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 renge. 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
DAHAL ON WAR PATH AGAIN

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 Shikhluk camp on Saturday.

After all, despite the Chairman’s unattractive options, UNMIN has left (the only concession from Karim Landgren being the violently red scarves sported by herself and a colleague at a 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 revolutionary cause by lighting 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 totalitarianise deepen the gulf of mistrust between the Maoists and the rest, who are ever more determined to exclude them from power. Fudged 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 does them and the rest 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 (Bharatmuni) Bhattarai, the boycotts the training program upon learning that he is not to be allowed to read out his statement of dissent; his wife and politician member Hilsa Yami is hushed off the stage when she asks for clarification. The cracks may be panned over 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.

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

SACERPHAL

- 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

CYNCAL

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.

GET ZUCKERBERG

Dahal, Khanal, Poudyal, Nepal? What’s the difference? Where’s Nani Maiya, when we need her the most (‘Seizing the moment’, Dakamant Jaijyal, #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 petrol, no pati, no pauwa, and so on and so damn forth. Let a nerd like Zuckerberg buy Nepal and run it. I’m sick of it all.

Thurpansh

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Isn’t it ironic that these so called student neta like Hima Sharma 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 what we are shown 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.

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 gains 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 will make people to think on the right path and not to chance any persons to act against the law. A doctor has the 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 work within the boundaries of law. Make sure that the patients’ forms are properly filled, consents taken, risks explained. Doctors barey care to tell about the side effects of the drugs they prescribe, explain the complications of the disease etc. That’s inviting trouble 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.

Kiran L

Doctor Who

Q. What is the most desirable political alliance?

Amit

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

Total votes: 1,193

Weekly Internet Poll #537
E
ven 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 candidacy
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 candidacy
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

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.
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 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 janamir 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.”
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 way in transforming the way Nepalis conduct 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 Minister and Deputy Prime Minister 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.

We really expect the NRN fraternity to lead the transformation by changing these fossilized Nepali ways of conducting public meetings. We should be planning for these transformations 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 Minister and Deputy Prime Minister 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 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 Nepal, 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.
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. 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 bourgeois 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 apologists to withdraw their children from reputed private English schools?

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 examples of good government schools: Adarsha School of Sainbu of Lalitpur district, which according to Shikshak magazine has made a stunning turnaround in the last three years. Want another example? Sarbajanik Lower Secondary School at Sisawani in Morang. Shikshak reports that it has made a substantial turnaround during the last year. Simple question to Comrade Lohani: why don’t you and your party work towards inspiring more schools to be like Adarsha Soul and Sarbajanik?

PM election
President Ram Baran Yadav on Sunday 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.

Question for Comrade Lohani
Can you force your Chairman from taking his grand-daughter out of her private school? Bet not.
The Annapurna 100 ultra race was a fitting kick off for Nepal Tourism Year 2011

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
www.annapurna100.com
www.trailrunningnepal.org
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.”

Meet your feet

Ab Ranjit, almost two years old, stares at his feet every day, according to artist Ashmina Ranjit (above). Moulds of his feet, that is, are 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**

Graham: an eclipse, exhibition of paintings by Sagar Manandhar, 23 January to 6 February, Gallery Husin, 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 Cafe, Jhamsikhel

YES Nepal Sunday Screening: Addicted to Plastic: The Rise and Demise of a Modern Miracle. 19 January, 5pm onwards, Youth Engagement in Sustainability, Baneshwor

Discussion on the movie Dabangg. 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 Cafe every Tuesday from 6.30pm, and Arabian Nights at The Cafe every Friday from 6.30pm at Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4493062

Newari cuisine at Hotel Himalaya, local favours to warm you up this winter. Every Friday, 6.30pm onwards, Rs 1100 Net 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, 4203346

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

**MUSIC**

Absolute Live Music, by Rashmi & Kitka Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. 7.30pm onwards. Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5548504, abar@wlink.com.np

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Sunday Jazz Brunch, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np

Tai Chi 3 month course, starts 22 January, 8am to 10.30am, 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-taku, 96088 91048 / 984124368, hbmc.programs@gmail.com, www.hbmc.org

**DIINING**


**GETAWAYS**

Park Village Resort, Saturdays and Sundays combo package with swimming, lunch and a bottle of beer. Budhanikunta, Rs 990 for adults and Rs 800 for children, call 4275280 for reservations

The Dwarika’s Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Drukhel, 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, offers weekend package with swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. Gokarna, 4910193

**YES Nepal Sunday Screening: Addicted to Plastic: The Rise and Demise of a Modern Miracle.**

**Discussion on the movie Dabangg.**

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**Koto Restaurant, whether it’s the fresh sashimi, sushi, sukiyaki or tempura, their experienced Japanese and Nepali chefs are sure to impress. Darbar Marg, 4203346**

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

**Absolute Live Music, by Rashmi & Kitka Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. 7.30pm onwards. Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5548504, abar@wlink.com.np**

**Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Sunday Jazz Brunch, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np**

**Tai Chi 3 month course, starts 22 January, 8am to 10.30am, 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-taku, 96088 91048 / 984124368, hbmc.programs@gmail.com, www.hbmc.org**

**Park Village Resort, Saturdays and Sundays combo package with swimming, lunch and a bottle of beer. Budhanikunta, Rs 990 for adults and Rs 800 for children, call 4275280 for reservations**

**The Dwarika’s Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Drukhel, 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, offers weekend package with swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. Gokarna, 4910193**
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.
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. 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 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!”
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 the Himalayas in the north had a different effect on the small kingdoms smaller than Nepal. Egged on by his American wife Hope Cooke, the Chogyal of Sikkim ran afoul of the Empress 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.

Thimpu lost all control over its foreign policy. This ensured, but so was its unof

The formal independence of Bhutan was now achieved, but so was its unhelpful attitude of the United Nations. ‘I also realised that the United Nations...’ writes. There is little doubt that the UN could have done a lot more a lot sooner had it 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... Rizal recounts how the oppression of Lhotsampas was planned and systematic rather than the whim of an absolute ruler. In the nineties it had become notorious for its 3-D postage stamps, but by the nineties it had become notorious for its human 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 Lhotsampas 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...
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 rows upon rows 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.

“As a supervisor at the Bajra Foundation, I want to make my children part of the society,” she says. “I’m just planning 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 Chinawati. “I left Bhutan. I’m still here, maybe after I settle in my new home I will be happy.”

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 to seek refuge in Nepal. The government put a price on my head, resulting in frequent re-arrest, torture, and elimination. The royal government feared the possibility of a joint rebellion by the Sharcho 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?
Rongthong Kuenley Dorji: 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.

What is your view on the human rights situation in Bhutan?
Rongthong Kuenley Dorji: 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. The eviction of those Bhutanese refugees whose choice is repatriation. We have always supported the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, but our 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?
Rongthong Kuenley Dorji: 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, Nepal, and the mobilisation of the international community and all well-wishers for our cause.
Narayan Wagle in Nagarik, 19 January

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 country is crucial for constitution writing. Continuing with an elected and accountable 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.

Editorial in Jana Astra, 19 January

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 Yarsagumba trade. He sometimes worship 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 light 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.


**Seeds of hope**

Subodh Raj Pyakyurel in *Himal Khabar Patrika*, 15-29 January

I have no doubts about the prosperous future of this country, and I am thrilled with the number of positive news items about agriculture lately. Farmers in Mustang and Kaski are earning millions from mushroom farming. 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 demolished for sand, gravel and other natural resources. Community forests have become the private property of looters.

Most Nepalis don’t really care who gets into government. They will be content as long as there are jobs, there is development and they can work with freedom and dignity. The irony is we are stuck with politicians who don’t even have the moral ground to lecture on good governance.

I suggest we make a consortium of industrious people who have shown by doing that there is hope. I have land in the hills and plains, let me contribute that. Let the scientists contribute their skills and knowledge. Let financial institutions chip in with capital and let the common people invest their labour. Let us build a project where everyone has a stake, where everyone has equal claims on the costs and the profits. If we combine our talents and resources there is no reason our country should lag behind.


**War of words**

Ganga BC in *Kantipur*, 19 January

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 Dhital 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.


**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

Rabindra in Nepal, 23 January

File in Baburam Bhattarai’s hand: Note of dissent

Deben in *Nagarik*, 19 January

Seeds of hope

War of words
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  Battle Campsite
Maoist Sub-cantonment  Battle Locale
PLA  Ex-combatants
Arms management  Disarmament
Integration  Demobilisation
SSR  DDR
Agreement on Monitoring of  One Country One Army
Arms and Armies

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-raders 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 RK, 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.