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.

**Editorial**

More than half the sky

Stateless in their motherland

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

A nun’s horrifying ordeal
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 – diametrically, 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 generational eras to eradicate, it is an educational component. But one has to start with laws, even if they are foisted 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 useful 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. (p9)

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 known knowledge that non-Nepal 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 the sky. With fairer laws and better implementation, they could hold it up all of it.

MORE THAN HALF THE SKY

The Nepali dream

R Rai

- 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.

- 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.

- 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 of lack of funds. My mind, nevertheless, rationalises the reason I left Nepal was because of the boundaries 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.

Shouvan Kharai

- I would return back to Nepal if the government would allow dual citizenship, I was born here in Kathmandu (not the best place to be). But even though my parents are both Nepali, I denied the right to naturalisation, 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 on one of these big businesses to see the kind of negativity anyway? But to all of you who still haven’t registered for college, ‘generate electricity, or protect local biodiversity’… But one has to start with laws, even if they are foisted 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 useful 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)

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

HOME COMING

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

- 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 Africa. 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 should be a job after retirement not an internship.

Aditi Adhikari

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Bikzopa Pokhrel

- There is something valuable on this difficult road: home. ‘So true, Surabhi. It is our home that has defined us. We are not a way we are living, but in that 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.

Yeti

- You have to give it back to Nepal and give it another shot. Hope things work this time.

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Concerned

- Done, Megh. (“Save our rivers from ourselves”, #562). Keep up the pressure to find the correct balance and let the right people on the river for their living. ‘Your sensitive understanding for future long term needs don’t consider their current citizenship papers 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 Badayi, 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 come out with their file without lying...so give PKD a break.

Ramesh Thapa Magar

BP

- Returning to Nepal is a great thing, but the perception is that those who come back just could not 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 more two floors to his house. Who wants to listen to this kind of negativity anyway? But to all of you who have come back, Jai Ho!

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.

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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 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 Bhirkuti 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.’

The onus is on the government to convince us that we need special economic zones.
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 Nepali citizenship: “Why is a Nepali woman can’t get automatic citizenship for her foreign wife even though a Nepali man can get one for his foreign wife?”

The draft provisions in the proposed constitution would mean:

1. Children of mixed marriages will be ineligible for Nepali citizenship by descent 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 parent in the process of switching to Nepali nationality will be stateless until the process is complete.
4. Children of Nepali parents who don’t have citizenship, or are naturalised children of Nepal is a signatory, citizenship by fraud. The provision prohibiting dual 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 in a 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 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 citizenship 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 draft 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 of either parent is Nepali.
2. Expedite Nepali citizenship to spouses who wish to renounce their foreign passport so that their children do not suffer prolonged statelessness.

With additional reporting by Anurag Acharya
Footnote to Sugauli
Two hundred years is a long time to figure out where you belong

Bank robbery
Is your bank ripping you off without your knowledge?

Have you ever been unpleasantly surprised to find your bank balance less than your expectation? Or when you check your statement do you realise out that your bank has graciously charged Rs 210 or more Territorial Administration (TGA) on your account or for your debit card. The most common complainers at a commercial bank are those who do not maintain the minimum balance limit so that they correct it. Apart from maintenance fees, these charges are imposed for unauthorised overdrafts, bounced cheques, or for any irregularity in the account. But often, the customer is not only surprised but also left with a financial deficit, which leaves them with a bad taste for banking.

In recent times, the banks have been tightening their grips on the customers, imposing heavy fines for slight deviations from the terms and conditions. The banks must also give customers an early notice of charges so that they have a chance to contest. The banks should only be asked to pay the cost of informing the customer about the irregularity in the account. But often, the banks do not follow this procedure. 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 overlooked. It is difficult to believe that the cost of informing an account holder is more than the cost of fixing the irregularity in the account. But often, these charges are imposed without proper justification.

Financial institutions argue that these charges are necessary to maintain a certain level of service. However, customers are often left with the feeling that they are being overcharged. When they demand an explanation, they are shown the fine print in the ‘Terms and Conditions’ which is often overlooked.

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, or any irregularity in the account. Sometimes, changes made in the account’s terms and conditions which, by default, allow the bank to debit your account. 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 shielded, 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 customer or the public.’

The Competition Commission has recommended several aspects of the banking sector in Nepal, but customers are still charged unfairly. 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 boards. Easy cash earned by slyly cheating the customer can be costly in the long run. Customer is the king (well maybe president) still.

Banking institutions, however, claim that they need to maintain a certain level of service. But often, these charges are imposed without proper justification. In recent times, the banks have been tightening their grips on the customers, imposing heavy fines for slight deviations from the terms and conditions. The banks should only be asked to pay the cost of informing the customer about the irregularity in the account. But often, these charges are imposed without proper justification.

The Footnote to Sugauli treaty, which was signed in 1816, had a significant impact on the political landscape of Nepal. The treaty led to the creation of the Gorkha empire and the annexation of parts of the Indian hinterland, including the Darjeeling region.

The treaty was negotiated between Representatives of the Gorkha Kingdom and British representatives in the presence of Rani Jwala Kumari, who is considered to be the ‘first female head of government’ in Nepal. The treaty created a large number of Nepali ethnic group which has a large concentration of indigenous peoples, also be incorporated in the GTA.
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 effect of these masses of airborne pollutants in Asia is huge. People in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan
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 industrialized 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 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
Surfing under surveillance

Careful, the government is peering over your shoulders

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 of 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,” 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 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.

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. Ominously, it is to control illegal call bypassers, but it may not be long before the government starts getting too intrusive, riding on these same oppressive tendencies. The government may well demand ISPs give in reluctantly and are providing the police with MRTG data of subscribers for network traffic monitoring. The government accused some ISPs of bypassing 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 scammers in this town? 1 million is 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 Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) has directed ISPs (Internet Service Providers) to provide information of all subscribers who use (Internet Service Providers) to provide 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.

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Once upon a time—not too long ago in 2010—Ramalaya, the high-end interior design showroom, opened its Tea Room, where afternoons were spruced up with warm scones, open sandwiches and tapenades. Sadly, those wide-eyed days are over.

Today, connoisseurs particular about flushes and fannings will find Kathmandu’s waterholes stark or at the very least—milky. But fair attempts have been made. Not quite to a T, the herbal preparations at the Tings Tea Lounge Hotel, tucked away on a quiet alley 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 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 biiset 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.

Pumpernickel Bakery, get an early breakfast at 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.

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, Taahalch, call 4273999 for reservations

Milk Coffee n Cocktail Cafe, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yachagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbucks. Woodland Complex, Darbar Mang

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

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

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Milk Coffee n Cocktail Cafe, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yachagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbucks. Woodland Complex, Darbar Mang

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

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

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GB syndrome

In June 2011 there were reports of patients from Yuma County, Arizona, USA with Guillain Bartre (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. Plasmapharesis 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.
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 borrows 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 right 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 a bus. At 11pm, Drona Rai, sleeping in a bus parked nearby heard a scream and went to investigate. Some passengers offered to share their room, the crew convinced her to spend the night in a bus. At 11pm, Drona Rai, sleeping in a bus parked nearby heard a scream and went to investigate.

The next morning there was commotion when Krishna reached Chainpur. The crew convinced her to spend the night in a bus. At 11pm, Drona Rai, sleeping in a bus parked nearby heard a scream and went to investigate.

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, Sureya 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 boses 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.

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Although there were initial reports that the nun would be excommunicated due to her actions, the Nepal Buddhist Federation (NBF) has denied this. “I was misquoted in the Indian media; she was never excommunicated, there is no provision in Buddhism for excommunication,” said the NBF’s Norbu Sherpa.

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 Bhawan 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.

Donation inquiries should be sent to: 9851024411/nwf@choying.com
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 Babadur 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 Organisation 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 Love in a time of war

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teach, as manpower migrates

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 Angkanchihi district committee. She saw action in the battles of Sandikharkha, Tansen, and Pokhara and survived, but she couldn’t survive the cruelty of her husband, Hari Bhattachari.

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.

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

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 don’t have alcohol consumption high, even children drink chhang in the morning because milk is neither available nor affordable. The girls morning because milk is neither available nor affordable.

The boy usually asks for the raksi () and tie it to 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.

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. She was 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 Mulabari 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 learned to read and write. She may also have married by then and have children of her own. Living inside a village that will have learnt to be self-reliant.

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

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 Singe 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 fortune anymore, I gave in and signed the papers three years ago. As soon as I did that, Bijay married Seema Khagti Magar. I moved to the Sankramp Cantonment in Dang after that with my seven-year-old daughter. This year I passed my SLC with 75.5 percent marks.

My family wants me to be trained as a staff nurse, but that requires money. My family can’t afford it.

My future will now depend on how much the government allocates to those victims of domestic violence. My family wants me to be trained as a staff nurse, but that requires money. My family can’t afford it.

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If the government offers the “don,” she refuses the offer and drinks from the bottle. 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.
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 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.

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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

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, Prostate 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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República

FEDERER FALLS TO SODERLING
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.

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.

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.

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.”