

NEPALI Times

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Nearly there

Nepal is taking money away from public welfare to rehabilitate and compensate Maoist warriors. But it may be the price we have to pay for peace.

Nepal's leaders spent the five years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on 22 November 2006 arguing over semantics. But it was an excuse to buy time for power struggle between and within the parties.

Now there is a concrete plan and a multi-partisan commitment to see the process through. "The major challenge now lies with implementing the agreement," writes Kul Chandra Gautam in an analysis on p12-13, "this is no time to be nit-picking and second guessing."

Many of the provisions in the 1 November agreement (return of seized property, disbanding the YCL, decommissioning the Maoists) are not really new. But the parties now have to do in weeks what they couldn't do in five years and try to maximize the 'peace dividend' from the compensation cash.

If the political leaders give clear guidance, the Special Committee can work it all out. The challenge is for the Maoist-led Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to work on the rehabilitation package without bungling it. ■

Nepali Times
CPA 5 Special
p12-13

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Kul Chandra Gataum
GUEST COLUMN by
Dhana Laxmi Hamal




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The 5-year ceasefire

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THE FIVE-YEAR CEASEFIRE

Hopes ran high when the top guns in the political parties signed an agreement to breathe new life in the peace process last month. The cynics among us said they only did it out of a sense of guilt for having wasted five years in senseless bickering. We said this was to appease a thoroughly disillusioned public so it would agree to another extension of the CA term on 30 November.

All that is probably true. The public perception of the nation's elected leaders is at an all time low. The current bloated cabinet is proof to many that politicians are only interested in a division of the spoils. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has inexplicably shot himself in the foot by not just tolerating and coddling crooks in his cabinet, but by pro-actively seeking a presidential pardon for a colleague who is a convicted murderer. Bhattarai is in danger of squandering most of the brownie points he earned for integrity and austerity.

In times like these, it is best to distil everything down to the bare essence: finding a leader who is partly clean. Little in Nepal these days is black or white, there are no absolutes. So, we in the media look for the relatively honest police chief, the bureaucrat who is comparatively less corrupt, the minister who shows a hint of honesty.

Call it "harm reduction". A political party may have not done much while it led a coalition, its ministers may have been involved in graft, the prime minister himself may have distributed cash from his relief fund to party cronies, but it may still do less harm than the one that openly uses threats, extortion and violence.

Nepal now needs a political evolution of the constitution process so that we conclude the disarmament of Maoist fighters, and move towards a pluralistic, democratic society that can bring social justice and economic progress.

This is the reason for the impatience about the political



BIKRAM RAI

deadlock of the past five years. Nepalis want their politicians to get on with peace and constitution so that there can be a stable government that can deliver. Public opinion polls have repeatedly shown the peoples' main concerns are inflation, lack of basic services, shortage of jobs, and security. What we are dealing with, therefore, is a serious mismatch between the preoccupation of politicians and the expectations of the citizens.

The last five years since the signing of the CPA has been a case of serial failures of the political leadership to see the larger picture and respond to the popular will. The first ray of hope in a long time was the Bhattarai government, which is why he needs to get the ship of state back on track and restore his image and moral authority.

At an interaction in Kathmandu last week, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and former Guatemalan democracy activist, Frank de la Rue, said there are lessons Nepal can learn from Guatemala. Peace-building, de la Rue pointed out, is as important as peace-making. Guatemala suffers from the same post-conflict ills Nepal faces now: the rise of impunity, the politicisation of organised crime, the replacement of war violence with criminal violence.

The only way to deal with this in the short, medium and long term is by stabilising the politics with a new constitution. For that we need closure on the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed this week five years ago. The goal is to address the violent legacy of the war and bring a party that formerly believed in violence into the political mainstream to guarantee sustained peace, justice, and development. Only with a strong and stable state is all this possible.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

LORDS OF IMPUNITY

Thank you Kanak Mani Dixit for standing up to these leeches of our society ('The Lords of Impunity', #578). I am slowly starting to like you now. Wonder, though, where are all the well-fed civil society losers?

Sarath G

● If you look at the rank and file of the Maoists, who does not have blood on their hands? Same goes for the (Royal) Nepal Army and the Nepal Police. It is only a matter of who got caught. The Doramba Massacre perpetrated by the Nepal Army is still unresolved. The officers are yet to be punished. The criminal case of Balkrishna Dhungel is clearly non-political and he should be punished. After all, Baburam turned out to be as artificial as his Mustang. Where is civil society and all those 'Kira Parosh' T-shirt walas?

Gaurav

● The NC and the UML are as responsible as Kanak Mani Dixit for bringing parties like the Maoists to the mainstream. Baburam as well as his coterie of mainstream parties and NGOs should stop protecting the false victims of the war. It is simple: the ones who got booked by the law while trying to kill others are not victims, they are murderers.

Nirmal

● 'Dhungel went on to fight the CA elections in April 2006 and terrorised the voters to get elected,' writes Kanak Mani Dixit. Are you sure? Didn't you and your ilk, who were hell bent on ousting the 'Old Regime', term the elections free and fair? And where are your partners from the civil society today? The likes of Devendra Raj Panday, Krishna Pahari and the rest seem to have gone into their holes. What is happening under this so-called scholar

prime minister is astounding. I wish Dixit success as you try to redeem yourself.

Parag

● Nepal was sucked into whirlpool of impunity and depravity the day Maoists were legitimised through 'free and fair' elections, observed so vigilantly by you and your 'intellectual' friends.

Anish

● Kanak Mani Dixit is hypocritical. His blindness towards India and Girija and company is responsible for the current situation. When he had the chance to warn his Kangresi and Indian friends, he chose to look the other way. Now you are crying foul. Ask the Indians: why have they pushed BRB on us?

Sudh

● Great article. Dr Bhattarai will never be counted as a serious politician who will lead Nepal to a new post-conflict era until he is willing to abandon the murderers and thugs around him. Does Bhattarai have the intellect and the courage to do the right thing for the country? His action so far doesn't seem to indicate that, but he still has an opportunity to correct himself. But will he?

BNS

● Not surprising. Power flows from the barrel of the gun, is what the Maoists believe and people elected them as CA members. Why do you expect them to be any different?

Ram Shah

● This selective amnesia on the part of Kanak Mani Dixit and the 'civil society' of 2006 is amazing. Stalin's Gulags, Pol Pot's Killing Fields and that large jail called North Korea are sites of barbaric crimes against humanity that are still highly revered as pilgrimage sites by our Maobadis, especially the hardliner ideologue Baburam. Dixit has failed to remind his readers of the hundreds of victims

such as journalist Gyanendra Karki who were slaughtered before their families like goats by the party that Baburam provided leadership to. Dixit and his civil society activists are as guilty of complicity in murder as Baburam and his thugs. You championed their 'liberation ideology' before the international community and helped foist the criminals on us in the name of Janandolan 2006.

Party Peedit

● Thank you Kanak ji for shedding light on the true realities of the kind of people Baburam has surrounded himself with. The media is truly a voice for voiceless.

Tashi Lama

● Can the author name a Nepali politician who is not a bandit, reformed or otherwise?

Lato Kosero

● Not long ago Kanak Mani Dixit wrote dire warnings about the Lumbini project. Now it is dire warnings against implementing the amnesties required by the peace agreement. I wonder what the next dire warnings will be about.

Arthur

SOCIAL SECURITY

The direct expenses of the Maoist compensation package is more than Rs 14 billion ('Social security vs military security', Editorial, #578). But there is much more in hidden costs. The country's economy would have been soaring had it not been for extraordinary stupidity displayed by the hypocritical intellectual supporters of the Maoists in Nepal.

Soni

The government should focus on improving the quality of the army rather than the quantity. If the NA couldn't win the war against Maoist how can they protect Nepal against foreign invaders?

Raghu

● The editorial started out terrific and then descended into wishful and impractical contradictions. What's with that Costa Rica nonsense? It is just a code for turning Nepal into a de facto Indian state like Bhutan.

Sudha

● Instead of giving military training to the PLA, they should have given them vocational training so they could start rebuilding what they destroyed during the war.

Rajaram Singh

● I agree Nepal should gradually downsize its army over a period of 20 years. Nepal's economy can't afford to have a big army. And we don't need it.

Kamal Kishor

GOLD RUSH

Great job increasing awareness amongst all Nepalis ('Quest for Gold', Arun Rana, #578) about catch and release fishing. This truly could add to our tourist attraction.

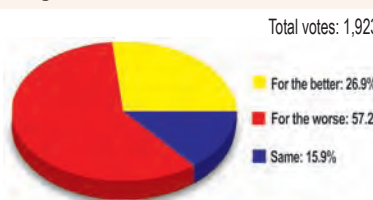
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Weekly Internet Poll # 579

Q. Compared to last month, how has your assessment of Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai changed?



Weekly Internet Poll # 580. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the Maoist camps be dismantled by 30 November?



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Walk the talk

The PM abusing his constitutional power to absolve wrongdoing makes a mockery of justice



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

At the SAARC Summit last week, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai exhorted South Asian leaders to walk the talk and deliver on the lofty declarations of the past. He may as well have asked himself whether he is doing the same back home.

The initially ga-ga mainstream media has done a dramatic turnaround and remarked on a badly tarnished halo effect. We don't know yet if this is also reflected in public disillusionment with Bhattarai, but it can't be disputed that the prime minister's brand equity has taken a battering in the past two weeks.

Not very long ago, when the opposition flagged his ride in a Mustang as a populist move, the public support for austerity measures taken by the Prime Minister forced even the critics to acknowledge it as exemplary symbolism. But all that seems to be a distant memory now as he rides in to bumpy political landscape in an over-crowded 49 seater that threatens to derail.

A prime minister who made austerity his guiding principle has made decisions which have not only put an astronomical price on the peace process, but also led to his personal political bankruptcy. But what really takes the cake is the way he has misused his office to influence cases against Agni

Sapkota, Prabhu Sah and Balkrishna Dhungel. A man the nation trusted as a statesman has not been able to rise above partisan interest.

Many war time atrocities need to be investigated by a future Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) but political motives alone do not explain many of the human rights

violations during the war. It is indefensible that cold-blooded murder of an unarmed individual has been pardoned on "political" grounds.

Baburam Bhattarai must also realize that he leads a government which he himself attributed as having a historical task of bringing together ideologically diverse political groups to converge on issues of national consensus. His inexplicably explicit role in the Dhungel case will put him on a collision course with the judiciary and undermine his stated goal to make progress on the peace process.

Returning from the New York visit, Maoist chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal was quick to defend Bhattarai's move, saying the pardon had been decided by the previous government. To reduce this case to a mere technicality and to argue that the government has constitutional powers to absolve wrongdoing makes a mockery of justice and is an insult to Ujjan Shrestha's still grieving relatives. It's not so much about what the government can or cannot do, but about what it ought or ought not do.

While one party of the conflict is under the scanner, nobody has dared to call for investigation into the crimes perpetrated by the Nepal Army. There seems to be a conspiracy of silence among the two warring sides to brush their past atrocities under the carpet.

Theorists argue that claim to absolute truth overlooks its relativity and context. Hence, the call for justice in Ujjan Shrestha's murder must not eclipse the larger need to provide justice for all. 🇳🇵

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NON-TOURIST VISITORS: Bechan Sah, 38, from Siraha in the Tarai with a load of pans and momo pots at Pheriche at 4200 m. He has been doing door-to-door sales here for the past 17 years. Smriti Kulung (right) is only 15 and quit school in lower Khumbu to earn money as a porter.

Second-class citizens

Nepalis are made to feel commercially discriminated on the Everest Trail



NEPALI PAN
Alok Tumbahangphey

As a Nepali, I had always dreamt of trekking to Everest Base Camp and seeing the ‘mother of the skies’ up close and personal. The only deterrent was the cost involved. I had heard rumours of how Nepalis were commercially discriminated against because we have to pay less, and the foreigners always get preferential treatment.

I didn’t think it would be that bad. But what I saw in Khumbu last week not

only left me appalled at the discrimination fellow Nepalis faced, but also made me wonder whether the tourism industry which is supposed to benefit us, is actually doing so.

Whether it’s taxi drivers and touts harassing foreigners fresh out of the tarmac, or hotels offering different rates for domestic and foreign tourists, differential tariffs are a given in Nepal. While there is no doubt that foreigners with higher income have higher spending capacity, and perhaps it is characteristic of capitalism to give priority to those who can pay, no one seems to be giving enough thought to those who can’t.

“We have rooms for the foreigners but none for

Nepalis,” the manager of a hotel we had booked in Namche told me, rather obnoxiously. Fortunately, our veteran guide knew the hotel owner personally and coaxed the manager into giving room to the Nepalis. Talking to the porters in our group, I realised that they were being accommodated elsewhere. Never before and nowhere else in Nepal, had I felt more ostracised in my own country than here.

But the shock and awe did not end there. Looking around for the men’s room, I followed the universal sign and came upon a door that had a sign on it: ‘All Nepali friends, please use the outside toilet. Thank You.’ At least they thanked us,

but only in Nepal’s tourism apartheid do you see a sign like that.

Fellow Nepalis may not have learnt bathroom etiquette that modernised Nepali hoteliers think all westerners have, but they are still Nepalis. If tourism entrepreneurs are really serious about developing the industry here, they should be training those Nepalis involved in the tourism industry how to better present themselves, not putting up discriminating signs that reek of racism in an industry that is supposed to promote ‘hospitality’.

Outside of Lukla and Namche, however, I noticed that not all lodge owners discriminated against Nepalis. Guides are welcomed as old

friends and called into the kitchen to be served food and drinks with the foreigners, allowed free charging of cell phones and camera batteries, and even given some snacks for the way.

They might have to sleep in the dining halls for lack of rooms, but they are not asked to use the outhouse. If those promoting tourism really want to ensure Nepal’s tourism industry gets a good name, they should be investing more on the backbone of that industry: the guides, porters, kitchen staff and even the yak, jokyo, mule, or donkey herder.

As the media made headlines of trekkers stranded in Lukla last week, I wondered what the Nepali guides I met on the way were doing. No one in the Kathmandu media obsessed with ‘stranded tourists’ spared a thought for them, perhaps unsurprisingly. 🇳🇵

They come from all over the world, they are dentists, engineers, risk management consultants, businessmen and physical trainers. What brings them together is that they all live and work in the countries of the Gulf, love a bit of adventure. And they all care for children.

For the past decade, Gulf for Good (G4G) has raised more than \$2 million through 700 Arab and other nationals participating in treks in Nepal. The charity is currently helping 35 projects around the world, including raising \$110,000 from the Everest Base Camp Challenge for a hospital in Ilam which was completed in 2004.

This time, 21 participants took part in another fund-raiser trek to support the construction of an orphanage in an eco-farm in Panauti. As a means of fundraising, members accepted the challenge to trek up to Everest Base

Charitable challengers



Camp at 5,380m.

A trek to EBC and back is not a walk in the park. But the 21 G4G charity challengers took it in their stride. They trekked past dramatic signs of glacier retreat caused by global warming.

Landing in Kathmandu from Lukla, the group headed straight to Panauti with Brian Wilkie, the initiator of the G4G project. The orphanage currently under construction is located in the eastern end of the beautiful valley in Kavre district.

Younger ones in the group like the soon to be dad Floyd Meenan, his best mate Tom McNulty and fellow Irishman Brian Hempenstall, felt such a sense of accomplishment that they are already talking about taking up next year’s G4G challenge to Mt Kilimanjaro. 🇳🇵

Alok Tumbahangphey

The .com generation

Nepali online stores are cashing on the spread of social networking sites



MY TWO PAISA

Paavan Mathema

How would you react to the suggestion of launching your business on the web? You might raise a skeptical eyebrow and say: "Online business in Nepal?"

Isn't that just for relatives abroad to send us cakes on birthdays and gifts during Dasain?"

Although traditional players like muncha.com and thamel.com have been around for about ten years, online businesses are still a fairly new concept in Nepal. E-commerce takes time to grow when people are still scared of putting their credit card information on an online form.

The scene seems to be slowly changing as several new online start-ups have made their debut in the hope of replicating e-commerce models abroad. It has now become possible for Nepali consumers to buy and sell electronic products, clothing items, accessories, air tickets and groceries on the web.

However, not only have these new players widened the market, they have also innovated new models for online businesses. For example, harilo.com allows users to purchase goods from international sites, foodmandu.com lets consumers pick dishes from their favorite restaurants in Kathmandu valley, which are then delivered to their doorsteps, and merodeal.com gives customers


discounted offers at various stores.

There are two main reasons for the rise of online stores in Nepal. Firstly, online businesses provide a win-win situation for both consumers and sellers. For the consumers, the ability to purchase a wide range of products on the web, minus the burden of having to physically visit stores and the stress of commuting makes their lives very convenient. For businesses, having an online

methods of advertising such as placing ads in newspapers, magazines, television, or hoardings, online businesses can take greater advantage of social networking sites with little to no cost.

Facebook, Google+ and Twitter offer real-time social networks, which mean information uploaded on a business' primary circle can be instantly shared or retweeted to millions of users in a very short time at zero cost.

The second factor contributing to the growth of online stores is the escalating number of Nepali internet users. The rate of internet usage in Nepal which stands at about 11 percent may not seem very encouraging at first glance, but there are now over a million Facebook users here. Nepal ranked fourth on the list of countries with the highest number of Google+ users in July 2011. The popularity of online media and social networks is likely to translate into a growing pool of consumers who are willing to purchase products on the web.

We have the eager consumers, we have the products, and the only problem is the lack of a trusted online payment mechanism. Credit card companies demand very high collaterals for their use and the banks here do not have the capital structure to withstand such risks. However, banking services and local payment portals such as e-sewa and pay are pioneering channels for online payment. The fact that e-sewa conducted transactions worth INR 110 million in its first year of operations says a lot about the untapped potential of e-commerce in Nepal. 



showroom allows them to cut down on operating cost.

Floor rental and staffing costs are reduced, and the sheer volume and variety of products that a company offers are no longer restricted by the physical space available. Online stores also help diminish advertising costs. Instead of relying on traditional and costly

BIZ BRIEFS

Easy learning

Lord Buddha Education Foundation has started Nepal's first computerised language learning centre, EnglishEdge. The program has been developed in association with BBC.

Smart purchase

Teletalk, the authorised distributor of Blackberry smart phones has introduced Blackberry Bold 9900 in the market. It offers two months of Ncell Blackberry Unlimited Monthly Service on every purchase.

Sensible touch

Nokia has launched Nokia N9. This touch- screen model is equipped with 8 mega pixel camera, navigation, and audio technology. Its design allows for easy use of applications, and social networking sites.

Branching out

Bank of Kathmandu has opened four new branches at Khandbari of Sankhuwasabha district, Beni and Baglung of Myagdi district, and Birtamod of Jhapa district. These branches will provide all the services including deposit, loan and remittance.

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Cyclists and the city

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With the fuel crisis certain to get worse, and an unreliable public transport system, more and more people in Kathmandu are opting for bicycles. Pedal power is actually a faster and more reliable way to navigate through the city's choked roads.

However, given Kathmandu's polluted and precarious road condition and the absence of designated bicycle lanes, bicycles are going to have an uphill ride. Rajan Kathet, an avid bicyclist and the founder of Kathmandu Cycle City (KCC) 2020 says: "The lack of bicycle lanes is the most important factor dissuading people from using bicycles as a regular means of transport."

The group has been lobbying government bodies to build cycle lanes on newly constructed roads and accommodate cycle lanes within existing road networks. Says Rajan: "Everyone on the road tries to overtake cyclists and we are forced to cycle and sometimes walk our bicycles on the pavements."

Motor vehicles ply left, right and center on the congested roads of Kathmandu so cyclists need to be

For cyclists in Kathmandu, the path ahead is full of potholes

extra cautious. Fellow cyclist Amita Thapa Magar has had numerous close calls. "Cycling is especially difficult at night," she says, "there are potholes and the darkness makes it really dangerous."

Although there are just 9 vehicles per 1,000 people, Nepal ranks 98th out of 178 on World Health Organisation's list of countries with the highest per capita rates of traffic-related deaths. The reason is the lack of adequate space not just for bicyclists or pedestrians, but for vehicles too. The death of noted biologist and devoted cyclist Pralad Yonzon two weeks ago after the bicycle he was riding was hit by a truck on the Ring Road, has focused attention on the dangers that bicycle commuters face.

In 2005 a decision to construct a 44 km long bicycle track in the city after Nepal signed the Velo Mondial Charter and Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities. The charter provided a blueprint and a set of

directives to promote bicycle as an efficient, environmentally friendly alternative to motorised transport. Yet, like the proposed bicycle lane from Maitighar to Tinkune which got suspended in early 2000, the plan to build the 44 km bicycle track in the city has been shelved.

"Unless there is serious pressure from the people on the Department of Roads, cycle lanes in Kathmandu will still remain a farfetched dream for cyclists", says Shail Shrestha, president of KCC 2020.

Despite increasing pressure to build bicycle lanes, Saroj Kumar Pradhan, project manager of the Kathmandu- Bhaktapur Road Extension Project says that building new infrastructures to make the city cycle friendly presents an immense challenge. The city's entire transportation system, he says, will need to undergo a major overhaul in order to accommodate a network of cycle lanes.

"It doesn't make sense to just build cycle lanes from point A to point B," Pradhan adds, "each form of transport must complement each other and cycle lanes can be developed systematically." 🇳🇵

Cycle city

In an effort to reduce Kathmandu's growing air pollution and promote a cycling culture, a passionate group of youth has set out to make the capital a cycle-friendly city by the year 2020. Kathmandu Cycle City (KCC) 2020. The group was formed by Kathmandu University students in 2009 has been actively promoting cycling through various events and workshops.

To mark their third anniversary, KCC 2020 is organising an evening cycle rally with the theme 'Get Visible' to shed light on the problems of cycling during night time. "Cycling at night carries unimaginable risks," says Shail Shrestha, the president of KCC 2020. The rally will also be a tribute to Prahlad Yonzon, who died in bicycle accident after being hit by a truck in Balkhu two weeks ago. The rally is supported by World Cyclist Foundation-Nepal, Chepang's Mountain Bike Club, Cycling Association- Kabhre, and Clean Air Network Nepal (CANN). The rally will take place on 19 November starting at 5pm.

KCC Facebook page Evening Cycle Rally 2011- Get Visible
www.kcc2020.blogspot.com

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Dead on arrival

It's 7 AM at the B&B Hospital's emergency ward at Gwarko. Two motorcyclists are brought in, they are conscious but badly injured. One has serious head injury and the other has a fractured leg. The trauma centre at B&B deals with 20 traffic accidents every day,

many of them from the newly constructed 9.14 km Kathmandu-Bhaktapur road where speeding vehicles has killed 24 people since it was opened last year.

Police say negligent drivers and careless pedestrians are the main reasons. "Driving licenses

uniformly placed and it is hard to see them at night, I have missed the concrete dividers by inches on several occasions," says Sajal Shrestha who commutes to work daily on his motorbike from Satdobato to Baneshwor.

A big part of the problem is the complete lack of coordination on road safety between the Department of Roads (which is supposed to undertake repairs) the Department of Transport Management (which registers and regulates vehicles and driving licenses), the Traffic Police (which enforces traffic rules) the Ministry of Environment (which issues green mission stickers), and the municipality (which is supposed to

oversee strategic management of roads and parking).

At the Traffic Police, Shrestha says he has neither the budget nor the authority to maintain road safety. Although driving under the influence is a leading cause of accidents, the Traffic Police has few breath analysers. Moreover, there are no laws limiting the alcohol level for drivers.

Paavan Mathema

nepalitimes.com

Compensation by accident,
DEWAN RAI #564



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

these two are lucky to have survived. Many are dead on arrival.

While aviation accidents make big headlines, road accidents have become so commonplace that most have come to accept it. But figures show that traffic accidents have now become the number one killer in the 20-30 age group in Nepal. Last year, 8,500 road accidents across Nepal killed 1,700 people, half of the accidents took place in Kathmandu Valley. B&B alone saw 50 traffic deaths last year,

are issued without really testing a driver's capability," explains Jagat Man Shrestha of Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, "drivers forget traffic rules as soon as they pass their written tests."

However, badly-built highways, traffic congestion, dangerously placed road dividers and lack of streetlights add to the problem. Road dividers have been a major cause of deaths, mainly of motorcyclists who collide with them in dimly-lit roads.

"Road dividers are not



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- Janakpur, Shiva Chowk, Ward No. 2
- Birgunj, Adarshanagar, Road No. 4 (Transport Line)
- Narayanghat, Shahid Path-3
- Butwal, Nepalgunj Road
- Pokhara, Durbarthok Chowk, New Road
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EVENTS

MLTR Concert, the hit Danish band is coming to Nepal, don't miss out. 19 November, Tundikhel, 4442435



Get Visible, a cycle rally to promote road safety and traffic awareness for bicycle riders. 18 November, 5pm to 8.30 pm, Basantapur, 9841442228

Art for Children, various art lessons for children aged between 6 to 14. Fees: Rs 3000, 19 November, 10am to 12.30 pm, Artudio, Lazimpat, 9841408425

For a Healthy Diet, Christina Reigner talks about eating healthy and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Fees: Rs 200, 19 November, 5pm, Delices de France, 4260326, info@restaurantnepal.com

Social Entrepreneurship Award, an award ceremony which will be preceded by two days of seminars and exhibitions. 18 November to 19 November, Award Ceremony on 21 November, Baber Mahal Revisited, 9813228579, 4265051, changefusionnepal.org

Nepal Cine Symposium, a film festival and network event aimed to highlight young cinematic possibilities from South Asia.

Tickets range from Rs 1500 to Rs 3200, 18 to 22 November, Nepal Tourism Board and Gurukul

Extraordinary, bring out the extraordinary in the ordinary. This is what Navin Joshi does in his art exhibition which shows a unique take on everyday life. 12 to 28 November, Park Gallery, Pulchowk

Noche Flamenca, a dance performance by the participants of two workshops by Maradee de Guzman of Clara Ramona & Co. 20 November, 6pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 5528362



DREAMS Art Competition, everyone is invited to participate in an art competition to raise funds to better the lives of stray animals. Fees: Rs 200, 20 November, 10am to 1pm, Bal Mandir, Naxal, 4444289

A Changing Nepal, Maki Gurung's first exhibition in Nepal which shows ever-changing Nepali faces painted on Lokta paper. 11 November to 25

November, Cosmopolitan Training Centre, Jhamsikhel, 016217752



Pashmina Week, celebrate 18 years with Sana Hastakala by endorsing their quality pashminas and authentic Nepali handicrafts. 13 to 20 November, Sana Hastakala, Kupondole, 5522628, 5526985

MUSIC

Piano Presentation, a piano recitation by Adolovni Acosta, sponsored by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. 18 November, Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari, 5013554

Kites Band, enjoy scintillating live music by Kites Band and unwing while playing a game of snooker or sipping a refreshing glass of mohito.

4pm to 11pm. Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, 4411818 ext. 1330



Gypsy Jazz, enjoy the music of Daniel Givone and Hari Maharjan with delicious food and drinks. 18 November, 7.30 pm, Delices de France, Thamel, 4260326, info@restaurantnepal.com

DINING

Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, have a BBQ lunch and a glass of wine or beer inside the peaceful Garden of Dreams. 4425341, Thamel



Portraits of a proletariat



People During Change, an exhibition of 22 pastel portraits by artist Maki Gurung, paints a personal protest against social repression. With his Kathmandu debut at the Cosmopolitan Training Center (CTC) in Jhamel, Gurung confronts the plight of ethnic and gender minorities, state brutality and


the common disregard for manual labour in Nepal. Gurung's palette incorporates a wide spectrum of oil pastels and spot colours that accentuate the movement of facial muscles and render almost palpable expressions. In a work bluntly entitled 'Police Beating a Proletariat', Gurung vividly captures a protester's anger and



Maki Gurung protests social repression with visual impressions

determination as authorities beat the man during a Maoist banda. "When I was photographing the strike, I was also almost hit," said Gurung, whose nameless subjects are drawn from news images and photos of strangers he had taken. 'Federal New Beauty' depicts a woman he found pictured along an article about the Tamang New Year. Born in Nepal to a Gurung father and a Japanese mother, the 26-year-old artist considers himself first and foremost Gurung and calls Patiswara, his father's native village in Gorkha district, home. "The word Nepali is very much associated with invasion. The Gorkha people invaded all of Nepal and had many colonies that exploited

local people. So I don't like the word Nepali. I am Gurung," he said. The self-professed anti-nationalist communist, however, admits to a bourgeois upbringing in Kathmandu that included private lessons from his mentor and Japanese artist Yuki Shirai, who now runs CTC. While studying sound engineering in Japan, Gurung honed his craft, holding two art exhibitions and playing guitar in bands. Since 2009, Gurung has performed with the Kathmandu-based anarcho-ska-punk band Naya Faya. True to his far-left leanings, Gurung funnels proceeds towards projects such as a non-profit cooperative shop and a pig farm he initiated

in Patiswara. With an inheritance from his father's estate, he also constructed a commune in Kathmandu valley, where he and six others have been sharing their incomes and living sustainably for the last two years. "I don't think capitalism is a natural way of living," Gurung says. "People should either farm or have a technical skill like a shoemaker or a blacksmith. Today, the main occupation in the world is being a middleman." Last year, Gurung planted 360 orange trees in Patiswara and plans to relocate his commune to the village as soon as the trees begin to fruit. For now, the would-be farmer works as an Art Teacher at CTC and hopes to sell his portraits. Gurung asserted: "Art shouldn't be limited to the bourgeoisie, but it is now. It should be for the proletariat. If you're farming for your own consumption, then you only have to work two hours a day. You can spend rest of your time doing art and being creative. But right now the poor are working too much."  *People During Change: Portraits by Maki Gurung at Space-Y, Cosmopolitan Training Center, Moksh, Jhamel 11 - 25 November, 11am to 6pm*



The Ghangri Café, A quiet and relaxing place with delicious food. Although known for their open momos, their Chef Salad is equally scrumptious. *Pulchowk, 5528703, ghangricafe@hotmail.com*

Yak Restaurant, provides authentic Tibetan cuisine at an affordable price. *Boudha*

Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice in your life with their

pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, try one of their western dishes instead. *Thamel, 10am to 10pm, 4701510*

Just Baked, a cozy café with amazing pastries and friendly ambience. *Old Baneshwor*

Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, delightful selections of reasonable and nutritious lunch. *Jawalakhel, 5536919*



Dhokaima Cafe, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. Your

oasis at the heart of Patan, and an easy walk from new Bhat Bhateni Supermarket. *Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113*



Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza, homemade pastas and the one and only tibetan gyakok. *Boudha, 012130681, 9841484408.*

New Dish, you will be in for a treat here as it serves one of the best pork momo in town. *Khichapokhari*



Mako's, an elegant fine dining Japanese restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel which serves authentic Japanese cuisine. *Timings are 11.30 to 14.30 and 18pm to 22pm. Dwarika Hotel, 4479488*

OR2K, one of the few vegetarian restaurants in the Valley, their Middle Eastern platter is delicious and their cocktails are to die for. *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4422097*

Buddha Bar, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. *Thamel, 9851053235*

New Orleans, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. Try their popular rosemary chicken and hamburgers. *Jhamsikhel, 5522708*

GETAWAYS

The Last Resort, be a part of the Amtrip Bungy or Swing Jump Event over the Bhote Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border. *Fees: Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until December. Last Resort Sales Office, Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700525*



SOMEPLACE ELSE

Out of the numerous terrace bars and cafes that compete for best breakfast sets or happiest happy hour deals in Chitwan, KC's stands out with a driveway and a sizable, Spanish-style manor that looms over Sauhara. Unaffiliated with the café of the same name in Thamel, the restaurant serves typical tourist provisions, but specializes in fish and barbecue items.

The Fish Fried, a battered trout filet served with fries and coleslaw was well-cooked and flaky, but lacked a complimentary sauce. A basic tartar or a seasonal mango salsa would have outdone the dish. The coleslaw, however, was evenly dressed.

To mix it up a bit, we opted for the pork on the barbecue list. The skewered cubes of meat were on the drier end. A spicy, red slaw that came with the dish was



MARCO POLLO

delectable. But once again, a sauce vital to the plate was unaccounted for.

KC's Special Steak was unanimously the best choice. A decent mound of hamburger steak comes sizzling on a heavy iron cast and bathed in white cheese and rum reduction. The steamed vegetables could have been sautéed in a butter herb sauce before plating, but the slices of cooked

pineapple and banana merge well with the rich gravy.

Considering the price that customers pay for the prime setting, KC's could be more generous with its proportions. The restaurant opens on to a manicured garden which ends right before the riverbed and overlooks the vast savannah. A tree-lined walkway leads customers from the arched terrace to the riverside where

comfy, wooden lawn chairs summon a sunset kickback.

The property is so large that the kitchen prompts the bow-tied waiters by mobile when orders are ready to table. It is surprising that in its decade long existence, KC's hasn't established a boutique lodge. Dining at KC's yields a fine ending to a weekend getaway in the national park.  *Marco Pollo*

On the main intersection in Sauhara-2, face the river and enter either end of the driveway

Service	★★★★★
Bread 'n water	★★★
Space	★★★★★
Deal-icious	★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★



Frostbite



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Living in the relative warmth of Kathmandu, it may be difficult for many readers to consider why frostbite is an important topic. One of the most important tragedy that happens regularly every trekking and climbing season in Nepal is frostbite amongst porters who accompany Western travelers. When they suffer from severe frostbite and need to have their toes or fingers amputated, their ability to earn a livelihood from portering is severely compromised.

Unfortunately the treatment of frostbite has not changed since Napoleon's army in 1812 tried to invade Russia in winter but failed miserably. Hypothermia (low body temperature) and subsequent frostbite amongst army personnel was an important reason for Napoleon's defeat. Essentially there is no specific, evidence-

based drug therapy for the treatment of frostbite. Hence prevention of frostbite is of paramount importance. One of the things that Baron Larrey, Napoleon's surgeon, learnt during the march into Russia was that when soldiers heated their hands and feet at night on open fires and next day continued their march in subzero temperatures, this freeze-thaw-refreeze cycle had the



most deleterious effect on the frost-bitten tissues. So, once warmed after freezing, the hands or feet should not be frozen again.

Although many trekking companies now provide shoes for porters (at one time most porters trekked

at high altitude wearing flipflops), often the shoes are ill-fitting which can predispose to frostbite by constricting blood flow to the feet while walking in cold temperatures. Often the socks get wet, and this too can lead the feet to frostbite. It is important to have shoes that fit properly and have available extra pair of socks to replace wet ones. Some porters use extra socks to try to fit their foot into big shoes which can be problematic as the trek progresses. Inadequate clothing or shelter will also lead to hypothermia and potentially

lead to frostbite as the blood is directed from the extremities to the main organs like the heart and the brain in hypothermic situations. Warm clothing, proper gloves and sleeping bags are important especially when the trek ascends to >4000 m passes. Adequate intake of fluids and food will also help prevent frostbite.

Crucially trekkers and climbers using porters to trek in the Himalayas need to take good care of their porters and vice versa. This 'buddy system' is a unique feature of Himalayan trekking and climbing. ❏



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A lingering low pressure area over eastern Nepal and Bhutan have brought overcast skies and precipitation to the mountains. Combined with pollution haze, this has created havoc with flights this week. Things should start to ease somewhat as the low pressure is pushed away by the prevailing westerlies. Expect misty mornings in the Valley with the sun coming out in the late mornings for hazy sunshine. Some cloud build-up in the higher mountains.



FRI	SAT	SUN
19-06	21-06	21-07



BIKRAM RAI

HALFWAY THROUGH: PM Baburam Bhattarai at a meeting of the Special Committee that approved the rehabilitation package for ex-Maoist combatants, Monday. The decision makes way for the categorization process of 19,000 Maoist fighters.



CZECH THIS OUT: Industry Minister Anil Jha shakes hands with the Deputy Environment Minister of Czech Republic Tomas Tesaf during a business and trade seminar on 3 November organized by the Confederation of Nepalese Industries. Also in the picture is the Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic to Nepal, Vishnu Agrawal.



SANJOG MANANDHAR

ROCKING KATHMANDU: Mikkell Lentz, Kare Wanscher and Jascha Richter (L-R), members of the Danish band Micheal Learns to Rock, arrive in Kathmandu on Wednesday. They are scheduled to perform on Saturday at Tudikhel.

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A war of words

RUBEENA MAHATO

At 23, Tara Rai has seen it all. She has been a guerrilla in the Maoist army, she has spent time in jail, and now she is the best-selling author of an acclaimed book that has sold eight editions in one year. As she prepares to bring out the ninth edition of ‘Chapamar Yubati Ko Diary’ while working on another war-based novel, she is pensive and a bit philosophical these days. “I have no regrets,” she told us, “but these days I have doubts about whether the war was necessary.”

In her village in Ilam district in eastern Nepal, she does what most other young women here do: help out her family in the farm. But in the evenings she works on her new novel. Tara left school at 15 and joined the Maoist cultural wing. Three months later, she was arrested by the army and sent to Ilam jail, where she nearly died after falling sick. She was treated by the army in prison and recovered. The near-death experience seems to have left an indelible mark on this fighter-turned-writer.

Tara’s book took the market by storm when it was published last year. All 5,000 copies were sold out within two months. Different from the usual narratives of Nepali war literature, it neither demonised the enemy nor was it over-burdened with ideology. It gave a heartfelt, honest account of a girl’s struggle as she battled adversity, forged emotional bonds with her captors and finally broke off from her party to start afresh.

The sympathetic portrayal of the army in the book and her questions about the use of violence for political

Fighter turned writer has doubts about whether the revolution was worth it



DEVENDRA BHATTARAI

ends put her at odds with her comrades in the party. Tara realises how lucky she was to come out of the war alive. “I was not raped, abused or tortured,” she says with characteristic simplicity, “I know that many of my friends were not as lucky. It goes to show there are good and bad people everywhere.”

Going back to her family after her release, Tara had to live the life of a social outcast for being a Maoist. For an entire year, she was afraid to step outside her village. Alone and disillusioned with war, she took to writing initially as a therapy.

Today, five years after the signing of the peace accord and finding success as a writer, Tara is still struggling to assimilate. Many of her friends are now in Maoist camps awaiting either rehabilitation or integration. Many of them are young girls like her who left school with lofty dreams of liberating the country from feudalism.

“Our hopes have been dashed and promises have been broken,” Tara told Nepali Times with a choke in her voice, “it is always the poorest people who suffer the most in any war.”

She reads papers to follow national politics and is ambivalent about the new prime minister. She has also heard about new calls to go back to war by the Baidya faction, but says she doesn’t agree with them. She tells us: “Before taking up arms again, they should think why they want another war, who it is against and to what end.”

BOOKS ON WAR

Through ten years of civil war till the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006, journalists, writers and even police officers and guerrillas tried to gain a clearer understanding of the conflict by examining the roots of the war and its effects on the people and society. A selection:

Chhapaamaar ko Chhoro (Nepali)

Mahesh Bikram Shah
Written by a Nepali Police Officer, the book consists of several short stories which deal with the violence and destruction during the war 1996-2006.

Dispatches from the People’s War in Nepal (English)

Li Onesto
Onesto presents a largely sympathetic first-hand account of the ‘People’s War’ through interviews and photographs of top ranked Maoist personnel, guerrillas, villagers and political leaders which she collected and published in 1999.

Himalayan People’s War: Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion (English)

Michael Hutt
This anthology investigates Nepal’s political, economic and social backdrop of the ten year war. Authors also provide a comparative perspective through discussions of Marxist rebellions and communist uprisings in other parts of the world.

Mayur Times (Nepali)

Narayan Wagle
The novel presents a fictionalised account of the war through the lives of two young journalists, Parag and Lisara who work for a small newspaper in the Tarai.

Palpasa Café (English and Nepali)

Narayan Wagle
While the basic premise of the novel revolves around the love-story between Drishya, an artist and Palpasa, a first-generation American Nepali, Wagle compels his readers to delve deeper into the problems faced by war-torn Nepal during the heights of conflict.

Urgen ko Ghoda (Nepali)

Yug Pathak
Pathak’s book, written from the perspective of the Tamangs tells the story of Mhendo who takes inspiration from mythical Tamang hero Urgen and his horse and launches her own war against the state.

काम सानो ठुलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौर ब गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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No war, no peace

No surprise that we have all forgotten the fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Accord this week



THIS IS IT

Rubeena Mahato

Monday, 21 November, marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of the UN-brokered Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) that formally ended ten years of conflict between the Maoists and the state. It ended the war, but didn't bring peace. The Maoists lowered their guns, but didn't abandon them. They joined mainstream politics, but didn't abjure violence.

Few remember the sense of jubilation that swept the nation as Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Girija Prasad Koirala signed the document in the presence of senior leaders and the UN brass. The ceremony was held inside the BICC, that later served as the Constituent Assembly.

As I write this, the amnesty case of Balkrishna Dhungel is raging like wildfire, jolting Baburam Bhattarai's seat of power. There have been five prime ministers in the last five years, all of whom have failed to deliver. There may now be a sixth. Impunity is rife, and the rot starts at the top. Power cuts and fuel shortage have worsened. Farmers are having to take to the streets to demand fertilisers. The middle class is struggling to keep up with inflation.

Never mind the disillusionment this has created in the general public, like a bad dream, the ex-guerillas who had fought for change are now engaged in an intense struggle for the hearts and minds of their own radicalised cadre base.

In the past five years, there have been 4-point, 5-point, 7-point agreements. Promises no one intended to keep, agreements not worth the paper they were written on. Everyone played for time until they ran out of time. All they were interested in was to lengthen their time in office so they could amass wealth from kickbacks and payoffs. Most people were past caring, they raised their heads when Baburam Bhattarai became prime minister with slender hope that he would be different. But they have been tragically disappointed again.

Four years ago, just before the CA elections, I was travelling across Rolpa, the district that was the cradle of the Maoist revolution. Everywhere in Rolpa, hopes ran high. Infrastructure projects that had been stuck for more than a decade were being revived. In Thawang, ex-guerillas were building a micro-hydro power plant. A huge festival was being organised in Jaljala, a historically significant place for the Maoists, to promote tourism in the region.

Finally it seemed like Rolpa would rise. After all, the very leaders who had taken shelter in homes that were destroyed in bombings from helicopters had risen to power in Kathmandu. Thawangis were sure that their time had come.

I can never bring myself to accept violence as a political tool, but could understand the anger of women who had lost all their male relatives to war, were raped and battered and were raising babies of the enemy. But even they lit up with hope talking about the future. They were glad the war was over.

The dream has shattered. The Maoists turned out to be like everyone else. After getting to power in Kathmandu, they forgot about Thawang and Jaljala. Parts of Thawang are still in ruins.

The promises of leaders to make Thawang a model commune commemorating the civil war fails to elicit any response from the villagers anymore. And there are other promises which have remained unfulfilled. The families of the disappeared are still seeking closure, thousands of internally displaced people are waiting to go back home. They have waited for five years without result and have now given up on the government.

This is the silence that is mistaken for peace today. This year, too, there will be the usual rituals marking the CPA anniversary. Leaders will wax eloquent on the historic agreement and its significance. The people will not be listening because they have heard it all before.

Why not do some damage control by paying a fitting tribute to the CPA, by immediately setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or by forming the Commission on the Disappeared? This is what will finally determine the direction of the peace process, how the grievances and discontent of the conflict affecting people are managed. In their squabble for power, leaders have forgotten what they had actually come together for five years ago. What a waste. 🇳🇵



COMMENT

Kul Chandra Gautam

We spent much time in the past five years debating the differing understandings of what the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) and the Agreement on Monitorign of Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA) meant by 'integration and rehabilitation'. But all that was settled by the major political parties on 1 November with an agreement on numbers, amounts and modalities.

We can, of course, always argue and speculate how the agreed package could have been better. But this is no time to be nit-picking and second guessing. The major challenge now lies with implementing the agreement.

Many of the provisions in the 1 November agreement – such as return of seized property, ending the paramilitary structure of the YCL, and bringing the Maoist combatants fully under the command of the Special Committee-- are not really new. Even an agreement on the numbers of combatants and the financial package for rehabilitation was almost finalised at the Gokarna Resort summit a year ago, but was dropped because of internal disagreements within the Maoist party.

Although there are still a few details to be worked out, the Special Committee has now prepared a very sensible plan for integration and rehabilitation. But, as they say, the devil is in the details which are ambiguous or remain unresolved. If the political leaders give clearer guidance, the committee can work out all technical and logistical details.

The rehabilitation package is more complicated, as the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction has not really done the required homework yet and it is questionable if it has the capacity to implement a sound vocational skill training, job creation and rehabilitation program. Complications that could crop up: Maoist combatants defying the agreement, haggling over their ranks in the army, uncertainty over the rehabilitation package, disagreement over how much combatants have to contribute to party coffers.

If the combatants are given truly free choice, and the party does not try to manipulate or extort



The way

The 1 November agreement breathed new life into the Comprehensive Peace Accord five years after it was signed.

funds from the combatants, the regrouping exercise is likely to produce a generally honourable outcome for the combatants. But whether that will also be in the best interest of the nation is a different matter. We should have tried harder to maximize the 'peace dividend' from the expenditure.

Now, there are two seemingly contradictory requirements: the need to reduce the size of the Nepal Army and the need to increase its size by integrating Maoist combatants. One way to tackle this would be to give priority to under-represented groups like women, Madhesis, Dalits, and some Janajati communities. Making the Nepal Army more inclusive and gender-balanced would eventually enable Nepal to respond to UN Security Council resolution 1325, under which the UN is encouraging member states to provide more women soldiers and officers in peace-keeping missions.

The proposed voluntary retirement package offered is quite generous. But it would wise to pay the amount in several installments.

Disbursement should also not be in cash but through banking channels, and preferably requiring the spouse's signature.

One criticism of the 7-point agreement is that it does not say anything about 'democratisation and right-sizing' of the Nepal Army, which is also a key component of the peace process. The CPA signed five years ago this week called for security sector reforms to ensure genuine civilian oversight over the national army and other security services. A detailed security sector reform (SSR) plan should be developed in due course keeping in mind Nepal's legitimate security interests, but avoiding unnecessary and unaffordable militarisation of Nepali society.

Some Maoists have criticised the new directorate of the Nepal Army for disaster relief as a second-class, non-armed military unit. But such a directorate is appropriate because a peace-loving country like Nepal that has no intention of going to war against anybody needs to redefine the role of its military.



ahead

While it remains ready for rapid redeployment for urgent national security tasks, the army must also be deployed precisely for development work, disaster relief, or environmental protection that bolster human security. Instead of feeling like second-class soldiers, ex-Maoist combatants joining this new directorate will be part of a vanguard forward-looking force.


Nepal's military should also strive to be the world's number one peacekeeper, not just quantitatively, but with enhanced quality and integrity. Here again, ex-Maoist combatants could eventually be trend-setters if a large number of combatants being integrated were women and from marginalised communities who can be groomed for future peace-keeping roles. I would therefore urge the Maoist leaders to be true to their proclamation of progressive pronouncements, not just in words but in deed, by encouraging a maximum number of women combatants to join the new Directorate.

While it is urgent and important to conclude the integration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants, this is not enough for the real completion of the peace process in Nepal. In accordance with accepted international norms, there can be no room for violent politics in a functioning democracy.

The Maoist party must

thus abandon its militarist mindset. It must declare, in a manner that will be understood clearly by all its party members and the public at large that it has abandoned the politics of violence. Such a public commitment will help develop public confidence in peace-building and the new constitution.

Some might say that the Maoists cannot do that because that would be contrary to their fundamental ideological belief, and that if they did so, they would be no different from the UML. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, an ardent opponent of Indian foreign investment signed the BIPPA agreement with India, proving that the Maoists are capable of transforming themselves.

For the sake of durable peace, prosperity and democracy in Nepal, let us hope that the Maoists will muster the courage and wisdom to further transform themselves, so they can help usher a truly progressive transformation of New Nepal. 

Kul Chandra Gautam is a former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and this review is adapted from his presentation at a workshop on 'The Peace Process in the Context of the Five-Point Agreement'

nepalitimes.com 

Full transcript

War during peace

A ceasefire is a time to build peace, not prepare for another war.



COMMENT

Dhan Laxmi Hamal

In Nepal today we are closer than ever to real peace with the seven-point deal reached on 1 November on integration and rehabilitation. At a time when we are thinking about the future, it is important to analyze our feelings that war is somehow 'special' and peace is somehow 'normal'. In fact, what happens during peacetime often makes possible the next conflict, the next war, and the next atrocity.

As a student of politics and human rights I have come across the work of anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes, who argues that one way to understand the violence of war is to look at the hidden violence that goes on during peacetime. The everyday violence of 'normal' times goes unnoticed and is accepted by society at large, often in the name of 'security'.

November 2006 was a big turning point in Nepal's history. Ten years of conflict officially came to an end as the government and the Maoists signed a Comprehensive Peace Accord. Yet many of us were uncertain about whether this ceasefire would hold. The first unsuccessful ceasefire with the Maoists four years earlier ended dramatically with attacks in 42 districts and the king's declaration of emergency that followed.

I remember that ceasefire well. On 7 September 2001 I was forced to join the Maoists in my home district of Mugu as a 'motivator'. I was chosen in part because I was young (only 14 then) and had completed Grade 8. The Maoists used the ceasefire to mobilise their forces and they were expanding their presence in Mugu. For two weeks in the Maoist camp I had to attend classes to learn how to 'motivate' and train for self-defense. There were hundreds of other young boys and girls with me, some had been forced, and others were volunteers. Together we listened to instructors discuss Mao, Marx and Lenin.

We were taught how to go into villages at night and form committees to advocate social equality, to work to end caste, class, and gender-based discrimination. We walked for hours and hours, sometimes for 22 hours straight. I went with a group of ten Maoists one day, and watched as they took food saved for the winter from an elderly woman's house. She was crying as they left.

Fifteen days later I told them I had become a true Maoist, but I wanted to go home one last time and say goodbye to my father. Instead, I left the district and went into hiding in India and later within Nepal as the war started again. For many, the ceasefire was about preparing for war, not peace.

Maoist violence was being countered by the state. The Armed Police Force (APF) was established during that ceasefire period because Nepal Police was proving inadequate to fight the insurgents and the king refused to use the Royal Nepal Army to fight the guerrillas.


The APF was officially set up on 24 October 2001, and many young people who had suffered under the Maoists joined the newly formed paramilitary force. The APF's stated mission was to control 'acts of terrorism and the associated trend of organized crime'. The Maoists were officially declared 'terrorists' around this time.



KUNDA DIXIT

Just as I was sent to mobilise villagers by the Maoists, the APF was sent out to 'protect' citizens from 'terrorists' during the ceasefire. For both the government and the Maoists, a ceasefire was a time to take a breather, to consolidate, re-mobilise, rest and prepare for the war to start again. It was a tactical break to enable a longer war.

The current ceasefire has lasted five years. But we are still trying to sort out the legacy of the conflict and it even seems like the Nepal Army, the APF and the Maoist army are warily circling each other. The new deal may create an integrated Nepal Army, but there is a lot of uncertainty about how it will go. A ceasefire is a time to build peace, not prepare for another war.

Today – even if we are lucky – we will have three security forces (NA, APF, and NP). Yet some would say that even one professional army is too many for a republic. 

Dhana Laxmi Hamal is a senior at Bard College in New York.

Double standard

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 13 November

कान्तिपुर

Scholar leader Baburam Bhattarai shot to popularity as an economic and administrative reformer with austerity measures and set an example of good governance which even those on the opposition appreciated. But the way Bhattarai cobbled together an outsized cabinet added an economic burden to the state. Then his decision to recommend a presidential pardon to a murder convict proved that he is no different from his predecessors. He has turned a deaf ear to widespread public criticism and continues to sing to his own tune.

Bhattarai rode a locally-assembled Mustang vehicle when he drove to his office after being sworn in, reinforcing the public perception of his modest ways. But with 49 ministers on board and the state having to spend millions per year for each minister, the entire Mustang gesture has turned into a farce.

Bhattarai must know he doesn't need four dozen ministers to run a transitional government. He has already set a new record by forming a 44 member secretariat of advisers at his office and doling out ministries to stay in power is a betrayal of the nation's trust. The government's decision to grant amnesty to Dhungel without forming

a Truth and Reconciliation Commission has made mockery of rule of law. Had the Supreme Court not issued a stay order on the cabinet decision on Sunday, it would have embroiled the office of the president in controversy as well.

Upon his return from the SAARC Summit, Bhattarai made irresponsible remarks against "a small coterie of dollar-earning groups" blowing the issue out of proportion. Nobody is opposed to the formation of Truth and Reconciliation committee to look into the war time cases but to condone individual acts of crime under political pretext will only promote impunity and anarchy.



Bhattarai needs makeover

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 15 November

नागरिक

Less than three months after being sworn in as prime minister, Baburam Bhattarai has been sucked into a whirlwind of controversies ranging from granting impunity to criminals to being unable to curb lawlessness in the country. The decisions he has taken so far in order to appease various parties in the coalition government are tarnishing his once popular image.

Soon after joining office, he had announced austerity measures and stood true to his words by riding the Nepal-assembled Mustang vehicle. However, what followed was the formation of a jumbo cabinet with 49 ministers, appointment of murder convicts as ministers and the decision to have a presidential pardon to a Maoist member convicted of murder by the Supreme Court. These actions have tarnished the prime minister's image.

Although the task of managing and appeasing a discordant coalition government is not easy, Bhattarai's decision to induct a record-breaking cabinet and shelter criminals to remain in power cannot be justified under any circumstances. Therefore, to win back people's confidence he has to admit to these mistakes and withdraw the pardon for Balkrishna Dhungel.

Despite the power struggle between the parties, the recent seven-point agreement has ushered in the only ray of hope for peace and constitution. It is high time the leaders worked together to save the country from sliding down a slippery slope much like Bhattarai's image has.

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Largest cabinet in history

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ Even I don’t know the names of all the ministers in my cabinet. ”

PM Baburam Bhattarai in Fireside, Kantipur TV

ABIN SHRESTHA/KANTIPUR

“I eliminated a spy”

Interview with Balkrishna Dhungel in *Naya Patrika*, 16 November

Nayapatrika: What do you have to say about the presidential pardon for you which has become an issue of national politics?
Balkrishna Dhugel: The issue has been overblown. This is an attempt to criminalise the insurgency and the Maoists.

What do you think is the intention behind this?
Those who had fixed a reward on our heads still want to finish us off. They have been trying to find a way to criminalise the Maoist movement and people’s movement.

Where were you at the time of incident? What had actually happened?
It was purely political, not personal at all. We found him spying on us and he was eliminated.

What proof do you have that he was a spy?
The government categorised the conflict affected areas and recruited influential people in the regions to carry out the mission in 1996. Ujjan Shrestha used to live in Kathmandu. He was sent to village as advised by Bal Bahadur Rai and Gopal Rai to spy on us. He went back to village the



following year. The government launched a bloody operation in Likhu areas in which families of the Maoists and Jana Morcha were killed and displaced. He played major role in this. The police arrested 47 people including me, Puskar Gautam, Shambhu Gautam, Madhav Dhungel, Prem Prasad Dhungel among others. We were released on bail when Bamdev Gautam was the home minister.

What did you do to Ujjan after that?
He was still working as an agent. We warned him, asked his relatives to convince him, party formally approached his family but he

continued. Then, the party concluded that he should be eliminated.

Which level of the party had decided?
If we have to eliminate someone during the insurgency, we had to take permission from the party command. No district or area command could take decision on elimination.

What was your position in the party then?
We had demarcated areas from Tamakosi to Ramechhap including some VDCs of Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Solukhumbu and Bhojpur as our eastern base. Biswa was in-charge of the area and I was next to him.

How did the case reach the court and how did you land up in jail?
I was involved in politics since 1986 and went underground from 1996. The incident took place when I was underground. The government launched a massive operation in the region. The party had concluded that he was a plain clothed policeman. Locals were arrested, tortured and forced them to sign in a paper saying Balkrishna Dhungel and Puskar Gautam were involved in killing. I was arrested in 1999 and released in 2006.

What will you do if the president doesn’t grant you a pardon?
I am a responsible party member. Whatever party decides is my decision.



Witch hunt

Rajdhani, 14 November
राजधानी

Whenever there is any mishap in the village of Mahadevi of Saptari district, people here blame Siyadevi Mandal, 44. She is accused of being a “witch” and is held responsible for everything from floods and fires to cows not giving milk. In a medieval practice, villagers then get together and beat her up. The latest “witch” episode occurred two weeks ago when Siyadevi’s neighbours Shyam Prasad and Rukmani Mandal, accused her of performing black magic on their daughter and making her ill and beat her brutally. Siyadevi sustained serious injuries and had to be hospitalised. She and her farmer husband went to the police, but no action has yet been taken against her tormentors.

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Notes of descent

Mustangs will soon have to be flying off the Hulas Motors assembly line in Biratnagar if we are to keep up with the demand for official cars for the cabinet which, like the universe itself, is still expanding. There are four more vacant portfolios so we will have a 55 member cabinet. Lot of people have been complaining about how this jumbo cabinet is going to be a drain on the budget. I don't think so. It will actually give Nepal's budding automotive industry a shot in the arm, create jobs and who knows one day we may even be able to export SUVs. At least BRB was honest enuf to tell Bhusan on Fireside that he can't recognise members of his own cabinet.



The prime minister's own custom-made Mustang Max (with power steering, stereo, and armour plated sides) is undergoing field trials as we speak. Quite appropriate that the model is called the Mustang Max since this is a maximum size cabinet. As one wag put it, this isn't a "jumbo" cabinet, it is an "Airbus 380" cabinet.



Victorious Bachelor Gachhedar has promised that his home ministry will be "cleanest ever". But old habits die hard and the minister can't seem to resist plucking low hanging fruits. A DIG spilled the beans to the tabloid press last week that he was asked to pay Rs 1.5 karod to be promoted to IGP by Gachhe's sidekick. When he said he didn't have that kind of money, they sent a notorious don in the payroll of the minister to have a chat with him. The DIG in question wasn't just not promoted, but two junior officers were. If that was the going rate, Victorious Babu must have made a cool 30 million on those two

promotions alone. If even half the rumours are true, Deputy Prime Minster and Homely Minister Victorious is raking it in. That explains why he then scooted off with family in tow to Manakamana last week to give thanks to the God of Good Wishes.



Don in question, Acting Minister of Home Affairs Ganesh Lama (no relation to HH the Dalai), has apparently issued a secret rate list for this year's police transfers and promotions.
ASI to Inspector: Rs 100,000 + a bottle of Famous Grouse
DSP to SP: Rs 500,000 + two bottles of Black Label
DIG to IGP: Rs 1.5 karod + a crate of Chivas



If any of you have ever murdered someone in cold blood or have the intention of doing so, don't worry, we now know how to escape punishment. Here's what you do: join the Maoist party and then get yourself elected as Constituent Assembly member. This is what Balkrishna, Baban and Comrade Ugly did, and they will all be pardoned by the president. Baboon Sing didn't just commit a murder, he masterminded a bloody massacre, and he is walking around the CA in broad daylight even when he is on the Nepal Police "Most Wanted" list. When a case was filed against him, he suddenly turned Gandhian and went on a hunger strike. Prabu Sah, involved in murder of a Hindu activist in Birganj, was not only never caught, BRB appointed him minister. Moral: Unless your cv says you have committed manslaughter, don't even bother applying for a post in this cabinet.



True to his name, General Attorney Mukti is busy ensuring that his fellow-

comrades get freedom from murder convictions. You have to go to the AG's office these days to see how Comrade Yummy is running the show. She was heard shouting to him from the stairs: "Eh Mukti Cha, thanawa!" And speaking of Comrade Hasiya, the prime minister will have to have to take her aside one of these days and tell her to shut the fog up. She's getting to be a national embarrassment. The PM's consort apparently made an ass of herself by asking a Madhesi NRN in NY which part of India she was from. Then she asked Prabal Gurung if he was a tailor, and ordered a haku patasi gown. And, this is the kicker, she asked a Nepali expert on cloud computing if he generate some rain in drought-infested western Nepal.



So BRB got tired of waiting for disgruntled comrades to join his govt and has filled it up with gruntled comrades. The ultra faction seems to be satisfied for now just filing notes of descent.



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