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Late bloomer

In a week when government ministers and officials have been scrambling to accommodate a visiting multi-billionaire Saudi royal, it's ironic that the newspapers have made so much of what he might invest

in. Didn't the government tell him Nepal hasn't had a proper budget for four months?

Thankfully, we seem to be finally moving beyond this vacuum. All eyes will now be on the Maoist plenum due to start on 21 November.

p3 Prashant Jha on the wisdom of the Maoists seeing India as the enemy

p13 In the run-up to Nepal Tourism Year 2011, let us remember Sabin Basnyat and Chhewang Nima Sherpa, who gave so much to Himalayan tourism

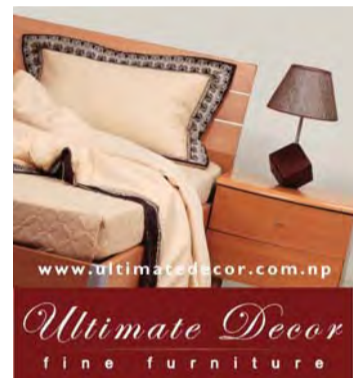


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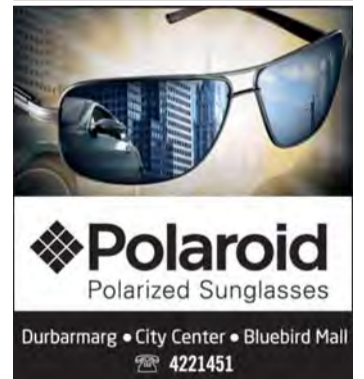
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DAMAGE DONE

If all goes smoothly, we will have a budget today, whether or not the integration numbers are fixed or a 'real' government is formed. Don't expect any more progress on either of these last two until the dust settles from the Maoist plenum that begins 21 November.

As far as our politicians are concerned, this is progress enough. The public, and the business community in particular, will heave a sigh of relief, and with a last brace of curses thrown in the direction of politicians in general, will get back to worrying about other things. Politicians will mouth platitudes about how the public interest was at the heart of their compromises, looking smug, as if to say, *See, we sorted it all out. Budget bhaye bhaihalyo ni, jaile bhaye pani bhayena?* (as long as you get a budget, does it matter when you get it?)

If it wasn't clear to everyone by now, it's doubly clear that the modus operandi in Nepali politics is to negotiate ad nauseam, and give the impression that one is really trying very hard, without actually being flexible until other factors force one's hand. In this case, the factor is impending economic paralysis (more cynically, an imminent delay in salaries to CA members and Maoist combatants). Doing so allows the negotiators to hold out for concessions as long as is feasible.

Holding out for concessions when so much is at stake may seem like standard operating procedure anywhere in the world. But the problem in Nepal is that the sense of proportion is all wrong. We're talking about the national budget here. While 'holding the nation to hostage' as far as the political impasse is concerned is a grave enough matter, the consequences of doing so by delaying the budget and having to make do with a 'special' budget are altogether more immediate.



KIRAN PANDAY

For some, it's a minor inconvenience, more moral than anything else, if the salary's a week late. For others, it's a matter of survival. For many, it's somewhere in between, but the cumulative costs of missed investments and knock-on effects can be far-reaching.

Take the delay in issuing tickets for athletes competing in the Asian Games, which was primarily the result of a lack of funds. Mental and physical trauma for the athletes could well have cost us medals, never mind the national humiliation. The effect on the sporting fraternity is lasting. Further, the National Sports Council borrowed from the Cricketing Association of Nepal, which was meant to use the money in question for infrastructural development. These funds have now been expended elsewhere. Even if the Council pays back the loan, it will be after some delay. So the development of a sport in which Nepal has a serious chance of excelling internationally has been delayed, too.

Take Nepal Tourism Year, which is almost upon us. There may be valid criticisms of the way preparations have been handled, but you can be sure that many such

preparations have been delayed or curtailed because of the budgetary crisis. There will not be enough time to make up for all these delays in time for 2011, even if you flood the tourism sector with cash now.

These are a couple of obvious, publicised, examples. Any individual who wasn't able to invest in something that matters to his or her future, as a direct or indirect result of the budgetary debacle, has already incurred a loss that is not necessarily erased simply if the budget is passed today. Multiply this by the population of Nepal, and you get an idea of the scale.

This is how seriously our leaders should be taking the budget. The budget, if they need to be reminded, is the sum total of expenditure of the state across all sectors of the economy. It affects every single Nepali, because all of us have to buy and sell products in the market, whatever they may be. Arguably, this is more important than who is in government. Holding the budget at bay, once more, is akin to suffocating the patient while operating on the rest of the body. It's nothing short of criminal.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

NATIONAL SHAME

One of the main reasons for this heinous crime and national shame ('Mumbai's shame', Pamela Sciantarelli and Eugenia Gabelia, #527) is many Nepalis' attitude - "Well, this is the problem of certain communities and areas of Nepal!! This kind of callous insensitivity and indifference has not helped at all. What are the women's organisations of Maoists, UML and other parties doing while many illiterate, innocent village girls/women are being kidnapped or tricked into this kind of slavery? Can't they carry out 'bhautik karbahai' on the traffickers/pimps?? Finally, shame on Nepal governments of the present and past. You could have done a lot more.

R Rai

- Michelle Obama will probably have most of her queries answered by the video 'The day my God died' on youtube without going to Kamathipura. President Obama will certainly agree with the 'audacity of hope' in it as well. Much more however needs to be done on both sides of the border. Perhaps female literacy is the main answer.

S Tuladhar

QUAGMIRE

What is the outcome of this quagmire? The Maoists are being cornered in such a way that whatever the 'nikas' they will lose face ('Last resort', Editorial, #527). Without any doubt, they are responsible for this mess and they should face the consequences: the consequences of their unwillingness to embrace the fundamentals of democracy that arms and gangs don't play key roles in decision making and socio-economic

transformation. We should congratulate both NC and UML for this fight which will and has to compel the Maoists to disarm their looters' gangs and be a civilian party.

kamal kishor

ATTITUDE PROBLEM

A great article outlining the shortcomings of the Task Force and the attitudinal deficiency ('Medieval mindsets', Damakant Jayshi, #527). The author at his best, as usual. Thank you.

Ram B. Chhetri

LAND OF SMILES

A meaningful article in many respects ('welcomenepal.com', Rabi Thapa, #527). People visiting Nepal must be made to feel welcome, be it with smiles, readiness to help or other gestures. While tourists may find hotel staffs good and cordial, the same can not be said about the rest. I often feel an air of snobbishness in the streets of Kathmandu and amongst many shopkeepers, not according the warmth to a tourist that I think he or she deserves rightfully. Approaching them without breaching the security cocoon that a novice needs is of paramount importance. Certainly, we need to know how to smile to a passerby, how not to intimidate people with unwise looks, and how to speak politely and cordially and perhaps how not to treat foreigners as mobile ATMs. It would only help our economy if we know and learn these basics in cordialness. The process should start from the airport itself where I see staff making long, grotesque faces of all proportions that can be found in the world. It is not too late to start making people feel wanted here.

Salil

CELEBRATE!

I think this is a thought-provoking article ('Whose festival is it anyway?', Artha Beed, #527). It raises two issues in my own mind; one is the issue of differing dates for the same festival, the other is the

issue of productivity. First of all the varying dates seem to be a function of different calendars being used across the country. I don't even pretend to know them all or about them culturally and have no wish to cause offence, but this must pose difficulties for interactions within and external to the country. Living in the UK and trying to interpret documents with Nepali/Sambat dates on them does pose the occasional difficulty, as does knowing when to send my relatives a greeting for a specific day which not only varies from year to year but also whether you are a Newar or not! Second there is the sheer volume of holidays which means nobody is 'producing' on those dates. Whether you see this in cultural terms or not, these are lost days to manufacturing and education which cannot be recovered. On numerous occasions across the year I try to get some school support or teacher training underway only to discover that the "schools are closed again, wait a couple of weeks and they'll reopen". They open and close so often the teachers and children must forget why the hell they were going there anyway! Overall this is about development, Nepal's development into a productive, self-sustaining nation. It can't be done when the world seems to stop turning on its axis for most of the nation for over 50% of the year!

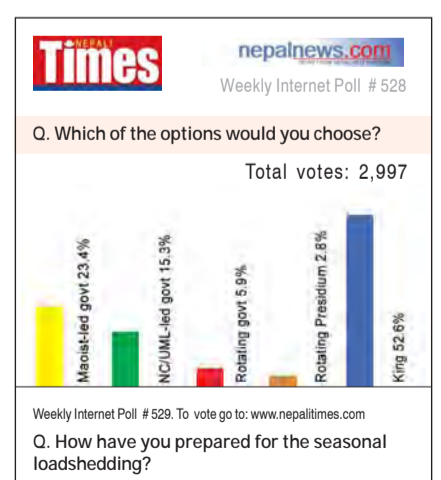
Dr B

LOMBORG'S MINDGAMES

It's interesting how after spending years feeding ammunition to the global warming skeptics, starting with his book, 'The Skeptical Environmentalist', Lomborg now wants to play both sides ('A return to reason', Bjorn Lomborg, #527). A change of heart? Fair enough; people can and must be allowed that freedom. But for Lomborg to now seemingly portray his advocacy to increase investment in alternate energy a novel idea and one

that is alone sufficient to address the global warming problem is plainly farcical. Increasing investment in alternative energy is good and must be done; but it is neither a novel idea nor it is by itself sufficient. Cuts in CO2 emissions are an absolute necessity. Mainly because alternate energy cannot develop overnight. Economic methods to exact a desirable outcome must be welcomed. Whether it is through cap-and-trade or something else. To put a full stop on that will make the efforts to weigh down on negative economic externalities quick enough more feeble. There is no one single method to address the challenge of global warming. And the 'pundits' commenting on this article who label investment in urban solar panels a 'waste of money' only need to ask a homeowner in Kathmandu who uses solar panels for water heating and actually learn something. Such commentators laud Lomborg's article, yet without pausing for breath, say solar panels are a waste of money. Lomborg, at least, is now advocating investment in alternate energy. Solar panels as an alternate technology are an early entrant in Nepal.

Ajay Pradhan



The notional enemy



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

GURGAON – Writing about the upcoming Maoist plenum from the capitalist hub of ‘expansionist’ India is not without irony.

Corporate offices involved in finance, trading, retail, consumer goods, outsourcing, software, and other services punctuate the landscape of this erstwhile village, now a metaphor for the new urban India. The sheer scale and speed at which a segment of the Indian economy is integrating with the global system is staggering. The new capitalists who drive the Indian economy, and increasingly its politics, are aided by a ‘democratic system’ where the affluent possess enough influence to change law and policy and call the shots between elections.

Foreign policy discussions have shifted from non-alignment to multi-alignment. In less than a month, the Indian PM has visited key East Asian countries to deepen links; Barack Obama came visiting, assured Indians he

loved them, and passed a subtle message to China through the emphasis on shared values; the Indian foreign minister then reached out to Russia and China in a trilateral meeting. And by December, all five P5 leaders (of the Security Council) will have visited India in a single calendar year.

While economy, geo-strategy, and internal security are all interrelated, Indian diplomats appear to broadly view other countries through two prisms. There are some powers that can aid the India growth story through economic exchanges and fill gaps in areas like technology, education, energy and infrastructure. These relationships are nurtured for their transformative potential – the US is the most prominent example. There are other states that can destroy the India story, and thus have to be handled as a ‘security issue’ – Pakistan leads the pack here. China falls somewhere in the middle, with a relationship of cooperation and conflict. Despite the hydropower, policymakers put Nepal firmly in the second box of crisis countries – it needs to be ‘managed’ for its ‘unreformed Maoists’ and the

trouble it can cause due to the open border.

More than others, the Maoist delegates who meet in Gorkha next week need to take note of this growing Indian political and economic might, and how Nepal is a mere blip on its global radar.

At a time when the Maoists should have been discussing ways to reform the Nepali state, thinking of how to create jobs, and take advantage of the big economies next door, they are fighting about whether India is the ‘principal enemy’.

Admittedly, the nature of the Nepali state is heavily determined by India, and different forces lobby with Delhi for support. It is also true that had India stayed neutral over the past year and a half, and not deployed resources and political capital to keep the former rebels out, the Maoists would have been in power today. The India-NA-NC understanding has been a key obstacle for the Maoists. But before that, it was Maoist arrogance that united its opponents. Since then, the Maoists have not been able to do anything to change the balance

of power in order to either get into government or push their agenda on integration and the constitution.

While thinking of ways to resist Indian influence is necessary, the fact that a section within a big party is proposing a ‘national war’ against India is truly astounding. Our currency is pegged to India’s and our macro-economic stability is linked to this; we depend on India for essentials from fuel to salt; Indian penetration in the Nepali state and influence over the private sector is immense; the kinship and cultural links across the border are overwhelming; there are millions of Nepali workers in India (who are not about to mutiny in the country where they reside); and the Indian state is at its most powerful and wealthy in its independent history. How do the Maoists plan to ‘fight’ India in this context?

The Maoists have been successful so far because they were in tune with the aspirations of the people on issues like the republic and inclusion, and they chose the right alliances at the right

moments. While there is resentment against India, and nationalism could be a potent slogan, to wage a sustained campaign and rally masses around it in a diverse country like Nepal seems like a tough proposition.

The most feasible course for the Maoists would be to get the best deal on integration and rehabilitation possible; write a moderately progressive constitution; claim the statute as their achievement or alternately, launch a popular movement, but only if the other parties back out on the basic structure of the constitution (federal, republic, inclusive, welfare measures); consolidate the organisation; continue fighting for their core constituency of labour, Magars, Dalits and other deprived constituencies; and let someone else take the blame for the governance mess. Otherwise, given the visceral anti-Maoist mood among the national elite, the desire of established forces to reverse the political transformation, and the shape of the new international alliances, next May could be more counter-productive for the party than this May.

THIS WEEK

Budget budes

The Council of Ministers on Wednesday endorsed the decision of the major three parties to present a full budget in parliament on Friday, following an amendment to the Interim Constitution. The Maoists, NC and UML reached an agreement on Tuesday to allow the caretaker government to present the budget. Earlier, a meeting of the ruling coalition of 18 parties had supported the PM’s proposal to present the new budget on 19 November. The special advance budget’s mandate ended 18 November. The new, full-fledged budget is expected to come to Rs 330 billion.



Power cuts ahoy

Nepal Electricity Authority has imposed 29 hours of weekly power cuts beginning Wednesday, citing decreased water levels in the rivers and the ongoing maintenance of the Middle Marsyangdi hydropower project. There will now be loadshedding in two to three-and-a-half hour chunks twice a day five days a week, and once a day on the sixth day. Prior to the authority’s announcement,

cuts stood at two hours a day six days a week.

Clean chit

The Parliamentary Special Hearing Committee (PSHC) Tuesday approved the nomination of three permanent justices of the Supreme Court. The Judicial Council had recommended Abadesh Kumar Yadav, Girish Chandra Lal and Sushila Karki to the permanent positions at the apex court. The Natural Resources and Means Committee of parliament has accused justice Lal of releasing a man involved in the smuggling of rhino horns while Karki has been accused of being close to a political party.

Inconclusive taskforce

The High Level Taskforce could not decide on land reform and provisions for land ceilings during their Wednesday meeting. While the Maoists proposed that no compensation should be given for ownership beyond the land ceiling, the NC and UML supported compensation. The Maoists also maintained that social justice can be provided by distributing the land owned by ‘feudalists’ to poor farmers. The taskforce still has to resolve 42 disputes related to constitution drafting, out of nearly 200 issues. The next meeting of the taskforce has been scheduled for 1 December.

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A bird eye's view of Bayalpata Hospital in Achham.



PICS: NYAYA HEALTH

Resurrection Achham

PAAVAN MATHEMA

Bayalpata Hospital in Achham is a busy health care centre. Every day, more than 100 patients come here with their complaints. Every week, about four babies are delivered. At any given time, five to six beds at the hospital are occupied. "We are always overloaded with patients. Some come from far away, walking many days to get here," says Drona Acharya Awasthi, Laboratory Assistant at Bayalpata. It is hard to believe that until last June, there was just an abandoned building here.

Nyaya Health is making the right to health a reality for the people of Achham

Bayalpata Hospital was set up by the government 30 years ago but even before the first patient arrived, all of its equipment was moved to Mangalsen, six hours away. "Ever since, the locals have been lobbying the government to restart the hospital," explains Bibhav Acharya, a member of Nyaya Health's board. "When Nyaya Health stepped in, it was the perfect opportunity for all parties involved."

Nyaya Health INGO was established by Jason Andrews and Duncan Smith-Rohrberg Maru of Harvard Medical School, and Sanjay Basu of UCSF School of Medicine. Andrews had visited

Achham in 2006 to learn about its HIV epidemic, and was motivated to form an organisation with several medical and public health practitioners based in universities in the US. Its sister organisation, Nyaya Health NGO, has been working to transform Bayalpata Hospital.

Today, the hospital is a 15-bed facility with a staff of 27 and two volunteers who work to provide free, quality health care to the people of Achham and neighbouring areas. The funds come from its partners and anyone willing to contribute.

While it was the increasing number of HIV/AIDS cases in Achham that first caught the attention of Nyaya Health, it now provides specialised treatment for tuberculosis, leprosy and maternity care along with general health problems. People here have


been able to access X-ray and ultrasound facilities for the first time, and the hospital's ambulance offers 24-hour transport services throughout the far west region.

"The most challenging task here is to provide expensive services like X-rays and comprehensive abortion care, free of cost. Sometimes the patients do not understand our limitations and the need to properly utilise costly medical services," says Bikash Gauchan, Medical Director at the hospital.

Bayalpata also provides Clinical Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) in collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health in Achham, where an estimated 60 per cent of children are malnourished. The immunisation clinic of the hospital runs in collaboration with the District Health Office. In

addition, Bayalpata is involved in training female community health volunteers from the neighbouring villages.

The working conditions in Achham are difficult but the hospital's development has had a chain effect on the surrounding areas. "We have lobbied to pave the road to the hospital, partnered with local communities to bring reliable water supply to the region, and re-connected electricity to the hospital," says Acharya. Nyaya Health has also installed a satellite internet connection, providing wireless internet in one of the most remote parts of the country. When it comes to staffing, priority is given to locals and the result is that 70 per cent of the hospital staff is from Achham, with the remainder from neighbouring districts.

Still, the hospital has to refer extremely serious cases to a better equipped hospital in Dadelhdhura, six hours away. Now, Bayalpata is trying to expand its surgical services so it can be a full-service hospital. This aim might soon become a reality, with the Ministry of Health's recent commitment to contribute Rs 3 million a year for infrastructural development, the largest government investment in health in the region. This may have seemed unimaginable until a couple of years ago. But it goes to show how a few determined individuals can kickstart a revolution that really does transform the lives of people. 

www.nyayahealth.org



THEN AND NOW: A nominal medicine storage facilities at Bayalpata (far left) have been transformed. The hospital now has well-stocked medicine supplies.

 nepalitimes.com
A virtual tour of Bayalpata Hospital

Princely returns?

Investors will invest when they are ready, but we have to be ready for them



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

If newspaper reports are any guide, the recent visit of Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal could have been titled *Prince in Wonderland*. Caught unawares by the multi-billionaire in their midst, unsure about what to ask of him, government ministers ended up falling over themselves to request everything from opening a training centre for migrant Nepali workers in Riyadh to investing in the usual mainstays of heritage sites, tourism and airlines.

The Prince's late-night stroll, which he used to quiz shopkeepers, made headlines for how the police forces had a hard time keeping up with his treadmill-honed steps. In the end, it turned out that merely being in Nepal was a good enough investment for the Prince. In return for his first-ever three-day private visit, he was promised this country's highest medal for foreigners.

Now that the commotion of the visit has died down, it's time to ask: just what should Nepal do when investors show interest? More precisely, how should Nepal market itself as an investment destination to investors with deep pockets?

Start with who we have: There are already a number of foreign investors in Nepal. Most of them readily admit that they are here not so much to grow their



KIRAN PANDAY

business at scale, but to earn a livelihood so that they can live in this country, which they have come to have affection for.

Still, talk to any one of them, and the list of business-related grievances – unclear tax procedures, nightmares at customs offices, corruption in the bureaucracy, political interference, weak legal enforcement, big disagreements with local partners over minor issues etc – just gets longer and longer.

Given the problems faced by existing investors, it's prudent for the government to start finding solutions, which can then be publicised to attract the attention of more investors. The idea of

going out of our way to find newer investors when the ones we already have are unhappy and may start packing their bags does not make sense.

Create an autonomous national investment board: Nepal can be an attractive destination for big-size investment deals, but not anytime in the near future. Much work needs to be done first. Investment opportunities – hydropower, tourism, infrastructure, etc – need to be researched, analysed, vetted, marketed and sold.

These sets of operational activities are best done by trained and experienced professionals.

Politicians and bureaucrats can help by lowering regulatory burdens, simplifying 'doing business' procedures, and insisting that investments create jobs locally.

As such, the first step towards eventually making Nepal an attractive investment

destination is to create an autonomous national investment board, accountable to a broad base of shareholders, including the government. Such a board needs to be led, at least at the start, by Nepali and foreign professionals with relevant global investment management experiences in New York, London, Mumbai and elsewhere. Such professionals bring credibility, competence, contacts and energy – all necessary ingredients to get the board up and running.

Prepare for a long road ahead: Potential is exciting. It fires up the imagination. But the very thought of engaging in brutal hard work over many years to turn that potential into something of value can dampen enthusiasm.

We easily get caught up with euphoria over Nepal's unending potential. But we do not realise that the potential can only be realised through painstaking, glamour-less drudgery that must go on for years and years before the rest of the world takes notice of Nepal as an investment destination.

The Prince may invest in Nepal when he's ready. Until then, our ideas and activities should be channeled along this line: what can we do soon to make Nepal ready for the Prince and other investors?

Luxury hire



Sixt, an international mobility service provider, has opened its first branch in Nepal. In addition to regular car

rentals, Sixt offers exclusive limousine services, as well as the services of well-trained chauffeurs. Sixt Nepal deals can be viewed and booked at www.sixt.com.

New cell

The new Nokia C3 has been launched. This model comes with Ovi Mail and Ovi Chat and is equipped with Wi-Fi connectivity, a 2-megapixel camera and a rich colour 2.4 inch screen. Nokia C3 supports memory cards of upto 8GB and is available at Rs 12,440.



Modified ride

The Next Generation i10 has been launched in two petrol engines: 1.1 iRDE2 and i.2 Kappa2 VTVT. The new 1.1 iRDE2 Next Gen i10 has ARAI certified mileage of 19.81km/litre while the 1.2 Kappa2 VTVT boasts a mileage of 20.36 km/litre. Both the engines are Bharat Stage IV compliant.



Bank online



Nepal SBI has started mobile banking services under the name Nepal SBI Mobile Shikha. Customers can enjoy inquiry, alert and transaction services for their accounts. They can also buy NTC CDMA and GSM prepaid recharge cards and make other utility payments.

Lucky winner

Niroj Thapa has won the Carlsberg Win a Trip to England Promotion 2010. Thapa has already left on an all-expenses paid trip to England to watch an international friendly between England and France at Wembley Stadium.



Welcome winter



The annual tradition of 'The lighting of the chimney' took place on Tuesday at the Chimney Restaurant at Hotel Yak & Yeti to mark the onset of winter. Original recipes by the restaurant's founder, Boris Lissanevitch, were served, including Smoked Bekt and Grilled Chicken a'la Boris.

The annual tradition of 'The lighting of the chimney' took place on Tuesday at the

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MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has emerged as the most flexible of Nepali politicians. He is ready to strike a compromise on almost everything to return to the prime minister's quarters at Baluwatar. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for other political parties.

Should the non-Maoist parties believe Dahal this time? After all, there is no lack of evidence to question his intentions: the infamous Shaktikhor video tape in which he speaks of the 'real' goals of entering the peace process, the tape from Khanna Garment vilifying Baburam Bhattarai and India, and the very visible contradictions between what he has said in public over honouring commitments made in peace agreements and his assertions in the party's internal documents.

With the Nepali Congress

Flexi-Dahal

KIRAN PANDAY

Chairman Dahal is on a tightrope, but it's best not to try push him off

refusing to stand down from the elections that, while failing to elect its lone candidate, have effectively blocked the prime ministerial designs of Dahal (who has been assured of support from

a section of the CPN-UML and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum), Dahal has changed tack. From fire-breathing, venom-spitting 'Prachanda', he has rebranded himself as 'Mr Flexible'.

The chairman's flexibility springs from three other factors. China has asked him to mend relations with India. Remember his Nepal-China-India dialogue proposal after his return from Shanghai? It was a ruse to hide his failed attempt to play the 'China card'.

Second, India has gone very public in turning the heat up on the man and his party, which they sheltered and funded while it waged the 'people's war' in Nepal. All these leaks about the UCPN (Maoist)'s alleged support to the Indian Maoists are very deliberate and are intended to unsettle Dahal.


The third and most important factor is the ugly display of an internal feud over the Maoist party's next course of action and the alleged misuse of party funds on a grand scale. The funds of the richest party of the poorest people in the country are managed by Dahal's close relatives. Add to this the question of the legitimacy of his leadership, which is popping up here and there, ever so softly. Dahal has been leading the party for two

decades without the benefit of an election. Talk about the hypocrisy of those who question the legitimacy of Madhav Kumar Nepal as prime minister.

Dahal, therefore, is under pressure the likes of which he has never experienced before. He knows he has to walk a tightrope when it comes to dealing with non-Maoist parties, his detractors within the party, and India.

Given Dahal's precarious situation, it might be tempting for the Nepali Congress and the UML faction led by MK Nepal-KP Oli to try to push him to the wall. Nothing could be more counterproductive.

The chairman still calls the shots in the party, since he controls its money and muscle. If Dahal can portray himself as a man cornered by an India-internal party rivals-NC/UML combine, he can generate a huge sympathy wave for himself and break free from the shackles he himself helped create in the first place. A teary chairman is very much capable of pulling off this stunt.

So the NC and UML should focus on the tasks at hand and concentrate on consolidating the gains made since the People's Movement II of 2006. An under pressure but secure-of-position-and-perks Dahal is a better bet than a completely humiliated one in taking the peace process to its logical end and ensuring the writing of the constitution by May 2011. 

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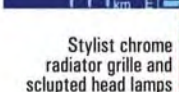


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DIPENDRA KHANIYA

Real people, real drama

RUBEENA MAHATO

The politics may be deadlocked, and the peace process may be stuck. But on Nepal's airwaves the people haven't forgotten what their leaders have—that all this was supposed to be about a new constitution. While political leaders sipped tea at soirees over the past month, a live radio discussion program has been using a tea shop as a venue for a lively and down-to-earth discussion about the new constitution.

Chiya Chautari, the radio drama series produced by Radio Audio in Kathmandu and aired on 24 FMs across the country, has gone viral because of the unserious way it tackles serious issues like the

constitution, the peace process, and reconciliation.

"People have a right to know how their constitution is being written. Our objective is to encourage people to take an interest in the constitution so that their concerns can be addressed," says

Nepal talks about its constitution in a tea shop

Santosh Khanal, producer of *Chiya Chautari*. Unlike other programs, this one avoids being preachy and eschews constitutional jargon and arcane legalese.

The easy-on-the-ear conversational format is woven

around a simple plot and is enacted spontaneously, without scripts. They started off in Radio Audio's studio across the road from the Constituent Assembly building in Baneswor.

There are characters like the hilarious Ghoda Dai, the optimist

communities and how to address them in the constitution. The things they talk about are everyday issues: the deterioration in law and order, exploitation by manpower agents, the plight of war victims, and the political deadlock.

The program has been so popular that the producers have moved it from the studio to outdoor locations, where it is now recorded as live street theatre. The sessions start with a tentative plot, but the drama is totally unscripted and moves along with the inputs provided by the audience.

In Chabahil on Monday, the actors voiced their displeasure at the failure to elect a prime minister and the delay it is causing in writing the constitution. The plot from this episode revolves around a frustrated Ghoda Dai, who has

come to the city to demand answers from an MP for not writing the constitution on time. A heated argument between Mama and Gharbeti Ba ensues about the cause of the delay, punctuated by one-liners from Ghoda Dai that have the audience rolling about with laughter.

Looking for answers, Gharbeti Ba moves around the audience asking for ideas. "What does it matter to us if the constitution is written or not? Nothing will come out of it. The constitution will never be written," says a disgruntled Govinda Shrestha, a driver watching the drama from the roof of his truck.

Most audiences are not hopeful that the constitution drafted will serve the interest of the people. Sakhi Chand Ram, a cobbler from Sarlahi, is fixing a pair of jogging shoes near the makeshift stage. Still engrossed in his work, he replies to Ghoda Dai, "What can be expected of these thieves?"

Such cynicism is becoming increasingly common and the actors know how to respond. Mama explains how the constitution will affect their lives. A 'referee' blows his whistle and adds in a lisp voice: "We have a stake in this, let's all participate in making the new constitution." By the end of the discussion, the audience is nodding in agreement.

Sometimes members of the audience get worked up, as did a young man who was following the debate between Mama and Gharbeti Ba, and burst onto the stage shouting, "We need BP Koirala, we need BP's socialism."

The drama often gets to the point where the audience takes over and the actors take a back seat. Quite like the state the country is in right now, the actors don't have all the answers. "We leave it to the audience to decide after we act out both sides of the problem," says Shri Prasad Thapa, who plays Gharbeti Ba's character.

"We don't expect *Chiya Chautari* to solve all the country's problems," program coordinator Shikha Sharma says. "We want common people who have no way of making their voices heard participate in the constitutional dialogue." 🇳🇵

Chiya Chautari airs on Radio Audio, FM 106.3 MegaHertz every Saturday from 1-2pm.



PICS: RUBEENA MAHATO



EVENTS

Balگو, an exhibition of contemporary Australian indigenous art. 21 November to 5 December, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048

Once in a lifetime, an exhibition of mixed media works by the Australian artist Donato Rosella. 21 November to 5 December, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal revisited, 4218048

Kathmandu International Theatre Festival 2010. 17 November to 7 December, Gurukul, Old Baneswor, for details see schedule on opposite page



Arpan (Shirish Thapa) looking at a photo of his girlfriend, Shila, in a scene from the latest story line of the BBC's *Katha Mitho Sarangiko*.

Shila's Tale in the BBC's radio drama *Katha Mitho Sarangiko*, which deals with mobile phone harassment. Airing on 103 FM in the Valley at 8.15pm tonight, you can also listen to the drama online on bbcnepalidrama.com

QC Awards 2010: The Poetry Slam, Quixote Cove and the US Embassy call for applications for a slam poetry competition. *Submission deadline 30 November, 5pm to 8pm, contest on 14 December, Jawalakhel*

Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, one-day program *Practising Compassion* by Geshe Thubten Sherab. 20 November, 10am to 4pm, 9808891048, www.fpmt-hbmc.org

Photos of Risk, a photo contest organised by UNDP on the themes of School and Hospital Safety, Emergency Response, Flood Management and Communities. *Submission deadline 24 November, for details and submission log on to www.un.org.np/nrrc/photosofrisk, photosofrisk@gmail.com*

Chagall in Nepal: The Magic of Colour, an exhibition of lithographs and original posters by Marc Chagall. *Till 21 November, 5pm to 7pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5552141*

Dreaming of Player Flags: Mantra on the Wind, an exhibition of impressionistic photography by Sandy Shum. *16 November to 6 December, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120*

Sanskriti Festival, jam session with eight young Nepali artists followed by documentary screenings, theatre show and live music by Nirakar Yakthumba and friends. *20 November, 10am onwards, Moksh, Pulchok and KCAC, Jhamsikhel*

The Blue Tone, charcoal sketches on handmade paper and textile by artist Annika Heed. *Till 19 November, 4pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, 5522307, parkgallery@wlink.com.np*

MUSIC



Golden Moments, the best bands in Nepal pay tribute to classic rock
The Factory, Thamel, 19 November, 7pm onwards, performance by *Abhaya and the Steam Injuns*
Bhumi Restaurant, Lazimpat, 20 and 21 November, 7pm onwards, performance by *Prism Band* on the second day
Moksh Restaurant, Jhamsikhel, 26 November, 7pm onwards, performance by *Jigme and the Strings*
Cafereena Restaurant, Darbar Marg, 27 November, 7pm onwards, performance by *Rustic Nails*
1905 Restaurant, Kantipath, 3 December, 7pm onwards, *all star performance*

Himalayan Blues Festival 2010
 19 November, Friday
 Madhuban Garden, Yak & Yeti,

Darbar Marg (Rs 2000) Workshop/clinic @ Nepal Music Center, Sinamangal & Kathmandu University Department of Music, Bhaktapur
20 November, Saturday
 Blues Big Bang @ 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath (Rs 500), *Midnight Riders (Nepal), Robin & The New Revolution (Nepal), Aghor (Nepal), Jose Luis Pardo (Argentina/Spain), Owen Campbell (Australia), Magnus Rosen (Sweden), Oliver Mally & Martin Gasselsberger (Austria)* Cafereena Restaurant, Darbar Marg, *Tere Estrada (Mexico)* Tamas, Thamel, *Baba Richi & The Ragas (Sweden)*
21 November, Sunday
 Open Jam Sessions at Comfort Zone, Thamel
www.himalayanblues.com

DINING

Ramalaya Tea Room, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese, also 10% discount on evening dinners to all *Nepali Times* readers when they mention this ad. *Pani Pokhari, near Japanese Embassy, for bookings call 4006589, 4006589, www.rde.com.np/index.php/tea-room*

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*

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth-watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest Resort. *Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, info@gokarna.net, Rs 1500 plus taxes*

Waffles promotion at The Lounge from 12.30pm to 4.00pm every day,
Vegetarian Buffet at The Cafe every Tuesday from 6.30pm, and

Arabian Nights at The Cafe every Friday from 6.30pm at *Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362*

Aqua Java Zing, soar high on a low budget, buy one cocktail, get one free, buy two hookahs, get one free, only during happy hours from 2pm to 6pm. *Ganesh Man Singh Road, Thamel*



Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which get a big thumbs-up. *Pulchok opposite Namaste Supermarket*

GETAWAYS

Club Himalaya, for amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend escapades, special package available for Nepalis and expatriates. *Nagarkot, 4410432*

Dhulikhel Mountain Resort, Palanchok Bhagwati Darshan Package with one night's accommodation in the mountain rooms and transport to and from the temple. *Dhulikhel, 4420774*

Grand Norling Hotel, country-side weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. *Gokarna, 4910193*

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नेपाल सरकार सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय सूचना विभाग

Aboriginal art



There's something innately colourful and vibrant about indigenous art. The Balgo paintings that come from the western part of Australia capture the spirit and essence of aboriginal life. Balgo art is known for its daring style, indulgent use of colours and powerful imagery. In Nepal, they are being exhibited by the Australian embassy

to commemorate 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The exhibition is part of the Australian Government's worldwide art tour to promote greater understanding and awareness of its indigenous cultures. It features works by some of the most renowned Balgo artists and will be inaugurated by the Australian Ambassador to Nepal, Susan Grace, on 21 November.

Kathmandu International Theatre Festival 2010

17 November to 7 December
Rimal/Sama Theatre, Gurukul, Old Baneswor, Kathmandu

Performances at 5pm

Monday 22 November

The Wizards of Oz directed by Irena Rajh Kunaver

Tuesday 23 November

A kiss of a spider woman directed by Deborah Merola

Wednesday 24 November

Andre and Dorine directed by Iñaki Rikarte

Thursday 25 November

Nightwind directed by B.J. Dodge

Friday 26 November

The Messenger: A tribute to the Life and Spirit of Nina Simone directed by Hazel Roy

Friday 19 November

Workshop: The Art of Transformation by Ronald Rand and performance of *Death of a scarecrow* directed by Adam Darius and Kazimir Kolesnik

Saturday 20 November

A James Joyce Cycle in III parts directed by Nikša Eterovič

Sunday 21 November

Let it be art directed by Gregory Abels

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Yeti Airlines in partnership with DRSP (District Road Support Programme) launched the pilot Green Far-west Project to plant one tree for every ticket sold in the Kathmandu-Nepalgunj-Kathmandu Sector, for which Rs.20 on every one-way and Rs. 40 on two-way tickets sold in the Kathmandu-Nepalgunj sector will be set aside for the funding of the programme. DRSP will be executing this programme in Baitadi District in co-ordination with District Road Technical Office and the Local Community.

Yeti Airlines in partnership with RAAIKA has launched the pilot Green Dhangadhi Project to plant one tree for every ticket sold in Kathmandu-Dhangadhi-Kathmandu sector for which Rs.20 on every one-way and Rs. 40 on two-way tickets sold in the Kathmandu-Dhangadhi sector will be set aside for the funding of the programme which is in Kailali District, Regional Head Quarter Far-West - Rajpur & Doti, and Kanchanpur area.

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NEPAL TOURISM YEAR 2011

Naturally high



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

What does a Nepali drinking milk (and getting the usual upset stomach) have common with a Nepali running up a mountain? It's not in the stars, that's for sure. But it may be DNA based.

About 7,000 years ago Northern Europeans learnt how to digest milk, a clear human evolutionary change. But people in South Asia never made this genetic change, so many suffer from lactose intolerance (milk indigestion), which accounts for

our 'pet gadyang gudung' after drinking a glass or two of milk. A new example of documented evolutionary change may well be in the field of high-altitude adaptation by Tibetans; and possibly (by extrapolation) our Sherpas, as well as other ethnic groups with Tibetan ancestry.

Recent, independent reports from the Beijing Genomics Institute, Case Western Reserve University, and the University of Utah have detected a gene that helps Tibetans adapt to high altitude. This gene is called Hypoxia Inducible Factor (HIF 2 alpha, to be precise), and seems to assist adaptation to high altitudes, just as Europeans avoid milk indigestion through a

genetic switch.

There are high-altitude dwellers in South America, too, but they do not seem to adapt properly to high altitude. In fact they maladapt. The Han Chinese from the mainland who ascend to live in Tibet also don't seem to do well. They may suffer from chronic problems in the lungs (shortness of breath) and brain (lethargy), primarily because they produce too much haemoglobin in the blood. Tibetans, on the other hand, seem to hold off on overproduction of haemoglobin thanks to the HIF gene. The intriguing question then is, do the Sherpas who share Tibetan ancestry also possess this HIF gene? If they do, does this gene play a significant role in their amazing ability to climb the mountains of the Himalaya? In other words, does the HIF gene give them a performance advantage?

A team led by Dr Cynthia Beall, medical anthropologist at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, USA and one of the lead academics investigating the HIF gene, is actively looking into some of the preliminary questions pertaining to the Sherpas. The answers could pave the way to some of the most intriguing findings in high-altitude Himalayan medicine in recent times. 🇳🇵

GREEN SCENE

Crafts for care

Another addition to the vibrant Mandala Street of Thamel is the shop *Recycling for Goodness*, stocked with intriguing products crafted from recycled plastic, cloth, rubber and paper. A plethora of items are available here, including sturdy plastic-woven stools, baskets and cushions, funky plastic belts, Christmas decorations, shopping bags, coasters, and iPod holders.

The shop is the retail outlet of Himalayan HealthCare (HHC), which opened 29 September. HHC is funded by and collaborates with the Spiral Foundation Centre (US). HHC products are also exported, and clearly a market has been established among global celebrities, whose endorsements are in evidence throughout the shop. The funds and revenue from sales go into supporting health care and education in Tipling, Shertung and Lhapa VDCs in northern Dhading, and creating income-generating opportunities for women there, such as weaving these products.

"Our approach is tri-pronged because we believe that education, health care and income generation are interdependent," says Sonie KC Parajuli, Senior Executive Officer of HHC. "Though income generation is a first priority, we prefer the recipients in our program to be educated so that they are able to take care of their health as well as participate in

our vocational programs. Thus we have incentives – those who participate in our literacy programs get bonus income-generating opportunities."

About 1,000 artisans benefit from such vocations. A plastic-woven stool, which takes a day and a half to make, earns its maker Rs 400. With their monthly earnings, artisans contribute 10 per cent to a credit savings scheme that functions as a revolving fund for loans in the VDC. Artisans from HHC are very much in demand and some of them have even gone to the Gulf to practice their vocation.

Raw materials for HHC products include junk food wrappers collected from Kathmandu's movie halls and streets, and rubber from old tires in garages. Says Parajuli: "We have made arrangements with Guna cinema hall and Jai Nepal to let us collect the trash and buy from independent garbage collectors as well. After collecting, we sort out the garbage, clean it and send it to our workshops in the city and in Dhading."

Items at *Recycling for Goodness* come at a 50-75 per cent premium, but they are of excellent quality. Himalayan Healthcare has been working as a social entrepreneur for 18 years, now you can be a part of their initiative. 🇳🇵

Shahani Singh
www.himalayan-healthcare.org



SHAHANI SINGH



KIRAN PANDAY

HOLY DAY: The Muslim community came together at Kashmiri Mosque in Kathmandu to celebrate Bakr Eid on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

HAPPY CHHAT: Devotees offer prayers at Rani Pokhari on Saturday morning to celebrate Chhat. The Sun is worshipped during Chhat to ensure longevity and prosperity.



KIRAN PANDAY

CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM: Nepali human rights activists celebrate the release of Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Basantapur on Sunday. Nobel Peace Prize-winner Suu Kyi was freed on Saturday after her latest period of house arrest expired.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This week dramatic weather patterns along the Kaligandaki corridor puzzled many trekkers on the Annapurna Circuit. Though the misty haze that ruled over most of western Nepal early this week had no effect above 2500m, trekkers were alarmed by the frequent changes of wind direction along with quick cloud movements that usually mark the beginning of snowfall. The satellite images shows that the axis of the northerly jetstream is shifting eastward and has positioned itself across the western Himalaya, where a huge mass of clouds has been deposited. This will bring the first snowfall along western Nepal and light rains in the lower Himalaya to central Nepal over the weekend. Prepare for chilly nights over the weekend ahead with cloudy days.



FRI	SAT	SUN
19-10	20-9	21-8

Roll the dice

People should be allowed to be waste their money if they want to



**POLITICALLY
CRACKED**
Indu Nepal

Rakesh Wadhwa – casino king, stalwart defender of the free market, and journalist-turned-novelist – surprised his invitees when he failed to show up at the launch of his own book, *The Dealmaker*, at an upmarket eatery in the capital last week. Kathmandu elites collectively sniggered when the police suggested that he might have done a runner before the event because they were cracking down on casinos, issuing arrest warrants for managers for letting Nepali nationals gamble. The casino tycoon was apparently being investigated by the authorities for tax evasion.

It was a perfect mix of glitz, money and crime and the media had a field day. News of men who had lost all their assets in the casinos covered the pages. Then came the stories of those who had resorted to kidnapping and murder to procure money they owed to loan sharks. Meanwhile, greedy capitalists were breaking a 42-year-old law by letting Nepalis willingly gamble their money away, not paying taxes on the money they



were making illegally, and, according to some, feeding deadly crimes in the country.

But if you follow the money, it isn't just going to the Goldfinger Casino in Goa that Wadhwa is said to be starting soon. Ex-home minister Bamdev Gautam, who tried unsuccessfully to keep the locals out of the casinos, has claimed that members of the police force routinely took bribes to turn a blind eye to

casinos. When asked to conduct routine checks, police would alert the managers of their impending arrival.

Gautam's attempt to crack down might have been motivated by his claim that the Maoists had a stronghold in the casinos. About 1,600 people, most of them Maoist-affiliated union members, are employed in various casinos in Kathmandu and Pokhara. He has accused then tourism minister Hisila Yami of

complicity, for protecting the union that resisted enforcement of the no-Nepali rule, which took to the streets to make sure they continued to gamble.

So the fingers are pointing in all directions. The question that seems to have fallen between the cracks is why not just legalise gambling altogether? After all, it is a voluntary tax on idiots. Reports state that 80 per cent of the casinos' income comes from their Nepali patrons. Like drugs,

porn and alcohol, there are choices people are going to make with or without the government's help. If they are determined to squander their money why not tax it, and use it for something better?

"Did you hear about the man addicted to gambling, who kidnapped and killed a girl?" asked the reporter who wrote a news story titled 'Casino breeds crimes' (*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17 November). Yes, and did you hear about the man who hacked his two daughters to death with an axe last week because his new wife didn't want to look after them? It is not the wife's fault the crime occurred; it is the murderer's lack of a moral compass that is to blame.

Locking down the casinos does not solve crime, nor does it prevent people from gambling. May I remind you of the online gambling sites that will be happy to take your money, minus the free drinks? In fact, the more we allow the government to intervene in our lives, the more opportunities there are for corruption. Only individuals can be their own moral agents. The government should not be in the business of wiping everyone's asses because people are too lazy to do it themselves. ❏

Marathon man

ABHAYA SHRESTHA

Last summer, a friend challenged me to run a marathon. Despite not being a runner, I took up the challenge and submitted my name for the New York marathon lottery, promising myself that if I got entry, I would train to run the 26.2 mile (42km) race and raise money for a good cause. In April, I received the news that I was in. I decided to fund raise for the Help Nepal Network, an organisation I'd volunteered with and contributed to over a number of years.

Training for the marathon was one of the most physically taxing things I had ever done: five months; three to six miles a day five days a week, and long runs of between twelve and twenty miles on the weekends. It didn't feel natural for the human body, at least not for mine. However, after many weeks of knee-icing, Advil and energy bar consumption, and the unyielding support of friends and family, I attempted my longest training run – twenty miles.

I crawled through the last mile and spent the next couple of days nursing my horribly sore knees. They seemed to need much longer to recover than implied by my training schedule. I stopped running to give myself a complete rest.

When marathon day rolled around, I hadn't run more than a few miles over the final three weeks. Queuing up at the start, I was anxious that I would not be able to push through to the end without



"You're almost there!" said a spectator's sign at the two-mile mark

my muscles cramping up or damaging my knees. What's more, friends and family had donated more than US\$5,000 to the Help Nepal Network to support my run. I'd be letting everybody down if I didn't finish.

Once the starter's pistol went off, I tried to keep my mind focused on the time and my pace, but soon found myself being pushed on simply by the cheering of the crowds. It was incredible. Two million people purportedly came out along the course. Little kids held up their hands, high-fiving the runners. I had barely passed the two-mile marker when I saw a man holding up a sign that said, "Keep going! You're almost there!" Not quite, but it made me forget my anxiety for a minute.

At mile eight in Brooklyn, a big crowd of spectators was dancing to the song YMCA, playing over loudspeakers. As the runners passed, they raised their hands and danced with the crowd. It was electric.

At mile ten, I heard someone shrieking my name. I saw a friend jumping up and down like a madwoman. She broke away from the crowd and ran towards me. "Good luck!" she cried as she gave me a hug. It was incredible how much she renewed my energy.

By mile twenty, however, I started to really feel the soreness around my knees, calves and ankles. My legs felt weighed down by gigantic rocks. Many runners around me had slowed down to a walk and I felt my energy faltering. I pulled out my music player and headphones for motivation. But the noise of the crowd drowned the music out. At the next hydrating station, I gulped down some Gatorade and tried my last trick. I counted

out loud, "one, two, one, two, one, two...", and focused only on putting one foot forward after the next. Left foot on "one", right on "two". It kept me moving.

Then I passed the twenty-five mile marker. A shot of energy coursed through me. The finish was within reach! I mustered up whatever I had left in me and ran as fast as my legs would go. 400 metres to go, and I saw the 200-metre sign clearly as I ran past. And then it was over.

I was a drop of water in the river of runners pushed along by the will of the spectators. I felt a strange connection to the people around me – to the runners who had given their all, the spectators who cheered the runners on, the kids who held out cups of water at hydrating stations, the musicians along the route, the YMCA dancers in Brooklyn, to the many faces of the streets of New York City and the people who populate them.

I expected to finish in about 5 hours. I made it in 4 hours and 18 minutes. The experience of running with thousands of other runners, of hearing the cheering of innumerable people along the course, the encouragement from family and friends, and the motivation to help a cause like the Help Nepal Network enabled me to exceed my own expectations. It was an amazing experience. ❏

There were 45,350 registered runners in the ING New York City 2010 marathon, including rescued Chilean miner Edison Pena and a number of blind and disabled people.



Stalin, our contemporary

TIMOTHY SNYDER

Eighty years ago, in the autumn of 1930, Joseph Stalin enforced a policy that changed the course of history, and led to tens of millions of deaths across the decades and around the world. In a violent and massive campaign of 'collectivisation', he brought Soviet agriculture under state control.

Stalin pursued collectivisation despite the massive resistance that had followed when Soviet authorities first tried to introduce the policy the previous spring. The Soviet leadership had relied then upon shootings and deportations to the Gulag to preempt opposition. Yet Soviet citizens resisted in large numbers; Kazakh nomads fled to China, Ukrainian farmers to Poland.

In the autumn, the shootings and deportations resumed, complemented by economic coercion. Individual farmers were taxed until they entered the collective, and collective farms were allowed to seize individual farmers' seed grain, used to plant the next year's harvest.

Once the agricultural sector of the USSR was collectivised, the hunger began. By depriving peasants of their land and making them de facto state employees, collective farming allowed Moscow to control people as well as their produce.

Yet control is not creation. It proved

impossible to make Central Asian nomads into productive farmers in a single growing season. Beginning in 1930, some 1.3 million people starved in Kazakhstan as their meagre crops were requisitioned according to central directives.

In Ukraine, the harvest failed in 1931. The reasons were many: poor weather, pests, shortages of animal power after peasants slaughtered livestock rather than losing it to the collective, shortages of tractors, the shooting and deportation of the best farmers, and the disruption of sowing and reaping caused by collectivisation itself.

"How can we be expected to build the socialist economy," asked a Ukrainian peasant, "when we are all doomed to hunger?" We now know, after 20 years of discussion of Soviet documents, that in 1932 Stalin knowingly transformed the collectivisation famine in Ukraine into a deliberate campaign of politically motivated starvation. Stalin presented the crop failure as a sign of Ukrainian national resistance, requiring firmness rather than concessions.

As famine spread that summer, Stalin refined his explanation: hunger was sabotage, local Communist activists were the saboteurs, protected by higher authorities, and all were paid by foreign spies. In the autumn of 1932, the Kremlin issued a series of decrees that guaranteed mass death. One of them cut off all supplies to communities that failed to make their grain quotas.

Meanwhile, the Communists took whatever food they could find, as one peasant remembered, "down to the last little grain", and in early 1933 the borders of Soviet Ukraine were sealed so that the starving could not seek help. Dying peasants harvested the spring crops under watchtowers.

More than five million people starved to death or died of hunger-related disease in the USSR in the early 1930s, 3.3 million of them in Ukraine, of which about three million would have survived had Stalin simply ceased requisitions and exports for a few months and granted people access to grain stores.

These events remain at the centre of East European politics to this day. Each November, Ukrainians commemorate the victims of 1933. But Viktor Yanukovich, the current Ukrainian President, denies the special suffering of the Ukrainian people – a nod to Russia's official historical narrative, which seeks to blur the particular evils of collectivisation into a tragedy so vague that it has no clear perpetrators or victims.

Rafal Lemkin, the Polish-Jewish lawyer who established the concept of 'genocide' and invented the term, would have disagreed: he called the Ukrainian famine a classic case of Soviet genocide. As Lemkin knew, terror followed famine: peasants who survived hunger and the Gulag became Stalin's next victims. The Great Terror of 1937-1938 began with a shooting campaign – directed chiefly

against peasants – that claimed 386,798 lives across the Soviet Union, a disproportionate number of them in Ukraine.

Collectivisation casts a long shadow. When Nazi Germany invaded the western Soviet Union, the Germans kept the collective farms intact, rightly seeing them as the instrument that would allow them to divert Ukrainian food for their own purposes, and starve whom they wished.

After Mao made his revolution in 1949, Chinese communists followed the Stalinist model of development. This meant that some 30 million Chinese starved to death in 1958-1961, in a famine very similar to that in the Soviet Union. Maoist collectivisation, too, was followed by mass shooting campaigns.

Even today, collective agriculture is the basis for tyrannical power in North Korea, where hundreds of thousands of people starved in the 1990s. And in Belarus, Europe's last dictatorship, collective farming was never undone, and a former collective farm director, Aleksandr Lukashenko, runs the country.

Lukashenko is running for a fourth consecutive presidential term in December. Controlling the land, he also controls the vote. Eighty years after the collectivisation campaign, Stalin's world remains with us.

Timothy Snyder is Professor of History at Yale University. His most recent book is Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin. www.project-syndicate.org



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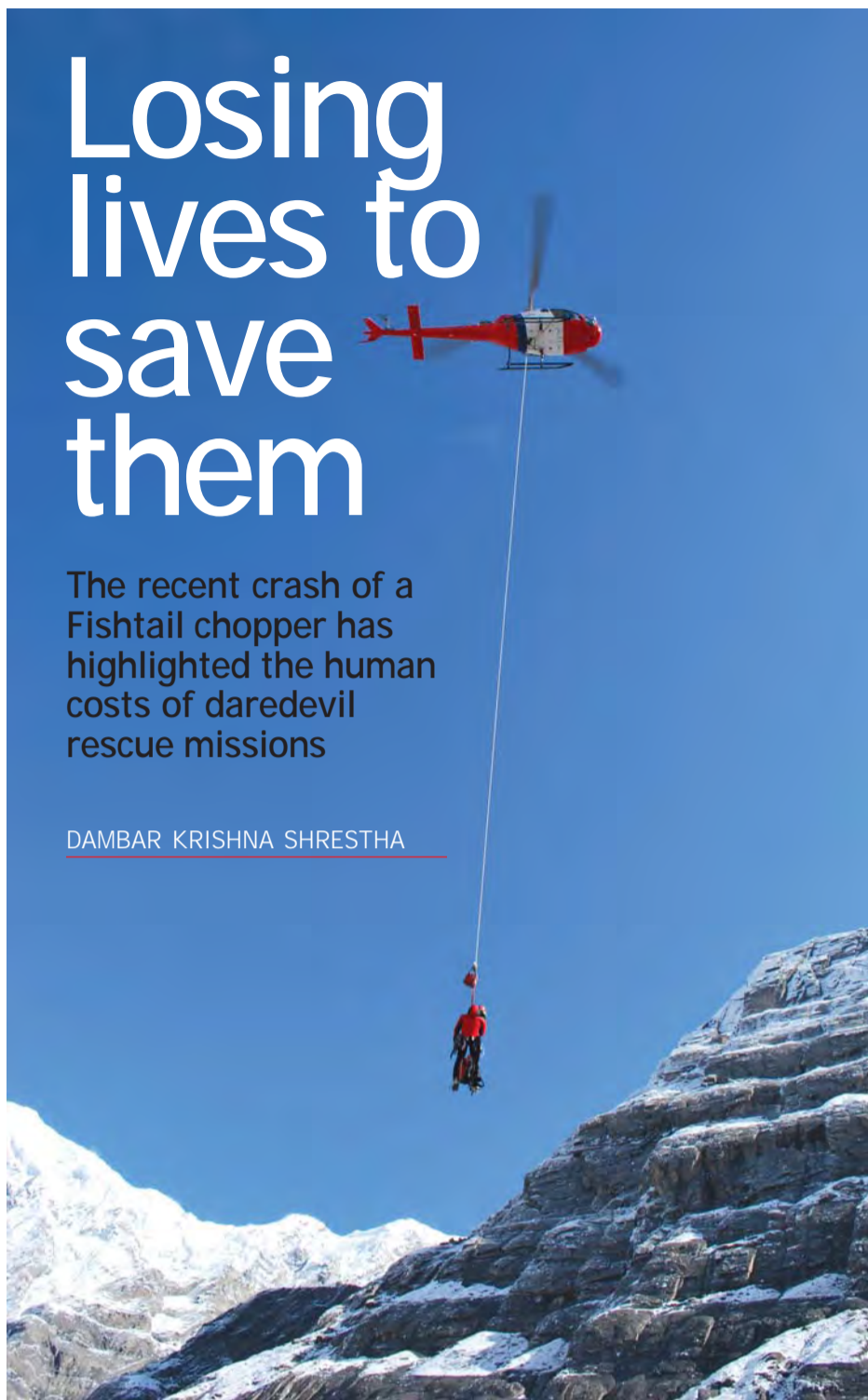
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Losing lives to save them

The recent crash of a Fishtail chopper has highlighted the human costs of daredevil rescue missions

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA



It was just what Fishtail Air's Captain Sabin Basnyat, 34, wanted to do for a living – rescue mountaineers from the Himalaya – but he never returned from one such mission to Ama Dablam on the morning of 7 November. In the process of rescuing Japanese mountaineers trapped at an altitude of 20,500 feet, the helicopter commandeered by Capt. Basnyat along with technician Purna Awale was buffeted by a sudden gust of wind and careered straight into the mountain. Though the Japanese mountaineers were rescued the next day by another Fishtail Air helicopter piloted by Captains Ashish Sherchan and Siddhartha Gurung, there was nothing they could do for their colleagues.


Four years ago, another rescue mission in Lukla ended in tragedy when a Dynasty Air helicopter crashed and killed Capt. Pembagelu Sherpa. Eleven years ago, Capt. Suraj Shumsher Rana lost his life while returning from a successful rescue in Lukla on an Asian Air helicopter. And two years ago, Capt. Sabin Basnyat narrowly escaped death en route to pick up tourists in the Annapurnas.

This rollcall of disaster compels us to think of the human costs of such rescue missions from the perspective of those who risk their lives to save those of others. It is also more of an indication of the extreme risks involved in high-altitude rescue missions than the ability of the pilots involved. While helicopter flights above 6,000 feet qualify as 'high-altitude' abroad, in Nepal even trainee pilots have to fly at altitudes of 16,000 to 17,000 feet above sea level. Capt. Basnyat had over 6,000 hours of flying experience and like many of the other Nepali pilots in private and army service, was considered an 'A' class international level helicopter pilot. There are 18 helicopters in service for rescue missions in Nepal, and close to three dozen highly qualified pilots operating them. Around 1,500 rescues of mountaineers, trekkers and tourists are completed every year.



(top) Capt. Sabin Basnyat's death was a loss to his family and the nation (left) Capt. Basnyat was part of the highest-ever rescue on 29 April, at 26,585 feet

Despite the cutting-edge technology behind a new generation of helicopters that can carry out rescues between 16,000 to 23,000 feet above sea level, and the undeniable skill of the pilots involved, the risk remains high. "Strong winds and the possibility of sudden fog can complicate rescues," explains Capt. Sherchan, operations manager at Fishtail Air. According to Capt. Pramod Lama of Dynasty Air, who flew army helicopters for 23 years, Nepal's topographic extremes raise risks and despite their advanced capabilities, helicopters perform less efficiently at higher altitudes.

While Nepali pilots are well aware of the risks involved, there's no doubt they are driven by a humanitarian impulse that supersedes personal concerns. Capt. Gurung says, "There is a desire to come back with those injured, ill or stranded in the mountains no matter what. The satisfaction of being able to do so makes one forget the risks." This is in evidence every day at the Fishtail Air office in Tinkune, Kathmandu. Upon receiving news of a sick tourist in the Everest region from operations manager Pradip Gautam, Capt. Sherchan prepares hurriedly to get to the airport. On his way out he explains, "We fly off to rescue sites within 15 minutes of being informed." 

Death on the mountain

On 23 October, Chhewang Nima Sherpa (*pic*) went missing following an avalanche on Baruntse (7129m), a neighbour to Lhotse and Everest. He had been fixing ropes below the summit on the north face of the mountain for an international expedition. He was 43.

Chhewang was no ordinary Sherpa. He had summited Everest 19 times, one short of Apa Sherpa's world record, and had completed many difficult climbs on peaks such as Cho Oyu, Manaslu and Sishapangma, as well as in the United States. He was also the brand ambassador for Nepal-based clothing store Sherpa Adventure Gear. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Following the abandonment of the search for Chhewang, *Nepali Times* spoke to his cousin, Lakpa Rita Sherpa, the first Nepali to climb the highest peak in all seven continents, and himself a 14-time Everest summiteer.

Nepali Times: What went wrong on Baruntse?

Lakpa Rita Sherpa: I am not sure what happened, but I have climbed Baruntse twice in the last couple of years. It's very technical in the last five to six hundred metres below the



summit. You are climbing on a knife-edge ridge with a huge drop on both sides, with very soft snow. If anything happens, or if you make a small mistake, there is no chance of survival. When I first heard the tragic news, I was speechless. Tears were running down my face, my wife and kids were crying beside me. It was a very sad moment for us.

Did Chhewang hope to one day hold the world record for climbing

Everest the most times?

Since he was only one short of the world record by Apa Sherpa, he had dreams to claim the record. In fact he was due to climb Everest twice in the spring next year.

Tell us about your experiences with Chhewang.

Chhewang and I had lots of great times while we were climbing together. We summited Everest together eight times, and

celebrating our success on the summit made for unforgettable memories. His main goal was to help other mountaineers when they were in trouble; we did this twice together, for instance when we helped rescue the Nepali climber, Usha Bista.

How risky is mountaineering as a profession, and why do Nepalis do it?

As a mountain guide, it is risky whether you are climbing the

world's tallest or smallest mountain. You never know how and when accidents may occur, even if you are very good at what you do. It all depends on Mother Nature. No one can beat nature. At the same time, you need to take care of your clients, and doing this on a mountain is riskier than climbing by yourself.

In a country like Nepal, people like us do not have many options other than climbing. Most Nepalis who climb mountains do it for a living, only a few do it for fun.

What will you remember most about Chhewang?

He was in the US, where I am based, a month before his accident. His cousin Norbu Tenzing Sherpa had invited him to attend a fundraiser for the American Himalayan Foundation on 13 October, where he would have met former US Vice President Al Gore. My wife and I tried very hard to convince him to stay on with us for another month and a half, but he said, "Sorry, I can't stay longer this time but I'll definitely be back next year." I wish he had agreed with us. Chhewang was always very humble, he was always smiling, and we will miss him a lot. Our family's deepest sympathies and prayers are with his family.

Spinning for consensus



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Interview with UML Chairman Jhala Nath Khanal in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17 Nov-1 Dec

हिमाल

Himal Khabarpatrika: Where is the country heading?

Jhala Nath Khanal: All are trying to find a point of consensus. Considering the recent developments, the country is moving towards a consensus.

How can you say that?

The meetings held in Hattiban and Gokarna have made headway. This will yield results if we consolidate our ideas and sentiments and give it a shape.

What did you discuss in the Hattiban and Gokarna meetings?

The Hattiban meeting helped identify the root cause of the problems, find potential solutions and understand the stance of the political parties. These meetings were crucial to sort out differences and build confidence. Both sides have agreed to conclude the peace process, institute a special committee, establish a secretariat and appoint a secretary. The Maoist combatants will be brought under the special committee within a week. They will be divided into three groups to be integrated and rehabilitated. The paramilitary structure of the YCL will be dissolved within a month and a half.

What is barring you from reaching a consensus then?

Power sharing along with issues related to the peace process and constitution writing should be finalised in a package to reach a consensus.

Then the dispute is about who should lead the new government.

The Maoists have exhibited flexibility regarding the leadership of the new government and so have we. It makes no difference who leads a consensus government.

Then why not form the government under the leadership of the lone candidate Ram Chandra Poudel?

This is not possible. Our party has concluded that a fresh process should be initiated as the current process is faulty. The Supreme Court recently instructed the speaker to end the futile election process.

The SC directive can also be interpreted in favour of Poudel?

For that, there should be a consensus first.

Is there possibility of a consensus on Poudel's candidacy?

I don't see any possibility of voting for his current candidacy. But this does not mean his candidacy should be ignored. Either NC or UML can lead the government if a consensus is reached.

What about the Maoists leading government?

They can lead the government only if the PLA is managed and a consensus is reached on a rotational system.

Can the parties reach a consensus while Poudel's candidacy still stands or after it is withdrawn?

It depends on the political parties. Withdrawal of the candidacy could take place along with the initiation of a new process.

You said Madhav Nepal's resignation would lead to a consensus. Now you are saying the withdrawal of Poudel's candidacy will help reach a consensus.

I never said Nepal's resignation would help forge a consensus. But Poudel's candidacy is one of the barriers to a consensus.

What guarantee is there that there will be a consensus if Poudel withdraws?

What guarantee is there that it won't lead to a consensus?

Some say that the UML does not have a political stance, compared to the clear positions of the Maoists and the NC, and that you only managed to undermine a government led by your own party.

We are leading the way towards consensus, as we have been doing since during the insurgency, and we have our own viewpoints on the peace process and constitution writing that the other political parties are now converging towards. As for the UML-led government, the central committee decided, with the agreement of Madhav Nepal, that it had outlasted its usefulness with regards to the peace process and the constitution, and that we needed a national consensus.

Has this government succeeded at advancing the peace process and constitution writing?

No, it has failed.



NAGARIK

Local efforts

Gajendra Bohara in *Nagarik*, 13 November

नागरिक

Whenever a woman suffers from labour pains in any of the 25 villages in Rolpa everyone thinks of Tija didi, a local female health worker.

Forty-year-old Tija became interested in working as a health worker when she interacted with a female health worker after the birth of her first child. "Eventually I received training and gained experience in the field," says Tija. She has now been working as a health worker for 17 years and is posted at a primary health centre in Mijhing VDC of Rolpa. Locals trust Tija more than the doctor at the centre.

Recently, Tija encountered a rare case. Tika Bista was brought in labour to Tija's home. The case looked complicated so she suggested that Bista be admitted to the local health centre. Because the doctor was on leave, Tija herself attended Bista's delivery. That day, Bista gave birth to four babies. At Tija's initiative, the villagers pooled money for Bista's treatment at Nepalganj Hospital.

She says that she appreciates the villagers' help, adding, "Everyone is in the city but no one cares for the villages, that is why I am here."

Kamalari to teacher

Rajdhani, 15 November

राजधानी

MAHENDRANAGAR. Eighteen-year-old Rima Chaudhary spent a year of her childhood as a bonded labourer. But now she is an 11th grader who also teaches in her village.

Rima is part of the non-formal education classes operated jointly by World Education Nepal and Backward Society Education (BASE). She runs tuition classes for around 35 students from class one to seven and uses the earnings to buy her own books and stationery.

Her family's poor financial condition forced her into bonded labour for Rs 5,000 a year when she was just 10 years old. But she broke free and returned home, with a deep desire to go to school. "I wanted to study earlier too and had told my father about it. But I could not because we were too poor," says Rima.

After breaking away from bonded labour, Rima

joined a nine-month course conducted by BASE and then was admitted into class four at the local school. She was among the top five students in her class and eventually passed SLC in second division. The village was astonished by her academic accomplishment, especially because most students drop out within a few years. "I want to graduate," says Rima. "But my father cannot fund my education. If I can earn, I will study."

According to BASE, there are about 25 informal education classes running in the district. Children who are unable to join a formal school or are so weak in their studies that they need to drop out join such informal classes. In addition to academic tuition, vocational training is also given. Rima's success story has encouraged others to enrol themselves into schools and value education, says BASE district coordinator Laxman Chaudhary, adding that the program will be continued in line with the interest of locals. And others like Rima will get an opportunity to earn as well.



Why do you keep reading the same news? Read the Ramayan, it's a pious thing to do.
Newspaper: No consensus

कान्तिपुर

Batsayan in *Kantipur*,
13 November



Date expired poison

Pramod Kumar Tandan in *Rajdhani*, 17 November

राजधानी

About 100 tonnes of expired and banned pesticides are lying in warehouses in Khumaltar, Nepalganj, Amlekhganj and the Cotton Development Board store in Khajura. These pesticides pose significant health risks.

The environment ministry signed an agreement with GTZ on 3 April to safely dispose of this stockpile of poison but nothing has been done. "GTZ should have begun the disposal works two weeks after this, we can't do anything about it," said Mina Khanal, spokesperson of the ministry. GTZ was meant to open bids in Germany for disposal.

Some of these expired pesticides have been lying in warehouses for over 30 years. They include such banned chemicals as DDT, aldrin, edrin, mercury compounds, BHC, methyl bromides, stored in liquid form in rotting containers.

Nepal does not have the technology or the expertise to deal with such pesticides, which is why they have to be sent abroad to be destroyed. European countries destroy such chemicals in atomic power plants as the process requires temperatures of between 500-1000C. Environmental organisations like Greenpeace, meanwhile, advocate that those countries that produce pesticides should take the responsibility for disposing of them.



KIRAN PANDAY

Finalise understanding

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 16 November

समाचारपत्र

The political parties should be drafting the constitution instead of holding inconclusive meetings. The never-ending prime ministerial election has been rescheduled for 19 November. They have come up with a new date but without concrete decisions as to what should be done on that day. NC has been claiming the lone candidate Ram Chandra Poudel should be declared winner unopposed while UCPN (Maoist) and UML have been insisting on a fresh start to the election.

The country needs a new constitution within the deadline. The economy is in dire straits as the government failed to present a budget on time. The nation should be run according to standard norms, not the whims of the parties. The deadline of constitution writing is drawing near but the political parties have different priorities. They should come up with a concrete understanding or the deadline will be missed again.

Speaker act

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 16 November

कान्तिपुर

The Supreme Court's directive to the Speaker of the House, Subash Chandra Nembang, to intervene to end the futile prime ministerial elections has been interpreted by different political parties in terms that suit their own interests. Since the directive was issued, the Nepali Congress has been pushing for the unanimous election of Ram Chandra Poudel as prime minister while the UML and the Maoists are demanding a new election process. Some are even demanding action be taken as if the Supreme Court's directive were an order. But these are only suggestions to the government on the part of the Supreme Court. The directive, however, has definitely given the parties the opportunity to rethink their positions and move in a new direction. If the parties want to take the country forward, this is their chance to work together. And it is the speaker of the legislative parliament who has to assume the leading role in making this happen.

The meaningless elections have made a mockery out of the democratic process. People are losing faith in the democratic



KIRAN PANDAY

system and the speaker's inaction about only undermines his reputation. Right now, the speaker can either initiate extended discussions among parties to seek a consensus or make use of his special rights to end the impasse. The speaker has even the right to suspend the clause in the parliamentary regulations that stipulates the elections continue

until a candidate is elected. Instead of expressing dissatisfaction over the apex court's directive, the speaker should make use of his authority to release the country from the stalemate. If the speaker does not act now it will ultimately endanger the country's parliamentary system. His inaction will cost the country dear. The speaker should realise this and take appropriate measures.



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Royal pain in the ass

Nepal may be a republic, but it still has a massive royal hangover. And any royal will do, even an itinerant Oil Sheikh. How does one explain awarding the Gorkha Dakshin Bahu (Revolutionary) to a Royal Highness from Saudi Arabia when we have put our own royalty in the doghouse?

If the intention was to lick the regal backside to **jhara one arab from One Arab**, as usual we failed miserably. Sri Punch Alwaleed Bin Talaal and Amira threatened to fly out immediately to Bhutan when they heard at the hotel that the medals were not ready yet. This was republican Nepal's new honour and due to the usual delays known as the MRP Syndrome the medal and sash hadn't been finished by the time the Shake got here. Rumour has it the civil servants in the concerned ministry dragged their feet purposely because they rightly asked: "Who dis guy, and why he get medal?" Bhutan being still a monarchy, and a country that has developed buttering dignitaries to a fine art, the Mr and Mrs Sheikh will probably be more impressed.



However, the danger now is that the guy may be back collect his award, and we will close down our airport again for the whole day.

ॐ

That's it. Enough is enough. We used to inflict monstrous traffic jams on ourselves everytime our royalty travelled anywhere, now we do it when imported royalty come in and out. Who decides these things anyway? Time to stop closing down the airport every time a domestic or alien

VIP is flying in or out. We should also wrest control of the **Berry Berry Important People** building at the airport away from the army and hand it over to a civilian authority. In fact, while we are at it why not convert that royal-era edifice into the domestic terminal and demolish the current domesticated terminal because it is such a health hazard. And while we are still at it, let's also hand over the Maiti Ghar to Bhadrakali shortcut back to the people and reduce the traffic

congestion. The ex-royal army should in fact return the public property it has seized in Tundikhel over the past three decades, and set an example for the Maobaddies.

ॐ

It's not that we haven't got ideas to end the political deadlock in this country. The Hatiban summit came up with four: revolving prime ministership, revolver prime ministership or revolting prime ministership. One of the three should do the trick.

ॐ

Just as power came out of the barrel of the gun, today in the Baddie party power comes from whoever controls the money. And Awesome has made sure that the money bags are all loyal to him. They can make their millions as long as they pay a tithe to the party, and this is going to buy him majority support at the Gorkha plenum. What this means is that the party is now in control of warlords up to their necks in crime and corruption. BRB alludes to this tangentially in his plenum report, but even he knows how dangerous it is tell it like it is.

ॐ

While we are all distracted by the so-called feud in the Maobaddie hierarchy and Lotus Flower being **caught between a doctor and a baidya** in Gorkha, no one has noticed that all three position papers of PKD, BRB and MBK say no way Jose to giving up the PLA/YCL and there is no word about the party giving up extortion and violence. The plenum is going to end with PKD and BRB patching up because both agree the peace process needs to be concluded so the party can make a push to win two-thirds of votes in the next general election and rule happily ever after.

ॐ

And this just in: Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Prakash Man Singh and Bishnu Poudel called to meet the mandarins at British Govt's Stabilisation Unit, re. But when they heard a receptionist answering the phone: "Hello Stab U, how can I help?, they hung up and quickly returned home.



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