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Sorry soldiers

Documentary films have been made about Nepal's female guerrillas, and photographs of them handling assault rifles have been printed internationally. They formed one-third of the PLA, often fighting on the frontlines. In some battles female guerrillas showed greater bravery, and many were killed in action.

Maoist women raised arms against injustice, but are now themselves victims of domestic violence. Khima Dangi (pictured with her daughter Garima, right) was wounded during the war, and fought next to her husband, Lokendra BC. But after the war, Lokendra pressured her to agree to a divorce so that he could remarry.

Sons of Maoist leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal and CP Gajurel have both seen their wartime arranged marriages fall apart. Their wives have been treated shabbily, while they go on under party protection.

Full story p12-13

Editorial

More than half the sky p2


Stateless in their motherland

Draft provisions on citizenship in the new constitution discriminate against children and spouses


p4

A nun's horrifying ordeal

p10

A FUSION SO EXQUISITE
 IT'S ENJOYED BY BOTH BLENDERS
 AND CONNOISSEURS.



USN/130068/11



ASHOK R SHAKYA

When the centre doesn't hold because the centre is so obsessed with gaining and staying in power, things fall apart. The state sinks into statelessness. So, when lawlessness is rife it may seem a waste of time to make even more laws. Yet, that is what we are striving to do with the new constitution.

There will be those who will rightly argue that if the 1990 constitution was respected, if there weren't powerful Nepalis

MORE THAN HALF THE SKY

who behaved as if they were above the law, if justice was blind, perhaps we wouldn't even need a new constitution.

Nowhere is this more glaring than in laws designed to protect Nepali women from discrimination. Nearly ten years after the legalisation of abortion, there are still women languishing in jails across the country, many of them reported to police by abusive in-laws and husbands after they gave birth to still-born babies. During just one month, there were four suicides by women in Rupandehi district recently, mostly wives who took their lives because they couldn't tolerate violent husbands.

Nepal's patriarchy asserts itself in less violent ways, too, in the dominance of men in positions of power in the bureaucracy, in government, in business and the media. It doesn't strike anyone as odd that among high-achieving overseas Nepalis on a recent book cover, there isn't a single woman.

Deep-rooted cultural discrimination needs several generations to eradicate, it needs a strong educational component. But one has to start with laws, even if they are flouted or ignored in the beginning. It isn't just a formality for Nepal to ratify international human rights covenants.

In this issue we look at several examples of social injustice in a male-dominated society. A rebel army that once had one-third of its force composed of women guerrillas, that stood for the liberation of rural Nepali women is now abandoning them. In hindsight it almost looks like the commanders condoned wartime marriages because the young girls could be used as "comfort women". More than 700 complaints have been filed

by Maoist women against their husbands, but the party and the government of which it is a coalition partner seem to have other more pressing concerns. (p12-13)

A nun was raped in Sankhuwasabha last month by a gang led by the driver of her bus. She is still in hospital, her family don't know where to go. The government Teaching Hospital admitted her only after the National Women's Commission got involved. The district administration in Sankhuwasabha is under pressure to let the rapists free. (p11)

A draft of the new constitution has clauses in it that are supposed to be an improvement on aspects of the interim constitution that were particularly unfair towards women. Guess what, the High-level Task Force has come up with provisions that make it even more difficult for Nepali women and their children to have citizenship after marriage. (p4)

The irony of it all, of course, is that foreigners are caught all the time at international airports with forged Nepali passports. It is common knowledge that non-Nepali men buy Nepali citizenship certificates under the counter, and go on to stand for and win elections. Yet, five million genuine Nepalis (many of them women and children) don't have citizenship papers.

But then there are also women like Sarita Thami (p12-13) who refused family pressure to get married, enrolled in school, is now in Grade 8 and is determined to be a teacher so she can help other girls like her in her community in a remote village in Sindhupalchok.

Nepali women hold up half the sky. With fairer laws and better implementation, they could hold up all of it.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

HOME COMING

All the best Ms Surabhi Raj Bhandari. Nepal really needs young people like you: positive, motivated, knowledgeable and, of course, daring ('The Nepali Dream', Surabhi Raj Bhandari, #562).

R Rai

- Thank you very much for the wonderful article. Each time I read such pieces it makes me want to return to Nepal. I did make an effort to go back in 2010, but I saw it was next to impossible for me to find a job. So I came straight back here to London. Perhaps, after I graduate.

Sunil

- Great article. Many Nepali people studying abroad see it as their duty to improve the situation of the country, but I feel like we sometimes consider ourselves 'saviours', much like Westerners do about the Third World. A better way to think of it may be the idea of 'giving back'. I like how, for you, coming back isn't necessarily about 'saving Nepal' or 'helping the poor'. You want to come back home just to be home.

Aditi Adhikari

- After spending nearly of decade my best years in few of the richest countries, working in probably the best institutions and after one of the highest academic qualification, I am back home working happily for more than a decade, a decision I never regretted.

Chyangba

- After spending over 25 years in the US and other countries around the globe, my wife and I have settled in Kathmandu. We are trying to pay our 'debt' to Nepal and Nepalis by initiating charitable activities. We are not involved with any INGO or NGO, and are completely dependent upon our own resources.

BP

- Returning to Nepal is a great thing, but the perception is that those who come back just couldn't get a good job. Next thing you know, a rumor is spreading around, speculating on your early return to the motherland. You explain that you genuinely



had no desire to live abroad, but you are compared to the person two blocks away, who lives in Australia who is adding two more floors to his house. Who wants to listen to this kind of negativity anyway? But to all of you who have come back, Jai Hos!

Praz

- As long as the rich and western education come back and work in INGOs, there will be no development in Nepal. Please use your education to create something meaningful and sustainable and one where the locals actually benefit from. Working in an INGO should be a job after retirement not an internship.

Manika

- I think it is commendable that someone, despite her privileged background and education, is passionate about returning and wanting to be part of a positive change in Nepal. But the best suggestion I can give to Surabhi at this point is to learn more about your country. Working in an INGO in Kathmandu and making sweeping generalizations about the country will not do you any good, nor give you any credibility. Travel, understand your country and its needs - then maybe you will have better ideas/means to make an actual, tangible difference.

ST

- I was in Nepal for a few months after

graduation, working for a media. I could not stay there for long and was eventually forced back to US because I needed money. My mind, nevertheless, rationalises the reason I left Nepal was because of the bandhs every other day. But after reading Surabhi's article, I have decided to fly back to Nepal and give it another shot. Hope things work this time.

Bhuvan Khanal

- I would return back to Nepal if the government would allow dual citizenship. I was born here in Baltimore (not the best place to be). But even though my parents are both Nepalis I was denied the right to naturalization, I might be an American just because I was born here, but I have an equal right to be Nepali too.

Issac Pun

- Stay in the US, work for one of these big businesses you seem to think will have you. Learn from them, they'll be very different to college then come back to Nepal and set something up that will employ Nepalis.

Yeti

- 'There is something valuable on this difficult road: home.' So true, Surabhi. It is our home that has defined us. The way we are, the way we behave and the way we see the whole world has everything to do with our home. When the time comes to do something for it, we must not hesitate.

Bikalpa Pokhrel

- I have forwarded your article to my daughters who, having graduated, are working in North America. While I do not expect them to return home anytime soon, I do want them to know of a girl, probably still in her teens, whose writing I have found inspirational.

P Rimal

ENERGY AND TOURISM

It is not only about tourism but more importantly, protecting the environment and improving the livelihood of the local population ('Generate electricity, or protect tourism', Paavan Mathema, # 562). Promoters of the project, including Mr Subash Karmacharya, should seriously reflect on who will it 'bring jobs to' and how it will 'help

in local development'. I am not against mega-projects, however, for sustainable development of the country, projects should focus on 'local development' through local initiatives and investments, rather than exploiting rural Nepal for the benefit of city-dwellers.

Concerned

- Well done, Megh ('Save our rivers from ourselves', #562). Keep up the pressure to find the correct solution for all who rely so much on the river for their living. Your sensitive understanding for future long term needs of all involved in this mighty river must be considered and not just short term gains of ready investment from the city to make a quick-fix solution at the expense of others.

L Sherpa

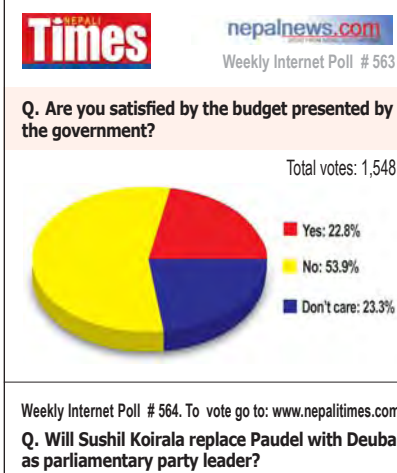
MAOIST INFIGHTING

The big question here is: What has Bhattarai promised Baidya, that Dahal himself could not, to get his support to be nominated as the party's prime-ministerial candidate? Are they really that far apart ideologically? ('The next move', Editorial, #562)

Anil

- Why single out Prachanda? He is not the only pathological liar in Nepali politics. They are all liars, they cannot live a day of their life without lying...so give PKD a break.

Ramesh Thapa Magar





BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

The Special Economic Zone (SEZ) bill will be tabled in parliament this year, and has already received a special mention in the budget speech last week. The government is keen on SEZs as a last ditch effort to woo foreign investors and create jobs.

The government circulated the draft of the bill 'Special Economic Zones Act 2008' three years back. It was either silent or deliberately unclear on three basic points: the environmental guidelines for the proposed SEZ, the rights of the workers in the SEZ and compliance measures for multi-national investors.

The proposed bill gives enormous power to the autonomous corporation to be established under the act which would be responsible for managing and monitoring the SEZ. What is most concerning is that the act does not have regulations to guide the functioning of the corporation. For instance, Article 3 of the proposed bill gives the corporation enormous power to select and recommend any part of the country as a SEZ. Article 4 specifies that the corporation must ensure that the proposed area is economically and logistically viable but does not require the project to conduct an Environment Impact Assessment or Social Impact Assessment.

Similarly, Article 6 give the corporation power to transfer the establishment and administrative role of the SEZ to the private sector. In the absence of clear



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SEZ who?

The onus is on the government to convince us that we need special economic zones

environmental and social guidelines, there is a danger that private management might turn indifferent to possible threats to local livelihood and biodiversity posed by future industries. The Bhrikuti Paper Industry in Narayangad is an example of failed safeguards that has led not just to massive pollution of the Narayani river just upstream from a national park but also the loss of livelihood of hundreds of fisherfolks and their families.

Article 36 gives the corporation complete authority to decide on minimum wages, and Article 37 states that any issue of worker's social security will be as per the individual contracts. This clearly means that the industries will have no obligation to abide by the national minimum wage or a standard working conditions and social security package including medical and life insurance. This raises philosophical and ethical questions on the responsibility of the state towards its citizens. Does our need for FDI outweigh the state's responsibility to protect its citizens?

Ujjaini Halim, who has

studied the SEZs in Asia closely over the years, writes in her research paper, Special Economic Zones (SEZs): Untold Agonies; Experiences from Asian countries: 'Strong motivation of the governments behind the promotion of SEZs is the desire to overcome

economic crisis and debt burdens. But the irony, in doing so most of these countries further expose themselves to a greater degree of vulnerability and risk, which was manifested in environmental, economic and social disasters at a later stage.'

ANTI-SEZ: Farmers in Singur stand firm on their land in protests in 2008 against the West Bengal government decision to set up an economic zone there.

Homegrown movements against SEZ in various Asian countries including India, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand are reminders that the economic well-being of a nation cannot run counter to ecological and social well being of the society at large.

At risk of being labeled "anti-development" it is time to ask some basic questions about SEZs in Nepal:

- What are the priority industries that SEZ will cater to?
- How much of the raw materials can be supplied internally for the proposed industries?
- What kind of manpower and skills are needed for the proposed industries are available locally?
- Can we provide sufficient energy, water, roads, etc to ensure a competitive economy of scale?

Unless there are answers, there will be public skepticism about SEZs, and whether they will be any different than the industrial zones already existing in various parts of the country. 🇳🇵



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Stateless in their motherland

Citizenship provisions in the new draft constitution reek of paranoia and pseudo-nationalism

KUNDA DIXIT

Among the many cases of abuse of human rights and injustice in Nepal that need to be addressed by the new constitution, one of the most widespread is the systematic discrimination against women and children in obtaining citizenship.

Draft recommendations by a high-level task force for the new constitution, while trying to correct discriminatory provisions in interim constitution and the 2006 Citizenship Act, have made it even more difficult for children and spouses of Nepalis to get citizenship. After public pressure in the Madhes, the interim government in 2007 gave out citizenship certificates to more than 2.5 million people, mostly in the Tarai, but one in six Nepalis is still without citizenship papers.

Maoist lawmaker Jayapuri Gharti admits that every child is entitled to Nepali citizenship in the name of the mother. “But,” she adds, “citizenship is also tied to national interest and it cannot be ignored.”

Gharti used to be much more forthcoming about the unequivocal rights of Nepalis to gain citizenship if either parent is Nepali. Her caution is now reflected across party lines where there is fear that relaxing

citizenship rules will favour Madhesi parties and have demographic and electoral consequences.

Nepal’s 2011 census questionnaire has a tick box for third gender, and even allows for same-sex marriage, but on granting citizenship to its own citizens the draft of the new constitution is one of the most regressive. In fact, Nepal will be one of only two countries in the world where children can’t be citizens by descent unless both parents are nationals.

Paradoxically, while genuine Nepali women, or naturalised children of Nepalis married to foreigners, are denied citizenship many non-Nepali men are caught with fake citizenship certificates or passports issued through bribery and have even been elected to office.

Citizenship provisions in the new constitution also violate various international human rights treaties of which Nepal is a signatory, including the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

At a CEDAW review meeting in New York on Tuesday, member Pamela Cross had tough questions on draft provisions in the Nepali constitution: “Why is even the language of the new constitution not able



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

NOT NEPALI

New draft provisions on citizenship would mean:

1. Children of mixed marriages will be ineligible for Nepali citizenship unless foreign parent switches nationality
2. Children of Nepali women married to foreigners would have to wait at least 15 years for their children to have Nepali citizenship
3. Children of a Nepali father will be denied citizenship if he doesn't help his wife get Nepali citizenship
4. Children of Nepali parents who don't have citizenship, or are unable to get one can't be citizens
5. Children whose parents' request for citizenship is rejected will remain stateless
6. Children abandoned by their fathers face hurdles in obtaining citizenship
7. Children of a parent in the process of switching to Nepali nationality will be stateless until the process is complete
8. A Nepali woman can't get automatic citizenship for her foreign husband even though a Nepali man can get one for his foreign wife

to address the inequality in conferring citizenship to children and spouse?” she asked. Nepal’s permanent representative, Gyan Chandra Acharya, replied that the constitution was not yet finalised and “due note would be taken”.

Other provisions in the draft deny children whose father is unknown automatic citizenship by descent, and put parents who don’t have citizenship on the same legal category as those who obtain citizenship by fraud. The provision prohibiting dual nationality also penalises children of parents who have to renounce their foreign passports before they apply for Nepali nationality. But since obtaining Nepali citizenship takes so long, children of such parents will be in protracted limbo.

Activists say the citizenship provisions in the new draft constitution reek of paranoia and pseudo-nationalism. Sharada Pokharel of the Women’s Pressure Group, says: “If a child born out of a foreigner mother, fathered by a Nepali can be entitled to citizenship, why should a child mothered by a Nepali be denied the same privilege?”

Rights experts recommend that two provisions in the proposed draft should be changed immediately to conform to international norms:

1. Automatically ensure citizenship by descent to children if either parent is Nepali

2. Expedite Nepali citizenship to spouses who wish to renounce their previous passport so their children do not suffer prolonged statelessness.

With additional reporting by Anurag Acharya



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Further details

Further details of this opportunity, including an application form, the criteria that will be used in selection are available on our website at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/nepal>

Footnote to Sugauli

Two hundred years is a long time to figure out where you belong



CHALO DILLI
Jyoti Malhotra

History, that capricious but determined avenger of the seasons, may have treated itself to a tiny cackle last week as India’s central government conceded to the formation of a political, autonomous body in the Darjeeling hills, dominated by people of Nepali origin.

Ok, so let’s align the chessboard right away. West Bengal’s new chief minister, Mamata Bannerjee handed over both power and resources to the new Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) on Monday in the village of Pintail. Hanging over the ceremony was the long, drawn-out shadow of the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli, which is a thorn in the flesh of every self-respecting Nepali because it forced the Gorkha empire to cede Darjeeling, Kumaon, Garhwal and Sikkim to the East India Company.

On hand to witness the creation of a new chapter in history, was India’s home minister P Chidambaram as well as Bimal Gurung, chief of the Gorkha Janmukti



KRISHNA SINJALI

Morcha and the prime mover behind the creation of the GTA, of whom it is sometimes said that he is less a character from a Shakespeare play than a familiar man-on-the-street from the small towns in the region.

The reference to Shakespeare is Gurung’s political stab in the back of his mentor Subhash Ghisingh, whose agitation in the 1980s for a separate state resulted in the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). The GTA is said to be much more powerful than the DGHC because many more people are elected, rather than nominated. A few weeks ago, Gurung “banned” Ghisingh from the hills, saying his “visa” had expired. The older man now lives in the plains in Jalpaiguri, fending off the symptoms of old age.

But the hero, or heroine,

of our story really is Mamata Bannerjee and her readiness to share power with the Nepali ethnic group which dominated the northern part of her state so soon after being elected. Perhaps Mamata had no choice because her overwhelming victory in the hills during the recent state elections had been helped along by Gurung’s party.

Mamata’s decision to share the development pie is an astute move. The GTA gets INR 6 billion for the next three years from the Centre’s kitty. Much better to be generous when the time is right, Mamata may have thought. At least, you can then hope to influence the nature of the new state.

But India is littered with a history of broken promises over the creation of small states: Telangana

from Andhra Pradesh, Harit Pradesh from western Uttar Pradesh, Bodoland from Assam, Vidarbha from Maharashtra, Bundelkhand from Uttar Pradesh again.

The big question that dogs both policy-makers and champions of federalism is whether small is always beautiful or that the “aspirations of the people” can only be met when you break up larger administrative entities. There may be a lesson for Nepal as it grapples with federalism in its new constitution.

“The creation of the GTA is certainly the way forward,” said Subhas Chakraborty, former professor of history at Kolkata’s Presidency College who also taught in Darjeeling, “provided the new administration does not misuse its powers and ensures democracy and pluralism.”

Chakraborty’s fears are founded not only on the usual avaricious grab for the fish and loaves of office, but also in reverse discrimination. Gurung’s party has demanded that parts of the Dooars between the foothills and the plains, which has a large concentration of indigenous peoples, also be incorporated in the GTA.

The star of people of Nepali origin in India is shining brightly these days. Gone are the charges of discrimination and that being Nepali they had divided loyalties.

There is talk now of converting Darjeeling into an education hub, attracting people not only from the Indian hinterland, but also from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Mamata’s description of the hills as a “new Switzerland” caused some mirth when it was made, but if Gurung gets his vision right, he could even find his dreams coming true.

The Gorkhas who will run their new body demanded a “separation” from Bengal because of the demands based on their special ethnicity, not because they were once part of Nepal. Two hundred years is a long time to figure out where you belong. The GTA just gave the Treaty of Sugauli a new footnote. 🇮🇳

Bank robbery

Is your bank ripping you off without your knowledge?



MY TWO PAISA
Paavan Mathema

Have you ever been unpleasantly surprised to find your bank balance less than your expectation? Only when you check your statement do you realise out that your bank has graciously charged Rs 200 or more for simple act of maintaining your account or for your debit card. The most common complainers at a commercial bank I used to work for were account holders who suddenly found out that Rs 500 disappeared from their account every month because they had not maintained the minimum balance. When they demanded an explanation, they were shown the fine print in the ‘Terms and Conditions’ they signed.

Many banks and financial institutions make millions each year from charges and penalties. Apart from maintenance fees, these charges are imposed for unauthorised overdrafts, bounced cheques, breaching the minimum balance limit and for several other conditions. Sometimes, changes made in the account’s terms and conditions which, by default, allow the bank to debit your account.



Principally, charges should only reflect the administrative costs of dealing with the problem. In other words, the customer should only be asked to pay the cost of fixing the irregularity in the account. But often, these charges are overpriced. It is difficult to believe that the cost of informing an account holder that he or she has crossed the minimum balance limit so that they correct it is more than Rs 250 per month.

Financial institutions argue that these charges are fair as they are contractually allowed to do so. But the issue is that in most cases the banks do not even make an effort to inform the customer about the irregularities in their accounts or about changes in the terms and conditions. When

you fill up an application for opening a new account, the bank asks you your mailing address, phone number, mobile number and email address. But this information is shelved, and used only when the credit card bills are due or when there are new schemes available.

Even the customers think that banks have a legal right to make all these charges and let them pass without complaint. But pick up the form of a new account for any bank, you will also find clauses such as: ‘The Bank reserves the right to amend these rules at any time and in any manner which the bank deems necessary with or without notice to the applicants or the public’.

Competition may have transformed several aspects of the banking sector in Nepal, but customers are still treated shabbily, as if the bank is doing us a favour and not the other way around. A bank that thinks the small guys don’t matter is doomed, but that message hasn’t sunk into most bank boardrooms. Easy cash earned by slyly cheating the customer can be costly in the long run. Customer is the king (well maybe president) still.

The central bank has to be proactive in ensuring that the banks play fair. Recently, Nepal Rastra Bank issued a circular regarding banking fees. It directed the banks to establish a front office and to inform all customers about the conditions of fees clearly. In absence of a consumer’s court, this step is not enough to protect customers. It has to devise a banking code that strictly ensures disclosure of every condition and cost involved in an agreement. The banks must also give customers an early notice of charges so that they have a chance to correct their accounts. Until then, customers need to be informed and aware themselves. 🇮🇳

BIZ BRIEFS

Handy videos

Canon has launched Legria FS405, a standard definition camcorder powered by a 1/6-inch CCD and 41x advanced zoom. Quick charge feature is able to power the camcorder for an hour’s recording with 20 minutes of charging.

Best car

Which?, a British product-testing and campaigning charity, has awarded Hyundai the Best Car Manufacturer Award. Hyundai’s i20 and i30 models have also received Best Buys award.

Micro showroom

Lotus Global International, sole distributor of Micro Cars, has opened a showroom at Uttardhoka, Lazimpat. It has launched Micro MX 7 Sedan Car and Micro MP III Van.

Multi cell

EOL, a subsidiary of Chaudhary Group, has officially launched Toshiba consumer products in Nepal. All Toshiba products are available with a 12-month warranty.



HIMALAYAN MAP HOUSE

A HAZY FUTURE

Growing affluence in the Indo-Gangetic plains is generating pollution that is ruining our mountain views

ALONZO LUCIUS LYONS

To the better-known threats to tourism in Nepal like global economic downturn or filthy cities, add a new one: the winter smog over the Indo-Gangetic plains that is obscuring mountain views in Nepal during the peak trekking seasons.

North India is one of

the most-densely populated regions on earth and steadily getting more affluent, which means more cars burning fossil fuels and more coal-fired thermal power plants generating electricity. In winter, the soot is trapped in an inversion layer 3 km thick, wafted across the border and up to the mountains by

prevailing westerly winds. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been investigating this Atmospheric Brown Cloud and found that most of it is from man-made emissions. It is particularly heavy and noticeable from November-April when rains that would otherwise

scrub the dust is scant. The contaminants can move halfway around the world within a week. A similar bloc of particulate air referred to as ‘Asian Dust’ is present over East Asia carrying smog from Chinese industry as well as fine sand particles from the Gobi Desert. The combined

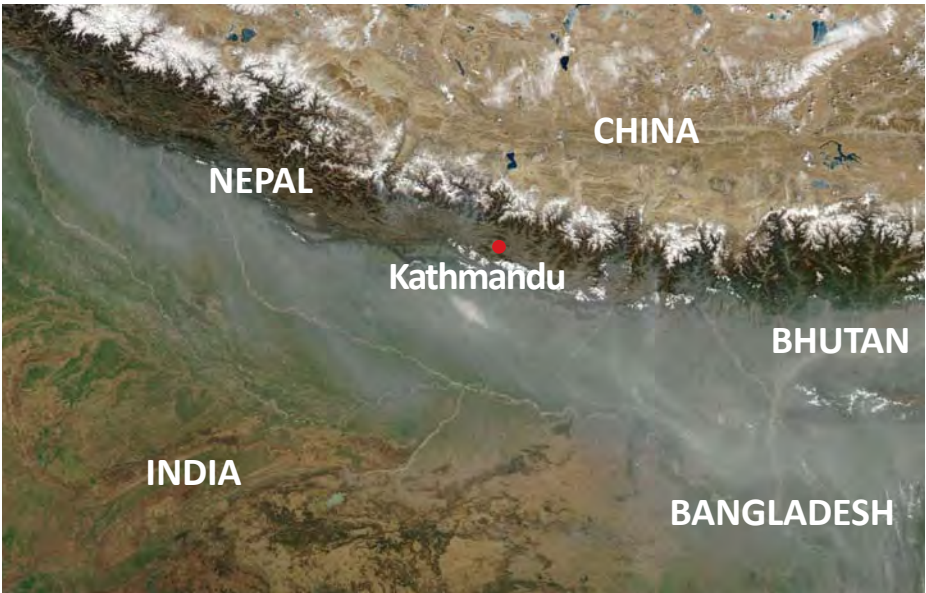
SMOKY MOUNTAIN: A curtain of pollution haze from the Indo-Gangetic plains up to 3 km high covers the Kali Gandaki Valley and veils this spring view of Dhaulagiri from Poon Hill.

effect of these masses of airborne pollutants in Asia is huge. People in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan



HIMALAYAN MAP HOUSE

BLACK PYRAMID: Machapuchre is 6990m high, yet it is almost devoid of snow in winter. Deposit of pollution soot is accelerating global warming and the melting of permafrost in the Himalaya.



NASA

EFFLUENCE OF AFFLUENCE: A NASA satellite image taken on 8 February 2010 showing the pollution haze over the India and Bangladesh which also creeps up the valleys in Nepal and Bhutan. The Tibetan plateau is in bright sunshine.



HIMALAYAN MAP HOUSE

use smoky fuels like wood, charcoal, coal, and kerosene for domestic cooking. Waste, including plastics, are often incinerated outdoors. The practice of setting fire to fields after harvests, brick kilns with smoky stacks and forest fires are other sources of soot.

Haze from the Indo-Gangetic plains covers 10 million sq km and stretches out into the open Indian Ocean. This dark layer of smog has worsened winter fog over the plains, and the haze spoils views of Nepal’s well-endowed, world-renowned scenery in winter and spring. The thawing of Himalayan glaciers is happening faster than in the polar regions, partly because of soot deposits melt ice and snow faster.

Nepal is one of the lowest-per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases, but it is being unfairly affected by the historical carbon emissions of the industrialised west, and now by the pollution from south of the border. There is a temptation to blame others and do nothing. Rather than looking at what others are contributing and waiting for worldwide consensus to mandate a plan, Nepal needs to pay attention to its own environment and each Nepali can adjust personal behaviour by limiting pollution.

One place to start could be to phase out the use of plastic bags and bottles as well as revive the holy Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers which have become dumpsites. The country also needs to reduce a growing reliance on

SEE FOREVER: One of the rare November days when northwesterly winds wash off haze from India and pollution of Kathmandu Valley to reveal mountains as far away as Dhaulagiri, 300km away.

imported diesel and petrol, and begin the switch to electric public transportation. With abundant hydropower potential, this would make both environmental and economic sense. This may not significantly reduce the smog over Asia, but it would improve the quality of life within Nepal. 🇳🇵

Alonzo Lyons, a Stanford epidemiologist, first came to Nepal in the mid-1990s and is the co-author of Trekking Nepal, Edition 8



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

UP WHERE THE AIR IS CLEAR: The mountains of central Nepal are enveloped in blue haze blown in from the south, while the high Himalaya, including Gauri Shankhar (left) and Mt Everest rise above it all.

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REPORTS

Bihar Way
Delhi Metro
Opposition in Crisis

COMMENTARY

United for Change
Betrayed Hopes
Vacant Local Bodies
Media Men

EVENTS



Expressions in Clay, ceramic art exhibition by Ceramic Hands, display of works created by local and foreign artists under the tutelage of Kalapremi Shrestha and 'P1' by Man Bahadur Harijan . *Till 23 July, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babermahal Revisited*



Hue/saturation, exhibition of photos by Sunanda Chandry Koning, organised by Chomolungma UNESCO Centre.

Till 23 July, 11am to 5pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

Funky Fresh E.L.E.M.E.N.T.S, a youth empowerment program for young hip hop enthusiasts above the age of 13 to harness their skills to become independent hip hop artists. *23 to 30 July, 10am to 6pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel/ Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, fee Rs 1000 (scholarships available), a pplication deadline 21 July*

Nepal Cine Symposium, a South Asia focused international film network and promotion platform for cinema which includes a film festival 'Something like a film festival' organised by DocSkool. *Till 22 November, Submission open until 30 August, www.cinesymposium.com, amanyu@cinesymposium.org, 4471104*



The Kathmandu Kora, a 60km cycle challenge around Kathmandu for charity, proceeds will go to

Samata School and OCCED. *23 July, Bhanimandal, 4412508, 5000547, info@chain.com.np, binita@socialtours.com*

The Great Indian Education Fair, a unique education exhibition showcasing the finest Indian universities, colleges and institutions. *Till 23 July, The Everest Hotel, New Baneshwor*



TEDx Kathmandu, an independently organised TED event featuring speakers Ani Choying Dolma, Anil Chitrakar, Prabhas Pokhrel, Salil Subedi and Sunil Babu Pant. Event is restricted to 100 attendees only who will be selected through application process. *Forms can be downloaded from www.tedxkathmandu.com. 30 July, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road*

MUSIC



Mukti and Revival in concert. *23 July, 7.30pm onwards, Cinnamon, Jhamsikhel*

Splash Grind 2011, the program features DJ session, loud music and dance by the pool. *13 August, 1 to 6pm, International Club, Sanepa, Rs1000*

DINING

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams and a glass of wine or beer. *Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1,300 per person, 4425341, operated by The Dwarika's Group of Hotels & Resorts*

Black Pepper Café & Pub, cosmopolitan dining and drinking in a traditional style courtyard, try the apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service. *Kopundole Height, Lalitpur, 5521897, 5536926, http://blackpepper.com.np*

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. *Jawalakhel*



9th Annual Wine Festival, Kilroy's monsoon wine festival will feature 15 varieties of exquisite wines from six different countries. *Till 15 September, Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 4250440*



Surfing under surveillance

Careful, the government is peering over your shoulders



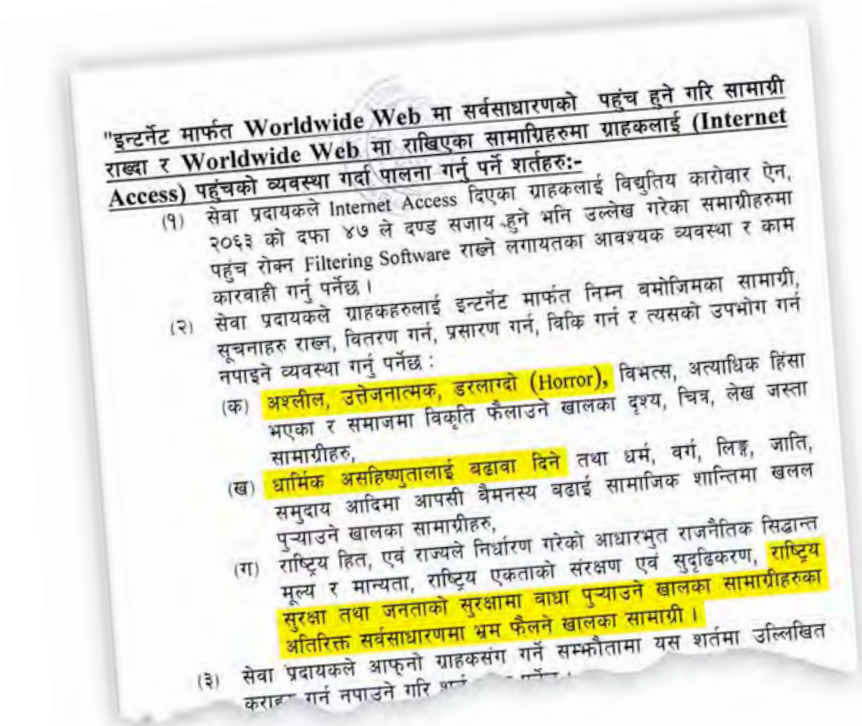
THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

Democratic governments are just as likely to restrict civil liberties as despotic systems are, if not safeguarded by citizen vigilance and protection. The gatekeepers of our transitional republic seem to have got it into their heads that the internet is too free and must be regulated.

The pattern is impossible not to notice. It started with the infamous ban on 'pornographic and objectionable sites' last September. Then some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who said they couldn't monitor subscribers were jailed. Now, the government is monitoring browsing details of high bandwidth subscribers. Ostensibly, it is to control illegal call bypassers, but it may not be long before the government starts getting too intrusive, riding on these same provisions to monitor more personal information including the private emails you sent out this morning.

The Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) has directed ISPs (Internet Service Providers) to provide information of all subscribers who use a bandwidth of 1Mbps or more. The Nepal Police work closely with NTA technicians in a joint taskforce to scan web use details of users to identify VOIP racketeers.

ISPs gave in reluctantly and are providing the police with MRTG data of subscribers for network



traffic monitoring. The government accused some ISPs themselves of illegal VOIP, making the controls necessary.

That's all fine. The problem is that this seriously infringes on the right to privacy of subscribers. Why should private internet users be subjected to profiling to nab a few bypassers? Is the police intelligence capacity so poor that it doesn't know the scamsters in this town? 1 Mbps is not a big pipe, and innocent users can be easily harassed (or extorted) by an opaque government machinery.

MRTG data only allows monitoring the browsing patterns of users, but could be a stepping stone for the government to introduce

censorship and intrude on private correspondence in the future.

The government's argument is that it wants the information to fight crime, terrorism and porn. But the way in which internet users and their activities are being tracked (the most recent is the requirement of ID cards to use cyber cafes) the government's motives are suspect.

Last year, the NTA made it mandatory for ISPs to install filtering software to block websites that are 'obscene, seductive and corrupt social morals'. Any content threatening 'religious harmony, national security, and goes against values and beliefs of the state' were deemed objectionable enough to be blocked.

The kind explanation is that the government only wants to protect us from objectionable content and maintain law and order. But the fact that popular sites like huffingtonpost.com and even scientific journals like springer.com were on the list of blocked URLs raises alarm bells because of the state's sheer incompetence and ham-handedness.

The government chose not to use legal methods to enforce this ban, unmindful that it was a violation to constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy and free expression. "It is simply not acceptable for the government to bypass legal channels and introduce such regulations by orders. Laws restricting the freedom of expression can be passed by parliament alone," says human rights lawyer, Santosh Sigdel.

One of the safeguards against privacy infringements can be data protection laws. These are necessary because the government is looking at the use of smart cards with full information on individuals. The government may well demand ISPs produce any user data it wants, but there should be laws to ensure that the data are not misused to target individuals.

That the government managed to enforce such controversial decisions without much opposition tells a lot about the lack of public awareness about privacy issues. All unchallenged governments, democratic or despotic, exhibit the same oppressive tendencies. The question is what are we as citizens going to do about it? 🇳🇵



Pumpnickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread and sandwiches. Experiment with their goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. *Thamel, 7.30am-7pm, 4259185*

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

Milk Coffee n Cocktail Cafe, coffee house during the day and a cozy

lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yarchagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbucks. *Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg*

The Oriental Tearoom at Pipalbot, has rather complicated opening hours but a mouth-watering spring menu. Try sake-cured salmon for lunch and twice-cooked caramelised pork belly for dinner. *Babar Mahal Revisited*

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

GETAWAYS



Monsoon Getaway at Gokarna Forest Resort. *Till 31 August, Gokarna, 4451212*

The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. *Dhulikhel, Rs 3,500 (single), Rs 5,000 (double), 10 per cent service charge extra, call 4479488 for reservations*



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

Tings Tea Lounge

in Lazimpat, are extracted from one of a standard selection of ten teas from China, India, Japan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, such as the Green Snail Tea or Pi Lo Chun, a long green leaf from Formosa, China with a flowery aroma.

Tea without cake would be a very miserable unbirthday. Cake choices at Tings are sporadic. At the time of the review, banana was fortunately available, a slice that arguably surpasses Snowman's banana chocolate cake.

And the tea party ends there. No three-tier displays filled with delectable cucumber canapés and ladyfingers to be seen. Grub-wise, Tings is more wine and tapas than proper high tea. Its sandwiches (chicken, egg, cheese, tuna or tofu) are served on a hearty sesame-seed brioche stuffed with sprouts, tomatoes and cilantro, but could go easy on



PICS: MARCO POLO



the mayo. Perfect with a glass (or better yet, a bottle) of vino, the tapas sampler boasts five offerings: shredded chicken, tuna-egg salad, sautéed mushrooms, tofu marinated in ginger and sesame, and homemade hummus. Crunchy pizza bites like the Pizza Bianca topped with potato and rosemary are a shareable savory snack. The spicy papaya salad is a recommended favorite but is heavily drenched in chili sauce.

Owned by Danish ex-pats, the boutique oasis is cut and pasted from a Scandinavian design hūset or architectural revue. Set in a chic environment of minimalist living rooms, quaint garden seatings and an open terrace, Tings is a perfect kickback for the aesthetically conscious.

For tea and snacks in a 'see and be seen' atmosphere, the prices aren't too steep. Wednesdays, kitchen's closed. Marco Pollo

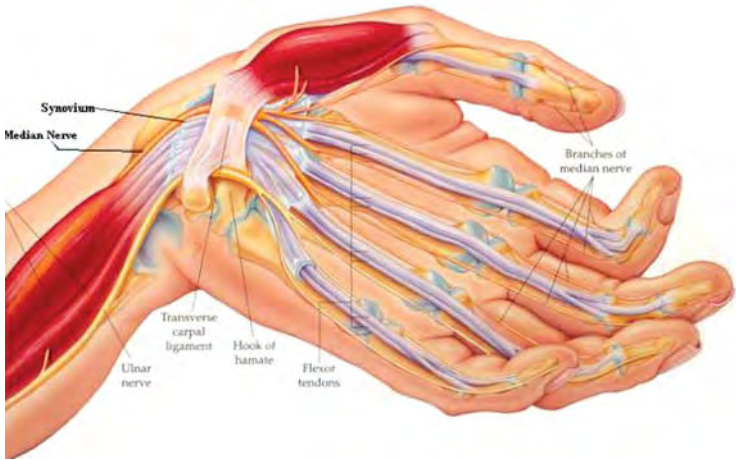
North on Lazimpat Road, left on the alley just before Hotel Ganjong and fifty wide steps from the Nepali Chulo.

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Deal-icious	★★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★★

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GB syndrome



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In June 2011 there were reports of patients from Yuma County, Arizona, USA with Guillain Barre (GB) Syndrome. This ailment is very well known to Nepali doctors, partly because of its close association with gastroenteritis (diarrhoea). Yuma County had been an outbreak of diarrhoea caused by a bacteria called *Campylobacter jejuni*, the commonly implicated microorganism in immunologically triggering GB syndrome after a few days to weeks.

Campylobacter bacteria is one of the well-known causes of

diarrhoea in Nepal, and so it is not surprising that GB syndrome which presents with weakness of the legs is seen in Nepal. It is important to emphasise that only a small minority of patients with Campylobacter gastroenteritis suffer from GB syndrome. Obviously if we kept meticulous notes and had proper disease surveillance in place, we would indeed be able to pick up GB syndrome cases and possibly trace them to gastroenteritis outbreaks.

The weakness in both the legs can slowly creep up to the chest and face. In the chest the weakness may interfere with breathing, and hence GB syndrome patients need close monitoring. Most patients make a good recovery, but this may take months. Steroids are

often prescribed, but they are useless. There are two modes of treatment: Plasmapheresis entails removal of the troublesome antibodies in the plasma by a special machine. Intravenous immunoglobulin administration is the other therapeutic method. Both are very effective, expensive, and seldom available here. We have to make sure that the patient has ventilator support if the need should arise, as just competently dealing with the symptoms is often not good enough.

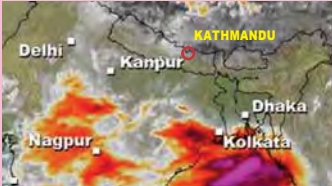
Since ventilators are not available in many areas of Nepal prevention of GB syndrome becomes paramount, which means avoiding diarrhoea even though not all GB syndrome needs a trigger like campylobacter, induced diarrhoea. Indeed, GB syndrome can happen spontaneously, but there are reports that patients with the GB syndrome associated with campylobacter have a worse prognosis.

Washing hands with soap and water, drinking boiled water, treating salad with chlorine or iodine tablets dissolved in water before consumption, and avoiding restaurant food cooked the previous day and kept without refrigeration (what with power cuts) become crucial in the context of Nepal to try to avoid even that small chance of acquiring the GB Syndrome. 🇳🇵



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The heavy precipitation in Kathmandu Valley on Wednesday was caused by an unusual circulation that brought colder air from the Tibetan Plateau and when this collided with moist warm air from the Bay, it unleashed that deluge of 75mm of rain in 36 hours. There is going to be a slight respite before that huge purple area in the satellite radar composite taken on Thursday morning arrives on our eastern border over the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
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NIRAJ SAPKOTA

BOAT ON WHEELS: Locals push a pick-up truck along a heavily waterlogged road next to the Bagmati River in Teku, Kathmandu on Wednesday. The day's rainfall was recorded as this year's highest within 24 hours at 73.4 millimetres.



BIKRAM RAI

MISSION DEMOLITION: The Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) cleared an illegal building in Sankhamul on Wednesday. This was under KMC's program to demolish constructions that violate the building code.



BIKRAM RAI

CHECK THIS OUT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Upendra Yadav (*third from left*) and FNCCI Vice President Bhaskar Rajkarnikar (*second*) tour the 2nd Made in Pakistan Products Exhibition 2011 on Tuesday. The exhibition is being held at World Trade Centre, Tripureshwor, Kathmandu and will last until Monday.



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“I wanted to murder whoever did this to my daughter”

DEWAN RAI

Krishna Tamang had taken his cattle out to graze on a meadow near his farm in Bhojpur in eastern Nepal. Dark clouds were gathering over the mountains beyond, and he had a sense of foreboding. At 2 pm, a neighbour ran up to tell him his daughter had fallen sick in Chainpur. Krishna borrowed some money and headed off with his brother.

Krishna says he felt like he had fallen off a cliff when police in Chainpur told him what had happened to his daughter. A 21-year-old apprentice at the Laligurans Rimthen Chholing Boudha Gumba in Dilkharka, the nun had been raped repeatedly by the driver and crew of a bus she was travelling in. They also stole the Rs 130,000 she was carrying that her sister Kabita Tamang, who lives in India, had sent home for constructing a new house in the village.

She was travelling from Khandbari to Dharan on 24 June, but a flooded river on the way forced the bus to make an unscheduled night stop. All the lodges in the village were full because of stranded passengers. Although some passengers offered to share their room, the crew convinced her to spend the night in the bus. At 11pm, Drona Rai, sleeping in a bus parked nearby heard a scream and went to help. He was beaten up by the rapists.

The next morning there was commotion as word spread about what had happened. Members of the Limbuwan Volunteers were alerted, they caught the culprits in a place called Kharang and handed them over to Chainpur police.

By the time Krishna reached Chainpur



BIKRAM RAI

BY HER SIDE: Krishna Tamang tends to his daughter at the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu. She hasn't spoken to anyone since the rape a month ago.

the next day his daughter had been taken by relatives to Paramount Hospital in Siliguri in India after initial treatment at a local health centre. It took Krishna two more days to reach Siliguri and be by his daughter's side.

"She was in a terrible state," Krishna recalls, "she was still unconscious in the ICU. I

wanted to murder whoever did this to my daughter."

When her family couldn't pay and the bills had exceeded INR 200,000, the Siliguri hospital evicted her. The family flew her back to Kathmandu on 15 July, but the Teaching Hospital refused to admit her despite request from members of National Women's Commission.

"We were told that the government hospital does not take this kind of case," recalls the nun's uncle, Surya Tamang. "We returned got to a relative's house at 9pm after waiting at the hospital all day."

After much lobbying with politicians, Teaching Hospital finally took the nun in the next day. Doctors told us she is suffering from extreme post-traumatic stress disorder. "She needs psychological and social support at this time more than medical treatment," Vidya Dev Sharma of the hospital's psychiatry wing, said.

The nun's sister, Kabita, watches as she tosses and turns in bed, moaning. Her bed is near the door of a large ward full of patients. She covers her face with her blanket every time someone walks past. Kabita says her sister hasn't spoken a word to her family, or to the doctors. She says: "Look at what those demons did to her, a young woman who has devoted her life to god."

The family is now worried about her future. Although there were initial reports that the nunnery where she studied in Pharping had

excommunicated her, the Nepal Buddhist Federation (NBF) has denied this. "I was misquoted in the Indian media, she was never expelled, there is no provision in Buddhism for excommunication," said the NBF's Norbu Sherpa.

The Nepal Tamang Lama Ghedung, an organisation of Tamang Lamas, has said it will reinstate the nun in the local Gumba in Sankhuwasabha once she gets well. Palden Lama of the Ghedung said: "Her celibacy was broken against her will, Buddhist philosophy is about protecting, rescuing and rehabilitating the victim instead of adding to the pain."

The Sankhuwasabha District Court has sent all five accused to jail for further investigation. In Khandbari, government lawyer Krishna Bhandari says the court has recommended compensation and medical expenses for the victim. "The court will give its verdict once the legal procedures are complete. All we need now is statement of the victim," Bhandari told Nepali Times.

Two members of the bus crew, bus driver Raj Limbu and conductor Bhuwan Gurung have already confessed to the crime, while the rest have pleaded not guilty. The maximum punishment is a jail term for up to 10 years, but since there is also a robbery charge, they could get an additional six year sentence.

However, the bus syndicates in Sankhuwasabha are lobbying with the local administration to have the accused released. They brought transportation to a halt in four districts in eastern Nepal this week to put pressure on the administration. 🇳🇵

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Love in a time of war

Wartime marriages between Maoists don't withstand the pressures of peace

ARUNA RAYAMAJHI

At the office of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Women's Organisation, there are stacks of over 700 files containing complaints from Maoist women of mistreatment by their husbands. Hundreds of other cases are never reported. During their long marches across Nepal during the war, young homesick recruits got into relationships, and the party would encourage inter-ethnic couples to get married. These "shotgun marriages" were good for morale of the rebel army, and forced young fighters to see beyond their own caste and ethnicity. However, with the end of the conflict in 2006 as the Maoist party entered open politics, many of these relationships had started falling apart. Partners, especially women, started seeing that their husbands were selfish, irresponsible and unethical, and many husbands have left their wives and children to marry again within their own ethnic group. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's son, Prakash, got married to Central

Committee member Post Bahadur Bogati's daughter Prabha during the war. When Prakash married again at a ceremony in Pokhara, his father extolled it as a "fusion of old and new". Prabha herself explains why her marriage fell apart: "Most girls who became Maoists would miss home and when a boy was nice to them they fell for it. They were immature." Another acrimonious breakup involved the son of Maoist leader C P Gajurel, Sanjiv, who was married to Sunita Pokhrel. Sunita says her mother-in-law always accused her of not bringing enough dowry, and used to taunt her. She was forced to have an abortion, and was evicted from her husband's house after she refused to sign divorce papers. "Sanjiv came to my room one day and threatened to send female YCLs to bring me in line," Sunita recalls, "he accused me of being pregnant with some other man, and with no hope left I signed the papers." Attorney Anjita Khanal says the situation is worse for Maoist women abandoned by their husbands because they are in legal limbo. She says:

"Their party marriages are not legally recognised, and the courts refuse to register their cases because there is no evidence they were ever married." All the Revolutionary Women's Organization does is forward the complaints to local party committees with a covering letter. The organisation's chairperson Jayapuri Gharti admits divorces are a concern, but the party hasn't found time to debate the issue. Even when the party has tried to deliver justice, it has made the problem worse. When Hemraj Gharti of the Dang district committee married again after having two children, he was evicted from the party. Gharti then abandoned his second wife as well, and has settled in Kathmandu. His three children from two wives are stranded in Dang with no means of support. PLA Company Commander, Comrade Badala, says Maoist men who have abandoned their wives and families took their cue from Chairman Prachanda and his "fusion" speech justifying his son's second marriage. Badala, who is Dalit, was married to Ram



Womanpower stays home to



WILKO VERBAKEL

THEN AND NOW: Sarita was 12, and the biggest girl in class when she enrolled after refusing to get married five years ago (above). Today, she is in Grade 8 (right), she has started a youth club to motivate her peers and is still determined not to get married until she finishes her SLC and becomes a teacher herself.



AMRIT GURUNG



“He told people I was a witch”

KHIMA DANGI

When Lokendra GC, Comrade Bijay, made an official request with the party in Rukum to marry me in 2002, the war was at its most intense. When I rejected his offer, Lokendra threatened to commit suicide.

He was lonely, and stressed out by the conflict. He wanted companionship and intimacy. But now that the war is over and he doesn't need me anymore, he is threatening to commit suicide if I don't sign his divorce papers.

It isn't as easy as it is for the men folk for us women to leave our spouses, children and homes. I always believed that marriage is not just a physical relationship, it includes children, society and a family's future.

In 2005, while fleeing an army attack in Singje of Rukum, I fell and was badly injured. I needed a husband to take care of me, but he wasn't there for me, he had found someone else.

After the ceasefire in 2006 and verification, I became a Section Commander and Bijay became a Battalion Commander. I thought he might change his mind and come back to me, so I applied to be in the cantonment in Rolpa where he was. But my husband started threatening me, saying he could “do anything” if I refused to divorce him. He even accused me publicly of being a witch.

Not able to take his torture anymore, I gave in and signed the papers three years ago. As soon as I did that, Bijay married Seema Gharti Magar. I moved to the Sankram Cantonment in Dang after that with my seven-year-old daughter. This year I passed my SLC with 75.5 per cent marks. My family wants me to be trained as a staff nurse, but that requires money. My future will now depend on how much the government allocates to those of us in the cantonments who opt for rehabilitation.

There are many like Bijay in the party who pay lip service to the revolution. The voices of women like me are drowned in this patriarchal society.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH: Khima Dangi (Comrade Namuna) with her daughter Garima, left. Garima with her father, Lokendra GC (Comrade Bijay), above. Lokendra threatened Khima when she refused to sign divorce papers.

Chandra Paudel by the party in a “people's marriage” in Lamjung. Says Badala: “When I found out he had married someone else, I called my husband. He said he had returned to his own caste.”

Documentary films have been made about Nepal's women guerrillas, photographs of them handling assault rifles have been printed in international magazines. They formed one-third of the PLA and fought alongside the men. In many cases the female guerrillas showed greater bravery in battle, and many were killed in action.

Maoist women raised arms against injustice, but are now themselves victims of injustice. They waged violence against class enemies, but have become victims of domestic violence.

Shanta Kandel used to be the secretary of the Maoist Argakhanchi district committee. She saw action in the battles of Sandhikharka, Tansen, and Pokharathok and survived, but she couldn't survive the cruelty of her husband, Hari Bhattarai.

Shanta got married to Hari at age 16 during the war. She gave birth to her first baby in a cave in the mountains, and was wounded in battle a few months later. On being reunited with her guerrilla husband, she found out he had eloped with someone else. Hari has since been promoted to a senior member of the Magarat State Council. Shanta sells trinkets by the wayside in Butwal. 🇳🇵

Aruna Rayamajhi is with the Maoist-affiliated Revolutionary Journalists Organistaion. A longer version of this article was published in Himal Khabarpatrika.

teach, as manpower migrates

WILKO VERBAKEL
in SINDHUPALCHOK

Sarita Thami lives with her family in Mulabari, a village in the poorer eastern part of Sindhupalchok where the mountains are steep and rocky, and there is little fertile land.

The hard life and lack of education has forced many men to migrate. Among those who remain alcohol consumption is high, even children drink chhang in the morning because milk is neither available nor affordable. The girls are married as early as 12 and by the time they are 20, they may have up to three children.

The boy usually asks for the hand of the girl by bringing a bottle of raksi (“don”) and tie it to the door of the girl's house. If the father

accepts the raksi and drinks from the bottle, the marriage is on. Sarita was only 11 when her parents were offered the “don”. She refused the proposal.

That year, the local group ISARD (Integrated Self-help Association for Rural Development) started work in the village by setting up a small school. Sarita convinced her parents to send her to school, and was the eldest girl enrolled.

When I first saw Sarita five years ago, she was the tallest and oldest girl sitting on a small bench in between other children six and eight years old. At that time I was not aware of her thirst for education, and I suspected she may soon think herself too old to be in school and drop out.

In March this year, I visited Mulabari again. With ISARD's

help, villagers had replaced the small school building dangerously located near an overhang with a newer, bigger and safer building. The school is now supported by the government, the first ever outlay made by Kathmandu in this remote village.

Sarita was now 17, studying in Grade 8 at a secondary school in the nearby town of Piskar. She is still determined not to get married until she finishes her studies. She was in Mulbari that day, and gave a welcome speech.

Later, she told us she wants to finish SLC and then learn to become a teacher so that she can help other Thami children in her village. She has already set up a self-help youth club in Mulabari to discuss amongst themselves issues like education, health, sanitation, village development and social

issues like child marriage.

Every month, each of the 15 club members contribute Rs 5 and from this money they rent a piece of land where they grow onions to sell and raise money for club activities. I was glad to see that Sarita was leading the children of Mulabari to make their own destiny.

When I return to Mulabari in a few years, I am sure Sarita will be a motivated teacher in the school where she first learnt to read and write. She may also have married by then and have children of her own, living happily in a village that will have learnt to be self-reliant. 🇳🇵

Wilko Verbakel is president of the Dutch group, ICFON (International Council for Friends of Nepal) and coordinates the ISARD project as a volunteer.



Power politics

Nagarik, July 19

NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba has asked the party chairman Sushil Koirala to implement “one person one post” policy. Deuba wants vice-chairman and parliamentary party leader Ram Chandra Paudel to resign from one of his posts. He also warned Koirala he would vote Paudel out if he did not step down voluntarily.

Deuba’s supporters are conducting a signature campaign against Paudel, and

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even Arjun Narsingh KC and Kul Bahadur Gurung have signed. Koirala had promised Deuba he would be leading the party if and when the NC goes into the government. It was only after this understanding that Koirala was able to nominate Paudel and Krishna Sitaula as Vice-Chairman and General Secretary respectively. Now Koirala is reluctant to replace Paudel as parliamentary party leader saying it is still not clear if the party will join the consensus government. This has upset Deuba.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“There is a growing Haribol tendency in the party which is a resurgence of Alok tendency from the past and it must be addressed immediately.”

UCPN (M) Politburo member Bhim Prakash Gautam in Radio Hamro Pahuch program Taaza Bahas.

Sick leaders

Naya Patrika, 18 July

नयाँ पत्रिका

Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal:
Night Blindness and high blood pressure

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal:
High blood pressure and diabetes

NC president Sushil Koirala:
Cancer, Pneumonia and toothache

NC Vice President Ramchandra Paudel:
Diabetes, Prostrate inflammation and Uric acid

Maoist vice chairman Mohan Baidya:
Asthma and high blood pressure

UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal:
Heart problems and high blood pressure

NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba:
High blood pressure and stomach ailments

Maoist Vice Chairman Baburam Bhattarai:
High blood pressure and Vertigo

UML leader KP Oli:
Transplanted kidneys and eye disorder



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Using fowl language

There has been a lot of hoo-hah about the use of foul language by politicians lately. As some of you may know, the Ass is used to spice up the braying at times with a lot of choice epithets like %\$#@^, *&(^%, or even *^%\$^*. But, WTF, the censorship of Delhi Belly was a great gimmick by the distributors to drum up lots of free publicity, and it worked f***** brilliantly.

The tripartite factional infighting within the Maoist party has also degenerated into ugly name-calling. As long as they were hurling insults at each other in their own party mouthpieces calling each other “dogs” and “dacoits” it was fine. But Baddie factions on Facebook calling a rival faction “donkey” is a bit below the belt, if you know what I mean. The Great Facebook War is now really intensifying with the cyberwarriors under the able command of Gen Laldhoj outsmarting and outnumbering the faction led by Gen Lotus Flower. But trailing way behind in terms of its presence on social networking sites, and almost exiled to Cyberia, is the third faction led by Com Kiran. And they have now even started hacking into the websites of each other’s party organs.



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The feud has now percolated down to all levels of the party, just about every trade union, provincial state council, people’s class organisation and district committee now has a three way split between factions loyal to PKD, BRB and MBK. The acrimony has also infected the council of ministers with the BRB loyalist Devi Khadka on warpath over Infomercial Minister Ugly Sapkota accusing her of being involved in camphor smuggling to the Mainland.

You know that it’s just one step away from bloody noses when Baddies start calling each other “Goebbels”, which for a non-Maoist is like casting strong aspersions on the ancestry of one’s enemy and hinting that he or she may have canine DNA.

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The other insult that has been flying around lately is the Awesome faction calling Comrade Cloud “Lin Piao”. Why Lin Piao is a bad word in Maoist circles, and Stalin is not, is hard to fathom. But Ram Budder Kamred got so riled about it he defected to

the BRB faction. And Kaji Naran (Comrade Xerox) finally broke away to join the ranks of the Disgruntled Comrades when he found out that his mentor has just named Post Man home minister in his fake cabinet. For him that was the final straw on the duck’s back, as it were.

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PKD wants to head the parliamentary party, he wants to remain party chairman, he wants to be the supreme commandante of the PLA and he wants to be prime minister once more, and/or executive

president. No wonder even Baburam and Kiran who can’t stand each other’s guts have joined up. But feeling power slipping away from his hands, PKD has used every trick in the book to keep ahead of the game.

First, he proposed BRB as prime minister, but it was just a ploy to confuse Laldhoj loyalists. BRB saw right through it, so PKD got his loyal junjatis to come to the Paris Hill in a staged delegation to propose Comrade Cloud as PM. This proved Lotus flower is not averse to playing the ethnic card when the occasion so demands. But Cloudy was already ticked off over the Lin Piao remark, so that trick also fell flat. Then Our Man leaked a fake ministerial lineup to his pliant mainstream mouth organ which duly bannered it on page one. PKD must have thought the ministerial candidates would all start salivating and saying “yes sir, yes sir, three bags full”. They didn’t.

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The Ass’ quote of the week is from Comrade Dina who said these famous words to Com Yummy after refusing to sign the petition against PKD: “I love you, but I am married to Chairman Prachanda.”





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