A post-mortem of the aborted political deal on Monday has revealed that it didn’t go through because Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai rejected outright an agreement brokered by Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the NC for a change in the leadership of the coalition.

This last-minute failure to meet President Ram Baran Yadav’s fourth deadline to form a consensus government to take the country to elections has exposed the widening rift between the two top Maoist leaders.

It has brought back memories of 2004, when Dahal actually had Bhattarai, his wife and other loyalists arrested and tortured because of a clash over ideology.

Dahal is determined to replace Bhattarai before their party’s convention on 3 February, and Bhattarai is equally determined to cling on to power. Both are competing to expand their control over the party with the break off of the Baidya group earlier this year. This intra-party feud is impacting directly on national politics, and prolonging the deadlock over the formation of an all-party election government.

President Yadav extended the deadline for government formation for the fifth time, and would like to wrap things up before his visit to India on Monday. But it is unlikely that Bhattarai will give in to Dahal’s pressure to remove him from office at least till the convention in February.
The horrific slaughter of 26 children and their teachers last week in the US state of Connecticut was a shock reminder to Americans to urgently address the need for gun control. Nowhere else in the world is it the right to be armed taken for granted as it is in the United States, and the latest massacre underscored the necessity to amend the Second Amendment. Passed as far back as in 1791, the law needs a serious revision in an age when assault rifles and other weapons of mass murder have been used by killers. The per capita rate of shooting homicide in the United States is 20 times higher than in Europe. There are over 10,000 murders by firearms in the US every year, compared to 30 in Australia, 37 in Sweden, and 8 in Japan. The frequency of school shootings in the US shows that the adult American’s freedom to own a gun is infringing on the rights of American children.

Here in Nepal, the latest US shootings reminded us of the murder in Kathmandu of 10 members of the royal family by another deranged and gun-crazed individual in 2001. That massacre set off a media feeding frenzy that put Nepal briefly on the global news map. Part of the reason for such log-sided coverage is the prevalent news paradigm, the parameters the media uses to define an event as newsworthy.

Journalism schools teach students that for anything to have news value, a whole lot of people, preferably well-to-do or living in a rich country, have to die suddenly, all in one place, and it would help if there are interesting visuals. These unspoken, cynical and callous criteria define the threshold of what is deemed important enough for the people to know.

Which means that a textile factory fire that kills 100 workers in Bangladesh, or a typhoon in the Philippines that kills more than 1,000, are eclipsed by relatively smaller events in the industrialized world. Seventy thousand Nepali children die every year of diarrhoeal dehydration, pneumonia and other vaccine-preventable deaths. That is about 200 children dying needlessly every day, but it doesn’t make headlines around the world. Not even in Nepal, because they are mostly poor children in remote areas who die silently and are scattered across the land. The death of 200 children in a day in Nepal should be news, but alas, it doesn’t fit the standard news format.

To be sure, Nepal has made dramatic progress in child survival, and that should be news too. But it isn’t. The country’s poverty rate has declined to 25 per cent, the national literacy rate has doubled in the past 15 years, enrollment in primary schools is nearly 100 per cent, and there is parity between boys and girls. Nepal’s under-five mortality rate is down from 162 per 1,000 births to less than 50 today, and the maternal mortality rate has come down from 850 per 100,000 births to less than 200 in 15 years. Still, these figures are national averages and mask the glaring disparity between urban and rural areas, between the mainstream and marginalised communities. There are still 200,000 children who are out of school, a quarter of the population is living below the absolute poverty line, and 41 per cent of children under five are underweight which makes them vulnerable to killer infections. Most worryingly, the female literacy rate is plateauing off and 41 per cent of children under five are underweight. That is about 200 children dying needlessly every day, but it doesn’t make headlines around the world, not even in Nepal, because they are being killed by state neglect, bureaucratic apathy, corruption and bad governance.

Nepali children are being killed by state neglect, bureaucratic apathy, corruption and bad governance.
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After nearly 70 years of war, peace may be finally breaking out in Colombia

IGNACIO RAMONET in BOGOTA

People in the streets and squares of the Colombian capital are breathing easier. The air is fresh with hope.

The war in Colombia is one of the longest-running armed conflicts in the world. It began (or intensified) when Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, a popular social activist who advocated fiscal and land reform, was murdered by the oligarchy in 1948.

Today, in a continent that is overwhelmingly at peace, Colombia’s 65-year-old conflict is like a vestige of another era. After many false starts, the peace process this time seems to be serious.

President Juan Manuel Santos publicly announced in early September that the government and the insurgents would be starting peace talks, first in Oslo and then in Havana, with the governments of Norway and Cuba as guarantors.

But why has Santos, an implacable opponent of the guerrillas as Defence Minister under former President Álvaro Uribe, chosen the path of negotiation? Because this time, he says, “the stars are aligned to end the conflict.” In other words, the national and international conditions are propitious.

Observers.

During the worst years of the war, the large cities were cut off from the countryside. It was impossible to travel overland from one place to another, and the portion of Colombia that was usable was limited to a sort of archipelago of cities. To these large cities came the millions of people fleeing the conflict, and dynamic, growing local economies developed, based on industry, services, finance, import-export and other sectors.

This is the economy that just as Uribe represents the large landowners who are opposed to the peace process. The urban oligarchy wants peace for economic reasons. The cost of peace, after all, will be borne by the big landowners. The urban elite is not interested in the soil, but in the suburb: pacification would allow exploitation of Colombia’s immense mineral resources, for which China is an insatiable market.

The urban business community also perceives that if peace is achieved, the present excessive military expenditure could be devoted to reducing inequality. Colombia’s population will soon exceed 50 million, a significant critical mass in terms of consumption, if average purchasing power rises.

Meanwhile, Latin America is experiencing a high point in terms of regional cooperation, with the recent creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), in which Colombia plays an important role.

Given these dynamics, as Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez keeps pointing out, the war is an anachronism, and the FARC knows this. Current events in Latin America show that gaining power by peaceful, political means is possible for a party with a progressive agenda.

The peace process is still being opposed by Pentagon hawks, ultra-rightwing members of the military, landowners and paramilitaries. But all signs from Havana show that the end of Colombia’s conflict may at long last be at hand.

PS

Ignacio Ramonet is the editor of Le Monde Diplomatique in Spanish.
A world apart

The dubious distinction of having one of the longest running conflicts in the world today. FARC has been fighting for the last 48 years and two generations of Colombians have never known peace. News of the peace process has been greeted with hope and apprehension; after all, there have been failed peace attempts before. A recent public opinion poll showed that 75 per cent of Colombians welcome the peace talks, but 45 per cent do not hold much hope that it will succeed.

The last time there was a ceasefire in 1998, the President Andrés Pastrana government gave an area of 42,000 sq km to the rebels as a safe haven in the southeast of the country, promising no military strikes there. The rebels took advantage of that to rearm, regroup, improve training and boost drug trafficking. They continued their urban offensives, extortion and kidnapping. Pastrana was also faulted for not having a clear plan about the process, and was naive in trusting the rebel group. The peace process collapsed within three years, but the straw that broke the camel’s back was FARC’s hijacking of an aircraft and kidnapping of a well-known politician.

After 12 years of strong military pressure by President Juan Manuel Santos and his predecessor, Álvaro Uribe, the rebels were weakened. The FARC access to and use of land, formalisation of property, providing development to remote areas and creation of jobs. The end of the armed conflict includes a bilateral and definitive ceasefire, disarmament, releasing prisoners and reintegrating the guerrillas into society. Anti-drug trafficking activities include crop substitution, and environmental regeneration in areas affected by narco-traffickers. Victims of the conflict will also be ensured truth and justice.

Just as Nepal, Colombia will also have to grapple with closure for the families of victims.

When I just arrived in Nepal, a friendly man at a small shop in Bhaisepati asked me where I was from. After I said Colombia, he replied with a grin: “Ah, the land of the FARC.” I was taken aback because normally few in Nepal have heard of Colombia (those that have think of the capital of Sri Lanka, or a university in New York) let alone a South American guerrilla group. That was the first time I realised that there may be a link between the conflicts in Colombia and Nepal. Nepal is ahead of Colombia in guerrilla matters in some ways. It signed a ceasefire in 2006 and concluded the peace process with the Maoists, and the former combatants are in the process of integration into the national army and assimilation into society. The Maoists became the largest party in the 2008 elections, and have been leading the government.

In Colombia, FARC has just entered the peace process and the country has of that to rearm, regroup, improve training and boost drug trafficking. They continued their urban offensives, extortion and kidnapping. Pastrana was also faulted for not having a clear plan about the process, and was naive in trusting the rebel group. The peace process collapsed within three years, but the straw that broke the camel’s back was FARC’s hijacking of an aircraft and kidnapping of a well-known politician. After 12 years of strong military pressure by President Juan Manuel Santos and his predecessor, Álvaro Uribe, the rebels were weakened. The FARC

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Juanita Malagón is a Colombian journalist currently Online Coordinator of the digital edition of Nepali Times, www.nepalitimes.com

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Women formed a sizeable proportion of the fighting force.
Let them all eat cake

This Christmas, bakeries across Kathmandu have given yet another yummy reason to rejoice

BHRIKUTI RAI

You know your olfactory senses are doing just fine, even with all the dust and congestion blocking your nose, when you pass a bakery and the toasty aroma of sweet buttery bakery delights wafts out to the chilly sidewalk. Bakeries have suddenly become a rage, not just in Thamel and other tourist areas of the country, but all over. They are even giving Indian sweet shops a run for their money with their delectable assortment of cakes, cookies, breads, and croissants.

Krishna Pauroti Bhandar was established in 1948 and marked the beginning of western-style loaf baking in Nepal. For 30 more years, Krishna at Kamal Pokhari was the only show in town, but things have changed profoundly with recent developments in the bakery sector. Today, when you walk past a bakery and find yourself in a crowd of people, it’s not just the delicious smells of freshly baked bread that draw you in, but the sight of mouth-watering pastries as well.

It’s not just the specialized bakeries that are doing well. There are also many other bakeries that have sprung up around the city, each with its own unique style and specialty. Some of these bakeries are small and run by local families, while others are large chain stores with multiple outlets.

But it is at Christmas that the Valley’s bakeries do their briskest business, and it’s no longer just for expats. “The new generation needs an excuse to celebrate Christmas and their family is suddenly fashionable here,” says Rajkarnikar. Other bakeries too wait eagerly for Christmas to put up their special selection of Christmas delights. European Bakery at Baluwatar is in its ninth year and offers a wide range of breads from millefeuille to garlic besides the assortments of pastries and cookies, says Bimal Bhandari, who bakes a special range of cheese and mint pies along with Christmas fruit cake and stollen bread every year.

In addition to the regular breads and cakes, Julie’s displays a sinful assortment of Swiss chocolates.

Krishna Pauroti survived and rebranded itself. Gahanbhumy Ramkarnikar of Krishna Pauroti Bhandar remembers the days when his father Krishna Bahadur Rajkarnikar pioneered baking. “Although bread and buns are still popular, as a pioneer establishment we have diversified into cakes, cookies and pastries,” he says. But it is at Christmas that the Valley’s bakeries do their briskest business, and it’s no longer just for expats. “The new generation needs an excuse to celebrate Christmas and it’s suddenly fashionable here,” explains Rajkarnikar.

Christmas is suddenly fashionable. European Bakery at Baluwatar is in its ninth year and offers a wide range of breads from millefeuille to garlic besides the assortments of pastries and cookies, says Bimal Bhandari, who bakes a special range of cheese and mint pies along with Christmas fruit cake and stollen bread this week.

The curiously-named Hygiene Bakers, also in Baluwatar, claims to offer an authentic Christmas sugar fix. Baker Rome Ghimire recommends his plum pudding and Christmas-themed cakes.

Hermann Helmers is a pioneer bakery on the Patan side of town and baker Sita KC has noticed more and more local customers over the years at his outlet in Jumla. “We had only a few orders for cakes this Christmas, but sales of puddings and mousse have gone up in December as always,” KC says.

Other popular Patan-based bakeries like Fuji and Julies say that business is good during Christmas despite not having Yuletide dedications. Babha Thapa of Julies in Kupondole points at the empty racks meant to showcase doughnuts, cakes and special Swiss chocolates, saying they vanish faster at Christmas.

While December does bring in extra business, it also comes with its own set of challenges. “Load-shedding is a real headache because it coincides with higher demand for items like our sour cream cookies,” admits Bhumi Shakya of Fuji Bakery at Chakupporta.

A green Christmas

I Bing Crosby’s song ‘White Christmas’ is hammering in your head this season and the wish for ‘trees tops glisten and children listen to hear sleigh bells in the snow’ makes you want to have trees and wreaths and lots of snow, look for a green Christmas next week.

After all, ‘tis the season to be eco-friendly. Instead of chopping down fresh pine trees and branches, you can have a small tree in a pot, look after it throughout the year, and then when Christmas finally arrives you already have the habit of making it grow. Or why not follow the tradition in Philippines were fresh pine trees are too expensive and locals prefer to make Christmas trees out of bamboo stalks and decorate them with lights?

But, the best option is to plant poinsettias inside and outside the house, its red petals the perfect symbol of Christmas.
Among the many food items that the world got after the Europeans reached America besides potatoes, chillies and maize is chocolate. Today, the chocolate’s dark smooth texture, bittersweet flavour and seductive scent is a mass-produced treat.

Good chocolate completes the joy of Christmas along with other yuletide musts such as walnuts, marzipan, candles and glittery decorations. And you can’t go wrong with an assortment of designer chocolates as a gift.

Asia is the new market for chocolate where it is competing with traditional flavours. In Nepal, the market is still immature, and although many bakeries offer delicate chocolates, it is still rare with local chocolatiers.

Down a warren of streets near Maligaun is a residence that’s probably Nepal’s only homemade chocolate factory. Shrishti Joshi Malla (pictured) started Moni’s Creations in 2005 to produce handmade stained glass, beads, candles and chocolates.

In her display room, Malla urges a visitor to sample a chocolate in bright green foil wrapping from a gift box. The velvety smooth, melt-in-the-mouth, mint praline is one of the specialities at Moni’s. The packaging is tastefully done as well, with hand-made cavity boxes of Nepali Lokta paper.

“It all started as a hobby, but with time it grew into a business,” explains Malla, who sells her world-class chocolate and other handicrafts as corporate gifts during festivals, as wedding and birthday presents and at Christmas time.

Moni’s Creations has something of a cult following among discerning Kathmandu locals and expats for its uniquely flavoured chocolates in custom-made boxes. A favourite is the silky smooth truffle, and other specialties that Malla created with inspiration from trips abroad, are chocolates with almond, mint, butter scotch, cappuccino, crunchy cracker and other tempting fillings.

Anna-Karin Ernstson Lampou

Moni’s Creations
01 443 21 22
Boxes start from Rs 400 onwards
B-OYING COMPETITION: shake and bake, and do whatever it takes to win a cash prize of up to Rs 50,000.

KATHA-KURO, opportunity for young professional photographers to work with journalist, narrative storytelling at this feature.

KJC winter camp for kids, music, movies, drama, and a range of outdoor activities to keep your children excited this winter.

KIM inter-college music competition, music the living daylight out of your competitors, and win up to Rs 145,000 in cash and kind.

REGGAE CAFE AND BAR, gather with your friends for drinks, and also catch the English Premier League live as Arsenal take on Wigan Athletic.

Salt & Pepper Restro Lounge, espresso, mocha, latte, frappucino, cocktails, liquor, beers and flavoured shishas, with an outdoor lake-view terrace.

CHA CHA CAFE, Iris Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks.

New Tusshila Restaurant, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss cut on its percy with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce.

Bato ko cinema, meet the director, shake hands, and do whatever it takes to win up to Rs 5000.

TRISOUL, Abhaya Subba Wese will perform live at the release of her latest album, 21 December, 7pm onwards, Factory, Thamel.

Chopstix turns 5, catch Hem Lama and Band at the fifth anniversary of the restaurant, and try the 5 new dishes prepared for this very occasion. 22 December, Chopstix, Kumanpali.

ROSCOT PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION, chance for professional photographers to show what they're made of, 30 December, rcjphotocomp@gmail.com, 9841634909/9802087277.

REGGAE CAFE AND BAR, gather with your friends for drinks, and also catch the English Premier League live as Arsenal take on Wigan Athletic. 21 December, 6pm onwards, Thamel.

TAMAS-LAYA, promises a refined dining experience, try the prawn tempura, fisherman's fish and Balinese chicken satay.

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, bite your time in their free-wifi zone as you enjoy your wood-fired pizzas, homemade pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok.

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Spread the word, Santa’s come to town

Father Christmas is visiting Manny’s Eatery this weekend, so don’t forget to take your kids to the Children Mela organised there as part of the season’s festivities.

Besides Yuletide cheers, the carnival will feature boat rides, trampoline, face painting, bouncing castles, lucky dips, puppet shows, treasure hunts and lots of other filled activities, in addition to a food court.

If your kids happen to be whisk wise, persuade them to take part in the evening’s special ‘Manny’s junior Master Chef’ event so that they may show their culinary expertise to contemporaries and seniors alike.

A part of the proceeds generated will be contributed towards the Mary Ward High School and Hager, say the folks, to persuade them to take part in the evening’s festivities.

A fun-filled weekend awaits all families, door prizes and gift hampers galore.

Call (01)5536919 for registration and booking.

Mulchowk

The lake-city beckons

Head out to Pokhara this week as the lake-city gears up to celebrate the coming of the new year, and not just the Gregorian one, during the 14th Pokhara Street Festival.

Tamu Lochhar, the new year of Gurungs, falls on December 30, and Pokhara is likely to be at the centre of all festivities.

The five-day party will have over 150 stalls, with restaurants also setting up shop on the road, and will also showcase art, crafts, culture and traditions of Pokhara and the surrounding areas to promote Nepal amongst tourist and local alike.

If the winter has halted your trekking, rafting and mountaineering plans, come out amongst tourist and local alike.

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**The Life of Pi**

When Ang Lee graduated from film school he struggled to make a film, and no one would give him a chance.

*Only with his trilogy on Taiwanese culture, Pushing Hands (1992), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), and Eat Drink Man Woman (1994) did he manage to gain the kind of attention he deserves. All three films are delightful, insightful dramas and were deployed with startling component of inflammation in bronchiolar asthma. In some patients, inhaler therapy involving bronchodilators (beta agonists) and corticosteroids is all that is required for asthma control. Occasionally, however, the condition is quite severe and a combination of bronchodilators and corticosteroids is necessary. Treatment regimens must be tailored to the individual patient.

**Wheeze, wheeze**

**DHANVANTARI**

*Buddha Basnyat, MD*

Although there are many causes of wheezing in the chest, bronchial asthma is one of the most common. And since the winter cold can bring this on, asthma is a relevant topic for this season.

Wheeze happens when the chest makes strange noises as we breathe in and out. The reason for asthmatic wheeze is that the airways in bronchial asthma narrow and the inhaled air passes the wall of the airway. Asthma narrows and the inhaled air passes the wall of the airway. Asthmatic wheeze is brought about when smooth muscles of the airways constrict (bronchoconstriction or broncho-spasm) is the medical terminology). Bronchoconstriction may be caused due to many reasons including cold, allergy, exercise, mental stress and so forth. Therapies have been designed to decrease or reverse this constriction. One of the most commonly used medicines in bronchial asthma are beta agonist inhalers which help relax the smooth muscles of the airways and reverse the process of asthma. Asthalin (a common brand name of a beta agonist) inhalers are used commonly and are usually effective. However it is important that the patients learn to use the inhaler properly. Many people do not inhale the medicine but rather swallow the puff of medicine. The medicine goes into the alimentary tract when it was meant to be delivered into the respiratory tract. Or, improper coordination can lead to exhaling air out of the lungs while the puff of medicine is being delivered, which leads to the medicine being washed into the atmosphere. Beta agonist pills are less expensive but may lead to unwanted side effects.

About 25 years ago, some smart pulmonary scientists determined that relaxing the smooth muscles was just one part in the treatment of bronchial asthma. A revolutionary treatment strategy using inhaled corticosteroids (beclate is a trade name) was put forward because it was clearly shown that persistent asthma had a sizable component of inflammation in addition to the smooth muscle broncho-constriction. Hence, anti-inflammatory medicines in the form of corticosteroids were deployed with startling improvement in asthma care. It is now routine to add a steroid inhaler if the beta agonist alone is not effective in the treatment of bronchial asthma. Although cold and exercise may worsen existing asthma. This is probably due to lack of allergens at higher altitudes.


Patriarchy in the political hierarchy

The exclusive behaviour of powerful Madhesi leaders ridicules the inclusion agenda they claim to champion

Tahassum Alam from Sarochiya near Biratnagar was married into a family across the border in Forbesgunj six years ago. Three years later, the groom started to torture her to put pressure on her family to pay more money. Tahassum’s family had paid as much dowry as they could afford: Rs 300,000 in cash and a new motorcycle for the groom. When her family couldn’t pay any more money, Tahassum was returned to Nepal. Her family sued the groom in the Indian courts, but after four years she returned to Nepal. Her family couldn’t pay as much dowry as they could afford: Rs 300,000 in cash and a new motorcycle for the groom. The groom’s family had paid as much dowry as they could afford: Rs 300,000 in cash and a new motorcycle for the groom.

Not a single Madhesi leader has so far admitted that the Madhies’ problems go beyond statelessness. While demanding political inclusion, few are willing to be inclusive in their own political and personal behaviour. The glaring absence of Madhesi, Muslim and Tharu women among decision makers in Madhesi parties ridicules the inclusion agenda they claim to champion.

The cultural decay in the Madhes is perpetuated by poverty and ignorance, reinforced by a cultural orthodoxy of the educated and powerful. The discrimination faced by Madhesi women at the hands of their own has its roots in their alienation from social, economic and political life. The victims of rape, torture and other forms of domestic violence against women are mostly poorer, illiterate women. Perpetrators of the violence walk free because they enjoy political patronage. (See story on page 12-13)

The government can bring legislation to ban dowry but the state cannot police it away as long as the embedded practice is not challenged from within the community,” says Mohana Ansari, one of the few Muslim lawyers in the country, and a member of National Women’s Commission. Ansari believes the campaign to end violence against women will remain ineffective as long as those expected to lead it stand guilty of perpetuating it. She is among few female voices from the Tarai’s Madhesi and Muslim community who speaks out in Kathmandu’s power circle, and blames the social conservatism of the Madhesi themselves for discouraging women from asserting themselves.

According to a recent Education Ministry report, the number of school-going women in the Tarai has gone up, but the dropout rate is high and their participation in higher education remains low. Crime against women in the Madhes stems from their disempowered status. Effective legislations, community mobilisation and gender sensitisation can help safeguard their rights but long term solutions lie in ensuring access to mainstream social, political and economic life.

But that seems to be in no one’s agenda, least of all for leaders steeped in patriarchy who are supposed to represent the Madhes.

(Names of the victims have been changed)
Sexual violence against women in the eastern Tarai districts has reached epidemic levels because perpetrators don’t just go scot free, but are often rewarded for their crime.

Two years ago in Mahottari, a young woman was forced into a sugarcane field and raped by Farmud Ansari and Murduj Ansari. They were caught, but instead of punishing both of them, locals padlocked the girl’s house and expelled her from the village for having “corrupted” local youth. After seeking help from police and political leaders, the girl got a compensation of Rs 40,000, half of which was taken by the mediating all-party leaders as a donation for their ‘community development fund’.

The local representatives of the TMLP, Maoists, NE, Madhesi Forum and UML all signed the agreement for compensation in the presence of the head of the Women’s Cell of the local police. And as a ‘reward’, the locals tried to force the girl to marry one of the men. Mahottari’s police chief said: “The best alternative was to allow the victim to re-assimilate herself in society.”

Another young woman from Laxmipur of Rautahat was forced to marry her rapist, Sagar Darji, under pressure from the local administration and civil society organisations, including gender rights activists. Police chief Pradip Kandel said: “It is not possible to deliver justice in all rape cases. Sometimes we need to find an alternative mechanism.”

‘Alternative mechanism’ has now become an euphemism for letting rapists to not just get away with their crime, but actually take the rape victim home with them. And the most outrageous aspect of this is that it is aided and abetted by local politicians, police and even human rights activists.

“The rapists who come from
powerful families never get punished, the victims who are poor never get justice because the police themselves work to cover up the crime and work out an arrangement,” says civil society activist, Madan Jha.

Other activists say rape is not a sexual crime, but projects violence and power deeply-rooted in the Tarai’s patriarchy. Earlier this year, a 17-year-old girl in Mahottari’s Baingiya village was raped by 25-year-old Ranjit Das who also filmed the incident and circulated the minute-long video via mobile and YouTube. When local authorities were informed about the crime, instead of punishing the accused, they collaborated with local bigwigs to force the victim to marry the perpetrator. Das is now in custody, but the video is being sold from phone to phone, and has even reached Nepalis in Qatar and Malaysia.

In August, another 17-year-old girl from the same district was raped by Ahmed Miya, who got his friend to record the act on his mobile phone. By coincidence, a young man from their village saw the video on a phone in Qatar and alerted the girl’s family. But instead of arresting the accused, important men in the village forced the girl to marry her rapist.

There are many more such incidents which go unreported in the media, and rape for ransom has become a thriving business because of impunity. Many of the victims are minors violated by neighbours, teachers and relatives, but are forced into a settlement.

In many cases, the rapist stands to make a lot of money selling videos of the crime across the border in India, and the spread of mobile phones has made it easier to record and disseminate such explicit material. Many of these sexual predators don’t just go scot free, but are rewarded, emboldening criminals who are now killing the victims after raping them.

A 18-year-old girl from Mahottari was gang-raped in broad daylight while carrying water from the communal well recently. “I noticed they were taking a video of me with their phones as I struggled,” she recounted to police. She named her rapists as Hajint Kawari, Dil Mohamed Kawari, Dawad Kawari and Kalmuddin Kawari. Police arrested all of them and took their case to the district police office. But the girl’s family withdrew the complaint after powerful locals put pressure on them. “They threatened us, we are poor what can we do? So we withdrew the case,” the girl’s mother said.

There have been 11 rape cases registered in Rautahat alone in the past year, of which nine have been settled by written agreement after the victim’s family was threatened. All 17 rape cases registered at the Women’s Cell of Rautahat Police have been suppressed because of local pressure. In Mahottari, there are 16 rape cases that are pending in the courts for the past three years. Because the police have become complicit as mediators, many victims now take their cases to a women’s rights group in Jaleswor where there are 37 cases registered.

Earlier this year, a 14-year-old student was found to have been repeatedly raped by her school teacher. When found out, locals and police mediated and forced the teacher to marry his minor victim. Another 13-year-old girl in Mahottari was raped inside her own house by a neighbour, Samuls Nafad, who threatened to kill her if she reported it. The girl’s father saved her life by rushing his bleeding daughter to hospital. Even though Nafad was later arrested, Jayanarayan Yadav of the area police post initially dismissed the complaint: “This happens all the time, it’s a normal case.”

For the complete Nepali version of this piece from the Centre for Investigative Journalism, see www.cijnepal.org

Names of victims have been changed.
I did not enter the Nepali Congress because I was a Janajati, or whatever. Never in my 60-year political career at various positions in the NC did I work under the halo of a Janajati. My colleagues, Bal Bahadur Rai, Yogendra Man Sherchan or Bhim Bahadur Tamang did not join the NC to wear the Janajati label but to be public servants. And the public admired them not because of their caste or ethnicity, but because of their principles and their commitment to helping people.

When the Maoists and UML formed ethnic factions within their ranks, I raised my voice in the NC and said this should never happen in our party. We should not be in the business of identity politics, but using politics for the betterment of all Nepalis who are disadvantaged and downtrodden. The NC must establish itself as a party of principle and not as a Janajati party. If the NC follows the Maoist and UML lead, it will weaken itself just like they have. It was King Mahendra who started identity politics during the Panchayat by tempting Janajati leaders away from the NC and other democratic parties. It did not work then, and it will not work now. These days, the question of identity has been defined in wrong terms. This will be to the detriment of the entire nation, of the Nepali people and of the Janajatis themselves.

I have been in the NC from its heydays when BP Koirala was our leader, and I have never found the party to be discriminatory. In fact, BP made it a point to go beyond tokenism to make a diverse party that encompassed representation. Today, the NC must make policies that will ensure ethnic harmony and prevent social tensions from erupting.

Nepal’s Janajati movement is being directly influenced by foreign interests. It is being fuelled by INGO and donor dollars from outside.

My Janajati colleagues are on the wrong track. They must work for the interests of the whole country, and must include everyone not just fragments of society. We must be Nepalis first, and then maybe NC, UML, Maoists later. We must not carve our boundaries. I have not dared say this, at least the NC should have been some instances when we’ve come to know about some meetings only through the media. If such meetings take place repeatedly without our knowledge, I make it a point to bring not just the ministers’ but even the Prime Minister’s attention to the diplomatic code of conduct.

The party has nominated you as an alternative candidate for the PM’s post, but you have been hinting at leaving politics. Are you serious?

My remarks about leaving politics were in a different context. I am in a different position. Nepal’s历史文化 is with the diplomatic code of conduct being flouted by top leaders. It is disheartening that the change that was brought about by the sacrifice of thousands of Nepalis is being squandered. I feel guilty and responsible for this lapse. However, that doesn’t mean I have decided to quit the party. As it is, I am bound to stay here. I remember something I have made clear that I will never be a prime minister who compromises on the issue of national sovereignty.

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## Nominees

### Best New Artist
1. Deepak Ghimire - Ma Timi Bina
2. Dikty Ukgab - Ujalo Orato
3. Fedrick N' the Zoo - Timi Roka
4. Navekanti - Priye
5. Santa Shahi - Jogi Bitto

### Best Male Pop Vocal Performance
1. Deepak Ghimire - Nasampta
2. Deepak Ghimire - Timdai Dekha
3. Jens Pradhan - Bhayako Roso
4. Nima Rampa - Pangun Ki Ma
5. Yogeshwar - Amalaya

### Best Rock Composition
1. Fedrick N' the Zoo - Ghast
2. Jens Pradhan - Aankha Ma
3. Nish Godar - Bhastri
4. Monkey Temple - Aumati
5. Nyuko Bajakarniya - Ma Tini Bina

### Best Performance by a Group or Duo with Vocal
1. Fedrick N' the Zoo - Timi Roka
2. Lakke - Achaemen
3. Monkey Temple - Aumati
4. Navekanti - Priye
5. Robin & The New Revolution - Hamro Dash

### Best Vocal Collaboration
1. Anup Shrestha & Juna Prasai - Time Dhou Reta
2. Sonam Bajju Tamang & Parima Gurung Hoda - Telela
3. Rajesh Rai & Anju Pant - Phedi Bho Majhi
4. Sudip Shahi & Rama Rimal - Timi Achari
5. Sawayoo Raj Acharya & Anju Pant - Najarko Timro

### Folk Record of the Year
1. Bhanu Oil & Juna Prasai - Sunima Jauna
2. Bhumi Rai & Raj Basnet - Bhumai Raj Rai & Khushchechu
3. Mila Lame & Tika Pun - Besho Bho Maya
4. Rajesh Rai - Jadeu 3

### Best Female Pop Vocal Performance
1. Ciney Gurung - Elia Ekai
2. Dikty Ukgab - Ujalo Orato
3. Sarita Sangrada - Jhame Minj
4. Shashi Rawal - Timro Heat
5. Shreeya Soltane - Najak Chhurans

### Best Pop Composition
1. Albert Gurung - Nasampta
2. Jens Pradhan - Bhayako Roso
3. Nyuko Bajakarniya - Timial
4. Nyuko Bajakarniya - Dekshe Dekh
5. Ugen Yorsan - Priye

### Best Female Vocal Performance
1. Lochen Bhattarai - Ki Huna Ho Kathal - Prati Layo Bhano
2. Nima Bajrangi - Basi Rahan Bhancho
3. Reema Gurung - Guri No - Chhusho
4. Rana Pradhan - Manda Manda

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### Awards

#### Hits FM Music Awards 2069

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- Ujalo Orato
- Timi Roka
- Priye
- Jogi Bitto

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4. Pangun Ki Ma
5. Amalaya

#### Best Rock Composition
1. Ghast
2. Aankha Ma
3. Bhastri
4. Aumati
5. Ma Tini Bina

#### Best Performance by a Group or Duo with Vocal
1. Timi Roka
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4. Priye
5. Hamro Dash

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2. Bhumai Raj Rai & Khushchechu
3. Besho Bho Maya
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2. Ujalo Orato
3. Jhame Minj
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#### Nominees

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Prime Minister eats a rat

If you are reading this on Friday morning it means the world didn’t end after all, so you can all go back to clipping your toe-nails. But wait, we have some breaking news. The Mayan calendar runs on Eastern Daylight Saving Time which means Armageddon is actually 9AM Nepal time on Saturday. Good, Baburam has another day in office.

Kings have been known to eat crow. Paranoid presidents sometimes smell a rat. But ours is the only country in the world where a prime minister actually eats a rat. This must belong somewhere in the Guinness Book together with the King of Lesotho and his 13 wives who once served barbequed boa during a state banquet.

Now that Lord Ram is on shaky grounds, may we make a humble suggestion that he not stray too far afield during his once-a-month sleep-in with the huddled masses? The country can’t afford these junkets anymore. How about just driving down from Baluwatar through the Lazimpat Villa after Red Flag sabotaged Lotus Flower’s carefully-laid plans to replace the prime minister with Jhuls Kaka. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to both, Gulch has hatched a plan to sneak into Baluwatar through the backdoor, and is using his aboriginal credentials to lobby for himself. The only regret about Jhusil not becoming pradhan monkey is that we were all looking forward to him breaking into a patriotic song after his swearing in.

The two had a shouting match the other night at the Lazimpat Villa after Red Flag sabotaged Lotus Flower’s carefully-laid plans to replace the prime minister with Jhuls Kaka. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to both, Gulch has hatched a plan to sneak into Baluwatar through the backdoor, and is using his aboriginal credentials to lobby for himself. The only regret about Jhusil not becoming pradhan monkey is that we were all looking forward to him breaking into a patriotic song after his swearing in.

Private conversations with Jhul Gnat and Makuran, PKD has been pouring out his woes and blaming “The South” for sabotaging his plan. As Awesome sees it, he has bent over backwards to kowtow to the DilliDarbar, and they still don’t trust him. As a result, Fericous is looking more and more like a man eater that has lost its fangs. Both BRB and PKD are rolling up their sleeves for a major kickboxing bout during the party’s convention next month. The real power struggle is not between the political faries, but between these two bahun comrades.

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