heat anytime soon. In Moscow, more accustomed to the harsh cold, public transport (including the metro) does not have any air-conditioning equipment or proper ventilation, as well as most homes, many public buildings and hospitals. The choking smoke and toxic gasses from the wildfires, including carbon monoxide, have penetrated the

Moscow metro that carries up to 5 million passengers on workdays. The temperatures at some metro stations are approaching 35 degrees Celsius. Doctors advise residents in Moscow to close all windows tight and stay at home if possible.

Russians are bewildered and angry as the authorities seem to be unable to help them. Russia's leaders - President, Dmitry Medvedev, and Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin - seem to be angry too. Last weekend, during a videoconference with local officials and governors, Putin compared the present crisis with the medieval invasions of Russia by Turkish-speaking nomads, German knights and Hitler's Germany during World War II. "Russia survived everything and will again," announced Putin, "Only if we consolidate and work effectively together." Putin declared that

now is not the time to apportion blame. Medvedev was forced, on August 4, to cut short his holiday in his summer Black Sea residence in Sochi and return to Moscow in a belligerent mood. At a Security Council meeting in the Kremlin Medvedev promised to immediately oust any officials guilty of allowing the fires to destroy "strategic facilities" and disciplined top naval commanders for negligence.

The first Soviet nuclear weapon was made in 1949, in Sarov at the Institute of Experimental Physics, which continues to be the main nuclear design and production facility in Russia. Sarov is home to the electro-mechanical factory Avangard, specializing in warhead production and dismantling. Kiriyeiko, referring to the speedy evacuation of "all explosive and radioactive material" is an apparent

reference to the movement of live warheads that combine arms-grade plutonium, uranium, heavy water and high explosives initiating a nuclear blast. The threat of a nuclear explosion may indeed be remote, but removing all dangerous and radioactive materials from Sarov that has a closed territory of 260 square km and a population of 81,000, would be a challenge to accomplish in several hours, as Kiriyeiko claims. The emergency movement to safety of possibly hundreds of tons of nuclear arms grade materials (capable of making thousands of bombs) is itself a highly risky endeavor.

It is unclear, where today in Russia it is truly safe. Medvedev has also ordered the Interior Minister, Rashid Nurgaliev, to use his forces "not to allow anarchy to develop"

~ News ~

Fidel Castro Calls on the World to Persuade Obama Not to Unleash a War



The Commander in Chief Fidel Castro said today that he hopes that US President Barack Obama will not order an attack on Iran "if we all persuade him not to."

That was the purpose of the Cuban Revolution leader's address to the Cuban parliament summoned for an extraordinary session in Havana, due to the urgency of mobilizing the

world, faced with the danger of a nuclear war that would be triggered by a US-Israeli led aggression on Iran.

Standing on a podium, in the presence of President Raul Castro, Fidel read a message to the Cuban legislative body making emphasis of the threat of an armed conflict in the Arabian-Persian Gulf, for which he held the American president responsible.

Fidel said men's pretensions must have a limit that can't be surpassed and added that in this critical case President Obama would have to give the order of the so much announced attack "in tune with the standards of the gigantic empire."

"But, in the instant he gives the order, which is the only one he could give due to the power, speed and countless number of missiles accumulated in an absurd competition between powers, he would be ordering the instant death not only of hundreds of millions of people, including, an immeasurable number of inhabitants of his own country, but also the crews of all US ships in the seas near Iran."

"Simultaneously, the war would break out in the Near and Far East and across Eurasia," said Fidel.

He also explained that fate decreed that at this precise moment, the President of the United States is a descendant of an African and a white, of a Muslim and a Christian and that he will not give the order if he becomes aware of the problem.

After reading his message, Fidel encouraged a dialogue with the Cuban deputies to find solutions to the issue and called on them to think of ways to spread the call for peace.

Military threats directed against China?

After days of hesitation, the Pentagon has decided to send an aircraft carrier to the Yellow Sea in upcoming joint drills with the South Korea despite China's strong objections, a Pentagon spokesman has said.

Chinese scholars said the move is likely to draw a harsh response from Beijing, and cast a shadow over China's already chilly military relations with the United States.

Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said on Thursday that the U.S. will send the USS George Washington supercarrier, which participated in last month's joint drills between the U.S. and South Korea in the Sea of Japan, to the Yellow Sea for their upcoming exercise.

He did not give specific dates for the exercise in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan, but the Associated Press said he was referring to the joint annual exercise named "Ulchi Freedom Guardian" scheduled for Aug. 16 to 26.

"China will definitely react harshly to the move. It's hard to predict its specific reaction, but that will for sure cast a shadow over Sino-U.S. military relations," said Rear Admiral Yang Yi, former head of strategic studies at the People's Liberation Army's National Defense University.

The ministries of foreign affairs and national defense did not comment on the information as of press time on Friday.

After strong and repeated protests from China over the initial plan of sending the U.S. carrier to drills in the Yellow Sea, which Chinese experts warned would place the Chinese capital within the carrier's striking distance, the Pentagon switched the Japan-based carrier to the Sea of Japan in the July drill.

Though many saw it as a U.S. effort not to upset China, U.S. officials stressed that the locations of its exercises was only up to Washington.

South Korea announced after the July exercise that the two sides will continue to conduct "a joint military exercise every month until the end of the year."

China has undertaken intensified military exercises in the Yellow Sea involving several major military commands and all of its three fleets before and during the U.S.-South Korea drill.

घरेलु हिंसा अपराधको जघन्य प्रकार
सबै मिली गरौं यसको प्रतिकार ।



नेपाल सरकार

सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय

सूचना विभाग

One of the best hill stations of eastern Nepal- Ilam



Ilam is a municipality and tea-producing town in Nepal. It is in Ilam District which is in hilly

Thus, Ilam is a much sought after tourist destination for travelers of all kinds. It is also famous all over the world for its special brand Ilam Tea.

Access:

Ilam Bazaar is in Ilam district Mechi Zone. It is approximately 700 kilometers and 18 hour-drive to east of Kathmandu. Daily bus services ply for Ilam from central Bus Station, Gongabu, in Kathmandu. Buses are also available from the major cities. There are flights from Kathmandu to Biratnagar and Bhadrapur from where Ilam can be driven to via Birtamod.

The famous Darjeeling city of India is just 2-hours drive from Pashupatinagar on the Nepal-India border of Ilam district. Nepali nationals and Indians can commute by the land to India from

accommodation in Ilam Bazaar. Besides home-stay facilities are also available in selected areas; telephone, medical and other tourist facilities are also available in Ilam Bazaar.

When to visit:

The subtropical climate of Ilam ensures good weather throughout the year. The best time to visit Ilam is between October-December, or from April-February. People from different parts of Nepal visit Maipokhari in Ilam for an annual festival on Kartik Ekadasi which falls in October or November. Thousands visit Mai Beni during Maghe Sankranti which falls in January.

Predominant Culture:

The main groups residing in Ilam are Brahmins,

terraced hills of cash crops, tea gardens and thick forests of pine trees. On a clear day one can see views as far as Mirik, Kurseong and Darjeeling in the adjoining Indian part. Antu Danda is an hour drive from

Pashupatinagar and about 3-hours drive from Ilam Bazaar.

in the forest of this area. From Ilam Bazaar one can go upto Maimajhua Khorsanitar via Mai Pokhari in a vehicle. From here one has to trek for about 5 hours to reach sandakpur.

Kanyam and Fikkal have large estates for which Ilam has been famous for the last 140 years. These tea plantation areas are

Pilgrimage Sites are numerous in and around Ilam. The popular ones are:

- Gajur Mukhi a stone tunnel with carved images of Hindu deities. It is on the bank of Deumai Khola, west of Ilam Bazaar. Gajur Mukhi is 4-hour drive from



Eastern Region of Nepal. It is famous for its natural sceneries and landscapes.

Ilam is a small hilly town with pristine landscapes of sloped tea gardens, thick natural forests, holy sites and



Home-stay facilities are available at Antu Danda area.

Mai Pokhari is a pristine lake amid natural forest. The pond surrounded by the thick forest of fir, juniper, birch and pine is home to a variety of flora and fauna. Various species of orchids, rhododendron, herbs; rare animals like musk deer, leopard, porcupine, jackal; numerous migratory birds and rare insects, are found in the region. The lake is also considered holy as the abode of Goddess Bhagabati. An annual fair is held here every autumn around the month of October or November. Mai Pokhari is about 18 kilometers from Ilam Bazaar which is about 30-minute drive.

Sandakpur at 3,636 meters on the international Nepal-India borderline provides majestic view of the Himalayas, Mt.

Kanchenjunga, Mt. Kumbhakarna, Mt. Makalu, and Mt Everest. Rare wildlife like red panda, musk deer, and wild bird Danphe can be seen

popular among tourists for picnicking, sightseeing, and taking photographs. Fikkal is a business center in the area. It falls on the Mechi highway on the way to Ilam.

Siddhi Thumka offers good views of sunrise and sunset from its elevation of 1800 meters. One can also see the Terai flatlands, the Mahabharat range and the Churia mountain range from this area. Siddhi Thumka is 3 hour trek away from Ilam Bazaar.

Chhintapu at 3,400 meters is the second highest peak in Ilam district. The area has natural rich forests of rhododendron, herbal plants and various species of birds. About 11 varieties of rhododendron are found in the area. In addition are rare herb Yarcha Gumba, and wild animals like musk deer and the rare red panda. Good views of the mountains can be seen from different points of the trek. The peak can be reached by trekking for three hours from Ilam Bazaar.

Ilam Bazaar.

- Pathibhara is in Ilam is believed to be as the younger sister of Pathibhara Devi in Taplejung. The temple is in Hanspokhari, southeast of Kolbung VDC and is on the way to Ilam on Mechi Highway.

- Mai Beni house the temple of Lord Shiva at the confluence of rives Mai Khola and Jogma Khola. It is located about 3 kilometers away from Ilam Bazaar. Thousands of devotees gather here on the day of Maghe Sankranti in January.

Besides these are:

Narayansthan in Ilam Bazaar; where a special festival takes place on Krishna Ashami; Bhimsensthan near Ilam Chowk; Singha Bahini in South Ilam, with a beautiful garden in the temple complex; Sati Devi Temple, or Puwa Khola west of Ilam Bazaar, which is a cultural, religious and magnificent site for domestic as well as other tourists.



unique culture. Ilam offers an excellent getaway from city life for romantic sunrise and sunset, a brisk walk in the tea garden, tranquil picnic and sightseeing spots, short treks along gentle slopes or a trudge into the nearby woods. If spiritual instinct calls there are several holy sites one can visit in and around the area.

Pashupatinagar in Ilam. However, this entry/exit point is for local use and Indian tourists only. Entry and exit from the eastern point for other travelers is allowed from Kakkarbhitia in Jhapa.

Food and Accomodations: Good to moderate facilities are available for food and

Chhetris, and Lepchas. A Lepchas is at initial stage at Antu and is in the process of being extended.

Places to Visit:

Antu Danda offers spectacular sunrise, sunset and views of the Himalayas. From 2,328 meters, Antu overlooks Terai flatlands,