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Light from darkness

LIGHT AFTER DEATH: Tilganga Eye Bank manager Sankha Narayan Twyana prepares medical instruments before extracting the corneas from a seven-year-old girl at Pashupati Aryaghat. *Full story inside*



JANA ASENBRENNEROVA

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The Power to Surprise™

TAIL BETWEEN OUR LEGS

It's hard to see what else the Indian prime minister's special envoy to Nepal can do to untie the knot that Nepali politicians have got themselves into.

The fact that Shyam Saran was India's ambassador in Kathmandu and helped midwife the November 2005 12-point agreement between the seven parliamentary

parties and the Maoists could mean he has a stronger sentimental attachment to his baby, and is therefore more committed to reviving the peace process.

It is now common knowledge that Indian intelligence sheltered and nurtured the Maoist leadership in Delhi during the war years. There are some in Nepal who say that India should clean up the mess it created. But that would be abdicating our own responsibility, and (more seriously) handing over our future political destiny to outsiders.

Indian operatives molycoddled the Maoists, as they did the Tamil Tigers in the 1980s, to try to co-opt and control them. But the Maoists have become a pet that has outgrown its master. With the benefit of hindsight, Delhi probably realises it bit off more than it could chew. It now sees the Maoists as a threat to democracy not just in Nepal but India as well, and is in no mood to accept an unreformed Maoist party in a position of leadership in Kathmandu.

The slaughter of 11 more Indian police in a Maoist attack in Chhatisgarh on Wednesday is just the latest in a

rapidly escalating war there that reminds us of the 2000-2001 conflict period in Nepal. The Indian insurgency is following a familiar pattern, and there are calls to deploy the army there, too.

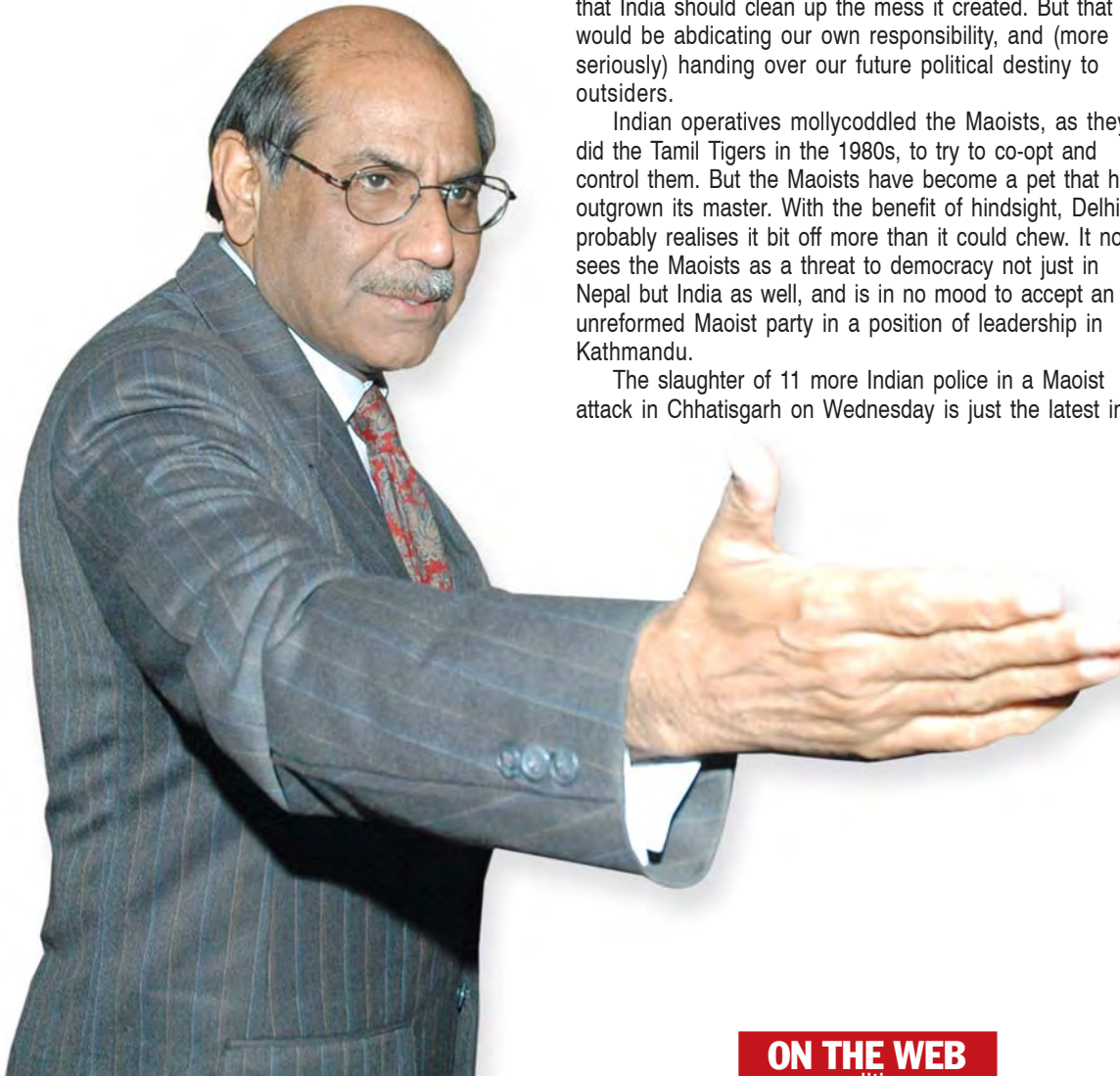
The red carpet treatment India gave to Burmese junta chief Tan Shwe last week proves that despite talk of shoring up democracy in its neighbourhood, realpolitik is the name of the game. If the national interest, need for energy, or geopolitical considerations dictate hobnobbing with dictators, so be it. There's a whiff of a subcontinental version of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine here (we don't care if they are sons-of-bitches, as long as they are our sons-of-bitches).

What this all means for us is that instead of waiting for India, or anyone else, to rescue our politics and perennially look to Delhi for signals, we should put our own house in order. There is no point celebrating the fact that Nepal was never colonised in history when we hobble around on the regional stage with our tail between our legs. It is time to stop playing victim, something we are extremely good at, and make our own future.

By now Chairman Dahal must have realised that the only way he is going to get to be prime minister is by making a credible public undertaking that he is demobilising his fighters, dismantling his paramilitary and renouncing his goal of establishing a totalitarian people's republic through protracted war. His ultra-nationalism card and flirting with the ex-royals are just not working, they are backfiring on him.

There have been enough empty words and false promises, so this time the burden of proof will be on Dahal. He has, however, made his task even more difficult by refusing to reign in the violence of his cadres, and burning his bridges with Big Brother.

The future of the peace process, the new constitution and this country's long-term political stability needs the Maoists to be on board as a demobilised and disarmed democratic party. This they must do to prevent their own self-destruction, and to prevent a collapse of the peace process.



KIRAN PANDAY

ON THE WEB
www.nepaltimes.com

YOUNG GUNS

Very glad to hear about this meeting of young MPs who want to get things done, more power to you ('An open letter to the Big Guys', Sunil B Pant, #513). It is unfortunate that the bigwigs want to shut you down - but do keep at it. And please tell us more about your initiatives and ideas. If you are prevented from bringing them to the CA table - maybe they can come to us straight through channels like these so we can have a constructive discussion. If nothing else, it will give us all some hope for our future.

Great!

- Your article, as they say in the US, is a day late and a dollar short. I think your article will serve you well in May 2011, when, with no constitution of any kind, at least you will be in a position to say: "Look, don't blame me. I tried everything. Even wrote an article in *Nepali Times* for which EU, DFID, US embassy, UNMIN, the Finns, the Norwegians all gave me a hearty syabashi. But what could I do when our respected party leaders chose not to listen? Blame them."

I expect Gagan Thapa and others to carry on with the drumbeat and publish similar articles in the daily newspapers. This way, you young guys get the best of both worlds: you continue to lay your head at the feet of the "respected big leaders" while showing to the public that you too are losing impatience with all this political nonsense. Yeah, right!

If you are so concerned, what's

stopping you guys from filing a lawsuit against the decision-making process of your 'respected big leaders' at the Supreme Court? Fight it out there. Let the chips fall where they may. If you have to make some powerful enemies while pursuing what's right for the public, make them. Let the media and the public be your allies.

Do you have the courage of your convictions to do that?

old one

STALE BAHUNS?

It's absolutely pathetic, the stage we've come to! The whole nation has come to a standstill watching a half-dozen old Bahuns trying to back-stab each other - while the country slides inexorably into a stinking abyss ('It's getting stale, mate', Prashant Jha, #513). Surely Nepal and Nepalis deserve better than this!

Budabaaje

- Bahunbaad is the latest bogeyman of the communist intellectuals used to justify their murder campaign and their politics. Of course, this is in a series of many other baads that they have utilised to justify their own murderbaad. This is in keeping with the spirit of having an unknown enemy lurking on the sidelines to keep the attention away from themselves. A tactic utilised by all core western philosophies - think about this - what is god without the satan bogeyman, what is communism without capitalism and vice versa? The moment you remove the anti-thesis they all collapse under the weight of their own folly.

Slarti

STRISTHAN

Out of the fourteen states proposed, seven of them should be declared states of Stristhan, where females should get agradhikar ('Women MPs seek to unlock deadlock', Rubeena Mahato, #513). Only they should be made chief ministers and all top positions should be reserved for them for the next 25 years. They should be given the right of self-determination. We are disenchanted with this thug leadership. We will all be in safe hands in such states.

Danny

RECYCLE IT

Dirt is not dirt, only something in the wrong place. Nothing is waste, everything is a resource ('Waste not', Dewan Rai, #513). Deepesh, keep it up. Separating waste, bio-degradable and hard non-degradable materials before disposing in every house should be made mandatory so that collection is easy. Collection should be done on different days to facilitate composting bio-degradables.

DG

FARMING FUEL

It's true, jatropha is being grown all over the world now. It's the new 'miracle' diesel plant. However, this article ('Farming diesel', #513) fails to mention the atrocities being committed in the name of jatropha across the world. Let us not allow big companies to abuse land owned by poor farmers by growing fuel where food should be grown instead, like in India, and by cutting down delicate ecosystems and forests to grow jatropha, like Brazil.

Roxy

JAJARKOT JIVING

Thanks for the note on Jajarkot ('Welcome to Jajarkot', Nhuchhe Man Dangol & Paavan Mathema, #513). The pictures are gorgeous, and I particularly like the overall positive tone of your paper, even when reporting on Jajarkot. I believe Jajarkot and other areas will gradually attract Nepali tourists as people begin to seek new destinations.

Having said that, Jajarkot does have notoriety for bad water. I recall reading a document, written circa 1600 AD, by a guru of Kulmandan Shah of Kaski, who noted the water of Jajarkot was very bad and it reflected on the health of the locals. Nothing was done in the subsequent four centuries to change the sanitary situation there, and let's hope the status quo will change now.

Biswo Poudel

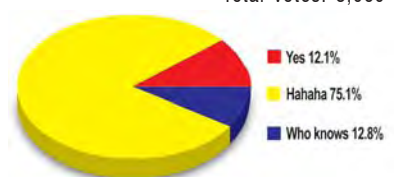
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nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 514

Q. Can a Maoist-Madhesi alliance be stable?

Total votes: 3,060



Weekly Internet Poll # 515. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Should MPs defy party whips and vote according to their conscience?

Hard choices



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

On Monday, the Madhesi parliamentary party offices in Singha Darbar were abuzz with activity in the run-up to the third round of voting. Leaders slipped in and out, even as there was an avalanche of rumours outside—Upendra Yadav will split from the front; Bijay Gachchadar has threatened his MPs not to cross the floor; or the extended meetings are a way to keep everyone guessing but the decision to remain neutral has already been taken.

A little further away, in the CA building in Baneshwor, the Maoists saw a flicker of hope in the divisions within MJF and launched a subtle propaganda war as to how they were sure to win.

The stalemate eventually persisted. But what was clear was that all political forces are in an extremely difficult spot, finding it hard to balance the pulls and pushes they are facing. Nepali politicians have a far tougher job than is often recognised.

Take the Madhesi front. There is a strong argument, made by Upendra Yadav and supported by a faction in the other parties, that this is the best time for the Madhes to strike a deal with the Maoists. Their bargaining position has never been better; they can thrive as long as the Big Three keep fighting; the Madhes is getting a chance to shape the central politics in an unprecedented way; and the Maoists are more committed to federalism and inclusion. Restless MPs who cannot wait to be ministers echo this line of thinking.



KIRAN PANDAY

It's easy to lambast politicians, but the current crop are under extreme pressure right now

But an equally powerful counter-argument is that the Maoists cannot be trusted; they may just use the alliance with the Madhesi front to make a comeback in the Tarai; this would be suicidal since the mood in the plains is anti-Maoist; there is little guarantee that the Maoists are indeed interested in writing the constitution; and Pushpa Kamal Dahal is a master at using and disposing of partners. Add to this the pressure from the Indian establishment, which has made it clear that it will not take it too kindly if Madhesi MPs shift their allegiance to the Maoists.

Or consider the Maoists themselves. Dahal is closer to his

aim of leading the government than he has been in the past year. He has shown remarkable energy and dynamism in trying to stitch together alliances, lure MPs, and engage with established power centres, unlike Ram Chandra Poudel, who appears to be merely going through the motions. The Maoist success in breaking the 'democratic alliance' and engineering rifts within each Madhesi party are major achievements for the party.

But Dahal's personal reputation has suffered in the process. Three defeats have made him a cartoonist's delight. His dalliance with royalists is public knowledge. And there is increasing pressure on him to

withdraw and allow a fresh process, for an outcome through the present round of voting will not necessarily lead to a constitution—which remains the official Maoist goal.

India has its own dilemmas. It invested considerable political capital in holding the Madhes back in the last round. But there appears to have been some confusion on Wednesday in Delhi about whether it made more sense to make the best of a bad situation and allow a Maoist-Madhes government, or stick to the policy line of keeping the Maoists in general, and Dahal in particular, out of power till they undergo a 'course correction'. For now, the old line has prevailed and the Madhesi alliance will be encouraged to stay together and remain neutral.

India has raised the stakes considerably by sending Shyam Saran as special envoy. Delhi will now get the flak for whatever happens—if there is a result and Dahal wins, non-Maoist parties will blame them for having

engineered it; if the stalemate continues, Dahal will ratchet up the rhetoric on 'foreign intervention'. But the criticism will be meaningless, and it would be a stellar contribution if Saran can use the authority of the Indian Prime Minister to encourage actors to think beyond the numbers game and get the broader process on track.

Madhesi leaders have told us the front will probably remain neutral once again in the fourth round. But there could be some increase in cross-voting. In addition, if the Maoists can get a section of the UML, CP Mainali's ML faction, and parts of RPP, Dahal has a chance.

At press-time, this remains an unlikely prospect for the potential costs of defecting to the Maoists remain high for all politicians, especially those from the Tarai. Nepal's parliament will probably make history by failing to elect a PM for the fourth time. If that happens, there must be an effort to begin the process afresh. ■

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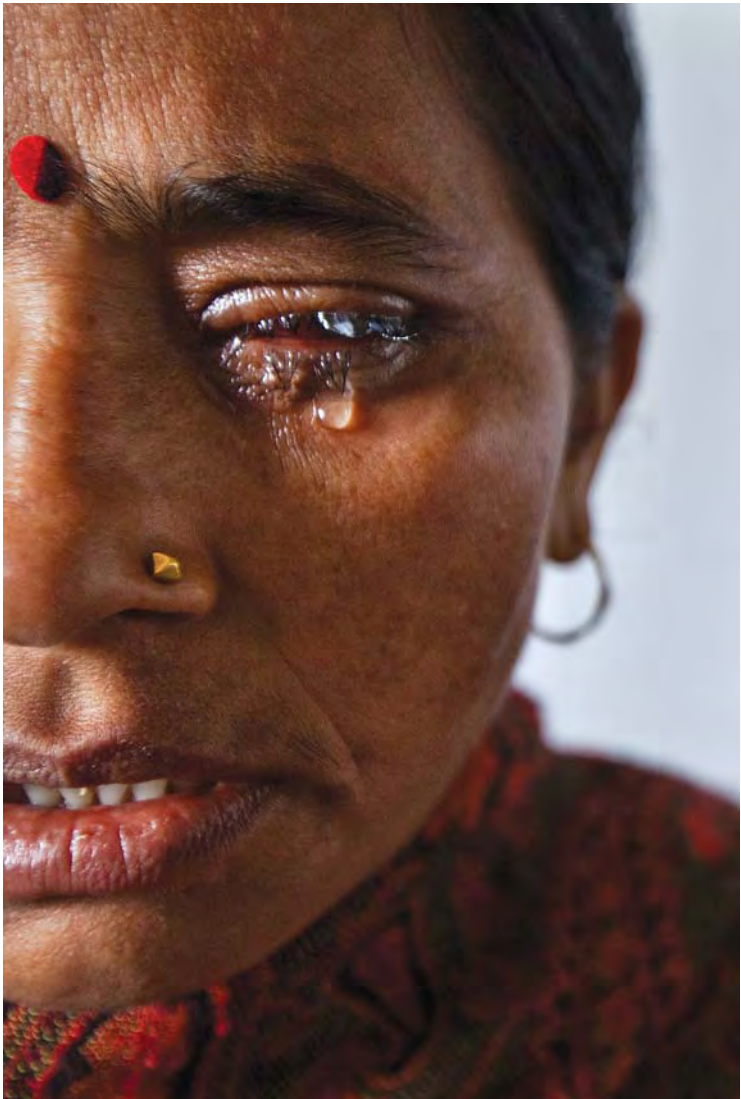
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Cornea recipient Sabitri Lamichhane (32), from Chitwan, cries before proceeding for surgery of her left eye, severely infected for a week (*left*). She waits to have her eye anaesthetised prior to surgery on her left eye (*top*). A cornea en route from donor to recipient at the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology (*bottom*).



The gift of sight


PICS: JANA
ASENBRENNEROVA
TEXT: RUBEENA MAHATO

Bishnu Bhattarai, 41, is a teacher from Surkhet. He thought he knew what it meant to pass on the light of knowledge to his students. “I had been teaching for many years and felt happy about opening the eyes

of my students,” he says, “but then the unexpected happened.” After minor discomfort in his left eye and blurred vision, Bhattarai woke up one morning with excruciating pain. Within days, he was completely blind in one eye and his right eye was so sensitive to light he couldn’t open it. For two months he stayed in a dark room. “I thought that was the end of my life,”

Bhattarai recalls. “As a teacher, being blind was as good as being dead.” Today, thanks to the eye donation program at the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology, Bhattarai has regained his sight with a corneal transplant. The cornea that allows Bhattarai to see came from a seven-year-old girl who committed suicide. The girl’s father, who had brought his

daughter for cremation to Pashupati two weeks ago, consented to donate her eyes after Tilganga’s Eye Bank team convinced him. The Eye Bank is the only one of its kind in the country, and has been harvesting corneas for transplantation from the nearby cremation site since 1996. The team tries to convince grieving relatives that donating the corneas

of the deceased can help the blind see again. It is not an easy job, and most refuse. But Tilganga’s cornea excision centre at Pashupati has seen an increase in the number of donors. The Eye Bank team at Pashupati harvested 214 pairs of corneas in 2008, compared to just two in 1996. One in every ten Nepalis is visually impaired and corneal defects are the second biggest cause of blindness after cataracts. The transplantation of a new cornea is the only way to cure such blindness. Sabitri Lamichhane (*see pics*) from Chitwan is among the many who have benefited from the eye donation program. A timely cornea transplant saved her from permanently losing sight in one eye to a severe infection that began a week before she had her operation. “It’s a miracle, I never thought she’d see again,” says Om Lamichhane, her husband. But the taboo against organ transplantation is still very strong, meaning few people pledge donations. “Most of our corneas are the result of grief counselling of relatives in Aryaghat,” says Shankha Narayan Twyana, manager of the Eye Bank. “We have very few voluntary donors and most of them are the relatives of the people who have received such transplants.” Tilganga offers free transplantation services and the patients only need to pay for medicines and a small entry fee. “We thought that if there was no money involved, we could discourage the black market in organ transplants,” explains Bhola KC of the Eye Bank team. Most grieving relatives think the eyeball itself is excised and the deceased will be disfigured, but many consent once they realise what they are doing will transform the lives of two people. A pair of donated corneas is always given to one eye in two people. When Manoj KC prepared to cremate his seven-year-old daughter at Pashupati, the last thing he wanted was to be approached by someone asking him to donate his child’s eyes “I was in grief. My child was gone. I didn’t want to give anything to anyone. I just told them to leave,” KC says. The Eye Bank team had already left when KC sent someone to call the team back. KC still can’t explain why he changed his mind. “I thought if her eyes could help two people to come out of the darkness, at least they would bless her soul,” he says. And the child is blessed indeed. “I pray for the girl every day,” says Laxmi Bhattarai, wife of Bishnu Bhattarai. She cannot stop thanking the family who agreed to the donation: “My husband got his life back. Is there anything more one can do for strangers?” Laxmi has herself pledged her eyes for donation after her death. 

The names of the donors and recipients have been changed to protect their identities.

You can bring light to people even after you pass into darkness

Sabitri immediately after the operation on her left eye, into which a cornea has been transplanted (*top*), and resting in the recovery room at the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology (*bottom*). A day later, she returns for a check-up (*right*). Her eye is examined and she is able to see shapes and movement.



Following the paper trail

In India vs Kantipur in June, the truth was never adequately explained to readers

FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel P Huntington characterises India as the ‘core-state’ of Hindu civilisation. The Indian government, however, behaves more like a besieged nation. The Indian embassy’s role in the Machine Readable Passport deal exposed the risks to trade. In a similar controversy in the 1980s, King Birendra had to acquiesce to New Delhi’s pressure to rescind a road-building contract awarded to a Chinese company and give the Kohalpur Mahakali Highway to an Indian company. This didn’t buy Birendra any goodwill. India imposed an undeclared economic blockade

engine of enterprise humming. To obstruct it in a planned manner is a veiled attack on its very existence. Kantipur Publications is still facing up to the attack on its economic viability with fortitude. Other hostilities have been more direct. In a step an unnamed South Block official inadvertently admitted was ‘cheap tactics’, the Indian authorities in June delayed the customs clearance of newsprint meant for Kantipur Publications for nearly a month at Kolkata port. The Indian embassy in Kathmandu said it was a ‘routine administrative measure’, but the clarification contained veiled warnings. Following an uproar in the Nepali and Indian media over curbs on press freedom, there was a ‘summit meeting’ of sorts between the owner-managers of Kantipur Publications and the Indian ambassador. Nobody

A measure directed against the market leader has succeeded in frightening the entire media. A similar attempt in the past, when the supposed misdemeanours of a cartoonist in a metro daily was greeted with an ad moratorium, ended with corporate groveling. The then home minister stood guarantee for the ‘good behaviour’ of the media owner. There is no news about promises made and warnings issued this time. The silence of Kantipur Publications has been deafening since the release of the containers from Kolkata. The change in the editorial tone of Kantipur since the Lainchaur Summit is not yet pronounced. However, Kantipur Publications owes its readers and well-wishers an explanation. When the three estates of the state are so enfeebled, it’s impossible for the fourth estate to withstand political and diplomatic pressure. But when the media has



anyway in 1989 on the pretext of the expiry of the trade and transit treaty. Disruption in access to the international market for 18 months crippled the Nepali economy. Overseas investors have been wary ever since about the industrial prospects of this India-locked country. Sometime ago, someone somewhere decided - the sources of such judgments are invariably indeterminate - that the editorial policy of Kantipur Publications was detrimental to Indian interests. In June, Kantipur Publications found ad bookings from Nepal-based multinationals were pulled out. In media financing models, ad revenue is the fuel that keeps the

knows for sure what really transpired at the meeting; the tone of press communiqués issued afterwards by contending parties differed widely. Rumours about continuing coldness in the relationship began to float the moment only 11 out of 39 containers held at Kolkata port were released initially. Sources in Lainchaur insist that the cessation of Indian hostilities against Kantipur Publications is contingent upon a continuous performance appraisal. The media in Kathmandu seems to have imbibed the lessons of the fracas: treading on Indian toes is fraught with untold risks.

to step back from telling the whole truth, it needs to share its compulsions with its readers and offer them an explanation. An ignoble dimension of the Kantipur saga was the relative neglect of the whole affair by the rest of the Nepali media. Journalists failed to examine the controversy and turn it into an issue of self-censorship and the freedom of the press. State and non-state groups are relatively easily identifiable enemies of the free media. Commerical and diplomatic pressures are much more hidden, and often impossible to withstand. When the two combine, truth is the only defense. 🇳🇵

THIS WEEK



KIRAN PANDAY

Army boosts
Nepal Army (NA) has announced vacancies for 3,434 soldiers, including 250 officers, and invited applications from eligible and interested Nepali citizens on Monday. NA began the recruitment process following the Supreme Court dismissal of the cases against recruitment last week, who deemed it fell under the jurisdiction of the Joint Monitoring Committee. NA has requested the government to create a dozen new positions for special class officers, including two lieutenant generals. In response to the NA recruitment drive, the People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the UCPN (Maoist), announced fresh recruitment starting from Tuesday. PLA deputy commander Chandra Prakash Khanal 'Baldev' told reporters in the capital that despite fresh recruitment, PLA strength will not exceed 31,315, the PLA's original strength before the UNMIN verification team brought it down to 19,604. "Committed Nepali youths above 18 with strong patriotic feelings can submit the forms at any of the seven cantonments across the nation," he said.

The Ministry of Defense objected strongly to the Maoist recruitment drive, and in a statement on Wednesday, said it would only create additional complexities and challenges in security management. This was, however, the fifth time NA had announced vacancies for various positions since the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. UNMIN has expressed deep concern over the fresh recruitments announced by NA and the PLA. "UNMIN's position remains that any recruitment by either the Nepal Army or the Maoist army constitutes a breach of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies," said a statement issued Tuesday evening.

Third time unlucky
Parliament failed to elect a new prime minister for the third consecutive time on Monday. UCPN (Maoist) candidate Pushpa Kamal Dahal obtained 259 votes while NC vice president Ram Chandra Poudel received 124 votes. Dahal had obtained 241 votes in the second round of voting. The CPN (M-L), Nepal Peasants and Workers Party, a few small parties and, significantly, 11 MPs from the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (Yadav) voted for Dahal but he fell short of the required 300 votes for a simple majority to form a government. The Business Advisory Committee of parliament has slated a fourth round for August 6.

Shyam Saran arrives
Former ambassador to Nepal Shyam Saran arrived in Kathmandu on Wednesday to try to fix Nepal's politics. He is here as a special emissary of Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh. "I am here to discuss his concerns with Nepali political leaders," he told reporters upon his arrival at the airport. "My role will be to facilitate a few political consultations among major parties for national consensus." His visit is just in advance of the fourth round of voting for the post of prime minister, scheduled for Friday, following three consecutive failed elections. On Wednesday, the UCPN (Maoist) spoke out against the interference of foreign power centres in the ongoing deliberations to form a new government. But Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal met Saran along with other top Maoist leaders, subsequent to which Dahal's deputy Narayan Kaji Shrestha told reporters the talks were not about the formation of the new government. Saran then met leaders of the NC and UML.

Systemic failure

We need to find a way to change the system, not the players



Observing the continuing political drama, which is as exciting as watching paint dry, there are those who say that we deserve the politicians we get. Perhaps. But what if we say that we only get the politicians who can thrive in the system we’ve let mutate to its present form? More than what’s in our fate, it’s the system that we have tolerated for far too long that gives us the politicians we are stuck with.

There are two system-level observations one can make. The first one is a primary problem. The second is a by-product of the first.

Unresponsive representation: Take a public health disaster. In the last 10 days, more than 30 Nepalis have died due to cholera and diarrhoea outbreaks in the western parts of Nepal. Though deadly when untreated, cholera and diarrhoea are both easily preventable diseases.

Putting aside the concern of whether there are enough healthcare workers and



medicines in the remote parts of Banke or Surkhet, what’s surprising is how little political representation the victims get in today’s democracy. Of the assembled 601, not a single CA member, including those from the affected districts, stands up and says, “These needless, untimely deaths of fellow Nepalis are unacceptable. They have to be stopped. When our citizens continue to die en masse because of preventable diseases, it indicates that something is horribly wrong. When we can’t even fix this simple problem, how will we achieve our goals in education, health, livelihood, and so on for a better Nepal?”

The reason not a single CA member says that is simple. They

may wax eloquent about Democracy, but they have zero incentive to practice democracy, in this case, by lending political urgency to solve people’s problems. Most came to the CA because they listened to their party bosses who wanted to strengthen their numbers, not because they listened to voters. As such, even when they do nothing for the districts that they represent, there is little they need fear: so long as their party has the money and is powerful, it will give them the permission to stand for election again, and win. Voters thus become a means to political ends.

Over the years, what this practice has amounted to is this. Yes, we have democracy and yes, we have elections, but the system is designed to be unresponsive to people’s concerns.

Not my children’s future: People work hard to improve, if not their own future, then their children’s future. Human nature being what it is, it’s hard for most people to get excited about the future of other people’s children.

But politicians searching for appealing generalities often make references to improving our children’s future as a way to anchor their present actions to possible future gains. In Nepal, politicians know that, given half a chance, most young people would rather leave the country. It’s likely that most politicians’ children are not in the country themselves.

Shorn of an honest metaphor that refers to our shared collective future, Nepali politicians habitually lapse into speeches that are filled with abstractions about Democracy and revolutions. When one can’t imagine, much less communicate, what the future holds in more vivid, concrete terms, then the question becomes: is one really working for long-term goals or for quick short-term gains – the answer to which is plain to all who follow politics.

The content of national politics can be dispiriting. Instead of asking politicians to behave themselves, finding ways to change the context of politics is how changes are likely to come faster.

Test drive

Syakar Company Limited is moving up into the stratosphere of luxury sedans with the launch of its premium sedan, the all-new 8th generation Honda Accord. A test drive held last week from the Honda showroom in Kantipath to Gokarna was testament to the fact that even in potholed, traffic-jammed Kathmandu, it can make sense to drive a big, classy automobile. The Variable Gear Ratio steering, shift holding system and multi-link rear suspension help for a smoother ride, and if you do get stuck in traffic, the advanced audio system with a centre multi-selector and USB port will ease the pain. If nothing else, you’ll have people peering in to see who’s driving this impressive looking car. Most impressive perhaps is the attention paid to safety features. The Honda Accord has six intelligent airbags, and an Advanced Compatibility Engineering body and G-force Control Technology for enhanced safety of the vehicle occupants during a collision. The use of high-tensile steel has improved torsional rigidity while achieving major weight savings. Go on, splash out. It’ll be a ride you won’t forget.

Flying dragons

Dragonair, a Hong Kong-based international airline, will increase its flights between Kathmandu and Hong Kong from three to six times a week from September onwards. The airline started flying to Nepal in December 2007 and had 25,451 passenger arrivals and 22,207 passenger departures in 2009.



Two cheers

Sthapit and Schlau, in collaboration with United Breweries, has introduced Germany’s Coblenser beer in two flavours – Pilsener and Märzen, both in 650 ml bottles. Coblenser Pilsener is priced at Rs 145 and Coblenser Märzen at Rs 155.



Money plants

Laxmi Bank organised a tree plantation program in Kirtipur under its ‘One Account, One Tree’ campaign. 1,000 saplings will be planted at the site in coordination with the Society for Ecological

Restoration. For every account opened under its Green Savings scheme, the bank will plant a sapling.

Going west

Nepal SBI Bank has opened a branch office in the far western city of Mahendranagar, Kanchanpur. The newly inaugurated branch will provide complete banking services including Remittances, Deposit Accounts, Loans, ATM and Internet Banking services. Nepal SBI Bank currently has 41 branch offices and 6 extension counters in operation.

Clean queen

Staff from Standard Chartered Bank along with KMC officials cleaned areas in and around Rani Pokhari. The initiative was under the Bank’s Employee Volunteering program, which allows three days leave to its staff for community service.



Special delivery

DHL has partnered with Room To Read to help establish a library in Shree Mahendra Lower Secondary School, Jatigaal, Bhaktapur. DHL also donated books and stationery to students at the school.



Cool LG

LG has launched the Nimbus series of LG Frost Free Refrigerators. The series is equipped with Green Ion Door Cooling (GIDC) technology, which ensures that food remains tasty and nutritious for up to 2.5 times longer. There are five models

available in four colours.

Still kicking

Nepa Hima Trade Link gave away prizes to the lucky winners of its ‘Sony’s FIFA World Cup Promotion Free Kick Offer’ under which buyers of the Bravia range of LCDs received scratch coupons. Shambhu Dulal won the first prize, a Sony Bravia.

Together again

The First Annual General Meeting and Convention of Paschimanchal Hotel Association, Pokhara was held at the Fulbari Resort & Spa on Sunday. This was the first meeting held after the unification of the Regional Hotel Association of Nepal and the Pokhara Hotel Association. The attendants were briefed on the activities of the association.

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Ms Elizabeth Hawley has retired after 20 years of service and the New Zealand Consulate has moved from Dilli Bazar. Please note our new location:

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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Stuff Nepali People Like - I

There are many ways of defining a nation, and Nepal's had a harder time than most in recent times. The sheer diversity of Nepali identities, with the suffocating aura of the Shah crown now dissipated, looks to burst the country at the seams. Still, it's nice to know there are certain things that unite us still, high and low. It's a list, and by its very nature will be incomplete and debatable. Which is why Nepali Kukur is inviting its readers to dig deep into their collective memories and ask, "What do Nepali people like?" Momos to mountains, hating India, loving India, speechifying, singing and spitting, let the series begin.

Nepali Kukur



Momos

What is it about momos that transfixes Nepalis home and abroad? There are hundreds of types of dim sum, but it's the steamed buff dumpling, with few variations, that gets our tongues into a twist. What's standard snack fare in urbania across Nepal is cultural glue in the momo parties of the diaspora.

Hawking and spitting

"Khaaaak-thook!" How many times do you hear this a day? Perhaps the most disgusting of our physical tics, hawking and spitting may have been tolerable in the open spaces of our hills and valleys and plains but in the city streets, it should go the same way as blowing-nose-into-fingers-and-wiping-on-lamp-post seems to be going – out of fashion. Sometimes it seems we hawk and spit as a sort of a segue between activities, in much the same way Americans say 'like' to link sentences. The argument that it's more hygienic to let it all out rather than use a piece of tissue and carry it around doesn't really hold as far as those around you are concerned.

Telling folks they've gained/lost weight

It's not because Nepalis are rude that they greet you with: 'Amai, ke bhako? Kasto motaeko/dublaeko!' Really, they are just very concerned about your health. Whether you are bursting or starving in their opinion, however, they will insist on...



Forcing you to eat

It doesn't matter if you've just had lunch. Your aunt will still force two rasbaris, a bowl of yoghurt and a cup of tea on you. If you try to resist, she'll pull out some reference in the scriptures to the

sin that will visit her if you leave empty-stomached. In the meantime, if you're not otherwise engaged, everyone present will...

Exhort you to get married

Apparently there is a season in life for everyone, vegetable-stylee, to be picked off the shelves. Woe befall those who do not heed the call of Father Time. For anyone who knows one of The Unheeding, however distantly, it is a duty most solemn to impress, ad nauseam, how important it is that you yoke yourself to another, bullock-stylee, to plough the merry fields of life.



Hating India, loving India

Up in the hills, we love to blame India for everything that's wrong with the politics and the economy. But most of us subsist on the petri dish of Indian culture, from the Mahabharat to Bollywood.

Calling white people racist

It's probably in the same vein that we like to blame white people for all the rest that's wrong in the world. They're arrogant, self-centred and racist, confirm the more hemmed-in Nepali diaspora, even as they aspire to be just like their hosts. What could be more racist?

Stuff Nepali People Like will be an ongoing series. Comment is free at www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/nepalikukur/

ABOUT TOWN

Exit the King, an absurdist play by Eugene Ionesco, directed by Eelum Dixit and presented by Nepal Shakes. *From Saturday 30 July to 8 August, Kamalmani Theatre, Patan Dhoka, Tickets start from Rs 400, student and group discounts available, call 5522113 or email at nepalshakes@gmail.com*

Shadows of the Street, a documentary on the life of street children by Mag Nepal and Silver Lining Creation, Finland. *Friday 6 August, from 5pm to 6pm, Russian Cultural Center, Kamalpokhari.*

Docskool, screening of *Battle of Algiers*, a French/Algerian movie by Gillo Pontecarvo. *Friday 6 August, 3.30pm, Docskool @Kathmandu Academy, Mahendra Bhawan, 4471104*

Tattoo Conference, 32 tattoo artists come together to promote their art. *Saturday 7 August, UWTC, Tripureswor www.nepalitimes.com/issue/2010/04/02/LifeTimes/16951*

Himalayan Readers' Book Club, a book discussion on Chetan Bhagat's *Three Mistakes of My Life*. *Saturday 7 August, from 3.20pm, British Council, 9849100300*

A New Tree in Charikot: people and landscapes - a mirror of time, photo exhibition by Fritz Berger. *Till Tuesday 10 August, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

14th Nepal Education Book Fair, a must attend for all book lovers. *From Friday 6 August to 14 August, 11am to 6pm, Bhrikuti Exhibition Hall, Tickets: Rs 20, Rs 10 for students*

Lazimpat Gallery, screening of *The Cove*, a film about dolphin conservation. *Friday 6 August, 6.30pm, Lazimpat*

Varsha: women art exhibition 2067, a celebration of women in the arts. *Till 7 August, Nepal Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), Naxal*

Portrait Expression, solo exhibition by Pramila Bajracharya Shakya. *Till Sunday 8 August, Srijana Contemporary Art Gallery, Lazimpat*

8th Annual Wine Festival, be there at Kilroy's for the best place for great value wine in Kathmandu. *Kilroy's, Thamel, 4250440*

Dhokaima Cafe has a new menu, try the Blackened Norwegian Salmon and Grilled Shrimp Ajillo. *Patan Dhoka, 5522113*

Olive Garden, mediterranean food fest. *Everyday, 6.30pm to 10.30pm, till 31 August, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, Price: Rs 1200 plus taxes for veg. and Rs 1500 plus taxes for non veg. call 4411818*

Splash Bar & Grill, great weekend BBQ dinner, *Fridays and Saturdays, 6pm to 9pm, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, Rs 1200, 4411818*

Hotel Shangri-La, try Shangri-La's creative mango cuisines at the first ever Mango Festival in town. *Till Monday 9 August, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat*



30,000 YEARS AGO: This panorama by Dinesh Shrestha, taken from Lakuri Bhanjyang in 2008, was manipulated to visualise what the Kathmandu Valley must have looked like when it was a huge lake.

The lake that was once Kathmandu

Geology shaped the Valley's destiny, and will continue to do so

Kathmandu Valley is where mythology and geology intertwine. The former holds that the Tibetan saint, Manjushree, flew down to Kathmandu. Upon seeing the huge lake, he cut the Chobhar ridge in half with his mighty sword and drained the waters to allow civilisation to flourish in the fertile sacred valley.

There is ample geological evidence to prove that the Kathmandu Valley was once a lake. But geologists piecing together the genesis and demise of the primordial lake now think it may not have been drained all at once, but in phases.


The lake was formed over one million years ago with the tectonic uplift of the

southern edge of the Valley and the damming up of the proto-Bagmati River, probably where Katuwal Daha is today. As the southern rim of the Valley rose at a geologically rapid 3cm a year, the lake shifted northwards. The level of the lake ebbed and rose between 1,400-1,440m, depending on the prevailing climate, making it about 200m deep in places.

Geologists have found the fossil remains of the extinct ancestors of mammoths, hippos and crocodiles in the Kathmandu Valley. They have pollen-dated the sediment, indicating that the shoreline of the Kathmandu Lake was heavily forested with pine and hemlock and teeming with wildlife.

The last Ice Age cooled and dried the Himalaya and the lake started to shrink starting 30,000 years ago. The main water body carved its way through the soft limestone at Chobhar, leaving behind a shrinking lake and three smaller ones at Gokarna, Pashupati and Kitni. These lakes later carved ‘mini-Chobhars’ and emptied into the main lake.

As the lake receded, flats emerged above the water that were later separated by the tributaries of the Bagmati, which sliced channels through the soft clay. The airport is one such flat from the Gokarna Period 30,000 years ago, and geologists think Thimi and Patan surfaced 25,000 and 18,000 years ago respectively.

The Kathmandu Valley civilisation with Lichhavi and then Newar settlements grew and prospered because of the fertility of the soil, and later because of the Valley’s location along the ancient trade route between India and Tibet. In their wisdom the early settlers set up towns along ridgelines, leaving the fertile slopes for farms. This unique urban-rural symbiosis and the agricultural surplus it resulted in enriched the kingdoms of the Valley, and they ploughed back the wealth into the unique cultural and architectural heritage of their towns.  Kunda Dixit



The Bagmati River Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Organiser Megh Ale of the Nepal River Conservation Trust spoke to *Nepali Times* about what he is trying to achieve:

Nepali Times: This is the 10th year of the Bagmati River Festival. What was the rationale for starting it?

Megh Ale: I was already working for river conservation when we talked about doing something for the Bagmati River in 2001. There was a time when clean water flowed in the Bagmati. So we came up with the idea of rafting down the river and called it the Bagmati River Festival. See, the Bagmati we see everyday is actually clean at its

Take me to t

source. Only if you take the journey and follow the river can you understand the situation. The idea was to involve people with the river and raise awareness. The festival also provides a platform for all organisations working for the environment to come together.

Why do you call this a festival of the 21st century?

A festival is a time when all of us get together for a purpose. We in Nepal celebrate many religious festivals as a tradition, regardless of their relevance today. However, the Bagmati River Festival is for a cause that is relevant today and tomorrow. The festival incorporates clean-up programs, rafting, mountain biking, concerts, painting exhibitions and other events.

What are the specific problems you are trying to address?

The main problem with Bagmati clean-up has been sewage management. Sewage has to be treated before it is disposed of in the river. Dumping of solid waste has to be checked as well. Another issue is the water level, which at present rises only during the monsoon. The natural flow of the river is dammed at Sundarijal to fulfill the water demand of the valley. This issue can only be resolved by finding alternate water sources. And of course, law and order has to curb slum encroachment on the river banks, land intrusion and sand mining.



DINESH SHRESTHA/MILAP DIXIT

The rise and fall

Approximate extension of the proto-Kathmandu Lake overlaid on a current Google Earth image of the valley. The approximate shoreline of the lake is loosely based on a composite of geological studies by Japanese and Nepali experts, and may not correspond to contemporary contours because of tectonic uplift in the last 100,000 years.



120,000 years ago
Upliftment of the southern edge of what is now Lalitpur district and blockage of the proto-Bagmati river at present-day Katuwal Daha, leading to the impounding of water in the Kathmandu basin.



30,000 years ago
Continued tilting of the Kathmandu basin moves the lake towards the north and the lake level, blocked by the Chobhar ridge, is at its maximum height of 1,440m. Bhaktapur, Patan, Manohara Valley and Gokarna are all under water.



15,000 years ago
Climate change and seepage through rocks at Chobhar lower the level of the water, exposing the Gokarna, Thimi and Gauchar (present-day airport) flats, and leaving three smaller lakes behind bedrock ridges at Gokarna, Pashupati and Kitni.

the river

Do you feel your effort has been worthwhile?
It is difficult to say, but the campaign has certainly raised awareness. It is hard to stay committed to a cause when you don't see changes or get the kind of response you expect. But we have received encouragement from the local communities and organisations like Bagmati Sewa Samiti, Nepal Tourism Board and PABSON. Mega Bank has recently committed to support the festival.

But is awareness enough? Isn't it time for action?
Well, if you tour the vicinity of the Bagmati in Chobar, Sankhamul, Tilganga, Thapathali and Teku, you will notice changes. Many areas that used to be filled with garbage are now clean. The locals have also become active. Efforts have been made in the Pashupati area as well. We have also had tree plantation programs at the source of the Bagmati, and the saplings are being maintained as well. Policy wise, there is much to do, but recently a Bagmati Action Plan was formulated that aims to revive the Bagmati and restore it.

Can the Bagmati be what it once was?
It is unlikely that the Bagmati will look like it originally did, especially in terms of size. But efforts can be made to clean it. The river is not contaminated by chemicals but biodegradable and treatable waste. It is the lack of initiative and political will that is letting this sacred river be polluted.



KIRAN PANDAY

What's happening, and where?

August schedule for the Bagmati River Festival				
13 August	Friday	7am-4pm	Sundarijal Uttar Bahini	School Challenge/Media Dunga Daud
14 August	Saturday	7am-4pm	Sundarijal Uttar Bahini	Corporate Challenge/Dunga Diplomacy
21 August	Saturday	7am-4pm	Chobar-Gokarna via Balaju and Shivapuri Bagmati	Eco-Challenge for Peace
21 August	Saturday	7am-6pm	Tilganga-Shankhamul	Bagmati/Bishnumati JalJatra/Grand Finale/Bagmati Live Aid

GREEN SCENE

As good as new



One man’s trash can be another’s resource

Jamarko in Nepali means effort and Jamarko Handmade Paper Products is a commendable effort to manage waste by recycling and reusing paper. “Paper can be easily recycled and reused, it should not be a part of garbage,” says Aruna Lacoul of Jamarko Handmade Paper Products. Lacoul and her sister Muna Shrestha started the company 10 years ago.

In Kathmandu, the pollution caused by piles of waste is clear to see, and this is what prompted the sisters to turn waste into a resource for a commercial venture. They attended a paper recycling training course conducted by the Department of Cottage and Small Industries, and without further ado, started a company. It has already managed to create an environment-friendly brand for itself.


Jamarko Handmade Paper Products collects

waste paper from a range of organisations, recycles it, and turns it into usable items. Anyone is welcome to contribute to their paper collection and a few INGOs and NGOs have become regular suppliers. Now, Jamarko recycles an average of 20 tonnes of paper every year.

The collected waste paper is sorted, soaked overnight and mashed into a gooey pulp. The pulp is strained and spread over tin sheets according to the thickness of the paper required. It is then dried in the sun and ironed to produce sheets of paper. On a good day, Jamarko can manufacture up to 600-800 sheets.

“The paper produced is of a fairly good quality and can even be used for simple printing,” says Lacoul. With the paper, Jamarko produces folders, envelopes, letter pads, notebooks, invitation cards, visiting cards, handicraft items as well as A4/A3 size papers. On the side, the company also produces Nepali Lokta paper and its products. The quality of recycled newspaper is not up to the standards required, so they are reused instead by making paper bags out of them.

Lacoul says that over the years, interest in recycled paper has risen, especially among young people. Jamarko has a few regular clients and also exports its produce. The price difference is minimal between recycled and non-recycled paper products.

Sales at Jamarko soared on World Environment Day this June, but concern for the environment will have to be sustained beyond a day a year if such industries are to gain momentum.  *Paavan Mathema*

Contact 2080162, 4351050, jamarko@hotmail.com



RSS

FATAL RAIN: Nepal Army airlifts victims of a landslide in Dolakha to safety. The landslide, triggered by incessant rainfall on Monday night, killed nine and injured several others, including the workers of Springkhola Hydropower project.



KIRAN PANDAY

LOUD MOUTHS: Nihita Biswas, wife of convicted killer Charles Sobhraj, and her mother, lawyer Shakuntala Thapa, surrendered before the apex court for contempt of court on Thursday. They have been sent to judicial custody.



KIRAN PANDAY

GO SAFFRON: Shiva devotees make their annual ‘Bol Bom’ pilgrimage from Sundarijal to Pashupati to offer holy water to the Shiva linga.



07/30/2010

RE-VERIFICATION: Ncell set up a camp in Pokhara this week as part of their nationwide campaign to re-verify Ncell numbers and match them with their subscribers. The Home Ministry has sent directives to all mobile operators to curb the misuse of stray numbers.

Snakebite!



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In the corners of the Kathmandu Valley we worry about leech bites in the summer, but imagine how much more frightening and deadly a snakebite is?

Many of us appreciate the fact that venomous snakebites are an occupational hazard for farmers in the Tarai, especially in the summer. South and Southeast Asia have been identified as having the highest number of snakebites per year. Conservative estimates suggest that there are 20,000 cases in Nepal a year, almost all in the Tarai, that cause 1,000 fatalities.

Unfortunately, because snakebites happen most often in impoverished rural settings, prevention and medical management have been neglected. Furthermore, there is a dearth of information. Many Nepali doctors will consult western textbooks to treat snakebites. But the treatment of bites from Nepali snakes is significantly different from that which is recommended for pit viper snake bites from the Sonoran desert in Arizona.


Russell’s vipers, kraits and cobras are the three well-recognised types of venomous snakes in Nepal. While kraits and cobras cause neurological and breathing problems, viper bites cause acute kidney or blood problems.

Dr Sanjib Sharma of the BP Koirala Institute in Dharan, who has published extensively on snakebites in Nepal, has shown that prompt motorcycle transport to a proper health facility by community volunteers can save lives in a Tarai village setting. At various institutes, Sharma has trained personnel ready to administer anti-snake venom and provide



artificial ventilation if needed.

Rewards for killing venomous snakes have been used to minimise bites, but the ecological impact may be detrimental as snakes keep the rodent population in check, thus helping farmers. An awareness of the behaviour pattern of snakes is more useful.

Kraits in the Tarai seem to mostly bite at night when people are sleeping on the floor. Using a mosquito net will help deter snakes. Snakebites, furthermore, are usually on the feet and legs, so villagers would do well to consistently wear proper foot gear in paddy fields. Simple measures like these will make a huge difference. A pound of prevention is better than an ounce of venom. 

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

It has been a strange monsoon with the south westerlies entering Nepal from the northeast. This has left most of the Tarai without adequate precipitation. Rain, when it has come, has been deficient in most midhill areas as well. July saw a 20 per cent shortfall in rain on average. The trend in the last decade has been that the monsoon starts late and ends late and this year looks like it will be no exception. A large low-pressure circulation is building up in the Bay that could intensify as it makes landfall this weekend, and inject copious moisture into eastern Nepal over the next week. Expect moderate to heavy rainfall mainly at night over the weekend and into next week, and below average maximum and minimum temperatures.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
27-16	28-20	27-19

“How can I ever forget?”

For more than 1,350 families across Nepal, the war never ended. Every day is a painful wait for the one piece of news they have waited years for: the whereabouts of missing relatives, even if it is a confirmation that they are dead.

In his documentary, *Shadows of Hope*, director Mohan Mainali gives voice to the forgotten relatives of those disappeared during the conflict. Both sides in the war are now in ruling circles and are preoccupied with politics, society wants to move on, and friends and neighbours can't offer more than sympathy. In fact the suffering of the families of the disappeared has been deliberately ignored so that the peace process won't suffer. The state expects the families to accept relief aid of Rs 100,000 and stop searching for answers that would be embarrassing for those



ONLY MEMORIES: Sahabir Biswokarma shows a picture of his missing son, Santosh, to a granddaughter on his lap in this still from Mohan Mainali's documentary *Shadows of Hope*

responsible on both sides.

The relatives interviewed in *Shadows of Hope* want peace of mind much more than justice or retribution. They want answers about the fate of their loved ones so they can move on. A little state support to rebuild their lives, if possible, would be appreciated.

Mainali could have easily manipulated the six profiled families to present angry and emotional testimonials, or slant it politically as many other film-makers have done. But he keeps himself in the background, allows the families to speak and lets the message come out in poignant words of bereavement, longing and loss. This is a subtle, but powerful, documentary that brings back the horrors of our brutal war and reminds us that the legacy of the war will be with us for a

long time to come.

Says Mainali: “We have often heard about the victims of war, but in the film we have tried to find out what it is that their relatives now need the most. It is their voice, the voice of the families of the victims.”

At the end of the 21-minute film produced by ICRC, Mainali zooms in on a father as he takes out from his wallet a faded photograph of his missing son. Ten years after his 14-year-old went missing, he is still trying to come to terms with his loss. His words dissolve in a flood of tears: “How can I ever forget?”

Rubeena Mahato

Shadows of Hope, directed by Mohan Mainali, is being launched officially by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 6 August.

HIMAL KHABARPATRIKA
1-16 August 2010



COVER

Maoists for ceremonial monarchy

Interview:

Chandra Bahadur Gurung

NC's dilemma

Madhesis in the middle

EDITORIAL

Save the CA

OPINION

Devendra Poudel

Purshottam Dahal

Prabhat Patnaik

ECONOMY

Borrowing from Peter to pay Paul

Education leads investment

Turning from cannabis to tobacco

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Women, determined

Women I met during my stay in Nepal last month changed my perception of gender inequality in South Asia, and helped change my notions of social truths in Nepal.

In Dadeldhura, I met Shakuntala Nagarkoti, a 35-year-old leader of a women’s group that works for community improvement. Shakuntala is outspoken, owns her own photocopy business, and thinks men waste too much time and money on alcohol.

Shankuntala and her group of 15 took action. First, they convinced women in the village to ban the sale of raksi during the day. Then they trained them in management to enable women to invest savings from raksi not consumed to other small businesses.

“When women have control over their money, it’s good for their children,” said Shakuntala. Previously, the women of Dadeldhura used to hand over all their income to their husbands, who would spent it on drinking instead of food and schooling.

In Chitwan, I met 23-year-old Sita Basnet Karki of the Tarauli Community Library. Sita and her friend, Sushma Kunwar (*see pic*), were participants in a need assessment survey for future projects by READ Nepal. The survey results as well as the group discussion revealed how women had gained confidence and started being involved in their communities.



JEERAWAT NA THALANG

Women like Shakuntala, Sushma and Sita have independently begun their liberation from housewives to active members of their communities

Respondents said they have become more independent, gained more control over household finances and are becoming better at making decisions. They are increasingly involved in local cooperatives where they have their own savings. Most signed up to participate in community libraries because they believe in the importance of literacy. During a 12-day community librarian training in Banepa in early July, women made up 18 of 28 participants. “I want to serve women and children, only women can understand the comfort of working with other women,” said Dhanumaya Pahadi Poudel, a 26-year-old librarian at Dipshikha Community Library in Kaski.

Such changes in rural Nepal also present challenges for women, whose cultural roles and identities are evolving slowly. They now juggle household duties with community activities. With a 10am appointment with the community group to attend, for example, women have to start their days earlier to cover their household commitments.

But women like Shakuntala, Sita and Sushma have independently begun their movement towards liberation, from housewives to active members of their communities. Their courage and determination changed my perception of women in South Asia. 🇳🇵

Jeerawat Na Thalang is a correspondent with The Nation newspaper in Bangkok and spent two months with READ Nepal.

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Nay to the government



**POLITICALLY
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Indu Nepal

The stretch of road between St. Xaviers School in Maitighar and Martin Chautari in Thapathali houses some of the richest people in the country, at least judging by the McMansions, long driveways and lush gardens. The road leading to these houses is a reminder of a remote village in the hills where a four-wheel drive can barely maneuver across the potholes.

The obvious disrepair of very basic and essential infrastructure isn't due to the helplessness of the people in the community. Rather it seems to indicate a pervasive willingness to wait for someone else, i.e. the government, to fix it. When it comes to access and improvement of services the residents of Thapathali, Sanepa and Lazimpat seem to be as dependent on the government as those of Taplejung, Simikot and Lamidada.

Last week, the publisher of this newspaper wrote: "15 per cent of Nepal's population is working abroad at any given time, and they send home \$2 billion a year. This is improving family cash income, but it doesn't always correlate with access to services like years of schooling, safe drinking water, electricity, or chronic hunger in children. Many of these basic services are the prerogative of the state..."



KIRAN PANDAY

Perhaps if we were talking about new age concepts like happiness and satisfaction, the role of money would have required deeper investigation. If it is tangible services like school education, some iodine pills for your water or food for your children, why does a family with an improved income need to wait for the state to access these services, especially when the government has proven to be anything but effective?

Statements like these may be the perfect kicker to an article, but are worrying because they gloss over the details. A few weeks ago, the host of *Sagarmatha*

Television's primetime news program ended a segment about child labour by grandly announcing that "the government needs to look after these children." There was no discussion of how he thought the government should go about doing that. Did he mean we should have more Bal Mandirs, the state-run orphanage long accused of corruption and even child trafficking?

There is merit in welfare services provided by the state to the poorest of its people and the most helpless, but none whatsoever in everyone waiting for the government to spoon feed

us. The government is unable to manage expectations and even less able to get things done. More than 30 years after identifying Melamchi as a source of water for the residents of the capital, the project has yet to begin in earnest. Major hydropower projects like Arun III have been stalled in the planning phase for years and are yet to deliver more value than just as talking points.

One could argue that the reason we are stuck in a cycle of violence, or in the continual threat of one, is because the government is deemed so important. Foreign aid is distributed through the

When it comes to getting services the residents of Thapathali, Sanepa and Lazimpat are as dependent on the government as those of Taplejung, Simikot and Lamidada

government. It has the largest share in the economy. It runs health services to the majority of the population in Nepal, as well as education, while it is clear that it is the private sector that is better at providing more choices and better services in both these areas.

Instead of asking for the end of state intervention in every aspect of our lives, we seem to be crossing our fingers and hoping that with one perfect government we can have a Swedish socio-heaven in this country. It might not happen in our lifetime, so we are better off looking elsewhere if we want our roads to be fixed. ■

काम सानो ठूलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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Unholy alliance

Rameshwor Bohara and Saroj Dahal in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-16 August

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

With the Maoists assuring the royalists they will revive the monarchy if they help them form a government, their regressive journey has been confirmed. Pushpa Kamal Dahal recently met with Kamal Thapa of RPP-Nepal, the only party openly advocating a monarchy.

The royalists have been encouraged by Dahal’s statement about an alliance of true nationalists. “India betrayed both the parties. So we have come to the conclusion that an alliance of two nationalist forces is possible,” a central committee member of RPP-Nepal said.

Ex-king Gyanendra, however, is not so convinced. He has given the responsibility of forging a business deal with the Maoists to his son-in-law Raj Bahadur Singh, businessman Ajay Sumargi and some ex-army generals.

The Maoist-royalist connection goes back a long way. The Maoists had relations with the palace even at the height of the insurgency, and it has already been revealed that there were agreements to share power. Baburam Bhattarai had to face action from his own party when he opposed this process.



ROUND TABLE: (From left to right) Chandra Bahadur Mahara and Kamal Thapa of RPP(N) in talks with Maoist leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Narayan Kaji Shrestha and Krishna Bahadur Mahara last week at Thapa’s residence

According to sources, Singh and Sumargi, among others, have been gathering funds to help Dahal get 301 votes in parliament. It is not mere coincidence that the *Times of India* published news on 30 August about Singh’s attempts to get 10 to 15 more MPs on Dahal’s side.

Sources also claim that ex-crown prince Paras called Moti Dugad, MP of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandidevi) to the Soaltee Hotel to get him to vote in favour of Dahal.

Fearing disclosure, Dahal has only allowed his brother Narayan and nephew Sameer to handle the money involved. Reportedly, 500 to 550 million rupees have been set aside to buy MPs, to be spent only on the night of 1 August.

Alleging that Dahal has engaged in horse-trading both with India and the royalists to become the prime minister, a politburo member said, “Whoever he settles the deal with, it will be against the country and the spirit of the people’s movement.” Another Maoist leader said, “If this is where they wanted to take the country, why did they have to kill 14 thousand people?”

UCPN(Maoist)-RPP(N) front possible

Chandra Bahadur Gurung, parliamentary party leader RPP(N)

What has brought together such strongly opposed parties?

We are in an interim period. This means the constitutional republic, secularism and federalism are also interim. The Maoists know this well. We want a referendum on the issues of monarchy, secularism and federalism. Prachanda has assured us that he will consider this once there is a Maoist government.

What is Dahal’s stance on monarchy?

Prachanda has said that there could be a cultural or religious king. The issue of national unity and independence are our common agendas.

Why do you think he saw any possibility of a cultural king?

We are motivated by the fact that the king is inevitable for national unity, independence, and the protection of national sovereignty.

Do you think Maoist support is enough to restore the monarchy?

It is an issue of national importance and therefore needs the support of all parties.



E-farming

Letter to the editor in *Nagarik*, 2 August

नागरिक

When we were awarded the Mondialogo Engineering Award in Germany during our engineering course at Pulchok Engineering Campus, we visited villages to implement our project linking agricultural modernisation with information technology. We were excited Mahabir Pun would be helping us.

Before we implemented the project, we felt the modernisation of Nepali agriculture could significantly contribute to the rural economy. But we did not meet any

young people interested in taking up agriculture. There were a few places where youth were involved but they did not know much about farming. Agriculture was considered more of a ‘time-pass’ than a commercially viable venture. Government programs haven’t been fruitful; farmers haven’t received new training. Most Nepalis are still involved in agriculture but how can we say we are agriculture-based when most depend on remittances?

We met agriculture experts in all the district headquarters but their capabilities were not reflected in the status of agriculture in the villages. If we

are to take information technology as the basis of human development in the 21st century, we must make information accessible in our villages. Keeping this in mind, we implemented a pilot program on E-farming in Gulmi district.

Every district headquarter should have an information and communication centre. We have established one in Baletaksar for Gulmi. The computer here acts as a server and has agriculture-related documents, digital books, short films, etc. If a house in the village has a computer, it can access the server. Every VDC should have a training centre equipped with a computer, projector and speakers.

If there is internet, farmers from different villages can share experiences. They can also learn about fair prices for their produce. A virtual class can be conducted to educate the villagers on farming technologies and how they can increase their production. An investment of Rs 200,000 is required to implement such a project in a VDC. This amount is relatively low, considering the economic and social transformation it can bring.

Sagar Gyawali, President
Our Technology, Prosperous Nepal
www.hprnepal.org.np

Porters, not students

Deepesh Ghimire in *Rajdhani*, 31 July

राजधानी

“If there was enough food to eat, I would have gone to school,” Ramesh Karki sighs in despair as he rests his load against a wall. His forehead is bruised by the rope holding up the sack of rice he is carrying on his back. Depression, pain and suffering show through his grim expression.

Karki, from Punma VDC of Jajarkot district, is 17. He should be going to college but has never seen the inside of a school. Transporting loads from Chaurjhari airport in Rukum district to different villages is what he has been doing since childhood.

“There is scarcity of food in my village. Since I have not cultivated my land for years I have to carry loads to make a living,” he says, as he wipes sweat from his face.

Karnali, Jajarkot, and Bajura, among others, are food-insecure districts in the mid-west. Children are the most affected as the need to earn their keep means

they never get to go to school. Many children and youths are seen carrying loads from Chaurjhari and Salli Bajar of Salyan to neighbouring districts. Hundreds of mules transport goods every day.

Some blame the food crisis on infertile land, others on a lack of awareness, and some also blame the lack of development infrastructure and industries. There should be an integrated approach to address the problem. Local crops such as maize, millet, buckwheat, potatoes and squash are abundant, but locals consider only rice food. In fact, mules used transport goods are part of the problem. One mule feeds on grain that would be sufficient for a family of five for a day. The locals feed mules local grain so they can transport rice for them.

The government is largely indifferent to the plight of children in these districts, but political parties, too, show no concerns for the food crisis. Our political culture is such that people feel powerless when they are not in government, though parties could do a lot to create awareness and mobilise locals.



कान्तिपुर Vatsyayan in *Kantipur*, 5 August

Nationalist Unity Front



Press statement, 27 July

Madhav Kumar Nepal's government shut down Unity Life International Ltd and organisations registered with it across the country. Our hospital has been padlocked and its manager detained. The government banned transactions with organisations associated with Unity as well as insurance of even deceased family members. Corrupt officials are conspiring to amass a huge sum of money by selling the property of the company. We have been watching the political parties who remained silent at such an injustice.

Running away or hiding ourselves is not the solution. We must face it and tell people the truth. For that, a movement has been inevitable. The court sided with the biased government and its accomplices, depriving people of their right to property. But the people have understood this. We ask them to stay alert. If our issues are not resolved immediately, we will eliminate anyone, one by one. The useless government, the corrupt justice, and legal professionals should take responsibility for the consequences. If cleaning up 50 corrupt people guarantees a better life for all Nepali people, we take it as a holy act, not as a crime. If the government fails to create an environment conducive to operating the company within 21 days, we will start executing the plan from day 23.

We have been keeping tabs on the daily activities of those involved in ruining the company. Neither the company nor the country will get peace until these corrupt people are killed. We have taken the decision to take physical action against them and are all prepared to face any challenges that might come our way.

We first want to warn the government officials and political leaders. Nothing can stop us from achieving our goal. We have formed a 1,505-member struggle committee comprising representatives of 75 districts. We warn the government to be prepared to face the consequences once our action is launched.

You can contact us to join the movement at blodformato@yahoo.com
Buland, Commander, Nationalist Unity Front

Maoists not for pluralism or absolutism

Editorial in *Janadesh*, 3 August

जनादेश

UCPN (Maoist) believes in a multiparty system, not in pluralism. Pluralism is a philosophy representative of orthodox thoughts and ideals that negates progress and transformation. It believes in putting together all the oppressed and oppressors, masters and serfs, tigers and lambs into a basket. It opposes the history of dialectical materialism. That's why the Maoists are against this ideal.

The Maoists are against pluralism as well as absolutism. Although it has been made clear time and again, they are portrayed as authoritarian, as wanting to capture power. The Maoists have modified their programs, ideology and policies to suit multiparty competition and then joined the peace process.

As far as the question of authoritarianism is concerned, this is class-specific. The state represents a class. Capitalists are influential in capitalism while proletariats remain at the helm in communism. And the Maoists speak for the proletariat.

If the Maoists were against multiparty competition, they would not take part in the CA elections. People support the party that has concrete plans and programs for a better future. They won the hearts and minds of the people who wanted change despite their opponents' attempts to denigrate them by calling them terrorists. People want change.



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Four down, 20 to go

So it does look like the gentlemen's agreement for unnatural political intercourse between the consenting adults of the Madhesi and Maobaddie movements has fallen apart, and the UML and the Madhesis have decided to stay **neutered**. Friday's fourth round of voting is going to be another dead duck in the water, so candidates for PM will bury the hatchet. In each others' backs.

The 1st point of the three-point agreement has been forgotten for the umpteenth time in the political circus. **Comrade Supercalifragilistic** had said everything in the six-point agreement under the first point of the three-point agreement would be sorted out within three days if the prime minister resigned. The prime minister resigned, and after more than a month of deadlock, **Comrade Expialidocious** now says everything will be sorted out in three months if he is allowed to lead the next majority govt. Prochandal is not just trying to move the goalpost, he's trying to



move the entire stadium. The Chairman's strategy seems to be to keep on going through an endless cycle of elections in parliament to a) turn the whole democratic process into a farce, and b) to buy time to buy some more MPs until he can hit the Magic 300. He has gambled all, and if he loses this he faces political extinction in his party's AGM next month. If only everyone showed the same alertness as the Business Advisory Committee. Even though the fourth round hasn't happened yet, it has already set

the time of the fifth round: Wednesday, 18 August at 3PM. If this is what the august house can do imagine what the September house will accomplish. The alternative to elections ad infinitum would be a consensus government, but there is no consensus either on who should be the consensus candidate: JNK, BRB or PKD? Now that Uncle Shyam is here everything will be sorted out, some say. But what can he do that the Soodsayer hasn't tried already?

The gloves came off in the war of words between PKD and BRB long ago, and both are now donning finger studs. The party is beginning to split right down the middle between Chhabilal and Laldhoj loyalists. The party's newspapers are snarling at one or the other leader, reminding us of the historical propensity for communist leaders to squash internal dissent. Usually it is the survival of the most ruthless. BRB commands respect within the party for his integrity and vision, while PKD has the **gift of the gab**. Baddie reps in parliament going around trying to woo the smaller parties to vote for Awesome on Friday secretly admit they are just dishing out the party line, and that they'd much prefer BRB as their candidate. But they look over their shoulders as they say this.

The biggest setback to the Chairman within his party seems to be that after crushing the monarchy he now has a crush on it. Ferocious is now trying to justify his overtures to the

royalists by saying that he is engaged in a "cultural revolution to bring back a cultural king". This has already worked wonders on the **Bhadgaunleys** who went lock, stock and barrel with the Baddies in the third round. The king card has also worked with certain Madhesis, although the deal seems to have been lubricated with 3 karod smackeroos each and brokered by a son-in-law who was above-the-law during the royal days. Comrade Jwai-saheb has joined the pro-Mau Janata Dull to position himself for Information Ministership in new PKD govt. And this week's winner of the 'Only in Nepal' contest is the agitation by the Baddie-affiliated Nepal Oil Corruption employees for a bonus in an organisation that is running a loss of 2 arabs a year. China has donated garbage trucks, we will donate the rubbish, but who is going to donate the diesel to run them? [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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