Delhi run

In September 2008, the theme of every speech that Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal made during his first official visit to India after being elected was: “Trust me.” The message is the same during his second state visit this week as well.

Eight years ago, Dahal was given a rousing welcome in New Delhi despite having miffed some quarters by visiting China first. Everyone wanted to shake the hand of the man who had gone from being a guerrilla commander to an elected Prime Minister. The Indian media couldn’t get enough of him.

However, there was some skepticism of his commitment to parliamentary democracy and free market. Dahal tried hard to convince Indian investors that he was a man they could do business with. But it was a step-by-step attempt to grab absolute power when he returned that soured his relations with India and ultimately led to his resignation in 2009.

It has taken him eight years to be accepted enough to make another visit to New Delhi, and regain that displaced trust. In the next few days, Dahal will be trying to convince India’s top leaders that he has learnt his lessons, and will not double in political adventurism.

Nepal’s former ambassador to India, Lukraj Birla, says Dahal needs to talk less and work more to show that he has matured. He needs to try to restructure Nepal-India relations from its post-blockade low.

“India has its own interests, but the current trust deficit between Kathmandu and New Delhi is the result of our failure to put our own house in order,” Birla said. “He will gain India’s trust if he addresses Madhesi grievances by amending the Constitution.”

Dahal justified his party’s defection from the UML coalition by blaming the KP Oli government for not solving the Madhes crisis. But he failed to register a constitution amendment bill in the Parliament ahead of his India visit, and Madhesi parties are now angry and suspicious.

Dahal needs the support of the UML to meet Madhesi demands on the amendment, and needs to balance relations with India and China. He already seems to have annoyed Beijing by inviting Indian President Pranab Mukherjee to Kathmandu before the official visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal, and by his indifference towards implementing the trade and transit treaty.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denied that Xi’s visit is cancelled, but it has not confirmed it either.

During his four-day India visit, Dahal will meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday. He is then scheduled to fly to Himalchand Pradhan on a helicopter on Sunday to inspect a 1500 MW hydropower project. Dahal briefed his party on Wednesday that his “goodwill” visit will focus on implementing the past pacts on earthquake reconstruction, Tatal Feeder Road power and trade.

Om Astha Rai

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Prime Minister Dahal said before his India visit he had the right ‘chemistry’ with Narendra Modi. But it may be the ‘physics’ he needs to get right this time.

When Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal arrived in New Delhi on a state visit on Thursday, he must have recognised some familiar landmarks. After all, he spent most of 1996-2006 during the revolution he unleashed on Nepal safe within his party’s secret headquarters in the eastern suburbs of the Indian capital. He will also remember some of the pomp that accompanied his first state visit here in 2008 after his party’s landslide victory in the post-conflict election.

Compared to his last visit, though, Dahal may find the Indian welcome a trifle less generous. Action he got from officialdom and media in 2008 was nothing short of ecstatic. It was almost as if the Indian establishment wanted to portray his visit as the successful culmination of the 12-point agreement it brokered between Nepal’s democratic parties and the Maoists in New Delhi in November 2005.

In fact, the media portrayed Dahal as a role model for India’s own Massists — someone they could emulate. Look at your comrade from Nepal, they wrote. Emulate. Look at your comrade from Nepal, they said. Look at your comrade from Nepal, they entreated. Look at your comrade from Nepal, they urged.

But, as we know, it did not take long for Dahal’s relations with India to sour. New Delhi stopped trusting him perhaps because he did not deliver on some undisclosed promises, or maybe owing to moves he made to capture total state power with the removal of Army Chief Gen Rookmangud Katawal as the last straw. Dahal resigned the day after President Yadav reinstated Gen Katawal, and thereafter blamed New Delhi scathingly for his resignation in 2009. Which could be why he is hurrying off to do Delhi before attending the United Nations General Assembly a week later so as not to risk ruffling Indian feathers again. He is doing the usual rounds in Delhi, and even countering the BJP constituency by attending a Patanajali yoga session.

Dahal may have to rely on more than just yoga to restore bilateral relations. After a bruising blockade and India’s open disdain for the coalition led by Prime Minister K P Oli of which the Dahal-led Maoists were a part, Nepal-India relations need to be rebooted. Dahal has tried hard to break the ice by giving conciliatory pre-visit interviews in which he said he and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had the right ‘chemistry’. However, it may be the ‘physics’ he needs to get right.

India’s main agenda on Nepal seen during the blockade and during the visit is to push through amendments in our constitution passed by the Assembly last year — especially provisions related to the two Tarai provinces and the inclusion of five disputed districts, citizenship rules, and electoral boundaries. Dahal will be under pressure to show flexibility, but since all politics is local, his antennae will be attuned to public opinion back home.

UML leaders K P Oli, Madhav Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal met Dahal before his visit and warned him not to undermine the country’s sovereignty during his visit. It is clear Dahal’s hands are tied because the arithmetic of the Parliament means that he will need the UML to pass the amendments. Oli wants revenge on Dahal for stabbing him in the back, and will drive a hard bargain for the necessary votes.

Last year’s blockade has been a public relations disaster for India, and the anti-Congress propaganda that it will undermine India’s national interest here unless something is done. As Nepal’s neighbour and dominant trading partner, Nepal cannot afford to have antagonistic relations with India. Dahal also has to ensure that ties with China are on an even keel. Beijing is irked by the recent regime change in Kathmandu, as well as Nepal’s fusewire resentment of the Nexum project. The One Belt One Road connectivity project for Eurasia.

Besides its southern yoga diplomacy, Dahal may also need to practice tai chi before heading north.
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Media muckrakers coming to town
Kathmandu prepares to host its largest-ever international journalism conference next week

SONIA AWALE

More than 300 journalists and speakers from 60 countries will be attending the second Asian Investigative Journalism Conference, 22-25 September, in Kathmandu, the largest ever international media conference to be held in Nepal.

The event is organized by the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN) and co-hosted by the Kathmandu-based Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal (GIJN), and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung of Germany.

It is expected to bring together some of Asia’s best muckrakers, data journalists and media law and cyber-security experts from around the world.

Recent crackdowns on press freedom across Asia have made it difficult and dangerous for reporters, especially investigative journalists. Media has had to battle censorship, overt state control, harassment, and reporters have been killed even in countries with long traditions of free press such as Philippines and India.

However, Asia has also seen courageous journalists expose corrupt leaders for their ill-gotten wealth, kleptocratic state machineries, investigated cross-border financial crimes, trafficking, illegal logging and has uncovered large-scale plunder of state coffers like the 1MDB scandal in Malaysia.

“Now, more than ever, Asia needs powerfully reported stories that uncover wrongdoing by powerful individuals and institutions,” says Sheila Coronel of Stabile Centre for Investigative Journalism of Columbia University, whose expose of Philippine President Joseph Estrada in 2000 led to his downfall. “The Kathmandu conference is a unique opportunity to foster cross-border collaboration among investigative journalists in the region and elsewhere.”

Coronel is a speaker at the conference together with the Pulitzer Prize winning team that investigated the Seafood Slaves story for the Associated Press, Walter V Robinson of the Boston Globe whose investigative story on paedophile priests featured in the Oscar-winning film, Spotlight, will be giving the keynote speech.

Ying Chan who has just finished her tenure as dean of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at the University of Hong Kong, Steven Gan of the independent news portal, Malaysiakini, and strong teams of investigative and data journalists from India and Pakistan will be in attendance.

“We’re witnessing an extraordinary response to the Kathmandu conference, not just in the number of investigative journalists participating, but also in the high calibre of speakers,” GJN Executive David Kaplan told the Nepal Times. “What happens in Nepal next week will influence Asian journalism for years.”

The first Uncovering Asia conference was held in Manila, Philippines in 2014 and got such a positive response that GIJN decided to hold another one, and proposed a partnership with GIJN.

“At a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to uncover the truth and present facts to the public, the conference will provide huge motivation to Nepali journalists, especially investigative reporters,” says Namita Sharma, Chair of GIJN.

“At the same time it is a matter of pride for Nepal to host an event in which so many globally well-recognized journalists will be participating.”

The conference will have more than 80 workshops and panels: from a forum on the Panama
Some of the notable participants attending the Asian investigative journalism conference:

- Walter V. Velázquez, former Latin American media executive
- Mar Cuba and 21 members of the International Center of Investigative Journalists
- Nina Gladstone, European journalist of the Year, 2005
- Clare Rewcastle Brown, investigating Malaysia Airlines 2014 scandal
- Brant Hansen, author of Computer-Aided Reporting: A Practical Guide

Papers to panels on investigating corruption, climate change, health, to a session assessing the state of investigative journalism in Nepal. Journalists from Kantipur, Republica, Annapurna Post, The Kathmandu Post, BBC Nepal, Nagarik, Ujyaalo and other Nepal media portals are expected to participate. There will also be a demonstration on the use of database managers and a workshop on security for investigative journalists. Advanced mapping, Internet detective, Media Law Clinic, virtual reality and hands-on training in data journalism and digital protection are other aspects that the conference is scheduled to cover.

“Trouble in the loric wolf is over. An increasingly interconnected world needs journalists who can work across borders to hold power to account,” says Sheila Coronel.

There will also be panels on the best cross-border investigative stories on post-disaster reporting, data mining, covering conflict, human trafficking and slavery, organised crime and terrorism.

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NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.

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Checking and balancing

When the executive and legislature are not functioning at optimum, it is up to the judiciary to act.

During the parliamentary hearing to ratify her appointment, Chief Justice Sushila Karki presented herself so boldly that Members of Parliament looked visibly dazed listening to her. She came across as a no-nonsense, straight talker who believed and practiced the law with integrity.

LEGALESE
Binita Dahal

Ever since, Karki has been equally audacious in carrying out her duties at the Supreme Court. There were murmurings about her gender when she was first appointed and doubts floated among the male-dominated legal fraternity that she might not be able to withstand the various pressures and inducements that came with the position. There were worries that the Chief Justice would be a weak link, and that she would not be able to take leadership of the judicial administration.

Karki had a shaky start to her tenure with the political distraction of a regime change three months ago and with the Parliament taking forever to conduct the hearing to ratify her appointment by the Constitutional Council. She then had just eight of the required 19 justices, and a huge backlog of cases to handle. Since the Chief Justice is responsible for any wrongful doings by the justices in verdicts, it was tricky. The Parliament finally also endorsed the remaining 11 justices, and the Supreme Court is now fully functional.

Karki has shown impartiality and has refused to bow to political pressure during her tenure as Chief Justice. Despite her Nepali Congress antecedents from Biratnagar, she revived corruption cases against senior NC leaders Khum Bahadur Khadka and Govinda Raj Joshi. It was her bench that convicted sitting minister Jaya Prakash Gupta on a corruption case by overturning a verdict of the Special Court.

Karki has always preferred to maintain a low profile, displaying none of the flamboyance of her predecessors even though her verdicts tend to thrust her into the limelight. As Chief Justice she has given strong decisions on the investigation of the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) for overstepping its jurisdiction. At a time when the bureaucracy, politicians and even the media appear to have been silenced, these decisions have reinforced her reputation as an impartial judge.

Sushila Karki is also busy allocating cases and forming committees. She has curtailed the activities of power brokers and middlemen who in the past played a role in distributing cases—by offering inducements to justices. Lawyers say it was standard operating procedure that middlemen negotiated Platt justices for cases in return for favours during the tenures of Dunodar Prasad Shrestha and Ram Kumar Prasad Sah. The power brokers had their wings clipped when Chief Justice Kalyun Shrestha was in office. Karki has publicly vowed to stop this practice.

Karki has challenges ahead in the management of judges and human resources of the Supreme Court. On Sunday, the Parliament passed a bill related to the formation of High Courts in seven provinces and she has to form these provincial courts. As head of the Judicial Council, it will be Karki’s responsibility to place judges of the Appellate Court to the High Courts. Equally challenging is the management of pending cases from Appellate to the High Courts. Karki’s leadership will be severely tested by her decisions.

The concept of High Courts in a federal structure is itself a difficult proposition because of the number of provinces, their boundaries and capitals. Each province should have a High Court, and there is the thought of converting 16 Appellate Courts to seven High Courts. The remaining nine months of Karki’s tenure will show how well Nepal’s first female Chief Justice will meet these challenges. When other pillars of democracy, the executive and legislature, are not functioning as they should, it is essential for the judiciary to step up to the mark. Under Karki, the judiciary seems to be serving as a credible check and balance to authority.

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No.1 DENTIST RECOMMENDED BRAND FOR SENSITIVE TEETH*
Aft er 12 years of rescuing, sheltering and rehabilitating stray dogs, Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) is facing a serious financial crisis, and may have to shut down its operations unless donors step up.

KAT’s facility in Budhanilkantha is not renewing its lease beyond September, instead it is looking for a new home - a crowd funding initiative has not yielded the expected revenue.

“We have not received the kind of response we hoped we would get,” said project consultant Pushkar Pal, who says only 11,345 of the 122,000 needed has been raised. “In Kathmandu, there is reluctance when it comes to adopting stray dogs because people only want good breeds.”

Despite the crisis, KAT’s dedicated volunteers continue to make sure that the dogs are taken care of. Phone calls for rescue start as early seven in the morning and last until midnight on some days. Clearing the wounds of dogs, feeding them, cleaning their kennels and ensuring that each gets its medicines on time are all a day’s work for the volunteers.

“But we have seen some noticeable changes towards animals over the years, people now feel that animals needs to be helped,” said Pal.

With over 22,500 stray dogs in the capital the municipality this July launched a vaccination and sterilisation campaign starting with the centre of political power itself - Singha Durbar. But there are at least 15 dogs caught in road accidents every month, with many of them landing up at KAT.

When KAT was founded in 2004 by British artist and author of Faces of Nepal, Jan Salter, it primarily emphasised birth control of canines. This was at a time when the municipality used to poise stray dogs to control their numbers. Introducing a more humane approach to tackling the growing number of strays, KAT began sterilising the dogs, particularly female, as they healed faster.

Today, KAT’s work has diversified and its responsibilities have increased. In addition to birth control, the centre also immunes every dog coming to the centre against rabies, it sterilises cats as well and conducts rescue operations. During last year’s earthquake, KAT tended to more than 400 injured dogs, providing them with food and on the spot treatment.

KAT hopes to develop a new model where communities take ownership of dogs to manage them in a more sustainable manner. “The stray dog issue in Kathmandu can be solved overnight if everyone is willing to shelter one each,” said Pal.

If it gets enough funding to move to a new space, KAT hopes to create a better animal-friendly space, with more capacity, improved diagnostic facilities and better-equipped operation theatres. Having settled a deal for a land not more that a few kilometres from their current place, it plans to build everything from scratch. But first, it needs to raise money.

www.youwaringa.com/katu.com
Swami Banet
Longtime Nepal resident Lisa Choegyal has teamed up with noted Indian outdoor photographer Sujoy Das to bring out a unique picture book on Nepal that is a deeply personal account of the country, and how it has changed their lives. Nepal Himalaya: A Journey through Time is exactly that—a story told in text and pictures of the lives and travels of two people through a country they have grown to love and cherish.

Choegyal first came to Nepal in 1974 when she was 23 years old at a time when young westerners disillusioned with materialism and war came to seek nirvana. Kathmandu was the end of the road, and many found their spiritual selves here. Choegyal describes herself in the book as ‘not a successful hippie’. That is because she decided to stay on, get a job and get married, raise a family and make a career out of tourism development and conservation in Nepal.

Forty years later, Choegyal writes: ‘Something about this place makes me feel deeply at home.’ The text part of the book is a shortish memoir of her life in Nepal, the Nepalis she made friends with (the book is dedicated to the people of Nepal), the expats she met everywhere (from Edmund Hillary, Betsy Lissavetsky, Jimmy Roberts, etc) and the places she visited.

‘My respect for the schnickschnack games (resigned to one’s fate) and strength of the Nepali people is infinite,’ writes Reinhold Messner in the foreword to the book. Indeed, Choegyal returns time and again in the following pages to the dignity and legendary ability of Nepal to overcome hardships. Sujoy Das’ stark black-and-white photographs are a visual testimony to this resilience. The photographs are divided by themes: into the landscape, the humanscape, the natural and urban heritage as well as the culture of Nepal. We have seen many coffee table books with superb colour photographs of the Himalayas, and yet the monochrome of Das’ images heighten the topographical extremes of Nepal, and juxtapose them against portraits of Nepalis who have to live and make a living in such breathtakingly difficult terrain.

The black-and-white images accentuate the rambunctiousness, the texture of clouds, wrinkles on the faces of villagers, terrace farms clinging to shoulders of mountains. There is a series of photographs of porters on trekking trails, and one striking double spread of them carrying long timber beams walking sideways up the mountains. Das explains in his own Photographer’s Note how he was inititated into mountain photography after watching Machapuchre from Pothana 10 years ago, and how there has been no looking back. He had fallen hopelessly in love with Nepal.

Because of her involvement with tourism ever since her work with Mountain Travel and Tiger Tops, Choegyal devotes much of her text to tourism. The setting up of the Chitwan National Park to rescue tigers and rhinos from the brink of extinction and the Annapurna Conservation Project that ploughed trekking fees directly to lift living standards, were models for eco-tourism that have now been copied elsewhere in the world.

Nepal was ahead of its time in appreciating and adopting what have become widely recognised core ecotourism values ... but seems to have lost its way.’ Choegyal writes pointing out that militant uranium has pushed away investors and led to a deterioration of service standards and affected tourism promotion.

But, reflecting the strength we see in Sujoy Das’ photography, she ends with a positive outlook: ‘Considering the country’s unparalleled combination of natural and cultural resources, I believe Nepal’s best hope still remains with tourism – an industry that creates many jobs, has the ability to reach far into these beautiful mountains, and can tangibly improve the lives of the admirably resilient people of Nepal.’
KtmWalks Klagga
Enjoy a vehicle-free Klagga and part of the heritage walk, an open forum, piluksi dance, cultural programs, games, food stalls and other fun activities. 17 September, 7 am to 7 pm, Kathmandu. ktmwalks.wordpress.com

Godawari Running
Choose from a variety of activities: an obstacle race, trail running, ultra run or basketball and spend your day outdoors. 24 September, 11 am onwards, Godawari Football Ground, 9841784805/9841729965

Yin yoga
Calm your mind with an hour of yin-inspired yoga followed by a singing bowl session. 1 October, 6.30 to 8 am, Soeway Wellness Yoga Studio, soewaywellnessyoga@gmail.com, Fees Rs. 1500

BAC Mela
Local products, food stalls and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family at BAC’s monthly mela. 24 September, 1 pm onwards, BAC Art Cafe, Patan, 9851477770

Fashion photography
Learn the tips and trade of fashion photography with Satya Raj in a three-day workshop. Profits will be given to charity.
16 to 18 September, Evolve Golf & Resort, Bhaktapur. 9851111001, Registration: Rs. 6500, On the spot registration: Rs. 7000

Rhythm and soul
Enjoy an evening of Kathak and Flamenco performances by well known artists like Sapkina Shrestha and Marushe de Guzman. All proceeds go towards Tewa for a fund to support women. 22 September, 6 to 7.30 pm, Nepali Army Club, Budhanilkantha, www.nepalartcultureacademy.com

Go green
Hike three saplings of Raktucho, Jarsaranda, Hous Benjamina, Camphora or Kayo from the 108 Chandar Gufung Conservation Foundation’s giving away and make your city green. Followed by performances in Makvik. 24 September, 3 to 6 pm (Collect saplings), Natural History Museum, Swayambhunath, Gobind, Rs. 999, Rs. 499 (Students), www.nhf.org.np

Miss Moti-Vation
Life is like riding a bicycle.
To keep balance, you must keep moving. – Albert Einstein

- GETAWAY -

Balthali Village Resort
A small, cozy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terraced fields carpeted with rustic painted houses. Balthali, Kavre. 9851755718

Mango Tree Lodge
Culture walks, calling in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bandipur National Park. Bhentoi, Janakpur. yoshidilodge.com

Famous Farm
Wake up to the scents of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze waiting in through the armpitful. Nawalpur, (9849784692, yoshidilodge-heritage.com

Barahi Jungle Lodge
The first ever jungle lodge of Chitwan directly over looks the Chitwan National Park, spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool. Anurad, near Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com

Atithi Resort
A perfect piece to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food all you wish for. Shigmpton, Lakeside, Pokhara. (069)466360-468270, info@atithiresort.com

- MUSIC -

Kutumba live
Tap along the beat of soul stirring music as Kutumba performs live. 16 September, 6 pm onwards, Patan Museum

Edge Band Live
Tune in with the popular Edge Band on a Saturday evening as they belt out some of their hits like Nischoda jo yasa, Kailai and Mera Ashai. 17 September, 7 pm onwards, Koreko Hati & Cuisine. Telephone: 9803539490/9815754426/9805086041

Jazz Night
Enjoy a jazz night alongside exhibitions of the opening of Time Culture Camp, an open studio and exhibition of the work created in community outreach camps in Goraknath and Kathmandu. 17 September, 6.30 pm onwards, BAC Art Cafe, Patan, 9851477776

Dinner Day
Get to meet and listen to some of the well known jazz players from around the city. 24 September, 2 pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075712

Gharana Music Festival
Mark your calendar for the second edition of the international classical music festival organised by the Gharana Music Foundation. Read more on Page 7, 24 to 26 September at Kailo Hall and PM, 17 September, 4 pm to 2 am, Tongling, Jorsale, 9851628490/9851655604, www.gharanaofmusicfoundation.org, (냈던) 200 (general admission), Rs. 250 (students), Rs. 2000 (few-seats package)

Phat Kath
Offering French-ish food, a takeaway cupboard, low tables and tabletops for rapping, tables and chairs for normal people, and a formidable hip hop sound track for everyone. Thamel. 9816985771

Grill Me
A restaurant with a warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. Thamel, 355394

- DINING -

Lhakpa’s Chulo
Nepali dal-bhat, mhwari (hoja, Swiss, Rosti), Italian risotto o Thai green curry – take a pick. Jomeshkel, (01)5554268

Hyatt Regency
 아직 lasagnas and pizza at a flex restaurant. From three cheese pumpkin speciality to fine cocktails take your pick from a wide array of dishes. 14 to 25 September, 6 to 10 pm (dinner only). A la Restaurant, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, (01) 4491234

Kaiser Cafe
Have a BBQ lunch and a glass of wine or beer inside the peaceful Garden of Graeme. Thamel, 4622381

- EVENTS -

Ride to Khokana
Contribute to restoring Nepal’s cultural heritages by going cycling in a cycle ride program from Kathmandu to Khokana, organised by the Khokana Reconstruction and Renovation Committee. 20 September, 7 pm onwards, Price: Rs. 600

Piano lessons
Regain for jazz piano lessons and get to know about jazz theory, harmony, improvisation, and composition with Indian musician and jazz pianist Shanor, Kathmandu, Jon Conservatory, Jomeshkel, (01) 5513554

Art exhibition
Attend an art exhibition by artist Shyam Lal Shrestha titled Images Through Time II. 10 to 20 October, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babai Mohol Anekdote, (01) 4378028/4663930
The legends of Pragya Paramita

Kathmandu Valley’s heritage is not just its monuments but its culture and rich rituals

One of the main reasons for the inaccessibility of the Pragya Paramita books is the fear of losing it. The one at Bhagwan Bahal is dated back to 1223 BCE, and the Piganani book is almost as old. The books at Gum Bahal and Bhagwan Bahal are written in gold and silver letters while the one at Piganan is written in banana leaves. The fragility and value of the books means that they are kept away for safekeeping, read, and are read only during Guna as they aren’t handled frequently. But what the guthis are overlooking is how accessibility helps in preservation and promotion of the tradition, as shown by Kwa Baha.

All the books in the four monasteries are in Sanskrit language, and use the Ranjana Lipi script. Knowledge of Sanskrit and Ranjana opens many doors for the guthis to learn about the traditional art of Kathmandu Valley. At the same time, the daily practice of reading the Pragya Paramita at Kwa Bahal provides extra economic support to the priests and the guthis.

The Bhagwan Bahal guthi has found a novel fund-raising idea: it charges at least Rs 3,000 from everyone who wants to get a glimpse of the holy book. Guthi member Ghetendra Pradhan says the book is wiped clean with a ball of cotton once a year, and rules out getting a digital scan of the book. The older generation of the guthi believe that the book would lose its tantric powers if we did that,” he explains. The guthi desired the Department of Archaeology permission to microfilm the sacred text. But there is public clamour to make the holy texts more accessible to its people, and to copy them in case of damage which would also aid researchers of Pragya Paramita.

The best way to preserve Kathmandu’s living heritage is to allow the public to participate and enjoy the traditions. So, the more we use the Pragya Paramita, the more we contribute towards its preservation for the future generations.

Glossary of terms

BAHA/BABHI
The monastery courtyard and day yard of monks staying in a set of huts or cells. The term Babha or Baha is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘vaha,’ which means a Buddhist monastery, according to the first written form of the text. The chief difference between Babha and Babh is the infrastructure and location. Babhas are located in a residential area, while Babhis are built over a sacred pond and are not residential.

GUNA
This is one of the oldest monasteries in Buddhist community that falls from the new reign of Skryan to the new reign of Shwav (before). During this reign, there are different scripts and texts, but Guna’s Pragya Paramita, or the book, has 12,000 sutras. Many other important texts like the Prajna and Mahavaj for fall in this reign.

PRAGYA PARAMITA
The term ‘Prajna’ means ‘perfection of wisdom’ and is one of the important scriptures in Mahayana Buddhism. Its practice is said to be the essential elements of the Buddhist faith. There are various editions of Pragya Paramita: the Kwa Bahal (Babhi), Gum Bahal and Piganani versions are the oldest versions of Pragya Paramita, mentioning they have 8,000 sutras. The book at Bhagwan Bahal is said to be Sankhchhurika Pragya Paramita, 16,000 sutras.
THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER’S WAR

It is unfortunate when an already unexceptional movie spawns a sequel. “Snow White and the Huntsman” (2012), starring the over-rated, frankly miscast Kristen Stewart as the famous maiden with porcelain skin and raven hair, was a fairly enjoyable, occasionally annoying, but ultimately mindless extravaganza that yielded over $196 million at the box office, inevitably spawning this lesser sequel that, nonetheless, astonishingly was able to retain not only Charlize Theron as the beautiful but evil sorceress Ravenna (she actually does use the words “Mirror, Mirror, on the wall”), but also the blustery, charismatic Chris Hemsworth as Eric, the titular Huntsman of both films.

Even more surprisingly, this foolish tale has also gained the incredible Emily Blunt and Jessica Chastain as Freya, the devilishly innocent sister of Ravenna, and Sera, a fellow Huntsman and wife of Eric. In a hodgepodge of a story, which takes elements of Disney's animated hit "Frozen" (2013), and steals outright from C.S. Lewis’s Narnia books, Freya comes into her magic powers when she is betrayed by her illicit lover who apparently would rather burn their infant daughter to death in her cradle rather than leave her wife, Freya, in a not so subtle reaction to her daughter's hideous death by fire, becomes a wielder of ice and snow, retreating to the “North” to become a ruthless conqueror of kingdoms, using her “children,” whom she takes from their families, as soldiers or “Huntresses”, to fight for her ruthless ambitions.

Eric and Sera, Freya’s favourites recruited as children, fall in love as adults, defying the wintry queen’s prime rule, that “love” does not exist, and that betrayal is the only thing that can come of it. Eric and Sera are torn apart and this story, which takes place after Ravenna is defeated in “Snow White and the Huntsman” deals with the fight over the magic mirror, which still holds a great deal of power, and perhaps something even more deadly, behind its malevolent surface.

There are a few, obvious surprises that I will not ruin for you here, but mainly, aside from some laughs, one particularly objectionable scene that is extremely rude about dwarfs, and the grim determination of Chastain, Blunt and Hemsworth, there is very little to love about this film. It will keep you mildly entertained on television or in an airplane, but Theroux’s once more performance as Ravenna, and the absolute barrenity of the plot are rarely leavened by the misguided special effects. There are goblins that have been modeled along the lines of gorillas, and Ravenna’s gold ensemble in contrast to Freya’s silverly loveliness can only be described disdly as garish. The only other relief is that Stewart’s gracing, overly self-conscious Snow White makes no show in this silly, self-indulgent fairy-tale.

nepalitimes.com

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

HAPPENINGS

HAND OVER: Former Prime Minister and UML Chair KP Oli hands Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Sunday against signing anti-national treaties during the latter’s India visit.

FRIENDLY AGAIN: Minister of Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat strikes hands with his Indian counterpart Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi a few days before PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s scheduled visit to the neighbouring country.

NO GO: People hold a rally protesting against Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s visit to India at Mahkha.

CLEANING UP: Young boys wash up before attending the mass prayer on the occasion of Eid al-Adha at Kashmiri Jame Masjid in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

PAINTING THE GOD: Local paint the mask of Svetta Bhakri for the Indra jatra festival at Kathmandu Durbar Square on Tuesday.
Dahal in Delhi

Editorial in Kathmandu, 13 September

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s Delhi visit this week is an opportunity to strengthen Nepal-India ties, and take steps that could benefit both neighbors.

In Delhi, Dahal must clearly put forth Nepal’s concerns, but avoid mixing our internal affairs with bilateral issues. Amending the Constitution to address Madhesi demands, most importantly redrawing boundaries of federal provinces, is a domestic affair, and it needs to be addressed internally. Dahal must not involve India in deciding when and how to do it.

Dahal looked anxious before the visit, and was promising to register a bill in the Parliament to amend the Constitution before embarking on a four-day visit to the South. It does not solve the problem it instead blurs the line on what internal matters are.

Dahal must focus on bilateral agendas, especially points that were previously agreed upon but not implemented. Nepal and India have failed to prepare a joint Detailed Project Report of Panchaswar Multipurpose Project even after inking a deal on it. Expediting the construction of the Tilbati road is discussed every time Nepal’s PM visits India, but it remains neglected.

There is a growing perception that India just wants to sit on hydropower development projects in Nepal to keep its neighbour poor. India must clear this perception by beginning hydropower and other development projects that it has agreed to build in Nepal. Dahal must also raise issues of inundation and encroachment by India, but must not promise anything on the contract of the Koshi-Madhyabibas fast track to any Indian company.

Dahal must not sign new agreements without proper groundwork, and it is equally important for the ruling Maoist-NC coalition to win the main opposition UML’s trust on this matter. If the sign new deals imposed upon him without understanding their nitty-gritties they will be disastrous for the country.

Dahal’s Maoist party shares a bittersweet relationship with India. He is not visiting India as the CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair, but as Nepal’s Executive Head. He must not be thinking of what his party will gain or lose from his visit. As the PM of a sovereign nation, he must show confidence, and raise issues of national interest with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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The horseman of Lumbini

A future that didn't come

A former Maoist child soldier is disappointed his dreams of revolution were dashed

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

The bloodshed in Bangdawa was splattered across national media the next morning. It was the result of bad blood between local landlords and landless Dalits in which 13 people were killed. During the Maoist war, the two sides sought help from the state and the rebels, and a minor land dispute could escalate into a bloody feud.

Golabí Chamaur, a Dalit, had bought half an acre of land from Nanda Kumar Chaudhari, a village landlord. But the transaction was not registered at the local land revenue office. After Chaudhari’s death, his sons tried to evict the Chamaur family from the disputed land.

The Maoists exerted pressure on the Chaudhari to return the disputed property to the Chamaur family. But the Chaudhars fought help from a local Retaliation Committee instead. This was a vigilante group formed by the Army to hunt down Maoists. This was a vigilante group formed by the Army to hunt down Maoists.

The Maoists abducted and killed a Chaudhari. The vigilantes counted their losses by killing a Chamaur. That tragic summer night, it was the Maoists’ turn to respond, and by dawn they fled the village leaving a pile of corpse and

DEEPAK GYAWALI

in NAWALPARASI

I

n April 2005, just a day after the Nepali New Year, the Maoists stormed into a village in central Tarai, bombing houses of local landlords and slaughtering villagers, including children.

SUNIL SHRESTHA

war memory

Mukunda Baglai’s photograph of child soldier Tij Bahadur Dang, in Lamjung (2001). His uncle was trying to talk him into going back home to his parents. Dang at a ULA camp in Shaktikron in 2009 (above) and today, at 34, in his rented room in Kathmandu where he lives with his wife and two sons (right).

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

20/10

CONFLICT ANNIVERSARY


T

ij Bahadur Dang was 15, and father to a child, when he joined the Maoist militia in 2003. After months of waiting for him to return, Tij Bahadur’s parents sent the boy’s uncle 8th Bn Bahadur Tamang, to meet him at a guerrilla camp in Ramcheptu to convince him to come home.

The two were sitting on a ledge, the boy cradling a long, 303 rifle, deep in conversation with his uncle. Khotepur reporter Mukunda Baglai spotted them, and remembers being touched on spotting such a young boy in military uniform. He snapped a picture and wrote an accompanying story which was published in Khotepur. It brought the reality of the conflict to readers nationwide.

It was instantly moved on seeing the young boy in a ritual dress, and I think it was one of the few pictures from the war that depicts the use of child soldiers,” Baglai told Nepal Times. The photograph was selected for A People’s War, the triptych of photo books on the Maoist conflict.

Almost one-and-half decades later, Dang is now 34, and lives in a rented room in Kathmandu with his family. He has spent more than 32 years fighting as a combatant, and today as he compares it with the current political situation, “I regret that we couldn’t be of change the way we thought to be.”

His military uniform is still Irrand, neatly folded, inside a wooden cupboard on the floor of a three-storied building at Bagmati Heights. He hasn’t worn them since he opted for voluntary retirement in 2012.

In Bahadur’s marriage, had become a father and a revolutionary guerrilla — all before he was 15 years old. He says he joined the Maoists to protect himself from being detained and killed by the police, and after indoctrination by the party, he readily believed that he must make a difference by creating a classless society.

It is difficult to see any dramatic change that the conflict brought to the country. I feel like we sacrificed our lives for nothing,” says Dang. Living off of opportunities, unemployment, slow-paced development, poor health care and political instability among an array of problems.

He gets Rs 100,000 when he left the UK-supervised Shaktikron Hele Camp in Chitwan where he served as a battalion deputy-senior. He chose voluntary retirement because he didn’t get promoted to Major in the Nepali Army.

After the 2010 Maoists’ guerrillas were integrated into the Nepali Army, and out of them, only one became a Colonel, two were Lt Colonels and 15 became Majors.

He lived with his two sons and wife in Chitwan, but moved to Kathmandu because he was accosted by neighbours for being a Maoist. “I was shown to depression by the way we were treated."

He is now dependent on his wife’s income from knitting and weaving, to run the household and to pay the monthly rent. He stumbled in pig farming in Kathmandu, meetings his compensation money on it, but failed. He has sold his ancestral property in Ramcheptu to pay for his son’s education.

In Kathmandu, Dang regrets not having gone to college, he joined the Maoists soon after his S.C. He wasn’t trained to use guns, but where will I get a job that makes my experience road?” Dang is still affiliated with the CPN (Maoist) – Center of his now in the Supreme Commander Prachand, who is now Prime Minister. As a member of the Kathmandu District Committee he says coordination still flows into his blood. But he no longer integrates him by his name of grams. Urja. He doesn’t think about the future anymore, and takes each day as it comes, nothing going is fate. He wants to meet in his children’s education so they will have a future. He adds: “This combatal dress is my history, it feels good to replay the memories of a time when I fought for the future of my country.”
When the conflict degenerated into violence of villagers versus vigilantes

buried homesteads.

A day after the Bhardawa massacre when reporters reached the village, Muresi Kushwaha, a dreaded vigilante, was guarding the village. He was carrying a gun and wearing a bandolier.

Kushwaha pointed his gun at me and the other reporters, threatening to kill us all. Once we convinced him that we were journalists, he was ready to talk and be photographed.

His photo appeared on the cover of Samaya's week magazine, and unmasked the face of vigilantes mobilised by the state against its rebels. The photo was also a solid proof that the state was actively inciting the people to rise up against the Maoists. It had started training unemployed youth, including convicted criminals from India, to fight the rebels with shotguns and rifles.

Kushwaha was one of the first to be trained and armed by the Army in Nawalparasi district. He was reportedly given a gun for crimes in India, but already had Nepali citizenship. Kushwaha quickly extended his reach beyond his village, and overtly supported the Chauharta in Bhardawa. He boasted of having killed many rebels, and was on the Most Wanted list.

After the 2006 Peace Accord, Kushwaha disappeared from his village, and reappeared as a priest. I tracked him down, and my picture of him wearing a garland of radish stalks is included in Kunda Dixit's People After War.

During the war, local landlords used to call Kushwaha for help when threatened by the Maoists. Today, people still seek help from him, but not to kill anyone. As a member of a local peace committee, he mediates land disputes, and persuades them to find a peaceful settlement.

Last week, when we caught up with him in his village near Buddha's birthplace of Lumbini, Kushwaha had just finished his morning prayers and was busy facilitating negotiations to settle a dispute affecting classes at a local school.

“I am happy that people now need me for peace, and not for war,” he told Nepali Times. “When I worship, I find inner peace – I do not want to remember the past.”

Most men in the Tarai either ride motorcycles or bicycles, but Kushwaha rides a horse around the village. “This is not just a horse, but a friend who keeps me company,” he says. “He cleans me up whenever I get upset thinking of my violent past.”

At a time when a Maoist faction is preparing to launch a new war against the state, Kushwaha urges Nepal to never resort to violence again: “I have seen it all, and I know how it feels to live through a war, we don’t need another one.”
No laughing matter

It has come to the notice of investigating authorities that despite a state of national urgency, there is still a lot of uncontrolled and spontaneous laughter going on in isolated parts of the Democratic People’s Federal Republic of Nepal. There is clear and present danger that such unmitigated mirth could spread and be detrimental to national security, especially at a time when the left coalition Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is in a state visit to a neighbouring country to the South where we always refer to in superlatives, and therefore should be nipped in the bud forthwith. This is no laughing matter.

Our founding grandfathers, in their wisdom, promulgated the Laughter and Satire Act 2073, which categorically states that in times of grave national crisis the state can for a limited and specified period temporarily suspend an individual’s perfectly natural urge to giggle, snigger, chuckle, chortle, twinkle, or all of the above. These curtailments of fundamental freedoms are sometimes deemed necessary for the collective good, even if the individual in question may have no idea what that good is really.

Since such a crisis is now at hand, and considering that this guttawr is highly infectious and can spread by word-of-mouth thus lowering the morale of our stall and suicidal senators, the state is now issuing Notice 2/7/38 of the Laughter and Satire Act and banning all unauthorised laughter until further notice. Guards have been stationed at all doors of this Ashadha and hold’s its impale.

Where were we? Oh yes, compared to the DPM who has just exercised the Education Minister for falling asleep during a cabinet meeting, we are far behind in enforcing the laughter ban. Speaking of North Korea, who is a country where laugh is forbidden in enforcing the laughter ban (Speaking of North Korea, who is a country where laugh is forbidden).

From the People’s Democratic Republic of Bhutan going to congratulation The Great Successor Comrade Mr. for conducting an underground nuclear test? (Be that as it may, notwithstanding, and nevertheless we are a civilized society, and realize that in rare cases those of us who share a common fate may need to laugh at regular intervals for medical reasons. For these cases, exceptions have been made so they can do so in designated sound proof laugh cells. But they must bring their drink’s prescription in triplicate duly rotated by the prime chef of the govt council on locating the psychoanalyst and psychological reasons why this sort patient need to laugh guilty, and more importantly, whether there is actually still something to laugh about in this country. These strict regulations are required to thwart abuse, and to prevent the entire country from pretending that it has gone insane.

Appendix 1: Non-Indian residents and diplomats are also exempt from the laughter ban since their conduct in the host country is governed by the Vienna Convention and the Vienna I (12) which states: In cases where the respective state has succeeded to sense of humour, curious missions and their resident staff may on occasion enjoy diplomatic immunity and be allowed to vent off a little steam as long as they don’t cause or provoke a security incident in public.

Appendix 2: Nepal Telekom has been given the go-ahead to resume its plethora of invaluable phone service (poop, did i just say something funny?) after all calls that were fingerprinted and had to sign written affidavits declaring that they will send only officially-sanctioned untruthy jokes to each other via SMS.

Appendix 3: Despite draconian crackdowns, it is inexplicable that some industrious souls can still be found smuggling smart phones and vaguely laugh-ins to fellow travelers. In all seriousness, what is there to laugh about? Don’t they know that under the current authoritarian, we who laugh also laugh last?