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## Nation's pulse

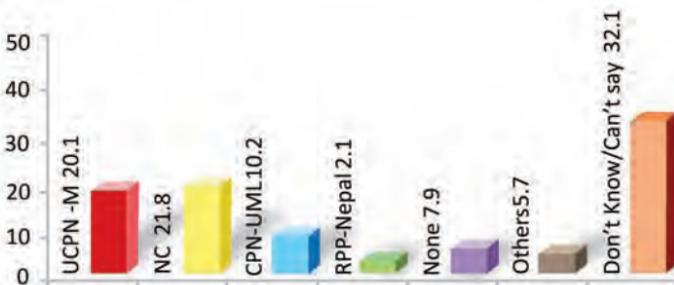
Himalmedia has been conducting public opinion surveys almost every year for the past 10 years. The 2011 poll was carried out last week in 38 districts, interviewing a statistical random sampling of 4,000 respondents.

Compared to last year's poll, the people are more vocal in expressing their frustration with the continued political deadlock. Their trust in the three main parties is at an all-time low. They see the continued polarisation between the NC and the Maoists as the main reason, but are convinced that the only way forward is a government of national unity.

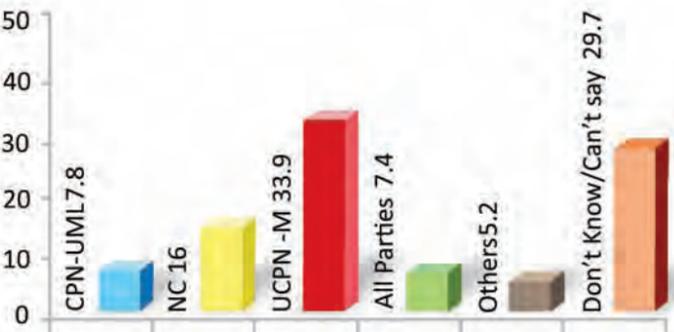
### The survey had some significant revelations:

- If the political parties mend their ways, the people are willing to grant a six-month extension of the CA, otherwise nearly half the respondents said it would be better to have fresh elections.
- A majority think ethnicity-based federalism is a bad idea
- Asked to name three main problems the country faces, a majority listed inflation, constitution deadlock, and political instability
- A majority felt health, education and transportation services had improved and reaffirmed the role of local communities in development, and they were for holding local elections

Which political party would you trust the most to lead the country towards peace, prosperity and democracy?



Which political party is most responsible for obstructing the constitution drafting and peace process in the last one year?



### Editorial p2

Not surprising that the level of frustration of the people is at an all-time high

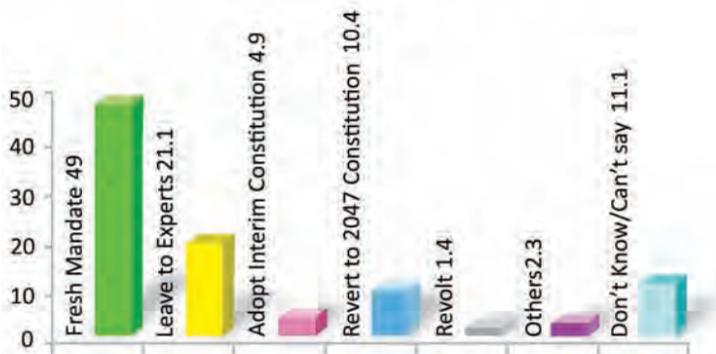
### By the Way p3

**Anurag Acharya**  
 The people say they want local and national elections to elect better leaders



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

What is the way out if the CA term is not extended?



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# FEW SURPRISES

Jhal Nath Khanal got a slap in the face when he visited Sunsari in March from a fellow-UML cadre. Last month, the Maoist CA member from Kathmandu, Jhakku Subedi, was slapped by a coffee shop owner who had voted for him in 2008. The results of this year's Himalmedia Public Opinion Poll, which we summarise in this issue, are a slap in the collective faces of Nepal's rulers since 2008.

There are no surprises here. Over 4,000 respondents interviewed last week across the country expressed huge disillusionment with the political establishment and with elected representatives.

Himalmedia polls have been held almost every year for the past 12 years. One consistent message that has come through in all these polls is that the Nepali people are traditionally moderate, they reject all forms of political violence and extremism, they yearn for peace and development.

They blame the political parties, but they also know that they have to work with them. This year is no different. It may be unfair, but a lot of the generalised blame has gone to CA members, who are seen to be a good-for-nothing lot, always absent from house sittings, just interested in collecting their allowances, or indulging in nefarious activities like selling their red passports. This is unfortunate because the little progress that was made has been in the committees who have worked on different sections of the new constitution. They got stuck on the political choices of future state structure, and there the hands of CA members have been tied because of a broader deadlock in political power-sharing between the personalities in the three parties.

The respondents pinpoint the ideological polarisation between the NC and the Maoists as the main reason for the delay, and a majority felt that if the CA term can't be extended new elections should be held.

If public opinion mattered, our leaders would by now have instinctively sensed the rising public anger and responded to them. Polls have little relevance in a country where politicians tend to disregard them, habitually whip up populist passions to cover up their inability to deliver, or take to the streets to terrorise the populace as a show of force knowing fully well how unpopular that is.

Even so, Nepal's rulers should take heed of this final warning. In a glaring departure from previous Himalmedia polls, this time there is a dramatic drop in the number of people who tick the 'Don't know/Can't say' response. The people have opinions, and they are no longer shy about expressing them loud and clear.

And the people, in their wisdom, while blaming the three main political parties for most of the ills the country faces today also see the same three parties uniting in a consensus government as the only way out of the crisis. And they don't

really care who leads such a coalition of the willing.

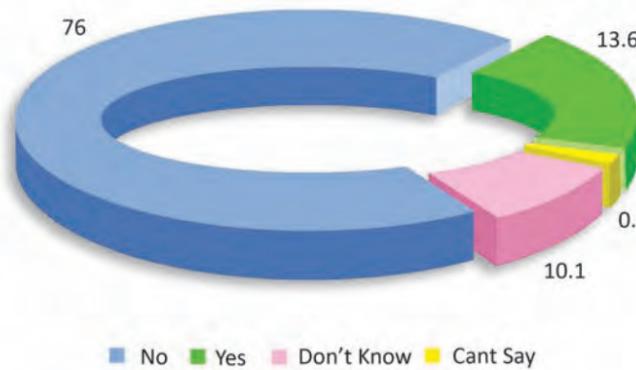
In response to a question about which party is the main obstacle to the constitution-making process, a majority single out the Maoists, while voting the NC as runners-up. Ironically the two parties also command the most trust of the people in leading the country to peace, democracy and development (one-third of respondents weren't decided). The UML trails behind in third place. Oh yes, and there is almost a complete rejection of an active role for the former king, or of presidential rule to fix the current mess.

Although opinion is divided about a presidential or parliamentary system in the new constitution, three-fourths of respondents (from all castes and ethnic groups) are categorical in their apprehensions about ethnicity-based federalism. Asked about the preferred model, most wanted to keep the current zonal break up or have provinces that integrate the himal, pahad and tarai.

The other surprise (or maybe it's not surprising, considering Nepal's progress in meeting most Millennium Development Goal targets despite political disarray at the centre) is that the majority of those polled feel there have been major gains in education, health care and roads. The responses ring true because on a 'control question' on electricity supply, most said it was worse.

And perhaps the biggest surprise of all for the cynical citizens (as well as non-citizens) of the capital is that a majority of Nepalis know exactly what is wrong with the country today, they know what the solutions are, and despite everything they are still largely confident and hopeful about the future.

Is the federal state along ethnic lines a viable option?



## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### TAINTED POLITICS

Everyone is complaining. Yet no one is doing anything. ('Curtain raiser,' #552) All politicians from the three big parties are best friends. They help each other, get richer and richer. The dirty, filthy politicians will surely one day meet the same fate as that of Hosni Mubarak or the disgraced President of Israel. It's only a matter of time. Everyone made a big deal about the Home Ministry, but the Maoists still got it. The US has 50 states and 100 senators and 435 House of Representatives. Nepal, a very small county, has 601 lawmakers. What a waste of resources and what a disgrace, especially with the scandal of selling and renting of diplomatic passports. Nepalis have nothing to be proud of these days, we always have to hang our heads in shame.

Shankar Lal Shrestha

### WHO LET THE GENIE OUT?

'The Bahun-dominated Maoist leadership can't put the genie back into the bottle.' (Editorial, #552) Why only Bahun-dominated 'Maoist' leadership? Didn't the Bahun-dominated leadership of all parties + the Bahun-dominated leadership of journalists and civil society egg on the Maoists to uncork that genie from its bottle?

The political and intellectual elites of Nepal including the Bahun editor of this paper hoisted and hurrah-ed the Maoists into our cities and government, into violent ethnic politics, et al. This kind of duplicity and dishonesty is why the youth of Nepal are leaving the country in droves. They know they can't trust their future in the hands of a generation of old, lying Bahun leaders - political, intellectual and journalistic.



### CLICK!

Kasto gazab ko tasbir! (Backside, #552) All three are getting instructions on their phones from their party bosses, Sushil Koirala, Prachanda and Jhalanath. As long as journalists are puppets of the political parties, there is no hope for FNJ.

SureshR

Mr Dixit, next time you're tempted to blame the political class for dishonesty or insincerity, look to yourself first. Were you thoroughly unaware of the Maoists' abuse of identity politics? If we can't expect honesty from the so-called 'intellectuals' of our country, how can we expect it from the politicians?

Anonymous

- The Maoists articulated the grievances of the marginalised and successfully channeled it for recruitment during the war. In the 2008 elections, they channelised it again, this time to get votes. Most Nepalis who don't know about how Lenin and Mao used ethnic autonomy not to devolve power but to centralise it through totalitarian state systems were easily duped, you write in your editorial. All this reminds me of George Orwell's Animal Farm.

### During the revolution

All animals are equal.  
No animal shall sleep in a bed.  
No animal shall drink alcohol.  
No animal shall kill any other animal

### After the revolution

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets.  
No animal shall drink alcohol to excess.  
No animal shall kill any other animal without cause.

Raghu

### HATS OFF

Keep on the great work. I sincerely appreciate the work that Sarita, Krishna and Rajani ('The power of three', Dambar K Shrestha, #552) are doing and hope their work will bring positive changes in the lives of children and mothers. I also wish that other men and women will be greatly inspired and follow suit.

Surendra

### WALK THE TALK

Mr Vaidya, what concrete plans do you have in your mind to create jobs? ('An investor friendly Nepal', Interview with Suraj Vaidya, #552) Just create jobs. Let people invest without any hassle. Can you make the business license process a 15 minute affair? Do you have any clout with this kind of change? Tourists who come to Nepal spend their day bored in their hotel because your country had a bandh and you want millions of people to visit Nepal? Business suffers due to the ignorance and incompetence of stupid politicians. Can you really do anything about these issues or are you just

another business leader who cannot walk the talk? Show us what you are made of.  
Joshua Clark

- Why is it that when a foreigner wants to start up or invest in a small business in Nepal, we are always confronted by suspicion that we have some sinister motivation? Why so hostile, when a less xenophobic attitude towards genuine small investors could provide a lot of jobs to young Nepalis?

Teresa

### WHEN LEADERS DON'T EMERGE

Leadership, that's what is lacking in Nepal. ('Who Cares?', My Take, #552) I want a leader to emerge, and I want masses to come spontaneously to ground, together, march into these government buildings and complexes, and take our destiny in our own hand. How I wish we could do this. But I know this is a pipe dream in Nepal. The poor perish, the middle class lingers on, and rich fly ever higher on the backs of the poor.

Raul

nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 553

**Q. Should Nepali Congress have joined the Coalition?**

Total votes: 2,070

Response	Percentage
Yes	39.2%
No	54.9%
Don't know	5.9%

Weekly Internet Poll # 553. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

**Q. Should the Jhala Nath Khanal government be replaced?**

# A decade of democratic deficit

Local elections needed to spur local development, most survey respondents say



**BY THE WAY**  
Anurag Acharya

April 2006 ushered in a new phase of democracy in Nepal. But at the grassroots, democracy had been in a coma for a decade: allowed to lapse by political parties, and then physically blown up by the Maoists during the war.

Elected local councils were dissolved in July 2002 by the Sher Bahadur Deuba government because he didn't want the UML to continue its local dominance. The VDCs, DDCs and municipalities remain without elected representatives to this day.

The popular perception in the media might put constitution drafting at the top of the agenda, but results of the Himalmedia nationwide public opinion survey this week reveals that there is extreme dissatisfaction among people about the prolonged absence of democracy at the local level.

The demand for elected local bodies is so strong that nearly half the respondents have asked for immediate elections to the local bodies. This is quite remarkable considering that of those polled, half feel that local representatives of the political parties are as bad as their leaders at the centre.

When Gyanendra Shah conducted local elections in February 2006, most of the people refrained from voting. This was during the war, and many felt it was a sham election anyway. But ever since 1990, Nepalis have shown repeatedly that they have tremendous faith in democracy and freedom. But the general mood of the 4,000 or so respondents surveyed last week shows that when the country is being held hostage by vested political interests at the top, people want accountability from their leaders, at least those at the grassroots.

The absence of elected representatives at the local bodies has not only stalled the local development works, it has also bred corruption. The all-party mechanism, which is entrusted with overseeing local affairs in the interim period, has become an exclusive club of powerful three parties, discredited for its lack of transparency and accountability. The survey reveals that people are largely unaware about the all-party mechanism, and most still go to their old elected representatives for any local matters. Those who have heard about it are largely dismissive of the all-party mechanism, and the sense is that they are no substitute for elected representatives.

Survey findings show that people in general feel that the education and health services at the local level have improved significantly, but they give little credit to the all-party mechanism that has been involved in local governance since 2006.

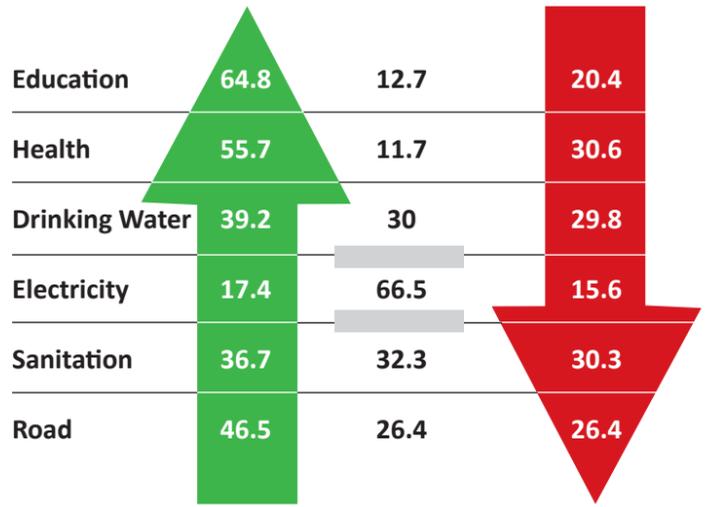
This improvement is obviously a cumulative effect of targeted government programs, surge in skilled manpower in the villages due to programs like CTEVT, consistent NGO presence in education and health and the foreign aid pouring in the country as a drive to meet Millennium Development Goals. Besides, the penetration of media in the remote areas appears to have also contributed to raising awareness level on importance of health and education.

Local bodies are vital to all democracies, and their continuous absence in Nepal has weakened the institution at its roots. The political parties who speak of institutionalising democracy seem to have forgotten its fundamentals: the foundations have to be laid before the structure can be erected. The Himalmedia poll also shows that although the political landscape looks messy, people are very clear about the way forward: they want local elections to kick-start local development again as it did in the early 1990s.

They also overwhelmingly want the parties to stop politicising development at the district and village level.

If the local perception is that health, education and transportation have improved in the past five years, imagine how much more progress we'd have made with more accountable elected leaders at the local level.

There is nothing in the interim constitution that prevents us from going for local elections. There is never a wrong time for democracy. 🇳🇵



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DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

# Hydrocratic dreams



GUEST COLUMN

Ratna Sansar Shrestha

Using hydro-dollars to mitigate our trade deficit with India is a myth

You don't need to be a Nobel-laureate economist to deduce that Nepal is technically insolvent. Our balance of trade deficit in the last fiscal year (2009-10) amounted to Rs320 billion. It was only Rs216 billion the year before. Our balance of payment deficit during the same period was Rs 2.92 billion. It was favorable by Rs38 billion the previous year.

The business community, renowned economists and the "hydrocracy" argue that the only way out is to export hydropower.

Susan Goldmark, the World Bank country director in Nepal, lent credence to this diagnosis by declaring that Nepal's GDP could be comparable to that of Saudi Arabia if we exported hydropower.

Actually, it is because Nepal for the past two decades concentrated on projects to export hydropower that we are suffering an energy crisis in both electricity and petroleum products. This situation will get worse unless policymakers refocus and realign the country's

energy policy.

Nepal's famed potential of 43,000 MW will generate 188 billion kilowatt-hours (units) of electricity if implemented at 50 per cent average plant factor (which ranges from 20-25 per cent for storage projects to 65-70 per cent for run-of-the-river projects). Exporting at 5¢/unit (the rate for peak-in West Seti power that India's PTC agreed to) will generate a revenue of \$9.4 billion/year, which amounts to only 3 per cent of Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2006.

Many people have also jumped to the conclusion

that exporting power will mitigate Nepal's balance of payment deficit. Not true. Even at a low ballpark cost of \$1,000 per kilowatt, implementing 43,000 MW will entail an investment of \$43 billion which is beyond Nepal's means. The only alternative is to build with foreign direct investment which will also mean that almost all of the hydro-dollars will get repatriated from Nepal as return on investment and debt service, except for royalties to be paid to the government (income from hydropower neither attracts income tax nor is electricity VAT-able) and a small amount spent on local salaries, a substantial portion of which will go for expat wages. The operation and maintenance cost of such projects and corporate overheads will also not stay in Nepal. Only three percent of the dollars we generate from exporting hydropower will actually stay in Nepal, and will help ease our balance of payment deficit to that extent only.

A country's economy benefits from value addition due to increased exports. This manifests in favourable balance of trade, triggered by augmented employment as a cascade impact of industrialisation necessary for incremental production for export. But in the case of hydro-dollars, value addition will not be commensurate to export, it will be limited by the quantum of percolation into Nepal's economy. Ninety-seven percent of hydro-dollars flowing out of the economy will not meaningfully add value,

and will neither increase industrialisation nor generate employment.

Nepal's priority should be to use hydropower for value addition and to wean ourselves from our dependence on imported petroleum (which aggravates the balance of trade and payment deficit) by electrifying the public transportation system (also generating carbon offset benefits) thereby ensuring overall energy security. We must also aim to supplant the use of animal and agricultural residue and firewood, which cause indoor pollution that reduces the productive life of, mainly, women.

This doesn't mean that hydropower shouldn't be exported at all. But it would be foolish for Nepal to have projects built to export at around Rs2 per unit, and import at over Rs10 just to mitigate load-shedding and perpetuate our dependency on petroleum. The country's best interest will be served by buying electricity at the lowest rate from developers capable of building projects cost effectively, and use the electricity to meet our own demand to supplant non-renewable and unclean sources. Nepal, not the project developers, should export the remaining electricity at premium price, because demand and price in India is highest when Nepal "spills" energy during the monsoon. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

No light at the end of the tunnel, #541



## "Power can be our most valuable export"



Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, chairman of Hydro Solutions, who has been involved in development of several hydropower projects, talks to Nepali Times about why power export is the most viable outlet from the trade deficit.

**Nepali Times:** How can we consider exporting power when we can't even sustain domestic demand?

**Gyanendra Lal Pradhan:** With 16-hours of power cut, the idea of exporting electricity may sound absurd. But in order to build capacity to export in next 5-10 years, we need to start now. The domestic demand is at about 1000 MW right now and even in next 20 years it will not surpass Nepal's hydro potential of 83,000 MW or more. Export is necessary because we will have excess power. Secondly, the opportunity cost of not investing in export projects is huge because unlike mineral reserves, electricity is a time bound resource. Once the water flows, it's a loss. Thirdly, focusing on export projects will optimise the usage of our rivers and decrease the cost per unit. For example, Upper Karnali would be constructed to produce only 300MW instead of 900MW, and the cost would be higher, if its export potential was not considered. And most importantly, electricity is the most valuable export for Nepal.

**How so?**

Our other exports such as manpower, garlic, herbs, and garment cannot help match the trade deficit of Rs 300 billion. Our biggest export right now is steel worth Rs 15 billion, but even this requires import of Rs 13 billion worth of raw materials. Hydro power is one area that can make significant contribution to the balance of payment without much need to import raw materials. The export does not have to be limited to India. We can also export to Bangladesh and there are more opportunities if the SAARC grid project is made possible.

**But such projects will not be possible in Nepal without FDI. Will that not endanger repatriation of profits?**

True, we do not have the capacity to invest in such projects and the international investors required will have vested interest in profits. But we need to look at the overall benefit to the country rather than complain about what will go into their pockets. Nepal's advantage

is in hydropower and this is one area where international investors will be interested. FDI means foreign currency will enter the country. Once a project starts, local people will get employment. Local resources will be bought and used. And when it completes, government will earn in terms of tax royalty and power capacity.

**What needs to be done policy-wise to ensure that the country benefits?**

A special office has to be initiated under the prime minister to oversee FDI projects in hydropower. We have to insert the clause to be able to buy back power when there is shortage. Policy about the benefits to the local community has to be clear. Local employment can be ensured by adding regulations that require international projects to employ local manpower. We have to have political consensus, proper dialogue and security for these projects to run. We have to take advantage of our hydro potential and make smart decisions.

# A costly constitution

Taxpayers must demand the CA their money's worth



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

Two hundred Nepalis with no overt political affiliations gathered at Kathmandu's Maitighar Mandala last Saturday to make this point: despite being paid by taxpayers for the past two plus one years, 601 Constituent Assembly members have failed to draft a constitution.

Tomorrow, in greater numbers, the protestors plan to assemble outside the CA premises in New Baneswor to demand a constitution.

**The future:** At present, the political horizon looks uncertain. The extended deadline for completing the work for the constitution

## BIZ BRIEFS

### New boss

Software Paradigms International Group an Atlanta based technology services and financial solutions organisation has acquired WorldLink Technologies. Renamed SPI Nepal, the organisation promises career opportunities for over 250 IT professionals.

### Celebration

KIST Bank celebrated its ninth anniversary with blood donation program at its central office and four of its branches. The bank also organised clean up activities.

### Check-up

Advanced Poly Clinic is celebrating the opening of its Pokhara branch by conducting a free health camp from 15-21 May. The camp will offer multiple specialties including OPD check up, blood sugar, cholesterol, ECG and blood pressure measurement.

### Happy lions

The Lion Corporation Japan, Lion Corporation (Thailand) and Nepal Thailand Trade Corporation jointly launched the Lion Products in the Nepalese market. Their products include personal care products, OTC medicines and functional foods.

### Stylish Nima

Nima Rumba has released a new album, 'PROstyle Rangaun Ki Ma..' and PROstyle is promoting its ambassador by running a contest in the musical program 'PROstyle Music of Your Choice' of Image Channel. Lucky callers will get a chance to dine with Nima, get his autographed album and also win a bumper prizes worth NPR 40,000.



BR/KANTIPUR

ends in two weeks. All indications spell that the CA is likely to vote to extend its term by six months to a year. Some speculate that the proposed extension may even be indefinite.

In any case we will be stuck with what will not be an elected CA, but a roguishly runaway CA controlled by a few party *netas* who are clever enough to mouth all the

right words about inclusive democracy. Despite progressive-sounding pronouncements, these *netas* remain a class apart: they continue to take a lion's share of credit for the success of fading-from-the-memory past *andolan*; they are seemingly accountable to no one; and their modus operandi is about keeping all decisions uncertain so that they alone are seen as the 'deciders' of Nepali

democracy.

The protest tomorrow must talk about how Nepal's future is bleak when the signals from the Kathmandu-centric political class remain muddled. In times of prolonged uncertainty, investors hesitate to buy, educated professionals emigrate, and marginalised Nepalis are left voiceless due to the partisanship of their local reps. We must

**PAY FOR WORK:** Social entrepreneur Anil Chitrakar and CA member Sunil Babu Pant at the Saturday's gathering, Maitighar Mandala.

not let each CA member continue to draw over Rs 50,000 of the taxpayers' money every month in cash and benefits without delivering.

**Next generation:** It's cliché that the Nepali population is young. 15 million out of 30 million Nepalis are 21 or younger. Yet Nepal's political discourse has never been about generational aspirations. What does the youth want to see in its future? And how can a new constitution help? These questions never figure into public discussions.

Tomorrow, the protestors must articulate their ideals for a future Nepal. Once this vision is engrained, then we can deliberate on what sorts of constitutional liberties and safeguards and checks and balances to write. Only then, the demand for a constitution will make sense.

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# Give and take

NC and the Maoists will each have to take a step back to end the deadlock



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



## MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

Jhala Nath Khanal's days as prime minister seem to be numbered. If indications from leaders of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal, the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML are real, we shall soon see a new government.

But would it be backed by a national consensus, which has been elusive since the election of the Constituent

Assembly in 2008? Time will tell, but leaders say there is no other alternative.

Whether Khanal stays or goes is immaterial. In any case, he hasn't done anything so far to inspire confidence in his leadership. So the all-important question, again, is whether the two principal architects of the peace process since 2005, the NC and the Maoists, reach a consensus.

The NC has demanded, and rightly so, that the Maoists first deliver on their promises vis-a-vis

a peace process without delaying the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants. Also reasonable is the NC's insistence on a lateral agreement on the new constitution.

Supremacy of the constitution and constitutionality (against parliamentary supremacy), periodic elections, independence of the judiciary, free press and pluralism – plus, an apolitical national army – would guarantee a democratic constitution. There cannot

be any compromise on these principles, however much the Maoists insist on diluting them.

The Maoist leadership believes that they have given too much but fail to acknowledge the successes of an abolished monarchy, an elected Constituent Assembly, and a secularised state. The leadership continues to sell to its cadre the impossible dream of complete revolution (a euphemism for state capture and one-party rule).

However, the NC, too, needs to make its own concessions. The form of governance need not be a Westminster-style parliament as the NC insists, arguing that a system of a directly-elected head of government would make the country more vulnerable to a one-party takeover. If the principles mentioned above are ensured, dictatorial ambitions can be foiled. And if watchdog institutions that ensure check and balance are weak, it wouldn't stop a party with authoritarian ambitions from being stupid.

The NC can also make a compromise on the electoral system. The NC has pressed for a first-past-the-post

system (where a candidate with the highest number of votes in a constituency is elected) and has only grudgingly accepted the principle of proportional representation under a mixed electoral system.

But the truth is that some form of proportional representation would ensure that smaller parties are heard. Of course, there are risks. Recently, four lawmakers— lone representatives of their respective parties or independent—are attempting to paralyse parliament. But not doing so would only further fuel the disenchantment of smaller parties with the system.

The result of the recent elections in Singapore should be enough to quiet those who oppose a proportional representation system. The opposition there has managed to get nearly 40 per cent of the total votes cast and has only six seats (an improvement from past elections) in the 87-member parliament.

So in fact, the NC could demonstrate flexibility on the forms of government and its elections without compromising the fundamentals of democracy. ■

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नोट: बम्पर उपहार योजनामा वार्षिक ग्राहक मात्र सहभागी हुनेछन्।  
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PROPHETIC PAINTER: K G Ranjit previews his snowless Himalaya from his studio in Kathmandu. A work from Ranjit's upcoming series (*below*) portrays nature's terrible reprisal.

PICS: MARCUS BENIGNO

# MOVING MOUNTAINS

Renowned himal painter shifts to environmental awareness

MARCUS BENIGNO

Krishna Gopal Ranjit rifles through his closet and pulls out a canvass, on which an explosion of light radiates from its center forming a galactic soup of colour. On a second panel a maelstrom of apocalyptic proportions swallows buildings of historical and religious importance.

"Man will destroy nature," the 75-year-old landscape artist says in a frank and almost prophetic tone. The paintings constitute part of a series set to debut on World Environment Day, 5 June, at Fusion Studio in Thamel.

The Kathmandu artist,

noted for his naturalist depictions of the Himalaya, is heading down what he calls a "semi-abstract" direction. In a work in progress, the familiar shapes of Mount Everest, Lhotse and Makalu are still there but devoid of snow. The peaks are brown and grey, and tongues of flames lick the mountains from below, highlighting the ominous threat of climate change.

Ranjit's transition from realism to abstraction evolves in parallel with the transition from capitalist consumerism to the global environmental degradation that it led to.

Early in his career, Ranjit was recognised as Nepal's preeminent commercial artist for big

industry like the then Royal Nepal Airlines, for which he designed everything, from brochures and logos to hoarding boards and airplanes, all by hand.

"When we're born, the first thing we do is cry for our mothers. This is at the heart of commerce, the human relationship," he remarks half-jokingly. With no formal education, Ranjit mastered his craft out of survival, an impetus that instigated a lifetime of trial and error—a fact no more evident than in a visit to his workshop.

More laboratory than atelier, Ranjit's workspace is replete with oddities invented and fine-tuned for his own use: toothpaste tubes of acrylic coded according to hue, mini

spatulas fashioned from old toothbrushes, hair dryers for blowing drops of paint across a surface and needless syringes perfect for penning a steady flow.

But perhaps, most obscure is his use of *tukis* or oil lamps, a technique that would leave even sfumato painters of the European Renaissance astonished. Ranjit burns kerosene producing a stream of black smoke on top of which he swivels and turn a netted canvass. The result is a foggy portrait painted entirely with soot.

"It's hard to get a misty layer. There's a risk of producing something really dull," says Bibha Shrestha, curator at Fusion Studio. "Most people don't know about Krishna

Ranjit's talent beyond his work on mountains. In fact, he's constantly challenging himself with what he can do next. Even without a standard education, his techniques are bold and confident."

Aficionados may find the eschatological theme in his upcoming series a bit exaggerated and typical of the times, but when juxtaposed with his entire canon of art, one can only appreciate his drastic shift as a beacon call to action. By his brush, hair dryer, syringe, and smoke, Ranjit draws awareness to the global environmental crisis. 

"Revival," an alternating exhibition of previous works by Ranjit, will show until the opening of his new series on 5 June at Fusion Studio in Thamel.



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नेपाल सरकार  
स्वना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय  
स्वना विभाग

**EVENTS**

**Kalashaktishwari**, painting exhibition organised by Centre for Health, Education, Training and National Advocay (CHETANA). 8 to 18 May, 2.30 pm on inaugural day, gallery hours: 10am to 5pm, *Newa Chen Art Gallery, Kobahal Tole, Lalitpur, 5533532, 9841224753*

**For the Supreme Right**, a discussion on social and political problems organised by Youth Today. 14 May, 8.30am to 10am, *In front of Constitution Assembly building, New Baneshwor*

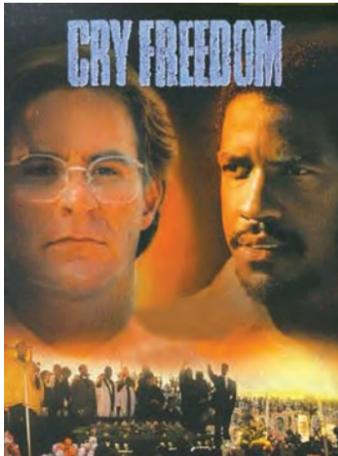
**Stories in Photos**, exhibition of photos submitted for a competition organised by the Photo Journalist Club. 12 to 14 May, 11am to 6pm, *Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, 420735*

**Photo Exhibition**, an exhibition of winners and selected photos of Mega Bank Photo competition 067. May 14, 3.30pm to 5.30pm, *Nepal Art Council, Babermahal, Kathmandu*

**26th Solo Arupan Painting Exhibition**, by senior artist Ramesh Khanal. 15 to 27 May, 5pm on the inaugural day, weekdays 10.30am to 6pm, *Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 5522307*

**Global Accent Training**, a program to help non-native English speakers better their English. 15 May, 5pm to 6.30pm and 6.30pm to 8pm, *Edusol Nepal, Baluwatar, 4412606, 9849452929*

**Discussion on 'Solar cult and some important icons of Sun and Moon of Kathmandu Valley'** by Dr. Bina Poudel. May 17, 3pm, *Martin Chautari, Thapathali, 4238050, 4102027, 4240243*



**African Film Festival**, organised by College of Journalism and Mass Communication. 23 to 25 May, 12pm to 3.30pm, *Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari*

**Discussion on Karnali Blues**, with author Buddhi Sagar organised by Himalayan readers book club. May 28, 3pm to 8pm, *Conference Hall, British Council, Entry- Rs.50, 9851076996/ 9849100300*

**The Revival**, re-exhibition of paintings by K.G.Ranjit. 13 to 19

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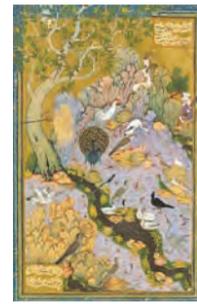
**Kizuna-a message of hope**

To show solidarity with Japan's children, UNESCO is organising a Post Card writing campaign. School children are requested to write a message of hope on a postcard. The aim is to deliver a post card to each of the thousands of children who were affected by the earthquake and subsequent Tsunami that hit northeast Japan on 11 March to remind them that they haven't been forgotten. The Sendai branch of the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ) will collect the post cards and then distribute it to the school children. Post cards should be sent before July 31, 2011 and addressed to:

*Sendai UNESCO Association,  
1-2-2, Oomachi, Aoba-ku  
Sendai City, 980-0804, Japan*

*Post cards can also be sent via the UNESCO office in Kathmandu  
(PO Box 14391, Sanepa-2, Lalitpur)*

**THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS**



The Conference of the Birds is a narrative poem by the 12th century Persian Sufi-Poet Farid-ud-Din Attar. Produced by Studio 7, the stage version of the poem is written by Sabine Lehmann and Ludmilla Hungerhuber. Studio 7 hopes to 'take the moral temperature' of the present day society with this production. It tells the story of a journey undertaken by birds to find a solution to a problem rife in their land. Danger, doubts and strange encounters fill their journey. Attars work is Sufi belief in an extended allegorical form with interwoven stories of great insight.

*The Conference of the Birds, 13-29 May, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 7.15pm, Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, Bijeshwari, Swayambhu, Rs.700, 4271545*

*May, 20 to 26 May, 26 May to 3 June, 5 to 17 June, Weekdays: 11am to 7pm, Saturdays: 12pm to 4pm, Fusion Studio, Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700562*

**Nepal Management Symposium**, organised by Kathmandu college of Management and KCM Student Council with the support of Three H Management. 20 to 22 May, *Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat, 9841568289*

**Book Sale**, sale of used books organised by Alliance Francaise. 28 May, 10am to 5pm, *Gardens of Alliance Francaise, Tripureshwor*

**The Government Inspector**, a play by Nikolai Gogol performed by Shailee Theatre Group. Every Thursdays till 1st week of June, 4.30pm, *Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari*

**Call for entries for Film Southasia**, a festival of South Asian documentaries. 29 September to 2 October, *early submission deadline: 31 May 2011, final submission deadline (for films made after April 2010): 31 June 2011, Film Southasia Secretariat, Patan Dhoka, 5552141, www.filmsouthasia.org, isa@filmsouthasia.org*

**Culturally Enlightened**, a cultural festival organized by Om Mahakal Film Production. 2 to 5 June, 11am to 6pm, *Tundikhel Ground*

**Outdoors Grind**, a pool side dance party organized by Party Nepal Outdoors. 28 to 29 May, *Riverside Spring Resort, Kurintar, Rs.3500*

**MUSIC**

**Absolute Live Music**, by Rashmi & Kitcha Band every Friday and performances by Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday. 7.30pm onwards, *Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, 5521408, 5549504, abar@wlink.com.np*

**KJC Faculty in Concert.**

*13 May, 6pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory/ Moksh auditorium, Jhamsikhel, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np*

**Yalamaya Classic**, a classical music event. 16 May, 5pm onwards, *Yalayamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka*

**Rap:Rock:Reggae**, a house of music festival. May 21, 6pm onwards, *Patan Musuem, Entry Rs. 300, 98419041005*

**La Fete de la Musique**, a music contest and concert organised by Alliance Francaise in celebration of the 30th anniversary of International Music Day. 21 to 26 June, 4242621, 4241163, *general.afk@gmail.com*

**DINING**

**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. But really, we can't wait to try their Margaritas. *Pulchowk opposite Namaste Supermarket*

**Lhakpa Chulo**, try the tender steaks and Thai-style salads. *Jhamsikhel*

**Alfresco**, for homemade pasta and other lip-smacking delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999*

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

**Dechenling**, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, their pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. *Thamel*

**Cosmopolitan Café**, located in the heart of Basantapur, this cozy café offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. *Basantapur*

# Let us eat cake



MARCUS BENIGNO

When reviewing a local eatery, I usually make it a point not to alert the restaurant of my eventual write up. But this time, in hopes to score a free slice of the legendary Chocolate Love cake at the Snowman Café in Jhochhen, I made my mission loud and clear.

Fittingly named, the Chocolate Love cake evokes homemade tenderness that even widowed grandmothers would pine for. Not too cakey and far from fluff, it strikes a perfect balance between its baked chocolate layer and its whipped choco-mallow topping.

Owner Ram Prasad Manandhar and his baker wife Mathura Devi have been letting Kathmandu eat cake since 1965. Like many of my favored joints, the Snowman's exterior is quite deceiving, and its sign isn't so original. Inside, however, is a two-story hangout equally popular with travelers and locals, evidently

decorated when free love reigned, a naughty poster of Sigmund Freud and the essential photo of Bob Marley hang above. But if you're not into the hippie scene, don't be repelled, takeover and special orders are common.

The Chocolate Love Cake, among other worthy contenders like the Cream Caramel, Black Forest or the Chocolate Banana Cake, is baked fresh daily and sits on a windowsill tempting passersby. So if you decide to visit the Snowman Café and regretfully decide to *share* a slice, make sure you fork the delicate cake top-down.

No WiFi or Illy here, it's all about the cake. 🇳🇵

Chocolate Love Cake	Rs60
Chocolate Banana Cake	Rs60
Cream Caramel	Rs70
Black Forest	Rs70
Milk Tea	Rs25



## SOMEPLACE ELSE

# Sing Ma Food Court

One of the pioneers of the Jhamel scene, Sing Ma Food Court has remained resolutely uncool through the years. Despite refraining from venturing into the upmarket dinner and drinks segment, however,

this purveyor of Singaporean-Malay fare is thriving. Unlike many of the other trendy restobars that litter Jhamel, Sing Ma is never empty, and has even opened a branch in Bhatbhateni.

The reason is simple. What Sing Ma sacrifices in ambience it more than makes up for with its rapid service and cheap and delicious food. With a range of rice, roti and noodle combos available for Rs 150-250, Sing Ma redefines the notion of fast food in Nepal, and challenges

the dullards who subsist on what passes for chowmein and fried rice here to open their senses to the street cuisine of the dragon city.

This cuisine is a reflection of Singapore itself, where Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures combine in what the hawkers serve up. Sing Ma tries its best to encompass that range. The result can be disorienting, as you dip a Malay-style roti into a rich, Indian-inflected gravy, take a luscious bite of tender Rendang fillet, slurp up some Cantonese fried noodles, and clear your sinuses with a fiery dose of Tom Yam soup. Before you dive into culinary confusion, I recommend the comfortingly momoesque pork Cha Siew Mae, which in its savoury sweetishness turns out to be something altogether. Sing Ma also does an excellent job of



incorporating vegetables and tofu into its dishes rather than as token sides. The brinjal and tofu combos work very well, and you'll have no problems finishing your greens when they come in the form of crunchy, stir-fried pak choi.

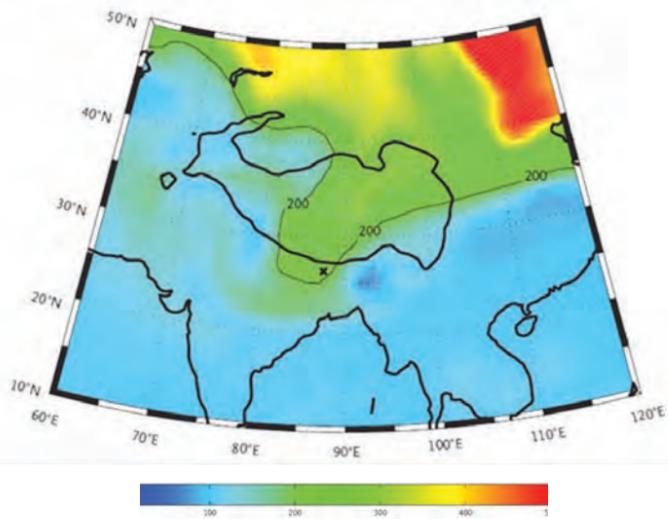
In lieu of beer, I suggest you wash this all down with an iced sour plum juice, and if you still have space, Sing Ma does a good selection of cheesecakes, too. 🇳🇵  
*Nepali Kukur*

*Past the Fire Engine Station on Jhamel's Restaurant Lane, opposite New Orleans, also at Bhatbhateni.*  
[www.singmafoodcourt.com](http://www.singmafoodcourt.com)

Space	★★★
Bread 'n water	★★★★
Service	★★★★
Deal-icious	★★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★★



# Ozone over Everest



**HIGH POLLUTION:** The green area denotes ozone-rich air migrating from industries in the neighbourhood in 2007. The thick black line encircles the Tibetan plateau and X indicates Mount Everest.



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Amazingly, pollution-related ozone concentrations in the Mount Everest region are reported to be very high as shown by John Semple, colleagues from the University of Toronto in a 2009 March issue of the *New England Medical Journal*. This is potentially alarming because death rates from respiratory causes are associated with increasing concentrations of ozone. The Mount Everest region is somewhere you can inhale

deeply without feeling a burning throat sensation as you do when you complete such a manoeuvre in Kathmandu. But if the ozone story is true, our lungs may be in for a rough ride even in the pristine Solukhumbu Valley.

Ozone concentrations in the troposphere have doubled globally since preindustrial times. They are now 30 ppb from estimates of 15 ppb in the pre-industrial era. And, not surprisingly, the major reason for

this is burning of fossil fuel. (Not to be confused with the stratospheric ozone layer which is "good" ozone and protects the planet from harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun.)

This is potentially a "double whammy" situation for the villages in Solu Khumbu region. Researchers have long known the risks of indoor stoves without chimneys that are used in Nepali villages. The risks are pneumonia in children, chronic lung and heart diseases in adults, and even lung cancer. Many people suffer from these illnesses and die young. Clean burning stoves with functioning chimneys, and social acceptance of these kitchen changes would go a long way in addressing this neglected area of public health in Nepal.

If more studies on ozone levels in Solukhumbu confirm the findings that Semple and colleague have clearly demonstrated, our government will need to bring this matter up in world fora so that people can at least begin to think what the practical solutions may be.

But in the meantime, replacement of old stoves by clean burning ones is something that is an eminently "doable" project that will save thousands of lives even as we tackle the potentially more complicated problem of trans-boundary ozone pollution in the Himalaya. 🇳🇵



**WEEKEND WEATHER**  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The April-May dry season this year has been unusually wet. In fact, it already feels like the monsoon, but we don't hear anyone complaining. Loadshedding hours have gone down and farmers are happy. The reason for the unusual precipitation is the consistently large infusion of moisture that blow up, cool and fall as rain. This satellite picture taken on Thursday shows the cloud cover restricted to the mountains, the plains are bathed in haze and dry. This trend will continue into the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
27-15	29-17	30-16



KUNDA DIXIT

**MOVE WITH THE TIMES:** Prime Minister Jhal Nath Khanal catches up with news from home after takeoff from Doha on his way back from Istanbul on Thursday morning. Khanal cut short his visit to the conference of Least Developed Countries because of the political crisis in Kathmandu.



DEEPPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

**PANORAMIC VIEW:** Photographer Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha, 82, discusses a panorama of Kathmandu Valley he took in 1959 with anthropology professor John F Fisher at the School of Creative Communications in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**GOLDEN END:** A rainbow arches over the Swayambhu Nath stupa after thunder showers on Wednesday.

## Consulting Opportunity

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**SNV Netherlands Development Organisation** is a leading international organisation that specialises in capacity development support to government, non-government and private sector organisations. SNV is committed to reduction of poverty that is consistent with nationally defined poverty reduction strategies and the global MDG agenda. In Asia, SNV is active in Nepal, Bhutan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and provides advisory services in Agriculture, Tourism, WASH and Renewable Energy sectors.

Within the framework of the European Commission (EC) funded programme "Developing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Methodologies and Services for the Informal Economy", SNV is currently implementing the High Impact Tourism Training for Jobs & Income (HITT) programme.

The HITT programme, aims to contribute to sustainable, scalable, pro-poor economic growth in 4 Sub-Saharan countries (Benin, Mali, Ghana and Mozambique) and 3 countries in Asia (Cambodia, Nepal and Vietnam) through the development and implementation of an integrated, market-driven tourism TVET system targeting the informal economy. More specifically, the HITT programme aims to expand access for disadvantaged groups (in particular women, youth, under skilled and semi skilled) to practical and market-oriented vocational training and facilitate direct links with the tourism industry to maximise income and employment opportunities for participants. SNV Nepal is responsible to manage the programme component for Nepal.

SNV requests a Nepal based international consultant to submit an application for:

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The primary objective of the assignment is to assist the HITT Nepal programme team in executing activities planned under the Inception Phase of the HITT programme and in particular support the implementation of the human resource development component of the programme.

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- Minimum of 5 years of professional experience in human resource development, with preference to those with experience in the provision of TVET for the informal economy and/or the tourism sector
- Proven ability to work together with private sector and public stakeholders
- Fluency in written and spoken English & excellent communication skills
- An organised, strong team player with excellent interpersonal skills
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Interested individuals/organisations are required to submit a letter of intent, a copy of lead CV including a daily rate by **20<sup>th</sup> May 2011** in the address mentioned below.



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# In search of lost Kathmandu

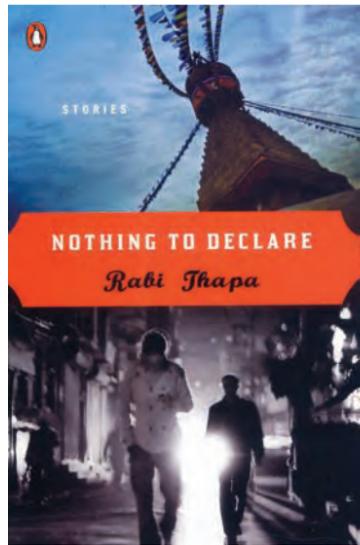
STUART MCCARTHY

At the beginning of *Arranged Marriage*, a story from Rabi Thapa's first collection *Nothing to Declare*, a grandmother tells her narrator grandson 'oranges are only good when they're ripe', alluding to the importance of young marriage. The narrator replies 'Do I look like an orange'. The joke works, like so much of Monty Python, on the disregard of the metaphorical for the literal, making what was said appear absurd. Thapa draws on dislocation to represent the cultural ground currently changing in Nepali society.

In many ways the protagonist is Kathmandu. A central story, *From the Road*, is a series of snapshots of Nepali life. The narrator, a Nepali travelling abroad, recollects 'the ceremonial run-up to Dashain' and, having described the events, ponders 'What does it mean that I have willingly joined in these rituals when I do not believe they are any more than just that?' The question resounds throughout the stories, seeking to gain perspective to form an answer.

Thapa has written, "... in writing about my places of Kathmandu valley, I sustain them, bring them out from under the rubble, and string them together." The collection seems to document Kathmandu, not in an attempt to hold onto the past, but in an attempt to collect and understand it for future and present generations. *Aryaghat*, a story about a cousin who commits suicide in the USA and whose ashes are brought for dispersal in the Bagmati, examines the loss of Nepali individuality. The narrator neither knows nor understands his cousin or his own parents.

There are moments of beautiful writing (see the conflict inherent in 'The dust of decades inside made me wheeze' looking at an ancestral home; 'Time folded into itself, the cycles of rice and dal as night and day', with its Asian Proustian feel; 'frames of time-softened carvings'). Laudable too are the innovations of language and structure – often a compounding of new and old. The styles range from the mythical (Valley of Tears) to simple 3rd person linear (Tiger!) to emails lined up in a diary form (*Arranged Marriage*); locals sing not



**Nothing to Declare** by Rabi Thapa  
Penguin Books  
Page 184  
Rs 320

Resham Phiriri but a 'famously camp disco refrain'; taxi drivers 'vocalise their insistent tooting'; note the subtlety of the final image of Swayambhu, '... the eyes of truth painted on the crown gazed impassively...'

Some stories however feel predetermined, as though almost journalistic, and contradictory to a living fiction. A writer who breaks into an otherwise objective scene ('The place [a dance bar] is almost full, not bad for a Thursday night.') suggests a lack of respect for the reader. More irritating is the lazy phrasing that appears. Compare the simplicity of the mountains after the rain 'soft to the eyes' with 'It was funny how it alternatively pissed you off, bored you, amused you' or 'chasing down the usual suspects with more than usual fervour'. Third person works better than first. The 'I' of *Arranged Marriage* is not totally convincing. *A Night Out in Kathmandu* and *After Party* generate limited sympathy for the characters largely because they are sketches. In *Desire* the pace is initially strong but the ending feels forced and reliant on exposition.

But I feel *Nothing to Declare* is an important step for Nepali literature in English. It attempts to look at the conflicts and striations of this country and tries to find ways of seeing them afresh. And for this, the gripes are outweighed by the success. At the end of *Aryaghat*, the sad grotesqueness of 'Come on, take photos!' for bereaved but absent parents still in the US is counterpoised with a scavenging boy who gets shooed away only to return. The story ends with the image of this boy, with 'black, heavy-framed spectacles' he's taken from the river, 'peering at us from behind them'. The glasses of the dead are used and perpetuated by a carrion-like living. I wonder what he sees. 📺

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# From basket case to bread basket



**UPWARDLY MOBILE NATION:** Dhaka's glittering new highrises are symbolic of this country's soaring ambition to break out of its image of a poverty-stricken country.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Forty years after independence, Bangladesh is poised for takeoff

KUNDA DIXIT in DHAKA

Ever since Henry Kissinger described it as a "basket case" and Joan Baez sang her sombre ballad about a million dead, Bangladesh has suffered an image problem. But, largely unnoticed by the outside world and even in its South Asian neighbourhood, the country has in recent years taken dramatic strides to raise the living standards of its 162 million people.

Bangladesh has gone from an aid-dependent to a trade-dependent country--ten years ago, foreign aid made up 10 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP, now it is a mere 2 per cent. Exports of textile and garments, and now ship-building and pharmaceuticals bring in \$25 billion a year.

At independence in 1971, 80 per cent of Bangladeshis lived below the poverty line, it is now down to 32 per cent. The country feeds itself even though population has nearly doubled in the past 40 years. Bangladesh may still lag in GDP per capita, but it is much further ahead in terms of human development indicators than India and the

country it was once a part of, Pakistan.

"It is to the huge credit of Bangladesh that despite the adversity of low income it has been able to do so much so quickly," says economist Amartya Sen, who adds that this is because of the work of non-profits like Grameen, BRAC and Proshika and committed public policies of successive governments.

The lesson for Nepal is that Bangladeshi politics until recently was also hopelessly stuck because of the "battle of the begums", but this instability was not allowed to affect economic and trade policies. Investment in education, health and basic services continued despite post-1990 party politics being as short-sighted as ours.

However, Bangladeshi democracy remains feckless, and proof of that is the way the Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of Grameen Bank, Mohammad Yunus, is being hounded by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Yunus has been forced out of the micro-

credit bank he set up and vilified in a government orchestrated campaign, all because he said he nearly set up his own political party.

Bangladesh's enviable achievements in education, health and agriculture present strong models for us. Nepal's prime minister hasn't been able to complete his cabinet in three months and it has only one woman, Bangladesh's prime minister, finance minister, agriculture minister, home minister and leader of the opposition are all women. The government's policies dove-tail with the work of Grameen and other NGOs in reducing poverty.

"We still have poverty, but the nature of poverty has changed," explains Shaheen Anam of the non-profit Manushi Janno, "people don't die of hunger anymore but there is a malnutrition problem. There is high enrolment but the dropout rate is still high. Our family planning was a success but we took our eyes off the ball, population is re-emerging with a vengeance because of premature policy changes."

Geo-politically, Bangladeshi strategists seem to have decided that it is better to engage with India than to bait the giant neighbour. In early 2010, newly-elected Sheikh Hasina signed an agreement with Manmohan Singh under which Bangladesh will allow transit through its territory to the Indian northeast and India will open up its huge market for Bangladeshi exports.

"There are political parties in South Asia that define themselves by their relations with India, they make their livelihood by being anti-Indian," says

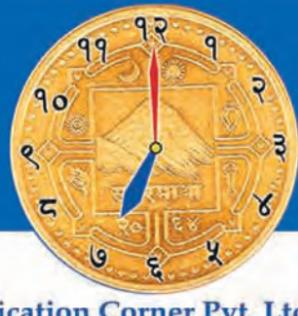
economist Rehman Sobhan, "we need to move on from treating big brother like step brother to a fairy god-brother."

Dhaka's glittering new highrises are symbolic of this country's soaring ambition to break out of its image of a poverty-stricken country. Businessmen are upbeat, and there is optimism here about the future. Much more than in Kathmandu, you get a sense here that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Debopriyo Bhattacharya of the Centre for Policy Dialogue in Dhaka says Bangladesh is like a jumbo jet that is revving up its engines. He says: "All we need now is a runway."

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL
Population	162 million	30 million
GNI per capita	\$590	\$440
Below poverty line	30%	55%
Under-5 mortality	52	49
Adult literacy rate	55	58
Life expectancy	67	58
Population growth rate	1.8%	2.3%

From UNICEF State of the World's Children 2009



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ONE WORLD

Ejaz Ghani

The geography of poverty and social deprivation has changed dramatically over the last two decades. More than 70 per cent of the world's poor now live in middle-income countries. This pattern, likely to continue into the next decade, raises important questions. Have poverty reduction and human development kept up with income growth? Is growth incomplete without social progress and gender-inclusiveness?

In South Asia the poverty rate fell from 60 per cent in 1981 to 40 per cent in 2005, not fast enough given population growth, to reduce the total number of poor people. In fact, the number of poor people in South Asia increased from 549 million in 1981 to 595 million in 2005, and from 420 million to 455 million in India, where almost three-quarters of the region's poor reside.

India has experienced slower income growth than China, which partly explains its higher poverty rate. But a country's poverty rate also depends on the degree of income inequality, a reduction in which makes growth more pro-poor, and inequality in China has, in fact, increased more rapidly than in India. So a rising tide really can lift all boats, with growth trumping inequality when it comes to poverty reduction.

Moreover, income growth has contributed to improved education. Adult literacy rates in South Asia match the global norm. But education outcomes lag behind when it comes to secondary and tertiary education, which are becoming increasingly necessary to thrive in today's world.

Nor have health indicators kept up with income growth. South Asia has the world's highest rates of malnutrition and the largest number of undernourished children, who have higher mortality rates, lower cognitive performance, and a greater likelihood of dropping out of school.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Incomplete development

Economic growth is not enough to fight poverty

More than 200,000 people in India die annually from malaria, mainly in poor regions.

And, while much of the existing international health-care assistance is focused on sub-Saharan Africa, India, along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, are just as devastated by neglected tropical diseases. Indeed, India alone accounts for one-quarter of intestinal worm infections worldwide and more than one-half of all cases of elephantiasis, leprosy, and visceral leishmaniasis.

Although gender parity in primary

education has improved in the subcontinent, dropout rates for girls are higher than for boys. The dowry tradition puts pressure on girls families to marry them early, leading to a preference for sons, and thus to sex-specific abortions targeting female fetuses. Legislation, courts, and law-enforcement mechanisms have failed to address the high incidence of violence against women. Death rates for young girls are much higher than for boys.

The paradox of South Asia is that growth has been instrumental in reducing poverty and improving

social outcomes, but poverty rates and social outcomes have not improved fast enough to reduce the total number of people living in misery. As a result, policymakers should begin to consider direct policy interventions to accelerate social progress, with a particular focus on human development and gender inclusiveness.

In today's uncertain world, social turmoil, gender deprivation, and rising conflict have tested countries' abilities to create jobs, promote gender equity, equip young people with skills, and design effective social protection programs. Tackling these challenges requires a clear understanding of how economic opportunities can be broadened to ensure faster poverty reduction, promote human development, and stimulate gender-inclusive growth.

Greater gender equality can contribute to economic growth and development, and major initiatives to increase opportunities for women can transform society. If more girls had gone to school a generation ago, millions of infant deaths could have been averted each year, and tens of millions of families could have been more educated, healthier, and happier.

Deeper social disparities should never be viewed as the inevitable price of rapid growth, and more egalitarian outcomes in education, health, and gender should not be considered 'second-stage' reforms. A development strategy that promotes growth first, and only then deals with human misery, is not sustainable. Policies designed to make redistribution more efficient need not hamper growth itself. 

*Project Syndicate*

*Ejaz Ghani is Economic Adviser on South Asia Poverty Reduction and Economic Management at the World Bank and editor of The Poor Half Billion in South Asia: What is Holding Back Lagging Regions?*

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## Choosing public schools

Sherbahadur KC in *Nagarik*, 1 May

नागरिक

Parents usually prefer sending their kids to private schools for quality education. But public schools in Butwal have established a reputation for being the first choice for parents. Govinda Gyawali, principal of Kanti Higher Secondary School in Ward 6 of Butwal, has been overwhelmed by the number of parents seeking admissions for their children at the school, which provides free education in English. "We had to send back many parents this time, but we have assured them that we will develop our infrastructure and increase our capacity for next year," he said.

According to the District Education Office, around two hundred community schools in the district have started English instruction. Principal of Shanti Model



BIKRAM RAI

Secondary School in Manigram says that 225 students from various private schools have taken admissions at the school

this year. Keshab Bhandari from Karahiya, who took his son out of a private school and admitted him at Shanti Model, says that both he and his son are happy since the school provides education in English like private schools but at a much cheaper price. Unlike Kanti, which raises funds by renting out space in its building, Shanti Model does not have internal sources to sustain itself. So the school charges a nominal fee to meet its costs which is comparatively much lesser than what the private schools

in the area charge.

Ultimately, Gyawali feels that public schools have to maintain a high quality of education if they want to compete with the private schools.

## Don't miss the chance



Letter to the editor by Shiva Raj Bhandari (Dolakha) in *Nayapartika*, 9 May

नयाँ पत्रिका

Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has once again distanced himself from the ultra-radicals. If his commitment to peace and constitution building is trustworthy then we have overcome a big hurdle. But going by Dahal's track record, we cannot be relaxed as yet. If we set aside the distractions, the peace process and constitution making are certainly on track. After much

hostility, cooperation and coexistence among parties, their leaders and cadres is a positive change.

The 1991 constitution was drafted in six months because of honest leaders like Manmohan Adhikari and Madan Bhandari on one side and sacrificing leaders like Krishna Prasad Bhattari and Ganesh Man Singh on the other. If the parties sincerely work to preserve the achievements of the Jana Andolan, then 2011 will be a landmark in Nepali history. Although the last three years have been spent in petty politicking among the parties, it has been significant when we consider the lessons learnt. The 17 rounds of PM election must have taught the parties that they alone cannot influence Nepali politics. The NC and the leftists have to understand that they are in the same boat. The culture of betraying and backstabbing once in power has to end and the parties need to re-establish their lost credibility. The onus is on the Maoists, otherwise there is a real danger of squandering this historic opportunity.

## Exclusive politics

Maina Dhital in *Kantipur*, May 8

क्रान्तियुग

Newly appointed minister Jayapuri Gharti has refused to take office until there is 33 per cent women representation in the government. She has also requested her party, the Maoists in the ruling coalition to ensure an inclusive government. Ironically two women members from the party have already taken their office. Even Urmila Aryal and Bhagwati Chaudhary from the UML have joined the government.

The Maoists have been demanding an inclusive state from the days of 'people's war'. The party had 40 per cent women in its fighting force. However, the party's representation in the government has been exclusive like its counterparts the NC and UML. The present cabinet which has 16 Brahmins/Chettris, nine Janajatis, three Dalits and seven Madhesi/Muslims has only five women.

Struggle for women's political inclusion has been setback by lack of unity among the women politicians from different ideologies and parties. They talk about united movement outside the government but readily abandon the cause once in the office. There is also dispute among the women lawmakers from different parties regarding the numbers and modality of inclusion. In such a situation there cannot be effective coordination or lobbying.

The parliamentary decision to ensure one-third women representation in all state institutions has so far proved ineffective. In such a circumstance, having a constitutional provision to ensure proportional representation of women will make little difference. It is clear that for the commitment of inclusion to translate into actual implementation, Jaypuri and other women lawmakers will first have to fight for inclusion within their own party.





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**NEXT QUESTION:**  
Poll enumerator Hira Bishural interviewing housewife Tara Adhikari at her house in Bhadrapur last week. More than 4,000 respondents across the country were interviewed.

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA  
in JHAPA



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

**F**ifty five-year-old Madan Ray of Chandragadi, Jhapa is bitter about the way politicians have put their interest above national interest. "Political leaders are engaged in their personal battles, nobody gives a damn about how we live," he says. He thinks the lack of agreement among the leaders has put the CA in crisis. "If only they were sincere, life would be much better for the twenty five million."

Chandika Prasad Bhurtel, 71, says he is not sure the constitution will be endorsed by 28 May, even if the political parties reach a consensus. "If the parties use the 1990 Constitution as a framework and incorporate the achievements of the Jana Andolan, a new constitution is possible within two days," he says. He sees Maoists' reluctance to part with its army as the major hurdle.

# Netas, are you listening?

Reporter follows pollsters around eastern Nepal as they conduct interviews for this year's Himalmedia public opinion survey

Krishna Tuladhar, 30, says five development regions should be developed as federal states since they accommodate all castes and culture in a mixed geography. "We should not make the mistake of creating federal states along ethnic lines," he insists.

Forty one-year-old Lila Prasad Tamang of Urlabari

in Morang is afraid the country will fragment. "The country will split into small kingdoms like in the past if the federal structure is decided on the basis of ethnicity," she adds.

Tara Adhikari, 35 of Bhadrapur and Mina Pokharel, 22, of Sunsari are more worried about inflation than the country's

political situation. "We had high expectation after the success of Jana Andolan, but things have just gotten worse," says Mina.

Pooja Silwal, 25, of Urlabari says she had pinned her hope on the Maoists and voted for them in the CA election, but she adds: "They have forgotten us and now are behaving like all

the others."

Dipak Bohora, 30, of Itahari is also frustrated with the way Maoists have been unable to transform themselves into a democratic party. "If they continue to keep arms the country will become like Afghanistan, and no one will be able to do anything about it, least of all the Maoists." 🇳🇵

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# The headlines, once again

This week we take a look at actual headlines from the national press and try to read between the lines.

## Chhetris Declare Band

It was bound to happen sooner or later. Nepal's warrior caste closed down half the country on Tuesday, declaring it a Chhetri Chhetra. Friday the Federalist Janjatis (which this week lost its donor funding) have their own banned. Now comes news that Bahuns also claim to be Janjatis because, according to some guesstimates, they settled in Nepal long before, let's say, the Sherpas. If the Chhetris have their own province, the Bahuns and Dalits will be the only ones without a geographically-defined state of their own, and under Nepal's new constitution can claim inclusive rights. Right?

## China upset over Taiwan Deal

It better be. Two months after reaffirming vows to its one-China policy, the JN govt goes off to coochi-coochi-coo with the renegade state and signs an anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism bilateral. This memorandum of



misunderstanding is even more inexplicable than making Larkya Lama a short-lived minister. What kind of money launderers and terrorists does Taipei want extradited from Kathmandu anyway? And we hear on the grapevine that even angrier over this than China is India, which has been trying unsuccessfully to get successive govts in Kathmandu sign an extradition deal. Wait, are the two linked somehow?

## Role reversals

The Madhesi parties and dons of the Kathmandu underworld seem to be on role reversal mode. Messrs Ganesh and Abhisek Lama are hobnobbing with Madhesi parties while Madhesi lawmakers are enjoying a much-deserved rest in various jails. Not that it made much a diff to the dons because their cells had cell phones so extortion, assassinations and business went on as usual. After Gayatri Shah and BP Yadav, six more lawmakers are headed for the can. The mafiosos, meanwhile, are seen gracing public meetings and rallies while the lawmakers expand their constituency among fellow-jailbirds who can be useful later on in their political careers as muscle-for-rent. Only a question of time, therefore, before Chari delivers an address to the nation televised live from his jail cell. Meanwhile, soon-to-expire CA members are experimenting with gender role reversals. A lady lawmaker got drunk and man-handling

her husband in public, ensuring proportional representation in all state activities, and getting even for centuries of oppression.

## Competition for New NEA CEO

Is this an open audition now? Going...going...to the highest bidder. Why restrict this to NEA, do it in NOC and NAC as well. In fact, the current practice of Pre-Paid nominations to state corporations should now be extended to all departments and ministries as well, especially juicy ones like forests, customs and hydro. Meanwhile at KNACK, Capt Limbu has locked out rival CEO Sugat Sir from his own orifice.

## NOC's Evaporation Loss

No wonder our state oil monopoly is bankrupt. Every tanker ferrying kerosene, petrol and diesel into Kathmandu is allowed 200 litres for evaporation loss. Even when the ambient temperature is 50 Celsius, petroleum doesn't vaporise at that rate. But that hasn't deterred the men from the Ministry of Under-Supply, the Nepal Oil Corruption, and the Tanker Drivers'

Cartel all taking their cut from the Rs 9 karod of petrol that is written off every month as evaporation loss. All this is perfectly above board and legal. And the reason there is a power shortage? All NEA staff are allowed 120 units a month free, and the public has taken its cue with 40 per cent of all power consumers in this country not paying for it. Tip of the Day: Another place to escape load shedding is Lazimpat, along the road where there are two important embassies and the vice president's official residence.

## Minister Attends Queen's Birthday

Not Nepal's ex-queen, Britain's Queen Liz II. Bharat Mohan Uncle stood in tottering attention during the 'God Save the Queen', but couldn't help breaking into a wide grin and tap dance through our very own "Sayaun Thunga Fool Ka Hami". Our new national anthem is definitely less boring than God Save but "Resham Firiri" would have been even jauntier.



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