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NEW DAY? The sun rises over Chitwan

KIRAN PANDAY

Déjà vu

In between phases of protests called by the Maoists, some Nepalis may have considered themselves lucky to have only load-shedding and the odd life-threatening doctor's strike to deal with. But there was also plenty to talk about what the usual suspects were talking about.

The tale of the tapes continues to baffle and infuriate those seeking to decide what Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is really about beyond the fact that he is lying at least some of the time. Prashant Jha (*see p2*) offers some insights as to the balance of power that might have provoked the Chairman's

latest outburst.

But the leaders of the Big Three parties are still talking, and agreeing to agree at some later date. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal came into repeated confrontation with YCL cadres who first waved black flags at him (in Dailekh) then stoned him (in Chitwan). Evidently upset, he spent the best part of his Dailekh appearance railing against the Maoists, warning them that attempts to seize state power would come at a 'high cost'.

The sun also rises, but as yet, it is difficult to see whether anything will be accomplished in the days to come.

In our new column **FOURTH ESTATE**, CK Lal trains his gaze upon the Nepali media.

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What lessons does South Africa have for Nepal? *Invictus* reveals much.



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FIVE MORE MONTHS

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal may have thought that he could say anything behind closed doors in one of his periodic 'cadre training' sessions. But as a public figure he should know by now that nothing he says is off the record.

He should have learnt from the damage he caused to his own reputation within Nepal and among the international community with the Shaktikhor video, in which he boasted to his troops about what a great liar he was in hoodwinking a gullible UN.

The half-hour tirade that he gave on Monday to a gathering of his supporters proved that the Chairman hasn't learnt a thing. And that is the kinder explanation. More ominously, it shows that the Maoist party is fully committed to seizing total power to set up a people's republic through a decisive revolution. Hearing about the Maoist endgame from the horse's mouth should not surprise anyone.

Many got sidetracked from that main message by the aside that Dahal flung at his chief ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai. That there is no love lost between

the two most powerful personalities in the Maoist movement has been known ever since the Chungbung Conference in 2005 when Bhattarai, his wife and close aides were sent to a labour camp. But by naming Bhattarai publicly as someone whom India was pushing to be the next prime minister, Dahal presented himself as a master schemer.

By now it is clear that Dahal has squandered most of the goodwill he earned from the international community when he followed parliamentary procedures by resigning in May last year. His latest harangue confirms that the



SAROJ DAHAL

Maoists are not interested in the new constitution or in future elections: they just want to seize power and want to sweep away anyone who stands in the way. Which is why it has become standard operating procedure for him to blame the messenger by first saying reporters quoted him 'out of context', then accuse them of 'yellow journalism', and then call editors and publishers 'feudals' or 'smugglers'.

The Maoists and their sympathisers like to label anyone who is critical of their posture as 'rightwing'. It is not rightwing to call on a party that won a majority in elections to adhere to parliamentary norms, to publicly renounce violence, to disband their paramilitary and to be more serious about the peace process and the constitution.

We urge the Maoists not to sideline or purge those who want to transform the party into a responsible mainstream entity with a strong social reform agenda. We urge them to work to end the political deadlock so we can meet the deadline for completing the new constitution in five months time.

KD

Unscripted lines



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Marxists argue that broader social and economic forces, rather than individuals, shape the course of history. But Nepal may still have been stuck in a bloody conflict but for Dr Baburam Bhattarai and his emphasis on democratic republicanism. The ongoing attempts to marginalise him within the Maoists reveal much about the balance of power and how counterproductive it could be for the peace and constitution-writing process.

Prachanda remains the unchallenged supremo. His control over the organisational apparatus, ability to reconcile interests, and personal charisma are testimony to remarkable political skills.

Kiran has a support base of loyalists like Biplab who call the shots in the party's base areas, operators like Krishna Mahara, polemicists like CP Gajurel,

ethnic champions like Deb Gurung, and key PLA and YCL figures.

Judged in terms of numbers of supporters, Dr Bhattarai is not the most powerful. He does not believe in patronage politics, but is a man of ideas who translates them into practice. Bhattarai conceptualised the war; judged when the time was ripe for peace and convinced the party of it; ensured its aims of a republic and CA were fulfilled; and has given the party respectability way beyond its base. Even now, it is Bhattarai and supporters such as Khimlal Devkota and Ananta who have been doing all the groundwork in the CA or peace negotiations.

Most importantly, Bhattarai has provided Nepali Maoism an intellectual coherence on issues as varied as federalism, the nature of the state, internal colonisation of the Tarai, class and ethnicity, and the nature of the 'semi-colonial' relationship with India.

In his 1997 essay, 'Political-Economic Rationale of the War', Bhattarai identifies Nepal's key structural problems: the use of

Nepal as an exporter of raw materials and a secure market for finished Indian products; the unfavourable balance of trade; control of the Nepali economy through Indian-origin capitalists; the trend of MNCs operating in Nepal through their Indian subsidiaries; unequal water treaties; use of cheap Nepali labour; and the hegemony of Indian monetary policy. Bhattarai's articulation remains the single most important text on

could trump him due to his popularity across party lines, performance in government and international credibility. He is also keen to cosy up to his orthodox colleagues by criticising Bhattarai.

Even if the end goal of radical state restructuring and hegemonic control is common to all Maoists, there are significant differences on how to get there – which have implications for the evolution

constructively in contrast to the abuse in public-suck up in private approach adopted by Prachanda, or the blind chauvinism of Kiran. Bhattarai knows the way to transform Nepal's structural dependence is through internal resource mobilisation and boosting national competitiveness while using India.

Make no mistake – Dr Bhattarai is a committed Maoist, not a social democrat. But his approach will force the Maoists to address diverse interests, and create checks against their violent impulses. This can however succeed only with more openness on the part of non-Maoists externally, and Prachanda's backing internally.

By snubbing Bhattarai and his 'line' again – as Prachanda did by depriving him of the deputy prime ministership in August 2008 and incorporating Kiran's views at Kharipati two months later – the Maoists run the risk of undermining their achievements, repeating the mistakes of their 20th century communist counterparts, and failing. 🇳🇵

Without Baburam Bhattarai, the Maoists will repeat history

which the Maoist insistence on redefining the relationship with India is based.

That is why it is a bit rich for party rivals to accuse Bhattarai of being an Indian agent. Under the radical garb lie deep fears. Kiran feels ideologically dwarfed by Bhattarai's creative and so far successful application of Maoism, dubs him a revisionist, and is looking for a role for himself. Prachanda is personally insecure, and is afraid Bhattarai

of the party itself.

Kiran believes that class warfare has to move to the next stage through a violent urban insurrection. Bhattarai understands the need for a broad multi-class, multi-ethnic alliance, and feels that a combination of mass politics, constitutional process, and elections can win the Maoists state power. He recognises geopolitical limits, and will engage with India more

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

JOB WELL DONE

The latest edition of the paper is full of contents that should give your readers complete satisfaction. Frankly, I got the return for every one of the Rs 30 I paid for it.

The warning in the editorial ('United nation', #483) has proved prophetic. We, the Nepalis, continue to be disunited. And the recent UDI-style Maoist announcements for "autonomous republics" might add insult to the injury.

Hope to be able to see the day when the Nepali Times would have come out with the materials selected in another preceding decade.

Dhruba Hari Adhikary, Kathmandu

LOOKING BACK, AND BEYOND

Mr. Lal jee's new year pledge to shift from discussing politics to incising "the inner workings of the media" is a welcome sign ('Looking back, and beyond', #483). But in countries such as ours where leadership is yet to mature and cultivate a new mindset, the role of the intellectuals in nurturing the body politic will persist for many years to come. National politics still needs microscopic surgery from the sharp pen of noted critics such as Mr. Lal. Let's hope that function will be retained.

Devendra Pant

MAINSTREAMING THE MADHES

The sentiments of Prashant Jha are a true reflection of our society ('Mainstreaming the Madhes', #483). Kudos to people like him who are at least daring to write on issues which are pertinent but don't catch the eyes of our donor-motivated scholars and journalists.

akeshkurmi

ALL HAIL, ALL HELL

First off, fantastic writing, absolutely fantastic ('All hail, all hell', #483). Undoubtedly, our Kathmandu has all the potential to be one of the best cities in the world. When I descended into the

valley on a bus from east Nepal some 30 years ago I could not help falling in love with Kathmandu. But sadly, nobody in power had a vision for Kathmandu. Let us act now. We need passionate activists – I personally do not trust our stupid politicians.

R Rai

On the blogs | www.nepalitimes.com/blogs

East West: Kunda Dixit reviews Invictus and draws striking parallels between post-Apartheid reconciliation in South Africa and our own shaky peace process.



KIRAN PANDY

Lohani's legacy



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

When Indra Lohani passed away in January last year, the movers and shakers of the Kathmandu Valley gathered in full force at the Nepal Bar Association premises to pay their respects. The glitterati grieved and the masses mourned, such was the force of his television presence.

A graduate of the National Law School in India and a practising Supreme Court attorney, Lohani had little time for the niceties of journalism. He ran his show *Bahas* with the combativeness of a public prosecutor. He didn't interview his guests; rather, they were grilled in penetrating sessions of public interrogation. He made the high and mighty quiver and squirm.

Journalists abhorred his style, but the audience loved it. Millions would switch channels mid-program to hear his trademark greeting *Jai Hos*. It's a tribute to his memory that all talkshow hosts try to imitate his style, even if they don't possess his perspicacity.

Context and insight are the main strengths of the print media. Radio encourages conversation and helps create a common ground for a diversity of opinions. Television, however, thrives by focusing on action. It offers video footage of breaking news, erupting conflicts and emerging personalities. In truth, TV is better at creating controversy than clearing confusion. The camera doesn't lie, but it can never quite capture

the multi-hued truth.

Innovative television producers try to overcome the inherent weaknesses of the medium through a judicious mix of vox pop, expert analyses, archival materials and journalistic commentary. But Nepal lacks well-grounded television anchors and newsreaders still run most current affairs programs.

TV stations rely upon politicians, NGO-tsars, lawyers, activists and the gatekeepers of the print media to round up the daily panorama. Since the talking heads often lack the skills to engage their audiences, most TV talkshows are banal

Nepal's TV stations will have to work harder for audience loyalty


affairs. It's no wonder market surveys show that comedy serials are more popular than current affair programs. Infotainment is a useful tool to keep viewers tied to the idiot box, but it hardly adds to the credibility of television stations.

Nepal boasts 10 television channels, and at least five more are said to be in the pipeline. But everyone wants to be a better copy of whichever Indian satellite they consider to be the model: India TV, Aaj Tak or Zee News. A serious shortage of trained journalists is the main reason me-too entrants fail to break new ground and have to rely on footage from the daily

drama at the Reporters' Club. It has become a vicious circle: salaries are too low to attract talent, which then justifies the decision of owners to pay even less, with obviously detrimental effects on program quality.

Pioneering Nepal Television was created in the mid-eighties to meet the cravings of the Kathmandu middle class for entertainment of some sort under the autocratic Panchayat regime. Unlike the national broadcaster in India, which began by enlisting the services of leading litterateurs and intellectuals, NTV was conceptualised and established by cine artistes. Thus it failed to groom professionals for the future boom in the field.

Private television channels began by buying time for entertainment programs with little inkling of the strengths and weaknesses of the medium. The tradition of innovation failed to take root as every channel wanted to play safe. They invested heavily in hardware, expecting that the software would take care of itself. Their prayers were answered by the likes of Indra Lohani. But wishful thinking isn't always self-fulfilling.

In the competition for eyeballs, TV channels will have to work to secure their niches. News channels need to nurture in-house analysts; those specialising in travel, business or lifestyle have to hire the services of professionals with a proven track record. And everyone will have to invest in the enhancement of the journalistic capabilities of their editorial teams. With some degree of market saturation imminent, the period of complacency in the television industry is now over. 

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Striking a balance



“Medicine is passed down like a religious lineage, from father to son. It is also like a dance and a game. People offer what they know, sometimes adding new ideas from what they have seen and done. In our tradition, we learn to take from our teacher’s ideas and our books to create new ideas, which come into full bloom like a lotus flower when combined with the soil of experience.”

Gyatso Bista, Co-founder of Lo Kunphen Medical School, Upper Mustang

For brothers Gyatso and Tenzin Bista, Rinzin Wangmo could well be a lotus flower coming into bloom. She is the first government-recognised Community Amchi Assistant (CAA) of Himalayan Traditional Medicine (HMT) in Nepal. Teaching her juniors in Lo Kunphen Medical School and treating locals in the surrounding communities, she is carrying on an ancient tradition that might have been lost in Nepal if not for the efforts of the Bistas.

The Bista brothers are leading a brave effort to revive traditional Tibetan medicine in Upper Mustang

There was a time when there were about 30 traditional amchis (practitioners of traditional Tibetan medicine) in Mustang, approximately one for every village. Now there are only seven, the inevitable result of out-migration and a shift towards a cash-based economy that undervalues indigenous knowledge provided for free through masters and apprentices.

Expert amchi practitioners and hereditary physician astrologers to the Mustangi King in Lo-Manthang, Gyatso and Tenzin Bista, picked the threat to this millennia-old tradition early.


HAPPY GRADUATE: Rinzin Wangmo says it isn’t just about the certificate. “I want to serve the local people as much as possible, as the other amchis do,” she says.

They then founded Lo Kunphen Medical School in 2000 and designed a two-year CAA curriculum for Class Eight graduates. Now they are looking to upgrade the HMT course to a Certificate in Amchi Medicine for CAA or SLC graduates.

HMT is based on the herbal and natural products of Tibet and the Himalaya, and is a rigorous discipline that has been practiced for thousands of years. Practitioners develop a close relationship with their patients, and attend to chronic conditions such as hepatitis and diabetes, incorporating diagnosis by pulse and urine analysis and holistic treatment combining physical and spiritual wellness.

In the age of modern medicine, some aspects of HMT – particularly its focus on Buddhist philosophy – may seem a little antiquated. But it is sometimes the only treatment available to locals in remote areas such as Dolpo, Upper Mustang and Mugu. What’s more, the services are provided for free by practitioners, old and new, mirroring the ideal of the Bodhisattva who sacrifices personal benefit for that of the community.

Lo Kunphen’s ultimate aim may be to produce HMT graduates to safeguard indigenous knowledge. But the Bista brothers appear to have grasped why HMT was under threat in the first place, and have sought to integrate traditional medicine’s aims with modern requirements. With the help of the Japan Foundation, WWF-Nepal and US-based Drokpa, Lo Kunphen Medical School and the Himalayan Amchi Association also support the cultivation and conservation of medicinal plants.

It’s widely acknowledged that Nepal has among the richest diversity of medicinal plants in the world. A strong, government-accredited community of amchis – linked with practitioners in Tibet, Ladakh, Bhutan and Mongolia – could prove essential to promoting sustainable utilisation of our ecological resources. This in turn could tie into a strategy for regional and international marketing of HMT that could provide the financial resources for its continued development, and that of the traditional communities that constitute its heartland. 

Yoji Kamata



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Dark star

With load shedding encroaching upon our lives day and night, CG Electronics' recent launch of inverters is timely. With the purchase of every CG inverter, customers will get a free CG iron and with the purchase of a CG inverter as well as a luminous battery, a free CG rice cooker.



Liquidity concerns



Kathmandu Frontier Associates organised a half-day workshop on current liquidity problems faced by banks and financial institutions, and the role of

Nepal Rastra Bank, in January at the Hotel Everest.

Remittance saviours

With a view to providing customised deposits products and services to its remittance consumers, Himalayan Bank has launched a deposit product named Himal Remit Savings Account. It provides a minimum balance of zero, an interest rate of five per cent per annum, a free visa debit card, accidental death insurance of up to five hundred thousand rupees and more.



Board of Trade

The Government of Nepal nominated Padma Jyoti, Rajendra K. Khetan and Diwakar Golchha as the first ever constituted Board of Trade under the chairmanship of the Minister of Commerce and Supplies. The board will look after all the issues related to the Commerce Policy of 2008.

Banking boom



The 15th Annual General Meeting of the Bank of Kathmandu concluded successfully with the AGM approving 40 per cent bonus shares

and 7.3684 per cent cash dividend to valued shareholders. The total deposits at the end of the fiscal year 2065/66 increased by 14.21 per cent in comparison to the last fiscal year and similarly, loans and advances increased by 17.24 per cent to the end of the fiscal year 2065/66.

Innovative services

Laxmi Bank entered into a Channel Partner Agreement with Beed Invest, the first operational licensed portfolio manager, to offer new investment products to customers. Laxmi Bank will be the first commercial bank in Nepal to introduce portfolio management products to its clientele through its various branches.



Active Citizens

The British Council and the Association of Youth Organisations in Nepal launched the project Active Citizens on 17 December. The project works with young people, helping them recognise their potential and exercise their responsibility to engage effectively for the positive development of their communities at a local and international level. Two hundred young people from Bhaktapur were chosen as Active Citizens.

Ride away!

Syakar Company, the sole distributor of Honda Motorcycles in Nepal, has launched the new Honda Activa in its scooter line. It has special features like a combined braking system, low weight metal parts, fuel tank capacity of six litres, under seat storage space, key shutter, tuff up tube and 15 per cent more mileage.



Big winners

The winners of the Tata Passenger Vehicles-Chakkar Lagaune Offer were announced last week. While 30 people got consolation prizes worth Rs 25,000, twelve couples won a free trip to Pokhara including paragliding. Five more couples won a free trip to Bangkok-Pattaya and the grand prize winner, Gyanendra Subedi, won a million rupees.



SUNITA DANGOL

Timeless Timex

Timex Group has been in the watch market since 1854. With outlets in 80 countries all over the world, the group launched its products in Nepal on 5 January, in cooperation with Him Electronics. *Nepali Times* spoke to VD Wadhwa, Senior VP of Corporate Affairs and Business Development at the Timex Group.

Nepali Times: Why do you wear a watch?

VD Wadhwa: Watches are a style statement. The brand, the colour defines my style.

How is the luxury watch industry in Nepal?

The trend in South Asian countries was that the market was growing 30 per cent each year. But the economic recession, since September-October, decreased sales by 26 per cent. Yet because of the growing number of malls in Nepal, since last year, the luxury watch industry has boomed here.

Why did you choose Nepal to launch Timex at this point of time?

There are many reasons; Nepal is finally coming out of its political turmoil and it's the right time to start. Another is because retailing is now well developed. Not only are the displays in malls great but the distributors too do justice to the brand.

Also, remittances are crucial to Nepal's economy. Nepalis staying abroad, being familiar with the Timex brand, would like to buy Timex watches in their own country.

How are Timex watches different from others?

Our watches have many more additional features: indigo dials,

heart rate monitor, data linker, digital compass, dual time, blood pressure monitor, temperature monitor and so on to suit every individual.

Who are your main customers?

Youth between the ages of 18 to 40. But it's not just the physical age! Timex watches are also for those who may be over 40 but still go to clubs and party and are young at heart.

How useful are watches to those with trendy mobile phones?

Unlike in earlier times, when people bought a watch and wore it for years, people today change watches every six months or so. And being early movers, they want to be the first to pick the latest trends.

How are you controlling the grey market in Nepal?

There is and will continue to be a grey market in every country. But the only way to control it is to display your products well, and as widely as possible. We will also provide certificates to authorised distributors.

Why did you choose Him Electronics as partners in Nepal?

The Golcas are serious

businessmen and have gone full blast behind every new brand they have taken up. They are also very professional and have done justice to all their brands.

What is the global turnover of your watches every year?

A billion dollars. Including other brands of ours like Versace, Salvatore Ferragamo, Valentino, Guess, Guess Collection, Ecko, Nautica, Opex and Vincent Bérard.

What is the price range of Timex watches?

From Rs 1800 to Rs 20,000.

How are you promoting your brand here?

We are a long term player and believe that if the groundwork is good, business will happen. So we're penetrating the market as much as we can by learning about Nepalis' preferences and studying the market. Besides displaying watches and publicising through the print media and hoarding boards, we are associating with local events as well.

What are your future plans in Nepal?

In the next six months, we plan to have 150 Timex outlets in Nepal, including an exclusive Timex boutique.

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

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THIS WEEK

Breach in the ranks
Rifts within the Maoist party almost exploded on Tuesday after Pushpa Kamal Dahal was heard on a leaked audio tape telling his party cadres that India wanted Baburam Bhattarai as the new PM and that plans were underway for a decisive people’s revolt. The Maoists convened an emergency central committee meeting the next day, where they appeared to patch things up, though not before Bhattarai told reporters, “this is an attempt to assassinate my character.” At the meeting, the Maoists reaffirmed their commitment to democracy and decided that Dahal would be PM if the Maoists were to lead the government.

Nearing a deal?
The Big Three party leaders made apparent strides towards ending the political impasse, nearing deals on army-PLA integration and a High Level Political Mechanism (HLP). On Tuesday, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal floated a plan that aimed to complete integration by 30 April and made provisions for the education and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. Some highly placed sources said an informal agreement to integrate 3000-5000 ex-combatants had already emerged. The parties also pledged to set up an HLP by Friday morning, which, hopefully, will reconcile key political differences that have delayed the peace process.

Shutdown
The Residents Association of the National Association of Medical Science (RAN) shut down emergency services last week claiming that their demands for better facilities and reduced tuition hadn’t been met. They had closed all other sections apart from emergency units since 23 December. On Monday, other hospital employees joined in the protests in part to express solidarity with RAN, but also because they alleged their work environment had become too dangerous. Emergency services reopened on Wednesday following talks between RAN and the government.

Not so fast, Gen Toran
On Monday, the Supreme Court ordered the government to hold off on promoting Major General Toran Jung Bahadur Singh to the post of Lieutenant General. There will be another hearing on 10 January when the court will decide whether to vacate the stay order. Singh has been accused of involvement in the disappearance of 49 detainees at the Bhairabnath Battalion between 2002 and 2003.

Unsung heroes



BROTHERS-IN-ARMS: Bill Jenkins remembers the forgotten Gurkhas in Dharan

SITA MADEMBA

SITA MADEMBA IN DHARAN

To the tune of a bagpipe, he bows his head low and then salutes, raising his right hand to his forehead. In this way, Bill Jenkins of Liverpool, UK remembers the Gurkha soldiers who lost their lives in World War I and II at the cemetery of the Gurkha soldiers, in the premises of BP Koirala Medical Science Academy in Dharan.

“I want to remember them,” he says, simply. Seventy-five-year-old Jenkins, father of three children, says he came to Dharan from halfway around the world to remember the forgotten Gurkhas. He recalls the name of Rit Bahadur Rai of Gairi Gaun, son of Nara Bahadur Rai and Durga Laxmi, who was killed on 27 July, 1941 during a battle in Iraq at the tender age of 16. Rai is among 47,000 Gurkhas who died in the two World Wars. A further 150,000 Gurkhas were also wounded.

Jenkins says, “I read his name at the Basra Cremation Memorial in Iraq in 2003, but it isn’t on official record in the UK defence ministry.” He is now in Nepal to help set the record straight. Like Rai, the names of many Gurkhas who died in these wars aren’t officially recorded. Jenkins, who served in the Royal Marines, started collecting the names of these unsung heroes in 2003. He obtained names from the Commonwealth War Graves commission and by visiting various places in Nepal.

Jenkins has been trying to find Rai’s house but can’t locate Gairi Gaun. “I don’t have a formal education, but have brains enough to now that something has to be done,” he explains. “By taking the names of some Gurkhas, I am remembering all Gurkha veterans who lost their lives in World War I and II for the British crown. The British government shouldn’t overlook those who die in its service.”

He says he has submitted a list of 43,000 names to the Indian and British embassies, and believes these governments can’t contrive an excuse to ignore them for much longer. He also directs ire at the Nepali Government, which he says celebrates the achievements of the Gurkhas only in speeches.

“I am not associated with any political party, religion or Gurkha organisation. I will be raising the issues of Gurkhas all my life. The British Government has failed to recognise them but I am proud of the Gurkhas,” he says.

Bill Jenkins salutes the Gurkhas who lost their lives in the World Wars



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Clint Eastwood's latest directorial turn has rather different lessons for Nepal

It is rare that you start taking notes furiously while watching a movie. And it is even more surprising if it is a Clint Eastwood film. A Nepali watching *Invictus* can't but help draw striking parallels between post-Apartheid reconciliation in South Africa and our own shaky peace process. What helped South Africa was that it had a statesman of the stature of Nelson Mandela. *Invictus* is the story of Mandela's determination to unite South Africa following the divisions wrought by its racist past. Even though he suffered two decades of incarceration at Robben Island, Mandela was willing to forgive and take blacks and whites together towards a prosperous new future with a bitter white population, and blacks bent on revenge, this was a formidable task. Eastwood's film takes the case study of the South African rugby team, and depicts how Mandela used that white-dominated sport to forge unity and inspire the team to an improbable, but symbolic, victory in the 1995 rugby world cup in South Africa.



No state without statesmen

So, what's all that got to do with Nepal? First off: you realise how lucky the South Africans were to have a leader like Mandela and how unlucky we are with our political lilliputs. Mandela stood for what he knew was right, even though most of his own people, including his closest advisers and family members, initially didn't agree with him going against the public current. Here in Nepal we have leaders who don't lead. They follow. They concoct populist slogans, stoke pseudo-nationalism and spew invectives. They always react, and are rarely proactive. They sow hate, xenophobia and paranoia rather than try to unite. Watching *Invictus*, you

wonder when we will get a neta who will say, "The past is the past, we look to the future now," as Mandela does, and really mean it. When his former ANC guerrilla bodyguard wants to accompany him to a function, Mandela tells him to stay away from view with the words: "I don't want to talk to them hiding behind men with guns." Mandela is played convincingly by Morgan Freeman, who even cultivates a faint Afrikaans accent, as he forces his black bodyguards to work with white bodyguards. "Reconciliation starts here," Mandela reminds the former enemies, "forgiveness starts here... forgiveness removes fear."

Mandela uses the medium of sport, in this case rugby, to stitch his country back together through a sense of national pride. Although Eastwood's film depicts this as a success, we all know that the reconciliation process hasn't been all that smooth in South Africa. Maybe this year's football World Cup will help finish what Mandela started 15 years ago. Mandela's words in the movie have a haunting relevance in Nepal. "In order to build our nation, we all need to exceed our expectation," he says, "we need inspiration." What a contrast to our paranoid leaders, not one of whom seems to be able to rise above personal and partisan interest. None of them have learnt

from the bloody history of our recent past. The film is named after a poem (invictus means unvanquished) by an obscure Victorian named William Ernest Henley, the words of which Mandela says helped get him through the long years of detention. The lesson for us in Nepal, perhaps, is that destiny is not fated, we have to carve it out of our present. Kunda Dixit

Precious: reality bites

Adapted from the award winning novel *Push* by American author Sapphire, *Precious* is a 2009 film directed by Lee Daniels, set in 1980s Harlem, New York. It's the frighteningly depressing story of an obese, black, 16-year-old teenager, Claireece 'Precious' Jones (newcomer Gabourey Sidibe) who struggles with illiteracy, a savage, volatile mother (Mo'Nique), and a father who sexually abuses her, giving her a second unwanted pregnancy. Boosted by fantasies of becoming a star in her darkest moments, *Precious* shows incredible resilience despite the gruesome reality she's living in. But the

major turning point takes place when she moves to an alternative school, meets new and supportive people, and most importantly a teacher who completely changes her outlook on life. Also part of her support group are Mariah Carey in the role of a completely de-glammed social worker and Lenny Kravitz as a male nurse. *Precious* is as depressing and distressing as you might imagine. It is ultimately uplifting, though thankfully not at all in the manner of countless coming-of-age Hollywood productions, and it offers a startling glimpse onto the mundaneness of much American urban experience. No critic could have said it better than

Oprah Winfrey, one of the producers, "I realised that, Jesus, I have seen that girl a million times. I see that girl every morning on the way to work, I see her standing in the corner, I see her waiting for the bus as I'm passing by in my limo, I see her coming out of the drugstore. And she's been invisible to me. I've done exactly what the people in this film did to her. I've seen her and not seen her. And I thought, that will never happen to me again. This is for all the Precious girls." *Precious* is only the third film to win both the Grand Jury and Audience prizes at the Sundance festival, and the Oscars are well within its grasp. Duksangh Sherpa



REVIEW



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Ghanachakkar

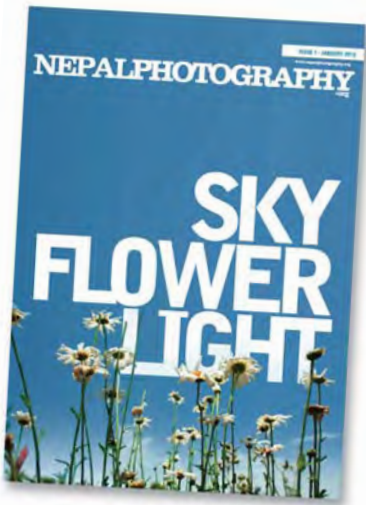
Catch the last two performances of the stage adaptation of Sanjeev Uprety's novel *Ghanachakkar* at Gurukul this Friday and Saturday at 4:30pm, (call 4466956, 2101332 for directions). If you get there on time, you'll be ushered in by ruffians dressed in military fatigues and thereafter treated to a mind-bogglingly adept and intimate performance from the talented cast directed by Sunil Pokharel of Aarohan Theatre Group. By the end of an hour and a half of mindgames, you may stagger out wondering if you haven't yourself been fundamentally disoriented.

Ghanachakkar is running in its second season here in Nepal, and depicts the mental state of a university professor (ostensibly the alter ego of writer Sanjeev Uprety, who is an English professor at Tribhuvan University). The protagonist himself is split into two alter egos played brilliantly by Kamal Mani Nepal and Bibhusan Basnet, and struggles to discern whether he is really going mad (as everyone seems to think), or if it is everyone else who is actually going mad.

Despite the morbid premise, *Ghanachakkar* is also a genuinely comic production, and the excellent lighting, music and choreography make for a spellbinding performance. Let's hope for an English-language production based on the upcoming translation in the not-too-distant future.
Rabi Thapa

EVENTS

Launch of **nepalphotography.org**, an online photography magazine by young Nepali photographers, accompanied by the ongoing exhibition **Photo Kavya**, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 9 January, 2.45pm



In the Eye of the Storm, launch of a book of drawings by Manuj Babu Mishra, 8 January, 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, followed by a documentary on the artist by Asha Kazi Manandhar. A collection of the artist's rare drawing and paintings will also be on display. Exhibition until 21 January. Siddhartha Art Gallery and Summit Hotel will also be presenting the art installation **Roots** by Dutch artist **Peter Shrader** at the Summit Hotel, Sanepa, 10 January, 3pm.

Landscape and Life History in the Himalaya, Social Science Baha lecture series XXXIV by David Zurick (Foundation Professor of Geography at Eastern Kentucky University and University of Kentucky) at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 11 January, 4pm

Poet's Corner at Lazimpat Gallery Café, write, read and vote, entries accepted until 24 January, voting from 24-31 January, 4428529. **Where the wild things are**, movie screening 11 January, 5.30pm.

People After War, permanent photo exhibition, every day 11am-4pm, Madan Puraskar, Patan Dhoka, for bulk school bookings call 5521393



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Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 483
Q. How do you feel about 2010?
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Hopeful 56.2%
Fearful 26.7%
Apathetic 17.1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 484. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com
Q. If there were elections today, what percentage of votes would the Maoists secure?

WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Oddly, this past week parts of the Tarai were actually cooler than cities at higher altitudes. For example on Wednesday, it was 22 degrees in Kathmandu, which sits at 1400m, while Biratnagar, Simara, Bhairawa and Nepalgunj recorded maximum temperatures of 13-20 degrees. Meteorologist call this phenomenon temperature inversion, which occurs in valleys when a layer of cloud acts as a lid, keeping the ground layer of air colder than the upper air. The satellite picture shows a thick layer of smog hanging over the western Himalayan foothills and Gangetic plains in India, extending eastward to Bangladesh. Although skies in the Tarai cleared up this week, westerly winds may push clouds back over the western Tarai this weekend. Expect sunny days, clear night skies and chilly mornings in mountains and the valleys.



FRI	SAT	SUN
22-2	22-3	21-3

DINING

Arabian Nights for Middle Eastern specialties every Friday from 6.30pm, Oriental Nights, flavours and specialties of Asia every Wednesday at The Café, 6.30pm, Hyatt Regency, 4491234, 4489362

Chez Caroline for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070

Live continental BBQ Fiesta, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, from 6.30-10.30pm everyday

The Corner Bar, 5-7pm, 3-11pm, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818

Lavazza Coffee and Baskin n' Robbins, at Blue Note Coffee Shop, Lazimpat, 4491234

A cafe's café, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113

Jazzabell Café, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8pm, Jhamsikhel, 2114075

Al Fresco, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, 7-10.45pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999

Teppanyaki meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318

Reality Bites, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9am-10pm, 4425341



Wine and cheese, every Friday & Saturday, 5-8pm, **Strawberry High Tea**, 4.30-6.30pm, The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, 4491234, 4489362

Starry night barbecue at Hotel Shangri-La with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden every Friday 7pm, **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999

Himalayan Rainbow Trout at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999

Tiger for Breakfast, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068

Stupa View Restaurant, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4480262

Gokarna Forest Resort for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 44512126

MUSIC

Wrathchild, Nepal's 'first heavy metal band', live at Moksh, Pulchok, 9 January, 7.30pm, 5526212

Celebrating Diversity: A Musical Caravan, a series of concerts by Kutumba and Minap in Amargadi (Dadeldhura) Jan 8, Taulihawa (Kapilbastu) Jan 11, Kalaiya (Bara) Jan 14, Lahan (Siraha) Jan 16 and Phidim (Panchthar) Jan 19. Performance in Kathmandu at the Garden of Dreams on 1 Feb and Basantapur Darbar Square on 2 Feb.

Live music from **Inner Groove** on Fridays at the Rox Bar and **Sunday Jazz brunch** at The Terrace from 12-3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4489362, 4491234

Some like it hot, every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7pm, 4479488



Live band every Friday and rooftop BBQ everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288

Happy cocktail hour, ladies' night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7pm

Nepali Ghajals at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30pm, 4468589

Rudra Night live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7pm at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212

Jazz evening at Delices de France restaurant every Wednesday, 11am-2pm, 4260326

GETAWAYS

Relax Package at the Hyatt for Rs 6,200 plus taxes for one night accommodation for two, including breakfast at The Café. Package valid till Feb 20, 2010, only for local residents and Nepalese citizens for a maximum of 3 nights. 4491234, 4489800



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SO LONG: Maoist ex-combatants prepare to leave Dudhouli cantonment in Sindhuli on Thursday, three years after they were first disqualified by the United Nations Mission in Nepal.



BLACK COATS: Members of the Nepal Bar Association take out a rally at Babar Mahal on Monday calling on the CA to complete writing the constitution by 28 May.



DESERTED: The Emergency Room at Bir Hospital is empty on Wednesday following agitations by the Resident Association of the National Academy of Medical Science.



BOMBS AWAY: Pushpa Kamal Dahal releases a book on Sunday about veteran republican leader Ram Raja Prasad Singh entitled, 'Ganatantra Ko Lagi Sangarsha' [Struggle for Republic], written by Sitaram Baral.



CHAMPION: Sabin Sapkota lifts a trophy after winning the Surya Nepal Eastern Open in Dharan last week.

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Disappeared

GOPAL GARTOULA IN DAMAK

If Pushpa were alive, he would have celebrated his twenty-second birthday on 6 December. Dharendra would be celebrating his twenty-sixth birthday on 31 January. But there has been no trace of them for the last seven years. Mention of the brothers brings their mother, Chandra Kumari Basnet, close to an emotional breakdown. She caresses the photographs of her sons and says, “Where have you gone, pieces of my heart?”

The Basnets are from Damak. Both Pushpa and Dharendra passed the SLC exams with distinction from Himalaya Secondary School. Pushpa graduated with a Bachelor’s degree from behind bars in 2003, and Dharendra had also passed his ISC when he was jailed. That was the first time they were jailed.

But it wouldn’t be the last. A contingent from the Bhairabnath Battalion led by Raju Basnet arrested them on charges of alleged involvement in Maoist activities. Pushpa was arrested from Kalimati on 5 November 2003 and Dharendra was arrested later on 14 November. That’s all Chandra Kumari heard from eyewitnesses. Birendra, her fourth child, was also detained in Bhairabnath Battalion and caught a glimpse of his two brothers. “After that the government neither released them nor gave me the dead bodies of my children,” laments Chandra Kumari.

Two of Chandra Kumari’s five sons have disappeared, both in government detention.

The families of the disappeared haven’t received the help they were promised

She breaks down when she is asked how many children she has and what they are doing. “If it was leaders’ sons that disappeared they would be concerned, but who will help find my sons?” she says, carefully holding their photographs.

She has appealed to a whole roster of former prime ministers: Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Girija Prasad Koirala and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and met the home and defence ministers who served under them. She has asked them all where her sons are, but has gotten the same reply: “Have patience, we will find them for you.” She sighs.

Sita Devi Dhakal of Damak-13 has a similar story. Her husband, Punya Prasad Dhakal, was known in the village as Junge Hawaldar (‘constable moustache’). The couple had just fixed the date of their eldest daughter Muna’s marriage and were making arrangements. But three days before the ceremony, Punya left for Chandragadi early in the morning and never returned. Sita Devi could never figure out who took him and where.



GOPAL GARTOULA

A resilient Sita Devi didn’t put the wedding off and Muna was duly married on 7 June, 2005. When she bid goodbye to her beloved child, the pent-up grief came bursting out. “The wounds get deeper as they get older,” she says.

Punya was a pensioner and an ex-police constable, but his family hasn’t received a penny since his disappearance. They were told by the Jhapa District Police that the pensions of the disappeared are not transferable. She flashes his pension card and

says, “No one helped me transfer his pension.”

These stories have recurred countless times across the country. In the beginning, human rights organisations went from door to door and listened to stories, prepared reports, organised workshops, and printed their photographs in newspapers. But the victims neither got any help nor patronage.

“One has to live no matter what you have to face,” says Sita Devi, as she works on an old sewing machine at home. ■

Missing justice



GUEST COLUMN
Ram K Bhandari

The issue of justice and impunity is once more in the headlines because of the promotion of Toran Bahadur Singh, the in-charge of the infamous Bhairabnath base, and the army’s attempt to prevent Nirajan Basnet from appearing in a civilian court.

Such blatant attempts to obstruct the path of justice have significantly weakened Nepal’s human rights movement and have also given the Maoists an excuse to get away with their own abuses. The issue of transitional justice and truth has become a charade.

Government bodies and human rights groups currently dealing with missing persons also display a lack of seriousness regarding justice for the affected families. Perpetrators of war crimes, far from being punished, are being rewarded. Supreme Court verdicts and court directives have been ignored.

The families of the disappeared have been forgotten and their need for truth, justice and compensation have been deliberately ignored. Their uncertainty and pain is felt daily because they still don’t know



KIRAN PANDAY

Impunity and the long shadow of war

whether their loved ones are dead or alive. This trauma is accentuated by the psychological, economic, social, political and legal problems that they have to bear.

The victims’ movement is becoming increasingly disillusioned and weakened by political divisions and the interests of NGOs and donors. Transitional justice has been an

elite discourse limited to urban centres. The affected rural families are unsure about how the process will work, the results being promised and whether it represents the fulfillment of their demands or not.

The Disappearance Bill drafted in Kathmandu, which was approved in late 2009, focuses largely on amnesty and reconciliation. But how can we

have true reconciliation through a bill drafted by the movers and shakers in Kathmandu without a word of input from those affected by what the bill proposes to correct? The Bill itself will likely linger before the Disappearance and Truth Commissions, and with no timetable for its acceptance, the government is off the hook on ending impunity and delivering justice to the families.

The Disappearance Commission should have been formed after the peace accord if the political parties were really serious about it. Now the government is preparing to just go through the motions of performing a ritual to keep donors happy. And why do we need two commissions?

In the villages, a single family is often a victim of different cases involving disappearances, killings, torture and rape. Family members don’t need to face two commissions and go through the excruciating trauma of publicly reliving their memories. If the government and political parties are serious, they should ask us, the victims, what we want.

A single commission to deal with the issue of disappearances and war crimes should be independent and have the power to prosecute those involved. Otherwise negative history will be repeated as it was with the Mallik and Rayamajhi commissions set

up to investigate past abuses.

Unfortunately, many families have lost hope for justice and reconciliation and feel marginalised by the peace process. Families and witnesses do not feel secure, and rights activists in the field like me face regular death threats.

The CDO, DSP and army major in Lamjung who were responsible for my father’s detention and disappearance are still serving and have even been promoted. The Toran Singh and Nirajan Basnet cases prove that impunity starts at the very top and sets a precedent for those in the districts.

We doubt the intentions of the government and the Maoists, and we fear that they want to return to war. The movement to learn the whereabouts of Nepal’s disappeared citizens is also at the crossroads. Seeking justice is an essential part of building a durable peace. ■

Ram Kumar Bhandari, whose father was disappeared in 2001, is a human rights activist based in Lamjung.

Also see:
Without a trace, #450
Vanishing hope, #466
The long, long wait, #409
How can we forget?, #389
“For lasting peace, we must deal with the missing”, #351

Circling back



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

In the early 2000s, locals in areas where vultures nested started noticing increased numbers of rats and dogs. Carcasses of dead animals by the riverbeds were left untouched for days and vulture nests in the forests started disappearing. Conservationists confirmed that the vulture numbers had indeed dropped alarmingly – in 15 years 95 per cent of vultures had vanished from south Asia. Studies of dead vultures revealed that an anti-inflammatory drug called Diclofenac, used on livestock, was causing kidney failure in vultures that fed on their carcasses.

A vulture summit was organised in 2004, and government officials and conservationists from Nepal, India and Pakistan committed to take action immediately. Diclofenac was banned in Nepal and a safer substitute, Meloxicam, was found. Organisations like Nepal's Bird Conservation have been working proactively in monitoring the ban, educating farmers and cattle owners about the use of



KRISHNA MANI BARAL

Nepal's effort to save vultures is yet another example of community power

Meloxicam, and in setting up vulture restaurants (where birds can feed safely on healthy meat put out by restaurant owners) in Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Dang.

There are no official numbers, but ornithologists say that nesting has increased, especially around the vulture restaurant areas. In 2004, no colony had been found in the Koshi Tappu area. In October 2009 a similar survey found 32 nests of the White-rumped Vulture. It is not known

whether this is a new colony, or one made up of vultures that withstood the effects of Diclofenac. But the initiative really took off last month when locals of nine districts declared they would become Diclofenac free.

Experts warn that vulture numbers may not go back to what they were 15 years ago, but their re-emergence is a positive sign. This journey for vulture conservationists hasn't been easy, but locals in native vulture

areas are once again seeing new nests appearing every season, more birds are circling in the skies and animal carcasses are disappearing within hours of being put out. Today even neighbouring countries have acknowledged this success: Pakistan has opened a vulture restaurant in Sindh and similar initiatives are in the pipeline in various states of India.

This is a big success story for Nepal, from which there are many lessons to learn. It is a perfect

example of pan-regional cooperation, for one. But community has had a crucial role to play. Considering the stigma attached to vultures in many south Asian cultures, it's hard to believe communities in rural Nepal would want to save these big scavengers. Not anymore, say vulture experts at Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), which leads the vulture conservation effort. In the areas where the vultures roam, the communities understand why saving scavengers is important. In fact, it is because of the community's involvement that the vulture restaurants have been so successful. The community looks after the restaurants, monitors the trees where the vultures are nesting so they are not cut down, and plays an important role in advocacy.

The biggest lesson here is the power of community. From saving forests to roads and using radio as a development tool, community involvement has very often been key to the success of projects in Nepal. As we start another new year, here's hoping policymakers understand the true meaning of people power and promote projects for community partnership and ownership. 🇳🇵

See also: Vultures are circling again, #398 and Soaring again, #286

How to keep a New Year's resolution

PETER SINGER

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Perhaps you resolved to get fit, to lose weight, to save more money, or to drink less alcohol. Or your resolution may have been more altruistic: to help those in need, or to reduce your carbon footprint. But are you keeping your resolution?

We are not yet far into 2010, but studies show that fewer than half of those who make New Year's resolutions manage to keep them for as long as one month. What does this tell us about human nature?



Part of the problem is that we make resolutions to do only things we are not otherwise likely to do. We use the occasion of the New Year to try to change behaviour that may be the most difficult to change. That makes failure a distinct possibility.

Nevertheless, presumably we make resolutions because we have decided that it would be best to do whatever it is that we are resolving to do. But if we have already made that decision, why don't we just do it? In the *Protagoras*, one of Plato's dialogues, Socrates

The emotional pull of chocolate cake can distort your reasoning

says that no one chooses what they know to be bad. Hence choosing what is bad is a kind of error: people will do it only if they think that it is good. If we can teach people what is best, Socrates and Plato seem to have thought, they will do it. But that is a hard doctrine to swallow – much harder than eating the extra slice of cake that you know is not good for you.

Aristotle took a different view, one that fits better with our everyday experience of failing to do what we know to be best. Our reason may tell us what is best to do, he thought, but in a particular moment our reason may be overwhelmed by emotion or desire. Thus, the problem is not lack of knowledge, but the failure of our reason to master other, non-rational aspects of our nature.

That view is supported by recent scientific work showing that much of our behaviour is based on very rapid, instinctive, emotionally based responses. Although we are capable of deciding what to do on the basis of rational thought processes, such decisions often prove less powerful than our instinctive feelings in moving us to action.

What does this have to do with keeping resolutions? Richard Holton, a professor of philosophy at MIT, points out that a resolution is an attempt to overcome the problem of maintaining an intention when we expect that, at some future time, we will face inclinations contrary to our intention. Right now, we want to lose weight and we are rationally convinced that this is more important than the pleasure we will get from that extra slice of cake. But we anticipate that, faced with cake tomorrow,

our desire for that rich chocolate texture will distort our reasoning so that we might convince ourselves that putting on just a little more weight doesn't really matter all that much.

In his recently released book *59 Seconds*, professor of psychology at University of Hertfordshire Richard Wiseman sets out the things that you can do to make success more likely:

- Break your resolution into a series of small steps.
- Tell your family and friends about your resolution, thus both gaining support and increasing the personal cost of failure.
- Regularly remind yourself of the benefits of achieving your goal.
- Give yourself a reward each time you achieve one of the steps towards your goal.
- Keep track of your progress towards your goal, for example by keeping a journal.

Individually, each of these factors seems trivial. Collectively, they are ways of exerting our self-control not only now, but in the future as well. These tools for keeping a New Year's resolution can help us to make progress, not only in losing weight or staying out of debt, but also in living more ethically. We may even find that that is the best resolution to make, for our own benefit and that of others. 🇳🇵

Project Syndicate

Anti-ordnance ordinance

KUNDA DIXIT

It has been nearly four years since the war ended, Nepalis are still dying from leftover explosives, and the government is dragging its feet in signing the Mine Ban Treaty.

More than 155 countries have signed the Ottawa Treaty since it came into force in 1999, although the US, India, China and Sri Lanka have refused to ratify it. Landmines and improvised bombs were used by both sides during the Nepal conflict, causing at least 1,500 fatalities. People have continued to die and be injured since the war ended. In 2009 alone 16 people were killed (6 boys, 3 girls, 5 men, 2 women) and 54 injured (24 boys, 5 girls, 13 men, 12 women).

Since the end of the war, the United Nations has spent \$5 million in Nepal to help clear minefields, destroyed Maoist explosives, trained Nepal Army personnel in demining and invested in risk education. However, there are still 36 minefields covering 3.25 sq km that need to be cleared and another 18,000 unexploded Maoist bombs, a job that may take another two years.

While Nepal has been praised for its demining work, its delay in signing the Ottawa Treaty could hinder future international support. "Failure to sign the treaty is a blot on Nepal's otherwise excellent global citizenship record. What's holding this up?" asks the UN's Resident Coordinator, Robert Piper.

Indeed, it seems Nepal has nothing to lose and everything to gain from signing the treaty. It has a stockpile of only about 3,000 outdated anti-personnel mines and the international trade in mines has virtually stopped. Experts say Nepal would have little trouble in meeting treaty obligations because it only includes victim-activated devices and gives



There is no reason Nepal should not ratify the anti-landmine treaty



PICS: A BJORNSON

signatories four years to destroy stockpiles and ten years to clear minefields.

Says Piper: "The time for Nepal to join the treaty is way, way overdue."


Successive Nepal governments have, however, been unenthusiastic. The Army says minefields on base perimeters prevented heavier casualties during the war. The top brass feels that it may have to resort to anti-personnel mines again if hostilities resume.

Peace Minister Rakam Chemjong led a five-member delegation to a treaty review conference in Colombia last month, and made a weak commitment to "eventually sign" the treaty. Officials have hinted Nepal could ratify the treaty after the new constitution is written.

Purna Shova Chitrakar of the Ban Landmines Campaign Nepal says she sees "some forward movement" in the government position. She says: "There is really no reason Nepal shouldn't sign, we will gain international goodwill and it won't hurt the military's battle readiness at all."

Stephen Robinson of the United Nations Mine Action Team in Nepal says the Ottawa treaty allows Nepal an opportunity to show its commitment to peace by banning these horrific and redundant weapons. "It will also acknowledge the hard and dangerous work of the men and women engaged in addressing the anti-personnel mine problem," he says.

Some government officials say the real reason for Nepal not signing is not the army's opposition, but the lack of political will, leadership uncertainty, lack of coordination between ministries and general lethargy.

Robert Piper concludes: "The international community has been generous to a fault in helping Nepal deal with this legacy of the civil war. Until Ottawa is ratified there is no guarantee we can close this chapter forever." 

Himal Khabarpatrika

31 December-14 January 2010



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Nationalism or Treason?
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Go to school to get a free meal

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Everyone Talked, No One Listened

CONSTITUTION SUPPLEMENT


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Mahendranagar Interaction

INTERVIEW

Madan Krishna Shrestha



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Character, assassinated

Interview with Baburam Bhattarai
Rabindra Mishra, BBC Nepali Service, 5 January



Does India really want you to become the PM?
This is just propaganda, an attempt to assassinate my character. Those who have an orthodox mindset and disagree with my campaign for democracy and socioeconomic transformation have created this propaganda. There is no truth in it.

Then your own party chairman attempted character assassination, and

he has an orthodox mentality because he said it.
I don't want to blame him, but the way it is being disseminated through different media, I think this is a conspiracy. You can have differences but you can always discuss them. To portray someone as a foreign agent is not the correct political culture.

The media did not present you as foreign agent. You must have already listened to what Dahal said in the audio tape. You cannot blame the media, rather blame your chairman, don't you think?

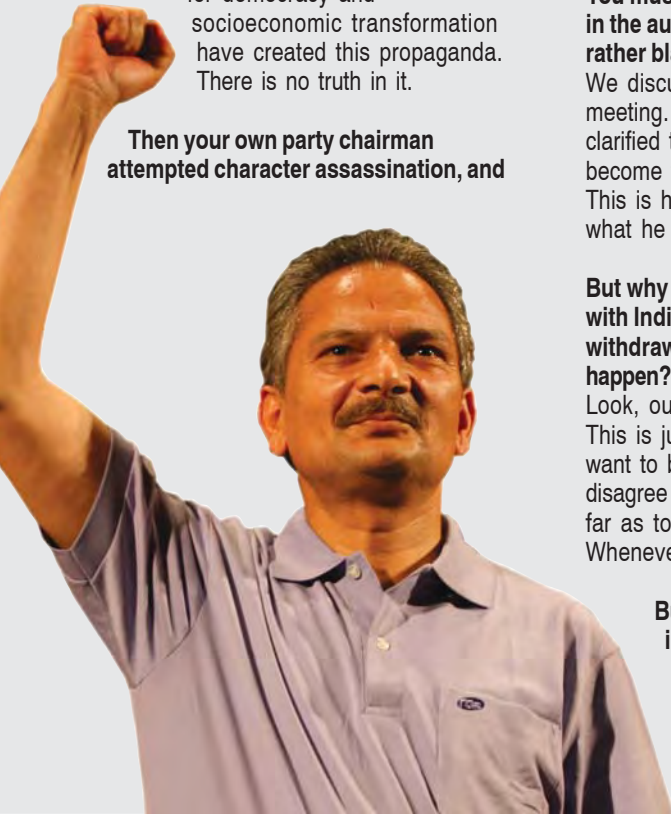
We discussed this in the central committee meeting. In today's (Monday) press meet he clarified that a lobby in India wanted him to become the PM while another proposed my name. This is how they played one against another is what he said in his clarification.

But why does Dahal keep on linking your name with India? Earlier, he said there was pressure to withdraw the party's action on you. Why does it happen?

Look, our political culture is faulty. This is just a manifestation. I don't want to blame anyone. We can disagree but it does not mean you go so far as to assassinate someone's character. Whenever you disagree it should be put clearly.

But Dahal did not put it to the politburo but in another place, right?

I don't want to put it that way. Things have been cleared now, he has already clarified it. I think I would go by his clarification and move ahead.



Code of conduct for journalists

President Ram Baran Yadav in
Nagarik, 1 January

नागरिक

I begin with an incident. Alok Bohara, with whom I studied, now lives in the US and supports Kathmandu University. He wanted to see me, and I met him. The next day, a newspaper reported that the president had met a RAW agent named Alok Joshi. I did not complain, did not even clarify, as advised by my press advisor. There are things that are better not spoken of. However, the truth should come out, which is the responsibility of journalism.

The opposition accused me of capturing booths during the CA elections. When I was a minister, some papers reported that I went to the UK for treatment of AIDS. The press council for journalists should be what the medical council is to medical doctors and the Nepal Bar Association is to lawyers. One has to pass a



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

standardised exam followed by nine months of training to join the security forces. Civil servants take a government exam. But journalists acquire a license without having to take any such test. The Nepal Press Council needs to think of some test for journalists. Even a driver needs to pass the trials, why not journalists?

The Interim Constitution has

emphasised consensus, as did the election results. Press people should understand the Interim Constitution, the CPA and the Special Committee on PLA Integration are the guidelines for completing the peace process.

Reporters should write in the national interest. They should play the role of social coordinators. More articles should be written about national unity, integrity and ethnic harmony. Violence of any kind can never be overlooked. Journalists have been targets recently. There are high professional hazards but they are not supposed to keep quiet.

Our media seems superficial, they do not go deep into issues. I don't like to read about ethnic and regional issues. The press should pacify the situation instead of aggravating it. I wish there would be more write-ups in favour of the national interest that would help maintain regional harmony between the himal, hill and Tarai regions.

A reporter needs to understand the pros and cons of deciding on states based on ethnicities. My request to the press people is they should work hard. What is the use of medicine after death?

Ultimate revolt

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal spoke to his cadres on Sunday in a closed session once more leaked out to the public. The party's ultimate aim, he maintains, is still to capture power through revolt. Translated excerpts of the leaked audio tape:

Nagarik, 6 January

नागरिक

The issue of government under our leadership as the biggest party, civilian supremacy, and national independence are phoney claims. We may or may not get to lead the government. The old modus operandi does not seem to work, so we will launch a decisive revolt once the preparations are complete. A school of thought in our party thinks we should first write the constitution, run for elections, win a two-thirds majority, and only then revolt. But this is not the party line.

We should make preparations to fight on four fronts. This will be a decisive revolt. We will revolt whether we are in government or not.

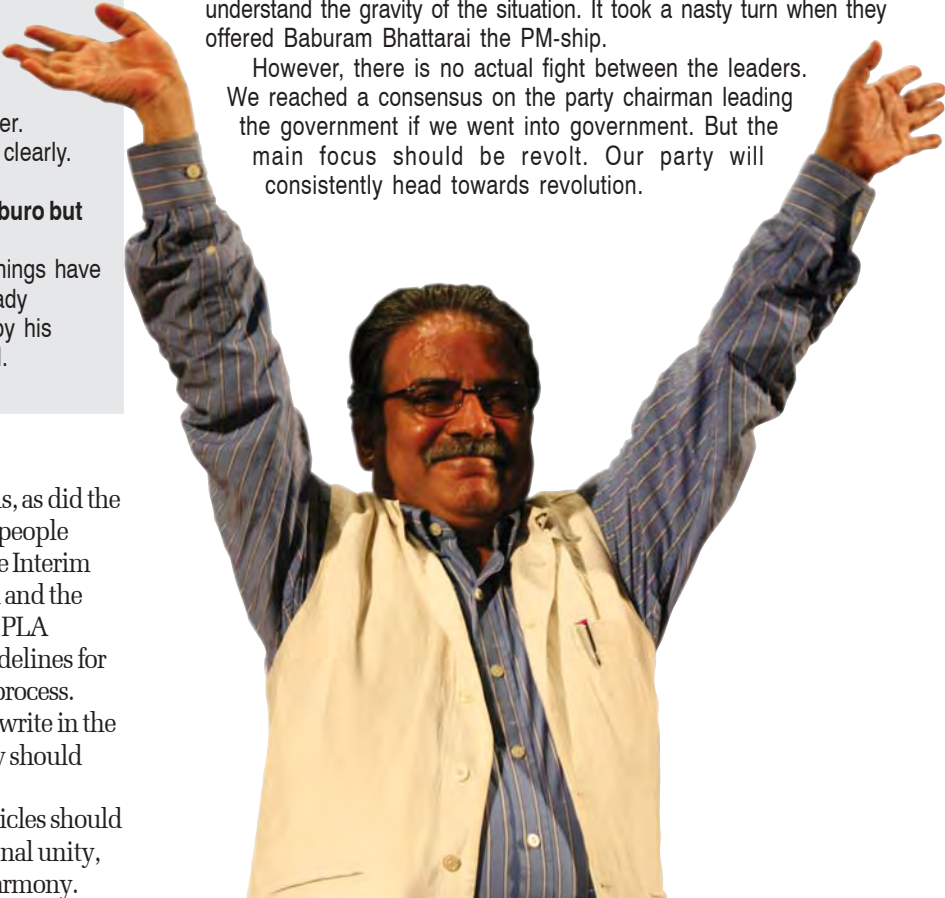
In our central committee meeting I once said that I wouldn't think of being the PM until the movement was completed. But the central committee did not formally approve of it.

Meanwhile, this has been a big problem. Who will be the PM? If it was only about choosing a person, we would have done it. But the enemy started playing one against another, especially imperialist India.

India offered the deputy PM-ship to one of our comrades. You understand the gravity of the situation. It took a nasty turn when they offered Baburam Bhattarai the PM-ship.

However, there is no actual fight between the leaders.

We reached a consensus on the party chairman leading the government if we went into government. But the main focus should be revolt. Our party will consistently head towards revolution.



India is applying pressure to make him the prime minister...

...is not what I'm saying.

क्रान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 7 January



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फरक संस्कार
फरक भूगोल

उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्क सानेपा

रेडियो चितवन ९४.६ रत्ननगर

अब सधैँका साथी

“Civil society has become passive”

In the penultimate edition of the Constitution Yatra, *Himal Khabarpatrika* interacted with the people of Kanchanpur, Mahendranagar on the constitution-making process, in which participants emphasised the need for consensus, and vigilance from the media and civil society.

How do you view the ongoing constitution-writing process?

Tekraj Pant (associate professor): It is time for civil society to be vigilant and do something for the nation instead of going after the political parties. Party cadres should put aside their fears of being expelled from the party and decide on issues with their own conscience, rather than waiting for party directions.

Yagya Raj Joshi (UCPN-Maoist): There is little time remaining for promulgation of the new constitution and agreement on state restructuring. Intellectuals, political parties and informed citizens all have to take this seriously. If consensus is not reached, the country might slide back into chaos.

Yagya Raj Joshi (NC): We might lose the achievements of Jana Andolan II if the current deadlock persists. Everyone has made mistakes, but the Maoists, as the biggest party, have not acted responsibly by not returning captured land, capturing more land, and assaulting journalists. They have diverted the focus from writing the constitution. Civil society and the media should point this out and bring them back on track.

Ishwari Prasad Kharel (UML): There has been some progress, but the political parties have failed to address the aspirations of the people. We have to find out who is responsible for delaying the writing of the constitution. Despite talks about consensus, the Maoists have already announced federal states, which is the task of the CA. Writing the constitution is



INDRA LAL SHRESTHA

impossible if the Maoists try to impose their ideas on others.

Has there been enough pressure on political parties?

Nara Bahadur Saud (civil society member): Civil society and the press are not pushing the issue as they did during Jana Andolan II. However, the real problem is that the leaders are not honest. Five months will be enough to complete the constitution if the leaders of major political parties work together in earnest. There is no alternative to consensus.

Bhawaraj Regmi (NGO Federation): In the past, NGOs played their part in creating public awareness. Now, we have been organising interaction

and discussion programs with CA members where they make promises they never keep.

Chitranga Thapa (journalist): Political parties could not deliver on the promises they made during Jana Andolan II. They are not focused on their real tasks. Civil society and the media should pressurise the political parties to write the constitution first.

How can we reach a consensus?

Yagya Raj Joshi (UCPN-Maoist): The other political parties are conspiring to stage a presidential coup instead of writing a new constitution by May. They want to defeat the Maoists by tagging them as terrorists once again. This should be exposed and a consensus should be forged among the political parties. The past

agreement should be reviewed and a new understanding reached.

Yagya Raj Joshi (NC): Civil society and the press should point out who is responsible for the delay in writing the constitution. The Maoists feel superior after winning the CA elections and are boosted by the strength of the PLA. They should withdraw the declaration of federal states, immediately end the capturing of private property, and discard the idea that they can capture power through street protests.

Ishwari Prasad Kharel (UML): Civil society should bring together leaders of the three political parties and point out their mistakes. The Maoists' totalitarian ideology won't be realised. We have to come to an agreement and move ahead and give people a new constitution by the stipulated time.

“Maoists using people to capture power”

Minendra Rijal, Ministry of Federalism, NC

What's happening in the CA?

Discussions for the preliminary drafts and concept papers of the Committee for State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power, Committee on Judicial System, and the Constitutional Council should have been completed by 25 December. The submitted drafts will be discussed until 21 January.

Since the Maoists have already declared states, what is the point of delineating states by the Committee on State Restructuring? This shows the Maoists' nervous mentality. Having failed to garner majority in the parliament, the Maoists wanted to mobilise the masses as a strategy to capture state power. State restructuring can never be based on a map drawn by a particular party. The process of delineating states through consensus has

been further complicated by the Maoist's unilateral announcement of states.

How come the NC hasn't submitted its proposal for state restructuring?

It has already said on what basis federalism must be instituted. It's not their job to put forth a very detailed plan. It's up to the state restructuring experts to draw up a map.

Do you think you will still be a CA member after May 28?

This wouldn't cause legal problems, but the politics will become difficult. The parties will have to reach a consensus to extend the deadline. It's not that the state

restructuring committee can't finish its work within the allotted time; it can be done if we have a state restructuring commission. But it is unlikely in the current fluid political situation. So, whether I will still be a CA member after May 28 depends on the actions of the parties.



“We're putting pressure on the CA”

Prabhu Sah Teli, Chairman, Committee on Judicial System, UCPN-Maoist

Did your party unilaterally announce autonomous regions because you didn't think the CA had relevance?
We announced it in order to pressure the CA to get its act together.

So, this is only pressure?

The people want federalism. But when that wish fell into the shadows, we declared autonomous regions.

You say other parties have conspired to stop the passage of federalism in the CA, yet your party called a Nepal bandha that obstructed the CA.
Yes, that happened, but our aim isn't to obstruct the CA.

What will happen after the announcement of the federal regions?

It will wake up people's hopes for federalism, and will help the CA meet the deadline and facilitate state restructuring.

Madhesi and janajatis opposed your declaration of autonomous regions, right?
This isn't final. There's still a lot of discussion left to be done.

You gave Koch a state of their own, but there is a much larger Maithili population. They didn't get a state, why?
The number of provinces will only be decided after rounds of discussions.

It seems like you're bypassing the CA?
No, rather we're strengthening it.



Three Asses



Five months after mooting a high-level political mechanism, the **three useful idiots** of the New Republic have come full circle. On Wednesday, they once more discussed how to discuss setting it up. The Eh-maleys and Kangresi dissidents seem to have come around to agreeing to let Girja Bau become the **Grand Ayatollah of the New Mechanics**. Now that he has been nominated for the Nobel Piece Prize, everyone is suddenly feeling generous about letting him lead the samyantra if he wants it so desperately.

And this just in: even if GPK doesn't get to go to Oslo

later this year, we have it on good authority that he has been nominated for a consolation dosallah from the Nobel Academy right here in Baneswor.

Makunay had a hard time getting over the fact that Barack Obama recognised him in a crowd of 190 heads of state in Copenhagen last month. ("Hey, aren't you the guy who gave me that rock?") And he was even more chuffed that the Reds gave him the red carpet treatment in Beijing recently. Which sent a strong signal to the Baddies back home that China is in no mood to see the **Gang of Four**

resurrected in its backyard. And to really rub their noses into it, they used the Makunay visit to invite President Ram Baron over in spring, the guy the Maoists most love to hate.

But before he goes off on any more state visits, Makunay should tell Gayatri Madame she can't attend **banquets in Reeboks**. And someone whisper to the Financial Minister that when it says 'black tie', he can't appear in a North Face down jacket and makal topi. Then there is the scandal about the prime minister and his 35-member entourage flying back from Hong Kong on Dragon Air when RA410 was at the next gate flying half-empty direct to Kathmandu. **Nepal Airlines not good enuf for Mr Nepal, or what?**

Not to be outdone, Com Red PKD also airdashed on Dragon Air Wednesday night, ostensibly at the invitation of NRNs in Honkieland. But the real reason could be another tetete with Avdesh Bihari Mathur, hand-picked as Nepal handler by PMO spook-in-chief MK Narayanan. Awesome met Mathur in London and Singapore and promised to behave himself, but hasn't. Maybe both should end this **cloak-and-dagger charade** and just meet in Delhi or Kathmandu.


K-town is also abuzz with the public falling out between PKD and BRB. It was bound to happen sooner or later, but for Laldhoj the public humiliation by Chhabilal was the last straw. Comrade ("Can't-Help-Shoot-Myself-In-The-Foot-Everytime-I-Open-My-Mouth") Awesome did it again: after the Shaktikhor Video and the Baneswor Harangue, it is now the Khanna Garment Tape. **Comrade Faux Pas** said the Injuns wanted BRB to be prime minister knowing full well that

is the kiss of death to his chief ideologue.

Plans are still up in the air, but as soon as he gets back from HK Awesome scoots off to Kalapani to **raise the Double Triangle** over occupied Nepali territory. If he really wants to use nationalism to stem a split in his party, may the Ass suggest he take the Nepali flag and plant it not on the banks of the Kali, but the Sutlej?

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