It is an indication of just how defensive and insecure the political parties have become that they lashed out the way they did this week at ex-King Gyanendra’s visit to distribute flood relief in western Nepal. The former king is no saint, but the parties are just exposing their weakness and trying to hide their lack of performance in the past six years by threatening to put the ex-king in jail. On the other hand, the breakaway Baidya-Maoist wing is taunting the parent party by threatening an improbable alliance with Gyanendra.

No political party in Nepal today can boast of a credible and stable leadership that deserves public vote of trust. The Nepali Congress has been embroiled in an intra-party feud between Koirala and non-Koirala factions for more than a decade now. The UML has its own ideological and political disorientation to cope with after the exclusive all-Bahun leadership led to an exodus of Madhesi and Janajati leaders last year. The Madhes Front is also enmeshed in a facade of unity amidst squabbling over leadership. But the party which is undergoing the biggest political crisis at the moment is the UCPN-Maoists. The only thing the High Level Political Mechanism has been able to give the people is a high level of cynicism.

Residents of the Bhaisipati neighbourhood got so fed up by the early morning honking from a nearby bus stop, they mobilised the community to turn the area into a horn-free zone. At first the drivers mocked the campaigners, but lately the noise pollution has dropped dramatically. Can other neighbourhoods in the Valley do the same?
Frustrated with the doubts and delays about polls, several international interlocutors have told Nepal's top politicians in recent meetings that “any election is better than no election.” Really? You sure?

They have reason to be exasperated when Nepal’s feeble rulers engage in mud-slinging during one-on-one meetings, but are all smiling and back-slapping buddies in collective gatherings. All of them swear by their commitment to hold elections, but in internal party meetings voice doubts about polls in November. In fact, the doubts are getting to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. With 120 days to go, the Election Commission (EC) is going through the motions of preparing elections, but commissionaries themselves are disillusioned by the drugging by politicians.

The CPN-M is not just boycotting elections, it has also threatened to unleash fire and brimstone if the polls go ahead. The other smaller parties too are sulking. The deadlock within the constituency delineation commission persists even as its term expired on Wednesday, and as party proxies within it haggled about where and how many constituencies to add. Chairman Tahir Ali Ansari got his commission to form a cross-party task force to break the deadlock, but without any fruit. The tactic of the matter is that the commission has shown huge increases in population in the Tarai and Madhesi areas, which are to have elections in November. In fact, the doubts are getting to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. With 120 days to go, the Election Commission, for its part, is going ahead with business, pretending as if nothing is wrong. While there are huge obstructions on the road to November, it is wasting time to chide the ex-King and his daughter-in-law’s trust for distributing flood relief in western Nepal. There are much greater violations of the election code of conduct happening which should preoccupy the EC.

In a sense, the internationals may be right. At least elections will focus everyone’s minds on the future, a future that most politicians seem reluctant to face.

Elections will focus everyone’s minds on the future, a future that most politicians seem reluctant to face on polls now.

The internal power struggle within the CPN (M) has been resolved temporarily by Pushpa Kamal Dahal centralising power in his own hands and this has removed a major obstruction. However, Dahal is getting increasingly worried about his falling popularity.

Thumpu gets message: Rahul Gomez

The misconception of Bhutan by India acts as a thick slab to those in Nepal who believe in the emotional ‘big brother’ relation. Altruism rarely exists in international relations and India has already shown how it can build good relations with neighbours.

The mistreatment of Bhutan by Nepal who believe in the emotional ‘big brother’ relation. Altruism rarely exists in international relations and India has already shown how it can build good relations with neighbours.

**Bibek**

Thank you VT for the story on Dharmash Thapa (‘Have Nepalis forgotten Dharmash Thapa?’ Sunil Pandey, #665). I have probably read his poems and songs during Nepal class in school, but to be completely honest I didn’t recognise his name instantly. I am not saying all young Nepalis are ignorant, but there are very few of us who know about Thapa and actively appreciate his music. He is a national treasure and there are hundreds of us like him. He has failed to give them the place in history that they truly deserve. Both the state and Nepalis are responsible for this sad state of affairs.

**Isahan R**

**FORGOTTEN**

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**Isahan R**

**MERTY-GO-ROUND**

Elections will focus everyone’s minds on the future, a future that most politicians seem reluctant to face.
N
the institution of politics rests.

ideals and principles on which
long transition has sucked out
participate, but the painfully
have grudgingly agreed to
brightened as all parties
The prospects of polls have
through constitution drafting.

political future
roadmap for the country's
is expected to chart out a
November elections which
leadership led to an exodus of

The exclusive all-Bahun
disorientation to cope with.

own ideological and political
slight margin.

are ahead of the others by a
undecided, Congress leaders
than half the electorate is still
show that although more
heightened by polls which
more than a decade now.

and non-Koirala factions for
party feud between Koirala
been embroiled in an intra-
power struggle between
Koirala

prized of its socialist history
The party has been all but

more than half the electoral
influence in a region that now
here too, as netas jostle for

are good, bad, and the ugly
electoral alliance. But there

The impatience has been
asked at a program recently.

who refuse to unlearn and

from a bunch of old men
vision for a new republic
stripped of its socialist history

The party which is

undergoing the biggest political

Dahal as the supreme leader.

reverted the party to a wartime
democratic structure and
extended party plenum this
week dissolved the internal
democratic structure and
reverted the party to a wartime
leadership arrangement with
Dahal as the supreme leader.

for bringing national politics
on track, but their legacy of
bigoted leadership still
threatens to destabilise this
country. Their pretensions with
democratic elections stand
at odds with their internal
authoritarianism.

Things are a little more
complicated in the rump party
as leaders like CP Gajurel and
Netra Bikram Chand seem
determined to quash attempts
at unity and instead have
floated the idea of forging
an alliance with 'nationalist'
forces represented by ex-king
Gyanendra. The enemy of your
enemy is a friend.

In any case, the UCPN (M)’s

The leaders of the self-

styled 'high level political

mechanism' may be patting
themselves on their backs
for bringing national politics
on track, but their legacy of
bigoted leadership still
threatens to destabilise this
country. Their pretensions with
democratic elections stand
at odds with their internal
authoritarianism.

It will only dampen the Maoists’

prospects in the upcoming
elections.

For a party striving to build its
democratic credentials, this is a
grave setback and not to say that
it will only dampen the Maoists’
prospects in the upcoming
elections.

The so-called fourth
crime at the moment is the
UCPN (M). After the split, the
largest party in former CA had
hoped to establish its credibility
and legitimacy nationally
and among neighbours.

However, power and greed
have corrupted the top leaders,
eroding their popularity and
the Maoists will have lot of
explaining to do when they face
the public in November.

Some analysts see the
resignation of party Vice-
Chairman Baburam Bhattarai
as a result of the power struggle
with Dahal, while some project
it as an exemplary act of
sacrifice by the senior leader
to make way for a younger
generation. But the move
seems to have been a strategic
means to lay the groundwork
to forge unity with Mohan
Baidya led CPN-M. There is
speculation that Dahal went
into damage control mode after
being concered by Bhattarai’s
resignation and forced all
his top leaders to resign. By
dissolving the party standing
committee and polit bureau, Dahal
may have centralised power in
his own hands, but he has sent
the wrong message just before
elections.
BHRIKUTI RAI

The budget announced by the interim finance minister last week was the first full budget to be presented in time for years. It has prioritized the energy sector and aims at massive reforms in generation of hydropower, construction of transmission lines, and distribution system with a Rs 30 billion allocation. Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala said huge investments were required in the hydropower sector to relieve the country from the curse of load-shedding within three years. This is not the first time a budget has promised an end to power cuts. The Pushpa Kamal Dahal government set out a goal of generating 10,000MW in 10 years and the Madhav Kumar Nepal government that replaced him was even more ambitious in aiming for 25,000MW in 20 years. A task force set up in 2011 to look at power issues is projected to exceed 1,700MW in the next five years and by the time Upper Tamakoshi, Upper Trisuli 3A, 3B and Chameleia are completed, they will only add 586MW to the grid. This means

Powerless future

This year’s budget allocation for energy sector, like previous years, is all too cosmetic

export multi-purpose mega projects like Kamali and Kosi. It is 2013 already and the country’s total installed capacity stands at a mere 740MW and only 40MW was added last year. Hydro experts and power producers fear that even doubling the allocation for energy compared to last year will not eradicate load-shedding. Thirty billion rupees isn’t really a very big investment in the cost intensive hydro sector, but we will have to see even if this amount is really translated into tangible progress on the ground,” says hydro analyst Ratna Samrat Shrestha.

Of the Rs 30 billion budget, the government has set aside Rs 1.05 billion for 140MW reservoir type Tanahu Hydro Project while Rs 4.66 billion has been earmarked for five government funded projects including Upper Trisuli 3A, Upper Modhi, Raghubhat, Chameliyangadh, and Kulokhani III. Enlisted under “projects of national pride” is Upper Tamakoshi that will receive Rs 2 billion for timely completion. While it may sound a lot, the 30 billion budget for energy will be scattered among various projects increasing the uncertainty of their completion. Add to that the transmission lines (see box) despite the Rs 6 billion earmarked for it. Two years ago, a mere 9MW was added to the national grid. This year Rs 13.5 billion was set aside for constructing cross-border transmission lines, north-south corridor lines, and east-west power lines.

But unless government bodies like NEA improve their institutional capabilities, it will be difficult for them to mobilise such large amount of money. An official from the Ministry of Finance who is all too familiar with NEA’s back attitude says, “When we asked them to take as much money as they want to tackle load-shedding in three years, the NEA’s leadership stayed mum.” NEA has been counting on Upper Tamakoshi (456MW) for relief from load-shedding and NEA’s Sher Singh Bhat like always sticks to his argument about how power cuts will be history once it is completed in four years. But demand for electricity is projected to exceed 1,700MW in the next five years and by the time Upper Tamakoshi, Upper Trisuli 3A, 3B and Chameleia are completed, they will only add 586MW to the grid. This means

there will still be a shortfall of over 400MW at full capacity and we will need extra installed capacity to cover for the winter deficit. Experts say the inability of successive governments over the past 15 years to add generation capacity to keep with demand has continued with the current technocrat government. Koirala’s budget, for instance, doesn’t really have short-term programs to tackle the immediate crisis. Petroleum is going to get scarcer and more expensive with demand has continued with the current technocrat government. Koirala’s budget, for instance, doesn’t really have short-term programs to tackle the immediate crisis. Petroleum is going to get scarcer and more expensive
Ujyaalo gets brighter

Load shedding, even in the monsoon continues to cripple Nepal’s economy and everyday life. To promote the use of solar power in urban centres, Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala announced subsidies for FM stations wanting to upgrade to solar. But Ujyaalo Radio 90 Network (ujyaaloonline.com), a nationwide news service provider to 150 local stations across the country, had already switched to solar power last winter.

 Aptly named Ujyaalo Ghar (bright home), the four-storey building in Jawalakhel is powered by 16KW solar panels, which cater to the energy needs of its 60 employees and enable round the clock production for both radio and internet.

“We had been planning to go solar for a long time, so when we moved to our new building we thought why not also make the switch,” says director Gopal Guragain. Although some FM stations in Jumla and Bajura run on solar power, their operations don’t need as much power as Ujyaalo’s.

The 55 solar panels on the spacious terrace give Ujyaalo Ghar a unique look in the quiet neighborhood of Jawalakhel. Although the station spent close to Rs 2.5 million on installation, Guragain is confident of recovering the cost in a few years.

“We were spending around a million every year on generator fuel and during shortages the cost would shoot up,” says Guragain. The company has already slashed its monthly electricity bill by half and is on its way to recovering the initial cost. The solar panels come with a guarantee of 15 to 20 years and save time and effort that goes into the maintenance of diesel generators.

According to Guragain, Ujyaalo Ghar was designed with sustainable use of energy in mind. The building is not just solar powered but also harnesses rain water to replenish ground water.

“With ample sunshine last winter, things went smoothly for the new converts to solar power. “Even on cloudy days, we had enough backup to last us for 10 hours,” says Guragain. “The initial investment might be high, but the returns far outweigh the cost.”

Ujyaalo Radio is now looking at adding more states. “We have already installed solar in six branches across the country, and are now planning to switch 25 more branches to solar power,” says Guragain.

According to Guragain, 300 employees are working at the station, with 120 of them involved in the production of content.

“Out of the 55 solar panels, 33 are already in use.”

Ujyaalo Radio 90 Network is currently making efforts to fundraise to expand their solar energy project.

“People are very interested in our work, so we are planning to add more branches to our network, and expand our coverage to more villages,” says Guragain.

Ujyaalo Radio 90 Network is also looking into the possibility of expanding its coverage to more villages, with the help of solar energy. “We are looking to make our station available in more areas, and with the help of solar power, we can expand our coverage to more villages,” says Guragain.

In addition to the solar panels, the building is also equipped with rooftop gardens and a rainwater harvesting system, which helps to reduce the reliance on ground water.

Ujyaalo Radio is now looking at expanding its network through collaboration with other stations.

“By joining hands with other stations, we can expand our reach and provide better content to our audience,” says Guragain.

Ujyaalo Radio is also looking at ways to make the station more sustainable, and reduce its carbon footprint.

“We are looking at ways to make our station more sustainable, and reduce our impact on the environment,” says Guragain.

Ujyaalo Radio 90 Network is now planning to launch its own online portal, which will allow listeners to access the station’s content 24/7.

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Rebels with causes

Gandhi, Assange, Snowden all tried to restore the moral compasses of their societies.

America’s clandestine mining of electronic data sends some important messages about its culture: that it is justifiable to encroach upon the privacy of others, that it is morally sustainable to suspect and spy on friends on the suspicion they could work against your interests, that hypocrisy is an acceptable code of behavior, and that the powerful are tacitly permitted a leeway with laws and norms they had themselves helped formulate.

Indeed, the international drama involving PRISM whistleblower, Edward Snowden, and the United States is a contest over the principles of morality underlying the organisation of our society.

This is what goaded Snowden to leak information on the eavesdropping. He was an individual rebel raging against an arrogant, implacable state. Rebels seek to restore to their societies the moral values set aside in the wielding of power, or reset the moral compass in the present that is different from the past.

The last decade, particularly, seems to have spawned a rash of rebels in different countries and cultural contexts: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and Bradley Manning; the Tunisian fruit-seller, Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire and triggered an upsurge against authoritarian rule; the Ukrainian who bared her breasts in 2008 to register her opposition to sex tourism, sparking off the FEMEN movement; and Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal, who have railed against the corrupt system in India.

However, rebellious attempts to redefine or reset society’s morality button are not of recent vintage. For instance, recall the refusal of Gandhi in 1893 to disembark from the first-class train coach, reserved exclusively for whites in South Africa. Tossed out on the platform at Pietermaritzburg, the humiliating experience inspired Gandhi to wage a battle against racial discrimination.

Though it took nearly a century to dismantle the apartheid system, there are nevertheless three lessons for us to draw from it. One, rebellion necessarily entails a transgression of laws. Two, it is inevitably directed against the state which is the principal designer of society in modern times. Three, morality underlying constitutional framework requires both constant vigilance and periodic rethinking. These two goals require both constant vigilance and periodic rethinking.

Rebels seek to undermine the moral authority of the state, turning it. Yet even cyber rebels take the risk of protracted suffering. Despite America and its allies hounding Snowden or Assange, they are doomed to encounter continued defiance from those who rebel with the click of the mouse. Through complex, still unfolding processes the internet has set free the individual more than ever before, threatening to throw open the secretive state and diminish its powers.

Indeed, what binds cyber rebels is their challenge to the state, which violates norms of morality in its quest to become a behemoth frightening to both the recalcitrant and the obedient. The rebel is locked in a mismatch, an unequal battle, almost always doomed to fail. But then, rebellion, particularly of the individual, is scarcely ever designed to win. Rebels merely seek to undermine the moral authority of the state, turning its enterprise illegitimate, until, over the years, it feels compelled to change its behaviour.

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The Human Touch

As Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press
is known for its state-of-the-art equipment.
But we never forget the human touch.
Citiizens of the capital snorted in derision as Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) withdrew its much-hyped ban on plastic bags last month. Even before KMC could complete the month long promotional campaign in June, Nepal Plastic Manufacturers’ Association (NPMA) filed a writ. In the absence of an answer, other parts of the country have successfully implemented plastic bans. Ilam municipality banned plastic bags in 2010 and it has worked. Both shopkeepers and shoppers are found using them.

Manufacturers and green activists say the KMC was wrong to enforce the ban without long-term planning and without providing alternatives to plastic bag producers and users. “Unless a cheaper and more convenient alternative is found people will continue using polythene bags despite the obvious environmental damage,” explains Bishnu Thakali of Women Environment Preservation Committee which has been collecting and recycling waste in Kathmandu for the last 15 years.

Kathmandu’s recent history is littered with similar stories of empty slogans and failed campaigns as KMC has tried and failed to get rid of the non-recyclable plastic bags. It has been ten years since a government directive required all manufacturers to start phasing out the production of plastic bags. In 2002, the Supreme Court ordered the government to enforce the decision. It was never heeded. A decade later the Ministry of Environment promulgated the Plastic Bags Regulation and Control Directive 2011 that imposes a fine of Rs 500 - Rs 50,000 on those still manufacturing and using bags thinner than 20 microns because of their toxicity and the fact that they can’t be reused. The same year Govinda Shah, science and technology minister, made a valiant attempt to ban plastic bags below 20 microns thick. To kick start the program, Singha Darbar was declared “plastic free”. But the ban did not even last a few days. Leading department stores too have tried to wean shoppers away from plastic, but without much success.

While Kathmandu gropes for an answer, other parts of the country have successfully implemented plastic bans. Ilam municipality banned plastic bags in 2010 and it has worked. Both shopkeepers and shoppers are found using them.

With no workable policy for management and disposal, Kathmandu Valley continues to choke in mountains of toxic plastic waste.

BHRIKUTI RAI
**EVENTS**

**FARMER'S MARKET,** get your supply of fresh, local produce. From fresh baked breads to organic veggies all in one stop. 27 July, 9 am to 12 pm, 1905 Restaurant and Bar, KARPATH

Critical Mass, be a part of a cycling movement that is taking place in 300 cities around the world and pedal around town on the last Friday of every month. 26 July, 5.30 to 7.30pm, Trishul Khel.

Goalmari, Bangladesh’s Own Island, a photo exhibition by Bangladesh photographer Shumon Wasif on Bangladesh’s water problems. 25 July to 25 August, 2010 to 6pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku road, (01)4256228.

Bottoms up, take your taste buds and olfactory nerves on a joy ride at the 10th Annual wine tasting festival at Kilroys. Rs 200 per glass, Rs 8000 per half litre. 27 July, 9 am to 8pm, Kilroys.

Goal, team up with friends and take supply of fresh, local produce. From Kantipath Goalmari to 12 pm, 1905 Restaurant and Bar, all in one stop. Fresh baked breads to organic veggies

**LEARN TAI CHI**, relax and refresh your body and mind and improve the internal harmony of body, mind and spirit. 21 week of August, 6 to 7 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Gyan Dho, Gyermandala, Rakhesh, (01)5221210.

Report it, hone your report writing skills at this three day workshop. Rs 6000, 26 to 28 July, 9.30am to 4.30pm, Career Master Nepal and HR Development Center, Pulchok, Lalitpur, (01)5221210.

**Photography Workshop**, learn the tricks of basic photography with in-class lectures and practical shooting assignments. 8 to 10am, 23 July to 14 August, Sundays and Wednesdays, 5 to 7pm, photo circle HQ, Rakhesh, Lalitpur, learing@photocircle.com.np.

**Word Warriors**, enjoy slam poetry from this popular group and perform one of your own. 13 August, 3 to 6pm, The Yellow House, Sanga.

Take the Lead, meet Anil Chitrakar, the author of Take the Lead Nepal’s Future has begun. Rs 100, 27 July, 5 to 7 pm, British Council, Laxmipati, register at: hmalayareaders@gmail.com

**Reflective Instances, a joint painting exhibition by four young artists.** 2 to 29 August, Park Gallery, Pulchok.

**A Step for Freedom**, a painting exhibition by eight young upcoming women artists from Pokhara. 21 to 12 August, 12 to 6 pm except Saturdays, Artist Proof Gallery, New Orleans, Lalitpur.


**Louder than a Bomb**, a story of four teens competing in the largest youth poetry slam. 26 July, 5.30pm, Satya Media Arts Collective, (01)5215416.

**Tamas-Laya**, promises a refined dining experience, try the prawn tempura, fisherman’s fish, and Balinese chicken satay.

**Saigon Pho**, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes.

**Yin and Yang Restaurant**, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can’t handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. Thamel, 20000 to 10am, (01)4701520.

NOYOS, this tiny little joint serves food that tastes like your mother’s home-cooking.

Pumpernickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or lunch with delectable choices of bread, experiment with its goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. Thamel, 7.30am-9pm, (01)5229285.

Wunjala Moskva, treat your palette to Newari and Russian dishes in the lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams. Naxal, (01)4552356.

Capital Grill, the American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone’s tastes.

**DINING**

Grassroots Recreational Centre, Mandikatar, (01)4241163/4242832.

**A People War**, an exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through 10 years of insurgency. Everyday except Tuesday, 11 am to 4 pm, (01)5255948, www.madnaprakar.org.


**Photography Workshop**, learn the tricks of basic photography with in-class lectures and practical shooting assignments. 8 to 10am, 23 July to 14 August, Sundays and Wednesdays, 5 to 7pm, photo circle HQ, Rakhesh, Lalitpur, learing@photocircle.com.np.

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**MUSIC**

**GYPSY JAZZ**, sway to sounds of Latin, Classical/Spanish jazz blended with gypsy jazz with the best guitarists in town.

**Live at Cafe 32**, live music and delicious food every Friday, 6pm onwards, Cafe 32, Battisputali, (01)4441132

**WATERFRONT RESORT**, the lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday.


**MANGO TREE LODGE**, culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park.


**GETAWAYS**

**Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**, announces summer bonanza offer. Make the resort your home for a price you just can’t beat. Dhulikhel, (01)430214/494

Himalayan wellness centre, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel, Butubanikotha, open all week, 982306666, www.himalayanelness.com.np

**A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN**

One World presents Eugene O’Neill’s famous American masterpiece directed by Deborah Merola. This famous drama filled with Irish-American comicality and lyricism tells the story of Phil Hogan, a wily tenant farmer, his outsized daughter Josie, and Jamie Tyrone, Jr., who comes for a fateful date in the moonlight. What begins as a rustic farce gradually connects the audience with the cleansing power of redemption.

The cast features Rajkumar Pudasaini as Jamie Tyrone, Deeya Maskey as Josie and Aashant Sharma as Hogan with support from Alan Gurung as young Mike Hogan and Saneer Duat as T. Stedman Harder.

Date: 26 to 31 July
Time: 5.30pm
Place: The Theatre Village, Lajimpat

**THE LONG ROAD**

Shanta Chaudhary’s journey from a kama- lari to lawmaker in the CA was a long and difficult one. Even after she came to Kathmandu and sat in the Constituent Assembly, she faced contempt from other representatives and the media because she could not read and write. With the release of her book Kamalari dekhi sabhasad samma (From kamalari to lawmaker), Chaudhary hopes to leave her critics mincing their words. Nepali Times caught up with the debutant writer to find out about her journey.

Nepali Times: What is your book about?

Shanta Chaudhary: It’s about my personal struggles as well as the hardships faced by people from my community.

Why did you decide to write a book?

Many people were interested in writing about me after finding out my story. But I felt that nobody could write about my experiences better than me. I now want the general public to also read it and share their thoughts with me.

What encouraged you to join politics?

Becoming a lawmaker would never have been possible without the help of others. I was able to gain valuable experience from the protests we launched on behalf of the landless. I guess it was a combination of all this and coincidence that brought me here.

How did you help the kamalari cause during your time in the CA?

All the issues I raised were lost because the constitution wasn’t written. But I took the voice of the kamalaris, kamaiyas, and landless to the CA and because of my efforts the government allocated some money for former indentured labourers.

I am the first woman to fight for the freedom of kamalaris and have also worked to improve the condition of victims of sexual abuse.
It's ten in the morning. Hundreds of cars, two wheelers, and tempos are jammed bumper to bumper in Thapathali. As the police signals the traffic to move ahead, a chorus of horns erupts all at once, like an orchestra performing a rehearsed symphony. Unfortunately, there's nothing pleasant about this ensemble.

As if the incessant honking from inconsiderate drivers was not enough, Kathmandu's residents also have to put up with the ear-drum splitting bellows of banned pressure horns, one of the leading sources of noise pollution in the Valley. Used mostly by large four wheelers - trucks, buses, minivans - these horns produce up to 120 decibels, while a standard horn produces only around 70-80 decibels.

"Long term exposure to high decibel sounds increases stress, blood pressure, aggression, and even leads to hearing loss in extreme cases," informs Dr Suman Raj Dangol, ENT specialist at Vayodha Hospital. The safe exposure limit is 85 decibels for eight hours a day, anything above that and our health is affected.

After multiple failed attempts to crackdown on the use of pressure horns, the Metropolitan Traffic Police re-launched its drive against on 2 July. It has confiscated more than 1,200 pressure horns and digital horns in the past three weeks and is slapping fines from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 on offenders. "We will continue our campaign until we get rid of all illegal horns," says DSP Pawan Giri, spokesperson for the Metropolitan Traffic Police Department.

As news of the campaign spreads through word of mouth, many drivers have started voluntarily removing their pressure horns. Ram Krishna Shrestha, 36, a driver at Lalitpur Yatayat says he got rid of his horn last week after he found out about the campaign from fellow drivers. "This is a good initiative, but it will only be effective if the police can give it continuity," he says. "And honking isn't only the drivers' fault. Many pedestrians just don't leave the way forcing us to use horns regularly. They need to be taught traffic rules too," Shrestha adds.

While traffic police is busy confiscating pressure horns from owners of four wheelers, many motorcyclists are also guilty of using the illegal contraption. Custom made horns that are louder and produce a sound similar to that of trucks are becoming increasingly fashionable among young bikers. "Most of my friends have the new horn, so I also got one," admits 19-year-old Dawa Tenzing.

To cater to this young market, bike companies are now offering digital horns in their vehicles which produce 105 decibels and are almost as loud as pressure horns. However, these companies are exempt from legal action on technical ground: only modifications count as violation of traffic rules.

Valley drivers are also notorious for abusing horns in ‘no horn’ zones around schools, hospitals, and government offices. Those who honk in such areas can be fined between Rs 100 to Rs 300, but this rule is rarely implemented and as the Motor Vehicles and Transport Management Act 1993 does not provide a clear definition of horn-free zones, vehicle owners are not sure most of the time. In the absence of proper guidelines and enforcement, communities have stepped up to control noise population on their own (see box).

While the ban is a step in the right direction, the misuse of horns won’t stop unless we address a larger social issue at hand: our lack of respect for other people’s space and privacy. What does it say about our culture that finds it acceptable to blast morning bhajans or the latest Bollywood hits on loudspeakers without a second thought for neighbours? Until we change our attitude and learn to be more caring and considerate of those around us, the tooting and blaring is here to stay.
Frustrated by the blatant abuse of horns, Hari Bahadur Thapa, a resident of Magar Gaun, Bhaisipati, got together with his neighbours and decided to make the community a horn-free zone. After consulting with the VDC head, local police, and bus owners/drivers that provide public transport in the area, they installed a no-horn zone sign in the neighbourhood this May. “The drivers were completely opposed to the idea at first and mocked us,” admits Thapa. “It took us several weeks just to convince them of the importance of reducing noise pollution.” The use of horns in Magar Gaun has decreased dramatically and Thapa is happy to see tranquility return to his hometown.

A study conducted by the World Health Organization in 2010 lists New York as the noisiest city in the world followed by Tokyo, Nagasaki, and Buenos Aires. When Tribhuvan International Airport was built in 1949, Kathmandu was home to about 400,000 residents. Today, it is one of the most densely populated metropolises in the world and as the Valley becomes smothered by urban sprawl, more and more families are being forced to live directly under the flight path. “In the beginning I had a very hard time sleeping,” says Usha Parajuli of Koteshor. “I have gotten used to the booming sound whenever planes fly right over my head, but it is still very annoying,” she adds. While the constant clamor is undoubtedly a big irritant, the negative health effects have not yet been studied. The Valley’s bowl-shaped topography amplifies the sound and prolongs the echo and planes have to climb on maximum power to get over the surrounding mountains. Officials at Civil Aviation Authority say they are exploring alternative routes that take planes away from densely built-up areas and reduce the sonic boom. But for now Parajuli and hundreds like her will continue to go to bed to the tunes of Boeings landing and taking off.
Monday, 22 July was Guru Purnima, the day you thank your teachers for all the knowledge they have given you. And while I have been lucky enough to have had my fair share of unforgettable and awe-inspiring teachers, I have also had my fair share of terrible ones. So in the spirit of thanking all the deserving ones and bringing the undeserving to task, I would like to review Detachment (2012), a film about teachers, their fragile students, and the lessons you can teach and learn from them.

Barthes is a wanderer, taking advantage of his transient teaching positions so that he never settles, never engages, and never forms attachments aside from his commitment to his ailing, aged grandfather whom he supports in a nursing home. But this time, in an unnamed high school, something changes. Barthes is an enigmatic, romantic figure to his teenage students, an adult who seems withdrawn, but occasionally exhibits signs of caring passionately. The high school students are the epitome of disenfranchised, disenchanting teenagers, their teachers struggling to reach these young people through their teenage angst (for everyone who can remember this hectic time as a teenager you will understand and cringe). As Barthes starts to care for his students and particularly for his one disturbed, but vulnerable teenager who has fallen into prostitution to support herself. Slowly, as all of these relationships begin to influence him, Barthes evolves, his teaching becomes ever more relevant to his teenagers, and his humanity starts to manifest. However, Detachment is by no means a feel-good movie. There are tragedies, deaths, and ugly untold secrets. Perhaps too many to create a truly cohesive story, and yet, what a story it is.

Detachment is a testament to the power of teachers who care; teachers who are good human beings and have direct access to young adults at the most difficult time in their lives and can make a difference, through their teaching and through their actions.

Education can change people’s lives, always for the better, and just one exceptional teacher can touch and save the lives of myriad haunted young souls. So, all you great teachers out there, you know who you are, and thank you. As for the bad ones (and yes, I do want to sound didactic), well, you know who you are too, so, watch Detachment think about the immense power you wield, the impact you can have, and, for pity’s sake, if you don’t care about your students and you can’t teach, perhaps it’s time to quit.

See Purnima, the day you thank your teachers for all the knowledge they have given you. And while I have been lucky enough to have had my fair share of unforgettable and awe-inspiring teachers, I have also had my fair share of terrible ones. So in the spirit of thanking all the deserving ones and bringing the undeserving to task, I would like to review Detachment (2012), a film about teachers, their fragile students, and the lessons you can teach and learn from them.

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X Factor HD’s battery life is also impressive and a full charge in the morning lasts a day of moderately intensive phone use (calls, texts, emails, internet browsing, music, videos, and games), which is more than you can ask of some more expensive smart phone models. Packed with extras like LED flash, G-Sensor, Proximity Sensor, Light Sensor, Digital Compass, Gyro meter, FM Radio and DTS sound, X Factor is a smart piece of kit from Colors Mobile. The only downside is the limited iGB storage space. However, limited storage is forgivable given the myriad of features along with the impressive design and build Colors has managed to pack into the set and you can always add up to 32GB extra storage via a Micro SD card for just a few thousand rupees.

Most serious phone buyers don’t even waste a second glance at Indian made smart phones. However, Colors Mobile’s X Factor HD is certainly doing something about that and at what price.

Yantrick’s Verdict: the latest from Colors pleasantly surprises with its slim body and an even more attractive range of features.
RE VIEW

Beli Basnet arrives from Ghatikot at her sister Tara’s flat in Bagbajar and has no choice but to share a congested apartment with her abusive brother-in-law Shankar. The elder Beli weaves elaborate tales about her being in town and the couple find out the sisters’ ancestral lands have all been sold off to cover hospital fees of their family. As Beli’s calved sensibilities come in conflict with Shankar’s brutish ways, they do each other irreparable damage and she is forced to retreat to her world of dreams, or what remains of it.

While the latter intention is to form an unfortunate, oily palette of overdone. A slice of cucumber sitting in a tall glass of complimentary péro marinade delicious, even if the meat was perhaps a little overdone. Main courses arrived before we’d devoured the starters, although in fairness we had dithered, probably causing the menu some amount of frustration for an efficiently efficient kitchen. We ordered the pork chops (continuing this column’s obsession with the best plates of pig available in this fair city) and the parsley pesto pasta (in a noble if half-hearted attempt to acknowledge that some of our readers are vegetarians).

Rato Mato, or to give it its full (and rather convoluted) name, Bikalpa’s Rato Mato Organics BBQ and Bistro, prides itself on the use of locally produced organic produce, free from ‘chemicals’ implied as polluting the dishes of its competitors. In addition, the restaurant’s publicity claims, wherever possible, to rely on locally produced ingredients, helping to promote food security and sustainable farming in Nepal. While the latter intention is laudable enough, the former is something dines in Kathmandu are frequently promised, with broad-based sideswipes taken at ‘chemicals’, which contrary to popular belief is shorthand for poisons, increasingly popular opinion are at ‘chemicals’, which contrary to broad-based sideswipes taken are frequently promised, with (often legitimate) public health concerns is hardly the worst marketing strategy in the world. The good things I’d heard about Rato Mato, along with the number of occupied tables on the evening we attended, suggested that this eatery might well be delivering something more than the promise of non-toxic tucker.

Our meal began with Rato Mato’s ‘special’ fries (Rs 80), made so by a crisp spacy coating and a Thousand Island-esque dipping sauce. We also took the BBQ chicken skewers (Rs 180) to task and found the mildly piro marinade delicious, even if the meat was perhaps a little overdone.

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I’m sorry to report that neither dish lived up to the recommendations we’d heard: the pork (Rs 260), smothered in gravy and served with a slightly cold mash, was tough and more than a little dry. The pasta (Rs 270) – which ought to have been beautiful in its simplicity – was oppressed by its grained cheese topping and had stuck together to form an unfortunate, oily mass. We picked at both plates before surrendering, ordering the chocolate mousse with crème (Rs 120), which, while an improvement on the mains, did not provide the rich, intense shot to the arm that I was by then counting on.

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Countries and companies spend millions every year on public health research, but the results of these studies are not always applicable or relevant to Nepal. The 2002 study conducted in the slums of Pakistan, however, not only provides a blueprint for other countries in South Asia but also reinforces the belief that even simple, preventive measures can save lives in poor communities which lack proper health facilities and services.

Supported by US consumer goods giants, Procter and Gamble, the study aimed to see if a new antibacterial soap could prevent diseases. Field workers fanned out in 25 randomly chosen slum neighbourhoods in Karachi to distribute soap, some with triclocarban and some without. The two soaps looked exactly alike. They encouraged people to use the soap generously and wash their hands in these five contexts: after defecation, after cleaning an infant that has defecated, before preparing food, before eating, and before feeding infants. A family was provided two to four bars of soap, with regular replacements.

Eleven neighbourhoods used as a ‘control’ group received pens and paper instead of soap. They were free to continue using soaps as they had done in the past, but were given no supplies or health education. For one year, the fieldworkers conducted weekly visits to the families to check if their instructions were being adhered to and to collect data.

Analysis of the data revealed that children in households that received soap and proper instructions experienced a 50 per cent decrease in pneumonia cases and 53 per cent in diarrhoea cases as compared to the control group that wasn’t provided with soap. More surprisingly (and disappointing for P&G), using soap properly proved good enough to decrease incidents of diarrhoea and pneumonia in children. The triclocarban antibacterial agent in the soap did not provide any extra protection.

The discovery that normal soap and knowledge of how to use them could decrease people’s chances of catching diseases even in communities with widespread poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding, and access only to contaminated water for drinking and cleaning, was stunning. And the study became part of a milestone paper that was published in The Lancet in 2005 with Bangladesh-based public health and sanitation expert Stephen Luby as lead author.

More than three and half million children die due to diarrhoea and respiratory infections every year in developing countries such as ours. Using soap generously clearly ameliorates this condition. People have strong ideas of purity in South Asia and wash themselves frequently. But regular, proper use of soap is a must, as it enhances the capacity of water to solubilise and remove pathogens from the hands, thus helping reduce both respiratory and digestive problems. Just washing the ‘involved’ hand after defecation won’t wash you of your sins.


FIREWALL: Chairman of election council Khil Raj Regmi, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and Narayan Kaji Shrestha (l-r) pay their tributes to founding member of Communist Party of Nepal, Nur Bahadur Karmacharya, who died on Tuesday.

NI HAO: Nepal Army Chief Gaura Shumsher Rana (left) meets Vice Chairman of China’s Central Military Commission Xu Qiyang (right) on Monday during his week long visit to China.

SAFETY FIRST: A woman in Kalagaudi, Kanchanpur abandons her home on Saturday. Thousands of families in the district have been displaced due to flooding caused by incessant monsoon rains.
The New Fascism

JOHAN GALTUNG

T
he atrocious Second World War left behind lasting damage by lowering our standards for what is marginally acceptable. War is bad but if it’s not nuclear war, the limit has not yet been reached. Fascism is bad, but if it does not come with dictatorship and the elimination of an entire people, the limit has not yet been reached. Hiroshima, Hitler, Auschwitz are deeply rooted in our minds. And we distort them. Hitler, Auschwitz are deeply rooted yet been reached. Fascism is bad, but if it’s not nuclear war, the limit has not.

A strong state, able and willing, unleashes unlimited surveillance on its own people.

LILIA SHEVTSOVA

A worldwide media frenzy has turned the plight of the rogue American intelligence analyst Edward Snowden into something resembling a John le Carré novel, full of suspense and intrigue. Whose spy is he? Who are his handlers? What will US President Barack Obama say to his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, at their scheduled meeting in Moscow – where Snowden is currently taking refuge at Sheremetyevo Airport – this September?

The real espionage, however, lies not in Snowden’s decision to release NSA secrets, but in the surveillance programs that he exposed. The leaked documentation highlighted how the West’s long-ignored failure to strike an information to China’s security services. Major global regimes in Russia or China, where little, will later make a deal with authoritarian countries. They know: coupling the pursuit of political goals by means of violence and the threats of violence.

A strong state, able and willing, unleashes unlimited surveillance on its own people.

The new fascism

Snowden’s exposé sparks a long overdue debate on security, privacy, and freedom

More important than actually checking everybody’s email and web activity and listening to telephone calls is that people believe this is happening. The trick is to do so indiscriminately, not focusing on suspects only but making people feel that anyone is a potential suspect. The more mass and the more trick is to make fascism compatible with democracy.

The trick is for the state to make fascism compatible with democracy. There are many ways to achieve this trick. First, a reductionist definition of democracy as multi-party national elections. Second, making the state close to identical in matters of ‘security’, ready to use violence internationally or nationally. Third, privatising the economic activities of the state, enabling a state to use money to make more money, and security as the force to kill the designated enemy wherever he is. Then we get the military-financial complex, the successor to the military-industrial complex in de-industrialised societies. They know their enemies: peace movements and environment movements, threats to security and freedom respectively by not only catching doubts on killing, wealth, and inequality, but also framing them as counter-productive. Both movements say that you are in fact producing insecurity and dictatorship. Both operate in the open, are easily infiltrated with spies and provocateurs, thereby eliminating badly needed voices.

So, here we are. Torture as enhanced interrogation, de facto camps of extrajudicial execution. What matters is fear: that people are afraid and abstain from protests and nonviolent action lest they are singled out for the ultimate punishment: extrajudicial execution.

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What is the essence of fascism? A definition has been given: coupling the pursuit of political goals with massive violence. We have already seen: a political game for the pursuit of political goals by nonviolent means and more particularly by getting the majority, as demonstrated by free or fair elections or referenda, on one’s side. A wonderful innovation with a logical follow-up nonviolence even when the majority oversteps limits or limits, for instance, as written into the codes of human rights.

The strong state, able and willing to display its force – including through the use of capital punishment – belongs to the essence of fascism. That means absolute monopoly on power, including the power that does not come out of a gun, including nonviolent power. And we distort them. Hitler, Auschwitz are deeply rooted in our minds. And we distort them.

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So, here we are. Torture as enhanced interrogation, de facto camps of extrajudicial execution. What matters is fear: that people are afraid and abstain from protests and nonviolent action lest they are singled out for the ultimate punishment: extrajudicial execution.

The trick is to do so indiscriminately, not focusing on suspects only but making people feel that anyone is a potential suspect. The more mass and the more trick is to make fascism compatible with democracy.

There are many ways to achieve this trick. First, a reductionist definition of democracy as multi-party national elections. Second, making the state close to identical in matters of ‘security’, ready to use violence internationally or nationally. Third, privatising the economic activities of the state, enabling a state to use money to make more money, and security as the force to kill the designated enemy wherever he is. Then we get the military-financial complex, the successor to the military-industrial complex in de-industrialised societies. They know their enemies: peace movements and environment movements, threats to security and freedom respectively by not only catching doubts on killing, wealth, and inequality, but also framing them as counter-productive. Both movements say that you are in fact producing insecurity and dictatorship. Both operate in the open, are easily infiltrated with spies and provocateurs, thereby eliminating badly needed voices.
We were performing an ultrasound of a young boy with pericardial tuberculosis at Bayalpata Hospital in remote Achham district when we heard the jeeps pull up outside. The patients, bloodied and distressed started to pour in.

Soon, the district-level government hospital was filled with 20 patients. One had already died and our team got to work, suturing, casting, and giving fluids and banked blood. There were six fracture cases that were of such extent and complexity that we would refer them to Nepalgunj Medical College, a 12-hour ride away.

Highway accidents have become an epidemic in Nepal and the roads of western Nepal are particularly dangerous. And as with nearly all diseases, the poor are the most vulnerable. In the 12 months ending April, more than 110 accidents have killed over 140 individuals in the far-west alone. Since then, a dozen more have died.

Furthermore, road traffic accidents ranked as the number one cause of disease burden among children between 3 and 14 years of age in Nepal. This is because pedestrians, passengers, and cyclists are most often the victims of road traffic accidents, rather than the drivers themselves.

Drunk driving is a major contributor, with most accidents taking place in the late afternoon and evening. Though fatal road traffic accidents are declining in the Kathmandu Valley due to the stricter drink-drive policies, it is still a problem in far-western Nepal. Nearly half of the drivers involved in accidents and brought to Manipal Teaching Hospital in Kohalpur showed evidence of alcohol consumption. In a separate hospital study of 870 traffic accident admissions, 17 per cent

Road Kill
Nepal’s most deadly epidemic is happening on its highways

DUNCAN MARU in ACHHAM

Nepal’s highways of death

SUNIR PANDEY

I t is just before sunrise at Kalanki bus station and the gateway to 59 of Nepal’s 75 districts is already buzzing with activity. Night buses crammed with passengers have just started arriving in Kathmandu. They are the lucky ones. Cargo trucks are preparing to head back to the Tarai, some of them will not make it to their destination in one piece.

Nepal’s highways are one of the most dangerous in the world and the chances of a bus, truck or car having a crash are more than 100 times higher than in Japan and 30 times higher than even India (see chart). Because of Nepal’s topography, poor road conditions, careless drivers, and lack of regulation, the chance of passengers surviving an accident is also much lower here than anywhere else.

One person died in every five accidents in Nepal in the last year, whereas the figure for Japan is one death in every 150. Nepal’s fatality rate per accident goes higher as one travels westwards, with nine deaths for every 10 accidents in the far-west. Kathmandu has seen a dramatic decline in traffic fatalities, with only one death for every 33 accidents.

More people have died on Nepal’s highways in the past decade than in the 10 year conflict. Nearly 10,000 people have died on the highways since the war ended in 2006, with the total annual fatalities doubling in that time.

15 July 2013: Bus from Baitadi went off the road in...
were found to be driving under the influence. The Department of Roads and the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport have taken an active role to address traffic safety in the Public Roads Act (1975), Vehicle and Transportation Management Act (1993), Local Self-Governance Act (1999), and Roads Board Act (2002). Though Nepal is still greatly in need of enhancing core road policies, some progress is being made. In February the Department of Transportation Management strengthened the written portion of the drivers’ licence examination in hopes of keeping unfit drivers off the roads. It also established a Vehicle Fitness Centre to repair and maintain public vehicles.

But the single most important initiative has been the no drinking and driving policy in 2011. A study has shown that the number of traffic accidents in 2012 decreased by 23 per cent compared to the previous year. In the far-west, a new system of time cards has been introduced to control speeding vehicles on the hilly roads of Doli, Ashram, Bajura, Baijnath, and Darchula after the devastating accident in Doli earlier this year.

More needs to be done, including:

• Restricting and regulating night buses
• Mandating seat belts on buses and controlling overcrowding
• Stricter legislation and enforcement of driving while intoxicated
• Increased funding for highway improvements
• Strengthening emergency response systems of hospitals through increased funding for training, emergency room supplies, and ambulance services
• Mandating proper and timely maintenance of private and public vehicles
• Stricter enforcement of driving licence rules
• Increased public campaigns on traffic safety
• Increased presence of traffic police on highways and local roads
• Setting and enforcing mandatory helmet use for cyclists, motorcyclists, and their passengers
• There are economic costs to bus owners for many of these interventions and the costs of improvements to consumers—many of whom rely upon bus transportation for their own survival—could be substantial.

The task of addressing the highway accident epidemic in Nepal is huge, but there is a real opportunity for saving lives with targeted policy interventions that are effectively implemented.

Duncan Maru, MD, PhD, is co-founder of Nyaya Health International. This paper was co-authored by Nirajan Khadka, Associate Director of Community Health with Nyaya Health Nepal, and Manasi Sangruala.

FISHING OUT: Armymen try to pull out the bus that fell into the Madi River in Tanahu in July this year.

Dhading. 3 killed. Driver had been at the wheel for 14 hours straight, had been speeding, and may have fallen asleep.

6 July 2013: Bus fell off the Madi Bridge in Tanahu. 11 killed. Witnesses said the driver swerved to save children crossing the bridge.

12 January 2013: A bus veered off the Bham Datta Highway in Doli at 3 AM and fell 700 metres into the valley below. 33 killed. The speeding bus skidded on ice.

13 October 2011: Bus fell into the Sun Kosi River on Khurkot-Nepalthok section of the BP Highway. 44 killed. Overcrowded bus should not have been plying on dangerous, incomplete mountain road.

3 May 2011: Bus fell off the Khurkot-Nepalthok section of the BP Highway. 11 killed. Driver negligence.

Police know what causes most of these accidents: dangerous, poorly-maintained, slippery, and narrow mountain roads, landslides, overcrowded buses, carelessness, and drunkenness of drivers. However, they seem powerless to control overcrowding and reckless driving. Even if police investigations find drivers guilty, powerful transport syndicates with political protection set them free.

“The government has tried to retire vehicles more than 20 years old, but it hasn’t been able to enforce it for years,” says Pawan Kumar Giri, spokesperson for the Traffic Police. But ultimately it is the responsibility of the state to ensure passenger safety. No, the government doesn’t bring stronger laws to show it is serious about preventing accidents. He says: “We need to improve road infrastructure and regulate the management of passenger vehicles. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure passenger safety.”

In Kathmandu and other urban centres. However, because of the lack of police manpower not all the roads in the country can be covered. Giri says the number of accidents and fatalities will keep on increasing if the government doesn’t bring stronger laws to show it is serious about preventing accidents.

Further reading
“Abolishing the monarchy was a mistake”

Sunday, July 21st, 2013

Interview with Shashank Koirala, leader of the NC and son of former Prime Minister BP Koirala, BBC Nepal, 19 July

BBC: Whose philosophy – BP Koirala or GP Koirala – is more pertinent in the current political scenario? Shashank Koirala: I still stand by BP Koirala’s beliefs. He agreed with the king as far as nationalism was concerned, but held a very different view on democracy. Nepal abolished the 240-year-old monarchy in 2008, but look at the state of the country in the past 10 years. We had a chance to set things right before the 2006 uprising by bringing the Maoists to table. If Girija Prasad Koirala had taken a firm step, Nepal would have been in a better position. If we don’t mend our ways soon, it is going to be very unfortunate.

How can we put the country back on track? BP always spoke about nationalism and nation building, but nobody seems to be bothered about these values any more. He used say that the king would protect Nepal’s nationalism because it is in his interests. But now people only talk about dividing the country along ethnic lines. If CA elections don’t take place in November, it will push the country further into anarchy. Our biggest priorities should be nation building and writing the constitution.

Do you mean Nepal should follow BP’s blueprint to correct past mistakes? We certainly need to correct our mistakes, but that doesn’t necessarily mean reinstating the monarchy. It’s for the people to decide whether or not they want to revisit the issue. If 30 million Nepalis say they want the king, monarchy will return. Also of late the NC’s image has been sinking, we need to restore our standing in the public.

After the 2006 uprising, the NC fully backed the Maoists and followed its agenda. What is the party’s position now on issues of federalism, secularism, and republicanism? The NC believes in multi-party democracy and an independent judiciary. People should be free to choose their religion and must not be forced to convert through enticement. As far as federalism is concerned, we have always supported decentralisation with the ultimate aim of creating a federal state. But federalism is not a magic wand that will solve all of Nepal’s problems.

However, abolishing the monarchy and becoming a republic were big mistakes. In 2006 when people came out on the streets to protest, there was not a single leader of BP’s stature who could bring the situation under control. We need a secularism and federalism were shared by most parties, but declaring the country a republic was solely a visit agenda. The idea of abolishing the monarchy came out from the Maoist camp.

You don’t agree with the NC’s current policies, what are your recommendations? We need to first focus on preventing Nepal from breaking apart. The parties need to agree on holding CA elections as soon as possible to give people a constitution within the next two to four years. Local elections also need to take place. Like BP said we need to think of the country first.

How do you view the country’s current political scenario? The threat to Nepal’s federalism comes from external forces, bringing Shah back into the political fray is not the solution. Such a move will only strengthen the right-wing establishment and deviate from the achievements and ideals of the 2006 Jana Andolan like federalism and secularism. For the past eight years, political parties have continued to make and repeat mistakes. Not writing the constitution and failing to institutionalise democracy will be seen as the biggest failures. But this doesn’t mean that the political transformations of the past decade or the people’s movement were mistakes. The only alternative to a republic is a stronger republic. The threat to Nepal’s nationalism comes from external forces gaining power due to poor governance and indecisiveness of our leaders. The solution lies in working towards building a conducive environment such for free and fair elections. It is important that political parties overcome their veil of ignorance and learn from a few lessons from the past. The sooner they do this, the sooner the country can move ahead.

Say no to monarchy

Editorial, Kantipur, 22 July

Lately, former-king Gyanendra Shah has become more active and visible in politics. As a civilian, he is free to participate in politics or assist flood victims in western Nepal. But what is more troublesome than the ex-king’s political ambitions, is the dubious behaviour of leaders of various political parties who are cozying up to Shah. Shashank Koirala, a central member in the NC, recently voiced his support for the monarchy and although this opinion is not shared by his party, Koirala’s statement is still worrisome. Similarly, leaders of CPN-M Mohan Baidya and Netra Bikram Chand, who have been extremely vocal in their opposition to polls, said they too are open to the idea of collaborating with the ex-king for the sake of national sovereignty. What do these latest developments say about the credentials of the NC and Maoists, who once played such a crucial role in ushering democracy in the country? And what will it do to the revolutionary image of the Maoists when leaders like Baidya begin looking wishfully towards the former monarch as an alternative?

Although it is true that Nepal is now running under covert control of international forces, bringing Shah back into the political fray is not the solution. Such a move will only strengthen the right-wing establishment and deviate from the achievements and ideals of the 2006 Jana Andolan like federalism and secularism. For the past eight years, political parties have continued to make and repeat mistakes. Not writing the constitution and failing to institutionalise democracy will be seen as the biggest failures. But this doesn’t mean that the political transformations of the past decade or the people’s movement were mistakes. The only alternative to a republic is a stronger republic.

The threat to Nepal’s nationalism comes from external forces gaining power due to poor governance and indecisiveness of our leaders. The solution lies in working towards building a conducive environment such for free and fair elections. It is important that political parties overcome their veil of ignorance and learn from a few lessons from the past. The sooner they do this, the sooner the country can move ahead.

Belbari’s victim speaks

Maya Shahi’s testimony MySansar.com, 24 July

I was returning home that evening when a man grabbed me from the back. Before I could scream for help, he pushed me to the ground and covered my mouth. It was already dark so I couldn’t recognise the attacker but judging by his voice, I presumed it was Jawan from my village. He had me in a chokehold and began forcing himself on me. When I bit his hand and screamed for help he threatened to kill me and strangled me again. It was only when people from nearby houses came out with torch lights that the assailant ran away. I went to the police and told them I had been attacked by Jawan and could identify him by the blue mark on his hand. But when Jawan was brought to the station, I saw no signs of injury on his hands. I thought I had wrongly accused him. On my way home, Jawan’s mother slapped me and said that since I was a Dalit, I wouldn’t be able to do anything and I would pay for my actions.

A village meeting was called on Monday morning to sort things out. But since the meeting didn’t begin until 8, I left for work. Later when I was called back, everyone started hurling abuses at me and asked who had instigated me report the police. When I said I did it of my own will, the mob suddenly started bunching and slamming me. They tore my clothes, covered my face in soot, and made me wear a shoe girland.

The NC and son of former Prime Minister BP Koirala has taken a firm step, Nepal would have been in a better position. If we don’t mend our ways soon, it is going to be very unfortunate.

What to think of the government’s decision to make one family holiday per year compulsory for some of its employees? Good: 65.5% Bad: 22.4% Don’t know: 11.5% Don’t say: 0.3%

NEPALI TWEETS

HSPXUIJO,BUINBOEVJTIJHIFSUIBOJO

SFBDUJOHUPTVHHFTUJPOTUIBUQPQVMBUJPO

CPUIDBNQTXJMMCFIBQQZ

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Bad: 35.4%
No interest/habit: 7.2%
No time: 41.1%
Don’t know: 16.7%
Not safe: 4.1%
Want it: 1.9%
Why not? No time: 35.4%
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Weekly Bazar Poll #20

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week’s result of interviews is about Nepalis’ travel habits.

Did you go on a family holiday last year? Yes: 60.7% No: 39.1% Won’t say: 0.2% Why not? No time: 35.4% No interest/habit: 7.2% No time: 41.1% Don’t know: 16.7% Not safe: 4.1% Want it: 1.9% What do you think of the government’s decision to make one family holiday per year compulsory for some of its employees? Good: 65.5% Bad: 22.4% Don’t know: 11.5% Don’t say: 0.3%
Karmacharyara’s unfinished revolution

It’s 1949. Nepal is still under the grip of the autocratic Rana regime. People are not allowed to write, talk, or speak in public. Organised politics is out of the question. Elsewhere in the world communism is beginning to take hold.

In China, military and political leader Chiang Kai-shek is about to abscound. Soviet Union is ruled by Stalin. Papers published in Prague, Czechoslovakia are broadcasting communist instructions and philosophies around the globe. Farmers in Telangana (present day Andhra Pradesh) have seized hundreds of acres of land and are distributing them to the poor. Over in West Bengal, the Indian Communist Party is organising massive rallies chanting, “We have to follow the Chinese, follow the Chinese.”

Inspired by these events and wanting to start a people’s revolution in their own homeland, four young Nepali men - Nara Bahadur Karmacharya, Pushpa Lal Shrestha, Niranjan Govind Baidya, and Narayan Bilas Joshi – establish the Communist Party of Nepal in Kolkata on 22 April, which is also Lenin’s birth date. The party’s main goal is to depose the Rana rulers and start a people’s revolution because the leaders believe simply following Gandhi’s principle of non-violence is not going to be enough.

In the six decades since then, the country has undergone immense transformation from a cloistered Hindu Kingdom to a progressive secular republic and Karmacharya, Shrestha, Baidya, and Joshi were major catalysts for these changes. On Wednesday, Karmacharya, the last of the founding fathers, passed away at the age of 90, with his lifelong dream of a people’s revolution unfulfilled. Those who didn’t bother to check up on him while he was bedridden in hospital, turned up at Paris Danda and Khula Manch to pay their last respect and shed crocodile tears.

Karmacharya was inspired to join politics after he witnessed the execution of martyrs Shukraraj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, and Dashrath Chand in 1941 for revolting against the Ranas. He was just 16 at that time. “After seeing the martyrs being hanged, I realised that the Rana rule had to be abolished and that’s why I entered politics,” Karmacharya would say.

He started out with Surya Bahadur Bharadwaj’s Democracy Association (‘Prajatantra Sangh’). Pushpa Lal was also a part of this group. The members called themselves communists and read revolutionary books from India like Messages of Communism (‘Samyabad ko sandesh’). After being caught multiple times and tortured for protesting against the Ranas, Karmacharya left for Kolkata along with a friend in the mid-1940’s.

Before starting their own communist party, the four men took a week long training from leaders of the Bengali Communist Party. Karmacharya was also a part of this group. The members called themselves communists and read revolutionary books from India like Messages of Communism (‘Samyabad ko sandesh’). After being caught multiple times and tortured for protesting against the Ranas, Karmacharya left for Kolkata along with a friend in the mid-1940’s.

Before starting their own communist party, the four men took a week long training from leaders of the Bengali Communist Party. Karmacharya was also deeply influenced by the teachings of Bengal leader Nripendra Chakrabarty whom he credits for inculcating in him communist ideologies, principles, and conduct.

Today the original party has split and divided variously with over a dozen communist parties each calling itself ‘24 carat’ authentic. When asked about his thoughts on the replication of parties, Karmacharya would generally respond, “Most parties are only ‘communist’ in name. You cannot be a true communist party without your own army.”

The veteran politician believed that revisionism within the party began in 1956 when Tanka Prasad Acharya and friends started the Jatiya Jananatrik Sanyukta Morcha. But he was most disheartened by the split during the fourth party convention in 1963 and the breakup of the unity centre in 1994 due to disagreements over whether to participate in the ‘People’s War’ or not. Karmacharya decided not to be a part of the armed conflict.

Before he took the plunge into politics, Karmacharya used to be a champion basketball player and also a trained singer. “When I joined politics, my only goal was to bring down the Rana regime. So I gave up all my hobbies. From when I was 17 or 18, politics became my dream and my work,” he said. He even sacrificed his family life and remained unmarried so that he could devote his 100 per cent to the party.

Nara Bahadur Karmacharya created Nepal’s first communist party, which despite its internal fragmentation is at the forefront of the country’s politics today. With his death, Nepal’s leftist establishment has lost an honest and upright leader.
Four-party dictatorship

Those who say Nepal’s political parties can’t get along are dead wrong. They get along like a house on fire, amicably deciding everything collectively in a spirit of fair play and equal sharing so that no one is left out. In fact, our current four-party dictatorship is a model for egalitarian political cohabitation.

Everything is decided on the basis of distributive justice and band-fand between the parties: road contracts, ambassadorial appointments, promotion of secretaries, and even the winners of the annual film awards. If there is a dispute, it is easily settled in the spirit of compromise. When diplomatic appointments need to be decided urgently before the Election Commissariat’s Code of Conduct deadline kicks in, the Kangreis are given the SAARC Secretary General, the Cash Baddies get Delhi, the UML gets UK, the Madhesis get Thailand. You can tell the relative clout of a political party by seeing who gets to be envoy to Burma or Egypt. Same with police promotions, secretarial appointments, and civil service transfers. And when the budget for a district is unspent, the four parties sit down and divide up the dough among themselves. Every year, three national media awards are doled out by the Ministry of Misinformation. This year the NC, UML, and Cash appointed one candidate each to be the recipients. Works beautifully and everybody gets his share in this superbly functioning and well-oiled system.

When power sharing is working so well, why have elections? Although the government of Chief Minister Kill Raj is supposed to be in charge, it has now become quite apparent that it can’t move even a pinkie without the approval of the High and Mighty Political Commission. And the most powerful commissar in the commission is none other than The Grand Ayatollah Commandante Awesome himself who has a hotline to the Regmi regime with instructions on day-to-day governance matters. That is why Sri Tin Pro-Chandra holds court every morning in Lajimpat and the long line of votaries bearing offerings in return for favours there is much longer in Balu Water.

With this week’s kerfuffle in the Cash Baddies, PKD has proclaimed himself Supreme Leader so that he is now not just Top Dog, but Only Dog. It is hard to say who won and who lost in the Clash of the Titans. BRB thought he had outsmarted both PKD and NKS by abruptly resigning as vice chairman, whom he described as ‘weeds’ in his speech to the Plenum. But PKD forced his entire top brass to step down and declared himself Great Leader. NKS is now out of the ring, but BRB and PKD are warily circling each other. It ain’t over until the referee counts to 10 and declares a knockdown.

DIWAKAR CHETTRI