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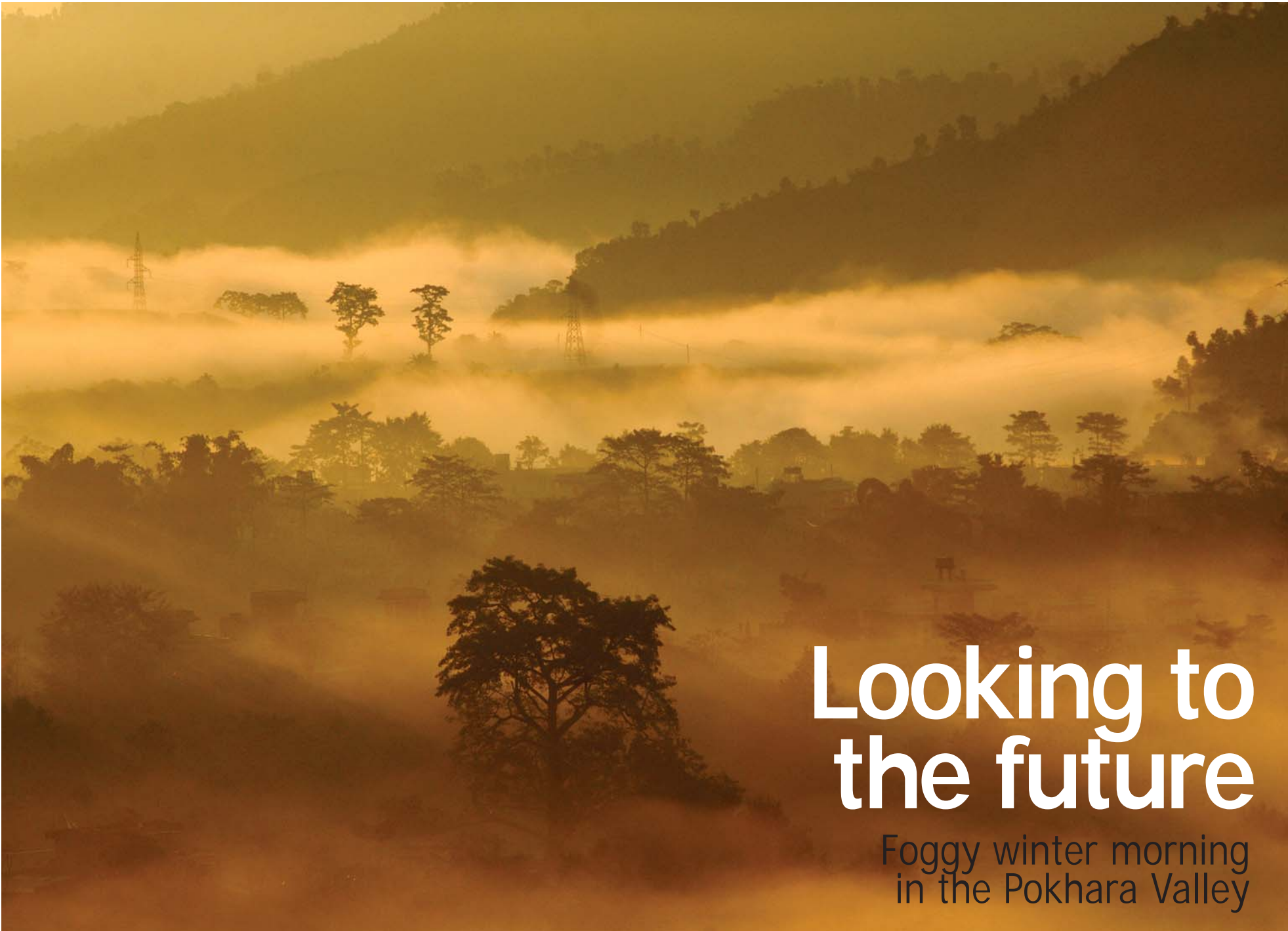
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KIRAN PANDAY

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STOP WASTING TIME



KIRAN PANDAY

By now it must be clear to most Nepalis that UNMIN's mission in Nepal is a done deal. Even the Maoists are only really pretending that with India on the Security Council, there is any possibility of another extension. So why bother?

The fuss they are kicking up has nothing to do with a concern for the larger peace process. By calling for UNMIN to stay, which they well know is impossible in the current configuration, they are hoping that they will at least be granted a residual mini-UNMIN, or at any rate a UN-related committee to take on some of UNMIN's mandate. Whatever form this body takes, the Maoists will hope to use it as cover for their actions, and to buffer their ex-combatants from direct dealings with the Special Committee and its secretariat. At the very least, their dire predictions now will allow for 'told you so' pontifications later, and justifications for situations that the Maoists themselves will play a part in creating in the months to come. To wit, they are creating room to manoeuvre.

The inability or refusal of the Maoists to take the difficult decisions that would eventuate in their 'losing' their military capability reflects a deep insecurity about their ability to retain power in a democratic set-up. This is not surprising, given their ideological make-up, and the past and current reluctance to support radical change of Nepal's mainstream political parties and the elite. But their continued reliance on the PLA is now a liability for both Maoists and non-Maoists.

If the intention was never to wean themselves off the PLA and associated militias, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Co. may have imagined they were pulling one over the Nepali public and the international community when they signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord. But if they still believe that they can capture the state and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat, they've pulled the wool over their own eyes.

On the other hand, if they are sincere about becoming a democratic party that relies only on the ballot, and not the bullet, then they had bloody well get on with it. We're all getting old waiting, never mind those wasted lives in the cantonments.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I got a terrible shock when I checked my email to find HSSAN (Higher Secondary Schools Association Nepal) and Kathmandu Metropolitan Police are planning to ban motorbikes for 10+2 students. I couldn't believe my eyes. This is clearly a violation of our rights.

Will banning bikes for students really put an end to problems like road accidents, traffic jams and lack of discipline among college goers as HSSAN and the traffic police claim? The city traffic police are corrupt, incompetent and cannot do their jobs well. They would do better to try and manage the infamous traffic jams of the city than indulge in silly tactics like banning youths from riding bikes.

I can understand some of the reasons for the colleges and the police wanting to stop students from riding bikes. But those concerns have fairly simple solutions. Colleges can stop students from bunking classes by asking them to turn over their motorbike keys once they are inside the college and handing the keys back to them once the classes are over. Attendance can be taken at the end of every class. Students can be given orientation about safe riding and traffic rules.

There are many students like me who are passionate about bikes and we don't think there is anything wrong with it. Putting excessive control on students will only provoke them more.

Gaurav Pandey

INSPIRING NEPALIS

Congratulations!!! You all helped make our world more beautiful and we are proud of you. ('Persons of the Year', #534).

Ngima Tendup Sherpa

Happy to note that your esteemed magazine choose Dr. Mingmar G. Sherpa in 'Persons of the Year' for his exemplary work in delivering healthcare services to remote, disadvantaged and rural people. His contributions have saved the lives of many mothers and children there. This can be a model for other districts in the country. Congratulations!

Heem S. Shakya

SOME SUCCESS

UML, in spite of myopic Jhalanath Baje, has been successful in retaining power ('Ignored Lessons', Damakant Jayshi, #534). This is their success, not incompetence.

NC is sure to remain steadfast, (their masters in Delhi must have told them to remain so) unless ordered to do otherwise. In doing so they are also keeping the Maoist Bajes at bay, and surely this is their success.

The Maoist Bajes are also being successful, by the public display of dissent to buy time to keep their radical cadres waiting and hoping for the dream that cannot be realised.

In the meantime, all of them and the minor parties are enjoying their allowances, perks and facilities. Good for them.

K. K. Sharma

WHITHER JOURNALISM?

Very good initiative by HeNN to get the ball rolling on Nepalis helping Nepalis ('Philanthropic Journalism', Rabindra Mishra, #534). Let's hope the partnership with Nepali Times will spread the word and more NRNs and Nepalis will start to contribute the cost of a beer a month. I am going to donate my one year's worth right now. Thanks to Rabindraji and HeNN.

Janak Dongol, Bangkok

I went to Help Nepal's web site. I could not find any document that says, 'Monitoring and Evaluation or Independent Evaluation Report'. Perhaps I did not search hard enough. I'd be grateful if someone posted a link to Help Nepal-specific M&E concerns or reports. On the other hand, if there has indeed been no independent evaluation of Help Nepal's work in the last 8 or 10 years, then it's hard to take it seriously as an impact-making charity. One is free to like Help Nepal as a Nepali-run and Nepali-managed charity that appears to have its smile in the right place. But beyond that, one need not take it as an exemplary charity of any sort.

Rabindra Mishra should also stop writing about Help Nepal. He founded it. He should be applauded for it. His championing Help Nepal is nice but is also full of danger for the charity's growth. You can't fault a father for singing his daughter's praises, though after a while, this can be boring and irritating, and embarrassing to the daughter.

Mishra should instead now find unrelated but credible national and international professionals, preferably those who know a thing or two about how rural education works, to make good or bad public comments about Help Nepal's work.

I am not sure what made Nepali Times sign on. I see Nepali Times' partnership as a dangerous precedent. Could it not have simply said 'Help Nepal is our Charity of the Year for 2011' and left it at that?

Mishra seems to have a mistaken view of journalism's public service mission. Contrary to what he says, the best public service that journalism can do is to take a hard-nosed, skeptical and questioning approach to everything that anyone with power says or does so that the public is not deceived by those who purport to work for the public. Taking such an approach consistently is difficult work in itself, and many journalists in Nepal

come short due to a lack of training, exposure, inherent biases, etc.

Soach

I agree that there is some motive behind all this. It could be the subconscious need for fame or just a defense mechanism like altruism. But, hey, who cares? Just look at Bill Gates – he gives hundreds of millions of dollars to developing countries for various programs even while he has named the foundation the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. At least it's much better than the actions of people like Mukesh Ambani, who is wasting billions on his 'edifice' while his Indian brethren are languishing in despicable poverty. Even in Nepal, we see so many rich people donating generously to temple construction and stuff. How about trying to make someone's life better instead of adding more adipose tissue to the bellies of mahantas at Pashupati? So my personal opinion on all of this is Help Nepal is a wonderful project that needs to be supported in every way possible. I recently started sponsoring a child through Save the Children Nepal and I will donate to Help Nepal as well. Good Luck Help Nepal team!

Bibek Koirala

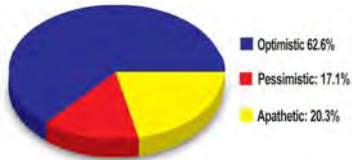
Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 535

Q. How do you feel about 2011?

Total votes: 1,662



Weekly Internet Poll # 536. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Is UNMIN right to be leaving?

Big Madhesi politics



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Watch this space for future splits among the Madhes parties

As yet another Madhesi party bites the dust and is reduced to almost half its size at the parliamentary party level, the question that has dogged the politics of the plains is back. Why is there such fragmentation among Madhesi outfits?

Take the latest case of Mahendra Yadav, who walked away from TMDP. Yadav recognised in 2007 that the future of Madhesi leaders in UML was bleak. Those who wanted a counter to Upendra Yadav were on the lookout for Yadav leaders who could undercut Upendra's caste base, and saw Mahendra as a potential foil. Obviously, Upendra's stature was much bigger, but Mahendra found an honourable space in TMDP. His presence helped convey that the party was not merely a club of upper caste leaders.

Though Mahendra Yadav played a role in start-up operations, his disenchantment began soon after. As Mahant Thakur increasingly relied on Hridayesh Tripathi, Sarvendra Nath Shukla, Brikesh Chandra Lal and others for the day-to-day functioning of TMDP, Yadav began a whisper campaign about how the party had been 'hijacked'. After the fall of the Maoist-led government, Yadav campaigned to get TMDP to join the government – even though the other senior leaders were averse to the idea as they knew it would destroy the party's credibility. India too wanted TMDP to join the anti-Maoist government to lend it more stability, and used Yadav to indirectly influence party equations. Yadav ended up with a lucrative ministerial portfolio.

Despite being accommodated, Yadav was openly critical of the party leadership. He developed his own coterie among non-upper caste MPs, largely Yadavs, intermediate castes, and some Tharus and Muslims.

The immediate trigger for the split appears to be the prospect that the next house session could throw up a new PM. The old UML connections have worked. Jhalanath Khanal is aware that a UML-Maoist government, even if it wins the vote, will find it impossible to function: NC will stay in the opposition, and Madhesi parties could well begin agitational politics. He is ensuring that he has a

broader support base, and is offering incentives to leaders from different Madhesi parties to support his imminent prime ministerial bid. It works for Yadav too, as he gets to head his own party, retains his portfolio as long as the caretaker government lasts, and will probably get something even more profitable in the next alliance with his increased bargaining power.

The details are important for they offer us a glimpse into an underlying pattern at work in Madhesi politics.

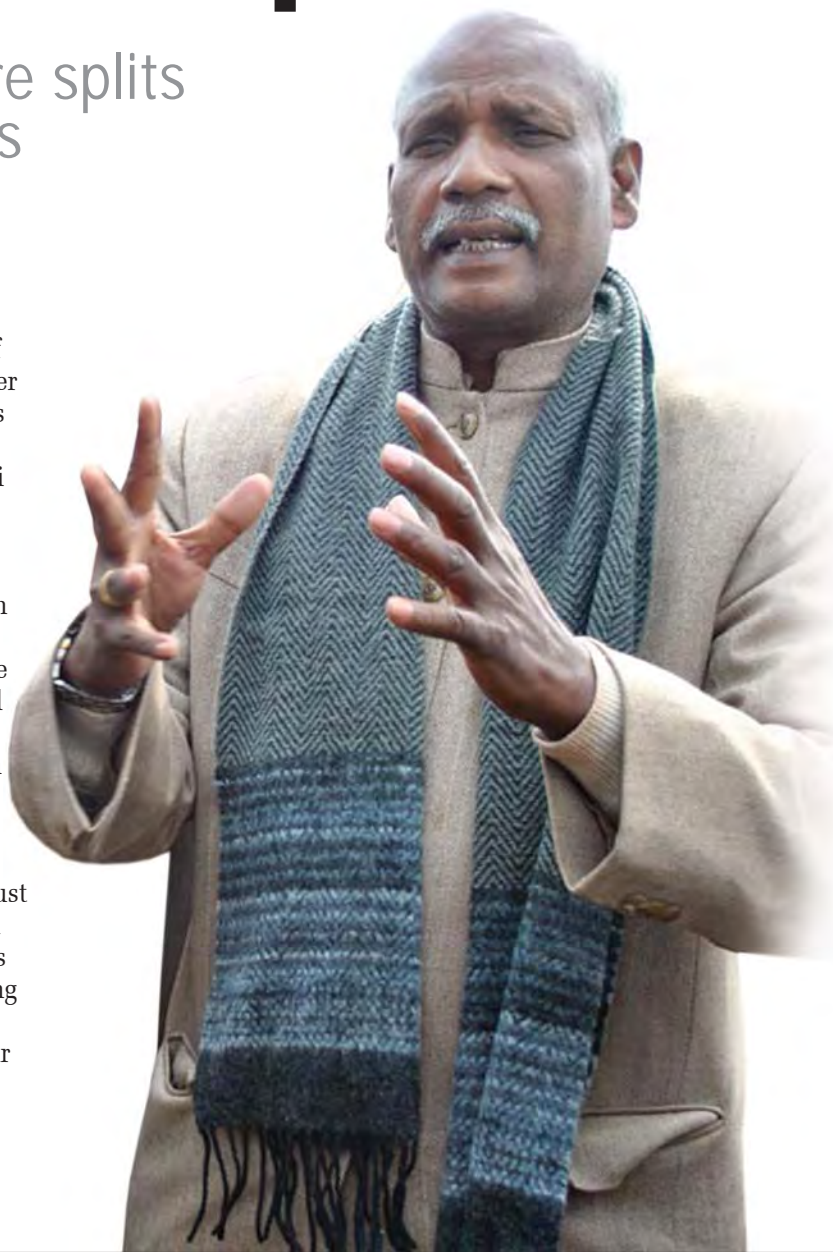
Nepali parties are centred on individuals. But in bigger parties, the organisational banner and symbol are critical; the stakes are higher; and it is far more difficult to trigger a vertical organisational split. In small, nascent outfits, it is largely personal connections, patronage, and resources that enable a politician to climb up. He makes money, and distributes it to loyalists – and that spurs his leadership ambitions even more. It is far more challenging to work for years to build the party when he can use his limited social base to fetch immediate rewards in the fragmented Kathmandu polity.

Look at Rajendra Mahato. He is happy with his small party instead of working for a broader Sadbhavana platform – he has money, commands nine MPs (a number that will soon shrink), and has been a minister in all governments since 2006. Expanding will only increase the pressure on him to share the spoils. Mahendra Yadav will follow a similar trajectory.

Add to this the fact that many of these parties are top-heavy. For example, TMDP was formed after already established leaders came together, not through a natural bottom-up party formation process where activists slowly rise up through multiple levels. Managing egos in such set-ups, where the hierarchy is unclear and often under challenge, is difficult for the supreme leader. In a fascinating article in *Kantipur* this week, Madhesi leader JP Gupta documented all the splits that have taken place in Madhesi parties since the 1950s, and found the stated reason for most divisions is disenchantment of senior and mid-level leaders with the party

president/chairman's working style.

Caste, ethnicity, ideology, the differing political backgrounds of the leaders, conflicts over resource-sharing, India's role and willingness to create and split Madhesi parties according to shifting priorities: all have played a crucial role in the fragmentation of Tarai politics. But at its root, the divisions are driven by the individual leader's calculation that the benefits of forming a splinter outfit – by way of a portfolio, a party position, increased prestige, autonomy, or just more money – outweigh the risks of finding one's own way in a challenging political landscape and being tainted as a regular defector. The churning will continue: expect newer Madhesi parties soon.



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In late November, Director of Buddha Air Birendra Bahadur Basnyet spoke at the weekly program organised by Entrepreneurs for Nepal at Dwarika’s Hotel. Excerpts:

“My family background is in agriculture and in that respect, I am a first generation entrepreneur. Fourteen years ago, when we set up Buddha Air, we didn’t have any equity and hence we started with debt finance.

Looking back, the determination that we had then was key. As a middle-class family, opening up an airline company was a joke for everybody else, even our relatives. We mocked ourselves, saying, “We didn’t have five thousand rupees in our pocket but we were forwarding a project worth three hundred million rupees.”

But there were many factors that made it possible, and all along we have stuck to our core values of diligence and integrity. Other lessons we have learnt are:

Respect your staff. We have around 600 staff and they are our strength. If we do not help and respect them, we cannot be a profitable company. There is a union in Buddha Air



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

but it is not political. The union understands that if staff members make a mistake, it hampers the entire team, so we are free to take action if necessary.

In 2001, the aviation industry wasn’t doing great. There was extremely unhealthy competition in the aviation sector and to make matters worse, we were in dire financial straits. We called a meeting of all our staff and decided to cut salaries by 30 per cent to sustain the company, something everyone was ready to bear. In the end, we didn’t have to resort to

this, but it demonstrated our ability to handle even that kind of situation. On the other hand, we have been able to justify our profits as well and have provided bonuses to all our staff members.

Be transparent. We have transparent accounts and we pay our taxes. The main importance of transparency in accounts is that we can diversify from the legal savings we have made. One of my proudest moments was when the government called me to say we would have to pay

10 per cent on our income to date under the voluntary disclosure of income source (VDIS) scheme. Due to the transparency we had maintained, I was able to tell them that if they wanted 10 per cent, they would have to return 15 per cent of the 25 per cent of our income we had already paid for all those years as taxes.

Focus on core competencies. One of our major strengths is that we focused on one business. The International Finance Corporation and the World Bank told us in 2009 that we

were among the five airline companies in the world that had generated a net profit. We have remained focused on our core competency for 14 years, even though there have been opportunities to diversity.

Never compromise on quality or safety. Every year we spend hundreds of millions of rupees to train our staff. Our pilots go to America, Bangkok, etc. for simulations and our engineers go for training every year. We have a huge amount of spare parts and we have not compromised a bit in training our staff. 🇳🇵

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Consulting Services: 'Proposal Reviewers' & 'Research Mentors'

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(First publication date: 5 January 2011)

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The objectives of the consultancy services for Proposal Reviewers are to review the research proposals received from the prospective Matthias Moyersoen Research Apprentices (MMRAs) and Harka Gurung Research Fellows (HGRFs).

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Interested applicants may submit their EOI, clearly mentioning the service/s they wish to provide (1 or 2 or both) along with current detailed CV. The Terms of Reference (TOR) and further information can be obtained from www.socialinclusion.org.np or requested by email at info@socialinclusion.org.np not later than 15 January 2011.

Expression of Interest (EOI) must be clearly marked as "Expression of Interest (EOI) for Consulting Services" in subject line and emailed to info@socialinclusion.org.np not later than 1700 hours, 16 January 2011. The EOI may only be submitted electronically at the email address mentioned below.

Female candidates and candidates from marginalised castes and ethnic & minority groups from remote regions are encouraged to apply and will be given special consideration.



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Car of the year

Ford Figo has been selected as the Indian Car of the Year. The model was recently launched in Nepal and has sold over 200 units.

More hours

Civil Bank has extended its banking transaction hours and will now operate from 8am to 6pm. The bank is open six days a week from Sunday to Friday.

Power up

Gautam Electric and Electric Centre, sole distributor of Firman generators, has launched a new range of CE, ETL Safety, EMC, EURO-II, EPA, and CARB certified petrol and diesel generators. Firman generators come with a 12-month warranty.

Profitable meet

The 18th AGM of Himalayan Bank concluded with the decision to distribute 25 per cent bonus shares and 11.85 per cent cash dividends to its shareholders. The bank earned a net profit of Rs 508 million in the fiscal year 2009-10.

Three cheers

Himalayan Brewery and Trishakti Distilleries are opening under new management. In addition to re-launching its old products, including Iceberg Beer, the companies will introduce new brands of liquor.

Branching out

Janata Bank has opened its sixth branch in Chautara, Sindhupalchok. An ATM has also been installed at the branch. Janata Bank has two branches in Kathmandu and one each in Pokhara, Dhunche and Birganj.

Questions for Buddha's Basnyet

What does corporate social responsibility (CSR) mean for Buddha Air?

For me, CSR is my responsibility to my staff. We have an understanding between the union and the management regarding salaries being reviewed every two years. Last year, salaries were increased by 40 per cent and we have provided facilities like health care, a provident fund, job security, etc. Before being of service to society, first we should fulfil the expectations of our staff. Let's see if we can get to a position where we can really invest in CSR in Nepal.

What scope do you see for Nepali management graduates at Buddha Air?

Buddha Air is 100 per cent managed and staffed by Nepalis. We have very little staff turnover. One of our policies is to make our staff managers and decision makers according to their growth.

We do not place new staff in higher positions and we have never created a new managerial band. We have in-house training for those who want to move up to the managerial band. So definitely there is a lot of scope for those students in Buddha Air.

Are there any opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to invest in the growing aviation sector?

There are many technologies required in our industry like ticketing, accounting, etc. There is no e-commerce in our industry and we have not been able to sell tickets through credit cards. So if anyone can develop the technology, there is always an opportunity.



KIRAN PANDAY

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Post-UNMIN tasks

MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

The most immediate challenge for the government and political parties is to cool temperatures over the monitoring of the Nepal Army and Maoist ex-combatants and the management of specific numbers of weapons in the wake of UNMIN's departure on 15 January.

Instead, there's the usual politicking and posturing.

The Maoists had previously agreed, though with some reluctance, that UNMIN's extension till 15 January would be the last one. But they have already written to the UN Security Council for yet another extension, knowing full well that this is not possible. Their reasoning is that vital elements of the peace process are still incomplete, especially the thorny issue of the Maoist ex-combatants' integration and rehabilitation.

This may be a valid concern but equally important is the question of who is to be blamed for the delay by not making sincere



KIRAN PANDAY

The parties should be focusing on enabling the existing local mechanisms post-UNMIN

efforts to resolve the situation during the four months of UNMIN's extended tenure. Despite knowing that UNMIN cannot stay here for eternity, the Maoists have violated one agreement after another, delaying almost every aspect of the peace process.

Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala says his party might agree on another extension for UNMIN, provided certain conditions are fulfilled, one of which is taking the Nepal Army out of the UN mission's monitoring purview. This is as silly a condition as one

can come across. Even if the mission were to get another extension, one cannot change the terms and conditions midway through the peace process. NC, which has so far displayed a lot more resolve and character than any other non-Maoist party when it comes to making the Maoists honour agreements related to peace and the constitution, is clearly taking a wrong stance here.

Both sides are engaging in a useless debate. They should be focusing their energy on how to enable existing local mechanisms to manage the

Maoist ex-combatants and their stored weapons, along with an equal number of weapons from the Nepal Army. UNMIN is on its way out, so there is no point arguing about the conditions under which it might stay.

The situation post-UNMIN assumes an urgency rarely witnessed since the political parties and ex-rebels came together in 2005. It demands dexterity, sensitivity and a little out-of-the-box-thinking. No doubt a tall order for the drivers of the peace process in the country, but they must salvage the situation

despite naysayers who want to discard the peace process altogether. Not doing so will cost them both heavily, never mind the Nepali people.

The Maoists need to come good on their earlier pledge to transfer the control of ex-combatants to the Special Committee, which also includes members of their party. They have also consented to the appointment of retired Lt. Gen. Balananda Sharma as coordinator of the Special Committee Secretariat, which is entrusted with supervision, integration and rehabilitation of the combatants. In other words, be it UNMIN's scheduled exit, transfer of control of the Maoist ex-combatants, and their monitoring by the Special Committee, these are all outcomes of agreements with the Maoists. Nothing has changed to demand a change in the set-up.

On its part, the government, effectively an anti-Maoist coalition now, must not provoke their former partners by demanding immediate control of the stored weapons and details of the combatants living in UN-monitored cantonments.

A competent handling of this situation will not only avert a looming but very much avoidable crisis, but will also go a long way in restoring the trust among the parties.

damakant@gmail.com

THIS WEEK

Promotion for some

The Home Ministry on Tuesday promoted 25 Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) to the rank of Superintendents of Police (SPs). The decision came at a time when the ministry has been widely criticised for last week's elevation of five SPs to the rank of Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs). The media has reported that those who were promoted are close to Home Minister Bhim Rawal, IGP Ramesh Chand Thakuri, and the leaders of political parties. Some of the promoted DSPs themselves have expressed dissatisfaction at the way the ministry promoted high-ranking police officers without taking into consideration their performance.

Last Friday, the ministry excluded popular SP Ramesh Kharel from its list of those promoted. Home Minister Bhim Bahadur Rawal defended his decision, issuing a statement on Wednesday saying the government decision to promote and transfer Nepal Police personnel was based on qualifications, seniority and performance.

Party line passed

The three-day Central Committee meeting of the Maoists concluded on Wednesday by endorsing the integrated political paper presented by Party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The standing committee has been assigned to decide



on further work strategy and work allocation. The meeting decided to take the initiative for the formation of a government under its own leadership and intensify political discussions for UNMIN's term extension until the completion of the peace process. However, the meeting did not decide which party leader will assume the leadership of the government. Vice-Chairman Baburam Bhattarai wrote notes of dissent, indicating his disagreement with the spirit of the proposals presented, and his belief that the party's primary aim should be a pro-people constitution and the conclusion of the peace process. The meeting also decided on an internal political orientation 17 January through 31 January, and indicated that it would begin a nationwide movement from March to ensure peace, the constitution, and protect national sovereignty.

Constitution ahoy!

All the reports of the thematic committees settled by the High Level Taskforce have been endorsed by the parties of the Constituent Assembly. NC leader Ramesh Lekhak, who was present at the meeting, said the parties differed slightly on the judiciary system. Efforts to finalise the remaining 83 issues have begun, starting with discussions on the name of the new constitution. Further discussions will focus on the report prepared by the CA Committee on Determining Forms of Governance.

Signing off

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal sent a letter on behalf of the government to UNMIN Chief Karin Landgren on Friday, covering the decisions taken and progress made on monitoring of the Maoist combatants in the cantonments and the democratisation of the Nepali Army in response to UNMIN's queries. The PM has clarified that the Army Integration Special Committee will monitor the combatants and the cantonments following the exit of UNMIN. A separate mechanism will be developed for a joint monitoring and coordination committee. All disputes will be resolved through mutual discussion.

उज्यालो 90 नेटवर्कमा

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Not so long ago, the tourism industry was on the verge of collapse due to the poor security situation and negative publicity brought on by the decade-long conflict. Nepal Tourism Year-2011 (NTY-2011) is now underway, and the country is hoping to welcome a million tourists. The government and tourism entrepreneurs are eyeing NTY-2011 as an opportunity to rebuild Nepal’s tarnished image, and promote it as a safe and exciting destination for tourists once again. But the continuing political disarray and uncertainty haunting the country is threatening to stymie these ambitions.

Thanks to the delay in presentation of the budget, NTY-2011 was not promoted sufficiently at an international level. Worse, political parties and their sister organisations always seem ready to stage protests, strikes or bandas. Not much has been done to develop physical infrastructure, manage the international airport or improve the human resources available to tourism either. Nepal Airlines Corporation still has a shortage of aircraft, and the airports are mismanaged and manned by badly trained staff. Nepal Tourism Board’s websites have not been updated for a year; some carry news from five years ago.

Nearly 585,000 tourists visited Nepal up to November 2010, so boosting this figure to one million should not be such a difficult task in principle. The real challenge, entrepreneurs say, is to change the perceptions of visitors to Nepal by making it safe for them.

Karna Shakya, a tourism entrepreneur and the coordinator of Visit Nepal Year-1998, warns that if the tourism year fails or backfires, it will take another 20 years for the sector to recover. “NTY-2011 should be promoted on a war footing,” he advises. “The international media should be invited to shoot in locations across Nepal. The sorry state of the international airport should be improved. Volunteers should be mobilised to take care of the tourists and most importantly, flights should be on time.”

Kishore Thapa, Secretary at the Civil Aviation Ministry, says that it is encouraging that tourist arrivals have been rising even when all other economic indicators are declining. But he adds that it is more important to promote a positive and hospitable image rather than focus on bringing in a million tourists.

It’s not as if nothing has been done to prepare for NTY-2011. Several festivals are being organised across the country by Nepal Tourism Board and the working committee of NTY-2011. Five-star hotels in Kathmandu alone have invested Rs 500 million in increasing their capacity over the last year. Luxury hotels have opened up in Kanchanpur and Biratnagar. Government officials, businessmen, Non Resident Nepalīs as well as goodwill ambassadors (*see box*) are also doing their part to promote NTY-2011. The government has



Bring ‘em on!

Piecemeal efforts have been made to promote Nepal Tourism Year-2011, but success depends largely on the cooperation of the political parties

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA and PRABHAT BHATTARAI



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

invested Rs 1 billion to upgrade airports in the country. The airports in Talcha, Simikot and Tumlingtar will be blacktopped in four months and a terminal has already been constructed in Dhangadhi. The runway in Pokhara is being extended by three kilometres and the runway at the international airport is being upgraded as well.

There were questions regarding who should carry out the infrastructure developments earmarked for the campaign. NTY-2011 Coordinator Yogendra Man Shakya emphasises that the committee itself will not build roads or improve airports. All the 26 ministries, the private sector and the public should contribute according to their capacity and responsibility, he says, as the campaign is for the benefit of all.

Unfortunately, the threat of political disruption is like a sword dangling over the campaign. Nineteen political parties expressed solidarity towards NTY-2011 by publicly committing to keep the year free of bandas, strikes and protest programs. But entrepreneurs are worried that the Maoists, who announced plans for NTY-2011 while in government themselves, will be the first to go on strike once UNMIN leaves on 15 January.

Former tourism minister and Maoist MP Hisila Yami says it is difficult to say that there will not be any strikes. “There was an elected government in place when we declared the tourism year. Anything can happen now that there is no consensus.” Tourism year may be important, but not as much as political agreement, peace and the constitution, Yami says.

Despite everything, Nepal can still make NTY-2011 a success if the government and the private sector are willing to make the effort. Shakya says, “If only the political parties keep their promises to the people, this campaign will be successful. Let us hope that the Maoists don’t throttle their own baby,” Shakya says.

Goodwill ambassadors

Although quality advertisements could not be produced due to the lack of a budget, Nepal has come up with some interesting promotional ideas. Khagendra Thapa Magar, the world’s shortest man, has been declared a goodwill ambassador for the campaign. Other ambassadors include Miss Nepal 2010 Sadicchya Nepal, Mount Everest summiteers, Indian-Nepali singer Prashant Tamang, and the band Sukarma. Singer Ani Choying Dolma is also expected to sign on. But how many tourists will be drawn in by promotional slogans like “The world’s shortest man invites you to the country of the world’s tallest mountain” remains to be seen.



LUCIA DE VRIES

Just a few minutes into Narbahadur’s film the audience gasps. After four days of walking the 18-year-old former child soldier arrives home in a remote part of Humla district. He has warned the viewers: ‘There is nothing in my village.’ But they are

unprepared for the images of grinding poverty in the young filmmaker’s home: malnourished sisters swatting flies, an emaciated mother, and his grey-haired father, a blacksmith who is going blind. Narbahadur’s film, *My Sun Rise*, is part of the *Through Our Eyes* trilogy produced by three teenagers who joined the Maoists when they were

Through our eyes

Former child soldiers have a lot more to say than their erstwhile leaders do

only twelve. Like Narbahadur (back corner, pic), Sukmaya (centre) comes from a Dalit background, and as a child was painfully aware of the fact that she was ‘at the bottom and always the last’. She narrates her story by Phewa Lake in Pokhara. The chronology is not entirely clear; Sukmaya’s father died when she was young, but did her mother become mentally ill because of that or after witnessing the Maoist attack on Beni in 2004? It doesn’t really matter. What is clear is that Sukmaya felt she was not given a choice. The Maoists stayed at her house, and the army knew it. “The army would not spare me. I had to go with the Maoists,” she says. Today Sukmaya still

appears traumatised. She asks the audience some hard questions. “Why for us nothing has changed? They needed us then, but now we are not needed, are we? Why are we not part of the decision making? The democratic republic hasn’t come, has it?” Then she breaks down. The three films stand as witness to the fate of the estimated 6,000-9,000 children who left their homes and schools to become Maoist cadres. The majority did not end up in cantonments; they are what filmmaker Tassia Kobylinska calls ‘the ones who were forgotten, the ones without an identity’. Working with Kobylinska (second from left, pic) and Roving Eye Film in

collaboration with CWIN, Jay (left, pic), Narbahadur and Sukmaya each directed and produced a short film to tell people about their lives and the circumstances that led to their becoming child soldiers. “It has been a life-changing experience for the trainees. For the first time ever they were given a platform where they were listened to, uninterrupted,” says Kobylinska, who believes the films act to remove the stigma they face and can be used as a vehicle for peace building. The young filmmakers are clear about their mission. Sukmaya wants no child to go through what she went through. Narbahadur wants the viewers to realise that caste discrimination must end. And Jay says the films make it clear why people go to war. “If we bring development to the neglected and give employment to youth then there will be no more war.” It is that youthful clarity which makes these testimonies so powerful. www.rovingeyefilm.co.uk

nepalitimes.com

Through his own eyes #492

closeup

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EVENTS



People in Between, Photo Exhibition by Gemunu Amarsinghe. *Till 11 January, 11am to 2pm, Tuesdays closed, Peace Museum, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka*

Assorted motifs, an exhibition of paintings by Chirag Bangdel and other artists. *Till January 15, Chai Chai Café, Jhamsikhel*



Screening of Eat Pray Love, starring Julia Roberts. *7 December, 5.30pm, Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, Lazimpat,*

Close-up 14th Hits FM Music Award 2067, an event to honour the best in the Nepali music industry. *7 January, starts 2.30pm, Army Officers Club, Sundhara*

The Wedding and Gift Expo, wedding dresses, jewellery, gifts and mehendi sessions. *Till 9 January, 10am to 6pm, Exhibition Centre, United World Trade Centre, Tripureswor*



Let's talk about ART baby! a collaborative solo from the series of Artivities by artist Sujan Chitrakar. *Till 27 January, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048*

ICT Info-Trade 2011, more than 80 brands of IT related products, new technologies, and attractive discounts. *Till 9 January, 10am to 5pm, Exhibition Hall, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road*

Winter Art Collection, works by Japanese and Nepali artists. *Till 24 January, 11am to 5pm, Sunday to Friday, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120, www.kathmanduarts.org*

AmarJyoti Foundation, provides support through scholarships in art and sports, elderly daycare and grief recovery. *9851023958*



Staging of Suina Karnalika, a new play presented by Aarohan-Gurukul in association with Karnali Natya Samaj of Mugu. *Till 9 January, Rimal Theatre, Gurukul, Old Baneshwor, 4466956*

MUSIC



Absolute Live Music, by Rashmi & Kitcha Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. *7.30pm onwards, Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchok, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np*

Baja Gaja playing live at Moksh. Every Tuesday, *7.30pm onwards, Moksh, Pulchok, 5526212*

Live Music by Sign band at The Corner Bar. Every day except Tuesdays and Wednesdays, *7.30pm onwards, The Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818*



DINING

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of Boudha stupa and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night. *Boudha, 2130681*

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*



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

Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area invokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. *Thamel, 4701170*

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*

Kakori at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kebabs, curries and more, enjoy Indian food at its best. *Everyday 7pm to 10.45 pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, call 4273999 for reservations*



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

Café de Newa, try Newari delicacies like deep-fried buffalo tongue, brain and intestines. You will be blown away. *Next to Kathmandu Guest House, open everyday*



Irish Pub, not only does it feel like one, but it's Irish all the way down to the original recipes from the owner's wife. *Ananda Bhawan, Lazimpat, 4416027*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. A sanctuary for meat. *Thamel, near Chhetrapati chok, 4260471*

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*

Comfort Zone, a decent range of cocktails and barbequed meats should keep you glued to the massive screen at one end. *Comfort Zone (rooftop of Bank of Kathmandu), Thamel*

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 1,200 per person, 4425341*

Aspirin therapy needs guidelines

DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Aspirin continues to impress. A study published in *The Lancet* last year suggested that aspirin users have a 21 per cent less chance of dying from cancer. The meta-analysis, which was a pooled study of more than 25,000 people who either took aspirin or a placebo (sugar pill), indicated that there were greater benefits with longer aspirin therapy. The study showed that the aspirin group had less chance of dying from cancer compared to the placebo cohort. Pancreatic, brain, lung, stomach and prostate cancer were some of the cancers that were prevented. The study's large sample size lends weight to the findings from Peter Rothwell and his colleagues at Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital in the UK, but does this mean that we need to start popping 75mg of aspirin a day to avoid cancer? Aspirin has long been regarded as a drug that prevents and helps treat strokes and heart attacks. In



fact, the above findings about aspirin therapy were a by-product of an earlier study. The original study was primarily designed to further define the role of aspirin in patients who suffered from strokes and heart attacks. Aspirin's capacity to protect patients from cancer was a serendipitous finding, common in biomedical research. Penicillin was also discovered serendipitously. (A note about the Sanskrit-derived word 'serendipity': Serendip was an old name for Sri Lanka. In an 18th century play by Horace Walpole entitled *The Three Princes of Serendip*, the travelling princes keep on making remarkable discoveries that they are not really looking for.) At one point some doctors got so carried away by aspirin's perceived benefits they were prescribing the drug for older people who had not had a heart attack and were not at major risk either. But two years ago, definitive research revealed that the risks of aspirin, including bleeding ulcers in the stomach, outweighed the protection from heart attacks for this healthy cohort of people. There has been a re-evaluation on the issue of 'primary' prevention of heart attacks with aspirin. Although popping inexpensive aspirin appears to be a highly cost-effective way to prevent cancer, especially in a resource-poor country like Nepal, it may be prudent to wait for proper international guidelines that take the recent *Lancet* publication into consideration.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Prime Minister Nepal presents a car on behalf of the government to NC leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai on his 86th birthday at the latter's residence in Bandegaun.



TALK TIME: Former Military Secretary to the palace, Bibek Kumar Shah, at a program to discuss his book *Maile Dekheko Darbar* on Wednesday at the Annapurna Hotel.

GREEN SCENE

Green thumbs together



MICHAEL COX

Some of Kathmandu's youngest green thumbs are getting a healthy dose of eco-friendly living. A Balkot children's home has ditched the 'orphan tag', and replaced it with a 'green tag' in an effort to give Nepali children a more sustainable future. 'Big brother' and chairperson of the Maya Children's Organisation, Bikash KC, says his ambition was to develop a home and a schooling system to support the children from the 'grassroots'. KC (*centre, pic*) has transformed a handful of Balkot's orphan children into some of Kathmandu's future green thumbs, by introducing them to a more sustainable lifestyle. "We're trying to make the kids think greener," he says. "We also want to make the

children's homes more homely rather than have them live in institutions." One of the three children's homes that KC is involved with is called Hamroghar Children's Home, meaning 'our home'. "We want do away with the 'orphan' tag and set up a home with small gardens, chickens and a compost pit so the kids can learn how to become self-reliant," says KC, who rescued over 20 children from an abusive orphanage operating until recently near Balkot. "It was like a business for him." KC believes that if he hadn't acted most of the children would have died of malnutrition, conditions were so bad. Maya Children's Organisation was set up, first and foremost, to provide a safe living environment for children with nowhere to go. KC concedes that many of the children may not go to university as they started school late. Still, it doesn't stop KC and his charges from dreaming. "We're on a safe route on a plane, but now we're looking for a safe landing," he says. Green thumb and orphan Sagar Magar, 15, lives in an Australian-funded orphanage called Meg's home in Balkot. He's been trying to set up a green club at school as a result of KC's mentoring. "We are learning how to manage crops and the green club will help in recycling," he says. "The degradable products will go into a compost pit; plastic goods will be recycled."

Michael Cox



KIRAN PANDAY

TOUCH GENERATION: A visitor at the ICT Info-Trade 2011 in Bhrikuti Mandap samples ZTE's 7-inch Android tablet on Wednesday. The expo features more than 80 brands and will conclude on Sunday.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The major feature of this week's weather is the emergence of a thick layer of winter fog that has extended along the 2500-km long foothills of the Himalaya and the floodplains of the Ganga river system. The first round of winter rains last week generated adequate moisture that turned into foggy clouds and led to a drop in daily temperatures of about 5 degrees. Fresh satellite pictures from Thursday afternoon indicate three things: the foggy layer will remain for the next couple of days till a major westerly front brushes it away, the days ahead are likely to be windy due to the strong northerly winds, and western Nepal is likely to see another round of fresh snowfall over the weekend. Expect colder mornings, sunny intervals, and a breezy weekend.

FRI	SAT	SUN
19-2	17-4	16-5



KUNAL TEJ BIR LAMA

Old year reckonings



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Beware the furious present and the anxious future, the past awaits

This may be the umpteenth plus one time you have read something about new year resolutions, just this year. But we all know how difficult it is to be resolved enough to do what we gotta do. Giving up vices, inculcating virtues, getting things done for number one. So much so that we are equally habituated to making fun of what's not done, even before the year gets underway.

But what say the ghosts of years past? How often do we actually stop to consider, at the turning of the year, not just which of the start-of-year resolutions we succeeded or failed at, but just what we have accomplished for ourselves? How has work, love, and life been? We're not simply looking at trajectories to the top and bottom lines, a perverse log applied to your own frame. Was it a good year? All said and done, do you feel better?

The novelist EM Forster was known to keep written account of what he had achieved at the end of the

year past. It may be ironic that his diaries reveal how his homosexuality prevented him from writing (about middle-class themes) from 1924 to his death in 1970. But the principle stands. Who accounts for you?

Oftentimes it seems looking back is a luxury only the very old have, because (we think) they have so little to look forward to in comparison, and in any case they have not very much to be doing. If you think about it, reminiscing of what was and what might have been is indeed a luxury. But if one life is all you get (or at any rate all you remember), why not review it from time to time? It's something we can do collectively, too, and not just to lament where we have stumbled.

If this all sounds a bit

vague, here's how I do it. Over the years, I've identified the most important things to my life, in no particular order: Work, Art, Love, and (latterly), Health and Moolah. At the end of a year, or a particular phase of life, I'm wont to reflect on where I stand vis-à-vis these markers. Do I fall asleep at work on a regular basis? Does my writing send certain Nepali writers to sleep? Are my Facebook friends more than profiles? Can I gear my cycle up the *Hattiban ko ukalo* and still look cool doing it? Have I stopped allowing Amrika-return friends to pay the bills for a night out?

Keeping these markers in some sort of a balance, or at least being aware of where I'm at with what's most important to me, makes me feel I'm in some kind of

control, even when things don't quite pan out the way I want them to. They often don't, of course, but knowing what's off kilter helps.

Of course, everyone has their own design for life, to be gauged by indicators perhaps more concrete. And the busy, bustling new breed of Nepalis, living under a neon-lighted, billboarded vision of Naya Nepal (new road really is that now, see above), is in danger of even forgetting to live in the present, let alone the past. Beware the furious present. The Welsh poet William Henry Davies put it best when he penned this ode to the joys of simple contemplation:

A poor life this if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare.

When was the last time you looked for 'streams full of stars, like skies at night'? 🇳🇵

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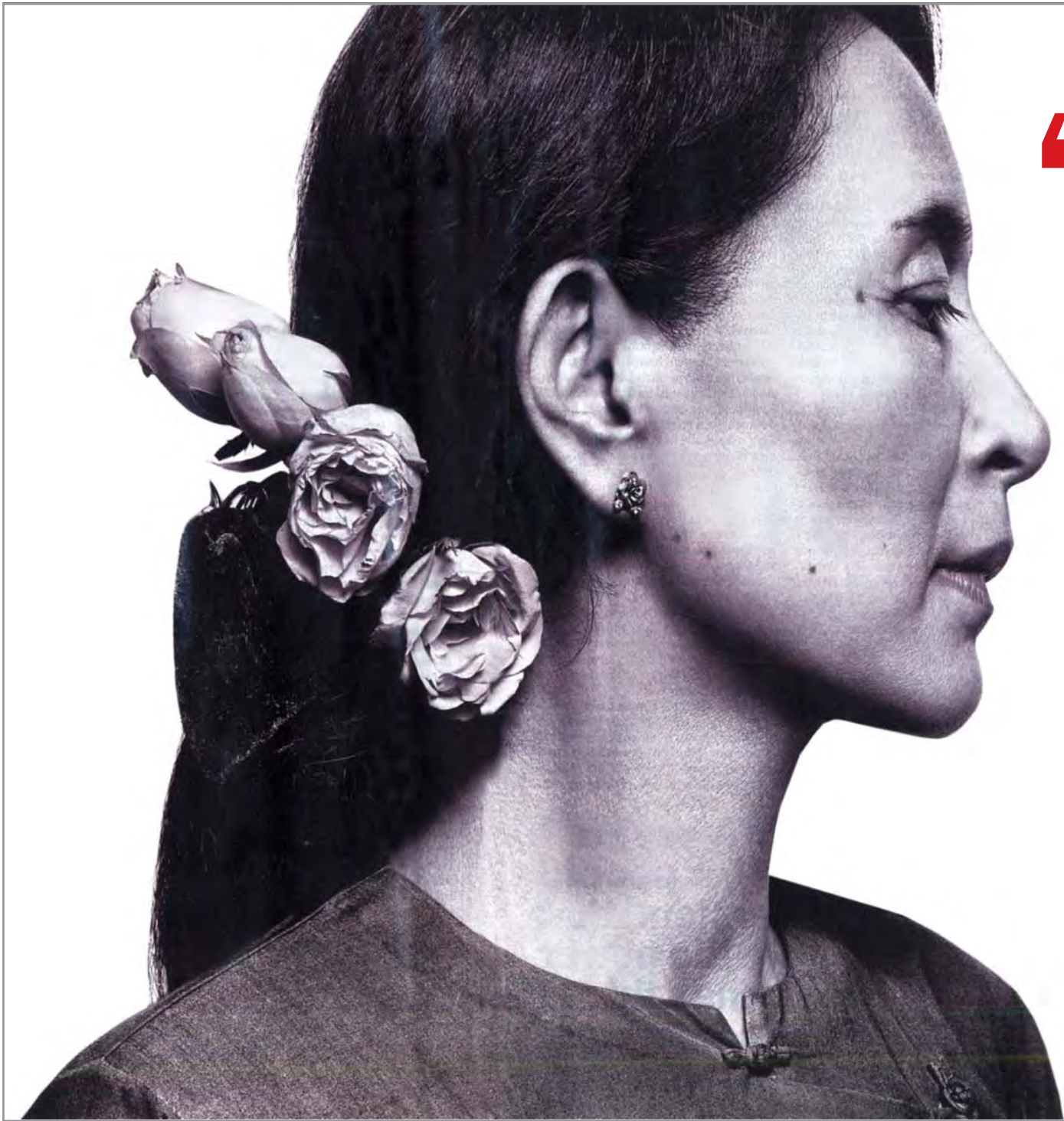
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TIME MAGAZINE

“I don’t really know when we’ll get democracy”

Six weeks after her release from house arrest, Burmese pro-democracy leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi talks about the prospects and difficulties of bringing about political change in Burma with Mon Mon Myat of the Mekong series/IPS Asia-Pacific.

Mon Mon Myat: Is the major force for democratic change inside the country, or is it international pressure?

Aung San Suu Kyi: I think force from inside is more important, but it doesn’t mean international actions are not important. I think there are more responsibilities for the inside force.

What is ASEAN’s role in pushing Burma for change?

The role of ASEAN might be important. In South Africa, all African neighbours supported the African people. That is why their movement developed quickly and effectively. In the Burma situation, it is not the same. We have faced difficulties in making progress with the

SURYA THAPA

The current political disarray is resulting in calamitous deforestation across the country, and threatens to roll back Nepal’s internationally acclaimed community forestry success story.

Smugglers in cahoots with government officials, police, and members of forestry user groups are responsible for heavy denudation in 25 hotspots in 16 districts. Trees are being cleared by illegal loggers or squatters settled in government forests by political parties.

More than 30,000 hectares have been decimated in the past year alone, and the country has lost three per cent of its forest cover in the unstable political climate since the end of the conflict, mostly in the Tarai. Environmentalists say the country needs at least 40 per cent forest cover to maintain ecological balance, but this has now fallen to about 25 per cent.

“The key to protecting what is left of the forests in this country is to have integrity in the leadership

of the administration,” says former secretary of the Ministry of Forestry, Uday Sharma. One indication of the anarchy in the forestry sector is that even though it has been the practice to ban all logging for four monsoon months, this year the cabinet reduced that period by half so more trees could be cut. Government-sponsored logging has got worse since the RPP’s Deepak Bohara became Minister for Forests, following which he handpicked his own secretary, director general and District Forest Officers (DFOs).

Former secretary at the Ministry of Forests, Keshab Kandel, says the DFOs’ role is critical in whether a forest is saved or destroyed. “The DFOs, police, civil servants, contractors, and some members of community forests are involved in the accelerated deforestation we see today,” says Kandel, “and the DFOs and contractors in particular have an inside track right up to the ministry and minister in Kathmandu.”

Most of Nepal’s Tarai

forests have been victims of political patronage since the Rana days. During the Panchayat years, the country’s forest cover dropped from 45 per cent in 1965 to 29 per cent in 1980, mainly due to government sponsored transmigration from the hills to the plains. The Department of Forest’s own survey shows that up to 100,000 hectares of forest along the East-West Highway have been encroached since 1990. The deforestation got worse during the war years and in the fluid transitional period since the conflict ended in 2006. Dadeldhura and Salyan, for instance, lost huge tracts of native forests during the war.

The Maoists are responsible for settling thousands of families in government forests in Dhanusha, Sindhuli, Mahottari, Udayapur, Kapilbastu, Dang, and Kailali. In Dang, the Maoists gave each family four katthas of land.

Meanwhile, in Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, and Sarlahi, smugglers have carted off hundreds of tractor-loads of valuable hardwood timber



Nepal’s political disarray is destroying what remains of our forests

Neither



The Lady speaks

movement. I think the support of regional governments and their pragmatic assistance are vital for us.

Many have said that political and economic ties with neighbouring countries cannot be excluded. Likewise, economic sanctions imposed by western countries created stronger economic ties between Burma and its neighbours. How can China or India help Burma?

They can do it if they really want to help us, but we can't force them to do it. We need to make it happen. At the same time, we need to be friends with the whole world as we are related. What I think is that our giant neighbours like India and China respect stability in our country. They think that only a military government can sustain stability. We have to try to change their view. We need to make them understand that a democratic government elected by the people can become the government, which can also guarantee the country's stability.

What is your opinion on development projects such as hydropower projects, gas pipeline projects or Asian highway trade route projects?

We don't have any objection if those projects can develop the country or the region, but the government that rules this country has the responsibility to make it advantageous for the country. Some say that the Burmese people have not benefitted from foreign investment. To avoid this, the main responsibility remains

with the government. If there is transparency, people will know what the advantages and disadvantages are, and they can make a decision. In some cases, we didn't know how things happened, how agreements were made between countries, what major things were included in the agreements. I think people should be informed about those things. It is not only because of our belief in democracy; there would also be fewer mistakes if people knew things. International aid agencies have been providing humanitarian aid to Burma. There are also some civic groups that believe that if more people could be involved in community development work, this could initiate good governance without a change in government.

Is there any prospect that good governance can be practiced without a change in the government?

Let me compare this with the media situation. There is not much media freedom in Burma now but media space is getting wider to a certain extent as there are more journals and magazines. It is similar with the civic groups. As there are more civic groups now, some progress can be made to a certain extent in practicing transparency and accountability among those groups. Those groups have to try to make it happen. If journals and magazines only work or write following the guidelines (set by the censor board), there will be no progress but if they are trying to do better and develop media freedom, there will be more progress gradually. If they do nothing, then there will be no progress.

What would be your message to the international community, including the UN and aid agencies, and those who are ready to welcome the so-called new government?

Actually, it is no wonder that the international community and governments acknowledge the new government rather than welcome. They have acknowledged the military government as the de facto government. So there is no difference.

It is true that people in the country don't think it is a change of government but in the outside world, they are preparing to repatriate Burmese refugees from the Thai-Burma border. How long do refugees and exiled political groups need to wait to return home?

I can't say, as I'm not an astrologer. I want to do it as soon as possible. I don't feel comfortable that our people are living in insecurity on foreign soil. It is a desire for those people to return home as soon as possible but the desire should not end as a wish. As I always say, do not just hope but work for it.

What do you want to say to those who doubt your non-violent revolution?

I think there are misunderstandings about the non-violent way. Some might think that non-violence means not doing anything and accepting whatever suppression (comes). It doesn't mean that. Non-violence is a basic principle. Based on that principle,

there are different ways. As I have often been asked this question, I have often answered using Gandhi ji's saying: "Non-violence requires more courage, more determination and it is harder than using a violent way." Although it is harder, it can go further.

If we use the violent way, we might reach our goal quickly but there will be many wounds among the people and for the country. It will take a long time to cure those wounds. But if we use a non-violent way, it will take time to reach our goal but the country's rehabilitation won't take a long time. If we use the wrong way, we may miss our goal. When leaders of independent movements have become the government, they have often suppressed people more than colonial governments.

What message would you want to deliver to the countries in the region?

What I want to say to the countries in the region is that if Burma has stability, development and union, it will benefit the whole region. So we are the forces who are trying to have stability, development and unity in the country. Don't consider us a stranger or an enemy. I would like to request them to please be in touch with us, work together with us and support us to build up our country.
www.ips.org

forests nor trees



across the border into India. Rautahat has lost 25 per cent of the sal forests in its northern region. In the Indian town of Ghodasan, there are signs that say in Hindi: 'Nepali Hardwood Timber Sold Here'.

The deforestation is now not just restricted to the Tarai. Hill districts have also suffered because of the corruption and politics that have seeped into community forestry user groups. National forests are being cut down in the hill districts of Panchthar, Kaski, Surkhet, Doti, and Dadeldhura. Community forests where user groups have been set up but don't yet have control of the resource, forests in charge of user groups that have not yet been registered, and those that are controlled by corrupt local political groups have suffered most.

Former president of the Federation of Community Forest User Groups (FECOFUN), Ghanashyam Pandey, says the districts where community forests have been least effective are Sarlahi, Udayapur and Kailali. "But in general, it is the government managed

or owned forests where the deforestation has been most serious," he says.

In October, the government set up a team to investigate deforestation, headed by former forest ministry bureaucrat, Sushil Bhattarai. The Centre for the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has named 14 DFOs as being involved in deforestation, but nothing has happened to them. Another team recommended action against the former director general of the Department of Forests, Madhav Acharya, but his resignation has still not been accepted.

Which is why not much is expected from yet another investigation committee set up by the cabinet, headed by former head of the Appellate Court, Govinda Parajuli, and former forestry bureaucrats. The team has been given three months to come up with a report. 
Centre for Investigative Journalism

“Himal is a conservative mouthpiece”

Conversation between Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Himal Khabarpatrika editor Kiran Nepal, before the start of an interview published in Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-16 January

Pushpa Kamal Dahal: The media has tried to say that the Maoists didn’t have a role in the country’s transition to a republic, inclusiveness, federalism, social justice, and proportional representation. This is not true. And in this *Himal Khabarpatrika* has been very one-sided. The Maoist role in these changes has been minimised, and they have been portrayed as only wanting violence. The role of those who say they are big democrats, republicans or agents of change are being highlighted even though they were only tangentially involved. I don’t say it is wrong to criticise the Maoists, but you must also give fair coverage to Maoist viewpoints and accomplishments. *Himal Khabarpatrika* has really become a magazine meant only for those who want the Maoists to be attacked. You read like the mouthpiece of extreme conservative forces that don’t want societal transformation. I am not trying to question your right to comment on, or cover facts. I am just saying that it would be more balanced if you accommodated our views too.



Kiran Nepal: Have you ever found us being, in principle, against republicanism, federalism, inclusiveness or secularism? Or have you ever found us saying that the Maoists are not a part of this transformation?

Dahal: No, you are not ideologically against change, that is clear. But the writings, the understanding of Kanak Mani (Dixit) is a little different!

Nepal: Kanak Mani is the publisher of this magazine. But the rights or wrongs of the content of this magazine are my responsibility as editor. We have complete editorial independence. We are not anti-Maoist, we are anti-violence. And the reason the Maoists perceive *Himal Khabarpatrika* to be against the party is that the Maoists have not yet abjured violence.

Dahal: Ok, Ok, I understand (Laughs.) Now let’s get down to the matters at hand.

financial assistance to pay their medical bills. KC earns some one hundred thousand rupees from rent every month, all of which he spends on his social work. KC has raised two orphan children as his own and has also been paying for the education of several other children. He has also been providing financial assistance of Rs 10,000 per month to the family of Bal Bahadur Pariyar in Parbat to treat their six disabled children. KC says he has no idea how much money he has spent on social work so far. “Everyone has to die some day. I think it is our duty to help the needy,” he says.

Water, please!

Prakash Dotel in *Karobar*, 3 January

कारोबार

About 80 families from Pakwadi VDC of Syangjiha have left their homes because of drinking water problems. Residents of Lakhudanda, Lafudanda and Bhirgaun have been forced to abandon their ancestral properties because they had to spend six hours daily fetching water. “Right now there are only five families here, with only three youths,” says a local from one of the families that can’t afford to leave. “Those who had the means to move have left,” says Dhan Kumari Shahi. Pakwadi locals have to wake up at 2am every morning to get water. Even during the monsoon, they have to walk two hours to reach the nearest source. Local social worker Krishna Shahi says that they have petitioned local politicians but in vain. “No initiative has been taken even though we have complained to the leaders of political parties,” he says. Even the primary school in Lakhudanda has been closed due to water scarcity. “The school was forced to appoint an employee just to bring two vessels of water a day,” says the principal of the school, Mukti Prasad Khanal.

Fill the vacuum

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 3 January

समाचारपत्र

UNMIN is leaving the country on 15 January. The parties in the government feel that UNMIN is no longer needed while Janardhan Sharma, a Maoist leader, has said that this decision will invite crisis in the country. He has said that although in UNMIN’s absence the Special Committee will manage, integrate and rehabilitate the PLA, there are other issues of the peace process that need to be addressed. UNMIN’s departure before the conclusion of the peace process has left the Nepali people in confusion.



In this regard, UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon has requested the government to fill the vacuum that will be created in UNMIN’s absence. He is worried by the inability of the political parties to forge a consensus regarding arms management and army integration and has requested them to address these issues. He has announced that UNMIN’s term has already been extended on the request of the government and the Maoists and that no further extension will be granted. UNMIN has been an objective player so far in analysing and reporting Nepal’s situation but time and again the parties of the government have questioned its operations. This has possibly hurt its pride. The time has come for the parties to take seriously the questions that are being raised nationally and internationally about the political deadlock that has affected the peace process. Even Ban Ki Moon has called for another comprehensive agreement among the parties, saying that no one can hope for victory by risking all that has been achieved to this point. The parties have to create an environment for consensus, understanding and respect to end the political deadlock and allow the peace process to be concluded. They need to independently solve the present problems and restore the people’s faith in them. Even though UNMIN is leaving, the UN has assured Nepal of its continuous support. It is important that the parties move the peace process forward as soon as possible. They should also make an effort to draft the constitution on time. The main agendas of the country should not be overshadowed by the issue of government formation.

Local hero

Bimal Khatiwada in *Nepal*, 2 January

नेपाल

For the many disabled, poor and abandoned people in the city, Basu KC, 76, is the only hope. KC, the first person to set up a readymade garment factory in Nepal, has long been active in social service. He has donated millions of rupees worth of money, food, and clothing to flood victims. Every day he scans the newspaper pages to find people who are in need of



Dahal: UNMIN! UNMIN!
Chariot: Peace process
Water: Power hunger

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 2 January

Elected vs selected

Letter to editor in *Nagarik*, 4 January

नागरिक

“Leave the post if you cannot work,” said Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to ministry secretaries at a function in Kathmandu recently. The PM told officials to report to him if they faced any political pressure, and encouraged them not to succumb to pressure. On the same day, SP Ramesh Kharel took a month’s leave and Shankar Prasad Koirala, Secretary at the Ministry of Energy, got transferred. Both were known for their excellent execution of their responsibilities.

Kathmandu locals have appreciated Kharel’s efforts to curb crime, while Koirala is highly regarded in the hydro sector. The PM has betrayed double standards by criticising high officials about their performance but penalising those who perform well. If those who perform well are not acknowledged, then only those performing badly will remain.



SHRUTI SHRESTHA/KANTIPUR

Politics and bureaucracy complement each other, but they have different modi operandi. Both should aim to make the country prosperous. Politics has the direct support of people (voters), which the administration does not have. The political leadership or ministers devolve power to the administration. The role of the bureaucracy or administration is thus important in delivering on promises that political parties make during the elections.

Politics is transient. Bureaucracy is more of a permanent government. It is the institutional memory of the government. The government cannot implement its policies and programs without the bureaucracy. Political parties reach out to the public through the bureaucracy, due to which there is a need for decentralisation. Politics is individual-centric while the bureaucracy is mechanism-centric.

The bureaucracy is not the place for elected representatives. It is not elected, but a collection of the selected. If the elected take pride in being elected, the selected are also proud of being selected for their capabilities and competencies. The real reason for conflict between politics and bureaucracy is their tendency to elevate their own importance. But they should understand that they need to complement each other to make things happen.

Harihar Sharma, Kathmandu

Being small

Prakash Chandra Lohani in *Nayapatrika*, 2 January

नयाँ पत्रिका

The plight of small parties is neglected by the big parties. The Maoists, UML and NC rule supreme. Agreements and understandings between these parties become general rules. Big parties are eating up small parties like big fish eat small fish. Nepali politics has become the world of fish. There is no other force to challenge the big three.

The approach of these three parties is feudal. They think they are supreme. In other words, there is an autocracy of three parties and their diktats are in force. What we expect from them is that they seek our suggestions before they decide, so they can make national decisions. They don’t even do us the courtesy of informing us in taking decisions of national importance.

There are four schools of thought in Nepali politics: NC believes in democracy, the Maoists believe in totalitarianism, UML vacillates, and then there are the nationalists. We believe in an inclusive democratic nationalism, which is the need of a country situated between two powerful neighbours.

I am also a serious student of Marxism. It is a philosophy of humanity. In the name of advocating for workers, Lenin and Stalin developed it as a totalitarian and neo-feudal ideal, as communism. This imposes single party totalitarianism that rules the people and makes people work.

The goal of the Nepali Maoists is to capture power. The revolution in Cuba led by Fidel Castro was for the people. Once he captured power, other voices were silenced for over 50 years. He handed over power to his brother. Kim Il Sung did the same. In fact, this is an extreme abuse of Marxism and an insult to Marx.

The parties’ ideological differences have resulted in mistrust among them. The country is in trouble because of their activities. Big parties view small parties as worthless and incapable. Who can teach them that small things always have great importance?

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Hinji minji

So we bungle along somehow. Or, as the Sherpas would say, it's a 'hinji minji' state of affairs. The Ass would have advised fellow mules to make hay while the sun shines, but it seems everyone is already doing it.

They're all raking it in: PAC, NAC, NOC, GON, MOF. One of the ministers in the current cabinet has reportedly stashed away 50 karod in cash made through lucrative appointments, and the only honest ones remaining seem to be those who are a bit too dim to be corrupt. The latest WikiLeaks revelations indicate that a **widebody minister** was aspiring to an even wider body by spreading the wealth around. Still our muntris come nowhere close to the kind of graft and malfeasance exhibited down south, where bureaucrats are in cahoots with politicians who are in cahoots with journalists to make billions at a go on telecom and infrastructure contracts. India is growing at 9 per cent, while we are stuck at 2.5 per cent, so there must be truth in the theory that nothing gets done

in this country because PAC Men sabotage every deal: MRP, GMR, Airbus, overhead footpath at Baneshwor. (Even getting two bahun netas, Dahal and Nepal, to officiate the foundation stone-laying of the footbridges didn't do the trick.) The moral of the story: legalise corruption and **let the kickbacks grease the economy**. Graft is good for GDP growth.

The Maobaddies should stop speaking out in favour of UNMIN all the time, it hurts the UN's credibility and reinforces the perception that UNMIN had a soft spot for the comrades all along. Must be pretty embarrassing for Karin that the only guy who says anything nice about her is **Comrade El Duce**. As UNMIN gets ready to pack up, the Nepali staffers are all scrambling for jobs, but it is unlikely any of them are coming back to the NGOs or media they were poached from. At the cantonments themselves, the Special Committee team that inspected the containers last week was puzzled to find that

they contain only guns and no ammo. We know ballots were stolen in the 2008 elections, but we didn't know they also stole bullets.

An American Indiana Jones is offering to buy up all the World War I vintage .303s in the cantonment containers and auction them off on eBay. If there are 4,000 three-naught-threes, and if they can fetch an average of \$10,000 each (\$25,000 for the muskets from the 1847 Afghan campaign), that should take care of the severance pay for all the ex-guerrillas who need to be rehabbed.

Just as the Radia Tapes in India have snared celebrity media personalities and exposed their wheelings and dealings with the high and mighty, it looks like Bibek Shah's book has also exposed some journalists on the take here as well as the names of Deep Throats who were leaking sensitive military info to the press during the war. (See p 224-5, 235, 241, 278, 391, 402 in Maile Dekheko Durbar).

The straw that will break the camel's back in the Battle of



the Titans between BRB and PKD will be reports filtering back from New Delhi that Comrade Laldhoj has been meeting the Indian Foreign Sec, Finance Minister, National Security Adviser etc, when the Maximum Leader hasn't even got an invite back to Delhi. Paranoid as the comrades are about each other, this is sure to take the rift in the Baddies to breaking point. Which must be why the Fuhrer sent his trusted aide, **Comrade Monsoon Man**, along with BRB to Delhi to keep a close eye on who he met and what he said. But even more intriguing than all this is that the conference on Nepal is being organised by a shadowy fundo group that is extreme even by BJP standards, besmirching the good name of Swami

Vivekananda. We'd heard politics makes for strange bedfellows, but we didn't know it was going to turn out to be a steamy group orgy.

First it was Nepal's business tycoons who all picked political parties and represented them in the CA. Now, it's Kollywood actors. After Rekha Thapa joined the maobaddies, and Manisha stuck it out with the rajabaddies, it's stuntman Bhuban KC's turn to be a Unified Marxist-Leninist. Sorry, Rajesh, you can only be a kangresi now.



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