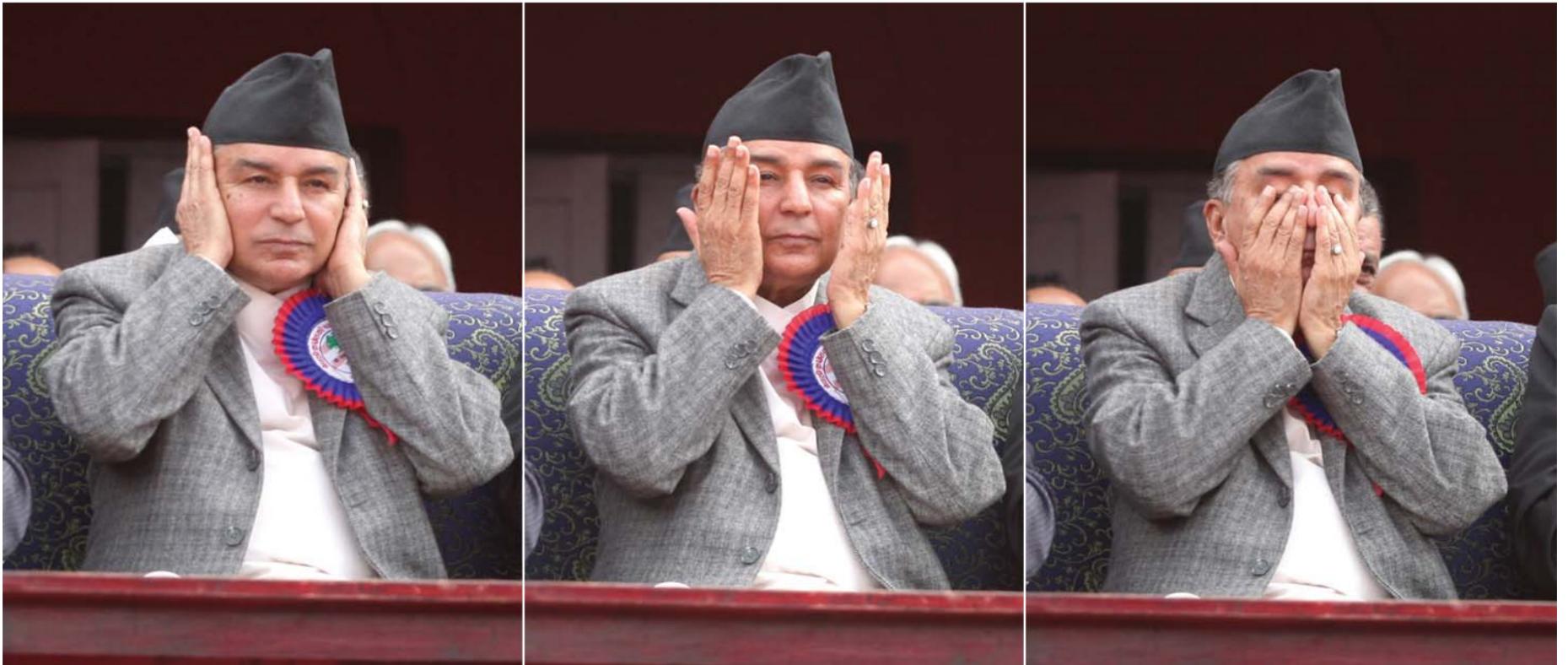


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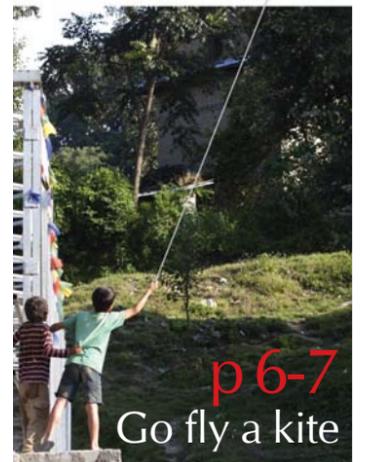
9 going on 10...

After the ninth abortive attempts to elect a new prime minister on Thursday, it doesn't look like the tenth vote on 6 October will yield a result either. Ram Chandra Poudel won't get the required votes to become prime minister, and if that happens the caretaker government will remain till after Dasain. Even though this has become a one-horse race, Poudel can't win since the Maoist and the UML command a majority in the 601-member

parliament. But the two communists can't agree on having an alliance, either. Poudel's only achievement so far is that he has prevented a Maoist-led coalition government from winning. Many in the NC fear the country will drift towards dictatorship if the Maoists return to power. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal withdrew in the last round, but he is desperate to be back on the saddle. He feels India is dead against him, and is using carrots and sticks:

threatening Indian investors while at the same time getting his deputies to sweet-talk Delhi. Neither Dahal nor Jhal Nath Khanal of the UML can become prime minister unless Poudel withdraws. Both communist chiefs know this, and are therefore pressuring Speaker Subhas Nembang to end the election process and amend regulations by using his special powers. Nembang has so far refused, but pressure is growing on him to do something,

anything. Bijay Prasad Mishra of the Nepal Bar Association says: "The Speaker alone can break this deadlock. He should not be mere spectator, and use his special privilege." The NC has preconditions to withdrawing Poudel's candidature that includes demobilisation of Maoist fighters, and a commitment to a democratic constitution. The Maoists have said in recent days they are willing to be flexible on the NC's demands. A deal is still possible. 🇳🇵



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MERRY GO ROUND

Here we go again. Nepalis will be forgiven if they feel like a hamster on a wheel. This is history repeating itself as a mockery of democracy itself.

Ironies abound. The same political actors who bayed for blood and demanded the resignation of Madhav Kumar Nepal are calling for the NC's Ram Chandra Poudel to withdraw from the one horse race in parliament. They want him to withdraw "so as to facilitate a consensus". Does that ring bell? It should.

Even after taking the notorious short memories of our politicians into account the UML's Jhala Nath Khanal and Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal should remember they repeated those exact words all of May and June. So, gentlemen, where is the consensus?

The problem, of course, is not between the NC and the Maoist, or the UML and the NC so much as between Khanal and Dahal themselves. Khanal is spooked out of his wits that Dahal may strike a separate deal with the NC. Khanal's chances are best if Poudel stands down, which



KIRAN PANDAY

to demobilise Maoist fighters and get the party to behave like a civilian entity, it is important to have a new democratic constitution. If we throw our hands up in the air and stop caring, we may very well end up as an authoritarian people's republic. The eccentric power transfer happening in Pyongyang this week shows where that can lead us.

We need to find a way out of this rut. Here, the Speaker's role is crucial and it is definitely more than that of a ceremonial bell-ringer. The

is why he is clamouring for it. But if Poudel withdraws after a package deal with the NC, Dahal's prospects improve.

It has been said here before, and our reportages these past issues reveal, that Nepalis are now past caring. Despite the cynicism and negativity fostered by the quarrelsome politicians, however, it is important to care. It is important that we get a new government, it is vital that a budget be finally passed before the holidays, it is important

majoritarian formula to form a new government may be perfectly within his terms of reference, but it is not working.

A national consensus government till the constitution is written is the only logical way to resolve this now.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

MONGREL NATION

Re: 'Nepal emerging as a rainbow nation' by Rubeena Mahato, #521. I am Marwari and my wife is Newari. I am a Jain and she is Buddhist. We call ourselves Nepali, and life is peaceful and couldn't be better. Thanks for a very interesting and timely article. We need to bring positive aspects of our country in front.

Manu

- We've seen the rapid change in attitudes toward caste and ethnicity in Nepal via personal experience. 30 years ago when my Newari wife's oldest sister married a Magar gentleman, they were socially ostracised, and there were no elaborate wedding festivities. Ten years later when my wife and I married, this gora guy was welcomed

young people away from Maoist recruiters to the safety of the cities, where they were free to mingle with other ethnicities without the rigid social structures of the rural areas.

Kenji

- A 600-word piece interviewing a few families in some cities does not prove that 'the trend towards inter-ethnic marriages is helping knit together Nepal's social fabric'. To call an entire country a rainbow nation needs spending several weeks reporting extensively, including the far-flung places, and then coming up with such a conclusion.

Anup

- Thank you, Rubeena Mahato, for a compelling story about Nepal integrating itself even though the politicians and extremists are trying to disintegrate it. You have illustrated the growing trend towards inter-ethnic marriages with some fine examples like the Poudyal, Dali, Shrestha,

practised. We can provide scores of anecdotes and stories (even faced by ourselves and humiliated to this day) to prove this. The article is wishful thinking towards a utopian society...and doesn't present the full picture of what is happening in rural Nepal.

Anuj

- The VDC map of ethnic composition is a good picture projecting the present situation of the country. Good work NT to put it with the article. There is not a single VDC that is mono-ethnic in the whole of Nepal. Our multi-culturalism is our biggest asset. Its fair and festivals are celebrated by all communities. They have been marrying inter caste for a long time but now due to the forward looking trend and working together males and females this is accelerated. So many Nepalis are working and residing in foreign lands, this has led to acceptance of inter-ethnic marriages. This shows the true spirit of new Nepal.

DG

have proved that they cannot govern or achieve anything at all without the Maoists, so ultimately they will have to accept Maoist leadership, whether they are happy about it or not. The onus is not on the Maoists to satisfy the failed parties and be given space by them. They have already taken the space they need to be able to reach the poor majority. The onus is on the other parties to find a place for themselves in a society that intends to move beyond the status quo.

Pressuring the Maoists to accept an Indian and Nepal Army veto is futile. Why not pressure their opponents to accept democracy?

Arthur

ASININE

I would like to nominate the Ass for the Foot in Mouth Award herself/himself for the asinine comment last week that 'stoppage of 14 hydroelectric projects that together would generate 5,000 MW', for effectively implying that the load shedding problem in Nepal will not be mitigated due to the stoppage. As most of these projects are dedicated for export, Nepal's load shedding problem will be impervious to these being built or not. These are being planned to be built to mitigate the load shedding problem across the border; in contravention of Nepal's constitution.

Ratna Sansar Shrestha



into the family, although we still attracted stares as we walked together around Kathmandu. In the intervening years, her cousins have married Chettris, other-religion Newars, and there was a Slovak wedding too, and nowadays no one gives my wife and me a second glance when we're out and about in the Valley. Some of the credit for this rapid change is probably due to the Maoists, both for their efforts to uproot the caste system and gender discrimination in the areas they controlled, and for causing a flood of

and Subba families. There are hundreds of others like them, and in all classes of society. A very positive and hopeful read.

Kiran L

- We have no problems with whom we live, but these so-called politicians make it an issue out a personal family matter and take advantage by spoiling our relationships. I request all Nepalis to reject their political agenda.

Anil Bhattarai

- We must accept and realise that the caste system is still prevalent and

PRASHANT JHA

I am sorry but aren't these questions that Prashant Jha should have asked at the time of signing the 12 point agreement back in Nov 2005 and before that? ('Round and round in circles', Plain Speaking #521). Here you are dealing with a country whose character you seek to change and you enter into an alliance with a terrorist organisation without as much as asking the very basic question?

Slarti

- I guess they all thought we will cross that bridge when we come to it. Concluding the peace process within four months may be highly unlikely, but Jha's analysis is incomplete. Whether the anti-Maoist parties agree to a constitution or not, they have already proved that they cannot rule Nepal and lost support from the great majority. Certainly the middle class minority and its international supporters are important, and building a new Nepal will be much harder if the Maoists are unable to persuade them to join in. But they

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 522

Q. What do you think of the prospects for foreign investment in Nepal today?

Total votes: 1,697

Weekly Internet Poll # 523. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How many elections in parliament before we have a PM?

Unreported reportages

Huge swathes of society fall in the media blindspot



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

Finally, it's official. A legislative committee has concluded that the rate of deforestation over last one year has surpassed the record of last three decades.

In 1979, random forest clearance was allowed to ensure the victory of status quo in a plebiscite held to decide the fate of the Panchayat system. Back then it was the fear of the Nepali Congress that destroyed trees, this time the barbarians at the door are the Maoists that must be stopped in their tracks at all costs.

The UML-led anti-Maoist coalition has used logging profits to buy the loyalty of supporters. The audience of the mainstream media had no inkling of the scale of devastation because national newspapers, radio and television channels were too busy tracking the antics of politicians or preparations being made for yet another Miss Neighbourhood beauty pageant.

Agriculture which employs over two-thirds of Nepalis is also sidelined in the media. Much is made out of the fact that rural electrification, mobile phones and satellite transmission of television channel has reached some of the remotest corners of the country. Few stories explore the angst of those left out of the modernisation and marketisation trend.

Villages need irrigation facilities, credits on easy terms, extension services, educational and health centres, fertilisers, seeds, sanitation and administrative services. All they are being given is a chance to buy DTH services so they can watch commercials of luxury items they can't afford.

The community broadcasters of the FM revolution promised far too much than they could deliver. Most of them ensure their survival by playing popular Hindi and Nepali songs. In the name of news, they relay what donor-funded producers of Kathmandu dish out to them.

It's not just the misery, even survival stories from the countryside could have made the urban consumers of the metropolitan media aware of the harsh realities of the country they live in. In the floodplains of Tarai, an abundance of fish once used to



be the mainstay of livelihood of the poor: they sold their goats to traders from the hills as the aquatic catch from rice fields served as savouries with millet bread. The tradition continues to be marked a day before the Jitiya festival. A famine-like situation this year, combined with privatisation of the commons, meant that the poor have nowhere to fish. The compensation the government gave them was announced as a day off for Madhesi women: a group with negligible presence in the formal employment.

The national media can't examine such issues because it hardly has any presence outside of the district capitals. Apparently, the press is even more

divorced from the masses than the much-maligned government. Newspapers are awash with advertisements announcing the launch of multiplexes, bumper sale of branded goods and marketing schemes promoting cars, motorcycles, furniture, and household appliances. It's natural that the media downplays reports that can spoil the endless partying in Kathmandu.

Political parties that swear by the poor should have the ability to redirect the attention of the media towards those who have no way to get their stories into television channels. Unfortunately, the only time political parties hit the headlines are when they are collecting donations.

This season's extravaganzas began with the Nepali Congress jamboree. The UML-affiliated student union's carnival is next, to be followed by Maoist revolutionaries feting their party chairman with one-lakh strong general assembly. Newspapers will be publishing cases of threats, intimidation and pressure tactics used by organisers to raise funds. Rest assured, nothing reported would be convincing enough to take the matter to the courts.

If it is any consolation, the degeneration of the fourth estate into stenographers to power is a global phenomenon. Nepal is merely the newest entrant. ■

THIS WEEK

Round eight

The eighth round of PM election also failed to elect a new prime minister on Sunday. Lone candidate Ram Chandra Poudel of NC secured only 116 votes in his favour out of 189 votes. Two lawmakers voted against him and 71 stayed neutral. UCPN (Maoist) and UML abstained from voting.

No EC campaign

Four Madhesi parties— MJF, MJF (D), TMLP and Sadbhawana Party have decided to obstruct the ongoing Election Commission's campaign to update the electoral roll in all Tarai districts from Monday. The parties say that thousands of Tarai people would be deprived from their voting rights if citizenship certificate is made mandatory to acquire a voter card. The EC has been collecting finger prints and computerised pictures of voters in the list distributing new voter cards. It has made it clear that the ongoing drive to issue voter ID cards will not stop.

12th NC Convention

The 12th Nepali Congress General Convention that elected 33 new faces, formally concluded on Monday. Gagan Thapa bagged the highest vote of all candidates contesting the 25 CWC seats allocated for open competition and 14 seats for under zonal category. The convention elected Shushil Koirala as the party president, Prakash Man Singh as general secretary and Chitra Lekha Yadav as treasurer.

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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Chatting with my best friend

CLAIRE COZENS

Ten years after it began, a radio talk program for young Nepalis is still a big hit

The presenters of the hugely popular radio show *Sathi Sanga Manka Kura* (SSMK) are barely into their twenties, but already they are having to tackle some very grown-up issues.

From the young girl raped by her own father to the 17-year-old boy abandoned by his family after contracting HIV, SSMK pulls no punches in dealing with the difficult issues faced by young Nepalis.

The show, whose name translates to 'Chatting with My Best Friend' was launched in 2001 as part of a campaign by UNICEF to raise awareness of the risks of HIV AIDS among young people. Nearly a decade later, it remains required listening for young people across the country, and six million tune in every week to listen to its unique blend of discussion, music and drama.

"Before SSMK started, there was no tradition of talking about

such problems in Nepal," says former presenter Kaustuv Pokhrel, who now works behind the scenes. "The show was designed so it felt like your friend talking to you in a non-judgemental way. The hosts talk about anything under the sun, sexual and reproductive health, career or study concerns, family problems, whatever."

SSMK's format has barely changed over the years: two young presenters, the "best friends" of the show's title, discuss listeners' problems before introducing a short drama in which solutions are found. But the content has evolved to reflect the changing concerns of its listeners.

"After a couple of years we began receiving letters complaining that we were focusing on small issues when the country was in such a bad situation," said Pokhrel. "We had letters from young people who had joined the Maoists and were afraid to leave, and even from girls who had been raped and were too

afraid to tell anyone because of the stigma."

At the offices of Equal Access Nepal, the organisation that produces the show, the shelves are packed with letters from troubled youths. All are kept and neatly filed away in folders bearing labels such as "How to propose", "How to deal with rejection", and "How to say no".

But as mobile phone usage has exploded in Nepal, young people are increasingly choosing to communicate by text message.

Until recently, between 1,500 and 2,000 letters would come in every week. But listeners are increasingly favouring the immediacy of SMS messages and emails, as the way in which young people communicate changes.

Earlier this year, UNICEF launched a new free SMS service to allow listeners to send in their views. A website entitled "Voices of Youth" was set up to reflect their submissions, on questions ranging from how to prevent teenage pregnancy to how to deal with bullying and harassment.

"The response was overwhelming," says UNICEF spokeswoman Rupa Joshi. "We expected it to start with a trickle and grow, but from the minute we launched the service the floodgates opened and we realised this had immense potential."

More than 14,000 messages were sent in the first week of the trial program alone, and UNICEF is now looking at how the responses could be used in

helping the government formulate policy on young people. SSMK's success has inspired Equal Access to export the idea to other developing countries including Cambodia, Laos, and most recently Yemen.

In Nepal, a new generation of young presenters who themselves listened to SSMK as teenagers have recently taken over on the show.

Having benefited from its advice, they are all too aware of the importance of getting it right.

"I loved listening to SSMK but I never imagined I would one day be presenting it," said host Swarnima Shrestha, 22. "It's hard work, and we're under constant pressure because people take what we say so seriously."

Sabin Singh, 25, began his SSMK career as an actor in the dramas before graduating to hosting. He attributes the show's popularity to its ability to connect with teenagers on their own level.

"The listeners feel that this show is theirs," he says. "It's very much a two-way process. That's why they trust us, in many cases more than their own friends and family."

SSMK is aired on Radio Nepal every Saturday at 3.30pm and on over 30 FM radio stations.

equalaccess.org.np/saathi-sanga-manka-kura

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The power of one, #87



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Ncell has launched an internet data card called Connect. The data card is priced at Rs 1,999 and the SIMcard at Rs 99. Once connected to the USB port of a laptop, desktop or Mac, the data card automatically installs the required software to connect the network. Ncell has introduced the service in three packages. For customers with minimum internet needs, Ncell has a package of 500MB that costs Rs 499 per month. The medium size, 1,000MB, with the same validity period costs Rs 899 and the large size, 5,000MB, costs Rs 3,999. The pack can be renewed at a reduced rate of 2 rupees per MB. Ncell's Connect offers the highest internet speed of 3.6Mbps in areas with 3G network.



Insured paints

Asian Paints has launched 'Asian Paints - Jeevan Rakshya' scheme for painters. Under this scheme, every painting contractor or painter who accumulates certain points by purchasing Asian Paints products will be eligible for on the job insurance worth Rs 50,000 to Rs 200,000.

Booking open

Bajra and Shangrila Residency has inaugurated the Residency Apartments at Thadodhunga, Sanepa. Booking for the apartments is now open with prices starting at Rs 2,799,000.

Real run



The 4th Real Kathmandu Marathon 2010 will take place on 2 October. The marathon will start at Tripureshwor and end in Dasrath Stadium.

Participants can choose to run the full length, half length, 5km or just 3km.

Freezing offers

Navin Distributors, authorised distributor of Whirlpool products, has introduced Whirlpool's Protton Series refrigerators. The Protton 3-door refrigerator has three distinct cooling zones for different cooling needs. Buyers of Protton refrigerator will take home a Whirlpool 20 litre Solo microwave oven for free during the festive season.

Macro delivery

Sagar Infosys has completed delivering the Baleyo micro laptops to those who had booked it at the ICT Trade fair in July. Sagar Infosys had received more than 10,000 bookings for the micro laptops that were priced at Rs 6,500, exclusive of tax.

QFX launched



Quest Entertainment has launched a new brand for its theatres- QFX Cinemas. Jai Nepal and Kumari will now be known as QFX-Jai Nepal and QFX-Kumari respectively. QFX will soon be opened at Civil Mall in Sundhara.

Wiz kids

Maureen Almeida from Kendriya Vidyalaya and Rinkesh Basnet from Pacific Academy won the Horlicks WizTeams 2010 held at Army Officers Club. The two, along with one more student, will represent Nepal in Horlicks WizKids South Asia 2010 in November in Bangalore, India. The Winners of Horlicks WizKids South Asia 2010 will get an opportunity to represent South Asia in International Youth Initiatives.

New showroom

SB Furniture has opened a new showroom in Lazimpat. The showroom will showcase products of SB Furniture and Konzept brands. SB Furniture is a ISO 9002 and ISO 14001 certified company with its factory in Thailand.

Prize car

Bama Motors handed over a Chery QQ3 model car to Miss Nepal 2010 Sadichha Shrestha. The car had been promised to the winner of the pageant.

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Nepali changas at the Fighting Kite World Cup in France

KITE RUNNERS

As Kathmandu gets ready for the Dasain kite season, our own national team has just returned from participating in the 30th Fighting Kite World Cup in Dieppe, France.

The skies over the Channel city blazed with colourful kites from all over the world. What the *lokta ladaku changa* from Nepal lacked in flashy colour and exotic construction, it more than made up by its maneuverability and fighting spirit.

“The Nepali changa outpaces every other kite in terms of its ability to dive, dodge, spin and soar,” says Nirmal Man Tuladhar, who has been leading the Nepal team for more than a decade.

Listed among the 300 biggest world events, in all categories taken together, the Dieppe festival presented all the kite disciplines.



चो चाडबाडको बेलामा साम्सङसँग उपहारै-उपहार भ्याउनु । पाउनुहोस् - नजद उपहार, ५ वटा सि.इफ.इल. चिम, साम्सङ वि.भि.डि. प्लेयर, साम्सङ माइक्रोवेभ ओभनका साथै बस्परमा कावासाकि निन्जा मोटरसाइकल तथा हरेक साम्सङ एल.सि.डि. टेलिभिजनको खरिदमा टाइमेक्स घडी सिटैमा ।

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ACE PILOTS:
Nirmal Man Tuladhar (left) runs with his Nepali kite at the biannual kite festival in Dieppe, France, recently. Tuladhar holds a huge lokta kite with his partner Rajesh Shrestha (right).



Elaborately designed and artistically painted kites from China, Malaysia, Europe, India, and US competed for supremacy. Nepali kites stood out for their unique feature of being one of the few to be flown mainly to fight.

Lately, our own skies have been dominated by the "Lucknow" changa with their frilly and frisky avatars. Tuladhar wants to revive the tradition of the lokta changa, and says the Dieppe championship was the perfect place to showcase the amazing flying machines

from Nepal.

But the festival offers its participants more than a platform for showcasing. Each time it is held, Tuladhar and his partner Rajesh Shrestha are treated to a world of limitless imagination. The skies at Dieppe explode with colour and shape, becoming a gallery of flying artwork.

The festival also offers opportunities for cultural exchange, where kite fliers attend each other's workshops, encouraging the fusion of ideas. Us kite lovers at home

could make the best of this exposure by soaking in the spirit for innovation and creativity, perhaps by reviving the distinctive feel and look of Nepali kites to start with.

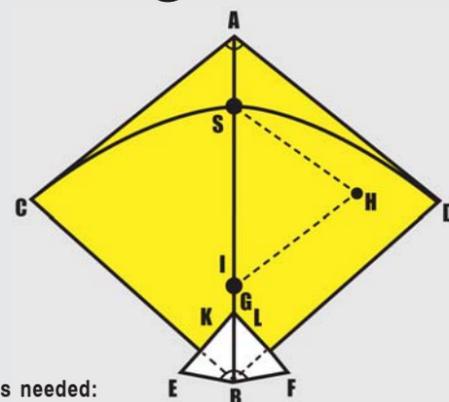
The kite jamboree is organised every two years and this year it was the 16th Festival. 🇳🇵

Shahani Singh

www.dieppe-cerf-volant.org/dccv/ukaccueil.html

 nepalitimes.com
Soaring and Sparring #264

How to make a Nepali Fighter Kite



Materials needed:

- A split bamboo of 3 mm trimmed to 1.5 mm for a bow stick.
- A split bamboo of 2 mm for spine stick.
- Two bamboo sticks of 1.5 mm for a beard (tail).
- A sheet of lokta paper of 8 gram.
- A glue stick.

Construct your own kite out of lokta paper.

Spine stick (length)	: AB = 45.5 cm
Wing (width)	: CD = 53.5 cm
Side wings	: AC – AD = 36.5 cm
Beard (tail)	: EK – FL = 7 cm GE – GF = 11 cm EB – BF = 7.5 cm GB = 10 cm
Bridle	: AS = 8.5 cm SH = 22 cm IH = 20 cm IB = 14 cm
Fold over the wing	: C – D = 14 cm x 1 cm
Bow stick	: 65 cm

10 things you need to know about Ncell Connect

1. What is Ncell Connect?

With Ncell Connect, you get access to the internet anytime, anywhere. No longer do you have to rely on a fixed line or poor internet speed. From your laptop, PC or Mac you can browse the internet with amazing speed - up to 3.6 megabit per second under 3G coverage area.

All you need is your PC/laptop/Mac, an Ncell USB data card and a data SIM card having the Connect tariff plan.

2. How does it work?

Plug the USB data card with the SIM card into your PC/laptop/Mac. The data card will automatically start to install the required software in your PC/laptop/Mac. Once installed, it will establish the network connection. Open the connection manager and click Connect. You will now be online. Enjoy the high-speed internet.

3. Where does it work?

As Ncell Connect uses the mobile data network, it will work wherever Ncell has the

mobile network coverage. Connect will establish link to the nearest network and you can go on the internet. You can go online from anywhere, even while moving.

4. What speed can I expect?

The speed of the internet depends on your location and how many other users are using the data network in your area. The maximum speed you will get is 3.6 Mbps. If you cannot get this speed because of your location or because many users are using the internet in your area, your speed might be 2 Mbps, 1 Mbps or 384 kbps. In any case, you will be getting a high speed internet connection.

5. What is the difference between the SIM and tariff in my mobile and the Connect SIM?

The Connect SIM is specially designed for the purpose of internet usage in PC/laptop/Mac. In your mobile phone, you do not consume as much data as on a PC/laptop/Mac. Therefore, Connect SIM is specially tailored for connecting to the internet from a PC/laptop/Mac.

6. I already have a SIM card which I use in my mobile. Do I need another SIM for using Ncell Connect?

Yes. To use internet through PC/laptop/Mac, it is highly recommended to use a Connect SIM. The Connect tariff is very less than the mobile internet tariff. So, if you use your regular SIM card in the data card, you will pay high tariff.

7. Can I make phone calls with Connect tariff?

Connect is an internet service, and can only be used for internet and SMS.

8. Is the plan prepaid or postpaid?

Both. You can choose the payment method as per your choice. If you choose prepaid, you load the account via SMS module in the subscription manager. You use the regular scratch cards as you find at any Ncell sales point.

9. Can I use other USB data cards with a Connect SIM?

Only if the data card is not locked to another

operator and if the data card supports the 3G, EDGE, GPRS network type of Ncell. We recommend you to buy the data card from Ncell to ensure best internet experience.

10. Can I use a non-Ncell SIM in the data card?

The data cards are made especially for Ncell's network and are not open for SIM of other networks.



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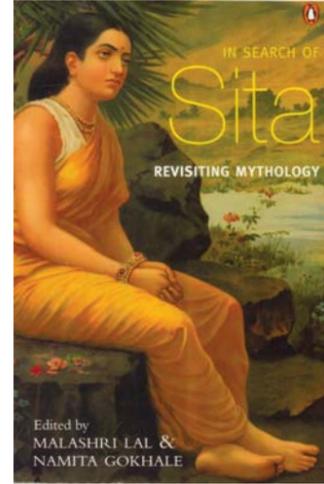
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www.npi-nepal.com

It was Lord Ram's victory over Ravan, the redemption of his honour at restoring the dignity of his clan, that we will be celebrating this Dasain. Nepalis will worship his prowess at warfare and good Dharma. We will also remember Goddess Durga, whose spirit was evoked to grant the victory of good over evil. Sita stands beside Ram in posters, statues and carvings. But our neglect of Sita is ironic when we analyse the psyche of most women in modern-day South Asia and how predominant her experiences are.

Sita is absent in our prayers, and has been misrepresented as well as misunderstood by readers of Ramayana. Her assertive qualities have been downplayed in several instances where she makes an appearance in the Ramayana. Her taking the agni



Search of Sita:
Revisiting mythology
edited by Malashri Lal &
Namita Gokhale
Yatra/Penguin Books, 2009

pariksha for instance, has been viewed by most as a meek submission to her husband's demands. Few see it as an act of defiance and rage at Ram doubting her in front of millions.

Hence, the question: Has the name 'Sita' become synonymous with 'docile' and dutiful? Or has her name retained anything of her assertiveness like when she stubbornly followed Ram to his exile? The essays and interviews in the book 'In Search of Sita: Revisiting Mythology' by Malashri Lal and Namita Gokhale explore these and other questions with regard to this mythological character, also engaging in dialogues of feminism today, the relation between social movements and women's status, and the interpretation of Sita in texts across South Asia. SS

For quiet lunches

It is quite impossible to find a restaurant in Kathmandu that does not have momo, chowmein or chicken chilly on its list of servings. But this is a welcome absence on Chai Chai's menu, prompting you to taste its unique recipes. One of the recent additions to the Jhameel restaurant lane, Chai Chai serves a blend of Asian and Continental dishes. Don't be misled by its name, tea here is available just in its regular variations. But do step in for Illy coffee and a range of refreshing cold drinks. Start with Vietnamese spring roll and try one of Chai Chai's most popular dishes, Chicken with sweet balsamic sauce and brown rice in the main course. The home-made bagel sandwiches served with soup and potato salad is also a good choice. The portions of the starters and the wrap are perfect if you are looking for a



KIRAN PANDAY

quick light meal and there are yummy desserts in offer. Chai Chai has a quiet ambience for lunch and dinner meets. The bar serves a selection of local and imported liqueur but you might go elsewhere if you are looking for a cocktail night. FM



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गरेर खान
लजाउनु पनि
हुँदैन । चोरेर, दाँटेर,
छलेर, लुटेर खान पो
लजाउनुपर्छ ।
जो जहाँ रहेर जुन
काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा
रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव
गर्नुपर्छ र सम्पित
मएर गर्नुपर्छ ।
काम नै शक्ति
हो, भक्ति हो र
मुक्ति हो । कामको

नेपाल सरकार
स्वचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय

EVENTS

A People War Exhibition, Nepal's conflict history in pictures. *Every day except Tuesdays, 11am to 4pm, Patan Dhoka. For school visits, call 5549948, www.apeoplewar.com*

Screening of *The Desert Eats us*, directed by prize winning documentary maker Kesang Tseten. *Friday 1 October, 4.45pm, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap*

13th ASA Annual Architectural Exhibition, exhibition by students of Architecture at Pulchok Campus, students works, designs and many more. *1 to 3 October, Institute of Engineering, Pulchok*

Baul Music and Songs, the Indian Cultural Centre presents performances by Shri Prahlad Bramhachari, a renowned Baul singer from Kolkata, India. *3 October to 6 October, inauguration by Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood on 3 October in Rastriya Naach Ghar, Jamal, 6pm, 4412018*



The Colours of Silence, Glimpses of Mustang, photographs by Italian Restorer Luigi Fieni. *Till 24 October, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Gallery hours: 11am to 6pm, 12pm to 4pm on Saturdays, 4218048*

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



Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, screening of Paa, featuring Amitabh Bacchan in a challenging role of a kid. *1 October, 6pm onwards, Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, Lazimpat*

MUSIC

New Orleans, Live blues, folk and Irish music and singing on acoustic guitar. *This Saturday, 7 pm, New Orleans, Patan*

Moksh, live music by Baja Gaja. *Every Tuesday, 7.30pm onwards Moksh, Pulchok, 5526212*

Fusion Bar, Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds playing live. *Every Friday, 7pm onwards, Dwarika Hotel, 4479448*

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

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams. *Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1200 per person, 4425341*

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest

Resort. *Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, info@gokarna.net, Rs. 1500 plus taxes*

The Café at Hyatt Regency offers vegetarian buffet. *Every Tuesday from 6.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

Arabian Nights in The Cafe, taste the culinary delights from the Middle-East. *Every Friday from 6:30 pm onwards, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Cafe, enjoy wood fired pizza with the superb view of Boudha stupa on the backdrop and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night. *Boudha, 2130681*

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*



Kakori at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kebabs, curries and more, enjoy Indian food at its best. *Everyday 7pm to 10.45 pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, call 4273999 for reservations*

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

GETAWAYS



The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. *Dhulikhel, Rs 3500 (Single), Rs 5000 (Double), 10 percent service charge extra, call 4479488 for reservations*

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Mountain warning



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

The trekking season is upon us, and it would be wise to remind ourselves of the warning signs of altitude sickness. Consider acute mountain sickness (AMS) to be a red flag. As you trek at about 2,500 m or higher you may suffer

from hangover symptoms, headache and nausea. But if you descend a few hundred meters, you may feel these symptoms subside. With AMS, it is likely that you will get better if you don't go any higher, or descend right away.

Peer pressure, an overriding ego, or wanting of their money's worth from the trek can make people with AMS go in denial of their weak condition. Dangerous complications ensue when

they push themselves and try to ascend higher. Water collection in the brain (high altitude cerebral edema, HACE) or in the lungs (high altitude pulmonary edema, HAPE) occur, as water seeps out of the blood vessels in these organs due to lack of oxygen brought upon by the inability to acclimatise properly. Symptoms of HAPE and HACE thus mandate immediate descent (by foot, yak, horse, a porter's back, or a helicopter).

Preventive aspects of "Lekh Lagne" (altitude sickness in Nepali) include the practice of listening to one's body. The sea level rule of "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" clearly does not apply at high altitudes, and strong and silent 'John Wayne attitude' would be life-threatening indeed. So don't rush up the mountain. Drink adequate fluids (about 3 liters per day), do not sleep higher than 300 to 500 m from the previous night's altitude, take a rest day every third day of your trek, practice the "climb high sleep low" technique, and take 250mg of diamox (acetazolamide), if you don't have sulpha allergy, two times a day if necessary.



GREEN SCENE

LEDing light

When electroluminescence was discovered in 1907, it was little more than a scientific curiosity. It took another 70 years for light-emitting diodes (LED) to come into use and found an application in infrared equipment and as the red lights that made up counters in early calculators.

But in the years since LEDs have become an important component of lighting equipment in torches, emergency lights and even traffic signals, vehicle brake lights, and outdoor street illumination. Unlike incandescent light bulbs or fluorescent tubes, LEDs use very little power as electrons hit holes within the device to create electroluminescence.

The main advantage of LEDs, which is of relevance for us here in Nepal, is their low electricity

consumption which makes it ideal for solar-powered lighting during load-shedding. There are now several companies manufacturing solar-powered LED lights for remote parts of Nepal.

"We designed them for use in Humla, but because of winter power cuts more and more are being sold in Kathmandu itself," says Dharmendra of Lotus Energy that installs solar lights in remote area monasteries and homes.

The other advantage of LED lighting is that they last up to 40,000 hours: four times more than fluorescent tubes and ten times longer than incandescent. LED lights are also very small, and can give any colour light depending on filter used.

"The main plus point is that it saves power and it doesn't use mercury and other harmful chemicals," says Anil Karki of Illuminium Enterprises which markets exclusively customized LED products.

The popularity of LEDs is growing, the only deterrent is the initial cost which is slightly higher than CFL. "But the payback comes from the energy savings," explains Karki, whose company has sold all billboard floodlights with LED at the new Civil Mall. Other clients include Chaudhary Group, Jagadamba Press, Gyanodaya School.

A ten-light system with 30-watt LED (equivalent to 150W of halide fixture) will cost Rs 170,000. This is nearly double of what it could cost to have metal halide lamps, however the initial expenses are made up for one-and-a-half years. LEDs also have a much longer lifespan.

www.illuminium.com.np
www.lotusenergy.com



KIRAN PANDAY

TALL AMBITIONS: Nepal's shortest teen Khagendra Thapa Magar, who has been working to promote NTY 2011, prepares to pose with Miss Nepal 2010 winners at a press meet organised by NTB on Friday.



KIRAN PANDAY

MODERN BABAS: Sadhus rally outside the CA building on Sunday before the PM election, protesting against inflation and unemployment.



KIRAN PANDAY

PYRAMID OF PEOPLE: The Kumari's chariot takes its final tour at Basantapur on Monday, marking the end of Indra Jatra.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

After a sputtering start and a vigorous climax the monsoon has finally withdrawn after three months. The rains came one month late, and most of the precipitation was in August and September. June and July registered an average 50% deficit, while August and September were above average in most places, especially western Nepal. The Valley's precipitation total was normal, although rice planting was delayed till mid-July. The southward migration of the jetstream has caused the westerlies to blow away the moisture bringing in bright clear days. There will still be some afternoon buildup over the mountains and some drizzles in the valleys and snow flurries till about 4,500m.



FRI SAT SUN



30-16 29-16 29-15

Old leaders of New Nepal

We are an incredibly young country, the leaders are incredibly old



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It was hard to shake off the feeling of déjà vu as the picture of Sushil Koirala on his hospital bed peered from the front pages of the newspaper the day after his election victory as Nepali Congress's new leader.

He was admitted to the hospital with a case of pneumonia merely hours after he was announced the president of the party. Candidates fielding for major political leadership positions may not have to present a clean sheet of medical report here, so we should perhaps be happy they issue pictures of themselves smiling as the nurses tape intravenous drips on their wrists. After all, they make Frank Delano Roosevelt look like a big scam artist.

You can treat sickness, but not old age. Sushil Koirala may seem like a newly hatched chicken compared to the



octogenarian ex-president of the party, but at 72 he is among the lucky 3.7 per cent of the population that goes on to live beyond 65 years of age. Not to forget the fact that the total median age in Nepal is 20 years old. We are an incredibly young country. The leaders are not.

More than half of the newly elected NC's Central Working Committee are above 50. A majority of the 'youth' members are above 40, only five are below 40. The NC calls itself a serious challenger to the Maoists. When the Maoists led the government in 2008, the party sat in the opposition "to play an active role in the constitution-making". It wanted to preserve freedom, analyse the government's drawbacks and shape policies. Now, its 66-year-old senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel is vying to lead the government. Democracy is supposed to be about choices, freedom, and hope.

At its General Convention, however, the NC showed it was unable to move with the times, unable to adapt to the changing reality. A recent report pointed out that the

age gap between the median age of the population and their leaders is higher in developing countries whereas opposite is true for developed countries. No surprise then that 40-year-old Ed Miliband was elected the leader of the Labour Party in the UK this week.

There is also a direct relationship between a country's rank in the failed states list and the age of their leaders, as some of the oldest leaders in the world will testify: Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak, Cuba's Raul Castro and Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki and Burma's Than Shwe.

Age is just a number, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh might say, who in his 78th year is steadfast in thoughts and physical movements. It is also true that with age one acquires a wealth of experience and wisdom.

Old patterns, however, are still alive and well in our political system and while there is the chatter about New Nepal, it would serve us well if the old indeed gave the new faces a chance.

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Once there was a leopard

NIRMAL GHOSH

DEHRA DUN – Most species depend on human goodwill to survive. The public's imagination is caught by charismatic megafauna – big bodied species, mostly mammals, which are instantly recognizable even to the man on the street. These include tigers and lions, orangutans, gorillas, whales, dolphins and elephants. Looking cuddly like the Giant Panda also helps.

All these species face an uphill battle for survival – but perhaps none more so than the large bodied predators, some of which, like crocodiles, do not appeal much to the general public.

What they are up against was dramatically illustrated last January when students training in camera-trapping of wildlife in the sprawling wooded campus of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) near the north Indian city of Dehra Dun and close to the forests of Rajaji National Park, detected the presence of a leopard.

It was not the first leopard to have come through the grounds. Thinning habitat and vanishing prey across India have driven leopards to the margins of their preferred habitat. In some cases, human habitation has come to them, leaving them with little choice but to live in a human-dominated landscape: sometimes in fear and conflict but mostly in peace.

Many of the students and faculty at the WII, were delighted at the leopard's presence. As scientists working for wildlife conservation, coexistence of people and wildlife is at the heart of the issues they grapple with. To have a leopard, a species now quite severely endangered, on the premises was to many, an endorsement of everything the WII stands for.

Not quite, however. Many in the area, including families of general staff members, were afraid of the leopard. Children had been instructed to stay indoors after sunset. After much debate the director of the WII apparently decided to have the leopard, a female with cubs, driven out of the sheltering scrub and woodland.

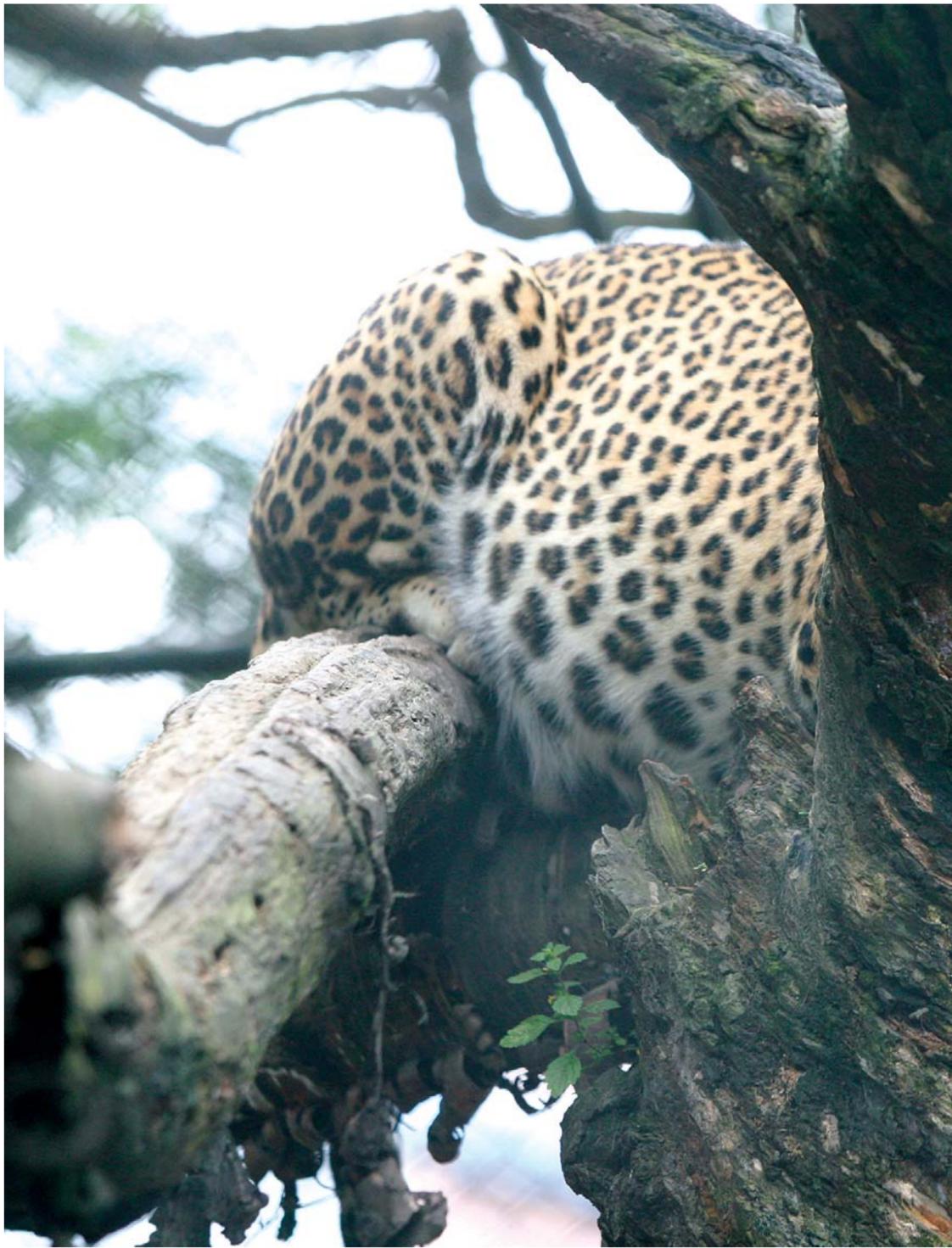
Parts of the scrub were cut down, and parts burned. In the process the leopard, cornered, severely mauled two people. One faculty member wryly remarked that it was a case of "people attacking the leopard" and not the other way around as claimed by local media. The leopard had lived in the vicinity for some time raising her cubs, without attacking anyone until the attempt to evict her.

The incident sparked outrage in conservation circles. If the WII could not tolerate a leopard on its premises, then what right could conservationists and scientists have to preach co-existence with and tolerance of wildlife, to communities living in and near forests?

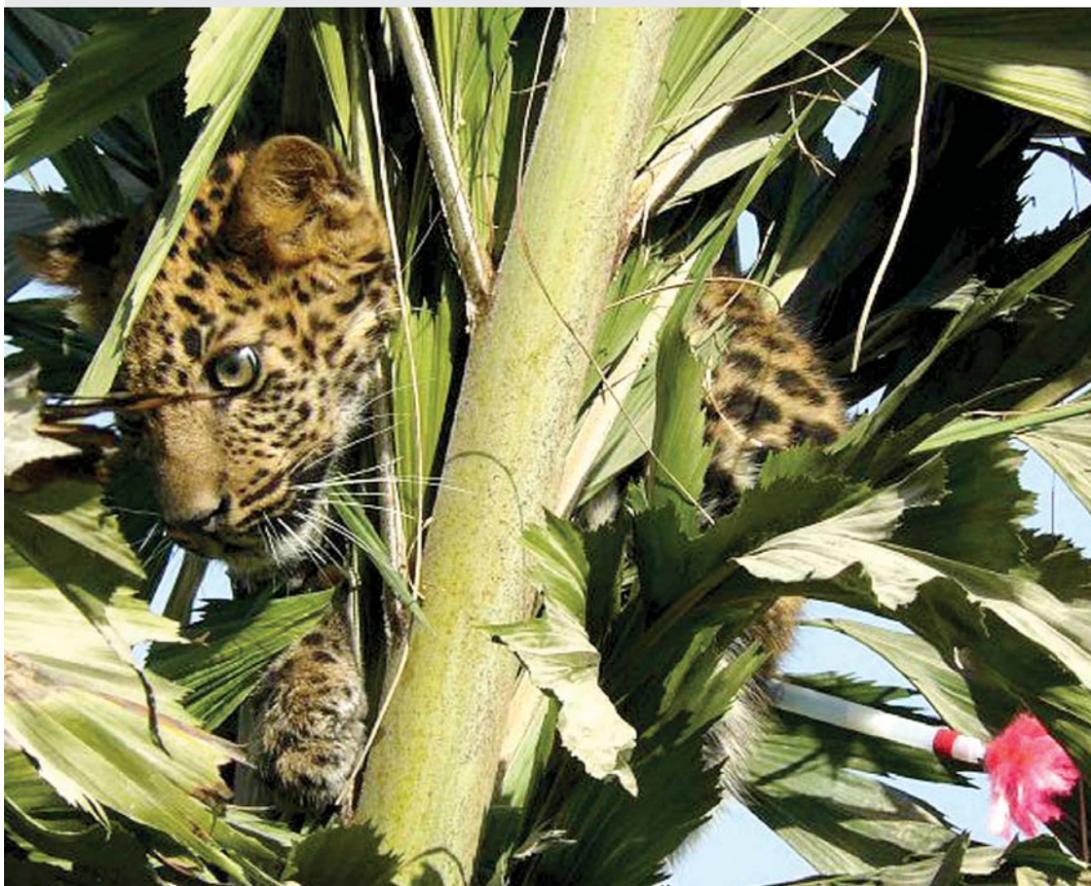
Many predators are what biologists refer to as keystone species. A keystone balances the opposing forces of an arch, without it the structure will wobble and collapse. Predators perform much the same function in the food chain. Remove a top or "alpha" predator and its prey species will multiply, with cascading consequences for the rest of the ecosystem.

Some conservationists maintain that co-existence of humans with large predators like tigers, is simply not possible without conflict - which the tiger will, like the WII leopard, of course lose. Tolerance for wildlife has diminished, across the world and also in Asia.

Nirmal Ghosh is the Thailand correspondent for The Straits Times, has written books on Indian wildlife and is a Trustee of The Corbett Foundation A longer version of this comment is on www.nepalimes.com. www.indianjungles.com



Nepal's year of the leopard



RABI THAPA

The spread of midhill forests is bringing the spotted cat in increasing conflict with humans

SHAHANI SINGH

The leopard mother and cub had wandered into the garden of a house in Dhapasi one morning last year. Locals raised the alarm, and the cornered mother was shot dead when it tried to break out. The cub was finally darted and caught, later set free in Shivapuri National Park.

Man-leopard encounters have become increasingly common in Kathmandu and across Nepal as the success of community forests has led to a revival of wild animals, which enter habited areas in search of easy livestock prey.

But most encounters result in tragedy, either for the farmers who lose goats or chicken, or for the leopard.

In Kathmandu, the Central Zoo has a darting team, but they usually arrive at the scene too late because of systems aren't in place for quick deployment.

SNOOZE: The leopard cub that had climbed up a tree at a residence in Dhapasi last year gets a dart in its flank (left). It was later relocated to Shivapuri National Park. A leopard that was darted and rescued after it strayed into the city takes a nap at an enclosure in the zoo at Jawalakhel (top).



KIRAN PANDAY

“There hadn’t been a clear mechanism for a rapid response team,” admits Sarita Jnawali, director of the Central Zoo, “a zoo’s actual role is to take care of the animals within it, not capture those in the wild.”

Since Kathmandu did not have an official wildlife rescue team, the Central Zoo agreed to take up the role. It has now hired an experienced wildlife vet, and a mobile tranquiliser team.

Naturalists say that the reason for frequent leopard incursions is paradoxically Nepal’s success in protecting its forests. The leopard, being the apex predator makes forays into the outskirts of Kathmandu or into villages when it is driven out due to competition, or due to depleting prey.

The problem is that most locals panic when they see a leopard, and think it is a man-eating tiger. Shanta Raj Jnawali at the National Trust of Nature Conservation says this spooks the leopard which then tries to defend itself. Leopards generally avoid people, and don’t bother them if they aren’t disturbed. But hungry leopards have been known to attack children if they are old or injured and can’t hunt traditional prey.

“If you sees a leopard, you should not disturb the animal,” advises Jnawali, “walk out of the house, lock it and wait for the rescue team.”

Rinjin Shrestha at the World Wildlife Fund Nepal advises against separating the cubs from

their mothers because she may come back looking for them. However, the leopard is much less well studied than tigers and not a lot is known about their territorial competition and other habits. There has been a study of tiger-leopard confrontations in Bardiya National Park, but there hasn’t been much research into encounters with humans.

Since it has been thrust by default into the role of rescuing leopards, the zoo has provided a grant to a student from Tribhuvan University to study leopard incursions for his master’s thesis.

With better knowledge of why leopards are leaving their natural habitat, a reliable rapid response system and better public awareness, leopard encounters in future need not end in tragedy. 🇳🇵

LEOPARD IN YOUR GARDEN?

- Don’t try to drive it away by making noise
- Don’t raise an alarm
- Don’t separate cub from mother
- Don’t panic the neighbourhood
- Call the police or Central Zoo’s Rapid Response Team (5528323)
- If leopard enters house, lock it up

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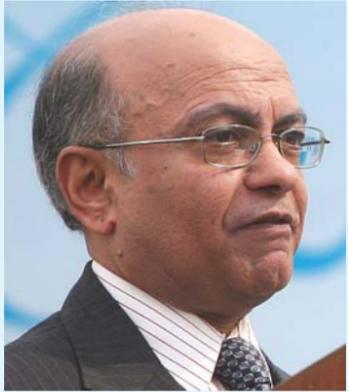
NEPAL TOURISM YEAR 2011
NATURALLY NEPAL

Gautam for president

Mahesh Acharya in *Kantipur*, 30 September

क्रान्तिपुर

NEW YORK: Nepal has increased its lobbying for Kul Chandra Gautam's candidacy for the president of UN General Assembly next year. Gautam is against the Qatari ambassador to the UN who has himself launched a spirited campaign for the post. Nepal is promoting Gautam through formal and informal gatherings and meetings. Those attending the current GA session have been discussing the merits of Gautam's candidacy at the side-line programs.



Home Minister Bhim Rawal forwarded Gautam's name for the prestigious post at the 65th UN General Assembly. Using this opportunity to meet the head of states and the officials of the member countries, Nepal has been requesting them to support Gautam for the post. Caretaker Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has also been meeting the

ambassadors of different countries in Kathmandu to promote Gautam.

Gautam's friend and East Timor's President José Ramos-Horta endorsed Nepal's candidacy at a dinner reception organised by him in New York this week and requested the nations for support. He introduced Gautam as the "Asian candidate".

Minister Rawal confirmed that Iran, Yemen, Solomon Islands, Nauru and other countries have agreed to support Gautam's candidacy during the G-77 and LDC meetings. Since the tradition is to elect the president unanimously, the Asian region representing 53 countries will have to nominate Nepal or Qatar by June 2011.

Risking their lives to go to school

Nagarik, 27 September

नागरिक

Come monsoon and students and teachers of Kota Tulsipur VDC of Kailali are compelled to put their life at risk every day to attend classes. Their school, Shree Secondary School, lies on the other side of Kada River. In absence of a bridge, the students wade and swim across the river to reach their school. In 2007, seven students were swept away by the river and since then, every year, two students have been killed while crossing the river.

Principal of Shree Secondary School, Laxmi Prasad Bhattarai, says: "Every year

students die as they try to cross the river. We haven't been able to conduct our classes properly." He adds that the students and the teachers would suffer less if there was a bridge on Kada river.

"We cannot come to school when it rains," says Nirmala Kathariya a student of the school. She adds that if it starts to rain they leave their classes and rush home.

According to the school, every monsoon, a majority of students of lower classes are absent. Established in 1972, the school has 1,500 students out of which 1,200 students are from Kota Tulsipur and need to cross to river to attend their classes.

Till when?



Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 28 September

नयाँ पत्रिका

The drama of the eighth round of PM elections has also ended. Despite being the only candidate, Poudel was unable to garner the required majority. His refusal to give up means that such meaningless elections will continue without a winner. The ninth round on 30 September is a futile exercise. Poudel has a moral obligation to withdraw and search for a new process. A group has been arguing

that since Poudel is the only candidate, he can be announced a winner. But this argument ignores the constitutional provision that the prime minister has to have the majority support in the parliament. These series of meaningless elections have overshadowed the more important issues of the country. It is simply the question of who will take the chair and it seems that every party is taking a selfish stance. Madhav Kumar Nepal's resignation will soon complete three months. To not have a new prime minister in such a long period shows failure on the part of the political parties. This is an interim period where the focus should be writing the constitution and nurturing democracy, not fighting for power. Why can't our big leaders understand this simple idea?

MPs hiding pins

Gorakhpatra, 27 September

गोरखापत्र

CA members are so ashamed of who they are that they have stopped wearing lapel pins. They are being branded as failures in the public eye, and there has been outrage that they are pocketing an allowance despite their inability to draft the constitution on time.



UML MP from Siraha, Ramrati Ram was humiliated twice in his home district when recognised as a CA member. He says that people have been commenting about "useless CA members" in the CA premises itself. He has stopped wearing his pin in public.

MP from Chure Bhawar Ekta Party, Keshav Prasad Mainali, has a similar experience. He was called a "Greedy MP" near the gate of the CA building by some strangers.

Mainali, however, says he will never hide his pin.

UML MP Naradmuni Rana keeps his pin at home and makes do with his ID card. The only time where he wore the pins was to enter the CA building during two elections for the prime minister.

MP Chabbilal Bishwokarma says that once people see the pin they ask "a thousand questions" and are rude. "It is better to stay incognito," he says.

Madan Puraskar

Kantipur, 23 September

क्रान्तिपुर

Mahendranagar- Nar Bahadur Saud's happiness knows no bounds after receiving Nepal's most prestigious literary award, Madan Puraskar, for a book that he wrote in a bedridden state.

The 48-year-old Saud's 'Nepal Ka Balinali Ra Tinko Digo Kheti' (Agricultural Crops of Nepal and Their Sustainable Farming) has been chosen as the recipient of this year's coveted award.

"I am extremely happy," he said, "my hard work was recognized, a book from the far west was selected and a book about farming was finally given due recognition."

A road accident two decades ago left Saud

paralysed from the waist down. Wheel-chair bound, he had been working on the book for the last 10 years. Saud graduated in agriculture from Palampur in India and started work as an officer in the National Agriculture Research Council. He was working as a Technical Officer of Dairy Development Corporation before the accident.

Saud is writing a book about mushroom farming now. "Every farmer should be given basic education on agriculture," he says. Saud lives with his parents and sisters 10km north of Dhangadi. His wife, who left for her parent's home after Saud's accident, hasn't come back. Saud's win has delighted his parents too. Saud's father said: "He used to write day and night. He has made us proud."

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E-mail: info@nawakantipur.com, URL: www.nawakantipur.com



I will plunge into the race, alone!
I plunged!

क्रान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha, in *Kantipur*, 27 September

To the streets



Interview with Maoist hardliner Mohan Baidya "Kiran" in *Janadisha*, 28 September **जनदिशा**

Janadisha: What is the purpose of the Extended Meeting next month?

Mohan Baidya: At a time when the constitution writing process is underway, a conspiracy is being hatched to derail it. There are issues of national independence, livelihood, class, caste, region and gender upon which the party should decide its stance. There is also a question of how to make the party revolutionary by defending the issue of class.

It is said the party is divided in the issue of

national sovereignty.

The party has an unequivocal voice regarding the issue of national sovereignty. No one is against the movement. We have to finalise the modality of the movement.

But didn't the party fail to continue the struggle?

At a time when we are engaged in constitution writing, foreign factor has become visibly active to obstruct the process. Now, national sovereignty has been the main agenda of the party. We said this issue should be dealt with first before the others. We have to fight the imperialists and their agents first to write the constitution, and then address the livelihood of the people.

Is it true that you are pushing for a new political formula?

This is not true. If we limit to being a democratic republic, what is the point of waging a 'People's war' for 10 years? India has a democratic republic but the movement is going on. We have to institutionalise the democratic republic system but we should not get stuck right there. We have to go beyond. These allegations against me come from those who favour the parliamentary system. In our draft of the constitution, we have mentioned the making of a People's Federal Democratic Republic, which means we will not just restrict to being a democratic republic. This is the party's decision, not mine.

So the party's plan of action is yet to be consolidated?

We already have a general plan of action: to establish the People's Republic, to take the People's Republic to a new level, to launch the movement of national sovereignty effectively, and to address the problems related to livelihood. We are fighting on three fronts: the street, the parliament and the government. The fight in parliament is to incorporate our ideas in the new constitution. If the constitution is not written, we will have to take to the street. The extended meeting will decide how to take the movement to the streets.

Politics free

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 24 September

कान्तिपुर



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

The government is on its way to forge deals with several domestic and foreign investors for building seven mega hydropower projects. But the Maoist decision to stop these projects has raised serious concern about the future of hydropower in the country. It is clear that the Maoist decision to halt operation of five projects with Indian and Nepali investment is politically motivated. In fact, some of these

projects had been given permission for feasibility studies by the Maoist-led government itself. The Maoist decision has come at a time when its leaders have been publicly complaining about how India has hindered them from forming the government and this can't be mere coincidence. Hydropower which remains Nepal's biggest hope for economic growth has once more turned into a political weapon.

Nepal's trade gap with India is Rs 17.7 billion, that deficit can only be plugged with hydropower exports. A World Bank report pointed out energy deficit as the biggest obstruction to commercial development in Nepal. Power cuts have forced businesses to use diesel generated electricity, which has led to a rise in the production cost. Also, millions of worth of generators and inverters are being imported every year. The cost is passed down to consumers. Last winter there was 16 hours of power cut every day. This year it is likely to be repeated. Instead of exploiting hydropower for political gains, the Maoists should be helping the projects to gather momentum. They should keep national interest above politics and call off their ban at once.

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Let sleeping dogs lie

After the roaring success of the Miss Aryan pageant, this week it was **Mr Hill Handsome**. The donkey's congratulations to fellow beauties Upendra Kumar Ban for being crowned with the BF Dear Hill Handsome 2010 Tiara as well as the first and second runners-up, Dipendra Karki and Bikranta Shrestha respectfully. Winners all get six packs each of Fair & Handsome Cream (Slogan: "Come to us if you think life is unfair and ugly.")

ॐ

And there are two groups short-listed for this week's Only in Nepal Knock-out Tournament: **petro-tanker operators** and **astrologers**. Oil tanker drivers who bring diesel and petrol from the Indian refinery in Barauni to the oil storage depot at Amlekhganj have been in the habit of siphoning off 250 litres from every tanker and passing that off as "evaporation loss". At current prices that means the tanker tycoons are creaming off Rs 20,000 for every ferry. Which is why the Ass wants to know why anyone would want to work for a living in this country. Anyway, Nepal Oil Corruption sends an investigation team down there



and it recommends that tanker drivers can't steal 250 litres anymore. So what do the **tankeristas** do? What they have always done: threaten to stop the supply of gas to the capital. And what does the government do? It gives in to the demand by the oil mafia to be allowed to keep stealing.

And that brings us to our **telly-astrologers** who provide citizens with valuable forecasts and answer queries from viewers across Nepal. These hourly fortune telling programs are some of the highest rated in the land. Now, our astrologers are facing

strong competition from Indian futurists who apparently have a much better track record for accurate astrological forecasts, even better than their meteorological forecasts. Our soothsayers are understandably incensed that they are losing their following among the domestic audience. They have threatened an agitation unless the cable operators block Indian horoscope programs, failing which they will stop their own astrology programs on Nepali channels. You don't need an **Asstrologer** to prophesise what will happen next.

ॐ

Next year is Visit Nepal Year, but it is also the year of the National Census. But animal rights groups in Kathmandu have pre-empted the human census by announcing a **dog census** in the capital this week. All canines in Dogmandu have registered themselves, giving details such as breed, age, owner's caste and ethnicity, number of litters, and sexual preference, if any. A dog census has never been carried out before, and the donkey's guess is that these three sons of bitches (pictured inside Singha Darbar this week) were not counted.

ॐ

Here is a Press Release just faxed to us from the Afadol Bumps Samiti:

When some time ago the President visited our neighbourhood, Afadol, to open a Ram Temple, we were very excited. That changed when his security people decided to remove the speed bumps we were ever so proud of. We have no idea what His Excellency's staff were thinking: how can the bumps be a security issue? Were they worried the President would bump his head when driving down our lane? Is the man too delicate to deal with a few ups and downs?

Whatever it was, when the President arrived our lane was bump-

less. Needless to say the children and dogs of Afadol now face a security crisis. Bikes zoom through our neighbourhood at a dazzling speed. The primary school at the beginning of the lane especially mourns the loss of the beloved bumps.

Afadol wants to get its bumps back. We ask the President to give us back our speed breakers before someone gets bumped off. One suggestion for His Excellency: restore the bumps or declare Presidential Rule.

**Afadol Bumps Samiti
(Revolutionary)**

ॐ

And, in conclusion, some headlines you may have missed in this week's papers:

**Extinct Frogs Haven't Croaked
Man Jailed for Microwaving Hamster**

And you must have all read about the world's youngest dozer operator, the seven-year-old in Dolakha who exhibited his dexterity with a Komatsu to a cheering public. What next, a four-year-old who can fly a Twin Otter?

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