

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.
— Albert Einstein

No place for praise

It is apparent that Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal came to be top executive post on the basis of the secret seven-point deal with the Maoist chief. That was a mission accomplished as far as PM Khanal is concerned. But, all that talk of consensus and the formation of a national consensus government have come but a cropper. There is no achievement that he can boast of in over six months that he has been at the helm of state affairs. He had that grand idea that working in partnership with the UCPN (Maoist) would assist the peace process in coming to its logical conclusion. Howsoever the prime minister may have thought that his strategy would work with the Maoists giving up their fascination for arms and army, but that has not happened. And PM Khanal's failure in state affairs is plain and clear, particularly it also is a downturn for his pet theory that the Maoists can be made to abandon their obsession for retaining their control over their arms and army, by working together with them. However, he has not been able to see through the stratagem that the Maoists have cleverly designed, one being the mysterious seven-point deal that propelled Khanal to become the prime minister.

The all-round failure of PM Khanal is obvious in that the government that he leads has failed to carry forward the peace process, and relief to the people

Having nothing to count on as a success story, it is time for Khanal to move leaving the prime minister's seat

too has not materialised. The integration and rehabilitation has been stuck up in the maze of intricacies emanating from the non-cooperation of the Maoists. PM Khanal had banked on his design of working together with the Maoists to make them end their military structure, but it did not work out the way he had wanted. The events that unfolded were too much for his ideas to notch up a scoop. Herein, it would be worthwhile going back to the 12-point agreement between the seven-party alliance and the CPN (Maoist), which was responsible for bringing the latter into the political mainstream. Later on, a four-phase political process had been visualised to complete the tasks in hand, namely, the peace process and statute-drafting. But, though democracy was ushered in and the republic declared, the peace process is stationary, while the works on drafting the constitution has hit the roadblock. And, only a mere three weeks remain for the extended term of the Constituent Assembly (CA) to end on August 31.

That PM Khanal failed in the implementation aspect of his theory is all too obvious as the Maoists want to retain their control over the arms and army by not taking the integration and rehabilitation of the former Maoist fighters too seriously. That may be the reason for the Maoists' displeasure with PM Khanal for not giving full support to their moves. Having nothing to count on as a success story, it is time for him to move leaving the prime minister's seat. It is a foregone conclusion that the Maoists played with the trust that PM Khanal had placed on them, and that has been his failure. More than anything, secret deals create fertile grounds for further degradation of moral values, which are essential but not present in many of our political leaders.

For the better

The Department of Education has banned the use of cell phones, junk food and plastic bags in schools, including 10+2 level, by issuing a code of conduct to that effect. This is indeed a laudable move for they are affecting the serious teaching-learning environment of the schools. Students can be seen using mobiles in classrooms, which is not congenial for studies as they cause distractions. Some schools confiscate the mobiles used by students in class, as the are not supposed to bring mobiles to schools in the first place. However, now that their use in schools has been prohibited, it would be easier for the school authorities to take action against students using mobiles in the school premises.

Similarly, the ban imposed on plastic bags would go a long way in keeping the environment clean and healthy. The banning of junk foods in schools also needs to be commended for consuming such food-stuffs is not healthy. Besides, children pester their guardians to buy them such food that are not only harmful to health, but also expensive. That the government has received support in this endeavour from the schools augurs well for the whole exercise.

Poor government-donor coordination

Matter to be concerned about



There is an urgent call for the Government of Nepal to respond immediately to ensure the resumption of critical life-saving services, and protect the rights of people who use drugs, which is a crucial step in creating a robust AIDS response in the country

donors led by the World Bank (WB). In spite of the significant financial resources invested, it is disturbing to find that people who use drugs are faced with a drought in services. The fear is compounded while there is no hope seen in the immediate horizon of smooth transition of ser-

vices as promised by WB, pooled partners and Ministry of Health and Population. There is serious concern regarding the escalating public health crisis in Nepal due to the loss of resources and poor coordination among donors to ensure the smooth transition to a health SWAP approach

Injecting drug users (IDUs) are the major HIV epidemic drivers in Nepal. Since the country's HIV epidemic is still concentrated in the most at risk population (MARPs) groups, the major programs designed and implemented targeting these groups are the only and most effective way to control it from spreading among the general population. According to the CBS report (2007), 61.4% among the drug users inject drugs, and 29% of them share needles, putting them in a more vulnerable situation.

The HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C (HCV) epidemics have highlighted the urgent need to involve people who use drugs, as well as the importance of "understand[ing] more about how the injecting drug user community functioned, in order to understand the nature of risk and to plan interventions." In addition to forming their own organizations, people who use drugs have also been instrumental in establishing the first harm reduction programs in a number of countries, including the very first needle and syringe exchange program, which was set up as a hepatitis B prevention measure by people who use drugs.

The user groups have

been agents of social change, who have altered the landscape in relation to every aspect of our perception of injecting drug use in the country.

Harm reduction (HR) program aims to reduce the health, social and economic harms associated with the use of psychoactive substances. It is the alternative solution to address HIV epidemic among the IDUs. However, the HR service coverage in Nepal is alarmingly low. Due to our heavy dependence on the external development partners for HR programs, oftentimes, the sustainability of funding for AIDS and harm reduction is unclear, uncertain and unpredictable. This has led to frequent interruption in the past and present. Discontinuation of these effective, high coverage sites to which people have responded well, will jeopardize our overall health gains of the past decade.

The HIV response in Nepal, which includes critical harm reduction programs and HIV services for people who use drugs, is under threat due to a shortage of resources after July 15, 2011.

Nepal is receiving up to USD 70 million over the next 5 years from the Global Fund and Health SWAP

TOPICS

Thoughts on friends

NEERAJ SUBEDI

We have childhood friends through our school years. Some remain in our life, others take a different path and gradually drift away as time passes. Yet, the time they spent together in life is no less valuable. The loss of communication just happens. Life takes many twist and turns. Some are of our own choosing, other choices are simply made for us. Hopefully, there will be a few friends in our life who are constant. Cameras may be there for a moment, but I believe every person who crosses our path does it for a reason. We may never know just what the reason is. May be we were there in their life to teach them a life lesson, possibly they are for us.

I have had many friends who have come and gone. There is no real reason

for many friends leaving. I have had two best friends in my life: someone whom I can completely confide in. I thought I had that in my friend Sagar. I was fooled, I was blindsided by his honesty of a situation that just crushed my heart.

I utterly lost all value of friendship when he simply said "I don't believe you". Belief in people is a valuable training of friendship. I didn't know how to respond to his frankness, except by letting our friendship down.

When a person is more concerned about himself/herself, and not a bit in the loved ones, that's when: I stop caring myself. It's tough to acknowledge this, but eventually that happens to everyone once in their life time. For me, it's like my life story.

To lose the value of a friendship can be a harsh and cruel lesson in life, but

it is one we all learn from very early on in our childhood.

At school, we make and break friendships on a daily basis. How many of us have heard our parents telling us, as they wipe away tears, that all will be forgotten tomorrow and we will be fast friends again?

How many times have statements like 'if they were really your friends then...', followed not far behind with 'a real friend wouldn't do...' So, what is a real friend, and why does it hurt when the value of that relationship diminishes?

Love your friends, value them. A true friend is hard to find. Just remember that, when a friend starts bringing you down and infringing on your ability to grow. They are no longer valuable to you. Sometimes, as hard as it may be, you need to break that friendship.

CARTOON



CREDOS

The Mess of Pottage – VII

Resentment ranked against the sister who had left her alone to meet the exhausting burdens of their parents' illness and brother's drinking—a sister who had taken care of herself and her own family, regardless. Worse than resentment smoldered against the father, a dull, deadening enemy, born in the hateful hours of his odious, but helpless, dementia. Burning deep was an unappeased protest that, instead of the normal life and pleasures and opportunities of other girls, she had been chained to his objectionable presence.

Treatment was undertaken, based upon a clear conception of her moral, mental and physical needs. Seven months of intensive right-living were enjoined. The greatest difficulty was found in compelling restraint from food excesses. The love for good things to eat was theoretically shelved, but, practically, the forces of desire and habit seemed insurmountable. Her craving for "good eats" now and then discouraged her resolutions and she periodically broke over the rigid hospital regimen. But she was helped in every phase of her living. The skin cleared; a hint of the roses returned; twenty-five pounds of more than useless weight melted away and

and Global Fund programs. Prevailing facts like the lack of coordinated efforts among the different stakeholders like Ministry of Home Affairs, UNODC, UNDP, and DFID programs are being implemented in fragments, which directly affects the impact of the programs also needs to be addressed.

The life or death decisions about the concerned target groups are being made without their active involvement. Nepalese drug using communities have played a crucial role in the AIDS response from the earliest stages of the epidemic in Nepal, as envisioned by the international policy mandates, including Treatment 2.0 by UNAIDS and Community Systems Strengthening framework (CSS) by the Global Fund which underpins the importance of supporting communities to play a central role in the overall AIDS response.

Currently, IDUs Advocacy Task Force, NEPAL, has been organizing advocacy at various levels. During a recent advocacy program, the unjustified arrests of user activists who were demanding immediate service, along with mounting human rights violation of people, is unjustifiable. Rather than coming closer

to ensuring smooth transition of services for people who use drugs, increasing human rights violation will only keep the country one step behind in achieving the millennium development health goals for the people who use drugs.

There is no doubt that the overall volume of spending on HIV related harm reduction in Nepal is still small and nowhere near proportionate to the need. We encourage the Government of Nepal, external development partners and UN agencies to invest more on evidence-based interventions and make resources available for drug and HIV services for people who use drugs, and make it proportionate to the needs of the country.

There is an urgent call for the Government of Nepal to respond immediately to ensure the resumption of critical life-saving services, and protect the rights of people who use drugs which is crucial step in creating robust AIDS response in the country and, external development partners including UNAIDS, UNDP and UNODC to be proactive and responsive to the situation, and demonstrate a pragmatic approach in finding a resolution of this crisis.

Advocacy Taskforce

BLOG SURF

Guest-list

Got a large list of friends and starting a party? If you want to narrow the numbers, read this!

Find out how many people you can invite. This is an important factor to consider when choosing the potential guests. Always consider the activities and theme of the party, when picking a specific group size. Remember: a long party works better with fewer people. That way, you can avoid drama at the party (people get ram-bunctious after a while). Also consider the size of your party space, and how many people you'll actually need to get the party running efficiently. A bowling party, for example, calls for



many guests. However, a simple sleepover may only call for a few friends. If you're a child, speak with your parents about this, and work out an agreement. Also decide if it will be girl/boy oriented. Many people of the female gender tend to have parties along with other girls, completely eliminating boys altogether (boys do this too; eliminating girls from their parties). There are positive and negative sides to this. — partyinvite.com

LETTERS

Countdown begins

Considering the ongoing snail-paced political progress during the last two months of the CA's three month extension, there does not seem much hope of the peace process and the drafting of the new constitution being completed by August 31. The Big Three spent the last two months merely on power games, and interpreting their five-point deal in their own ways. Now, the NC is continuously obstructing the house for the last one week asking PM Khanal to follow the five-point deal, and resign accordingly by August 13. His statement that was supposed to be read out by Deputy PM Bharat M. Adhikari yesterday afternoon in the parliament could not be done due to the last hour



changes in the draft as reported in "Maoists foil PM's House address bid" (THT, August 9, Page 1).

The terms "national" or "consensus" government and "new Nepal" have been political jargons of our political leaders. Is it possible to form a national or consensus government of 30

parties having their own political ideologies and manifestoes? Are the Big Three capable of forging consensus on national issues?

Why don't they, who completely failed to form an effective government and complete the peoples mandated tasks in the past, realize the existence of other political parties in the CA

and asked the other political parties to lead the government rather than themselves (Big Three) wasting time in forming and leading the next government? Why don't they be sensible and responsible towards the nation and the people, and start putting their efforts for peace and statue-drafting processes within the deadline?

Some of the ministers have now started publicly talking about the extension of the current CA until November 30. Looking back at the peoples concerns and anger on May 31, it may not be easily possible this time to extend the CA's term beyond August 31 by staging a political drama. The five-point deal has not fully worked. As the deadline is rapidly approaching, either the political leaders must have some clandestine agenda that they are hiding from the

people, or they are knowingly pushing themselves towards extinction. The people need to make the political parties aware of their irresponsible acts and exert positive pressure on them to go by the mandated jobs.

Rai Biren Bangdel,
Maharajgunj, Kathmandu

Dreams

Education Minister GL Tuladhar's announcement that the Prime Minister would resign on August 13, and would continue his mission of trying to achieve a national consensus from August 14 indicates the continuation of the Khanal-government as the caretaker government after Khanal's resignation. It seems that PM Khanal does not want to override the 7-point Agreement

which makes the provision of bringing UCPN (Maoist) Chairperson PK Dahal "Prachanda" to the premiership of the country after Khanal. The dreams of Sher Bdr Deuba (NC), Ram Chandra Paudel (NC) and Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai (UCPN-Maoist) to become the prime minister may not be fulfilled. Instead of wasting time in the game of the PM's chair, a clear roadmap for the post-deadline of the CA after the mid-night of August 31 has to be crafted. The country should not go into another election for another CA. A national referendum on an expert-drafted draft-constitution might be the best option after allowing the CA to die a natural death on August 31.

Megha Nepal,
Kathmandu

Blunders

With reference to the news "Police probe into suicide" (THT, Aug 9, Page 2), it is so sad to hear that a group of women assaulted a woman so much so that she committed suicide. In recent years, the culture of the mob taking law and order in their hands has increased. Earlier, groups like YCL and Youth Force started them, and now social groups are continuing such blunders. How could any group have the right to take the law and order into their hands. These have occurred because people no more trust the government.

Manoj Thapa, via e-mail

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