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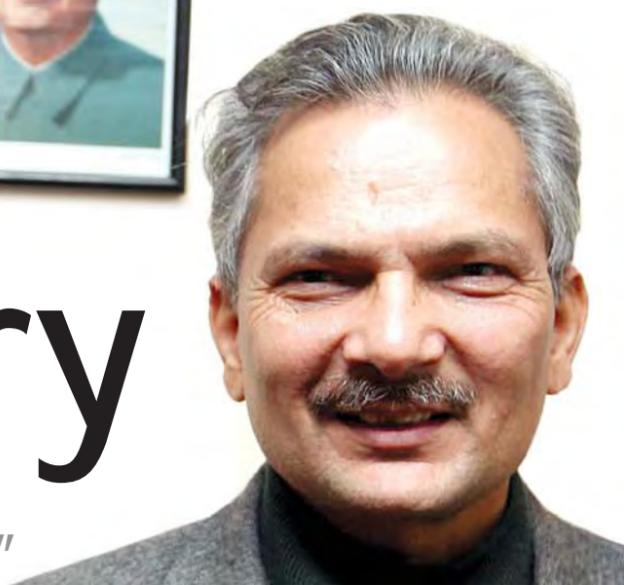
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LINEAGE, LEFT:
Baburam Bhattarai is at home in the company of his fellow ideologues

Man in a hurry

"Find the correct balance of pace for both sides"



KIRAN PANDAY

Hardliners in each of the three big parties are making it more difficult for the top leadership to find a compromise power-sharing formula, prolonging the stalemate and threatening the peace process. This could be why senior leaders all sounded conciliatory after their numerous one-on-one and joint meetings this week, but came out with uncompromising stands the very next day.

"The problem is not between the political parties, it is within the parties themselves," one senior adviser told *Nepali Times*.

For example, the UML has an almost right-wing faction, while the NC has a leftist fringe that is acceptable to the Maoists.

The Maoists, weakened by serious internal rifts, need an acceptable face-saving way out of their 'civilian supremacy' stance. Conservatives in the NC and UML, however, smell blood and don't want to give the Maoists an easy way out. Although the Kailali incident this week and the vicious Maoist attack on Rukum journalist Tika Bista have sharpened the rhetoric on both sides, the three were said to have edged closer to a formula for

an all-party coalition.

Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai represents the pragmatic aspect of the Maoist hierarchy, although one wouldn't guess that from what he has to tell us in an extensive interview this week. His clarification that ethnic autonomous regions are just 'symbolic' betrays his party's need to extricate itself from an issue that is spinning out of the leadership's control.

Peeling away the rhetoric, one senses his hurry to resolve the political deadlock to pay attention to the economy and to development. "Our society is

afflicted with poverty, unemployment, discrimination, dependency. We have to do away with these as soon as possible. We have to hasten our pace," Bhattarai says.

When asked about how his party's labour militancy is hurting industry, he replies: "National investors and multinational companies are most welcome to invest in Nepal and contribute to the development of the country. We have no policy to discourage investment in the country." *Excerpts on p3, full interview on www.nepalitimes.com*

EURO BHUTANIS



Older refugees from Bhutan may find it difficult to adjust to life in Europe and separation from their extended families, but their children have fit right in, learning Dutch, Danish or Norwegian. When asked why they agreed to third-country resettlement, the parents all say: "For our children's future."

p8-9

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Nepal in Copenhagen

Ten steps to a new carbon-neutral Nepal

CRISIS OF THE WEEK

As this country lurches from one crisis to another, the government is too busy fire-fighting to plan or implement anything.

This week's crisis was the violence in the forests of Kailali, where we witnessed a combustible mixture of politics and populism. It is now becoming clear from field reports that the Maoists deliberately mobilised tens of thousands of people they had promised land to in the past.

Some were genuinely landless, some ex-Kamaiyas, but the majority were people bussed in from afar. The timing was what gave it all away: they were pouring oil onto the agitation. What the Maoists perhaps hadn't bargained for, and five people paid for their lives for this, was that the government was determined to forcibly stop the land-grabbing that has rapidly spread across the country, especially in the western Tarai.

There is a moral to the story of the Maoists copying the NC and UML in resettling new vote banks along the highways by clearing forests: don't stir the hornets' nest. Perhaps the more important lesson pertains to the resettlement of Maoist guerrillas, qualified and unqualified alike. If they are let out into society without a plan, incidents like this week's explosion of violence may find better motivated and heavier armed instigators.

But Dudgehari has already started to fade from the media glare, being replaced by some other crisis of the week. It is clear that incidents like these will become increasingly commonplace unless the political parties do not come to a power-sharing agreement soon. Unfortunately, we see a dangerous political polarisation between the Maoists on the one hand and the NC/UML on the other. This chasm is difficult to bridge because both sides are being goaded on by hardliners on both sides who agree on only one thing: the peace process was a mistake and we should start killing each other all over again.

Forget the political slogans about civilian supremacy: the secret talks these days are all about the conditions (read cabinet berths) under which the Maoists will agree to come back to power. Deals that had almost been finalised by the moderate leadership of all three parties have in recent weeks been sabotaged by radicals within.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal managed to save his party by deft footwork to have his party convention postponed. The thinking within the right wing of the UML is: "Let's finish them off before they finish us off." And kangresi conservatives now openly say the peace process was a mistake.

All this pushes a power-sharing deal further away. However, there is really no other way to ensure the relative stability we need to finish constitution writing and conclude the peace process. In fact, if the power deal can be done, everything else could pretty much fall into place. The question is will the pragmatists in all three parties be allowed by their hardliners to strike a deal?



ANANDA RAM DANGOL

Last week's high profile cabinet meeting below Mount Everest must not be seen as just a publicity stunt. We must build on it to mobilise a real, sustained global campaign to protect the Himalaya, to uplift the lives of the billion-plus people who live in the river basins flowing from these mighty



GUEST COLUMN
Kul Chandra Gautam

water towers of the world, and to generate momentum to build a new carbon-neutral Nepal.

Later today in Copenhagen, a large gathering of eminent mountaineers from around the world will be marching in a 'Summit of Summiters' campaign to the save the Himalaya. Their message will be reinforced by Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal next week when he addresses world leaders at the climate change summit.

Besides pleading for more foreign aid citing our Least Developed Country status, what can Nepal actually offer its people, and humanity at large, as its unique contribution to turn the threat of global warming into an opportunity to build a better future?

I suggest a 10-point action plan to build a carbon-neutral Nepal:

1. Declare Nepal's aspiration to become a carbon-neutral

country by 2030: currently Nepal consumes a tiny amount of energy per capita and has a very small carbon footprint. If we make a concerted and determined effort now, it is quite conceivable that we can build a carbon-neutral future.

2. Develop a master plan for energy independence: at a time when we have prolonged daily blackouts and rely heavily on expensive imported petroleum products for most of our modern transport and industry, energy independence may seem an unrealistic prospect. But Nepal has vast untapped water, solar and wind energy resources, and people power. We certainly have the potential to become energy independent if we develop an ambitious, long-term master plan.

3. Switch to Nepal-based renewable energy sources for major new transport and industrial projects: as we develop ambitious new national

reconstruction and development plans, we must discontinue business-as-usual development paradigms. Instead of building new roads and highways that depend on expensive imported petroleum products and destroy our pristine environment, we must switch to electricity-operated high-speed trains, trams, trolley buses and ropeways. Let us discourage smoke-belching, polluting industries and encourage factories and industries that use electric, solar and wind energy to power our industrial plants.

4. Offer generous tax incentives for vehicles and machinery using non-polluting energy sources: although we pay lip service to clean energy, our tax system does not favour the import and use of electrically operated or hybrid vehicles and industrial equipment and machinery. It is time not just for tax incentives, but also for subsidies for transport vehicles and industrial machinery that minimise carbon emissions and greenhouse gases.

5. Launch a global campaign

to save the Himalaya: we are lucky to have thousands of mountaineers all over the world who love Nepal and who would happily work with us in a global campaign to save the Himalaya. Let us reach out to them, and organise a campaign of global solidarity with them to help protect the Himalaya and uplift the living conditions of the people of the Himalayan region.

6. Further expand community forestry and national parks: Nepal has a very successful and exemplary community forestry program. We can expand these and our national parks to both provide livelihoods for our people and to earn credit under the global carbon emission-trading scheme.

7. Promote eco-tourism: given the great diversity of its flora and fauna and the stunning natural beauty of Nepal, there is great potential for us to specialise in eco-tourism.

8. Build a new capital city and regional growth hubs: Kathmandu is choking and can no longer handle further population growth and traffic. We need to consider developing a new parallel capital city. As Nepal moves towards a new federal structure, we must develop new, well-planned, environmentally friendly and economically viable urban settlements and growth centres.

9. Promote a culture of non-violence: we must end the culture of violence spreading across the country. Non-violence must extend to protecting our precious natural resources.

10. Invest in children: we must protect our environment to save our children, and empower our children to save the environment. It is for our children and future generations that we must build a carbon-neutral new Nepal. Like all progressive and prosperous countries, let us invest heavily in the survival, protection and development of our children, and inculcate in them an abiding love of nature and the environment.

LETTERS

DEFROSTED

The huge number of fires burning plastic waste across the country must be a big contributing factor to the rising temperatures in Nepal ('Defrosted', #479). In the area where I stay in Pokhara, there are some days when we can hardly breathe because of the toxic smoke in the air, as each household burns their plastic rubbish. Sadly people do not understand that the sickly fumes drifting into their own homes are a great danger to the future health of their own families.



Bridgette Harris

• This article has the right conclusion. Rather than debate what to do about 'climate change', it is better to concentrate on the imperative to reduce carbon usage for economic reasons. The imperative will become more urgent with hundreds of millions of Chinese, Brazilians, Indians, and others now joining the ranks of the middle class.

Ken

LABOUR WOES

The Beed is spot on ('Labor woes', #478). Creation of employment opportunities is paramount for sustainable growth, yet it has become a peripheral issue. Unless we tackle this

issue head-on immediately, it will spiral out of control. The best way to fix the problem is to create a conducive environment for investment in productive economic activities. Agriculture has been absorbing most of the jobs so far, but this will have to change before it's too late.

Gaule hero

KING OF SNEERS

Excellent and insightful article ('King of sneers', #478). KFC is stomach-churning and greasy, and Pizza Hut is pretty much the bottom of the barrel of pizza chains. And I see no benefit economically to Nepal, except to a few wealthy folks who can buy franchises. Thinking that you're being sophisticated and Western by lining up to swallow food that, in the West, is seen as cheap, low-status, and just something to eat when nothing else is available is little different from

believing the enticements of the Marlboro Man.

Observation

UNWANTED IN ACCHAM

It may be more feasible to remind people that the husband usually has the strongest preference with regard to the child's gender ('Unwanted in Accham', #478). Maybe he will be better able to withstand societal pressure than the wives and there will subsequently be fewer abortions.

Proud to be a daughter

CORRECTION

Contrary to a caption from last week's Happenings section, the Australian Embassy handed out cheques totalling AUD 170,000 under its Direct Aid Program. Australian Ambassador Susan Grace's name was also incorrectly spelt.

“If you consider all oppressed people Maoists, if you say all 28 million Nepalis are Maoists, we are quite comfortable with that”

Nepali Times spoke to vice-chairman of the UCPN (Maoist) **Baburam Bhattarai** on Tuesday on federalism, the landless problem, the current political deadlock and ways forward. Excerpts follow:

Nepali Times: It was reported last week that the politburo will demarcate federal units on the basis of nationality instead of ethnicity. Have the Maoists abandoned the issue of ethnicity?

Baburam Bhattarai: From the very beginning, we have said the basis of the federal system should be nationality. In Marxist terms, nationality means a common language, geography, economy and psychological make-up. On this basis we have proposed federal autonomous units in Nepal.

Let me be clear that translating the word 'nationality' into Hindi it becomes *jatiyeta* (ethnicity), in Nepali it becomes *rastriyata* (nationality). In English, ethnicity is also *jatiyeta*, caste is also *jatiyeta* and nationality is also *jatiyeta*. So there was some confusion. Since the very beginning we have been consistent that federalism should be along the lines of nationality.

Isn't the declaration of autonomous federal states by the party unconstitutional?

Who says? In the interim constitution and Comprehensive Peace Agreement we have already agreed to adopt a federal system. Those going back on this commitment are violating the spirit of the constitution.

What if all political parties start declaring their own federal states?

They are most welcome. That will help the people and engage them in the debate.

The Kailali incident has cast doubt over the Maoists' commitment to democracy and a new constitution. How can you win the people's confidence?

The people are with the Maoists. The reactionary elements who sided with the monarchy are feeling insecure because the monarchy is gone, but they need not be. The Nepali people who have suffered for so long want to introduce a democratic system, restructure the state, and bring about social and economic transformation, which will create peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

Did the Maoists encourage the landless to occupy government land illegally?

Do you think the millions of landless people don't have any rights over the land? These are natural resources given free by nature. It is perfectly legitimate for landless people to ask for their share of land and we support them.

Are you trying to find a way to mobilise your cadres by announcing autonomous states, as you did by encouraging the landless in Kailali?

The landless peasants' problem is a real issue in Nepal. If you don't solve it, they will agitate for their rights. If you want to say all 28 million people of Nepal are Maoists we will be quite comfortable with that.

Political leaders are frequenting the president's residence lately. What's your take?

The legal advisor to the president wrote an article in a national daily arguing if the constitution is not written on time, power

will automatically go to the president. They are encouraging the president to assume all power and institute a formal dictatorship in the country. We hope he won't be provoked.

What should be done to end the current political deadlock?

We should have worked out the modality of taking decisions and forming government through consensus. But when the Maoists emerged as the largest party, some of the old parliamentary parties went against that principle and opted for a majority system, which invites the dirty game of pulling down and making new governments. Constitution writing has thus been overshadowed. We should only go for competitive politics once the constitution is written.

Are the Maoists not responsible for the deadlock at all?

We are responsible in the sense that we are the largest party. The current clash is between two forces, those who want to bring about changes in society and those who resist it. The challenge is to find a correct balance of pace for both sides.

You have made a unilateral decision to release unqualified combatants. Do you have UNMIN's support?

We have already made our commission for disqualified PLA combatants to be discharged. It is our duty to comply with that agreement and I don't think anybody should have any objection to that.

Some argue the Maoists want to use the PLA as a bargaining tool.

In the CPA, we made a commitment to integrate and rehabilitate the PLA and democratise the NA. That's the only way you can create a new national army and complete the peace process.

Is it true that your name was proposed for the post of prime minister in a new coalition government?

Our concern is that civilian supremacy be established in the country, and that peace and the constitution are guaranteed. You need a national coalition government to facilitate this. First let this peace process be settled, then only will we talk about who will lead the government.

So you think the Maoists should lead the government?

This is the mandate of the people. We are the largest party. Even the second and third party combined are smaller than us. Where on earth do you make a coalition government and not have it led by the largest party?

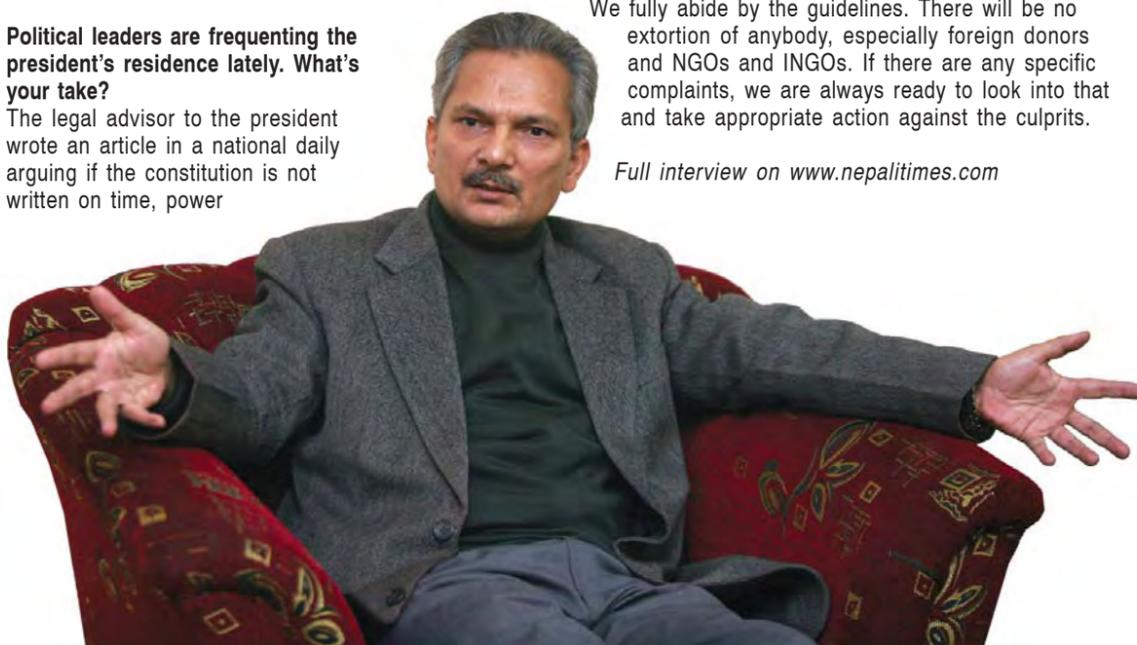
Do you regret leaving the government?

No, we did the right thing. We set a very high standard of political morality and we are very proud of that.

International donors recently asked for reassurance that the Basic Operating Guidelines will be respected, citing incidents of extortion and threat.

We fully abide by the guidelines. There will be no extortion of anybody, especially foreign donors and NGOs and INGOs. If there are any specific complaints, we are always ready to look into that and take appropriate action against the culprits.

Full interview on www.nepalitimes.com



KIRAN PANDAY

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KIRAN PANDAY

Upendra Yadav announced a new movement last week, demanding the implementation of the eight-point agreement, the restoration of the vice president to his constitutional position, and recognition of Hindi. The simple

Even as the focus remains on the government-Maoist impasse, the Madhes is slowly coming back to haunt the ruling classes

power structure.

This is a part of the conventional wisdom in Kathmandu that holds that the Madhes movement is dead. The Madhes parties are fragmented and have been co-opted into the establishment. The armed movement has faded away with slightly better public security. Concessions have already been made to the Madhes – “You have all the top posts, so many

ministers, what else do you want?” is a common refrain. And the utility of the Madhes card for the Indians and others who wanted to weaken the Maoists is over.

This view has elements of truth in it. But it misreads the sense of rage that lies beneath the seeming disillusionment. It ignores the sense of betrayal that most Madhesis feel with both the state and their own representatives. It does not take into account the

certainty with which both politicians and civil society in the Tarai dismiss the CA, for they are convinced that a strong Kathmandu lobby will block federalism, affirmative action, and structural change.

Kathmandu is once again forgetting how movements for dignity and rights evolve. The smallest slight can trigger a mass movement; a prolonged period of seeming peace can be followed by riots and disturbances; and when both the authorities and political representatives are discredited, locally active segments of the population will dictate the agenda and pace of protests.

The example of India is instructive. It seemed peace had slowly returned to Kashmir with a dip in Pakistan-sponsored infiltration. Then in 2008, a seemingly innocuous administrative decision to transfer land to the Amarnath temple board sparked off mass protests, and polarised the state communally. The alleged rape of two women by security forces in Shopian and the state's efforts to cover it up then discredited the new Omar Abdullah government completely. In 2004, it was a single ‘encounter’ resulting in the death of an unarmed civilian woman in Manipur that triggered an agitation for the repeal of draconian security laws. The agitation was renewed earlier this year when another so-called encounter was caught on camera.

The brutality of the security forces and the alienation of local populations are greater in India's hotspots than in Nepal. But the capacity of the state to quell dissent, and use coercion and political persuasion, is also higher in India. In Nepal, a weak and unreformed Nepali state, reluctant to make any substantive change, faces an angry and restive

population.

The Madhes movement is not over by any stretch of the imagination. The 1990s showed that as the interaction of the Madhes with the state increased, a constituency of young radicalised people was born who perceived and personally felt the humiliation of the discriminatory structures surrounding them. Politics may be going through a lull of sorts, but the churning on the ground continues. The radicalisation of the young, the intelligentsia, mid-sized landowners, families of migrant workers, and students has only grown in the last two years.

These groups are looking for a political platform. The established Madhesi parties are losing ground. The NC has been unable to regain their trust. The UML's virulent anti-Madhesi mindset is now widely recognised. The Maoists are slowly increasing their base with an influx of newer leaders, their commitment to federalism, and the loyal Dalit-landless base, but remains limited. And the armed groups have become fragmented, discredited, criminalised, and weaker.

If the state is more confident today, it is because of this political vacuum in the Madhes. It is not because of a change in heart among Madhesis, or their sudden love for the present establishment, or because state structures have become inclusive and won the loyalty of a broader social alliance.

The fundamental trust deficit between the state and Madhesi people persists, and it will translate into a confrontation. At that point, the fact that a Dr Yadav heads the state, even if he were to run it, will be irrelevant to the Madhesi masses. ●



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

cynical interpretation is that Yadav has locked himself into a position where he cannot join this government. Through the andolan, he wants to increase his bargaining power, and then push for a decisive stake in a future



Enterprise Challenge 2009 proves the creativity and perseverance of Nepali youth is not limited to the Kathmandu Valley

Inspiring success

The poet Madhav Ghimire indicated the pipal tree, which can grow through boulders, to illustrate the power of creation. So it is that the five students from the Seti-Mahakali Nursing College in the far western Tarai district of Kanchanpur have won the British Council's Enterprise Challenge 2009, to claim Rs 100,000 as well as a video camera. The nature of their project proposal – a career counselling centre – has allowed them to realise not just their own considerable potential but also paved the way for other young students to do the same.

The Enterprise Challenge is organised annually by the British Council's skills for employment program. According to project officer Tsering Gurung, “Our principal aim is to create opportunities for the new generation by supporting social and economic development.” The Council has made special efforts to reach youth outside the Kathmandu Valley, and the results are there for all to see. This year, entries included students from the Seti-Mahakali Nursing College, the Far West School of Medicine, Trade School-Sunsari, Balaju School of Engineering and Technology and the Pokhara Tourism and Training Centre.

The winning team was announced during an event held from 16-17 November at the British Council in Kathmandu. If creativity, entrepreneurship and financial sustainability were to be rewarded, Sukarsha Ghimire, Sunita Chaudhary, Madhu Gurung, Babita Bista and Meena Chand's project had it in spades. As their instructor Rusila Paudel explained, “It's tough for SLC and +2 graduates to decide on a career. We wanted to help them.” Given the difficulties

these nursing students had faced themselves, they readily understood the needs of a career counselling centre.

Meena Chand explained the counselling centre's two-year business plan. About 300 youths will be counselled every month at the centre, to earn Rs 1,080,000 a year, of which over Rs 800,000 will go on expenditures. The balance will be ploughed back into the business as well as scholarships. The team also plans to expand operations to other districts.

The girls from Seti-Mahakali Nursing College now have an opportunity to expand their horizons yet further. As winners of the Nepali Enterprise Challenge, they have been tasked with making a five-minute project video that will be aired on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter in competition with projects from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The team netting the most votes will travel to the United Kingdom in March 2010 for further training.

Last year's winners from the Balaju School of Engineering and Technology made it past the regional competition to travel to the United Kingdom. Project Officer Gurung is confident such successes will inspire others in Nepal to believe in their own potential and work with others to set up projects. Equally important, the success of Seti-Mahakali College has proven wrong the stereotype that Nepal's all about a Valley-centric patriarchy. There's plenty going on out there. ●

Suresh Raj Neupane

Forefront

Standard Chartered Bank was awarded 'Bank of the Year' by the Banker Magazine for their long-term strategic commitment to Asia, ability to deliver shareholder returns and gain strategic advantage.

Bike loans

Everest Bank is collaborating with Morang Auto Works to facilitate loans for the purchase of Yamaha bikes. It is the first bank to introduce bike finance in Nepal.

Helping hand

As part of their social commitment, Yeti Airlines is donating Rs 4 per flight ticket to four organisations, namely Helpless Children Welfare Mission, Itahari, Sewa Kendra Leprosy Relief, Kathmandu, Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Sangha, and Women for Human Rights, Kathmandu.

Soaring high

Thai Airways is celebrating its Golden jubilee this year. The first commercial airline to operate with jet services with SE210 Caravelle aircraft between Bangkok and Kathmandu, it has been serving Nepal for 41 years now.

Win-Win

Rabi Khadka won Tuesday's play-off of the third event of the Surya Nepal Golf Tour against Shiva Ram Shrestha. Rupak Acharya won the Amateur Section.

Buy and sell

A special scheme is now available to customers of Morang Auto Works purchasing Gladiator SS motorcycles. It offers 0% finance on finance purchase of bikes and a Rs 10,000 discount for customers who make cash purchase. The offer is valid till 15 January. Also, it is offering a 'Buy Back Guarantee' on Alba Motorcycles.

Inauguration

Jebile's Finance Limited was formally inaugurated by NRB's deputy governor Bir Bikram Rayamajhi this week. The finance company is run with Rs 400 million authorised capital, Rs 200 million fixed assets and Rs 102 million current assets. The company has already collected Rs 168 million deposit and invested Rs 72.7 million.

Turning 20

Continental Trading Enterprises, the authorised distributor of Komatsu construction & mining equipment for Nepal is celebrating 20 years of partnership with Komatsu. The enterprise has extended its warranty on all equipment to two years.

Lessons learnt

This month is my last as the CEO of Himalmedia. As I look back on the last 27 months of restructuring work and turnaround challenges, all of which have been completed for now, here are three lessons that I have learnt and applied.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Board is the boss: The state of corporate governance is abysmal in Nepali private companies. That sorry state comes about not because of malice on anyone's part, but because of ignorance about what the governance of a private sector firm entails.

But an astute CEO need not despair. His primary task is to think of himself as an agent who's been appointed by the Board to represent the interests of the owners of the company, that is, the shareholders who have put in money to earn returns. This clarity about why he's there makes it easier for the CEO to filter important decisions through the lens of this question: "Is this decision in the interest of the shareholders?" If yes, proceed. If no, rethink and revise.

This mindset on the CEO's

part makes it easier for him to have good working relations with the Board, which can then provide advice, guidance and necessary doses of skepticism. Conflicts that many Nepali private firms, notably banks, have between their CEOs and Board members boil down to the former's inability to repeatedly communicate their own job description to the Board members.

Persistence is important: I used to think that communication was very important. It is, but not as important as persistence to see challenges through over a stretch of time by focusing single-mindedly on the results. Almost all managerial accomplishments are about getting things done. As such, quietly determined persistence on the CEO's part signals to staff that the results matter more for the company than just communicating back and forth and getting along with one another.

To get the results, one can rant and rave and scold employees. Fear works very well to get outcomes in the short run. But it will fail to develop the long-term capability and the professional confidence of the staff to deliver results on their own, without anyone hovering over their

shoulders.

For long-term stress-free results, a CEO has to initially set himself up as a patient coach who will let some employees make mistakes, stumble, not get results for some time, before making sure

values sharing information quickly with one another. The more information the staff members have about their company, the more they feel that they know what's going on, and this knowledge helps reduce the level of internal politicking.

Company culture that faces outside has to be customer-centric. This means that all staff, from those who create the goods to those who ship the goods to the customers, are



Governance, persistence and culture matter most

that they have mastered the art of getting their act together to start delivering results. An initial investment of coaching pays for itself many times over.

Culture matters: Culture has two parts: one facing inward, and the other facing outward. Inside the company, the CEO can use his role to share information with all, be approachable to staff, be transparent about important HR and management decisions that affect staff, and focus on creating an environment that

thinking about a single question: how can we please the customer so that he does repeat business with us?

At Himalmedia, though we have been able to get the internal culture of openness working, we still have a lot of work to do to be more customer-centric. Still, at a media company, balancing what advertising customers want with the obligations of being a respected, independent public watchdog is a task that is challenging for any manager. ●

On the web | www.nepalitimes.com

Last week, the Maoist party announced that the federal autonomous provinces will be delineated on the basis of **nationality**, as opposed to **ethnicity**. We asked people what they thought was the difference between ethnicity and nationality. Selected comments below:

It's nothing, just propaganda. Creating states based on ethnicity will give the Maoists enough support from each and every ethnicity as all of them would get a stake in the government.

- Sagarmatha

'Ethnicity' has become a dangerous term to use in politics precisely because it has become politicised. The word 'nation' here is meant to have positive connotations about fellowship, kindred spirit, communion, not to mention self-determination and individuality. But let's not kid ourselves. This kind of federalism, even if it is only 'symbolic', will hand down, from above, legitimacy to one group of people over others.

- Alexis

Let's face it, we are headed for ethnic federalism. We must look forward and take examples from where this model has worked, and avoid the mistakes of places where it hasn't.

- Patriot

Give Gurung, Magar, Tarai, Tharu, Rai, Sherpa and Limbu people a historical opportunity to take part in governance, which is systemically denied them. Maybe they will be more accountable and responsible for the development of Nepal.

- Anuj

On the blogs | www.nepalitimes.com/blogs

East-West with Kunda Dixit: More observations from the road.
The Brief: All the news you need in one place.

New this week:

My city: A photo blog from the photographers at Nepali Times.

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KIRAN PANDAY

Kailali's lessons

Karna Bohara, *Nagarik* op-ed, 8 December

नागरिक

Last Friday, while scenes of the cabinet preparing to meet on Kala Patthar were being shown live on tv, preparations for a confrontation were ongoing in Kailali. More than 15,000 squatters had gathered along the highway with 'orders from above' to encroach on the forest, while 2,000 security force personnel too had orders not to let that happen. When the police started setting fire to the huts, the squatters brought out their khukuris and axes. Both sides had orders not to give in. By dusk, five people lay dead. Many were wounded. Both sides took their dead and wounded and retreated, weeping and looking down.

The squatter problem is not new to the farwestern Tarai. The clever and powerful have always encroached on the forests of Kailali and Kanchanpur. There is now pressure on land from the landless, the freed Kamaiyas, from migrants from the hills and flood and landslide victims. Political parties like the NC and UML have always used this shifting population as a vote bank for elections. The Maoists used the same groups for recruitment, but after getting into government the party couldn't deliver on its promises of land to its supporters, who were increasingly disillusioned.

Three weeks ago, an all-party meeting in Kanchanpur decided to clear squatters from community forests with the use of force if necessary. So the district administration chased out 4,000 squatters who came out on the highway and started chanting anti-Maoist slogans. The Maoist leadership felt it was losing control of its erstwhile supporters, so it announced that anyone moving down to Dudejhari would get 10 kattha of land each.

In one week, more than 20,000 people were bussed in by the Maoists, some from as far away as Surkhet. The party then started provoking the squatters to confront the expected security clampdown. The ordinary folk who were enticed to Dudejhari with the promise of land did not know they were pawns in a political game, the political parties themselves were pawns in the shenanigans of the land mafia. Ordinary peasants were being readied to kill or die. The Kailali administration decided to use live bullets as the tension escalated. If the government still doesn't learn its lesson, and unless the main parties stop using peasants as cannon fodder in their power games, the problem of land is going to be much more explosive in the future.

Community deforestation

Durgalal KC in *Nepal*, 13 December

नेपाल

Nepal's community forestry success story may be unravelling if the trend in Dang is anything to go by. Forests that were conserved by communities are being cut down by the user groups themselves. Two thirds of the 447 community forests in Dang are said to be in the process of being denuded, affecting more than 3,200 hectares of woodland protected by villagers in the past decades.

Many places that used to be thick forests are today unrecognisable because they have been turned into farmlands, or even plotted out to housing colonies. In many of the community forests, the user group committees have themselves

decided to cut the forests and start cultivation because they were being encroached upon by squatters. The chairman of one user group, Duryodhan Pandey, said: "When the squatters wouldn't move, we thought it was better to cut down the trees and use the land ourselves."

The Dang DFO has warned user groups that it may get the police to evict the encroachers and if that doesn't work, they may lose their lease on government forests if the deforestation continues. The main parties in Dang have also started consultations on how to stop the destruction of community forests. The UML and NC are fully on board with getting the encroachers out, but the Maoists are against the move.

Anti-climax

Kantipur Dabali, *Kantipur*, 27 November

कान्तिपुर

The Tibetan mastiff is losing hair. Snakes in the Tarai are moving uphill. There are mice and cockroaches in the kitchen. Kafal is ripe in Dadeldhura. Rhododendrons are blooming early. Phewa Lake is receding. Winters are getting warmer. Rain falls after the rice harvest. All because of climate change. Now, even the inflation is being blamed on climate change and so is the political deadlock!



Left arrow: 'Agreement'
Right arrow: 'Disagreement'

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur* on 6 December

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अब सधैका साथी



“CA shouldn't be parliament also”

Debaraj Joshi, NC CA member, Bajura

How have you spent the last two years in the CA?

We set the CA agenda and formed the committees. Then, the committees canvassed and discussed public suggestions for the constitution and started work on preliminary drafts. The Determination of the Form of Rule Committee, Judicial System Committee and the Distribution of Natural Resources, Financial Rights and Public Revenue Committees haven't finished their drafts yet.

How difficult will it be to write the constitution on time?

Going by the current pace of work, it's unlikely to be written on time. But we must write it, even if that means pushing back the deadline once again.

What are the chief reasons for the delay?

The main reason is the distrust among the parties. This distrust would disappear if there were a high-level political mechanism.



Has the CA stopped working altogether?

No. It's tough because the CA functions as the legislature too. We should have kept the functions separate. That way, the CA could focus exclusively on writing the constitution.

What needs to be done for the constitution to be written on time?

First, first every thematic committee must complete its drafts and submit them to the main assembly. Second, the assembly should promptly finish discussions and quickly make necessary revisions. Third, the Constitutional Council should collate all of these drafts. But none of this can happen without political consensus.

Autonomous Karnali

In a discussion organised by *Himal Khabarpatrika* last week in Jumla, people revealed that they are concerned about the protracted political impasse and delayed constitution-writing process. They also unanimously supported an autonomous Karnali region with special provisions for its development. Translated excerpts:

How hopeful are you about the constitution-writing process?

Birkha Bahadur Budha (Treasurer, RPP-Nepal): The CA members were elected to write a new constitution incorporating the people's aspirations. They seem to have submitted themselves to their party's interests and foreign forces.

Debi Sejuwal (Chair, Appellate Bar Unit): Both the CA members and party leaders are fighting only for their existence. They can't make one decision without consulting India, China or America. Instead of writing the constitution we are contemplating which country Nepal should obey: India, China or America.

Gajendra Mahat (District in-charge, Maoists): It shouldn't be so hard to write the constitution. The republic has already been established and although there are some disputes on federalism, the big parties are near a consensus. The issue of the state executive will easily be solved. We can even get a good constitution with amendments in the interim constitution. But the question is, will whatever document we write be implemented? The president's violation of the constitution is a bad portent.

Khadga Sejuwal (NC): The army chief issue caused a lot of insecurity and hindered the constitution-writing process. But the people are aware of what's necessary, and if the parties fail to write the constitution, the people will do it themselves.

Would an amended interim constitution be acceptable?

Durga Prasad Pandey (President, NGO Federation, Jumla): So much money has already been spent on the new constitution. Frankly, if the politicians can't run this country, let's give it up to India or China.

Sarpananda Hamal (President, Nepal Red Cross Society, Jumla): The interim constitution is temporary, and doesn't incorporate all of the people's aspirations. While it may take a while to write a new constitution, we must complete it.

Laxmi Kanya Budha (Chair, Republic Women Network): If the interim constitution is appropriately amended, then it can serve as our new constitution. The real issue is to ensure that the people's aspirations are met.

Bishnu Timilsina (advocate): The constitution can't be written overnight. Besides, we don't need a perfect constitution. It just has to be enforced properly. For instance, the current political problems wouldn't have occurred had Pushpa Kamal Dahal followed the constitution. The President made

mistakes too, but the Maoists committed a major wrong in halting the constitution-writing process.

Gajendra Mahat: We need to stop worrying about whether the constitution will be written and actually write it. There is need for more discussions on federal states and the rights to be given to them.

What type of federalism does Karnali need and on what basis?

German Nepali (Dalit activist): Federalism became a hot topic because the centre has too much power in the current unitary system. Decentralisation and the devolution of power will ultimately strengthen the federal structure. Karnali people want federalism based on geography and the availability of natural resources.

Kantika Sejuwal (Principal, Karnali Secondary School): Karnali's voice won't be heard no matter how loudly we shout. The media doesn't care about us, especially our gender issues. Women are discriminated against at every step yet don't have a voice in the CA.

Nanadraj Dhital (Disabled Rehabilitation and Development Centre): It's unfortunate Karnali hasn't been discussed during the debate on federalism. Some argue Karnali should be a separate state but it is not clear what basis is suitable. The states should incorporate hill, mountain and Tarai regions, since they can't survive independently. No matter how many states we make, Nepali national sentiment shouldn't be fragmented.

“Constitution must be written”

Ekraj Bhandari, Maoist CA member, Salyan

What has the CA achieved in the past year and a half?

In the beginning we prepared the regulations for the CA and formed different committees. Then we had members of the CA visit people's homes to find out what they wanted to include in the new constitution. Out of ten thematic committees, seven have presented their drafts. Most of the technical aspects have been addressed by the CA. The only thing left is to come to a consensus.

Do you think the constitution will be drafted in time?

Yes, I am sure it will. Most of the technical work has been completed, and some of the principal



constitution, the majority of CA members are touring abroad, taking care of their personal business, and concerned with their own parties,

issues have also been discussed. All that is required is a consensus.

Are you addressing issues or just adding on more problems?

We are not trying to create chaos and confusion. We are just trying to address what is important and necessary.

Instead of focusing on the completion of the

constitution, the majority of CA members are touring abroad, taking care of their personal business, and concerned with their own parties,

what do you have to say about this?

I disagree with you; CA members are busy working on the constitution. NGOs and INGOs are helping us draft the constitution. This is a positive sign. Therefore, it is an unfair assessment to say that the CA members are not effectively working on the completion of the constitution.

If the constitution is not ready within the stipulated time, will this not create further problems?

We have to come to a consensus to finish writing the constitution. But in case we are unable to complete it in time, we can always amend the interim constitution as an alternative. That way the function of the CA will still be validated. Even if it takes 2-4 years, we have to write the constitution.



THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT:
Bhutani children in a
Norwegian school.

Euro Bhutanis

Refugees no more,
Bhutani families adapt
to life in Europe



PICS: GOPAL GURAGAIN



HOME SWEET HOME: Nawaraj Gajmer and family in the Netherlands

GOPAL GURAGAIN

Refugees from Bhutan who had been living in camps in Nepal since 1991 are finding it difficult to adjust to life in Europe and separation from their extended families, but their children have fit right in. They are learning the local languages and making friends fast.

It is the older family members who bear the brunt of culture shock, and find their new environment difficult to get a handle on. But all agree that they are willing to go through it for the sake of their children.

"We came here for our son's

sake, so he would have a future," says Kamala Rijal, who was resettled in Utrecht in the Netherlands last year with her husband Hem and son Manish. "He already speaks Dutch better than Nepali and all his friends are Dutch."

In Denmark, Durga and Balkumari Adhikari's two sons are already fluent in Danish and are so good with gadgets they are in high demand in their apartment to fix the neighbours' malfunctioning computers.

Ramesh Gautam, 26, only arrived in Norway three months ago, but even he has picked up Norwegian so rapidly that his teacher, Ina Jacobsen (pictured left), is impressed. "They are so

fast with the language it is amazing," Jacobsen told the Nepali Times, "but I must say we language instructors have learnt much more from our students about Bhutan than they have from us."

Bhutan evicted nearly 100,000 of its citizens 20 years ago, and with India's assistance dumped them in eastern Nepal. Their numbers in seven camps in Morang and Jhapa have grown to 110,000 and those born in the camps are now teenagers. Two years ago, a consortium of western countries agreed to resettle the refugees and over 20,000 have now left, mostly to the United States. So far, Norway has taken 310, Denmark 305 and the Netherlands 122 refugees.

After living for nearly two decades in bamboo huts in the hot and dusty plains of eastern Nepal, the Bhutanis now enjoy the amenities of modern apartments with high-tech kitchens. But it's not the novelty of life in Europe that the refugees are most happy about. They say it is the first time in a long time they are being treated with respect.

Naturally, there is the sorrow of separation from their extended families back in Bhutan and Nepal (see box). "We now have everything we want, the only worry is about the relatives we left behind," says Kecalram Rijal, 55, who arrived in Utrecht from Goldhap recently.

Third country resettlement has not always been able to place family members together. Kecalram starts his day in a prayer room filled with pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses and he prays that he will soon be reunited with his parents, who were resettled in America, and his daughter, who is still in Jhapa.

In the west Norwegian town of Tysvar Rohit Pokhrel, 68, and his wife are worried about their family as well, and say the only thing missing in their life is a Hindu priest to do *saradhha* and other ceremonies. ●

See also: 'Can't wait to leave', # 409
'Refugees finally find respect', #409
'No place like home', #306
'Home away from home', #340
'Long way from home', #353

Ram, Laxman and Arjun

There are many Bhutanis with relatives scattered all over the world and the resettlement process hasn't always been able to ensure that family members are sent to the same country.

Fed up with living in the camps, Ram Karki arrived in the Netherlands via the Czech Republic and Belgium seven years ago. He is an activist for refugee rights and is now a Dutch citizen. He has filed a case against the Bhutan king at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands.

Ram's brothers Arjun and Laxman (pictured, to his right) have now joined him in the Netherlands under the third country resettlement scheme. But his eldest brother is a teacher in Bhutan and their parents are still in their ancestral village in southern Bhutan. Ram, Laxman and Arjun haven't met their parents and



elder brother for nearly 20 years, and would like to have a family reunion more than anything else. As a Dutch national, Ram can now theoretically travel back to Bhutan but says he is afraid the Thimphu regime may harass his brother and parents because of his activism.

Endless goodbyes



FAMILIES, INTERRUPTED
Bhutanese refugees in Jhapa substitute photos for family

GOPAL GARTOULA

GOPAL GARTOULA in JHAPA

Here in Beldangi there are tearful scenes of farewell every day as fleets of white IOM (International Organization for Migration) buses taking Bhutanis for third country resettlement leave for Bhadrapur airport.

Among those seeing off relatives and friends are those who have travelled clandestinely from Bhutan for poignant farewells before time and distance separate them from their relatives.

Antari is 35 years old, and has come all the way from southern Bhutan, crossing two international borders, to say goodbye to her parents, and seven brothers and sisters and their children. She is the only member of her family still in Bhutan. "I don't know when I will see them again, they are going so far away," Antari sobbed, clutching a faded photograph of the family taken while they were still in Bhutan. Antari's elderly parents Krishna Prasad and Dhanmaya can't hide their tears.

Hugging her parents, Antari tells them there is now no sign of their little ancestral home in Bhutan and even the tulasi plant in front of their house is gone. But Antari has brought a handful of soil from their homeland to give to her parents in a little plastic pouch before they leave. Dhanmaya takes a pinch from the pouch and puts it on her daughter's forehead like tika as a final farewell.

Like most Bhutanis here, Antari doesn't want to be named or her picture taken for fear of retribution back home in Bhutan. She says the repression of Nepali speakers continues. More than 80,000 Lhotsampa Nepali speakers were not allowed to vote in last year's elections. The signals of some Nepali FM stations reach southern Bhutan, but Antari says one has to be careful not to listen openly for fear of spies in the neighbourhood who have already labeled her 'ngolop' (anti-national) for having refugee relatives in Nepal.

Saraswati Sharma is 83, but has travelled for three days to get to Beldangi to say goodbye to her second daughter, Shibamaya, who will soon be leaving to join her elder sister in the United States. For others, like 45-year-old Bhim, there was a different kind of farewell. Hearing his father was ill, he rushed to Nepal, arriving at the Sanishchare refugee camp only to hear that his father, whom he hadn't seen for ten years, had just died. Bhim went straight to the banks of the river to light his father's funeral pyre. ●

(Some names have been changed.)

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With our friends homing in on security, Nepali democracy really will have to be home-grown

The Joint Secretary of India's external affairs ministry Satish Mehta has decided that an army airstrip at Surkhet and the resumption of non-lethal military supplies are the two most important needs of Nepal. Chief of Army Staff Chhatra Man Singh Gurung is



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

leaving today for India for a week-long visit. For the Indian security establishment, the imperilled peace process of Nepal has suddenly become a low-priority issue. Security cooperation rather than political interactions is going to be the focus of Indo-Nepal relations in the coming days.

These days, few Nepali politicians can access top-rung Indian leaders. They have to go through featherweight politicians like D.P. Tripathi, who was here some time ago to bolster the resolve of the anti-Maoist coalition in Singh Darbar.

Officers of the Nepal Army, however, can boast of high-profile batch mates from Sandhurst,



KIRAN PANDAY

West Point or the Indian Military Academy at Dehradun. General Gurung is an alumnus of the latter and will be attending a graduation ceremony there during his visit, but he will also have a crucial meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's national security advisor M.K. Narayanan.

Meanwhile, the Chinese sent a team under Gen Shu Yu Tai, its deputy force commander in Tibet, to assess ways of enhancing military assistance. Another Chinese team is likely to arrive

soon to discuss the modalities of improving security along the 1400km Nepal-Tibet border, much of which remains impassable throughout the year anyway. The agenda for Premier Madhav Kumar Nepal's scheduled visit to Beijing from December 26 is thus more or less set: there may be some development assistance thrown in to sweeten the deal, but he will be asked to accept security assistance first and foremost.

With friendly neighbours like these competing with each other

to militarise the Nepali state, democrats and peaceniks in Nepal need no enemies. But that doesn't mean they don't have to contend with more friendly advice from further afield; everyone seems to have designs for the vulnerable, geopolitically strategic state of Nepal.

The Eurozone is still a marginal player in global affairs, often playing second fiddle to Uncle Sam. But individual European countries wield considerable clout in the capital cities of the Third World, where the academic elite and the INGO/NGO sector are important actors in national politics.

This sector may be naturally more comfortable with the suave social elite than with the rustic political class. The problem arises when opinion leaders begin to play favourites with the transfer and promotion of officers in the Nepal Police or the Nepal Army at the instigation of their sponsors at various aid agencies. Playing politics with the defence establishment is a bigger cause for concern than even militarisation.

Till the early 1960s, the India Desk at the State Department in Washington looked after its

interests – meagre as they were back then – in Nepal. With Af-Pak emerging as a global hotspot, the concept of the India Desk may yet see a revival. But if the experiences of the past are anything to go by, there is nothing to cheer in the decision of the Embassy of the United States in Nepal to develop American Centers in four different towns in the country. Intelligence gathering rather than strengthening of democracy will probably be their priority.

It seems Nepalis will have to learn the ropes of democracy on their own. All foreign aid is invariably aimed at strengthening the establishment, of which the military is the most prominent part. Hillary Clinton affirmed this viewpoint by vowing to restore American leadership through a 'smart power' mix of diplomacy and defence at her Senate confirmation as the US Secretary of State earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the queues at the KFC and Pizza Hut outlets, to say nothing of the booming sales of Coke and Pepsi, will ensure that Americans taxpayers needn't worry about the source of funds that go in the name of aid to Nepal. ●

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Stagnant times

For a country known for great political changes, we don't have much to show for the last seven months

In Nepal, we have long maintained that political events happen too fast. What was true the night before is no longer so the morning after. This was especially true after the end of the war and during the peace process. The way we have



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

leapt forward from signing the peace treaty, holding the Constituent Assembly elections and ending the monarchy, it has been a rollercoaster ride.

But since the Maoists quit the government in May our rush towards change has come to a complete halt. The largest party hasn't stopped sulking about civilian supremacy. Mistrust between political parties has so deepened that no high-level task force or fence-mending meet has come up with a solution. This has been going on for over seven months and there's no end in sight to this deadlock.

Very few things have actually changed in Nepal in the last year. The country is still reeling from a crippling fuel crisis, and Nepalis are quietly getting ready for long, dark, cold winter nights. Nepal bandas have continued, new businesses are too scared to invest and the continuing extortion of entrepreneurs has led some to consider closing shop. While those who killed journalists Birendra Sah and Uma Singh have gone scot-free more journalists are being threatened and beat up all over Nepal. The rehabilitation of ex-combatants is in limbo. Three years on from the CPA, the families of the victims of war have no word on missing family members, nor official acknowledgement of wrongdoing by either side or reparations.

The Nepali people are not a priority for the leadership because the latter are so bogged down by political bickering. Then there are the big meetings to attend, from Kala Patthar to Copenhagen. These are important global meets, but they are easy distractions and an excuse not to deal with what is really important at home. Most of the mammoth 57-member government delegation in Copenhagen for the climate conference are CA members. Shouldn't their priority be writing the constitution that is due in six months?

Nepalis knew the transition would not be easy and it would be difficult to bring different ideologies together. But we also knew that no matter what our beliefs we all wanted the same thing—peace and development. Political parties will always disagree, but this time around they agreed to come together and write the constitution. If the constitution is not written on time, and it is looking more and more likely that it won't be, there will be anarchy in Nepal. We will be an embarrassment in the world community and the leaders will have once again failed the people.

A recent survey indicates the majority of Nepalis either don't know what federalism is, or don't want it. Perhaps if the leaders had left Kathmandu to talk to their constituencies we would not now be stumbling towards a system that most Nepalis do not even want. The priority should be fixing Nepal first. In order to do that Nepal's leadership must let go of rigid ideological stances that the common people do not care about. Being flexible does not equate to being weak. People want promises delivered. They want results. They are tired of the limbo. They want great change. They want the leadership to put them first. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

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Tales of the underclass



Frank Senn, Hari Thapa and Otto C. Honegger
Sherpas - The true heroes of Mount Everest

What was your inspiration?

In 2003, we did an expedition on the north side of Mount Everest and decided to film what no one had filmed before—how hard the Sherpas worked.

You trained some Sherpas in camerawork as well.

We had two Sherpas and they shot the portions above the base camp. But we had six cameramen and at the end of the film, it was hard to know who did what.

What was the audience's reaction in Switzerland?

There was a huge discussion. The climbers were both happy and unhappy. Some Swiss climbers had come home saying, "I climbed Everest." Now people were asking them: "Who was your Sherpa?"

Did you have safety concerns during filming?

There is always a chance something will happen but we knew we had a strong, professional team.

What would improve a Sherpa mountaineer's life?

They should get internationally recognised degrees as mountain guides. They are good climbers, and with a degree, they would have better positions in the expeditions.

The sixth Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival opened in Kathmandu on Thursday. *Nepali Times* spoke to the directors of two of the films

Kesang Tsetan

In search of the Riyal

Why did you make a film about migrant workers?

Everyone from a low-income background thinks about migrating, has migrated or knows someone who has migrated. Very little is known about the



experience of these migrants except for those who make the headlines for the wrong reasons.

How hard was it for you to film in the Gulf countries?

It's difficult to get a visa let alone get permission to film in the Gulf. I had friends who sponsored my first visit to the UAE but refused to do it when we went to film. I couldn't get a visa to Dubai the second time, so the filming centres on Qatar.

Because of the presence of nearly 400,000 Nepalis in Qatar, you have said that it is colonised by Nepalis, but from the bottom up. What is their condition there?

An average worker with some skill does alright—he returns home with savings. But it's still tough condition: long hours, extreme heat, stress and a lack of leisure.

Many end up worse off than had they stayed in Nepal.

The film's protagonist, Dalbir, is swindled while attempting to go abroad the second time. Was he not aware of such dangers?

Dalbir is a mature guy, but he got swindled by a Nepali conman. So you can imagine the chances of the young folk fresh from the village.

What role should the government play on behalf of the migrant workers?

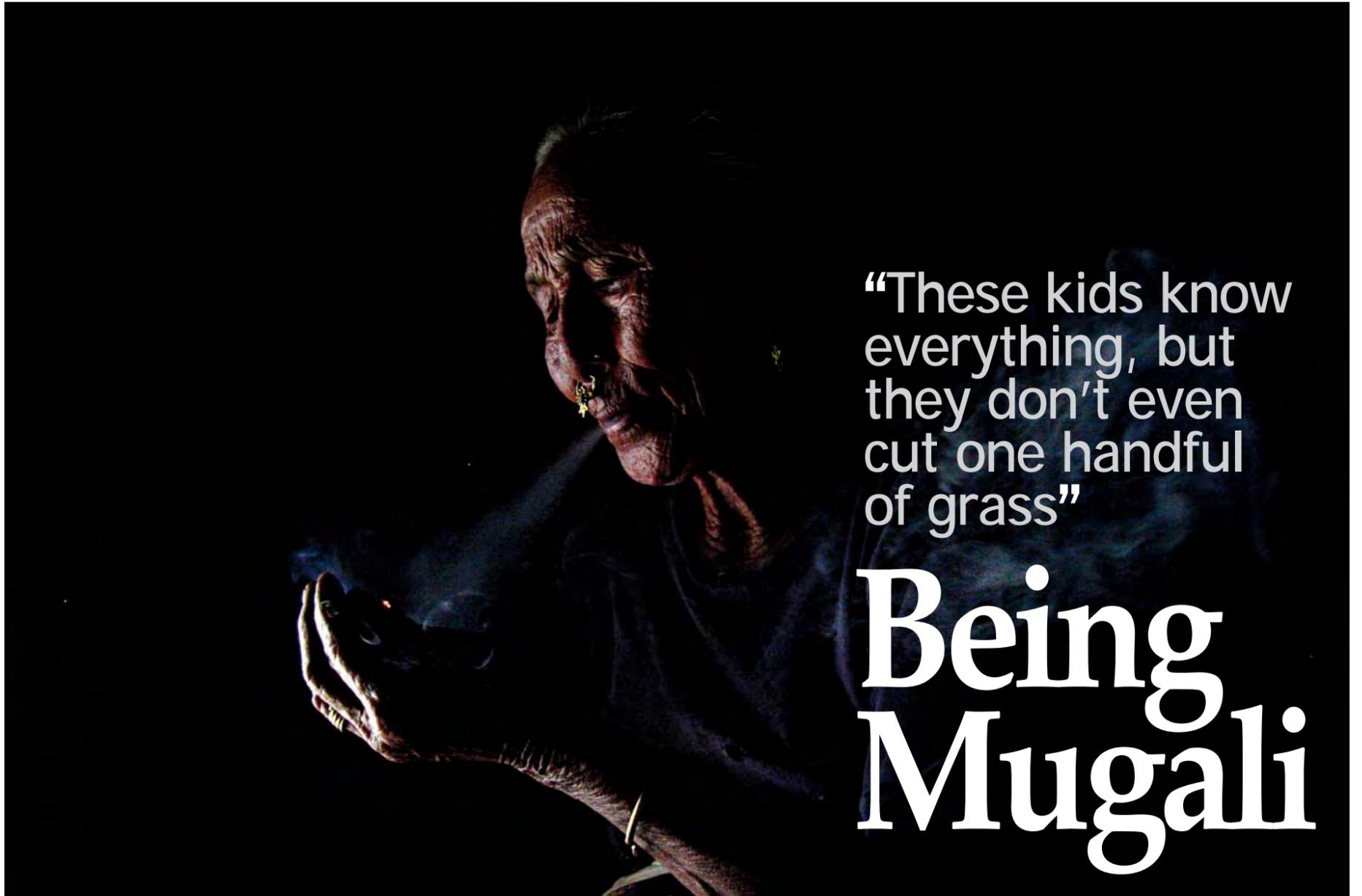
Given that workers' remittances add up to almost USD 3 billion, the government should make migration safer by regulating manpower agencies, posting labour attachés in the migrant destinations, and negotiating with foreign governments for better wages.

Closeup
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“These kids know everything, but they don’t even cut one handful of grass”

Being Mugali

PICS: SUSHAN PRAJAPATI

RABI THAPA

Raigaun, Muga is a very ordinary Nepali hill village, and the traveller may be forgiven for passing it by. This may be how it should be. The seasonal road, in the words of 75-year-old Lila Maya Rai, has made precious little difference to her life. ‘I’d have to walk whether there was a road or not,’ she says. ‘We used to walk to Dhankuta, to Dharan, and even to Jogbani on the Indian side, which took three days. But since I hardly go anywhere these days, even to market, what do I care where the road goes or not?’

It is not entirely true that civilisation has passed Lila Maya by, even if she suggests the new, easy age of education and medicines and roads is not for her, this old woman of hard times. Just as her mother before her, Lila Maya had to bear the burden of a husband’s early death, which left her with four daughters and a son. ‘Babu, those were the hard days,’ she remarks matter-of-factly. ‘I even had to put my hand to the plough.’

Her calloused hands are as busy as ever. Shelling corncobs, drying the kernels in the yard. Herding her four cows with lusty shouts, cutting grass for her four goats. Cooking for her son, daughter-in-law and grandchild, washing dishes, chiding the neighbourhood kids. Chasing away the hornets that threaten her apiary-in-a-log. She is only at rest when she rolls herself a bidi and lights it. ‘This is my friend.’

‘The days of happiness are here,’ she draws, as often as she mentions the bad old days. Watching her work, unceasingly, it is not clear if she means it. Education she never had, nor until recently, modern medicine. ‘We were dull children, not like these kids,’ she says. ‘If someone died, they’d say they got the death-illness, *mame rog lagecha*. We didn’t know anything, didn’t have anything. My son and his family, they run to the health post for everything.’

But she’s not let her prejudices keep her from essential treatment. She went down to Biratnagar a few years back to get some teeth



replaced, then again for glasses. ‘My teeth were all bad and cutting into my gums. Then I was seeing double, I’d chase one cow thinking it was two. So I went.’

Perhaps she would have made use of education, too, if she’d had the chance. ‘The old man up the hill, he says, “We were born too early, sister!” We had to spend our lives in the dark. These kids,’ she grimaces, gesturing at her seven-year-old grandson,

Manish, ‘they have to study, so they can’t do anything else. They’re smart, they know everything. But they don’t even pick up what they drop, they don’t cut one handful of grass.’

Lila Maya doesn’t much fancy the *chiplo luga* either, the smooth clothes from India and China. She recalls with evident fondness the days of weaving, cutting and dyeing her own cloth. ‘It was hard work and they didn’t

look so good, but they lasted,’ she says, then eyes a crop-haired niece in shorts with distaste. ‘Look at them, wearing pants, short hair. You can’t tell men from women.’ A brash, gravel-voiced boy of about 10 standing nearby sums it up. ‘*Sun chaadi hira moti dhoti*. Gold, silver, diamonds, pearls and saris, that’s what grandma likes.

She’s a grandmother to all these kids. But Lila Maya isn’t too happy with the son she shares the homestead with. ‘Seventeen is when the brain goes bad, a blind age,’ she mutters. ‘He didn’t complete his School Leaving Examination, and what good was school then? Study, study, to plough the land. He was a fool, he got married.’

‘And now he wants to go abroad again.’ She points at a photo of a youth in blinding sunlight against a backdrop of glittering towers. ‘He said he couldn’t stand the heat, he was sweating from the soles of his feet. Three years, and for what?’ A television, a computer, a camera and a few thousand rupees. That’s all he brought back from Dubai, what for?’

‘I just got the things I always wanted,’ Mani Raj admits when he and his wife join us after a day planting millet. ‘I want to go back because there’s nothing to do here.’ Never mind that only last month a cousin came back in a coffin.

It is perhaps too much to expect Lila Maya to understand what her son wants away from home. For her, despite everything, ‘Muga is like heaven,’ it’s home. She’s not sentimental for the past, and has few desires, though when asked if she’d like to go live in Kathmandu, she’s game. ‘Why not?’

‘But my days are gone,’ she repeats with a laugh. She gets up, wry and spry, and waves a slipper on a stick at the hornet that just won’t give up. ●



This article is excerpted from Hamra Hajurama: Our Grandmothers, a photo.circle project. A book launch and exhibition will take place at the Nepal Arts Council, Babar Mahal, on 18th December. Please check www.photocircle.com.np for details.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Visual Poems**, art exhibition by Emma Ponsart, 11 December, 6.30PM, Alliance Francaise, Tripureshwor
- ❖ **Faces from the heart of India**, photographic exhibition by Sharmila Runa Pyne at The Kathmandu Contemporary Art Center, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 13 December 11AM-6PM, 5521120
- ❖ **Marfa to Manhattan**, exhibition of photographs by Kashish Das Shrestha at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 11-31 December 11AM-5 PM, 4438979
- ❖ **3D Images Exhibition** by Bishnu Kumar Shrestha, till 13 December, 6PM, New Orleans Coffee Shop, Pulchowk, 5522708
- ❖ **A people war**, permanent photo exhibition, Sunday-Friday at Madan Puraskar, Patan Dhoka

EVENTS

- ❖ **Inglorious Basterds**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, 17 December, 6PM, 4428549
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival**, 11-15 December, City Hall/Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, www.kimff.org
- ❖ **GAA Forum**, organised by The Godavari Alumni Association, topic 'What Ails Nepali Media', 13 December, GAA, Thamel, 4PM, 4414785
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale**, a winter concert at The British School, Jhamsikhel, 12 December, 3.30PM and 6PM

MUSIC

- ❖ **Mukti Shakya** and his band playing blues and original tracks, 11 December, Friday, 7PM, House of Music, Thamel, entry Rs 100
- ❖ **French Gypsy Jazz**, 11th December, 7PM, Délices de France, Thamel
- ❖ **Benefit concert for Street Dog Care**, at Hyatt Regency Ballroom, with Ani Choying Dolma, 19 December, 5-7PM
- ❖ **HyJazz** every Friday evening by Inner Groove at the Rox Bar, 4489362
- ❖ **Baja gaja** every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30PM onwards, 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Some like it hot**, every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Roots and American Music with Donato, Beppe and Desmond**, 16 December, 6PM, Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, 4428549
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards, 4468589
- ❖ **Rudra Night** live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7PM at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212

DINING

- ❖ **Christmas Cake shop**, christmas pudding, chocolate Santa Claus, hampers and more at The Lounge, till 31 December, 4491234
- ❖ **Lavazza Coffee and Baskin n' Robbins**, at Blue Note Coffee Shop, Lazimpat
- ❖ **Strawberry Étagère**, strawberry flavours at The Lounge, 4.30PM-6.30PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu,

4491234

- ❖ **Oriental Nights**, all flavours and specialities of Asia every Wednesday at The Café, 6.30PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **Aqua Java Zing**, bbq and gourmet fare, 4254809
- ❖ **Live continental BBQ Fiesta**, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, from 6.30-10.30PM everyday
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **Wine and cheese**, every Friday & Saturday at The Lounge, 5-8PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8PM, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45PM
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle East at The Café, Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM, 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-La with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards, 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068
- ❖ **Stupa View Restaurant**, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4480262
- ❖ **Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 44512126

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalimes.com

Quest Entertainment



Harpreet Singh Bedi (Ranbir Kapoor) has just graduated, but his marks are a little embarrassing. Nevertheless, his scores do not stop him from dreaming of an exciting and adventurous career and so, he dives into the world of sales (rumoured to be an ultra cool career for all smart people blocked from entering medical, engineering or business schools). It's everything he dreamt of, with its smooth dressing, smoother talking men and women who can sell ice to an Eskimo, dreams to an insomniac, and a lifetime mobile connection to a dying man. But soon, his idea of success begins clashing with the strange ways of these 'professionals' and 'bosses' he looked up to.

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www.streetdogcare.org

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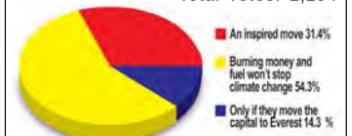
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Weekly Internet Poll # 480

Q. Do you think the Everest cabinet meeting is a worthy stunt?

Total votes: 2,294



Weekly Internet Poll # 481. To vote go to: www.nepalimes.com

Q. Who is using provocations to stall the peace process?

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

After a long dry spell, parts of Nepal should see rain in the days ahead as a westerly front enters Nepal via Kashmir. However, it's moving fairly slowly, and chances are that it will only yield light precipitation in western Nepal, leaving much of central and eastern Nepal dry. Satellite pictures show a low pressure zone over eastern Tibet and Chengdu in China exerting a pulling effect over the emerging westerly front and a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal. This weekend, expect cloudy days, with more cloud cover in the west than east, and average daytime temperatures to fall by 3 degrees.



European Expedition

Legendary mountaineer Apa Sherpa and fellow Everest summiteer Dawa Steven Sherpa are embarking on an expedition through 10 European cities - Prague, Brno, Bratislava, London, Rome, Geneva, Chamonix, Vienna, Brussels and finally to Copenhagen to raise awareness about the impact of climate change in the Himalaya.

Their European journey will reach out to high-profile politicians and celebrities and people in the streets of these European cities whose energy needs will determine the future of hundreds of millions of people who depend on Himalayan waters. The European Expedition is part of the Climate for Life Campaign started by WWF Nepal and the Nepal government, its development partners and many non-profit and private organizations.

www.climate4life.org

RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Fried Spinach and Bread Dumplings

(Serves 4)

Dumplings
8 slices white bread
2 cups chopped blanched spinach
2 eggs
salt and pepper to taste
Oil for frying

Dipping sauce
½ cup grated blue cheese
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 cup thick cream or yoghurt
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
1 teaspoon sugar
juice of half a lemon
salt and pepper to taste

Cut the bread into 1cm cubes and mix with the spinach and egg. Season well and roll into balls the size of golf balls. Deep fry at 170C for 1-2 minutes until golden brown. For the dipping sauce, lightly beat the cream and mix in the rest of the ingredients. Serve with the hot dumplings.



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Somewhere special



KIRAN PANDAY

TRUTH BE TOLD: Rukum-based journalist Tika Bista was flown to Kathmandu for treatment after suffering severe injuries from an attack by suspected Maoists.



KIRAN PANDAY

REMEMBER US: President Ram Baran Yadav looks on as traditional dancers perform at the Human Rights National Magna Meet-2009 at the Academy Hall on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

THANK YOU: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal meets Chief Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhi on the latter's last day in office on Wednesday in Singh Darbar.

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DFID Nepal is responsible for managing the British Government's contribution to development in Nepal, set out in our new country business plan 2009 - 2012¹. Its objectives are to (a) Support a sustainable and inclusive political settlement (b) Help build a more capable, accountable and responsive state, (c) Promote inclusive, low carbon, economic growth and better jobs for the poor (d) Reduce the vulnerability of the poor and improve their resilience to climatic shocks.

DFID now requires an experienced governance adviser to advise and assist on key elements of DFID Nepal's complex governance portfolio and provide political analysis to the office. You will engage with government counterparts, political and civil society actors, and the international development community in delivering on the commitments in the DFID Nepal results framework.

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- At least 5 years experience in project design and management.

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- Good understanding of public sector governance and reform in Nepal, in particular local level governance and decentralisation.
- Good understanding of promoting democratic accountability in Nepal.
- Ability to commission, produce, and communicate political economy analysis, and articulate its relevance to projects and programmes to non-governance advisers.
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Closing date for applications is Thursday, 31st December 2009.

¹ [http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/nepal-country-plan-brochure\[1\].pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/nepal-country-plan-brochure[1].pdf)



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Everyone has his share

So, to recap this week's main news: Monday MKN met PKD, Tuesday MKN, GPK met, then PKD, MKN and GPK all met together before they brought in JNK, NKS and RCP, and CPG met MKN on the sidelines of all this. On Wednesday PKD met RBY and soon after MKN also met RBY and then they all met individually with RS. On Thursday MKN, PKD, JNK, RCP, NKS all met once more and at the time of going to press, the meeting had expanded to include ABC, IJK, MNO, QRS, and XYZ.

It looks like all we in the media do these days is report on who met who, who flew off and who came back from junkets abroad. Speaking of which Makunay is leading a jumbo 56-member donor-financed delegation to Copenhagen that includes nine ministers. More than 600 Nepalis are already at the Climate Summit according to latest estimates, making the Nepali delegation the highest per capita carbon emitter at the conference. They should all **ride bicycles for one year** to make up.



The holy trinity of MKN, PKD and GPK are now reportedly so sick and tired of their meeting agenda getting prematurely ejaculated into the national media that Makunay suggested at their confab Tuesday that the three should meet at Kala Patthar just to get away from the prying press. They underestimate the Nepali media's hound-dog tenacity and herd mentality, though.

Thereupon, Awesome is supposed to have said: "Now you understand why I had to go to Singapore?" Actually we gather the real substantial meeting was not in S'pore at all but at the transit lounge at Suwarnapoom. Which leads us to think that the reason both Makunay and Ferocious always want to meet somewhere else is because Baluwatar, Paris Danda, Pistachio Palace and Balkhu have never been swept for bugs. Another reason we shouldn't **allow the Chinese to build our consulate in Lhasa**, who know what they'll sneak into those walls.



You've all been waiting with bated breath to hear the Ass' take on the Airbus deal. Sorry to disappoint you, comrades, but the Donkey gives it a thumbs up. Look at it this way, it is a USD 200 million deal for the 330 and 320, right? Even if it is only a ten percent kickback that means 20 million smackeroos will theoretically be in the hands (palms?) of Nepalis.

This would raise Nepal's per capita GNP by a couple of percentage points, and we get to keep the planes too. Everyone has his share, the airline can fly jets it desperately needs, Airbus sells two more planes and saves jobs in Europe, Nepal gets richer and everyone can live happily ever after. Which is why it is so completely daft that some born losers are trying to put a spanner in the works. Apparently most party stalwarts, ministerial honchos, CAAN authoritarians, the airline board, even the anti-corruption watchdogs have been suitably lubricated. But they forget the PACmen, which is why the deal is stuck. But only temporarily, because all that needs to be done is share the wealth around a bit more.

The Ass is quite impressed with NAC CEO SRK, who seems to have a knack for these things, and boasted to the media that he had 'trapped' the govt into agreeing with the deal by paying Airbus an advance. Good thinking, it's this sort of go-getter attitude that will allow Nepal to leapfrog in the Long March into a prosperous future. The way to look at it is: there would be kickbacks anyway whichever plane NAC acquired, so our policy should be to allow **constructive corruption**. That way, everybody gets a share.



The Baddies declared Sunday's unscheduled mori-bund 'peaceful' and a **'grand success'** because vans were vandalised, an ambulance was assassinated, drug stores were ransacked, there was a bonfire of buses in Lamki, Pokhara lakeside restaurants were forced to close on pain of death, Thamel shops got door-to-door threats. Syabas!



The govt is so hard-up it allowed a Kollywood potboiler to be shot on location inside the former royal palace. Now that the mating season is in full swing it could make a killing by renting the venue out as **Narayanhi Party Palace**.



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That's when I introduced Réal ACTIV juices in my life. Made from select fruits and vegetables, Réal ACTIV juices are **'PURE and NATURAL'** as they have NO Added Sugar, NO Added Flavour, NO Added Colour and NO Added Preservatives. They rejuvenate my energy and replenish my body with vital Nutrients and Antioxidants.

So, pick up a pack today and **LIVE ACTIVE- LIVE HEALTHY.**"

ANTIOXIDANT-RICH JUICES
Activ Orange Carrot 1 Glass = 100% RDA of Betacarotene*
Activ Orange 1 Glass = 100% RDA of Vitamin C*

REFRESHING COOLER
Activ Apple 1 Glass* = Juice of 4 Apples

0% ADDED SUGAR
100% TASTE



*1 Glass = 250ml. RDA = Recommended Dietary Allowances. The % RDA are approximate values. The comparison here is made with -Woman, moderate work.

Apple | Orange | Orange Carrot | Cucumber Spinach | Beetroot Carrot

For more information, log on to www.dabur.com