Brick by brick

The parliament vote on Sunday may have averted an immediate political crisis, but the fallout is rattling the seven party alliance.

The Maoists have been portraying as a victory the house vote in which they exchanged proposals with the UML to pass their resolution for full-proportional representation and the UML’s compromise on republic. They are gearing up for street protests immediately after Tihar with a mass meeting in Kathmandu on 18 November. The idea is to bring the NC under mounting pressure from the streets and the house (which reconvenes on 19 November) to abide by the directives.

The NC, for its part, is trying to put on a brave face saying it alone refused to buckle under Maoist pressure. But it is hobbled by an increasingly frail but autocratic party president who has to also double as prime minister and leader of the alliance.

The UML went into an alliance with the Maoists last week, but it now appears the party went against the wishes of a majority of its top leaders. This is now creating serious tension in the top leadership.

“Have to understand why the Maoists brought the proposal, they haven’t yet abandoned their goal of capturing state power through arms,” K P Oli told himalkhabar.com on Wednesday. He said a majority of UML central committee members were against the proposal and the party could never work with the Maoists.

“How can we be with a party that doesn’t want elections?” he asked.

Subhas Devkota
BATTLEFIELD TO BALLOTTFIELD

One could say that the honourable members of the interim legislature, including the Maoists, were at least not killing each other on Sunday. The sight of Maoist MPs thumping tables instead of throwing socket bombs raising their hands to vote instead of giving the red salute can only mean progress in the peace process.

We don’t want the Maoists to be a mainstream party because the mainstream has discredited itself in the past ten years. This historical reason in itself is enough to suggest that it is better to leave things, which is its unique selling point, to be its anti-status quo agenda that will attract voters up with infection, lethargy and incompetence of the old leaders of Old Nepal.

But here is the rub: the Maoist party must officially renounce its modus operandi of violence, intimidation and threats. Without demonstrating that it is willing to play by the rules of pluralistic peaceful politics, it will be defeated in the ballottfield just as surely it couldn’t win in the battlefield. Despite the show following the parliamentary process in the special session last week, there are plenty of indications that the Maoist party hasn’t abandoned the old ways of doing things: bearing up the cadre of other parties, thrashing people who dared worship at a temple, extorting trekkers and killing journalists.

The pitfalls of praying alone

The Maoists finally accepted responsibility for the murder of Birendra Shah this week, but refused to apologise. Worse, a Maoist leader said his party should be given law because in law, one deals with the actions of individual cadre. This is appalling, considering that Shah was murdered after local Maoists in Bara lured him to a story on timing something.

Inexcusable also is the behaviour of Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula who apparently knew that the Maoists had kidnapped Shah soon after his abduction last month. He lied in parliament, and he tried to cover up the Maoist crime. We don’t know who is wronging Sitaula, but the man needs to go.

The two resolutions on Sunday night represented a political compromise and a face-saving way for the Maoists to extricate themselves from a parlous situation. This week, the Maoists have tried to portray the vote as a victory, but they have to do much better than that to prove to the Nepali people that they have made a clean break with their violent past.

Because the directives were a apolitical compromise, however, the legal issues are still stuck. The proposals only put moral pressure on the government to go ahead with parliamentary ratification, but that still needs a two-thirds majority of which as its unique selling point, it will be defeated in the ballottfield just as surely it couldn’t win in the battlefield.
DELHI VIEW

Why doesn’t New Delhi arrest the militants using its soil to prolong the conflict in Nepal? (‘Happy king’, #372). That would show it is really serious in resolving current problems. I feel uneasy when Delhi wants to prevent the UN from trying to contact terrorists creating havoc in Nepal and derail the peace process, then complains about the UN trying to resolve these matters. What really worries me is that we are becoming an Indian protectorate. It’s none of Delhi’s business to tell Nepalis how long to keep UNMIN and how they should work.

Sandep Dhungana, Birmingham, UK

● How did we ever get to this? A nation that can’t feed 250 million of its own people gets to decide what our national interests are? I blame the politicians, every single one of them, for letting inept Indians call the shots.

Sharina Dahal, email

● Declaring a republic from the present house would sow a seed of anarchy. All said and done, there is still a certain percentage of the population in this country which endorses the monarchy, apart from a majority of the people who still think the fate of the monarchy should be decided by a fresh mandate. Over the past one-and-a-half years the king has explicitly and implicitly asked the people to use all his rights as a monarch. Until proven otherwise, one should respect this. The king also expressed his delight over the peace deal. Denorning him without the verdict of the people would be a gross injustice. The political parties have overstepped the mandate of the April movement to decide on the future of the monarchy. This is tyranny in the name of loktantra.

PB Rana, email

● The king is a human being and a Nepali and has his own rights and duties. He should be free to practise them (‘Happy king’, #373). If the constituent assembly was held as scheduled, it would be better for the people and the king. But till then, he is a free man. There are people like us, the silent majority, who support the monarchy.

Name withheld, email

● It’s really frustrating to read your editorials each week about what the Maoists, monarchists, madness or ‘mahamahims’ are doing. In this appalling state of politics the players are behaving like 10-year-old kids. My complaint with the media is that you always make suggestions about making changes but are afraid of being proactive even though you have so much power and ability. The media community should start a non-aligned, non-political, non-biased, Nepal-centric civil movement so we can take ideas to the people to find solutions.

Rishav Shrestha, Geneva

● If the Maoists want to be seen as a legitimate political force, they have to renounce violence once and for all. Every law-abiding, democratic and progressive Nepali must openly condemn the Maoist actions. They threaten democracy.

K Kishore, email

MENTAL HEALTH

Your full page coverage on mental health (‘Stigma therapy’, #372) is most welcome. Nepal Times has brought the issue of a mentally ill person’s rights which for so long has been neglected and excluded from the human rights agenda in Nepal. A person experiencing a mental illness can be very vulnerable. Family, doctors and the DAO make decisions usually without the involvement of the mentally ill person. As a result, people are locked away, men lose property and women are excluded from marriage. Is this not a violation of fundamental rights? The question arises: How can the rights of a mentally ill person in Nepal be protected? Who is responsible to ensure this happens? Mental health is not just a medical issue but also a legal as well as a social issue.

It is essential that the rights of a mentally ill person are appropriately defined for Nepal. This raises a further question: Who should be involved in this process? Here, there may be something to learn from the experience of developing mental health legislation in my native Scotland where lawyers, human rights defenders, psychiatrists, mental health nurses, psychologists, social workers and people with experience of mental illness all participated and contributed to the development of the legislation.

In Nepal where is the space for people who experience mental illness to raise their voice?

Gael Robertson, Dhobi Ghat

NOT US

I was concerned to see the name of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) connected to internship Nepal in the article ‘Gap year ripples’ (#372). As Executive Director I can tell you that the NPPA does not endorse this program nor does it promote it. At one point a few years ago this internship was listed as an opportunity on our site www.nppa.org. After we received a few complaints from our members who applied for it, we removed the listing and have denied its listing since. The NPPA has been known for its professionalism and integrity for over 60 years. I would hate to think that your readers would associate us with any disreputable organization. There are many beneficial opportunities for our members as well as many other benefits and we take pride in protecting the interests of our members and visual journalists as a whole.

Jim Straight, Executive Director, NPPA

DURHAM, NC, USA

I bound ‘Gap year ripples’ very well.

Four years ago, I went through an organization called Rural Community Development Program Nepal. We paid $250 on our arrival and then about $250 a month for food and housing. The initial $250 covered the first two weeks in which we studied Nepal, and then went to a village to meet the people living there. I was supposed to work in a community forest very close to the Chitwan National Park in a village called Jarkauli where I would work in the nursery, replant trees, maintain the forest and so on. Unfortunately when I got there, I was told it wasn’t planting season, so there was basically nothing for me to do. I had been in contact with my organization quite a lot before coming to Nepal and they never warned me I wouldn’t be doing conservation work.

We learned that the family, which was very poor, only got Rs 700 per month, which I thought was negligible. We sure wondered where the rest of our $250 went, and we heard one of the owners of the organization was based in Malaysia and had a new, rather stylish office. I was sceptical of organizations that offered such “volunteer” work even before going to Nepal, and I am even more sceptical now.

Lina Hålåström, Caracas, Venezuela

ARTRA BEED

I agree with Artha Beed’s columns, but he is sometimes too passé, like in his last column (‘Cart before the horse’, #372). He writes: ‘The mortgage and sub-prime issues leading to a dip in the housing market resulted in lower consumer spending and threatened to send the entire economy into a spin.’ Actually, mortgage and sub-prime are not two different issues. Sub-prime mortgages are a risky lending practice to customers with below par credit ratings, is affecting the housing market in the US. Secondly, the issue of how much sub-prime mortgage is going to affect the US economy is still contentious. Contrary to what the Beed suggests, the US economy grew strongly in the last quarter, buoyed by a surge in consumer spending.

Santosh Pokharel, Charlottesville, VA, USA

POLL

Your internet poll about the fuel price hikes gives no real option to vote on (#371). And in the current poll (#372) you have GPK, PKD and King G to choose from about whom to blame for unsuccessful elections. Good luck with your three choice options. Could it be that the media is at fault for elections not happening?

Name withheld, email

THE ASS

The Ass is right as usual about opening momo shops at our embassies abroad to pay for their upkeep (‘Mad tea party’, #372). May I strongly urge His Political Highness Girija Babu to immediately recall the Nepali ambassadors to the US, UK and India, in that order, and send restaurateurs as plenipotentiaries. T entendals must have preference, given the Nepali penchant for delusional drinking. I would even suggest limiting the candidature to real New Road momo shop owners only.

Surya B Prasai, Maryland, USA

● The Ass for president!

Gyan Subba, Kumanipati
Indian Maoists have nothing but scorn for Nepal’s revolutionaries

Not comrades anymore

PRASHANT JHA in HYDERABAD

Indian Maoists are feeling vindicated by the recent setbacks suffered by their Nepali comrades and are full of scorn for them. Here in Andhra Pradesh, which has been a hotbed for Naxalite activity because of government neglect and entrenched caste and class inequities, the Nepalis sold out on the revolution when victory was so close at hand.

Indian and international Maoists always saw Nepal as a vanguard of their revolution. They provided training and material assistance in the early days, and they saw Nepal as a source of hope during the war.

The disillusionment first set in when India’s moderate left which is a partner in the central government steered the 12-point peace deal that was signed in November 2006 in New Delhi. The Communist Party of India (Maoist) saw that as a surrender. And when Pushpa Kamal Dahal told The Hindu newspaper that Indian Maoists should learn a lesson from them there was anger among the Naxals who see themselves as the pioneers of the South Asian revolution.

Now, the anger has turned to mockery as they watch the Nepali Maoists squirm. They think the present plight of the Nepali Maoists stems from weakness and incoherence.

“We had told them not to give up armed struggle, based on our own experience of doing so in Telengana in 1951,” Varavara Rao, the Telegu writer considered the public face of the Indian rebels, told us last week. “Your Maoists have neither been able to change the nature of the state nor even abolish the monarchy.”

Ganapathy, the leader of the Indian Maoists, said in a recent interview about the Nepali comrades: “They will either have to get co-opted into the system or abandon the present policy of power-sharing with the ruling class and continue the armed revolution to seize power. There is no Buddhist middle way. They cannot set the rules for a game the bourgeoisie invented.”

Pro-Maoist intellectuals in Hyderabad told us the Nepali Maoists are now stuck. “It’s too late,” said one Maoist-affiliated journalist. “They neither have the gun nor mass support. They should have listened to us.”

What has riled the Naxalites most is the continued hobnobbing of the Nepal Maoists with both the Indian state and the mainstream CPI-Marxist.

“Sitaram Yechury is an agent of the Indian ruling classes and is making money off the present process in Nepal. We cannot trust the Nepali Maoists anymore,” says Gadar, the most popular ‘revolutionary’ poet in the state. He claims that Indian police officials asked him to emulate the Nepal example a year ago.

“When the enemy puts up someone as an example, then something is obviously wrong,” he adds.

But the perception of the enemy has undergone a shift as a result of Nepali Maoists’ withdrawal from government in October. In stark opposition to the Naxalite assessment, a top counter-insurgency official in the Andhra Pradesh police says: “The Nepali Maoists have taken everyone for a ride. It was all tactical, they are still violent and will definitely make an attempt at grabbing power.”

Meanwhile, the Naxalites are themselves in a bit of a mess in Andhra Pradesh. Brutal police crackdowns, a dip in mass support, an inability to attract the urban youth and intelligentsia in significant numbers have all been serious setbacks.

The Naxalites are therefore shifting focus to the resource-rich central Indian states of Chhattisgarh and Orissa and plan to pick issues related to land rights of tribals and displacement.
Sri Lanka wins

Sri Lanka won the Surya Nepal 9th Saarc Golf Championship on Friday. Sri Lankan Tisa Chandradasa played Nepal Tashi Ghale and won the match after 12 holes. Similarly, in a match between Rupak Acharya and K Prabagaran, Sri Lanka’s Prabagaran won when Acharya lost the 12th, 13th and 15th holes. In the match between Mitthin Parera and Rabi Khadka, Nepal’s Khadka lost the match at the 17th hole. In the ladies category, Kusang Lama beat Eu Hau Thapa. Min Gu Cho won both the longest drive award and the drink. Jolly Shandy is available in shops and restaurants.

CG expands

Chaudhary Group (CG) has announced plans to enter the energy and infrastructure sectors in the next few years. Nirvana Chaudhary, executive director of Chaudhary Group, told a press conference the group would soon announce plans to set up a huge hydro project to help fill the gap in Nepal’s energy supply. He said the current project would cater to the real estate sector, which CG expects to boom in the near future. Chaudhary said the instability of the past decade had not been easy for the group, but added that CG’s FMCG division had grown 20 per cent in the last five years, and its electronic business had grown 35 per cent. He said CG Finco, a subsidiary, has been a key contributor in reducing the proportion of migrant workers’ remittances entering the country through unofficial channels.

Foreign cuisine

With the intention of bringing food from various countries to one venue, the sixth edition of the Himalayan Times International Food Fest concluded in Kathmandu on Saturday. More than 16 countries were represented, including Afghanistan, Israel, Mexico, Russia and South Korea. Artists like Jems Pradhan, Yogeeshwor Amatya, X mantra and others performed at the show. Those attending the festival also found games laid on. The event was organized by APCA-Nepal.

Hip drink

Carlsberg has introduced Jolly Shandy, a cocktail of beer and lemonade with 0.5 per cent alcohol content. The company is hoping to attract young, hip and urban Nepalis to the traditional English lemonade with 0.5 per cent alcohol content. The company is hoping to attract young, hip and urban Nepalis to the traditional English lemonade with 0.5 per cent alcohol content. The company is hoping to attract young, hip and urban Nepalis to the traditional English lemonade with 0.5 per cent alcohol content.
Interview with Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) in Naya Patrika, 6 November

Naya Patrika: What is the message from the voting in parliament on Sunday?
Ram Bahadur Thapa: First, the people want a republic and full proportional representation. Second, the government and other conspirators are bent on not letting these two proposals through. Third, some international powers are still trying to prop up the monarchy.

First, the people want a republic and full parliament on Sunday?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

Third, some international powers are still trying to prop up the monarchy. But we are trying our best to keep the six parties united so that regressive forces and international powers can’t take advantage. Sunday's voting has polarized the politics, but united so that regressive forces and international powers can’t take advantage. Sunday’s voting has polarized the politics, but we are trying our best to keep the six parties united so that regressive forces and international powers can’t take advantage.

If there are no disagreements we wouldn’t exist. There has been disagreement and serious debate even about the 20-point agreement. But there is a conspiracy to label one side stupid and the other wise and tolerant. We leftists believe in resolving our disagreement through interactions and consensus.

What is your personal view about India’s role?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

As long as there is a party there will be struggle and counter-struggle. The movement will continue. If the government doesn’t follow parliament's instructions, we have to set up a new interim government. But we are trying our best to keep the six parties united so that regressive forces and international powers can’t take advantage. Sunday’s voting has polarized the politics, but there is still room for agreement.

Let’s say the government doesn’t do that ...
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

If parliament’s directives are followed, they will. Otherwise they will try to prevent the government from following parliament’s directives. They will say this is only moral pressure, it is non-binding. There may be more terrorist attacks and criminal activities.

Are you saying there is no disagreement within the party and you are for armed struggle?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

The October Revolution was a progressive and positive step, but Maoists are presently trying to label it terrorism. They are trying to break the alliance and isolate the Maoists. But the special session of parliament made that unsuccessful. There was a lot of wheeling and dealing and open interference by reactionaries to break UML, Maoist unity. They were even getting ready to celebrate, but they failed. Therefore they will attempt an even bigger conspiracy now.

Are you still on the path of armed rebellion?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

We aren’t using the word rebellion. We are on a peaceful path, but if they don’t allow us to do the revolution forward peacefully, if they put up legislative obstacles and if they use crackdowns, then our response will also be violent.

Finally, you think elections will happen in 2064?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

If parliament’s directives are followed, they will. Otherwise they won’t. Then the mahanag and maha will rise up. The oppressed classes, regions, genders, languages and ethnicities will rise up.

Are we seeing the countdown to the end of Koirala’s prime ministership?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

He said in parliament he would not let the alliance fall apart and expressed his commitment to a republic. So it may be too early to say.

And there was a lot of dissatisfaction within the UML about the voting?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

That is an internal matter of the UML. But the voting did show unity and a victory for the progressive wing of the UML. Is your party trying to increase contradictions and usher in an October Revolution?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

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What kind of conspiracy?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

First, to split the alliance. They will try to prevent the government from following parliament’s directives. They will say this is only moral pressure, it is non-binding. There may be more terrorist attacks and criminal activities.

Are you regarded as a hard-liner within the party and you are for armed struggle?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

The media has begun labelling us hard and soft-liners. The International Crisis Group reported this a long time ago. This is a dangerous conspiracy. This is an effort to bring a split in the movement: to label someone moderate and another a Pol Pot or Bin Laden.

Are you saying there is no disagreement within the Maoists?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

As long as there is a party there will be struggle and counter-struggle. If there are no disagreements we wouldn’t exist. There has been disagreement and serious debate even about the 20-point agreement. But there is a conspiracy to label one side stupid and the other wise and tolerant. We leftists believe in resolving our disagreement through interactions and consensus.

What is your personal view about India’s role?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

There can’t be a personal opinion. Which India are we talking about: the Indian government, the Indian people and the various nationalities and classes? There is one class in India which wants to keep Nepal under its tutelage and there are parties which say India’s border is the Himalaya. And then there are the people who support the liberation of the Nepal people and their war. A symbol of the asymmetrical relationship is the treaties. We want them scrapped.

But you didn’t have any problems with India’s role in the 12-point agreement?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

During the war, India sold Nepal Rs 3 billion worth of arms. Those weapons were used to kill Nepali people. History is witness to the fact that the Indian ruling class tried to put down the people’s movement. They abet the capture of border territory, the traite violence and unequal treaties. Still we are dependent on India socially, geographically and culturally.

RIM and COMPOSA are dissatisfied with you. Not true. You are right that some friends in RIM and COMPOSA aren’t happy with the path we have taken. But our relations are stable. During the war we had no relations with India and China. We are now developing our diplomatic ties.

Are you still on the path of armed rebellion?
Ram Bahadur Thapa:

We aren’t using the word rebellion. We are on a peaceful path, but if they don’t allow us to do the revolution forward peacefully, if they put up legislative obstacles and if they use crackdowns, then our response will also be violent.

Finally, you think elections will happen in 2064?
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The army is working on a war-footing to complete the road from Beni to Jomsom. Work on the road started in 1996, the year the Maoist war started, and construction halted also because of the conflict.

Now, with only a few cliffs left to blast through, 2,000 labourers and 300 soldiers are working night and day to complete the road by next month. Gravelling has been done on the 41km highway and vehicles are already plying the areas that are completed up to Lete. But there is the strange situation where locals prevent trekkers from riding buses because otherwise they won’t stay in their lodges. But the apple growers of Marpha and Jomsom are happy that their fruits will now have a market. With the road, we won’t have a situation where locals prevent trekkers from riding buses because otherwise they won’t stay in their lodges.

The Maoists had waged war on their opponents and professionals in the districts and villages. But a party that believes in armed struggle as an extension of politics is finding it difficult to transform itself. It is finding it difficult to be accountable to the public about its activities. After violent incidents like this, the Maoists have tried to wash their hands by saying that it is not the party’s policy to do such things.

Meanwhile, the administration has shown its inability to carry out a proper investigation and has failed to make the Maoists accountable for the crime. Ordinary citizens are asking: how can an administration that can’t even carry out a proper investigation and has failed to make the Maoists accountable for the crime.

The leaders probably think they are everywhere. They are wrong. The people are everywhere, and they want elections and a loktantrik republic in Nepal. But the seven parties are entangled in their own petty interests and pushing the country towards darkness. The leaders probably think they are everywhere. They are wrong. As long as we can’t make the Maoists accountable for the crime, they are everything here. They are everything here. They are everything here.

The Maoists have tried from the beginning to wriggle out of taking responsibility for the murder of Birendra Sah. But even after their own investigation proved the involvement of party cadres, the Maoists have tried to cover up and delay. The party promised to punish the guilty, but hasn’t done so and hasn’t handed them over to the state either.

To be fair, it’s not just Koirala who is at fault here. Pushpa Kamal Dahal is also equally responsible. As long as we can’t have the constituent assembly elections there won’t be a loktantrik republic in Nepal. But the seven parties are entangled in their own petty interests and pushing the country towards darkness.

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MANANG—In a dimly-lit stone-walled room in Manang village, men shake the dust out of costumes before trying on brass warrior helmets and rubber devil masks.

It’s been three years since the last Badhe festival, a ritual forgotten for more than two decades as urban migration and tourism took their toll on local practices in this scenic valley behind the Annapurnas. But local leaders are keen to see a cultural revival, aimed at young Manangis as well as the 10,000 or so trekkers who pass through here every year.

Badhe is a three-day event, held this year on 25-27 October. The first two days involved outdoor performances which retold the story of a Ghale king sending his army off to battle. While the costumes had to be recreated in Kathmandu, the swords and spears carried by the warriors were authentic relics.

For the last day, the characters changed costumes and joined the head lama in a dance to drive the devil out of the village. The festival began as a B’on religious ceremony and originally involved the sacrifice of 12 virgin girls, according to oral history. Eventually, goats were sacrificed instead of humans, but these days Badhe is a bloodless affair.

“Before, we used to kill a lot of goats, not with a knife but just by banging them on the ground,” remembers 83-year-old Jumgme Ghale. “We used to think we’ll kill our enemies like that.”

In Ghale’s youth, the Badhe festival attracted huge crowds, as people came from neighbouring villages to party for a whole week. This year, about 200 locals and around 50 tourists turned out to watch.

The organizers of this year’s Badhe, Manang Youth Society and Annapurna Conservation Area Project, hope the 2010 event will attract more young Manangis from the cities and help reconnect them with their cultural heritage.
The number of women working in the Nepali media is growing dramatically, especially in FM radio. One year ago, there were only two women journalists in Surkhet, today there are 20—most of them working in radio stations but also as correspondents for national newspapers.

“I am really excited about my new job,” gushes Dipa Koirala, who works 12 hours days at Bheri FM in Surkhet. Across the street at Bulbule FM, Rita Kandel is also passionate about her new journalism career. “I got into radio by chance, but now I can’t leave it,” says Rita, who writes and reads the news, reports and also takes care of the technical side of the studio.

Surkhet’s new local language programs are also drawing women journalists. Bimala Budamagar reads the Magar news on Radio Nepal’s medium wave regional broadcasts. In Palung valley in central Nepal, 19-year-old Sunita Syangtan handles programming, reporting and procuring on Palung FM’s Tamang program. District health authorities in Makwanpur registered a sharp fall in child mortality rates from pneumonia last winter, and they credit Sunita’s Tamang language program.

In Biratnagar, the new Purbanchal FM is Nepal’s first all-women station. Goshari Kunwar is the 22-year-old editor of the Morning Bell, a daily paper in Kailali. She is a petite, fragile girl, but brave enough to expose a case of corruption in a bylined article.

After the newspaper came out, a group of men stalked her for over a month and eventually beat her up. “Some guys insulted me and punched me in the face,” says Goshari, who lost two of her teeth.

Goshari has no intention of giving up journalism. “I am the publisher and editor of this paper. I like my job and I am committed to my career. I will stay on,” she told us in Kathmandu last week, where she was among 200 women journalists attending a conference organized by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).

Logshari’s story is not uncommon. Most women journalists work as volunteers or receive only symbolic pay. They are afraid of losing their jobs if they get pregnant, because maternity laws are not implemented. Promotions are very rare, and even the most capable and committed lag behind male colleagues in terms of salary and benefits. Only 16 per cent of journalists in Nepal are women.

IRENE PERONI

Radio active

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In Palung valley in central Nepal, 19-year-old Sunita Syangtan registered a sharp fall in child mortality rates from pneumonia last winter, and they credit Sunita’s Tamang language program.

In Biratnagar, the new Purbanchal FM is Nepal’s first all-women station. Goshari Kunwar is the 22-year-old editor of the Morning Bell, a daily paper in Kailali. She is a petite, fragile girl, but brave enough to expose a case of corruption in a bylined article.

After the newspaper came out, a group of men stalked her for over a month and eventually beat her up. “Some guys insulted me and punched me in the face,” says Goshari, who lost two of her teeth.

Goshari has no intention of giving up journalism. “I am the publisher and editor of this paper. I like my job and I am committed to my career. I will stay on,” she told us in Kathmandu last week, where she was among 200 women journalists attending a conference organized by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).
Nepal are women, a figure that seems very low in itself but is second only to India among South Asian countries. Even though more and more women are joining the profession, they are much more likely to drop out than their male colleagues. Many of them are lured by prominent INGOs which offer better pay, others seek a more secure ten-to-five job to be able to look after their families. But many are simply discouraged by the difficulties of doing journalism in a predominantly male world.

The main grudge of Indira Aryal at Radio Lumbini is against local police. “If a male journalist goes to the police station, they are very friendly with him, sharing tea, but if I go I have to work really hard just to convince them that they should talk to me,” says Indira.

Women have to struggle on a daily basis with the psychological stress of reporting because of the unhelpful attitude of colleagues and the people they interview. “In a society where all decision-makers are men, most sources are sceptical of women’s skills, and sometimes they try to take advantage of the youngest and most inexperienced girls by subtly blackmailing them,” says Nirmala Sharma of Sanchinkha Samuh, a women communicators forum. A male-dominated workplace can make women feel unwelcome. Even seemingly minor things like the lack of a ladies’ toilet can become a real problem.

“Sexual harassment is not only about physical violence, it is also about how people deal with you, the language they use, whether or not they show you respect,” says Yashoda Timsina, a reporter with Nepal who is the only woman among 35 male colleagues. “A year ago I went to the office one morning, turned my computer on and a porn site popped up,” Yashoda recalls. “A male colleague had accessed it from my machine. I got very upset and complained to the editor. They never did it again.”

Despite the difficulties, editors and women activists believe this is a good time for women to embark on media careers in Nepal. There are new websites, FM and TV stations. Parliament has ruled that in every sector, including the media, at least one-third of employees should be female. Some women concede that the real problem is lack of competence. “To be honest, sometimes it’s difficult for media houses to recruit women, because they haven’t received proper training and are not really as good as their male colleagues,” says Nirmala from Sanchinkha, which runs journalism courses for women in the districts.

radio station (pictured). Except for the security guard, all the producers, reporters and administrative staff at Purbanchal are women. The station is a cooperative owned by local social organisations, and broadcasts in Tharu, Maithili, Rajbansi, Jhagand, Dhimal and Santhal.

“Tila Bhandari in Surkhet, Kunda Dixit in Palung and Kamal Rimal in Biratnagar we are truly inclusive radio,” says Minadebi Biswas of the Sujanshil Community Organisation. “Everyone is happy to finally have a radio that speaks their language.”

Chini Toina, Dabur Honey. Healthy Chha. Tasty Chha.

Source: from nature’s lip. Dabur Honey is a wonder food. rich in anti-oxidants, important vitamins like B1, B2, B6 and C, as well as, essential minerals like Calcium and Iron. it provides energy and strengthens immunity. In fact, just switching from sugar to Dabur Honey promises multiple benefits for you and your entire family. So, go ahead, just swap out of your life and switch to the healthier alternative today. Dabur Honey.
Global Nepalis come home

They have stopped complaining, and started getting things done

There used to be a time when the main pastime at all Nepali gatherings abroad was a discussion on how corrupt Nepali politicians were and how difficult it was to change the country.

The Third Global NRN Conference over the weekend demonstrated that overseas Nepalis have not only stopped complaining but have become proactive and more assertive in seeking a role in Nepal’s transformation. The meeting was attended by approximately 400 global Nepalis from 40 countries, proving that Nepalis dispersed around the world are more connected with each other and concerned about the wellbeing of Nepal.

No matter how attractive it may look in terms of personal benefits and affinity, migrant communities appear to resist the so-called ‘melting pot’ theory. The desire to have a distinct identity, fueled by aggressive globalization of the last decade, is the driving force behind the latest wave of international diaspora networks.

The Nepali diaspora has learnt from its Asian, African and Latin counterparts that through social (networking), intellectual (skills and know-how), political (lobbying), cultural and financial (remittances and direct investment) capital, diasporas can have a lasting developmental impact on countries of their origin.

**Brain gain**

Young Nepalis abroad, tired of hearing only about the best and brightest going abroad to work, have started a project to try and reverse the flow.

The NRN Youth Forum last week signed an MoU with the Nepal Youth Entrepreneurs Forum to push a campaign to lure young Nepali professionals back to Nepal on short and long-term internships with selected organizations in Nepal.

“We thought: let’s stop complaining about the brain drain, let’s do something about it, that was how the idea came about,” says Sagar Ona, vice-president of the international coordination council of the NRNA.

To start with, the program will look for applications from young Nepalis at universities and companies in the US, Japan, Canada and Australia for short-term internships in Nepal. The group has already signed agreements with several business houses in Nepal, including IT companies, media houses and banks, and in the travel and tourism industry.

“We are really glad to be working with the Youth Forum, and this could be the seed of something that could really grow into a movement in future,” says Saurav Jyoti of the Nepal Youth Entrepreneurs' Forum, which has already launched a ‘Made in Nepal’ program to urge Nepalis to buy Nepali products wherever possible.

Besides the internship program, the Youth Forum also wants to start a mentoring program to market Nepali products abroad and bring into the country experts of Nepali origin on everything from transport management to civil aviation and information technology for short-term consultancies.

“The advantage is that we tap into a huge reservoir of goodwill towards Nepal on the part of people of Nepal origin who want to give back to their society,” says Ona. “The advantage is that because they are Nepalis they will fit in better than non-Nepalis.”

**Homeward Bound:** “We want to reverse the brain drain,” says Sagar Ona of the NRN Youth Forum.

**The Third Global NRN Conference over the weekend demonstrated that overseas Nepalis have not only stopped complaining but have become proactive and more assertive in seeking a role in Nepal’s transformation.**
American eccentricism

How the death of a dog leads to radical self-invention

The last decade in the United States has witnessed a gathering of films with an offbeat sensibility that champions the misfit, the loser, the freak or the generally maladjusted. This genre we may call American Eccentricism, although inadequate evaluation has often led it to be tagged with unwieldy monikers like ‘The New New Wave’ or ‘Neo-Humanism’. Its master, Wes Anderson (The Royal Tenenbaums, The Darjeeling Limited), with his melancholic characters lovingly propped against gorgeous sets, is already known for writing and directing films that are often described as ‘peculiar’, ‘strange’, or ‘pointless’. We are supposed to be disappointed, only to highlight the undercurrent of dissatisfaction. Our misfit Peggy commands our sympathy and even our feathered and furred friends, like the beloved beagle named Pencil. Although on the face of it happiness is her one source of real affection even as we are asked to laugh at her oddity, Eccentricist films have always relied on a broad ensemble of secondary characters that reinforce the humanist spirit of the films. Here, however, they serve as a foil to the saintly persona of Peggy. The script becomes too evident that each viewer with their callous disposal of the film, but doesn’t always tickle. It becomes too evident that each person will eventually disappoint, only to highlight the simple loyalty and innocence of our feathered and furred counterparts.

In this story about finding meaning and purpose, White’s film fails to match the perfect balance of pain and humour accomplished by its Eccentricist cousins. Its ending, with Peggy egotistically yet determinedly summarizing her discoveries about herself in an email over a montage of her loved ones, goes far in rescuing the film from the drudgery that inflicts it by that point. Sadly, despite this correction, the estranged individuals and Peggy’s dissatisfaction with humanity through most of the film sour Year of the Dog.

Year of the Dog
Director: Mike White
Cast: Molly Shannon, Peter Sarsgaard, Regina King, Laura Dern, Josh Pais

CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D’Silva

Anderson (The Royal Tenenbaums, The Darjeeling Limited), with his melancholic characters lovingly propped against gorgeous sets, is already being called an auteur. Noah Baumbach (The Squid and the Whale), Miranda July (Me and Everyone We Know) and Mark Mills (Thumbsucker) are others who have left their mark, and the recent success of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris in Little Miss Sunshine owes much to the Eccentricists.

Wes Anderson is renowned for writing comedies like School of Rock and Nacho Libre, Mike White recently made a not-so-surprising foray into Eccentricism with his directorial debut Year of the Dog.

Protagonist Peggy, played by the excellent Molly Shannon (Saturday Night Live), is a secretary in a nondescript suburban firm. Single, in her forties, her one source of happiness is her beagle named Pencil. Although on the face of it Peggy seems well-adjusted, happily delivering elements to her workplace and being the sympathetic ear, there’s an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. That veneer begins to crack when her much-loved dog tragically dies. The event puts her on a path to some radical self-invention. Befriending and consequently falling for the animal shelter guy Newt (Sarsgaard) who persuaded her to adopt another dog, she finds herself slowly awakening to a new political life of veganism and animal activism, which
Exhibitions
- The Work of the Wind by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Ambrosini at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 13-27 November. 4218048

Events
- Kukur Puja 8 November
- Laksmi Puja 9 November
- Maha Puja/Laksmi Puja 10 November
- Bhai Tika 11 November
- Dasain Swing Festival at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal, 10AM-6PM, with evening lighting from 6-7PM and Festival of Lights on 9 November. 4425340
- Dipawali with dance and bonfire at the poolside and garden at the Grand Norling Resort, Gokarna, 7:30 PM onwards on 2 November. Rs 400. 4482993
- Bingo Nights at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM and every Monday. 55225201
- Play and Learn German at the German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel. 4700832
- School Bullying by Niti Rana, 24 & 25 November at The New Era, Battisputali. 9851023958
- Toastmasters a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4286847

Music
- Dipawali Jam Night at Mohk Live, 8 November at Mohk. 05525219
- Jazz at Jatra every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Cafe and Bar, Thamel.
- Ciney Gurung every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 55221048

Dining
- Steak at Olive Bar and Bistro, available for lunch and dinner at a-la-carte rates with live band in the evenings, Radisson Hotel. 4411818
- Nauratha special vegetarian dinner at The Cafe, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- Vegetarian alternative at Sputa View restaurant and cafe, Boudha Sputa. 4480362
- Steak Fare a la carte steak menu at Rosy-Hyatt’s Signature Restaurant from 6PM onwards till 12 November. 4491234
- Sunday Jazz Brunch Hyatt’s BBQ brunch with live jazz music at the Grand Norling Hotel, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- Jazz in Patan with coffee, foods, and dessert at the New Orantes Cafe, Jawalakhel, 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- BBQ, chilled beer, cocktails and live music at the Kausari Restaurant and Bar, Darbar Marg, 6218490
- Crepes and Smoothies - Come for Hi-Tea to taste our tempting crepes and fresh smoothies at The Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM. Please call 4491234
- BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill Radisson Hotel, Lalitpur, every Friday 6:30 PM, Rs 899 nett.
- Cocktails and jazz with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika’s. 4479484
- Lakejawaab curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Cafe Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5520900
- Starry Night Barbeque at Hotel Shangri-La with Live performance by Ciney Gurung. Rs. 666.00 nett per person, at the Shamabala Garden, every Friday 6.30 PM onwards. 4412999
- Kebabs and curries at the Dhaa, Thapathali. 9841290619
- Krishnarpan Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika’s Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- Calculata’s rolls, biriyani, kebabs Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- Rediscover fine Italian cuisine and an exclusive selection of wines at La Dolce Vite, Thamel. 4700612
- Little Britain Coffee Shop fresh organic coffee, homemade cakes, WiFi internet, open all day, everyday. 4962607
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- Dohkaiama Cafe at Patan Dhowa, warm and intimate 5522113

Getaways
- Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara Rs 10,999 for Nepali double, Rs219 for expat double, two days and three nights package, including transportation from the airport, welcome drinks, tennis and swimming, discount on food and beverages.
- Weekend Getaways at Le Meridian, Kathmandu, Resident Night Rs 4444 and Two Nights Package Rs 8888. Also includes, breakfast, all-inclusive facilities, swimming pool, steam sauna, Jacuzzi and gym facilities.
- Escape to Shivalai Heights Cottage great view, bird watching and more. 9841371027
- Chiso Chhau Hava Ma at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, Rs 3,400 for double, includes one night accommodation, dinner, breakfast and shuttle service. 6680089

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Healthy Growth: Prime Minister GP Koirala on Wednesday attends the Silver Jubilee celebrations at Patan Hospital, which is adding a new maternity wing with support from the Nick Simons Foundation.

Self-Worship: Grade Five students at a school in Patan celebrate the Newari festival of Mha Puja on Wednesday by blessing themselves.

Macaque Misery: Primatologist Jane Goodall unveils a report on the sale of Nepali monkeys for lab testing, published by the Stop Monkey Business Campaign Coalition, in Kathmandu on Monday.

SRSG: UNMIN chief Ian Martin addresses the media on Tuesday on his return from New York, emphasizing that elections were a vital part of the peace process.
Hic, hic hurray!

Let’s not split hairs here about whether Comrade Lotus Flower and Comrade Red Banner were summoned to Lainchaur last weekend, or they rushed over when they heard His Excellency was about to meet the prime minister. What is sure is that PKD and BRB got the shock of their lives when they were ambushed by hacks after meeting Shivbhai. The surest kiss of death for a politician in Nepal these days is to be seen to be sneaking out of the Indian embassy under cover of darkness. The Indians themselves have realized that the best way to pull the rug from someone they don’t like is to leak it to the press that so-and-so had a 90-minute tête-à-tête with the ambassador, and poof!

Ironically, the very next day Comrade Janardan Sharma of the unsuccessful-attack-on-Tansen fame was delivering a tirade against “imperialists and expansionists” from the rostrum in parliament. Among the Maoist rank-and-file, where Red Banner is already called Big Brother’s sidekick, there were snide remarks all week about their leaders going to the embassy with their tails between their legs—the same comrades who in 2004 told them to dig tunnels and bunkers all over the country to prepare for an Indian invasion.

Too bad Janardan Babu and Suresh Sir haven’t got US visas even though 37 other MPs have got theirs for the mass junket to attend the UN general assembly and play shell games in NYC. No wonder they were in such a hurry to wrap up the special session. Some MPs are taking their wives and husbands, which reminds the Ass, is anyone monitoring whether they come back? The Australians, Danes, Malaysians and French still haven’t said either yes or no to our Maoist ambassador designates.

The donkey’s mole in the UML says the Maoists cleverly deployed Comrade Leftist God to dangle prime ministership before Makunay to get him to agree to vote together in the house. Cross my heart.

Now that Nepal is the world’s cardamom superpower, it is shameful that our only railway line from Janakpur to Jaleswor is out of action, the baggage carousel at Kathmandu airport was not working throughout Dasain at a time of peak traffic because someone forgot to propitiate it with a goat sacrifice, and they’re still mixing our diesel with 40 percent kerosene. How are we going to show our faces at the International Cardamom Congress this year?

As the interests of the Maoists and the monarchistas converge more and more, it was only natural that there should be jubilation at Narayanhiti and Nirmal Nibas on Sunday night. With the Maoists determined not to let elections happen unless they can win, which is probably never, it looks like the monarchy’s future is now assured. No wonder they are celebrating. Hic, hic, hurray!

In a week when it looked like elections would be held next decade if at all, an NC central committee member was killed in Lahan, news of a journalist’s murder was admitted by the Maoists and the country is poised for another paroxysm of street agitation after Tihar. What is our cabinet doing? It decides to devote half the meeting to denounce Musharraf’s coup and pass a solution. The mouse has roared. But then what do you expect from a prime minister who devotes three-fourths of his speech to parliament before it voted to why everyone should vote kangresi because otherwise the international community would be ticked off.

That’s even worse than being summoned to Lainchaur.