Better late than never

This week’s rain broke a four-month winter drought in central and eastern Nepal, bringing the snow down to 3,000m and reviving withering winter crops along the midhills. This view from the summit of Pulchoki on Thursday morning shows Kathmandu Valley shrouded in fog below, and Ganesh Himal in the distance draped in new snow. The rains also raised water levels in the rivers, reducing power cuts temporarily. However, the medium and long-term prognosis for energy supply looks dire, as our special report warns. (‘No light at the end of the tunnel’, page 12-13)
KHALAN THE TROJAN (KARAN MAHENDRA BHATT, #548)
Sir, you have missed the train by at least five years. This is not the first time that the Maoists drove dodgy tricks to get their way and it will not be the last. In the near future they will be ahead and they will very likely be in control of the country in the coming year. That no resistance will bear fruit for now is something that you must accept. This time should be spent in understanding what happened and finding out the truth about both motives and causes. You will need to work hard not just for this country’s sake, and therefore ours, but also for yourself. To, dare I say, redeem yourself.

Just four quick points:

1. How come the Koirala govt. duly elected on the floor of the CA House is not democratic but Madhav Nepal’s govt. was? 2. Madhav Nepal and his cronies did not have the will or courage to fight for that matter any other ministry to buttress their political constituencies and agendas.

As the politicians jostle for space in the new government, Nepal is in store for us; the only certainty (and not always) is the inaction that we pursue today. Just four quick points:

1. There are few articles that have the ability and the strength to capture and analyse a present story that is truthful and honest to the situation at hand. And this is exactly what Mr. Dixit is able to do. The analysis successfully brings into light the failings of the political system in Nepal in a way that addresses the jeopardisation of the democratic system in Nepal by a group of political forces working together. Are we as a nation looking backward toward another authoritarian monarchy in the form of the Maoists? In a time when freedom of speech still exists for the people of Nepal, we must both comprehend and spread awareness about the ‘dirty politics’ that the Maoist party is playing, especially in and amongst the lower strata of society. For if Maoists are able to create complete power, censorship of media and the brutal repression of freedom of expression will have to be liberties that we as a nation must forego for the crime of ignorance and inaction that we pursue today.

Aditya Todi

2. Every event is hailed as a milestone, a plethora of agreements sprinkled liberally with buzzwords more numerous than where pen drives and solar-inverter of young Nepalis swarmed the stalls, and nowhere were they in store for us; the only certainty (and not always) is the inaction that we pursue today. Just four quick points:

1. There are few articles that have the ability and the strength to capture and analyse a present story that is truthful and honest to the situation at hand. And this is exactly what Mr. Dixit is able to do. The analysis successfully brings into light the failings of the political system in Nepal in a way that addresses the jeopardisation of the democratic system in Nepal by a group of political forces working together. Are we as a nation looking backward toward another authoritarian monarchy in the form of the Maoists? In a time when freedom of speech still exists for the people of Nepal, we must both comprehend and spread awareness about the ‘dirty politics’ that the Maoist party is playing, especially in and amongst the lower strata of society. For if Maoists are able to create complete power, censorship of media and the brutal repression of freedom of expression will have to be liberties that we as a nation must forego for the crime of ignorance and inaction that we pursue today.

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3. Shouldn’t that be Khanal the Greek? They were the ones behind the wooden horse project, the Trojans got sited up and burned Mr Dixit’s paranoid analysis is rooted in the fear that he’ll end up playing the Trojan.

Kiran

4. This article is RIGHT on. Finally telling it how it is. No point blaming Nepal Times for previous opinions. At least they gave the murderers the benefit of the doubt. But now that all the cards are on the table, it’s time to figure out how to take the country back from these murderers/criminal organisation disguised as a political party.

Rick Fair

5. Yet again, a member of the Kanthamande elite demonstrates not only how much they don’t get democracy, but the extent to which they are responsible for alienating the political forces that seek to ensure that nothing changes in the country, and for whom the current deadlock is an option. For the largest party (by a factor of two) in the legislature to be part of a coalition is apparently a ‘threat to democracy’ - it would be interesting to see what arrangement of forces in government Mr Dixit would consider representative of the electorate.

S D Muni

The ‘imperial progressives’ of whom the author is so dismissive would beg to point out that the 19% growth of the mid-1960s was invisible to many Nepalis, including those who supported the People’s War and who voted for the CPN-M. Such TEDerness in Kathmandu was exactly what caused the conflict. This article appears to be a plea to ignore both such facts and to have breathtaking contempt for those Nepalis who cast their votes for the current Assembly. The commitment articulated here to no change at any price is a recipe for the continued exclusion of most Nepalis from their politics and society and a one-way track to continued violence.

This article suggests that there remains a constituency in Kathmandu that still refuses to accept the facts of the Maoists as part of the political environment, despite their demonstrable support, and appears to prefer a breakdown of the peace process to their participation in governance.

Simon Robins

I dislike foreigners like Simon Robins. I really do. They should really stick to hiking and trekking.

chandraGurung

Regarding NT’s support to the Maoists in the past. Let’s see it this way, before the Maoists joined open politics, many poor folk had faith in them and believed in them, that the Maoists really wanted to change the life of the poor. After their entry into open ground, the Maoists have been so far real supporters (the poor) as well as NT no longer believe in them.

After the Maoists joined open politics - criminals, smugglers, looters, rich, business community, gangsters, many so-called civil society members all joined the Maoists. What does this mean? It means NT supported the Maoists in the early days because they believed in them, for their personal benefit like those who joined later. NT as well as the poor dumped the Maoists because the Maoists have been lying to them. NT could have cashed in for their past loyalty to the Maoists just like many others are doing, but they are not because they are genuine patriot Nepalis.

So NT should be respected for not being opportunists, and don’t forget that they have been a really big risk by supporting the Maoists during Shah rule. Now they are being attacked by the Maoists for going against them.

My suggestion to NT is, while criticising the Maoists, keep on saying, “Once we (NT) believed in the Maoists.”

who cares

Editor’s note: We would like to clarify that Kanak Man Dixit is not on the editorial team of Nepal Times, but is an occasional contributor.
I nstability in governance over the last two decades has been the norm. The result has been that no single person or group has been able to hold power for long. Jhala Nath Khanal, who took over as Prime Minister on 4 July, 2008, has recommended Mandal for the post. Gupta was nominated CA member by the cabinet led by erstwhile Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on 28 January.


Koirala on 4 July, 2008. Gupta was nominated CA member by the cabinet led by erstwhile Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on 4 July, 2008.

UN calls
The United Nations on Sunday urged the verified minor’s and late recruits (VMLRs) among the discharged Maoist combatants to enrol in the United Nations Inter-agency Rehabilitation Program. The final date for enrolment for the program is 22 March. There are four rehabilitation packages available for the VMLRs: educational assistance, micro enterprise development training, vocational skills training, and health service related training. Altogether, 4,098 Maoist combatants were verified as VMLRs based on their age and date of recruitment from the cantonments. However, as of 10 February, only 2,393 VMLRs have contacted the UN office.

Membership scrapped
The Supreme Court of Friday scrapped Shyam Sunder Gupta’s CA membership as he was nominated without his party’s consent. After hearing various writs filed by Krishna Mande and Satima Giri on behalf of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (A) a joint bench of Bimal KC and Bharat Raj Upadhyay scrapped Gupta’s CA membership. CSP (A) has recommended Mandal for the post. Gupta was nominated CA member by the cabinet led by erstwhile Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on 4 July, 2008.

Khanal will be hard-pressed to survive, let alone force change

Maoist ministers will be even higher as their political base has waited patiently for years. If not more than a decade, to gain the patronage that others have capitalised on. Some ministers may have new ideas, but the constraints of their parties will diminish their ability to act independently. Even if Khanal and his cabinet try to steer reform, through cracking the whip on certain public sector institutions, introducing new personnel, making the administration more accountable, or breaking the cop-criminal nexus, a coalition of established interests will raise the alarm. Most of these moves will have a hint of partisan motives. The NC-inclined bureaucracy, the commercial interests that will lose out if public schools or health institutions even begin to succeed, the corrupt security apparatus, and the media, which is an entrenched part of the establishment, will begin saying this is all a conspiracy to “take over the state.” A cry for ‘democracy’ will be raised to force Khanal to play along with the status quo.

Nepal’s best-known television anchor, Vijay Kumar Panday, has a reservoir of political anecdotes. One such story is about the time he went to meet a prime minister, soon after 1990, in his office chambers. It was morning, and the PM was inside, taking a nap. Panday was amazed, and said aloud, “Sir. There has been such a remarkable political change. Expectations are so high. Don’t you have to work and deliver instead of sleeping?” The PM laughed and adapted an old vernacular metaphor to denote insignificant change: “It’s all the same. If I work, the result will be 19; otherwise 18.”

Call it fatalism, but that may well have been among the most profound political insights into running this country. It explains why there was little substantial difference for the common man when GP Koirala was in office, working four hours a day, or when Dahal or Madhav Nepal were heading government, working 12-14 hours a day.

For an overhaul in governance, old patronage networks have to be broken down; fresh politician-bureaucrat equations must be created; ruling parties need to have a degree of security so that they can stop worrying only about survival; constituents have to begin demanding ‘public goods’ and not merely ‘private goods’; and a consensus political compact on certain issues needs to be worked out. It is unlikely Khanal will be able to do any of this. And even if he does, the opponents will raise the cry of ‘democracy is in danger’, or ‘state capture’, to block any effort at governance reform – since governance reform is so inextricably linked to which political constituencies get what resources.

The ‘18-19’ framework will remain unbroken. And Khanal will join the line of PMs who, despite the support of ‘revolutionaries’, reinforced the status quo in the way this country is run.
Straddling two boats

Nepal’s politicians pay homage to one definition of politics while exploiting another

Flipflopping on both definitions makes for a dysfunctional system of governance and fosters moral decay in the people who believed in and voted for them, only to be let down. Raising the price of oil one day and sending one’s own student union to the streets the next day is akin to a split personality disorder. Similarly, there can be no justification for keeping the country hostage for almost seven months as 18 elections ran their course. This is a modus operandi worse than the rulers of the pre-1990s would have chosen. Ambiguity in political actions sends out a message of futility and fickleness of governance, stalls any hope of development and progress, and generates frustration in the people that will inevitably lead to the demise of the regime.

A strong regime is one that conforms to a single definition of politics, sticking to the norms of a democratic republic, in which there is a set of rules based on the principles of equality and freedom. Unless the people of Nepal feel that everyone is equal by law, they won’t see a difference between the politics of Naya Nepal and the old Nepal. Real change does not necessarily stem from the election of a new prime minister, or by overthrowing governments. Real change will come when the people in power truly sense the fundamentals of democracy being implemented.

Biraj Bahadur Bista is a PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science in Seoul National University, South Korea.

Nepal Times: Would you say that the life insurance industry in Nepal is growing? Resta Jha: Life insurance began in Nepal with the National Insurance Corporation of Nepal in the early 1970s but private players did not enter the market until a decade ago. Now there are nine life insurance companies, and approximately six per cent of the population is insured. The industry is in its nascent stage, which means there is a lot of opportunity. People started questioning the credibility of life insurance companies after the recent Unity scandal. But the market is picking up, as shown by the premium collection of Ru 2.25 billion in the last quarter, up from Ru 1.5 billion collected in the same period a year before.

Why should an individual be insured?

When you insure yourself, the money you put in is not just an investment. Life insurance is finally for the security of your family, who will be taken care of if anything unfortunate happens to you. Secondly, it is a mode of forced saving, and will give you returns in the form of bonuses. Lastly, insurance gives you tax benefits.

Which market is the industry primarily catering to?

The market for life insurance is still a push market; the insurance suppliers seek consumers rather than the other way round. Only 15 per cent of the insured population lives in urban areas, the remaining 85 per cent is based in rural areas.

What does the insurance sector need to do to attract urban residents?

There is still a need to raise awareness about life insurance among the urban population. While direct marketing has worked well in rural areas, different methods will have to be used to change the attitude of urban consumers. We need to introduce differentiated products that are customised to the urban lifestyle. On the other hand, agents also have to be trained to allow clients to make informed choices.

How can the growth of the industry be facilitated?

Right now, there is an asset-liability mismatch in the life insurance industry. The average period of a policy is 13.75 years – our liabilities are long-term. Meanwhile, our investment options are mostly short-term. There needs to be a regulatory change that will allow us to invest in real sectors such as health and education. Also, the government needs to increase the tax benefit insurance can provide, currently set at present is just Rs 20,000.

As part of KFA, can you tell us about the International Management Conference the institution is organising?

KFA is collaborating with the Nepal Academy of Management to organise this conference and we have invited more than 100 international delegates from academic and business backgrounds. We expect that during this three-day conference, the participants will not only learn about international management practices but will exchange international linkages that will help the business community here. We are trying to ensure that the right people attend the conference so that the talks will transform into actions.
Adieu Time to say goodbye!

A s I sat down to write my final column, I went through the collection of my articles online – after 10 years as a columnist, you forget how and where it all began. Kunda Dixit, the man who pushed me into starting this column from issue zero, told me that I was the last columnist to have been here from the first.

It has been a long time since I adopted the persona ‘Arthabeed’, in collaboration with Kunda Dixit and Binod Bhattarai. I enjoyed the anonymity in the initial years and the guessing game till Arthabeed’s first public appearance at the fifth anniversary of Nepali Times. The joy of living another character has been amusing, like an avatar you create online. You have the freedom to vent your anger, think aloud, and of course give advice as a personality that people recognise. Arthabeed witnessed the most eventful phases of Nepali political and economic history. When the column began, we had a constitutional monarchy and the insurgency had started to get really nasty. Then the royal massacre took place, crowning a new monarch who later imposed direct rule. His failed attempt paved the way for a republican Nepal, and we elected a constituent assembly to write a new constitution for a new Nepal.

The ten years saw good governance and the national economy losing out to party politics and those keen on personal gain. While our neighbours grew at an express rate, our politicians were content in clinging to whatever power they could grab, providing jobs to family, extended family and party cadres and of course, hopping onto junkets abroad. Decentralisation took place, in corruption rather than power, and a new vocabulary through messages of congratulations or condolence, provided good sources of revenue to media houses feeling the beat of a failing economy. The architecture of management changed as unions dictated to owners and the owners, instead of managing businesses, became busy managing associations and chambers. The numbers of financial institutions soared; every second person was a promoter of XYZ Finance. It was a decade of taking speculative positions for gains that a sane financial and economic world would never deliver. Asset prices started to stagnate and non-performing assets at banks started to build up. Phew – how eventful.

But this beed enjoyed looking at the silver lining in the dark clouds — in the emergence of art forms, in lifestyle changes, in the bright lights of party palaces, in the launches of shopping malls, and in the lines of stores real international brands were opening up. Barefoot, ragged poster boys and girls for the donors were replaced by Nepalis decked out in cheap Chinese jackets and shoes. Mobile phone penetration brought in an unprecedented revolution of connection. The media prospered through community radio, broadsheet dailies, and some hard-hitting television programs. Village roads connected more destinations and there was a significant increase in access to financial services. Lifestyles went through significant changes; people became open to holidaying abroad and spending money on hobbies. You just need to stand on a busy street and watch the movement of people, you’ll see things have definitely changed in the last decade. But whether it’s confidence or arrogance, one cannot say.

Meanwhile the remittance economy kept the decade afloat, uplifting our economic history that survived on money sent by Gurkhas and Lahures. Aid continued to pour in (though I have consistently wondered aloud about the productivity of each dollar of aid). Despite the political mess, we still stayed afloat!

It was the readers who inspired me the most and the beed has now transformed into a brand-driven, management consulting and advisory company (www.beed.com.np). There are many beeds now and there will be many more in the years to come. Thank you readers for encouraging me to go this far. I look forward to making occasional appearances.

www.sujeevershakya.com
Trust our political parties to act like ostriches while the common people struggle to carry on with their lives.

There's a more pathetic scene to be seen than the one that the parties are currently indulging in over power-sharing and the calculation of gains and losses for the (upcoming) election - the queue of hundreds of passport-seekers outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in the capital.

If you want a clear demonstration of people's lack of faith in those who are supposed to make life easier for the citizens, look no further. The lines of those seeking a better life elsewhere is the most definitive 'no confidence' vote in the political parties by the people.

But even the most basic right of acquiring one's passport is being made much more difficult, as if the people have not been punished enough already. I spoke to some applicants outside the gates of MoFA and found that some are still unaware about the recent change of rules that requires them to have their applications endorsed by district administration offices (DAOs).

Apparently, there's not been much publicity despite the notice in the media. The change that came into effect almost a month ago was because the ministry officials could not think of a better way to beat the criminals who found a way to get machine readable passports (MRPs) by forging documents. Another reason was to diminish the crowd at the MoFA gates. The result is people who come from all over Nepal have seen their hard-earned money go to waste. Some have had to stay in hotels in the capital for over a week, only to be asked to go back to their district and come again.

MoFA officials, on the other hand, are a harried lot. They are simply unable to cope with the pressure despite doing everything they can to make the process of acquiring a passport easier. Here's a list of things they could work on.

First off, they need to revert to a single page application form and do away with the form that has print on both sides, available at MoFA and DAOs. If you fill out the form electronically (a mode preferred by MoFA), it is rendered useless unless you copy the DAO's endorsement onto the backside of the filled application form. To avoid this hassle, MoFA could ask the DAOs to verify applicants' papers, download the new single page forms, fill in the required endorsement details, and then have applicants fill them in.

The application form and instructions to download it on the Central Passport Office's website - www.cpo.gov.np - are not user-friendly either. Clicking on 'Download Forms' does not lead to the forms; instead it takes you to instructions on how to fill them in. Yet another click is required to locate the link that finally takes you to the form. This speaks less of the CPO or MoFA and more of the software developer who designed such a system in the first place. This is not all. You need to press the tab button on your computer each time before you type in a letter or digit. The cursor does not automatically place itself in the next box. How difficult can it be to fix this?

While these technical problems can and should be fixed, the best way is to delegate the responsibility to DAO to collect application materials and issue the passport after it is printed at CPO at MoFA. This is already being done for Kathmandu valley citizens. It needs to be followed in other districts without further delay. This will not only ease the pressure on the MoFA but also save people coming to the capital for their passports a lot of trouble and money.

Poverty, politics and the urgent need of people make for a compelling case to immediately review the passport distribution system. damakant@gmail.com

Hassleport

The first step towards a better life is often the hardest one for Nepalis applying for passports

Getting A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

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We provide comprehensive transplant care from infants to adults with both malignant, benign, genetic and/or blood disorders. This treatment procedure is applicable alone or in combination with other treatments for conditions such as leukaemia, solid tumours, thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia, metabolic diseases, immune deficiencies and autoimmune diseases.

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Our multi-disciplinary team of specialists offers a complete range of medical and surgical interventions to treat patients with kidney diseases including acute and chronic disease management, end-stage disease management and kidney transplantation. We adopt the latest medication and quality care to undertake complicated transplantations for blood group incompatible and crossmatch positive (sensitized group) patients. ParkwayHealth is the first in offering such solutions to patients in Southeast Asia.

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24-hour Hotline: (65) 6281 1346 • Fax: (65) 6280 1345
Website: www.ppac.sg

ParkwayHealth Patient Assistance Centre (Nepal): 1800-1-422-2008
Website: www.ppac.nepal.com.np

Kiran Panday

OP-ED

My Take

Damakant Jayshi

For creating an image corresponding to the content of this text, please refer to the existing images in the document or provide the content for direct image creation.
There’s been a lot of hype surrounding the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) in the last couple of years. At least two separate entities have staked their claim on the GHT brand in Nepal, with Robin Boustead leading World Expedition’s commercial venture and Dutch development organisation SNV recently handing over ownership of the official GHT to the Nepal Government. Ultimately, both have the same motivation: to promote sustainable tourism across the 1,700km length of the Nepal Himalaya, in a way that benefits both visitors and the communities of the visited.

On 17 February, the first ever commercial crossing of the Great Himalaya Trail kicked off. World Expeditions have been marketing the trail for the last 15 months in Australia, USA, Canada, UK and New Zealand, and now have over 40 participants who will walk parts of the trail. Two will trek the entirety of the GHT in one continuous 157-day push. Aussie Gregory Baggage (pic, right) and Brit Toni Wilson will be making history, as no one has ever completed the 1,700km route in a single season.

The various stages of the GHT will be led by a series of expert mountaineers, with the architect of the GHT Robin Boustead leading the first stage. Other guides include Sorrel Wilby, Stephen Venables, Greg Mortimer, and Carlos Buhler. The expeditions will employ porters and support staff from the regions they pass through, purchase food from the villages and of course, afford trekkers the opportunity to purchase traditional handicrafts. For Boustead and World Expeditions, this is sustainable tourism in practice.

“There are not many times in your life that you get an opportunity such as this,” said Babbage before the GHT traverse began. If the GHT picks up, it won’t be just trekkers the opportunity to purchase traditional handicrafts. For Boustead and World Expeditions, this is sustainable tourism in practice.
Jardin - food & wine garden

Off Jhamel’s ‘restaurant lane’, Jardin is one of a flotilla of upmarket eateries that have mushroomed this side of the river in the last year. One could easily conclude that Jhamel is saturated with expensive restaurants offering generalised menus of oriental and continental fare, something in vaguely interesting combinations, with an insurance snack menu of momos and chicken chilli for the resolute Nepali beer monsters. Jardin contrives to keep its head above the masses with more cultivated fare, with a degree of success.

Jardin has taken some care in designing its outdoor and indoor spaces, soft furnishings, lights, greenery and all. So far, so Jhamel. It was a deserted Tuesday night, and we enjoyed prompt and attentive service. I don’t doubt the alfresco spaces will fill up come summer, by which time I hope they will still be serving the excellent Coblenzer beer.

We joined friends who were already a couple of starters in. They described the Smoked Salmon Rosettes with Wasabi-infused Pannacotta and Soy Mirin Dressing, and the Rock Shrimp tossed in Spicy Mayonnaise as excellent. So we ordered the Tofu Pouches with house hot sauce and the Crackling Calamari with Smoked Chilli Aioli and Pickled Cucumbers. The former was a little insipid (compared to the last time), and could have benefitted from a more generous fashing of the spicy sauce. The calamari looked good, and felt crunchy and juicy, even if some may have found it a bit heavy as a starter.

Onwards, and with three of us plumping for Hot and Sour Thai Salad with Roasted Rice and Crispy Onions, Jardin had a lot running on its reception. Personally I found the salads attractive and scrumptious, but gasps of ‘Piro! Piro!’ from around the table forced me to add an advisory for the feeble. I’d order one as a starter rather than an entrée. But the Japanese-style Steak with Wasabi Mash, Salsa Verde, Ponzu and Himalayan Salt was not to be faulted. The good-sized portions of meat were medium-done to perfection, and the dish combined well. The Roast Duck salad with Orange segments and Lychee tossed in Nam Jim sauce was exciting enough, but maybe it went a lychee too far. Dessert was a mixed dish; the chocolate fondant with vanilla icecream disappeared in a jiffy, the fresh fruit millefeuille fell flat.

A good variation on the Jhamel scene, if on the pricey side; don’t let the bill catch you by surprise!

Thadodhunga, Jhamsikhel. Keep going at the end of Jhamel’s ‘Restaurant Lane’, pass Ideal Model School on left, turn right, on left.
**EVENTS**

**Photo Exhibition by USAID**, images from its development story, 1951-2011.
18 to 22 February, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.

24 February, 4pm, Nepal Airlines Corporation Building, New Road Gate.

**The New World Rhizome**, exhibition of paintings by Indra Babu Lama.
21-25 February 2011.

**College Theatre Festival**, plays staged by students from eight colleges.
19 to 27 February, 5pm onwards, Gurukul, Old Baneswor.

**AmarJyoti Foundation**, provides support through scholarships in arts and sports, elderly daycare and grief recovery.
180120068.

**Tal Chi** 3 month course, 13-form Yang style with Gold medalist Ang Babu Lama.
Starts 22 January, 9 to 10.30am, 1 week course, starting every Monday, Yoga: Monday and Thursdays 7 to 8.15am, Sunday 7 to 9.15am. Meditation class: Mon 6 to 7pm, Thursday 7 to 8 pm.

**KrishnaNarayan**, a specially Nepali restaurant at The Dwarika’s Hotel, 6 to 22 courses, an authentic Nepali meal.
Station BBQ, don the chef’s hat, make your own BBQ. Jhamakheti, 5522063.

**Music**

**Bryan Adams** live in concert.
10 February, 9pm onwards, Dwarahat Stadium, Trippreover.

**Suli Songs** with Zila Khan.
16 February, 5pm, Army Officer’s Club, Sundhara, 20 February, 5pm, Patan Museum, Patan.

**Sunday Jazz Brunch**, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu with barbeque and live jazz music by Inner Groove.
12pm to 3pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, music by Inner Groove.

**DIINING**

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**Saturday at 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.

**Sandwiches and Crepes** promotion at The Lounge everyday from 11am to 6pm, 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, 4499362.

**Kakori** at Soalte Crown Plaza, Kathmandu, 4273999 for reservations.

**Veteran Saturday** at Hyatt, 10 March, opening 5.30pm, Siddha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4218048 / 4438879.

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Hyatt Regency, Boudha, for reservations call 4491234.

**Sandwiches and Crepes** promotion at The Lounge everyday from 11am to 6pm, 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, 4499362.

**Kakori** at Soalte Crown Plaza, Kathmandu, 4273999 for reservations.

**Veteran Saturday** at Hyatt, 10 March, opening 5.30pm, Siddha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4218048 / 4438879.
Otzi the Iceman

Imagine stumbling into the oldest moist mummy in the world while trekking. This is exactly what happened to a German couple in 1991 when they were hiking in the Alps in the South Tyrol region of Italy. They alerted the local police thinking it was a possible crime scene, but were shocked to discover that the body they had discovered was the well-preserved natural mummy of a man who lived about 5,300 years ago.

Otzi was carrying an axe, a bear fur cap, and bow and arrows at the time of his death. A reconstruction of Otzi would have looked like what greets you at the Archaeological Museum in Bolzano, Italy (www.iceman.it). In the museum Otzi now ‘lives’ behind an eight centimetre thick pane of bulletproof glass.

The humidity inside the case is 98 per cent and the temperature is minus six degrees centigrade, to simulate the environment in the Alps where he was found.

Extensive radiological exams indicate Otzi died of injuries sustained on the run, including being hit on his right shoulder by a flint-tipped arrow. He eventually succumbed to his wound in the Otzal Alps, hence his name.

This mummy, thought to be between 35 to 55 years of age, has turned out to be a scientific treasure trove. It is hoped that Otzi’s DNA will shed new light on hereditary diseases, common neurological problems like Parkinson’s disease, and even infertility.

Clearly there is also immense anthropological interest in the Iceman. Radiocarbon dating tests have confirmed that he lived in the early Copper Age and probably was a person of high standing in the community as he was over 35 years old before he died, a ripe old age back then.

Amazingly, the iceman has more than 50 tattoos on his body, mostly located in the joint areas. The tattooing technique seems modern, using tiny incisions made in the skin into which vegetable coal was rubbed; certain communities in Asia and Africa continue to use this technique to this day.

Radiological examination of his bones showed age and strain-induced or wear-and-tear degeneration in the joints, and as the tattoos correspond to skin acupuncture lines, it has been postulated that tattooing may have been a form of medicinal treatment rather than a shamanistic practice. If true, we can sympathise with Otzi, who may have had age-related painful joints (osteoarthritis), and searched for an effective pain-relieving treatment, just as many of us do today.

Let there be light

Through the hours of loadshedding, a group of innovative students have been working to design an alternative energy option - a solar battery charger for areas with no access to the grid.

Under the British Council’s first Skills for Employability project in Nepal, Balaju School of Engineering and Technology, Bharatpur’s Nepal Polytechnic Institute, and Nuwakot’s Trade School partnered with Dundee College of Scotland in 2008 to develop technical and vocational skills training for students. Dundee College is the sixth largest vocational education college in Scotland. The project involved sharing of research, skills and technical experience in order to develop an innovative and cost-effective product for Nepali villages, and to equip students with vocational skills. One of the outcomes of the project is a prototype solar battery charger with battery tester – the Munro Solar Power Pack. The pyramid-shaped portable solar pack weights 10 kilos with a battery. A 24-watt product with a potential of 96 watts, the pack can power 25 LED light units for 15 hours.

“We believe that this product will be an asset for Nepali villages as a source of electricity, in places where hydroelectricity is not available or feasible,” says Anil Bajracharya, College Partnership Project Coordinator at Balaju School of Engineering and Technology. “It is a milestone in terms of learning, shaping the skills of trainees, and sharing knowledge and experience.” Over 100 students will be trained every year in the technical specifications of Munro and each of them will make at least one unit. The students are also trying to develop a solar battery charger to operate high voltage home appliances such as computers.

The colleges intend to copyright this design and introduce it to the market commercially next year for Rs 12,000-13,000. They also have plans to recommend that the curriculum board of CTEVT and introduce a course for solar technicians in the curricula of vocational and technical colleges.

Green Scene

Happenings

Cover Girls: Norwegian Ambassador Thor Gialesen inaugurated ‘Avatars & Interpretations’, an art exhibition by Erina Tamrakar and Asha Danori, on Sunday, at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal.

Holy Splash: A local of Thecho is worshipped as Lord Madhav Narayan on Tuesday, as part of the month-long Madhav Narayan festival. Thecho is a village in the valley of the Kholamandu Valley.

Weekend Weather

Bikram Rai

We are glad that last week’s prediction went wrong and the country received its heaviest rainfall in months. On Thursday alone the Valley received 30mm rainfall against a monthly quota of 3mm. The storm has brought the cloud base to 200m. The steady showers of over 24 hours have replenished dried surface water sources, thus reducing potential water shortages for the coming summer. The satellite picture of Thursday afternoon clearly shows the pressure trough (the centre of the low pressure zone) shifting northwards towards Nepal’s west. Enjoy the bright snow peaks and warmer days ahead.
When I first left Nepal to further my studies, the idea that modern western democracies would force their citizens to undergo compulsory military conscription was novel to me. Of course I had heard of the American draft during the Vietnam War, and knew that all Israeli men and women got into uniform and goosestepped up and down their hard-won borders (before running amok along backpacker trails around the world). But being from Nepal, where there is no shortage of interest in voluntarily joining up (from all societal strata), I was simply ignorant of the phenomenon.

Conscription was really brought home to me in London, where I met Giorgos after Giorgos after Giorgos, each determinedly pursuing PhDs, partly because staying in Greece meant signing up for a 9-month stint in the army (or 17 months of alternative service). How ironic that an obligation to serve as a mindlessly obedient ‘grunt’ furthers the creation of doctors of philosophy! No dearth of future philosopher kings in the land of Plato.

Yet Greece is not the only country that requires its citizens to spend a couple of years training for war during peacetime. Far from it. About half of the world’s 192 UN member states still practice some form of conscription, and that list includes nations such as China (no surprise), Brazil (fun in the sun?), Norway (peace mediators now, but Vikings of yore), and Thailand (so much for the land of smiles).

If the UCPN (Maoist) has its way, Nepal will join this list with the promulgation of the new constitution. According to Maoist leader Deb Gurung, compulsory military service for men and women above 18 years of age is necessary because “if we train all citizens, they will be able to protect our sovereignty.” Excuse me? China and India may squeeze the little yam that we are, but they certainly don’t look like swallowing us up. And if they were, a citizenry adept at wielding bamboo poles and farming implements will hardly prove an impediment to the People’s Liberation Army (3 million para/military) or the Indian Army (2.6 million para/military). If we are to believe the Maoists, it’s not that the world hasn’t changed since the time of Mao, the threats to our national sovereignty remain the same as they were since the time of Nepal’s wars with China and the East India Company in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Nepal is already overmilitarised, the civil war is hardly past us, and the Maoists are proposing that every adult receive military training? The Nepal Army, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Police make for a combined military force of about 200,000. Add the PLA, YCL, and any number of non-state armed groups, along with the proposal to create a separate force, and the folly of the Maoist stance becomes clear. Who’s going to pay the trainers? Who’s going to pay the trainees? Believe me, no one will do this for free.

What is the intention here? If the collective bellies of Comrades Dahal, Ram Bahadur Thapa, and Janardan Sharma are anything to go by, physical fitness is not a priority. And even the Maoists must realise that they cannot wage an actual war for national sovereignty against India, much less China.

One has to conclude, then, that the Maoists hope to militarise the Nepali population as a whole. They probably feel that the very fact of having millions of reservists newly charged with a sense of disciplined patriotism (for all militaries are about submitting to the state’s objectives) will strengthen their position vis-á-vis Delhi, and force a change in the latter’s policy towards Nepal. The Maoists also wouldn’t mind having a hand in training not just their own cadre but the entire adult population so one day, when the ‘historic moment’ arrives, reactionary state forces will be easily overwhelmed by a true ‘people’s army’. If they had their way, the Maoists would dump the whole lot of us into cantonments and have us do the Physical Jerks for the rest of our productive lives. They’ve already wasted the prime time of 20,000 of Nepal’s youth for four years and running. They shouldn’t bank on jerking the rest of us around.
I 

f you think 14 hours is bad, think of what lies in store: only two hours of power a day. At the rate at which demand is outstripping supply, this will soon be a reality. The uninterrupted power supply on Wednesday illustrates why. Nepal’s hydropower generation is inadequate, but when the flow of Himalayan rivers goes down because of winter drought, it gets worse. Two days of rain temporarily solved the problem, but the future doesn’t look so rosy. “It’s simple,” explains former Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) chief Uttar Kumar Shrestha. “We are having a 14-hour power cut in February, which will increase to 16 hours by April. With a minimum of an 80MW annual increase in demand, this will reach 19 hours next year and 22 hours the following year.”

The bad news is that things will get worse before they get better. It will take at least two years to build transmission lines to import power from India, and multi-fuel plants take at least a year to set up. That is, if we start now. The country currently has an installed capacity of 697MW, all of which, except Kulekhani, come from non-storage ‘run of the river’ projects. During winter, these plants generate just a third of their capacity and things are worse when the winter rains fail like this year. Demand has now reached 967MW, and there is a winter deficit of 520MW. There is a deficit of 250MW even in the monsoon.

In five years, NEA projects demand to rise to 1500MW, so we will need an installed capacity of 4500MW to cover for the winter deficit. The projects expected to be completed in the next few years (Upper Tamakosi, Upper Trisuli 3A and 3B, and Chamelia) will only add 586MW to the grid. This still means a shortfall of over 200MW at full capacity. “Projects of 2000MW should immediately go into construction if we are to keep up with demand,” hydropower developer Gyanendra Lal Pradhan says.

Local opposition has stalled three big projects with Indian investment: Arun III, Budi Gandaki and Upper Karnali. West Seti is facing political instability, local unrest and financial insecurity complicate the equation. The open investment policy introduced after 1990 led to a brief boom in hydropower development, increasing capacity from 280MW to 615MW, but the war delayed new plants. NEA projects by 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Capacity (MW)</th>
<th>Completion Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kulekhani 3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Tamakosi 456</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Trisuli 3A (600)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Trisuli 3B (400)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rahughat (30)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Modi A (42)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing NEA capacity: 697MW
New NEA capacity by 2015: 672MW
Existing supply: 697MW
New private plants by 2015: 281MW
Installed capacity by 2015: 1,053MW
Capacity required by 2015: 4,500MW

Political instability...

Even the optimistic scenario for 2015 looks gloomy...
The export debate

Dipak Gyawali, water resource expert and former minister

People often cite Bhutan’s example to show how it has been benefitting by exporting power to India, but Bhutan will be facing power cuts during the monsoon. This is because 80 per cent of Bhutan’s electricity is exported to India, leaving just 20 per cent to meet domestic consumption within the country.

Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, hydropower developer

There is no other way to balance the trade deficit than to export power to India. Bhutan has today an installed capacity of 1900MW but we, in the name of ultra-nationalism, are hindering hydropower development. It does not make any difference who builds a project as long as it is built.

If NEA can import Indian electricity at Rs 7.28 per unit, there is no reason why it can’t buy from local developers at slightly less,” IPPAN President Suhaara Lal Shrestha says. Private producers say the government has a negative attitude towards domestic investors.

NEA wants to import 125MW from India for 25 years, a plan ridiculed by experts. “It is absurd to be dependent on a foreign country for a resource that we already have. If NEA bought electricity from local developers at the rate it buys from India, we would have projects in Nepal,” Shrestha says.

Even so, there may be no option but to immediately put up transmission lines to import from India to make up for the supply shortfall.

Invest in storage

The reason power cuts are so crippling in winter is that supply drops as the flow of Himalayan rivers goes down in winter, just when demand is at its peak. The shortfall has been worse by successive years of winter drought since 2000.

Experts at Policy Dialogue on Hydro Power Development, recently organised by Niti Foundation, recently stressed the need for storage projects to address the winter power crisis. They said the government should now fast-track its reservoir projects that store monsoon runoff, and let private producers focus on run of the river schemes.

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If NEA was a hydropower developer, it would not end Nepal’s power woes because they are all for export.

“Our priority should be to build projects for domestic consumption. Building mega projects for export will do nothing for the deficit back home,” water resource analyst Ratna Sanasar Shrestha says. Jeeb Bhandari.

Experts say the best short-term solution is to improve the performance of state-run projects, which are all running at 20 per cent below capacity, equivalent to 560GWh worth Rs 35 billion. Cutting down the transmission losses, currently at 20 per cent, could save 560MW. Pillage is also very high in the Tarai, and districts like Bhatkapur.

But the only long-term solution is to start building new projects right away. For this, Nepal needs to be investment-friendly, and tariffs need to be revised. Private developers say the NEA’s purchase price of Rs 4.44 per unit is not sustainable. Independent Power Producers of Nepal (IPPAN) wants the rate raised to at least Rs 5.90 per unit.

From light to darkness

Flickering through Khagendra Bahadur Bish’s book celebrating the centenary of electricity in Nepal by candlelight this week, the absurdity of it all suddenly dawned on me. It also demonstrated how inured we have become to power cuts.

Cutting 14-hour power cuts in a country with among the highest per capita hydroelectricity generation potential in the world are an indication of shameless malgovernance, and just how completely our rulers have let us down since 1990. Bish is with the Independent Power Producers’ Association of Nepal, which published the book, ‘Hydropower Nepal’, to mark 100 years since the commissioning of the 500kW Paroog power plant in 1911. In hindsight, the fact that Nepal was generating electric power for streetlights even before the UK had established a national grid could be considered something of an achievement. 100 years later, few of Kathamandu’s streetlights work even when there is power.

“Hydropower Nepal” is a useful reference tool for the past, present and future of hydropower development in Nepal with a glossary of rivers, hydropower plants and a wishlist of projects.

Domestic power squabbling among political parties contributed to the current power crisis. After Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala signed the Mahakali Treaty with India in 1994, UML mounted a national sit-in campaign and overthrew him, but UML itself split when it went ahead and ratified the treaty. Bish lists other reasons for the power famine: fecklessness and political interference at the Nepal Electricity Authority, delays due to the conflict, the state’s negative attitude towards private producers, low tariffs and dollar-denominated deals. The book cites the World Bank’s withdrawal from the Arun III project in 1995 as the watershed that precipitated the loadshedding crisis. But some Arun slayer activists would probably argue that Arun was the wrong project at the wrong time and power was generated by cheaper, medium-sized plants in the ten years after it was scrapped.

Over reliance on run-of-the-river schemes is another reason. Water flow in rivers is lowest when demand is highest, and the only way to get out of that trap is to build storage reservoirs to tide over peak winter and evening demand. It may be wise to turn West Seti into a domestic project, for example.

Whatever the merits of the case, it is clear that the country cannot sustain the current peak load shortfall of 400MW that is surely going to increase. The book estimates that the country loses Rs 1 billion a year due to loss of industrial production and cost of diesel generation. Bish says: “To say this is simply a failure is an understatement…it is in fact a huge disaster.”

The power crisis also masks other systemic failures and instances of poor decision-making that have resulted in the power-starved Nepali public having to fork out billions of rupees to pay contractors for cost over-runs because politicians pocketed kickbacks to get NEA to approve faulty FIDIC contracts for projects like Kal Ghandaki A. The unheralded West Seti saga is another example of the result of political failure and lack of national focus.

So, what to do? The Pushpa Kamal Dahal government set out a goal of generating 10,000MW in ten years, and the Madhav Kumar Nepal government that replaced him was even more ambitious in aiming for 25,000MW in 20 years. A task force set up to look at power scenarios says it is possible to generate 2,000MW by 2014 through power projects for domestic consumption, another 10,000MW by 2024 through a combination of run-of-the-river and storage projects, and 18,000MW by 2029 through export multi-purpose mega projects like Karnali and Kosi.

At the end of his book, Bish looks forward to “a new hydropower century” for Nepal. Let’s hope it will be brighter than the last. Aunty Dol
Have historical ties thanks to the bond created by Hillary and Tenzing.

Has New Zealand always been so prepared?
Yes, there has been a lot of emphasis on preparedness since the great earthquake of the 1930s when about 100 people died. That is when we drew up a building code and we enforced it strictly. Infrastructure projects are also designed with earthquakes in mind. There is a mandatory insurance policy for urban housing. The September earthquake was very strong, it caused $10 billion worth of damage.

We are still in the reconstruction phase, and will finish that in two years.

What would happen if a similar earthquake were to hit Kathmandu?
It is very unfortunate, but I have to say that there will be a lot of lives lost. Many historical buildings will be reduced to rubble, it will be a huge calamity. You need strict monitoring of building codes.

What should be the role of elected representatives?
Mayors are elected, and to be elected means they have to be accountable to citizens. There is a big role for local councils in the post-earthquake scenario. I was re-elected after the earthquake, and perhaps wouldn’t have been if I had not done my job.

What should the municipality do?
Nepal also has a building code. There are rules and regulations to ensure a minimum benchmark on jobs creation.

But how satisfied are you with its implementation?
Ratification of this Convention by Nepal is significant. However effective implementation would be even more significant. It is always the case in Nepal as well as elsewhere in the developing world that there is a huge difference between two legal frameworks and practice. Nepal has provided technical support in preparing a National Action Plan on the implementation of the Convention. Unfortunately, the Cabinet has not yet endorsed the National Action Plan due to the political uncertainty. But different line ministries have gone ahead with activities, so I think there has been important movement on implementation of the Convention.

What does ILO 169 actually mean in practice for a country like Nepal?
Convention 169 emphasises several fundamental rights which the indigenous peoples should have in the new constitution, for example the right to be consulted and to participate in decision making and implementation. Indigenous peoples have their own traditions, culture and language and if they are not consulted or allowed to participate, these traditions are slowly lost. We need to protect their traditional occupations as well. Normally, people who live below the poverty line are socially excluded, so the Convention is also about giving priority to economic empowerment.

Which of these fundamental rights do you think are most important for Nepal?
All of these rights are equally important for indigenous peoples. On land reform in general there has been less progress. It is not only about indigenous peoples, but the people of the whole country. This is one of the areas the government should take action in. The government has achieved a lot in the participation of indigenous people in politics. There have been pilot programs introduced to protect mother tongues. But in terms of economic empowerment, there is no national policy on how to generate jobs and income-generating programs for indigenous people. We have been running a few projects like the one with the Ministry of Local Development in Ramechhap, where the minimum benchmark on jobs creation was set according to the proportion of indigenous peoples in the district.

Which countries have successfully implemented Convention 169?
In terms of using the Convention as a dialogue tool to stabilise the country, Bolivia and Guatemala in Latin America are ahead. The percentage of indigenous people in Bolivia is more than half the population, and the country has actually seen economic empowerment through ensuring indigenous rights. Guatemala is another Latin American country that has moved ahead.

What are the challenges in implementing the convention in Nepal?
Generic challenges for the whole work of development aside, there are some specific challenges. We have to ensure effective participation and meaningful representation of indigenous people in the decision-making process. Although there are rules and regulations to ensure a minimum percentage of the participation of indigenous people, in reality it falls short.

The second challenge is the formal endorsement of the interim constitution. If there is strong political will it can be done. Another challenge is to get the commitment of the Ministry of Local Government to ensure that the rights of indigenous people are enshrined in it. If these rights are not included in the new constitution, this may create another conflict.

Do you think the draft preamble is adequate?
What has been written in the draft on the chapter on fundamental rights falls short of what is needed, it is not as comprehensive as it should be. Even the interim constitution doesn’t fully reflect the issue.
The India factor

Indian commentator cites security as reason for rejecting seven-point agreement

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA

At the heart of the political deadlock in Nepal is an inability to achieve a security matrix that complements the political ambition of Nepal to become a genuine democratic republic.

The moment details of the seven-point agreement between Jhal Nath Khanal and the Maoists began being leaked to the local media, there was a furor even within the UML, let alone other parties like the Nepali Congress. The argument was that this amounted to retaining the Maoist PLA at government expense. The Maoists, who had been floating this idea of a separate force for a while, had intentions of converting the PLA combatants into a paramilitary force meant to guard Nepal’s borders. This obviously raised security concerns in New Delhi, because such a force on the open Indo-Nepal borders would have all kinds of implications for India, starting with support to Naxal elements here and the Gorkhaland movement, coupled with the smuggling of fake Indian currency notes among several other issues.

It was an understanding that was not acceptable to any other political formation, including the Madhesis, not acceptable to any other political parties and remove any possibility of broad-based political support. He had also given his word to his Indian interlocutors that he would not act against India’s security interests. The talks, therefore, broke down over the home ministry portfolio with the Maoists squarely blaming India for being the obstacle.

Regardless of whatever other trouble, Nepal has rarely seen itself at odds with India’s security concerns. It’s a different matter that a lax security apparatus may have allowed anti-Indian forces to use Nepal to meet their ends, but this has never been the ethos of Nepal’s own security outlook.

The Maoists, on the other hand, repeatedly seemed to place themselves at odds with India’s security needs: and that’s the potential game-changer, a serious cause for worry. The more the Maoists position themselves against India’s security priorities, the more India will be compelled to push the envelope. And that, in effect, will have the undesirable outcome of framing Nepal increasingly in security terms.

Further, the Maoists’ ploy to play the China card against India has gained them nothing. Instead, it has helped justify the hardening of positions in New Delhi, which does not augur well for the relationship. Interestingly, China’s primary objective in Nepal is to stop Tibetans from using it as a staging ground to quietly move in and out of Tibet; and for this it has been asking for more support from Nepal’s home ministry.

Mutuality of security interests has been fundamental to Indo-Nepal relations. And even when India gave up its twin pillar approach, monarchy and multi-party democracy, and welcomed the formation of a republic with the Maoists at the helm, this principle remained vital. However, over the past few years, the Maoists have sought to consciously undermine this security logic and sought to replace it with one that inhibits the ethos of the Maoist PLA. Anything short of that has not been acceptable to the Maoists. This explains why the integration of PLA cadre has not moved at a desirable pace; and also why it was so important for Prachanda to take on Nepal’s army chief, and now to break off talks on joining the government over the UML’s refusal to part with the home ministry.

Needless to say, if security priorities are not sorted, governance is bound to be the first casualty and that’s why Khanal, the fourth PM in three years, has more than just a coalition tohandle. 

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One of the most welcome pieces of news this week is the long-awaited announcement that the Municipality is going to finally install an electric crematorium in Pashupati. This will reduce the pressure on our forests and hopefully resolve the burial ground dispute. There is just one small problem. What to do during loadshedding? We could power the crematorium with a diesel generator, but what if there is one of those frequent diesel shortages? Dead people can’t wait at gas stations.

The other idea that is gaining currency is a solar incinerator. This would definitely be environmentally friendly and Nepal could cash in on carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism. But, again, what do if folks die at night? Or during the monsoon? There may be a huge backlog of corpses waiting for a cloud-free day. So, despite opposition from the greens there seems to be only one solution: a nuclear-fuelled crematorium.

Lest there be any doubt, Maoist Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal and Maoist Chairman Lotus Flower have signed a sworn affidavit reaffirming their commitment to the seven-point pact. There is now an agreement to follow the agreement. What is not so well known, however, is that there was another, even more top secret, agreement between JNK and PKD. The unspoken 10-point pact is so secret that the Ass was sworn to secrecy and can only divulge it if you promise to keep it to yourself:

1. We won’t ever let Baburam Come-red become PM
2. We will dangle a bone to keep The Sher salivating
3. We will not let anyone from the Oli-Makunay camp in our coalition
4. We will extend the CA by two years on 28 May
5. We will buy off more CA members and get a two-thirds majority
6. We will charm the pants off the Europeans
7. We will both say one thing and do the other
8. We will stab each other in the back, but gently
9. We will merge the Maoists with the ML faction of UML
10. We will abide by communist principles and share the moolah