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SRIJANA ACHARYA

Searching for answers

Four years since the end of the decade-long conflict in Nepal, peace is still elusive for the families of those who were disappeared by the state and the Maoists. This is why in marking August 31 as the International Day of the Disappeared, we stand shoulder to shoulder with these families caught in political, legal and

emotional limbo. They have not even been granted the freedom to grieve for their lost loved ones.

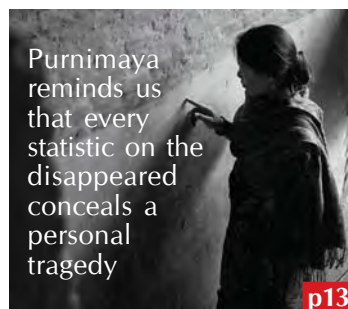
Remarkable stories are born out of adversity. For Laxmi Devi Khadka and Devisara Wali, whose husbands were disappeared by opposing sides during the peak of the war, the pain they share is the same. In Bardiya, these two women work together as activists

campaigning on behalf of the families of the disappeared.

Their journey has been a long and frustrating one. Not only do they have to cope with the loss of their life partners while raising children, they have to face the stonewalling of a state reluctant to move the courts on what remains a politically sensitive issue. What's worse, according to Devisara, "Those who took away our husbands are walking free and they are threatening to kill us if we search for answers."

ONE JOURNEY IN PAIN: The husbands of Laxmi Devi Khadka and Devisara Wali were disappeared by opposing sides during the war, but for these women working together, "the pain is the same".

Read more inside



p13



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IN A DANGEROUS STATE

Politicians playing their parlour games don't seem to care less what the country is coming to, or what becomes of its citizens.

If they did, they would take one look at the queues in front of the former royal palace for passports and do something about it. The ministers' caravans, sirens wailing, whoosh past people waiting days on end, rain or shine, for new passports. As they go from one inconclusive meeting to another, the politicians have little time to ponder the hardships they leave in their wake. The supreme irony is that the passport applicants at Gyanendra's former palace are beginning to say that things were much better during the monarchy.

A country that is almost totally dependent on its citizens working abroad to send money home should make it as easy as possible for people to get hold of passports. But the opposite is true.

The political stalemate has delayed the contract for machine-readable passports that were made mandatory for international travel earlier this year. At least the bureaucrats went ahead with the MRP bidding process despite the foreign minister once more trying to stall the process.

The caretaker government can't take care of things; it has lost the little moral authority it had. So the bureaucracy is treating politicians with the contempt many of them richly deserve. Secretaries are now openly defying lame-duck ministers, but they face obstacles from



venal politicians out to make a fast buck before they go.

It's hard to think of a time in recent Nepali history when graft was as endemic, and accepted, as it is today. Counterfeit driving licenses can be had across the counter for a 'facilitation fee'. Officials at the Department of Transportation installed a CCTV camera to monitor driving tests. Guess what, the minister ordered the camera removed. Meanwhile, blue buses with murderous drivers have mowed down 20 people on the Ring Road in the past year.

Airline insiders speak in hushed tones of some domestic airlines cutting corners on spares by cannibalising parts to save money and then 'persuading' civil aviation inspectors to look the other way. It may not just be the weather and equipment malfunction that caused the Agni Air crash that killed 14 on Tuesday. The calamity caused by floods is not the result of 'natural' disasters, but criminal state negligence in allowing settlements on floodplains.

When politics fails, it doesn't just affect the election of a prime minister, the rot seeps right through the system. The malfeasance eating away at the polity can only be addressed if caretaker leaders lead by example and restore stability.

But for the three parties and the leaders within them competing to set up a new government, it seems not to matter that the budget hasn't been passed, and that development has ground to a halt. You can tell it has been a long time since they even thought about what this transition period was for: writing a new constitution and taking the country to peace and stability.

 See 'Hotel Echo's last minutes', The Brief

KD

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

BAD JOKES

If you don't know what to do, just stall ('The winner can't take all', Publisher's Note, #516). These guys are so good at it that sometimes I think we're going backwards in time. It's not even funny anymore.

whatever

CRISIS POINT

People have lost their faith in the present parties and their leadership in particular ('Twin crises', Prashant Jha, #516). We know these are the rogues, but we have to put up with them for some time.

Start with local body elections first. Problem lies in making it fair and free; certification in a Jimmy Carter style is not going to cut any ice with us. Constitution making is a delicate job with partisan groups, misinformed youths and communal excitement playing a part. It has to be taken up with cool heads and wisdom, long-term vision, and a caring and sharing spirit.

Dr. Ambedkar said in November 1949: "I feel, however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called on to work it happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it happen to be a good lot. The working of a constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the constitution."

The condition in India during 1949 compares with our situation now.

Daniel Gajraj

- The Nepali state does not suffer from 'twin crises', it suffers from one single crisis and it is the crisis of a narrative. Every country stands for something, its own uniqueness, that the people identify with. Chinese communists hark back to past glory and use an iron hand to push ahead with their agenda. Europeans have their own identity, America is the land of the free. Nepal does not stand for anything other than slogans that fools frequently depend on for their own political survival.

Slarti, Royalist

URBAN BUBBLE

People from cities don't know anything about the problems that are affecting the rural parts of our country ('Urban bias', CK Lal, #516). And they get the blame for being apathetic and ignorant about these problems. But how is he gonna know about those things when nobody tells him in the first place? And who's the one responsible? THE MEDIA, of course. When the media starts to cover ground-level news, be it from the villages or from the cities, then people elsewhere will know what's going on in the real world, and whether the concerned authorities are doing their job properly. That will put pressure on them. I remember back in school days we would not dare to do any misdeeds because the class captain might report us to the teacher. Well, the media should be like a class captain. They should report to the people.

Another LAL

LEADER, WANTED

Leaders like Hitler do not arise unless there is a pre-existing social environment; they do not arise out of a vacuum. Throughout Europe, the Jews and the Gypsies/Romany people had been persecuted for more than a millennium before Hitler came up with the idea of the 'final solution' to exterminate them once and for all.

Given the history of tolerance and the multi-ethnic diversity of the country, the threat of a racist totalitarian leader like Hitler arising in Nepal is low. However, the potential for a strong authoritarian ruler coming into power does exist, resulting possibly from a backlash against the current anarchy by a people looking for a strong and capable leader to lead the country out of crisis.

The main problem for the people currently seems to be the disintegration of existing social and cultural norms and laws, being replaced by the rule of the jungle where 'might is right', and an almost complete absence of law and order.

The government slowly is becoming invisible and defunct for the common

man because of its inability to protect individual rights and freedoms of its citizens. As a result businesses and people are forced to live under rules made by local criminal bosses in their districts, and even pay 'taxes' to them or face the consequences, with nobody to protect them.

Democracy and individual freedoms remain just slogans, and in reality do not and cannot exist for the people when the government cannot enforce even the basic and simplest laws, and cannot protect its citizens from criminal elements.

In Nepal, at least for now, the threat of a dictator like Hitler arising is much lower than the threat of anarchy and disintegration turning the country into another Afghanistan, with multiple ungovernable provinces run by local criminal-political syndicates.

What seems to be lacking and what the people want is strong and visionary leadership, if the country is to avert either of the two fates.

Dev Batsya

DRINK LOCAL!

Amazing and positively slanted story on how Nepal's unsung heroes are showing entrepreneurship where it counts: by giving jobs to women at the grassroots (Exotic Nepali drinks', Rubeena Mahato, #516). Combining this with good marketing as Marmelous has done is really cool. This is what we need more of in Nepal. But judging by the lack of feedback on this article compared to, say, phone banking or politics, we can see where the priorities of *Nepali Times* readers are. Thank you editor, for also thinking of the small people.

KiranL

DIAL C FOR CASH

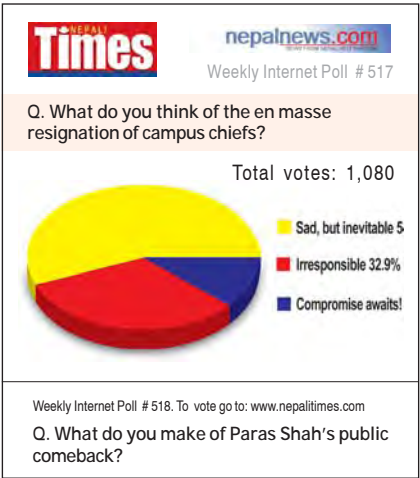
Fantastic! While I realise that there is no silver bullet, this is hopefully the beginning of a good trend: NRNs returning to Nepal to harness their skills for the betterment of the homeland ('Leapfrogging with phone cash', Kunda Dixit, #516). Given our geography and resulting isolated communities and lack of infrastructure, mobiles have taken off. Using this to fill a void in the banking sector is a win-win situation: good for the wider Nepali public who now have easier access to funds, good for the hard-working

labourers sweating away abroad to send money home, good for the banking sector who can tap an unreach customer base, and good for the Nepali economy as a whole since, like Kenya, this may be the beginning of increasing income and investment. Again, let's not count our chickens before they hatch, but I find this very exciting & promising. Great job gentlemen: Nepal welcomes you back!

hange

- I would like to know how this system actually works. Here are my questions to start:
 - How is the security handled? What if the mobile phone is hacked?
 - Is the transaction between the accounts within Kumari Bank or also between different banks?
 - How would the money actually be distributed? Would Kumari Bank need to open branches all over Nepal?
- I have many more questions...but if this is successful, this will be wonderful for the country and the companies associated. Perhaps *Nepali Times* can do a follow-up article that addresses these questions.

Binoy Yonzon





KIRAN PANDAY

Central concerns

The way forward will be defined by the approach adopted by the Maoist Central Committee



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The ongoing Maoist Central Committee (CC) meeting, and the extended one scheduled for next month, will decide whether Nepal will get a constitution through this CA.

The last extended CC at Kharipati in December 2008 put the Maoists on a confrontational path. The party decided to consciously sharpen the polarisation with 'India and domestic comprador, bureaucratic capitalists and feudal elements'. While remaining vague about the specifics, the party made it clear it would not get 'entrapped' in the conventional liberal democratic system.

The Katawal controversy was a direct outcome of Kharipati. In the CC after Dahal's resignation, the party patted itself on the back for taking on 'foreign and domestic enemies'. The Maoists also decided to be 'very careful to the reactionary plot of weakening and disarming the party by integration and rehabilitation before a people's constitution is written', the clearest indication they would not move on the PLA.

Over the past year, Dahal has broadly followed this line even when faced with the prospect of complete political isolation. While failing to lead a new government, he thinks he has succeeded in exposing 'India and its brokers' and making 'nationalism' a central issue; maintaining the 'people's army'; defeating the 'reactionary design' to dissolve the CA; and sowing divisions within other parties even while

keeping his own intact.

The Maoists will now review the achievements and failures of the past year, the problems within the party, and the way forward. But fundamentally, the party needs to decide on three issues: does it want a constitution; how much is it willing to compromise to achieve that; and how does it see India.

The Maoists suspect the other parties do not want a new, progressive constitution. This is partially true. The NC and UML accepted the CA because the king had kicked them out in the capital, the Maoists were attacking them in the hinterland, their movement was only drawing a few dozen people in Ratna Park, and they saw an alliance with the Maoists as the only way to survive politically. But what the Maoists ignore is that the NC and UML cannot get out of the constitution-writing framework for the ground has shifted too drastically.

In fact, the Maoists have played right into the hands of those who do not want a constitution. By adopting a confrontational posture, opening multiple fronts, and linking government formation to the constitution, the Maoists have enabled a strong 'military bourgeoisie' alliance, which was strained in 2006, and antagonised even 'friendly forces'.

If the Maoists do want a constitution, they will not only have to change the Kharipati mindset but also think afresh about the PLA. It is understandable that a party that feels cornered, and sees an assertive and autonomous Nepal Army, would be reluctant to give up its own army – especially if it is a party that remembers Mao's dictum that 'without the army,

people have nothing'. But instead of seeing it as surrender, the party needs to see integration as an opportunity. If the Maoists make some gesture on the PLA, its opponents will find it far more difficult to keep the former rebels out. The party's core strength comes from its mass base, front organisations, and the YCL. The Nepal Army's character and structure will not change as drastically as the Maoists want, but other parties are willing to accommodate far more fighters, on more respectable terms, than they were even a year ago. The timing could be negotiated, with the process finishing just a few months before the statute is finalised.

The Maoists also have to assess whether their approach to India has helped the party and its core goals. The Indian stand has been unreasonable and shows their intolerance for strong and autonomous domestic Nepali actors. And the Maoists have done well to blow the cover off the fiction, assiduously cultivated by the Kathmandu establishment, that Nepal is an independent country.

But by scaring Delhi on its core security concerns, waging a hate campaign, trying to build 'anti India' alliances, and thinking that China or the West can neutralise India's leverage, the Maoists have been plain stupid. Dahal should recognise the level of structural and political dependence on India, and how Nepali forces cross certain lines at their own peril.

If the Maoists do not undertake a major policy review on these questions, the CA will not be able to produce a new constitution and the 2006 political framework will gradually collapse. 🇳🇵

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RATNA SANSAR SHRESTHA

People in Bhutan must have felt magnanimous after reading the Times of India (ToI) article on June 20, 2009 that read: ‘Bhutan PM pledges power aid for India’. For a tiny country like Bhutan to be able to ‘aid’ its giant neighbour India must be a thrill. Advocates of the Bhutan model in Nepal are also salivating at the possibility of wielding immense power (not electricity!) over India by exporting hydropower, in the hope that control will be in Nepali hands.

Of course, they will have forgotten that India will circumvent the possibility of Nepal controlling the flow of power by demanding that they get to ensure the ‘security’ of such projects, with Indian security personnel. The Karnali Chisapani project, meant to generate 10,800MW, was shelved in the mid-70s by the then Nepali government for this very reason.

These people have their collective heads in the sand for a couple of other reasons. Bhutan’s example illustrates a few ground realities. Kuensel online, Bhutan’s national English-language news portal, reported that “contrary to existing notions, a new study says it is economically more beneficial for Bhutan to supply power to its industries than export to India.” The report details findings from the Bhutani Ministry of Economic Affairs and the royal audit authority, which note that the government makes a profit of Nu 64 million if it exports electricity to India, compared to a profit of



It’s folly to think Nepal can replicate Bhutan’s model of hydropower development

Nu 152.8 million from tax receipts if it supplies 15 major national industries. Economic Affairs Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk was reported to have said, “Electricity is the only plentiful raw material that can be used by our industries to compete with external competitors by value adding on reasonably priced power.” Ministry Secretary Dasho Sonam Tshering reportedly

Power to India

alluded to Norway, which “also used its hydropower to initially bankroll its industrial development through power intensive metallurgy and fertilizers”.

The export-oriented model of hydropower development in Bhutan has threatened its own industrial development. As early as 2008, Zeenews.com reported that “a severe power shortage may hit Bhutan in view of new industries readying up to kick start operations even as India is banking on borrowing electricity from the Himalayan country by 2020.” Bhutan Power Corporation Limited is reported to have confirmed this. Kuensel online echoed this anxiety in February 2010, suggesting setting up captive thermal power plants and in May 2010, even calling for the import of electricity from India.

Due to the unique geopolitical relationship between India and Bhutan, the three hydropower projects built so far, with a total capacity of 1,416MW, are owned by Bhutan but funded by India as a 60 per cent grant and a 40 per cent soft loan. But this ‘inter-government model’ has been found wanting by the Indian Government of late. The ToI last year noted that “The power ministry is getting the jitters over venture models for setting up hydel projects committed to Bhutan, with a view emerging that the amount of investments India will have to make at one go till 2020 under the present inter-government arrangement may adversely affect our budgetary provisions.”

According to records of a recent meeting called by Indian power sector officials, India is committed to projects in Bhutan of

10,000MW by 2020. This will require fast-track investment of Rs 500 billion at Rs 45 billion per year till 2020. The Indian Government, therefore, is endeavouring to drastically reconfigure the model so future projects are built with 70 per cent loan and 30 per cent grant. According to Kuensel online, the Bhutanese government has not yet agreed to this.

Under the current model, Bhutan seems to be profiting even by exporting power at a dirt cheap rate. But once the financing modality is turned on its head, the benefits to the Bhutanese economy will shrink by a magnitude. By exporting power, furthermore, it is condemned to remain underdeveloped.

For Nepal, with a population of 28 million, to reach the same level of ‘gross national happiness’ achieved under the current India-Bhutan inter-government model would require India to finance 52,864MW of electricity. Unfortunately, India is already experiencing financing fatigue after its relatively small investments in Bhutan. It’s time for the hydrocracy in Nepal – the politicians, policymakers, planners, bureaucrats, and intelligentsia who deal in hydropower – to acknowledge the ground realities and grow out of their short-sighted, juvenile vision for Nepal’s hydropower future. 🇳🇵

Ratna Sansar Shrestha is a water resource analyst

See also: ‘Nepal is not Bhutan’, #314



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ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

JOHANNESBURG. When you zip through the airport, getting from aircraft to taxi in twenty minutes, you can't help but wonder why this process can't be just as fast in Nepal. However, seeing watch businesses in Johannesburg close before sunset and people too scared to venture out at night without security, you feel thankful that Nepal has not seen urban crime escalate to that extent. South Africa has emerged as a big economic player on the global stage. But the country first needs to resolve crime issues and reduce the gaps between the haves and the have-nots.

The African continent is full of action. Passing through Nairobi, one overhears



KIRAN PANDAY

If they can do it, we can do it

conversations about the promulgation of the constitution. This constitution is expected to herald a new era in Kenyan history and also help the country

fulfill its ambition of becoming the political and economic hub of East Africa. It makes you dream of developing Kathmandu as the economic hub of the Himalayan

belt, and extend its influence into the Gangetic plains.

If Rwanda can make an effort to keep up its pace of GDP growth despite its major political and social upheavals, Nepal should at least aspire to compete. Nepal, comparatively, has a lot going for it – biodiversity, a natural bounty of water, and the geographical proximity of the world's two emerging economic superpowers, China and India. People say that apart from the natives, it is the Chinese and the Indians who are seen most frequently travelling through airports in Nepal. We have a long history of bilateral relations with these countries, both of which have invested in Nepal. We simply need to tap into their pace of development.

South Africa hosted the World Cup football tournament this year, putting itself in the global map with a high brand recall. Football united the diverse

South African people as they proudly rooted for their team in the world arena. Closer to home, every Indian identifies with cricket and Bollywood. Nepal also needs something that can give us a sense of pan-national belonging, in a polity that is so fragmented at present. It is time for us to find something that will give us this sense of national pride – in sports or the arts, or anything that can unite us. Perhaps Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is an opportunity for us to bond as a nation.

The biggest asset for Nepal is that the world still sees Nepal as trustworthy, friendly and polite people. We can leverage this image to develop our competencies in the service sector, especially in hospitality and the care-giving industry. If we do things right, we might be able to build a brand on this comparative advantage of ours. www.arthabeed.com



Delivering libraries

DHL Express has been helping to spruce up library facilities for schools in Nepal in association with Room to Read. In 2006, a school in Nuwakot and another in Nala, Kavre benefited from this association. Earlier this month, DHL's Senior Vice President and Area Director for South Asia, Malcolm Monterio, made a dedication for a library for Shree Mahendra Lower Secondary School in Bhaktapur district.

DHL is also managing the logistics for the worldwide distribution of 'Zak the Yak', a children's book authored by Room to Read founder John Wood. The adventures of Zak the Yak are sure to leave a strong impression in the minds of children about Nepal's cultural landscape.

The organisation has a structured approach to corporate social responsibility with its programs for Education (Go Teach), Environment (Go Green) and Disaster Management (Go Help). One hopes that such initiatives will be replicated; given the obvious shortage of resources at the 3,000 government-run schools in Nepal, attractive libraries are certainly one way to keep children in school.

“Two years ago, someone called me fat. That day, I decided to take control of my fitness.”

We women are no less than superwomen, because we end up juggling home and work. Eventually, we compromise on our health. Even I felt the same when someone pointed out the extra weight I had put on. I was surprised to discover that the culprit was my habit of eating unhealthy food between meals. But now things have changed.

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GHAR KAHA? Shailaja CM, Director of EBMF questions the children at Phulbari Children's Home in Delhi, collecting information to trace their parents and homes.

ESTHER BENJAMINS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Take me home

Nepali children are rescued from the streets in India and placed in children's homes, from where they need to be rescued once more

PAAVAN MATHEMA

Fourteen-year-old Pralad Rai is scrawling the numbers 1-100 in a new exercise book he has just been given. "Thik hai?", he asks in Hindi, a language he acquired while living in India for a year. His forehead is scarred; there are marks on his cheeks, neck and feet and bruises on his body. It makes you wonder what kind of life he must have lived in India.

Pralad is one of thousands of children who reach India for work but end up in government-run children's homes. On 23 August, he arrived in Kathmandu along with six other boys, in the aftermath of a successful rescue operation overseen by Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation (EBMF). While Pralad had been trafficked, the rest had run away from home to find work.

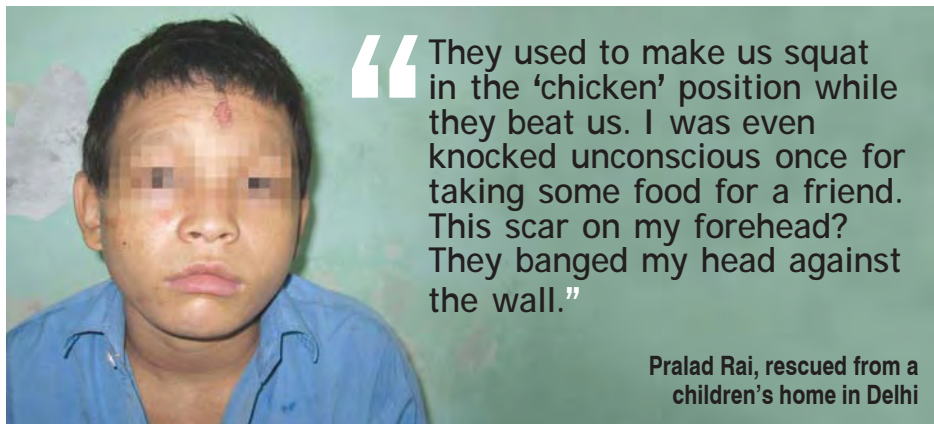
"Poor financial status and difficult family lives push these children to leave home," says Durga Ghimire of ABC Nepal. While there are no records of Nepali child labourers in India, it is estimated that every year 4,000-5,000 Nepali children cross the border hoping to find work and a better life. This makes them vulnerable to trafficking. These children find jobs in restaurants, small factories, circuses and in homes, as domestic help. Workplace abuse

is rampant, which means many of these children end up on the streets.

Child-based organisations and the police pick up street children from railway stations, bus stations and the places where they work, and present them to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). The CWC then allocates them to Juvenile Justice Homes, commonly known as children's homes or observation homes. "As private children's homes are reluctant to accept Nepali

children but minors convicted of crime. Special permission is required for an outsider to enter these homes and cameras are prohibited. As the children themselves are not allowed to leave the homes of their own free will, their plight is a largely invisible one.

Nepali organisations work with local partners to bring Nepali children in India home. "Rescue operations are more effective when conducted in coordination with



“They used to make us squat in the ‘chicken’ position while they beat us. I was even knocked unconscious once for taking some food for a friend. This scar on my forehead? They banged my head against the wall.”

Pralad Rai, rescued from a children's home in Delhi

children, they are compelled to go to government-run observation homes," says Shailaja CM, Director of EBMF.

Most of these government-run homes barely pass the minimum standards of a children's home (see box). There are 600 such homes and they house not just street

organisations there," says Achyut Kumar Nepal of Maiti Nepal. But it's by no means straightforward. For a home to consent to release a child, either a parent needs to be present, or the organisation needs to furnish proof that it will take care of the child. The Nepali embassy, which can vouch for such organisations, has an important role to play.

However, bringing them back is not the end of the story; it's as important to reunite the children with their families and ensure they have a better future. "Most often the children require counselling before they can go back," says Bharat Adhikari of CWIN. Some children are reluctant to return home and often the organisation involved takes on the responsibility of rehabilitating them.

There are still many Nepali kids in such homes in India, and an estimated 500 in Delhi alone. "Bilateral mechanisms have to be put in place so that there is proper networking," says Gauri Pradhan of the National Human Rights Commission. "If the police, child-based organisations, and the embassy work effectively together, we can bring our children home." 🇳🇵

The children's names have been changed

THIS WEEK

Losing streak

The losing streak has continued for the candidates vying for the post of prime minister, with the conclusion of the fifth round of voting on Monday.

Neither of the candidates, UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal or NC Vice President Ram Chandra Poudel, secured a simple majority. Dahal secured 246 votes, while Paudel only managed 124, both well short of the majority vote of 301. The UML and the Madhesi alliance, which have a critical role in deciding who becomes the prime minister, stayed neutral in today's election, as they have done previously. The Business Advisory Committee has scheduled the sixth round for 5 September.

UNMIN terms

When UNMIN chief Karen Landgren started consulting political parties on the extension of her organisation's term, Nepal Army Chief Chhatraman Singh Gurung met the Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Rakam Chemjong to request him not to extend the mandate of UNMIN on Friday.

Gurung, who is also an ex-officio member of the Special Committee for Management, Integration and Rehabilitation of the PLA, is learnt to have asked the minister to send back UNMIN, saying its role as defined by the Comprehensive Peace Accord has been completed, and recommending alternative arrangements for monitoring and management of the PLA.

Air hazards

A Dornier 228 aircraft of Agni Air, carrying 11 passengers and three crew members, crashed Tuesday morning in bad weather while returning to Kathmandu after being unable to land in Lukla. The airplane crashed near a small settlement in Shikhapur VDC of Makwanpur district, about 15 miles south of Kathmandu.

Preliminary reports indicate the accident was caused by a combination of technical failure and extremely bad weather. Six of the 11 passengers killed in Tuesday's crash were foreign trekkers. The plane was piloted by Capt Lucky Shah and the co-pilot was Sofiya Singh.

Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority on Wednesday has suspended the flights of two mid-western region based airline operators, Makalu Air and Kasthamandap, on charges of carelessness as two consecutive flights had to make emergency landings after their doors opened in mid-air shortly after taking off. Both the planes were transporting food to Jumla.

Mustang rally

The locals of Upper Mustang have decided to bar foreign tourists from entering the area from 1 October. The Upper Mustang Youth Society reportedly said that it was forced to take this decision as the government continued to remain indifferent towards the development of the district.

Earlier, the government had promised to invest 60 per cent of the fees raised from tourists visiting Upper Mustang for local development and conservation of the area, the Society was quoted as saying. Till the end of 2009, 15,000 tourists have visited Upper Mustang, and the government has collected over 100 million dollars.

Inside story

The children in government homes live in a jail-like environment. The food served barely fulfills their nutritional requirements. Although the children are fed three times a day, the food is usually half-cooked. There are minimum health and sanitation facilities. The older boys amongst the six rescued from Phulbari Children's Home in Delhi by EBMF this week say they could get cigarettes, tobacco and alcohol through security guards, and sometimes even from the supervisors, in exchange for clothes and shoes donated to the home.

The lack of infrastructure could be excused if the children were treated well. But they suffer physical and sometimes even sexual abuse from other children and supervisors. "They used to hit us on our legs and feet for even a small mistake," says 17-year-old Ashim Nepal.

The children went to school for three hours a day, where they were also taught to use computers. "But we didn't have study hours at the government home, we played and had to scrub the floors more than three times a day," says 15-year-old Shyam Gupta. Running away was not an option as the compound was heavily guarded and the walls were topped with electrified wires.




Sundari Chok gets a facelift after 360 years

BEAUTIFUL COURTYARD: Sundari Chok was built in 1642 by King Siddhi Narsingh Malla as part of the Patan Palace Complex. It is now being restored by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) and is under scaffolding. KVPT's director Rohit Ranjitkar compares a photograph taken 110 years ago to ensure that the restoration is accurate (*top, right*). The courtyard is a treasure trove of the Malla period, with its stone and wood carvings, and has survived five major earthquakes.

Siddhi Narsingh Malla was a devout king, so when he had a new palace designed in Patan he got his architects to plan a shrine to all the gods in the main courtyard. When it was built in 1642, Tusa Hiti must have impressed everyone who visited. More than 50 stone carvings of deities adorned the stepwell into which crystal clear spring water gushed out of a shiny bronze spout guarded by figures of Laxmi Narayan and Garud. Above it all was a miniature stone temple that pre-dated the nearby Krishna Mandir, and is now thought to be an architectural model for it. More than 360 years later, and having survived at least five major earthquakes, Tusa Hiti still impresses devotees and visitors. The pantheon of exquisitely carved gods is regarded as the crown jewel of Kathmandu Valley's Malla period. Contrary to what the tour guides will tell you, the Sundari Chok was not a 'royal bath'. To take a bath in a sanctum sanctorum so densely packed with divinities would be considered sacrilege. The Patan Royal Palace Complex, of which Tusa Hiti and Bhandarkhal Archaeological Garden form a part, is currently being renovated by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), which

has been involved in two decades of heritage conservation work in Nepal. KVPT received the UNESCO Heritage Award in 2005. KVPT's Nepal director, Rohit Ranjitkar, says: "This is the most important heritage conservation currently taking place in Kathmandu because of its religious and archaeological significance." When finished in three years time, the Patan Darbar Complex will be integrated with the Patan Museum, and the archaeological garden will open to the public as an inner-city park. The garden is an archaeological treasure trove because it was the dumping ground for debris after successive earthquakes. KVPT has already unearthed the foundations there of a building dating back to the 12th century. In the picture (*top, right*), Ranjitkar is looking at a catalogue of photographs of the original Sundari Chok and directing a stoneworker from Panga as he delicately applies traditional clay and lime mortar to fix the figurines to the stepwell. "This picture was taken 110 years ago, and this one was by the art historian Mary Slusser in 1968," says Ranjitkar, pointing to two photographs that he is using to assist the restoration. Two nag kanyas seen in the first photograph are already missing in Slusser's picture. The stone figures are still intact, but a

bronze Durga went missing 40 years ago. Then, one night in January this year, someone made off with the Laxmi Narayan and Garuda figures on top of the water spout. "We have now come to the point in Nepal where we should keep only replicas of the 100 most valuable religious figures, and lock up the originals in museums. It's just not worth the risk anymore," says Ranjitkar. Important carvings could also be fixed to temple walls with concealed chains, as KVPT did with a priceless 9th century torana at Yethka Bahal in Kathmandu. Upstairs, the entire structure of the third floor is being refurbished and made earthquake-proof. The Bhandarkhal Pokhari, with its pavilion and stone carvings, is being painstakingly restored too. Sundari Chok originally got its water from a natural spring in Lagankhel through an underground canal. This is being cleaned and restored after centuries of neglect. Says Ranjitkar: "I just can't wait to see Sundari Chok looking like the day it was built, with clear spring water flowing out."  Kunda Dixit

 See 'Good Job', East West



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

MUSEUM PIECE

This meticulously crafted wooden model of the Cyasilin Mandap in Bhaktapur Darbar Square is now on display at the Munich Architecture Museum as part of an exhibition of noteworthy heritage restoration projects worldwide. The octagonal shrine was restored by a team led by architects Niels Gutschow and Goetz Hagemuller in the 1980s. The Bhaktapur Project not only renovated the town's temples and bahals but also preserved its urban landscape in collaboration with the local municipality.



EVENTS

Men of God, painting exhibition by Ruchika KC Ahmed. *Till Friday 27 August, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Center, Jhamsikhel, 5521120*

Bishoy Mahabharata, paintings by Kurchi Dasgupta. *Saturday 28 August, Imago Dei, Nag Pokhari*

Gaijatra, solo painting exhibition by acclaimed artist Ragini Upadhya Grela. *Till 20 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 4218048*

Nepal Seen Through My Lenses, a photo exhibition by Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted. *Till Sunday 29 August, 12pm to 6pm, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka*

Docskool, screening of *Three Times*, a Chinese movie directed by Hou Hsiao Hsien. *Friday 27 August, 3.30pm, Kathmandu Academy, Mahendra Bhawan Premises, Naxal, 4471104*



Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, screening of *FOOD, INC.* *Friday 27 August, 6.30pm, Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, Lazimpat*

Cycle 4: Selfie, photo exhibition by 17 young amateur photographers. *Till 23 October, Galleria CUC, Momo Magic, Pulchowk*

Kilroy's Annual Wine Festival, offers the widest range of choice in wines. *Till mid September, Kilroy's, Thamel, Jyatha Street, 4250440*



Repeating Bodies Structural Space, exhibition of paintings by Sanjeev Maharjan and Sunita Maharjan. *Starts Sunday 29 August, 5.30pm, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 5521120*

MUSIC

Paleti series, featuring the works of lyricist Dinesh Adhikari with some never heard compositions. *Saturday 28 August, Nepalaya, Kalikasthan*



House of Music, live performances by Abhaya and the Steam Injuns. *Friday 27 August, 7.30pm, House of Music, Thamel, Entry: Rs 200, 984923807*

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency with barbeque and live jazz music by 'Inner Groove'. *Every Sunday from 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/ 4489362*

DINING

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

Vesper Cafe, has an outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunches. Serves good salads and steak-wraps. *Jhamel*

Olive Garden, mediterranean food fest. *Every day, 6.30pm to 10.30pm, till 31 August, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 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*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, enjoy wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi with an unparalleled view of Boudha stupa. *Every day from 9am to 9pm, Boudha, 2130681*

Chopstix, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken, it's one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118.*

Comfort Zone, expansive restobar that needs to be full to come into its own. A decent range of cocktails and barbequed meats should keep you glued to the massive screen at one end. *Comfort Zone (rooftop of Bank of Kathmandu), Thamel.*

Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool and sample the delicious barbeque in open air. *Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm at the poolside, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Its walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city, *Kantipath, 4215068*



The Factory, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on their cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*

Cosmopolitan Cafe, located in the heart of Basantapur, this cozy cafe offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. Frequented by famed guitarist Hari Maharjan, spot him there and you might get an impromptu performance with your meal. *Basantapur (along Kathmandu Darbar Square), 4225246*

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Bring your own booze though. *Jawalakhel, Open daily 11am- 9pm except Mondays, 2110517*

Casa de Cass, out-of-Kathmandu dining in cosy surrounds with attentive service, what more could you ask for? A martini, of course. *Hariharbhawan, , 5010100*

Lhakpa Chulo, a relative newcomer to Jhamel, but among the best for food – try the tender steaks and Thai-style salads. *Jhamsikhel, open for lunch and dinner daily except Wednesdays*

Momotarou, nestled inconspicuously amongst the street shops of Thamel, this restaurant serves Japanese food that is top value for money. Extravagant taste yet humble in presentation. *Thamel, Bhagawatisthan (near Bhagawati Temple), 4417670.*

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The hungry eye – Marronnier, Chakupat

This one's a real tuckaway, and perhaps one that deserves to remain so, if only for the continued patronage of those who've discovered it through dint of cultured curiosity. Hint: it's above the Fuji Bakery and you'd be forgiven (though hungry) for retreating after opening the door to the sight of fine textiles on racks. Which they also sell, along with a fine selection of pan-Asian and continental dishes. Try the Greek Taramo for starters, if you like (and you should like) smoked salmon and salmon pate on bread. If you feel a little bolder, lively up

the Newar in you and order a few slices of rare buff to boot, as much of a riposte to carpaccio as kachila is to steak tartare. For the mains, to the strains of opera-lite, you have a choice of cutlets and steaks and what better to wash it all down than good old Star Beer, of tasty 7.5% vintage? My companion figured the plum soda was better, and she preferred the salad to her fatty pork, but we both rolled out feeling beery, and porky, and well done.  Nepali Kukur



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abarpatrika August 2010

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Beating malaria with a stick



 **DHANVANTARI**
Buddha Basnyat, MD

The term ‘Jesuits’ Bark’ does not denote Catholic priests mimicking dogs. Rather, it is the bark of a tree (quinine, see pic), originally from Peru, that revolutionised the treatment of malaria. In the 17th century, Jesuit missionaries in Peru realised that the bark of the cinchona tree, used by the Peruvian Indians, was very effective for the treatment of malaria. The Jesuits introduced

the plant to Europe, where its efficacy was hotly debated by Protestant England. It would go on to be a key component of malaria treatment, including in southern Nepal today.

Malaria is commonly seen in Nepal during the summer, though it is usually confined to the hot and humid Tarai. Although it is the benign variety (vivax malaria) that is predominant here, outbreaks of the life-threatening falciparum malaria have occurred almost every summer. Falciparum malaria, which is known to affect the brain of its victims, kills more than a million children a year in Africa alone, and is also a concern for the Nepali UN peacekeeping forces stationed in the Congo and Burundi.

Those at risk of exposure to these mosquitoes are strongly advised to use mosquito nets and insect repellent, and take prophylactic drugs like doxycycline or mefloquin for prevention. Many do not heed this advice, and some have died as a result. Case in point: a Nepali soldier in Africa who came home after his posting suffered from a flu-like illness (a symptom of malaria). Despite taking medicines and antibiotics for common cold from the local pharmacy, his health speedily deteriorated. The soldier went into delirium and shock, and eventually died.

This is tragic, because he could have been saved had the right treatment been available to him. Quinine may not be the first line treatment for malaria any longer, but Chinese medicine has stepped in the boots of the Jesuits. Derived from sweet wormwood (qing hao in Chinese), artemisinin is now recommended by the WHO as part of combination therapy and must form part of health plans for those travelling to malaria-infected regions. 🇳🇵

GREEN SCENE

Buy organic

Subecchya and Prabighya Basnet talk with strong conviction about the importance of promoting organic food in Nepal. Their family venture, Kheti Bazaar, is a conscious effort to educate us about the food we eat, and persuade us to choose the organic path.

As a student of environmental studies, Prabighya Basnet explains why one should go organic. Firstly, it is fact that the mainstream vegetable market in Nepal is rife with contaminated produce. Farmers are known to use four times the optimal level of pesticides needed for most vegetables. Besides, pesticides have impacts on other parts of the food chain. The population of scavengers like vultures in western Nepal, for

instance, is known to be dwindling due to the use of Diclofenac to treat sick cattle. But farmers often use pesticides because of the economics of mass production and the low demand for fresh, organic food.

Considering these issues, the Basnet sisters have developed supply chains with farmers who produce organically outside of the valley. They have categorised their produce into ‘Organic by Default’ and ‘Organic’. The former category consists of fresh produce from Jumla. Being extremely remote and out of the reach of pesticides, Jumla, according to Kheti Bazaar, has always been organic. The category ‘Organic’ on the other hand consists of produce from fields that have stopped using pesticides for more than three years. Vegetables of the organic category come from Kathmandu, Chitwan, Palpa, Panchthar, and Dhankuta, according to Subecchya.

Kheti Bazaar will soon be providing seasonal vegetables (brinjal, lady finger and cucumber for this season), spices (turmeric, coriander, cumin, and chilli powder), honey, tea from east Nepal, and additional products such as shopping bags made of reused bedsheets, table mats, and newspapers. The retail store aims to cater to households in Kathmandu as well as the expatriate community, and though its products come at a 25 per cent premium, the Basnet sisters are confident people will pay for quality.

Kheti Bazaar will be launched on 1 September. www.khetibazaar.com
See also ‘Organic growth’, #412



VINTAGE RIDES: Owner of a 1930s BSA Bantam, Mohan Gurung, shows off at the Classic Motorbike Exhibition at Electric Pagoda, Thamel on Saturday. More than 40 bikes were part of the exhibition.



DANCING QUEEN: A Miss Nepal 2010 contestant performs during the Miss Nepal Talent round at the Russian Cultural Centre on Friday.



PRETTY MAIDS IN A ROW: Locals dress in traditional Newari attire on Wednesday to celebrate Gai Jatra at Basantapur Darbar Square.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

This week, weather wise, the tables were turned. After weeks of the monsoon operating in low gear, the majority of the country's rain-gauges recorded excess rainfall, and there were widespread floods and landslides. The Valley's station alone recorded 40 per cent excess rainfall. The latest satellite images reveal that fresh clouds continue to reach western Nepal directly from the charged Arabian arm of the monsoon. Monsoon pulses are also recharging from the Bay of Bengal arm, and will supply moisture to the east. This is the 'active monsoon', with the low-pressure Inter Tropical Convergence Zone shifting to the Himalaya, pulling the moisture-laden clouds up to the hills. Expect more light and continuous rain through this week with brief sunny intervals.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
26-19	27-20	29-21

Against the flow



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

The van veered off onto a gravelly trail and stopped short. We disembarked into bright sunshine, and wondered if the muggy air meant we'd be treated to a monsoonal downpour. Happily, the clouds were huddled into the lush green hills behind us. We made our way down to the river bank, where a whole crowd of fellow-rafters had congregated, and were milling about chatting, laughing, taking photos, and splashing water on the waiting rafts. The artificiality of the grey inflated rubber rafts, lying indolent like walruses on a rocky shore, contrasted with the pristine pastoral of the river winding down south.

If it wasn't quite the raging serpent white-water rafters associate with their idea of a good time, all present seemed impressed by the clarity of the waters they were about to ride. It took some time for the organisers to calm their spirits enough to get them to hold hands and file into the water, to 'listen to the river'.

As we stepped into the waters and ferried each other across, a group of monks on the other side broke into a dirge-like melody, with horns and drums. The solemn atmosphere was riven with the laughter of those watching each other stumble in the surprisingly strong current; if not for the hands holding them up, some might have been knocked off their feet and swept a few paces downstream. Centred on my own passage, I paused to listen to the gurgle of the water I could feel cooling my skin. The clouds had massed above us now, and the

mercury had dropped.

Soon, our circle stretched out across the river and onto the banks. Someone started it – then all broke rank in an infectious flurry of splash-your-neighbour. Within seconds, we were all soaked to the skin

Reclaiming something of our pastoral past need not be a foolish dream

and raring to get into the rafts. An hour's frenetic rowing and seven kilometres later, we tumbled out the rafts, exhausted, wondering where the packets of reviving Glucose-D were when you really needed them. But our day was done. It was back to the city: back to the grime and social mime of the capital. How many of us remember that day now?

Did I ever think I would be soaked in Bagmati water? Not in my lifetime; if this wasn't explicitly articulated by all those around me, they were surely making the most of it, in the most wonderfully juvenile manner. My friends may have been the last children to have swum in the clear waters of the Bagmati and Bishnumati downtown. We discovered that day was that this was still possible, albeit not far from where the river drops down the Shivapuri massif and hits the valley floor on the first leg of its journey south. What if this were possible throughout the length of the river, in all seasons?

You may sneer at such a suggestion, or shake your head sadly, saying things have gone too far for us to dream of the past. For most of the denizens of the Kathmandu Valley, the Bagmati is little more than a channel for sewage outside of the monsoon. But if the Bagmati River Festival doesn't pretend to have all the answers, at least it has shown some of us what the river was and still is in some parts. For the boys frolicking naked in the water downstream of Sundarijal, hemmed in by verdant paddy fields, little has changed.

In the mid-nineteenth century, untreated sewage in the River Thames led to The Great Stink, and the House of Commons even considered relocating. Granted, the greater stink may be inside the Nepali Parliament, but it's remarkable how predictably we are following the West in all its industrial follies. New, separate sewers solved the problem for London, and in more recent times the Thames has become renowned for the turnaround it has achieved. If it was possible for the British to turn back the clock in the face of continuing growth – metropolitan London hosts around 13 million souls across an area of 1,706 square kilometres – then why can't we? 🇳🇵

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THE PROBLEM

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SRIJANA ACHARYA

Same road

SRIJANA ACHARYA in BARDIYA

Their husbands were taken from them by opposing sides during the conflict, but they journey in pain together

Laxmi Devi Khadka’s husband, Dil Bahadur, was disappeared by the Maoists in 2003. Devisara Wali’s husband, Suresh, was last seen in the district police office in Bardiya eight years ago.

Under normal circumstances, Laxmi and Devisara would hardly be able to get along. But the two are not just friends, they work together as activists campaigning on behalf of the families of the disappeareds.

“We may have been victimised by different groups but the pain is still the same,” Devisara says, recalling how her husband and father-in-law were both detained by the police. Her father-in-law was released four days later, but Suresh was never heard from again.

Laxmi recalls her own ordeal in a monotone drained of all emotion. “It was dark when the Maoists came and took my husband away,” she says. “They said they would send him back in 15 minutes, but we never saw him again.”

Of all the districts in Nepal, Bardiya recorded the largest number of disappeareds during the war. Nearly five years after the end of the conflict, Dil Bahadur Khadka and Suresh Wali are among the 172 people still listed as missing from Bardiya.

Over the years, the search for their husbands has brought Laxmi and Devisara close together, and the two now work as a team to help other families of the disappeared. Along with 200 other men and women, they have been advocating for the rights of war victims and families of the disappeared under the Committee for Conflict Affected People in Bardiya.

Laxmi has gone to every Maoist leader, political party, and human rights group in her district. Padam Rijal ‘Navin’, the known Maoist kidnapper of Laxmi’s husband, threatened to bomb her house and take away her son too, if she continued the search.

Laxmi says she never had big dreams, all she ever wanted was to live in peace. “I can’t believe he is dead until I see his body,” she says. “I keep searching for his face in the crowd. At night when the dogs bark, I still get up to see if it’s him.”

Devisara still keeps all her husband’s

UNITED BY LOSS: The husbands of Laxmi Devi Khadka and Devisara Wali were disappeared by opposing sides during the war, but they now work together in Bardiya to help the families of other people who are still missing.

clothes and belongings in the hope that he will return one day. “Every time I see a new number calling my mobile, I think it might be him,” she says.

Both their families are entitled to compensation, but it has taken years for them to get Rs 100,000 from the government. Raising children has been difficult for both families. Laxmi’s son was 10 when his father went missing, and is now not eligible for free education. Devisara’s two daughters could not get government scholarships because they had also crossed the age limit.

Both families are also in a legal limbo. Devisara’s daughters don’t have citizenship certificates because of the absence of the father the state itself disappeared. Laxmi’s children got citizenship papers only after much pressure from human rights groups.

The women also face problems in claiming their husbands’ share of family property. Devisara’s in-laws have refused to give anything either to her or her daughters. They live in a separate section of the same house.

“No amount of compensation will make up for our loss, but we are at least entitled to know where our husbands are,” Devisara says. Two weeks after Dil Bahadur disappeared, a local paper in Nepalganj reported that he had been executed. But Laxmi never got any official confirmation.

Laxmi and Devisara have waited for the sake of the children, but their patience is running out. Laxmi’s younger son constantly talks about killing the man responsible for his father’s disappearance, whom he sees walking around freely in the village every day.

Says Devisara: “Those who took away our husbands are walking free and they are threatening to kill us if we search for answers.”

Stolen lives

The Disappearances Commission should ensure justice, not obstruct it



COMMENT
Ram Kumar Bhandari

Maiya Basnet’s husband was a school teacher in Lamjung. She was pregnant when he disappeared during the conflict in 1999. Maiya was left to fend for nine dependents in addition to bearing society’s stigma towards single mothers. No one from the community stepped forward to help Maiya cope, and some even sought to label her politically.

It has now been 11 years, but it is still a struggle. Maiya has talked with some city-based human rights groups, but has been given the brush-off so often she doesn’t go to them anymore to seek help for the health and education needs of her children.

Nearly five years after the end of the war, it is becoming apparent that discussing the civil and political rights of victims of the conflict is pointless without first addressing their socio-economic vulnerability.

Nepal’s ‘peace industry’, dominated by big donors and Kathmandu-based NGOs, often ignores the real needs of families of the victims. The parties make it worse by exploiting their suffering for their own ends. The bill in parliament on the setting up of the Disappearances Commission has taken four years of consultations, but the families of the disappeared are dissatisfied with provisions in the draft that deal with:

- *Definition of Missing:* The definition of ‘disappearances’ does not encompass missing persons who were not forcefully made to disappear. The law should entitle all families of those missing as a result of the conflict access to the Commission and the prerogatives granted.
- *Statute of Limitations:* The families demand the elimination of provisions that would deny justice where claims are not made within six months of the initiation of the Disappearances Commission.
- *Independence of the Commissions of Inquiry:* Further measures are required to ensure the independence of the commissions, including public hearings to approve nominated members based on competence, impartiality, and independence, not political affiliation.
- *Role of the Attorney General :* Investigations and prosecutions should be made obligatory and be carried out in an independent and impartial manner, avoiding the possibility that current provisions for government discretion can divert such cases or that the Attorney General will fail to provide reasons if prosecutions are not initiated.
- *Victim and Witness Protection:* More specific measures are needed for independent and competent victim and witness protection, including against perpetrators who may exploit vague amnesty and reconciliation provisions by pressurising victims to agree to them.
- *Protection of Evidence:* Specific measures are needed to ensure the protection of findings, particularly evidence, with mechanisms for safe archiving.
- *Public Reporting and Notifying Families.* Mandatory and time-bound public disclosure of findings are demanded, and the families should be notified of all pertinent details related to the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.
- *Exhumation and Mortal Remains:* The Commission has the authority to order exhumation, and should do so systematically with the purpose of clarifying the circumstances of death. This information must be relayed to the families, and where possible mortal remains must be handed over to them.

The Disappearances Bill and the Truth and Reconciliation Bills have been prepared without adequate consultation with relatives of the victims. There is little awareness among victims of the scope and nature of these bills, including the meaning of key concepts including truth, justice, reparations, reconciliation, and amnesty.

The definition of ‘victim’ is not clearly understood or applied consistently either, and often reeks of political patronage. Under Nepal’s international obligations, the state is duty-bound to provide a remedy without delay. Any delay of a judicial remedy for serious crimes is a denial of justice.

We, the families of the victims, are concerned that as in many other instances globally, the commission will obstruct rather than create conditions for justice. We are also concerned that the full truth will not be publicly disclosed, and that reparations will not be effectively implemented in order to avoid future conflict and a repetition of these violations.

To ensure hope for the future and a durable peace, an independent and powerful commission that respects victims’ voices and addresses their needs is a must. Until the truth is uncovered and their needs are addressed, real peace is impossible. 🇳🇵

Ram Kumar Bhandari, whose father was disappeared in 2001, is a human rights activist and chair of the National Network of Families of Disappeared and Missing (NEFAD)

The disappeared

and the disquiet of those left behind

On the International Day of the Disappeared, 31 August, we should remember the personal stories behind the statistics

PICS: NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI
TEXT: ROBERT GODDEN

You do not have to talk with Purnimaya Lama for long to understand why she campaigns with such determination to uncover the truth about the abduction of her husband, Arjun. It's easy to sympathise with her frustration and anger at the stalled police investigation. And to hear her talk of the plans she and Arjun had for the future raises the hope that reparations could help her family build a better life in years to come.

Too often those of us working on conflict-related disappearances here in Nepal fail to focus on these personal stories, getting lost in human rights terminology that can feel clinical. Our focus is understandably on documentation for police investigations, prosecutions in courts, and commissions of inquiry. But in much of our reporting we dilute what it means to have lost a loved one. Without their voices, how can we empathise with them, whose lives could so easily have been ours?

The 2005 abduction of Purnimaya Lama's husband, Arjun, has been covered in the media. Accounts tell of how Maoist cadres took Arjun while he was attending a ceremony to celebrate his election as president of a local

school in Kavre district. The case has become notorious because UCPN(M) CA member Agni Sapkota was named in the First Information Report filed. But police have failed to give an adequate explanation of why they are yet to arrest Sapkota or any of the others accused.

Purnimaya is not alone in losing a loved one to either side during the conflict. There are thousands of similar stories across Nepal. To add insult to injury, the police have failed to bring any of those accused before a court, the Nepal Army actively blocks investigations, and political leaders fail to deliver on promises committed to.

The International Day of the Disappeared is a reminder that the pursuit of peace means not only the end of grave human rights abuses but also peace for those left behind. That requires delivering on their individual needs for truth, justice and reparations. 🇳🇵

Visit www.nepalitimes.com for a new Amnesty International video on Purnimaya's story. Robert Godden is Asia-Pacific Campaign Coordinator for Amnesty International.

Every few months, Purnimaya visits the family home in Dapcha, which is now locked up as she lives in Kathmandu with her children. Though Purnimaya's campaign for truth and justice has been met by threats from Maoist party cadres, she says she would like to return to live in the village some day.

Purnimaya visits the newly appointed Kavre CDO to introduce herself and brief him on her husband's pending case. Earlier the same day, she visited the office of the Kavre DSP to follow up on paperwork related to the exhumation of her husband's body. She was told to go to the human rights cell at police headquarters. Purnimaya has spent five years going from one office to another to push for justice and reparations.





NHUCCHE MAN DANGOL

Who were they?

Suraj Kunwan in *Kantipur*, 26 August

कान्तिपुर

Five of the fourteen killed in Tuesday's air crash were Nepalis:

Pemba Sherpa: He had been running a shop in Namche Bajar, while his wife and two children live in Jorpati, Kathmandu. He was excited about getting to fly to Lukla since his shop had been closed for the last month and a half. He used to purchase merchandise from Thamel and Boudha. While he had already transported some goods to Lukla he had eight more containers of goods to take. Pemba's relatives received his remains on Wednesday and performed the last rites at Teku. His wife was unconscious throughout.

Prakash Amgai: Hailing from Bungkot of Gorkha district, Prakash was out to guide four American trekkers to Everest base camp for two weeks. He stayed at a rented home in Naya Bajar. Before he took off, he had told his bother Nanda Lal to take his wife and two kids to the temple to tie on holy threads. The news of the crash reached them as they returned from the temple. Nanda Lal went to Teaching Hospital to collect his brother's remains.

Temba Norbu Sherpa: After waiting at the airport for six mornings, 29-year-old Temba finally got to catch a flight on the seventh day. The seven Japanese tourists he was assisting had tickets for a different flight and stayed back in Kathmandu. Temba lived in Hattigauda with his wife Lakpa Kipa and three kids. He used to carry tents, ropes and food supplies beyond base camp but this time he had been given the responsibility of managing hotels, porters and supplies.

Ishwor Risal: A resident of Dhading, Ishwor was bound to Lukla for a 15-day trip with Jeremy Taylor from Ireland. He had plans to return and treat his father, who is suffering from typhoid. Ishwor intended to improve his village school with help from foreigners. His 22-year-old wife heard the news of the crash as their two children were tying holy threads on their wrists. His sister and younger brother lost consciousness upon hearing the news. The last rites were performed by relatives.

Ashwari Khaling Rai: Twenty-three year old Ashwari had left her child in her parent's care in Solukhumbu and come to Kathmandu for work five months ago. She had been jobless for three weeks after quitting her work at a Sherpa's home in Kapan. When her parents called her to help in farming, she was happy to go back and be reunited with her son. Her relatives reached Teaching Hospital only late Wednesday and had nothing but some clothes belonging to Ashwari to take home.

Suicide in Lebanon

Hom Karki in *Kantipur*, 8 August

कान्तिपुर

Fifteen Nepali women who had gone to Lebanon as domestic maids committed suicide in the past year. They were aged between 20 to 30 years. "Nepali women are increasingly committing suicide, unable to bear the physical, mental and sexual abuse by their employers," said Dipendra Upreti, volunteer at the Nepali Council in Lebanon. "According to police reports, the women killed themselves by shooting, hanging, or jumping from buildings," he said, adding that information was hard to come by.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not inquired about the incidents, nor has it written letters to the Nepali Consulate for reparation. "Because of this inaction, it's difficult to find out what actually happened," Upreti said. Complaints to the consulate about low pay, excessive workload, and abuse by employers, however, are common.

The government imposed a ban last January on sending housemaids to Lebanon after it was deemed unsafe for Nepali women. However, manpower agencies have been sending more than 20 women every day from Tribhuvan airport, in collusion with the authorities.

There are more than 18,000 Nepali workers in Lebanon, of which 95 per cent are women. Human Rights Watch says that 95 foreign housemaids committed suicide in Lebanon between January 2007 and October 2008 alone. "According to 2010 data, every week one housemaid kills herself in Lebanon," said Jeff Chaufield, a local journalist.

Meanwhile, five women have returned to Nepal with children born after being forced into sex with their Lebanese employers. "We have rescued many women with children in the last four months, and one woman is in hospital with her child," said Upreti.

Slipping into security

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 20 August

कान्तिपुर

With the announcement of fresh recruitment in the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, National Department of Investigation and Nepal Army, there have been reports about illegitimate dealings, as in the past. Nepal Police has even issued a notice cautioning the public not to resort to brokers.

The 300,000 Nepali youths who are aspiring to join these forces cannot be sure of impartial selection, and many seek the patronage of politicians or pay money to brokers rather than believing in their capabilities. When everything is fixed behind the scenes, the selection process becomes a mere formality.

No authority has come forward to monitor and check rampant fraud. In fact, officials at the monitoring authority have been found to have recommended their own people for different posts. Security chiefs and ministers try to please the ministers and high officials by obeying orders, and



BIKRAM RAI

their statements regarding selection appear to be made simply to cushion themselves from pressure.

Frustration results, given increasing unemployment, if selection is unfair. But if one is selected after bribing someone, who is that person accountable to? Will he work for the institution or reap the returns of his investment? The security organisations therefore fail right from the beginning. A separate commission is needed for recruitment.

Hanging on

Interview with ex-crown prince, Paras Shah, in *Nagarik*, 25 August

नागरिक

How do you view the current political situation?
There are foreign interests at work in Nepal, which have a big role in what is happening at present.

Was foreign intervention behind the fall of the monarchy?
Definitely.

That means people did not want to see the end of the monarchy?
I think Nepali society was totally dragged to one side at that time. People wanted change but they did not know how and in what form they wanted it to come.

Were there similar interventions when the monarchy existed?
Foreign activities increased after 1990, when NGOS and INGOs entered Nepal. I have heard there are 4,000 VDCs in Nepal but more than 165,000 NGOs. All these are run by foreigners and work for their interest. Everyone understands this.

There are talks about reviving the monarchy. Do you think it is possible?
That depends upon the people. If they want, anything is possible. My father renounced the throne for the sake of the people. In the past we have had instances where the monarchy was reinstated through public demand. People's faith in the monarchy has been rekindled but that is due to the circumstances, not because of us. But I think the monarchy should update itself with the changing times.

Do you see yourself as a potential king if the monarchy is restored?
I have already said I have no personal ambitions. But if the country needs us, we are ready to do anything.

It's said that you had relations with the Maoists during the war and even now.
I can't say what happened during the war, but can't a citizen meet a former prime minister? If you say I can't, then I will not meet him (laughs).

You seem to be on a mission to bring back the monarchy. Are the people supporting you?
Let's not say it is a mission but a necessity. We have stepped in seeing the need.



“They’ll make up in a jiffy. It’s not like they’re forming a consensus government!”

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 22 August

Between extremism and opportunism

Saroj Dahal in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 17-31 August

The battle raging between *Lalrakchyak* monthly (which supports Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal) and the *Samayabadha* bimonthly (which supports Mohan Baidya) clearly points to mounting internal tension within the party. Though the comments seem to pit Dahal and Baidya against each other, there is another common target here: Vice Chairman Baburam Bhattarai. Factionist politics in the UCPN (Maoist) has led leaders to brand each other extremist, opportunist and rightist, while the country is held hostage

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

to their infighting. Leaders are still divided over whether to support the constituent assembly or to go for a revolution to establish a people's republic. Bhattarai wants to pursue the first path as was decided in the 12-point understanding and so is criticised by the hardliners in the party for being rightist. Baidya sees the current change as meaningless and wants to revert to the extreme leftism of the past. In between them is Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who swings between both lines, using the conflict between the two factions to his strategic advantage. A Central Committee member close to the Baidya group says that even

though Dahal favours Baidya during decision making, he supports the 'rightists' while implementing policy. Both Baidya and Bhattarai are equally frustrated by the opportunism of Dahal. They are planning to bring out written proposals based on their respective lines at the party meeting scheduled for 19 August. They have reached the conclusion that a party convention is inevitable. A politburo member close to Bhattarai says, "One person reigning for 20 years in the name of communist

centralisation has led to wrong practices in the party." Dahal has come under fire in his own party for using cheap tactics like buying MPs and accepting the idea of a cultural king in order to become prime minister. Vice Chairman Baidya writes in a party publication, "We are basically revolutionary and on the right track but are facing serious philosophical problems. Our principles say one thing but our practices are quite the opposite. Our ideals do not match our actions."

Three-way split

Maoist adviser Nagendrajung Peter in *Nagarik*, 23 August

नागरिक

The UCPN-M goes into its Central Committee meeting battered by outside pressure and internal fissures. There are three factions, three tendencies and three mindsets within the party, and these differences are now in the public domain. Internal impunity is on the rise, and the party is in serious danger of unravelling. This is why the

meeting must take some risky decisions. The party can either remain in its current comfort zone or take a gamble. But relations between the top leaders are strained, and they regard each other with suspicion. The party's slogans of the liberation of the oppressed and strengthening nationalism have turned into ultra-ethnicism and territorialism. Religious extremism is being stoked. The party's strength was its struggle on behalf of the oppressed, but this became counterproductive and today the

slogans have been hijacked by revenge, ambition, and identity politics. The rank and file is demoralised, and the leadership is torn by the clash of egos in the name of ideological differences. The party took an uncharted path by going along with the 12-point agreement. But when the party achieved unexpectedly good results in the CA elections, it was besieged from

without. Within, the party became victim to ambition, NGO-ism, consumerism and nepotism. Criminals found shelter in the party's internal impunity. The party has been forced to tolerate diplomatic pressure and interference. The southern and northern neighbours are worried about their own internal security. South Block has a colonial mindset. We need to analyse the geopolitical

implications. The problems have become complex. There are no ready-made solutions. But the party needs to look at a new effort, a new direction and a new policy to get out of the present crisis. Politics is about finding solutions and removing obstacles. The party should sometimes present itself as amenable to reform, but other times it will need to put its extremist left foot forward.



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Intakes
SEP/OCT/JAN/APRIL

Definitely indefinite

The Ass has an idea. And it's a brilliant one, if I may say so myself. Lately there has been a hungama about the breeding centre to export lab monkeys, which were set free in Shivapuri National Park. Many died. This is cruel and inhuman, and we should re-legalise the trade. Only this time, **let's keep the monkeys, and export the politicians.**

It's definite there will be indefinite elections. But shut up already, those of you whining on and on about the tripartite netas holding the country hostage with their moronic behaviour. I am sick and tired of hearing you complaining. Let's face it, it's not at all original anymore to grumble about politicians. Besides, you think it's only in Nepal? Look at the Ozzies - they had an election a week ago and still don't have a new prime minister. What Nepal does today, the world does tomorrow.

With the sudden resurgence of ex-royals appearing at temples and giving impromptu interviews, it does look like someone somewhere is pulling

the strings to bring back a 'cultural' (read Hindu) monarchy. If the Hindutva Brigade is in cahoots with the Red Brigade, then it may happen before long. Didn't Mao ally himself with Chiang Kai Shek against the Japanese?

There is one small problem: the Baddies don't believe in God. But considering how pragmatic the Comrades are about restoring the monarchy it's just a small extra step to accept the existence of a divine being, after all they are already used to cult worshipping **His Holiness the Chairman.** And seeing how many of our leaders have 'Ram' in their names (Ram Chandra Poudel, Ram Baran Yadav, Babu Ram Bhattarai, Ram Bahadur Thapa and even Pushpa Kamal's wife's name is Sita) it was anyway anachronistic to be declaring Nepal secular.

What is holding things back is the aversion of kingji to any overt collaboration with the Mau Mau. Which is probably why he is angling for another medical diplomacy trip to India to clarify matters with the powers that be, during which he also wants to drop in on Bhai Bua, who is undergoing treatment.



Now that **Julia Roberts has converted to Hinduism**, we shouldn't bar her from entering Pashupati should she decide to come to Nepal. She can join all the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis who are inside already because they 'look Hindu'.

The Chinese agenda of trying to get our Reds to work together is a non-starter considering how far apart the Maos and Eh-maleys are; or even Oily and Jhallu seem to be poles apart. So while Lainchaur is trying to keep our

netas at each other's throats, Naxal is trying to get them to work together.

Some foreign embassies in Kathmandu are feeling a bit left out because they don't get the attention the Indians, Chinese and Euros get in shaping the destiny of our great nation. The Japanese are one of our biggest donators and are building a 9.1 km superhighway to Bhaktapur, but don't have a proportionate say in our internal affairs. The ex-Soviets who once built cigarette factories, sugar mills and educated thousands of

Nepali engineers and doctors are now nowhere in the picture. But with its new oil wealth, international clout and the Putin Doctrine, the Russians have sent feelers asking the Nepal govt where they can meddle. How about getting the Russian Space Program to agree to take RCP and PKD on as trainee cosmonauts and blast them off into orbit?

One guy who doesn't seem to have a care in the world is Makunay, who is so cocksure the elections in parliament are going nowhere he is planning to fly off to New York in mid-Sept to address the UN General Assembly. Don't forget to take Suji along, and let's hope both of you will be sent back from JFK because you don't have machine readable passports.

The **Nepal Electrocutation Authority** is thinking of hiking power tariffs. This merits this week's 'Only In Nepal Award'. The nationwide electricity theft rate is at 40 per cent. Which means by jacking up the rates, NEA is punishing honest customers who are paying for power, and letting the crooks go scot free. Jai Nepal.



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