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Two faces

When he is not inaugurating conferences like this one of overseas Nepalis, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has his hands full with damage control. There is an unrealistically high public expectation on him to deliver. He faces challenges on every front. There are limits to populist gestures stage-managed by his spin masters.

The singlemindedness with which Bhattarai is trying to pardon and exonerate a minister and MP from his own party threatens to undermine the goodwill most Nepalis have for him. By protecting crooks and sanctioning impunity, the prime minister is making his own job immensely more difficult. 🇳🇵

Editorial p2
Immunity from impunity

Mustang in Mustang p15
Anurag Acharya



BIKRAM RAI

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IMMUNITY FROM IMPUNITY

For an atheist party that supposedly thinks religion is the opiate of the masses, the Maoist-led government sure took this year's Dasain festival seriously. No sooner had we emerged from one holiday, we are plunging straight into another one, Chhat. This means the Madhesi half of the coalition is soon going into its own prolonged hibernation. And with Tihar coming in the way, don't expect much besides slogans on peace-building and constitution-drafting.

But there is one activity the government led by Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has been deadly serious about: pardoning party faithful accused of crimes and forgiving those involved in excesses during the war. This is not surprising since the main point of the four-point agreement that installed Bhattarai in power was a general amnesty clause.

But the singlemindedness with which Bhattarai is pursuing this agenda threatens to undermine all the stage-managed populism his spin masters have set up for him since he took office.

The public perception is still that Prime Minister Bhattarai is an upright and intelligent man. But he can't remain the only good apple when the rest of the barrel is filled with rotten ones. In fact, the stench is now getting so unbearable that it will sooner or later taint the prime minister himself unless he stops giving excuses, passing the buck.

Soon after assuming office Prime Minister Bhattarai appointed his crony, Mukti Pradhan, as attorney general. Pradhan immediately, and publicly, said his intention was to



BIKRAM RAI

dismiss all cases of gross human rights violations against Maoist cadre, and to pardon those convicted of such crimes. Carrying on from that, Bhattarai nearly got the cabinet meeting before Dasain to recommend a pending presidential pardon for Maoist lawmaker Balkrishna Dhungel who last year was convicted and sentenced to a 20-year jail term for the murder of Ujjan Kumar Shrestha in Okhaldhunga during the war. The state never made any move to apprehend Dhungel.

Bhattarai also brought in another loyalist, Prabhu Sah, as

land reform minister in the cabinet. Sah and his assistant, Siyaram Kuswaha, have been accused of being involved in the murder of Hindu youth leader Kashinath Tiwari in Birganj last year. Police now believe there is enough evidence to take the two to court. Earlier moves by the relatives of the victim to seek justice had failed because of political pressure. But now that there is a professional and honest police chief in Parsa, the case is moving. Sah's Maoist supporters have reacted the only way they know how: by taking to the streets and declaring an indefinite shutdown in Gaur. The state counsel in this case appears to have been under direct instruction of Attorney General Pradhan to remove the minister from the charge-sheet.

None of this, of course, surprises anyone. This is the way the justice system has always worked in this country. Political pressure has always been brought to bear to exonerate criminals under the protection of establishment bigwigs. But this is prime minister of whom we expected more.

If the rot at the top is not stopped, it will be a signal to everyone down the line that it's ok to murder, loot, extort, and take a bribe. If he remains silent when surrounded by crooks, the prime minister will also be seen as a crook.

We understand Baburam Bhattarai has his hands full. There is an unrealistically high public expectation on him to deliver. He has unenviable challenges on every front. But by sanctioning impunity and protecting criminals in his party and cabinet, he is making his own job immensely more difficult.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

DEMOGRAPHICS

Your editorial ('Demography, democracy and demagogues', #273) sounds like an out-and-out optimism on Baburam's ability. I'm not so sure. He has centralised duties that were the obligation of CDOs and public administration to his own office. This is cheap populism. Bhattarai is swimming in the sympathy of poorly educated masses and ignorantly despotised media houses.

Nirmal

- We wish Bhattarai well this Dasain so he can address the twin challenges of keeping the country's demography and democracy on track, and keeping demagogues out. A demagogue is a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises in order to gain power. Your demagogue is already in, how do you propose the PM keep himself out?

Soni

- Have fun BRB. You are in trouble. The first trouble is your own wife, and others around you. You haven't yet renounced violence, so I don't believe you. Period.

Gyarel

- This is the most incompetent census result I have ever seen. Nearly four million people are missing, and the Central Bureau of Statistics doesn't even try to break this down into internal or external migration, seasonal or permanent migrants, their destination countries. What a wasted opportunity. Any analysis will be flawed because the census itself was flawed.

Kiran L

TRAFFICKING

I salute all who have worked to make Nepal a better place and especially young journalists like Rubeena Mahato whose investigative report ('Long journey home', #573) shows she has the courage to write about atrocities and the people who commit even though it is dangerous. Thanks also for telling us about courageous people who are fighting child trafficking even though it is enjoying the protection of politicians, bureaucrats and security forces. They

have taken an oath to protect the poor and defenseless, but are preying on them.

BNS

- There is a body of research that shows that orphanages fail to provide children with the proper life skills needed for adult life. Therefore a disproportionate number of them (as many as 1 in 10) commit suicide, up to 1 in 7 end up in prostitution and many others gravitate towards places they can cope with given their institutional life skills, such as in jails and psychiatric institutions. I commend the work of the Esther Benjamin Trust for getting kids out of Indian orphanages and also recognize the work of Next Generation Nepal and Help for Himalayan Kids promoting non institutional care in Nepal. It is the future.

Ram Gurung

- Why is Thomas Bell so negative about orphanages in 'Cashing it big on children', #573? There are many orphan homes with good care and sufficient family environment. If these orphanages are shut down who will take care of the children who will be out on the streets?

Bobby Adhikary

- You can't close orphanages overnight. You first offer support to keep families together, then you trace the families of those who are in the orphanages and once the family is strong enough you reunite, then if there are some left over you set up fostering schemes. It takes time and money, but in the medium to long term it will cost much less.

James

- Both sending and receiving countries are generally not interested in adoption as it is an extra burden to the state apparatus and mostly of limited political significance. Most receiving countries accredit adoption agencies that serve as agents for the adoptive parents. These agencies come in all hues and shades and are the money makers at the receiving country end. Some countries are very stringent about accreditations, others couldn't care less. In the latter category you find for instance Italy, Spain, Canada and the USA (and others). At the same time, in these countries you will find

both good and bad apples. Intermediaries of these agencies in Nepal and their habit of handing out cash are a key factor in giving adoption a bad name in Nepal. The way Thomas Bell writes with a broad pen makes the reader believe international adoption is all about wads of cash changing hands. That is a huge oversimplification and does justice to neither adoptive parents nor needy children. The bottom line is that childless couples have to pay for the services rendered by governments and their intermediaries, and that different agencies have different practices how this is done. What is lacking is a morality among these agencies, operational guidelines for the agencies and stringent policies in their home lands that they actually adhere to (The Hague Convention comes short of this).

The Nepal government needs sufficient strength and self confidence to stand up and refuse the presence of bad apples in Nepal (learn from China), and itself be wise and transparent in how received funds are spent. It is naive to believe that orphanages will become obsolete in Nepal, or that inter-country adoption cannot be an option.

Saagar

- It's really sad the most powerless are the ones victimized over and over again because there is no one overseeing the welfare of these poor children. And of course they don't have housing facilities for "rescued" children, and the government is helpless. Only if there was one conscientious politician who really cared about the issue...

Mia

- Simply hanging an article on the premise that the Nepali adoptoin system and orphanages are full of corruption and riddled with money hungry people is simply insulting to the reader and tarnishes the reputation of good and honest people who put their heart and soul into helping children in Nepal.

Tom

DR BANSKOTA

From one Ashok to another, congratulations Dr Banskota ('Award for Banskota', #573). A well-deserved recognition from outside

Nepal for your contribution to tens of thousands of disadvantaged Nepali children. You have improved the lives of many families without craving for money or recognition. You are a shining example for others.

AshokG

- Hearty congratulations, Dr Banskota. I feel proud of your contribution and achievement.

Laxmi Tamang

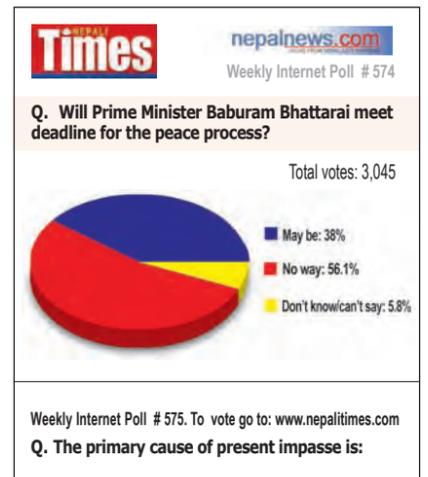
- Congratulations, Dr Ashok Banskota ji. You truly deserve this and more than this. Your charity hospital HRDC in Banepa is of great help to poor and deprived Nepalis and others, through your kindness, many poor people got cured and are able to walk and work to make their living. I saw many people cured, and myself too, from your good hands and expertise in orthopedics. Nepal needs more warm-hearted doctors like you.

Tashi Lama

VACANCY

It's a bit late for earthquake inspectors in Kathmandu ('Vacancy: Earthquake Inspectors, #573). If they cut corners and didn't build according to code to save money before, do you really think they'll earthquake retrofit now? Fat chance. The only way to prepare at this point is to gather emergency supplies, be prepared to help others and hope for the best.

Mags



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Out of sight is not

BHRIKUTI RAI

As garbage piled up on Kathmandu's streets over the holidays, it was clear that much of the trash was made up of plastic wrappings. The city is generating mountains of non-biodegradable and toxic plastic waste with no workable policy in place to either curb its use or manage its disposal.

The science and technology minister in the last government made a valiant attempt to ban plastic bags below 20 microns thick because of their toxicity, and the fact that they can't be reused. At a press conference he announced that the campaign would be launched from Singha Darbar itself and declared the seat of government "plastic free".

The ban did not even last a few days. This week, there were garbage piles even inside Singha Darbar: mostly made up of plastic. Kathmandu's recent history is littered with similar stories of empty slogans and failed campaigns. When archaeologists dig through what used

The plastic bag you threw in the garbage today will be around for 10,000 years

to be Kathmandu Valley 10,000 years from now, they will probably discover a thick layer of plastic that they will guess choked the civilisation into extinction.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), which seems totally overwhelmed by the sheer extent of Kathmandu's waste problem, says 10 per cent of the garbage is plastic bags. Reducing the use of plastic wraps would remove a large part of the non-biodegradable content of the city's waste, and make it easier to compost the rest.

It has been ten years since a government directive required all manufacturers to start phasing out the production of plastic bags. In 2002, the Supreme Court ordered the



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Feel the difference

Amid Jhameel's booming eatery row is Jamarko, a retail store for recycled paper artifacts by sisters Aruna Lacoul and Muna Shrestha.

While the store is barely a year old, Jamarko Handmade Paper Products has been around for more than a decade. The company has been collecting and recycling paper that would otherwise have just added on to the pile of garbage Kathmandu produces.

"I was running an adhesive factory then," says Lacoul. Weary of problems regarding imported raw materials and high risk of the production process, Lacoul

wanted to start a venture that used local resources. "That was when my sister and I came up with the idea." While many suggested that they open a NGO and gather funds from donors, the sisters were firm on their idea of a sustainable business.

Lacoul and Shrestha visited a few paper making factories and then applied to the Department of Cottage and Small Industries for a trainer. The duo took the paper recycling training and also trained other 10 women to begin their venture.

Now, Jamarko recycles an average of 20 tons of paper every year. The company collects waste paper from a range of organisations, recycles it, and transforms it into usable items. Soaked overnight and mashed into a gooey pulp, waste paper is strained, sun-dried and ironed according to thickness



in their factory in Gokarna. On a good day, Jamarko can manufacture up to 800 sheets of paper.

"The paper produced is of a fairly good quality and can even be used for simple printing," says Shrestha. With the paper, Jamarko produces folders, envelopes, letter pads, notebooks, invitation cards, visiting cards, handicraft items as well as A4/A3 size papers.

On the side, the company also produces creative Nepali Lokta paper products. Newspapers are turned into paper bags as the quality of recycled newspaper is not up to the standards required.

Anyone is welcome to contribute to their paper collection and a few INGOs and NGOs have become regular suppliers. Jamarko's policy is that corporate suppliers should also be

buyers. "Our objective is to return their waste in usable form," explains Lacoul.

The sisters say that over the years, interest in recycled paper has risen, especially among young people. And it's no surprise that Lacoul's young daughters Kritica and Ritica were the ones to take the initiative to open Jamarko's first outlet. Says Kritica: "At present, we are just managing the store and marketing, but I would like to contribute to the production process soon with creative ideas."

Jamarko in Nepali means "initiative". Lacoul and Shrestha encourage Kathmandu residents to make an extra initiative to go green, dispose their waste paper at Jamarko and see what unfolds. 🇳🇵

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Feel the difference

out of mind



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

government to enforce the decision. It was never heeded. Now, the Ministry of Environment has promulgated the Plastic Bags Regulation and Control Directive 2011 that prescribes slapping fines ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 50,000 against those still manufacturing and using bags thinner than 20 microns.

"It has been an uphill battle enforcing that law," admits Sanu Maiya Maharjan of KMC. "Some shopkeepers have started using paper and cloth bags and we have talked to manufacturers. KMC is committed to make Kathmandu valley plastic-free in the next two years."

That could be easier said than done unless plastic production itself is curbed since there are numerous unlicensed plastic bag producers. "Unless a cheaper and more convenient alternative is found people will continue using polythene bags," argues Kul Bahadur Shahi of Aastha Scientific Research Service, a firm that conducts quality tests on drinking water, waste water and soil.

Leading department stores have tried to wean shoppers away from plastic, but without much

success. Namaste Supermarket in Pulchok conducted a 'No Plastic Bag' campaign in 2008 but the bags reappeared. Bhatbhateni Supermarket's 2009 campaign failed to make any impact. "Fabric bags are available but customers don't even bother to ask for them," explains Durga Gurung, a sales attendant at Bhatbhateni.

While Kathmandu gropes for an answer, other parts of Nepal have successfully implemented plastic bans. Ilam municipality banned plastic bags a year ago, and it has worked. Both shopkeepers and shoppers are slapped fines of up to Rs 500 if found using them.

Pravesh Chapagain, of the Namsaling Community Development Center in Ilam says the main factors in making plastic bans work are strong awareness and commitment of all stakeholders. "We have shown it can be done," he maintains, "it just needs everyone to work together." Keenly watching Ilam's success are the municipalities of Pokhara, Itahari, Bandipur and Dharan. And if that happens, it will put Kathmandu to shame. 🇳🇵

Sharp entry



SG Global recently launched Sharp, the well known Japanese electronics company, with a showroom at Naxal. Vice president Raju Bhetwal (Chettri) talked to *Nepali Times* about the consumer electronics brand and a foray into the Nepal market

Nepali Times: Sharp has been around for some time. Why is it being re-launched in Nepal?

Raju Bhetwal: Sharp was first introduced in Nepal 12 years ago. But the purchasing power of the consumers then was not very high and the brand could not be well established. However, the consumers are mature and brand conscious now. The timing is just right.

How is Sharp differentiating its products from the competition in what appears to be a very crowded market?

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How has the response been so far?

Despite not being located in a prime area like Darbar Marg or New Road, the showroom has been doing very well. The spacious showroom and availability of parking area may be a plus point for us. The inquiry has been five times our expectation. We are planning to expand to Pokhara, Narayanghat and Butwal. Sharp also manufactures solar systems and if there are incentives, we are interested to bring in these technologies.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Tired of waiting for the government and the municipality to get its act together to manage the city's wastes, communities in the Valley and inner city neighbourhoods have got together to set up exemplary garbage collections and recycling systems.

One of the oldest and most effective was organised by a group of enthusiastic housewives in Kopundole in 1992. The Women Environment Preservation Committee (WEPCO) began working with just 50 houses and now covers nearly 1500 households in Patan. WEPCO's 3R motto is "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle". For a monthly fee ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 150 WEPCO collectors in cargo trishaws do the rounds every morning and they have even educated households to separate biodegradable and other trash.

The biodegradables are turned into compost, which is sold and the proceeds help run the collection system. WEPCO also recycles paper and other materials to produce export-quality handicrafts. WEPCO has trained women's groups in implementing similar programs in other neighbourhoods in the Valley. "We believe in handing over the responsibilities to the people of the community as it is the only way to ensure the program's effectiveness", says Bishnu Thakali, chairperson of WEPCO.

If only Kathmandu Municipality could scale up on what Kopundole has shown can be done.



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BHRIKUTI RAI

Not so far from Kathmandu's squalid suburbs lies the village of Bungmati which this time of year is surrounded with the yellow terraces of ripening rice. There are red houses with thatch roofs amidst a backdrop of a deep blue sky and a horizon of mountains beyond.

But besides its picturesque landscape and its fame for being the home of the Matsendranath chariot festival, Bungmati is also the proud host to a very special school.

Thanks to the vision, compassion and tenacity of Dayaram Maharjan, Bungmati's Adarsha Shaulah Yuwak Higher Secondary School has in the last 20 years helped hundreds of children with disabilities. In a country where handicapped children are often refused admission into schools which have no facilities or training to work with them, Maharjan's school stands out as a shining beacon of hope.

In fact, Adarsha Shaulah is a model for integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education and also provides free

education and boarding to 32 children with disabilities from all over the country.

It all began in 1990, when a blind student was admitted into the school but couldn't do well in class due to his disability. Maharjan felt the child deserved the same chance as everyone else. But instead of looking for benefactors, he enrolled himself for Braille lessons. "Learning Braille was a life changing experience for me. If it was so tough for me, I could imagine how much more difficult it must have been for a child with visual disability," he recalls.

Soon, Maharjan was not only teaching in Braille, but was also painstakingly translating the entire school curriculum into Braille. In 2001, Jiwan Dangol became the first visually disabled Nepali student to pass the SLC examination from the school. Jiwan now teaches other blind children like him in his former school.

Bungmati school lets children overcome disability by working on their abilities

When deaf students were admitted into the school, Dayaram started learning sign language too. The students now receive education alongside other classmates in sign language. There are two residential rooms for the 14 deaf children in the school.

As children from other parts of Nepal started being enrolled, Maharjan had to expand the school's boarding facilities. This led to the establishment of the Disabled Service Association in 1997 which runs a hostel for children with physical and mental disabilities adjacent to the school. The hostel even houses children abandoned by their parents.

And the astounding part of it all is that Maharjan has managed all this without any major funding.

"We haven't been able to upgrade the hostel but we are doing as much as we can with the available resources," he says modestly.

The school tries to compensate

for the lack of proper facilities by emphasising the quality of education, and giving the children a chance to hone their skills in music, art and other vocational training.

Artist Sarita Dongol has been volunteering with art classes for the children, and some blind children are even learning massage therapy. They get music lessons from Jiwan Dangol, a former student who is himself blind. School children now even perform in Bungmati's many festivals, making the townspeople proud of their school.

With characteristic humility, Maharjan admits that he does not seek publicity for his work. His satisfaction comes from seeing his children overcome disability by working on their other abilities. In a country crowded with loud philanthropy, the understated success and dedication of one small school is an example for others.

Maharjan sums it up: "The school doesn't just educate its children, we educate the community at large, and help change societal attitudes towards children with disabilities." 🇳🇵

Contact the Adarsha Shaulah Yuwak School at 9841490490

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A drop in the ocean

A young boy with cerebral palsy writhes his body with happiness as he claps his hands, and his face breaks into a wide grin.

Seven-year-old Rhydym is one of estimated 80,000 people in Nepal who have cerebral palsy. His mother Tulasa Khadka, and another parent, Bimala Sigdel decided that while helping their own children should help as many other Nepali children with the same affliction.

So, they set up the Cerebral Palsy Centre in Gathghar outside Kathmandu, and there are now eight children including their own who receive physiotherapy and other care.

The Centre has received help from Self-help Group for Cerebral Palsy (SGCP) the only one of its kind addressing the needs of children with this condition, which impairs the body's motor functions due to a brain disorder.

What started out in a rented house in 1987 is now a well-developed centre where children with the affliction are rehabilitated. They also go to a school and learn vocational skills like making bead necklaces and tea coasters. If they are capable in learning and writing, the children are transferred to normal schools and 200 of them have been helped so far.

But SGCP's Bimal Shrestha admits that it is still difficult to convince schools to take children with cerebral palsy, mainly because of objection from



PRANJAL POUDEL

other parents.

"Such is the stigma that mothers lock up their cerebral palsy children in the attics and in cages," says Shrestha.

The centre is chronically short of funds, and has to struggle against official and public apathy. "Normally," Sigdel says, "parents refuse to invest in children with cerebral palsy because they think there is no return on the investment." Many parents are poor, and just can't bear the added burden, she adds.

"People don't want to devote a lot of time to children who have cerebral palsy and it is very hard to convince them to," explains Shrestha, "it is usually the mother who has to take care of the child and often she has to bear ridicule from in-laws and even husbands for bringing bad luck."

There are also very few medial professionals trained in taking care of children with cerebral

palsy, and even fewer hospitals and shelters that specialise in their care.

Most children with mild or moderate or even severe cerebral palsy can go on to be well educated with the famous example of the writer Jhamak Ghimire who this month won Nepal's most prestigious literary award, Madan Puraskar.

Even at SGCP, a student has gone on to give her SLC examination. But if the condition is coupled with epilepsy or mental illness, the child may be severely limited.

Back at the centre, Khadka's son is clapping his hands happily. It is a drop in the ocean because thousands of other children like him throughout Nepal are not so lucky.  **Stuti Sharma**

To help the SGCP, call 5573699, 9851042469

To help the Gathghar Cerebral Palsy Centre, contact Tulasa Khadka at 9841736596

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Once upon a time in Jazzmandu

It's the season of festivals, and not just Dasain, Tihar and Chhat. In the last two months, Kathmandu has played host to two literary festivals, a documentary festival and now we are gearing up for our annual jazz party, Jazzmandu.

Surya Nepal Jazzmandu turns nine this year and, we are happy to report, has stuck to its annual promise. "When we started the festival in 2002, it was difficult to even find a jazz CD in Kathmandu," recalls Navin

Chhetri, the drummer and vocalist of Cadenza. "Now the genre is popular, and we no longer have to explain what jazz is."

An impressive, varied ensemble of invitees this year testifies to the growing success of the event. Jazzmandu has put Kathmandu on the international jazz map, getting mentions in *Jazz Times* and *Lonely Planet*. Chhetri says that he gets emails from acts from previous years, and from outfits around the world who want to be part of the festival.

The organisers try not to repeat artists so that the audiences have the chance to taste different flavours of jazz every year. Next week, musicians are flying in for the festival, including Neighbourhood (Sweden), Nick Aggs (Australia), The Window Seat (India) and Bconnected (Switzerland). They will be joined by our resident ensembles Cadenza, The KJC Faculty Combo, Gandharva, and Rabin Lal Shrestha Eastern Classical Trio. Along with regular jam sessions around the Valley, Jazzmandu this year offers

a special slot for Afro-Latin and Cuban sounds with the Cuban League.

This year also sees the return of Jazz for the Next Generation Music Competition for local musicians. "We want to encourage new artists so that the jazz music scene stays alive here," explains. "The applicants have been very impressive so far."

So, mark your calendars for next week, it's time for some jazz!

www.jazzmandu.org

Thursday, 20 October Jazz for the Next Generation Music Competition

Three young selected finalists will perform for the crowd and a panel of judges, consisting of visiting Jazzmandu artists. One outstanding band will be picked to perform at Jazz Bazaar, plus win a private workshop with Jazzmandu musicians.

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel

Time: 2.30pm to 4.30pm
Free entry (limited seating)



Friday, 21 October Valley Jams

Different venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various

Jazzmandu artists. Take your pick and go where your favorite band will be jammin'.

Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat: The Cuban League (USA)

Moksh, Jhamsikhel: Bconnected (Switzerland)

House of Music, Thamel: Neighborhood (Sweden)

Time: 7.30 to 9.30pm (Gates open at 7.00pm and close at 8.00pm)

Ticket: Rs 400



Saturday, 22nd October Jazz Bazaar

A marathon of jazz and traditional Nepalese folk and classical music performed by international and Nepali musicians. Featuring Bconnected (Switzerland), The Cuban League (USA), Cadenza

Collective (Nepal) Gandharva (Nepal), Nick Aggs (Australia), Neighbourhood (Sweden), Window Seat (India), Nepali Classical Ensemble (Nepal) and JFNG outstanding band.

Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna

Time: 2.30pm to 10.00pm

(Gates open at 1.30pm and close at 7.00pm)

Ticket: Rs 799

Free shuttle bus service available every hour from 1.00pm – 4.00pm.

Pick-up point: outside Hyatt Regency gate, Boudha. Free return shuttle bus available between 10.00pm - 11.00pm, drop at Lazimpat.



Sunday, 23 October Afro-Latin Jam

A night featuring authentic Afro-Cuban sounds of the Caribbean with the band Cuban League, followed

by Jazzmandu artists jamming to the grooves of Afro-Latin Jazz.

Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat

Time: 7.00pm to 10.00pm (Gates open at 6.00pm and close at 8.00pm)

Ticket: Rs 799



Monday, 24 October Jazzmandu Master Class

The Jazzmandu master class is an opportunity for music students and jazz enthusiasts to interact with visiting musicians, share their experience and stories and learn different instrumental tips and techniques.

**Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory,
Jhamsikhel**

Show Time: 3.00pm to 4.30pm
Free entry (limited seating)

Monday, 24 October Jazz at Patan

An evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz at a historic and magical venue with a rich and soulful ambience. International musicians bring out their musical ideas and backgrounds

with Nepal's Cadenza.

Patan Museum Square, Patan

Show Time: 6.00pm to 8.30pm

(Gates open at 5.00pm)

Ticket: Rs 1299

Tuesday, 25 October Jazzmandu Finale

Jazzmandu ends with a finale jam. Musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating high-energy, improvised music.

Venue: Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat

Time: 6.00pm to 10.00pm (Gates open at 5.00pm)

Ticket: Rs 899



EVENTS



Pulbata Herda, an adaptation of Arthur Miller's 'A View from the Bridge'. Tickets are Rs 200 and Rs 500, available at Dhokaima Café, 21 to 23 October, 5.30 pm, The Kamalmani, Rato Bangala School, Patan Dhoka

Texts and the City, photo exhibition by Satish Sharma about cities as dreamscapes. Till 17 October, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited.

Yalamaya Classic, an event organised to appreciate Classical Music on every second day of Nepali calendar. 19 October, 5pm onwards, Baggikhana, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5553767, 5522113

Hands Washing, celebrate Global Handwashing Day with the Feenzo-Utsav. 15 October, 8am to 3pm, Jawalakhel Area

MUSIC

Silence Festival II, second edition of Silence Festival featuring international artists and Nepali metal bands. 15 October, Jawalakhel Grounds, Jawalakhel.

Screaming Wall, a not-for-profit concert with Nepali and international bands from Switzerland and Bangladesh. 16 October, 6pm to 11.30pm, House of Music, Thamel, manish.limbu@gmail.com

DINING



Mako's, an elegant fine dining Japanese restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel which serves authentic Japanese cuisine. Timings are 11.30 to 14.30 and 18pm to 22pm. Dwarika Hotel, 4479488



Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. Pulchok

New Orleans, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. We got hooked on the rosemary chicken and hamburgers. Jhamsikhel, 5522708

Higher Grounds, enjoy the rich Oreo Milky with comfort. Kumaripati

GETAWAYS

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काम सानो ठुलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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 सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
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SOMEPLACE ELSE

Cha Cha Café, a very non-Italian restaurant, strains a spaghetti perfectly al dente and leaves us open-mouthed and craving for more. Tucked away in a narrow alley in Thamel, the six-year-old, Japanese-owned café stands easily unnoticed. But guidebooks and guided tours have made Cha Cha a must eat on the tourist trail. With a menu in English and Japanese, Cha Cha caters to Japanese visitors and yields a subtle and unusually delicious fusion of Western diner and Japanese kitchen:



MARCO POLLO

milkshakes, burgers, spaghetti and rice!

Among Cha Cha's rice combinations, the garlic chicken steak stands out. Knifing into the chicken reveals a plump and juicy breast drenched in a tangy garlic sauce. A mound of shredded daikon, a Japanese

radish, tossed in a tart soy-ponzu sauce compliments the dish.

Cha Cha's hamburger stacks fresh lettuce and tomato and a thin meat patty in a toasted bun spread with a tangy Asian dressing. Small in portion, the burger is typical for Tokyo fast

food but may be meager for healthier appetites.

A visit to Cha Cha without sampling a hearty bowl of spaghetti would be amiss. The Cream, Tuna and Corn spaghetti is rich in flavour and crisscrosses savory and sweet like a salad Niçoise, while the Peperoncino Bacon

spaghetti folds wilted spinach and slices of bacon trailed by a spicy kick. Its Neapolitan Carbonara puts Italian cafes to shame, merging the best of comfort without holding back: cheese and bacon. Small and large servings are available and proportionally generous.

Cha Cha's white walls, white dishes and wooden table setting create an unpretentious atmosphere that emphasises its food (as it should). Despite its popularity with tourists, Cha Cha retains good service and affordable prices that do away with the additional 10 and 13 per cent (service charge and VAT)—a rarity in the tourist hub. 🇳🇵

Marco Pollo

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

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DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

About eight years ago important medical journals suddenly started publishing articles advising post-menopausal women not to take hormonal therapy (HT, consisting of estrogen and progesterin). If this news was hard to comprehend for doctors, the public was even more confused. Until this stunning piece of news, most Western-trained doctors were telling post-menopausal women to conscientiously take HT pills because they would be protected from osteoporosis (weak, mineral-deficient bones), cardiovascular (heart attacks) and a whole host of other illnesses. Drug companies making these pills (premarin, for example) were obviously delighted.

However, there was not enough evidence to back these claims about the protective effects of HT. Because estrogen and

progesterin levels decrease after menopause, the whole idea of replenishing these hormones in tablet form made great, intuitive sense. Except that often times in medicine, intuitive sense does not always translate to good outcome.

Indeed, in 2004 the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) based in the US came up with startling findings



about the serious side effects of administering HT to postmenopausal women. The study recruited 27,000 postmenopausal women to perform a definitive study and what caught everybody by surprise were the incredible side-effects. It revealed that HT decreased hip fracture by 34 per cent in

the women. A good thing, and no one was surprised. But concurrently this study revealed a string of bad news for this cohort of women who had been followed for 5-7 years: there was a 30 per cent increase in heart attacks, 40 per cent increase in strokes, 25 per cent increase in breast cancer and 100 per cent increase in deep vein thrombosis.

In fact the preliminary findings were so unacceptable that the study was stopped early so that the participants could stop taking estrogen and not be potentially risking the complications of HT. Aborting the study was also in keeping with a Hippocratic oath which states: above all, do no harm (Primum non nocere in Latin). I must hasten to add that not all postmenopausal women behave similarly, and it may be good to discuss your personal situation with your doctor.

The WHI program established in 1991 continues to do exemplary work in postmenopausal problems and often comes up with findings that challenge conventional wisdom so that doctors may better serve their patients. The HT study is a good example of this. 🇳🇵



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The government, in its wisdom, has proclaimed that the monsoon is over. Tell us something we don't know. The autumnal westerlies are now in full swing, the humidity levels are falling fast, and the clear breezy afternoons are here to stay. However, with the cooler temperature we also see the morning inversion layer trapping particulate smog over the Valley floor. This will get thicker as we head into winter. Also, don't discount low pressure systems moving in from the Bay and bringing unseasonal blizzards, because 'tis the season for cyclones.



FRI	SAT	SUN
25-12	25-12	26-11



BIKRAM RAI

NOT FOR SALE: Babita Tiwari (centre), wife of Kashi Nath Tiwari, at a press conference on Wednesday where she claimed that she was paid Rs 800,000 a day before to not implicate Minister Prabhu Sah in her husband's murder. Tiwari, chairman of World Hindu Youth Association, was shot dead a year ago.



BIKRAM RAI

IN REMEMBRANCE: Tibetans light candles on Tuesday at the Tibetan Refugee Center in Lalitpur in memory of Tibetans in Sichuan who have died through self-immolation in opposition of religious controls by the government.



KUNDA DIXIT

FESTIVE SWING: A young girl soars on a traditional Dasain swing in Lalitpur on Sunday, under a deep blue Himalayan autumn sky.

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Descent from decency

Reinforced by Dasain vibes, it's time to look to your extended community



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Oh hullo there. How was Dasain?

Mine was crap, thanks to work, leavened only by the brief sight of the empty streets of Kathmandu during our tika expeditions and the lovely turn to autumn that I have been enjoying from my study.

So you're back again, along with the hordes that clog this city to distraction. Well, come back you have, and I don't resent that in a manner that claims "raithane" status. After all, none of us slithered out of the Lake of Kathmandu, we all came from someplace else. I mean to say it's nice to see you again, but I would rather they kept the people out and let the vegetables in for a change.

My Dasain wasn't great, but it's not only because I just didn't have the time to eat, drink and be merry. It's because Dasain is really mostly about being with your family – as far as its extensions take you – and I felt I missed out on this variegated privilege. As I dashed about town with my father to receive tika from our elders, I congratulated him on timing it so we caught them right before they themselves dashed out into the city to their own elders. My father, however, wasn't happy, as it meant we literally walked in and out, our relatives' reaching for the tika even as they greeted us. I could

understand. He saw his cousins so rarely it seemed a travesty to not even have the time for a cup of tea.

But onwards. Things are more or less back to normal. That dreary peace process is still dragging on. Thanks god Prachanda Dahal has decided that as a communist-without-a-soul he will be devoting his full head of hair's attention to concluding it, over plates of masubhat and glasses of raksi. Doubtless that's why he decided to limit his part in the funeral proceedings to setting his old man on fire.

We've also survived the horrors of the food scandal, even managed to log on a kilo or two. But not much else has changed over the festive season, and neither have we Nepalis, hitherto unknown for our mannerlessness. Only the other day, seeking to dodge the scummy cabbies that gather around a certain chowk where I live in Kupondole, then to dodge the traffic jam at the Bagmati bridge, I walked on into Kathmandu. As I waited fruitlessly for a taxi, fretting about whether I would make the movie I was scheduled to see, a man came up and accosted me with his cellphone. "Ask him where I should go," he said in Hindi. "I don't understand Nepali." As I explained to the voice on the phone that his "maanche" was in Thapathali, not Maitighar, an empty taxi flashed by. I pointed my man towards Maitighar, and he walked off without a word of thanks. I failed to spot another cab,



BIKRAM RAI

and gave up on the movie.

I slouched back home, pondering the casualness with which Nepalis explain to foreigners, "We don't have words for please or thank you," as if implying that we are so naturally nice that such formalities are superfluous. This may hold true in certain contexts, and certainly within an extended family or a rural setting. In urbania, with all the other rules of conduct expected to apply (whether they do or not), why not the most basic rules of decency?

Heading to a recent event organised by Nepal Unites – an unabashedly self-declared bastion of common decency – I was asked

directions by two northern European girls. I obliged, and further down the road witnessed an ice-cream man stop to hand over a filled cone, gratis, to a beggar child looking on longingly. On the way back, filled with the milk of human kindness, I espied two more damsels in distress, local variety. They had dropped a cheap plastic garland of flowers from the road into the shrubbery next to the Kalmochan Temple on Tripureshwar. Seeing me, they demanded: "Oh, you have an umbrella, tyo nikaldinus ta!" I obeyed, getting my knees dirty and risking a tumble into monkey territory. A few false jabs later, I

managed to rescue the garland. And the women?

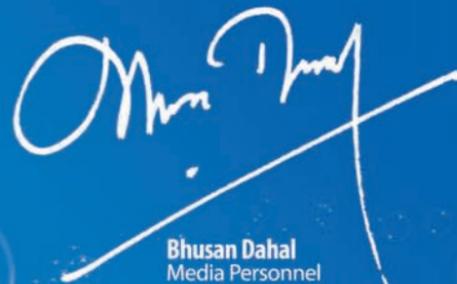
They took it from me, wordlessly, and simply walked away.

What did I expect? A simple acknowledgement, even just a smile? It was not forthcoming. It reinforced my idea that Nepalis, renowned the world over for being smiley, hospitable types, have unlearned how to live with each other. Sure, it's hard to get the community vibe when you only know your neighbours by the timbre of their nuisance value. But how about a little more Dasain spirit this Tihar and beyond, the kind you extend as a matter of course to your extended family? Pretty please?



हात धोऔं, रोगबाट बचाऔं!

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हात धुने दिवस मक्यताका साथ मनाऔं ।



Bhusan Dahal
Media Personnel

Venue: Jawalakhel
Time: 8 am onwards











Guilty until proven innocent

New DNA evidence indicates innocence of Nepali man who has served 14 years for murder in Japan

KUNDA DIXIT

New DNA evidence has prompted Japanese activists and relatives of a Nepali man serving life sentence for the murder of a woman in Tokyo's Shibuya district in 1997 to call for a retrial and acquittal.

Govinda Mainali, now 44, was convicted of killing a 39-year-old woman. But new DNA techniques used to re-examine evidence shows that the semen found inside the victim's body was not Govinda's, and matches that of another person's hair found in the room where she was killed.

The last time I met Govinda was in November 2006 in a jail in Yokohama. At that time he was required to speak in Japanese through an interpreter, but we did manage to sneak in a few sentences in Nepali. He had put on some weight and was balder than the last time I'd seen him five years previously in a detention centre in Tokyo. He was thankful for support from Japanese activists who arranging

for family visits as well as defending his innocence.

I asked him if I should keep sending him Nepali magazines because the news from home was so depressing. "Any news from Nepal cheers me up," he had replied.

During both meetings, Govinda convincingly maintained his innocence. He admitted having paid for sex ten days before the murder, but said he had been framed. The woman worked for the Tokyo Electric Power Company by day, and was a prostitute by night.

Now, new DNA techniques not available in 1997, prove that there was another man involved who could be the killer. Govinda's lawyer, Katsuhiko Tsukuda, says the "basis for the conviction has collapsed". Japanese legal experts say there is now sufficient grounds for a retrial because the original court decision had not taken this evidence into account.

In 2000, the Tokyo District Court had acquitted Govinda saying there wasn't enough evidence. But the Tokyo High Public Prosecutors Office



requested a remand, and the Tokyo High Court approved it. The High Court later found him guilty, and the Supreme Court upheld the ruling sentencing him to life imprisonment in 2003. The police was under pressure to make an arrest in the high profile case, and reportedly suppressed evidence.

A group of Japanese set up the 'Justice for Govinda Innocence Advocacy Group' that is struggling to keep the case alive and to prove his innocence. Over the years, the

pressure group has regularly flown in Govinda's wife, Radha, his mother, brother and two daughters to Tokyo to visit him in prison to keep his morale up.

I asked Junko Hasumi of 'Justice for Govinda' the reason why her group had taken up the case so relentlessly. "Most of our members have never been to Nepal," she replied, "they are involved because they know there has been a miscarriage of justice, and it is to draw attention to the need to reform



"Living

PHOTO ESSAY by
TAKAAKI YAGISAWA

When Radha Mainali went to see her husband last month in prison in Yokohama, he thought she had come to finally take him out. Still, Radha says his morale was high and he was confident he would be released soon. "I am thankful to all Japanese friends who helped prove my husband's innocence," she said.

Here is Radha (left) looking at Govinda's prison from across the train tracks. She reads letters from Govinda (right), packs sweaters for him, and walks to prison with her lawyer.



TAKA AKI YAGISAWA

Japan's judicial system."

After the new DNA evidence came out, 'Justice for Govinda' issued a statement saying he should be released immediately. There are suspicions that the Tokyo High Public Prosecutors Office is trying to delay or even stop the retrial by suppressing 42 pieces of new evidence that could prove Govinda did not commit the crime.

Govinda's case has become headline news in Japan again, with regular follow-ups in the mainstream

newspapers and television. All major stations covered the visit last month by Radha and Govinda's brother, Indra Mainali, to the Yokohama prison.

On return to Kathmandu, Radha told Nepali Times: "I had been living like a widow these past 15 years, our daughters haven't been able to grow up with their father. But for the first time there is hope."

When he saw Radha in prison last month, Govinda thought she had come to get him out. "But his morale



HEADLINE NEWS: Radha Mainali faces a Japanese media scrum last month in Yokohama after visiting her husband in prison. Govinda Mainali (above) in 1997 in Tokyo a few months before he was arrested.

is high and he is convinced that he will be acquitted soon," she added.

Indra Mainali says his brother was puzzled about why he still needs to be in prison. "He is worried that he will not be able to see our mother who is in frail health," he said.

Govinda's defence team say there is precedence from recent acquittals based on new DNA evidence in other murder cases in Japan, and lawyers are confident the High Court will accept retrial.

The Japan Federation of Bar Associations also came out publicly in support of a retrial based on new evidence because of recent cases of innocents being incarcerated. It has accused prosecutors of withholding key evidence that would exonerate the accused. The Federation's Keita Miyamura told the Japanese media there were serious questions about miscarriage of justice and called for judicial reform: "We must create a system under which all evidence is disclosed."

In 2001, Japanese activists took me to interview Shinichi Sano, the author of a book on Govinda, *Tokyo Electric Power Co. Office Lady Murder Case*. After visiting Govinda in prison and traveling to Ilam to meet his family, Sano was convinced of Govinda's innocence.

He told me he wrote the book to expose Japan's judicial system and the hidden tensions within Japanese society. "In Japan we have a saying: when something is rotten, cover it up," he said. "And that is what happened, the truth was so ugly we tried to cover it up and have a fall guy from a poor country that didn't dare make a fuss take all the blame." 🇳🇵

TIMELINE

1994: Govinda arrives in Japan from Ilam and works in an Indian restaurant in Chiba

March 8, 1997: 39-year-old woman is killed in a Tokyo flat, body found a week later

March 23: Govinda arrested and initially charged with overstaying and then with murder and robbery

April 2000: Tokyo District Court acquits Govinda

December 2000: Govinda gets life sentence from Tokyo High Court

October 2003: Supreme Court upholds verdict
March 2005: Mainali files appeal for retrial with high court

21 July, 2011: Yomuri Shimbun breaks story on prosecution suppressing new DNA evidence

26 July: Defense submits retrial request to Tokyo High Court

4 August: 'Justice for Govinda' and the Nihon Kokumin Kyuuenkai petition the Tokyo High Public Prosecutors Office to release Govinda

2 September: Prosecutors disclose to defence team that there are 42 additional items of evidence for DNA tests

8 September: Defence team learns saliva on victim was Type O blood (Govinda's blood type is B), protests suppression of evidence

12 September: Govinda's wife Radha and brother Indra visit him in prison amidst heavy media coverage

16 September: Prosecutors say saliva test result is insufficient ground for retrial

nepalitimes.com

Something that he never did by Shinichi Sano, #189
Govinda by Kunda Dixit, #39

Coverage on Japanese channel Pandora TV



like a widow"



Forgotten Doramba

April Adhikari on *Nagarik*, 10 October

नागरिक

More than eight years have passed since the Doramba massacre which led to the collapse of the Maoist ceasefire with the government. Twenty-one Maoists were executed by the army after they were captured in Doramba on 17 August 2003, at a time when peace talks were going on in Hapure of Dang. Acting on a tip-off, a team led by Major Ram Mani Pokharel surrounded the house of Yubraj Moktan, a local teacher at Doramba in Ramechhap district killing two people instantly, capturing 19 others who were executed one by one later.

Every year, party leaders make promises of justice to the families of those killed. But these have been empty promises. They have

got neither compensation nor justice. Suntali Tamang, Moktan's wife, says that she has got nothing except the Rs 225,000 as compensation for the murder of her



husband and son. Mayadevi Tamang, who lost her husband in the massacre, also hasn't got anything more than Rs 125,000.

The families had hoped that at least the perpetrators would be punished and they would be delivered justice after the Maoist came to government. After all, they did not die in combat. Perhaps if they had fought back they would have survived, but they thought the army would not kill them because a ceasefire was in effect. This time too, the Maoists are in power but it seems very unlikely that they would investigate the case or punish the accused in the army. Family members have demanded the Maoist leadership to disclose what kind of actions were taken against the guilty. It is due to sacrifices made by many cadre like these that the Maoists got into power.

Patching-up

Ganga BC in *Kantipur*, 10 October

कान्तिपुर

The Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has not launched a tirade of abuses against India in over a year, instead he talks about softening bilateral relations through diplomacy. Dahal had launched a 'national sovereignty' campaign when Madhav Kumar Nepal was elected prime minister which went silent as soon as Jhala Nath Khanal took office. Following Khanal's resignation, the Maoists moved closer to New Delhi. Meanwhile, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, who had a strained relationship with the Maoists was replaced by Jayant Prasad. Since Prasad's

arrival, both sides have been toning down their rhetoric and no controversial statements have been made. Has India finally adopted a liberal stance on Nepal's Maoists?

Addressing the 66th UN General Assembly PM Baburam Bhattarai stated that Nepal wants to become a bridge between India and China. Dahal and Bhattarai had differences over the issue during the Palungtar plenum last year, but all that seems to have changed as the party establishment evidently has adopted a policy of extending friendship instead of annoying India.

Analysts say Dahal seems to have realised that it is impossible to become an influential leader riling neighbouring countries.



QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Peace process cannot be completed by isolating the Maoists. NC should seek breakthrough by entering the present government.”

NC leader Sujata Koirala

Bless you! May you not be fork-tongued.

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 10 October

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Mustang in Mustang



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

People care less about what the prime minister drives in Kathmandu than how much they have to pay for a ride



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Breaking the lifelong tradition of celebrating Dasain at home in Tarai, my parents expressed desire to travel beyond the Himalaya this year on a pilgrimage. But the journey to Muktinath in Mustang last week was an eye opener, and a different kind of pilgrimage for me.

All along the route, passengers complained about being fleeced by extortionist bus fares. The festival rates were up to 30 per cent more than what the transporters normally charge. Across Nepal we saw old men and women, families travelling with children and students quarrelling with drivers and conductors about fares. There are no police raids or ministers parachuting in for a spot check. The looters were looting with abandon.

Which is why it was such a populist move for the new prime minister to say he was going to crack down on price gougers. He didn't have to go after everyone. As long as the few bus conductors arrested for overcharging appeared on evening tv news, it gave the impression he was tackling the problem.

Ticket prices for buses in Nepal are bizarre and ad hoc. At the ticket counter in Ghassa, three foreigners paid Rs 500 each for a 45 minute ride Rupshe Chhango while Nepalis had to pay Rs 300. It looks like the two-tier ticketing to enter Bhaktapur and get on a domestic flight applies here too. The road to Jomsom was muddy and dangerously slippery due to the protracted monsoon. Our Mustang lurched from side to side as we crossed over into Mustang. An elderly couple chided us for risking our young lives. "We are old and have lived our lives in full, why are you here?" they asked.

Josmom was jam-packed with tourists and there wasn't a hotel room empty—unless you were willing to pay the "Dasain Rate". The same price anarchy of the bus companies was rife at the lodges. The only compensation was the spectacular view of Nilgiri which took away all the fatigue and for the first time in months the lungs breathed in clean air. Up the Kali Gandaki Valley in Kagbeni the next day, the menu prices looked scary, and we decided to settle for the porters' dal bhat available in shops behind the tourist lodges.

It wasn't just the prices that were scary. From instant soups, noodles, canned fish, chocolate bars to energy drinks and even paracetamol tablets everything was past its expiry date. The government's pre-Dasain food quality inspection teams were never going to get here. We pointed out that the instant noodle we were about to buy was one year past its expiry date. The Sauni in Kagbeni replied matter-of-factly: "How can it be expired? My husband got it from the city only two months back." The only sub-healthpost in the area was padlocked and the villagers were at the mercy of an ill equipped clinic nearby and, surprise surprise, most of the cases it treats are food poisoning.

If we are to rate the Baburam government on daily administration, it will score better than its predecessors. Corruption in the bureaucracy seems to be down this festival season, despite the health minister blatantly bribing journalists. Crime also seems to be down this Dasain-Tihar. But why aren't the people feeling relief then?

No matter how much patch-work reform Baburam does, as long as the politics is in turmoil life will be difficult for the citizens. A weak polity ensures weak governance and rule of law, and ultimately takes a toll on the economy. Places like Manang, Mustang, Rolpa, Rukum, Dolpa and Achham need sustained and planned injection of development which is only possible under a stable and prospering economy.

Speaker Subhas Chandra Nembang made a public statement this week in which he requested the people to exert constructive pressure on the political parties. The fact that the parties are holding the constitution-drafting hostage to the peace process shows that they are already doing their post peace-process mathematics. They do not care how long the present crisis lingers on so they will have more time to be prepared for an electoral showdown.

Up here in Mustang, though, people care less about what the prime minister drives than how much they have to pay to take a ride in an overcrowded Mustang to Jomsom.

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