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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

“We are for a dictatorship of the proletariat, however long it takes”

Exclusive New Year
Interview with
Maoist Chairman
Pushpa Kamal Dahal

p4

Untying the knot

DAMAKANT JAYSHI

There are two dates to look out for in 2011: January 15, when UNMIN's mandate expires, and May 28, the extended deadline for the new constitution.

It's easy to see what we need:

- Peace, a constitution that guarantees constitutional supremacy, pluralism, multi-party democracy, independence of the judiciary, and media freedom
- A coalition government that will facilitate the CA's writing of the constitution, and hold general and local elections

How we get there is the question. The mistrust is more severe within the political parties than between them. Nepalis are thoroughly disappointed, and can only hope that better sense prevails in 2011. Hardliners within the Maoists have forced an official change in the party's goals to go for a 'people's revolt', instead of peace and the constitution, adding more uncertainty.

The CA has hardly anything to show for its yearlong extension. The political will to draft and promulgate the constitution in time is sorely lacking.

Fortunately, there is a way out of this impasse. It lies in the future of the Maoist ex-combatants. The majority of the Nepali people, the political parties, and above all the ex-combatants themselves, want integration and rehabilitation resolved. The only people who want to leave this unresolved, at least for now, are Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the hardline faction led by Mohan Baidya. Which is why the ex-combatants have accused Dahal of using them as pawns.

It is thought that half the combatants would want to integrate with the army or police, that is nearly 10,000 fighters. Once a credible mechanism is put in place, a coalition government under the leadership of the Maoist Party could be the next step. Before the winter session of parliament that starts 9 January, the parties should prove to the people that they are still capable of delivering on peace and the constitution. 🇳🇵

Nepali Times would like to wish its readers a Happy New Year 2011



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LOOKING BACK, MOVING ON

Whatever you are doing on new year's eve, if you look back honestly on 2010, it's hard to miss a sense of collective failure as a nation. The year has been marked by political wrangling above all else, and the extension of the Constituent Assembly has not, to date, advanced the cause of the constitution to come. If there was hope that the political parties were close to reaching an agreement on power-sharing, the constitution, and integration of the Maoist ex-combatants, the latter's Palungtar plenum has dampened it. It appears we are back to square one, and Girija Prasad Koirala, for all his faults, is missed sorely in the attempts to forge the consensus that is needed to move on.

2010 had more than its fair share of scandals, high-profile assassinations, air and road accidents, and natural disasters. There was plenty that was bad and ugly. But there was some good, too, that owed much to initiatives led by remarkable Nepalis. Anuradha Koirala became CNN Hero of the Year for her work with Maiti Nepal. Shrikrishna Upadhyay won the Right Livelihoods Award for his work with SAPPROS. Against all odds, Nepal's women cricket and football teams continued to shine.

More quality books were published, movies made, and music released than ever before, and 2010 morphed into a year for festivals – jazz, blues, theatre, the environment, the arts, poetry – that underlined the creative potential of Nepalis. If nothing else, we can look forward to more of the same next year.

There is a justifiable tendency for some to dismiss such achievements as irrelevant in the face of the daunting challenges Nepal faces in concluding the peace process and drafting a constitution that will set up a level playing field for all the peoples of this nation. But if we are to meet



KIRAN PANDAY

these collective challenges, and spur those making decisions on our behalf to do so, then individual and social endeavour of this sort serves to demonstrate that if only we put our minds to it, anything is possible.

It's not about replicating Kathmandu's cultural and social ferment elsewhere. If we didn't know already, Elinor Ostrom, winner of the Nobel Memorial

Prize for Economic Sciences, visited Nepal this year and reiterated the capacity of rural Nepali communities to manage their resources efficiently and equitably. The capital enjoys its own advantages. If we manage to facilitate the same in towns and villages across the country (and document what is already happening), then 2011 is certainly worth looking forward to.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

THE INDIAN FACTOR

What a shame! How and when can we Nepalis decide our own fate ('The diplomat's burden', Prashant Jha, #533)? I have not seen a single political analysis without the India factor being the prime driver in anything we want to do, from writing a constitution to taking care of our people. Yes, I agree that we have a very strong socio-economic-political relationship with our powerful neighbour. But is that the most important factor that shapes our future? Are we Nepalis so incapable? Can any political pundit tell me how we can do better ourselves in our unique geopolitical situation?

DBB

- We can choose our friends, but we can't choose our neighbours.

We can't escape from the fact that India is our neighbour and we are more dependent on India than it is on us. India has more leverage with us economically, politically and culturally. We also can't ignore the reality that India has vested interests in Nepal, which can conflict with Nepal's own interests and may be related to its national security concerns, or simply its desire to prove its big power status. Nepal can't expect any better from any other country, whether China or the US.

The challenge for Nepal is to manage India's interests for its own benefit. A case in point is the Sri Lankan civil war. President Rajapaksa astutely asked India for military supplies to suppress the LTTE but when India refused for domestic

political reasons (Tamil parties are in the coalition government), he turned to China. The rest, as they say, is history.

Nepal would like to do the same but unfortunately can't because of the divisive nature of Nepal's politics. India has in essence become the kingmaker as one political party or an institution turns to India to enhance its position when it is weak. The bottom line is, let us stop bitching about India, and first put our house in order.

NepaliEconomy.com

UNMANNING UNMIN

Kanak has been gentler towards UNMIN in this article particularly in raising rather a meek voice about the accountability of UNMIN ('Not missing UNMIN', Kanak Mani Dixit, #533). Obviously, had it not been for UNMIN's presence, the Maoists would probably have never agreed to put their fighters in the cantonments and the disqualified would not have been released. But it must be noted that UNMIN was invited only after the government and the Maoists decided on the peace accord. In other words, it was not UNMIN that brought the conflicting parties together and made them agree on the peace accord.

Nonetheless, UNMIN did its job and it should have left long back. But instead they invented many excuses and reasons to extend their stay in Nepal. Neither UNMIN nor the UN facilitated the strengthening of the Special Committee to take up monitoring responsibility. Clearly, strengthening the Special Committee was a suicidal game for both UNMIN and the Maoists. This non-functional Special Committee worked

quite well for both of them. For the Maoists, it was an excuse to continue playing their games under cover of UNMIN. For UNMIN, it has been an excuse to stay longer at huge cost, and be part of international politics. Evidently, a longer UNMIN presence not only jeopardises the peace process, but also blindfolds Nepalis and prevents them from seeking a long-term solution independently.

The Maoists should understand that it is not only the 20,000 combatants that make up their strength. After all it was the people's votes, not the combatants, that made Prachanda the prime minister of Nepal.

Mahesh Sharma

In writing the 'Nepal Ko Sambidhan, 2046' no foreign help or expertise on such a colossal scale was involved. This time, covertly or overtly, there is much foreign hand involved in this exercise. Does this not hurt Nepali pride? It was a purely Nepali affair previously.

The Indian Constitution was drafted by Indians, and it has been said that its indigenous nature is the major reason for that constitution's success. During the drafting process, the chairpersons of all committees – Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Ambedkar, Patel, Kripalani, etc – attended the meetings without fail and contributed to their fullest extent. Is it not a shame and a dereliction of duty towards the country and the people that our socialist comrades, who mention the people in every sentence, have such bad attendance at constitutional meetings? Why not ostracise them for such acts? 'No attendance, no vote' should be our slogan now.

DG

- I think UNMIN did a great job facilitating the peace process. It gave Nepalis a ray of hope in the path towards peace. But I have a feeling that the Maoists are taking advantage of UNMIN and has always stressed extending its term. Despite weapon registry and monitoring by UNMIN, Maoist cadres have always been able to access the weapons. The Maoists have also used UNMIN to their advantage by urging it to hold talks with parties and negotiate demands on their behalf. So it is probably the best time for UNMIN to leave, as it has already managed the key process of keeping the Maoist combatants inside the cantonments along with provision of regular stipends. Thanks to UNMIN. The key thing now is for the other parties to unite until the Maoists give up their weapons, dissolve the YCL, and return seized properties to their respective owners.

Shiva

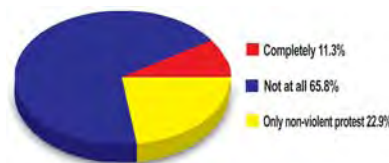
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Weekly Internet Poll # 534

Q. Should students be involved in politics?

Total votes: 2,249

Weekly Internet Poll # 535. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How do you feel about 2011?

2010's men



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

As 2010 ends, here's what the key political actors will be thinking about the year gone by and the one that lies ahead.

For the president, this has been an excellent year. If 2009 saw him at the centre of a controversy, Dr Ram Baran Yadav's spin doctors have managed to salvage his reputation almost entirely by now. He has played the role of the concerned statesman perfectly – expressing concern over the political deadlock, and repeatedly conveying how he is not empowered to act. He made successful visits to India and China; built up a support base in Kathmandu among army generals, lawyers, journalists, and a section of the business community; chose his public commitments carefully; and maintained his links with NC while expanding outreach among politicians of all hues.

Dr Yadav knows what will be asked of him this year and has set the stage accordingly. The tenor of his message is – I do not want

to go beyond the limits of this office, but if there is no choice and democratic forces and the international community support me, I am ready to step in. But don't be swayed by this seeming reluctance: the president is an active politician and will relish the power that comes his way. But aware that his institution is still in a nascent

A bad year for the Maoists, a good one for the president and the army, and status quo for the rest of the politicians

stage, he will ensure there is a cushion around him before he acts.

General Chhatraman Singh Gurung will be a happy man too. He has played his part in rehabilitating the Nepal Army (NA) and erasing its none-too-glorious recent record from day-to-day political discourse. Careful about the army generals below him who have greater influence, pedigree and connections, the chief has nonetheless carved out his own niche.

Gurung took on the prime minister on certain postings; he launched a belligerent campaign

on UNMIN and succeeded in forcing the Maoists to concede that NA and PLA could not be equated by way of the four-point agreement in September; the army's public relations drive has been a success. And NA has offered a quid pro quo to the politicians – we don't want direct power, we will symbolically plead allegiance to

you, but don't mess with us or interfere in our functioning. Many parties have signed up to the deal.

2010 has been an even more terrible year for the Maoists than 2009. Last year, they had to give up power but retained the moral high ground and sustained a public movement that energised the organisation. This year, the May strike brought home to them the limits inherent in inciting urban unrest when the state, middle class, international community, and media are on the opposite side. This dampened the morale of cadres, from which they are yet to recover, leaving the



party gasping for alternative paths.

The party fell into the trap laid out for them by anti-Maoist strategists in Delhi and Kathmandu, whose aim was to strengthen the hardliners by keeping the party out of power and generating an existential crisis. There are now deep divisions in the leadership, and an increasing perception that the Maoists are solely to blame for the present stalemate. The fact the party did not split while managing to break the 'democratic alliance' ranks as its only achievement of the year. While Chairman Dahal remains the foremost national leader, his reputation did take a massive dip with failed attempts to become PM, and refusal to make compromises that would help win the trust of other parties and convince them of the democratic commitment of the Maoists.

In 2011, if the CA is not extended and another regime takes over, the Maoists will become the face of the resistance. In a way, this would suit the

party as it would be the culmination of their plan to polarise politics; they did the same by helping bring NA into the battle in 2001. But it is highly unlikely that the Maoists will be able to use the streets to get back to power and impose the political system they desire. Their political achievements, and their growing integration into the political system that has proved financially profitable, could well be reversed if they took this path. Unlike a massive homogeneous movement, the resistance may take the form of multiple mutinies dictated by local conditions.

But if any one person was the face of the stagnation of 2010, it was Madhav Kumar Nepal. Nepal's smug smile over the past six months is representative of how most of Nepal's NC-UML politicians think – irrespective of the state of the citizens, as long as their positions are secure, Nepal's democracy is safe. But if they do retain any of their democratic values, it will be time to make some tough decisions in 2011.

THIS WEEK

MRP distribution

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs started distributing Machine Readable Passports (MRPs) from the Foreign Ministry on Sunday. Chief of the Passport Office, Bharat Poudel, has announced that MRPs will be provided within six months of the submission of an application. An extra charge will be levied for those who want an MRP within a week. The Ministry is planning to distribute MRPs from all three districts of the Kathmandu Valley in the next few days.

Appointment

The cabinet meeting on Sunday approved the appointment of Gopal Prasad Kafle and Maha Prasad Adhikari as deputy governors of Nepal Rastra Bank, as recommended by the governor. Adhikari has been executive director at the bank while Kafle has been heading the microfinance department. The meeting also decided to set up a three-member army advisory committee comprising the army chief and defense secretary, led by Defense Minister Bidhya Bhandari.

Regular house session

President Ram Baran Yadav on Monday called a regular session of parliament from 9 January on the recommendation of the prime minister. The special session of parliament was called off earlier after the Maoists agreed to hold a regular session instead. However, the main political parties are still wrangling over who will lead a new government. The Maoists and UML have been urging NC to withdraw Ram Chandra Poudel's candidacy and start the process anew, but so far NC has not agreed to do so.

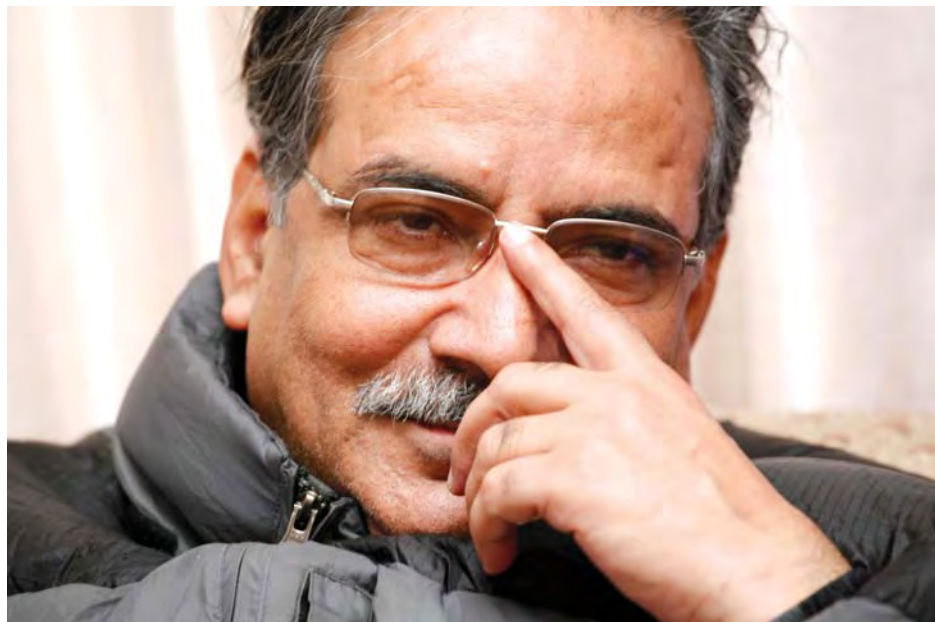
Show cause notice

The Supreme Court on Monday issued a show cause notice on a writ petition that accuses Rubel Chaudhary of involvement in illegal activities. The court ordered the Office of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Koirala, Home Minister Bhim Rawal and the police headquarters to provide a clarification within 15 days. Advocate Jayanta Bahadur Thakuri filed the case on Thursday, demanding action against Chaudhary, son-in-law of Deputy Prime Minister Sujata Koirala, accusing him of involvement in illegal activities including a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service scam, passport forgery, and irregularities in the purchase of vehicles for the Nepal Police unit deployed in Sudan under the United Nations. Chaudhary was in the limelight recently following on altercation with former crown prince Paras Shah at Tiger Tops Resort in Chitwan.

NATURE KNIT

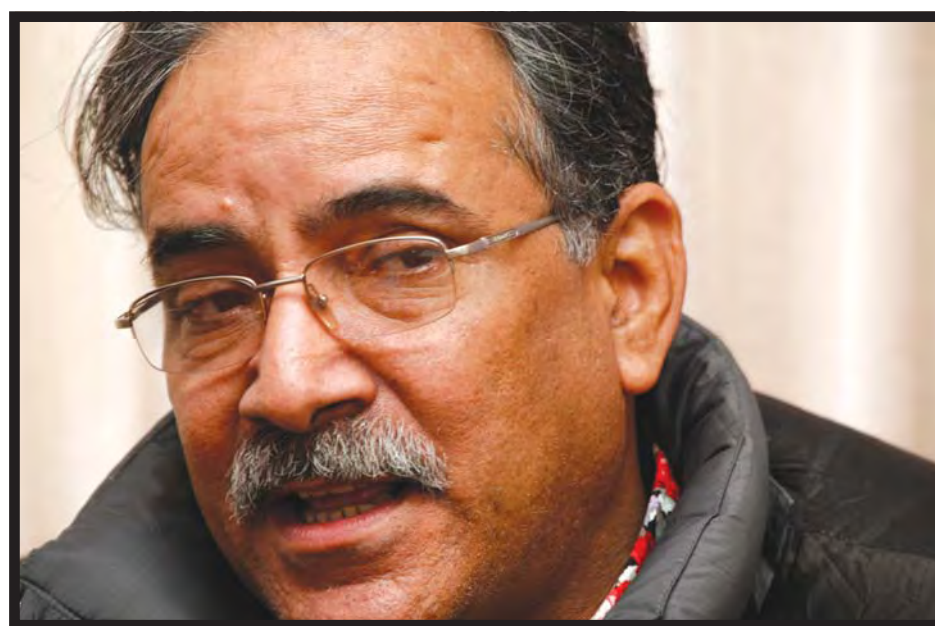
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PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

“I think there can be an agreement”



Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal spoke to *Himal Khabarpatrika* this week about the political deadlock with the other parties, the disagreements within his party and prospects for the peace process and constitution in 2011. Excerpts:

Himal Khabarpatrika: What is the reason we have this political deadlock?

Pushpa Kamal Dahal: Two schools of thought are on a collision course: one that wants to weaken the Maoists and another that says the Maoists should not be isolated. That is at the centre of the deadlock. The status quoists and reactionaries could never digest the fact that the Maoists became the biggest party. They think that if the constitution is written the Maoists will be dominant for the next few decades, and some reactionary foreign power centres support this view. There is a campaign afoot to weaken the Maoists.

Can you explain it a bit so we understand: who are these reactionaries and status quoists?

(Laughs) It will be difficult to state this categorically. In our view those who rely on outsiders to bolster their position instead of making the national interest their priority are status quoists and reactionaries. The progressives and agents of change are those who give priority to Nepal's independence, national interest, and want the country to be treated with equality and respect by foreigners. We can see some of these reactionary tendencies within NC, UML and even within our own party.

Really, even within your party?

I wouldn't say there are status quoists and revisionists within our party, but there is a debate about these tendencies. Even at the Palungtar Convention, one of the main debates was about interference by foreign reactionaries. Since the republic was established there has been collusion between domestic reactionaries, mercantile capitalists, lackeys and feudals with Indian monopoly capitalism. In our party, one side lays slightly more emphasis on nationalism and the other side a little more on people's democracy. There are feudal residues still around, but as long as democracy is not strengthened we won't have true sovereignty.

In Palungtar your colleagues accused you of economic anarchy and nouveau riche tendencies.

Yes, there was that accusation, but it wasn't directed at me. Certainly, there has been some class upliftment within the party. I referred to this even in my document, as did Kiranji and Baburamji.

Who is trying to make you weaker?

The NC mainstream and the other parties haven't yet come around to support our agenda. If they identified with state restructuring, right to self-determination, social justice and autonomy, their relations with the Maoists would not be so

bad. These parties were under the misconception that they could force the Maoists to toe their line. We were united against the monarchy, now we disagree about the kind of new state structure we want. This can't happen by weakening the Maoist party. We emphasised state restructuring, and this brought us into a confrontation with mainstream traditionalists. We felt that with the end of the monarchy there should also be an end to Indian neo-colonialism.

Why are you getting closer to the monarchists, then?

We understand that there are two types of monarchists: one that will kowtow to foreigners, and another that is on the side of national sovereignty. The monarchists who are close to the Maoists are mostly nationalists.

You talk about national sovereignty but during the war you spent your time in India. Yesterday you were against the king, today you hobnob with his supporters?

Firstly, we were not in India because of its government, we were there because the Indian people loved us. In fact the Indian government chased us down, detained our cadre and handed them over to Nepal. The recent book by Bibek Shah mentions that the Indian Army gave us training in Dehra Dun. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it raises questions about the veracity of the rest of the book. I used to go back and forth while underground, but towards the end of the war I moved our headquarters to Rolpa and Rukum because I felt the revolution would be completed if I stayed on. India helped with the 12-point agreement, but I had proposed that the agreement be signed in Rolpa, not in Delhi.

You have been accusing Baburam Bhattarai of being pro-Indian, and you yourself are accused of being pro-palace.

The real debate within the party is between nationalism and people's democracy. This is normal within a communist party. We shouldn't, and haven't, been accusing each other of being pro-palace or pro-Indian. But if you are out to save our nationalism, you will automatically be pushed closer to yesterday's monarchists. It is also not correct to go around saying India is our main enemy. We are just against the cohabitation between Indian monopoly capitalists and Nepali feudal capitalists.

Isn't it contradictory to support ethnic and territorial federalism and be against pluralism?

Not at all. In today's reality we are for multi-party competition and federalism. Federalism reflects the citizens' need for linguistic and cultural identity within the framework of multi-party competition. Our philosophy is not pluralism, it is socialism and communism. Some are trying to force us to

accept pluralism, how can we do that? What if we say the new constitution must accept communism. Will NC agree to that? To try to force us to agree to pluralism is to ask us to abandon our ideas, our philosophy, our ideals. We are for a dictatorship of the proletariat, however long it takes.

Are you dragging your feet on demobilisation of your fighters and constitution-writing?

This is the main political disagreement right now. We are not dragging our feet. The CPA states it very clearly: the Maoists are a political force with an army, and for lasting peace the old army and the Maoist army should be integrated into a new army. The power to say this comes from the Maoist army's ability to fight a ten-year war. What we need now is for the Maoists to accept the other political forces and the others to accept the Maoists. If that happens, integration will be easy and the peace process can be concluded. We are willing to hand over command of the cantonments to the Special Committee, we are willing to regroup and divide up our forces between those for integration and rehabilitation. But the other side is not ready for this.

Why do you need UNMIN so much?

At the beginning of the peace process, we felt the gap between us and the parties was too wide and we wanted the UN to have a role. If UNMIN leaves, the constitution, peace process, arms monitoring, all will have to be altered. We only have five more months. We are worried that to chase out UNMIN at this time may lead to the disintegration of the peace process. It is clear that the gurus of the ruling parties want UNMIN out.

The quarrel is about who becomes prime minister when the constitution is written and the peace process is concluded. Right?

No, the main quarrel is about whether or not we take into account the reality of the integration of armies. The task force I headed fixed a lot of disagreements in the constitution. If there is political will, the constitution won't be a problem. The main quarrel is between those who want peace and those who don't. If the Maoists are accepted as a power and are integrated with respect, everything else will fall into place.

Will the parliamentary session bring a new government?

I think there can be an agreement. There must be. There is no other way.



Full version of the interview in Nepali on: www.himalkhabar.com

Economy deal

Teletalk has launched G-300, a dual SIM mobile that boasts a camera, an FM radio, an MP4 player, a video player, and a flashlight. It has an expandable memory up to 4GB and is priced at Rs 2,450.

Healthy anniversary

NMB bank organised a three-day free health camp on the occasion of its 15th anniversary. The camp was organised in collaboration with Venus International Hospital and provided free health checkups, sugar level tests, stool tests and urine tests.

Going hi-tech

Himalayan Bank is moving from traditional magnetic strip cards to EMV chip-based cards. Chip-based cards are considered more secure and are accepted world-wide. The bank is the first to adopt the system and will soon issue EMV credit and debit cards.

Foundation of light

AmarJyoti Foundation, set up in memory of the late Amar SJB Rana, was launched last week. The foundation offers art and sport scholarships, and will also provide grief recovery and elderly care services.

Lucky win

Rajesh Dhakal and Purushottam Khatiwada have each won a trip for two to Thailand under Sony's lucky draw campaign, which ran for three months. A total of 3,500 lucky draw coupons were given out during the period on purchases of all Sony products.

Think national, act local



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

The experience of The Last Resort highlights the urgent need for elected local government

What's to hope for in 2011 for Nepal? Most Nepali wishlists would have: a national constitution, general elections, and a fresh start for a newly elected government. Specifically, what should businesses and development agencies hope for?

All of the above, with one specific addition: speedy re-establishment of elected local governments in districts, towns and villages.

Elected local government = good for all. Last week, for two days, villagers padlocked The Last Resort's (TLR) bungee bridge, and threatened to close the resort, which had earlier been featured prominently in a Nepal Tourism Board promotional video.

In a press release, TLR complained that despite what it had done for the local villagers over the last decade in terms of providing employment, supporting health posts, building toilets, and starting income-generating projects, it had to endure the threat of a forced closure on the eve of Nepal Tourism Year 2011. Happily, TLR has since re-negotiated with the villagers, and is now open for business.

But the incident reveals a deeper problem in the Nepali countryside. There has been no elected, accountable local government in Nepal's 3,915 VDCs and 58 towns since 2002, when Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved all local governments. In the intervening years, the space for local governance has been usurped by the local

branches of national political parties, which are often rabidly partisan.

Mirroring their national brothers, these local parties quarrel with one another, or team up with one another to gang up against a third, and basically force their various party agendas onto the table even if that means acting against the interests of the very villagers they are supposed to represent and serve.

The villagers dare not speak out publicly because of security reasons or

attract unwanted attention. Say you are a hydropower company. Instead of negotiating with one elected local government for a predictable period of time over a lease agreement of a water body, you now have to continuously negotiate with all the local parties and keep them all happy – years before you see a single paisa of profit, if you see it at all. If one political party is unhappy with you for any reason, it can force your business to shut down, regardless of what positive work you have done in the villages. In such an environment, who wants to think long-term for investments?

In essence, what the absence of accountable local governance has done is increase the elements of uncertainty and unpredictability, and thereby raise the costs of doing development or commercial work in villages and towns. If one gets to do the work, it's hard to build up locally sustainable institutions in politically charged locations.

So, here's my wish for 2011. I am not sure whether the CA members will actually draft and ratify the constitution in May. But if they only find ways to take steps to re-establish the process of elected local government in all VDCs and towns, the process of local accountability and development could continue at a faster rate. That way, at least the rest of the country need not remain hostage to the mind-numbingly dumb antics of a few infantile netas at the top.



because, in most cases, many of the young people who could have spoken up have left for jobs in the Gulf or Malaysia. Since there are no local elections to hold them accountable, most local politicians thus have an incentive to lord it over villages and towns with a degree of unaccountable power, which has, no surprise, corrupting influences.

What results is a nightmare for development agencies and businesses, though they choose to keep quiet, lest they

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Ignored lessons

Unless our politicians internalise the lessons of 2010, we can expect a repeat performance



KIRAN PANDAY



MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

A loss, a promise, and a waste define Nepali politics in 2010. These three incidents have touched almost every Nepali.

The death of Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala after prolonged illness, the *shanti sabha* (peace assembly) that blew away the

indefinite nationwide shutdown by the Maoists, and the resignation of a prime minister who commanded a parliamentary majority to pave the way for an elusive 'consensus' were events have not only had a huge impact over the year but are also likely to shape 2011.

Koirala's demise was beyond our control, and the nation had to bid adieu to a man who courted controversies and people but whose crusade for democracy was unmatched by any contemporary

leader in Nepali politics. An autocrat in his own party and at times a vindictive politician who hardly countenanced any opposition, he nevertheless made the greatest contribution to present-day Nepal. He courted and cajoled the then outlawed Maoists and once he agreed to do away with the monarchy, a 19-day people's movement did what the decade-long violent Maoist insurgency could not accomplish.

The *shanti sabha* in Basantapur

in the capital on 7 May, the sixth day of a nationwide banda aimed at dislodging an unshakeable Madhav Kumar Nepal, will be remembered as the day when people rose to protest excesses by a powerful party that was acting as if it could do anything it wanted. That the assembly took place, despite dire threats from Maoist Chairman Dahal and the party's trade union wing, was so telling that you could hear its reverberations throughout the country. The party called off the strike later that evening. Dahal was shaken enough to rant in public against the 'sukila mukila' (the well-dressed).

As for the wasted resignation of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, it happened due to a combination of factors: the desperation of the Maoist leaders, who were bereft of any agenda to fire the passion of their frustrated cadre and an increasingly apathetic public, the greed of the prime minister's party colleague and UML Chairman Jhalanath Khanal, and the cowardice of the hounded man himself.


Khanal was confident that 'consensus' would come in two days of Nepal's resignation; the Maoists believed it was possible in 'two hours'. It has been seven months since Nepal resigned and the much-touted consensus is still elusive. Sixteen attempts by parliament to elect a prime minister are all that we have to show in lieu of the resignation.

Will 2011 be any different? Unlikely. Unless accountability

replaces apathy in politics, we are going for a repeat performance. Learning lessons is not part of the schooling of our politicians. Despite the *shanti sabha*, the Maoist 'headquarters' still speaks of revolt. A miffed and nonplussed Dahal is now working behind closed doors to take disciplinary action against his party colleague, Baburam Bhattarai, who has openly criticised the party line of discarding peace and constitution and embracing revolt.

Khanal, still nursing a desire to become prime minister, has only succeeded in reinforcing the image of UML being here-there-everywhere-and-really-not-anywhere. Unless he is told to behave, UML will not be able to rise above its nuisance value.

There's not much to hope for from the Madhes-based parties. They could have played a role in taking the peace process forward and expediting the drafting of the constitution. Their hypocrisy has been exposed on a number of occasions: the Madhesi agenda comes up only during talks to form a government or when a faction of a Madhesi party is about to split.

A Nepali Congress without the towering GPK has so far held the fort. It has refused to budge despite pressure from the opposition Maoists and non-cooperation from its coalition partner, UML. How long can it remain steadfast will determine the course of our politics in the new year. 

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Feeling at home?
Upendra Mahato chills
out away from home.

Sambat calendar system in reference to the Gregorian calendar. Use of this calendar, along with the time zone factor, are two obvious deterrents for anyone abroad thinking of making a smooth transition to Nepal.

- Do not attempt to change the way things work immediately. It is simply impossible and will only invite aggravation. Hold on to your habits and set personal examples instead. Understand that when a meeting is scheduled to start at 10am, it may start at 10.45am, or it may never start at all. Also understand that mobile phone interruptions are very much part of meetings, and that it is perfectly OK for people to be holding side conversations on their phones while meetings continue, except when foreigners are involved.
- Get used to working without deadlines. Even if deadlines are set, they are rarely met, and are mostly extended. The politicians are the best examples of this phenomenon, and their craftsmanship has been extended to the private sector seamlessly.
- Keep references to wherever you have returned from to a minimum. People will perceive you as a misfit. Create a social network. It's not about what you know, it's who you know in Nepal. Actually, it's more about who knows you. You may work hard and put in 14 hours a day in the office, but don't neglect building up a social ecosystem. People need to know you if you want them to get things done your way.
- Accept that corruption, traffic violations, loadshedding, littering, and spitting are part of the Nepali everyday. These things are bound to raise your blood pressure, but if possible, use some of that energy to focus on why you are here instead. Focus on the opportunities at work; if you have returned, more than likely, you are at the frontline of a new industry.

- Take this as an opportunity to rediscover yourself. Don't compromise on the core values that you've operated by over the years, but understand and accept that things often work differently from what you are used to. Be optimistic that someday, things will be different. Believe that someday you will be sitting next to a tourist travelling to Nepal who knows exactly what time it is there. It's far from easy, but it is possible. 🇳🇵

Back to Bikram Sambat



COMMENT

Sanjaya Poudyal

How to adjust if the Nepali dream overwhelms the American one

"What time is it in Nepal?" the passenger in front of me asked the flight attendant an hour before we began our descent to Kathmandu. She wanted to confirm that the entertainment portal in front of her hadn't gone haywire. GMT+5:45 didn't make sense.

Nepal's integration with the global economy is as remote as the ability of the average tourist to comprehend Nepal's unique time zone. Of late, I have been wondering whether my decision to return, after living in the US for 16 years, was a wise decision.

Sixteen years ago, I was a rebellious 17-year-old student in search of opportunities and freedom away from the confines of Nepal. Sixteen years later, I was living the American dream: a good career, a house in the American suburbs, and the rest of the pieces slowly falling into place. The one thing I knew was that I had to work hard and pay my taxes, and the promise of America was there for the

taking. So why did I return?

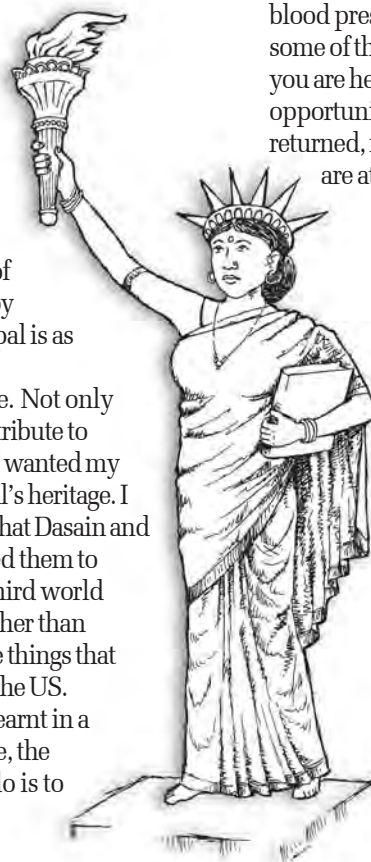
Most Nepalis of my generation in the US are preoccupied by a conflict that involves a tug of war between two cultures. It's a constant pull between the conveniences presented by the affluence of America, and a longing desire to come back home to contribute to our own country. Each step towards assimilation into the American culture, it seems, means losing a bit of our identity as a Nepali. We are equally part of both cultures, but truly belong in neither.

We compare every convenience in the US – responsible public policies, transparent bureaucracy, home deliveries, well-paved roads, good hospitals, courteous customer service, and clean public toilets – to the innocent memories of home: the smell of morning fog, the gossiping over tea, the taste of momos, the cows on the streets, the *gallis* in which we sweated over makeshift cricket matches. It is always a dream that we will one day

return. But for most of us, this powerful longing remains simply that, because it is not easy to uproot ourselves from careers and mortgages, and because of kids who are American by birth, and for whom Nepal is as alien as Haiti.

But I took the plunge. Not only because I wanted to contribute to Nepal, but also because I wanted my children to admire Nepal's heritage. I wanted them to know what Dasain and Tihar mean, and I wanted them to build a perspective on third world hardships that is real rather than viewed on TV. These are things that cannot be purchased in the US.

So here's what I've learnt in a year. If you are a returnee, the first thing you need to do is to internalise the Bikram





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People In Between



‘People In Between’, the photo exhibition by Sri Lankan photographer Gemunu Amarasinghe, is in its last week. Amarasinghe’s pictures document the horrors of the brutal civil war in Sri Lanka, which raged for close to three decades, killing thousands and leaving a legacy of violence and destruction in the island nation. The pictures are arranged in the same hall that houses a permanent exhibit of Nepal’s own war pictures, ‘A People War’. The two exhibitions serve as a poignant reminder of how wars, irrespective of where they are fought, tear through the social fabric of society, causing wounds that are not easily healed. ‘People In Between’ runs till 10 January at the Shanti Sangralaya, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka.

EVENTS

NEW YEAR EVENTS



Screening of Toy Story 3.
31 December, 5.30pm, Lazimpat
Gallery Cafe, Lazimpat



Peace 2010, exhibition of paintings and poetry.
23 December to 4 January,
Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

Assorted motifs, an exhibition of paintings by Chirag Bangdel and other artists. Till January 15,
Chai Chai Café, Jhamsikhel

Staging of Suina Karnika, a new play by Aarohan-Gurukul in association with Karnali Natya Samaj of Mugu. Till 9 January, Rimal Theatre, Gurukul, Old Baneswor, 4466956

New Year’s Eve at Kilroy’s, Turkey, balloons, party hats and blowers with a free large glass of bubbly by the fireplace. 31 December, Kilroy’s of Kathmandu, Thamel, 4250440/41.

New Year’s Eve at The Chimney, an exquisite 5-course candlelight dinner and an enchanting evening await you. 31 December, 6.30pm onwards, The Chimney, Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, Rs 3,000+ taxes per person, Rs 5,000+taxes per couple, 4248999

Bend it Like Bollywood, celebrate New Year’s Eve with Aasma and Indian Idol finalist Ankita Mishra. 31 December, 8pm onwards, Megha Malhar, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, Single: Rs 6,999 and Couple: Rs 12,000, 4273999

Christmas by the fireplace, surprise visit from Santa with gifts for all, turkey with all the trimmings and a free glass of hot mulled wine. Till 1 January, Kilroy’s Restaurant, Thamel, 4250440/41

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Nepal Tourism Year 2011
Opportunity for Nepal to improve its brand image

Interview: Pushpa Kamal Dahal
“There has to be an agreement. There is no other way.”

Opinion
Learning how not to do federalism from Ethiopia
By Bipin Adhikari

Weakening rule of law
By Subodh Pyakurel

Ice and fire
By Kunda Dixit

Reports
Banking: Mergers on the horizon
Weapons factory on the Indian border

Christmas Turkey Dinner, with surprise visit from Santa and gifts for all, festive menu, a free glass of Irish coffee and all UEFA & Premier League soccer games. *Till 1 January, K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, 4700043*

The Merry Menu at Café Mitra, 4-course set menu by Chef Mohit Rana. *Till 31 December, Rs 2,750 non-veg and Rs 2,200 veg, inclusive of all extras, Café Mitra & Lounge Bar, Thamel Marg, 4259015, 9851023934*

Celebrate New Year in The Fulbari Resort, sumptuous food, live music, traditional dance and lots of games and prizes to be won. *The Fulbari Resort, Pokhara, 4462248, resv@fulbari.com.np, Ticket: Rs 2,500 nett person*

New Year's Eve at Godavari Village Resort, welcome drinks, one-night stay, live concert by 'The Heart Breaker' and a lavish gala dinner with a glass of wine or beer, breakfast on New Year's Day. *31 December, Godavari Village Resort, Godavari, Rs 9,999 nett per room on a sharing basis, 5560675*

MUSIC

Absolute Live Music, by Rashmi & Kitcha Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. *7.30pm onwards, Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchok, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np*

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday at The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu with barbeque and live jazz music by Inner Groove. *12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362*

Live Music by Sign band at The Corner Bar. *Every day except Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 7.30pm onwards, The Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818*

DINING

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of Boudha stupa and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night. *Boudha, 2130681*

Kakori at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kebabs, curries and more, enjoy Indian food at its best. *Everyday 7pm to 10.45 pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, call 4273999 for reservations*



Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal, 4424303*

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest Resort. *Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, Rs 1,500 plus taxes, info@gokarna.net*



Alfresco, for homemade pasta and other lip-smacking delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999*

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams. *Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1,200 per person, 4425341*



Vesper Café, has a quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunches. Serves good salads and steak wraps. *Jhamel*

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city. *Kantipath, 4215068*

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*

Organic Café and Salad Bar, hearty breakfasts and healthy salads in the heart of Thamel. *Chakshibari Road, Thamel 4215726*



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The humble soap



 **DHANYANTARI**
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Proctor and Gamble (P&G), the consumer product conglomerate, helped conduct a study in the slums of Karachi, Pakistan, to see if a new soap with the antibacterial agent triclocarbon could prevent diseases in the community. Field workers fanned out in 25 randomly chosen slum neighbourhoods in Karachi to distribute soap, some with triclocarbon and some without. The two soaps looked exactly alike. They encouraged people to use the soap generously and wash their hands in these five contexts: after defecation, after cleaning an infant that has defecated, before

preparing food, before eating, and before feeding infants. A family was provided two to four bars of soap, with regular replacements. In 11 ‘control’ slum neighbourhoods, no soap was distributed. Instead, these households received pens and paper. Although the control group was free to continue using soap as they had done in the past, they received no supplies or health education. For one year, the fieldworkers conducted weekly visits to the families in the study sites to check if their instructions were being adhered to, and collected data. Analysis of the data revealed that the children in the households that received soap and proper instructions experienced a decrease of 50 per cent in pneumonia cases and 53 per cent in diarrhoea cases

compared to the control group that wasn’t provided with soap. What was surprising (but disappointing for P&G) was that using soap properly was good enough to decrease incidents of diarrhoea and pneumonia in children. The triclocarbon antibacterial agent in the soap did not provide any extra protection. These findings were stunning because it meant that even if you lived in unhygienic conditions and had access only to contaminated water for drinking and cleaning, using plain soap properly could decrease your chances of catching diseases significantly. This finding became part of a milestone paper that was published in the Lancet in 2005, with Bangladesh-based public health and sanitation expert Stephen Luby as lead author. More than three and half million children die due to diarrhoea and respiratory infections every year in developing countries such as ours. Using soap generously clearly ameliorates this condition. People have strong ideas of purity in South Asia and wash themselves frequently. But regular, proper use of soap is a must, as it enhances the capacity of water to solubilise and remove pathogens from the hands, thus helping reduce both respiratory and digestive problems. Just washing the ‘involved’ hand after defecation won’t wash you of your sins. 🇳🇵



“What do you mean I can’t walk on the roads?”



“Wait a minute, I gotta talk to my lawyer. This ‘jaywalking’ thing sounds serious.”



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

“Mark my words, I’ll be out within the hour. Nobody tells me where to walk in Naya Nepal!”

GREEN SCENE

For the love of birds

Nepal is home to more than 850 species of birds, more than can be found in the entire continent of North America. Some 150 are migratory species that stop over on their east-west or north-south migration from Siberia to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and even Africa. It is Nepal’s topographic diversity, ranging from the wetlands of Kosi Tappu, barely 90 metres above sea level, to Himalayan peaks above 8,000 metres, that makes this rich birdlife possible. Nepal is a bird-watcher’s paradise. And most serious bird watchers in Nepal will have used ‘A Guide to the Birds of Nepal’ at least once. In addition to being a perfect field guide for ‘twitchers’, the 1985 guide was fundamental in documenting the bird species of Nepal. The book was so popular that a revised edition was published in 1991. Even today, it remains the standard source of reference for Nepali ornithology.

The authors of the book, British ornithologists Tim Inskipp and Carol Inskipp, were in Nepal recently. In recognition of their more than four decades of contribution to Nepali ornithology, they were felicitated by senior ornithologist and founder President of Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), Hari Saran Nepali ‘Kaji’, during the organisation’s 28th Annual General Meeting this month. The Inskippes continued their research on birds of Nepal following publication of their classic guide. Their co-authored publication with Richard Grimmett, ‘Birds of Nepal’, is another sought after guide, and has been translated into Nepali. They expanded their research in South Asia, publishing ‘Birds of the Indian Subcontinent’ and ‘Birds of Bhutan’, and also contributed to the establishment of the Annapurna and Kanchenjunga conservation areas, which are among Nepal’s richest bird sanctuaries. Carol Inskipp has also worked to support many young ornithological researchers and conservationists through her association with the Oriental Bird Club, UK, and has served as the Chair of Nepal Rare Bird Committee. The good news for those who can’t find their books in the stores? The Inskippes have decided to upload all of their published and unpublished work online. 🇳🇵



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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A wide westerly front is sweeping across northern India and into western Nepal. The high pressure prevalent over central Nepal is deflecting this frontal system into Tibet, however,. Moisture will arrive in the Kathmandu region over the weekend leading to thicker morning fog and some cloud cover. Most of the moisture will be spent by the time the front arrives here so don't expect much by way of precipitation. Light rain may be possible on Saturday and Sunday, the first of this winter, with snowfall over 3,000m. Nights will get slightly warmer and the maximum temperature will fall due to clouds.


FRI SAT SUN

18-1 17-3 16-4



Not tolerating tolerance

Tolerance doesn't mean we should be holding hands with someone who has just picked his nose



**POLITICALLY
CRACKED**
Indu Nepal

As we were compiling a list of 100 reasons to love Nepal for a New Year special issue of Wave magazine (which shares the publisher of this paper), one such reason came up repeatedly from both our readers and editors: "We are resilient." Nepalis can tolerate anything.

This famous Nepali resilience has not gone unnoticed. A British friend who blogs at www.thehalfhog.com had this to say about Nepali tolerance, beginning with some social commentary from British comedian Dom Jolly:

"Hello! Wot? I'm in the cinema! THE CINEMA! Naa! It's rubbish!"

To make sense of the above you need to picture a man stood up in one of the front rows of a cinema hall silhouetted against the screen, which is showing a film that increasingly irate, paying cinema-goers are trying to watch. Those were the days in the UK when mobile etiquette was still taking baby steps and you can still see that now here in Nepal.

In the cinema, people will answer their phones much as they might do if they were on the street, or in their living rooms back home. This extends to concerts, meetings and even the pinnacle of business professionalism, MS PowerPoint presentations. The needs of the many are every time trumped by the needs of the individual.

Blogger Nepaliketi ranted about this a while ago. Her point

was "Let's not stand for this. Who is in with me..." "I'm in", I said.

A few days later, and a few comments later, this message was somewhat modified under the title 'Major on the major, minor on the minor'. It's good college wisdom: focus on the important things.

But I disagree that while these behaviours are minor inconveniences, in the big scheme of things, they should just be tolerated. To me the word tolerance sounds like a virtue. That we should accept, nay embrace, others' differences, seek to understand them with empathy and live together side by side the best we can.

There is also the less compassionate side, which says "You have your rights, do what you want and I will tolerate it, but don't bother me with it." The Dutch must surely be the world leaders in this. And of course, as a youngster I heard my mother shout many times, "I will not tolerate this behaviour any longer!" proving that tolerance can often be hard work.

But then there is a list of many things that we don't tolerate in the West and society is arguably better for it. Drunk driving, racism, homophobia, misogyny, child abuse, littering, breaking the law even when no officer of the law is watching, corruption. Eating with your mouth open, spitting, not washing your hands after visiting the toilet, pissing on the street, picking your nose in public, talking in the cinema, arriving late for a meeting. Do any of these too

frequently and you'll find the distance between you and everybody else slowly increasing towards infinity, but more likely someone at some point will let you know that you are being anti-social.

Is there a thread in Nepal connecting tolerance of, say holding a loud phone conversation in the cinema, spoiling the film for everyone, and tolerance of, for instance, the corruption or ineptness of public officials, spoiling the country for everyone?

Before I step further into deep cultural waters without the lifebelt of an anthropology degree to save me, I'll stop. I guess social behaviour has to find its own balance over time. I don't know why Nepalis seem to care less about each other in public. I don't know if it matters. Certainly worth further pondering.

Why do we have the stamina to put up with this? It is hard to say. But as we celebrate Anuradha Koirala's victory in CNN's online poll or Prabal Gurung for his first runway show at New York Fashion Week, we also ought to chide ourselves for not speaking up to make other things better. There is nothing brave about putting up with corrupt officials who wiped hundreds of acres of forest clean or politics that has come at the cost of new schools, hospitals and roads, or just the stench of the Bagmati River.

So, this New Years, let's give it up for a little less tolerance and more speaking up. Or, as the New Yorkers say, "if you see something, say something". We might just get some peace and quiet in the cinemas next year.

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Nepalis helping Nepalis

Unique charity launches the 'Rs 100 Per Month Fund for Nepal'



RUBEENA MAHATO

Two men, one an industrialist from Kathmandu and another, a social worker from a village in remote Mugu, embraced each other. They had been brought together by a unique Nepali-to-Nepali charity to bring education and health to disadvantaged citizens.

Help Nepal Network (HeNN) channels small donations from diaspora Nepalis to fund schools and health posts in remote parts of Nepal. At a function in Kathmandu on Monday, Siddhartha Rana inaugurated HeNN's new office by hugging Birkha Bahadur Rokaya from Murma village on the banks of Lake Rara in Mugu (pic, left).

HeNN doesn't use its donations for overheads, but its activities have become extensive enough to warrant an administrator in Nepal. The new three-person office in Chabel will run on the interest of a trust fund created by Rana's donation of Rs 10 million.

When Help Nepal Network (HeNN) was set up in 1999 in London, it had 'practical philanthropy' as its guiding principle: allowing Nepalis to contribute the price of a can of beer a month for the benefit of Nepalis back home. Its '\$1 a Month' campaign spread quickly. In 10 years, small donations have



Health post supported by HeNN in Murma of Mugu

PIGS: HENN



School built by HeNN in Chitwan

Where your money goes



e-Library in Koldhung School, Sindhupalchok

HeNN plans to set up e-libraries in all 75 districts and has already established 15 of them. An e-library has a central server with books stored in pdf files that can be searched and read on dummy monitors. HeNN is also building an orphanage in Dhulikhel with support from a Swiss charity. Dhulikhel municipality has supported the initiative by providing millions of rupees worth of land for free. Mugu District has one of Nepal's highest child and maternal mortality rates, so HeNN is working with a community group there to expand and run a health post in Murma that it has supported since 2004.

HeNN and Nepali Times
Nepali Times is proud to be a part of the Help Nepal Network, and urges its readers in Nepal and abroad to support its activities across the country.
www.helpnepal.net

built schools, health posts and e-libraries in villages across the country.

"Why complain that the government is doing nothing? Little things that we can do ourselves can bring great changes," says Rabindra Mishra, one of HeNN's founders and a journalist with the BBC (see Comment).

At Monday's ceremony, Rokaya was overcome with emotion as he recounted how he struggled to stay above the fray during the war to help improve healthcare and education in his village. He was attacked and detained by both sides. "I used to think aid only came from foreigners," Rokaya said. "Now I know that it is money from our Nepali brothers and sisters all over the world."

A group of second-generation Nepalis in London raised Rs 1.2 million running a marathon this year, and the money was handed over for school upgrade projects in Bajura, Sindhupalchok and Morang during Monday's ceremony. In the past 10 years, HeNN has spent Rs 30.23 million to help 46 schools, 19 health centres, and rehabilitation for flood and conflict victims. The money is

managed by local communities that also make their own contributions so there is a sense of ownership.

"The easy part is donating," said Rana. "It's much more difficult to put the money to work. People like us who were fortunate enough to get a good education and facilities have an obligation to contribute to society."

HeNN keeps meticulous records of all its projects and provides detailed accounts of where the money goes. Donors are also kept updated about where and how their contributions are being used. Says Himali Upadhyaya of HeNN Austria Chapter: "Many Nepalis want to help, but they want to also make sure that the money they give is spent well and not wasted."

After a decade of engaging Nepalis living abroad, HeNN has now started the "100 Rupees a Month Fund for Nepal", which will be run from its new office. Says Mishra: "Not everyone can be a social worker. But by having one plate of momos less every month, and donating the money to less advantaged Nepalis, a little can add up to a lot." 🇳🇵



उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

आर्थिक खबर

हरेक दिन बिहान ७:०० बजे



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Philanthropic journalism



COMMENT
Rabindra Mishra

The announcement today that this newspaper will support and promote the HELP NEPAL Network marks a new beginning for the Nepali media. The fourth estate is usually reluctant to incorporate charity into its regular activities.

Nepali Times is changing this with its association with the HELP NEPAL Network's 'One Dollar a Month Fund for Nepal'. This is the largest network of Nepalis that tries to involve Nepali individuals and institutions in philanthropy. HELP NEPAL tries to get people to contribute a small portion of their earnings for the benefit of those who genuinely need support.

This 'Practical Philanthropy' approach does not really burden the individual who gives, but will greatly benefit disadvantaged communities. Since 1999, the Network has established chapters in 14 countries and completed more than 70 education and health projects in rural Nepal. Not a single paisa of donations received is spent on overheads, as all administrative costs are met by a separate Endowment Fund set up by generous Nepalis like Siddhartha Rana, who has contributed Rs 10 million.

After working with and being trained by some of the world's best journalists for over 15 years, I feel that the media's obsession with politics and human misery is not fully reflective of that core value of journalism: public service. Decades of reporting disasters, deaths, human misery, violence and conflict have not always helped bring about positive change in society.

The idea of 'development journalism' in the early 1970s was a reaction to this, and tried to encourage journalists to go beyond everyday stories and come up with facts that would help policymakers address issues like poverty and inequity. In the early 1990s, the concept evolved into 'public journalism'. Practitioners wanted to engage the public in meaningful debate to help them resolve their problems. Both movements were attempts to achieve the 'public service' goal of journalism.

Nepali Times partners with the HELP NEPAL Network to support Nepalis in need

'Philanthropic journalism' goes a step further; it requires journalists to adopt philanthropy as one of the foundation stones of their profession. Many would argue that this is not the job of the press. Fair enough, but the press is not a political organisation either, obsessed with the corridors of power. Politics is central to society, no doubt, but philanthropy forms the foundation of all good politics and creates a cultured and humane society.


Philanthropy is not just about giving money occasionally, it is about humanity, honesty, individual social responsibility and caring for those who can't care for themselves. Society can't flourish without a cultivated sense of philanthropy. However, the media's neurotic focus on politics and misery has not always served those who really matter.

Journalists can no longer be just catalysts for gossip, they have to be catalysts for change. Journalism must try to find a balance between covering politics and helping society. Leading newspapers often publish pictures of dilapidated school buildings, but rarely is there an accompanying attempt to encourage a direct remedy. Would it be wrong if those newspapers were to put a note under those pictures to fundraise for the reconstruction of the schools?

Similarly, if each of the nearly 300 FM stations across Nepal were to decide to build just one library each every year within their broadcast areas, nearly 300 libraries would be built every twelve months. It would be much better for them to take the initiative themselves rather than just report on the lack of community libraries and expect the government or a donor to help. Merely reporting the absence of a library is an example of 'development' or 'public' journalism. Taking the lead to help to build a library is 'philanthropic journalism'.

This is not about mission journalism, it is about becoming more sincere about the media's core values. Just like entertainment, environment and sports, the media should carry a separate section for philanthropy. It should aspire to ensure that this section becomes the most read and talked about, and provides the most uplifting reading.

The press has the power to generate support, unite communities, and inspire them to act for real, positive change. Few individuals or institutions in society have that power and privilege. It is pointless just to talk and complain for years on end, and never act.

I welcome the initiative taken by Nepali Times. Imagine if every major national newspaper were to adopt a charity of its choice and promote it. Imagine the potential it could unleash. Journalism can be a driving force for fundamental change, to make people's lives better, and to help transform society. 

Rabindra Mishra works with the BBC World Service and is the founder president of HELP NEPAL Network.
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“India gave army training to the Maoists”

Kantipur, 27 December

कात्तिपुर

In his soon-to-be published book, former Military Secretary to the Royal Palace Bibek Kumar Shah has disclosed that the army knew about India’s patronage of the Maoists. Shah has recounted an incident involving an inspector of the Armed Police Force back from commando training in Chakrata, Dehradun, who submitted a report claiming that the Maoists had been trained in the same location a month earlier.

“The sand models that the Maoists used in the attacks at Satbariya in Dang, Mangalsen in Achham and Chainpur in Sankhuwasabha were exactly the same as the ones Armed Police Force officers were



trained to build in Chakrata,” the inspector said in the report. He was also informed about the Maoist group that allegedly came to Chakrata from Nepal by a shopkeeper outside the training centre. The shopkeeper

had remarked that the previous group had many women amongst them. A trainer, too, let slip the intention of India to train the armies of both sides.

India trained the LTTE rebels, the Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh, and the Khampa rebels of Tibet in the same complex at Chakrata, Establishment 22, which was built by the Americans. Shah has also disclosed in his book that former DIG of police, Lal Bahadur Thapa, was instructed to carry out a covert investigation in agreement with former King Gyanendra after they came to know about the Maoists being trained in Chakrata.

But Thapa, an expert on the Chakrata area, reportedly went missing and Shah was asked to resign from his post soon after the decision to investigate was taken. King Gyanendra asked for Shah’s resignation in October 2003.

Another sensational revelation in Shah’s book involves a police officer who served in the United Nation Mission in Kosovo. According to this officer, “A senior Indian IPS officer worked in the same sector as me and he told me that everything in Nepal will happen as India wants. He said that an army officer in the palace was sacked after he came to know about India giving army training to the Maoists. They mobilised Surya Bahadur Thapa, one of their men, to influence the King to remove the officer.”

Integrate respectfully

Editorial in Janadisha, 29 December

जनदिशा

Various models to integrate the PLA are being made public and each seem to express the views of their own groups. Reactionary forces and supporters of the status quo are threatened by the existence of the Peoples’ Liberation Army (PLA). So they are making arguments regarding disintegration and surrender that demean the PLA. The Maoists are resisting such actions. This issue is related to the benefit of Nepal and Nepalis.

There are five structures within the Nepali security sector. The Nepal Army, Armed Police Force, Nepal Police, and Investigation department are the traditional components, and the PLA has been endorsed by the interim constitution. The Maoists have already forwarded an open proposal to establish the PLA as a special unit for border security and is ready to recruit from the army or the police or even through new applications. This would secure their chain of command. Anyone can understand that the Maoists are helping the army integration process.

The bid to send UNMIN back is a conspiracy. It will increase the risk of foreign interference in Nepal. The already active reactionary forces will act to hinder the peace process. If this blocks the integration process, the country may have to face a civil war, as intended by foreign interferers and traditional thinkers. In fact, the situation now calls for the army and the PLA to work hand in hand against foreign interference. It is not right to look down upon the members of the PLA, who risked their lives to bring change to the country. PLA members in Chitwan have demanded ‘respectful integration’ from the Special Committee for integration, and no action should go against this sentiment.

Incentive treatments



SAM KANG LI

Pravin Dhakal in Naya Patrika, 27 December

नयाँ पत्रिका

The government has decided to provide full scholarships for postgraduate studies to doctors who work in rural areas for two years.

“This provision is under the incentive package aimed at motivating doctors to head towards rural areas,” said Health Minister Uma Kanta Chaudhary. He added that there has always been a

shortage of doctors in rural health centres because they prefer the pay and facilities of urban areas. But since the announcement, more than 200 doctors have submitted their applications at the ministry to work in traditionally neglected areas.

In addition to a regular salary, doctors in rural areas will be granted many fringe benefits including internet links, rent support, and educational provisions for their children. They will also receive salary increments and will be given priority for promotions.

“This kind of incentive program has been introduced for the first time to improve health services in rural areas,” said Minister Chaudhary. “We have separated quotas for ultra-rural, rural and Tarai areas.”

According to the Ministry of Health, out of 25,239 medical posts in government hospitals and health centres, 2,722 are vacant.

One voice

Editorial in Dristi, 28 December



दृष्टि

A recent UML meeting decided to go for a majority process if a consensus is not reached in electing a new prime minister. This has given the country new hope. The party leaders may have their own interests, ambitions, and judgments. But the meeting has clearly ruled in favour of giving continuity to the democratic alliance until the PLA combatants are managed, despite the unfortunately contradictory statements of those present following the meeting.

When leaders speak, they should be speaking for the nation, not just for their parties. They should also execute their parties’ decisions, and we should not have to be concerned about individual statements. But if these statements do not make sense, or contradict each other, then even meaningful statements become superfluous. Leaders should be aware of this fact. If UML does not want to remain under the shadow of the Maoists, its leaders should not utter equivocal and contradictory statements in public.

Prachanda: Buy it, brother, the constitution will be written soon.
Poster: People’s democracy
Bottles: Protest, Capture
Containers: Revolt, State Capture Tonic

कात्तिपुर Batsyayan in Kantipur, 29 December

A year of false dawns

NARAYAN SHRESTHA

The first day of 2010 was bright and crystal clear and I felt as if everything was moving smoothly. The birds were perched on treetops, chirping their morning songs, and a brand new sun was rising, almost as if from the gorge of Sanga.

The day was bright in so many ways – we were looking forward to 2010 with great hope. The country's New Year's resolution to its people was a new constitution that would protect the rights of all castes and creeds in Nepal.

GP Koirala, the former Nepali Congress president, was active in leading a high-level taskforce that was supposed to settle the disputes that had arisen in the committees drafting the constitution. Disagreements on certain major issues were anticipated, but there was also a general belief that the leaders would agree to move this process towards a definite end.

Nepalis were engaged in the debate of how the state should be restructured too (and which federal province they would end up in), and there was a real feeling that things would change soon. In the last week of January, I travelled to Gorkha, where I found people in teashops and marketplaces discussing the proposed new maps of a federal Nepal. It was exciting to see ordinary people debating their future and taking part in the new constitution drafting process at the local level.

Shortly after this, 4000 disqualified Maoist combatants



left the cantonments. It was one of the most significant steps in the peace process, and made many people feel optimistic about the successful conclusion of a just and non-violent settlement.

In March, the Sajha Sawal team and myself travelled to some of the more remote parts of the country to gauge how people really felt about the peace process and the drafting of the new constitution. I was curious to know whether people in far-flung parts felt any tangible changes in their lives. Did they have confidence in the entire process? Did they believe that their leaders and a handful of intellectual elites in the capital, hundreds of miles away, were really looking out for them?

Sadly the answer was no. The harvest had just concluded in Jumla and people were enjoying some well-deserved downtime, but their lands were almost barren. The Tila River flowed

All across the country, there is a real sense that the people have been let down by their leaders

through their grassy pasture lands, but to Jumlis, it was an untapped resource. No one here knew how to make the best use of the water to boost agricultural production, and food scarcity continues to haunt the region. In Jumla, it was as if time had stood still. People here had no sense of change, nor did they have any hope that their situation would improve. The promises that were being made far away in the capital had no impact on these people's lives.

When I returned to Kathmandu the talk of the town was that the new constitutional writing process wouldn't meet its deadline. The parties continued to

bicker amongst themselves. Meanwhile, the death of GP Koirala had people worried that the political process would derail. The Maoists called for an indefinite strike in May in the hope of toppling the government, but had to call it off in the face of urban protests.

On Sajha Sawal's very first episode, GP Koirala had said: "I want to finish the peace process and hand over the responsibility to my successor". Nine months since his demise, we don't even have a prime minister.

After Dasain, I travelled to the midhill districts of Syangja, Kavre, Gorkha, Tanahu, Kaski,

Lamjung, and the Tarai. Meeting locals with their Constituent Assembly representatives, was an opportunity to better understand the mood of the people. There was a lot of anger. "We want healthcare, roads, schools and better infrastructure and development," they said, strongly criticising the MPs for only paying attention to party cadres at the expense of voters. In Jiri, a woman tending to her buffaloes said, "I don't care about politics anymore, not because I don't understand what's going on but because I don't trust any of the leaders."

In some public and private conversations with leaders and CA members, I'm sorry to say that even they don't have the proper answers as to why the process is not moving along. They know what they disagree about but don't know why they can't sit together and figure a way out. No wonder there is so much anger, and growing apathy, amongst the people.

So as the year 2010 draws to a close and political uncertainty looms large, what of 2011? The Maoists are calling for a revolution. Nepali Congress and UML say they want peace and democracy. But all the people of Nepal want is closure.

I really do hope that the first day of 2011 will be much brighter than the end of 2010. 🇳🇵

Narayan Shrestha is the presenter of Sajha Sawal (Common Questions), the BBC World Service Trust's discussion program, broadcast at 9pm every Sunday evening on Kantipur TV and on the BBC World Service (103.1 FM) www.bbcasajhasawal.com

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The Donk isn't someone who counts chicks before they hatch, but as 2010 draws to a close I detect strong vibes that this country is headed for better times. There is a new dawn at the end of the tunnel, and a land of milk and honey (and electricity) awaits us on the other side. So what if we are chasing away foreign investors by putting a gun to their heads? It doesn't matter that power-cuts are soon going to total 74 hours a week.

Who cares that we still don't have a govt? Forget all that. The reason for my cheerfulness this new year's eve is that there are so many liquor ads in this paper. Oh yes, and also the news that **crude oil** has been discovered in Dang and uranium in Mustang. No longer can other countries (especially our neighbours) kick our collective ass. We will have oil, and if they don't treat us with respect we will develop weapons-grade plutonium, rig them up into warheads, and become a rogue state. It's much **more exciting than being a failed state.**

witnessed in its hard-knock life. This is what happened: **two boys from rival student unions got into a fight in a micro over a girl.** Their unions are affiliated to the two main parties in the ruling coalition, the kangresis and the eh-maleys. The NC guy radios for reinforcements and stabs the UML chappie in broad daylight. The UML calls in the marines and slashes NC fellows with khukris. The UML-affiliated union threatens a bund and starts putting pressure on the Homework Minister to arrest kangresi knife-wielders. So, the student union that is the fratricidal organisation of the home and prime minister's ruling party brings the capital to a standstill by terrorising anyone who dares venture into the streets. That's one way of ensuring no one flirts with your

girl, that's for sure. This is the party that doesn't get tired of accusing the Baddies of wrecking the country with its hurt-alls. The Ass' assessment is that there is no point blaming the ruling party for not being able to rule the country. How can they? Poor guys, even their own student wing doesn't listen to them.

The reason politics is stuck is because the politicians all cancel each other out. The man most desperate to be PM is Jhallu Babu, but the guy whose support he needs (Maximum Leader Chairman Ferocious) wants the job for himself. RCP could be the compromise candidate, but he has been cancelled out by PKD hinting to Lion Brave that he will make him PM. But **Unserer Fuhrer** has his own in-house problems as his effort to have Laldhoj censured for WikiLeaks has been outvoted. The long and short of it is that we shouldn't expect any breakthrough on Sunday, and it is likely that Macoonay will outlast winter.

Heard at the Army Party Palace the other day that the **Rajabaddies** are ticked off that all the energy they invested in public relations work by bringing the Para Commando back from Singapore to tour the temples has come to naught due to his high-profile attempt to **hunt Koirala in-laws in Chitwan.** Despite the attempt at damage control to divert the attention to the none-too-savoury Rubel Bhai, the perception of a trigger happy ex-crown prince has stuck. Daddy was also not very happy because the whole episode set back his behind-the-scenes maneuvers to regurgitate the monarchy. The only bright idea comes from Himani Nani, who is sending hubby to Halesi to take a holy oath to go on the wagon.

The Nepal Electricity Authoritarian union was having its general convention at the **Shitty Hall** the other day. On the stage was powerless minister Andhakar Sharan Mahat, Jhusil Koirala and union honchos. The NEA chief had just got to the mike to explain that the lack of rain meant river levels were down when the lights went off. Standing ovation, hooting, laughter and general pandemonium in the darkness. For an hour the generator couldn't be turned on. The mike was dead, but this didn't stop the endless speeches that no one could hear over the din.

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