

NEPALI Times

#518

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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Lifeline

Most people are so engrossed in the day-to-day that they hardly notice the lines clogging up the pavements of the capital. Unless they are in them themselves. Add up the queues for army recruitment, Korean language tests, passports, and the airport, however, and you get a composite picture of the desperation Nepali youth face when it comes to

making a living. For every man or woman who hopes to get into the army, police or the APF, there are thousands more who see no way out but to get out.

And there are plenty who take advantage of the most disadvantaged members of our society. It goes all the way from the brokers who step up to the line and promise to facilitate whatever it is you are looking for

to the politicians who brazenly pocket the life savings of those less fortunate than them. The most depressing aspect of this is how some Nepalis abroad are doing the same. The recent case of 108 Nepalis rescued from Libya is not simply about cruel, exploitative foreign employers and states; it illustrates how Nepalis are fleeing Nepalis, home and abroad.

PAINFULLY EMPLOYED: Youths queue up for army recruitment, Korean language tests, and passports in the capital



p13

Trafficker Tej: How one man gambled with the lives of hundreds of Nepali migrant workers

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THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD

Things fall apart when the centre doesn't hold. The prolonged political uncertainty in Kathmandu is having an impact across all sectors of the economy, and in the everyday lives of citizens.

The long queues for jobs in the army or police, the teeming passport seekers, the throngs at Korean language test centres and at the departure gate at the airport all indicate heightened public exasperation and disenchantment.

Politicians, whose inability to agree on forming a stable new government are the cause of all this, ignore this mass disaffection at their own peril. Someday they will reap the whirlwind. The only political forces that benefit are those that thrive on chaos and anarchy.

Even if it is only for their own self-preservation and well-being, the democratic parties that believe in non-violent change and pluralism should work together and curb short-term greed and ambition. If they don't stop fighting now, there will be nothing to fight over.

History is replete with example of demagogues and

dictators who were propelled to power not by their ruthlessness, but by the fecklessness of moderate adherents of an open society, whose greed blinded them from seeing what was coming.

There has always been mismanagement in Nepal. We have come to take it as a given that governments will be ineffective and corrupt. Budgets, if passed, are seldom spent. Garbage has been piling up on Kathmandu streets for decades, especially since 1990. State-run corporations have all been bled dry. There have always been kleptocrats in the bureaucracy, and there has always been dacoity in politics. But never has the level of malgovernance, corruption and apathy among our rulers been as visible and blatant as it is today.

The rubbish on the streets is symptomatic of the rot. The inability of the state to cope indicates the level of statelessness. Floods are ravaging the land from Mahakali to Mai Khola, but there hasn't been a coordinated state response. A CDO inspecting floods from a helicopter in Kanchanpur makes the news, not the fact that boulder

mafias were quarrying the flood-control embankment.

In this issue we have an investigative report on how Nepali workers are not just being exploited, but are bought and sold like slaves. The victims are Nepali, the traffickers are Nepali. There is no point blaming the Libyans or the Macau authorities for this modern-day form of slavery in which the state is complicit.

This is what happens when society and the nation are without leadership. Crooks of all hues crawl out from holes in the ground to pick at the bones of what is left.

It is when the state goes into freefall that we have to be most vigilant to prevent the rise of strong-arm dictators who promise to set things right, and restore order. If that does happen, the blame will then fall squarely on the leaders who today call themselves 'democratic'.

KQ

Nitty-gritty politicking



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The Maoist-Madhes dynamic is back in the news. Political circles are rife with speculation that the two MJF constituents could shift to the Maoist camp in the next round of voting. This has been reinforced by Pushpa Kamal Dahal's statement that 5 September will be decisive, his meetings with both Upendra Yadav and Bijay Gachchadar, and their subsequent efforts to convince other front constituents to play a more 'decisive role'.

It is difficult to judge whether both the Madhesi parties – with all their members – will be willing to break the front and vote for the Maoists. But the speculation underlines once again the fact that the dynamic between these two forces is the big unpredictable variable in Nepali politics.

There appear to be three causes for the renewed restlessness in the Madhesi camp.

Upendra Yadav's heart is with the Maoists, and he only

reluctantly agreed to stay neutral because of Indian pressure and fear of another split in the party. Yadav sees the other three Madhesi parties in the front as upstarts who are benefitting from his movement. His past Maoist background is coupled with the strong conviction that only a tactical alliance with them can win the Madhes any rights, since the Maoists have the least stake in the present structure and are willing to reform it.

The Maoist-Madhes dynamic may yet gel to give Nepal a prime minister next week

Yadav told an interlocutor last year, "Look, just let me be with the Maoists till we have federalism. The NC and UML will never give us that. Once we have our own state, we will fight the Maoists." Add to this the temptation of becoming deputy prime minister and regaining his position as foreign minister.

Bijay Gachchadar, schooled in the GP Koirala brand of politics,

has an instinctive understanding of where power resides in any context. Dahal has been trying to tap into that, by offering him DPM-ship and the home ministry. Gachchadar seems to realise he can extract the most while the bigger three parties are fighting. Despite his bluster about Maoist 'state capture', he is not worried for he knows that the Maoists can do little to challenge him in his home districts, which gives him enough space to

manoeuvre in the capital.

Gachchadar also appears confident that while India may be upset temporarily if he moves, it has limited options and he can mend the relationship. But these are all last-minute decisions. He could well be cozying up to the Maoists to increase his bargaining position, and extract more from the other side.

The third variable is the

disillusionment among the rank and file Madhesi party MPs. Many of them feel they are just being used as pawns in larger games and want to assert themselves. Add to this the desire among many from the Madhes to be seen as acting independent of India – they are sick of the taunts from other MPs and constituents that Delhi decides their fate.

There are widespread rumours about how top leaders were given some money to remain neutral, but this never trickled down to the MPs. Those who were not ministers in the last government see an opportunity now, and feel there will be more cabinet berths on offer since both the NC and UML could stay out of a government led by the Maoists. Many of them also dislike the established parliamentary parties; note the royalist background of some of the 11 MPs who crossed the floor in the third round. With the Maoists not really in a position to challenge these politicians on the ground back in the Tarai, their fear of the former rebels is diminished.

There is of course another school within these parties, and in the broader Madhesi front.

They point out that the Madhes movement is essentially an anti-Maoist movement and allying with them could erode their base, which NC could capitalise on. Alternatively, others say that the Maoists could use the Madhesi parties to make inroads in the Tarai. Some leaders also argue that Dahal cannot be trusted one bit – he may become PM with their support, but the Madhesi parties will not be able to control him at all. And if the UML joins such an arrangement subsequently, their space will shrink further. But with the Indian enthusiasm to hold the Madhes back from supporting the Maoists flagging, these arguments are not supported by adequate hard power.

Irrespective of the result on Sunday, these seemingly mundane details are fascinating for they show how politics, at the end of the day, is not about broad principles. Instead, individual calculations, personal relations, money, and raw power are driving forces. Any alliance finally rests on the right combination of these factors. The Maoists and a section of the Madhes are trying to get that mix right. 🇳🇵

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

HIGH HOPES

Constitution or no constitution, Nepal is becoming Zimbabwe; Dahal will be Robert Mugabe ('Central concerns', Prashant Jha, #517). Once in power, no one will be able to dethrone Prachanda. He will be a lifetime President. The internal split in UCPN(M) is just a drama to fool the opponents; even with their differences, they have to stay together. Prachanda controls the Maoist treasury, which is very rich. Only poor parties break. You

cannot compare UCPN-Maoist with any communist party of the past.

Gole

CROSSING LINES

This is an amazing story of reconciliation and hope ('Same road', Srijana Acharya, #517). If these two women who should be trying to exact revenge for the disappearances of their husbands can work together why can't our stupid political leaders. I think I know the answer: there are no women among the political leadership,

which is made up of 100% bahun males.

KiranL

CASH FLOWS

Which India are you talking about ('Power to India', Ratna Sansar Shrestha, #517)? The state of India or Indian investors? You should know that there is no such thing as 'financing fatigue'. There is only looking around for the right time and right conditions for investments that give returns.

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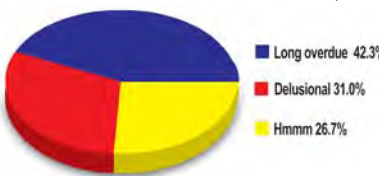


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Weekly Internet Poll # 518

Q. What do you make of Paras Shah's public comeback?

Total votes: 1,821



Weekly Internet Poll # 519. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. "Should I stay or should I go?" - UNMIN



Meddling in the media



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

The influence of the Indian Embassy in the internal affairs of Nepal has always been felt. Now it can be heard and seen as well. Clearly, Lainchaur does not believe in diplomatic niceties in exercising political control in a notionally independent nation.

The pressure exerted on the foreign ministry by the Indian diplomatic mission led to delay of the the Machine Readable Passport (MRP) deal. Though the printing contract was initially awarded to a company owned by the Government of India, the subsequent fiasco finally ended with the cancellation of that contract.

The verity of the accusations that former lawmaker Ram Kumar Sharma levelled against an Indian embassy official has not been established. But the perception is that Sharma may well have been threatened as alleged.

Now the tussle between Kantipur Group and Lainchaur has just got dirtier. In the first

part of the drama, the embassy persuaded Indian nationals heading businesses in Nepal to throttle the advertisement pipeline of Kantipur Publications. When this failed to have the desired effect, non-tariff barriers to trade were used to starve the publishing house of newsprint supply.

The third episode began with

was released.

The fundamental premise of these press releases is flawed. The Indian joint ventures are legal entities in Nepal. They are expected to approach law enforcement agencies if they have any complaints. The law does not offer them any special privileges just because they are Indian. They have crossed the limits of

It's not the Indian Embassy's job to impose a code of ethics on Nepali journalism

a terse embassy press release on 27 August charging the Nepali media with using slanderous coverage to elicit commercial advantage. The statement was not only undiplomatic and politically incorrect, but also insulting. Paid news is not unknown to the Indian media; the *Times of India* sells its loyalty openly to the highest bidders through what it calls 'private treaties'. Prominent media organisations were justified in demanding an apology from the Indian mission, particularly after a second and even more belligerent statement

decency by approaching a foreign embassy for what was essentially a difference of opinion or dispute between some Nepali advertisers and the national media.

Indeed, when approached with such grievances, the embassy should have recommended that the offended party either register complaints with the Press Council, the police, or the courts. The Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) could also have been asked to intervene. The NICCI did place a notice in newspapers calling for restraint on all sides on Wednesday, but it



was clearly a case of too little, too late.

Diplomats need to realise that Nepal-India ties are fraught with potential misunderstanding. India may not be the superpower it aspires to be yet, but it is a giant that India-locked Nepal can ill afford to ignore. This helplessness in the face of India's might has rankled every ruler in Kathmandu from the time of Chandra Shamsheer. Indian officialdom hasn't yet realised that with great power comes great responsibility, and playing upon the vulnerability of Nepalis is counterproductive.

It is not the responsibility of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to foist a code of ethics on Nepali journalists. But the Press Council is embroiled in a controversy with the Ministry of Communication, and is dysfunctional at present. Various other media forums probably realise that whatever is being reported about certain Indian-owned joint ventures may not be above board. But meddlesome statements from the Indian mission have made their task, of monitoring the activities of their colleagues, almost impossible.

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Hotel Echo's last minutes

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

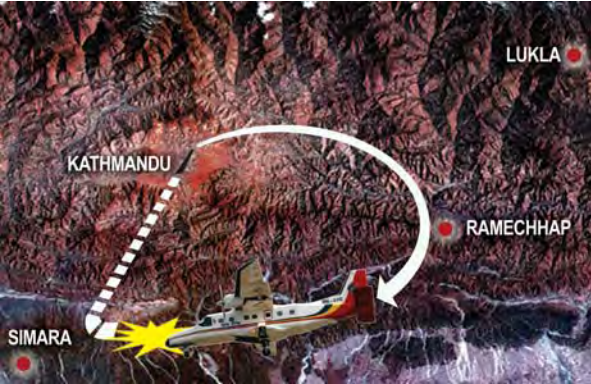
One week after the crash of the Agni Air Dornier, investigators finally located on Tuesday evening the Flight Data Recorder (black box) of the Kathmandu-Lukla flight. Once it is decoded in India, the mystery of exactly what caused the twin turboprop to nosedive into the ground will become clearer. Eleven passengers and three crew members died in the crash as the plane was trying to return to Kathmandu because of bad weather and equipment malfunction. From interviews with pilots and air traffic controllers, *Nepali Times* has pieced together the last 26 minutes of 'Hotel Echo' (9N-AHE) on 24 August.

0700: Word came that Lukla had good visibility for the first time in more than a week. Domestic airlines scrambled to get their planes in the air. There was a huge backlog of passengers and cargo at both Kathmandu and Lukla as the Khumbu geared up for the autumn trekking season.

0704: Although Kathmandu had heavy rain and poor visibility, Hotel Echo got clearance. Capt Lucky Shah, a veteran pilot with nearly 30 years of flying experience in Nepal and India, and co-pilot Sophia Singh, who had logged nearly 920 hours on Dorniers, were in the cockpit. Hotel Echo was first off the domestic apron with a Buddha Air Beech 1900D taxiing out for a Mt Everest sightseeing flight.

0710: After takeoff, the plane cancelled its standard instrument 'Igris-1 Alpha' departure, involving a climbing circle overhead, then headed north east.

0718: Hotel Echo was 35 miles out, approaching Ramechhap, when it decided to turn back because of reports that clouds were closing in on Lukla. It is not known whether the pilot had already detected problems in the cockpit.



0720: Hotel Echo acknowledged instructions to maintain an altitude of 12,000 ft and follow a 20-mile arc to the south to make an instrument approach to Kathmandu. A few minutes later, the captain indicated generator malfunction but did not declare an emergency.

0722: Capt Lucky was in touch with the crew of another Lukla-bound Agni crew on the ground in Kathmandu (9N-AIE), and said he was trying to switch to the backup generator, but was having difficulty. He then said he was trying to 'recycle' the battery pack. Generators supply power to cockpit instruments, and without it most avionics shut down and the pilot is flying without direction or distance-measuring equipment.

0725: Capt Lucky said he could see the terrain and would shoot for a 'visual approach' to Kathmandu. The alternate airport at Simara was closed due to bad weather. That was the last contact from Hotel Echo, and the plane dropped off the radar.

0736: At the plane's estimated time of arrival in Kathmandu, the radio remained quiet and there was no sign of the plane.

The crash crater at Shikharpur at 1,700ft altitude is 10m wide and 5m deep. It is clear the plane hit the ground at a steep, if not vertical, angle. The impact probably happened around 0726, a couple of minutes after the last communication and just two miles short of the right turn Capt Lucky was supposed to make to intercept the approach to runway 02 in Kathmandu.

Why did the plane spin out of control? Was the crew disoriented in whiteout conditions over rugged terrain? Did the engine flameout due to heavy rain? Was the pilot trying to break through cloud to remain visual and couldn't pull out? Was there fuel adulteration?

Only the contents of the black box can now tell us more, and perhaps offer lessons for the future about aircraft maintenance, rules for bad weather flight, and weak regulatory oversight. 🇳🇵

"I don't want

The latest airliner crash in Nepal has underlined the danger of monsoon flying in the Himalaya. *Nepali Times* gathered a panel of experts on Monday to discuss Nepal's appalling aviation safety record, and to suggest remedial measures.



Participants:
Capt PJ Shah: has been flying in Nepal since the age of the DC-3s and spent 40 years as a senior captain with Royal Nepal Airlines and then Emirates. His nephew, Capt Lucky Shah, was commanding the Agni Air flight that crashed on Monday.

Hemant Arjyal: engineer, aviation analyst and a member of the Nepal National Aviation Council.

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: airline entrepreneur who was with Yeti Airlines, Lumbini Airways and Skyline, and now Air Kasthamandap. His daughter, Sarah Sherpa, was on her first flight as an Agni Air flight attendant when she was killed in Monday's accident.

Binod Kumar Gautam: Deputy Director at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN).

Sanjiv Gautam: Head of Air Traffic Control Division, CAAN.

Hemant Arjyal: Statistically, if you look at the record since the first crash in the 1950s, you see that most accidents happened in the monsoon and most of them have been classified as Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT), which means a perfectly good plane in full control of the pilot hits a mountain in cloud. Therefore, human factors are involved. It could be that there is complacency about the dangers of mountain-flying in the monsoon season, over-confidence, and pressure on pilots to fly in bad weather from passengers or the company.

PJ Shah: The preliminary indications are that the Agni Air crash was not a CFIT, as the nature of the impact suggests the pilot was not in control of the aircraft. The crash should be a warning, but we seem not to have learnt from previous crashes. We need a complete structural

Legally free

The songs from 1974 AD's new album Aath Athara can be downloaded for free from www.cellroti.com. The concept of free licensed downloads is being tried out for the first time in the Nepali music industry, and is being supported by Cellroti and Ncell.

New branch

Bank of Kathmandu opened its 37th branch in Narayangadh. The newly opened branch will provide services to Sauraha and Mugling of Chitwan and also the area extending from Gaindakot to Pragatinagar of Nawalparasi district.

Chery queen



Miss Nepal 2010 Sadichha Shrestha received a Chery QQ3 as a gift from Bama Motors. The car was handed over to her after the announcement of the winners at the pageant.

Cycling cops

Varun Beverages Nepal and Devyani International handed over 10 bicycles to the Nepal Police.

Seven of the cycles were from Pepsi and three were from KFC.

Stepping up



CG Impex, the sole authorised distributor of LG Mobiles for Nepal, plans to introduce more than 10 premium models of LG handsets. According to first quarter 2010 statistics from research firm Gartner, LG is now the third highest seller of mobile handsets in the world.

Going online

On its 13th anniversary, Nawakantipur MP Cooperative Society introduced internet banking. Its clients can now log on to www.nawakantipur.com to check their account transactions, interest and tax details and also order chequebooks.

Upgraded Alba

Morang Auto works, the sole distributor of Yamaha bikes for Nepal, launched Alba YBR 110, an upgraded model of Alba. Buyers receive a Rs 5,000 discount for cash or through finance purchase for a limited period. Alba YBR 110 is available in red, black and a combo of both colours.



any more Sarahs to die”



DAMBER KRISHNA SHRESTHA

overhaul of the civil aviation regulatory environment.

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: I feel like I have come full circle in the airline business with the death of my daughter. Earlier, I had lost relatives in the Thai Airbus crash in 1992. Capt Lucky was one of the most experienced pilots around, a very safety-conscious commander. I went to the airport on Monday morning and asked why the Lukla flights were allowed to take off in such bad weather. It seems there was competition among the private operators to lift out the tourists stranded in Lukla. Someone has to say enough is enough. I don't want any more Sarahs to die.

PJ Shah: There are four components to the airline business. The manufacturer, the operators, the regulator, and the travelling public. Safety has to be the primary concern for all four, and the emphasis must shift to the passengers, without whom there would be no airline business. Unfortunately, in our country the most valuable sector, the passengers, are not treated well. Only VVIPs are given importance.

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: I agree, passenger safety has to be the ultimate goal. Even after this accident there will be a committee, there will be a report and no one will really know what happened or whether remedial measures were taken. I have been involved in the search and rescue of previous crashes. In two of them, planes crashed into mountains during the monsoon, but crew conflict was a factor. You have to respect the monsoon; maybe there should be a moratorium on flying to certain airports in the monsoon.

PJ Shah: You can't change the weather. I don't think you can stop flying in the monsoon; there are periods even in August when the weather is good. Nepal is a very difficult place to fly, but there have to be methods and proper procedures. We should also discourage fusion between the regulators and the operators. They should be separate, otherwise maintenance standards will be compromised.

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: The nature of Nepal's domestic airline business and tariffs is such that it is very difficult with current CAAN rules for an investor to sustain a fleet of multi-engine aircraft. Which is why I have always been a proponent of single-engine equipment for remote airports: they are easier and cheaper to maintain and operate. The other aspect is that even a small airline with only one aircraft is required to maintain an engineering department, whereas operators with the same aircraft should be able to pool maintenance and crew. But CAAN has no such mechanism.

Binod Kumar Gautam: I think we are a long way from pooling engineering departments. Two airlines with the same Jetstream or Beechcraft equipment don't even help each other out with engine or landing gear spares.

PJ Shah: There is no point imposing more rules, we have the world's best regulations, but let's face it, there is a problem with implementing them. There is a 'who cares' attitude among airline staff. There is a culture to compromise by cutting corners on safety matters.

Hemant Arjyal: If there is a crash every monsoon, you have to plan accordingly, and learn from the previous years. When can Air Traffic Control clear a plane for takeoff, what is the trend at the destination airport? We have to maintain minimum equipment and provide for air crew training. If there is a pattern of crashes and we know the causes, we have to be prepared.

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: CAAN has to do something

about search and rescue coordination. It was chaos at the airport on Monday morning.

Sanjiv Gautam: We have a search and rescue unit as per ICAO requirements, it comes into operation only when something happens. It involves the army, police and civil police. What we need is more communication equipment, maps, charts, procedures, an MoU with the army in a permanent centre at TIA. If most accidents happen in the monsoon, we need rules on visibility, established norms for monsoon flying, and better coordination among pilots, Air Traffic Control and airlines. There has to be a balance between service and safety: if we insist on safety alone, the airlines will go bankrupt.

Binod Kumar Gautam: They say the history of aviation is written in blood, and in Nepal we have to address the human factor since this is the cause in most crashes. Pilots go through three phases: first they feel invincible, then with experience they think they know everything and in the third phase they think "it will happen to someone else, not me". Cockpit dynamics and bureaucratic and peer pressure to fly in bad weather are important issues. We have a confidential reporting system now that has already yielded results.

Sanjiv Gautam: Accidents happen and we try to look for someone to blame. But the cause is always a combination of factors. There is always risk, the question is can we keep the risk at a tolerable level, minimise it, and examine and eliminate the potential contributing factors?

PJ Shah: If most accidents are human error, we have to address the what, when, where, how and why, and plan accordingly.

Binod Kumar Gautam: Our main constraints at CAAN are insufficient technical manpower for maintenance inspections and remuneration of staff. We follow ICAO procedures, but just because an aircraft has passed our certification doesn't absolve the operator from responsibility. Financial regulations for the import of spares also need to be revamped. You have to wait three days to open a Letter of Credit (LC) for an urgently needed spare part. How do you keep the plane flying in that time?

Dorji Tsering Sherpa: The hassles in getting permits and LCs for spares need to be removed. Also, the process for visas and work permits for expat personnel need to be streamlined. Over-regulation is no regulation.

Hemant Arjyal: Safety has to be a culture, not a requirement. But this can't happen overnight.

If the cap fits



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Two weeks ago, this column argued that the central bank had no business capping the salaries and benefits of CEOs of private commercial banks. Today, it will explain what Nepal Rastra Bank can do to use market forces to influence the size of CEO salaries.

Specifically, the central bank should take a broad view of the talent pool that is potentially available to run the growing number of Nepali commercial banks. This means being open to bank boards hiring competent CEOs from outside Nepal as well as from outside the incestuous milieu of the Nepali commercial banking sector.

Doing so has become a matter of urgency. If the collective achievement of the banking sector in 73 years (from the founding

year of Nepal Bank Ltd) is that three out of every four Nepalis are yet to be served today, surely banking is one service industry that cannot continue to afford to wrap itself in a mantle of inward-looking inscrutability and high priesthood into which others are not allowed.

Four years ago, the central bank promulgated rules that basically said one could not be a bank's CEO without a minimum of five years of experience in the finance sector. On the face of it, this sounds like a sensible provision. But over the years, with the rise in the number of banks and a corresponding shortage of competent manpower, this provision has had three unintended consequences.

First, it has forced bank boards to recruit their CEOs and top managers from a very narrow talent pool. To a degree, this explains the sort of bank-hopping that we see among bankers today.

Second, enjoying a low-

supply and high-demand situation, those bankers and their erstwhile juniors, all now deemed to be top management candidates, have been free to drive hard bargains for high salaries for themselves and their teams.

And third, with salaries inevitably shooting to

competitive industry, is now trying to burst it in a ham-fisted manner. Surely, the central bank knows that bankers are smart enough to figure out ways around any salary cap?

One issue that does not get discussed is that commercial banking, at its core, is not rocket

neither the intelligence nor the diligence to be as good as or better than them. That is simply shorthand for keeping the clubhouse the way it is.

It is this sort of insular, arrogant bubble that the central bank needs to burst first by letting boards consider hiring CEOs from outside the industry and from outside of Nepal. That freedom to expand the talent pool alone will start exerting a downward pressure on CEO salaries as more and more candidates, from various industries, start competing for top jobs.

In the process, who knows, many more banks may discover undervalued 'human stock', which, once hired and given top responsibilities, may end up outperforming even the most experienced names, especially when it comes to addressing the central bank's central concern: how to reach those with no access to banking services.

Rather than clumsy caps on CEO pay, the central bank should let market forces do the job

eye-popping levels, the central bank, citing equity concerns, is now belatedly trying to cap them.

Summing up, what we have is a situation in which the central bank, having unwittingly helped to create a 'bank CEO bubble' through rules that promoted the sort of professionalism more suited to a clubhouse than a

science. After all, how many years of plain-vanilla Nepali banking experiences do you really need to be able to collect deposits at x per cent interest rate and lend them out at a higher rate?

But talk to some bankers, and you'd think that what they do is something closer to quantum physics, and that outsiders have



PARASH SHRESTHA



locations in surrounding districts, and is also a teaching hospital for the students of Kathmandu University Medical School.

“Everyone should have access to quality healthcare whether or not they can afford it,” says Dr Ram Kantha Shrestha, the hospital’s founder. “Just because it is a hospital for the poor doesn’t mean it should be badly maintained, or that we should compromise on the quality of services.” The success of this model is apparent, for there are 200 community hospitals in Nepal now.

Water management in Dhulikhel is also an exemplar of how users can manage utilities. While most towns in Nepal reel under water shortages, 80 per cent of Dhulikhel’s population is supplied with purified drinking water from a source 14km away. The Dhulikhel Drinking Water Users Committee, which is the only urban water supply system managed by users in Nepal, also ensures that revenue is used to expand its services. The project was constructed with the aid of GTZ, donations from locals, and municipal funds.

There was a time, back in the 1980s, when the decision to elevate Dhulikhel to the status of a municipality provoked such outrage in neighbouring Banepa that it blockaded the up and coming town. Today, Dhulikhel Municipality has proved wholly deserving of the designation. It has been estimated that Nepal’s urban population, at 10 per cent in 1991, will reach 32 per cent by 2027. If towns across the country – and indeed the capital – can draw on the lessons of Dhulikhel, they will secure their future for themselves. 🇳🇵

Model Dhulikhel

If towns across Nepal learnt from the example of Dhulikhel, urban living would actually mean better living

RUBEENA MAHATO
in DHULIKHEL

One need not go far to see how local participation and able leadership can do wonders. In just a few years, the scenic town of Dhulikhel has become a health, education and tourism centre befitting its status as the district headquarters of Kavrepalanchok.

“We had a clear vision on how to develop Dhulikhel. We wanted basic infrastructure like water, health and educational facilities in place, and we wanted the

people to lead these projects,” says Bel Prasad Shrestha, the former mayor of Dhulikhel.

Today, Dhulikhel is home to the country’s finest university, a state-of-the-art community hospital, and a consumer-managed drinking water system, all built through initiatives from the local community.

The founders of Kathmandu University had failed to find a location until they were invited to Dhulikhel to build the campus. The municipality quickly recognised its potential and agreed to donate 200 ropanies of land, and make arrangements

for road, electricity and water within three years. Although the municipality had an annual budget of only Rs 2 million, Shrestha, who was mayor then, motivated local businessmen to chip in with some land and money.

The university, completed in 1991, has become an integral part of the local economy today. It employs many locals and many students from Banepa and Dhulikhel study there. After the university was completed, a Quality Education project was initiated in 1997 to upgrade the educational standards of local

schools. Upon the three-year project’s completion, the SLC pass rate of Dhulikhel jumped from 26 to 73 per cent.

Dhulikhel is also home to the country’s first community hospital. Established in 1996, Dhulikhel Hospital is one of the best equipped in the country, but that hasn’t stopped it from being accessible to the poor. It provides quality health services at one of the cheapest rates in Nepal and is the only one to treat patients before charging them, though most patients are treated for free. The hospital runs outreach centres at 17



PARASH SHRESTHA

Mountains and more

After a brief hiatus during the war, tourism is booming in Dhulikhel. Tourists throng its hotels for mountain vistas that are among the best in the world. Twenty mountain peaks from Annapurna in the west to Karolung in the east grace the spectacular skyline of Dhulikhel. A breathtaking mountain sunrise can be viewed from the Kali Temple, southeast of the town.

Short hikes can be taken from Dhulikhel to Namobuddha, Panauti, Nagarkot, Sankhu and Palanchowk Bhagwati. Most hotels also provide excursions to Tatopani and rafting trips on the Bhotekoshi.

The old town of Dhulikhel is a visual treat in

itself. The cobbled streets of Dhulikhel are lined with Newari-style houses, some of which are more than a hundred years old. At 1,500 metres above sea level, the climate is pleasantly cool and the lush green hills make for pleasant walks and great mountain biking trails.

In the past few years, Dhulikhel has also developed as a centre for conference tourism. “Hotels in Dhulikhel always have one conference or meeting taking place at all times,” says former mayor Bel Prasad Shrestha, who is also the owner of Hotel Himalayan Horizon and Dhulikhel Lodge. Mid to high-end accommodation is available in the 24 hotels in Dhulikhel.

Leading the charge



NEIL DIXIT

Everyone in Dhulikhel would agree that the changes in town would not have been possible without the charismatic leadership of Bel Prasad Shrestha (*pic, left*). The three-time mayor of Dhulikhel

was the first in town to open a lodge for tourists and the first to build a public toilet. His success in bringing water to the town made him highly popular and the people showed their support by electing him for three consecutive terms.

Bel Prasad, however, thinks otherwise. “Dhulikhel has succeeded where other places have failed because everything that we did here was a people’s project. If we had waited for the government, Dhulikhel would still be the same nondescript town it was along the Arniko highway.”

The sense of community is strong in this Newari town. Many of its people have gone as far as Sikkim and Assam to do business, but value their roots in Dhulikhel. Schools, temples and roads have been built with their remittances. Dr Ram Kantha Shrestha (*pic, right*), for instance, left his well-paying job in Austria to open a hospital for the poor back home. Having started with no more than two doctors and four rooms, Dhulikhel Hospital has already served 2.6 million people and conducts 10,000 surgeries and 500,000 treatments a year.



SAILENDRA KHAREL

The road to progress

Banepa Bardibas highway, which is nearing completion, will open up a range of possibilities for Dhulikhel. Once the highway is completed, Dhulikhel will be the main entry point to eastern Nepal, and may soon develop into an economic hub. The Suryabinayak-Tinkune highway will mean that Dhulikhel will be accessible from the centre of Kathmandu in 45 minutes. But does this mean that this model town will fall prey to unplanned urbanisation?

“It does not have to be that way,” says the Chief of the Planning Section in Dhulikhel Municipality, Jaisi Mandal. He says tourism will remain their main priority and the current policy of banning industries that pollute the town will continue even after the roads are opened.

As a centre for tourism, Dhulikhel has always understood the importance of maintaining a clean environment. The municipality disposes of solid waste in a dumping site after separating recyclable waste, and sewage is treated in a reed bed treatment plant before it flows back into the rivers.

These practices are adequate for a population of 15,000 but some fear that the pressure will be too high once the town starts growing.

“Efforts are already underway to prepare Dhulikhel for the population rise that will accompany the completion of the roads,” says Prakash Aryal, Project Manager of the Urban Environmental Improvement Project. A land pooling project will build a planned settlement for more than 5,000 people.

Former mayor Bel Prasad Shrestha believes that there is no alternative to expanding the town. “A greater municipality should be formed by merging Panauti, Banepa, Dhulikhel and the surrounding villages. The municipality should then be developed in a planned way with separate sections for residential, tourism and industrial purposes. Let that be a model for planned development in Nepal,” he says.

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World-class debut

Confession, first off. Even before laying my hands on *Kalakarmi*, I'd declared on numerous occasions that Hari Maharjan is 'the best guitarist in Nepal'. So even if a whole succession of Thamel music shops seemed bemused by my request for the Hari Maharjan Project's debut album ("Ko? Naamai sunyaa chaina..."), I expected much.

I wasn't disappointed. And you don't have to be a bedroom guitarist to lock into *Kalakarmi*, either. Along with Rizu Tuladhar (bass), Daniel Rasaily (drums/percussion) and Nawaraj Gurung (tabla), Hari has created a sound that fuses and transcends the genres he draws on, and promises to grant him international critical acclaim, if not fame and fortune.

Those accustomed to Hari's pyrotechnics on the electric guitar at live venues across town may have expected more obvious fireworks, and simply



Album: **Kalakarmi**
Artist: **Hari Maharjan Project**
Distributor: **Music Nepal**
Price: **Rs 300**

listening to *Kalakarmi* they may also miss the visibly dynamic synergy of Rizu and Daniel, an essential component of the trio that plays live on Hari Maharjan Project (HMP). But they are missing the point. Hari's

inspired, clean-toned, jazz-rock riffs, alternately elongated and shredded to perfection, are spread over nine instrumental tracks that reward repeated listening.

The most accessible tracks on *Kalakarmi* are already a staple of HMP's live performances. *Never gonna drink and drive again* and *Soul in you* are simply phenomenal world-class tunes. Both boast amazing, complex sets of crunchy, funky riffs, and you may well find yourself humming the unorthodox melodies the day after. Bass and percussion are in perfect sync here, with Hari surfing the beats. But it's not all spacey, funky jazz. There are Shakti-esque moments in both *Big Brother* and the title track *Kalakarmi*, and the galloping *Chyante Ghoda* evokes Mustang in more ways than one.

Throughout, while remaining essentially a jazz album, *Kalakarmi* showcases HMP's fluency in rock, blues and funk. What sets their debut apart from a host of high-minded

modern jazz fusion is the uncontrived, organic nature of the compositions, which are laced through with mostly subtle references to Nepali musical cultures. The beautiful melody in *Raktika*, for instance, brings one in mind of a nursery rhyme – or is it a Newari tune?

Kalakarmi is an unabashedly serious debut. It won't gain HMP the flag-waving devotion his former bandmates in Nepathya enjoy, not least because it's wholly instrumental and, well, jazz. If you like a rousing chorus, *Kalakarmi* might seem like an exercise in guitar noodling. But the very fact that it's accessible to non-Nepali speakers sparks hope that with robust marketing and further experimentation with other sounds and artists across Nepal, HMP may well become the first Nepali band to truly represent us on the global stage.

Rabi Thapa

EVENTS

Ebisu Jewellery Exhibition & Sale 2010, exquisite jewellery for the festive season. *Till Sunday 5 September, 11am to 7pm, Ebisu Jewellers, Darbar Marg, 4222815*

Home and Decor Expo 2010, homemaker's paradise, everything you need for your beautiful home. *From Friday 3 September to 5 September, 11am to 6pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road*

Midas CAN SofTech 2010, for software solutions and services. *Till Saturday 4 September, UWTC, Tripureswor*



Tarabaji Lai Lai, play directed by Morten Krogh and enacted by Gurukul artists. *Till 5 September, 5.30pm, Sama Theatre, Gurukul, Purano Baneshwor, 4466956*

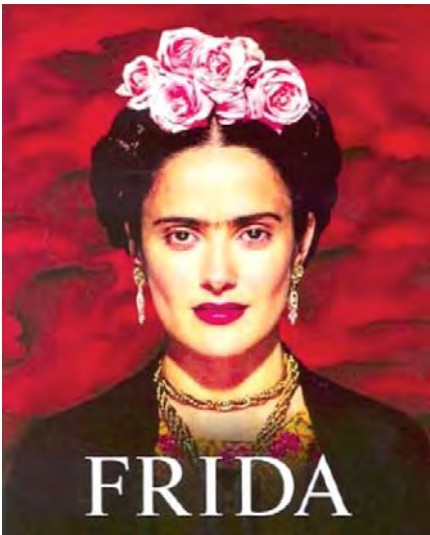
Gaijatra, solo painting exhibition by acclaimed artist Ragini Upadhyia Grela. *Till 20 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 4218048*

Repeating Bodies Structural Space, exhibition of paintings by Sanjeev Maharjan and Sunita Maharjan. *Till 20 September, 11am to 5pm, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 5521120*

KCAC Art Criticism Series II, 'Reflections - Should Contemporary Nepali Art be imbued with, or reflect an innate Nepaliness or Nepali Punn?', criticism and debate on the works of artists Sanjeev and Sunita Maharjan. *Sunday 5 September, 4.30pm, KCAC, Jhamsikhel*

Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, screening of *Samson & Delilah*. *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, Pulchok*



Docskool, screening of *Frida*, starring Salma Hayek. *Friday 3 September, 3.30pm, Kathmandu Academy, Mahendra Bhawan, Naxal, 4471104*

MUSIC

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*

Treasure at the Pub, live performances by The Treasure Band. *Every Friday, 8pm, Irish Pub, Ananda Bhawan, Lazimpat*



Bottles and Chimney, live music by Nekhvam. Dharmendra Sewan unplugged every Wednesday and Friday. *7pm onwards, Thamel, 2123135*

House of Music, Karaoke night every Tuesday and in-house band jam session every Saturday. *2pm to 12pm, Thamel, 9849243807*

DINING

The Oriental Tearoom at Pipalbot, try their sake-cured salmon for lunch and twice-cooked caramelised pork belly for dinner. *Wednesday to Monday for lunch, and Thursday to Saturday for dinner, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4267657, bookings preferred*

Jazoo, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special barbeque set for a mix of everything. *Jawalakhel (near the zoo), 5538321*



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*

Hadock, big compound with ample parking space, their Western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. *Jhamel, 10am-10am, 5546431*

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

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*

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush

garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal, 4424303*

Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. *Pulchok opposite Namaste Supermarket*

Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. *Pulchok (near the Suzuki showroom), 11am-10pm except Tuesdays.*

New Orleans, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. *Jhamel, 5522708.*

OR2K, One of the few vegetarian restaurants in the Valley, their Middle Eastern platter is delicious and their cocktails robust. *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4422097*

Organic Café and Salad Bar, hearty breakfasts and healthy salads while you catch up with your reading or emails in the heart of Thamel. *Chakshibari Road, Thamel 4215726*

Roadhouse Café, serves pizzas cooked to perfection in wood-fired ovens. Health-conscious diners have an alternative in the Caesar salad, garnished with the freshest of ingredients. *Jhamel, 5521755*

Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area invokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. *Thamel, 4701170*

Yin & Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Get a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of their western dishes. *Thamel, 10am-10pm, 4701510*

Himalayan Java, one of our favourite places for coffee, just got bigger, with a new branch deeper in the heart of Thamel. Expect the same excellent service and quality food and drinks with a change of scenery. *Food Bazaar, Thamel.*





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Solving mysterious fevers



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Mysterious fevers are common in Nepal, especially in the summer. Sherlock Holmes and Watson would have had a field day here, figuring out the causes of these unknown fevers. But these outbreaks are in fact diseases such as typhoid, typhus, and leptospirosis, which are all mistakenly thought to be common fever. As our laboratory facilities are too weak to make proper diagnoses, Nepal has become a site for case studies that have revealed the lack of systematic curative practices here.

Almost a decade ago, about 900 fever patients were studied at Patan Hospital. Many well-known conditions such as typhoid were correctly identified. However, two diseases, typhus (not typhoid) and leptospirosis were completely overlooked by the physicians. Surprisingly, these turned out to be the third and fourth most common proven causes of fever after the pneumonias.

This discovery has helped in treating fever patients in Nepal more effectively, for the results



RSS

led to proper therapy – the right drug for the right disease. It also proved that unknown causes of fever can be determined only through systematic study. In medical parlance, this is known as ‘differential diagnosis’.

Thanks to the research, typhus and leptospirosis are now listed as one of the main causes of fever in Nepal. Typhus, which is a flea, louse, mite, or tick-borne illness, can be acquired after being bitten by any of these organisms. This should not be mistaken for typhoid, which is caused by contaminant bacteria in our food or drinking water. Leptospirosis on the other hand, is acquired

from rat urine in puddles of water getting into abrasions in our skin – not impossible in Nepal. An effective drug for both typhus and leptospirosis is doxycycline.

There are, of course, many other infectious fevers in Nepal such as malaria, kalazar, tuberculosis, and now dengue, but typhus and leptospirosis had always been off the radar until the ground-breaking study at Patan Hospital. A crucial lesson learnt from this study is the importance of investigative research in medicine – much like Holmes’ and Watson’s work in solving mysteries. 🇳🇵

GREEN SCENE

Collecting rain



SHAHANI SINGH

Raju Dangol, Hem Narayan Shrestha and Gokul Dangal could be the Kathmandu Valley’s most invaluable trio this season, given they are rainwater harvesting system technicians. The monsoon still prevails and hundreds of households, old and new, could make use of this basic technology for saving water. The system is simple: rainwater collected in the catchment area (usually the balcony or the roof) is channelled through a coarse mesh to prevent the passage of debris, and into a pipe used to sieve out the first flush of dirty water. The collected water is filtered through bio-sand tanks to rid the water of ammonia, arsenic, iron, and dust, and finally conveyed to reservoirs under and

above ground. Excess water can be channelled to recharge the water table underground, staving off some of the hassle of the dry season.

The scarcity of water at present and the prospect of its depletion in the future are incentive enough to consider installing a rainwater harvesting system. The rain in Kathmandu is minimally acidic and only needs the usual filtering and boiling to render it drinkable. With the possibility of collecting plenty of water with a single shower, a rainwater harvesting system can be a workable solution for both households and institutions.

The team of three has installed systems for several hotels and schools across the

Valley, including the Summit Hotel, Rosebud School, and Fora Darbar. Their experience, along with formal training from the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, means they have strong credibility in their field. According to Dangol, their network of customers has materialised through word-of-mouth and recommendations from organisations such as the NGO Forum, ENPHO and WEPCO, which they used to work with.

“Our work is to just connect the pipes, install the tanks and ensure the flow of water, so this does not incur a big expense,” explains Dangol. The team charges 20 per cent of whatever the equipment costs amount to. While every site has different requirements in terms of tanks, pipes, and the size of catchment area, prices for household installation have ranged from Rs 800 to Rs 100,000, whereas prices for schools and hotels have ranged from Rs 10,000 to Rs 200,000. This monsoon may be almost over, but quick service means you can already benefit from the bounty of the heavens – now and forever.

Contact:
Raju Dangol (9841367690); Hem Shrestha (9841534189); Gokul Dangal (9841797404)



NHUCHHE MAN DANGOL

NEW QUEENS: Sadichha Shrestha was crowned Miss Nepal 2010 on Wednesday, and Sahana Bajracharya and Sanyukta Timsina were named first and the second runner-up respectively.



KIRAN PANDAY

MAKING WAVES: Caretaker PM Madhav Kumar Nepal visited the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre in Sanga on Friday.



BIKRAM RAI

BREAK DANCING: Participants perform at the Nepal B Boy Championship 2010 held at the Rastriya Nach Ghar on Sunday. The Everest All Stars A won the competition.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

After nearly a decade, this year’s monsoon has brought persistent rains. Farmers of Dolakha, Chitwan and Gorkha report they are happy with the rains and hope the groundwater in their fields will be recharged fully after decades. Satellite pictures show a powerful low pressure band sitting over the north Indian plains and the central Himalaya, from where it is continuously drawing fresh clouds from both arms of the monsoon. Western Nepal will get heavy rains while the other parts of the country will see light but continuous rains. Expect cloudy days and more rain throughout the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
27-20	27-21	28-20

Singing of sorrow



**POLITICALLY
CRACKED**
Indu Nepal

You wouldn't go around proudly proclaiming you're a racist. Then why do most people think it's okay to say they're not feminists?

The get-together of female relatives before Tij is the Nepali women's version of football night for men. Except you don't drag your inebriated self home after the party and pass out. You attend what has now become a month-long estrogenfest, and recite the trials and tribulations of women's lives musically: the neglect by the husband, the mistreatment by the in-laws, and how they should take up the only chance to dance because the rest of the year is, well, going to be shit.

Welcome to the life of a Nepali woman, where you dance and sing your sorrows away. And there is a long list of sorrows. The maternity death rate for Nepali women ranks among the highest in the world. While the overall literacy rate has gone up, the percentage of literate women still lags behind. Almost 83 per cent of households have no property under women's ownership. Women earn about three quarters of what men earn in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Those who seek economic independence in spite of these inherent disadvantages face further harassment in the workplace. Forget the backwaters, where uneducated men and women toil in the fields: around 50 per cent of women are victims of sexual harassment in the shiny



KIRAN PANDAY

glass towers of urban areas, says the International Labour Organization. That means one out of two women in your office been physically or verbally harassed, eyed by sleazy men, or shown pornographic images.

Consider all of this part and parcel of what Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn call the "greatest moral outrage of our century" in their new book *Half the Sky*. Discrimination has led to two million girls being lost

every year; they are killed or aborted because, author claims they are unwanted. Another 60 to 100 million are 'missing' due to trafficking and slavery. Being a woman is tough all over the world. In Nepal, you get to sing about it.

Among the educated urban mass, the troubling aspect of this phenomenon is the failure to recognise discrimination when it happens, and the refusal to acknowledge that they can have a

part in either eliminating or promoting it. During a light conversation about women's rights recently, a colleague pulled a disgusted face and said, "I hate feminists." Feminism is a dirty word. Those of us who risk being hated by colleagues because we want equal rights and freedom for women have to qualify it by saying we don't want to throw men off the cliff before extracting their semen so that we can populate the world with test-tube

babies. There are crazies in every field, but will you stop caring for the environment because of some overzealous fruitarian eco-warriors who want you to live in a yurt in the woods?

If you question those who go around proclaiming they are not feminists and hate those that are, they will usually say that they have no problem if women want to pursue their goals in life. But to achieve the feminist utopia where there is no discrimination between the sexes requires a lot of people to change their behaviour and outlook. Only 24 per cent of men say they recognise instances of sexual harassment at work. Others seem to think that women actually enjoy being ogled.

We have the advantage that we do not live in a society where oppression is religiously or legally sanctioned. We can openly talk, or sing, about our grievances. That is the only first step. Eliminating discrimination is actually a conscious proactive process. But you can start with this: next time you say you are not a feminist, ask yourself if you would proudly go around saying you are a racist. Because saying you don't support equality between the sexes is exactly the same as saying you don't support equal rights for everyone because of their racial background. 🇳🇵

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Crackdown riles ISPs

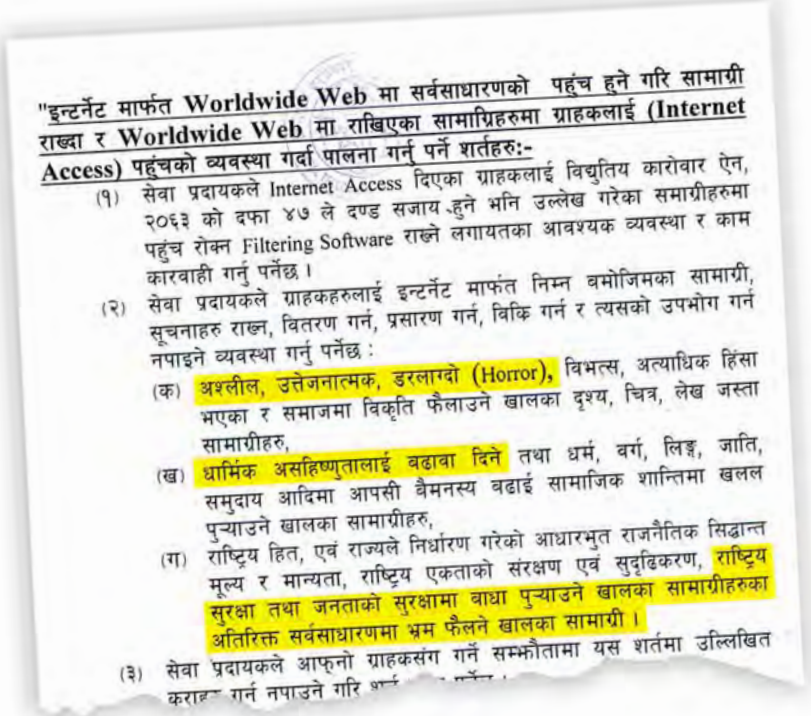
The cabinet's new Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), set up last month, has already come under fire for being overzealous, and violating constitutionally guaranteed privacy laws in going after Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The new 'FBI-style' unit was set up by the government two weeks ago in response to a nationwide rise in abductions, financial scams, cyber-crime and call-bypass syndicates. The high-powered and well-resourced force works under the direct control of the chief of police and is designed to act immediately to counter organised crime.

However, by targeting Nepal's ISPs, the CBI has stirred a hornet's nest among IT companies, constitutional lawyers and consumer advocacy groups, who say the unit is overstepping its bounds. Sirish Karmacharya of the internet provider Namche was arrested this week and jailed for having provided bandwidth to customers who were allegedly using it to bypass calls. Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) sent a letter this week to ISPs, warning of stiff punishment if they didn't fulfill conditions for operation that include filtering pornographic and 'horror' content. NTA wants material that 'incites racial and religious hatred' and is against the 'national interest' filtered. "The conditions are too broad and ISPs can't be held responsible for what the subscribers use the internet for, it's their private business," explains Binay Bohara of the ISP Association. "In any case, filtering content is very expensive, cumbersome and difficult." Constitutional lawyer Satish Kharel goes a step further and says NTA's conditions for use also violate the constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy. "Only parliament can pass laws restricting fundamental freedoms, it can't be done by NTA or the police," Kharel says. "This is an infringement of the constitution and also goes against the right to privacy under

international human rights instruments to which Nepal is a signatory." Kharel, who specialises in telecommunications, says if the government is serious about going after those misusing Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), it should investigate the real culprits and not those who are simply selling the connection. Following the NTA directives to the letter would effectively shut down YouTube, Facebook, popular Nepali portals like cybersansar.com, mysansar.com, and even nepalitimes.com, because some of the comments in the feedback section could be construed to be objectionable. Minister of Information and Communication, Shankar Pokharel, said the government was losing billions in international call-bypass and was forced to act against operators with VOIP. "The state needs information on who is using excessive bandwidth at all times of the day, without this data it is difficult to catch the culprits," Pokharel told *Nepali Times*. "All we are asking is for the ISPs to pass on this information."

The police say they have been handicapped by their inability to access mobile phone and internet usage data in going after criminals. DIG Arjun Singh Bhandari says, "Our main concern is to ban VOIP calls as it becomes difficult to trace criminal activities, and organised crimes have been carried out using VOIP. We have requested ISPs to help us in our investigation." But Karmacharya's arrest and the fact that he has been presumed guilty until proven innocent has sent shockwaves through the ISP community, and lawyers are aghast at the lack of due process in the case. This has led to suspicion that the police are themselves involved in extorting ISPs. "It now seems to be our turn to be milked," said one cyber café owner in Thamel.

New police unit designed to combat organised crime wants internet controls



HORROR: NTA sent a letter this week to ISPs, warning of stiff punishment if they didn't fulfill conditions for operation that include filtering pornographic and 'horror' content.

Internet shutdown?

Internet Service Providers (ISPs), who met the home and information ministers Thursday morning, said both blamed them for complicity in the call-bypass scam. ISPs say they can't run a business with the threat of arrest at any time and may collectively return their licenses. This would potentially paralyse internet services in Nepal. ISPs say the new law holds them liable if an illegal VOIP operator is using its bandwidth without the knowledge of the service provider. Said one ISP owner: "The police want us to tell them about excessive use, but what is excessive use? Who defines it? There are hundreds of legitimate individuals and businesses who use more than 1MB, do we report all of them?" Nepal's 49 ISPs have already blocked scores of pornographic sites under instruction from the police in the past month, and they say they can block other sites as well. But they can't be filtering everything because it is impossible, especially since the definition of what is deemed 'anti-national' and 'inciting racial hatred' is so broad. Says the ISP Association's Binay Bohara: "If they tell us what to block we will block, but we can't accept this blanket blame."

7th

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THIS WEEK

MP jailed

The Special Court on Tuesday remanded Dol Bahadur Karki, a UML CA member, to 20 days of judicial custody. He has been charged with accepting bribes from 12 people in exchange for arranging for recruitment into the police force. A CIAA team arrested him on Monday evening, allegedly while he was in the process of accepting a surety of Rs 100,000 from an individual to whom he had promised help in getting through the exams required to be appointed as a police officer.

Unlocking the mystery

The black box of the Dornier 228 belonging to Agni Air has been found a week after its crash on Tuesday. The Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR) of the plane were recovered from the impact ditch created when the aircraft dived into the ground. Rescue workers used an excavator to look for the black box, which was buried 15ft below the surface.

Where have they gone?

Human rights organisations, civil society members and victims' families remembered those disappeared during the decade-long insurgency on the International Day of the Disappeared on Tuesday, with a lamp-lighting ceremony at Basantapur. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal urged the government to swiftly implement the Supreme Court decision of 2007 that requires the state to criminalise forced disappearances. Rights bodies emphasised the need to form commissions on forced disappearances, truth finding and reconciliation. A bill has been prepared and tabled to this effect, but lack of interest from the political parties has stalled the process.

Trafficking labour

JB PUN MAGAR &
BABURAM BISWOKARMA
in HONG KONG

“Tej Prakash Pun is my relative,” points out Dolendra Bahadur Khatri, 30. But this didn’t save him from being trafficked first to Macau, then to China, and eventually to Libya, from where he had to be rescued and brought back to Nepal (*see box*).

The 108 Nepalis who were rescued from Libya recently are victims of an international trafficking ring run by Pun (*pic, right*), aided by his wife Tikadevi Gurung. Pun, who has been involved in trafficking since at least the mid-1990s, has a long history of fraud, is wanted by Hong Kong immigration, and has now gone underground in Libya.

Following a troubled time as a student in Myagdi district’s Prakash Secondary School, Pun served in the British Gurkhas from 1981 to 1994. After his discharge, he forged a passport and under the alias Keshar Bahadur Gurung, entered Hong Kong in 1995 as the husband of legal resident Radhika Gurung (real name Tikadevi Gurung). In reality, both were already married to other people. Together, they registered Gurkha Construction Ltd in Hong Kong in 1995, and Dhawalagiri International Manpower in Nepal in 1997.

Pun and Gurung worked as a team to fleece Nepalis seeking work abroad, and specialised in trafficking prospective labourers to Hong Kong and Macau. But with the tightening of visa on arrival rules for Nepalis in both these destinations, and Hong Kong immigration’s discovery of Pun’s criminal activity, he moved to Libya. It became his new destination of choice for hapless migrant labourers.

In 2008, Indonesian company Citramegah Karya Gemilang (CKG) won a bid to construct 1,200 houses in Libya. The company approached Gurkha Construction Ltd for 180 skilled labourers. Pun charged Nepali workers Rs 130,000 to Rs 270,000 apiece to arrange for visas and tickets, even though CKG was covering these costs. According to Mausam Roka, who has just returned from Libya, Gurkha Construction sent 25 skilled labourers from Hong Kong while



Migrant workers are falling prey to traffickers like Tej Prakash Pun, who is responsible for the plight of the 108 Nepalis rescued from Libya recently

Dhawalagiri International Manpower sent 108 Nepali workers. Those from Hong Kong were paid US\$2,000-2,500 a month but the Nepali workers were paid just US\$300, and eventually had to fend for themselves (*see box*). Pun’s venture fell apart when the

workers appealed to the Nepali authorities, prompting their rescue. His whereabouts are currently unknown, but Tikadevi remains in Hong Kong, where she lives in an apartment she owns.

Despite his recent failure, Pun has done extremely well out of exploiting his countrymen. He

has long had good relations with the powers that be, and the former king Gyanendra awarded him the Birendra Aishwarya medal and Gorkha Dakshinbahu IV. He is also the outgoing treasurer of the International Coordination Committee of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRN) and

chief advisor to NRN Libya, as well as the coordinator of the Myagdi Overseas Nepalese Association (MONA). Pun and Tikadevi Gurung each own shares worth HK\$50,000 in Gurkha Construction Ltd. Dhawalagiri International Manpower has a principal capital of Rs 4 million and current capital of Rs 3 million.

The government has now banned Nepali labourers from going to Libya. But Pun and Gurung are just one of many involved in trafficking Nepalis around the world. Indeed, Nepal is seen as a source country for human trafficking. *Trafficking In Person*, a report published by the US Department of State, lists Nepal as an extremely vulnerable country, particularly for the trafficking of children and women.

For Surya Limbu of Sankhuwasaba, who exclaims that in returning from Libya he felt as if he had “escaped a monster” in the form of Tej Prakash Pun, the worst may be over. But while Nepalis still dream of foreign climes, they will continue to fall prey to the worst nightmares that could befall them. 🇳🇵

With Dev Pachbhaiya in Myagdi and the Centre for Investigative Journalism

“We were tortured in custody”



Dolendra Bahadur Khatri, 30, paid Rs 180,000 to his relative Tej Prakash Pun to be flown to Macau, where he covertly worked for a year. Once his tourist visa expired, he was taken to Guangzhou, China, where a dozen Nepalis lived in a room for three months. Dole ndra was then returned to Nepal and flown to Libya once he made a further payment of Rs 30,000 to Pun’s partner-in-crime, Tikadevi Gurung.

“On 19 May 2009, Dhawalagiri Manpower gave me a letter of understanding that said I would be paid US\$500 per month,” recalls Dolendra, who is from Rupandehi. “I reached Libya. But I was paid only US\$300, and the food and accommodation wasn’t as they said it would be. When I demanded my pay so I could return home, Tej Prakash accused us of trying to kidnap him and got 23 of us arrested. We were tortured in custody.”

“We ate grass to survive”



“I was preparing to go to Bahrain, where I had been promised room and board and a monthly salary of Rs 25,000, when I met Tikadevi Gurung and her niece Kamala Gurung of Dhawalagiri Manpower,” says 40-year-old Lal Bahadur Khatri of Kaski district. It was a fateful meeting. They persuaded him to sign up for Libya instead, though he had already submitted his passport to another manpower agency.

Even after making a payment of Rs 130,000 (“I later discovered that CKG had paid for my visa and travel costs,” he says), it took a whole year before Lal Bahadur made it to Libya. But conditions were so bad he had to resort to eating what the cattle did – shrubs and grass – for a week. He’s now back home, but has to pay back debts incurred of Rs 80,000. Lal Bahadur says, “When I remember what I went through, I just feel angry.”



उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

आर्थिक खबर

हरैक दिन बिहान ७:०० बजे

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“Khara’s wounds are still raw”

Naya Patrika, 30 August

नयाँ पत्रिका

“I was heading to my neighbour’s place at 7am, to help them build their home, when suddenly I heard gunfire. The police were advancing towards my home, firing gunshots and setting fire to the neighbourhood. Soon our houses went up in flames and people were crying aloud...” Tantaveer Oli of Khara, Rukum, recalls the day with sorrow in his eyes. His entire village was consumed by flames, with 66 houses and farms burned to ashes, and 15 innocents were killed by the police. On 22 February 2000, the village of Khara fell victim to one the worst atrocities committed by government forces in the 10 years of the armed insurgency. Parvati Khatri remembers panicking and going into the jungle, searching for her daughter-in-law. “I told them that my daughter-in-law was innocent and my granddaughter was young. I pleaded with them, but those sinners did not listen. They killed them in front of my eyes.”

Ramkali Khadka, a mother of two, had gone to the jungle with her husband Laxmi to cut grass. They were hurrying home after realising their village was on fire. But they were targeted by the police themselves, and Laxmi was shot dead. “I cried and screamed in front of them, but they would not listen,” says Ramkali, recalling the day of her loss. “As if that wasn’t enough, they set fire to our homes too.”

Tantaveer, Parvati and Ramkali are among many in Khara who faced the terror of seeing their houses burnt down and family members killed. “Whenever we see a uniformed person, we instinctively fear for our lives,” says Raj Singh Oli.

After a long period of neglect, the government provided aid to the bereaved families of Rs 100,000 each, along with compensation for destroyed property. Some have rebuilt their homes, but many used the money simply to get by. Those who did not receive adequate aid have not even been able to pay for their children’s education.

When Prachanda was prime minister, minister of peace Janardan Sharma declared he would make Khara a ‘village of peace’. Roads, school buildings, drinking water facilities and toilets were built, and even the police station was reconstructed. Former VDC chairperson Sita Oli claims that the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation spent a total of Rs 3,500,000 on relief for Khara last year, and Rs 10 million this year.

But the survivors of the Khara massacre would rather have their homes reconstructed than be given communal facilities. Most of all, their hearts still cry for their loved ones. Their loss cannot be erased by development or money. Eleven years have gone by since that day of terror, but the wounds of Khara are still raw.

Undiplomatic diplomacy

Editorial in Kantipur, 30 August

कान्तिपुर

The Indian Embassy has been allowed to stay here as a diplomatic representative of the Indian government, not to conduct business or issue threats. But lately, the embassy seems to have forgotten that Nepal is a free and sovereign state. It has openly intervened in Nepali politics, stopped the Kantipur Group’s newsprint at Kolkata, pressurised companies with Indian investments to not give advertisements (which still continues) to the media, and even issued death threats to a CA member. Now it is challenging the Nepali media. Our government chooses to ignore these ground-level interventions. We may have just a caretaker government but this should not affect the day-to-day functioning of the state. It is important to remind them that in such serious



situations the Foreign Ministry holds the power to call on the ambassador of the concerned embassy and ask him to maintain limits in diplomacy and even send him back.

The organisations that are a part of the Federation of Nepali Journalists should not hesitate to act against such undiplomatic activities of a foreign diplomatic mission. The time has come for some big publications, which have not given this matter much importance, to forget commercial competition and stand up for national issues. Civil society, professional organisations and all political parties need to unite. Without your support it will be difficult to drive away these dark clouds threatening press freedom, which is so closely linked to our national integrity.

Driving UNMIN away



Dil Shahani in Rajdhani, 31 August

राजधानी

UNMIN has raised its finger whenever the Maoists have been at fault. After all this is what it should do. This is what we invited it for. UNMIN has also raised its finger when the Nepal Army made mistakes. But the political parties and the Nepal Army want UNMIN to stay quiet no matter what the Army does and blame the Maoists even when they haven’t done anything wrong. UNMIN is not an institution that dances to someone’s tune. The parties have blamed UNMIN of acting as an aide of the Maoists. But the

fact is UNMIN is closer to the parliamentary parties than the UCPN (Maoist) in terms of ideology. UNMIN knows its roles and responsibilities well. It knows that it has come to monitor the peace process in the country. So, it says what it sees.

UNMIN has raised objections to the recruitment drive because it knew that such actions would increase suspicions between the two armies and affect the army integration process. UNMIN has only voiced its concerns. It has not stopped the process. We haven’t given it the rights to stop things, after all. We have only allowed it to speak. And that is what it did. But if we cannot even tolerate the UNMIN speaking, how can we expect to make the country a democratic republic?

The country has reached a juncture where it cannot even form a government. The black clouds of chaos are hovering over us. Where will the country go if we send back UNMIN at this moment? Do we want violence and bloodshed again? Do we want another emergency? If that is what we want, we can send UNMIN back. Otherwise, UNMIN should be kept till the peace process is brought to a logical conclusion.



Oh, the mountains are melting!
And this is a mountain in the making? Hahaha..!

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in Rajdhani, 29 August

Royalists in the Madhes

On 27 August, former crown prince Paras Shah threw a party at Nirmal Niwas for over 100 leaders from Sunsari to Saptari, who are affiliated with the organisation. Suresh Yadav of Siraha, Janak Lal Sah of Parsa, Dinesh Mahato, Shailendra Singh and Ajit Singh of Rautahat district had one-on-one conversations with the former crown prince.

Manmohan Shamsheer Rana, who defected from RPP(N) and opened the Patriotic Nationalist People Unity Party, said that since the CA had failed to deliver a new constitution on time, efforts are being made to find a place for a 'worthy monarchy' in the new constitution through an all-party round table conference.

MJF president Upendra Yadav has been invited to make the proposed conference a success. Rana said that other political parties could not be contacted, as they are engaged in the formation of the government. "We have already had informal talks with Yadav regarding the need for an all-party round table conference to draft a new constitution, as the extended term of the CA is illegal," he said.

According to Mohan Shrestha, who heads the publication and publicity department of RPP(N), Lal Krishna Advani and other top Indian leaders will participate in a chariot procession that begins on 10 December. They have already arranged Rs 10 million for the procession, which will begin from Janakpur, go all the way to

Lumbini, and conclude in Pashupati.

Followers of former King Gyanendra are being mobilised in the Madhes to exert pressure on political parties to accept a Hindu monarchy. Following frequent visits to the Madhes by RPP(N) president Kamal Thapa, Gyanendra visited Janakpur on

24 March and said he did not think that the monarchy was obsolete. He also visited Nepalganj on 23 May and Birganj on 16 June.

The former crown prince then visited Bara, Parsa and Birganj. Sources say Gyanendra is scheduled to make a five-day visit to the Madhes in mid-September.

The royalists have concluded that the Maoist and Madhesi parties are not against the palace. "There is no alternative to working together, for above all, we are for nationality and not for power," said Krishna Mahato. President of the National Democratic Tarai Madhes Organisation.



Nabin Jha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-16 September

हिमाल

District president of the National Democratic Tarai Madhes Organisation in Rautahat, Shailendra Singh, is busy shuttling back and forth between Kathmandu and the Tarai these days. The organisation is active as a royalist front in the Madhes. "We are preparing to rectify past mistakes and move forward," Singh says.



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If you gotta go, you gotta go

A lot of naysayers have been criticising Makunay for putting up Nepal’s candidature for the post of General Assembly president when it is pretty well known that the Qataris have already invested millions and that their Plenipotentiary in New York is well on his way to bag the coveted post. But what the heck, Nepal thought, let’s try to convince Qatar to pull out of the race and get our **Cool Man** in there. It’s a risky plan, but it may just work if we can threaten to pull out all 500,000 Nepali workers from Doha if they don’t agree. We have the Qataris by their gonads.



It’s also brilliant timing to get the Army Chief to speak out against UNMIN. An army that is so dependent on the UN’s DPKO for extra pocket money for its soldiers, and core funding for the **Army Wives Welfare Fun**, should campaign harder so the UN blacklists NA and it is then forced to implement the Security Sector Reform and downsize men-under-arms.



So, with the new arch at the airport, we are now fully prepared for Visti Nepal Year 2011 (see pic by unknown artist, above). Never one to skip a junket, MKN is off to NY for the MDG session on 17 Sep. But then he has to go back on the 28th for his GA speech, so what to do in the meantime? Makunay decided to pack in a visit to



Canada as well and wait it out. All in all, it now looks like the PM will be out of the country for the entire second half of September. If you gotta go, you gotta go. Just hope he will still be PM, and there will still be a country when he returns.



Comrade Bhayanak, meanwhile, is determined to sabotage Makunay’s globetrotting and replace the Caretaker before mid-Sept so as to pull the rug from under Makunay before he sets off to North America. The way he is trying to do this is by getting both Forum factions in his pocket by making them ministerial offers they can’t refuse in the new coalition. In separate secret meetings, it looks like

Upadro Yadav readily agreed to come back as **Foreigner Minister** and even Bijay Babu has found the offer of DPM and Home Ministry plus other plum portfolios for his sidekicks too juicy to resist. Looks like it’s time for Lainchair to bring back Uncle Shyam.

Have to hand it to Awesome’s sales pitch, he’s even convinced Ridesh Tripathi to take up the offer of Minister of Information and Communication if he brings his party in on Sunday’s vote. But PKD may have a problem on his hands: he has already offered MoIC to Rajabadi Singh for getting assorted Madhesis and the Workers and Peasants Party to defect in the second round. The Ass’ unsolicited tip to Awesome: bifurcate the ministries and

give Information to Tripathi and Communication to the ex-royal son-in-law. After all, Raja Budder knows too many secrets since he was the one distributing monies to fence-sitters. The man had to hurriedly stash cash worth 9 karod under a bed when the Madhesi Youth stormed the **Great Cattle Market** at the Sunset View Hotel last month, legend has it. But the Begum did manage to stuff her handbag with as yet unascertained favours.



The **Jungli Minister’s** proposal to induct 5,000 of the Cantonment Warriors into a National Park Ranger Force is a brilliant brainwave. The Maobadis will be literally going back to the jungle, and it will be like letting foxes guard the poultry farm. What remains of our rhinos, tigers and crocs will be poached into extinction and the nature sanctuaries can be turned into housing plots.



Ass fans have sent in headlines from this week’s newspapers, which are all tied for the coveted News of the Week Medal: ‘Gyawali Smells a Rat’ ‘Kangaroo Testicles, Chefs Say Yes’ ‘Monkey Business in Parliament’ ‘Natural Orifices Thrill Docs’

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