

NEPALI Times

#540

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16 pages

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

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SLAP-HAPPY: (ADJ.)DAZED, SILLY, OR INCOHERENT FROM OR AS IF FROM BLOWS TO THE HEAD



BIKRAM RAI

The cynics will be gratified by Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal's struggles to cobble together a coalition with his Maoist backers, following his unlikely victory in last week's election. The ongoing brouhaha over the secret seven-point understanding between Khanal and Maoist Chairman Dahal has rendered the highway of leftist solidarity into something of a quagmire. Unfortunately, it is the peace process and constitution writing that are mired; Dahal and Khanal will no doubt find ways to spin their way out.

It's hard to decide what's more incredible about the seven-point deal (see *translation, p15*): the manner in which it came about, or its actual contents. The fact that the leader of a supposedly democratic party can even think of inking such a deal without consulting his own party colleagues (let alone his party's erstwhile coalition allies, Nepali Congress) is disturbing to say the least.

As for the contents, two points in particular offend. The deal implies that the Maoists and UML will take turns to lead government (despite Khanal's backtracking in a subsequent interview with BBC Nepali). This has even led some to suspect that Khanal intends to resign to make way for Dahal just before the 28 May deadline, thereby handing him power at a critical stage, and setting the stage for Maoist rule at a time when no provisions have been made for either a further extension of the CA or fresh elections.

indeed, there is no way that any other political force in the country will willingly agree to what is virtually the resurrection of the PLA.

One might argue that in reality the hardcore of the PLA is actually the YCL, but what is to stop such a separate force recruiting YCL members and other Maoist cadre to maintain its revolutionary character and edge out the influence of the state? Once again, it is only natural for Chairman Dahal to angle for the formation of such a force. For Khanal to do so is an admission of the polity's failure to agree on integration into any or all three existing state security forces (of which the APF came into being only because of the need to combat the Maoists, and which would cease to have a *raison d'être* if the Maoists dissolved their own military forces). It is also terribly poor judgment.

It is not Khanal's 'self-criticism' and weak statements that the contents of the deal were 'just a proposal' that will sink the coalition before it pushes out to sea. It is, as ever, Khanal and Dahal's single-minded lust for power (one ingenuous, the other manipulative, but both wholly destructive), that has done the job.

So what lies ahead for Khanal's government? At the time of going to press, there is still the possibility that UML and the Maoists will come to an agreement on government formation. They will most likely then proceed by the spirit if not the letter of the infamous seven-point deal. Whether they will make any progress towards conclusion of the peace process and constitution-writing will depend largely on whether UML leaders can channel their errant leader appropriately, and whether NC leaders have it in them to make the best of a bad situation in part of their own making.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

SLAP-LUCKY

Jhala Nath, when he was a young Naxalite and Charu Mazumdar's *chela*, was in detention in eastern Nepal and Lila Raj Bista was the Anchaladhis at the time ('Slap-happy', Editorial, #540). Lila Raj was asked to use the stick-and-carrot method by the regime to deal with the young communists. So he started courting Jhala Nath to bring him to the Panchayat system and started inviting him to his residence for dinner. When Jhala Nath was not persuaded, Lila Raj got infuriated one night and spat in his face. This made Jhala a leader. Now, Devi Prasad has slapped him on his cheek and made him the Prime Minister of the Republic of Nepal.

Kale Rai

- Once I was a supporter of Jhala Nath but no more. He is an intellectual who knows how to play with words, can give speeches for hours quoting Lenin, Marx and Mao but does not know or believe in what he says. He became Chairman with the Maoists' support in the name of creating left unity. He did everything to change the equation of Madhav's government, tuning in with Dahal. A puppet is never better than the puppeteer.

He broke the alliance of UML with NC and other parties. An anti-Maoist political alliance of all the parties was broken and a dangerous situation in which the political spectrum is clearly divided into left and right has been created. This is regression in every sense. This alliance won't be able to complete writing of the constitution with consensus. Who will be blamed? UML. What happens in the next election? UML will be further downsized. Congratulations Khanal!

kamal.kishor

WHOSE LOSS?

This is what happened, plain and simple: Dahal wanted power ('NC's loss', Damakant Jayshi, #540). With Gachchadar joining the fray, he knew he couldn't win. Therefore, he figured it would be best to support another candidate so that the new PM would be obligated to the Maoists. Now that Khanal has won, he is indebted to Dahal. Therefore, Dahal and his cohorts will get some prime positions in the new government. This is what it's all about: maneuvering in such a manner that you and your supporters get power and money.

The Maoists don't want another revolution. Did you read the article on Shaktikhor? ('Shaktikhor waits', Dambar K Shrestha, #540) Their fighters have all started families and want to make a life for themselves. The rank and file has finally seen the light: they were used by the Maoist party leaders to get money and power. Again, it's all about money and power: not constitution, not equality, not government structure.

hange

- It is high time for the parties to split. Nepali Congress should get rid of their deadwood leaders; they have outlived their utility, namely Koirala, Deuba, Sujata and their cronies. Let the new generation revolt and take over. Let them realign as liberal democrats.

UML also must split; the Khanal faction and the Oli-Madhav faction, for the sake of clean politics. No use misleading the electorate with a fake communist title. Let them follow the Euro-Communists' example and form a Social Democratic Party.

The Maoists also should split and the

Ultras and the Moderates should divide and let people to follow one or the other as per their choice.

The Madhesi parties should join the mainstream as national parties and not be limited to regional politics as we are all Nepalis. Let bygones be bygones. Let all contribute to rebuild Nepal and not waste our energy in squabbles.

Ghuc Chaku Naran

BUMPY ROAD AHEAD

The nation got its 34th PM after a long political impasse ('Khanal's road from victory', Damakant Jayshi, #540). The sacrifice displayed by the Maoists at the most crucial and vital time has registered them as one of the most responsible parties of the country and showed why people made them the largest party. They are not just the largest party in number but in the size of heart also. Let us not only highlight the challenges ahead of the new government; there is more opportunity ahead. Finally the people are seeing 'the light at the end of tunnel'.

ani

- To ani -- that 'light' at the end of the tunnel that you see...is the 'headlight' of the train called 'disaster' which is heading towards you.

Tulsi

PEOPLE'S PRESIDENT

Our President Dr Ram Baran Yadav is the only politician in Nepal who is mature, sophisticated, understands politics and diplomacy, and is also a committed nationalist ('Presidential poise', Prashant Jha, #540).

Deepak Bista

- It appears that Dr Yadav went there as a Nepali leader and not as an ethnic Madhesi operative with an agenda or as a cunning and greedy attention-seeking political sell-out like Sujata, Surya Thapa, Oli, and Baburam. Mr. President, well done. Keep it up. We are with you.

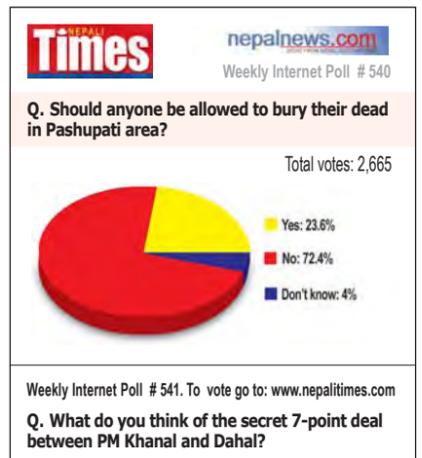
rita

YO BBC HO

It indeed is sad that the BBC Nepali Service will no longer be available in short-wave transmission ('Making the cut', Rubeena Mahato, #540). But a glimmer of hope remains for the service to really dominate the online sphere as the possibilities here remain infinite.

Also, as discussed in the article, by joining hands with more local stations the service can reach more people who can't otherwise access proper news and analysis except from the state-run PR machine in the form of Radio Nepal, in better quality than that of SW. Good luck!

Birajman



Trial by fire



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Jhala Nath Khanal's election as PM is good news, for it breaks the stagnation that had marked politics for some time and ends the effort to 'isolate and encircle' the Maoists that had been the guiding principle of the previous government. But whether Khanal can go beyond that – to achieve his stated objectives of finishing up the peace process, writing the constitution, and providing a semblance of governance – really depends on how well he manages contradictions and mediates between conflicting interests. His first week in office does not offer too much reason for hope.

The controversy over the seven-point agreement and the home ministry is instructive. To get the Maoists on his side, Khanal signed the seven-point deal. He did not show it to his party for he knew that it would never get passed – a clear sign of political insecurity. Once the details emerged, he had to spend the better part of the week apologising to and convincing his colleagues that this was not a sell-out. In the process, even though the Maoists understand his constraints, their trust in his ability to deliver has diminished considerably.

How Khanal balances Oli-Nepal and Dahal, who in turn has to manage his own internal party dynamics and thus can yield only so much, will determine the composition, character and stability of this government. It will remain in place for a while, for even if the Maoists do not join the government, they cannot withdraw support immediately. Whether the government is functional or not depends on how Khanal reaches out to the multiple domestic and international constituencies that are suspicious of his intentions.

Take governance first. No government can really solve the structural ills that plague Nepal with a magic wand, from unemployment to power cuts to impunity. But Khanal has an additional complication. His alliance with the Maoists is a manifestation of the deep resentment against India in a large section of Nepal's political class. Delhi's flawed uni-dimensional policy is responsible in large measure for such an alliance having come into force.



ANANDA RAM DANGOL

But forming a government that India may not like is one thing. Running such a government is something else. If the folks in South Block and the CGO complex decide that it is in their interest to erode the legitimacy of this government, they have a range of instruments at their disposal. These include delaying fuel supply; turning a blind eye to armed criminal groups operating in the Tarai; encouraging anti-government movements; and tightening the screws on trade issues, monetary supply, investments, and tourist inflow.

The root source of the idea of a separate Maoist force, or a mixed force, remains a bit of a mystery. It was among the four models the Maoists had presented; a section in the previous government and some in the army also toyed with it as a way of keeping the purity and 'institutional sanctity' of existing security organs intact and eliminate the chance of Maoist infiltration. But the way it was inserted in the seven-point agreement has generated suspicion among both NC and the army that this is a Maoist ploy to retain a parallel force. With negotiating positions constantly shifting, non-Maoist members of the Special Committee are now more comfortable with the idea of higher numbers in the army than in other forces.

Till there is a broader consensus, the peace process cannot move for the simple reason that all decisions have to be passed unanimously by the Special Committee.

The modality is as important as the politics. NC, and its backers, would not like to see the peace process concluded under this government – for it

could just mean the further consolidation of the existing alliance. At best, the Maoists could decide to take the first step and 'regroup' the combatants to show they are committed to the process. But movement beyond that is difficult to envisage.

If the peace process does not move beyond that point, it is difficult to see all parties agreeing on even

the framework constitution that is being discussed at multiple levels. The Maoist incentive to compromise on contentious issues diminishes without a major share in the power structure and an agreeable model of integration. NC incentives to compromise will be even lower if the government is seen to be geared to 'isolate' them. What is more likely

The many difficulties faced by PM Khanal may well result in another extension of the Constituent Assembly

now though is another extension of the CA – sources tell us the unwritten eighth point in the deal is to use 'regrouping' and discussions in the Constitutional Committee as evidence of 'progress' and as a basis to propose a six-month extension.

Madhav Nepal only had to stay rigid, keep the Maoists out, and bank on India to do a fair share of political management for him. With more powerful adversaries, demanding allies, and an ambitious agenda, Khanal has a far tougher job ahead. 🇳🇵



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THIS WEEK

Sworn in

President Ram Baran Yadav administered the oath of office and secrecy to newly elected Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal on Sunday, upon his return from a 10-day visit to India. However, Khanal has not been able to form a cabinet due to differences with his key ally, UCPN (Maoist), on the allocation of important ministries. Despite the formation of an eight-member taskforce to address power-sharing, the lack of progress led to the Maoists announcing Thursday morning that they would not join the government after all. They will however continue to support the UML-led government.

SC order

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Election Commission to issue voter cards only on the basis of citizenship certificates as it is the only document that establishes the nationality of an individual. A special bench of justices Bharat Raj Uprety, Balram KC and Bharat Bahadur Karki also directed the government to make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible to issue citizenship certificates to eligible individuals. Earlier, the Court had issued a stay order on the Commission's decision to distribute voter cards based on documents of identity other than a citizenship certificate. The Commission itself had relented to pressure from various Madhes-based parties, who protested the requirement for a citizenship certificate.

Fading light

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) increased loadshedding to 14 hours a day from Monday, up from 12 hours a day. Power will



be cut off twice a day, every day, in seven-hour slots. Nepal has been facing increasing power shortages over the years, particularly in winter when the water levels in the rivers go down. All hydropower projects in Nepal, with the exception of Kulekhani, are run-of-the-river projects.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

The goose strikes back

We should be more interested in why the near-agreement between the Maoists and the rest at Gokarna fell through than in the recent seven-point agreement



MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

The latest twist in Nepali politics reminds one of the fable of the goose and the golden egg. A farmer has a goose that lays a golden egg every day. But greed overtakes the farmer, who wants all the gold at once. So he kills the source of his greatest fortune and we all know what he found.

The only change to that famous tale in Nepal's context is that the goose has hit back, and in what style. Instead of gold, rotten eggs are on the faces of all those within and outside the country who thought they had cornered the goose—Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal—to extract more concessions from him. They had the one-point agenda of doing everything they could to prevent Dahal from becoming prime minister.

Dahal, the goose, had finally started delivering on his promises after refusing for over two years. This, despite being under tremendous pressure from within his party, with the Mohan Baidya faction forcing the official party goal towards revolt and Baburam Bhattarai beginning a series of notes of dissent.

Of course Dahal's track record on honouring even written commitments is not impressive. He has the proven

reputation of saying three different things to three different people on the same topic, all within a span of six hours.

But in politics you cannot have permanent enemies (or friends). So even when he started delivering (official handover of his party-controlled army to the government) and agreed to the integration/rehabilitation package suggested by caretaker Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal at Gokarna Resort on 26 January, NC and UML reverted to their old stance of 'everything now and here'. We lost a very good opportunity to resolve the thorny issue of combatant integration and power-sharing.

Something happened between the 26 January Gokarna meeting and the follow-up at Hotel Radisson on 28 January. Those in the know say it was NC's Krishna Sitaula, one of the members of the taskforce formed to work on the modality of integration/rehabilitation, who spoiled the atmosphere. He insisted that the Maoists first agree on all of NC/UML's conditions before they could claim leadership of the consensus government. The Maoists hardened their position, saying they wouldn't accept any pre-conditions to leading a consensus government. Ram Chandra Poudel and Sher

Bahadur Deuba of NC and UML chief Jhala Nath Khanal were more than happy for the chance they got to stake their own claims to the prime ministership.

So what did the modern goose do? It effected one of the most outrageous deals in Nepali politics. So outrageous that it has just one destination: the dustbin. The two communist chiefs have agreed to something that is clearly beyond their mandate and authority.

But the question we need to ask is not to do with the contents of the secret seven-point agreement between Dahal and Khanal. The question is how and why the agreement of Gokarna was torpedoed and in whose interest.

There's a lesson here for the Indian political leadership as well. Nepal's case is a classic example of how you can screw it all up. If you leave everything to the babus in the Ministry of External Affairs and intelligence officials, this is what you get. The one-point agenda of 'No Dahal' is silly. There needs to be a review of this approach.

In the meantime, NC needs to reach out to Dahal and his party. This is in the best interest of the peace process and constitution-writing. Only those who have a personal axe to grind (or vested interests) will find fault in this approach. damakant@gmail.com

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Beyond the HR department



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Two conferences on human resources (HR) are taking place in Kathmandu this month. The first, a two-day program organised by the Nepal Banking Training Institute (NBTI) and its partners, began yesterday. The second, by Growth Sellers, will take place later this month. Both conferences feature domestic and international experts who will share insights in the standing-room-only venues with participants from both the private and the public sector.

In the last three years, there's been a resurgence of interest in HR management. The number of firms to which organisations outsource their recruiting work has grown. Initiatives such as NBTI's HR Club have brought professionals together to share ideas on a regular basis. Organisations, too, have realised that fancy office buildings, sophisticated

machinery, and high starting salaries alone do not mean much without competent employees, or if they leave for other jobs. Investors and entrepreneurs alike have come to accept that their ideas will not have the legs to run with if there is no appropriate workforce.

But why should human resource management remain a concern of only HR professionals? What can organisational heads do for their organisations to attract, retain and grow competent employees in ways that their HR department, busy as it is with everything from organising office picnics to defending managers in the face of staff grievances, cannot do by itself?

A reputation for a good place to work: Organisations have certain reputations as places to work. In these days of Facebook and Twitter, such reputations can be developed or dented rapidly.



"I had the dream about meaningful employment again last night."

Human resources is more than just hiring and firing, it's about being resourceful with the humans who work with you

Instead of only promoting the product- or profit-side issues of one's companies, organisational leaders should think about how they can promote their institutions as good places to work, not only in terms of benefits, but also in terms of professional growth, and point to examples that job-seekers can relate to. Cultivating such a reputation takes a long time, but is worth the effort.

Setting a context for success: Once employees

are hired, the role of senior management is not to micro-manage them. It's to set a context for employees' productivity and success.

True, this is easier said than done. Tolerating screw-ups so long as the employees learn quickly, focusing on achieving agreed-upon goals while leaving the mechanics of how to reach those goals to teams and individuals, removing constraints that teams face, and giving credit openly are some ways senior managers set a context for everyone's success. Often, how an organisation treats employees' mistakes is a good sign of just what sort of context its senior managers have set for success.

Keeping in touch with former employees: Many years ago, I interviewed at a top investment bank in New York. After two rounds of interviews, I was

rejected. What has stayed with me about that bank is that it hosted a dinner for the rejected applicants, where its senior managers basically said: "Sorry this did not work out. But no one knows the future. Let's stay in touch for possible future opportunities."

Granted, the dinner primarily served the bank's own interests. But the gesture made a deep impression: in today's world, no one really knows what the future holds; today's junior staff may leave to run her own company. As such, it's best for the senior managers to stay civil and pleasant with all prospective, present and past employees.

The two Kathmandu conferences are likely to emphasise ways to strengthen the content of an organisation's HR work. This is one side of the equation, since HR professionals have limited influence at most organisations. To help HR really succeed, it's the senior managers who have to continually ask themselves: to attract, retain and grow employees, what can we do that HR alone cannot?

Here for education



Ncell has collaborated with Save the Children's Adopt a School program to support 11 schools in eight districts. The company will adopt five schools in Humla, Nawalparasi, Dailekh, Dhanusha,

and Bajura and set up electronic libraries in schools in Nawalparasi, Sindhupalchok, Kailali, Baglung and Siraha.

Ace artists

Ace Development Bank joined hands with the Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind to organise an art competition for visually impaired students with the theme 'Your Vision of Nepal'. Sabitri Paudel, a sixth grader at Laboratory School, received the first prize of a full scholarship for a year. Her art will be featured on the cover page of the Bank's annual report.

Rescue flights

Qatar Airways has made adjustments to its operations in Egypt to operate outside its curfew timings. The Doha-based airline has also deployed additional capacity since the start of civil unrest in Cairo in order to facilitate passengers departing from Egypt to Doha and other points within the airline's network.



Something for everyone

CG Impex, the sole authorised distributor of LG Mobile for Nepal, has introduced four new models— LG P500 Optimus One, a touchscreen Android smartphone, LG Papaya T300 with SNS application, LG Rosemary S310, and the A165 dual-sim multimedia mobile phone. Every LG model comes with a 12-month warranty on handsets and a 6-month warranty on the battery, and a 2GB memory card.

Latest kick



Morang Auto Works, the sole distributor of Yamaha Motorcycles in Nepal, has launched the Yamaha YBR 125, equipped with a 4-speed gearbox. The bike is available in black, red and red-black and is being introduced at a price of Rs 149,900.

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THIS WEEK

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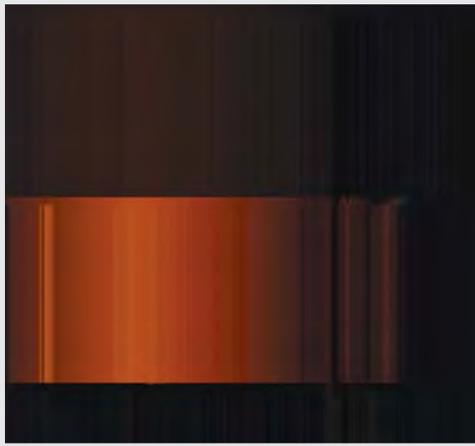
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Of course Dahal's track record on honouring even written commitments is not impressive. He has the proven

reputation of saying three different things to three different people on the same topic, all within a span of six hours.

But in politics you cannot have permanent enemies (or friends). So even when he started delivering (official handover of his party-controlled army to the government) and agreed to the integration/rehabilitation package suggested by caretaker Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal at Gokarna Resort on 26 January, NC and UML reverted to their old stance of 'everything now and here'. We lost a very good opportunity to resolve the thorny issue of combatant integration and power-sharing.

Something happened between the 26 January Gokarna meeting and the follow-up at Hotel Radisson on 28 January. Those in the know say it was NC's Krishna Sitaula, one of the members of the taskforce formed to work on the modality of integration/rehabilitation, who spoiled the atmosphere. He insisted that the Maoists first agree on all of NC/UML's conditions before they could claim leadership of the consensus government. The Maoists hardened their position, saying they wouldn't accept any pre-conditions to leading a consensus government. Ram Chandra Poudel and Sher

Bahadur Deuba of NC and UML chief Jhala Nath Khanal were more than happy for the chance they got to stake their own claims to the prime ministership.

So what did the modern goose do? It effected one of the most outrageous deals in Nepali politics. So outrageous that it has just one destination: the dustbin. The two communist chiefs have agreed to something that is clearly beyond their mandate and authority.

But the question we need to ask is not to do with the contents of the secret seven-point agreement between Dahal and Khanal. The question is how and why the agreement of Gokarna was torpedoed and in whose interest.

There's a lesson here for the Indian political leadership as well. Nepal's case is a classic example of how you can screw it all up. If you leave everything to the babus in the Ministry of External Affairs and intelligence officials, this is what you get. The one-point agenda of 'No Dahal' is silly. There needs to be a review of this approach.

In the meantime, NC needs to reach out to Dahal and his party. This is in the best interest of the peace process and constitution-writing. Only those who have a personal axe to grind (or vested interests) will find fault in this approach. damakant@gmail.com

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Beyond the HR department



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Two conferences on human resources (HR) are taking place in Kathmandu this month. The first, a two-day program organised by the Nepal Banking Training Institute (NBTI) and its partners, began yesterday. The second, by Growth Sellers, will take place later this month. Both conferences feature domestic and international experts who will share insights in the standing-room-only venues with participants from both the private and the public sector.

In the last three years, there's been a resurgence of interest in HR management. The number of firms to which organisations outsource their recruiting work has grown. Initiatives such as NBTI's HR Club have brought professionals together to share ideas on a regular basis. Organisations, too, have realised that fancy office buildings, sophisticated

machinery, and high starting salaries alone do not mean much without competent employees, or if they leave for other jobs. Investors and entrepreneurs alike have come to accept that their ideas will not have the legs to run with if there is no appropriate workforce.

But why should human resource management remain a concern of only HR professionals? What can organisational heads do for their organisations to attract, retain and grow competent employees in ways that their HR department, busy as it is with everything from organising office picnics to defending managers in the face of staff grievances, cannot do by itself?

A reputation for a good place to work: Organisations have certain reputations as places to work. In these days of Facebook and Twitter, such reputations can be developed or dented rapidly.



"I had the dream about meaningful employment again last night."

Human resources is more than just hiring and firing, it's about being resourceful with the humans who work with you

Instead of only promoting the product- or profit-side issues of one's companies, organisational leaders should think about how they can promote their institutions as good places to work, not only in terms of benefits, but also in terms of professional growth, and point to examples that job-seekers can relate to. Cultivating such a reputation takes a long time, but is worth the effort.

Setting a context for success: Once employees

are hired, the role of senior management is not to micro-manage them. It's to set a context for employees' productivity and success.

True, this is easier said than done. Tolerating screw-ups so long as the employees learn quickly, focusing on achieving agreed-upon goals while leaving the mechanics of how to reach those goals to teams and individuals, removing constraints

that teams face, and giving credit openly are some ways senior managers set a context for everyone's success. Often, how an organisation treats employees' mistakes is a good sign of just what sort of context its senior managers have set for success.

Keeping in touch with former employees: Many years ago, I interviewed at a top investment bank in New York. After two rounds of interviews, I was

rejected. What has stayed with me about that bank is that it hosted a dinner for the rejected applicants, where its senior managers basically said: "Sorry this did not work out. But no one knows the future. Let's stay in touch for possible future opportunities."

Granted, the dinner primarily served the bank's own interests. But the gesture made a deep impression: in today's world, no one really knows what the future holds; today's junior staff may leave to run her own company. As such, it's best for the senior managers to stay civil and pleasant with all prospective, present and past employees.

The two Kathmandu conferences are likely to emphasise ways to strengthen the content of an organisation's HR work. This is one side of the equation, since HR professionals have limited influence at most organisations. To help HR really succeed, it's the senior managers who have to continually ask themselves: to attract, retain and grow employees, what can we do that HR alone cannot?

Here for education



Ncell has collaborated with Save the Children's Adopt a School program to support 11 schools in eight districts. The company will adopt five schools in Humla, Nawalparasi, Dailekh, Dhanusha,

and Bajura and set up electronic libraries in schools in Nawalparasi, Sindhupalchok, Kailali, Baglung and Siraha.

Ace artists

Ace Development Bank joined hands with the Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind to organise an art competition for visually impaired students with the theme 'Your Vision of Nepal'. Sabitri Paudel, a sixth grader at Laboratory School, received the first prize of a full scholarship for a year. Her art will be featured on the cover page of the Bank's annual report.

Rescue flights

Qatar Airways has made adjustments to its operations in Egypt to operate outside its curfew timings. The Doha-based airline has also deployed additional capacity since the start of civil unrest in Cairo in order to facilitate passengers departing from Egypt to Doha and other points within the airline's network.



Something for everyone

CG Impex, the sole authorised distributor of LG Mobile for Nepal, has introduced four new models— LG P500 Optimus One, a touchscreen Android smartphone, LG Papaya T300 with SNS application, LG Rosemary S310, and the A165 dual-sim multimedia mobile phone. Every LG model comes with a 12-month warranty on handsets and a 6-month warranty on the battery, and a 2GB memory card.

Latest kick



Morang Auto Works, the sole distributor of Yamaha Motorcycles in Nepal, has launched the Yamaha YBR 125, equipped with a 4-speed gearbox. The bike is available in black, red and red-black and is being introduced at a price of Rs 149,900.

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A dog's best friend



PICS:GERARD TRUFFANDIER

MICHAEL COX

They dodge through traffic, laze in the sun, and howl through the night: they're the street dogs of Kathmandu.

Nepal is the last country in south Asia to start controlling its population of stray canines. Even Bhutan is working on animal birth control. But the 2010 Kathmandu dog census conducted by the Kathmandu Animal Treatment Centre (KAT) suggests the task is a challenging one. More than 22,000 street dogs live within the Ring Road.

Thousands of mangy dogs with skin diseases and open wounds wander the streets and the Municipality has failed to put a department in place to deal with the problem. Still, the current population is a major improvement on the 30,000

plus stray dogs counted in the 2006 census, thanks in part to KAT. The animal shelter has been working with a 14-man crew to sterilise over 11,000 dogs inside the Ring Road in the last seven years.

It's a big change from the days when over 10,000 Kathmandu dogs were poisoned with strychnine to control the spread of rabies. KAT's mission is much more humane. It aims to reduce the dog population, decrease the risk of rabies, and improve the health levels of the dog community.

KAT works through a catch-and-release program that sterilises and rescues about six dogs every day. At KAT the dogs are vaccinated, de-wormed and sterilised (see pic, above).

When the dogs recover they are released into the community that they were found in. KAT homes about 40 dogs at one time plus a number of puppies out of an animal refuge centre on the road to Budhanilkantha.

Founder of KAT, Jan Salter, says animal birth control, the rescue of mangy dogs from the streets, and education of the human communities the dogs live in is the most effective way to control rabies and the dog population. "But it's a big worry to keep this shelter running," she says. It costs Rs 1,500 to sterilise a single dog and the shelter costs almost Rs 400,000 per month to maintain. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) helps fund the sterilising program, but KAT relies heavily on donations from dog-lovers in Nepal and abroad.

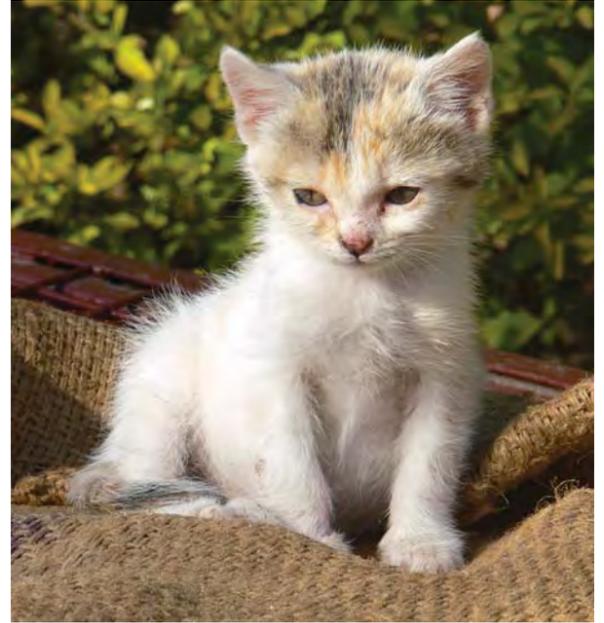
Salter adds that the progress of KAT is evident by the change in the way dogs are treated. "People's perceptions of dogs have changed, they're now much kinder to street dogs," she says. "There are always clusters of puppies on the streets, and people used to think Nepali people were cruel to dogs. It was just that they didn't know what to do with them."

Sterilising street dogs to control their numbers is far more humane than poisoning them



nepalitimes.com
K9-friendly, #460

Adopt-a-dog (or a cat)



Kitty

This kitten is new at KAT and is recovering well. In a few weeks she will be playing with the puppies. A caring cat looking for a nice owner.



Buddy

Buddy got his name because he is very friendly and he will suit a loving family. Buddy was in terrible condition when he arrived at KAT, but now he is on the mend and looking for a new best friend.



3 X Puppies

KAT's latest puppies are in need of a warm home. They're all very friendly dogs hoping for a second chance to stay off the street.



Junoo

Junoo has a very caring nature and she is very good with puppies and children. She is a natural mother and would suit a family home.

Call Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre: 01-4373169.

NEIL DIXIT

This Valentine's, we're moving beyond puppy love. How about love between two real dogs?

Tashi Sir (pictured) used to belong to a Japanese expat living in Patan who decided to leave behind his Tibetan Mastiff when he left the country four years ago. Thinking the dog would feel more at home in the mountains, he drove his pet out to Ramechhap and left him there with a friend.

One day three months later, neighbour Bihari Krishna Shrestha and his wife, Hira, noticed an emaciated and scruffy dog walk up their driveway and immediately recognised Tashi. The dog had walked 200km from Ramechhap along the Khimti Highway, crossed the Tama Kosi bridge below Charikot, then headed down to Dolalghat, up the Arniko Highway past Dhulikhel to Kathmandu, and found his way to Patan Dhoka.

"He was like a walking skeleton when he first came back, nothing but skin and bones," says Bihari Krishna, an inveterate dog lover who has picked up several abandoned street dogs. They

DOG'S LIFE: Development expert Bihari Krishna Shrestha with Tashi Sir (below, right) and friend at their home in Patan. Tashi walked 200km from Ramechhap to Kathmandu to be with his girlfriend.



Tashi's trek

A dog walks his own Great Himalayan Trail to be with the love of his life

adopted Tashi too. It takes a week for a human to trek the route (*see map*) from Manthali to Kathmandu, and Tashi must have memorised the smells along the way and played it in reverse to sniff his way back.

"It is an amazing story, but not that uncommon," explains Jan Salter of

the Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre. "We have had dogs and cats return to the shelter after they've left. When an animal becomes attached to a place, its instincts can lead it right back."

The Shresthas attribute Tashi's long journey home to more than just an attachment

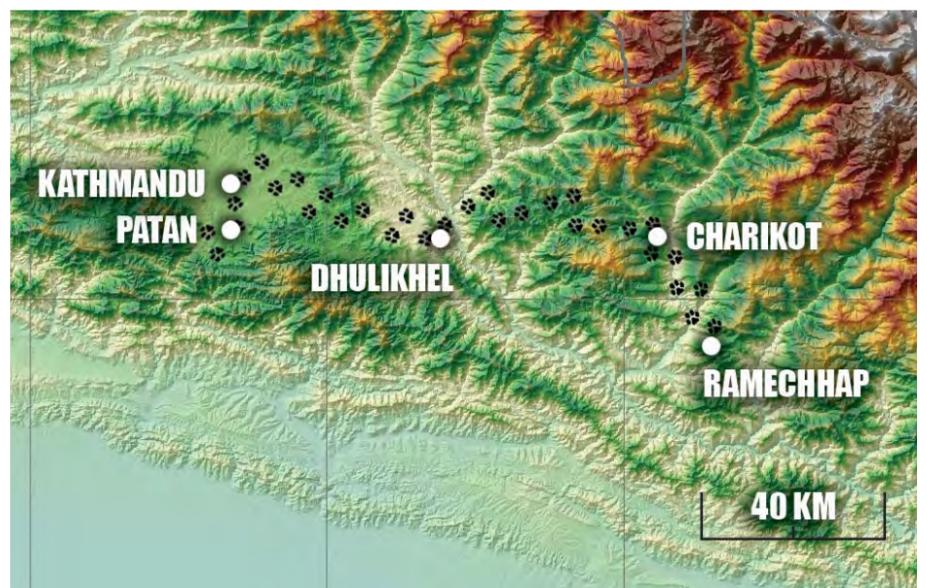
to the place where he grew up. After all, Tashi had only been an occasional visitor to the Shresthas' home. "We had a white dog named Phyaury at the time," recalls Hira Shrestha. "Tashi had been over before and you could tell right away that they were in love."

Tashi, now 12, lives happily with three other dogs. His girlfriend passed away a few years ago, and Tashi is now going out with two of Shrestha's pets. Says Salter: "Stories like this make you realise how intelligent and emotional dogs really are, something that we don't acknowledge very often."

Tibetan Mastiffs are traditionally bred as guard or sheep dogs. They prefer the great outdoors and like places that are cooler than Kathmandu. Tashi Sir has a calm and understanding temperament, but his eyes tell of the loneliness of the long-distance hiker. One can only imagine what he went through as he walked the two hundred kilometres back home. 🇳🇵



PICS: NEIL DIXIT





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Kicking Kirtipur



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



NEPALI KUKUR

It would appear that Kirtipur, the small town south-west of Kathmandu, has finally hit the big time. First it was the success of the community-run Newa Lahana that drew youth on motorbikes; then a series of festivals staged in the surrounds of the restaurant; and now it's the five-day Kirtipur Mahotsav, the 2011 edition of which is said to have been visited by 100,000 people last week.

It was evident on arrival that Kirtipur's 50,000-odd inhabitants had ramped up their welcome like never before. A dusty parking lot at the entrance to the city set us on our feet up the steep hills among scores of Nepalis heading our way and back, and volunteers stood by to collect parking and entry fees. There was no single destination; the entire settlement seemed to have set out stalls selling Newari food and drink along the largely traditional lanes punctuated by temple squares, with straw mats to sit on and partake. There were lakhe dances in progress, and re-enactments of Newari religious rituals such as Mha Puja, as well as processions of musicians. And everywhere there were people, the vast majority Nepalis curious to experience the beating heart of a Newari culture away from the trafficked thoroughfares and anodyne malls of Kathmandu.

We drifted through the lanes, paid a quick visit to the imposing Bagh Bhairab temple (outside, volunteers selling entry tickets and a postcard; inside, medieval shrines finally labelled with dates), and squeezed onto the raised dais of Newa Lahana, the better to get on with our drinking and eating. And if the prices were over double what you might pay in a bhatti, they were still very competitive at Rs 100 for a litre of chyang! Soon, we were in no state to complain. If, as the organisers claimed, there were transactions of Rs 5.5 million, more power to the locals who worked to make the Kirtipur Mahotsav the first grand success of Nepal Tourism Year 2011.

It was frenetic, and I would recommend an off-season quiet wander around the hilltop town's lanes of faded grandeur, but it made for a fine day out. Prithvi Narayan Shah, whose hard-fought victory over Kirtipur finally set him on course to conquering the Kathmandu Valley, would have been astonished at the openness of the Kirtipures last week. Then again, perhaps they needed to see the back of the monarchy that cost them so dear to really come into their own.

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EVENTS



Avatars and Interpretations, an exhibition of mixed media works by Erina Tamrakar and Asha Dongol. *13 February to 10 March, opening at 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048 / 4438979*

Call for entries for Film Southasia, a festival of South Asian documentaries. *29 September to 2 October, early submission deadline: 31 May 2011, final submission deadline (for films made after April 2010): 31 June 2011, Film Southasia Secretariat, Patan Dhoka, 5552141, www.filmsouthasia.org, fsa@filmsouthasia.org*



GraFTII, workshop on Film for New Generation and Cinematography and Sound to be hosted by reputed director Shyam Benegal and inauguration of GraFTII, an organisation of Nepali film artists trained at the Film and Television Institute of Pune. *11 to 12 February, 98413443855*

The New World Rhizome, exhibition of paintings by Indra Raj Subba 'Soshu'. *Till 1 March, 5.30pm, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120, www.kathmanduarts.org*

Royal Nepal 1930: Through the lens of Richard Gordon Matzene, book launch and exhibition of rare photographs. *Till 18 February, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048 / 4438979*

Carnival of Love, a fundraiser to start a Soup Kitchen project for street children. *11 February, 1905, Kantipath, 9851031410*

Momo Mania, more than 20 varieties of yummy momos, momo-making and eating competition, and beer-drinking competition, organised by The Bakery Cafe. *11 February, 5pm onwards, Bhrikutimandap Garden, www.thebakerycafe.com.np*

MUSIC

Ke-sang on acoustic guitar and vocals. *Every Saturday, 7pm onwards, New Orleans Coffee Shop Garden, Jhamsikhel, 5522708 for reservations*

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

DINING

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Dr Maugham, I presume?



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In the 1970s, the St. Xavier's Godavari School library prominently displayed books by physician-turned writer AJ Cronin. But I can't recall if the works of William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), another physician-turned writer, were even at the library. In a recent comprehensive and fascinating biography entitled *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham*, Selina Hastings traces the life of this acclaimed story-teller who actually started off as a physician.

Maugham studied medicine at St Thomas's Hospital in London. A diligent student, he easily qualified as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London, in 1897. Somerset Maugham's first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, written during his final year of medical school, draws from his experiences in treating patients from the Lambeth slums of London.

"I spent five years at St Thomas's Hospital. I was an unsatisfactory medical student, for my heart was not in it. I wanted, I had always wanted, to be a writer, and in the evening, after my tea, I wrote and read," Maugham says in his memoirs, *Looking Back*. And what he



created has enthralled us over the years. He wrote about eccentric characters in colonial outposts in southeast Asia, and the hypocritical upper class in England in memorable classics such as *Of Human Bondage*, *The Painted Veil*, and *The Razor's Edge* in addition to captivating collections of short stories and screenplays. At one time he had four productions running simultaneously in London's West End.

Maugham was an amazingly observant human being, a talent he put to good use as a dramatist, novel, and short story writer. This gift would have been very handy had he continued his career as a physician. Traces of his short-lived career as a doctor can be found in some of his stories, like the one about the baffled psychiatrist, Dr Audlin, whose patient cannot separate his dreams from

reality.

"They taught me pretty well all I know about human nature," says Maugham, who did not regret having studied medicine. "People in pain, people in fear of death, do not try to hide anything from their doctor, and if they do he can generally guess what they are hiding." 🇳🇵

GREEN SCENE

Turn on the meters

Cargo trucks, buses and cars cough up jet-black exhaust fumes on the roads of Kathmandu, brick kilns can be spotted miles away with attendant clouds of smoke, and a walk on the main roads sans mask is likely to result in a sneezing-coughing riot at the end of the day.

In 2002, seven air quality monitoring stations were set up with the assistance of DANIDA. Putalisadak, Kirtipur, Lagankhel, Macchegaun and Bhaktapur have one station each, and there are two in Thamel. These monitoring stations automatically collected 24-hour samples of air to be analysed for PM 10 levels, a measure of the particulate matter content in the air. Yet the latest data for air quality in the Kathmandu Valley dates back to 2007, which was when the stations stopped working.

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) has finally decided to dust off these machines, following a study by the Asian Development Bank for Kathmandu Sustainable Urban

Transport. "The study showed that it was possible to repair these stations," says Sushma Upadhyay of the Environment Pollution Control and Evaluation Division at MoE. "They will be functional by the end of February."

Repairs were handled by Nepal Environmental and Scientific Services (NESS) and cost about Rs 4 million. Sunil Babu Khatri, Lab Quality Control Manager at NESS and the coordinator for the repair project, says that lack of maintenance, and low power supply for the batteries were the main reasons the stations became dysfunctional.

To ensure that the batteries don't give way again despite 14 hours of loadshedding, MoE has installed back-up power for 10 hours and is in the process of negotiating with ADB to channel solar power to charge the batteries. MoE plans to outsource the operation and maintenance of the stations.

However, Upadhyay is concerned that the readings from the stations may no longer be accurate as tall buildings have been erected near them, hindering the sample collection process. She says: "We now need to explore if these stations can be relocated to more appropriate areas."

The average PM 10 count concentration in Kathmandu was 183 ug/m3 in 2003 and 173 ug/m3 in 2007, far above the National Ambient Air Quality Standard of 100 ug/m3. The World Health Organization's standard is 50 ug/m3. 🇳🇵



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

P FOR PEACE: Students write on a wall near the Saraswati Temple in Swayambhu Nath temple on Tuesday, in celebration of Shree Panchami, the festival of the goddess of knowledge, Saraswati.



BIKRAM RAI

SHOWER TIME: The Kathmandu Metropolitan Office cleans up the dust-caked road dividers in Rabi Bhawan early Thursday morning.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO BE A BOY: A Kalimati-based b-boying group practices in the premises of Swayambhu Nath, Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

IT'S A HIT: The Saturday crowd at Broadlink CAN InfoTech 2011, which featured stalls of over 300 IT related companies and products.

WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This week saw the steady rise of daytime temperatures, by 2 degrees. There were two consequences - the humidity level dropped to 25 per cent during the day and it wore out the persistent winter fog over the southern plains, thus ending the two-month cold snap in the region. Satellite pictures of Thursday morning indicate the continuation of current weather patterns till early next week. However, there is a high possibility of more fluctuations in continental pressure, corresponding to the temperature rise, and streaming of high and dry clouds over Nepali skies during the weekend. A dense cloud patch will pass over the Valley over the weekend resulting in a temperature drop and cooler breezes.



FRI	SAT	SUN
26-5	23-6	22-7



VICKI TAUFER

Company of dreams

PHILIP HOLMES

In 2002, nine-year-old Lalita was easy prey for Kajiman Shrestha. She lived in an impoverished village in east Nepal, and her alcoholic father regularly beat her mother (she subsequently died after one such beating)

The outlook was bleak for Lalita and her three younger siblings. Shrestha, who procured children for Indian circuses, beguiled Lalita with his stories of the beauties of India and its tall buildings. If she went with him he promised to show her this and provide her with a good schooling and the chance to earn some money. With her father's agreement she decided to go, in spite of her mother's warnings that she might be sold. Arriving at the circus that was to become her prison, Lalita asked Shrestha what the tents were. He laughed and said that these were the tall buildings he'd promised her. Lalita felt like crying.

Shrestha's treachery led to three years of misery. Lalita recalls how she and other performers were beaten with twisted wires as punishment for the slightest mistake. Their food frequently contained insects and if they refused to eat they would be beaten until their mouths bled. Deliverance came in 2005, when a field team from The Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation (EBMF) arrived at the circus in a joint raid with the police. Lalita had to be physically wrestled from the grasp of the circus owner, who did not want to give up one

of his top performers. A fortnight ago, remarkably, Lalita was performing once again in a circus act (*see pic, below*). But this time she was doing so voluntarily and loving every moment of it. She is now a member of Nepal's first ever domestic circus company, 'Sapana', the Company of Dreams.

Sapana is an EBMF initiative that began with the arrival of two circus professionals from the UK last August. Aerialist (trapeze artist) Sky Neal and her rigger husband, Mark Perrin, had joined EBMF as volunteers. They were keen to set up circus skills workshops. This was a brave step into what had been hitherto a taboo area. To an outsider this could have seemed like the cruellest offer imaginable

— to return teenagers to the source of so much pain and suffering. Understandably, everyone involved was cautious. Sky and Mark were only given the go-ahead conditional upon there being no mention of the word 'circus' (these were to be 'performing' skills), and the local media was to be kept well away.

The duo started slowly, first explaining to the young people at EBMF's refuge in

Godavari what contemporary circus in the west is all about, including by showing them films of their own performances. A few willing participants came forward, and as the word went around of the fun that was being had, more joined in. By the end of Sky and Mark's assignment in September, around a dozen were turning up each day for training, including children of prisoners and former street children.

Mark and Sky returned at the start of January, this time with five other professionals — a gymnast, a dance choreographer/aerialist, a clown, and two costume designers. During the school holidays they worked tirelessly to develop a show called 'The Devil's Spell', based on a Nepali myth. This was performed in front of an

invited audience two weeks ago that included the British Ambassador, John Tucknott. Cast as a serpent goddess, at the culmination of the show Lalita rose 10 metres into the air wearing a radiant 30-foot costume that had been made especially for her in London. As she revolved in the air she was flanked by two other former Indian circus girls who performed aerial dance manoeuvres high up, entwined in silk drapes. The show wasn't about tacky circus tricks, it had assumed an art form. At the end of the show, the Ambassador was first on his feet to give the cast and crew a standing ovation.

The young people of Sapana can now look forward to continued training that will lead to a career that provides not only a good income but catharsis and the chance of regaining their self-esteem. A highlight for them will be a trip to Dubai in October, when the company will perform at The British Embassy before 700 guests. The trip will be funded entirely by a corporate supporter that has been following the development of Sapana closely. Lalita and her friends have much to look forward to, unlike Kajiman Shrestha. He was caught by EBMF field staff in 2006 and in 2009, sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. 

Lalita is finally living the dreams she was promised



NAYANTARA GURUNG



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

The gentleman farmer

RUBEENA MAHATO

Nepal was once self-sufficient in food. A rising population and neglected agriculture mean that the country now imports most of its food from India.

But a small farm in a quiet suburb of Patan is cashing in on the huge demand for organic vegetables from the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. A locally developed variety of high-yield, wilt-resistant organic tomatoes called 'Shrijana' is one of the best-selling items.

Shrijana was developed over six years of research by a team led by Dr Kedar Budhathoki, a senior horticulturist at NARC (National Agricultural Research Council). He understood the tomato's potential, and after retirement set up a farm in Nakkhu to grow it in large-scale.

"I knew the only way to protect the breed was to market it commercially," explained Budhathoki during a tour of the farm last week. Budhathoki's company, Gorkha Seeds, now produces 50kg of tomato seeds every year and is striving to meet the huge demand from farmers who prize the breed for its high yield and disease resistance. Even under adverse conditions, a single



A retired horticulturalist is taking matters into his own hands

Shrijana plant produces up to 15kg of tomatoes compared to just 2-3kg produced by local varieties. The tomatoes are larger, juicier and redder, which is why they command a premium in the Indian market. Shrijana can also be cultivated any time of the year throughout the country.

Budhathoki's farm, spread over four acres, made Rs 2.5 million last year by exporting

60 tonnes of tomatoes to India, excluding seed sales priced at Rs 90,000 per kg in the Nepali market. Gorkha also exported tomato seeds to Bangladesh and Sikkim last year, and orders have come in from Saudi Arabia as well.

Spurred on by his own success, Budhathoki is promoting Shrijana to Nepali farmers. The company is supporting 50 farmers' groups

in and around Kathmandu to grow Shrijana by providing free seeds, fertilisers and training on cultivation techniques.

"The poor will always remain poor growing traditional crops. Farmers who have grown Shrijana on one ropani of land are earning Rs 124,000 every season. Moving to high-value crops is the only way

to resolve the food crisis in Nepal," explains Budhathoki.

Retirement has not stopped Budhathoki from continuing with his research, and he recently launched nine varieties of heat-tolerant and disease-resistant tomatoes that can produce up to 30kg per plant.

He believes that with support and high-yield varieties, farmers' livelihoods can be transformed, and there is no reason for Nepal to be food-deficit or poor anymore. "If we can tell farmers about better breeds, cultivation techniques and new technologies, they can prosper," he says. "If the government can't do it, people like us should be involved."

Budhathoki plans to train farmers to export vegetables to India. Nepal produces vegetables during the off-season in India, so it is an ideal situation. Farmers are being trained in grading and weighing techniques and marketing produce to Indian purchasers.

Says Budhathoki: "We have the right climate, right soil, and hard-working farmers. The market is right next door in India." 🇳🇵



Style tip 2011: Visit Nepal

Prabal Gurung dresses the world up in style, and packs them off to Nepal

KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA



Most of us would have been fast asleep on the morning of 1 January, 2011, but designer Prabal Gurung had a few things he wanted to say. And just as he does so frequently, the rising star of the fashion world logged onto his Twitter account (with its 145-character limit) to say it: "2011 is Nepal Tourism Year. Lookin 4a vacation spot, an adventure, or 2 find urself? Will you pls consider visiting Nepal? U cud make a diff. PLS RT." The last bit means 'please re-tweet', which means he was asking people to pass on via Twitter what he'd just written. Prabal followed that tweet up with another about the fact that Nepal has 8 of the world's 10 highest mountains.

That week, Indian media speculated about Bollywood sweetheart Sonam Kapoor's plans to travel to Nepal. "People are wondering why Sonam Kapoor is actively talking to many people and telling them to visit Nepal," The Times of India wrote. They concluded her to be "an activist who feels it would boost the country's economy." Sonam is a friend of Prabal, and she had simply 're-tweeted' Prabal's call to visit Nepal in 2011, asking her Twitter followers to consider visiting Nepal this year.

No one has appointed Prabal brand ambassador of Nepal. No one needs to. Simply by virtue of being an internationally known Nepali, Prabal has emerged as one of the best brand ambassadors Nepal could have. Never one to miss an opportunity, he isn't shy about consciously promoting Nepal every chance he gets, be it at a private dinner with Demi Moore or on the runways of New York Fashion Week. In private conversations over Nepali food with friends in Queens, New York, it's clear he wants to help his country any way he can. He displays a keen interest in the country's economy and seems frustrated that his work can't contribute to it as much as he would like.

Last February, when Prabal showcased his collection at New York Fashion Week's runway for the first time, Women's Wear Daily asked his celebrity-studded front row to name the country he is from. Several correctly identified it as Nepal. In April Vogue (America) featured



his travel journal from Nepal online, with photos of him in the Everest region. In September he started his presentation at New York Fashion Week with a series of designs handwoven in Nepal. By December, those bright colour-blocked dresses had been photographed for publication by some of the world's biggest magazines and newspapers, defining the 'colourful' fashion outlook for this spring. Not to mention the fact that every time someone writes about Prabal, his nationality is mentioned.

Prabal was in the news recently when Oscar-nominated actress Hailee Stein wore a white dress by him to the Golden Globe Awards, and was declared among the best dressed by Vogue and the New York Times. Last week, Vogue did a special feature on five designers actress Annette Bening should consider wearing to the Oscars, naming Prabal. But Prabal is no stranger to dressing up A-list celebrities, of course: last year, First Lady Michelle Obama scored big with fashionistas when she wore two of his designs at major public events, and she wore a third Prabal outfit recently on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Prabal will present his Fall 2011 collection at the ongoing New York Fashion Week, on 12 February. Once again his collection is one of the most anticipated at the fashion gala. Nepal can look forward to some good press-by-association next week.

nepalitimes.com
Do your homework, #498

Valentine's Special
Nabin K Bhattarai
 14th Feb 2011
Live Band & Concert
 Sunil Bardewa DJ Deluxe

Entrance : Rs 1250 nett
 (inclusive of One Shot of Ruslan Vodka a complementary snacks and Lavish Buffet Dinner).
 at **BRONCO BILLY**
RESTAURANT & BAR
 Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur. Tel: 01-5526212

'Peace process will speed up with the Maoists in government'

Interview of Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal with *BBC Nepali Service*, 8 February

बिबिसि नेपाली

BBC Nepali: A leader from your party was the prime minister before you. What will you do that he hasn't?

Jhala Nath Khanal: We have become prime ministers in different contexts. When Madhav Kumar Nepal was the prime minister, the Maoists were not in government. Now they are joining us. The involvement of the Maoists in this government means that the peace and constitution-writing process will now speed up.

The Maoists didn't join government earlier, and now NC is staying in opposition. How do you plan to move ahead without a consensus?

National consensus is obligatory. Either

they choose to support us by joining the government or by staying in the opposition, it is their decision.

The seven-point agreement between you and Pushpa Kamal Dahal says that you plan on sharing the PM post on rotational basis. How can we believe you plan to include everyone?

This agreement is not directed against other political parties. By rotational we do not mean between two parties only. If another party is interested to join us, they can come too.

You made an agreement with Dahal to set up a separate force either composed of Maoist combatants or combined with other security forces. Is this UML policy?

It is a proposal. There are other alternatives.

How can it be a proposal when the two of you have signed it?

It can't be the last word just because two



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

parties have agreed. Without the permission of the Special Committee, we can't do anything. That is why for now it is only a proposal.

The Maoists used to accuse Madhav Nepal's government of being India's puppet. Now people are saying your government will be a puppet of the Maoists.

UML is a party with its own ideology and identity. So there is no need for us to follow anyone. But yes, we did feel the need to unite to lead the country to a better future.

The coalition between the Maoists and UML has been termed anti-Indian. Some say without India's support, the government will not last.

The first call I received after being elected was from the Indian prime minister. He congratulated me and promised to support the government under my leadership.

If the constitution is not written by 28 May, is there an agreement between you and Dahal to extend the CA's term?

We haven't discussed this.

What are the three main priorities of your government?

First priority is to take the peace process forward, the second is constitution writing, and the third is to strengthen the governance system. Another priority is economic revolution.



bbc.co.uk/nepali/news
Full interview

China gets what it wants

Purna Basnet in *Nagarik*, 6 February

नागरिक

Ever since Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal resigned from the government, the strategists in Beijing had been trying to reinstate him or at least have a government with Maoist participation. With the election of UML's Jhala Nath Khanal, who is not much liked in Delhi, Beijing can claim its first diplomatic victory for the year. Beijing did not trust ex-PM Madhav Kumar Nepal to address its security issues in Tibet and had always seen him as Delhi's candidate. The state-controlled China Daily even commented on Madhav Nepal as 'a prime minister who works according to Delhi's strategies'. But after Nepal's resignation, Beijing formally thanked him for playing an important role in strengthening mutual ties between the two countries.

The officials of the Communist Party of China, who came to Nepal

often, told the Maoists that they had made a mistake by walking out of government. In fact the Chinese leaders even advised Dahal to forge an understanding with Delhi if that was what it took to get back to power. Beijing had taken Dahal's exit from the government as Delhi's victory and therefore has been pressuring the Maoists not to forsake the peace and constitution-writing process at any cost. Beijing has made clear its disapproval of the way Dahal meddled with the army, to the point of losing leadership of government, and has advised the Maoists not to take the risk of a 'people's revolt' again.

Apart from the inability of the parties to reach a consensus, it was also due to geopolitics that the election process remained inconclusive for seven months. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sent special envoy Shyam Saran to put together a 'democratic

alliance' excluding the Maoists. In response, China sent a secretariat member of the communist party, He Yong, to counter the move. "China will not interfere in Nepal's internal matters and will not tolerate it if others try to do so", Yong warned during his visit.

It was after this that the Chinese effort to engineer a Dahal or Khanal-led UML-UCPN (Maoist) government gathered speed. While India was trying to keep the Maoists at bay, China was quietly working to build a leftist alliance. Chinese officials held several meetings with supporters of Dahal and Khanal in UML. In the meetings held with Khanal confidante Yubaraj Gyawali and UML representatives in Beijing, Yong advised forming a UML-UCPN (Maoist) coalition.

Dahal tried hard to win back Delhi's trust. He agreed to send back UNMIN and keep the ex-combatants under the Special Committee. Only after all these moves failed did Dahal decide to back Khanal.

Take a stand

Editorial in *Deshantar Weekly*, 6 February

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

UML Chairman Jhala Nath Khanal has become the new prime minister of the country with the support of the Maoists. If the Maoists ever decide to withdraw their support, his government is bound to crumble. It's unlikely that the Maoists have forgotten the role Khanal played in bringing down their government earlier. The question now is who will Khanal represent? Will he carry the agenda of the Maoists or his own party? The UML central committee had once decided that the party would not work with the Maoists until they approached the peace process in good faith. This decision has not been amended even as the process of government formation begins. No agreement or commitment between Khanal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been made public with regard to control of the government. It was Dahal's lone decision to accept Khanal's leadership. Only those with the courage to differ with Dahal voted otherwise. Dahal now appears to be an opportunist.

The people's interests were not even discussed when Khanal received support from the Maoists. Forces that did not agree with the selfish aims of the Maoists chose to stay out of government. Although Khanal will lead the government, it is quite likely that the main player will be Dahal. A government without an identity is unlikely to be able to deliver, and the prime minister may just become a helpless shadow unless he makes his position clear.



Prachanda: "Come! Sit!"

क्रान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 7 February

To-do list

Editorial in *Janadisha*, 5 February

जनदिशा

Ending a seven-month period of absent government, the country now has a prime minister. Thursday's election has crushed foreign powers that wanted to create a deadlock in the country and form a puppet government. The election has proved that Nepali political parties are capable of deciding on the issues of the country. UML Chairman Jhala Nath Khanal is not the only winner, the Nepali people have won. It is clear that Khanal owes this victory to the Maoists. People hope that the newly elected prime minister will acknowledge the sacrifice the Maoists have made, despite being the rightful contender for the post as the biggest party in the CA.

The Maoist-led government struggled for people's supremacy against foreign interferers and supporters of the status quo.

The conspiracies of that time continue and it is a challenge Khanal needs to deal with. He has a duty to protect national sovereignty. Another responsibility for Khanal is to integrate the PLA into the army according to the aspirations of the 12-point agreement, Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim Constitution. Respectful integration of the PLA is an important responsibility of this government, which has been formed with support from the Maoists. Khanal also needs to democratise the army that has until now been guarding the capitalists. A federal democratic republic constitution should be written. The government will have to form bonds with pro-people groups to fight reactionary forces that want to obstruct the constitution-writing process. Khanal will have to reconstruct the centralised political structure into a scientific federal system and revive the failed parliamentary system. Other pro-people parties should also devise strategies along similar lines.

The seven-point agreement between the UCPN (Maoist) and UML

The UCPN (Maoist) and UML hereby agree on the following, 3 February

1. By protecting national independence, integrity and sovereignty, we agree to move forward by ending all forms of feudalism, build an independent economy through socio-economic transformation, strengthen inclusive democracy and develop a pro-people political order. On this basis, we have agreed to go forward along with all the leftist, patriotic and democratic forces.
2. Both the parties agree on drafting the new constitution that ensures national independence, ending all forms of feudalism and strengthening people's inclusive democracy besides institutionalising a republican set-up and turning Nepal into a federal system by restructuring the state.
3. To take the peace process to its logical conclusion, voluntary retirement, rehabilitation and integration will be implemented. On integrating Maoist combatants into security forces, we have agreed to form either a separate force of Maoist combatants or a combined force of Maoist combatants and other security forces, giving continuity to the ongoing work on the peace process.
4. Both the parties agree to form a joint government. A high-level mechanism will be created to help in the functioning of the government. It will be led by the chairman/president of the party on a rotational basis. In this context, a new government will be formed by as many parties as possible. The sharing of important ministries, including home and defence, will be done in an appropriate and respectable manner. The top leaders of the two parties will take responsibility for the mechanism.
5. The Minimum Common Program of the new government will be implemented by creating a code of conduct.
6. By leading future governments on a rotational basis based on mutual agreement, the long-term partnership and journey between the two parties will be carried forward.
7. It has been agreed that the UCPN (Maoist) will support the UML candidate in the prime ministerial election.

Prachanda
Chairman, UCPN (Maoist)

Jhala Nath Khanal
Chairman, CPN (UML)

Khanal the Trojan

KANAK MANI DIXIT

There are two things the Maoists of Nepal have decided they absolutely can do without – the peace process which, as defined, would only partially integrate their fighters into the security forces; and a truth and accountability process which would seek to investigate human rights abuses both state-side and by the Maoists themselves. Additionally, the Maoists want to construct a one-party state through an undemocratic constitution, and be in control of government, including the Home Ministry, when the next election rolls around.

Allowed by the Kathmandu intelligentsia and the international community to shift goalposts with impunity since it came above ground in 2006, the UCPN (Maoist) has succeeded in redefining the public discourse to such an extent that ethical standards have been reduced to pulp. Our great political scientists cower in donor-funded bunkers, while a good number of the Western diplomats and donor *hakims* believe to this day that the party with the gun is the social transformer. The Shaktikhor videotape, the Maharagate audiotape, the official Palungtar call for revolt, the 'people's republic' constitutional draft, the diversionary call to ultra-nationalism – nothing has meaning in a world turned upside down by triplespeak.

It is as if the People's Movement of 2006 and its demand for an end to autocracy and non-violent politics never happened. Amidst a polity bombarded by Maoist propaganda, Jhala Nath Khanal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal felt emboldened enough to sign their secret seven-point deal of 3 February. They hoped that the betrayal of the peace process would be a *fait accompli*, smothering the social democratic middle of Nepali politics. This was a deal between the UCPN (Maoist) and the 'Maoist-Leninists' of UML, with Khanal willing to surrender the pitch of left politics to the radical communists as long as he could make it to prime minister.

The ultra-nationalist wording in the seven points is a replay of Maoist fear-mongering, as if the country were about to be invaded from the south. The clever, obfuscatory language on cantonment management guarantees the raising of a separate security corps, essentially a continuation of the 'PLA' accommodating the ex-combatants *in toto*. The show to handover the Maoist cantonments to the Special Committee a month ago was a fraud perpetrated on the people and the international community. The chain-of-command remains where it was, in Dahal's hands.

The written agreement on

The seven-point agreement is a clear signal that the Maoists are manoeuvring themselves into pole position for the critical months ahead, democracy be damned

turn-by-turn prime ministership between Dahal and Khanal left parliamentary practice in tatters. The verbal agreements were even more dangerous, including Khanal's willingness to concede the Home Ministry to the UCPN (Maoist). The latter wants the ministry in order to cancel all the cases against its cadre and leaders accused of atrocities. The Maoist strategy is to speak nicely to OHCHR but sabotage the proposed

reporter of *The Kathmandu Post* who on Wednesday lauded Khanal's "patience and principled engagement with the Maoists".

There are some Western representatives and New Delhi observers who wish to see their youthful fantasies of communist utopia played out on the killing terraces of Nepal, as if our country were some kind of an experimental station. These are the imperial progressives, with little empathy for the suffering of the people of Nepal, whose level of disinterest allows them to gloss over the lethal Maoist obduracy on the peace process. And they are programmed to look the other way when an undemocratic constitution is foisted on us.

The imperial progressives would deny that the Maoists had anything to do with the 15 continuous years of zero economic growth that continues to this day, which has impoverished the poorest citizens and left a trail of misery and migration. Who will tell



Truth and Reconciliation Commission through tendentious appointments. To prevent investigations into Maoist atrocities, the party would willingly cancel the judicial process on excesses by the army, whether at the Bhairabnath Battalion or in Bardiya. Home Affairs would also allow the Maoists to control the security apparatus and government administration, and define the course of the elections when the term of the Constituent Assembly ends in May. Only those who live in a vacuum – where you need no eyes, nor ears – would suggest that the Maoists deserve Home Affairs because they are a large party in Parliament, forgetting Dahal's adventurism while in government and the peace process not yet ended.

Incredibly, there are observers who believe that the Dahal-Khanal coalition represents a return to democratic governance. These include SD Muni writing in *The Chandigarh Tribune*, the editorialist of *The Hindu* of Chennai, and the

plenipotentiaries that the CPN (Maoist) started their war at a time when the economy was growing at 6 per cent?

For his part, Jhala Nath Khanal did everything possible to undermine a government led by his own party, ultimately forcing Madhav Kumar Nepal to resign while still holding a majority in Parliament. Khanal's day in the sun came when Dahal decided that since he (Dahal) could not become prime minister, and Baburam Bhattarai was to be blocked at all cost, it was better to have a puppet in Singha Darbar. Additionally, Khanal could serve as a Trojan horse into the UML bastion, to clear the path for the Maoists in the long term.

Khanal has achieved his ambition of becoming prime minister, by means rather foul. With an eye on history and his own career graph, is it possible for him now to do a course correction and stand on the side of peace and democracy? This is a question best answered by his party colleagues. ❏

Living in a fine country

The question on everyone's lips this week: who is going to be **Home Minister**? Right? Wrong. The question on everyone's lips is: "How are we going to deal with 16-hour power cuts a day from next month?" As a public service, the Donkey presents below ten easy tips to survive the powerless days ahead:

1. Detach your home from the grid completely: use firewood in the kitchen, go back to petromax for reading, and kerosene for Molotov cocktails for the Jana Bidroha starting 28 May
2. Yank out doors and turn your fridge into a bookshelf and your microwave into an underwear closet
3. Buy a mobile that has a built-in lighter so you can ignite candles with it
4. Buy an exercise bicycle with dynamo to burn carbs while powering the wifi router and PC for internet
5. Learn Braille
6. Buy surplus US Army night-vision equipment for the whole family from e-Bay, including one for your Rottweiler for added security at night
7. Collect the brightest little fireflies in a jar and use as emergency light (needs regular replenishing)
8. Repaint your commode with phosphorescent paint so you can locate it when you have to go at night
9. Promote load-shedding as a tourist attraction (slogan: "Visit Nepal and Travel Back to the Dark Ages")
10. Apply for DV lottery and get the hell outta here

✍

We are used to Comrade Cry-Baby shedding a crocodile tear or two. After all, Hamid Karzai, Luiz Inacio Lula de



Silva, Olusegun Obasanjo, and, most famously, Kenneth Kaunda all broke into tears at the drop of a hat. But it seems the mass hysteria last Thursday at the Baddie central committee meeting infected even Commander **Annual Man Pun**, who was reduced to tears when the Chairman said he was withdrawing his candidacy. ("Uh-oh, there goes my Home Ministry.")

✍

Predictably, the secret 7-Punkt agreement is tangled in a band-fand dispute again. The great thing about tap-secret agremos is that you can always have a different interpretation of what transpired. Hence, PM JN says, "It wasn't an agreement, it was just a proposal." Or: "It wasn't secret, there just wasn't even time to inform my UML colleagues." Whereas Comrade Awesomeness, speaking to cadre at Kirtipur says there weren't just seven secret agreements, "there were many more." Like he did in the Shaktikhor tape about UNMIN, he went on to boast: "My agreement with JN was just a tactic, we fooled him and we also showed

India who is boss. We can throw him out anytime."

The morning after this tirade, PKD meets secretly this time with the same Uncooked Operative who he met in S'pore and Kowloon last year. No wonder no one trusts this guy.

✍

Under pressure from his party for having unilaterally and slyly signed away everything just so he could become **PM by hook but mostly by crook**, Jholababu has been backpedalling furiously. He is also saying he never agreed to a 'rotational' prime ministership, only a 'revolving' one after NC joined the govt. Fat chance. Looks like the only choices we have are a 'revolving' PM or one with a 'revolver'.

On the establishment of a separate security force for

cantonment Baddies, JN now says he was thinking along the lines of forest rangers, a rapid deployment disaster relief force or a border security force under the army's command. That's like letting a wolf in sheep's clothing guard the goat herd. Imagine what a boost that will be to illegal logging and cross-border smuggling. Besides, Nepal will need a major natural disaster every month or so just to keep this force occupied, and away from mischief. And how come no one talks of the **YCL Red Guards**, when are they going to be demobilised and disbanded?

✍

Airbus Industrie, which had refused to payback a 750,000 dollar advance, finally agreed to do so this week probably in the hope that the new govt would revive the deal under

a Baddie cabinet. But, guess what, the NAC management is refusing to send the bank a/c#, it seems they don't want the money back. Tax payers can also kiss goodbye to the \$25,000 fine in hotel charges for Makunay's visit to New York that got cancelled at the last moment last year. We were also fined \$45,000 by the Indians for cancelling the MRP deal. Like Singapore, this is getting to be a 'fine' country, yar.

Hard to understand why PM JN is off to Cambodia for 'peace talks' with Jhusil and Chairman Tremendous mediated by Comrade Hun Sen. What can they say in Siem Reap that they can't in Simara? One way to salvage the trip would be for PKD to visit Tuol Sleng, and sit in at the Khmer Rouge war crimes trial as an observer.



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