

# NEPALI Times

#478

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## Killing fields



SPARE A THOUGHT FOR THE LIVING: A butcher waits for killing time at the Gadhimai Mela in Bariyapur, Bara.

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## PARLIAMENTARY SUPREMACY

It is the curse of Nepali politics that a party boasts about its democratic credentials by allowing parliament to function for three days.

The most inclusive house ever elected in Nepali history was blocked for five months, there is a logjam of legislation waiting for ratification, the budget delay deadlocked development, and important national issues were not debated. The governing coalition actually benefited from the parliament blockade because it could get controversial decisions passed without proper oversight.

Meanwhile, despite the drama of the NC and Maoist leaders meeting around a hospital bed in Singapore, there is no end in sight to the political deadlock. At this stage, it is difficult to say what NC Chairman Girija Prasad Koirala seeks to achieve by forming a high-level political mechanism when grassroots politics bristles with antipathy and apathy towards the governing coalition.

Why do you need another cabal of secretive political bosses making decisions behind closed doors when you already have an elected assembly? The only mechanism we need is parliament. Use that.

If and when it is formed, perhaps the main job of the high-level mechanism will be to work out a power-sharing formula. After all, that is the real reason behind the stalemate (as Krishna Khanal argues on p7) and a consensus government would allow the peace process and constitution writing to restart.

The importance of this can't be dismissed, but the polity faces bigger challenges. The passage of the long-withheld budget through the legislature is welcome, but the government badly needs to make its presence felt throughout the country. It needs to prove that it can function normally without looking too often towards Koirala's residence for nods and winks. No matter what it is called, any mechanism outside the provisions of the interim constitution would lack the mandate to cultivate the culture of consensus in national politics.

Few would argue with the necessity of a government of national consensus. But that is a political necessity that needs to be discussed in the constituent assembly by the elected representatives of the people, not at the hospital beds or drawing rooms of political bosses. Koirala must impress upon Pushpa Kamal Dahal that taking the constituent assembly hostage to political bickering between leaders is sending all the wrong signals to the electorate and the international community. Parliamentarians need to be made to work overtime, not allowed to wallow in forced recesses the country can ill afford.



KIRAN PANDAY

# The new proletariat

If you want a glimpse into the lives of Nepali migrant workers, fly with them. Avoid the more expensive routes, and opt for the NAC direct flight to Kuala Lumpur, or the more time-consuming route through Dhaka. What one gets is a crash course in Nepal's ethnic diversity, economic stagnation, failed politics, and the survival skills of its citizens.



PLAIN SPEAKING  
Prashant Jha

As a meal was served on our way to Dhaka, I looked across to my co-passenger, who was slouched in his seat, staring blankly ahead. He saw me peel off the cover from the meal box, and get a fork out. With an eye on my tray, he cautiously did the same with his own, then smiled. "Ke garne? This is my first time."

Lakhandar Mukhia was from a small village in Saptari and was going to work "in a company". He explained how he landed the job. "I used to hang around the village doing nothing. An agent was looking for people and came to the village. My father said I should go. We paid him 70,000 last month and he organised this." I asked him if he knew

## The workers of our world are united in-flight

where he would be working in Malaysia or which city he was flying to. He shook his head. "Someone will be there to take us." Returning to his food, he murmured, "But I am very scared..."

Mukhia was just one of the 6335 people who left to work in Malaysia between mid-October and November this year. He was understandably nervous, but if those who return are any indication, don't be surprised if that changes soon.

A few days later, at the Kuala Lumpur departure lounge, I met Mohammed Sadiq, from Kharchaiya in Saptari. Sadiq had been working in a furniture company in Malaysia for five years. He earned about 30 Ringgit a day, and worked seven days a week for twelve hours each. Sadiq managed to save between 400-500 RM every month—approximately Rs 10,000.

### Was he happy?

"Ke khushi, what happiness? I spend all my time in the factory and both my Chinese owner and Tamil supervisor are cold-hearted and mean. They do not even allow me to pray regularly or go to the mosque. I have four children, and I haven't seen them for over two years. The money is good and I have paid off my family's debts. But because of other emergency expenses, I have not even been able to build a house or buy land."

The interesting

thing about Sadiq was his confidence. "I am illiterate. When I first left Nepal, at every step—airports, planes, roads, factories—I used to feel I would make a mistake and people would abuse me. Now I just walk straight with my head held high. And if I have to fill in a form, I just scribble my name, leave the rest, and negotiate with the person at the counter," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Most workers had not kept in touch with Nepali politics. But they instinctively understood Nepal's diversity better staying outside than they may have being in Nepal itself. At Dhaka airport, as the names of passengers were screamed out for boarding passes, each ethnicity seemed to be represented—Shrestha to Damai, Tamang to Choudhary, Mahato to Magar. And there was a visible fraternity that had evolved in the course of a plane journey, with each helping the other.

When I asked Sadiq, and other workers, what they thought of Nepal now that they had seen a bit of the world, there was a common refrain to their answers.

"Nepal is totally spoilt. Even Kathmandu looks backward to us now. There is nothing to do at home, and we cannot earn even this much. When we talk to our families, they only mention the bandhs and strikes. The problem is there are no factories in Nepal. If there were, we would have jobs."

Nepal's political class, especially the Maoist dogmatists, should start thinking about how they will deal with this newly assertively 'proletariat', which has far greater exposure than many in the urban lower middle class. This class will not fall for false promises easily. And despite serving as the underbelly of the capitalist machinery, it sees the benefits of industrialisation. Accommodating the new proletariat will have to be a part of any new political design. ●

## LETTERS

### INHUMAN

Gadhimai Mela is nothing but a barbaric and inhuman tragedy (Animal fights, #477). The people who carry out the slaughter are invariably drunk. What I don't understand, why the need to drink if they're so brave.

It's time to wake up and live in a civilised manner. Just as in India, animal sacrifices should be banned here. Happiness comes from helping, not hurting. Let's hope this Gadhimai festival will be the last.

Chandra Gurung, [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

### SOLHEIM'S PAST

I was not happy that Nepali Times gave space to Erik Solheim's interview (Nepal needs a homegrown solution, #477). It would have been appropriate to have a small introduction related to his past controversial peace negotiating role in Sri Lanka. He allegedly helped LTTE secure arms

covertly during the period he was involved there. He was rightfully kicked out from Sri Lanka and just look at the marvellous achievements thereafter. Need we say more?

Armugam Ananta,  
email

### HOORAH FOR HOFTUN

I heard much about Hoftun while working with a hydropower company in Kathmandu but did not know that he started Tansen Hospital and how Martin Chautari was set up. After knowing all this I must say Hoftun is a true friend of Nepal. It is often said that it's better to teach a man to fish than to give him fish. Sir Hoftun's taken this to heart.

Pradip, [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

### MILESTONE

The blogs online are a milestone. I'm not sure if they're ever going to be printed, but it wouldn't matter, since I'm sure Nepali Times knows the majority of its readership is online.

Aawartan Discuss,  
Nepal

### FINDING FEDERALISM

I recently visited Switzerland and stayed there for three weeks (Finding federalism, #476). I got the feeling that Swiss federalism evolved bottom-up, and wasn't imposed from the top. I agree with

Ms Nicole Topperwein when she says federalism combined with democracy worked as a conflict management tool. But the question is how to involve people at

the grassroots? First of all the election of 75 district governments should be held, and each should be asked which districts they want to join. These suggestions should be discussed in the CA with the participation of national and international persons who have experience in the field. To my mind, this is the way to evolve federalism combined with grassroots democracy. Switzerland has a lot to teach us.

P.C. Joshi, [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

### CORRECTIONS

● SN Power, not Norfund, has agreed to jointly develop projects in Nepal and India with Tata Power. Norfun owns 40 per cent of SN power. (Nepal needs a homegrown solution, #477)

● SN Power, and not BPC, is developing the Tama Kosi 3 Project (Norwegian guru, #477)







# Jaded Jaleshwar

JALESHWAR-The district headquarters of Mahottari is divided into two distinct parts. The temple of Jaleshwarnath, dedicated to Shiva in his benevolent form as the supreme lord of water, is still the main attraction. Visitors from surrounding villages throng the shrine every Monday. The *haat*—



STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

a marketplace where barter used to be the dominant means of trade till quite recently—gathers twice a week on the banks of the holy tank close by. Here petty trade and idol worship coexist in harmony. The eastern section of Jaleshwar is the seat of temporal authority. Almost all government offices are located along a north-south road that connects the army barracks with the CDO office. The district hospital and schools too are in this area for the convenience of the families of public servants. Increasingly, however, government officials are to be found in Janakpur, from where they commute everyday.

## Over-zealous planners would do well to accommodate businesses

The bazar area links these two parts and is the belly of the town, almost literally, as it houses all the main eateries, *mithai* shops, beer bars and arrack outlets. This is where journalists gather in the evening, politicians hold court in front of *paan* shops and manpower agents try to lure unsuspecting villagers into low-paying jobs in Afghanistan and Iraq. But the Chowk no longer glitters. With the en masse departure of the Marwari shopkeepers, shopping is not the attraction it used to be. There are economic reasons behind the out-migration of this vibrant business community. Janakpur has emerged as a bigger commercial centre and attracts traders from smaller towns in the vicinity. Enterprising traders have moved as far as

Birganj and Lahan, and some have even moved to the capital to make their fortunes. But the most important factor behind the flight of Jaleshwar's Marwaris is psychological. A half-dismantled shopping centre in the bazar (*see box*) stands as a monument to the humiliation of the most respected Marwari trader in town at the hands of an arriviste UML politico. Perhaps to remind locals of their complicity in the crime as bemused bystanders, the owners of the once-magnificent house have left the skeleton intact. When it was built in the late eighties, Siriya Marwari's house looked too imposing to be in a town as sleepy as Jaleshwar. But the venerable Seth wanted to impress local government officers with his wealth, taste and power. Engineers and builders were brought in from Mujaffarpur and construction material was procured from Kathmandu and Patna. The top floor of the building was to house his family while businesses were to operate from shuttered fronts on the ground floor. For the first few years, it appeared as if the town finally had a commercial landmark. But jealousy is the evil twin of success. After the political changes of 1990, the old Seth found it hard to learn new tricks to do business with the UML upstarts in town. Mayor Balkrishna Dhakal used his proximity to Khadga Oli and Madhav Nepal to push through demolition orders, ostensibly to widen a road where few buses ply even today. The building was defaced and rendered unusable. Unable to bear the humiliation, the most well-known Marwari family of Mahottari left Jaleshwar for good. With the big businesses gone, the town wears a somewhat dehydrated look. Other than government vehicles, there are few cars to use the recently widened and freshly paved roads. Unsure of the variety and quality of locally available goods, shoppers prefer to go to Janakpur for bigger purchases. Local temples have few patrons and schools and colleges routinely fail to raise funds for additional infrastructure. The Maoists are the new UML around town, with former revolutionaries such as Mayor Dhakal settled into comfortable bourgeois life. For politicians looking for cheap popularity, eminent domain (the right of the state to take private property for public use) is a useful tool, and one that makes the rich quaver. The right to property, however, is the sine qua non of economic development. Jaleshwar's sad story bears testament to a clash in which the state won the battle, but everyone lost the war. ●

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# Politics of aid

Aid has been in the news again in the past week for the wrong reasons. A consortium of Nepal-based donors held a press conference and plastered ads in the papers to warn against continued extortion of their development partners. They said this violated the Basic Operating Guidelines, but they



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Rabin Subedi**

did not dare name the political party to which the organisations that were doing the extorting belonged to.

But what of the donors' violation of Nepali regulations and their own international commitments to directly implement projects and create parallel in-country aid structures? These rules strictly restrict direct implementation of projects by donors and international aid organisations. But in Nepal, donor agencies and INGOs have been setting up offices in district headquarters and sometimes even at the local level.

This appears to be not only against the domestic laws of Nepal but also contradicts the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which set the agenda for donor governments and agencies and recipient

## Donors violate their own international commitments



BADRI PAUDYAL

governments. Donors agreed to make assistance more effective by harmonising aid and channelling it through central government in developing countries. But local donor offices in Nepal are increasingly subcontracting development through an interconnected web of INGOs that undermine donors' stated commitment to 'country ownership' and 'use of country system'.

The international legal status of INGOs is being changed to

Nepali legal status by registering them with CDO offices, blurring the differences between INGOs and NGOs. The real intention here appears to be not 'localisation' and 'decentralisation' per se, but capturing funding both at the national and international levels.

Most INGOs have set up their Nepal offices to tap the 'year marked' monies of bilateral donors. This has not just made aid less sustainable and increased dependency, it has also resulted

in wastage, duplication and aid failure and ineffectiveness. Aid policies promoted and practiced by some of the self-described 'democratic and credible donors' in Nepal have therefore ignored and undermined Nepali ownership, which past donor compacts have committed to.

INGOs should be raising funds and tapping resources from their home countries, not from the Kathmandu country offices of donors. For their part, bilateral donors are required to use in-

country systems to channel development funds. Political instability in Nepal, the lack of government oversight and weak implementation of agreed guidelines have led to this situation, which must be corrected to make aid more effective.

More than 60 per cent of Nepal's development budget comes from foreign aid, but a Finance Ministry official admitted recently that there had been no progress in enforcing international aid guidelines. Donors are also reluctant to follow their own commitments in Paris and Accra for use of country systems. The Foreign Division of the Ministry of Finance, the National Planning Commission, parliament and civil society (including the NGO Federation of Nepal) are also apathetic or ignorant about the trend.

The international agreements made by donors were aimed at making foreign aid more efficient, coordinated and effective through increased donor engagement with government agencies, parliament and civil society. It is unfortunate that what we see in Nepal today is a trend in the opposite direction. ●

*Rabin Subedi is a campaigner with the Nepal Policy Institute, a member of the Reality of Aid Global Network.*

## Suffer the children

MARIANNE HEREDGE

Kanti Children's Hospital is the only government hospital for children in Nepal, and it will soon have 500 beds for the children who come from all over the country. Most patients are from the poorest families. But Kanti lacks even the most basic equipment, so those who can afford it head elsewhere.

In Nepal, there is not enough government support for healthcare. Most people have to pay for their medical treatment. Nurses administer injections, but friends and families of patients take care of the sick, bringing food, and running out to the pharmacy for medicines. Whilst there are many trained nurses in Kathmandu, there are not enough nurses in the wards, especially in government hospitals like Kanti. Doctors in government hospitals have to survive on a salary of around Rs 15,000. It is no wonder that some doctors spend a few hours at the hospital then slip off to private practices to make ends meet.

Many of the health problems of the children at Kanti are hardly ever seen in the west, where they are detected early or



are no longer prevalent. In Nepal, with its limited number of often inaccessible, understaffed health posts, conditions such as rheumatic heart disease are regularly misdiagnosed and left too late. Many of these health problems are avoidable, but when nearly half the population is illiterate, then basic knowledge about healthcare is as much the problem as anything. In Kanti, the burns ward is full of children who strayed too near the open fire that is used for cooking in the majority of village homes, and burn cases from kerosene stoves. Malnourished children are also a common sight.

There is little equipment in evidence. In the Cardiac ward, up to half a dozen children are treated for various heart conditions, mostly rheumatic heart disease. When ten-year-old Padma Tamang's heart crashed

**SILENT WITNESS: Gopal Chaudhary suffers from similar heart problems as Padma Tamang, who he watched die. Gopal's condition has improved more recently, and he is scheduled for an operation at the Shahid Gangalal Heart Hospital.**

(it stopped beating, though she continued breathing) there was nothing anyone could do besides watch her die. There was no defibrillator, no ECG, no child-sized masks and 10 precious minutes were wasted changing an empty oxygen tank. A little boy in the opposite bed, Gopal Chaudhary, watched quietly. The look of fear in his face spoke volumes.

About three kilometres north of Kanti is a

new heart hospital, the Shahid Gangalal National Heart Hospital. Under a government assistance program, poor families who cannot afford the cost of surgery can seek free treatment for children under the age of 15. 'Why can't the children with heart problems go there?' I asked. The answer is that the heart hospital can only admit cardiac pediatric patients requiring catheterisation procedures or surgery, so until the child is diagnosed and any existing infections are dealt with, he or she has to wait. Depending on the seriousness of the problem, this could be from one or two months to a year or more.

Kanti Children's Hospital needs so many things. Face masks that fit children, basic life-saving equipment and even blood, as well as well-trained nurses to monitor and perform observations. Help is also urgently needed for poor families to afford what can be expensive courses of treatment. Even giving priority to simple but essential things like clean wards is vital, which in the case of the leukaemia patients can be a matter of life or death.

Nepali charities such as Social Action Volunteers (SAV) have been working for twenty years at Kanti to help the poorest families with the costs of medicine and other expenses, including travel expenses for those from outside the valley. SAV is trying to help the poorest families, but with limited resources can only scratch at the surface of a far bigger problem. ●

*Rural Assistance Nepal (RAN) is a UK charity providing support to SAV at Kanti. For further details, go to [www.panepal.org/ran/kanti](http://www.panepal.org/ran/kanti), or contact Marianne Heredge, [m\\_heredge@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:m_heredge@yahoo.co.uk).*

**"A good mop would be useful," says Kanti Hospital staff**





# Banking basics

The leadership of Nepal's banking fraternity faces many challenges. Here are two challenges for which it needs to have collective plans that it can execute in the next two years.

**Macroeconomic research:** Nepal is probably among a handful of countries that lets some bankers and accountants play the role of thoughtful-sounding macroeconomists in public.

The reason is simple. Most trained macroeconomists, that is, a few who returned to Nepal after earning higher degrees abroad, are either busy consulting for donor agencies or they haven't kept up with the changes in the discipline, especially in the light of the recent Great Recession.

**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
**Ashutosh Tiwari**

Since the public does confuse finance (a slice) with macroeconomics (the whole), this makes it easier for some articulate finance professionals to mouth off on the broader issues of employment, inflation, national income and productivity, even when what they say amounts to nothing more than platitudes.

But this ignorance reduces the substance of conversations that bankers have with their regulator, the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), which is filled with professionals with degrees in economics. As such, apart from making sure that they are not on the wrong side of the NRB, most bankers are not able to deal with NRB staff as intellectual equals who can honestly counter-cite evidence from other economies as to what will or won't work in Nepal's banking sector.

When NRB proposes pay cuts for bank's CEOs, for instance, most have no choice but to agree, even when they privately bristle at the suggestion. Likewise, when NRB turns down a request to allow a new financial product to enter the market, bankers' private criticisms signal that they are quick to attribute the reasons to personalities and attitudes rather than to economic reasoning.

## Banks need to be savvy to research and self-development

One way bankers can beef up their institutional expertise on macroeconomics is to hire research-oriented economists, set up research departments and start producing papers and briefings that can be distributed to the media. Some individual banks have already done so.

But there's a need for collective effort: to pool resources to strengthen the research output of, say, the economists that are to be hired at the Nepal Bankers Association (NBA). Else, a surrender of the industry's intellectual leadership to isolated accountants and some degree-smug economists at the NRB does not help banks to collectively take a proactive stance for the industry's growth. If that's the case, then they'll always be reacting to others' views and criticisms, and not be able to set the agenda themselves to take the conversation forward.

**Creating effective boards:** As the number of banks goes up, the NRB will have to extend its supervisory duties. One way it does so is by instituting higher standards of corporate governance. As governance standards go up, there will be a greater demand for qualified independent board directors.

The ugly truths in the market are two: there is a severe shortage of such board directors, and those who do get invited or are elected to become directors have little knowledge and training as to how they can be effective in discharging their responsibilities on behalf of the shareholders.

As such, again, institutions such as NBA have to step in, and offer training programs and counseling sessions to board directors. If banks these days require their entry-level staff to go through certified training programs, why wouldn't they want their board directors, the very representatives of the owners of banks, to go through appropriate training programs too? After all, having a diverse pool of effective, qualified trained and duty-focused board directors is in the larger interest of the financial community, and of Nepal. ●

## Golf players

Surya Nepal Khelaparyatan and Nepal Golf Association as per the Surya Nepal NGA Youth Golf Coaching Programme selected Dinesh Prajapati, Sanjiv C.K. and Sonam Lama as the 'Camp of Excellence'. They will now be playing in the prestigious Surya Nepal Golf Tour.

## Branching out

Kumari Bank opened its 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> branch in Koteswhor and Budhanilkantha. The bank plans to open more branches outside the Kathmandu Valley and reach a total of 30 branches by the end of the year.

## Soaring high

MoneyGram International and Samsara opened two new agent locations in Nepal; one at Everest Base Camp (5365m) and the other in Namche Bajar (3440m). The former is now the highest money transfer agent location in the world.

## Forefront

Nepal Investment Bank has become the first bank in Nepal's history to receive an investment grade rating of A, from the Indian Credit Rating Agency. The rating ranges from AAA to D.

## Prevent AIDS

Arun Beverages and PepsiCo International launched its CSR initiative. The program is aimed at HIV/AIDS awareness and will be driven across the country by VBNPL and PepsiCo International with the help of Mitra Samaj, an NGO working with USAID which will also be distributing free condoms to all the participants.

## Seeing is believing

Standard Chartered Bank conducted a fund-raising walkathon on 21 November, 'A Walk for a Brighter Tomorrow'. The funds raised will go to the bank's 'Seeing is Believing' initiative, which seeks to increase awareness amongst the public about blindness to reduce the stigma associated with visually impaired people.

## Finger lickin' good

Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Pizza Hut have finally opened in Kathmandu. The two American food chains were brought to Kathmandu by Devyani International in partnership with NMB Bank and are located in Annapurna Complex, Darbar Marg.

## Steps forward

City Development Bank presented its annual progress report at its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual general meeting held last week. The bank has been able to make a net profit of Rs 6.5 million with an investment of Rs 960 million. It has collected deposits worth Rs 1.19 billion this year. The bank has a total of five branches and preparing to open a new branch in Damauli in the near future.

## Spreading wings

Biswa Bikash Bank has extended its branches in Kushma, Parbat, marking its third anniversary. The bank is also preparing to open a branch in Rupandehi, Butwal.

## Share the wealth

Kamana Development Bank will be floating public shares to add to its authorised capital. The bank is planning to reach 10 districts and open new branches, with SMS and Internet banking services.

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# Whatever Sujata wants

Letters to the editor in *Nagarik*, 24 November

नागरिक



Apparently Sujata had the desire to ride the most expensive car in the world. Maybe her father understood this while forcing the prime minister to promote her to deputy prime minister. Maybe she did not want to return to Nepal while spending Rs 300,000 to sleep in the presidential suite of the best hotel in Singapore. What would she do here? There are hardly any places to spend the country's budget. After all, it is one of the least developed countries.

- Khem Gaire, Palpa

Sujata is the princess of the Federal Republic of Nepal. What can we do? We can only defeat her during elections. Which we did. Although she lost the elections, she became a minister anyway. Now she is ruling us all.

- Ren Kumar, email

Sujata's expenses in Singapore should not be covered by the state. She should return the money. Then she can do whatever she wants.

- Sagar, London

Where did Sujata get the courage to spend so recklessly? There is a limit to nepotism. She can be a minister without winning elections. She can spend the state's money whenever and however she wants. Aren't there any laws to control her?

- Tapas Magar, Lalitpur

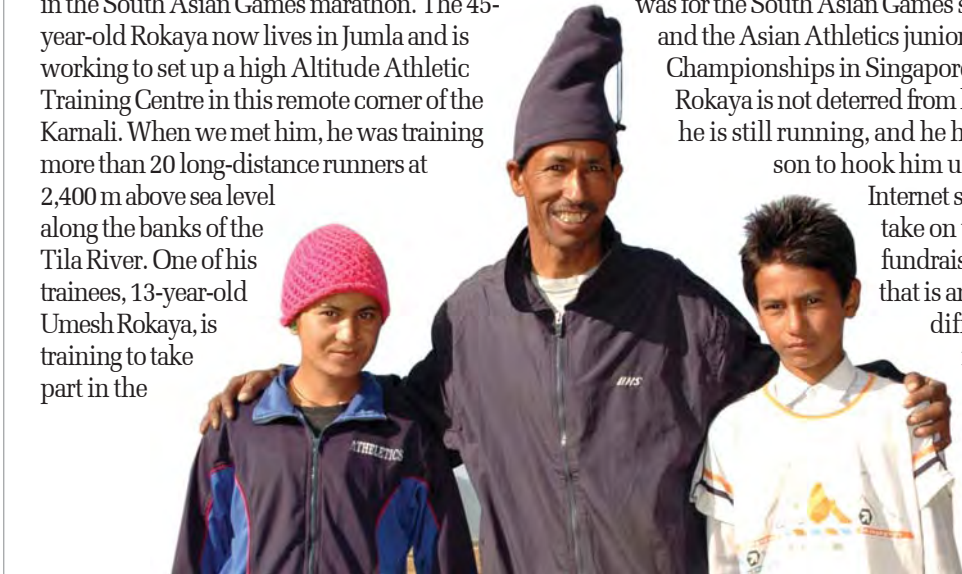
# Long-distance runner

Kiran Nepal and Rameshwor Bohara in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-30 November

हिमाल

Hari Bahadur Rokaya is a three-time national marathon gold medallist. He's achieved another hat-trick by winning the Everest marathon thrice. He has qualified for the Seoul and Barcelona Olympics marathon and won a silver in the South Asian Games marathon. The 45-year-old Rokaya now lives in Jumla and is working to set up a high Altitude Athletic Training Centre in this remote corner of the Karnali. When we met him, he was training more than 20 long-distance runners at 2,400 m above sea level along the banks of the Tila River. One of his trainees, 13-year-old Umesh Rokaya, is training to take part in the

2010 Everest marathon. He is also training 12 army runners for next month's Army Cross Country Race. Rokaya is working to raise the Rs 10 million necessary to start his centre, but meanwhile is trying to at least finish building a 200m race track in Jumla, which has no stadium. Unfortunately, the athlete selection process is dominated by big people in Kathmandu and Jumla is always left out, as it was for the South Asian Games selections and the Asian Athletics junior Championships in Singapore. Still, Rokaya is not deterred from his dream, he is still running, and he has got his son to hook him up to the Internet so he can take on the task of fundraising. And that is an even more difficult marathon.



RAMESHWOR BOHARA

# Show disrupted

Kantipur, 25 November

कान्तिपुर

ITAHARI n Maoist cadre here on Tuesday disrupted the photo exhibition, *People After War*, saying it showed their activities in a poor light. They threatened the head of the municipality that had let out its cultural centre for the exhibit and tried to prevent visitors from going in. However, 25,000 people from all walks of life waited hours in line to see the exhibition, which depicts how the relatives of the victims of the conflict are getting on with their lives. This exhibition is one-sided, Maoist Itahari in-charge



Mukti Rijal told local organiser Ganesh Niraula of the Youth Media Centre, you better stop this program or else. The Maoists said the pictures in the exhibit would contaminate the minds of

innocent school-children. However, Maoist regional in-charge of Sunsari-4 Manoj Shrestha said it was not his party's intention to stop the exhibition.

# Staged affair

Amrit Kharel in *Janadisha*, 25 November

जनादेश

UML and its allies hastily passed the budget during a farcical parliamentary session after the Maoist party suspended House obstructions. They completed discussions on budgetary allocations to the 27 ministries and the Prime Minister's office on Tuesday alone. The Maoist party didn't participate in the discussions. Analysts say that by passing the budget without the participation of the opposition, the government has set a bad precedent. This is the first time in Nepali history that the budget has been passed with the leading opposition party absent from the legislature. However, this is not the first time the budget has passed without support from the leading opposition party. When NC leader Ram Chandra Poudel was House speaker, the budget was passed despite the total opposition of the UML. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal claimed the budget is pro-people and thanked the Maoists for suspending House obstructions. He said it would improve all sectors of the economy, even as people face higher costs of living.

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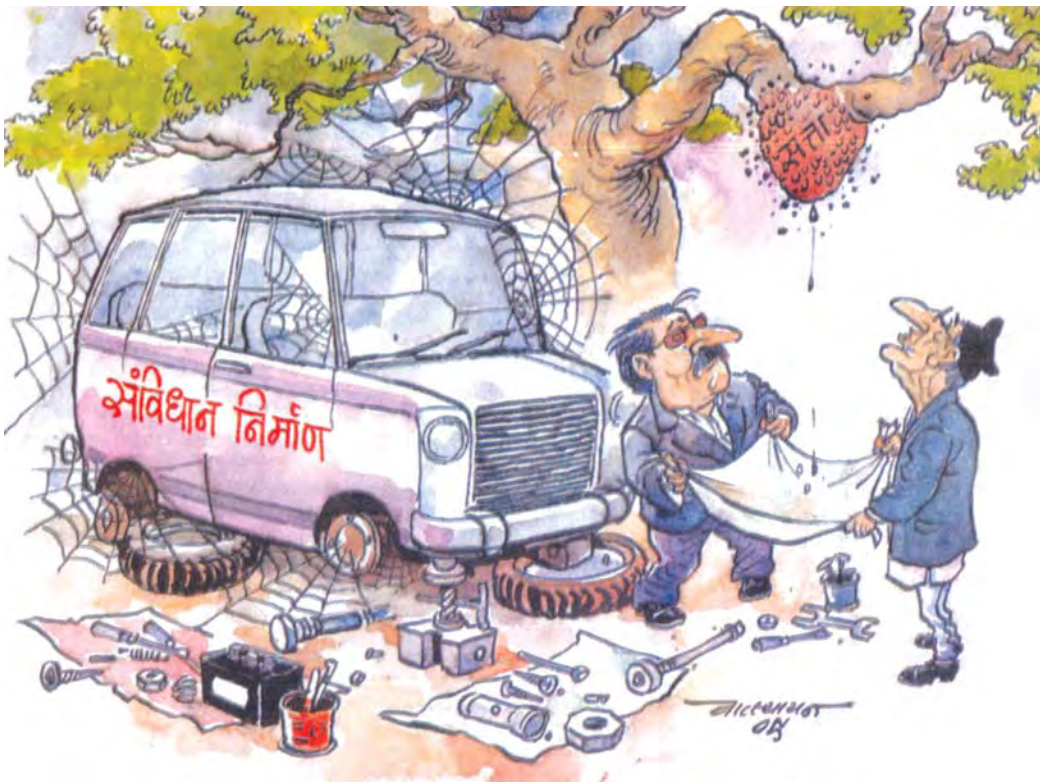
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कान्तिपुर Batsayan in Kantipur, 22 November



# Substance, not form

## Constitution-writing is not a zero-sum game

There have been some positive achievements in the Constituent Assembly in the past year and a half, but things could have gone much faster and smoother. There are now misgivings that the new constitution will not be written in the next six months. The reason is not that the CA is unable to write it in time. It is because we are stuck in a political quagmire of deep



**COMMENT**  
**Krishna Khanal**

ideological divisions between the main political parties on issues like federalism. The UML and the Maoists want provinces based on ethnic, linguistic and geographical identity while the NC, RPP and others reject ethnic provinces.

There is also disagreement over state structure. Earlier they couldn't agree on having a presidential or parliamentary system but all wanted a pluralistic multi-party democracy. Now the Maoists want a 'unicameral people's assembly' and a standing committee within it, which will run the government. They also want the judiciary to come under the legislature, and there are differences over the electoral process.

These are not just procedural issues, there are now fundamental differences in the political value systems of the parties. Normally, post-conflict countries chart out their political future only after the demobilisation of fighters. Here, even the Maoist government did little to move the process of integration forward, raising suspicions that it wants to keep its army at least until the first elections under the new constitution.

However, the biggest weakness of the constitution-writing process has been that we sat down to write it without first laying down the basic principles. There was a constitution court, but all it did was oversee elections. So there is no ideological foundation to build the constitution on, and it has become an open-ended free-for-all. Suggestions were collected, but now they are arguing over every word.



KIRAN PANDAY

A CA member that gheraos the rostrum is, a few minutes later, sitting down to lead a committee discussion. Committee drafts reflect the views of their chairs with the others registering pro forma dissent. A major flaw in the process was not separating the function and roles of the constituent assembly and parliament from the very beginning.

So, most party representatives want all or nothing. Constitution writing is not a zero-sum game. And there is now also a dangerous tilt to the right, with some arguing that it was a mistake to give away so much to the Maoists. There is a danger that these forces will use the excuse of a delayed constitution to come out into the streets.

The disagreements in the drafting committees all stem from the basic political differences between the parties over power sharing. Whenever the political leaders meet, it is to discuss who should be in power, not the constitution. In fact civil society organisations funded by donor agencies seem more preoccupied with the constitutional process than our political leadership. A sovereign nation cannot write a new constitution solely on the basis of outside support and money.

The Maoists are bogged down by internal rifts. They say one thing to their cadre, another thing at the Khula Manch and quite another thing to the international community. The other parties, by not giving space to the moderate line within the Maoists, are making them more aggressive.

Then, there are our southern and northern neighbours. Both India and China are following the identity-led constitution-writing process with some degree of alarm because of the effect this could have on their own domestic security concerns. The UN, on the other hand, doesn't want Nepal's peace process to be a failure just because our politicians can't get along. The UN may therefore lobby and even exert pressure, but there is no reason to get worked up about this.

Further delays in constitution writing will not only invite a dangerous political crisis, but also increase external interference. If we can finish the new constitution and set democratic institutions in place India's role, for one, will automatically be reduced.

**So, what do we do? Four things:**

1. Bring the politics back on track
2. Don't argue over form, but substance
3. Enforce the rule of law
4. Leave space for constitutional amendments

Clearly, the most urgent need is to set up a power-sharing coalition based on the proportionality of members in parliament. Then, agree on basic political principles of democracy and pluralism and leave the details for the committees to work out. After that the rest will fall into place. ●

*Krishna Khanal is a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University.*

## “Maoists made CA inclusive”

Kushiram Pakhrin, Maoist CA member, Gorkha

**What are you doing these days?**

I am busy with the protests carried out by my party. Besides that I am also participating in the boycott of the parliamentary meeting.

**How is the constitution-writing process going?**

There has been some progress in that area. The CA is discussing six out of ten committees' drafts. The other committees are also preparing their drafts.

**At this rate will the constitution be framed in time?**

Unlikely, given the current



political climate. That being said, if the parties can reach a consensus there is a possibility that it can be written in seven months.

**Who is delaying the constitution-writing process?**

Presently, the political parties who are in power are the ones obstructing the progress.

**What kind of state restructuring would you suggest?**

We have to opt for a federalist state that is demarcated by caste, language etc.

**Your party has proposed that the Lamas who do not belong to any caste be given a region. But that way some other castes are neglected.**

We are not neglecting them. They will be categorised not just according to caste and ethnicity, but more on the basis of geography, language, and tradition.

**What is your experience of the CA?**

Because of the Maoists, the CA is representative and inclusive. There are now discussions about backward and disadvantaged groups. But oppressed and marginalised groups are still being ignored because some of the groups within the CA are still opposed to this inclusion.

## “Everyone's despairing”



Arzu Rana-Deuba, NC CA member, Dadelhdhura

**What are you doing these days?**

When the CA and parliament were suspended, I spent a lot of time on official trips abroad. I attended programs on development, environment and social service in Delhi and Germany between Dasain and Tihar. Since then, I have attended two meetings of the State Restructuring Committee.

**What is happening in the CA?**

CA meetings are going on and the discussions have been good, but there is still a lot of work left to do.

**Will the constitution be written on time?**

Because of the current political impasse, it doesn't seem likely that the constitution will be written on time.

**Is there a lot of discord in committee meetings?**

The Maoists, and an assortment of ethnic political parties allied with them, want ethnic federalism, while the other parties want

federalism to be based on geographic, ethnic and economic viability. There is also disagreement on how to regulate and share power amongst the executive, judiciary and the legislature.

**How much of the constitution-writing process is complete?**

The constitution hasn't been drafted yet, so about 25 per cent is complete.

**Why has the constitution-writing process been delayed?**

A big reason is the unhelpfulness the Maoists showed after leaving government. Their unwillingness to disband the violent YCL, return land taken during the war and advance the integration of combatants have also delayed the constitution-writing process.

**What are the positive and negative aspects of the CA?**

It's good that those on opposing sides of the civil war are now sitting down in one place. The CA membership reflects the make-up of our society. However, the harsh language used by the Maoists is a negative aspect.

**How different is the mood among CA members now compared to how it was when the CA was first established?**

At first, people were generally upbeat and committed to writing a good constitution. But now, many are disenchanted by Maoist ideological stubbornness and their greed for power. Everyone is despairing.



## K-W

SHAILEE BASNET

A young man reluctantly helps a drunk girl he doesn't know regain her senses, but, alas, is jailed for all his troubles when people suspect his intentions. Hollywood's *My Sassy Girl*, Bollywood's *Ugly Aur Pugli* and Kollywood's *Mero Sansar* all begin with this scene, copied from Korean blockbuster *My Sassy Girl*, which was released in 2001.

This is no one-off, either. Korean films and serials have gripped audiences worldwide. *My Sassy Girl* was so popular in Asia people began making comparisons to Hollywood mega-blockbuster *Titanic*. Hollywood actors and producers immediately took notice and a spate of successful remakes of Korean movies hit the market. Many American theatres even run Korean movies with English subtitles.

The trend has caught on in Nepal as well. This year's *Mero Euta Saathi Cha*, for example, is a remake of Korean movie *Millionaire's First Love*, and many scenes from *Sano Sansar* were lifted from Korean films. Director of *Mero Euta Saathi Cha* Sudarshan Thapa says the movie was in part an 'experiment' to test local receptiveness to remakes of foreign films. It seems the movie's success at the box office has proven his point.

Korean films are so popular DVD sales rival that of Hindi movies





# Wave



However, Korean films themselves may be more popular than remakes, as the popularity of DVDs of Korean films attests. DVD shop owner Ganesh Ghimire says Korean films have been popular here since the emergence of Korean language schools in 2007, particularly with Nepalis seeking work in Korea. He suspects that initially many people bought Korean films to learn the language. The movies have gained a much broader appeal since, even though much of the audience today doesn't understand Korean.

Indeed, Korean movies are now so popular DVD sales rival that of Hindi DVDs, the traditional heavyweights in the local market. Dev Chulagain, who runs a DVD shop, confirms this: "While people only buy recent Hindi films, there is demand even for Korean movies released four to five years ago."

People are especially keen on 2001's *My Sassy Girl*, 2006's *A Millionaire's First Love*, 2008's *Ta Gutgi*, and romantic movies more generally. Inevitably, Korean language and fashion have caught on. For example, instead of saying "I love you" many have started using the Korean equivalent, "Sarang hyo."

Part of the reason Korean films have been so popular is that they are easier to relate to. Bollywood films are shot in western locations these days and tend to have fanciful plots. It's no surprise, then, that demand for Bollywood movies has diminished just as that for Korean films has grown. Usha Lama knows the names of Korean actors by heart. She says, "Korean films are fun and easy to relate to." Director Thapa is also a fan. "Korean films are thoughtful, and commonplace plots are presented very well."

Romantic Korean films can also be slow and plodding and have turned off some, like *Mero Sansar* director Alok Nembang. But they continue to grow in popularity and are easily accessible on TV channels like Arirang or the Internet. A couple of years ago, Nepal Television and Doordarshan began running Korean TV serials. Many more TV channels air these shows today. Businessmen add that cinema halls that show Korean movies have made a lot of money. It's clear the K-wave is here to stay. ●



# Silent soldiers

HELAMBU ñ A row of two-storied concrete buildings can be seen as the local bus enters Timbu, a town after Melamchi Pul in Sindhupalchok. This is the starting or ending point of the Helambu trail. Tea houses and lodges are sparse here, and those coming down from Sermathang or Gosainkunda stop over in Timbu.

This row of buildings is one of the most popular lodges in Timbu. It has several rooms, separated by corrugated sheets, and it backs directly onto the Melamchi River. Everyone in the village knows the lodge as Roshani Didiís. The kitchen starts buzzing with people from 6am, by which time Roshani Didi (pictured below) will have been up for more than two hours. Little boys and girls stop on their way to school to buy candy, workers



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
**Mallika Aryal**

stop by for a cup of tea, teenage boys come to buy rice on their way back from school, farmers stop by for a drink of raksi, Melamchi engineers for

lunch. Itís as busy as you can imagine.

Roshani Didi grew up in Sindhupalchok, but moved to Kathmandu for higher studies. Later, she got involved with a local NGO that works to rescue trafficked women. She was sent to Timbu for work, as Helambu was, and still is, plagued by girl trafficking. It was here that Roshani Didi met her future husband, a local Sherpa. They fell in love and decided to get married, despite their familiesí objections to the union of a Chettri woman and a Sherpa man.



MALLIKA ARYAL

## Those who make the little changes are the ones who actually transform our society

Roshani Didi left everything behind to build a new life in Timbu, but had to live apart from her husband for many years, with three children to raise, due to misunderstandings with his family. That was when she built the lodge. ìl carried sand, bricks, helped the workers, did whatever I could ñ with him gone I was all alone but I donít give up so easily.î

Today Roshani Didi and her husband are back together running the place. They have regular trekking guides bringing in groups, but Roshani Didiís cooking is so popular that bankers and Melamchi managers drive all the way from Kabhre and Kathmandu on weekends to spend the day in Timbu at her place.

Running the hotel is not the only thing Roshani Didi does. She never gave up her work as an activist, even during the difficult years of separation from her husband. She has worked relentlessly to rescue trafficked women, organise awareness programs, and counsel girls from the village. Recently, she went all the way to Sunauli to rescue a couple of village girls who had been stopped at the border. ìl didnít have to think twice, I just packed and left to get there before the girls crossed the border,î she says.

Helambu is just six bumpy hours by bus away from Kathmandu, but it is one of the most impoverished areas in Nepal. ìThereís so much poverty here that people have no remorse about selling off their own daughters or sisters,î she says. The ones who are rescued at the border are the luckiest, as most never make it back from cities such as Mumbai. The handful who do are physically and psychologically damaged and commonly have HIV.

Roshani Didi is a silent soldier in the fight against girl trafficking. Her untiring efforts are a key reason why trafficking in Helambu, though still significant, has gone down so dramatically. And there are so many like Roshani Didi, in every village in Nepal, fighting alone and relentlessly for such big causes. Foot doctors, female community health workers, legal activists and journalists expect nothing in return for the work they do because they care deeply about the issues. In a true sense, those who work at ground level are the ones who are bringing the real change we need in our society, not those who come out on the streets, disrupt normal life to chant slogans, or limit themselves to workshoping. As we leap forward towards a new Nepal, spare a thought for all the Roshani Didis working to make it possible, step by step. ●



# More than mountains

BADRI PAUDYAL

It's not such an inconceivable task to imagine being treated like a god when you are a guest in a Nepali home! It is our tradition to treat guests in the best way possible and in keeping with this tradition, the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) have introduced the concept of home-stay village tourism in Ghalegaun and its surrounds that takes in more than just mountains.

The 'Gurung Heritage Trail', starting from Besisahar, includes several villages of Lamjung district within the Annapurna Conservation Area, such as Ghalegaun, Ghanpokhara, Bhujung and Pasgaun. Located at an altitude of 2070 metres, Ghalegaun attracts many trekkers and tourists for home stays. Visitors are exposed to the simple life of their hosts and eat

the same food – dal, rice, vegetables, roti and so on. In the evenings, the womenfolk perform song and dance routines depicting Ghantu (celebrating Lord Buddha's birthday), Sorathi, and Krishna Charitra. The guests receive a big reception on arrival as well as when they leave. But Ghalegaun also offers stunning mountain views of the Manaslu range in the east, Lamjung Himal and Annapurna II in the north, and Machapuchhare in the west.

Half an hour north of Ghalegaun lie two other beautiful Gurung settlements – Nayu and Ghanpokhara. Ghanpokhara is known for its honey extracted

from the hives of giant wild black bees. A nice way to pass time is to seek out the 'honey hunters' so famously depicted by Eric Valli and Diane Summers in 1988. After listening to stories of their perilous adventures in the cliffs where the bees are found, you can take a two and a half hour walk to reach Bhujung.

Bhujung contains the largest Gurung population in the area, with over 400 households that pride themselves on their rich cultural heritage. They have even generated their own electricity supply, and are considered pioneers in conservation and development in the area.

After a five hour up and down hike from Bhujung you will reach a pristine village of over 200 houses called Pasgaun.

Untouched by modernity, this village has retained its traditional feel, evident in its architecture (e.g. slant-roofed houses), culture, and food. With no electricity, except for those provided by solar panels, the villagers express their need for it through their evening performances.

After Pasgaun, travellers can stop at Nanghidhar or Pakhrikot, make a last stop at Thumsikot, and take a bus to Pokhara, before ending the experience of the 'Gurung Heritage Trail'. Those willing to postpone the end of their trip can go off road and hike to Begnas and Rupatal lakes, then take a car to Pokhara.

The best time to visit these villages is from September to November, or from March to May, when the blooming rhododendrons are a sight to behold. The Tourism Management Sub Committee (TMsC) handles all the home stays in the region. Houses are solar lit, and boast toilets and bathroom facilities. Food is also provided for by the TMsC. Five per cent of the guest's payments goes towards the committee's fund for conservation and community development, and there is also an entry fee to enter the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA). This under-promoted tourist trail is indeed a welcome change from the Poon Hill circuit and its cousins; why not get off the beaten path and get comfortable? ●

## Home stays in Ghalegaun will make you forget home



(top) Ghalegaun, 2070m, is the centrepiece of the Gurung Heritage Trail (above) A traditional Gurung 'ghumaune' round-house (right) Typical kitchen interior



PICS: BADRI PAUDYAL



# Jhankri science

DEREK MA

Malaise oozed through my pores as I lay bedridden with a cold and a persistent fever. But my housemates were not going to let me slip away. Home-made remedies kept cropping up – prayers, hot ginger water with honey, steam inhalation, a cloth around my head, the works! What I then realised, after entertaining them and subsequently recovering, was this – you are not really Nepali if you are not a self-prescribing doctor. Which made me wonder...how powerful is this ‘jhankri science’?

Jhankris and other practitioners have been an integral part of Nepali society, even if the practice is not as widespread in our cities as it is in the rural areas. They are believed to possess supernatural powers and the knowledge of mastering spirits. Shamans take on the role of priests and doctors to heal patients and ward off evil spirits. Matas are a relatively new concept: these are individuals who periodically become possessed by a god, and they diagnose problems, suggest remedies, and predict the future. Despite the advent of modern medicine, some still find solace in having a jhankri slaughter a goat and beat them with a broom to rid them of spirits!

Intrigued by the idea of a mata who could possibly predict my future and save me a lot of time deciding on a career or whom I would marry, I made my way to Baluwatar last week. When I was admitted, I saw before me a young woman with eyes closed, apparently in a trance. Right off the bat she asked me whether I had a younger sister. I was impressed but was it just a good guess? Curious to find out more, I told

## Why get surgery when you can have a tumour beaten out of you?



KIRAN PANDAY

her that I had a nagging leg ache and poor eyesight. She advised me to make offerings to Bangalamukhi and pray for a speedy recovery. I asked her about my future, and she said that I would live close to my parents and settle down happily. Pleased enough, I made my obeisances and left – though unsure where I should go next, the temple or the pharmacist.

A couple of days later, my grand-aunt narrated to me a bizarre incident. She’d been on her way back from the Budhanilkantha market, and was drawn to a large crowd. A man had fallen to the ground and was writhing, as if in an epileptic fit. People tried sprinkling water on his face to resuscitate him, but it only aggravated his convulsions. Then through the crowds a man came up, promptly removed his shoes and began urging the sick man to partake of the fumes of his socks. Miraculously, the man regained consciousness and thanked him profusely for his kind gesture. A strange genre of smelling salts!

I have encountered a fair number of superstitious people in Nepal, including myself. Some blow on their fingers if they happen to touch their necks, refrain from crossing the road if a black cat crosses their path, and abstain from stepping on brooms. Psychologists maintain that superstition is the result of ‘adventitious reinforcement’. B.F. Skinner demonstrated that you can create superstitious behaviour in animals, too. When an animal is placed in a box with a device to automatically dispense food every five minutes, the animal will typically develop superstitious behaviour. For instance, if the animal happens to lift up its right foot just as the food is dispensed, it will then repeat this behaviour, which will be intermittently reinforced. Soon enough, its superstitious behaviour will become well established, just like in humans. If politicians believe that feigning illness can work in their favour when the going gets tough, perhaps ‘jhankri science’ can beat out this superstition so we can get on with building New Nepal? ●

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BRANDON LATHAM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

# Sherpa in Alaska

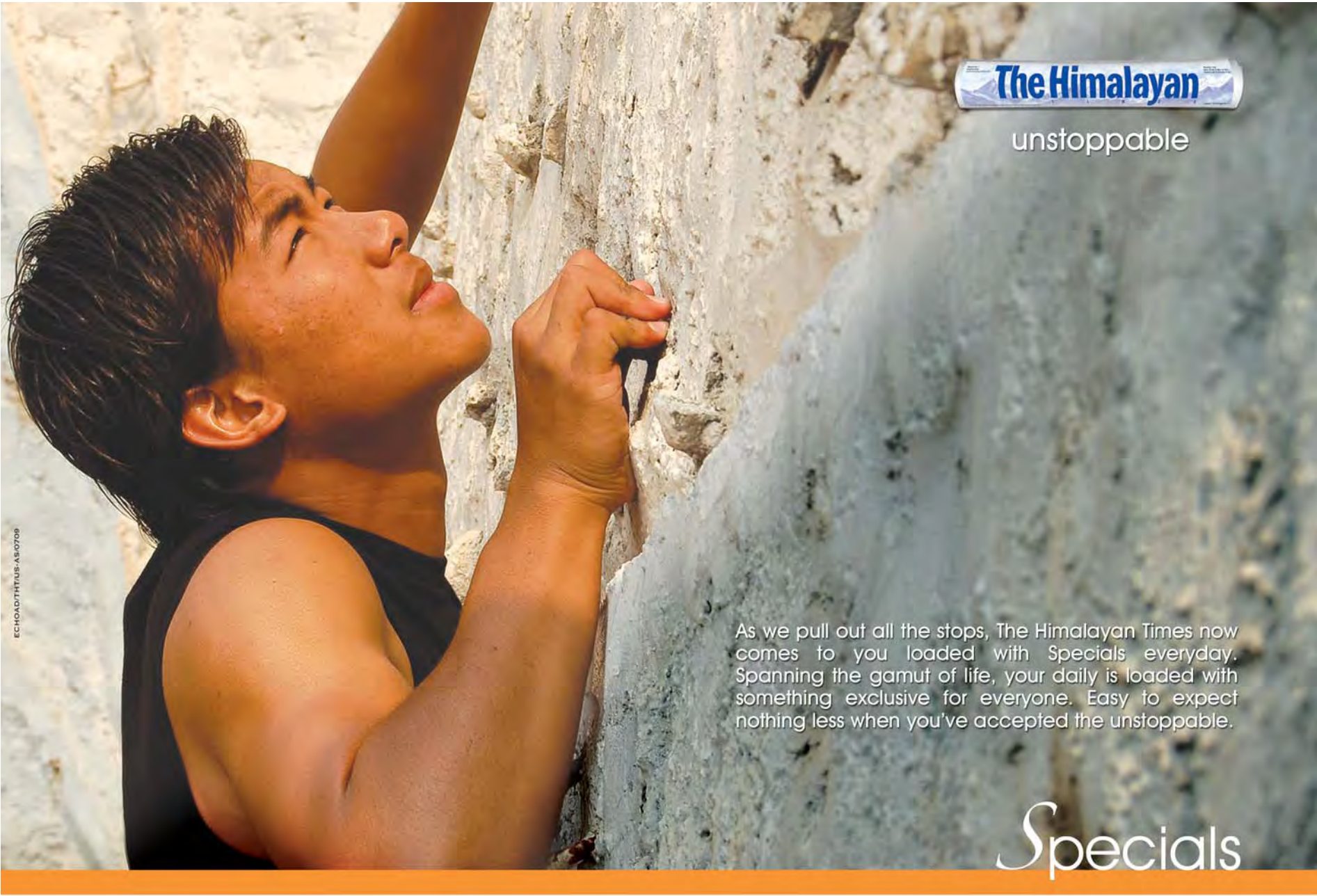
DENALI NATIONAL PARK ñ PhuNuru Sherpa does not climb the worldís highest mountain for thrills. Itís his job. The job is dangerous, often deadly. Thatís because many of the sherpas working for expedition climbing groups on the more than 29,000-foot-tall Mount Everest donít have basic skills necessary to do the job safely. PhuNuru wants to change that. ìWe have a big problem on Everest,î he said.

## PhuNuru wants to bring mountain rescue to the Khumbu

The 29-year-old married father of two girls spent a month this summer in Alaska getting job training on 20,320-foot Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America. He was on a scholarship from the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation, named after the famed mountaineer who died in an avalanche in the Himalayas in 1999, where his body remains. It turned out to be the perfect classroom. PhuNuru joined McKinleyís high mountain ranger patrol on June 3, and has participated in half-dozen rescues. He had barely settled in when rangers at the 14,200-foot camp got an emergency call. Two men who were roped together had fallen a couple of thousand feet. ìMe and two friends go running up there, take some oxygen, some medical kits and everything we can carry,î he said. ìWe go there and they both already dead.î PhuNuru helped recover the bodies, which were flown off the mountain. Four people died on McKinley this year. Since 1932, 106 people have been killed on the mountain ó about half as many as on

Everest. Thirty-nine bodies remain on McKinley. As many as 150 bodies remain on Everest. In 2004, the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation established the Khumbu Climbing School in PhuNuruís village in Nepal. About 30 students were in the first class and about one-third had already summited Everest, but not one of them knew how to tie a figure-eight knot used in rock climbing to secure climbers to their harnesses, President Jennifer Lowe-Anker said. PhuNuru, who has summited Everest four times, is an instructor at the school. When he returns to Nepal at the end of October, he will share what he learned and plans to establish a professional rescue team on Everest. The knowledge will save lives, he said. Even though more than 200 people have been killed on Everest, the mountain has no rescue team. If a climber needs help, it is up to expedition guides to decide if a rescue should be attempted. Sometimes that means telling clients who have paid tens of thousands of dollars to summit Everest that their dream will have to wait. Sometimes it means that help comes too late. That was the case with British climber David Sharp in 2006. Dozens of climbers who were headed to the summit walked past Sharp lying in a rock alcove on Everest as he froze to death. By the time the decision was made to send a sherpa to help Sharp, it was too late. The

sherpa pulled Sharp from a rock alcove and placed him in the sun and gave him oxygen, but his limbs were frozen in place. He couldnít walk, even with assistance. Sharp was placed back in the alcove where he was found dead the next day. A week later, sherpas rescued another climber who was left for dead near the same spot. Author Nick Heil wrote about the infamous 2006 climbing season on Everest in which 11 people died in his book *Dark Summit*. ìIt is an extremely risky proposition to try and stage a body removal up high,î Heil said. ìNowadays people are kind of prepared when they go up to a place like Everest to see corpses.î Some of the bodies of people who have died on Everest are within sight of the climbing routes, remarkably preserved in the extreme cold. PhuNuru said it would be better to get the bodies off the mountain, but Heil said removal is not always possible. ìAfter a season or two these bodies are effectively welded into the landscape,î he said. ìYou literally have to chisel them out.î PhuNuru said body removal pays better than other jobs on Everest but many sherpas find the work distasteful. For those who want to do it, the rescue and roping techniques he learned this summer will be useful, he said. ìWe donít want to leave any body on the mountain,î PhuNuru said. ● Mary Pemberton, *The Associated Press*



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- Monday - Hi Tech Plus - technology and gadgets
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- Wednesday - Campus Plus - collegiate life ; Appointments - careers and jobs
- Thursday - School Times - everything kids should know
- Friday - Green - environment matters
- Saturday - Property Plus - weekend two pager focusing on real estate





# Love in the time of Mad Zombie Disease

There's something of a bait and switch involved in director Ruben Fleischer's debut, *Zombieland*. With an R-rating that seems justified in the first few minutes of the movie—graphic violence with the zombie apocalypse in full swing, a glib



**CRITICAL CINEMA**  
A Angelo DiSilva

narrator with a vulgar and coarse manner—would you believe what you have in store is something akin to an indie romantic comedy instead, simply with the dross of blood and guts? It's true, *Zombieland* really does have a warm and gooey heart, and no, not in the organ-eating sense.

Exhibit A: the social misfit with a quip at the ready in Jesse Eisenberg (who was in the excellent *Squid and the Whale* by director Noah Baumbach). Exhibit B: the sexy, sardonic, smoky-eyed and tough-as-nails Emma Stone and unlikely love interest to the lead. Add a road trip, a message about precious childhood in a harsh world, a cameo by a well-loved Hollywood actor who frequently dabbles in alternative film, mix in deadpanned topical jokes, and you'll quickly realise to your horror, that what you have here is the *Juno* territory of saccharine indie comedies. And make no mistake; *Zombieland* is as saccharine as a pint of fake blood.

Eisenberg's character, by

virtue of his social aloofness, fails to take note of the zombie apocalypse taking place outside the world of his apartment, cooped up as he is playing video games. When his neighbour comes knocking, she is a damsel in distress one minute, the ravenous undead the next. He takes to the road on his way to reconnect with his folks when he hooks up with Woody Harrelson's character, a wild man who

They don't make zombies like they used to

particularly relishes offing zombies. Along the way, they pick up a pair of con artist sisters, the aforementioned Stone and the younger Abigail Breslin, whose childhood is truncated by the apocalypse and the hard life that preceded it. Each member of this quartet is assigned a moniker according to where they are heading, and it's one rollicking escapade after another from there on.

But how does *Zombieland* fare as comedy? It is surprisingly effective, thankfully. Fortunately, it distinguishes itself from really the only comparable zombie comedy, Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2005), with a snarkier

sense of humour coupled with a broad and violent slapstick element. But as a zombie movie, it's another matter. While the zombies, when we see them, are as bloody, hungry, leaky and pus-y as those in the best of the genre, there is a levity that spoils the mix. One component of zombie movies, perhaps counter-intuitively, is the pleasure of vicarious wish-fulfillment. With societal collapse, you don't have to behave, or pay for what you want, or repress your violent tendencies (in the face of zombies). This license has given us some of the most celebratory scenes of gleeful abandon in cinema, perhaps most powerfully in recent times in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*. But in the absence of consequence or commentary on human society, anarchist or conservative, it becomes an empty pleasure. In *Zombieland*, in place of commentary, we are given indie sappiness. When Romero, the grandfather of the zombie movie, mixes political commentary with his mayhem, it may have been a necessary formula rather than simply an attempt to be subversive. Though in all fairness, Romero never had Woody Harrelson bashing in the head of a zombie with a banjo. ●

**Zombieland**  
Directed by Ruben Fleischer  
Cast: Jesse Eisenberg, Emma Stone, Abigail Breslin, Woody Harrelson.  
2009. R. 87mins.

## December sky

2009 will end with a bang as an eclipsed blue moon and the Gememid meteor shower grace the December skies. But before that, let's talk about the stars.

Orion, with his ever-ready hunting bow, will appear on the eastern horizon and herald the winter season. Along it, you will see the constellations Gemini, Taurus, Aries, Pisces, Aquarius and Capricornus. The latter three constellations are faint, and you might need a dark location to view them.



**STARGAZING**  
Kedar S Badu

The Great Square (Pegasus) still holds ground overhead during dusk. Perseus, the savior of Andromeda, flies high in the northern skies. Look for the double cluster that marks the handle of his sword, an easy binocular target. Andromeda herself is due south and home to the great galaxy M31, the furthest object visible with the naked eye. Taurus is host to two fine open clusters, the Pleiades (Seven Sisters) and the Hyades that mark the V-shaped head of the Bull. The mighty Orion dominates the southeast.

### Planet observing

Jupiter and four of its moons will be visible low in the southwest, within the constellation Capricornus, around 9pm. Jupiter's four major moons will appear as tiny specks of light arrayed along a straight line to either side of the planet.

Celebrate the New Year with the eclipsed blue moon



Mars will rise in the northeast around 10pm, and will be high in the southern sky in the early hours of the morning. Mars is above Regulus, the brightest star in Leo, and well to the left of the bright star Procyon, in Canis Minor. Mars is significantly brighter than either of these two stars and is much more orange in colour.

Mercury is at its greatest distance east of the sun on 18 December. You can catch a glimpse of it on nights when it sets two hours after sunset. Look southwest immediately after sunset within a couple days before and after 22 December.

Venus will rise in the southeast just an hour before sunrise, so for the most part will be obscured by the sun's glare. It may, however, be visible very low in the dawn sky.

Saturn will rise in the east around 1am, and will be high up in the southern sky by dawn. It will be to the upper right of Spica, the brightest star in Virgo, and to the lower left of Regulus. It will also be moving very slowly south-eastwards in Virgo.

### Meteors

The Gememid shower appears on 7-16 December regularly each year. It will peak around the night of 13 December, when you should see one meteor every couple of minutes. You can rest assured that visibility will be clear since there won't be any interfering moonlight this year. Watch out for the Quadrantids showers at December's end too.

### Eclipsed Blue Moon

There will be a full moon within Taurus on 2 December and a Blue Moon is essentially an irregularly timed full moon within Gemini on 31 December. The Blue Moon will be partly obscured by a lunar eclipse from 12:36:26am to 1:38:37am, all of which will be visible from Nepal. The eclipse will peak at 1:07:28am at which point 8 per cent of the moon's disc will be hidden.

Wishing you all clear skies and a very Happy New Year 2010!

kedarbadu@gmail.com



## रेडियो कार्यक्रमको आदान-प्रदान नेटवर्क हाइवे

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रेडियो तरङ्ग १०७.६ पोखरा

फरक परिवेश  
फरक संस्कार  
फरक भूगोल

उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्क सानेपा

रेडियो चितवन ९४.६ रत्ननगर

**अब सधैँका साथी**



ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Exhibition 2009 of Nepalese Buddhism and Hinduism Art Painting** by Sudarshan Suwal at Summit Hotel, Kupondole, till 30 November

EVENTS

- ❖ **Spanish Fiesta**, at the Mirabel Resort Hotel in Dhulikhel, 28 November, 12PM onwards, 4439584, reservations required
- ❖ **Nepali Art: In Present Scenario**, documentary screening, 28 November, 2.30-3.30PM and 5-6PM, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5553767
- ❖ **Buddhist Walks in Ancient Kathmandu**, breakfast and afternoon tea, 29 November, HBMC, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402
- ❖ **WALLiE**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Caf , 3 December, 6PM, 4428549
- ❖ **AWON Christmas Bazaar** with locally produced arts and crafts, 5 Dec, 10AM-3.30 PM, Hyatt Hotel,  awoncom@gmail.com
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale**, a winter concert at The British School, Jhamsikhel, 12 December, 3.30PM and 6PM
- ❖ **Benefit concert for Street Dog Care**, at Hyatt Regency Ballroom, by Ani Choying Dolma, 19 December, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Patan Press Club** meets every Thursday at Dhokaima Caf , 6PM, 5522113
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Tai Chi 10-11.30 AM Saturday, Yoga 8.30-9.30 AM and Meditation 5-6PM weekdays, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402

MUSIC

- ❖ **HyJazz** every Friday evening by Inner Groove at the Rox Bar, 4489362
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch**, at The Terrace, Hyatt Regency with barbeque and live jazz by Inner Groove from 12-3.30 PM, 4491234
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** every Saturday till late with Aprilrush at Rox Bar, 4489362
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM, 4260326
- ❖ **Some like it hot**, every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Caf  & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at DiLounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards, 4468589
- ❖ **Rudra Night** live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7PM at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212

DINING

- ❖ **Christmas Cake shop**, christmas pudding, chocolate Santa Claus, hampers and more at The Lounge, 30 November-31 December, 4491234
- ❖ **Strawberry ...tag re**, strawberry flavours at The Lounge, 4.30PM- 6.30PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **Oriental Nights**, all flavours and specialities of Asia every Wednesday at The Caf , 6.30PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **Thanksgiving Celebration**, at K-Too Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, till 28 November, 4700043
- ❖ **Live continental BBQ Fiesta**, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, from 6.30-10.30PM everyday
- ❖ **Global flavours** at the casual table for thin-crust pizzas, fruity hookahs, brewed coffees & desserts, 4254809
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's caf **, Dhokaima Caf , Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Caf **, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8PM, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45PM
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle East at The Caf , Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Caf , Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM, 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-La with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards, 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068
- ❖ **Stupa View Restaurant**, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4480262
- ❖ **Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 4451212

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

Quest Entertainment



Nitin Bankar (Akshay Kumar) is a personal butler, cook, driver, watchman and gardener to a wealthy female industrialist (Archana Puran Singh) in Singapore. He desperately wants to become rich and marry the love of his life, Anjali Kakkad (Katrina Kaif). Nitin's best friend, Ram Mishra (Suneil Shetty), also comes to Singapore with the dream of striking it rich, but ends up as a delivery man. He falls for Manpreet Oberoi (Sameera Reddy), but her high society parents do not approve of their marriage. In the midst of all this is Harbans Chadda (Paresh Rawal), a shrewd businessman. He decides the best way to double his money would be to marry his son off to a girl whose parents can give him a large dowry, and is introduced to Manpreet's parents. But misfortune is around the corner.

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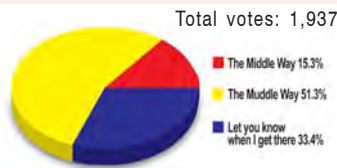
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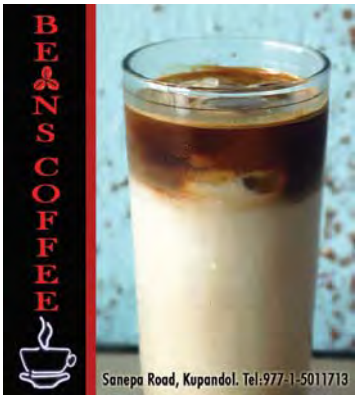
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Q. Are you relieved the budget has been passed?

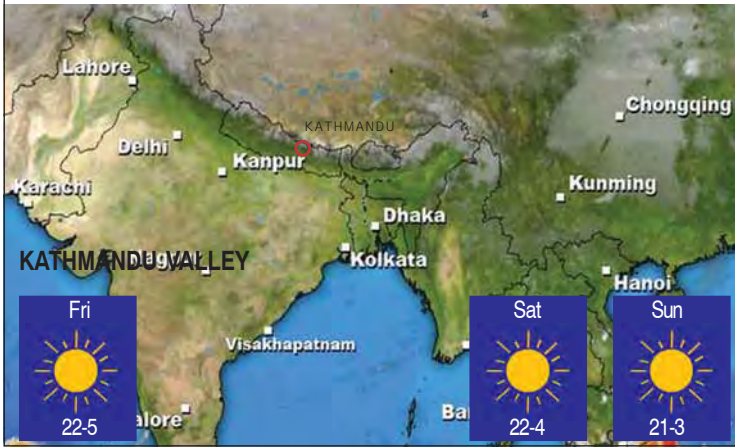


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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Temperatures have fallen an average of 3 degrees this past week because of cold winds from Siberia. Breezy afternoons will ensure that temperatures stay low this weekend. Satellite pictures also suggest that the skies will remain clear. Expect cold, foggy mornings in the low-lying parts of the valley. Those on hilltops, however, can look forward to clear sunrises.



RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Bread & Butter Pudding

This classic, simple recipe is great for the colder months. You can also vary the recipe by replacing the raisins with sultanas or candied citrus peel, or by adding your favourite nuts. (Serves 4-6)

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 8 slices          | white bread, buttered on one side only |
| 3 cups            | milk                                   |
| 4                 | eggs, beaten                           |
| 120g              | sugar                                  |
| 120g              | raisins                                |
| 1 teaspoon        | vanilla essence                        |
| ½ teaspoon        | cinnamon                               |
| ½ teaspoon        | salt                                   |
| some extra butter |  |



Pre-heat the oven to 170C. Butter a large baking dish and line with the buttered bread. Mix the eggs, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, salt and raisins together and pour the mixture over the bread. Allow to stand for 20-30 minutes so that the bread can soak up most of the liquid. Cover with a piece of aluminium foil and bake for 20-25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 15-20 minutes until it turns a golden brown. Serve with custard or your favourite ice cream.







KIRAN PANDAY

**STOP THE ABUSE:** Actors perform a play depicting domestic abuse against women during the launch of the National Plan of Action for the Year Against Gender Based Violence 2010 at the Everest Hotel, Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**DIVERSITY:** Women don traditional clothes from various districts during the Third National Tourist Fair 2066 in Bhrikutimandap on Tuesday.



NAVIN JOSHI

**TRIBUTE:** Wilda Campbell hands over an oil painting entitled 'Fruit Seller' by the late Rama Nanda Joshi to his wife Nirmala Joshi. The painting will be exhibited at the R.N. Joshi Museum.



KIRAN PANDAY

**THE FUTURE:** Children perform at a program marking International Child Rights Day and four decades of UNICEF's presence in Nepal at Pulchowk on Friday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**SUMMITEER:** Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal congratulates Min Bahadur Sherchan, who climbed Mount Everest at the age of 76 years and 340 days. The Guinness Book of World Records recently recognised him as the oldest man to have achieved the feat.

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# High-level political mechanics

So they're going to set up another high-level political mechanism to sort out the political deadlock. Great idea. Maybe the previous high-level mechanisms were just not high enough to do the trick. Or perhaps there was something wrong within the mother of all mechanisms.

But at the rate we are going, our New Nepal is going to be a nation of mechanics who don't know how to fix this mechanism. The Ass's two cents is that even this new thingie is not going to work because it is too high level. The leaders who are currently a part of this mechanism either need supplemental oxygen to climb up to their bedrooms, or are civilian supremacists who can't utter a sentence without threatening to take the country back to kingdom come.

So the best way out of the deadlock is to set up a **not-so-high-level political mechanism** with advisers to the senior leaders like Amaresh Bhai, Raghu Jee and Kamred Prakash in it. The advisers all get along like a house on fire, so it's time to set up a High-Level Advisory Mechanism.

✂

Expect Senior Leader Girija Prasad Koirala to be airlifted out any day again, because the docs in Singapore apparently found out the reason his remaining lung had stopped functioning altogether was because the onset of winter worsens the pollution in KTM Valley and made his haemo count plummet. Trouble is, even Biratnagar is polluted in winter, so the doctors have recommended moving him from Maharajanj to Tokha. Now, that should take the political mechanism to an even 'higher' level.

✂

The reason the Baddies are lately looking like chickens that have inadvertently had their heads separated from their thoraxes is not just that they managed at the nick of time to save themselves from splitting right down the middle by postponing the party convention till next year, but also because they mysteriously failed to get an invite to an international convention of commies in New Delhi last week. The **Red World**

**Conference** had delegates and observers from 90 of the world's fraternal communist parties attending. Representing Nepal was our very own fire-breathing Comrade Oli, who was personally invited by India's CPM. Conspicuous in their absence were the Nepali Baddies, which is surprising for a party that regards itself as the vanguard of world revolution. It looks like Comrade Awesome has not just fallen foul of the Injun govt but also of Messrs Yechury, Karat & Co, Pvt Ltd.

✂

As reported last week, the Baddies have stepped up extortion nationwide. Businesses across the country have received letters demanding anything between Rs 50,000-100,000 for "supporting the on-going agitation for civilian supremacy". That's a great sales pitch because it's like saying: "You are hereby required to donate money to us, or else...but if you do fork out the required sum, you can be assured your money will be put to good use to shut the country down for three days in December." Donors sent word to the donkey this week to deny

they'd ever asked their partners to **give in to baddie extortion**. However, employees of donor-funded projects admit they regularly make office collections of percentages of salaries to keep local comrades happy without telling HQ, for fear they may be shut down.

✂

They're really catching 'em young these days. Baburam Bhattarai on Wednesday gave away prizes to those who stood first, second and third in the **All-Nepal National Speech-giving Competition**. With tv news full of netas giving bhasans, the kids obviously had a lot of practice.

Maybe next should be a Nepal Idol, not for singing but for speechifying. Showing the world what we do best.

✂

Now that Kathmandu Fried Chicken has just opened there should be a slogan contest to get Nepalis hooked on the **Colonel's drumsticks**. The Ass already has a couple of potential winning entries: 'Karsapko Kukhuro', 'Rato Bhaley Kwayn Kwayn!', 'Noon Khwayeko Kukhuro', or even 'Khukuri Kaan...'

ass(at)nepalitimes.com



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