



## Nepal Roulette

When a country is forced to get 14 governments in the span of 16 years, it shows it has a poor, dysfunctional democracy in which political parties seem to be interested more in feathering their own nests than working for the well-being of the people who elect them to rule. This is the fate of democracy in Nepal that abolished a 289-year-old monarchy in 2008 and embraced parliamentary democracy. Now, it is set for a new coalition government led by KP Sharma Oli after the ultra-Left Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal lost a parliamentary vote of confidence. It marked the end of a tumultuous 20-month tenure during which he had faced no-confidence five times, including the last one. He had survived the previous tests by frequently changing his allies to cling to power with his party, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) having even the lowest tally among the three main contenders.

Dahal was forced to either resign or prove his majority in parliament after his largest ally the liberal Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), led by Oli, withdrew support last week. Oli is an old player who also knows the tricks or the art of forming coalitions to hang on to power. He has been Prime Minister three times before. Now, as he is sworn in, he gets the stint for the fourth time. He struck a deal with the centrist Nepali Congress (NC) only a few weeks back. This gives him enough seats for a majority. According to this deal, Oli is to remain PM for half of the remaining term, while the former five-time PM Sher Bahadur Deuba of the NC will replace him for the rest of the period. Nepal's next general elections are due in 2027.

Dahal needed at least 138 votes in the 275-member house to retain power. His fate was sealed after he parted company with Oli. In the end, a total of 63 of the 258 lawmakers present in the chambers voted for him, 194 voted against, and one abstained. In his third term as prime minister, which began in December 2022, Dahal changed his main coalition partner three times.

Just as his final fall was predictable with the NC and the CPN (UML) joining hands, so also was his criticism ahead of the vote on no-confidence that Oli's coalition was against "democratic practice." NC is the largest party in parliament and CPN (UML) is the second largest. He expressed fear that the new government may turn regressive and authoritarian. Such high sounding words do not mean much in Nepal politics as the country remains an inchoate democracy.

Nepal's politics is closely monitored by both India and China. India is likely to gain as long as NC influences the government policies, whereas China prefers a Communist government in place to serve its interests. Oli is an astute leader who previously maintained a fine balance between the two giant Himalayan neighbours, though he is tilted towards China to decrease Nepal's dependence on New Delhi.

Nepal has for the past one and a half decade been plagued by a revolving door of ageing prime ministers and a culture of horse-trading has fuelled public perceptions that the government is out of touch with Nepal's pressing problems. Though Oli is an old face in parliament, he is confronted with new challenges. Observers are now keeping a watch on whether the new government will be more democratic and work well for the Nepali people or could it turn autocratic since the two alliance partners have between them the strength of numbers.

### WISDOM CORNER

"The man who acquires the ability to take full possession of his own mind may take possession of anything else to which he is justly entitled."

ANDREW CARNEGIE

"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes."

CARL JUNG

"Time changes everything except something within us which is always surprised by change."

THOMAS HARDY

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1935:** The world's first parking meters were installed in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; the device, which sought to ease congestion, was designed by Carl C. Magee.
- **1945:** First atomic bomb exploded near Alamogordo, New Mexico. The United States tested the first atomic bomb this day in 1945 near Alamogordo, New Mexico, and the following month dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, hastening the end of World War II.
- **1951:** The Catcher in the Rye is published. The book, written by J.D. Salinger is considered to be one of the top 100 works of fiction of the 20th century.
- **1965:** The Mont Blanc Tunnel officially opened, linking France and Italy; at the time, it was the world's longest vehicular tunnel, spanning 7.3 miles (11.7 km).
- **1969:** Apollo 11 lifted off from NASA's John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida, and four days later two of its astronauts, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, became the first humans to set foot on the Moon.
- **1979:** Saddam Hussein became president of Iraq, and his brutal rule, which lasted 24 years, was marked by costly and unsuccessful wars with neighbouring countries as well as atrocities against the Iraqi people. Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, the fourth president of Iraq, resigned from his post citing health reasons and promoted his Vice President, Saddam Hussein to the post of President.
- **1981:** Mahathir bin Mohamad takes office for the first time. Mohamad, took office as the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia and remained in the position until 2003, becoming Malaysia's longest serving prime minister and Asia's longest serving politician.

### LOL

#### ROOKIE ON THE JOB

A rookie police officer was out for his first ride in a cruiser with an experienced partner. A call came in telling them to disperse some people who were loitering. The officers drove to the street and observed a small crowd standing on a corner. The rookie rolled down his window and said, "Let's get off the corner people." A few glances, but no one moved, so

he barked again, "Let's get off that corner... NOW!" Intimidated, the group of people began to leave, casting puzzled stares in his direction. Proud of his first official act, the young policeman turned to his partner and asked, "Well, how did I do?" "Pretty good," chuckled the vet, "especially since this is a bus stop."



Sanjana Brahmawar Mohan

**EVEN WITH THE POOR QUALITY OF TEACHING IN INDIAN MEDICAL COLLEGES, THERE IS A WIDE DISCONNECT BETWEEN FOREIGN-EDUCATED DOCTORS AND LOCAL ONES**

There is a growing voice on the "commercialisation" of healthcare, with stories surfacing time and again - the recent reports around kidney transplantation being a case in point. Partly in response to the situation it seems, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita came into force this Doctors Day, with a provision of jail terms for doctors if found guilty of negligence. The many errors in the NEET examination and postponement of the PG entrance exams have brought the country's attention to medical education. As we start rebuilding the examination process it will be pertinent to see what more needs to be done so that our doctors are on top of their work.

In our decade long work of providing primary healthcare in rural tribal Rajasthan we have worked with a large number of young doctors and interacted with many more working across government Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs). We have also conducted several workshops for doctors to sensitise them to the realities of rural India. Based on these we share a few priorities that need to be addressed.

There is a popular lament that MBBS doctors of yesterday knew a lot more about medicine than the present-day ones, and could "see" patients independently. Many of us will remember doctors visiting our homes with a briefcase, seeing the sick, and providing treatment there and then. They have all but disappeared. There was a lot of rigour in medical college teaching with teachers fully invested in their students and managing each one personally. Classes were held as per schedule.

This rigour is weakening. In the rural sensitisation workshops, many doctors spoke of their presence at the college not maturing of "studying home" and staying away for weeks together. They lamented that their teachers have little time for them - "people are all mouths, not ears."

What are the kinds of news that keep feeding our news channels and social media? At present it is a lot about India winning at the World Cup, and a celebrity marriage. Stories of likely misconduct, such as the kidney transplant stories get attention, but what about ones where lives

are saved? A week ago a woman with eclampsia was referred from one of our clinic areas to Udaipur, a distance of 120 km. When she reached the hospital, she had been having seizures for over 3 hours and was barely conscious. That she was saved owes a lot to the prompt treatment she received from the gynaecologists and nurses. In different news media, such stories do need to be featured. These will have a significant impact, both on how doctors view themselves and their profession, as well as how society views them.

Two stories doing the rounds at present are around the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and the kidney transplant racket. Let us go back when was the last time we talked about the appalling conditions in which our young doctors/doctors-in-the-making study - the hostels they live in, food they eat, their abnormally long duty rotations? When did we celebrate stories of lives they save day after day? We remember well the stellar roles our doctors played during the COVID pandemic.

We need to keep telling such stories. The absence of such stories and constant presence of not so positive ones creates a disquiet which can be dangerous. A few years ago in a hospital in central Rajasthan, in a complicated delivery the woman died. The immediate backlash from the media and the (expected) pressure from the family was not unexpected. But the tragedy that followed was not expected, and heartbreaking in which doctor under the spotlight could not take the strain and ended her life.

The situation in our country today is a wakeup call. As we start rebuilding our healthcare, it would be worthwhile to not pick up fragments but to see it as a whole.

The writer is a doctor and co-founder of Basu Healthcare Services, a Rajasthan-based non-profit that runs primary healthcare centres.

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### SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

## What to make of Russia-North Korea bloc



Yoon Young-kwan

**THE WEST SHOULD FOCUS ON LEVERAGING THE STRATEGIC INCONGRUENCE BETWEEN CHINA, RUSSIA, AND NORTH KOREA**

Not content with disturbing the peace in Europe, Russian President Vladimir Putin recently signed a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Jong-un. As troubling to China's leaders as it is to Western officials, the deal is shaking up the geopolitics of Northeast Asia and sending reverberations around the world.

Despite the strategic unease that Putin has provoked, the West must be careful neither to overestimate nor underestimate the treaty's importance. The reasons for Putin's recent trip to Pyongyang - his first visit in 21 years - were deeply pragmatic. Russia urgently needs North Korean ammunition, weapons, and labourers to continue waging its war against Ukraine, and North Korea, as is usual as ever, longs for diplomatic support, as well as energy, food, cash, and sensitive military technologies of the kind that only the Kremlin can provide. For Kim, Russian military technologies are particularly important, because they could enable North Korean nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles to survive re-entry

into Earth's atmosphere and hit any target in the world without being intercepted by missile-defence systems. Moreover, if North Korea can produce quiet nuclear submarines with Russia's help, it will be able to project its risk not just to South Korea and Japan, but also to the United States.

If Russia does provide such sensitive technologies to North Korea, it will upend the military balance on the Korean Peninsula and across Northeast Asia. But a major limitation might prevent Russia from doing so: the incongruity between China's global strategy and those of Russia and North Korea.

China's highest strategic priority is winning the global competition against the US. Its leaders want to replace the US-led unipolar international system with a Chinese-dominated multipolar arrangement, and have tried to drive wedges between the US and its allies, hoping to pull some into its own orbit. China has befriended and provided military assistance to Russia, despite their "no limits" partnership, precisely because it wants to avoid driving European countries fully into America's arms.

Similarly, China has been pursuing more amiable diplomatic relations with South Korea, including by participating in a trilateral South Korea-Japan-China summit in Seoul in May, where it vowed its commitment to "de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." By contrast, Russia's most urgent concern is winning the war it started.

In the meantime, Kim will be desperate to get his hands on the highly sensitive Russian military technologies he craves. His primary goal is to establish North Korea as a de facto nuclear state that the international community will just have to accept. Of course, if Russia does succumb to North Korean pressure and gives Kim the technologies he wants, the US-Japanese-South Korean partnership will grow stronger. There would be more frequent joint military exercises, and more US strategic assets allocated to the peninsula. South Korean public opinion might also shift from despair to hope, as the domestic nuclear weapons programme or redeploying US tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean territory. These developments would be counter

to China's strategic interests. Despite appearing to be sidelined from the Russia-North Korea strategic marriage, China holds significant leverage over both smaller powers. China's economy is about 10 times that of Russia's and more than a thousand times the size of North Korea's. Russia probably could not continue fighting in Ukraine if China stopped purchasing Russian energy exports or stopped providing dual-use materials. Likewise, the North Korean economy simply cannot survive without Chinese food, energy, and trade. Given these dynamics, the West should focus on leveraging the strategic incongruence between China, Russia, and North Korea.

Chinese and US strategic interests overlap far more on the Korean Peninsula than they do in Ukraine or the Middle East. Both want stability in the region, which suggests that diplomacy toward that end has a real chance of success if both countries make the effort.

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Korea.

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address (email ID). They may also send in their valuable comments, opinions and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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### Zero-sum politics

Sir, This refers to "Trump Does gun," Orissa POST, July 15. The attempted assassination of Donald Trump by a gunman confirms that the US is the land of guns in which the atmosphere is vitiated by the incendiary nature of political rhetoric in highly polarised times. It's a no-brainer that having firearms so easily available is a recipe for a weapon reaching the wrong hands. But in its wisdom, America finds the theory of self-defence trumping the practice of threat of a bullet. About 1 out of 10 US adults in a household own a gun. This includes 32% who acknowledge owning a firearm. It's believed, owning a gun increases safety by allowing law-abiding citizens to protect themselves. At best, this exposes a society distrustful of its own law and order capabilities. At worst, it tells us of a society where discontent is weaponised. True, assassinations also happen in countries with tightly gun control. But bilateral disarmament, it's far more dangerous society that chooses to freely wield guns than those where it is difficult to carry them. This moment serves a warning not just to America, but also to democracies across the world, against a zero-sum politics in which campaigning is a bloodsport, where both sides see it as a fight to finish and where the winner must take all.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Bilateral ties

Sir, India's "Vishwa Bandhu" image was reiterated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi while interacting with the Indian diaspora during his two-day Austria tour. Modi and Chancellor Karl Nehammer emphasised on a quick end to the Ukraine war and establishment of peace in West Asia. Both the nations rightly agreed upon steps of robust infrastructure partnership, innovation, renewable energy, water and waste management, artificial intelligence and smart cities' development. As ascertained by the PM it's on democracy, freedom, liberty, multilateralism and rule of law that the bilateral relationship is firmly glued. Modi's Vienna visit came at an appropriate time because it was in 1949 - exactly 75 years ago - that a diplomatic relation was entrenched between the two countries.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA