After many months of trying to be everything to everyone, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal finally took the plunge during Wednesday’s politburo meeting to follow the pragmatic line espoused by his rival, Baburam Bhattarai.

Dahal had been expressing his commitment to work with the other parties for ‘peace and constitution’ with the international community, while simultaneously appeasing his hardline colleagues by backing the ‘people’s revolt’ line.

Dahal’s about turn seems to have lifted his notorious reputation for making contradictory statements and being an unreliable partner. “It is a positive step and will help to forge a political consensus,” Shyam Shrestha, leftist political analyst, told Nepali Times.

Although the Kiran faction is not happy, Dahal’s move will be welcomed by most of the 19,000 restless combatants in camps across the country who are uncertain about their future. “Integration and peace is a simultaneous process and this proposal will expedite integration. There is a new hope for those living in the cantonments,” PLA spokesperson Chandra Prakash Khanal (Baldev) said.

Dahal seems to have timed his announcement for the visit here by Indian External Affairs Minister, S M Krishna. The Maoists have blamed India for being the main obstacle to their rightful place in government, and Dahal probably hopes Krishna will take a positive message back to New Delhi that he can now be trusted.

Baburam Bhattarai could pave the way for a consensus government, but analysts say it will take more than this to convince the NC to join in. “We will not join as long as this government set up with a secret 7-point agreement between Prachanda and Jhalnathi is in place.” NC chief-whip Laxman Ghimire said.

Dewan Rai

Editorial p2

Hydrocarbon, hydropower and carbohydrates
Time for our politicians to be less obsessed with power, and more with energy
Drought, Hydrocarbon, Hydropower and Carbohydrates

The Nepali business sector is controlled by a few family-run behemoths (“Vidya’s medicine”, Ashushot Thaw, #549). The monopoly they enjoy should be scrapped. All these large organizations could be brought under NEPSE so that the general people can also invest in these companies. All big companies should be under these big family run businesses and the state of the people working for them is miserable. Dear FNC, please learn that people in your organisation are the asset of your company. Taking care of them is your first priority.

Bidhan Shrestha

Weekly Internet Poll # 550

Q. How do you feel about the New Year?

Total votes: 1407

- Satisfied: 58%
- Unhappy: 20%
- Neutral: 18%
- Don’t Know: 1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 552

Q. How do you rate Jhala Nath Khanal’s 80 days tenure as the Prime Minister?

- No need to be a genius to figure out that this is not sustainable. We are doomed if we continue with a fascist economy, our economic reliance on India will grow and will translate into political subordination. The answer always was hydropower, to spur domestic growth and for balance of payments equilibrium. But we are the laughing stock of the world for harnessing only 500 megawatts of our 50,000 megawatt generation potential. Nepal is not poor, it is poorly governed. Things will only improve when the political class is less obsessed with power and more with energy. Only by generating hydropower to reduce our d dependence on hydrocarbons will there be enough carbohydrates for everyone.

Anurag Acharya, #549. Most people have never taken an interest in this type of political nonsense and you are deluding yourself if you think that life in Mathes has become ‘qualitatively’ or in any other way, better because of the 2007 agitation. The situation, not just in Mathes but everywhere in Nepal, has got so confusing that you can’t make up your mind on what to talk, complain, have a view on, or worry about. Who is opposing whom, who is behind what atrocity, whom to trust? What do politicians say is not what people want, how is it that all this politics is driven by the dimmest characters, backed by the sharpest tongues, and what do they each want? Who is evil? Where are we, and how did we land here, and since we have landed here, which destination are we off to? I wonder where are the people who chased away families? Where are the people who decapitated that inspector in Biratnagar (or was it Janakpur)? I wonder if they had fun doing it, if they are laughing at their achievements now?

Bimalesh

Weekly Internet Poll # 551

Q. How do you feel about the New Year?

Total votes: 1495

- Satisfied: 72%
- Unhappy: 20%
- Neutral: 8%
- Don’t Know: 0%

Weekly Internet Poll # 553

Q. How do you rate Deuba-Nath Koirala’s 80 days tenure as the Prime Minister?

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Unintelligent intelligence

BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Last weekend a Pakistani Embassy official was shot at by two gunmen in broad daylight on a Kathmandu street (right). The frequency with which such brazen assassination attempts are taking place in the capital has heightened public fears about security.

What is even more worrying is the ease and confidence with which such attacks are being carried out. Two gunmen simply strolled to the spot in their slippers, shot at the man in full public view and got away in his motorbike. These were no rookies. The hit job reminds us of the Jamim Shah murder last year. The police said the attacks on Shah and Asif were not just carried out by the same gunmen, they could also be linked to the murder of Shankat Beg in Butwal last year, the Indian businessman Anjani Kumar Chachan last week and the attack on Yunus Ansari inside prison last month.

In a studio discussion on an Indian news channel last week, ex-intelligence operations of which our own intelligence agencies openly discuss ways to eliminate anti-Indian activities in Nepal. “India can’t just sit back and watch,” was the general refrain. They went on to raise fears of “growing Chinese and ISI nexus” in Nepal that goes unchecked due to corrupt political leadership and instability in Nepal, and how this was giving New Delhi a major headache.

These statements from Indian ex-military top brass hints at a thriving world of espionage and covert operations of which our own intelligence agencies have no clue. A senior CIB official admitted to us this week: “Yes, we have failed in counter-intelligence, and everybody out there needs to know this. Only then will they begin asking why we have failed.” That may be cryptic logic, but you can’t expect intelligence to operate effectively in absence of resource and logistical support. Outsiders seem to have free movement in Nepal because we have not been intelligent enough to give intelligence due importance over the years. A guy riding a embassy vehicle and playing golf with you might be masterminding these covert operations. How do you find out?
Telecom operators in the country are incurring losses of up to Rs160 million a month in revenue due to the bypassing of international calls through illegal connections via the internet, called VOIP.

The government is taking this seriously since it also affects tax revenue and income from Nepal Telecom. In the last few months alone, police have conducted a dozen raids, made several arrests and recently cracked down on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for allegedly colluding with call bypass racketeers.

Experts say the call bypass thrives in Nepal because rates for international calls are one of the highest in South Asia, and every family is affected because one-fifth of the country’s population lives and works abroad. The technology required to bypass calls is available over the counter and anyone with an internet connection can set up a connection. Illegal operators in Nepal, many of those detained have been foreign nationals, evade the official gateway by using VOIP. And since there is no tax or service charge to be paid in this arrangement, the rates for end users are much cheaper. "The most effective way to stop call bypass is to reduce long-distance telephone charges and render the call bypass rates non-competitive so the illegal operators go out of business," Binay Bohra, chairperson of ISPA, says.

Nepali customers are paying the highest rates for international calls in the region, but there is no consensus about how to lower rates. Nepali customers are perfectly happy with whoever provides cheap call rates, even if it is illegal. Experts say that unless this demand is addressed by supply, it will be impossible to stop illegal connections. Indeed, both ISPs and telecom operators say it is impossible to completely stop the racket because it is big business and enjoys political protection.

Says Koistinen: “It is impossible to control 100 percent of illegal calls. However we have been helping the police, re-verifying our customers and have suspended several points of call in the last few years.”
It’s an expensive jam

Time is not the only thing you waste when you are stuck in traffic engines on during traffic halts, in anticipation that the vehicles will move forward. But keeping the engine on idle consumes more fuel than when the vehicle is on the move. A 1000cc car burns 2 litres of fuel if it is kept in idle for an hour, a heavier vehicle consumes double. A motorcycle engine consumes 0.25 litre per hour if it is just sitting in a jam. This means that if you own a 1000cc petrol hatchback and you are stuck in traffic for an hour a day you lose Rs 194 a day (@ Rs 97/litre), Rs 5,820 a month and Rs 69,840 a year. Multiply that by the total number of vehicles and you see that the current petroleum shortage is probably good for the country because at least we are wasting less fuel.

There are other costs: the fumes from stationary vehicles adds to the already toxic air. Idling in traffic, frequent acceleration and braking also increases the wear and tear on vehicles, leading to more frequent repairs and replacements. Mismanaged traffic also results in stressed and frustrated drivers, hypertension and increases chances of road rage and accidents.

The most logical solution to manage traffic is to build roads and widen the existing ones. But while we wait for that to happen, let’s be proactive to cut the costs of traffic jams. If you leave your house half an hour earlier than rush hour, you can skip traffic. Keep an eye for short cuts— the link roads beside the valley rivers are newer, shorter and often faster. Try the public transportation, Rs 20 can get you anywhere. If the distance isn’t too far, give your car a rest and walk or cycle, it’s good for your health and your pocket. Start today, Fridays have been declared ‘bike to work’ days after all.

Return gifts
Kumari Bank marked its 10th anniversary by gifting computers to Shree JanakiBhaksh Secondary School. The school is located in Balkhu.

Mega opening
Mega Bank formally inaugurated its 12 branches. The branches are located in Anghalbachi, Bratnagar, Birganj, Butwal, Chautara, Hariwan, Jawalakhel, Kapan, Pockara and Syafulbesi. Baneshwor and New Road are the two locations in Kathmandu.

Spring collection
Springwood, a product of Surya Nepal, has launched its new summer t-shirts. Tourism and social networking are among the themes for the prints.

Lucky dices
Him Electronics has introduced a new scheme ‘Himstar Roll Roll Roll’ which offers a scratch card imprinted with two dices on purchase of Himstar TV, fridge and deep freezer. If customers get stars in both dices they win a 26” LCD- A.S.I. Woofer, DVD, Induction Cooker and CFL bulbs are also be to be won.

Colour play
Amat-Jyoti Foundation organised Teen Art Competition with 30 participants. Sagar Samal, Sonam Tamang and Anamika Gautam were declared first, second and third respectively. The paintings will be exhibited next Saturday at the foundation’s premises.

Go Charlie
Charlie Gurung won the Ruslan Vodka New Year Golf 2068, taking home a two-way ticket to Bangkok. Eighty-five golfers had participated in the tournament.
In the fall of 1979, when the Czech photographer Zdenek Thoma reached Manang, the valley had just been opened to tourism. Its stunning location on the north side of the Annapurnas and its hospitable inhabitants tempted Thoma to linger there to take pictures. He held many exhibitions in Prague and across Europe.

Thirty years later, Thoma’s son Michal travelled to Manang with his father and re-took pictures of the same places photographed in 1979. He met the people whose portraits his father had taken and documented the changes in the architecture and lives of the people of Manang.

Earlier this month, father and son returned to Manang once more for a before-and-after exhibition at the Manang Culture Museum. The opening ceremony on 4 April was attended by 100 locals and trekkers. Visitors were excited to recognise themselves and compare pictures of their valley as it was in 1979 and see the changes. Although Manang has been transformed in the past 30 years, this is nothing compared to the changes that will come in the next few years as the Marsyangdi road reaches the once-pristine trans-Himalayan valley.
When Zdenek Thoma first came to Manang, there was only one house providing accommodation run by Tsering Dolma. Today, she is a prosperous tourism entrepreneur with several hotels. Dolma is happy about the changes, but adds: “I just wish people were a little less selfish.”

Today, everyone has mobile phones, the houses have electricity, and the sound of the internal-combustion engine has arrived in the valley with three motorcycles and tractors.

Locals are looking forward to the road, they think it will be better for trade. But not everyone is sure whether the road is good for tourism. Already, despite it being the peak trekking season, lodge-owners said there were many fewer tourists than before.

“Tourists want virgin places to visit, the road will be a negative unless you are smart about it,” says Zdenek, who has seen how the road has affected trekking in Mustang, on the other side of Thorung La.

For Michal, the exhibition was a sort of homecoming because he grew up in Prague seeing his father’s pictures from Manang. “I was six months old in 1979 when my father came here, and the images are so familiar to me that the exhibition took me back to my childhood,” he says.

“Although people have taken many pictures of Manang and Manangis, nobody had yet brought the pictures back to them,” says Michal, “we wanted to share our work by giving pictures, not just taking them.”

Zdenek Thoma with a trekking companion, in 1979 in Manang (below, right), and with his son, Michal, at the same spot earlier this month.

Locals from Manang thronged the exhibition, excitedly pointing to relatives and friends they recognised.
**EVENTS**

**MUSIC**

Universal Religion 2011, music coming together performers from around the world. Till 24 April, 12 noon onwards, Putan Resort, Plotka, kgarira@gmail.com, mountainmadnessnepal@gmail.com, 984138662/9851043398

Absolute Live Music, by Rashmi & Kitcha Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. 7.30pm onwards, Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchowk, 5524180, 5545904, abar@wlink.com.np

**DIETING**

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. Thamel

Pumpernickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread and sandwiches. Experiment with their goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. Thame

Bencey Billy, a new restaurant in the offering. Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. But really, we can't wait for their yarchagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbuck.

**GETAWAYS**

Charkirot Panorama Resort, enjoy mountain views and local culture at the historic town of Charikiot. Special packages on offer, Charkirot, Dolakha, 5524863, thapamaag@gmail.com

The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight packages available for the romantics every full moon night. Candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night, Lahore, 2135558

**FUSION**

The veteran golfers were left watching as 20-year-old Rashid Khan took home the Surya Nepal Masters 2011 trophy in his debut season. Khan submitted an error-free card of six-under 66 to finish the tournament at 20-under 260, seven shots clear of Sri Lankan Mithun Perera. Khan was awarded the winner's cheque of Rs 648,500 while Mithun received Rs 446,000. Nepal's best bet, Shiva Ram Shrestha finished third and took home the prize money of Rs 250,000. The 18th edition of Surya Nepal Masters was played at the course of Gokarna Forest Resort.
Running with resonance

Joining the ranks of professional runners at the 31st annual Virgin London Marathon on 17 April was first-time runner, Philip Holmes, who completed the 34 km course in 4 hours and 50 minutes: all to raise money for The Esther Benjamins Trust Nepal which he helped set up.

The Trust works in Nepal to locate, rescue and rehabilitate children and young people who have been the victims of trafficking as well as other marginalised and at-risk groups including the hearing-impaired and street children. Holmes, who has lived in Nepal since 2005, was joined by a small group of dedicated runners from Nepal and they raised £25,000. The money will be used to help in the upkeep of the Trust’s nearly 200 rescued children and to apprehend the traffickers and agents who continue to prey on Nepali children.

On 30 May Holmes will again lace up to compete in the BUPA 10 km run in another fundraising effort. This time he will be joined by Maya Lama Dong (pictured, left), a talented long-distance runner who was rescued by the Trust from circus slavery in 2004 and now resides in one of the charity’s two refuges at Godavari.

A group of 11 Western circus volunteers, three of whom are former Nepal volunteers, will also join the trio to raise money to support Sapana, Nepal’s first contemporary circus.

“IT’s wonderful that Maya can don trainers and help us raise funds for other girls like herself and allow them to benefit from the opportunities The Esther Benjamins Trust provides in Nepal. This will be the race of a lifetime for Maya and one that could have no better purpose,” says Holmes. justgiving.com/maya10k

Vesper Café

I’d never frequented Vesper Café, but had noted its slick interior, the pleasant garden, and the wonderful red building next to it. The cuisine, I assumed, was of a piece with Jhamel’s many upmarket restobars, tipping towards continental offerings. So much so that I didn’t even think I’d replicate earlier reviews of the place in other publications. But the other day I just happened to have lunch there, and came away with very distinct impressions.

Now, I have nothing at all to say about the main courses offered in Vespers. For the three of us present, it was a salad-fest, at least on my part because of overindulgence towards the meaty side of the spectrum in days past. A Goat Cheese Salad, a Caesar Salad, and a Warm Chicken Salad. Light, substantial, tasty, right?

Wrong. After waiting longer than one might expect, slurping up bits of over-chopped mint through a straw and spitting them out discreetly, I eagerly looked at the approaching waiter to see a Tuna Nicoise take the place of my Caesar. “Bhai, yo ta Nicoise ho ni…”

The waiter stalled, retreated, and came back insisting that the Nicoise was what I had ordered. When I stared at him, he said a Caesar could be prepared, but that it would take 15-20 minutes, because the bacon would have to be cooked. I gave up, and reluctantly agreed to have canned tuna for lunch. And it was just as dull an experience as I expected, with nary an anchovy in sight.

What’s worse, with the exception of the delicately grilled, flavousome chicken, the rest of the ingredients in the other two salads were a disaster. While I praised another establishment recently for experimenting with a range of leaves in a salad, it seems everything just has to catch on in Nepal. Here we had parsley, fennel, garlic, mist, some other unidentified shrubbery and, oh there you are, lettuce. Believe it or not, there is such a thing as too much variety. And instead of nicely crumbled goat cheese Vespers opts for three slices of bread lathered with the stuff to top the salad itself.

As we left, disgruntled, the waiter came rushing up to inform me that they’d given us too much change back. It was the first thing they’d got right that day.

Nepali Kukur

After New Orleans on the right side of Jhamel’s Restaurant Lane.

Space ★★★★

Bread ‘n water ★★★

Service ★★★

Deal-i-ous ★★★

Rep-eat? ★★★
The question below is commonly asked in medical examinations for qualified doctors.

Which one preventive intervention leads to the largest average increase in life expectancy in a target population:

a) A regular exercise program  
b) Quitting smoking  
c) Mammogram (breast cancer prevention screening in women)  
d) Pap smear (cervical cancer prevention screening in women)  
e) Prostate gland cancer screening for men

The answer is b) quitting smoking. For a targeted population, more than all the other choices listed above, quitting smoking will add 3 to 5 years. A regular exercise program will add 1 to 2 years and the rest of the others will each add a couple of months. This question illustrates the importance of quitting smoking and exercising. Does this mean that c, d, and e options are not worth pursuing?

Predicted increases in life expectancy are average numbers that apply to populations and not individuals. For example, mammograms may increase life expectancy overall by only 2 to 3 months, but for the individual at risk of breast cancer (patients with a family history of breast cancer, smoking etc), the screening may add many years by detecting the disease earlier. This same pattern holds true for cervical cancer and prostate cancer in the question above.

Many of us do not know if we are at risk for common diseases because this may not be obvious, like a family history. So, in carrying out recommended screening tests like the ones in the question above, it is important to assume that we are average Joes (or average Ram Bahadurs and Sita Devis) who may be at risk.

In a country like Nepal where day to day existence is so difficult for so many people, it may be hard to understand the concept of “wellness” which the above medical question evokes. But this idea of wellness is in our interest because prevention is better than cure. And crucially, care is more expensive. Hence not only quitting smoking and exercise, but tests like breast and cervical cancer screening may help a great deal in promoting wellness. Raising awareness about the importance of screening tests in the community is a very good public health practice.
The idea of a presentation in less than 10 minutes is no doubt an appealing one, particularly for Nepali audiences accustomed to the blather of self-important personages with no respect for their time. Having ranted concisely on this point not so long ago, I was intrigued to hear of but disappointed to miss out on the first edition of Pecha Kucha Kathmandu in Attic Bar. I was happy therefore to be invited to contribute to photo.circle’s presentation for the second edition last Saturday.

The format of Pecha Kucha, which is Japanese for ‘chit-chat’, is 20x20. This means that each presenter – and there are about a dozen per session – gets 20 seconds each for 20 slides, making for precisely 6 minutes 40 seconds. No politely gesturing hosts are needed to discourage over-running, as the presenter has no control over the slides he or she is presenting. The fear of being caught mid-presentation as your ‘Thank You’ slide beams out to the audience appears to be deterrent enough.

Pecha Kucha began in 2003 in Japan and has now spread to over 260 cities. Kathmandu’s second edition took on an ‘Inspire Japan’ theme and included an incredible range of suitably inspirational stories from artists, journalists, photographers, writers and filmmakers. It was further enlivened by an auction of organiser Sujan Chitrakar and Chirag Bangdel’s artworks, the proceeds from which joined with door takes to help fund the building of a school in Japan.

Of course, there are always good presentations and bad presentations. There is the risk of Death by Powerpoint, and inattentive audiences. And the format has unique challenges. It took some doing to squeeze the seven slides I was allotted on the book ‘Hamra Hajurama’ into photo.circle’s presentation – in so many words, to distill my grandmother’s three billion seconds of personal history into 140. And then you had American photographer Brian Sokol, who chose to sit in near-total silence as his brooding images of urban Japan cast light and shade on us. “Who’d have thought 20 seconds would be so long,” he quipped.

But the inspiration was as much for the Nepalis present as for Japan. While those meant to be doing the most for Nepal stoop ever lower in their bungling, self-absorbed cretinism, to hear someone passionately describing a project that she has poured her creativity and intellect into is to hear the sound of hope. It goes without saying that there are many more Nepalis across the country equally deserving of such a platform to present their ideas to their peers. Pecha Kucha Pokhara’s a shoo-in.

pecha-kucha.org/night/kathmandu
Ah, so finally, there are signs that two principal architects of the peace process in Nepal, the Maoists and the NC are trying to strike a deal on peace and the new constitution. To all those who have been advocating this idea (including yours truly who first broached this subject last year) this comes as a relief. Influential leaders in the two parties are taking in near unison about the need for Maoist-NC partnership.

The cooperation between the Maoists and the NC need not be about government formation at all. Nothing can stop these two from forming a coalition government should they want it since, together, they command a majority in the legislature-parliament and they can have a comfortable cushion of Madhesi parties’ support as well. The UML, which has never stayed out of government since 2004, irrespective of who were its coalition partners (except during Gyanendra Shah’s absolute rule) can be expected to come on board. But it would only give credence to the suspicion that parties forge alliance only to form a government for personal interests by toppling an incumbent.

The Maoist-UML seven-point deal is the latest example. Moreover, a rule by majority is neither an answer nor an objective. The existing government and the one preceding it are examples of how a majority government alone cannot deliver during post-conflict transition. There has to be consensus between the parties that have the capacity to move the agenda of peace and constitution forward.

With just over a month left for the extended term of the Constituent Assembly to expire, the Maoist party and the NC need to recreate an understanding, like the one in November 2005 which resulted in the famous 12-point agreement which, in turn, led to abolition of monarchy, formal end of Maoist insurgency and an elected Constituent Assembly to draft the constitution. That understanding, according to Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai and NC CWC member Shekhar Koirala who had been very closely involved in negotiations that led to the 12-point agreement is an absolute must.

Skeptics, radicals and extreme leftists and rightists will oppose and may even work against a NC-Maoists consensus. Well, they never owned up to the changes that have occurred since 2005. The parties need to focus on the vast majority of people who are waiting for them to deliver. And what better time than now to do so as we are about to celebrate the momentous changes we ushered in exactly five years ago, on 24 April, 2006.

There are people who want peace and constitution by 28 May, but others oppose another extension of the assembly. After all, the parties have wasted 11 months of the extended period on power games. What guarantee is there that they won’t waste another extended period in a similar fashion? Valid concerns, which the parties need to address.

But if the term of the assembly is not extended through consensus between the NC, the Maoists party and the Madhesi parties, especially the first two, we will face a ‘might is right’ scenario. No prizes for guessing who will get the backing of the majority of the people at home as well as neighbours and powerful members of the international community.

‘Might is right’ or consensus? We have a choice to make and much before 28 May arrives.

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Might is not right

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation is a leading international organisation that specialises in capacity development support to government, non-government and private sector organisations. SNV is committed to reduction of poverty that is consistent with nationally defined poverty reduction strategies and the global MDG agenda. In Asia, SNV provides advisory services in Agriculture, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene and Renewable Energy/Climate Change.

Our work in Asia is led by a regional management team, made up of the Regional Director, Country Directors and Regional Unit Managers. PR/Communication for Asia is organised in two clusters: South Asia (Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia) and South East Asia.

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The RPCO will be responsible for SNV South Asia regional PR/Communication strategy, especially linked to business development efforts, knowledge dissemination, quality control and support for reporting and proposals. The RPCO will oversee and coordinate the PR/Communication activities for the South Asia sub-region and is in charge of communication for SNV Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, together with Communication Officers at country level.

Requirements

- Masters Degree in communication or marketing related field
- Well seasoned communication professional with knowledge of Communication, PR and knowledge management instruments, regional implications and the care processes
- Strong background in managing and delivering marketing and communication strategies
- Verifiable experience in design, translation and backstopping the implementation of regional communication plans
- Strong market orientation with ability to track trends in development communication
- Excellent verbal and written professional communication skills
- Previous experience working in the international development context and in Asia is preferred.

The position is based in SNV Country Office, Kathmandu, Nepal and would require extensive visits to programme areas throughout South Asia Region. Detailed TOL is available upon email request to nepal@snvworld.org

Your applications should include i) motivation letter mentioning vacancy code no. and ii) detailed C.V (preferably web links to your work).

Female candidates and candidates from marginalised castes and ethnic groups are encouraged to apply.

Your applications need to be received at address mentioned below before 1700 hours, 3rd May 2011.
When Mani Ram Rai left Nepal two years ago in search of a better life in Japan, he never imagined what he would have to go through in a country he thought was the safest and most prosperous country in the world.

The triple disaster—earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown that hit Japan on 11 March killed at least 25,000 and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Maniram lived in Fukushima and fled to Tokyo with six of his friends. Initially, he was happy to have survived the quake, tsunami and radioactive leak, as living became difficult and expensive in Tokyo. Maniram decided to head back home. Although he will return to Japan to complete his studies. “Life is hard in Nepal, but at least it is home,” he says.

On the other side of the world at the same time, Dwar Chand Rai of Khotang and Netra Thakuri of Kavre were fleeing a different kind of disaster: the unrest that led to war in Libya. It is a story of hardships, struggle and survival while traveling out of Libya’s Darna province to Egypt. Netra and Dwar Chand were among hundreds of Nepali migrant workers rescued from Libya by our embassy in Egypt. They have decided not to go back to Libya. Dwar Chand recalls the fearful nights he spent while waiting uncertainly for the relief transport that he wasn’t sure would come. He dreamt of his family in Khotang and longed to see them again. After witnessing bloodshed in Libya, both Rai and Thakuri are thankful that at least their own country is not at war. Nearly 1,000 Nepali migrant workers go abroad, mainly to India, the Gulf, Malaysia and further afield in search of income. The remittance they send back has sustained Nepal’s economy. But the reports of exploitation, abuse and deaths of migrant workers in foreign countries has exposed the ugly side of this business. With growing unrest, uncertainty and recession abroad, many Nepalis feel it is better to make a modest and honest living in Nepal than to risk being cheated or mistreated in a foreign land.

“We will work hard in our own country now,” says Thakuri, “there is no place like home.”
Anti-poverty salary
Rajdhani, 15 April

The vice president of the Poverty Alleviation Fund Bidhyadhar Mallik earns Rs 175,000 a month. This is five times the salary of the prime minister, who is also the Fund’s president. Similarly, the executive director of the Fund, Rajbabu Shrestha, earns Rs 153,000 and assistant level employees earn salary of Rs 30,161. This is more than the salary of a minister and the chief secretary. There are 116 employees in the Fund, including 5 division heads, 8 regional coordinators and 59 officers level employees. Due to high salary and perks, a large portion of the fund provided by the World Bank for poverty alleviation is spent on administration. Ex-Vice President of the Fund Mohaman Saiju says that such exorbitant salaries are not appropriate in Nepal and there should be a code of conduct.

Healthy mums
Sita Niraula in Himal Khabarpatrika, 14-28 April

Januka Bivakarma of Taplejung is preparing for her second baby. The first time she was pregnant, she had not even entered a hospital because she was too shy. But this time she has already had seven check-ups at the local hospital. There is a sense of awareness among women about maternity health care in the villages. “My daughter-in-law gave birth to her child at home, but now the women are conscious of their health and run to the hospital,” says Babitra Majhi of Pachthar.

This change has come about because of the government’s program to decrease maternal mortality. The country was even awarded for its exemplary work with a MDG award in September. Nepal is now near achieving the target of decreasing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three quarters (134/100,000) by 2015. In 1991, this number was at 517 in Nepal, had increased to 539 in 1996 but was brought down to 281 in 2006.

It is hoped that the programs and campaigns running at present will continue to have a positive impact. In pre and post natal care, a pregnant woman is supposed to get health check-ups in her fourth, eighth and ninth month and receive two TT vaccines. Fourth month onwards, she needs to take iron tablets and de-worming medicines. If a woman comes to a health centre for delivery with proof of having received all of this, she receives an allowance of Rs 400. Government hospitals, primary health care centres and health care centres offer free checkups to pregnant women and also give allowances: Rs 1500 in mountainous districts, Rs 1000 in hilly districts and Rs 500 in Tarai districts.

Dahal's roadmap
Sudheer Sharma in Kantipur, 20 April

Girija Prasad Koirala and Pushpa Kamal Dahal were the key persons who jointly initiated the peace process. With Koirala gone, Dahal should play a major role in taking the peace process to a conclusion. The current political uncertainty is the result of the Maoists’ contradictory standpoints of ‘peace’ and ‘revolt’. It is time for Dahal to decide the party’s ideal.

If Dahal is for peace and constitution, as understood lately, it should be reflected in the party document, eliminating the speculations about Palungtar plenum’s decision of ‘revolt’. People always reserve the right to revolt but this is not a time for destruction. It is time for peace and constitution through which Nepal’s prosperity is possible. There is no insurmountable obstacle to overcome but eliminating the Maoists’ strategic dilemma is the first thing to be done in proceeding the process.

There is a risk of party split if Dahal takes decision in favour of peace and constitution. A true leader has guts to take risk in making a historical decision. Dahal should make efforts to convince the hardliners who jointly initiated the peace process without the support of the Maoists. There is no better time than it is now as the government, the Maoist, NC and the people are positive towards the NA’s proposal for PLA integration. It is hoped that the programs and campaigns running at present will continue to have a positive impact. In pre and post natal care, a pregnant woman is supposed to get health check-ups in her fourth, eighth and ninth month and receive two TT vaccines. Fourth month onwards, she needs to take iron tablets and de-worming medicines. If a woman comes to a health centre for delivery with proof of having received all of this, she receives an allowance of Rs 400. Government hospitals, primary health care centres and health care centres offer free checkups to pregnant women and also give allowances: Rs 1500 in mountainous districts, Rs 1000 in hilly districts and Rs 500 in Tarai districts.
Kanak Mani Dixit is not a diplomat. His language is blunt and straight forward. He dares, and even relishes, to speak truth to power and populism. For some of us—scholars, intellectuals and diplomats included—who are trained to be politically correct, sit on the fence and play it safe, his new book, *Peace Politics in Nepal*, makes uncomfortable reading. This book may as well have been titled *Inconvenient Truths of Current Nepali Politics*. Dixit is often portrayed as a part of the Kathmandu elite, an upper-class, upper-caste Bahun, strongly anti-Maoist, perhaps a little right-wing by the upper-class Bahun-foreign-agents dominated imperialist, capitalist, counter-revolutionary stooges of feudal, conservative, as being sharply divided between feudal, conservative, radical, less than fully non-violent and undemocratic solutions which they would not accept in their own countries.

Dixit argues that it was precisely the populist characterisation of Nepal as so deeply divided by entrenched disparities and discrimination, inequalities and injustices. It even allowed the freedom for a radical Maoist movement to rise in Nepal, at a time when Communism was collapsing all over the world. Democracy takes time to evolve and correct its own shortcomings. Dixit argues that the infant and imperfect democracy of the 1990s was not given enough time. The populist thesis in vogue in Nepal right now, and one that seems to be subscribed even by some diplomats and donors of Western democracies, is that Nepal’s experience with democracy in the 1990s was an utter failure. Dixit asks us to look at some of the successes of the 1990s before the Maoist insurgency derailed them. Dixit is unapologetic and biased in favour of non-violence, liberal democracy and pluralism. He has a gripe against many members of the international community who subscribe too easily to the populist characterisation of Nepal as so deeply divided by entrenched caste, class and ethnic divisions that to solve such problems, Nepalis should be prepared to accept, at least temporarily, some radical, less than fully non-violent and undemocratic solutions which they would not accept in their own countries.

He sees diplomats, donors and consultants of many Western countries, even some UN officials as having a rather romantic view of the Maoist agenda for social change. He faults the analysis contained in reports of organisations like the International Crisis Group (ICG) as showing a subtle bias that castigates the NC and UML as status quoist, and the Maoists as the true agents of progressive change. The chapter that made me sad was the one dealing with the UN Mission to Nepal (UNMIN), which Dixit rather unkindly titles “Uncivil Mission”. As someone with a long association with the UN, my natural instinct was to disagree with Dixit’s harsh judgment of UNMIN. But, it must be said, UNMIN was not as conducive to pressuring the Maoists to give up violence and intimidation, to convince the other parties that it could be counted on to firmly stand on the side of democracy, and that its reporting would provide the most objective basis for the Secretary-General and Security Council to understand Nepal. In the chapter on federalism, Dixit dares to address an issue which most sophisticated Bahun-Chhetri intellectuals consider taboo for fear that it will draw the wrath of the advocates of ethnicity-based federalism. While fully supportive of economically viable federal structure that ensures greater inclusiveness and better representation of marginalised groups, Dixit questions the rationale for setting up ethnic Bantustans.

The book argues that Nepal’s peace process cannot be considered complete so long as the thousands of victims of conflict do not get justice. There is a real fear, he argues, that both the Maoists and the Nepal Army would rather that we “forgive and forget” the terrible atrocities committed during the conflict.

Dixit also worries about some continuing, undemocratic revolutionary romanticism. He insists that the new constitution must be an advance from the 1990 Constitution, and not a further regression. Reading the Maoist draft of the constitution that doesn’t accept pluralism, there is a chance that we might end up with a constitution that is even less democratic than the 1990 one.

I hope this book will inspire us to strive for and insist on, a model of New Nepal that seeks both socio-economic justice and political freedoms, in a non-North Korean style and substance. Kul Chandra Gautam is a former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and this review is adapted from his presentation at the launch of the book, *Peace Politics in Nepal*, on 19 April.
Those of you who know Assdon well will not need to be reminded what we think of our snooty equine cousins, the horses. Although we do, on occasion, horse around with horses to produce offspring known as mules, we don’t take the relationship any deeper than that. For the rest of the time, the male ass and the female horse observe decorum and remain strictly at arm’s length. Which is why I don’t blame the honourable justices of the Supreme Court for raising a stink over the smell of fermented horse guano emanating from the Cavalry Brigade of the Nepal Army at Bubber Mahal. The esteemed justices of the constitutional organ are fine with the aroma wafting up to the chambers from the Bagmati, but they draw the line at having to smell horseshit all day. So the high court wants the cavalry relocated to some remote district, and the horses snort back: “This is our ancestral home and we ain’t goin’ nowhere.” Of all the crises that the government now has to deal with, add an imminent declaration of hostilities between the Nepal Army and the Supreme Court. It’s déjà vu all over again as PKD, after hee-hawing and flirting with hardliners for two years, finally comes around to Baburam Path and postpones his planned people’s revolt. Some say all the ruffling in the Bhotekoshi and the retreat in Kaveri seems to have mellowed the Chairman, but others point to the sudden air-dash he made to Singapore recently for the about turn. Whatever the reason, Comrade Lotus Flower seems to have figured out which side of his toast is buttered. He will now try to dump JNK, but the only way to replace him as PM is by giving in to all demands on air marshals, a treaty on extraordinary rendition, disbanding the YCL and demobilising the PLA. Word is, he is only waiting to sign on the dotted line. The trouble is, can anyone trust Comrade Ferocious? Beset by crises, Jhol Gnat needs all the advice he can get to turn challenges into opportunities. After a serious brainstorming in the shower just now, the Ass has come up with the following solutions to his problems:

**Problem:** There is no money to pay the Indians for petroleum imports, and Nepal has become the main transit route for the smuggling of fake Indian currency.

**Solution:** Print counterfeit IC to pay IOC.

**Problem:** Daily 16-hour power cuts and no diesel for generators.

**Solution:** Merge NEA and NOC, bring them under the Religious Affairs Ministry and leave it to the gods.

**Problem:** JNK’s cabinet is in trouble even before it is complete. Of the ministers he appointed, one is shot, another refuses to take the oath and Dr Lharkyal Lama turns out to be a Chinese double agent pretending to be a Free Tibet activist with Indian and Nepali passports.

**Solution:** Replace Radha Gyawali with Amja Baniya, switch Gokarna Bista from hydro to home, appoint Lama ambassador to Beijing.

**Problem:** Two sitting CA members are accused of renting out their red passports.

**Solution:** Make Biswonath Yadav Foreign Minister and give Irrigation to Gayatri Shah, thereby making MJF a part of the governing coalition.