Prime Minister Bhattarai has argued that violence perpetrated during the conflict were political in nature, and in the past year he has pardoned 1,715 Maoist cadre involved in atrocities. Bhattarai says digging up war crimes will endanger the peace process. Actually, not investigating them will ensure that the wounds of war never heal.

Editorial page 2

Get used to it by Damakan Jayshi page 3

Skeletons in the closet by Anurag Acharya page 11

SICK CITY
Kathmandu Valley’s air pollution has topped safety thresholds this winter. If you breathe you die, if you don’t breathe you die.

page 12-13
 Those involved in the torture and murder of the girl, Dendendra Thapa (above). This case has become emblematic of the unpunished crimes committed by both sides during the conflict.

It was the summer of 2003, and the Maoists had laid siege to the district capital of Dailekh, cutting off its water supply. After nearly two months without water, a few journaliers led by Dendendra Thapa dared to walk up to rebel-held territory to negotiate. The team was abducted and led away, some were released after two weeks but the doggedly pursued the case and finally arrested four of them. Even after the war ended, a courageous district police inspector doggedly pursued the case and finally arrested four of them.

While Dendendra's killers are willingly going to jail to atone for their crime, in faraway Kathmandu Maoist Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and his cronies are using their influence to quash the investigation. They don't want the masterminds of Dendendra Thapa's torture and murder to be arrested, and the case to set a precedent against senior party leaders.

The Maoist-led coalition has an unwritten pact with state security not to pursue conflict-era atrocities, and to let bygones be bygones. This means there is little chance for Army and Police involved in the Doraama massacre, the Kathanda killings, the torture and executions at Bhaishaband, and hundreds of cases of disappearances, rape, and extra-judicial killings will ever be tried. In fact, Bhattarai promoted the Army's head of the Bhairabnath Battalion, and the policeman involved in the death during torture of Maoist journalist Krishna Sen. Since he came to power, Bhattarai has dismissed more than 100 cases involving 1,715 cadre accused of atrocities. Bhattarai has argued that violence perpetrated during the conflict was political in nature and should be addressed by a future Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, his draft of the TRC Bill that is languishing on the president's desk is a toothless face.

Bhattarai’s dirty tricks department is handled by his hand-picked Attorney General Pradhan, but the buck still stops at Baburam.

Bhattarai says digging up war crimes will endanger the peace process. Actually, not investigating them will only sour the peace process. Actually, not investigating them will only sour the peace process and the wounds of war will never heal. The ensuing impunity has eliminated deterrence, and fostered an epidemic of crime involving robbery, rape, murder, and violence against women.

Lachiram Ghati was stuck by a guilty conscience, but the real masterminds of Dendendra Thapa’s murder have no such remorse. Top Maoists are terrified it is payback time for the terror they unleashed on the people.

Kesara Lall (above) was a giant of Nepali literature, a statesman, a scholar. Only through a proper truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) at both home and abroad, but thanks to human rights organisations moral pressure has been once again exerted on Nepal's ruling class.

**Anonymous**

**This is a well argued piece by Prateek Pradhan. Initially, I felt that it was wrong of the British to arrest Lalla after letting him go through investigation. After all, we can say war criminals should be punished, the UK did not have access to evidence in Nepal. But after reading your piece, I am actually neutral. I feel it's good Nepal is putting under the international spotlight. Maybe this will pressurise their leaders to set up a TRC and prosecute war-era crimes.**

**Justin**

**No democracy can survive or prosper in eternal impunity under the perpetual fear of war mongers. Only through a proper truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) at both home and abroad can the healing begin. The current coalition government under the Maoists and the Madhesi failed to draft the constitution and develop a mechanism to foster reconciliation, thereby wasting a massive opportunity.**

**Unjala Acharya**

**One can proudly demand for fair trials for war crimes in Nepal, and at the same time, be offended when a judge or any other representative of the UN mission is tried at counts in a foreign land. There is nothing pseudo-nationalist about it. I don’t understand why Prateek Pradhan calls this jingoism. If the point of his article is to offend a section of Nepali society, then he has succeeded.**

**Krishna**

**Transboundary jurisdiction sounds great, but the asymmetry in its delivery is what should bother us. I would love to see that there was no Amnesty for Tony Blair arrested in one of the third-world countries for crimes against humanity. But then, who are the watchers?**

**Funky Buddha**

**It’s easy to add all high and mighty in the name of justice, and human rights; but be wary as if you think additional sovereignty getting compromised is not a big deal. But it’s not so easy to ignore UK’s shameful history of colonialism, racism, and genocide, not to mention a tarnished record of protecting Asian and Muslim minorities in its own backyard.**

**The British are rather fair-minded and concerned about human rights and they are not responsible if they demonstrate this by arresting Tony Blair who backed unjust wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and others as war criminals instead of picking on an army officer from a weak third world country.**

**Dhruba Basnet**

**I argue that the capturing of Lama in Britain is an affront to our national sovereignty is simply ridiculous. When did national sovereignty come to mean the so-called right of one group of armed Nepali thugs (army leaders or Maoists) to kill another group of people who happen to be unamused and not a party to the conflict? Yes, Britain does have its share of human rights problems, but in this case the decision to arrest Lama is correct. From now on our murderous criminals will have to think twice before they kill another civilian or bully another journalist alive.**

**Ke Garne’ THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE**

The unthinkable always comes to mind when I walk through the narrow alleys of Bhaktapur, Anam, Indra Chok, and Nantivi in New Road (‘Thinking the unthinkable’, #30). There are no open grounds where we could run to safely in the event of an earthquake. Most of the houses (especially the older ones) will probably fall like a stack of dominoes. Even many of the newer buildings are poorly built and don’t follow earthquake safety codes. The sad thing is that we Nepalis only think about short-term issues and are willing to pay heavy bribes to officials just so that we can get things done quickly even if this means risking our lives.

**Tashi Lama**

**ENERGISING THE ECONOMY**

I agree with Puja Tandon’s description of how the power crisis affects industries in Nepal and slows our economy (‘Energising the economy’, #30). However, I do not think that the power crisis is the problem. The main problem is the lack of proper planning and the need to invest more in power generation. We need to focus on developing our domestic resources, such as hydroelectric power, to meet the growing demand for electricity. Only then can we truly energise the economy and create jobs for our people.
The reputation of Nepal’s first PhD prime minister lies in tatters, and it’s all his own doing. His ‘records’ include making the state treasury pay more for his publicity stunt of travelling in a Mustang vehicle, having the largest-ever cabinet in Nepal’s history, withdrawing cases against more than 1,000 people including those accused of rape and murder, having the most number of murder-accused in his cabinet (at least four), and inviting the largest number of people to his official residence at state expense. Now, he has also become the biggest obstacle to finding a way out of the current impasse, demonstrating that he will stop at nothing to cling on to power.

The question is what gives him the confidence to continue? After all, he failed to hold elections in November, a date he proposed while conspiring with his coalition partners from the Madhesi Front to let the CA expire in May last year without necessary changes in the Interim Constitution. He has cashed in on the lack of foresight of the NC and UML since he knew they would not accept an election government led by him. It now looks like he doesn’t want an election at all. And to prove how far he can go, he is now openly obstructing justice over conflict-era abuses.

Bhattarai’s confidence seems to stem from the fact that Nepal handlers in New Delhi think there is more merit in Bhattarai continuing than otherwise. The Madhesi Front holds the aces, and as long as Madhesi leaders in the government see more of an advantage in staying in the coalition for political and monetary gain, Bhattarai is safe.

Madhesi ministers now don’t even try to hide whose advice they heed. Home Minister Bijaya Gachhadar passed on a press release about the parties’ strong objections to remarks by an Indian official in Birganj last year to the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu even before it was made public. So asking the Madhesi Front to ditch Bhattarai is asking for a lot.

This will change only if all the parties outside the coalition and Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal come together with all of them supporting a move by President Ram Baran Yadav to end the deadlock. Other than that, it will take a genuine popular movement to unseat Bhattarai. Both are unlikely at present, and here is why.

With the exception of NC President Sushil Koirala, there is no leader of national stature who can stand up to the Indians and their representatives at state expense. Now, he has also become the biggest obstacle to finding a way out of the current impasse, demonstrating that he will stop at nothing to cling on to power.

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India’s gender insurrection

Extensive media coverage in India and Nepal of the phenomenon of rape seems to have fanned conservatism, spawned amorphous fears, and threatens to shackle women in villages where gender equality is a battle won or lost almost daily.

Travelling last week on a train from Delhi to Patna, and then by road to the Bihar countryside, I silently listened to passionate discussions in tea-stalls, offices as well as living rooms, astonished at the media’s capacity to create a nationwide community, united in its focus on the issue of rape.

Yet it is a community bitterly divided in its analysis of the rise in rape cases, leading me to conclude: our liberalism is a mask worn to conceal the deeply ingrained conservative values we secretly nurture because of the premium placed on modernity. Media coverage of rape has ripped off the mask to reveal our fears of modernity swamping the values inculcated in us.

The discussions I overheard, or occasionally engaged in, had a universal pattern: rape was unanimously condemned. Almost always the punishment prescribed for the guilty was public hanging as a deterrence. Indeed, there seemed to be a barely concealed admiration for the code of punishment based on the principle of ‘an eye for an eye’ and ‘blood for blood’. A few Muslims took perverse pride in what they described as an idea of justice Islamic in nature.

With the rapists condemned to the gallows, the discussions would invariably turn to analysing the causes popularly described as social sickness. Invariably again, the culprit was modernity. It is vital, they said, for girls to acquire an education, particularly through the medium of English, enroll in professional colleges and aspire to become engineers and doctors and bureaucrats. But is it necessary, they would ask, to wear body-hugging jeans, stay out late in the evening, and for boys and girls to mingle freely? Are teenagers, particularly girls, serving a larger purpose in emulating the lifestyle of their brethren bred in metros, say, in Delhi or Mumbai?

As young Patna consciously wraps itself in modernity through spiffy showrooms selling designer wear, eats out in restaurants and coffee shops, or builds educational institutes and teaching shops, to which students from other parts of the state throng, their parents mull the outcome of flirting with progressivism. Have they erred in easing earlier curbs on children, allowing them greater personal space and independence, and believing they would not belie the faith reposed in them?

In a discussion on sartorial style, a parent remarked allegorically: “Thieving can be curbed by punishing the thief. But it is also important to lock your house at night. If you leave it open, you are asking for trouble. Why are we emulating the Western code of dressing – three-piece suit for men, two pieces for women?” It is precisely why girls in small town India feel their freedom has been imperilled because of the ambience that the prolonged national debate has created. The perception of the brutal rape of the physiotherapy student in Delhi has undergone a radical transformation over the weeks: the unconscionable criminal act is now considered symptomatic of the crisis springing from the degree of freedom granted to teenagers. The cure, therefore, is believed to lie in curtailing the freedom the young enjoy.

This curtailing won’t be universal in its application, largely because parents are under greater societal pressure to skill boys for the job market than girls. The girls fear that the inability of their parents to negotiate and overcome their fears of modernity could have an adverse impact on them, particularly in circumstances involving decisions of sending them out of city or town for education. They may willingly forego jeans, they will willingly shun male company, but it is their aspirations they don’t wish to compromise on. They want the debate on rape to the background, and the national media train its spotlight elsewhere. They wish to engage in silent insurrection, not trumpet their rebellion.

ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

Liberalism is a mask worn to conceal the deeply ingrained conservative values small town India secretly nurtures

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Tug of war
How will politics and economics interact nationally and globally in 2013?

MOHAMED A EL ERIAN

Watching America’s leaders scramble in the closing days of an election year, it is hard to miss the influence of the political winds on the business landscape. With a crisis in Washington, voters are rethinking their economic policy options and assessing the impact of the election on the economy. At the same time, global politics are also shifting, with the re-election of Barack Obama in the US providing a degree of certainty for participants in the world economy. With the end of the US campaign in sight, it is time for investors to assess the implications of the US election for the global economy.

In the US, the next four years will be marked by significant challenges for policymakers. The fiscal cliff – the need to avoid deep budget cuts and tax increases – will remain a threat, and there are concerns about the ability of the US economy to recover from the recession. The US dollar is also likely to remain strong, which could make it difficult for US exporters to compete in global markets. In addition, there is concern about the pace of job creation and the stability of the housing market.

In Europe, the election of a new government in Germany is likely to have a significant impact on the region. The new government is expected to take a more proactive approach to economic policy, which could lead to more rapid growth and a stronger eurozone. However, there are also concerns about the impact of the eurozone crisis on the German economy, and the risk of a recession is not ruled out.

In China, the credibility of the incoming leadership will depend largely on whether the economy can consolidate its soft landing. Specifically, any prolonged period of sub-seven per cent growth could encourage opponents of the incumbent – not only in the countryside, but also in urban centres. Then there is Germany, which holds the key to the integrity and unity of the eurozone. So far, Chancellor Angela Merkel has been largely successful in insulating the German economy from the turmoil elsewhere in Europe. Unemployment has remained remarkably low and confidence relatively high. And, while growth has moderated recently, Germany remains one of Europe’s best-performing economies – and not just its paymaster. While some would have favoured greater policy activism, Merkel’s Government has provided a steady anchor for a eurozone struggling to end bouts of financial instability and put an end to questions about its survival as a well-functioning monetary union (one that aspires to becoming much more).

A change in German leadership would, therefore, raise questions about Europe’s policy underpinning. How politics and economics interact nationally and globally is likely to persist in 2013. Having said this, we should also expect much greater segmentation in terms of impact – and the consequences will affect both individual countries and the global system as a whole.

In some countries – for example, Italy, Japan, and the United States – politics will remain the primary driver of economic-policy approaches. But elsewhere – China, Egypt, Germany, and Greece come to mind – the reverse will be true, with economics becoming a key determinant of political outcomes.

This dualism in causation speaks to a world that will become more heterogeneous in 2013 – and in at least two ways: it will lack unifying political themes, and it will be subject to multi-speed growth and financial dynamics that imply a range of possible scenarios for multilateral policy interactions.

With an election looming in Italy, the country’s technocratic interim administration will return the reins of power to a democratically elected government. The question, both for Italy and Europe as a whole, is whether the new government will maintain the current economic policy stance or shift to one that is less acceptable to the country’s external partners (particularly Germany and the European Central Bank).

Japan’s incoming government has already signalled an economic-policy pivot, relying on what it directly controls (fiscal policy), together with pressure on the Bank of Japan, to relax the monetary-policy stance, in an effort to generate faster growth and higher inflation. In the process, officials are weakening the yen. They will also try to lower Japan’s dependence on exports and rethink sending production facilities to lower-wage countries.

The economic impact of politics in the US, while important, will be less dynamic: in the absence of a more cooperative Congress, politics will mute policy responses rather than fuel greater activism. Continued congressional polarisation would maintain policy uncertainty, confound debt and deficit negotiations, and impede economic growth.

In other countries, the causal direction will run primarily from economics to politics. In Egypt and Greece, for example, rising poverty, high unemployment, and financial turmoil could place governments under pressure. Popular frustration may not wait for the ballot box. Instead, hard times could be a force for good: consider Prime Minister Mario Monti’s ability to pull Italy back from the brink of financial turmoil. But in other cases, like Greece, political dysfunction aggravated economic problems.

Close and defining linkages between politics and economics are likely to persist in 2013. Having said this, we should also expect much greater segmentation in terms of impact – and the consequences will affect both individual countries and the global system as a whole.
Ratna Park today is known for its chaotic traffic, microbus stands, and hordes of street vendors selling cheap Chinese knockoffs. Forty years ago, it used to be the city’s cultural and artistic hub and artist RN Joshi’s Park Gallery was at the heart of it all.

Started in 1970, Park was Nepal’s first gallery of modern art where Joshi displayed his works, taught classes, and encouraged Nepalis to appreciate their artistic heritage. In 1975 Joshi shifted the complex closer to his home in Jawalakhel, where today Nira and Navin are keeping their father’s legacy alive as well as promoting upcoming artists.

“We grew up with art and when you love art, you want to support it and support other artists,” says Nira who is curator of Park Gallery. (see page 7)

Titled ‘Emergence of Nepali Modern Art: 1960-80’, the latest exhibit which runs until 31 January displays works from the sixties, seventies, and eighties that paints a complex narrative of the birth and evolution of modern art in Nepal.

Arranged in chronological order, pieces from the 60s are lined up closest to the entrance and a walk further inside the gallery reveals how the artists’ work evolved through the 70s. A staircase leads to the upper level, where works from the 80s are displayed.

“The 1960s were a turning point in Nepali art,” says Navin, “Uttam Nepali, Sashi Shah, Vijaya Thapa, Indra Pradhan, and my father went to Mumbai and Lucknow to study, brought back a lot of new influences and pioneered modern art in Nepal.”

However, even in the 1970s, many Nepali artists chose to play safe and paint landscapes or cultural events which were very popular among the audience. Then, some began taking risks and experimenting with abstract pieces and preparing the art-loving public for the revolution of the 80s.

One example is KK Karmacharya’s piece (pic. centre) comprised of many different materials which stand out among the traditional oil paintings. “Karmacharya is part of the second generation artists, who were influenced by the famous five and later developed their own unique styles,” explains Navin pointing to the collage on the wall.

In the 80s Nepali artists also began exploring different mediums instead of just sticking to paintings or sculptures. Says Nira: “Susan Chitrakar and Manish Lal Shrestha stick out from the 80s. Their installation based exhibitions were exceptional.”

As the founder of the gallery, RN Joshi’s works are most prominently featured. Each of his paintings seems to serve a specific purpose. A large painting of a woman brushing her hair while a crow perches on a window (pic. above) is a reference to an old Newari folk tale, reflecting the artist’s desire to preserve Nepal’s oral storytelling tradition through art. His later works document everyday life around him, such as the Rato Machhindranath festival (pic. left) which takes place in Pulchok every year.

Artist and writer Saroj Bajracharya, who moderated a discussion held at the gallery on Sunday believes the exhibition is a good way to understand the history of Nepal’s artistic landscape. “We need to encourage more Nepalis to come see art and learn about their own history,” he says, “And an exhibition such as this is a good first step.”

Among the throng of visitors this week was 16-year-old Dhiraj Bayelkoti, a student of fine art at Bijeshwori Secondary School who came to hear Bajracharya’s talk. In an effort to promote art among young Nepalis, Park Gallery allows free access for students. If the gallery continues to inspire students like Dhiraj, Nepali art is in for some exciting times for the next three decades.

www.parkgallery.com.np
Emergence of Nepali Modern Art: 1960-80
9-31 January, 10.30am to 5.30pm
Park Gallery, Pulchok
(01) 5522307
nepalitimes.com
RN Joshi retrospective, #314
Straight from the art

The brother and sister duo Nira and Navin Joshi of Park Gallery spoke to Nepali Times this week about current trends and the future of Nepali art

Nepali Times: How is modern art different than traditional art?
Navin: Traditional artists work with religious icons and use certain set techniques, whereas modern art is primarily about individual expression.

How far can an artist use his freedom of expression?
Navin: Freedom of expression is important, but Nepali artists are still members of society and have to respect its norms and values.

How do you view the Nepali public’s interest and understanding of local art?
Nira: Some people are interested while others see it as just a luxury. And there is still a lack of understanding, but it makes me happy to see the audience gradually warming up and becoming more appreciative.

Navin: Today anybody can use Google to get a basic sense of art history. But I wish universities and art institutes made a greater effort to teach students the roots of Nepali art, how it has evolved in the last 200 years, and where it gets its influences from. Like Nira said a nuanced understanding of our own art history is missing.

What are your impressions of the new generation of Nepali artists?
Nira: Younger Nepali artists are not afraid to express themselves through different mediums like performance art, videos, and photography. I think greater exposure to the international art scene through travel and education has made them more confident.

Navin: It’s also heartening to see that families today are much more supportive of their children’s interest in art than say 10 or 15 years ago. When you are a young aspiring artist, you need a strong support system to succeed.

Any advice?
Navin: There is a famous quote by Picasso that says ‘It’s easy to become an artist, but it’s difficult to remain an artist.’ They have to be remain focused even during the tough times and just keep working hard.

Nira: They should be aware of why they want to create art and what made them enter the profession in the first place, and have their hearts in the right place.

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HIMAL KHABARPATRIKA
14 – 26 January

COMMENTS
Wounds of the war, Mumaram Khosal
PM’s lies symptomatic of Maoists’ fears, Narayan Wagle
A war-cry against democracy, Pushpesh Dahal

REPORTS
Gender violence misunderstood
CPN-M anxious to be unique
Patronised crime at immigration

PROFILE
Purnima Lama

INTERVIEW
Chandra Dhakal

COVER
Into the docks: politicians and security officers could soon find themselves in Col Kumar Lama’s shoes if wartime atrocities are forgiven

EDITORIAL
Critical issues finally surface

EVENTS

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children aged 8 to 18, 9 to 20 January, Art of Living Centre, New Baneshwor, 9803039759/9803675895

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EVEREST PANORAMA RESORT. If you can’t get enough of the Himalayas in smoggy Kathmandu, a great view from the top of the Mahabharat is just what you’re looking for. Daman, (01) 4439857

If it is typical Nepali khana that you are craving, then Noyoz is the place for you. This tiny little joint in Bhatbhateni serves momos, aludum, meat and more meat, and they all taste like your mum’s back home. Don’t go to Noyoz looking for ambience or fine décor and you will walk out deeply satisfied. This very basic eatery, run by a Limbu couple and the proprietor and chef all rolled into one, learnt cooking from his mother, grandmother, and her many aunts. And she tries to emulate that style in her own kitchen by serving up nutritious, hearty, and wholesome meals with a special eastern touch. The aludum with roti (Rs 100) is the real deal. Authentic aludum is plain boiled potatoes dunked and cooked in a hot chili sauce without the addition of tons of masala and onion and garlic and tomatoes and the serving is perfect for a filling lunch. Sargemba (Rs 150), the Limbu version of blood sausage, has minced pork and blood mixed with edible moss, dried and boiled in ash, sourced from the hills of Taplejung. It is mild and best had warm—truly delicious.

The folks at Noyoz claim that theirs is simply the best Dharane pork momos (Rs 95) in town and I have to agree. Soft and moist, the flavour of the meat is accentuated by a tinge of ginger and the crunch of chopped onions. The masala-free dumplings (masala is the death of many a good plate of momo), come with a hot bowl of roti (Rs 150) begging for dippage. After discovering Noyoz, I doubt I’ll ever cook momos at home again. We polished off two plates very quickly and would have ordered more if we didn’t have the pork leg curry (Rs 150) with roti that we found at Noyoz in Kathmandu. It’s that’s just my personal taste.

Regardless, the dish remains true to the spirit of Dharan and its eternal love affair with pork.

The smoked pork chop with steamed vegetables (Rs 195) is the dish that sealed the deal for me. The pork is slow smoked over a wood fire by Barsha’s aunt in Dharan and can only be found at Noyoz in Kathmandu. The almost peasy flavour of the wood combined with the seasonings and the charred bits make this dish addictive. It’s been almost two weeks since my visit and I can still clearly recall the taste, yum. Noyoz is definitely going to be revisited, many, many times.

Non-pork eaters and vegetarians fret not, Noyoz serves a variety of vegetarian dishes. In a relatively short time Noyoz has become extremely popular among nomadic writers, artists, and musicians from east Nepal (and they have quite a huge diaspora in the capital) and it has taken on the air of an ‘intellectual adda’. They congregate here to talk about all things Nepal while eating bonda fide puranvi meals, just like back home. Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Noyoz is smack opposite the Chinese Embassy’s gate in Bhatbhateni.

(01) 4439857

Rato Mato

F amous among Nepalis home and abroad for his recent forays into Nepali folk music, Dilav Gurung will perform in Nepal for the first time in eight years. Gurung was an active musician in Nepal’s underground music scene, and his band Abhakross was a favourite among those who wanted a taste of something different. For two shows in January, Gurung will team up with his old bandmates and play songs from his album Rato Mato. Get a taste of Nepali neo-folk while it lasts.

18 January, 7:30pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel
20 January, 7:30pm onwards, Moksh, Thamel

For more information contact Noyoz, (01) 4439857.
**Decoding H pylori**

**DHNAVANTAR**

Until the early 1980s, mental stress and excessive acid secretion in the stomach were thought to be responsible for peptic ulcer disease (PUD), a condition wherein patients feel a burning sensation especially on an empty stomach at the lower end of the breastbone region for days. Doctors advised patients to take it easy and prescribe plenty of antacids.

However, it was only in 1982 that the real culprit was identified. To the astonishment of the medical fraternity, two Australian scientists Barry Marshall (pic, left) and John Robin Warren (pic, right) from Perth discovered that bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori* (H pylori) causes PUD and gastritis. Although drugs like aspirin and ibuprofen can independently cause PUD, H pylori is much more common sources and may well exacerbate mucosal injuries in the stomach and duodenum triggered by drugs.

Marshall and Warren shared the Nobel Prize in 2005 for revolutionising the treatment for PUD and bringing relief to thousands of people across the world. Today, doctors usually cause tuberculosis, typhoid or cholera, the spiral-shaped and three microns long *H pylori* infect a larger population than those three diseases combined. Also the *H pylori* bug is more prevalent in poorer countries and only 30 per cent of those infected reside in developed nations.

Not surprisingly, PUD is a well-known problem in Nepal. Many patients visit their doctors complaining about ‘gastric’, meaning gastritis which is an inflammation of the lining of the stomach, a common finding with PUD.

However, like many other aspects of medicine, the relationship between humans and *H pylori* is staggeringly complex. Some recent scientific evidence strongly suggest that *H pylori* are not the villains they are usually made out to be. In fact, they provide protection against childhood asthma, hay fever, some skin disorders, and even some forms of gastrointestinal cancer.
The dilemma of post-conflict reconciliation is to balance society’s need to ensure justice while at the same time curbing retribution. In many post-war situations the delivery of justice is limited to avenging wrongdoings, without effectively addressing the structural roots of violence.

Seven years after the end of Nepal’s bloody insurgency which claimed 16,000 lives, a status quo media and civil society activists still give asymmetrical weightage to crimes committed by the Maoists, often obscuring the brutality of state security.

While the media spotlight is on Dekendra Thapa who was tortured and buried alive by the Maoists in 2004, we must not forget the names of other journalists like Kanchan Priyadarshi, Dev Kumar Acharya, Krishna Sen, and Milan Nepali, who were killed by the state. When the framework of justice is custom-made and tailored to serve the interests of the few, it loses its essence and stokes revenge.

To be sure, we shouldn’t wait indefinitely for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be formed to try war-era crimes, especially since the current draft of the bill makes it a rubber stamp mass-pardon body. Also, the prime minister is wrong to argue that probing human rights violations will hinder the peace process. Not only is that a politically incorrect thing to say, it is morally flawed as well.

But we have to be scrupulously even-handed in pursuing war crimes. While calling for the prosecution of Ujjan Shrestha and Arjun Lama, we must also investigate the cases of Sapana Gurung, Maina Sunuwar, the torture and executions at the infamous Bhairabnath and hundreds of other cases involving state security that are languishing in civilian courts.

The decision to set up the Truth and Reconciliation and Disappearance Commissions was part of an understanding between Girija Prasad Koirala and Pushpa Kamal Dahal who were both worried about skeletons in their own closets.

As the leader of a party which was in power for the longest period during the conflict, and under whose watch Kilo Sierra II was launched, Koirala was acutely aware of his own culpability. Similarly, although Dahal may not have pulled the trigger himself he did give the order to do so, and the chain of command led up to him. Many unspeakable atrocities were committed by his revolutionaries on innocent Nepalis and justified as an answer to the structural violence of the state.

The Koirala-Dahal pact sought to assuage the international community that transitional justice was being addressed domestically since the entire peace process was a homegrown exercise. In actual fact, it was a ruse to let their own fighters, as well as others, off the hook. This accommodation is still in effect, as is seen in the NC and UML’s unhappiness with the detention of Colonel Lama in the UK.

What is different about the Dekendra Thapa case is that the NC and UML, desperate to get the Bhattarai government to step down, have decided to politicise it by launching an agitation from Dailekh next month. This has already provoked the Maoists into launching a parallel protest to demand justice for state excesses during the war.

Every upright citizen of this country will, and should, support mobilisation against the Bhattarai government’s obstruction of a judicial probe into Dekendra Thapa’s case. But justice must be seen to be even-handed, and there must be as much outrage about the same prime minister’s promotion of Army officer Raju Basnet of Bhairabnath.

What makes politicians think they can get away with this is the state of impunity in the country. When massive kickbacks, payoffs, murders and mass killings go unpunished, anyone can get away with anything. Those entrusted with protecting citizens, prey on them. Law-makers turn law-breakers.

The greatest lesson Nepal can draw from the bloodshed of the decade long war is that it is cheaper in the long-term to address social injustice through politics rather than violence.
Forty-year-old Ali Akhtar never leaves home without what has become an essential accessory for most Nepalis: his brown cloth mask. As the streets around his fabric shop in Jawalakhel are demolished for road widening and the neighbourhood becomes shrouded in a cloud of yellow dust, Akhtar is trying his best to protect himself from the pollution and keep his business running. While Beijing made headlines this week for the worst air quality on record (see box), Kathmandu Valley is not far behind. The average PM 10 count concentration in Kathmandu, a measure of particulate matter content in the air, was 183 µg/m³ in 2003 and 173 µg/m³ in 2007, both far above the WHO standard of 50 µg/m³ and the US National Ambient Air Quality Standard of 100 µg/m³. There is no data beyond 2007 because the seven monitoring devices installed by DANIDA across the Valley in 2002 to measure PM levels have been out of order for the past four years. Without the units, there is no mechanism to monitor and warn citizens to take extra precautions during bad days. The Department of Transportation, however, has said it is going to repair four of the stations by next month.

While mismanaged waste and unplanned urbanisation contribute to the city’s air pollution, vehicle exhaust and brick factories are the biggest polluters. Fumes from the 60,000 plus vehicles plying on the choked roads of the Valley add the most toxins. The road expansion drive has only made things worse.

Anjila Manandhar from Clean Air Network Nepal says that instead of improving air quality, the government has aggravated the problem: “They just tore down houses and roads, nobody thought about how to get the job done with the least amount of pollution and there were no cleanup efforts either.”

In winter, the Valley’s topography creates a cold inversion layer that traps warm and polluted surface air, trapping dust and smog. “Air pollution has become a huge problem and it gets worse during the winter,” says Buddha Basnyat, a doctor at Patan Hospital, “we have long queues and ward full of patients with respiratory problems at this time of the year and children suffering from asthma are also on the rise.”

Every year the government spends more than $21 million in medical bills for pollution related illnesses. Street vendors, construction workers, road workers, and traffic police who are exposed the longest to the smoke and dust face the greatest risk along with those who attend schools, colleges, and offices located along major roads.

According to a recent study conducted by the Nepal Health Research Council, the average PM 2.5 (the smallest pollution particles) around a school in Jawalakhel located next to the road was 200 µg/m³, significantly higher than the WHO threshold, and the national standard of 40 µg/m³. Arjun Karki, a pulmonologist at Patan Hospital, says pollution is not only harmful in terms of health, but stunts the country’s economic growth. “When an adult falls sick, the family risks losing...”
its source of income, productivity goes down, expenses go up and sometimes the family is pushed into poverty,” explains Karki. Streetfront shops like Akhtar’s lose business when pollution is higher.

While the road widening campaign is partly to blame for the thick clouds of brown dust in Kathmandu, lack of government control and monitoring is also responsible. The state introduced a Vehicle Emission Standards (VES) test in 1995, and those four wheelers which passed were given green stickers. Similarly the ban on vehicles older than 20 years was announced in 2000. However, many government vehicles don’t have stickers and not all those that do have actually passed the test. Corruption is rife and the traffic police hardly checks the validity period. And despite repeated attempts to stop the worst offenders, the state hasn’t been able to enforce the ban on old vehicles plying on the roads of Kathmandu.

In the absence of clear environmental guidelines, industries are free to let off massive amounts of smoke into the atmosphere without any repercussions. BrickCleanNetwork is an exception. It has introduced a new certification system for brick factories to encourage them to remove exploitation and pollution.

“The pollution is making us sick, affecting our incomes, and turning Kathmandu into a very unpleasant city. But our leaders are so busy with power politics, they don’t care,” says Akhtar as he puts on his mask and gets ready to go home.

### How effective is your mask?

Most Kathmandu commuters don masks or hold a handkerchief to their mouths when out on the streets, but these barely provide any protection in this dust bowl. Larger particulate matters above 10 microns (PM 10) are trapped in the nose and mouth, but the finest and most deadly particles, PM 2.5, lodge themselves deep in the lungs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of mask</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton handkerchief</td>
<td>Rs 20</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclist mask 1</td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical mask</td>
<td>Rs 15</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclist mask 2</td>
<td>Rs 4,000</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3M Dust Respirator</td>
<td>Rs 1,400</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teflon filter</td>
<td>Rs 2,500</td>
<td>99.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benefits of cardiovascular effects of reducing exposure to particulate air pollution with a simple face mask.
Many more Dekendras

Media Kurakani, 13 January

After the arrest of Lachhiram Ghati, one of the accused in journalist Dekendra Thapa’s murder in 2004, there have been demands for fair and free investigations into the murder and disappearance of journalists during the conflict. While Thapa’s case has gained national and international publicity, more than 30 murder cases of journalists are left in limbo. Following Ghati’s arrest, UCPN (Maoist) has decided to file new cases in contention.

According to the Federation of Nepalese Journalist (FNJ), 35 journalists have been killed since the conflict began in 1996, while three are still missing. FNJ is demanding a high level probe committee to investigate the murder and disappearance of journalists. FNJ will take some time to see the government responding to the demands, for now here are the names of the journalists who were killed and disappeared and the parties involved.

S no Name Organisation Date Party Involved
2. Kanchan Priyadarshni Former Secretary of FNJ, Sindhupalchowk chapter 29 April 2002 State
5. Rajkumar K.C. Raahi Samsar Samiti (RSS) 24 July 2002 State
7. Ambika Timalsina Janashed and Mahata Weekly 11 December 2002 Maoist
8. Kumar Ghireta Janashree Weekly 2 November 2002 State
9. Gyandendra Khadka RSS 6 August 2003 Maoist
13. Padamraj Devkota Karnali Smpad, Muruchia 7 February 2004 State
15. Baili Khadka Janashed Weekly 29 August 2004 State
17. Khagendra Shrestha Dharmodaya Daily 1 April 2005 Maoist
18. Maheshwor Palakhi Radio Nepal Saptahik Weekly 4 October 2009 State
20. Pushkar Babah Babha Saptahik Weekly 2 January 2008 GTMJ
22. Bhim Bahaudhar Gharti Correspondent, Maitai Radio 2005 State
23. Sushil Manal Correspondent, Maitai Radio 2004 State
24. Mohan Khair Janashed Weekly 2005 State
25. Swaroop Chhugana Janashed Weekly 2005 State
29. Jannam Shah Chairman, Channel Nepal 7 February 2010 Unknown
30. Arun Sahaniya Media entrepreneur 1 March 2010 Unknown
31. Prativa Dinpatra (Hemraj) Media entrepreneur 27 July 2010 Unknown
32. Babur Khanali Media entrepreneur 26 July 2011 Unknown
33. Yadan Poudel Mechi Times, Rathip, Avenues 4 April 2012 Unknown
34. Sanjay Kumar Gupta Media entrepreneur (Bindsah FM) 8 July 2012 Unknown
35. Chandan Nepal Radio Sphre, Gumi 12 September 2012 Unknown

Journalists who forcefully disappeared:
1. Milan Singh Dekendra Weekly 9 June 1999 State
2. Prakash Singh Thakuri Rathip Daily, Kanachaur 5 July 2007 Maoist
3. Chitrarayan Shrestha Sindhul

Which means there is still gender discrimination in the new party? It is natural that social structures are replicated in social units. But politics is all about strength of ideas and ability, so I feel that our party has done justice to us.

You spent millions on your general convention after exhorting from businesses in Kathmandu, and those who refused were reportedly beaten up. Is this the kind of future unrest. A country is sovereign only when its citizens are able to live with dignity. And it doesn’t take external forces to ‘undermine’ its sovereignty. It automatically becomes hollow when rulers refuse to provide justice and reconciliation for thousands of Nepalis who were killed, tortured, raped, disappeared and instead look for ways to pardon those involved in war crimes.

Seven years after the armed conflict ended, the arrests in the UK and Daikheh have once again made us realise how important it is to identify and punish perpetrators on both sides so that families of victims can find closure. However, if Nepal’s rulers sweep the dirty secrets of the war under the carpet and provide bland, formulaic condolences, those wounds will continue to fester and could turn into potent ingredients for future unrest.

For qualitative changes

BBC Nepal Service, 16 January

Rabinbaba Mishra: The foundations of the people’s war, like people’s courts and PLA, have been disbanded. How are you going to reconstruct these for your new uprising?

Pampha Bhusal: First of all, we must try to peacefully reach consensus for a constitution that guarantees federalism and protects our sovereignty. As far as the bases of a revolution are concerned, we already have experience organising people’s courts, unions, area commands, and so forth. If necessary, we will draw from these experiences and move forward.

You spent half of your life working for a constitution. Will you spend the primer half trying to rebuild these conditions again?

As long as our society is repressed in class, gender, and identity conflicts, there is always room for a revolution. We don’t have to lead the revolution, someone might take the initiative and that’s fine with us. But we have not forgotten our experiences, and the sacrifice made by thousands of Nepalis and women for our cause. We are aware of what we must do.
For the past six years, administrators in public schools across the country have been celebrating as if it’s Dasain all year through. The government had started the Per Child Fund (PCF) in 2007 which allocates Rs 1,626 for each student to cover the cost of their uniforms, stationery, and other essentials. However, school administrators have been inflating enrollment rates and fleecing the government. And it’s not only schools that are looting the state, even parents are enrolling their children at more than one school to pocket the scholarship money.

According to the 2011 census, there are 6,003,178 children between the ages of 5 and 13. However, flash reports from the Department of Education (DOE) put the number of students in the 5-13 age bracket at 6,585,565, which leaves almost 600,000 children unaccounted for. In Sunsari alone there were 83,000 fake students out of the reported 196,562 in 2011-12. Sunsari’s District Education Officer Bir Bahadur Khadka, says that out of the total budget allocated for schools during the last fiscal year, Rs 900,000 has already been collected. Says Khadka, “Falsifying enrollment for more than 80,000 students in one district is no joke. The government needs to intervene immediately before things get completely out of control.”

Schools in Saptari are a step above the rest. They managed to double the number of students in just a single academic year. The flash one report at the beginning of the academic year in 2011 shows the total number of students to be around 84,000 which reached a staggering 149,100 by the end of the year.

There are close to a million fake students across 75 districts and more than one billion was spent on them last year alone. The figures for the entire six years exceed Rs 8 billion. In the last fiscal year, the government allocated Rs 63.9 billion, the highest ever for education of which Rs 51 billion went directly to schools. Of the country’s total education budget, 22 per cent is provided by donor countries and agencies while the rest comes from the state treasury. Since 2009 the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Union, DFID, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Australian Aid, UNICEF, and Global Education have been providing funds for the School Sector Reform Plan.

Neither the donors, nor the Ministry of Education (MoE), or even the teachers’ unions have spoken up against such massive embezzlement. Shankar Thapa, vice secretary of the research and information branch of DOE admits to the shortcomings of the monitoring mechanism. “Since it is not possible for the department to cross check the records of each and every school, it’s very difficult for us to find out which students are real and which are not,” acknowledges Thapa.

Although the government issued a directive last June to investigate those involved in the fraud, it first needs to inspect its own staff. Everyone involved in the preparation, monitoring, and sanctioning of funds needs to be held responsible and punished if found guilty and the PCF also needs a major overhaul to weed out the loopholes.

Baburam Bishwakarma, Sikshak, December-January

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It is an insult to say that Prime Minister Rambabu presides over the most corrupt government we’ve ever had in the history of the Federal Pragmatic Republic of Nepal. Those of us who are a bit long in the tooth remember with nostalgia and fondness good, old-fashioned corruption when we had scandals named after Niki Lauda, or Sudan. Those were the days when the prime minister’s daughter took a teensy weensy commission on some construction contract here and a jet leasing deal there. So what an affront on the BRB administration that we call it ‘corrupt’. What a slur on its capacity for plunder and state capture. It’s like saying Al Capone was a pickpocket.

All this hasn’t gone unnoticed in Nepal’s lively social media scene, where people have been posting variations on the title of Prime Minister Bhattarai. An unedited selection:

- Comrade Awesome’s variations on the title of Prime Minister Bhattarai.
- All this hasn’t gone unnoticed in Nepal’s lively social media scene, where people have been posting variations on the title of Prime Minister Bhattarai. An unedited selection:
- Primordial Minister Bhattarai
- Pardon Mantri Bhattarai
- PM Bhattaraidanda
- Pratham Monkey Bhattarai
- Sri Tin Bhattarai Maharaj
- Crime Minister Bhattarai
- Prime Sinister Bhattarai
- Promo Minister Bhattarai
- West Minister Bhattarai
- South Minister Bhattarai
- The folks at Kathmandu Fried Chicken (KFC) must be heaving a sigh of relief that their minor the buff momo you ate today wasn’t adulterated with common street fauna?
- One of the predictable fallouts of high profile war crimes coming out of the woodworks is that it has temporarily patched up the differences between PKD and BRB. Like the boy and the tiger in Life of Pi, the two find themselves on the same boat. Suddenly, Komrade Awesome’s roar has lost its ferocity, and he told his party faithful on Monday: “At this rate we will all be in jail, and won’t be able to travel anywhere in the world again. So we must never leave the government, we must back up the prime minister.” Everyone nodded in assent. Instead of thinking their time had come.
- Long and short of it is that there will be all kinds of fun and games in the Kathmandu Spring. Everyone and their grandparents are going to be out on the streets protesting. Gender rights activists, the film industry, Baddie journalists and Goodie journalists are already out there with rival protests, soon they will be joined by the NC’s fraternal organisations, and the UML will field its own affiliated groups to demand the PM’s resignation. And as soon as it gets a little warmer, the ruling party will also be out on the streets that it newly widened protesting the state’s widening protest against the protesters. Must be one helluva job these days being a riot policeman.
- Mahi-cha is willingly allowing himself to be BRB’s lightning rod to atone for having deserted the Maoabaddie party during the revolution. As an ultra-chauvinist ethno-federalist the Attorney General has done everything in his power to pardon war crimes and now finds himself splattered as the RN hit the fan after he sent written instructions to Dahlek police to stop investigating Dekendra’s torture and murder. Doesn’t look like Comrade Freedom is going to the Land of the Free in his lifetime.
- The total bill for the Dash Baddie Convention has just come in. Rs 25 million of the cash they extorted from Kathmandu businesses. And what did they achieve: they carried on the Kangresi tradition of keeping post-organisational Buda Kaka Kiran at the helm. Poor Comrades Cloudy and Bigplop, they did their thing had come.
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