PEACE BELL S

Now to make peace deliver development to a ravaged land

KANAK MANI DIXIT

The credit for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement goes to the political parties of Nepal—detested by the extreme right royalists, the Maoist supporters of the far left, and Kathmandu Valley’s upper crust. As responsible, elected people’s representatives, they reached a magnanimous compromise with the CPN (Maoist), to keep the latter from reverting to brutality and saddling society with more years of violence.

The peace agreement, though couched in language that appears balanced equally against the state and rebels, makes demands on the Maoists to abandon violence in word and deed. It is, finally, though not in so many words, the declaration of abandonment of the ‘People’s War’.

This is Girija Prasad Koirala’s hour of recognition, having held out against international naysayers and standing steadfast against Maoist attempts to deliver a less-than-pluralistic finale to Jana Andolan II. Going against the populism which had made the intelligentsia reluctant to challenge the Maoists, Koirala followed his own course, utilising the stature he had acquired even with the rebel leadership.

And what of Pushpa Kamal Dahal? He showed nerve and steel in turning his insurgency a full 180 degrees, and bringing his commanders along with him. Whether he can now bring along his entire cadre as well is the next challenge, one which will truly be a measure of the success of the agreement signed last Tuesday evening. While Dahal has thankfully turned out to be more politician than revolutionary, we now have to await the CPN (Maoist) as a whole to convert from a militarist force into a political party, one that does not extort, abduct, threaten, and act as if nobody would notice.
The more things change

The Maoists now trust India, but let's not buy into the impression of reciprocity

Nepal's Maoist party no longer believes in India as the "inexorable power" they railed against for so many years, and whose malign influence they sought to remove in their initial 40-point agreement. Kathmandu's elite is happy with the change of heart. Most Nepalis do not believe a prime minister can annoy India and still remain in power, and political 'realists' believe the change was inevitable. The integration of the CPN (Maoist) into the 'mainstream' is almost complete.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has thanked the Indian government for allowing and supporting SPA representatives to meet on Indian soil. He's also said that without India's tacit consent the 12-point understanding of November 2006 would have been impossible. The Comrade says India represents a threat to the Nepali people when the government in New Delhi is supporting the monarchy and what was then called the Royal Nepal Army against the 'People's War.' Now that India seems to have accepted his party's claim to political power it no longer poses a threat to the people of Nepal.

For decades, the Indian ruling elite supported the Nepali Maoists, which behaved in a feudal, autocratic manner. The monarchy perpetuated a system of government based on nepotism, nepalisation, and harsh suppression of dissent. Yet India, the largest democracy in the world, supported it. New Delhi continues to support the autocratic king of Bhutan and is friendly with Myanmar's murderous dictators. The Indian ruling elite supports 'official' killers and abusers of human rights, and frowns upon 'non-official' or 'non-state' armed struggle.

The CPN (M) no longer exposes Man's dictum that "force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one". Instead, the Maoists appear to espouse Marx's theory of peaceful transition to a new social order through 'competitive democracy.' In making this shift, they have become acceptable to India. The CPN (M) says it expects India to support a republic in Nepal, should the constituent assembly decide on it. Let's put the realpolitik aside, and look ahead. If India's character of benign neighbour, an ruling elite cannot have changed overnight. New Delhi supported the monarchy and the 'twin pillar' theory during the 13 years of multiparty democracy in the name of the 'Nepali people.' Now New Delhi's mantra is strange when it shows so little regard for its own vast masses of poor, dalits, adivasis, and religious minorities. New Delhi's mantra is strange when it shows so little regard for its own vast masses of poor, dalits, adivasis, and religious minorities.

TheCPN (M) now trusts India, but India can buy into the impression of reciprocity as it will find it much more comfortable to talk to a Nepali government than to one which has ruled the country for decades. India could face a new problem, however, if the US does not back the Maoists. As the US is India's greatest ally, India will probably continue to support the Maoists, but it is only the US who can be expected to buy into the idea of a Nepal having two states, a democracy and a monarchy. But the US is India's ally, not Nepal's. New Delhi's support of the monarchy is a clear case of媚外欺内 when it controls its own people. New Delhi is supporting the monarchy in the name of the Nepali people's rights.
SAFE LANDING INDEED

After over a year of king bashing, Nepali Times has begun to pay attention to the other threat to democracy (‘The Seduction of Process’, #323). Instead of write-ups by experts like Ajai Sahni, we’d been treated to week after week of CK Lal’s ‘bitterades’ against the king and the army, and lured into believing in the mainstreaming-the-Maoists-through-safe-landing rhetoric.

When the Maoists have got everything they asked for, or the path to it cleared, surely we deserve peace. The hard truth is that this Peace Accord has not only legitimised the Maoists’ violence, but glorified it. Their local cadres still go around committing atrocities while their leaders attend international summits decrying ‘bourgeois democracy’ and peddling their own brand of ‘socialist democracy’.

With a new Nepal on everyone’s lips, one wonders who is ‘mainstreaming’ whom, and who needs a ‘safe landing’ from whom.

Satyaajit Nepali, email

LIGHT OF PEACE

Your recent political analyses have been fairly wishy-washy. Admittedly, this could be as much because there is actually not much to say, though it is more likely Nepali Times had not done its homework. At least you had the good sense to treat us to some stunning photographs by Deependra Bajracharya. The image titled ‘Light of Peace’ (#322) was by itself worth the price of admission.

BR Chetri, email

RENT-SEEKING

Rent-seeking has nothing to do with house rent or physical capital, as CK Lal suggests (‘Power for the powerhungry’, State of the State, #323). Economist Ann Krueger used the term in the 1970s to explain the behaviour of economic actors in India when the Indian economy was plagued by the ‘License Raj’. It is used in political economics literature while discussing corruption, lobbying, and other unfair practices, and refers to the seeking of financial benefits by securing unfair market advantages using political or bureaucratic influences.

The rent-seeking behaviour of major actors in hydropower—in the form of securing license for easy commissions or winning favourable contractual terms through unfair lobbying—is the key barrier to developing the sector. Unlike Mr Lal, I think it makes a lot of economic sense for potential hydropower investors to learn from real estate-investing middle-class Nepalis who expect fair financial returns and don’t spend their money bribing decision makers.

In its extended meaning, ‘rent-seeking’ is also used to describe intellectuals who claim to be more than they are worth through misinformation. One wonders if Lal’s motive in using a term he does not fully understand is an act of intellectual rent-seeking, attempting to give the impression that he is familiar with economics.

Surya Raj Acharya, Tokyo

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CHEVROLET TAVERA
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The magnitude of Nepal’s politics was obvious in their willingness to provide the Maoists a presence in the interim government and interim legislature equal to that of the two large parliamentary parties. The sacrifice made by the CPN (UML) in this regard is noteworthy, for it has allowed the perception to develop that a gun-wielding rebel group ban equal status as a party which has slain violently, within non-violent practice. The rebels now have to traverse a vast ideological distance when serving in government and the hybrid interim legislature, where they will have to jettison their rigid postures and replace it with principled positioning. Can they adjust to the practicalities of governance, for so far removed from in-kind sloganeering? Ideologue Baburam Bhattarai does maintain that this is the time to concentrate on delivering the constituent assembly, which will tackle the larger issues of state transformation; but we have to see how things play out around the cabinet roundtable and in the interim House.

Dalal and Bhattarai now need all their dialectical skills—so clearly visible in Delhi last week, where they shelled all pretense of the anti-Indian India that has been the pretext of their rebellion—to manage the myriad contradictions of an ideology-driven insurgency that has not publicly conceded defeat. They understand better than many Kathmandu-based analysts that the people in the districts are sullen with the years they have suffered under the communists and militia. But unlike Gyanendra the king, the Maoist leadership will hopefully not miscalculate the democratic values held dear by a national, sophisticated populace.

The Nepali profligacy to conduct negotiations in the full glare of floodlights week after week might have exaggerated some foreign observers, but one could say that these were the most ‘transparent’ negotiations to be conducted anywhere—an example, indeed, for the world. More importantly, the public sharing of the daily ups and downs provided a crucial cushion to prepare the Maoist fighters for the changing times. While not mentioned in any of the celebratory prose after Tuesday, the Indian government’s positioning on the gun and government issue obviously played a part in moderating rebel demands, while the U.N. role in overseeing ‘arms management’ and the election process has provided some confidence in the outcome all around.

In fact, the politicians and paupers alike are relying too much on the United Nations mechanisms—in Martin’s office and the OHCHR in particular—for the monitoring of the peace agreement and attendant ceasefire and human-rights matters. They will not have enough muscle if Nepal’s government administration does not activate itself, and if civil society gets drowned in the upcoming ‘donor tsunami’ and neglects to be a proper watchdog of the people.

Senior Maoist leaders Thapa, Bogati, Barsha Man Pun (‘Ananta’), and Deb Gurung are working on changing the ‘wartime’ structure of the organisation, and preparing a proposed list of representatives. Deputy Commanders Pasang, Chandu Kharei (‘Baburam’), Janardan Sharma (‘Prabhat’), and central committee member Kul Bahadur KC will manage the Maoist army and work simultaneously on the constituent assembly elections. We don’t have to join the government to send people to the SPA, but even more so by the Maoists, the People’s Liberty Army’s (PLA’s) functionaries will deal with all the political parties and all layers of civil society. We will not only fulfill the people’s hopes and dreams, but also the Maoist army will stand back, according to the principle of the Maoist party that the army will not resemble the armed forces of the CPN-UML.

In addition to the commissars, the Maoists are expected to bring in upper-level leaders from sister organisations: social, political, and oppositions groups, as well as the physically challenged, and the injured. Few were in active politics prior to 1996 and, in addition to the experience of armed rebellion, the new representatives will also bring with them new backgrounds, fresh perspectives, styles, and characters.

Maoist Dynamism is most likely to get one of the five ministerial posts, and the rest will go to a mixed group that represents all the interest groups mentioned above. The party will likely propose Deb Gurung for the post of Speaker of the interim parliament. If this does not happen, Gurung and Matrika Yadav will join Mahara as ministers. Either Haila Yami or Pampa Brual and ‘People’s Liberation Army’ Deputy Commander Nanda Kishore Pun (‘Pasang’) are also likely to join the government.

Four high-level leaders—Pushpa Kamal Dali, Baburam Bhattarai, Ram Bahadur Thapa, and Post Bahadur Bogati—along with most other central committee members will not join the interim government or parliament. Mahara said this was because, “the leadership level will be working on spreading the organisation in view of the constituent assembly elections.”
New leader

SOPHIA TAMOT

Long overdue

To catch a thief

WINNERS

Carlsberg Classic Golf winner

New products

TRUCKLOADS OF PRIZES

Asian Thali foods' new Rumpum Truck Ma Luck contest features prizes with couunts such as a truckload of home appliances (including a Videocon 21" TV, a Videocon refrigerator, and an LG washing machine) and cash prizes.

Incentives:

Incentives: The CIAA doesn’t have its own lawyers and investigative officers, though it can hire private lawyers to argue its cases. Almost all its personnel are on deputation from government departments and ministries.

Inconsolable laws: “Even if the CIAA drags us to the Supreme Court, I am confident that we will win because of the soundness of our arguments,” says Lalit Bahadur Basnet, a member of the four-person legal defence team of Joshi and Khadka. Basnet’s team benefited from the Special Court’s favourable interpretation of an old law which says that there is a time limit of only one year within which a corruption-related lawsuit against a person holding public office can be filed. In Joshi’s case, the court did not adopt a more recent version of the law, which allows for an open ‘time-frame during which lawsuits can be filed. Why the court chose one law over the other remains unclear. Still, it is likely that the Special Court might just take the opposing view, and let at least the facts of Joshi’s case be admitted for a re-

Tihar Hungama lucky draw on 15 November, and went home with a Motorbike each.

Carlsberg Classic Golf winner

Dawa Sherpa won the Carlsberg Classic Golf tournament held at the Royal Nepal Golf Club (RNGC) Saturday. Sherpa, who shot 72 in the two-day tournament organised by Carlsberg in coordination with RNGC, Gopal Chitrakar was declared runner-up.

Carlsberg Classic Golf winner

New leader

Jaspal Singh Jass (centre) has been appointed the new executive director of Everest Bank, Jass, who has 30 years of experience, including as Punjab National Bank’s zonal manager of Jammu and Kashmir, says he is committed to Everest Bank’s growth as well as its dedication to corporate social responsibility. As part of their program, the bank recently donated computers to two government schools in Dhaisari and Kapan. Everest Bank opened in 1994 and in the last fiscal year recorded a 39 percent increase in net profits to Rs 237.30 million.

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Tomorrow’s army

Interview with Nanda Kishore Pun, deputy commander of the ‘People’s Liberation Army’ in Nepal, 19-26 November

Are you preparing to go to the barracks? We have asked the government for Rs 20 million for each of the 28 barracks; that’s the minimum. As soon as the government provides for expenses, we will enter the camps.

Is the budget also for salaries? We have to start paying salaries, which need to be given from the day the agreement is signed.

But the agreement only talks of lodging and food. All the details will not be mentioned in the agreement.

How were the camp locations chosen? We proposed [the sites] and the three sides discussed them. The sites have been inspected and we are now building camps. Some locations don’t have roads, electricity, or water.

Isn’t your recent recruitment drive against the code of conduct? We have now called them back.

So how do we know who is from the PLA? It’s true that the FNJ fought more like a political party, organisation, community, ideology, person or group with vested interests. The federation’s ultimate goal should not be political, but to make journalists more capable and independent.

The talks were about the regular forces. What to do with the militia’s weapons—khukuris, muzzle guns, homemade pistols, grenades—is undecided.

One for every 15-20 soldiers. We’ll show whatever weapons are collected next week.

What about weapons? Around 35,000.

How big is your armed force? Around 35,000.

Our army will bring the weapons to be counted at the same time as the head count.

The government team is made of all parties. Normally, they go back to political and organisational work afterwards. All people from all directions. We have to start paying salaries, which need to be given from the day the agreement is signed.

The FNJ fought strongly for freedom of press during the king’s direct rule, and also actively took part during the street protests even in prohibited areas. During the April Uprising it was inevitable that the political parties to struggle for press freedom. But that was about as far as journalists could go without harming their profession.

It’s true that the FNJ fought strongly for freedom of press during the king’s direct rule, and also actively took part during the street protests even in prohibited areas. During the April Uprising it was inevitable that the political parties to struggle for press freedom. But that was about as far as journalists could go without harming their profession.

The militia is also the army.

What will their weapons also be locked away? The talks were about the regular forces. What to do with the militia’s weapons—khukuris, muzzle guns, homemade pistols, grenades—is undecided. For the CA elections, we can’t just depend on state security. Our militia and their militia must integrate.

The government team is made of all parties. There’s the army, the UN, and we have our own teams. Our army will bring the weapons to be counted at the same time as the head count.

So what do we call the Maoist militia? The militia is also the army.

Will their weapons also be locked away? The talks were about the regular forces. What to do with the militia’s weapons—khukuris, muzzle guns, homemade pistols, grenades—is undecided. For the CA elections, we can’t just depend on state security. Our militia and their militia must integrate.

How big is your armed force? Around 35,000.

What about weapons? One for every 15-20 soldiers. We’ll show whatever weapons are collected next week.

How can we believe that all the weapons will be locked away? The government team is made of all parties. There’s the army, the UN, and we have our own teams. Our army will bring the weapons to be counted at the same time as the head count.

How do we know who is from the PLA? Through identity cards. If you’re doubtful, you can investigate with the UN people.

Mahara money

Jana Aastha, 22 November

The latest round of meetings of the council of ministers has decided to give Mahara a cheque for Rs 70 million. However the CPN (Maoist) has to provide the government with receipts and vouchers to keep record. Of the Rs 100 million allocated for the peace process, the government will keep Rs 30 million for internal management. The
Child recruits

Nepali, 20 November

Various human rights groups in Banke have said they will start investigating allegations of Maoists recruiting underage children in their army. Fourteen media reports of the Maoists violating the ceasefire agreement was signed to agree on allocation of funds and to form various committees.

Maoists to use its Rs 70 million to provide rations for their cadres. Although the government has agreed on rations, the cadres will not receive an allowance. The council of ministers met on Tuesday morning before the peace agreement was signed to agree on allocation of funds and to form various committees.

Maoists have been recruiting children as young as grade four students and youth from villages in Banke. Eighteen children studying between grades four and eight in Nepal Rastriya Nimai Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Kailalpur VDC’s Khaduwar village were recently taken by the Maoists. Parents and guardians claim that the Maoists lured their children away by offering various perks. The Maoists, however, deny the allegations.

Not in vain

Annapurna Post, 23 November

The decade-long armed conflict killed Hira Gurung’s husband, Kaluman but she wants to move on with a new Nepal. “Let the tears for our lost loved ones not be wasted,” says Gurung, who moved out of Khotang where Kaluman was killed six years ago. “Whatever happened in the past, but now let no innocent person become a victim again,” is what she wants to say to those who have also lost loved ones. Humaani Tiwari from Gorkha witnessed her father being killed, but finds consolation in a peace deal and the rebuilding of Nepal. “We now have to focus on new things rather than concentrating on our past,” says Tiwari. Widowed young, Kalpana Bhandari also hopes that the death of her husband, a policeman who was killed by the Maoists while on duty in Ramchebhap, will not be in vain. “We have to learn to forget our past if someone’s death can make the lives of future generations secure,” says Bhandari.

Grief-stricken 63-year-old Laxmi Devi Rayamajhi from Saptari, who has, after six months of pending against the government. By the time just a quarter of the work was complete, over Rs 21 billion had already been spent. The Rayamajhi Commission has, after six months of investigation, advised legal action against those involved.

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Marsyangdi darkness

Ghatala Ra Bichar, 22-28 November

When the 70MW Middle Marsyangdi project started five years ago, it was touted as one of the most important and least expensive hydroelectricity projects in Nepal. But work on Middle Marsyangdi has stopped and the project is on the verge of collapse. Over 75 percent of the work on Middle Marsyangdi is finished, and only the power station remains to be completed. Work on the project has stopped because of pressure from the German contractors, locals, and Maoists. As a result of their selfishness, the government is losing over Rs 100 million every week.

Although the project started with German assistance, due to numerous irregularities, it is now estimated that it will cost double the original estimate of over Rs 13 billion. Foreign assistance may sound attractive, but it comes with conditions.

The contractor, DDC-JV, has already collected millions of rupees and numerous cases related to the project are still pending against the government. By the time just a quarter of the work was complete, over Rs 21 billion had already been spent. As the cost of the project has skyrocketed, locals saw it as a source of free money and began milking it. The government had said that it would be benefit the local community, and had set aside Rs 250 million for schools, drinking water, a road, rural electricity, and health posts. That money has been grossly misused by the locals—Rs 30 million was spent on the construction of one school building, and now, another is being put up.

When a parliamentary committee visited the region recently, it said there is no alternative but to finish the work swiftly. They also recommended that in future the government do its homework before signing agreements on assistance for such big hydro projects.

The Minister for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, and the managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Arjun Karki insist that work on Middle-Marsyangdi can be completed on time. A highly-placed source says negotiations are going on between the government and the Maoists, and that both sides are worried about the ongoing strikes. It’s anybody’s guess when the work will resume.

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Fly by Wire
Information (Digital Display)
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SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Now we will do miracles for development."

CPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Rajdhani, 22 November

The government has committed to make the Rayamajhi Commission’s report public once it was complete. Its reluctance to do that now is against the people’s wishes. Making the findings public and taking action as per the report’s recommendations should be a priority. The Rayamajhi Commission has, after six months of investigation, advised legal action against the accused.

This makes it easy for the government to expedite prosecution of the guilty. However, the report could have missed out on all people responsible for the excesses committed during Jana Andolan II. Similarly, defining penalties might also have been omitted.

The report may not necessarily be complete. It is up to the government to see to it that all those who ordered Jana Andolan II be oppressed are subject to court martial.

This report is just a set of recommendations. It leaves the path open for the government to conduct investigations into the role of people not included in the report. This must be a reference, and the government should take further legal measures against the guilty. The prime minister must show enthusiasm to take this forward, and the government must begin to do its homework on the issue of appropriate action against the king.

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

24 - 30 NOVEMBER 2006 #324
END OF THE ARMED CONFLICT LED TO BUILDING A NEW, PROSPEROUS NEPAL
In search of the spirit
Some people raise the dead, others go along for the ride

BILLI BIERLING
in SUSPA, DOLAKHA

The shaman showed up drunk. Full of spirits, you might say. By the time the tiny, inconspicuous man of 70-something and his band of buddies came staggering along the trail, we’d been waiting for over three hours in front of his house, squished between rice fields and looming snowy mountains.

When I saw a notice in Thamel for a shaman festival, I wasn’t quite sure what it would entail. I knew that traditionally, twice a year, hundreds of jhankris make the pilgrimage to Kalingchok in Dolakha, where the spirit of Kali rests. The older ones do it to renew their allegiance to her spirit, while for young apprentices it is a crucial rite of passage.

But the festival had been put off for the last five years because the shamans couldn’t afford it, said organiser Dinesh Deokota of Adventure First, a regular visitor to the shamans of Kalingchok. Paying tourists would mean the festival could resume.

So it happened that 20 of us took the bus to Charikot, and then walked five hours to Suspa, a Thami village just before Kalingchok. When I arrived and Jun Kiri, Suspa’s head shaman, struggled to get his front door unlocked.

As the effects of the shaman’s little bhatti-stop started wearing off, Jun Kiri told us about the woman coming to see him, who has apparently been possessed for years. “We’ve had two sessions, I haven’t driven it out of her yet,” he said, putting on his white robe, a chain of bells, and an dangerous-looking crown of porcupine quills.

The patient arrived and Jun started drumming himself and her into a trance. The thunderous sound went on for about three hours. The longer the jhankri and the possessed woman shivered, shook, and drummed, the stiffer our limbs got from sitting quietly.

The energy was palpable, but the spirit was unimpressed, and the woman went home, still possessed.

At nightfall the next day, we made our way to Suspa’s cemetery to raise a spirit to accompany the jhankris and apprentices up Kalingchok—a ritual apprentices need to be able to perform to be full-blooded Jhankris.

After about five hours of drumming, dancing, and chasing through the forest with a bunch of tourists in tow, the apprentices had failed to raise the spirit.

Dinesh put it down to severe performance anxiety, and most of us started to crawl into our sleeping bags. As photographer Josh Lustig put it, “at about 2AM, I did start to wonder what on earth we were doing, digging up dead babies’ bones.”

We should’ve stayed awake. About an hour later Josh and a few others were jolted awake. He looked up and, like a few of the other visitors, saw something that hadn’t been there earlier—one of the spirits itself, or a shaman dressed in a black cloak who no one had seen before. Amrit Thami, a jhankri from a neighbouring village, said it would stay with them until it was put back in another ceremony two nights later.

The shamans, who had not slept for two days and two nights, began to dance up the hill to the summit at 3,500m, even the elderly as fleet-footed and energetic as teenagers. We collapsed, worn out from the intensity of the experience, while the spirit-workers drank and chatted till the wee hours.

Before dawn the next morning the steep trail up to Kalingchok was already teeming with pilgrims. On the sacred summit we were rewarded with a magical simultaneous moonset and sunrise, as the mountaintop heaved with activity.

At around ten o’clock heavy clouds started moving in and the pilgrims, finished with sacrificing chickens and goats to the goddess, made their way down to the next village. Turning back, I got a final glimpse of the treeless peak before the cloud curtain closed and Kalingchok fell silent again until another festival in August next year.

(For more information on shaman trips, contact Adventure First Nepal at info@adventurefirstnepal.com)
Beneath the surface

Efforts to remove a 56kg ‘cylinder’ bomb from the Ghardebi section of the Gaur-Chandranighapur road in Rautahat have been surrounded by drama and controversy. The bomb was planted by Maoists over six months ago, and has since been sealed over, with vehicles driving over it every day. The road is still currently in use.

Following the peace talks, the Maoists contacted the CDO last week requesting a bulldozer be sent so they could remove the device. A bulldozer was provided, but the driver refused to proceed. Local Maoist district committee member Samir says they are willing to coordinate with the UN, INSEC, and the Nepal Army to do what is necessary. “We’ve removed devices from other locations, but because the road is sealed, we need a bulldozer. If we have one, we can remove it in ten minutes,” he said.

However, mine and bomb risk expert Hugues Laurence, who is currently working with UNICEF, as well as local INSEC representatives are strongly advising against this plan of action. “Because it’s an improvised explosive device (IED), we don’t know the lethal radius of this bomb, but we know it is huge. A bulldozer is not appropriate in this case. It needs proper risk assessment, and to be excavated with multiple precautions, which is very sensitive work. The device either needs to be removed and detoxed, or specific explosives need to be used to destroy or neutralise it on-site. All this is dangerous, and must be done by bomb disposal professionals,” explains Laurence. There are concerns that, as with all explosives, passing time—combined with climate, ground conditions, and the vibrations from vehicles will have made the device increasingly unstable.

In a similar case from monsoon 2006 in Dhukuri, Nuwakot, fragments of shrapnel were found in trees 2km away after a 50kg bomb being used by the armed police exploded; fortunately, the explosion happened at night, so there were no casualties. A standard socket bomb contains less than 100gm of explosive.

(Kemima Sherpa)

Kathmandu falls

Kathmandu now has the distinction of being the most unpleasant of all 94 World Heritage Sites. A recent survey by National Geographic Traveller of sites as varied as the Jurassic Coast of Dorset, the Pyramids of Giza and the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador, gave Kathmandu Valley the lowest score, with just 39 points out of 100.

Some 420 experts from a variety of fields such as ecology, sustainable tourism, geography, travel writing, and indigenous cultures studied the World Heritage destinations. Convened by National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations, this international panel rated each place on the basis of stewardship and overall outlook and criteria including environment, historic preservation, cultural impact, aesthetics, tourism management, and plans for the future.

Norway’s West Fjords topped the list with 87 points, and Mexico’s Guanajuato, Salzburg, Austria, Siena, Italy, and Kyoto, Japan were ranked as ‘destinations doing well’. South Africa’s Cape Floral Region, historic Prague, Czech Republic, and Australia’s famed Great Barrier Reef were named the ‘so-so destinations’. Stonehenge, England, China’s Great Wall, Machu Picchu, Peru, Greece’s Acropolis, and Egypt’s pyramids are all having serious problems.

16 years, 16 days

Women’s rights activists will be observing 16 days of stepped up activism against gender violence beginning 25 November (the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day) to pressurise the government to effectively implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

The 16-day campaign began in 1991 with activists around the world calling on the UN to place women’s issues on the agenda for the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993 in Vienna. The campaign, which succeeded in collecting half a million signatures in 23 languages from 124 countries, helped secure a formal declaration of women’s rights as human rights and of violence against women as a human rights violation in the Vienna Declaration.
New life

NARESH NEWAR

Smiling shyly, Rabina and Rabin came over to their visitors. “I’m Rabina, and
this is my brother,” says the ten-
year-old girl. We barely recognise
her.

In 2002, when Rabina was six and Rabin four, they were severely burnt after Maoists bombed the bus they were on, near the Lahnjini bridge in Simara,
Kathmandu. For several months they received no attention in
the hospitals they were sent to. On the last day, their young mother Anju died trying to save her two children.

Their horrifying story barely received any attention in Kathmandu. For several months their father Bhakta Bahadur, a
forest guard with District Forest
Office in Bara, was living from
forest fire.
There are a few bleary eyes in the community hall here at 7AM on a recent Tuesday. But Christine Stone is bustling around happily, unpacking boxes of finger puppets, flashcards, and drawing materials for one of her rather unique teacher training sessions.

An hour in, Stone has the 25 teachers, some beginners and others 20-year veterans, blowing and chasing after soap bubbles. The training is fun, but the lessons Stone imparts are serious. Some are general—why primary education is the foundation of all that comes later, including SLC, and others are specific classroom techniques, like inexpensive and interactive ways of imparting knowledge using flashcards, cassette tapes, finger puppets and, yes, soap bubbles.

The slogan is Education For All By 2015, and most action plans we see are about building infrastructure and supplying textbooks, to maintaining enrolment in schools and developing more relevant curriculum.

But talk to teachers who deal with low attendance rates, frequent failure, high repeat and drop out rates, and disengaged parents, and you wonder how teachers, who get little by way of training and support, remain motivated.

"Teaching needs to be seen as a challenging, exciting, thrilling career. Nepali teachers need a career structure and opportunities to progress," believes Stone, who criss-crosses the country every week with Save the Children Norway and private school associations training mostly primary school teachers.

In her 25 years of working in Nepal, Stone has done it all, from teaching English and math in Gorkha and Namjung to writing textbooks with the Secondary Education Project in Sano Thimi. Stone also works with the Kathmandu International Study Center (KISC) and Room to Read.

The transformation in participants is remarkable. Maya Regmi (pictured top) teaches three to six-year-olds in a single class at Mahendra Secondary School in Narathali. She has four children of her own and began teaching 10 months ago just because she needed the money. But now, says Regmi, "I want to teach well now, by new things."

Regmi and her colleagues receive flashcards and listening tapes, and will take home the materials they've made. There could be nothing better for Shailendra Paudyal (pictured second left), who’s taught at Ganesh Higher Secondary in Balewa for 20 years. Today, when Stone put the teachers through listening and action-oriented exercises, Paudyal finally got that English words and phrases like 'point to the window', which he made his students repeat, actually meant something, they formed a language.
Last week, a distinctive part of the mountain broke off, killing six climbers

Accident on Ama Dablam

On 13 November, at about half-past-five in the morning, three Sherpas, one Briton, and two Swedes would have been preparing for the final assault of Ama Dablam’s summit. They were placed at Camp Three (dot on Before photo), at 6,300m, on a narrow ledge on top of a near-vertical ice slope of nearly 1,000m. The ledge is located just below the huge and distinctive overhang that juts out like a chin of Ama Dablam (circle on both photos). This ‘chin’ is perhaps why the mountain is called ‘mother’s necklace’. Besides the amazing leftward tilt of the entire massif as seen in postcards, it is this overhang that, according to many, makes Ama Dablam the most beautiful peak of the Nepal Himalaya.

On that tragic morning, a part of that overhang gave way (circle on After photo). A block of ice removed itself from the rest of the mountain, and crashed through Camp Three, careening on down the main western face of the mountain (dotted line on Before photo). The climbers obviously had no possibility of survival. The villagers of Pangboche, in the sprawling valley of the Imja Khola in Upper Khumbu, would have heard the avalanche early that morning. At least one of the Sherpas in the accident was from Pangboche.

Inspecting Ama Dablam from the base camp as well as upon flying around the west and south face, we ascertained that this was an accident from which there was no escape, possibly even if the climbers had been at Camp Two (dot on After photo). There were pieces of what looked like tent fabric visible on the western flank, about 500m below the Camp Three site, where the slope converts itself into a high altitude glacier (oval on Before photo).

Of the British expedition, the two who were lost were Mingma Nuru Sherpa of Pangboche, and Duncan Williams. Two other climbers, still down at Base Camp, abandoned the expedition and returned to Kathmandu. Tashi Dorje Sherpa and Da Narbus Sherpa perished with Swedes Mikael Forsberg and Daniel Carlsson. They were climbing without a regular trekking or mountaineering agency, who would have provided support and information.

The most well-known accident on Ama Dablam before this was when Peter Hillary found himself dangling from a rope on an exposed slope while attempting the unconventional West Face, back in 1979. Reinhold Messner, who was on the south of the mountain (not the usual south-west ridge route), made a detour to rescue Hillary. The last fatal accident on Ama Dablam, one of the most climbed expedition peaks, was in 2003, when a German climber lost his life.

At the time of this writing, an American team is still up on the mountain, expecting to make an attempt on the summit. Perhaps they will glean more information on the two ill-fated teams. But winter is closing in, and the area of the accident site is dangerous, so it is more than likely that we will have to wait till spring before any effort can be made to go up to find the remains.
EVENTS
- Mahan Shipli Nepal's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's The Master Builder, presented by Aamchha Gurukul at Bimal Nalakhor, Old Baneshwor at 4.30 PM 24 November. 4466956
- Live Music with Siren from 8PM onwards on 24 November, and Yami Lepecha on vocals and Sanjani Sunam on piano on 25 November at Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat.
- Shastrartha at Martin Chautari by MAPS. 3-5PM, 25 November to discuss Marxists anthropology. 4286050
- November Film Festival documentaries from Nepal, 25-26 November at Yala Maya Kendra. Patan Dhoka. Tickets Rs 50, 5452444
- Personality Through Quality Circles Second national convention of Students Quality Circle at DAV School, 25-27 November.
- Vagina Monologues opening on 1 December 2006 at The National Academy, Kamlari at 5.30 PM. 4421800
- Documentaries every Wednesday at 6.30 PM til 30 November at Nhuchhee's Kitchen—The Organic Bistro, Baluwatar
- Surya Lights Rhymn Nites with Aashi and DJ Charlotte, 1 December 8PM at The Aturik, Hotel Yak & Yeti, Rs 999 including a drink and dinner.
- AWON Christmas Bazaar 2 December, 10AM-5PM at the Hyatt Regency. Entry Rs 50 for adults, Rs for 10 children.
- For Good winter concert by The Kathmandu Chorale. 3.30 PM and 6PM on 9 December at The British School. Admission free.
- Seven habits of highly effective people 6-8 and 10-12 December, 9.30 AM-5.30 PM at Soothe Crowne Plaza. 9851036719

MUSIC
- Ramalo Saanjh with Anil Shahi and Maya Mantra. 1 December, 6.30 PM onwards at Dolma Cafe, Thamel. 4215069
- Palefi featuring Prem Lama, 24 November. 5.30 PM onwards at nepa-laya R sala, Manohavan. Rs 500, seats limited. 5552830
- Live Music with Rashmi Singh and band, 24 November, 7PM onwards at Absolute Bar, Pulchowk. 5521408
- Fourth Anniversary of Moksh Live, with various artists from 8PM onwards, 24 November. 5526212
- Open Mic Night at Vaiva Cafe, Thamel every Friday. 8PM
- Nekyham Band live at Shambala Garden Cafe, Shangri-La Hotel, Kathmandu. Wednesdays, 7PM onwards, Rs 600 with barbeque

DINING
- Thanksgiving Traditional Dinner with turkey and pecan pie, 23-25 November at Kilo's of Kathmandu. 4250440
- Persian BBQ Night 24 November for Rs 900 at Fusion, the bar at Dwarika's
- Walk and lunch at Shivaipur Heights Cottage, 25 November and 16 & 23 December.
- Saturday Barbeque Special at Le Meriden Golf Resort and Spa, Rs 1200 for adults, Rs 600 for children
- BBQ Special on Friday nights at Courtyard Restaurant, Kamaladi. 4253056
- Barbeque Ban-Ban at Godavari Village Resort, every Saturday and Sunday. 5560675
- Pork chops and lamb steaks at Sports Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- Theme Dinners at Shangri-La Hotel. Sunday and Monday Nepal thali with cultural show, Rs 700. Friday Bhatkpati Nights with cultural show and Newari cuisine, Rs 600.
- Foodcourt at Bluebird Mall, open 11AM-9PM every day. 4228333
- Woodfired Pizza at Java's new extension, Thamel. 4422519
- Happy Merry buy one get one free at Last Horizon Bar, Shangri-La Hotel from 5PM-7PM every night.
- Shaken Not Stirred Martins 007 style. Wednesdays at Fusion, the bar at Dwarika's. Rs 555 including tapas platelet
- Charcoal and Flaming' Cocktails with live music for Rs 799, Fridays and Saturdays, 7PM at Hotel Yak & Yeti. 4248699
- Woodfired Pizza at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel, 4262768 and Pulchowk. 5521755

GETAWAYS
- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge pure relaxation. 4361500
- Winter Package three days and two nights at Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara. Rs 7490. 4412999
- Harmony of the mind, body and soul at Club Oasis, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- Yoga Camp at Shivaipur Heights Cottage, 1-3 December. 9841371927

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Starting next week, we can all finally get down to our favourite winter pastime—finding creative excuses to get out and find the warm sun when we should be doing something else. The grey days will give way to pleasant bright days. The nights will slowly get colder, and it looks like the dry spell of the last three weeks will continue. Confirming November as the driest month of the year.
ROAD RAGE: Satdobato comes to a standstill all Thursday morning, as irate truck drivers force a blockade to protest a traffic policeman’s ‘manhandling’ of a driver.

LAST OF THE GUNBOATS: Maoist soldiers from the sixth division of the ‘People’s Liberation Army’ travel on Wednesday from Ramghat to Dasharathpur, Surkhet, where one of the cantonment sites is located.

ANYTHING FOR BUSINESS: A vessel vendor is far from home along the Khumbu trail on Wednesday.

MOCK-KING: Comedian Manoj Gajurel does an impression of King Gyanendra at a cultural meeting at Khula Manch on Sunday.

FILLUM: Following a month of filming in Mustang, (l-r) actor Nima Rumba, producer Bhaskar Dhungana, director Bhushan Dahal, cameraman Bidhur Pande, and actor Saughat Malla speak at a press conference on Tuesday at Shangri-la Hotel about Kagbeni, Nepal’s first feature film to use digital technology.
The ass is just a horse with big ears. This is what gives him an acute sense of hearing and wisdom, over and beyond his rugged good looks.

That just by introduction to this, the tenth Backside column in this space. The Ass thanks all faithful readers for their time and support as well as for the rotten tomatoes thrown his way. More, throw me more, yum-yum. I would not be where I am today without them. Please, please, please, can all you rumorumgers out there send chitchat to my email below? I’m scraping the bottom of the barrel here.

Nepal’s designer revolution is now really going places. The Pushpakamal-Baburam show is back from Delhi from The Forbidden Fruit or the Nectar of Progress—who is the copy editor at HT, that’s what I want to know. The Ass couldn’t help reflecting that the very people who were forcing schoolchildren in Nepal to build bunkers in preparation of an imminent Indian invasion two years ago are now being feted by ex-Indian PMs for conducting a successful revolution. Also, wasn’t it just last year that Indian spooks successfully patched up a serious public rift between Chairman Prachanda and Ideologue-in-chief Laldiri?

Do these ga-ga Indians, who want revolutions only in other people’s countries and not their own, ever read the news? The campaign to force schoolchildren to cantonments is so calculated, deliberate, and nationwide that it could only have come from a command at the highest levels of the Maoist hierarchy, despite what they have been telling Ian. (“It is not part of our policy and we will take strong action against anyone going against it.” Where have we heard that before?) It’s pretty clear the Maoists are blackmailing the people with peace, and the strategy goes something like this: We know you all want peace, and we are the only ones who can give it to you, so you better allow us to take away your children into our PLA otherwise we will go back to war, and if we won’t get our way in the interim parliament and the interim government we’ll go back to war, and if we are not allowed to extort money we will go back to war...

To be fair, it is rather embarrassing for the comrades who till recently had been boasting of a 35,000-strong PLA to show up with only 4,400 rank-and-file guerrillas. Not surprised they want to pad their numbers.

Dahalji in his dapper blazer and Bhattaraiji in a jacket sporting a Nike swoosh knew what the babuis wanted to hear so they made gratuitous references to the ISI (“the Pakistanis wanted to give us money and arms and we refused”). Oh, yeah, and I’m a horse. Then the ding-dong duo sucked up to the ex-Naxalite closet pinkos in the India International Centre saying they found them much more sympathetic to Nepal than Kathmandu’s buddhi jeebs. Hee-haw.

The donkey’s moles in Delhi tell him this has been the strategy of the intelligence wallas all along: to make Prachanda president so they have a say over Nepal’s hydropower and trade and whatever. The idea is to defang the Nepali Maoists by arm-twisting them into the mainstream and this way sideline an arrogant king, weaken those pesky political parties and cut the Nepal Army down to size. The bonus is that this will delink Nepali Maoist from their Indian comrades.

Prachanda’s utterances in Delhi show this is going brilliantly according to plan. Then, I suppose they will do an Indira Gandhi on the Naxalites with scorched earth in Andhra, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Bihar. Wel, good luck to the big brothers.

Business as usual for the royal pundits, though, who are still roving the kali temples doing pujas to enlist divine intervention to save the king. He’ll need that with the final verdict of the Rayamajhi (Better Late Than Never) Commission this week.