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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

SAROJ DAHAL in PALUNGTA

About 7,000 cadres thronged Palungtar for the sixth extended plenum of the UCPN (Maoist) to hear Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal back a 'people's revolt' as the party line. But state council members, ex-combatants and cadres find themselves divided as they discuss the papers presented by Dahal and vice chairmen Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai. A three-way split is clear to see.

Although the plenum meant to reach out to grassroots cadres, they were prohibited from participating

in the discussions, and will go home with little more than the knowledge of supporting one of three factions. Some members boycotted the meetings, saying it should not have been used as a forum to gauge the influence of leaders over the state councils.

Each state council is now split into three factions, each of which defends its own leader and attacks the others. Bhattarai supporter and Tharuhat State Council representative Lila Bhandari said, "In the nine months of the Maoist government, Chaiman Dahal met the Indian ambassador 171 times, but Bhattarai met him only 51 times. Who's for India?"

Even Dahal's supposed hold over the PLA was far from complete. The 1,500 ex-combatants attending the plenum formed groups in support of Dahal, Baidya and Bhattarai, and insisted on speaking for all three leaders in direct contravention of the chairman's directives.

According to politburo member Ram Karki, who also favours Bhattarai, leadership has been lacking. "This plenum failed to clear away the illusion that Maoists are just paying lip service to peace," he said. Any agreements that Dahal signs on peace and democracy will be unconvincing given his support of Baidya's 'people's revolt'. If Dahal had really been committed to peace, the constitution and democracy, observers say, he would have decided in favour of a pro-people

BRED RED: About 1,000 Maoist mothers attended the sixth plenum in Gorkha this week

constitution rather than a revolt, as decided at Kharipati.

Dahal supporter Shiv Dangi of Kochila State Council is confident that the constitution will not be written. He says, "The constitution will be written only as desired by the Maoists or it will never be written at all. This is how the cadres and the leaders have understood it." Bhattarai supporter Khim Lal Devkota laments that those for the constitution and peace are labelled rightist and subservient to India, adding, "This plenum should decide clearly whether the constitution should be written or not."

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TWO-FACED, YES. TWO-SOULED?

The Maoists continue to frustrate both those vying to outdo them in competitive politics and the public at large. After supposedly agreeing to allow the budget to be passed last week, they changed their minds and declared their intention to protest the presentation of the same. They claim the government was announcing a budget beyond the terms that were agreed on. Since the talks were held behind closed doors they can claim what they like, and so can their political adversaries. As if allowing the substance of the wheeling and dealing to leak to the public would risk derailing the deals; it could only embarrass those engaging in them.

What followed of course has laid another black mark next to the parliamentary process in Nepal. Which is precisely what the Maoists, who had no respect for the process in any case, had in mind.

It was the former rebels who jumped the finance minister and, in the words of RJP leader Prakash Chandra Lohani, behaved like animals. But it was Lohani's description of the hapless speaker and the confusion of others in the immediate aftermath that really

told the tale. In the run-up to their Gorkha plenum, the Maoist party wanted to show just what they thought of parliamentary process, even if they realised that they couldn't block the budget any longer. The juvenile grin on the face of Narayan Kaji Shrestha as he watched Minister Pandey being manhandled by his comrades betrayed his approach to problem-solving. Like the Maoist Party at large, the Maoist vice-chairman's act is two-faced: he will travel to London with NC and UML politicians to meet British coalition members and experts on conflict resolution, thereby presenting a reasonable façade to the wider Nepali polity and the world. But he will break the terms he has agreed to at the flick of a switch, thereby presenting a radical façade to the Maoist cadre. Over this all is clumsy spin, characterised by remarks such as that justifying the presence of the PLA at the Gorkha plenum: "They are not *practically* under the Special Committee". It bears underlining – if you have in principle and in theory agreed to place the PLA under the control of the Special Committee, does this not mean one has to move towards implementing it practically by *not* allowing for PLA attendance?

This desire to have it both ways – to partake of the

approval of both the democratic and radicalised brigades – may work temporarily for the Maoists, but it won't lead anywhere, not for them, nor for the country. You can't fool all of the people all of the time, foreigners included. Does even the Maoist leadership believe that it can find a way to capture the state by brute force and hold onto it?

One begins to suspect that it is not only the two-facedness of the Maoist leaders that is dragging the country (and the Maoist Party) down. It is the need to hold onto two different, opposed constituencies that is tearing the leadership apart. These are existential times for the Maoists.

Unfortunately, one suspects the Gorkha plenum will do little to reconcile the polarised viewpoints of Baidya and Bhattarai, because they are irreconcilable over the medium term of the peace process and constitution writing, not even in the fluid, accommodating persona of Chairman Dahal. It has to be one or the other: by now it should be clear even to the Maoist leadership which path leads to oblivion, and which to social justice, freedom and prosperity.

Lukla in moral chaos

I have been working in Nepal for the last three years, so I am not technically a tourist and I can speak some Nepali, so maybe I was slightly more in touch with how things were going in Lukla last week.

Everyone had their own story and everyone was, of course, dealing with it in their own way. As a traveler on my own, I was open to listening throughout the four days of waiting to the kaleidoscope of responses to the unfortunate delay in flights back to Kathmandu. Strategies to deal with this kind of hold-up were available, but delayed and without a system.

The tension in the village on my arrival – two days before my confirmed flight to Kathmandu – was undeniable. To counter this I looked for supportive smiles and found none. I looked and listened



KIRAN PANDAY

for supportive and appropriate alternatives and heard none. I searched for an authoritative person but witnessed only individual hype as every guide or guesthouse owner was desperately trying to persuade his clients to spend exorbitant amounts of money to secure a seat – whether it was US\$1,400 on a helicopter or

US\$500 to chuck someone already holding a confirmed ticket off their flight. A guide with some British tourists could not get his head around their refusal to sign a hospital bill reflecting their fabricated illness – the insurance company's investigation apart, the illegality and falsehood was outside his comprehension. All

was a scramble for personal gain...as the profits from this type of corruption (and can we call it 'heartlessness' to take from those in distress?) would trickle down from one secret and idle hand to the next.

The incident of 'the flying chair' was unsettling. I witnessed that from where I was sitting on the bank overlooking the airstrip. To see a chair being flung through the glass of a top window was frightening. Of course the full story was not known. One can only guess at the build-up of fury and frustration of the two budget travelers who had had their seats handed on to those with sufficient funds to bribe. I was told they had now run out of money to pay for the incredibly expensive food in Lukla (Rs 150 for one slice of toast!). What a disturbing

memory to carry away from Nepal. I am so sorry.

Those that profit from these possibilities in Lukla know that people the world over will still flock to the most beautiful and famous mountains in the world, regardless of Nepal's unpreparedness for Tourism Year 2011. How sad that they do not show some pride in their heritage and share the joy of it with their treasured visitors in hospitality and open honesty.

Lukla is the richest village I have visited in Nepal and it has confirmed to me that riches, when quickly and viciously grabbed, can eclipse a national character of welcome and replace it with stony-faced indifference to the 'goose that laid the golden egg'.

Doreen Johnstone

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

NEPAL'S HEROES - I
Bravo Anuradha! You are the the true hero of Nepal ('Anuradha Koirala wins', The Brief, Nov.21). This is a great, great day for Nepal and Nepali women. Leaders of the Govt. of Nepal, what will you do now? Will you do anything to help this cause? You cannot even pass a law to punish the people who sell your sisters and daughters. You cannot prosecute the filthy animals that sell these innocent children and young girls. Nepali leaders, what you could not do with your positions of power of position, Anuradha has accomplished single-handedly...does that not make you feel ashamed?

Sandra Anne King

NEPAL'S HEROES - II
Jason & Roshani, I'm happy you guys have fulfilled the dream which you had five years back ('Resurrection Achham', Paavan Mathema, #528). I haven't forgotten

when you guys returned from Achham with fever but satisfied eyes. Thanks to all the team who did a very good job in that remote area.

Kalpana dhungana

GOVERNING BY MORALITY?
Your argument that only individuals can be their own moral agents is not convincing ('Roll the dice', Indu Nepal, #528). If that is so, why do we need a government? When Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau talked about the rationality for a government, it was for the very reason that society could not be left to the individual's moral compass.

About gambling, just to get some revenues, should the government legitimise gambling? If so, how about brothels? The government not legitimising them hasn't stopped people from getting involved in it, so by the same logic are you fine about legitimising brothels?

Ayesha

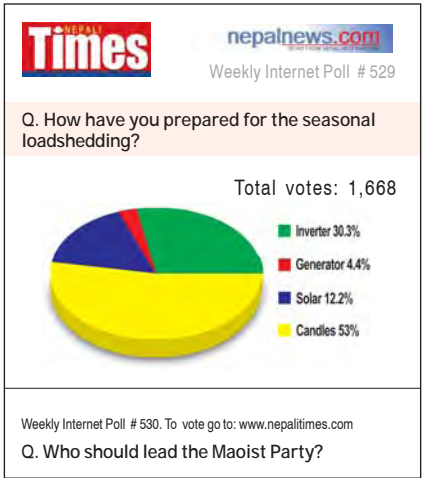
● People miss the point that 'industries' like gambling, prostitution, drugs, porn, etc are not moral issues. They are economic issues. No one can ever eliminate them but they can be curtailed by economic incentives or disincentives. Morality cannot be policed but actions can be encouraged or discouraged through economic policies. Making such issues about morality just makes these 'industries' more glamorous, like anything that is anti-establishment.

Anish

WHO'S BAD?
Prashant makes a mistake by placing Nepal amongst the enemy states of India ('The notional enemy', Prashant Jha, #528). He mentions the first prism as being countries that can help India with technology, education, energy and infrastructure and the second prism as being unfriendly countries such as Pakistan. I think Nepal should be placed in a third prism. It is India's mixed bag of haphazard foreign policy strategies that

has hindered Nepal's 'growth story'. India's foreign policy is a confused one and clearly lacks vision and leadership. It is the same with countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Indian geopolitical strategy is a reactive one. When China proactively pursues interests in our region, India backtracks and reacts.

Orgyen



Widening gulf



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

It is only a matter of time before the 2006 political framework collapses. As the three political documents in the Maoist plenum make clear, there is no question of 'dissolving and dismantling' the PLA. The Maoists will move on the PLA only after meeting three conditions – Dahal gets back to power; integration leads to some kind of structural change in the NA or gives the Maoists space in the security structure through a new force; and the Maoists get close to getting a constitution that meets their political line and the demands of their support base.

Most other parties are not in the mood to allow the Maoists back to power. They see the plenum discussions as only confirming their worst fears of Maoist intentions, of the shift away from a federal democratic republic to a people's republic. The budget antics of the Maoists would have weakened even the

Jhalanath Khanal segment within the UML that speaks of allying with the former rebels – incidentally, the finance minister is related to Khanal.

And on integration in the NA, go no further than the latest issue of the thoughtful Maoist-leaning journal *Rato Jhilko*, in which a relatively moderate former NA officer has responded to a paper by Barsha Man Pun. There is a wide, though not necessarily

anyone. But since the UML, NC and Madhesi parties are at least in power, they can live with the status quo. It is the Maoists who are itching for change. Now to alter the balance of power, they could do two things. They either have to revive the spirit of the 2006-8 days – it was a strategy that fetched them tremendous gains but also required them to make structural compromises. Or they have to inflict sufficient

rising belligerence on both sides are all signs of a coming showdown. Two looming deadlines – January 15 and May 28 – only add to the urgency of the situation.

The four-point agreement between the government and the Maoists in September held that all the remaining tasks of the peace process would be completed in four months, timed with UNMIN's exit. Integration cannot possibly happen in a month and a half, especially now that Dahal has made it clear to his party that the PLA will be kept intact.

So will the government request another extension of UNMIN? Will the Security Council (SC) accept it? What will be India's stand on the first major issue it will have to deal with as it enters the SC? Will there be a request for a downgraded technical mission, with an even more limited political presence, and can the SC live with that? If UNMIN does leave, what happens to the cantonments and who monitors them, even nominally? How will the Maoists play it? Does it mean the end of the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies?

What happens to UNMIN will have implications for the CA. While one cannot discount the possibility of 601 MPs giving themselves another extension, it will be a lot more difficult for them to do so. The tussle over power-sharing is so crucial because each side wants to ensure that they are in power on May 29.

Non-Maoists fear that if Dahal is allowed back to power, he will consolidate control over the state and be in an advantageous position – irrespective of whether the CA stays or goes. The Maoists fear that even if the president does not take over directly he will use his discretion, with Indian and army backing, to give legitimacy to a non-Maoist government in a post-CA context. If this happens, as is likely, the Maoists will claim the reactionaries have derailed the CA process, and launch mass revolts. If the protests are non-violent, aka May, the state will have a low-key response; if it is violent, the NP and APF will manage if possible, with the NA stepping in if absolutely necessary.

More than others, the politicians know this is dangerous as the form of the new conflict will be uncertain. But it appears that, contrary to hopes, certain fundamental ideological and political conflicts that characterise Nepali society will be fought out on the streets, not the CA. ■

One stance unites the Maoists and complicates the road ahead – the status of the PLA

unbridgeable, gulf in the understanding of a range of issues – integration, its necessity, nature and modalities, security sector reform, a new national army, and related issues.

Add to this the plenum rhetoric on India, which has only hardened Delhi's resolve to support the anti-Maoist forces back in Nepal.

It is not an easy situation for

damage on the other side, and bully them into submission. But they are not prepared to make the compromises required for the first; nor does the other side need them as much. The second is a high-risk approach, and could well boomerang.

The status quo cannot last for too long. The deadlock over integration and power-sharing, increased public acrimony, and

THIS WEEK

Maoist plenum

The sixth plenum of the UCPN(Maoist) kicked off at Palungtar in Gorkha District on Sunday. Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal inaugurated the program while YCL cadres performed a parade. Dahal and vice chairmen Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai presented separate political papers on the future course of the party in the closed session that began Sunday. Bhattarai and Baidya, presenting their political documents, criticised Dahal for not having a clear ideological line to lead the party. Baidya even threatened to revolt against the party. Defending his paper, Dahal said that the party should use the peace process, the constitution, and a people's revolt to achieve its goals. Following the discussion, 30 groups comprising representatives of the state council have been formed to review all three papers. The discussions will continue till Friday.

Budget announced

Finance Minister Surendra Pandey unveiled a Rs 337.9 billion budget for the current fiscal year on Saturday. The budget was announced through an ordinance at the National Planning Commission Hall in the presence of the prime minister, cabinet ministers, senior government officials, leaders of ruling parties and economists, but representatives of the opposition were not present. The opposition UCPN (Maoist) had prevented him from presenting the budget earlier on Friday, accusing the government of presenting a full budget against what was agreed upon in closed-door negotiations at Gokarna Resort. The budget has projected 4.5 per cent economic growth for 2010/11 and aims to limit inflation to 7 per cent.



Anuradha wins

Anuradha Koirala has been chosen as CNN Hero of the Year 2010. Koirala had been nominated as one of the top 10 CNN Heroes of the

Year, and won after getting the most support through an online voting system that ran for eight weeks on the CNN website. She has been recognised for her work against human trafficking through her organisation Maiti Nepal, which won \$100,000 in addition to the \$25,000 awarded to each of the top 10 Heroes honoured last Saturday night in Los Angeles.



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JASON DOWNES

Nepal in America

Now Nepali products can go to America too

PRABHAT BHATTARAI

The hall roared in applause as an American model dressed in *gunyu choli* and traditional Nepali jewellery took the stage as part of an event in Washington D.C. showcasing Nepali products. Organisers Office Abroad and the Nepali Embassy in the US seemed satisfied with the response and the turnout on October 28, which inaugurated the Voyage to Shangri-La (V2S) campaign.

"The American government has stopped levying customs charges on 14 Nepali products, but our government hasn't been able to cash in on this opportunity. So we decided to do something on our own," says Rajendra Shrestha (*pic, right*), owner of Office Abroad. Shrestha feels that one cannot sell Nepali products in the US without strong marketing. "There is a large market here if we can package our products attractively and convince American consumers of the quality. Instead of selling products like hawkers, we should draw in

buyers by demonstrating how Nepali handicrafts can be used to decorate homes or how Nepali clothes and ornaments can be worn."

Nepali tea, coffee, honey and silver ornaments, among others, are now exempt from duties. With the right marketing, "these products can earn us millions in export money," says Shrestha. But hurdles remain. "The government does not do enough marketing, but when the private sector makes the effort, the disorder in the country does not allow products to be delivered on time." Office Abroad provides event management services, and Shrestha has registered another company for his export-import business. He hasn't been able to get it going due to this very problem – late delivery.

The event, however, also provided an opportunity to promote Nepal Tourism Year 2011. Coffee represented Nepal's products, Bhaktapur its tourist destinations, and New York-based designer Prabal Gurung stood



out as an exemplar of a successful Nepali personality. The event was attended by 200 people, a mix of Americans and Nepalis living in the US. Nepali coffee and honey were among the most popular buys. In March of next year a similar event will be held under the aegis of the Nepali Embassy and FNCCL.

"Now we're planning V2S II in New York in November 2011, to which we will invite the CEOs of multinational companies doing business in Nepal like FEDEX, DHL, and General Motors," says Shrestha. Former American ambassadors to Nepal, bureaucrats and local politicians are also expected to attend and there will be a great deal of publicity to encourage public participation at the event, which may be telecast live. Shrestha is deservedly proud of his team's efforts: "The way we organised the event, with much promotion and fanfare, resulted in a great deal of interest on the part of American people and we are very hopeful." 🇳🇵

Powerful partnership

A consortium of 11 financial institutions, led by Laxmi Bank, signed an agreement with Sanima Mai Hydropower to finance the 15.6MW Mai River



Hydropower Project in Ilam. The lenders have committed to finance 75 per cent of the project cost with the remaining 25 per cent

being invested by the promoters. The hydropower project is expected to come into operation by early 2014.

Walk for a cause

Standard Chartered Bank organised Walkathon 2010 – A Walk for a Brighter Tomorrow. The funds raised from the event went to the Bank's 'Seeing is Believing' initiative, which works to encourage visually challenged people.

Spa award

Himalayan Healers was designated the Socially Responsible Spa of the Year for 2010 at the annual Asia Spa Awards. Himalayan Healers was the only spa representing Nepal and was one of 28 winners out of more than 300 nominees from all over Asia.

High entertainment



Hometv, a DTH service, has extended its network to Kyangzin Gomba in Langtang National Park. The monastery is located at 4,000 metres

above sea level, making it the highest point at which any DTH service has been installed.

Regional entry

Commerz and Trust Bank has received a D&B D-U-N-S number from the international credit rating agency Dun & Bradstreet South Asia. The bank will now be a part of Dun & Bradstreet's global database system.

Home designed



Chain Holdings inaugurated its bicycle showroom at Bhanimandal, Lalitpur. Chain's bicycles are the first Nepali-designed

bicycles to hit the market. Chain Holdings will also provide cycling training and maintenance services and organise programs to promote the benefits of cycling.

Two openings

Samsung has opened new exclusive outlets at Kumaripati and in Civil Mall, Sundhara. The brand also has a showroom in Darbar Marg. The products on display include Samsung's latest range of 3D, LED and LCD televisions, cameras, refrigerators, music systems, and other electronic appliances.



Leveraging Brand Buddha

Lumbini can become Nepal's economic focal point

LUMBINI: A month ago, I visited mesmerising Angkor Wat in Cambodia. As I walked through the 12th century ruins, I thought of our historic Lumbini. As the birthplace of Lord Buddha, Lumbini has not just religious but economic value as well. But we cannot even begin to compare the number of visitors in Lumbini to the two million that Angkor Wat plays host to every year. Great guidebooks are available on Angkor but very little information exists on Lumbini that is traveller-centric. Lumbini has become an extension of the Buddhist circuit tours out of India, rather than the other way around.

The Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) was formed in 1985 to consolidate activities in the area, under the patronage of a royal family member. The objective of the Trust was similar to that of other such trusts during the Panchayat era – to control a money-spinner. The LDT leased out land in Lumbini on the cheap to different organisations to build monasteries. These organisations were not required to contribute to any other infrastructure development, so have now


become very profitable. Some of these monasteries, constructed by non-Nepalis, are open only to pilgrims of their own nationality while others are in effect guesthouses in monkish garb. Although the LDT has no official way to link this income to their own, it is quite clear that the Trust isn't running on small change.

While it is good to see domestic tourism picking up in Lumbini, some of its negative aspects cannot be ignored. There is limited visitor management or a code of conduct to prevent irresponsible behaviour that damages the monuments, which can start from something as simple as scribbling on the walls. We need to take a leaf of learning from the temples in Bangkok, which have been able to enforce strict codes on silence, photography, and on touching the artifacts or damaging gardens.

Further, private enterprises, especially the hotels that have been set up around Lumbini, are focused on squeezing tourists for the maximum. These enterprises are keen on short-term returns rather than building customer relations for long-term business. They do not even consider that a

customer may perhaps come again or refer another customer.

However, the potential is tremendous and one needs to move away from the myopia of the master plan of 1978. We need to change our thinking, and embrace the idea of a conservation area of more than 600 square kilometres that will encompass many heritage sites. The area can then be developed under public-private partnership. Local and even international business firms would be interested to invest if the brand Lumbini is marketed well. Ownership can remain with government and the communities who live there, but professional firms can manage the area and share revenues. An airport is a must and the business challenge is to keep tourists for at least two to three nights in the area. Lumbini can be a centre for international hotel chains, learning centres, rehabilitation and healing centres and other avenues of business.

If Vatican, Jerusalem, Mecca, Kumbh and other religious sites can draw such large numbers of people, why can't we get our act together? 

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RSS

Is the CPA still relevant?



MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, after labouring for weeks to put together a document for the party's extended plenum at Palungtar in Gorkha District, has come up with a great discovery: identifying our national enemy.

Congratulations. Now we know what has held back our progress, our march to peace and prosperity. And who else but the favourite punching bag of communists and royalists alike: India. Identifying India as Nepal's enemy means protecting nationalism, safeguarding sovereignty, and ending our southern neighbour's interference in internal matters. Did someone say patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels?

Dahal is known for his capacity to surprise people, be it

in striking deals and in breathtakingly breaching them, shedding timely tears, resorting to uncontrolled outbursts (usually at the sight of thousands of his cadre), or simply in his interactions with national and international actors. He is a charmer, no doubt.

However, this time he has failed to surprise. Unable to secure a meeting with top Indian officials despite a series of efforts, he is frustrated. India's sustained snub is having an effect on Comrade Chairman. So he is back to India-bashing.

Faced with an open challenge to his leadership by two vice chairmen – Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai – and confronted by disappointed and angry cadres in Palungtar who feel betrayed, something drastic had to be done. Hence the methodical madness in parliament, in the full glare of live TV coverage.

Dahal may have felt a bit easier in the aftermath of this ugly incident, but it will be a

Communists need enemies for their survival, even if they have to invent them

challenge for him to escape unscathed this time. The chairman can hope to contain the damage done so far to the lustre surrounding his leadership. Like in the past, the leaders are likely to patch it up and show a public face of unity with raised fists.

But the Maoists' internal feud is reality. What is equally true, and perhaps of more significance to non-Maoist parties, is the absolute inability and unwillingness on the part of

the Maoist leadership to wean their cadre off revolutionary misadventure.

The leaders have been unable to drill home the point that the kind of revolution they are espousing is simply not possible. They are too cowardly to tell their cadre that their 'jana yuddha' (people's war) failed to achieve the goal of state capture, which was why they had to enter into a peace agreement with the very political parties they had vilified throughout their decade-long insurgency.

This is the crux of the problem. The Maoists see doublespeak as an effective tool to clear hurdles in the way of their march to power. After all, it has paid them rich dividends so far.

However, there is a growing realisation among other political parties that they have been unable to transform the Maoists. The leaked documents of Dahal, Baidya and Bhattarai have a common goal: absolute control by the Maoists of the

state apparatus. The peace process and drafting of the constitution are a means to that end and the Maoists have said so a number of times. What can and will the non-Maoists parties do about it?

The fate of the 12-point agreement of November 2005 that brought the Maoists and non-Maoists together against the absolute monarchy and the subsequent Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) of 2006 hangs in the balance. The Maoists have violated these pacts at will and the latest example is the participation of Maoist ex-combatants, who draw government salaries and are supposedly not under the Maoist Party's leadership, at the Palungtar plenum.

Are these two landmark agreements still relevant? These are the questions that non-Maoist parties need to reflect on before they hastily enter into another non-implementable agreement with the Maoists. damakant@gmail.com



उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

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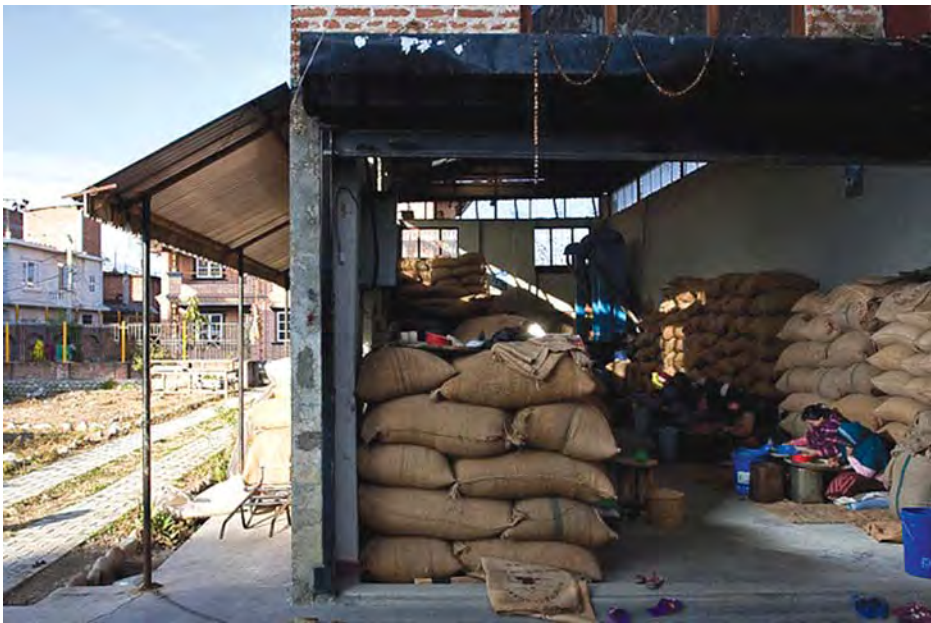
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Branded brew



PAAVAN MATHEMA

Last week, Nepali coffee producers celebrated the registration of the official trademark of Nepali organic coffee. The Department of Industry granted the trademark after the Nepal Tea and Coffee Development Board (NTCDB) applied in May 2007. Organic coffee grown in Nepal will now be known as ‘The Himalayan Specialty Nepal Coffee’.

“This trademark will assure international buyers that the coffee is organic and has been produced in Nepal,” says Binay Kumar Mishra, executive director of NTCDB. The trademark will also standardise and guarantee the quality of Nepal-grown coffee. The process of certifying 10 Nepali coffee producers with the trademark has already begun.

Nepali coffee is now Himalayan Specialty Nepal Coffee



ALL PICS: FOO CHEE CHANG

Commercial farming of coffee in Nepal started in 1976, but the market finally began to pick up in the last decade. Only the highland Arabica variety is produced in Nepal. At present, 1,630 hectares of land are used for coffee farming, spread over at least 23 districts, including Syangjha, Gulmi, Palpa, Kaski, Tanahun and Baglung.

The industry employs 25,000 farmers and this year, total coffee production amounted to 334 tonnes, up from 265 tonnes in the last fiscal year. “The coffee produced here is called specialty coffee because it fulfills certain standards,” says Shyam Prasad Bhandari, Chairman of Nepal Coffee Association. “Our coffee is grown above an altitude of 800 metres, is farmed in the shade, and is organic.”

Nepali coffee has done well on the international market because of the taste these criteria add to a brew. This year, out of total production, 120 tonnes of coffee were exported. The trademark is expected to boost

this figure. Nepali coffee is already finding a niche in the US, Japan, Korea, Germany, Netherlands and Canada, and from this year on, exports have been extended to the Gulf countries. According to Bhandari, Nepali coffee ranked second among 80 coffee producers in a recent grading exercise in Germany.

Unlike most Nepali export industries, the coffee industry here does not need to import any of its raw materials, except for jute bags for packaging, which are sometimes not available locally. This means that all of the revenue earned through coffee export and sales goes into the pockets of Nepali producers and farmers.

The industry has also been encouraged by domestic demand. Local coffee culture has grown over the years, demonstrated, for example, by the coffee shops popping up here and there across the Kathmandu Valley. “When we started selling coffee 27 years ago, it was difficult to sell even a tonne in the Nepali market,” says Krishna Ghimire, Chairman of Highland Coffee Company. “Now we sell over 50 tonnes a year.”

Coffee producers here are now lobbying to register the trademark internationally. For the time being, Nepal is just an observer member in the International Coffee Organization, but membership will facilitate access of Nepali coffee to wider markets. For those who don’t get the Nepali love of *chiya*, something else is brewing. ☕

COFFEE LIFE: (clockwise from top left) Royal Everest Coffee Mill in Thimi, where pulped cherries are brought from local coffee farms. First, coffee beans are dried. They are then hulled, polished, cleaned, and sorted by a machine. The final round of sorting and grading is done by hand before the beans are packaged.

Nepali brews	
Local boys to look out for:	
Johnny Gurkha Blend Coffee	
Annapurna Organic Coffee	
Royal Everest Coffee	
Jalpa Gold	
Morning Fresh Coffee	
Himalayan Arabica Coffee	
Him Café	
Necco	
Buddha Organic Coffee	
Lalitpur Organic Coffee	



nepalitimes.com
Coffee, tea and we #302
In one’s (coffee) cups # 343

EVENTS



Author event with Sheeba Shah, to discuss her latest novel *Facing my Phantoms*. 27 November, 3pm to 4.30pm, British Council, Lazimpat, 9849100300, himalayabookclub@gmail.com

Trees and Leaves II, painting exhibition by Samjhana Rajbhandari and Bidhata KC. 26 November to 4 December, 5pm, Fusion Studio, Sagarmatha Bazaar, Mandala Street Thamel

Japan Festival, a one-day festival organised by the Japanese Embassy to showcase Japanese art, music, cuisine and products. 27 November, 11am to 5pm, Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat

Balgo, an exhibition of contemporary Australian indigenous art. Till 5 December, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048

Cricket for changing lives, a friendly T-20 cricket match organised by FAITH to create awareness about HIV. 27 November, 11am Tundikhel ground, www.faith.org.np

Once in a lifetime, an exhibition of mixed media works by the Australian artist Donato Rosella. 21 November to 5 December, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 421804

Kathmandu International Theatre Festival 2010. 17 November to 7 December, Gurukul, Old Baneswor, for details see schedule on opposite page

Screening of Up, an animation movie about an adventurous 78-year-old who ties his house to thousands of balloons and flies to South America. 26 November, 3pm, USEF-Nepal, Gyaneswor, 4414598



Nepal Bharat Library presents Tavern Tales in Kathmandu: Word Warriors - Slam Poetry in Nepal. 26 November, 4pm, Nepal Bharat Library, NAC building, New Road. The event is free and open to the public.

QC Awards 2010: The Poetry Slam, Quixote Cove and the US Embassy calls for applications for a slam poetry competition. Submission deadline 30 November, 5pm to 8pm, contest on 14 December, Jawalakhel, www.qcbookshop.com, 5536974

Dreaming of Player Flags: Mantra on the Wind, an exhibition of impressionistic photography by Sandy Shum. 16 November to 6 December, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120

The Lion King, students of Malpi International School are back again with their award-winning musical play. 1-2 December, 6pm, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi

MUSIC

Golden Moments, the best bands in Nepal pay tribute to classic rock: **Moksh Restaurant**, Jhamsikhel, 26 November, 7pm, *Jigme and the Strings* **Cafereena Restaurant**, Darbar Marg, 27 November, 7pm, *Rusty Nails* **1905 Restaurant**, Kantipath, 3 December, 7pm, all-star performance

Kgarira Festival Dub FX Live beat-boxing at 1905, presented by digital om productions. 1 December, starts 7pm onwards, 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath

DINING



Koto Restaurant, whether it's the fresh sashimi, sushi, sukiyaki or tempura, their experienced Japanese and Nepali chefs are sure to impress. Darbar Marg, 4220346

Thanksgiving at Kilroy's of Kathmandu and K-too Beer & Steakhouse, for a traditional thanksgiving dinner complete with turkey, pecan pie and free mulled wine. Till 27 November, 6pm onwards, Kilroy's Restaurant, Jyatha Street, Thamel, 4250440, 4250441

Casa Toscana, 26 varieties of yummy pizzas to try. Till 28 November, 11am to 11pm, Casa Toscana, Pulchok

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. Jhamsikhel, 5521810

Ramalaya Tea Room, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese, also 10% discount on evening dinners to all *Nepali Times* readers when they mention this ad. Pani Pokhari, near Japanese Embassy, for bookings call 4006589, 4006589, www.rde.com.np/index.php/tea-room



Singma Food Court, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. Pulchok, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np, www.singma.foodcourt.com

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth-watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest Resort. Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, info@gokarna.net, Rs 1500 plus taxes

Aqua Java Zing, soar high on a low budget, buy one cocktail, get one free, buy two hookahs, get one free, only during happy hours from 2pm to 6pm. Ganesh Man Singh Road, Thamel

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city, Kantipath, 4215068

Vegetarian Buffet at The Cafe every Tuesday from 6.30pm, and **Arabian Nights** at The Cafe every Friday from 6.30pm at Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362



Alfresco, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams. Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1200 per person, 4425341

GETAWAYS



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Club Himalaya, for amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend escapades, special package available for Nepalis and expatriates. Nagarkot, 4410432



Dhulikhel Mountain Resort, Palanchok Bhagwati Darshan Package with one night's accommodation in the mountain rooms and transport to and from the temple. Dhulikhel, 4420774

Grand Norling Hotel, countryside weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. Gokarna, 4910193



Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Get a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. Thamel, 4701510

Waffles promotion at The Lounge from 12.30pm to 4.00pm every day,

Kathmandu International Theatre Festival 2010



17 November to 7 December
Rimal/Sama Theatre, Gurukul, Old Baneswor, Kathmandu
Interactions with directors and actors every day at 3pm, Sama Theatre
Performances at 5pm, Rimal Theatre

Friday 26 November
The Messenger: A tribute to the Life and Spirit of Nina Simone directed by Hazel Roy

Saturday 27 November
John Gabriel Borkman directed by Anuradha Kapur

Sunday 28 November
The Trial of Wantong directed by Chang Janaprakal Chandrung

Monday 29 November
Chitrapata directed by Sumathi KR

Tuesday 30 November
The Metamorphosis directed by Kamaluddin Nilu

Wednesday 1 December
Akhinyan Walio directed by Aamir Nawaz

Thursday 2 December
'Opekkhoman' (At the Threshold) directed by Ataur Rahaman

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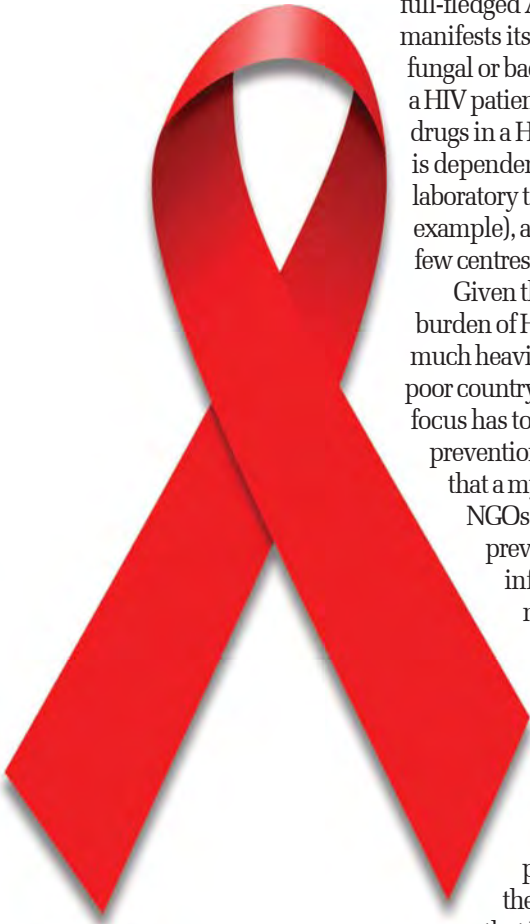
Treating HIV



DHANYANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

There was a time when being infected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was tantamount to a death sentence. This is no longer true, especially in the western world. Now patients can keep the virus under control, even if they are not actually cured of it. This transformation has been due largely to the anti retroviral therapy (ART) group of drugs. HIV infection is now a chronic illness like diabetes, coronary artery disease, or rheumatoid arthritis, which all demand continual effective drug therapy, but also periodic laboratory tests and knowledgeable supervision on a long-term basis.

Unsurprisingly, affluent nations are more able to afford ART and long-term care. In Nepal for instance, some estimate that only 10 to 15 per cent of HIV patients have free access to ART. The Global Fund to Fight Aids, among others, provides grants to supply free ART drugs in Nepal. This is crucial, considering



full-fledged AIDS, which manifests itself in concomitant fungal or bacterial infections in a HIV patient. Starting ART drugs in a HIV-infected patient is dependent on sophisticated laboratory tests (CD4 count, for example), available in only a few centres in Nepal.

Given these constraints, the burden of HIV treatment is a much heavier one in a resource-poor country such as Nepal. The focus has to continue to be on prevention. The good news is that a myriad of INGOs and NGOs are working on preventing HIV infection. In fact, many caregivers working with other common illnesses (chronic lung disease, typhoid, chronic renal disease, etc) that plague this part of the world complain that HIV steals all the limelight (and the funds).

Some report the incidence of HIV in Nepal at less than 1 per cent of the adult population. But on World AIDS day (December 1), let us remember that we should never be complacent about this killer disease. 🇳🇵

‘rack’ prices for these drugs run into thousands of rupees per month.

Evidence is mounting in favour of early initiation of ART to decrease the rates of death from HIV. Death results from HIV when the disease progresses to



BUDGET AT LAST: A group outside the National Planning Commission watches the live television broadcast of Finance Minister Surendra Pandey delivering the budget speech for the year 2010/2011 on Saturday.



SQUEAKY CLEAN: Children celebrate Global Hand Washing Day on Friday at Changu Narayan, Bhaktapur, in a program organised by UNICEF and WaterAid. Around 88 per cent of diarrhoeal deaths in Nepal are attributed to lack of safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and proper hand-washing.

GREEN SCENE

Red alert

What started as a women’s initiative to conserve red pandas in Jamuna VDC of northern Ilam has brought about an impressive transformation. The Choyatar forest has been restored to its past glory and the village economy is thriving because of tourists that have poured in following a rise in the number of these endangered animals.

Unill two years ago, open grazing and caused uncontrolled logging had caused the destruction of the forest, and a subsequent decline in the number of red pandas in the area. But now the villagers are so keen to protect the

forest that people are required to take permits from the women’s user group committee even to collect fodder.

Thanks to efforts like these, there are now 15 red pandas in the community-managed forest. The IUCN red-listed species, *Ailurus fulgens*, has proven to be a major tourist attraction. The user group committee charges Nepalis Rs 500 and foreign nationals Rs 1000 to enter the forest for red panda-watching. A 1.7km road has been constructed from Aalehanjhyang to help tourists reach the forest.

Every house in the village is now upgrading rooms to allow for homestay for tourists, and cultural groups have been formed to entertain them. Chairperson of the forest user committee Gopika Gurung says that interest in the forest has also increased since their efforts to conserve the red panda began. "Now it seems our forest will be protected," she says.

The all-women committee has planted rare species of trees on the barren slopes surrounding the village, and has also carried out demarcation and inventory studies of the forest. 🇳🇵

Prabhat Bhattarai in Ilam



JATRA TIME: Locals throng Patan Darbar Square on Friday to witness the last day of the annual Kartik Nach. The masked-dance festival was initiated in the 17th century by King Siddhi Narsingh Malla.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Although the high mountain districts, particularly Manang and Mustang, received fresh snowfall this week, the rest of the country has remained dry this month. Satellite pictures show no signs of major westerly fronts coming towards the Himalaya, though a shallow northerly jet stream seems to be crossing the central Himalaya, linking the Arabian Sea with the Tibetan plateau. A low pressure belt of moderate strength will continue to keep the Himalayan weather in its present state. Expect sunny days with long, foggy mornings in the Valley and clear nights.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
21-9	22-9	23-8



KIRAN PANDAY

Ode to foolish youth

The older I get, the more I love life (try telling that to the idiot speeding towards me at 100 clicks an hour)

even these individuals have a larger sense of their own mortality, stemming as much from a knowledge of the diminished time remaining to them as the very personal experience of having witnessed death. As your youthful aspirations fade, or are modulated into what is acceptable, you also begin to love life for all it is, whether you admit it or not. You are unwilling to let go, and learn not to risk life for fleeting pleasures.

It's ironic that those who have the most to look forward to, whose aspirations are as yet unclouded by the disillusion of ordinary life, are so careless about their own lives. Perhaps the moodiness of adolescence, when every problem seems monolithic, conspires with the spirit of rebellion to inspire this thoughtlessness. Oh, to be young again? Once was enough. I'm glad I survived, and good luck to you, boys and girls. Just remember there's nothing beyond that wall, if you do crash into it. 🇳🇵



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Whenever I see a reckless young motorcyclist swerving hell-for-leather through traffic, helmet askew, my first reaction is an impotent rage that finds outlet in imagining him smashing into a wall. Feeling (ever so slightly) guilty, I then wonder how it is that the youth in question does not realise how stupidly dangerous his actions are, not only for himself but also for everyone else on (and off) the road. I feel old even as I condemn him for being so young at mind, and right about this moment it occurs to me that I have turned into my parents.

Before Dasain, in the course of travels in Humla's Lini Valley, we were expected to take a detour to ease the crossing of the Ling-Chu River. One of the younger members of the group (myself not included) asked the guide if it was not possible to cross 'right here' and save over an hour of walking. There was a brief discussion, and we agreed that it made sense to cross later. The group moved on, but our young friend (all of 25) stopped suddenly, and asked me (36) and another (27) if we shouldn't just go for it anyhow.

We agreed. And though the crossing through the marrow-chilling cold of the three-pronged, fast-flowing Ling-Chu

wasn't exactly life-threatening, there was the strong possibility of a good pneumonic soak a shiver below 4,000 metres. We made it without too much incident. An hour later, we had to cross again to make the camping site. This time, the river was too wild (and our memory of the waters too chilly) to persuade us to wade over. The only option was a stone bridge missing the bridge, that is, four columns left standing in the river.

Once again, the youngest among us led us leaping across the five-foot gaps. Safely over, it occurred to me very definitely, "Am I not too old to be doing something like this?" Certainly I would not have, had it not been for my younger companions. But immediately after, I recalled that time in Australia fifteen years ago when we'd fearlessly jumped from one 10-foot boulder to another along the length of a beach to escape the incoming tide. I hadn't hesitated then; it was risky, sure, but fun.

Of course death seems such an unlikely prospect to the young. Thrill-seeking often outweighs good sense. But when does fear begin to tip the balance, recalibrating the unnecessary risks we are willing to take in the course of the everyday?

Clearly this depends on the individual. I have middle-aged friends who drive as badly as the aforementioned teenage louts. Family responsibilities have not attenuated their risk-taking behaviour, though they are more likely to risk life and limb when they are drunk. For the main,

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Crossing the Larkya La


TEXT and PICS by
SAM COWAN



The *Lonely Planet* is unequivocal in stating that “the Larkya La is one of the most dramatic pass crossings in the Himalaya”. In every sense, the 5,200m pass is the high point of the 18-day Manaslu circuit. To get into position to tackle it entails following the Budi Gandaki River to its origin in the Himalayan glaciers. The trail, starting from Arughat or Gorkha, is rated as arduous but the rewards of experiencing Nepal’s rich cultural diversity first hand are hugely satisfying.

On Day 13, we set off from the last camp at Larkya Phedi to cross the pass. Larkya La is not the highest of the trekking passes of Nepal, but it carries its own challenges and dangers, not least because of the need to commit to a 10-hour day, including four or five hours at altitude on rough and exposed terrain. The pass is also notorious for sudden storms. A day before our crossing, snow had erased the trails but we woke up to a gloriously clear sky.

It didn’t make it any easier. The pass is not sharp-edged, but just seems to go on and on. I could see the prayer flags on top for a long time before I got to them. As I ground it out, large Himalayan peaks started to appear to the left and right and from the top, I was completely surrounded and indeed emotionally overwhelmed by them.

A long 1,700-metre descent led to the campsite at Bhimtang, a sublime high alpine valley, itself surrounded by Himalayan peaks. The spectacle of amazing peaks continued most of the next day, as we dropped down the valley of the Dudh Khola to meet the Annapurna Circuit trail at Dharapani, on the banks of the Marsyangdi Khola. Yes, *dramatic* in no way overstates the crossing of the Larkya La! 



- 1 Towards Larkya La, an hour from the top.
- 2 At 5,200m, and just about to begin the long descent to Bhimtang.
- 3 A mani wall at Bhimtang. Namjung Himal (7,140 m) dominates the skyline.
- 4 Glacier from Namjung Himal below Bhimtang.
- 5 Above the Dudh Khola. Manaslu (8,156m), on the left, dominates.





PICS: RUBEENA MAHATO

Women from the slums demonstrate how single drops can make up an ocean

RUBEENA MAHATO

Inside a cramped room in Balaju, Kathmandu, a group of women are poring over some papers. Oblivious to the noise outside and people bustling about in the tiny room, they are engrossed in checking and rechecking figures. Fifty, two hundred, thousand, they murmur in a low voice as they carefully record the numbers in ledgers.

This is the one-roomed office of the Pragati Women's Cooperative, run by women from slums and squatter communities, and it is their hard-earned monthly savings that they are so meticulously noting down.

It's hard to believe that the savings that

started with Rs 1 a month now total Rs 10.5 million. The women who helped raise this money, working as construction workers and household help in the city, beam with pride as they mention these numbers.

"Why wouldn't we be proud? These savings are our blood and sweat. When you live in a 'basti' nobody trusts you even for a loan of ten rupees. But this cooperative has made us millionaires," says their 70-year-old president, Kumari Singh Khadka. Thanks to the cooperative, landless women who lack any collateral can take out small loans to pay medical bills, cover tuition for their children, and invest in small businesses without any hassle.

Entrepreneurship has flourished with the availability of easy loans, and the living standards in the slums have improved. "Almost everyone from our community has taken some kind of loan. I took a loan of Rs 50,000 to set up a small motorcycle workshop. Others have raised chickens or bought spinning wheels," says Bimala Gautam (pic, right) from Narayan Tole, the slum below Maharajganj.

Although the cooperative was initially meant to provide savings and credit facilities to women, it also started to mobilise its members to improve the living conditions in the slums. The result is that most members have constructed toilets using loans, the

settlements are cleaner, and almost all children go to school. The cooperative also runs health camps, offers tuition for children in the slums, and spreads awareness about hygiene and sanitation.

The cooperative's role in improving slum conditions has also had a direct bearing on reducing the stigma against squatters. "City dwellers did not even let their dogs come to our area," Kumari Singh Khadka remembers. "Now they come to us to seek our advice on how to improve community amenities."

But it is the cooperative's role in empowering disadvantaged women that has had the most profound effect. Most women who work in the cooperative have little or no formal education but manage their money down to the last paisa. Their accounts are so

immaculate that the government officials who came to check up on them some months ago returned praising the women and advising them to purchase a computer.

Initially set up with the initiative and assistance of Lumanti, an organisation working for the urban poor, the women of Pragati now run the cooperative completely on their own – collecting savings, evaluating the loans, and managing the administrative work. Barring a few staff, most do the work for free, and there is a strong sense of camaraderie. "We are a cooperative of poor women. The salary is not much but we are happy to volunteer," says Naina Thapa, the cooperative's treasurer.

"It would definitely be better if the government did not put us in the same league as profit-making companies. The government has never done anything for people like us, but at least it could offer us tax cuts," says Khadka, who coordinates 29 other cooperatives like Pragati run by squatter women in Kathmandu. There are now about 10,000 members in the cooperatives set up by Lumanti for squatters and slum dwellers in Nepal, with total savings of close to Rs 30.5 million. 🇳🇵



nepalimes.com

Kathmandu's malignant urban tumour #161

Model slum

In spite of the flashy malls and high rises across Kathmandu, the slums that sprawl along the Valley's rivers remind us of the ugly face of urban poverty. But the government's response has been one of indifference. Lajana Manandhar of Lumanti knows this well. "There is a distorted image of poverty amongst the government, policymakers and donors. Only rural poverty gets any attention here. But the government cannot shrug off its responsibility to address the needs of squatters," she says.

Lumanti has taken the initiative where government has



failed. To show that slums too can be made habitable and their inhabitants be supported in improving their living conditions, Lumanti decided to develop Narayan Tole, a squatter settlement below Maharajganj. Four years ago, the 31-house settlement perched atop steep slopes above the foetid Samakhushi stream, and faced yearly risks of flooding and landslides. The paths were so steep one had to crawl on all fours at times. Diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid and hepatitis were common. "I fell ill due to hepatitis after I came to live here and then I found that almost every family had someone suffering from the disease," Arjun Thapa remembers.

The houses of Narayan Tole still give the impression of tin

matchboxes but now flowers and plants line the paved lanes, and stone slabs cover the stream running through the middle of the settlement. There are toilets in all the houses. Walls have been constructed to contain mudslides. There is clean piped water available to the residents and there's even a sewage treatment facility that purifies the settlement's waste before it is discharged into the stream. Unsurprisingly, the incidence of water-borne diseases has declined. Right after the slum ends, however, imposing houses discharge untreated sewage directly into the stream. "Talk about who's polluting the river now," exclaims Bhairaja Gautam, vice chairman of the Narayan Tole Improvement Committee. 🇳🇵

Budget bahas

Editorial in *Janadisha*, 21 November

जनादिशा

Presenting the budget is a regular task of government. But the country is in transition. There is a caretaker government, and it cannot take decisions on issues with long-term implications. This is a universal norm. The Madhav Kumar-led government forgot its status, due to which an unfriendly incident occurred on Friday.

The government's decisions and activities prove that it has been instigating the president to be active. The prime minister and the speaker recommended the president to end the ongoing parliament session. This has undermined the parliamentary process. By bringing the budget forcefully, as if Nepal were under emergency rule, the ruling parties have betrayed the hollowness of their rhetoric of consensus.

While the speaker remained passive in the never-ending prime ministerial elections, he solicited a forced budget, and has warned he will take action against opposition MPs. He has been paving the way for the reactionaries.

The unconstitutional presentation of the budget is an act of treachery that has made a mockery of the CA. A budget brought by bypassing CA procedures has no meaning or implication and does not help the economy. It was presented simply for the sake of it. It has made a mockery of democratic norms. This budget will only help smugglers, corrupt people and black-marketeers, not the country's economy and the people.

Editorial in *Punarjagaran*, 23 November

पुनर्जागरण

The budget announced through an ordinance at the end of the parliamentary session has not only saved the country from becoming a failed state, it has also defeated the subservient strategy of the speaker and Jhalanath Khanal towards the Maoists. The government snatched the weapons from the Maoists and fired them back. This government deserves kudos.

A government is a government. There is no caretaker government. The country itself is running under an interim constitution. Any government formed under this constitution automatically becomes a caretaker government, meant to be temporary. The Constituent Assembly itself is both temporary and unconstitutional because the CA term stipulated by the same constitution has already expired. The Supreme Court that sanctioned the unconstitutional one-year extension of the CA is even more incompetent and anarchist than the CA.

The illusion of consensus has been cleared away. The Maoists, in the name of writing the constitution through the CA, won the elections using all manner of threats. They don't want to write the constitution. They want to create an environment conducive to capture power, meaning they promote instability and anarchy. The government's courage in challenging the Maoists has pushed them onto the defensive.

The democratic front of 22 parties should be revived to form a government that will manage the PLA and weapons. A strong and determined government is the only way to end the Maoists' anarchy.

Editorial in *Budhabar*, 24 November

बुधवार

It is the responsibility of all the CA members, but the speaker in particular, to maintain the decorum of parliament. Speaker Subas Nembang looked helpless when parliamentary values and norms were desecrated in front of his eyes. He has remained silent for the last five months, as the minority held parliament hostage. Ministers are beaten up, but he does not speak. He is probably the most 'gentle' speaker in the history of parliaments across the world. He approves of Maoist activities just because they are the largest party in parliament. The speaker could have saved Finance Minister Surendra Pandey if he had wanted to. But even after the incident, Nembang is hesitant to take action against those involved.

However, he is incredibly active in other ways. When three political parties agreed to request the president to remove the constitutional difficulties in passing the budget, Nembang expressed his dissatisfaction to the media. He told them, "Curtailling parliamentary rights is tantamount to curtailing the people's rights". He said using short cuts to amend the constitution was wrong practice. Egged on by his statement, the Maoists objected to the president's involvement in amending the constitution. Instead of facilitating the situation, the speaker has been making things worse. This was not done unknowingly; it shows to what extent one can go for cheap popularity.

Opportunism



Interview with former Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana in Nepal, 5 November

नेपाल

How is the peace process moving forward? Nepal's peace process has become like a boat stuck in the middle with those meant to move it forward

engaged in a fight. The process has not been able to move ahead according to its spirit, the understandings reached, a code of conduct, the Interim Constitution, and the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA). Rather, it is oriented towards power, factionalism, and disruption. It has failed to recognise the people's aspiration for lasting peace, democracy, and progress.

Who is responsible for the current political stalemate? Although the fight over the post of the prime minister and power sharing seems to be the most

important, the actual reason is the lack of understanding between the political parties, as well as external factors. The broken understanding of the political parties is responsible for their competition for political gain. Another reason is the lack of a mechanism to implement the CPA according to its true spirit, capable leadership, and a government for the transitional period.

One of the partners of the peace process has been blaming India. Ever since the 12-point agreement, India has played a role to bring the Maoists into peaceful and constitutional politics, and even supported them in forming a government. The Maoists show high respect for India whenever they get support but they blame it on India whenever it does not favour them. The Maoist anti-India campaign has exhibited the most unprincipled opportunism.

Have the increasing security concerns of India added to the problem? Indian security concerns over Nepal are natural. Nepal-India relations are guided by the 1990 treaty. Nepal should accept this fact without hesitation. Nepal should ensure Indian security concerns, if we expect the same from India. Nepal should not lean heavily on China or encourage it at the cost of goodwill between Nepal and India.

Risky crossing

Mithila Anchal Bishesh, 16 November

JANAKPUR: A year has passed since a part of the main bridge that connects several VDCs to Janakpur collapsed but there are no moves to repair it. The bridge is located two kilometres east of Dhanusha District.

Locals of Barmajhiya, Raghunathpur, Sawaila and a dozen other VDCs are forced to risk a river crossing every time they need to go to Janakpur. Many locals have to go to Janakpur for medical reasons. The bridge, which is 15 feet in width, is part of the fast track that connects the eastern VDCs of Dhanusha to Janakpur and is used daily by government vehicles. Still, it has received no attention. Laxman Sah, a jeep driver, says, "I don't have the courage to cross the bridge with passengers in my jeep, so I ask them to get off when we get here." If a foot more of the bridge collapses, the road will be completely blocked.

All plans, no work

Toofan Neupane in *Nagarik*, 23 November

नागरिक

More than a dozen central plans for the development of the Karnali region are yet to be realised even though a decade has passed since they were formulated. The plans have been gathering dust because the centre has not considered them a priority.

Ten years have passed since the plans for micro-hydro projects in Mugu, an airport in Kalikot, and roads in Humla, Mugu and Dolpa were conceived. Humla's iodisation plant is not in full operation either.

Gangadi micro-hydro project in Mugu was supposed to supply 400KW of electricity to five VDCs. But project chief Mahadeb Mandal, who has been living in Kathmandu for the last two years, blames the contractor. "The contractor has taken Rs 173.5 million for the project but no work has been done," he says. It was not possible to get a statement from the contractor, Global Contracts.

The state of road projects in Karnali is not any better. Three out of five districts in Karnali – Mugu, Humla and Dolpa – still do not have road



RABI THAPA

access. Even Kalikot and Jumla only have unsurfaced tracks. Four years have passed since the Karnali Highway track opened but the road has been blocked for 15 months. Krishna Kumar Niraula, local development officer of Humla, says that work has not progressed because resources have been diverted.

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Who needs the Ass?

Ass missing

In a sad turn of events, the Ass has gone missing along the Nepal-Tibet border. The media community has greeted the news with dismay, and there are suspicions that he could have been abducted by wildlife smugglers. Ransom demands, if made, are sure to be rejected.

Media analysts have suggested that the kidnapping was probably triggered by the luckless Ass's relentless cynicism, coupled with his unbearably tedious double entendres. *Nepali Times* is looking for a replacement donkey. Apply with photographs in triplicate to ass@nepalitimes.com



The Ass, last seen close to the Nepal-Tibet border in early November.

New method of laughing animals introduced

RSS

RATNANAGAR, Jan 4

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Bright future for Nepal predicted

Himalayan News Service
Dhankapur, October 17

Biswonnath Barnepati, a fighter of the people's revolution 1990, in an...
Newari Language Literature...
organised by the Nepal (meaning...
Saahitya...
grahma here on Thursday.

Speaking at the function, president of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Narayan Maz Bujichhe, said that poets the nation, said the youth today need to learn from those senior literatures who have contributed to the society. He predicted that the future of Nepal bright.

Many youth recited poetry in Nepari among other veteran poets. Speaking at the programme in... reflect Bahadur Khatu d...

However, positive support of the authority can help preserve our languages, he suggested. He are inclined towards fantasy. Literature can be a handy tool to maintain peace and harmony in order to establish peace in the society, he urged.

He termed literatures as the cultural engineers of the nation who creates the beautiful future of society.

Senior poet and critic Iswar Ballav also said that the present turmoil is not the cause of literat... but bad politicians.

Janakabi (people's poet) Chandra Bahadur Ullah questioned what the condition would be when doctors become admini... Panchayat system again.

President of Nepari Khala, B...

Scribes' body to launch protest

KATHMANDU: The Nepal Working Journalists' Struggle Committee (NWJSC) is to stage protest programmes next Wednesday in front of various publishing houses to have all media persons reinstated who were sacked during the royal regime. KP Dhungana, of NWJSC, said the committee members and those victimised will hold sit-in programmes on June 28 in front various media houses. — 1925

Correction

Last year's budget was worth over Rs 126 billion and not Rs 126 million as was inadvertently mentioned in a front page story on June 25.

Anal Jyoti, Jyoti Academy in final

Himalayan News Service
Lalitpur, November 21

Anal Jyoti Secondary School and Jyoti Academy entered the volleyball final of the second Anal Jyoti Sports Competition on Thursday.

In the day's semi-finals, Anal Jyoti beat Saraswati Secondary School 22-25, 25-20, 27-25, 22-25, 15-10 while Jyoti Academy defeated Saint Paul 25-23, 25-16, 25-19.

In girl's volleyball, Anal Jyoti 'blue' and Nightingale School entered the final. In semi-finals, Anal Jyoti 'blue' defeated Anal Jyoti 'red' 25-17, 25-9, 25-22 while Nightingale beat Saraswati Secondary School 25-9, 25-13, 25-17.

In teacher's volleyball semi-finals matches, Anal Jyoti defeated Nightingale 25-19, 25-14, 25-19 and Jyoti Academy beat Oasis School 25-8, 25-22, 25-17.

In boys' table tennis section, Sujan Maharjan of Universal School beat Niran Deshar of Hilltop School and Rakesh Maharjan of Nawadeep School defeated Hari Sharan of Kalyan School 4-1 sets each to enter the final. In girls' section, Bhima Karki of Kalyan School beat Sumitra Rai of Anal Jyoti 4-3 and Usura Maharjan of Anal Jyoti beat Ishwori B...

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Laughing programme held

KATHMANDU, July 13 (PR) - The Hasane Pratisthan (Laughing Academy) today held a laughing programme marking the 190th birth anniversary of the late poet Bhanu Bhakta Acharya in the capital. The poets recited their humorous and satirical creations on the occasion. Speaker Tara Nath Ranabhat recited a poem urging to nurture brotherhood among all people. Folk singer Komal Oli sang a song whereas the poets Laba Gaule, Ram Kumar Pande, Laxman Lohani, Basant Sapkota and others recited their poems.

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