



There's no looking back

BIKRAM RAI

President Ram Baran Yadav gave them a week to form a consensus government, but the three main parties are as far apart as ever ahead of Friday's deadline. The Maoists, NC and UML are working instead to change the rules to benefit themselves.


The Maoists are formally handing over their fighters

to the Special Committee on Saturday. Given their history of backtracking, they could still renege. But it is a first step that has not been matched by the NC and UML.

The NC says it is open to a Maoist-led government provided it honours past commitments and disarms. The NC and UML are wracked by internal

squabbles between rival camps: even if either party leads the next government, it won't make Nepal's politics any more stable. The Maoists have enough numbers in the CA-parliament to bring government to a standstill.

By continuing to prevent a Maoist party-led government even after getting it do what they want, the other parties risk losing the moral high ground and public support. The best way out

is for the NC and the UML to get the Maoists to name its candidate, take Madhesi parties on board a unity government, and make the best use of the next four months. 

Damakant Jayshi

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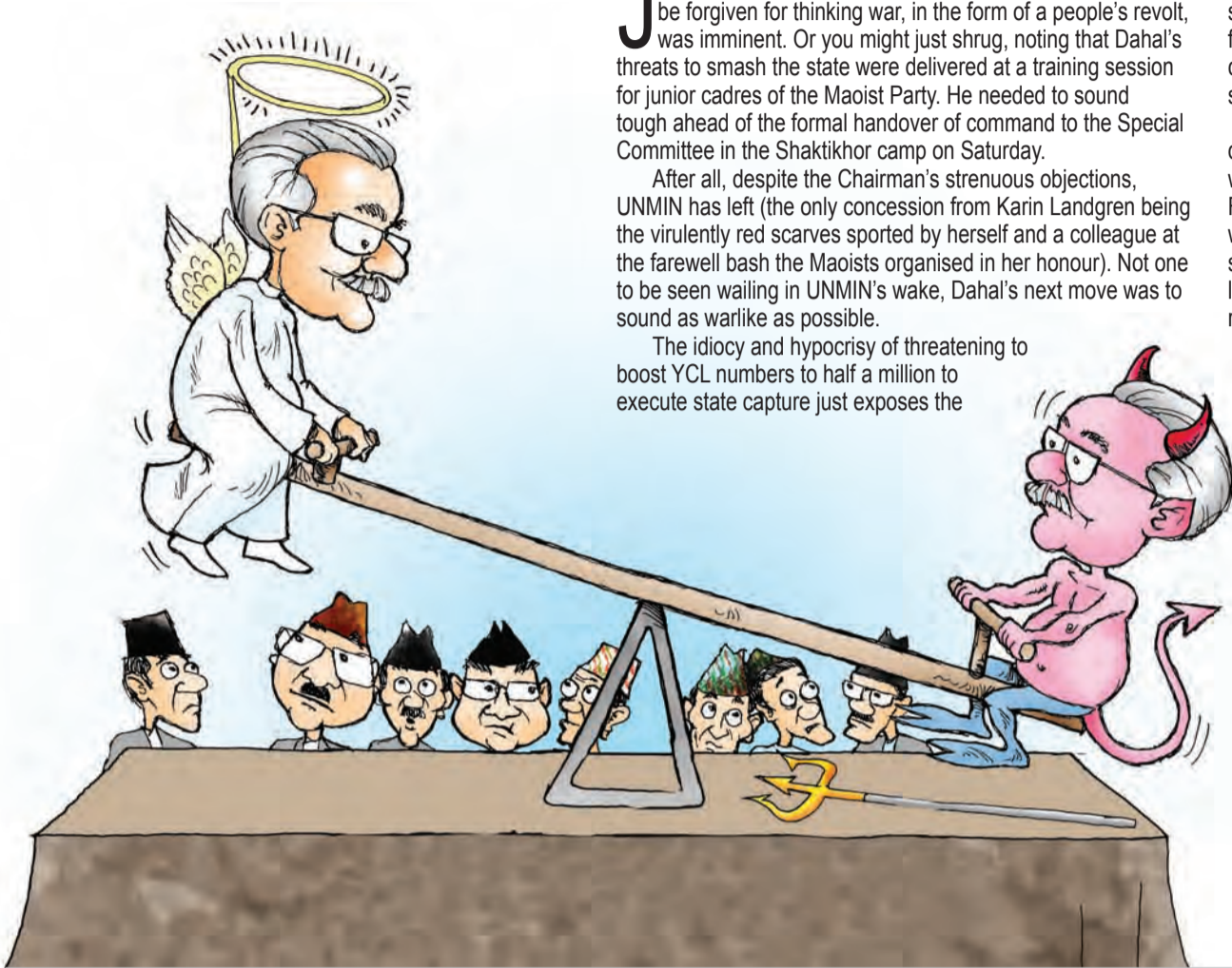
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DAHAL ON WAR PATH AGAIN



BILASH RAI

Judging from Pushpa Kamal Dahal's latest outburst, you'd be forgiven for thinking war, in the form of a people's revolt, was imminent. Or you might just shrug, noting that Dahal's threats to smash the state were delivered at a training session for junior cadres of the Maoist Party. He needed to sound tough ahead of the formal handover of command to the Special Committee in the Shaktikhor camp on Saturday.

After all, despite the Chairman's strenuous objections, UNMIN has left (the only concession from Karin Landgren being the virulently red scarves sported by herself and a colleague at the farewell bash the Maoists organised in her honour). Not one to be seen wailing in UNMIN's wake, Dahal's next move was to sound as warlike as possible.

The idiocy and hypocrisy of threatening to boost YCL numbers to half a million to execute state capture just exposes the

Catch-22 Dahal finds himself in. He can't claim leadership of a successful party in sync with the revolution without breathing fire and brimstone to cover up its failures (read 'bourgeois compromises'). But every such speech he delivers makes success less likely.

Threats to grab power and turn the country totalitarian deepen the gulf of mistrust between the Maoists and the rest, who are ever more determined to exclude them from power. Fired up cadres may support Dahal, but as a result of their zeal will continue to push the party towards unrealistic and damaging strategies such as the nationwide strike last May. Sooner or later, Dahal will be wholly trapped by the hollowness of his rhetoric.

Believers of Dahal's revolution insist he is sincere in his dealings with those who matter (his cadres), and his two-facedness with the rest is actually an asset. For those with revolutionary blinkers, it doesn't matter if the rest are against them because they are bent on grabbing power through violence.

Something is clearly rotten in the state of Dahal. You'd have to be seriously deficient to blame the media for playing up divisions within Maoist ranks when Dahal alludes to the "defeat" of India's choice of prime minister (Bhattacharya). Bhattacharya boycotts the training program upon learning that he is not to be allowed to read out his statement of dissent; his wife and politburo member Hisila Yami is hustled off the stage when she asks for clarification. The cracks may be papered over one more time, but the claim that the 'two-line struggle' as all good sporting revolutionary fun is wearing rather thin.

Ultimately, this country will only be stable once there is a Maoist party that other parties and Nepal's two big neighbours trust. Dahal's tactic of beating war drums is the wrong strategy, and completely counterproductive to himself and his party.

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

NOT IF

Appreciate the timely article on earthquake preparedness ('Not if, but when, Kunda Dixit, #536). The future damage of life and properties will be very huge. Awareness and preparation are the only way and for this our political leaders need to wake up. There is still time to mitigate the effect

Radha Krishna Deo
SACNEPAL

- You advise people to stay clear of buildings and power lines. In Kathmandu? Good luck!

Kirsten

- If we can't predict earthquakes, the only solution is to be prepared for them. Thanks to Kunda Dixit for at least doing something to spread the awareness. The information sure helped me, and I am sure it will help others too.

Amit

CYNICAL

May I be brave enough to ask a simple question? What is the relation between the government making process and the constitution writing process ('Vacuum ahead', Prashant Jha, #536)? Why is it that the CC had not met for over six months? If the task force could resolve 127 issues in about 10 sittings of a few hours each, could the sittings of CC not resolve more? It is understandable that the government is lame-duck, but what did the two-legged ducks of the Maoist party do during their time in the government? Despite Prashant's cynicism about the entire process, I will predict that nothing of consequence would happen one way or another.

Nepal will most likely have a PM sometime this month, and then some other

crisis would be initiated by some faction or some group which will function as an excuse for the Maoists to start getting violent before 28 May. Good luck to the "people". There is nothing they can do, other than to grin and bear it. And, I am not being a cynic.

Slarti

GET ZUCKERBERG

Dahal, Khanal, Poudyal, Nepal? What's the difference? Where's Nani Maiya, when we need her the most ('Seizing the moment', Damakant Jayshi, # 536)? I mean, folks, these people are squabbling in the name of national politics, when Nepal, after who cares how many years following internal independence, is still reeling from no water, no electricity, no food, no sanitation, no highways, no goretos, no pati, no pauwa, and so on and so damn forth. Let a nerd Zuckerberg buy Nepal and run it. I'm sick of it all.

Thurpunsich

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Isn't it ironic that these so called student neta like Himal Sharma who are 40 plus and has his kids studying in China, tell us that we need to close private schools ('Ignorant crusaders', Ashutosh Tiwari, # 536). Do we not have a right to choose where we want our kids to study or do we need to be dictated by these idiotic people? If they had the guts they should come out of the so called student leader tag and enter the world of real politics. One should leave Politics out of the educational system.

Ram

- One would think that with the benefit of an expensive private education, Ashutosh Tiwari could come up with some plausible argument in favour of private education. Instead we get an illogical rant, simply

pretending that the opponents of private education are opposed to education. Obviously, the argument is about whether better off people should help pay for poor people to go to school through taxes to fund a public education system to the same level for all or whether the poor should only get less education and children of better off parents get the education their parents can afford.

By pretending the argument is about whether there should be education or not, the writer shows that he has nothing relevant to say.

Arthur

- Many private schools are extorting parents, who are desperate for quality education because cheaper government schools are so bad. The answer is not to close private schools, but regulate their fees and improve the quality of government schools. Many government schools have shown that you can have a good school without exorbitant fees. The Maoists are not for free universal education, that is just a slogan for them to extort the private schools. You just have to see how the campaign against private schools always gears up at admission time. Private schools should be less greedy, the government should improve its schools and the Maoists should be lined up in Tundikhel and spanked on their buttocks.

Kiran L

ETHICS MATTERS

Excellent thought provoking article, hope it leads to some action ('Diagnosis of death', Indu Nepal, #536). Nepal Medical Association officials, amongst others should take the lead.

Samjana Poudyal

- I am a doctor, not a god and I don't want anyone to treat me as a god. But lying about a patient's condition is a crime. Just because

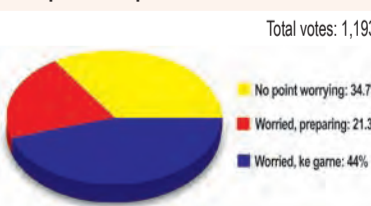
you are threatened to be beaten up is not an excuse. Being a doctor is not just about mugging up those facts in the book. You have to be able to counsel and comfort the patient. It's a skill you have to develop over time and experience. A patient has a right to be told the truth, no matter how unpleasant. And there's a proper way to do it. And the safe way to do it is to work within the boundaries of law. Make sure that the patients' forms are properly filled, consents taken, risks explained. Doctors barely care to tell about the side effects of the drugs they prescribe, explain the complications of the disease etc. That's inviting trouble to yourself. On the other hand, patients' relatives should also know that any information about the patient's condition is strictly confidential unless the patient gives the consent to the doctor. Please do keep in mind that we are so limited in our investigations and treatment that we are left clueless lots of time. And at those times, you just need the courage to say "I don't know" instead to telling them that their loved ones is about to die.

Doctor Who



nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 537

Q. How worried are you about a major earthquake in Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll # 538. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the most desirable political alliance?



21-27 JANUARY 2011 #537



PLAIN SPEAKING

Prashant Jha

Even as professional Maoist baiters take great delight in the latest public spat within the party, it is almost impossible to conceive of a successful conclusion to the peace and constitutional process till Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai revive their partnership, or at least develop a working relationship again.

But this will be an enormous challenge given the deep personal and political rift between the top two leaders. Sources inside and outside the party who have had conversations with both

isolate and undercut me; he is behaving as the next Gyanendra and wants to concentrate all powers and finances, I do not want to be PM but when there was a possibility of consensus under my leadership, he blocked it and filed his candidature instead; he is conspiratorial in his functioning and is now collaborating with royalists, I am not given any organizational responsibilities to prevent contact with the cadre, he is a petty pragmatist who vacillates between different streams, he knows a people's revolt is not possible and has privately assured India he is willing to do anything to become PM, but is dishonest in public about it and instead branded me an Indian stooge.

It is time for Dahal to pick up the phone and make peace with Bhattarai

the leaders on the issue have given us a peek into the depth of resentment. Here is Prachanda's version: Bhattarai never treated me with respect, he is arrogant and thinks he is smarter than everyone else just because he topped the school board exams, his relations with India are deeply suspect and Delhi is using him to stoke divisions, he does no organisational work, he wants to create an alternative power centre in the party and become PM, his public statement undermining my candidature right after proposing my name as PM was the breaking point, his contribution to the movement is genuine, but now he is willing to make too many compromises with revisionist forces.

Bhattarai obviously has a different story to tell: I have never challenged the chairman and his leadership position within the party, he believes in a use-and-throw policy and has instead worked to

Add to this the genuine differences over the political line.

Bhattarai is not in favour of 'surrender'. Given his deep ideological commitment to Marxism and Maoism, he is in fact least likely to make any fundamental compromises in the party line or organisational structure. Indian and NC negotiators from the 2005-07 days often recount how it was easier to deal with Prachanda than Bhattarai. But he recognises the limits of the political moment, how a 'revolution' before its time is doomed to fail, and is willing to make major compromises to institutionalise a secular, federal, republican Nepal and then focus on the economy.

Prachanda however wants to keep his options open. To be fair, this could be because unlike Bhattarai, he has to deal with internal party pressures, restive PLA commanders, and reconcile

Fork in the path

conflicting viewpoints while maintain party unity. But there is also clearly an overwhelming element of personal ambition: "If you make me PM, constitution and peace can take place, if not, be ready for a revolt." This duplicity only helps strengthen those who want to keep the Maoists out of the power structure.

The real crisis in the relationship, however, is the breaking down of the old compact. 'Prachanda's leadership, Bhattarai's line' was the principle till 2008. Now, Prachanda's leadership

is no longer unquestioned, and Bhattarai's line has been sidelined. Till that old compact is revived, or a new arrangement worked out, the party will remain deeply divided.

In early 2010, the columnist Aditya Adhikari and I travelled with Dr Bhattarai to his constituency in Gorkha. During a walk back from a village where he was addressing a mass gathering to the main highway, we asked him whether differences could lead to a split in the party. His reply is worth quoting in full: "Between

1960 and 1990, many people left the NC and formed small groups. But there was no vertical split because NC was not a party, but a movement. Individuals may leave and form splinter outfits, but there will be no split because the Maoists are not merely a party. It is still a movement."

If the movement has to find its way, it is time for Prachanda to make a phone call and make peace with Bhattarai over several long one-on-one meetings. Otherwise, history will not judge them kindly. 🇳🇵



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“ They should have just killed me.”



LAST WORDS: Deusari Pun, wounded during the war, died last month, soon after this picture was taken.

ALL PICS: LAXMAN KC

LAXMAN KC in RUKUM

Deusari Pun had just come out of her home in Garayala village early morning one day in November 2002 when an army patrol shot at her. The army patrol from Musikot Base also destroyed her house, so Deusari moved to the district capital with her six children.

The bullet wound in her pelvis never healed, yet she moved around with a crutch and worked by the roadside breaking stones. She told us last month: “I couldn’t get any treatment, even when I went to all government and non-government agencies.”

The open wound had infected her bones, and her face was contorted in pain as she told us: “There is no one to help, they should have just killed me.”

Two weeks after we met her, Deusari died. Nepal’s ten-year war is still claiming victims.

In Salle, Narjit Basnet is teaching a Grade 8 class in the Saraswati Secondary School as he has for the past 15 years ever since his left hand was chopped off at the wrist by Maoists

On the 15th anniversary of the start of the war, and nearly five years after it ended, the wounded are forgotten

after he refused to join the revolution. They dragged him out of his former school at Amachaur, cut him into pieces, threw him into a river and left him for dead.

“I just hope no one has to suffer like me,” says Narjit, “I want peace and development in this country. And maybe some help for people like me who were handicapped during the war.”

The Maoist war started 15 years ago in these mountain villages of Rukum and Rolpa. The conflict ended nearly five years ago, but the suffering of the tens of thousands of Nepalis like Narjit continues, and doesn’t register in the priority of politicians in faraway Kathmandu who are caught up in their own power struggle. Of the 16,000 people killed during the war, more than 1,000 died in Rukum between 1996-2006. Another 2,000 were wounded here.

Bimala Pun is from Chunbang, the

village in Rukum made famous for the Maoist convention in 2005 during which the leadership decided to form an alliance with the democratic parties. The party ordered Bimala and hundreds like her to march down to Kapilbastu in the plains to capture zamindar land in 2002 where she was wounded in a police attack.

The Maoist party sent her to a city hospital, but she still has a bullet lodged in her leg, and says it is unbearably painful in winter or when she has to walk a lot. “Till when do I have to suffer like this,” she asks, “how many times do I have to ask my party to help take the bullet out?”

Paban BK was conscripted for the Maoist attack on the APF base in Satbaria in Dang in 2002. He was hit in the spine and was in a coma for nearly two months. He has been a paraplegic ever since. The party gave him a job, but he finds it hard to take care of his five-member family.

Paban has only two requests to his party: “Write the new constitution and give jobs to those who were handicapped during the war.”

The year the war started in February 1996, Indra Lal Gautam was attacked by the Maoists for being an NC supporter. They crushed his legs with rocks, crippling him for life. Today, Indra Lal repairs umbrellas in Khalanga to feed his family of five.

Indra Lal has seen funds sent to Rukum for compensation for war wounded being diverted by political parties and distributed among themselves.

Indra Lal’s greatest disappointment is against his own party. He says: “They forgot our suffering.”



LEFT TO RIGHT: Bimala Pun and Paban BK were both shot and wounded by state security in 2002. Narjit Basnet showing his chopped off hand, and Indra Lal Gautam with his legs crushed by Maoists.

Bipalis should innovate



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

DUBAI: A recently concluded regional conference of Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) brought together compatriots from different parts of the world. It was heartening to see so many Nepalis converge to consider what they can do for their *matribhumi* despite having adopted different *karmabhumis*.
Nepalis, wherever they go and whatever their ethnicity, do think of the larger Nepal. Those who have returned have helped in transforming Nepal, be it the Newah business people who went to Tibet or the British Gurkhas who fought wars across the world. The onus of introducing innovation lies to some degree with the NRNs. So as a starting point, it may be worthwhile considering how best to conduct such conferences.
Having a crowd on stage is the worst way to start. Garlanding a host of people and letting them all speak without restriction eats into the productive time of conferences. And why does every speaker need to address every other speaker before speaking? We also love to ask questions, and often speak from the floor longer than the speaker, but vanish when the speaker finally gets around to answering our questions.
This beed cannot understand why we Nepalis have an obsession with welcome arches, either.
We really expect the NRN fraternity to lead the



transformation by changing these fossilized Nepali ways of conducting public meetings. We should be sticking to time schedules, disposing of long formalities, and of politicians who have no business being there. Having the Foreign Minster and Deputy Prime Minster chair a session on collective investment may have seemed like a good idea, but what is the point of running a technical session when the chair can't distinguish between debt and equity? We need to do away with the sycophancy that has become a feature of Nepali life. If *chakri* was institutionalised during the Rana regime, now we simply have more people to keep happy.
NRNs can do what Nepalis in Nepal feel more constrained in doing. The fact that the conference got people like Karna Sakya, Ani Choying

NRNs can start by ending the ritual of garlanding everyone on the podium

Dolma, Manoj Gajurel, Rajendra Khetan, and Anil Shah together in one place, without having to get donors pay for their tickets, says much for the potential of NRNs. Perhaps this is the starting point of a transformation, whereby Nepalis can fund Nepalis to speak to Nepalis in Nepali, without having to worry about which logframe items have been ticked.
As Upendra Mahato remarked, Nepal is becoming more distant by the day for the children of NRNs. There is therefore an urgency for the current generations of Nepalis, who are directly linked to the motherland, to lead transformations. In the next (hopefully streamlined) conference, we can look forward to planning for these transformations. 🇳🇵

Let's IME 
International Money Express (IME) has launched a campaign 'IME Garaun', whereby it wants to promote the use of the phrase to refer to sending money home from abroad in a fast, convenient and safe way.

Branching out
Everest Bank has opened a new branch in Sandikharka, Argakhachi, bringing the total all over the country to 39.

New tracks
Tractors Nepal, authorised suppliers of Caterpillar Inc products, has introduced its vibratory soil compactor CS-533e in 10 tons segment in Nepal. The



130HP CAT 3054c turbocharged diesel engine can be used in highway and street construction, both residential and industrial, industrial site preparation, rental operations and large building sites.



Zooming prize



Nabin KC of Kavre has won the grand prize of Berger Paints' 'Berger Rangey-Haat Offer'. He took home a Pulsar 220cc motorbike. The scheme ran over a time span of three months with more than 85 lucky winners.

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Question for Comrade Lohani



MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

The teachers' wing of the UCPN (Maoist) has threatened to shut down private boarding schools owned by party leaders and members as a step towards closing down all private schools.

"Our campaign against private schools has not been effective because our party members themselves have betrayed the cause," chairman of the Maoist All Nepal Teachers' Organisation, Gunaraj Lohani, said. "We are compelled to create a moral base to bolster our campaign against private schools."

While it is nothing new for a Maoist wing to issue threats (after all, the mother party does it all the time), what makes it novel is this time the comrades are after brother comrades. The excuse behind shutting down private schools for the sake of "equality" is utter nonsense.

The timing of the threat is not so surprising, though.



Can you force your Chairman from taking his grand-daughter out of her private school? Bet not.

The new academic session of schools is just a couple of months away, a time when most private schools rake in a lot of moolah by way of annual and other fees to ensure profits. No wonder they attract a lot of attention, including those from Maoists and other parties.

But is it really about ensuring "equality" in education?

Assuming that it is, let us

examine the path proposed by the Maoist teachers' union. It looks like they have strong opposition to private schools, something they view as bourgeoisie indulgence. I have a question to Lohani and his comrades. Can they force their party chairman to withdraw his granddaughter from an English-medium school in the capital? Bet not. Can they ask all their apologist commentariat to

withdraw their children from reputed private English schools? No way.

Just like individuals and groups have the right to open and operate private schools, people like Lohani have simply no right to shut schools whether they are run by Maoists or others. Similarly, parents and grandparents have the right to educate their children wherever they want. Period.

Shutting down private schools, which usually have a better success rate than those run by the government, is no way to ensuring equality. Government-run schools have poor quality, so Lohani & Co would be better off trying to raise the standard of government schools. Instead, they harass the administration of even well-run community-managed schools where they can't exert control.

There are example of good government schools: Adarsha Soul Yuvak Secondary School of Sainbu of Lalitpur district, which according to Shikshak magazine has done so well that people are taking their children out of

private schools to be enrolled there. Twelve private schools in the vicinity are so worried they have complained to the District Education Office, Lalitpur.

Of the 101 students of Adarsha Soul who appeared for their SLC exams last year, 11 passed with distinction, 50 in first division and 40 with second division marks. The medium of instruction is English, the facilities are as good as any private school but it is cheaper. It arranges special classes for 34 differently-abled students. It also conducts informal education for stay-at-home mothers, besides conducting 10+2 in Humanities, Management and Science and BBS and BED.

Want another example? Sarbajanik Lower Secondary School at Sisawani in Morang. Shikshak reports that it has made a stunning turnaround in the last three years.

Simple question to Comrade Lohani: why don't you and your party work towards inspiring more schools to be like Adarsha Soul and Sarbajanik? damakant@gmail.com

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THIS WEEK

PM election

President Ram Baran Yadav on Saturday called on the political parties to elect the prime minister and form a government based on political consensus by 21 January. Speaker Subas Nembang had briefed the president about the termination of prime ministerial election with the withdrawal of all proposals for the post in the parliament. Earlier the president had called on the parties to form a consensus government after Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned from the post on 30 June. Several rounds of talks were held till Thursday, but the big parties failed to reach even close to a consensus.

UNMIN leaves

The UNMIN wrapped up its four year mission in Nepal on Friday. Prime Minister Nepal and Maoist Chairman Dahal had agreed in principle to give continuity to the peace process and to iron out the exact modalities of the transfer of the monitoring of Maoist camps from UNMIN to the Special Committee and its composition. Senior Nepali government officials and the Maoist leaders attended the flag lowering ceremony. The UN's Department of Political Affairs head of Asia-Pacific Samuel Tamrat, who helped set up UNMIN in Nepal in 2006, said: "Regrettably insufficient progress has been made on the peace process and the parties have to redouble their efforts to implement all facets of the peace process." UNMIN chief Karin Landgren said a lot of challenges still remained and the peace process is unfinished.



Maoist row

The Unified CPN (Maoist) has started its nationwide instruction campaign for its Regional Bureau Members and district members from Sunday. Around 4,000 leaders and cadres from Newa and Tamsaling State Councils took part in the instruction campaign. Meanwhile, expressing dissatisfaction over the party's decision of not including his proposal during the training session, Maoist vice-chairman Baburam Bhattarai boycotted the instruction campaign. The party's central committee meeting had decided to float Bhattarai's notion to all district and regional cadres for the discussion.



Extreme Annapurna

The Annapurna 100 ultra race was a fitting kick off for Nepal Tourism Year 2011

LAXMAN UPRETI



This first event of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, held promptly on its first day on 14 January, took place in the natural stadium of the Annapurna Conservation Area. Runners were applauded by local residents volunteering at check points and feeding stations. Torches and headlamps were lit for the dawn start, khata and tika were presented to the participants by local mothers' groups and there was an impromptu flyover of majestic Himalayan Griffon vultures. All very befitting for a tourism year ceremony.

"It was a beautiful and challenging race. An incredible experience to share, and a unique way to start a new year," said Britain's Lizzy Hawker, former 100 km world champion, and now first-ever female winner of the Annapurna 100 ultra trail race.

The event is in its sixth year now and promises to be a challenging and permanent fixture in the world sporting calendar. Trail running, using mountain trails rather than roads, is one of the world's fastest growing sports. In 2009, 4.8 million Americans

participated in trail (off road) running, according to a report by America's Outdoor Industry Foundation.

In France, the world home of mountain running, there are more 100 km+ races every year than there are types of smelly cheese. Nepal is a perfect host for this kind of sport. Not only are the trails great and the Himalayan views from them heavenly, but the fact that the mountains are inhabited at high altitudes makes for a great experience for foreigners. It's a race, but tourism too.

With three international

elite athletes invited to run, the race has received respected praise in the media overseas. These athletes too provide a benchmark for the world to assess the current local talent. When someone of the enormous calibre of Lizzy Hawker finishes 3.5 hours behind the winner, it shows how special the first finisher, Sudip Rai, really is. He finished in 12.05 hours on a course with 4,620 m climb and deservedly collected prizes of Rs 50,000 cash and a Chain mountain bike.

Nepali women took part for the first time. Twelve girls from Pokhara's Three Sisters Adventure Trekking nervously joined the 5.30 am start without any running practice whatsoever. Nine finished the 50 km course beaming with pride.

Work has already begun on the 2012 event, but efforts are also being put towards generating money for the Nepal Mountain Running Service, an athlete training centre, and to afford to get trail runners to the start lines of world class races around the globe, with the very achievable aim of flying Nepal's unique flag on the podium. If any minister would be willing to forgo an international junket and submit an expense claim receipt for an athlete's flight ticket, please get in touch. 🇳🇵

Richard Bull

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Vegetarian Thali: Nrs. 1,000 + taxes
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Pour Something Priceless



PICS: MICHAEL COX

Moulding a childhood

With Nishan Rai's sculptures, you can remember how your baby used to be, quite literally

MICHAEL COX

Gold and silver trophies hang in box frames on a wall. Take a closer look, and you realise they are the hands and feet of a newborn baby set in stone, so defined that you can read the palms.

Getting moulds made out of the hands and feet of your newborn baby is a phenomenon that has taken

Australia by storm. Could it catch on in Nepal? One Jawalakhel resident has a hunch that she could be on to something.

Nishan Rai is about to launch a new business called 'Capture Childhood' to literally set memories in stone by sculpting the hands and feet of babies. She says it's not art, and is not sure how the Nepali people will respond to this slightly bizarre craftsmanship, but

explains: "You will only have your baby once, you won't give birth to the same baby twice, and this gives people the chance to capture that moment forever."

It was a trip to Australia that sparked the idea to mould Nepal's childhood.

Rai was working for an Australian company in the business of making these sculptures, but says her counterpart and friend at the time did not want to share the knowhow. Secretly, she

began to piece together the process.

"We are grown-ups, from different social backgrounds, so I'm not angry at her for not sharing it with me. I'm still grateful to her because I learnt how it was done," says Rai, who believes that Nepal's new middle class could be interested in spending between Rs 7,000-12,000 on such moulds.

Though her sculptures started as a hobby, Rai

now has enough overseas contacts to build her business from the ground up in Kathmandu. So far she has only been taking moulds of children of her friends, such as artist Ashmina Ranjit (*see box*).

Says Rai: "Sculpting memories is a good way for families to stay connected. These stone sentiments can be captured at different milestones, and are guaranteed to last a lifetime." 📷

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Meet your feet

Aba Ranjit, almost two years old, stares at his feet everyday, according to artist Ashmina Ranjit (*above*). Moulds of his feet, that is, mounted on the wall. Ranjit says her first-born son interacts with the sculpture now that he is growing. "He has this expression when he points at his stone feet, his attachment to the sculpture is so deep," she says.

Ranjit was Rai's first client and says the sculpture provides a sense of time and growth. "I'm encouraging my circle of friends to have one made with their children because I think most people who see it will want it," she says.

She concedes moulds are more of a craft than an art, but adds: "The definition of art is always changing. If we open our eyes, whatever we see, one way or another, it is a piece of art."

EVENTS

Grahan: an eclipse, exhibition of paintings by Sagar Manandhar. 23 January to 6 February. Gallery Hours: 10.30am to 5. 30pm, Saturdays closed, Park Gallery, RN Joshi Center for Fine Art, Pulchok

Mystic muse, exhibition of paintings and mixed media works by artist Chirag Bangdel. Starts 22 January, Chai Chai Gallery and Café, Jhamsikhel



YES Nepal Sunday Screening- Addicted to Plastic: The Rise and Demise of a Modern Miracle. 23 January, 1pm onwards, Youth Engagement in Sustainability, Baneshwor

Discussion on the movie Dabangg. 21 January, free entry, Docskool 9813060962, 9841245862, 9841872689, docskoolnepal@gmail.com

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

The Australian Film Roadshow, six award-winning movies from Australia. 28 to 31 January. Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari, free passes available at the Australian Embassy Gate, 4371678

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

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

Tai Chi 3 month course, 13-form Yang style with Gold medalist Ang Babu Lama. Starts 22 January, 9am to 10.30 am, 1 week course, starting every Monday, Yoga: Monday and Thursdays 7 to 8.15 am, Sunday 8 to 9.15 am, Meditation class: Mon 6 to 7 pm, Thursday 7 to 8 pm, Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Ekan-takuna, 98088 91048 / 9841224368, hbmc.programs@gmail.com, www.fpmt-hbmc.org

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, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu with barbeque and live jazz music by Inner Groove. 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362

Live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds. Every Friday, 7.30pm onwards, Fusion Bar, Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali

Baja Gaja playing live. 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

Black Pepper Café & Pub, cosmopolitan dining and drinking in a traditional style courtyard, try the apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service. Kopundole Height, Lalitpur, 5521897, 5536926, http://blackpepper.com.np



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

Saturday @ Hyatt, come and spend a day with your family this winter. Your children can enjoy on-site fun and games, as well as a kid-friendly menu. Hyatt Regency, Boudha, for reservations call 4491234

Waffles promotion at The Lounge from 12.30pm to 4.00pm every day, **Vegetarian Buffet** at The Café every Tuesday from 6.30pm, and **Arabian Nights** at The Café every Friday from 6.30pm at Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362

Newari cuisine at Hotel Himalaya, local flavours to warm you up this winter. Every Friday, 6.30pm onwards, Rs 1100 Nett per person, Hotel Himalaya, Kopundole

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

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



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

Ramalaya Tea Room, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese. Pani Pokhari, near Japanese Embassy, for bookings call 4006589, 4006589, www.rde.com.np/index.php/tea-room

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

Himalayan Java, this Thamel establishment, more known for its coffee, serves excellent sandwiches too. Tridevi Marg, 4422519

GETAWAYS

Park Village Resort, Saturdays and Sundays combo package with swimming, lunch and a bottle of beer. Budhanilkantha, Rs 990 for adults and Rs 800 for children, call 4375280 for reservations

The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri- La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Dhulikhel, Rs 3500 (single), Rs 5000 (double), 10 percent service charge extra, call 4479488 for reservations

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



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नेपाल सरकार

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सँचना विभाग

Cholera vaccine, too



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Almost the only group that drug companies target for a cholera vaccine is travellers from developed countries to underdeveloped ones. Ironically thousands of people in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh suffer from cholera, but the vaccine is not available to them.

Cost is certainly one factor inhibiting its widespread use. The vaccine Dukoral is manufactured in Sweden and costs US\$40 (about Rs 3,000) a pop.

But there is good news. The pharmaceutical powers of the world, India and China, sometimes step up to the plate when inexpensive versions of drugs or vaccines are needed. Shanta Biotechnics, an

Indian company based in Hyderabad, has begun the commercial production of the cholera vaccine. This oral vaccine is called Shanchol and was manufactured with the help of the South Korean International Vaccine Institute, as well as a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Costs have been slashed to US\$6 (Rs 400 to 500) and may be cut further.

The oral vaccine consists of killed pathogenic strains 01 and 0139 of vibrio cholera, the bacteria that causes the disease. It is administered in two doses, one week apart in adults, and three weeks apart in children. A trial in Kolkata that enrolled 70,000 people

showed that the vaccine was 67 per cent effective.

Just having the vaccine commercially available does not mean it will be used, however. Take the typhoid vaccine. It has been available for decades and WHO strongly recommends its use in vulnerable populations such as school children.

But this recommendation has been sidelined by south Asian governments even though conservative estimates

indicate typhoid annually affects 22 million people and kills 300,000, mostly in South Asia.

By comparison, cholera kills about 100,000 a year. Undoubtedly, providing safe drinking water and proper sewage disposal should be emphasised to eliminate the disease, but these measures will take decades to

implement. In the interim, vaccines are a clear option.

Recently, the Nepali peacekeeping force in Haiti was accused of having spread cholera there, with tragic results. This has not been proven. But a proactive measure to try to remain above suspicion is to consider the administration of the Shanchol vaccine to the next Nepali contingent going abroad. 🇳🇵



GREEN SCENE

Jhamel's green oasis

With power cuts cutting any chance of a warmer future, perhaps Kathmandu could take a leaf out of a Jhamsikhel bed and breakfast and start promoting eco-heating.

Nepal Face to Face, uses a charcoal briquette made from decomposing branches to keep guests warm and help conserve the environment. The briquette burns for over an hour and heats a bedroom without giving off any smoke. "We have really good feedback from our guests," says owner Per Zetterberg. Once the briquette burns out the ash can be used to fertilise the veggie garden.

Face to Face also uses another eco-friendly fuel for its weekly cultural dinners: logs made from rice husk. It has turned out to be a hot way to bring people to "Patan's green oasis" on Thursday nights.

"I don't think anybody is 100 per cent green, but we can only try to do our best," says Zetterberg, who

moved here with his family from Sweden to start a tourism business.

Other green ideas include growing veggies, buying chickens and being as self-sufficient as possible. Their focus, on being socially responsible extends as far as Europe where they recommend to Scandinavian clients to use Qatar Airways on route to Nepal, because it only stops once on the way to Kathmandu.

Being socially responsible is why the Swedish couple say they came to live and work in Nepal, and tucked away in the back of Jhamsikhel, Face to Face is a breath of fresh air. "It's an ecological thing how can we use business to make a good development in ways like helping the environment," says Zetterberg, who has been coming to Nepal for the past 20 years. 🇳🇵

Michael Cox



MICHAEL COX



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

SAVE ME: The Nepal Army demonstrates post-quake rescue equipment at the Earthquake Safety Exhibition at Basantapur on Sunday to mark Earthquake Safety Day.



KIRAN PANDAY

IT'S A PARTY: The official opening ceremony of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 on Friday at the Dasrath Stadium concluded with a fireworks show.



KIRAN PANDAY

NICE HAT: The Tharu community felicitates PM Madhav Kumar Nepal with a *phetta* at a program in Tundikhel to celebrate Maghe Sankranti on Sunday.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The Himalaya region is under the influence of seasonal low pressure that is sucking in a wide westerly frontal system with moisture bearing clouds. This satellite image from Thursday afternoon shows two westerlies: one from the southwest and another from the northwest, meeting over northern India and possibly heading into Nepal over the weekend. But they will only bring sporadic rain and snow flurries down to 4,000m. The mercury will stay low until this system passes next week. Pale sunshine through haze and smog.

FRI	SAT	SUN
18-2	18-1	16-3

“Off with his head”



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Recent reports of corruption involving (again) Labour and Transport Minister Mohamad Aftab Alam (Nepali Congress) will have provoked the usual outrage. Two separate stories in the 15-29 January issue of *Himal Khabarpatrika* chronicle his alleged misdeeds. Here is a talent for multi-tasking:

- Migrant labourers leaving Nepal are required to contribute Rs 1,000 to a fund, ostensibly for their benefit. Alam, like his predecessor Lekh Raj Bhatta (UCPN-Maoist), has been accused of using this welfare fund as his personal slush fund, spending freely on foreign trips, fuel expenses, and furniture for his residence.
- Traffic police recently introduced CCTV cameras to monitor driving tests, long notorious for inviting bribes that find their way into the pockets of middlemen, traffic police, bureaucrats, and ministers. Alam has been accused of pressuring Binod Adhikari, who was heading the Department of Transport Management,

to remove the cameras. When Adhikari refused to comply, he was transferred back to the ministry.

Alam's is no ordinary case, involving two high-profile instances of blatant corruption. We suffer the consequences of traffic mismanagement every day, and one could not really sink lower than parasitising the one safety net, however inadequate, possessed by those poor Nepalis who keep the country's economy afloat.

Yet the accusations against Alam risk being subsumed in the culture of impunity, political and social, that allows so many to get away with murder. A few headlines, teashop gossip, perhaps a resignation, and Alam will rejoin the ranks of his parliamentary peers,

satisfied with his fun in the sun if a little miffed that it had to end before he was good and ready. Indeed, it may be the foreknowledge that all things must pass that makes for the blatant voracity with which people like Alam stuff their pockets.

Yes, we are outraged when we hear of such cases. Our cynicism, and lack of faith in those meant to represent the best of us, mean we assume all charges are true. This in itself is a tragedy. But our outrage is fatalistic, thus impotent. What to do if so and so does such and such? He's not the first, and certainly not the last.

But we are not so impotent as we make ourselves out to be. If it is true that corruption is so pervasive as to be omnipotent, we cannot plead

helplessness for too long, pointing crooked fingers at crooked politicians. Sooner or later we have to acknowledge that we, too, have a part in corruption, and are culpable.

After all, the Kushwahas (of 'Does a fish in the sea not drink water?' infamy) and Alams of the world are not simply corrupted by power. Power merely raises their capacity to lower their moral standards. But their morals are flawed to begin with, just like ours. A teacher may favour a nephew over a stranger for admission into his school today; as foreign minister tomorrow, he may make his nephew an ambassador. In the absence of moral or legal checks on corrupt behaviour, everything becomes permissible in time.

We are also culpable in thinking that politics is paramount. There are

Corruption is a many-headed Ravana, cut one off and another will take its place

some who feel that if the politics is sorted out through the formulation of a constitutional and legal framework that lays out rights, responsibilities and checks and balances, then a just and humane society will follow. But perhaps it is the other way around. Perhaps if we re-examine our own relationship to law and order, we will be better equipped to deal with power, and less liable to abuse it.

Of course, it's not easy to make things difficult for yourself by, for instance, refusing to pay that bribe to expedite things. But it may be useful to understand that many of Nepal's systems are designed to be difficult precisely so you will seek the easy (and corrupt) way out. If we focus on streamlining such systems in a way that is fair to all – take the example of CCTVs for driving tests – then we can extricate ourselves from the moral morass of day-to-day life in Nepal.

Then we can hone our outrage to a fine edge when we hear of ministerial misdemeanours, and shout out without shame, “Off with his head!”



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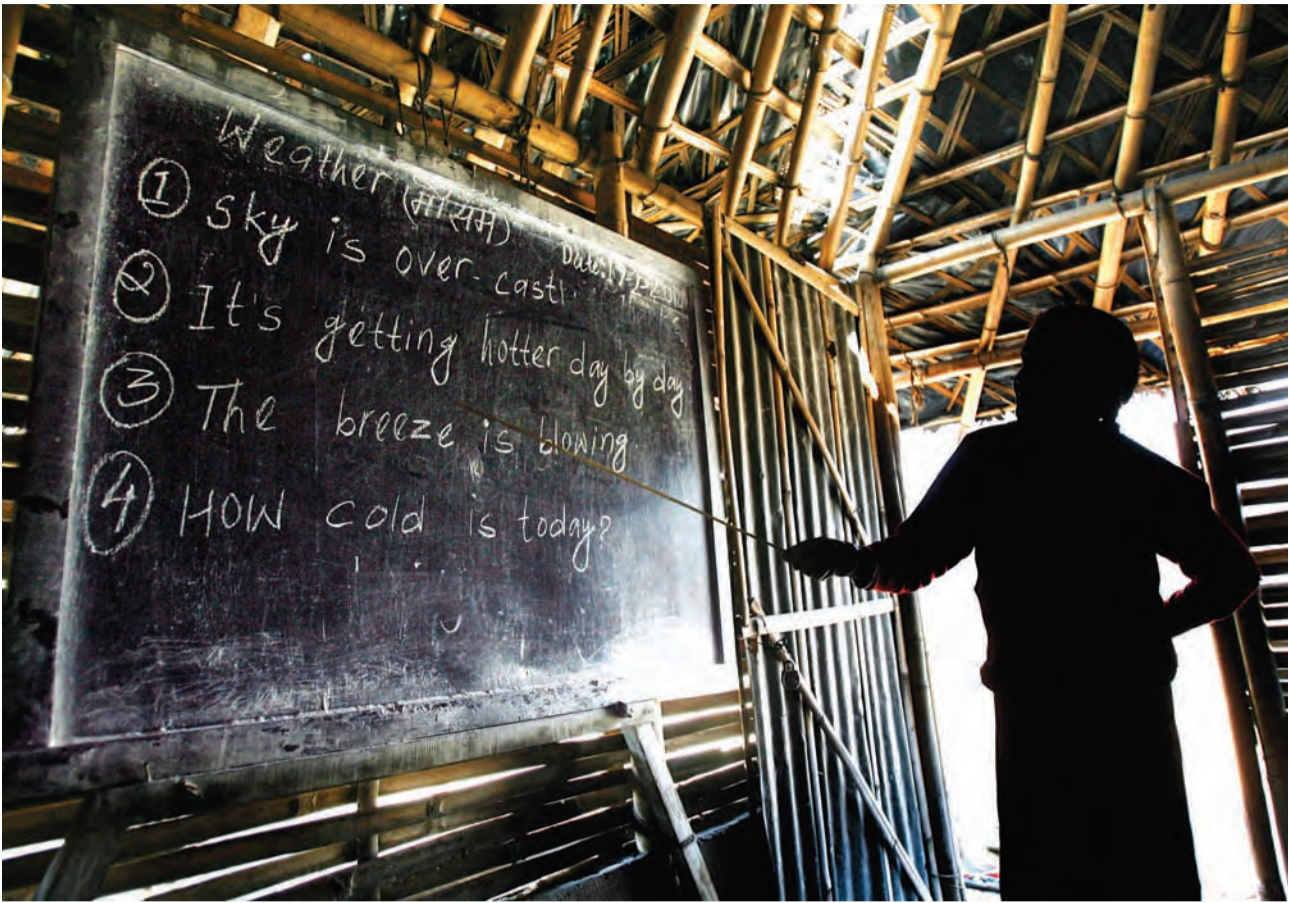
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New home

Last spring, New Zealand journalists Rebecca Todd and Kirk Hargreaves travelled to Nepal and visited Sanischare and Beldangi II, two of the seven camps that housed 100,000 Bhutanese refugees for two decades. The camps are now emptying rapidly, with about half already resettled in third countries, mostly the United States.

Todd and Hargreaves met three families waiting to leave for New Zealand, the Magars, the Odaris, and the Subbas. They spoke to them of their troubled past, the wasted present, and the hopeful future. In the following months, they visited them in their new homes in the suburbs of Christchurch. The Weekend Press ran a special on the Bhutanese refugees in April 2010, excerpts of which have been reproduced here.



The school in Beldangi where refugees being resettled abroad took English lessons.

Suk Maya Magar and her mother Chiniawati are greeted by family members and friends on arrival at Christchurch Airport.

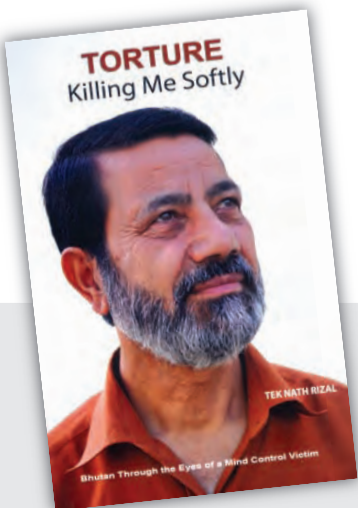


Gross national misery



REVIEW
CK Lal

Tek Nath Rizal's prison memoir narrates Bhutan's crimes against humanity in the court of world history



British India considered the three Himalayan kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal as 'protected' client states. The ruling Ranas of Nepal proved their loyalty to the British Crown with the blood of Gorkha soldiers, the sweat of Tarai farmers and a share from the earnings of Newar traders and secured the right to deal directly with London on most matters. The Chinese occupation of Tibet ensured that Kathmandu could exercise more freedom in its foreign policy than ever before after Indian independence. Ironically, developments beyond Himalayas in the north had a different effect on kingdoms smaller than Nepal. Egged on by his American wife Hope Cooke, the Chogyal of Sikkim ran afoul of the Empress of India, Indira Gandhi. The Chogyal was forced out of his throne in 1975, and his kingdom annexed into the 22nd state of the Indian Union. A few years earlier, New Delhi strategists had engineered the admission of Bhutan into the United Nations to have a handy extra vote. The formal independence of Bhutan was now ensured, but so was its unofficial subjugation. Thimpu lost all control over its foreign policy.

Torture: Killing Me Softly
Tek Nath Rizal
Friends of Bhutan, Kathmandu
2nd Edition, 2010
Page: xiv+175
NPR 450

With a population of over 600,000 Bhutan takes its distinctiveness rather too seriously. During the seventies the country was best known for its 3-D postage stamps, but by the nineties it had become notorious for its inhuman treatment of Lhotsampas: the only country in the world that has forced out one-sixth of its population. Aided and abetted by India, more than 100,000 Bhutan refugees have languished for 20 years in UN-managed camps in eastern Nepal. Western countries have now absorbed half of them, but the resettlement plan runs the risk of being interpreted as acquittal of the repressive regime in Thimpu. Bhutan's best known prisoner of conscience, Tek Nath Rizal, has been a witness as well as victim of his country's ethnic cleansing. In *Torture: Killing Me Softly* he tells his story, perhaps more for the record than anything else, in simple but compelling prose. Rizal has the credentials to present the case of Lhotshampas to the world. Born in 1947 in Lamidara in south Bhutan, he rose to be a member of National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council. When he tried to protect the people he represented in the court of King Wangchuk, Sr., his position became a liability. The royal regime arrested him and put him through the techniques of torture tinpot dictators the world over are infamous for. His book narrates the regime's crimes against humanity before the court of world history. The 14 chapters detail what the world has pretended not to know about Bhutan behind its façade of 'Gross National Happiness'.

Rizal recounts how the oppression of Lhotsampas was planned and systematic rather than the whim of an absolute ruler. However, when the author meanders into mumbo jumbo of "mind control" and gives full vent to his rage, the book tends to lose focus. Some descriptions, however, capture the realities of torture and prolonged solitary confinement. Rizal writes about Rabuna Prison: 'The bird was furiously flying from wall to wall in sheer desperation, and was repeatedly colliding against the rough black wall. Its struggle continued for about an hour and helpless bird fell on the floor.' This understated sentence, like classic prison memoirs of other world leaders, brings out the full horror of what Rizal lived through much more than his seething tirades against the regime. Also none too subtle is Rizal's indictment of the unhelpful attitude of the United Nations. 'I also realised that contrary to the universal principles and the ethos it espouses...people lacking integrity and professionalism can find their way into high echelons of the UN agencies,' he writes. There is little doubt that the UN could have done a lot more a lot sooner than it did for the Lhotshampas. The book is a timely critique of the 'one country, one people' concept and its unsuitability in South Asia's multicultural societies. Rizal's is a reasoned voice for liberty, equality and fraternity in a bastion of institutionalised discrimination in the world.

IN NEPAL

The small silver taxi van jolts along the dusty paths of Camp Sanischare as we scan for signs of Sector H2. As we pull to a stop, a crowd of curious children forms and stays close as we set off in search of Hut 3. Chicken peck at the dust in the narrow paths running between row upon row of bamboo mud huts. Old women raise surprised eyes from their sweeping and point us around corners until we arrive at the Magar family home. Though nominally identical, their hut stands out with its small, tidy garden, painted walls and straight bamboo fence.

Grandmother Chiniawati invites us in and quickly sends some children scurrying off to fetch her daughter Suk Maya and two grandchildren Sofiea and Anil Dip from school. Suk Maya arrives in a rush after being pulled away from her work as a supervisor at the Bajra Foundation, which distributes the large solar ovens dotting the camp. The 35-year-old’s husband walked out years ago and her father died, leaving her to provide for the family.

“After staying 18 years in camps, I am hopeful to do something and have a fruitful life over there in New Zealand... I want to make my children part of the society,” she says. Four generations of the Magar family had previously made their lives in Bhutan, where they were orange farmers. Suk Maya was just 16 when they were forced to leave their whole world behind. “I don’t remember Bhutan, I’m just planning and dreaming about New Zealand,” she says.

Before we leave with promises to see them again, the Magars pose for a photo outside their hut. Their smiles are genuine, but the grandmother’s face reveals the strain of the unknown ahead of her.

IN NEW ZEALAND

Three weeks later, a large welcome party is assembled at Christchurch Airport. As the families arrive they are enveloped in hugs from relatives and introduced to their eager volunteer helpers. The Magar family grab their bags and set off towards their new home in Burnside. Their delight is evident at seeing their rooms. Heads poke into the linen cupboards and unsure hands glide across oven hobs and kitchen drawers. Everyone has a good look at the toilet and tests the water running from bathroom taps. Suk Maya says she can imagine starting a life in this “good place”.

The women are enrolled in English classes and the children in local schools. Adjusting to change and life in New Zealand comes easily to most children, but older family members can struggle. “It should be like home here because I have no home,” says Chiniawati. “I left Bhutan, I’m still new here, maybe after I settle in my new home I will be happy.”

Suk Maya Magar who spent half her life in a refugee camp marvels at the kitchen in her new home in New Zealand.



Khini Maya Subba and Harka Subba are dazzled by the choice at their first visit to a Christchurch supermarket. Food in the refugee camp was only-just-enough lentils and rice.

Padam Maya and husband Jai Narayan Odari start a new life in Christchurch with their son Bhim Kamar (17), grandson Anugrah, 2 months, and granddaughter Sinarika, 17 months.



“We will struggle for full democracy”

Rongthong Kuenley Dorji is the President of the exiled Druk National Congress. After his 1991 arrest in Bhutan, he fled to Nepal, but was re-arrested in 1997 while travelling in India. He was jailed for a year at Delhi’s Tihar Jail and released last year. Nepali Times spoke to Dorji in Kathmandu recently.

Nepali Times: Why did the Bhutan Government exile you?
Rongthong Kuenley Dorji: In 1991, the royal government of Bhutan had me arrested and tortured for 50 days at the Royal Bodyguard headquarters at Dechencholing palace, Thimphu, for extending my support to the Lhotshampa agitation. After my release, I fled Bhutan and took refuge in Nepal for fear of re-arrest, torture, and elimination. The royal government feared the possibility of a joint rebellion by the Sharchop and Lhotshampa communities, and made an example of me to pre-empt this.

Did the Indian Government give any reason for your detention in 1997?
Initially the Foreigner Regional Registration Offices arrested

me for travelling in India without valid documents, even though I had documents from the Nepali Government. In any case, Bhutanese nationals don’t need documents to travel in India, according to the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 1949.

Later, the Bhutanese Government produced fabricated charges against me and requested my extradition. I was imprisoned in Tihar Jail for a year. I was released on bail, though my movements were restricted to Delhi, and on 21 April, 2010, the Indian Government dropped extradition proceedings against me on instruction from the Bhutanese Government.

The regime in Bhutan claims the eviction of the Lhotshampas is not ethnic cleansing. What is your view?
I agree that it was not a case of ethnic cleansing. There was an issue of non-Bhutanese ethnic Nepalis in Bhutan. The confusion was greater because one could hardly differentiate between genuine Bhutanese of Nepali origin and non-Bhutanese of Nepali origin. Innocent people preferred to flee Bhutan than stay. During the day, the Bhutanese king would appeal to the Lhotshampas not to leave their ancestral land but at night the army would forcefully evict them. The demand for human rights was totally unacceptable to the king.

What is your assessment of the move towards democracy in Bhutan?
A real sense of democracy is absent in Bhutan. The functioning of the current so-called democratic government is like the earlier monarchy. The king appears to be omnipotent and omnipresent. Fundamental democratic rights enshrined in

the constitution are still neglected. A glaring example is the violation of the right to life of political prisoners. But an irreversible democratic process has begun in Bhutan. We will continue to struggle for the establishment of genuine democracy, and urge the international community, led by India, to counsel Bhutan to move towards genuine democratisation.

Nearly half of the refugees will soon have been resettled in a third country. Do you think they should have been resettled or repatriated?
We have always supported the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, but my party respects the choice of individual Bhutanese refugees. We will fight for the dignified repatriation of those Bhutanese refugees whose choice is repatriation.

What is the future strategy of your Druk National Congress?
Our main aim is to participate in forthcoming general elections of 2013 and work towards the repatriation of refugees and their participation in a democratic process. As an initial strategy, DNC has formed an alliance with other exiled political parties and human rights organisations. We have agreed to work for the participation of those exiled in the elections, the dignified repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners, the promotion and strengthening of the existing bonds of friendship between the peoples of Bhutan, India, and Nepal, and the mobilisation of the international community and all well-wishers for our cause.

Think outside the box

Narayan Wagle in *Nagarik*,
19 January

नागरिक

The chances of Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a consensus government is as remote as the formation of a coalition government made up of other parties. The reason is that the NC has no confidence in the Maoists’ commitment to the peace process. But NC should think this through: can Nepali politics ever be stable by keeping the Maoists out of power?

The NC has concluded that the peace process did not progress during the time of Dahal’s premiership. But we should remember that disqualified PLA combatants left the cantonments only after Dahal told them to. He could not stop UNMIN from leaving, and has now agreed to bring the ex-combatants under the Special Committee. Now, to settle the internal issue of integration and rehabilitation Dahal needs to be in government.

Maoist support in the CA is crucial for constitution writing. Continuing with an unelected and unaccountable government after the CA expires on 28 May will be unconstitutional and an apolitical step. This will take the country off the democratic track. If the NC backs a Maoist-led government the UML will not stay in the

opposition. And even if it does, that won’t make any difference. Madhesi and other political parties might also join the coalition. The interim constitution has emphasised the formation of a consensus government for constitution writing, the majoritarian formula was added later.

The NC and other parties think it is unsafe to give Dahal premiership again. But if he couldn’t even change the army chief, how can he capture state power? Dahal can’t last long without support from other parties in a coalition. He can’t afford to jeopardise Nepal’s relations with the international community, and Dahal knows that it is not sustainable to give provocative speeches about a country and then meet the envoy of the same country.

Dahal may lead the government, but his policies will be forged by the common agenda of the coalition partners. Divided politics has never met the aspirations of the Nepali people. One thousand of them leave the country every day for employment abroad.

NC president Sushil Koirala should directly sit for talks with Dahal and tell him the NC will accept his leadership and ask him for details of his programs and policies. Having the Maoists on board a democratic path will end the current political uncertainty and doubt. By giving Dahal leadership, the country’s biggest party will be engaged in political process. Besides, what is the alternative to Dahal? A non-Maoist coalition? We have tried that.

Who will die for Prachanda now?

Editorial in *Jana Astha*, 19 January

आस्था

Two days after he assured people that there would be anew government in two days Prachanda announced that he would expand the YCL to 500,000 to launch a revolt to capture power. People have right to know what kind of revolt he is thinking of, and for whom.

Is it for the prime minister’s chair that Nepali youth will have to sacrifice their lives? Tens of thousands were killed in the war, but what has Prachanda’s leadership offered?

Has Prachanda done anything in favour of people as a prime minister? He lives a luxurious life in Baluwatar, has nominated relatives to the CA, provided them with state facilities, bargained for the price for CA members, protected those accused of Ram Hari Shrestha’s murder and the Yarshagumba trade. He sometimes worships buffalos and at other times rubs shoulders with royalists.

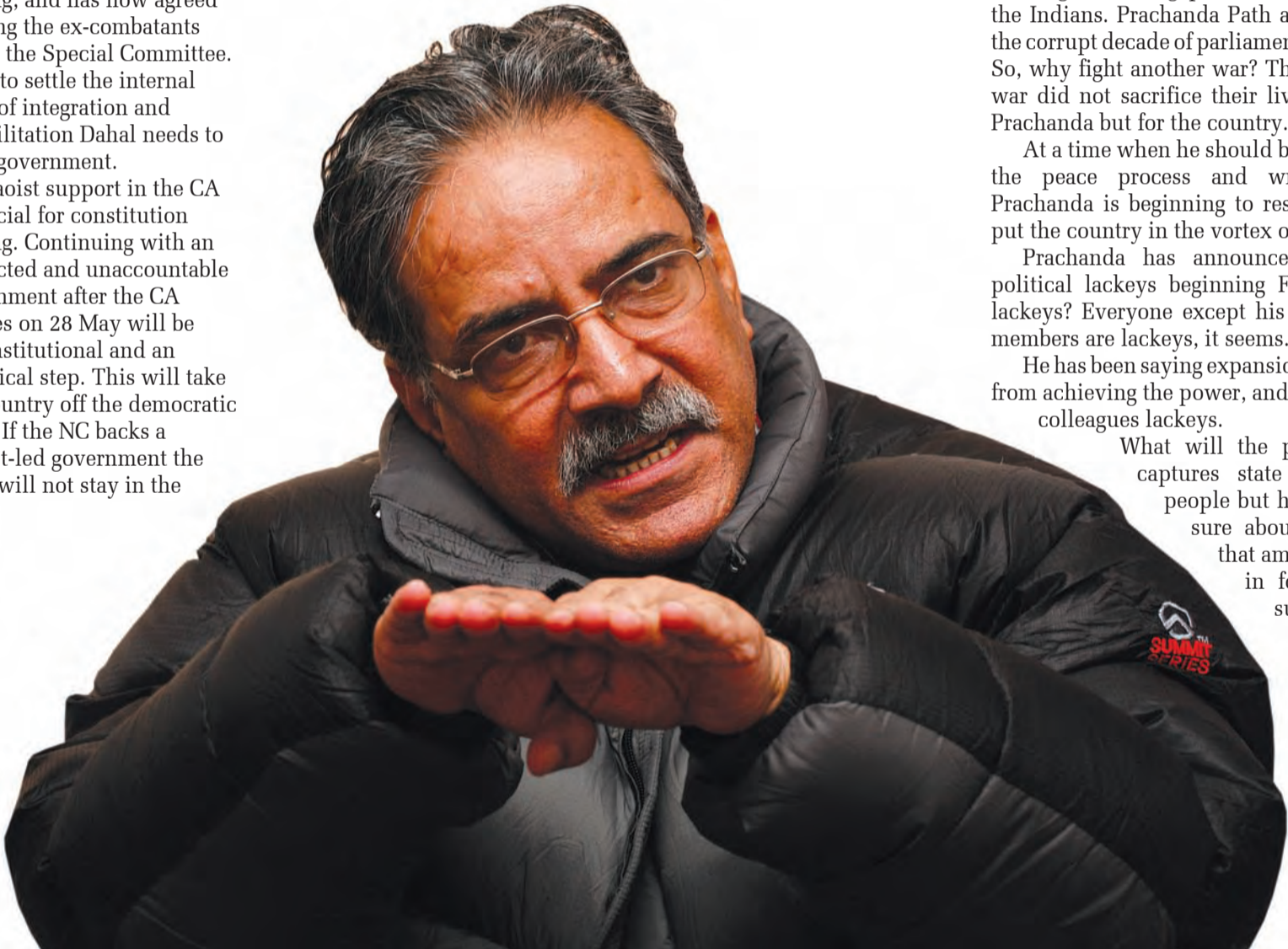
He goes to Singapore and London to try to appease the Indians. Prachanda Path appears no different from the corrupt decade of parliamentary politics of the 1990s. So, why fight another war? Those who died during the war did not sacrifice their lives for Sita, Prakash and Prachanda but for the country.

At a time when he should be busy trying to conclude the peace process and writing the constitution, Prachanda is beginning to resemble Pol Pot. This has put the country in the vortex of a dangerous maelstrom.

Prachanda has announced an offensive against political lackeys beginning February. Who are these lackeys? Everyone except his own cronies, his family members are lackeys, it seems.

He has been saying expansionists would be prevented from achieving the power, and has been calling his own colleagues lackeys.

What will the people get if Prachanda captures state power? Not only the people but his own comrades are not sure about it. The history has it that ambitious leaders have died in four ways: assassination, suicide, insanity or heart failure. Let’s hope Prachanda is an exception and the country would not suffer more from his madness.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Ice breaker

Editorial in *Janadesh*, 18 January

जनादेश

For now, the prospect of derailing the peace process has been averted after the Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and caretaker Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal signed a three-point agreement on Friday. The government following the orders from its collaborators wanted to wreck the peace process by sending the UNMIN back without

making alternative arrangement in place. Just one day ahead of the UNMIN exit, a mechanism has been formed singing a three-point agreement, which has temporarily avoided untoward confrontation.

The UCPN (Maoist) had been insisting on the extension of the UNMIN mandate until 28 May during which the integration process should have been completed, or else an alternative arrangement was to be made to replace the UNMIN. The government and coalition leaders were

not showing any interest in forming an alternative arrangement due to which it was feared the peace process will dissipate. Now, a six-member team, two members each from the big three parties, has been entrusted with the task that UNMIN was doing. The government and its coalition partners were forced to agree on an alternative arrangement. The efforts made by UCPN (Maoist) have given a new hope toward the peace process.

As the mechanism has taken over, the peace process is now on track.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal termed it an “ice breaker”. The ice has not started melting yet but the regressive forces are already involved in hatching new conspiracies to fail the peace process. There is still hope if the progressive forces come together and remained united, there is a chance the deadlock will end. A consolidated movement of progressive and revolutionary forces is the need of the hour to preserve the achievement made so far.

Seeds of hope

Subodh Raj Pyakyurel in
Himal Khabarpatrika,
15-29 January

हिमाल
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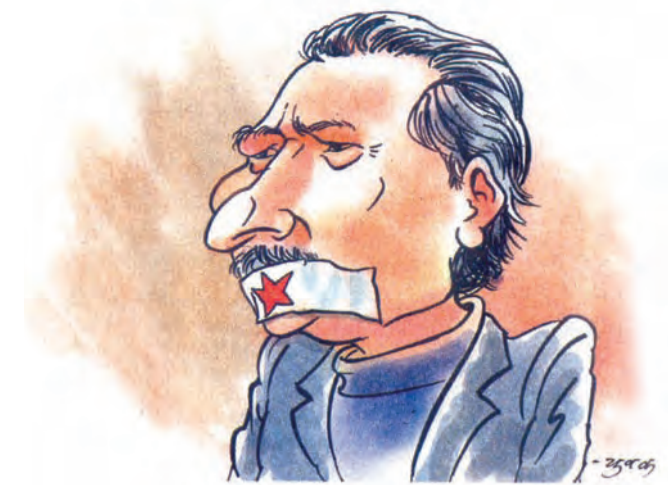
I have no doubts about the prosperous future of this country, and I am thrilled with the number of positive news items about agriculture

have made a former DDC chairman prosperous. In Nawaparasi, a former chief of the CIAA and several bureaucrats have invested Rs 100 thousand each and started cultivating medicinal plants with an initial capital of Rs 10 million. In Jiri, I met a German national who has been raising Alpacas to produce wool that is worth about Rs 100,000 per kilogram on the international market.

While on one hand, there are amazing stories of entrepreneurship from across Nepal, there are also people who do nothing for themselves and

only loot hard earned money from others. Schools are being extorted, businessmen are forced to cough up money. The unholy alliance between the politicians and bureaucrats are stripping the country bare of its trees, our mountains are being

lately. Farmers in Mustang and Kaski are earning millions from mushroom farming. In Kabilbastu, a botanist has created a unique medicinal plant which he sells at Rs 700 per bulb. Hill oranges growing in the Tarai town of Inaruwa



War of words

Ganga BC in *Kantipur*, 19 January

कान्तिपुर

The squabble among party leaders in the UCPN (Maoists) has also affected its publication, Janadesh weekly. After tensions rose between party leaders, the pro-establishment editor was removed at midnight and vice chairman Baburam Bhattarai criticised the party leadership in its own mouthpiece.

Manrishi Dhitai had interviewed Bhattarai soon after he boycotted a Maoist training program this week. The two editors had a major disagreement after editor Komal Baral refused to publish that interview. The argument was over whether or not to print an interview with Bhattarai. The editor wanted to edit the interview. There was a huge row at the paper's office in Sankhamul and the editor was sacked.

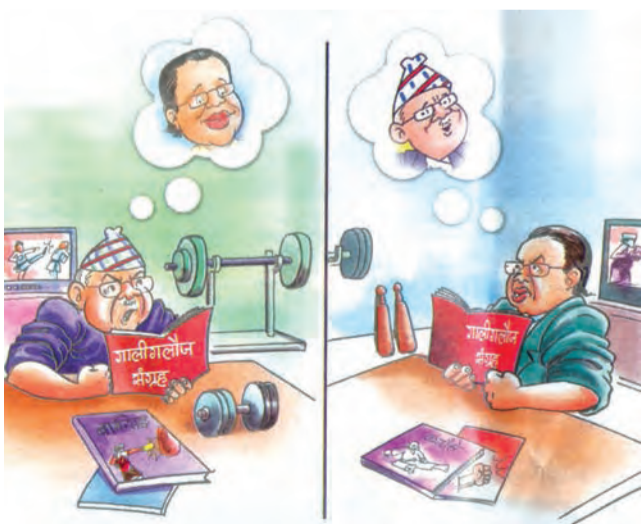
Baral claimed that he was removed at the instruction of Baburam Bhattarai who also heads the party's promotion department, "I only said that we should not publish the interview as it will invite controversy," he said. Dhital on the other hand claims that Baral was removed at his own request. "He asked us to take back his name if we are publishing the interview."

Baral belongs to the Baidya faction and Dhital supports Bhattarai. The front page of Tuesday's Janadesh has openly criticised Dahal in an article headlined 'Our Objection'. It termed Dahal's refusal to allow Bhattarai to voice his dissent as an example of slave mentality. "Janadesh which has always supported debate, can never agree to the way Baburam Bhattarai was stopped from expressing his opinion at the party meet," the paper wrote.



File in Baburam Bhattarai's hand: Note of dissent

नागरिक Deben in *Nagarik*, 19 January



Book in Madhav Kumar Nepal's hand: Insults encyclopedia
Book on his table: Boxing
Book in Jhala Nath Khanal's hand: Insults encyclopedia
Book on his table: Karate

नेपाल Rabindra in Nepal, 23 January

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Post-UNMIN chow min



It all started with Jhallu Babu yawning away at the Nepal Tourism Year official launch at the stadium. Then Ram Chunderji started nodding off on candid camera, and at one point snored away with his mouth open. Not that it wasn't a rousing ceremony with imitation North Korean mass gymnastics and speeches galore. But the stress and sleepless nights seem to be taking their toll on both future prime minister wannabes. The two admitted later that the sound of ultralights sounded had a hypnotic effect. Maybe. The Mule, for one, is sure **NTY 2011** will be a roaring success as long as our leaders go to sleep and don't bother us too much for the rest of the year.



Now that UNMIN has left, what we are left with is chow min politics and no one to blame. The Maoist army is formally coming under the Special Committee at a grand ceremony on Saturday at Shaktikhor. Comrade Fearsome had quite a lot of convincing to do to get his recruits to agree, and his line of argument made a lot of sense. He told them, "Look I already declared that you guys were under the Special Committee two years ago and that made no diff, so what's the big deal?" Such is the Chairman's oratorical skills that did the trick. But guess who nearly sabotaged Saturday's function, none other than Come-red **JN** who tried to convinced **PKD** the handover should be done when he became **PM** and not by Madhav ("Lame Duck") Nepal. But someone else in the nick of time stepped in to sabotage the sabotage.



Now that UNMIN has left, there is no reason why we can't revert to accepted vocabulary instead of the laboured politically-correct jargon intended to appease the Baddies in 2006. Here is the new glossary:

UNMIN terminology	New terminology
Maoist Cantonment	Baddie Campsite
Maoist Sub-cantonment	Baddie Locale
PLA	Ex-combatants
Arms management	Disarmament
Integration	Demobilisation
SSR	DDR
Agreement on Monitoring of Arms and Armies	One Country One Army



Meanwhile, we are back to mangalman vis-à-vis the election of a new prime minister exactly where we were six months ago when **MKN** stepped down. Whatever deal is struck to form a coalition it ain't goin nowhere, the reason is not the tripartite constipation afflicting the Big Three, but rival candidates within the parties canceling each other out. To summarise:
1. **PKD** is torpedoing **BRB**'s chances
2. **SBD** is pulling the rug from under **RCP**
3. **JNK** is check-mated by **KPO**, and slapped on the face in Itahari



And if you are not already utterly confused, then you haven't even started looking at the criss-crossing alliances. Junketeering Suji is not supporting any kangresi for the post of prime minister, she is backing the **UML's JNK**. **PM MKN** would prefer the **NC's RCP** rather than **JNK** from his own party to head a new govt. **PKD** will back anyone from any party, just to keep **BRB** out of the race. Lion Brave is the only non-bahun among the protagonists, but this hasn't stopped him from out-doing even his brahmin colleagues in fratricidal infighting.



Now, this is where the plot thickens even further. Kangresi middle-roaders Sitaula, Shekhar, Gagan & Co are on record backing **BRB** to lead a coalition. But they are all under-estimating Herr Fuhrer's capacity for intrigue. The Chairman has the knack of building the perfect Venus Fly Trap for greedy politicians from other parties. As soon as it looks like any one else is getting close to forming a govt, he will simply dangle the PMship in front of **RCP**, **SBD**, **JNK** who then immediately sit on their hind quarters,

start drooling, wagging their tails and saying "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full." The latest is that since **RCP** is out of the race, **SBD** thinks it's his turn to be prime minister for the fifth time in history. Have to give it to the man, he keeps coming back for more humiliation.



Ever since **RCP** stepped down, Netaji Subhas has been promising everyone the next session of the **CA** will produce a rabbit out of the hat. Given the tangle of self-interest listed above, he doesn't seem so sure anymore.



COLOURFULLY NEPAL:

Tarai women after their dance performance at the launch of Nepal Tourism Year at Dasrath Stadium on 14 January.



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