“Looks don't count…”

“...but good looks attract attention.”

JOHN PLAYERS Premium men's wear from Surya Nepal
gift voucher on yearly subscription of Nepali Times.
We know, you sometimes like the attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>YOU PAY</th>
<th>YOU SAVE on conventional price</th>
<th>+ YOUR ASSURED FREE GIFT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Rs. 1,350</td>
<td>Rs. 210</td>
<td>John Players gift voucher worth Rs. 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Rs. 2,500</td>
<td>Rs. 620</td>
<td>John Players gift voucher worth Rs. 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Rs. 3,500</td>
<td>Rs. 1,180</td>
<td>John Players gift voucher worth Rs. 1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For subscription, SMS: 9818476422 or call 977-1-5250845, 5250333 to have our subscription agent visit your home/office.
John Players

Premium men's wear from SURYA NEPAL
The Big Three had agreed on a 5-point deal in order to avert the void on 28 May. But from the moment it was signed, it was a no-deal because it was never clear who was going to be responsible to implement it. So, as we enter the final weeks of the extended CA term, the parties that sat on their hands refusing to budge an inch for the last ten weeks are now frantically engaged in a face-saving exercise. Last month, when the Maoist party was threatened with a serious rift we said the internal three-way squabble within the largest party was holding the nation hostage. But soon, what began as an internal struggle for democratic space within the Maoists opened up a rash of fissiparous tendencies in every major party. As the politics failed, peace and constitution took a backseat. All this was reflected in the impunity and breakdown in law and order. “In the last three years, all we have done is quarrel and look where we stand,” says Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai, whose internal battle against his boss was the reason for the latest delay. In an interview with Nepali Times, Bhattarai (whose party has fielded him as prime ministerial candidate in a consensus government) reiterates his belief that majoritarian rule will consign the country into protracted limbo (see interview, p6).

Every media poll has shown that the people also know that a unity government is the only way forward. Political leaders all say in public they back consensus, but carry on back-stabbing each other in private. But this time an intense exercise for a consensus government has begun even before the Khanal government has resigned. A new government with the Maoists, NC, UML, and Madhesi Front seems the only way to break the log-jam, and Bhattarai is the candidate towards whom most political leaders have the least objection (except perhaps his own boss, Pushpa Kamal Dahal).

So, what are they waiting for?
THE URGENCY OF THE ENERGY EMERGENCY

I

n the transition from war to peace, from revolution to mainstream politics, our politicians seem to have forgotten that power no longer comes out of the barrel of a gun. It comes out of the turbine at the end of a penstock pipe.

As the JhalaNath Khanal government prepares to step down as agreed in the five-point agreement, the best outcome now would be that his government will be replaced by a consensus cabinet of all main parties. This would offer a better chance to overcome the political hurdles that have deadlocked the peace process and governance for so long. We cannot afford another cliff-hanger at midnight on 31 August. The people need reason to hope that things will be different this time, and that can only come about if they see the parties seriously working together.

The Khanal government has come under a lot of criticism for sins of omission, and there are so many on our list that we lost count. Many “sins of commission” were also committed with arbitrary, irrelevant decisions that wasted money and time. It is true that the Maoist tourism minister unilaterally sanctioned the dangerously daft proposal to turn Lumbini into a Buddhist hermepark. It needs to be investigated. The Finance Minister announced a distributive budget that pandered to patronage politics, was inchoherent and could not prioritise. But, it has to be said, there are bright spots. One of them is Energy Minister Gokarna Bista and the non nonsense style with which he has gone about tackling the country’s crippling energy crisis. Bista represents a new breed of Nepali politicians who are motivated, professional, take advice from experts, prioritise and get down to work. (Pictured is Bista shutting off power this week to a government department that didn’t pay its bills.) He is a do-er who wants results. And unlike party peers who are always out to undercut rival, Bista works across party lines with similarly committed young leaders within the NC and Maoists.

In this issue, we make a realistic assessment of the country’s power crisis and come to the conclusion that winter power cuts will be debilitating for at least the next three years (p14-15). The reason is that successive governments after 2006 did not give the energy emergency the urgency it needed, or they played politics with it. Bista is working from the recommendations of a preliminary White Paper issued by the Parliament Committee on Natural Resources of which the NC’s Gagan Thapa is a member. For a document prepared by politicians, this is surprisingly cogent and solution-oriented. It points to a four-fold path to energy security including:

- Political consensus on future strategy
- Generate enough power to meet domestic demand for value-added industry and only then export
- Immediate completion of a reservoir project in each development zone
- Unbundle transmission and distribution, address inefficiencies, corruption, pilferage in the NEA

Politicians and CA members get a lot of bad rap these days for not doing enough to get the peace process moving. But there are young larks in all political parties who are equally frustrated with this paralyzing inertia, and should not be tarred with the same brush. They understand the consequences of a seemingly endless deadlock with the Maoists, who will support them? Communists may have lost their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a country that has seen so much bloodshed and suffering. The main opposition parties are split too. So what will be the outcome of the elections? It is in the party’s interest to keep people poor. If people are well off, who will support them? Communists lose their vote bank. The lowest ground of a county...
BY THE WAY

By Anurag Acharya

The final days of the extended Constituent Assembly is fast approaching once more, and the smell of street protests is in the air again. The tents have returned to their familiar spots in New Baneshwor, and bitter political power struggle is slowly giving way to nervous signs of cooperation before the deadline expires on 31 August. We are approaching yet another anti-climax.

But something is different this time. The hint of guilt and remorse that we saw in the run up to 28 May have vanished, as the leaders audaciously claim “we may be losers, but you’ve got no choice”. Forget about the peace and the constitution, in the last three months, the leaders could not even agree to work together on kick-starting governance. We’ve been witness to bizarre scenes where fellow members have collected signature to unseat their own leaders in the party and in the CA.

Every major political actor in Nepali politics today is a victim of what the Game Theorists call ‘prisoner’s dilemma’, where individuals look to maximise their own payoff with utter disregard of that of the other, thereby leading to Mutually Assured Destruction. The failure of Madhav Nepal government, 17 rounds of elections and the humiliating attack on the Jhalanath government from his own party are a proof that Nepali politics is a zero sum game where one party has gains at the collective loss of all others. No one has learnt the lesson, we are on the verge of yet another majoritarian government.

Fear of the NC and the larger-than-life ego of the Maoist chairman is leading the nation down a spiral. Although the UML might have lost interest in cashing in on their divide this time, the Madhesi front is looking to score brownie points by entering into a deal with NC. Even the school kids who sat in front of the CA building for weeks with their hands tied to one another in a futile attempt to drive in sense of cooperation among the leaders know that so long as we follow a majoritarian culture in a bitterly divided nation, we are all losers.

This time, the power deadlock has stopped baffling, enraging, angering, provoking and even amusing us anymore. Ours is a generation that has grown up in the shadow of violence. The decade long violence and half a decade of painful transition is clearly taking its toll on Nepali society. The lack of physical and social security has led to growing desperation among the youth who are losing faith in the state. They do not fear this weak transitional justice system. We are experiencing what happens when the future of the nation manifests itself as a violent present.

The unseemly political cock-fight for power is leading this nation towards not just political and economic crisis, but social upheaval. Perhaps the power clogged brains of our rulers can’t understand that the anarchy and impunity that prevails in the streets today will come to their doorsteps tomorrow.

The public’s faith in politics is now largely eroded. Nothing can be more dangerous than a society that loses faith in politics, because what reigns then is uncertainty. In a dire attempt to keep hopeless hope alive, let us hope that sanity prevails and the institution of politics saves itself for the day. It does not require a herculean effort, just a bit of common sense and more assertiveness from a younger generation of leaders in all major political parties with a cross-partisan approach to nation-building.

DIWAKAR CHHETRI
Maoist vice-president Baburam Bhattarai, the most likely consensus prime ministerial candidate, spoke to Nepali Times on Thursday about the formation of a national unity government and progress on the peace process. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: Who will be the consensus candidate as the PM is all set to resign on 13 August? Baburam Bhattarai: It is up to the parties to decide. As the largest party in the CA, naturally the UCPN (Maoist) has been claiming leadership in national unity government. Our party has unanimously nominated me as prime ministerial candidate, but who would lead the government will be decided after consultation with other parties.

The parties all seem to have their own candidate for the prime minister. How is consensus possible? The experiences of the past three years have shown, majority governments failed to move the peace and constitution writing process forward. We made a mistake by forcing majoritarian politics over the politics of consensus. It has been my consistent position that there is no alternative to consensus to bring Nepali politics back on track. This time I hope everyone agrees. It’s the only way peace and constitution writing process can be moved forward.

Are two days enough to forge a consensus? (The prime minister) was supposed to resign even if there is no consensus as a part of the five-point deal. You can fight for infinity, but you need one moment of sanity for consensus. The selection of the prime minister becomes a protracted process. The prime minister becomes a protracted process. The process of regrouping will be started. But this should not obstruct the formation of a national unity government. On the contrary, it is this unity government which will implement the agreement and move the peace process forward.

Why should people believe that political parties are serious about it this time? Three years of going around in circles has proved that there is no alternative to consensus. Making majority governments and sticking to party positions will take us nowhere, I know it sounds ironic, but all political parties have realised this fact.

How will the new government be formed? There are three tasks ahead: integration, constitution and national unity government. All three should be dealt with in a package deal. You cannot insist on any one. It is not important which party took which stand in the past. It is time to look ahead and find a common ground to get there. Once that is sought, a national unity government comprising of the Maoists, NC, UML and Madhesi parties will be formed to take the peace and constitution writing to its logical end.

Who will take the responsibility if and when this deal is reached? When one party is in the government and the rest oppose, there is no deal. That is why we need a national unity government so that everybody takes a collective responsibility.

By-passing the public
Nepal has the highest international call rate in the region

The way the newly set up Crime Investigation Bureau (CIB) is cracking down against illegal call bypassers is no uncharacteristically ruthless, one can’t help but wonder where this rare resolve stems from. Is there more to the story than meets the eye?

Why this sudden vindictiveness when it comes to dealing with VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) calls? The draconian measures include objectionable surveillance to detaining Internet Service Providers (ISPs); very unlike the lax and lackadaisical attitude to other far more serious crimes.

The government is missing the point here. The laws of supply and demand have ensured that international calls via internet is impossible to control. The real reason consumers opt to break the law is that Nepal has one of the highest rates for international calls in South Asia. For an international termination call to Nepal that should not cost more than 1 cent per minute, telecom operators hike charge up to 14 cent.

As with the American problem, the question must be asked why not legalise VOIP? This would allow one-fifth of the population working and living abroad to make cheaper calls home, expand telephony to rural areas thus spurring business and trade, attract investment and entrepreneurship and eliminate the telecom mafia that controls the illicit sector. Why should this be a problem?

The government’s argument is that it is losing billions in revenue to illegal international calls. So, let’s get this straight: revenue is more important than providing an affordable service? Nepalis abroad pay through their noses when they call home, wasting their hard-earned riyals and dollars. Any government worth its salt earned riyals and dollars. Any government worth its salt would lower international call rates, license internet calls, and try to make money from the increase in volume of calls and taxes this would unleash.

Nepal has the highest international call rate in the region

With 20 days left for the CA deadline, is it possible to complete these tasks? As I said earlier, we only need a moment of rational thinking to forge a consensus. Political parties should first agree on these issues in principle, we have enough time in hand for an agreement. If there is an agreement, the national consensus government will kick-start the process that has been stalled for so long. Yes it will take time to resolve all the deals, for which we need extension of the CA but then at least we would have a basis for one.

Instead of devoting outrageous amount of money, resources and expertise in nabbing by-passers and snooping on unsuspecting subscribers, the government should do to be as legalise inbound VOIP calls. But we hold VOIP operators themselves don’t want their service to be legalised and are exerting pressure? Some big names are involved in the illegal VOIP business, and despite their denial some ISPs are involved in providing them bandwidth. Keeping it illegal benefits the operators, allows telecom companies to keep their rates up and allow SIM cards to be used for bulk bypassing. The only losers are Nepalis making international calls. “In all our operations we found that most of the illegal international calls are operating in the scam. Without their support, call bypassing is not possible.” Rajendra Singh Bhandari, DIG at the CIB told me this week. Police complaint organised crime is being carried out with calls made through VOIP because they are hard to trace.

VOIP has been legalised in many countries in the last decade and the Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA) is also considering distributing VOIP licences to qualifying ISPs with coverage of at least 25 districts and 13,000 VDCs. There is however fierce opposition from within the telecommunication sector and even the CIB to this move. Bhandari questions the motive of those pushing for the legalisation of VOIP when he says 99 per cent of all call bypassing involved millions of rupees added to the state coffers. However, even more suspicious is the motive of those who want to keep VOIP illegal. While the fear that few big shots would corner the market if VOIP licences are distributed is valid, there is no alternative to opening up the market and allowing competition to lower rates and improve services better.

Ultimately, cheaper and better services always win out no matter what the restrictions. After all, customers should be king.
success always starts with failure. This is both a subtitle and the premise of Tim Harford’s enjoyably readable latest book Adapt. But what kind of failure is helpful for success? Harford starts out by pointing out how complex and fluidly changing the world around us is. He uses the bread toaster as an example. If you were to start making a toaster from scratch today, at your own house, the task would be next to impossible. The workmanship, the logistics and the materials needed for a toaster are all so maddeningly complex -- and the knowledge about what makes a toaster a toaster is dispersed among so many different people -- that is impossible for any one person to actually build it.

If the simple task of understanding how a toaster is made is so complex, what makes us think that, with a few degrees and few experiences, we can really understand the world at large? After all, is only one among many maps and mental models. Schooling, degrees and few experiences, we can overestimate the explanatory powers of their own maps and mental models. Schooling, after all, is only one among many small ways to understand how the world works. When experts were tracked for the accuracy of their predictions, it was found that they were only marginally better than amateurs. Better, then, is to think for oneself, and learn from mistakes. Try new small things, and survive failures: When no one knows for sure what works and what doesn’t, it pays to try new things, but in small doses. Trying out new things will invite failures, to be sure. But those failures, Harford notes, tend to be survivable failures, which help make the final product better. In other words, do not try new big things, only to fall flat on your face, but try new small things, which you can gradually improve to make it a success.

This is one view that Nepal’s aid industry needs to take to heart. Most so-called pilot interventions fail because even the pilots are so over-planned and over-designed -- at least on paper with all the good intentions and expertise -- that there is no mechanism to adapt to the inevitable but survivable failures when the plan comes in contact with reality. Making a good enough plan with a view to adapt to changing realities is not a move that risk-averse aid officials make.

Learn from feedback: software programmers know this intuitively. If a program doesn’t run, that’s a feedback that some code is amiss. Sportspeople know that if the way they are playing is not good, they need to change tactics. But in life, inertia sets in. Most of the time, we are reluctant to seek out and learn from feedback. Instead, we spend more time defending our past mistakes and errors instead of learning from what doesn’t work, and going along with what works.

Written in a style reminiscent of Malcolm Gladwell (i.e. a question followed by a story followed by what academic researchers say before reaching a surprising conclusion), the book’s strength is that it backs up its views with numerous examples and studies. Though the book is useful for managers, it underestimates the level of resistance one is likely to encounter at workplace to try new small things, make mistakes to deliberately learn from them, and iterate one’s product line to success.
There are plenty of getaways around Kathmandu, ideal for mini excursions if you know where to look. Just 6km from the busy city and walking distance from Patan is the scenic and historic hilltop settlement of Chobhar. It overlooks the Bagmati where it exits the Valley through a gorge cut by Manjushree.

On the hill is the 15th century Adinath Lokeshwor Temple dedicated to Rato Machhindranath with an astounding array of metal pots, pans and water containers hanging from the roof, donated by newlyweds to ensure a happy marriage. Also known as Karunamayu, the deity is revered by both Hindus and Buddhists as incarnations of Shiva and Avalokiteshvara.

A carnival is held here from full moon of Dasain to Tihar. According to legend, as recounted by temple priest Rajesh Shakya a local cow herder found the statue of Adinath Lokeshwor in the nearby Nakkhu River and established it in the temple on top of the hill. Since then, every year the Kalash from the temple is filled with water from the Nakkhu River and is offered to the god.

Women perform a five day fast known as ‘Nirjala’, drinking only the holy water from the temple after they have visited and taken a ritual bath in five holy spots. There is a belief that such harsh fasting settles any kinds of dispute between the married couple and ensures a happy married life.

Another attraction of Chobhar is a bathing ceremony held the first day after Gai Jatra in May in the presence of the priest. The figure of the god is carried in a chariot by four members of Nemkul family to Nani Tole where the statue is bathed with milk. A line of priests belonging to the Shakya family have been serving the temple for generations.

Chobhar is a quiet and tranquil village which overlooks Kathmandu city, but could as well be far away in time and space. It is a photogenic place and a perfect venue for photographs of the Valley and the mountains beyond when the monsoon ends. The route to Chobhar is also great for bicycle enthusiasts, and an annual mountain biking championship is held in the cement quarry on the other side of the hill.

The simplicity and cheerfulness of the locals, and its rustic old world charm gives Chobhar an added draw. An early morning trip to the hilltop town offers amazing views of the sun rising from behind Gauri Shankhar in the northeast, as the Valley wakes up slowly from slumber.

Chobhar, so far and yet so near.

A tranquil hilltop village close to Kathmandu is the perfect destination for those who crave a little time out.
**EVENTS**

**Tribute to MF Husain: Journey of a Maestro**, an exhibition of serigraphs and drawings, opening remarks by Sanjeeva Thapa and Sujan Chitrakar and a talk program by Dr Geeti Sen. Till 12 August, 5.30pm. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Restored, 4438979

**Group Art**, exhibition of works by Nepali and foreign artists, organised by Unique Stokes. Till 12 August, 11am to 6pm. Park Gallery, Pulchok, 5522907, parkgallery.wlink.com.np

**Little Voice**, an exhibition of artworks by Sarita Dongol and Little Voice. Till 15 August, 5.30pm on opening day, gallery hours: 10am to 5pm. Newa Chen Art Gallery, 5535532

**Staging of Bukhyacha, a Nepali adaptation of Italian play ‘About Face’**, Till 3 September, every day except Mondays, 5.30pm. Anran Theatre, Gorku, Old Baneshwor, 4469556

**Organic Farming training**, training on bio intensive farming, organized by Eco organic Nepal. 12 to 19 August, 5am to 4pm. EON farm at Mahankal. Fees: Rs 4000, 0449658808, dpu.al@yahoo.com, www.ecoorganicnepal.org

**2nd annual Galajatra International Pride Festival**, Blue Diamond Society is staging Nepal’s pride march for the country’s sexual and gender minority. 14 August, Bharatpur, Chitwan

**Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited**

19 August - 9 September, from 11am to 6pm, Baber Mahal Restored, 4438979


**NePAL REAL STATE EXPO 2011**

Till 15 August, 10am to 5pm, Newa Chen Art Gallery, 5535532

**Nepal Real State Expo 2011**, organised by Nepal Land and Housing Association of Nepal. 25 August to 28 August, 11am to 6pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu

**South Asia & China Trade Fair 2011**, with Dashin Bazaz. Organised by Nepal China Executive Council. 15 to 19 September, 11am to pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu

**‘Something like a film festival’ organised by DocSkool**. Till 22 November. Submission open until 30 August. www.cinesymposium.com, amanyu@cinesymposium.org, 4471104

**School Sanitation: the neglected development link**, an exhibition to spread awareness on school sanitation, organised by Water Aid. Till 15 August, 3pm on Thursday and 5pm on Saturday. Nepal art Council, Baber Mahal, 4471105

**Lyrics from the Junkyard**, sixth album of Robin and the New Revolution. 13 August, Atlantic Bar, Lazimpal, 9808011015

**Album Launch of Hamro Desh**, song launch, concert to mark International Youth Day along with workshops, meetings and cultural events. 13 August, noon onwards, GAA Hall, Thamel

**MEENA KAYASTHA**

Meena Kayastha recycles objects which have outlived their usefulness to society

While painting exhibitions are a dime and a dozen in Kathmandu, there is one unique perspective on sculpture that opens on 19 August at The Siddhartha Art Gallery. ‘Life forms from the junkyard’ is an amalgam of primitive art form and contemporary sculpting by Meena Kayastha that will take visitors’ breath away with its sheer audacity and dreamlike forms. Kayastha has grabbed life-forms from the junkyard with imaginative figures and native earth tones. Not only do you see haunting antropomorphic figures lurking within each piece, you also hear the music that the mechanical sculptures sing.

Kayastha says she began fiddling with the idea of moulding pieces from scrap heaps five years ago, the idea incubated in her sculptor’s mind until the actual work started taking shape two years ago. Paintings appealed less to her at art school, and she was drawn more to sculptures recycled from objects which had outlived their usefulness to society. The 25 pieces, are worked on progressively without a preconceived promise to enchant viewers.

Meena uses paper mache, mud, discarded junk pieces, her own jewelry and even human teeth in her sculptures that are toned with primitive and traditional hues of tera sigillata, mud brown, whites and smoke black. The structures have been welded, modified and reminds one of African art forms, or the exaggerated figures of Brancusi and Marcel Duchamp. Kayastha’s boldly dada-esque approach distinguishes them and gives them a breathtaking originality in the evolution of modern Nepali sculpture.

Having participated in a number of group exhibitions, this is Kayastha’s first solo. “I see process work as more intriguing than the conceptual one, process work lets you discover while you work and feelings are added to it in those moments,” she explains. “A life form shapes itself progressively, and that is what I have tried with these pieces...I have added life to it.” True, a preview of the exhibits evoked a sense of awe and wonder at how Kayastha has made inanimate junk animate.

Lyrics from the Junkyard
By Meena Kayastha
19 August - 9 September
The Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Restored
www.siddharthaartgallery.com

**Animated junk**
Upstairs Cafe, a delicious range of Vietnamese cuisine to sample. Maharajgunj, near the US embassy

Delícies de France, special menu with duck 3 courses, including Duck jambonnet with its vegetable garnish or Duck breast with its mango garnish. Friday 12th, Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th August, diner (Rs 140) plus taxes, Ganesh Man Singh Building, 2nd floor (above Illy Galeria Cafe), Booking is necessary (limited offer), call 4260326

Cinnamon Grill Lounge, offers delicious food and good music, added bonus- live performance by Ciney Gurung every Saturday. Jhamsikhel

Singma Food Court, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. Pulchok, 500992 and Bhatbhateri, 441078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np

9th Annual Wine Festival, Kinjo’s monsoon wine festival will feature 15 varieties of exotic wines from six different countries. 14-15 September, Kinjo’s Kathmandu, Thamel, 4250440

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city, Kantipath, 4215068

Krishnarpan, a specialty Nepal restaurant at The Dwarka’s Hotel, Maharajgunj, near the US embassy

The Factory in Thamel is a disappointment, the Beef Burger was more comparable to a baked meatloaf sandwich than a chargrilled hunk. On the same page, the Steak and Mustard Sandwich was sadly served on a stale loaf, that if toasted and dressed up like a Philly or even au jus for French dipping would make it a unique addition to the city’s repertory. The Seared Bekti under a bed of creamy spinach wasn’t seasoned, rather breaded and fried but tastier than fish sticks. And for vegetarians, the Cottage Cheese Steak with Ratatouille, a slab of packed cheese topped with a tomato slurry and roasted veg, is too much for a main fare and better ordered as a sharing entree. The evening’s only salving grace in terms of grub was the Buffalo Wings, a finger-licking snack that calls for a cold brew, and the silky Chocolate ‘Kahlua’ Mousse. The treats, along with the mutton seekhwa sticks, hint on The Factory’s selling point as a happy hour hangout. Priced at standard Thamel rates (add 10% and 13%), the mediocrity of The Factory’s victuals isn’t worth the tab. Come for the music, setting, or as its slogan suggests, ‘converse’, but certainly not for food. Marco Pollo

Turn into Mansalah Street from Thamel Chowk, first set of stairs on the left and two flights up.

Space
Bread ‘n water
Service
Deal-icious
Repeat!
Gosainkunda illness

S
ome years ago I observed
a congregation of 7,000
pilgrims at 4,300 m above
sea level ready to pray to Shiva
at the magnificent holy lake of
Gosainkunda north of Kathmandu.
Many were in no mood to pray.
They were stilted with altitude sickness
in its various forms: acute mountain
sickness, high altitude pulmonary
oedema, and high altitude cerebral
oedema.
The initial symptoms of acute
mountain sickness (headache and
nausea) are warning signs that
need to be heeded. Alas, many
pilgrims climb too high too fast (from
Kathmandu at 1,300 m to the lake
in two nights) and totally disregard
initial symptoms.
Recent studies have shown
that acute mountain sickness is
rampant in this population of pilgrims
to Gosainkunda and that many
are dehydrated because they are
facing. Women are so serious about
the Gosainkunda ritual they do not
even drink water as they ascend.
There is a belief that the
sickness they experience is caused
by the scent of the flowers and
alpine vegetation that grow on the
wayside. This is akin to what Jesuit
travelers in the early 18th century
also thought when they were
crossing Himalayan passes. The
scent of the flowers as the cause
of altitude sickness does not make
sense, as I am fond of reminding
the pilgrims, because invariably the
patients improve significantly on
descent, even though the flowers
are still giving off their scent.
One study postulated that the
visions that these high altitude pilgrims
often report may not actually be divine revelations
but just hallucination caused by the
cerebral oedema. The pilgrim
community may not favour this
rational explanation for what is
obese men and women, who
can barely climb up stairs in their
homes, undertaking such high altitude
pilgrimages on helicopter and
horseback. Usually they decide to
do this on the spur of the moment
as a famous “guru” is going to lead
them.
This year the annual
Gosainkunda festival is 13
August 13, the full moon day of
Janai Purnima. Hopefully the
Himalayan Rescue Association
and the Mountain Medicine
Society of Nepal at Dhunche
will have been successful in
convincing the pilgrims not to
go too high too fast, to listen
to their bodies, drink adequate
amount of clean water, and use
medicines if necessary. Although
the drug acetazolamide (diamox)
prevents and treats altitude
sickness, ascending gradually with
proper acclimatisation is the best
precaution.

HI-FI ACCESSORY:
A young Tharu woman at a cultural parade
organised to celebrate the 17th International Indigenous Day,
outside City Hall, Kathmandu, on Tuesday.
The Big Smoke is in serious danger of reclaiming its industrial-era sobriquet. London had, in the last couple of decades, become synonymous with ancient history wedded to booming commerce – the Royal Wedding and the Olympics in successive years testifying to a juxtaposition befitting the world’s leading tourist destination.

In the last week, all this has gone up in the smoke obscuring fuzzy videos of hooded rioters running amok across the city. Before the disbelieving eyes of residents (let alone those of us who think Tottenham’s just a football club), the fallout from the death of Mark Duggan has spread far beyond the north London suburb to other British cities across the country. Where will it end, and what does it mean?

The answer to the latter question is best left to those more familiar with British youth, crime, and the impact of the economic downturn. I’m more interested in what it might mean to Nepalis, and our youths in particular.

First off, what is London to Nepalis, beyond everything that Kathmandu and the rest of the country is not (among other things the seat of a working constitutional monarchy)? Clearly it’s a destination of choice for students, though many end up working sooner rather than later, along with a motley mix of other Nepalis more or less qualified, rather than later, along with a motley mix of other Nepalis more or less qualified, from investment bankers to kitchen boys.

Once in London, ground realities quickly obscure the glitter on the dreams of the less fortunate. Especially if they’re marking time serving up curry and lager in the kitchen boys.

One commentator labelled the rioters ‘the products of a crumbling nation, and an indifferent political class that has turned its back on them’. Another characterised the ‘shopping riots’ as a rebellion against a consumerist system ‘that denies its bounty to them’. Shift contexts, and we may speculate how the youth in Nepal, with far fewer opportunities that their British counterparts, may respond to much more of a ‘crumbling nation’ where ‘bounty’ is increasingly marketed yet remains out of reach.

There’s no doubt the political class in Nepal has turned its back on the youth of Nepal, except when it needs to employ the more criminally inclined among them. Our decade-long conflict itself was fuelled by disaffection with the established, never mind the irony of Maoist youth fighting the more ‘secure’ youth in the army and police. With the end of the conflict, labour migration is no return.

– of the state exchequer – any end to the Nepali youth decides what could happen to them.

On the other hand, they should perhaps worry about what could happen to them onto the Nepali youth decides what could happen to them onto the Nepali youth decides what could happen to them. Those who feel that if there was no progress on anything that然 ends up harming the vulnerable as much, if not more than the ostensible targets (the rich and powerful). It’s in the interest of everybody in Nepal, rich, poor and in the middle, to try and understand the motivations of those who spontaneously decide against the rule of law, and work together to ensure we don’t get to the point of no return.

This time it’s us watching them, but maybe Nepal should be more worried about its own youth.
Nepal faces a power deficit of 200MW during peak hours in the dry season. The total installed capacity of 648MW is misleading because most hydroelectric plants in Nepal generate electricity to their full capacity only during the monsoon. Power demand is highest when the generation is lowest in winter. There are no reservoir projects to store monsoon water to generate power in the dry season, hence the mismatch between demand and supply. Expect electricity rationing at least till 2014.

The rising demand for power has attracted dozens of domestic and foreign private investors who have already acquired licenses but are being hampered by local obstruction. Even so, several small scale projects are already in the construction phase.

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) alone has five projects with total installed capacity of 560 MW in the pipeline. The private sector has 17 projects with total installed capacity of 112 MW at various stages of construction (see box). If current roadblocks are removed, most projects can be completed within five years. Another 27 projects totaling 1,093MW are waiting to start construction.

The critical factor is for the government to remove bureaucratic and financial hurdles and to address local opposition in its prestige projects like Upper Tama Kosi, Chamelia, Kulekhani III, Senjen and Upper Trishuli. Although private investors have appreciated the troubleshooting approach taken by new Energy Minister Gokarna Bista (see interview below), they acknowledge he has his work cut out.

“Only by changing the work culture of the NEA will it be able to attract more investments in hydropower,” says Subarnaad Shrestha of the Independent Power Producers Association (IPPAN). NEA is the sole authority for transmission and distribution and most generation, but has amassed an accumulated loss of Rs 30 billion. Private investors are skeptical that NEA can ensure timely payment for the electricity they supply to the grid in future.

It seems even Minister Bista has given up on NEA ever being reformed, and has proposed an Electricity Development Board. But experts say that unless there is change in the way institutions are run, nothing is going to work. There has been little change in electricity tariff in the past 10 years. NEA buys costly dollar-denominated electricity from private producers but has to subsidise the tariff bearing a loss of Rs 2.5 for every unit it sells.

If NEA offers an attractive price to private producers and revises distribution tariff, it can gradually make up for the losses incurred. But if it can’t for political reasons, experts say it ought to hand over transmission and distribution to the private sector as well.

The government could also entice the financial sector to invest in hydropower. But under current rules an investor has to make the rounds of nine ministries and 35 departments. At best, it takes 88 days to complete Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA). Sometimes a project is faced with retroactive regulations half way through the process.

NC leader Gagan Thapa who heads the taskforce that is preparing a report on Water Resource Development under CA’s Committee on Natural Resource says, “If only we pass two resolutions stuck in the parliament, we can ensure effective generation, transmission, distribution and tariff regulation.” (See overleaf)

Nepal’s private sector is capable of producing more than enough electricity the country needs into the future. But in order to harness this capability, the government must first make changes in regulations that work at cross purposes and correct contradictory policies. The private sector is convinced that with better pricing and fast-tracked bureaucracy at least 1700MW can be generated in the next seven years.

Nepal’s energy crisis is sum total of corruption, mismanagement and politicisation of NEA and its lack of accountability. Successive prime ministers and home ministers have abused the NEA’s resources and other officials use it as a cash cow. Up to 20 per cent of power is lost through leakage, mostly stolen. Political patronage ensures that thieves and those involved in kickbacks and mismanagement walk scot free.

If the government is serious about addressing the energy crisis, the first step is the de-politicisation of NEA and its better management. Then, if it can only ensure a stable policy and keep politics out of the power sector there will be no power cuts after 2015. If not, load shedding is here to stay till the 2020s.

**Nepal Times** What is different in your approach to energy development? Gokarna Bista: For the first time, the executive head of NEA has been selected on competitive basis and I have initiated the process to scrap the provision of minister heading the NEA. Apart from this, I have overseen establishment of a company to invest in the hydropower development, initiation of big project like Upper Tama Kosi, the preparation of a master plan for the extension of transmission lines and prioritisation of reservoir based projects.

But we’ve heard all this before, haven’t we?

I was not a part of governments that produced only 600 MW in 100 years. I am determined to leave a mark in hydropower development. I understand well that without augmenting production, we cannot end load-shedding.

But the private producers are not happy with you?

I am ready to listen to their complaints but if they want to revise PPA of old projects then they are being unreasonable.

Why can’t the government offer revise all PPAs?

How many times should we amend the PPA of the same project? We are ready to listen to legitimate demands, but they can’t have everything their way.

Why have you initiated the idea of new Board instead of improving NEA?

In order to improve the NEA’s financial condition, there is a need to eliminate existing malpractices. This will take time. But in order to tackle the power crunch, we need to extend transmission lines immediately. In the last ten years, NEA has extended only 127 km of transmission lines we need thousands of kilometers. A new company would meet this challenge.

“Things will change”

Interview with Minister for Energy Gokarna Bista

Nepal’s private sector is capable of producing more than enough electricity the country needs into the future. But in order to harness this capability, the government must first make changes in regulations that work at cross purposes and correct contradictory policies. The private sector is convinced that with better pricing and fast-tracked bureaucracy at least 1700MW can be generated in the next seven years.

Nepal’s energy crisis is sum total of corruption, mismanagement and politicisation of NEA and its lack of accountability. Successive prime ministers and home ministers have abused the NEA’s resources and other officials use it as a cash cow. Up to 20 per cent of power is lost through leakage, mostly stolen. Political patronage ensures that thieves and those involved in kickbacks and mismanagement walk scot free.

If the government is serious about addressing the energy crisis, the first step is the de-politicisation of NEA and its better management. Then, if it can only ensure a stable policy and keep politics out of the power sector there will be no power cuts after 2015. If not, load shedding is here to stay till the 2020s.
Anyone who looks at the figures should be worried. Nepal produces only 600MW of power and demand is 800MW. Since most projects are non-storage type, generation capacity depends on the flow of the rivers. Even in the monsoon, the rivers generate only 692 MW, and with energy demand rising at 80 MW a year, power rationing is here to stay for at least three more years. In fact, there may only be power for three hours a day in coming winters. Load-shedding is no just a nuisance to consumers, the fall in productivity and increase in diesel imports is ruining the economy.

The government has declared an energy emergency up to December 2015 during which period it hopes to fast track projects to generate 2,500 MW of additional power, including from reservoir projects. Parliament’s Committee on Natural Resources, of which I am a member, has just completed a detailed study and has made some recommendations in a preliminary report.

At present, hydropower development is stymied by inadequate incentives for domestic and foreign investors, poor governance at the regulating agencies and line ministry. Politicisation of the NEA has now reached unprecedented levels: there are 13 unions affiliated to various parties in the NEA. Even if there is enough generation capacity, there isn’t the transmission capacity to take the power to consumers. NEA’s monopoly in generation, transmission and distribution has hindered competition and hampered efficiency. Some projects are being delayed because their environmental impact assessment isn’t complete.

The preliminary report makes the following recommendations:

- Draw up a 50-year National Energy Security Plan and a medium term National Energy Plan within 12 months
- Forge a national consensus among political parties about a five-year National Hydropower Development Plan.
- Urgently draw up a data base of survey licenses for various projects
- Set up an all-party mechanism to remove obstacles for completion of projects undertaken by NEA, domestic private sector and foreign investors.
- Launch construction of West Seti, Budi Gandagi reservoir project with new company and line up financing
- Provide government security and prevent strikes and shutdowns at power generation sites
- Address demand side issues like cutting pilferage and instituting institute time-of-day and seasonal tariff
- Expedite 10 projects of up to 25MW, for immediate relief from power cuts, fast track Upper Tama Kosi
- Make special request to five of Nepal’s partner countries to build a project of more than 100 MW each
- Repair and operate 59MW of thermal capacity in Biratnagar, Duhati and Hetauda
- Set aside 7 per cent of the budget for the next ten years for hydropower development, secure financing from international creditors
- Set up a National Transmission Company
- Set up a National Power Trading Company
- Priority should be to meet base load before exporting power
- The rate demand for energy is growing and hydro power is not able to keep up, thus increasing this country’s dependence on imported fuel. Nepal’s future development is only possible with hydropower, and the development of other renewables will help us attain self-sufficiency in energy. Each development zone should have a reservoir project to meet demand during the dry season.
- Energy from the cost-effective investment in hydropower should be invested in industry and processing should spur rural development. Multi-purpose projects must provide irrigation to boost agriculture production. Most important of all, given the importance of hydropower for the country’s development, there is an urgent need for political consensus and continuity to future development of this sector. We have lost a lot of time, we cannot afford any more delays.

Gagan Thapa is a NC member of parliament’s Committee on National Resources and has been involved with the draft report on water resources development.
Maoists must lead

Interview with the Maoist’s Barsaman Pun and NC’s Gagan Thapa in Kantipur, 7 August

Barsaman Pun

Kantipur: Is the party dispute settled?
Barsaman Pun: Most of the differences have been resolved. The ideological debate is ongoing.

Gagan Thapa

Kantipur: What has delayed the peace process and constitution drafting process?
Gagan Thapa: Every party has to bear the share of blame. Internal dispute within the Maoists and CPN-UML as well as failure of NC to ensure implementation of 5-point deal are largely responsible. But the prime minister’s political dishonesty is also to blame for the protracted stalemate.

Don’t you think the NC is too engaged in power sharing as opposed to peace and constitution?
We should have agreed upon a national consensus in a package. Lack of clarity has wasted two months of the extended CA period. Peace and constitution can only be achieved through national consensus.

How can you have a consensus government when there is difference among the parties who lead the consensus government?
We have made it clear that the PM has to resign and the NC can’t accept Maoist leadership until they take concrete steps towards the peace process. The NC has to take the initiative and convince the other parties and win their trust. The Maoists are free to take initiative so long as they are able to take the NC into confidence by fulfilling the conditions we demand. Unless one of the above happens, this deadlock will not be resolved.

The NC’s role after 28 August has not been constructive. Is the leadership at fault?
I don’t think the NC has done anything constructive. Is the leadership at fault?

The NC has to take the initiative and convince the other parties towards the peace process. The NC has to bear the responsibility of the protracted stalemate.

Corrupt cases

Box: Peace and Constitution
Basket: Constitution Assembly

Basu Kehlitz in Annapurna Post, 6 August

I will never forget Nepal. It was the most unforgettable assignment of my 35 year diplomatic career ...

Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood during his final diplomatic meeting with Prime Minister Jhalanath Khanal on Tuesday.

How are parties mired in internal disputes when there are other national priorities?
There is a debate within each party about whether or not to move ahead in a new direction. There is still debate within the NC regarding federalism, secularism and republicanism. There is similar debate inside the UML as well.

What about the differences between the parties?
The major difference concerning the integration of combatants has nearly been resolved. Everybody has agreed on forming a separate force under the Nepal Army. There is a near consensus on at least 8,000 combatants to be integrated. The parties have also agreed on norms depending on education, marital status and age of the candidate. But the parties are yet to agree on the total number of personnel to be brought in from other state forces.

What about the issue of rank harmonisation? When will that be resolved?
It’s a technical issue and will be resolved after mutual negotiation, probably within a week. By 27 August, those to be integrated, rehabilitated and those seeking voluntary retirement will be grouped separately.

Your chairman has said a consensus government must be formed immediately, will this lead to stability?
Put it this way: in spite of peace process moving ahead, this government has to make way for consensus government after 12 August. It may be led by Khanal, NC or us, but it will be a new government.

Who will lead the consensus government?
We have proposed our vice chairman Baburam Bhattarai as the consensus candidate as per the party’s decision.

But NC president has proposed your party chairman as a consensus candidate.
I thank NC President for the proposal, but it is our party’s internal decision as to who should lead the party in the government and we have already made our choice.

The major difference concerning the integration of combatants has nearly been resolved. Everybody has agreed on forming a separate force under the Nepal Army. There is a near consensus on at least 8,000 combatants to be integrated. The parties have also agreed on norms depending on education, marital status and age of the candidate. But the parties are yet to agree on the total number of personnel to be brought in from other state forces.

What about the issue of rank harmonisation? When will that be resolved?
It’s a technical issue and will be resolved after mutual negotiation, probably within a week. By 27 August, those to be integrated, rehabilitated and those seeking voluntary retirement will be grouped separately.

Your chairman has said a consensus government must be formed immediately, will this lead to stability?
Put it this way: in spite of peace process moving ahead, this government has to make way for consensus government after 12 August. It may be led by Khanal, NC or us, but it will be a new government.

Who will lead the consensus government?
We have proposed our vice chairman Baburam Bhattarai as the consensus candidate as per the party’s decision.

But NC president has proposed your party chairman as a consensus candidate.
I thank NC President for the proposal, but it is our party’s internal decision as to who should lead the party in the government and we have already made our choice.
The Agni Air Dornier had taken off during a torrential downpour from Kathmandu on the morning of 24 August. It was bound for Lukla with 14 passengers from Nepal, UK, USA and Japan, and of the three crew members one was my daughter Sarah Sherpa, the flight attendant. Fifteen minutes after takeoff, Capt L P B “Lucky” Shah and Co-pilot Sophia Singh decided to return to Kathmandu due to poor visibility en route.

Soon after, the plane’s primary and backup generator failed, then the standby battery ran out. It is thought that without power, the cockpit instruments must have malfunctioned disorienting the pilots in heavy clouds. The aircraft came down about 20 miles south of Kathmandu in the village of Shikharpur of Makwanpur district. There were no survivors.

My wife Anju and I have lived and relived the memory of that devastating morning, and as the first anniversary of the crash approaches next week we are once more numbed by the loss of our precious Sarah.

Shikharpur is a bumpy three hour jeep ride east of Hetauda populated by subsistence farmers. In the past year, we have visited Shikharpur and decided to turn our sorrow into support for the people of the little village. At their request we have built a stupa at ‘ground zero’, which is only 20 metres away from the school that is also being upgraded.

My wife and I have been amazed by the outpouring of support and goodwill from friends, relatives and even those we don’t know. Howard Fallon, father of 18-year-old Kendra Fallon who was in the same flight, initiated the project and has also set up an endowment at Asna Orphanage in Lamatar where his daughter had volunteered for two months before setting off on her trek.

Misa Hayashi’s only son, 19-year-old Yuki, also died in the crash. The Hayashi family is now an ardent supporter of the project, helping financially to build the school. Yuki’s 78-year-old grandmother is coming to Shikharpur for the inauguration of the stupa and school next week. Our children left us, but we want to cherish their memory by helping the underprivileged children of the village they came to be joined with that fateful morning a year ago. All of us lost fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and friends. We had raised Sarah with lots of love and affection, we invested all we could in her education. Now, she is only a memory. But it is a memory that we hope will live on in the hearts of the children of Shikharpur as they grow up.

We have also received help from many friends. Agni Air’s Sudip Basnyat has offered to contribute for Shikharpur’s education fund through a portion of every air ticket. We were hoping that the embassies of the nationals who died would chip in for the school expansion, but that hasn’t materialised yet.

The new SKY building (named after Sarah, Kendra and Yuki, pictured left) is coming up and will have new spacious and bright classrooms. The stupa is complete, and the village is getting a drinking water supply.

No one is immortal, but we can contribute to the future by investing in children. We hope that the stupa will be around for a long time to come to remind us of those who left us.

Shikharpur Buddhist Monument and Bakiya Thakur School Committee
+977 3651018820
nths@ntc.net.np

www.laxmihyundai.com

SURPRISING SPACE WITH AMAZING COMFORT

Whether you are behind the wheel or in the back seat, Sonata’s elegant interior provides generous space and exceptional comfort. Leg, head and even shoulder room in both front and rear seats exquisitely its roominess which makes Sonata a nice place to be in.

www.laxmihyundai.com
From lame duck to dead duck

New that Lujendra has discovered water on Mars, maybe the Department of Drinking Water and Sewerage should invite him back to Nepal to see if he can find it in Kathmandu too. We will need a diviner here, and it may as well be an ex-patriot Nepali. If he can find it in outer space, he can find it anywhere. Kathmandu may have run out of water, but it is the most happening place in the solar system, there is lots happening even though nothing ever gets done.

The most happening announcement by the Gobblement of Nepal this week was not the promulgation of a new constitution a week before the deadline, but the banning of smoking in public places. One thing about this grovelment, it sure has its priorities right. There is a sword hanging over the prime minister’s head and he still has time for life-and-death issues like fining people for smoking. As far as rules and regulations go we must have some of the finest on the planet. At this rate KTM will be a “fine” city just like Spore. The only diff will be that here we will have to fine people for flushing the toilet and wasting water.

JN’s mentor Comrade Caesar Maximus has also got his priorities all figured out. At a time when integration is stuck and the constitution deadline is a week away, he’s air-dashing off again to Malaysia with his left hand man, Com Bagman (“50 karod”) Mahara. And just to quell speculation about whether the Asia-Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation (APECF) actually exists, this time PKD brought the entire zingbang back with him on his plane from BKK. Last time journalists went to check out the Glouster St office address of APECF in Wan Chai, they found a textile factory. Anyway, this is the organisation that has a grandiose plan to turn Lumbini into a Buddhist Disneyland? APECF’s website is still “under construction”, and that will probably be the fate that awaits Lumbini, too.

No one it seems has time to think about such things when internal feuding among kangresis, eh-maleys FG is reaching a crescendo. The worst is yet to come in the PKD vs BRB saga. Awesome is ticked off JN offered to resign on Saturday under pressure from the kangresis, because that would make it easier for BRB to cobble together a consensus govt. But for lame duck JN to be a dead duck, the kangresis will first have to resolve the SBD vs RCP power struggle, and you can be sure PKD will try his best to drive a wedge there. SBD gave BRB a public dressing down in Gorkha last week calling him “fork tongued”, must have been to make PKD happy so he will anoint him PM?

So, to recap, the plot so far:

1. The PKD faction wants SBD as PM just so BRB doesn’t get the chance
2. The BRB faction wants the NC to come on board in a consensus govt headed by him
3. Jhusil Da would rather have PKD as PM because a consensus govt will mean either SBD or BRB as PM
4. RCP wants a consensus govt led by him and not by BRB
5. JNK knows that even if he resigns none of this will be sorted out and he can remain in Balu Water for the unforeseen future
6. The KPO faction of the UML wants JNK out even if it means a kangresi-led govt

If you think your head is spinning, look at what it has done to the prime minister. All the excitement has been too much for him and he is down again with a viral fever that doctors suspect is an E-KpOli infection.