Chronic shortages of electricity, fuel, water and now food have brought about a serious dislocation of businesses, trade and livelihoods throughout the country. The shortages come at a time of deepening political crisis in the Madhes in the run-up to elections. They feed the public’s perception of government incompetence. What is surprising is that people are still queuing up for fuel, gas and water without complaining. But public patience is running thin, and relatively minor incidents can spiral out of control as seen last week in Bhaktapur.

Photo essay: p 8-9.
A War on Tolerance

When the time feels accelerated...

TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

This week has been a roller-coaster with statements galore on the political front in the Madhes region. None of these statements are new, but the volatility of the Madhesi leaders has increased. The Madhesi leaders have been accused of being indecisive and not having a clear strategy on both the national and international fronts.

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DAY OF PRETENDERS

I laughed when I read in ‘The day of the pretenders’ (State of the state, #387) that the YCL cadres think that Prachanda is going to be president, which is of course unacceptable to anyone other than the Maoists and their supporters. To be a president you should know what democracy means and respect other people’s opinions. I don’t think he is fit to be president without any improvements in his party and his own politics.

Suraj, email

Mr Dahal wants to be the president of Nepal but he is not aware of the problems of the lower class Nepali people, and he is doing nothing to help them. He just wants the seat of power and is playing the nationalist card to try and get it. I had to leave my home because of the Maoists three years ago and I am currently struggling to make my livelihood in India. They need to know that the Nepali people want them to help the poor, not just intimidate people.

Fahwor Aryan, email

You are claiming that the existence of the Maoists is playing the nationalist card and the successful holding of elections depends on the wishes of the Indians. Do you really believe that is true?

Name withheld, email

HEALTHCARE

It is very sad to know that the TEAM hospital has been closed down under pressure from the Maoists (In god’s hands, #387). How can they meddle like that when people’s lives are at stake? It is very inhumane of them to not recognise that people should not be deprived of fundamental rights. This one is about the right to live. I hope the article will raise concern among the responsible authorities and help reopen the hospital.

Prerana M, email

Dear Mr Dixit, I was rather disappointed after reading your article about the TEAM hospital. The subject matter itself is saddening, but you also dive into some of the deeper underlying reasons for the closure of the hospital. Why did the Maoist leader say the doctors were “agents of American imperialism”? What were the assumptions on which he based his allegations but was unable to explain due to his own lack of intellectual capacity? What have been the cultural, religious and social implications in the surrounding villages after half a century’s presence of an evangelical mission in one of the remotest part of the country? The article would have been more informative if it had tried to address these bigger questions. Fililing a field report on a ‘blame-the-Maoists’ pretext does no more good than communists ranting about ‘imperialism’ as the root of all the nation’s problems. However, I must admit that the title was apt: often in Nepal the government has left us in god’s hands!

AK Adhikari, email

That was a good article from Aruna Uperty (Free drugs, #387) Regarding corruption, strict monitoring—better decentralised monitoring—is a key to controlling it. Involving young local people in the local monitoring committee can be very effective, and it should be supported through public auditing on a regular basis. However, we live in a country where there is one security person for every 20 people, but 300 people have to depend upon one health person. Obviously, there is an overload of work for health workers—can we do anything to change this imbalance? We should also try and promote alternative and traditional health systems—that would make a real difference.

Prakash Shrestha, Kathmandu

ORPHANAGES

Many thanks to Wilko Verbakel and Susan Van Klaveren for their great article about the uselessness of children’s homes in Nepal (Mushrooming orphanages, #387). The article raises many serious questions which I think both Nepalis and foreigners alike may not have considered: whether children homes should be allowed to open so easily or not, the self-sustainability issue, criminal activities related to children homes, and whether donor money should be used for development in rural areas rather than opening children’s homes. I only hope that this article will generate some response from the related authorities and the donor bodies.

Avani D, email

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the Norwegian prime minister was misidentified in Happenings (State of the state, #387). He should have been Jens Stoltenberg.

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with ‘letter to the editor’ in the subject line.

Email: letters@nepaltimes.com
Fax: 977-1-5521013
Mail: Letters, Nepal Times, GPO Box 725, Kathmandu, Nepal

As ‘partners’ of Subisu, many of our clients today have found efficient and cost-effective alternatives to stay ‘connected’ with their operations, stakeholders, and their performance. Our customised services, powered with a fully redundant optical fibre network, has helped organisations in business and development sectors in Nepal create their edge in ‘Businesses’. We invite you to be a part of this tradition of success!

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Last December, Nepal was abuzz with news of the first Nepali made aeroplane. In a country where most of the population has not even boarded an aeroplane, it was no wonder the news caused such sensation. But after the Civil Aviation Authority Nepal (CAAN) refused the aircraft permission to make a test flight, the buzz about the Danfe has died down.

Built by eight mechanical engineering students from the Institute of Engineering at Pulchok Campus, the Danfe was unveiled in front of the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Prithbi Subba Gurung. Team leader Bikash Parajuli says that although the test flight was scheduled for mid-December, CAAN brought up various legal issues and refused to allow it to fly. “Even though this was purely an educational venture and our university project, CAAN's refusal to grant us permission has put all our hard work to waste.” Pulchok Campus's IOE chief Ram Chandra Sapkota says that although the campus has already given the green light, the government is holding the project back. “The students have attempted something new and the government isn't even giving them permission to test it,” says Sapkota. “If the test succeeds, all Nepalis will benefit. The government should be facilitating the test.”

Minister Prithbi Gurung claims that despite all his efforts, CAAN inspected the parts and their workings and refused permission for a test flight. He told Nepali Times, “I took a risk and gave them the authority to make a test flight but it was CAAN that stopped them.”

CAAN's chief director Yagya Prasad Gautam refused to comment and through his personal assistant said that all queries were to be addressed to the ministry and not to CAAN. Even so, an official at CAAN said that the problem was with the process and not the aircraft. The official claimed that unless either a minister, secretary or the cabinet sent a statement in writing giving permission for the flight, CAAN would not allow the flight to take place.

Even though it only took a year to build the plane, there were three years of planning behind it. Mechanical engineering student Parajuli put forth his ideas to childhood friend Ganeshram Sinkeman and together, they drafted a plan. For two years, they researched aeroplanes and after graduating, asked for technical help and manpower from the campus. Avia Club, which conducts commercial flights and is a pilot training school, provided them with an engine, propellers and various other old aircraft parts. NAST, the Nepal Tourism Board and Nepal Airlines all provided the funding required. “Through various organisations we raised Rs 600,000 but we came up with Rs 400,000 ourselves,” says Parajuli.

The rest of the eight member team Ramesh Ranabhat, Rabindra Shrestha, Dinesh Pradhyul, Balkumar Kharel, Anil Maharjan and Prashant Malla, all gave their services voluntarily. Aeronautical engineer Uday Krishna Shrestha helped the students with the technical and mechanical aspects. They named the aircraft Danfe, after our national bird. Danfe can hold two people, fly up to 200km in the air at 100km per hour, theoretically.

Faced at first with incredulity at the idea of building an aircraft in Nepal, Bikash says that if the testing went through then with a few more years of research, Nepali hands could be building fully-fledged aircrafts. With an average construction cost of around Rs 2 million, aircraft like these could be a boon for those living in remote hilly areas and could also be a major tourist attraction.

Bikash says that he has fulfilled all the legal requirements for permission. Although Nepal's air code on aviation sports is quite simple, so as to better accommodate micro light flights, hang gliding, heliskiing and hot air ballooning, CAAN says that the International Civil Aviation Board restricts test flights. Parajuli, on the other hand, claims that ICAO has a provision that allows the government to issue permission.

There’s even a senior Russian captain, Alexander Maximo, on call to fly the aeroplane. Maximo has been flying planes for the past twenty years and upon seeing the aircraft, gave his word that he would fly in from Russia at any moment.

With the aircraft gathering dust, the students are disappointed and feel incomplete that they haven’t been allowed a test flight. Danfe’s future is hazy at the moment as only a test flight would tell if it was capable of long distance flight or not. Says Parajuli, “Danfe is an aircraft. How can we feel proud of our achievement when it hasn’t even flown?”
**Proportional interest**

Siddhartha Bank’s novel new Siddhartha Mega Savings account provides interest on the basis of how much deposit customers put in. The account can be opened for Rs. 50,000 and the interest rate increases as the amount deposited, the higher the interest. Interest starts at 4.5% percent and goes up to six. Parking includes free debit cards, in-ward remittance and internet banking.

**Everest in profit**

Everest Bank operating profits showed a 29 percent increase from the last fiscal year, amounting to Rs. 337 million in the first six months of this fiscal year alone. The bank’s credit has grown by 20.35 percent reaching Rs. 16.969 million. The bank currently has 23 branches throughout the country.

**Gold for Prime**

Prime Commercial Bank has started a new savings account, Prime Gold. Prime Gold comes with six percent interest, debit card, SMS service and E-banking, all free. Prime Commercial Bank started operations on 28 September 2007.

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**Siddharta Bank Limited**

**ECONOMIC SENSE**

Artha Beed

1989, oil prices shot up five times on the black market, but that is yet to happen this time. In fact, the Tarei crisis and oil crisis are just keeping the real story away from the public at large.

The Nepali Stock Exchange began a process to issue licenses to new brokers and, for the first time in Nepali history, the process was designed to be transparent, using the internet to call for applications which would promote transparency and allow the results to be available in real time.

The computer aided tests would have determined the results instantaneously, and therefore would have been considered by people who always want their own way.

Apparantly a sitting minister called the person concerned with the message that either their non-qualifiee candidate would be added to the list, or there would be dire consequences.

Despite the fact that the minister made a public statement saying that it was not him but someone posing as him, the selection process had to be cancelled and a valid attempt to bring about transparency ended in failure. The Beed definitely urges people to recognize such attempts at improving our working practices.

Maybe one day, after so many failed attempts, one will have some success in changing the basic rules of the game.

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**Evasion of taxes in Nepal is not considered anything to do with transparency.**

Published houses get away without having their circulation verified by an audit bureau. And as for the political parties, the word is little more than a painful joke. If we want Nepal to change, a small beginning would be for the political parties to fight together to bring about political contributions. The transparency in political funding and adequate disclosure would hopefully signal an end to the rampant corruption to which we are accustomed.

We need a Young Clean League to bring about transparency, not just the looks. Maybe one day, after so many failures, we would see a Young Clean League, a small beginning, to play with the political parties. If we want Nepal to change, a small beginning would be for the political parties to fight together to bring about political contributions. The transparency in political funding and adequate disclosure would hopefully signal an end to the rampant corruption to which we are accustomed. We need a Young Clean League to bring about transparency, not just the looks.

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Marcello Bottoli (CEO of Samsonite) mentioned in 2005 during an interview with Forbes that he would like the brand to stop relying on suitcase sales, and by 2010 reduce them to only 50% of its business. What we are doing is basically damage limitation, things to be hit after travel was luggage. Then, it was 90 percent of suitcase sales, and by 2010 reduce them to only 50% of its business.

Samsonite is kind of a victim of its own success because it is an innovator in its category. You can walk into a luggage stall and easily pull out one product that is inspired by Samsonite, but you just can’t find where these things (printed goods) are made. We have started patenting innovations and any new ideas we come up with, for example, we filed 75 patents on our X:Life product, from mechanical to process, not just the looks.

As the Global Creative Director, how do you convince people to spend, say for example, $775 on an SBL Alexander McQueen bag? I’m not a dictator to tell people to spend that sort of money. We know there are people out there who want it. They are the people who move the consumer. They love lifestyle magazines, innovations and gadgets, and are more than happy to splurge on certain things. What we’re trying to do is make them think about luggage the same way they think about a handbag or a pair of shoes. We achieve this through design and innovation, adding emotion and sensuality to our products.

How do you improve your company’s sales and brand awareness?

We intend to globalise the brand by consolidating the products and reducing the styles that we carry, basically reducing the styles that we carry. We have 17 different logos in different regions and 20 different colours associated with the logos. Our idea is to get one logo, one colour, to build a stronger brand identity.

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**No transparency please**

**We only have time for murky deals**

It is useless now to devote columns inches to the supply crisis, as our predictions of a khattam Nepal are finally taking shape (and, as usual, in the time of the crisis our great ability emerges of finding ways to scrape through any situation, however dismal). This Beed was told that during the Indian embargo in

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**Suitcases are like cars, only you’re the engine.**

“Our brand makes it as easy for the engine as possible.**

Samsonite's Global Creative Director, Quentin Mackay talks to Nepali Times on the similarities between cars and luggage. He also shares the brand's business outlook, piracy combating plans, and explaining why their luggage is so expensive.

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**Artha Beed**

This week parties field candidates in closed lists. Did your paper arrive on time this morning? If not, call our Customer care at 5547002

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Marcello Bottoli (CEO of Samsonite) mentioned in 2005 during an interview with Forbes that he would like the brand to stop relying on suitcase sales, and by 2010 reduce them to only 50% of its business. Does that mean that Samsonite thinks the luggage business has limited growth?

Quentin Mackay: When 9/11 happened, one of the second things to be hit after travel was luggage. Then, it was 90 percent of our business. What we are doing is basically damage limitation, things to be hit after travel was luggage. Then, it was 90 percent of suitcase sales, and by 2010 reduce them to only 50% of its business.

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Spook speak

Interviews on the BBC Nepal Service by Navin Singh Khadka, 12-15 February

Hu Shisheng, Director of South Asia Study Centre under the China Institute of Contemporary Relations.

How does China view the peace process and the atmosphere for upcoming constituent assembly elections in Nepal?

The objective of our government’s Nepal policy is to ensure the prosperity, stability and integrity of Nepal. We would like to support any force that can make Nepal more stable and develop. The Chinese government strongly supports the current peace process. We would like to see that the upcoming constituent assembly election is held on time and that the future government is able to manage the entire situation smoothly.

“We would be against any activity aimed at disintegrating Nepal”

The Tarai situation is seen as a major challenge for the election. What do you think is the Chinese government’s view on the issue? We know that the situation in the Tarai is not good. There may be some elements who want to further advantage of the current fragile government for their own political benefits, like the Maoists did.

What elements do you mean?

According to some Nepali scholars and intellectuals, the porous border means there may be some foreign elements with ulterior motives involved in causing the volatile situation. Some have even alleged that US or Indian intelligence agencies have played some role behind the scenes. There was an article in the mass media some months ago which alleged that the Indian intelligence agency the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) had played some role in this. It may not be the government’s own work, but some local elements, for various reasons, may have played some games with various local political or religious groups in the Tarai.

But can you really make these kind of assumptions based purely on media allegations? If the reports are true, then the Chinese government will be very much concerned.

Is it concerned already?

Our ambassador in Nepal has already told the Nepali government that China will strongly support Nepal’s efforts to maintain its integrity. We would be against any activity aimed at disintegrating Nepal in a covert or open way. We are very clear on our position. But while developing our relations with Nepal, we also tend to respect and be sensitive about India’s concerns. We would do our very best to avoid giving an impression to India that China would use Nepal to harm Indian interest, as we know that Nepal is more influenced by Indian policies than by China.

But many believe that the tensions between China and India would affect Nepal as well. Of course, because Nepal is located between these two powers. You must make a balance between them. Any improvement in the bilateral relations between China and India will also benefit the development and stability of Nepal.

China is also said to be quite uncomfortable with the US role in Nepal.

Our attitude has been quite negative towards the US activity aimed at disintegrating Nepal in a covert or open way. We are very clear on our position. But while developing our relations with Nepal, we also tend to respect and be sensitive about India’s concerns. We would do our very best to avoid giving an impression to India that China would use Nepal to harm Indian interest, as we know that Nepal is more influenced by Indian policies than by China.

There are also allegations that the Indian intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is active in the Tarai.

S Chandrashekharan, former senior RAW official who was with the Indian mission in Kathmandu until the early 80s.

There have been allegations that the Indian intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is active in the Tarai. Is there an allegation that the RAW is providing the groups with arms? They wouldn’t need it, as they can buy arms anywhere, from the north and Bihar. The Indian government is not involved in this matter. What the Indian government is not willing to do is hand over the insurgent leaders to Kathmandu, as the Nepal government wants. So long as they abide by the local laws, they can stay in India and hold meetings. But the Indian government also wants elections to take place in the Tarai, therefore supporting the armed groups would be counterproductive to its own objective.

But they appear to be operating from Indian soil and the Indian government does not seem to mind that. There are a lot of people who have sympathies for what is happening there (in the Tarai). In this situation, if you arrest someone in India, say Jwala Singh, it’s not going to work (laughs). You have to see the situation in India too. After the Lahan incident nothing was done (by the Nepali government), so this was a problem. The mindset of the politicians in Kathmandu has to change.

“China will be watching what India does in the Tarai”

There are also allegations that there is overlapping between different Indian agencies, for example between the Indian foreign ministry and RAW while dealing with issues across the border. Actually, RAW has nothing to do with that, this side of the border. It is the Intelligence Bureau (IB) which is handling.....talking and all.

Handling what?

The IB is responsible for law and order situations like this, people coming from one side to the other. But it has no hand in the Tarai unrest.

Why are we hearing blame games between the different agencies? I am sure if you ask the RAW people, they will say it’s not our job, it’s the IB’s. The IB in turn would say that the RAW is responsible for the other side (of the border). This is typical of the many agencies in India and it has been happening for many years. But it has nothing specifically to do with Nepal. I understand in border areas it sometimes overlaps.

What about the US role?

They are also interested, we are interested and so are the Chinese, as these are the major foreign powers in Nepal. China will also be watching what India does in the Tarai. Ask the Peasants and Workers Party in Bhaktapur; the Chinese government is in touch with them.

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS
No ethnic politics

Excerpts from an interview with Ram Baran Yadav of the NC in Bishal Nepal, 15 February

Can elections be held without solving the Madhes crisis? The agitators in the Tarai need to come to the table. The uprising in the Tarai is for the sake of an uprising only. It is not going to free the Madhesis, it is only going to make them poor. Madhesis need to retaliate against the forces that are burning the Tarai.

What will satisfy the Madhesi people? We have moved towards federalism. Self-governance comes with federalism. The constitution made by 25 million Nepalis will be their self-determination. There cannot be ethnic politics. I am strictly against it. In a country that is taking its first steps as a republic, anyone who talks about ethnic politics is a fool.

How do you view the people who have turned into revolutionaries in the name of Madhes after being in power for years? All the leaders including JP Gupta who are involved in the Tarai politics have been defamed for their corruption. Now they are talking about ethnic politics. I am a socialist. I do not want to be involved in either ethnic or religious politics. Democracy is my ethnicity.

Why are the leaders who talk about ‘one Madhes one region’ silent about nationalism? Those revolting in the Tarai should be brought to the table. The uprising in the Madhes will lead to more corruption. Representatives and area allocation in terms of population, and proportional representation have been written in the constitution. What is there to give now?

No person or group can make stubborn demands and say they will obstruct the polls. It is not only haughty but treacherous. If the government consents to the demand for one region, it will start afresh an unimaginable rebellion in the country.

Central Committee member UML, Ramchandra Jha quoted in himalkhabar.com, 21 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"No ethnic politics"
Running out...

Chronic shortages are beginning to take their toll both in the capital and throughout the country.
A girl carries water from a public tap.

A shop assistant counts empty gas cylinders.

A World Food Programme storage at Jhota in Bhajang. Here too supplies are running low.

Empty water cylinders are loaded to be taken away.
John Narayan Parajuli in Belbari, Morang

As the transitional period drags on, spiraling lawlessness and impunity continue to erode the state’s authority and capacity to get things done. While the seven parties are considering a truth and reconciliation bill, there are many who feel that the government has denied them justice by delaying it.

On 28 April 2006, indiscriminate army firing in Belbari, Morang, killed 6 people and 43 others, most of them innocent bystanders, sustained serious injuries. Two years on, no one has been punished or held to account.

Gopal Hem Sagar Dhakal, a young dentist who was standing just outside his clinic after seeing a patient, got hit in the head. He still has a piece of the shrapnel lodged in his skull. Doctors have warned that complications may arise if he tries to remove it here in Nepal.

The government gave him Rs 10,000 for treatment. But he has already spent more than Rs 200,000 from his own pocket. A neurologist in Kathmandu has advised him to go back to India and see an expert in India and get the piece of the metal removed. “But it costs a lot and I can’t afford it,” says Dhakal. “It is very condescending. All the government has done so far is barely keep us alive,” he laments.

In the same incident, a bullet whizzed through Gopal Chandra Gautam’s cheek and popped out of his ear—knocking off his jaw and bursting his ear drum. He was in fact trying to hide in a safe place with some human rights activists, but that didn’t help. A soldier deployed at the village bank started spraying bullets and one of them found its way to him. He continues to have problems opening his mouth.

As one meets more of the victims, the magnitude of this tragedy grows. There is real grief and pain here, but those at the helm seem too occupied with the grand fact trying to hide in a safe place with some human rights activists, but that didn’t help. A soldier deployed at the village bank started spraying bullets and one of them found its way to him. He continues to have problems opening his mouth.

A day after king Gyanendra conceded power to the parties, a group of locals went to thank the local army security camp demanding action against the culprits. The army under the command of Captain Prahlad Thapa has just submitted a report indicting 28 officials including then chief district officer of Morang Narendra Thapa to death in the

Women are still highly vulnerable to domestic violence

The government’s failure to enforce justice is rapidly eroding its grip and may be contributing to Nepal becoming a failed state.

Intensive

The government's failure to enforce justice is rapidly eroding its grip and may be contributing to Nepal becoming a failed state.

No safer

Women are still highly vulnerable to domestic violence

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John Narayan Parajuli in Belbari, Morang

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As one meets more of the victims, the magnitude of this tragedy grows. There is real grief and pain here, but those at the helm seem too occupied with the grand
Laligurans Hotel in Butwal at 1AM. Krishna had taken her husband to Butwal for a medical check up. He was arrested on the spot and charges have been levelled against him.

After the series of domestic violence cases, women in Nawalparasi blocked the highway and demanded that the police and the administration take strong action against those responsible.

Legal advocate and journalist Hari Narayan Regmi says, “The increasing violence against women is the result of widespread poverty and lack of awareness amongst the people.”

Two years ago, Ek Narayan Gaudel murdered his sister-in-law Sabitri Gaudel and was recently released from prison. Family sources claim he was set free after paying Rs 600,000 in bribes. Ek Narayan has even managed to flee the country. Sabitri’s family blame the carelessness of the police and the administration in letting Ek Narayan off scot-free.

The area police office in Nawalpari stated that the investigation into Chandrakala’s murder took longer because her post-mortem report was inconclusive. Her body has been sent to Kathmandu for further investigation after Bharatpur Hospital failed to ascertain whether her death was a murder or not.

Police sub-inspector Yam Bahadur Bohara, who is investigating the two cases of domestic violence in Kawasoti says: “The recent rise in the number of domestic violence cases is because people believe that during this time of insurgency, any crime can be easily hidden.”

“Inadequate laws, family background, social outlook towards women and lack of awareness amongst women are responsible for the increasing number of domestic violence,” says Parvati Tiwari, a human rights worker and the chairman of Himweoti Nepal.

Gita Khanal, the sister of the deceased Chandrakala Sapkota says, “Men still think of women as subordinate to them.” Gita fears that her sister’s murderer will get away scot-free.
How to check charities actually do what they say they do

Suppose you are concerned about children in Africa dying from preventable diseases. You want to donate money to a charity that is working to reduce the toll. But there are many charities doing that. How do you choose?

The first thing that many people ask about charities is, “How much of my donation is spent on administration?” In the United States, that figure is readily available from Charity Navigator, a Web site that has five million users. But the information is taken from forms that the charities themselves complete and send to the tax authorities. No one checks the forms, and the proportions allocated to administration and program expenses are easily massaged with a little creative accounting.

So Karnofsky and Hassenfeld got together with six friends who also worked earning six-figure incomes at an early age. They wanted to make similarly well-informed decisions about whom to support and how to give effectively. They contacted organisations working in Africa, did not respond to GiveWell’s request for information. No doubt they calculated that the chance to get a $25,000 grant wasn’t worth it. But if donors start to follow GiveWell’s recommendations, then a high ranking from GiveWell could be worth far more than the value of the grant.

This is why the potential of GiveWell is revolutionary. In the US, individual donors give about $200 billion to charities each year. No one knows how much of that goes to the most effective charities. GiveWell’s recommendations, then a high ranking from GiveWell could be worth far more than the value of the grant.

Peter Singer is professor of bioethics at Princeton University and the author of several books on the subject.

After raising $300,000 from their colleagues, Karnofsky and Hassenfeld left their jobs and began working full-time for GiveWell and its associated grant-making body, The Clear Fund. They invited charities to apply for grants of $25,000 in five broad humanitarian categories, with the application process demanding the kind of information that they had been seeking. In this way, a substantial part of the money they had raised would go to the most effective charity in each category, while simultaneously encouraging transparency and rigorous evaluation.

The first report on which organisations are most effective at saving or transforming lives in Africa is now available on GiveWell’s website, www.givewell.net. Population Services International, which promotes and sells items like condoms, to prevent HIV infection, and bed nets, to prevent malaria, came out on top. Followed by Partners in Health, an organisation that provides health care to poor rural populations. The third-ranked organisation was Interplast, which is more narrowly focused on correcting deformities like cleft palate.

Evaluating charities can be more difficult than making investment decisions. Investors are interested in financial returns, so there is no problem about measuring distinct values — in the end it all comes down to money. It is more difficult to compare the reduction of suffering brought about by correcting a facial deformity with saving a life. There is no single unit of value.

In other ways, too, evaluating charities takes time, and can be expensive. Perhaps for this reason, many organisations, including some of the best-known anti-poverty organisations working in Africa, did not respond to GiveWell’s request for information. No doubt they calculated that a chance to get a $25,000 grant wasn’t worth it. But if donors start to follow GiveWell’s recommendations, then a high ranking from GiveWell could be worth far more than the value of the grant.

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One left foot

The first time Rashmi tried dancing, she couldn’t even balance herself. She fell, she cried, but four got her back on her feet again. “I imagined my life without my parents to take care of me, what would happen, she would eventually happen,” she said. At that point, dancing wasn’t simply an interest. It was a test of her independence. She would secretly memorize the steps whenever her friends danced, and then she would teach herself in her room to practice. At 18, she signed up for a dance competition organised by Patan Campus. “My brother cried when he saw me dancing,” she said. Her younger brother, who was a student at the campus at that time, closed his eyes throughout the performance. He was afraid that she would fall. It was an ironic blessing that Rashmi was very young when the accident happened. She got over the crying and grieving very quickly, even though adults were still lamenting her misfortune.

After the accident, she had to learn to walk all over again, with crutches made by her father. But she saw the walking aid as a hindrance rather than a help: “my friends would be playing kabaddi and it was impossible for me to play with crutches.” Our second meeting, which was at Bhrikuti Mandap, came one week after her performance. When I arrived outside the National Disabled Rehabilitation Centre, she grinned at me and hugged me like she had known me all her life. Dressed in a colourful white and yellow kurta, Rashmi sat cross-legged on a white plastic chair during the interview. Whencever she’s not dancing, she puts on her prosthesis. What really went wrong for Gowariker is that, coming from an age of extreme Hindu-Musalim animosity, she was looking for drama where there was none. Akbar is an empire-builder, commander of innumerable brutal wars. But he is really a kind, liberal sort of person. Rashmi is a fierce, assertive kind of princess, deft enough in swordplay to almost beat Akbar. She may protest being betrothed to a Muslim, but like a good Hindu girl, a champion of willful independence. Jodhaa is a fierce, assertive kind of princess, deft enough in swordplay to almost beat Akbar. She may protest being betrothed to a Muslim, but like a good Hindu girl, a champion of willful independence.

What Rashmi dances, not only eyes will be wide open, jaws will also follow suit. Her husband fell in love with her after he saw her performances on stage. “It’s a love marriage,” she said proudly. The 23-year-old does not feel that the accident made her different from others, but instead, she thinks it had brought her closer to experiencing life. “Life is a struggle” she said, adding that everyone encounters their own set of challenges, and the pain she went through probably isn’t unique to her.

She hopes to set up an arts school for the disabled in the near future, so that they too will be given a chance to showcase their talent. The dancer has not only convinced others to see her without being reminded of her disability, but has also proven the power of her will. Just like she said, there is nothing she cannot do—perseverance and eventual success should stand as an example to everyone.

Rashmi has gone to Cambodia as one of the two representatives from Nepal to participate in a dance competition for the disabled in the Asian region. We wish her all the best! •

Mughal-e-Hindustani

A regal romance, an epic bore

Hector Ashutosh Gowariker keeps great interest in history and it shows no qualms about finding historical accuracy. The wiles of his filmmaking were already evident in the charming Lagaan (2001), relating rural India’s espousal of cricket as a patriot’s wet dream. With Jodhaa Akbar, however, controversy even before the release, he is finally learning the grim responsibility of historical representation. Jodha’s specialness would be to witness protests against the film last week, claiming that Jodha is the wife of Akbar but his son Jahangir. But let us not fuss – like the modern day proprieties of the virile Rajput and their VHP cohorts – about who Queen Jodha really was. Gowariker’s researchers are not concerned that the misnomer comes mainly from the spurious source of the 1960 film Mughal-e-Azam; but suffice it to say that Akbar had a Hindu queen, daughter of Raja Bhoj, Raja Bharml, who we will temporarily call Jodha.

Gowariker depicts this as a strategic marriage as an epic love story, perhaps to evoke the distant amibility of Hindus and Muslims in India. To find a ‘good Muslim’, acceptable to Hindus, it is as if the film had to hark back all the way to the Mughal Akbar (played by hunky Hrithik Roshan), whose good-heartedness is to be envied by his love for Hindu Jodhaa (Aishwarya Rai). Akbar defies Islamic mores and the baddie Imams of his court to accommodate Jodhaa, even marrying her Hindu-style. The queen, who in reality rechristened Mariam-uz-Zamani, does not even give up her name in the film. The only concession she makes to Islam is to write Akbar’s name in Urdu, which neither of them can enunciate – Akbar because he is illiterate and Jodhaa because Hindu wives are not allowed to utter their husbands names.

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ABOUT TOWN

**EXHIBITIONS**

- Remains of a smile sculptures and prints by Jamil Alafaghani, 11AM-5PM, until 29 February, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited.
- Metamorphosis paintings by Christian Salzgeber, until 9 March, at the ledge Gallery.
- Design show with Kripa Joshi and others at the Pulchok Bakery Café, curated by photo.circle, until 29 February.
- Tibetan Lhaso photographs by Daniel Collins at the Saturday Café, Boudhanath stupa, until 31 March.

**EVENTS**

- Taare Zameen Par a film by Amir Khan, 15 February, 5.30 PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- School Bullying a talk program by Niti Rana, 29 Feb at The New Era, Battisputali. 9851029595
- ANFA politics and the future of football in Nepal discussion with Lalit Krishna Shrestha, Indra Muni Tuladhar, Niranjan Rajbanshi and Hari Kathak at Martin Chautari, 3-5PM, 22 February. 4235850
- Bingo Nights at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201
- Play and Learn German at the German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel. 4700832
- Toastmasters a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Trupurepro. 4288847

**MUSIC**

- Rob Garza with Jerry Julian and the Power of Joy performing at 1905 Restaurant, fund raising program sponsored by WFP. 7PM on 29 February. Rs 1,000.
- Jeremy Borthwick with Trouble Clef live at Mokoh
- Anil Shahi every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 6PM. 8521408
- Bingo Nights at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201
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**DINING**

- Greek food festival with chef Georgios Vagianos, 7-10.30 PM, until 29 February at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- Full moon night with BBQ dinner and a short hike at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage, 22 February. Rs 1,550. 9851012445
- Continental and Chinese cuisine and complimentary fresh brewed coffee after every meal a Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- Illy espresso coffee at the Galleria café, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- International four course buffet at the Sunrise Café with a range of Boris' signature dishes at The Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- Wine and Cheese every Friday and Saturday at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, 5-8PM. 4491234
- Jazz in Patan with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Era Café, Bhatbateni 4260187, Pulchok.
- Dine-licious brunch at Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, roll the dice to the number of the day and get 50% discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4273999
- Scrumpulous wood fired pizzas, cocktails and specialty coffees at Roadhouse, Bhabateri 4426587, Pulchok 5251775 and Thamel 4260187.
- Cocktails and jazz with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479448
- Starry night barbecue at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Girey Gurung. Rs 66.00 nett per person, at the Shamabala Garden, every Friday 6.30 PM onwards. 4412999
- Wine and curries at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- Calcutta’s rolls, biryani, kebabs Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 974100735
- Lavazza coffee Italy’s favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700812
- Little Britain coffee shop fresh organic coffee, homemade cakes, WiFi internet, open all day, everyday. 4492657
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Jara, Thamel. 4422519

**GETAWAYS**

- Relax Package with a one night stay, full breakfast buffet at The Café and access to Club Oasis at Hyatt Regency, until 29 February. Rs 5,000 plus taxes, valid only for Nepalis and local residents. 4488900
- Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara Rs 10.999 for Nepali double. $219 for English double, two days and three nights package with transportation from the airport, drinks, tennis and swimming, discounts on food and beverages.
- Weekend getaways at Le Meridien, Kathmandu, Resident Night Rs 4,999 and two nights package Rs 9,998. Also includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, spa facilities, swimming pool, steam sauna, Jacuzzi and gym facilities.

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

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**WEEKEND WEATHER**

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Thursday morning satellites pictures show a strong westerly front appearing in the western Himalaya, indicating a gradual break in the current dry weather. Although there have been sporadic rains in parts of eastern and western Nepal as results of collisions between the warm southerly and cold northerly winds, the Valley has remained completely dry for over a month but may now get part of its monthly quota early next week. Expect colder weekends as clouds emerge and a cold evening breeze brings down daytime temperature.

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**18TH ANNUAL NATIONAL GALLERY OF ARTS-
TEXAS**

Mahal Revisited. 11AM-5PM, until 28 February, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal. 9841290619

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**Rajput Princess**

Jodhaa Akbar is a sixteen century love story between the great Mughal emperor Akbar (Hrithik Roshan) and a Rajput princess, Jodhda (Ashwarya Rai Bachkan). Akbar marries Jodhda to strengthen his relation with the Rajputs but gets more than he bargained for when he starts to fall in love with her. The daughter of King Bharmal, Jodhda is a fiery Rajput and Akbar’s biggest challenge will now be winning her love.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com
KIRAN PANDAY

OVERLOADED: The few buses running this week were packed to bursting.

KIRAN PANDAY

MASQUERADE: Masked dancers represent Bhaktapur District at the Democracy Day celebrations.

KIRAN PANDAY

HAPPENINGS

TAXI STANDSTILL

OVERLOADED: The few buses running this week were packed to bursting.

KIRAN PANDAY

A GOOD SHOW: Nepal Army soldiers on parade at Democracy Day on Tuesday.

KIRAN PANDAY

IF ONLY: No rest for motorcyclists queuing for hours to get petrol.

KIRAN PANDAY

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Thamel Showroom: Opposite Sankalchand Building | 4227756, 4410947
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FRIDAY NIGHTS BASH
HAPPY HOURS BETWEEN 6PM TO 9PM

RETRO SATURDAYS
GRAB 4X2 TILES ON SPECIAL HOUSE DEALS
news just in: protesters in the Tarai are running out of petrol for their petrol bombs. Hurrah, the government strategy is working. Heard on the gas queue: the reason there is no petrol is because there is no diesel, the reason there is no diesel is because there is no government.

It is a time-honoured Nepali tradition that whenever one political party wants to challenge another one, it goes to the people. And punishes them. Pretend I’m having an argument with you. Instead of hitting you I choose a passerby smaller than me and smack him on the nose. Seeing that, the chap I’m having an argument with also pulls a small kid out of the crowd and bashes him up.

That is how our politicians have always behaved and that is how they are behaving now. Madhesi parties want their six demands fulfilled, so they declare a war on their own people and shut down the Tarai. Farmers aren’t able to sell their produce, and Madhesis have suffered a lot more than anyone else. As long as it is poor Madhesis, leaders don’t care.

Kathmandu also has a gas shortage, but that’s not because of the Madhies. It’s because we have such a bunch of bungling idiots running this country. Even an Ass would do a better job. Ass for president.

Is it just the Ass or do many of you out there also notice the growing resemblance between our Eternal President, Prachanda Bonaparte, and Joseph (Uncle Joe) Stalin? But if Comrade Chairman would shave his moustache he would actually look like Great Leader Kim Il-Sung. Comrade Jit Bahadur is reportedly not pleased with the personality cult being built around President Lotus Flower, but can’t say so in public.

For those of you who are a bit behind on the fraternal relations between the DPRK and GONE, Maharababu went to the North Korean birthday bash and looked mighty uncomfortable when his host not just shook hands but entwined his fingers in those of our Honourable Informatics Minister and wouldn’t let him go for most of the evening. This must be what they call the Juche idea.

The Ass mailbox is full of crackpot fans who send in unsolicited gossip, most of which is so libelous that it can’t be published. But one of you has sent in a brainwave, which if implemented would solve our electricity crisis overnight. The only problem is: do we have the political will to implement it? “How about,” writes the correspondent, “giving every one of the 18,954 Maoists in the cantonments a stationary bicycle with a dynamo so that they can pedal away and generate some electricity?”

Wonder why the NEA hadn’t thought of that one before. This way, the young comrades could get some exercise and shed some of that accumulating flab and the cantonments could be hooked up to the grid. The Ass back of the envelope calculation shows at least 5 megawatts can be generated in this way, enough to light all the liquor billboards on Bagmati Bridge.

The Maoist members of the Joint Monitoring Team get the UN’s subsistence allowance of $300 a day, but apparently don’t spend a cent of it during their inspection visits and lets UNMIN pick the hotel tab. Whether it goes to the party coffers or into the JMT member’s own pocket is not clear, but one wonders where relatives are getting the dough to make the down payment to the manpower companies to go to Malaysia and attend computer classes. Also, the JMT comrades have now changed their revolutionary ringtones on their mobiles. Now they have the hit song from ‘Thboon’ like the rest of us.