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BIKRAM RAI

A lot of the fallout from Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's trip to India last week was muffled by the firecrackers over the Tihar holidays. But it has resulted in two clear outcomes: widening the acrimonious rift within his Maoist party, and bringing the Nepali Congress closer to the Maoists.

The irony of it all is that Bhattarai's faction of the ultra-left Maoist leadership


is today closer to the centre-right NC than to comrades-in-arms within his own party. The Baidya faction is rolling up its sleeves for a Central Committee showdown this week, while Pushpa Kamal Dahal plays an ambiguous role as he himself is publicly ridiculed by his erstwhile ally, Ram Bahadur Thapa.

Bhattarai's strategy seems to be to get the NC on board before the CA term expires on 30 November, and use

that as the basis for another six-month extension. However, NC leaders say there will not be enticed into government unless Bhattarai can convince his own party about dismantling cantonments and coming up with a flexible proposal on integration in the coming two weeks.

What is clear is that the prime minister has to now move beyond micro-managing Kathmandu's

traffic snarls, inspecting eateries on the Prithvi Highway, and earnestly untangle the political deadlock as well as address the structural issues plaguing the economy. He has done just that by winning back India's trust and assuaged existing and potential investors.

But will the enemies within his own party allow him to succeed?   
*Kunda Dixit*



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# THE POWER OF NEPAL'S MAN POWER

Nepal's head of state and head of government both recently had a chance to see up close and personal the plight of Nepali workers in the Gulf. President Ram Baran Yadav was on a state visit to Qatar, while Prime Minister Bhattarai made a stopover in Doha.

The president had a long chat with the progressive and pragmatic Emir of the gas-rich sheikhdom over a lavish banquet. They talked about the potential for further Qatar-Nepal cooperation, especially in agriculture and tourism. The only reason Nepal hasn't been able to cash in on Qatari goodwill towards Nepal and take it beyond exporting "manpower", it seems, is because the various branches of government here are so feckless. Distracted by holidays and politics, they couldn't even get their act together to give the president talking points for a specific Qatari request to invest in agriculture in Nepal.

Both President Yadav and Prime Minister Bhattarai, however, met Nepalis and heard first hand that their real problem is exploitation by fellow-Nepalis. The statistics are shocking: every year, more than 200 Nepalis come home in coffins from Qatar alone, most dying due stress and heat stroke. Ten Nepalis are deported from Doha airport every day because middlemen back home have duped them with fake papers. Even those who find work earn much less than what the recruitment agencies promised. Middlemen take away as much as a worker's annual earning in commission. And when they return to Nepal, they face harassment and extortion by customs and immigration officials at Kathmandu airport. One woman recorded the conversation of an immigration official soliciting a bribe and posted it online (see p 14). No action has so far been taken against him.

This is the way we treat Nepalis who have saved this



KUNDA DIXIT

country from economic collapse. And we give a red carpet to up-market permanent migrants (euphemistically called "Non-returning Nepalis") who hold conferences in Kathmandu paid for by the state.

Eighteen per cent of Nepal's population at any given time is working abroad. They send home more than \$2 billion a year, and remittances now make up one-third of Nepal's GDP. One in every four persons in Qatar today is a Nepali—most of them are unskilled construction workers. Doha's impressive skyline is shiny with the sweat of Nepalis.

For two decades now, Nepal's national policy has been to take the easy way out and address unemployment at home by exporting manpower and, increasingly,

- Reducing the cost of migration for workers, simplifying procedures
- Cracking down on exploitation and bribery by recruiters and immigration
- Reducing the cost of official remittance transfer
- Providing mandatory orientation and skills-training to workers so they can double their income

Studies have shown that Nepal can easily double its present income from remittances if these simple steps are taken. That, in turn, will buy time until Nepalis can finally work on their home soil and not have to toil in the hot sands of some distant desert.

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### WAY HOME

Welcome back, Akriti Rana ('My way home', #575). Let's hope more people decide to do something about the state of Nepal by returning than just sitting back and complaining about how corrupt, dirty, polluted it is to justify staying away.

JB

- My first job in Nepal was with one of the numerous NGOs but sadly after working for it for nearly three years, I had to quit. My salary was almost as par to what I used to earn abroad and I dived into my new job full of hope, dreams and raw enthusiasm. I was punctual, straightforward, met people of different backgrounds, castes and religions. I was awed by every single experience. Sadly, by the end of my third year it became unbearable. Facing people at work became a nightmare. I was completely out of sync with how the system worked. I wanted black and white, but they worked in grey. I got so disgusted with the system and our Nepali attitude and mentality towards work that I decided it was better for me to quit. But I am still hopeful. One thing for sure: no more NGOs or UN or "social work" for me. It's time for me to do something on my own.

Still Hopeful

- If you consider Nepal as problematic, then don't return, but if you consider it challenging and want to find ways to overcome them then you have great opportunities to succeed in Nepal in long run. If you would like to expand your network among Nepalis interested in returning to Nepal, then you give a try at Nepal Development Forum at LinkedIn.com. All the best to Akriti and others like you.

GyaRel



- Why do you want to force senseless nationalistic prejudice onto people who feel suppression, senselessness and helplessness? Are you born with a national identity tattooed on your forehead?

Global

- Nepal needs a policy to attract more people like Akriti to get back following higher studies overseas. Recently, I was in China and several colleagues who spent years in overseas, have returned to China to do great work.

K Hill

- Why this ridiculous notion that you have to come Nepal only to serve? Why not create

something on your own, start a business, and make lots of money? I studied abroad too, now I am back in Nepal because it makes economic sense. I can easily make money here without patronage and sycophancy. Money grows on trees in this country, and you don't even need a ladder to pick it.

Sarath G

- Rich kids have the option of returning, the poorer ones don't. The rhetoric of working in Nepal in various NGOs and INGOs too only come from people with similar privileged background.

Adarsh

- Opportunities for those who worked or studied abroad really comes down to the individual and what your are prepared to deal with when you come home. Work culture

and ethics as described by Akriti Rana is a difficult area to deal with. The office work culture in Nepal is something which a lot of foreigners and expat Nepalis have always found something of a struggle to get use to.

Rishav

### BEEN THERE

I agree with Rubeena Mahato ('Been there, done that', #575) that revolution is an easy word to use. The main goal should be to capitalise on the sentiments of revolution once demonstrations are made and the situation is calm. So, it's better to hold leaders accountable before hitting the streets for another revolution.

Kumar Paudel

- Change is great, sure, but you cannot bring about change unless the forces of change are greater than the forces of political inertia. The politicians in Singha Durbar don't know that we exist and don't care. Start by changing that with a little civil protesting that hints at revolution.

Blogdai

### PAWAN GHIMIRE

On the one hand there are brave soldiers like Major Pawan Ghimire ('Soldiering on', #575) who have lost their sight who work to help others and on the other hand we have former revolutionaries who help themselves to others. They just keep on looking for reasons to loot us, who want everything for free, who want to get paid for doing nothing.

Who Cares

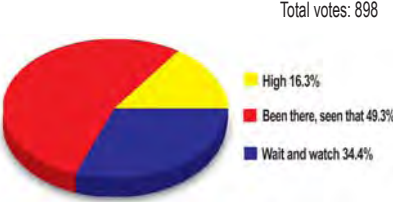
Well done Major Ghimire. You are the true son of Nepal Ama.

DV



Weekly Internet Poll # 576

Q. What are the chances that new-found cooperation among the parties will take the peace process to its end?



Weekly Internet Poll # 577. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. The NC and UML's protest against BIPPA is:



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# The New Deal

The knee-jerk reaction of Baburam Bhattarai's critics to the BIPPA agreement is another manifestation of bankrupt nationalism



BIKRAM RAI



**BY THE WAY**  
**Anurag Acharya**

After three days of marathon diplomacy in the Indian capital, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai returned home with Indian goodwill, only to be greeted at the airport with bad will from his fellow comrades.

Bhattarai exuded confidence, but where does it come from? He couldn't have cared less about the black flags at the airport gate. "I expected this, he told the press, "but it needed to be done because it is in the interest of the nation."

Beyond the rhetoric and polemic, the India visit was a refreshing departure from previous ones. For the first time, the two countries issued a joint statement agreeing to review and revise the 1950 treaty which will provide a window of opportunity for Nepal to establish ties

with its southern neighbour on an equal footing. While the Indian side is known to be very sensitive about its security concerns, the Nepali side also secured Indian commitment not to allow its land to be used against its neighbour.

Bhattarai's statement that Indian security cannot be addressed in isolation reflects that Indo-Nepal relationship has gone through a paradigm shift.

Not long ago, during the war, the Indian government looked the other way while Nepal's Maoists went in and out of Delhi. Then, when they won the election and Pushpa Kamal Dahal became prime minister they became conspicuously and overtly "anti-Maoist". So much so that its ambassador made blatantly provocative statements and was in turn greeted with shoe projectiles. Both the Maoists and the Indians tried to play each other down. While Delhi tried to assert its presence in Nepali politics ignoring the changing ground realities,

for their part the Maoists overlooked the changed geopolitical context of their revolution.

If the deal in New Delhi last week is anything to go by, both sides seemed to

have learned their lessons. The \$250 million line of credit is an indication that India is ready to ratchet up its economic involvement in Nepal. This is strategic: a poor and chronically unstable Nepal is not in India's national interest. New Delhi has decided to help Baburam Bhattarai try to be the architect of Nepal's economic transformation by encouraging investment, creating jobs.

Why should Nepalis be against that? They aren't. It is only Bhattarai's enemies within his own party who are against it because they are against him. The knee-jerk reaction to the BIPPA agreement is another manifestation of bankrupt nationalism from hardline Maoists as well as the confused UML.

UML leaders are so vacuous they haven't even bothered to elucidate what exactly it is they don't like about BIPPA. Maoist ultra Mohan Baidya has made a complete fool out of himself by stating that it is quite normal for industries to be destroyed and shut down and that the government can't take responsibility.

Mercifully, Tihar came in the way and the media went into hibernation so these rants didn't get wider play. The government has

guaranteed safety of Indian investors, something it has done for investment from other countries, and it is fulfilling its obligation to ensure economic growth by assuring outsiders that their investment in Nepal is safe.

Although the state also has an obligation to guarantee domestic investors similar safeguards, consistent economic underdevelopment along with technological lag means that Nepal's resource and energy drained economy urgently needs injection of foreign capital to rescue it from stagnation.

Nepal also competes with countries with low wages but much more attractive political, energy and labour situations. We need to generate enough power so that industries don't shut down and workers are not laid off due to losses incurred as a result of underproduction. Nepal does not have that kind of money now, it needs the outside world.

And that is probably where Bhattarai's confidence comes from: as a PhD he understands this on an academic level and knows that politically BIPPA was the only way to go. Those that don't agree must either come up with a better alternative, or not be spoilers. 🇳🇵

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# Radio at the crossroads

Nepal's community radios risk alienating the communities they claims to serve



ANTHONY WILLE

Community radio in Nepal is frequently celebrated as a model for radio broadcasting in South Asia. There are almost 200 licensed community stations on air across the country, often broadcasting to impoverished and remote areas. In theory, community radio props up grassroots democracy but there is a growing gap between the promise and reality of community radio in Nepal.

The phenomenal growth of community radio in Nepal has been without oversight. Ownership is increasingly dominated by local elite who start stations in the name of the community. Privileged class and castes and politically well-connected males hold licenses through cooperatives or NGOs, whose limited objectives are often politically motivated, may be out of touch with the communities they serve.

Publicity is the lifeblood of politicians, and the widespread ownership of radio sets has naturally made community radio a targeted publicity tool for politicians. The Community Radio Support Center estimates that political parties directly or indirectly operate up to 60 per cent of community radios currently on air. A look at a map of community radios shows clusters of three or more stations in many areas

across the country, an indication of counterbalancing efforts among the three main parties. Beyond the problem of the manipulation of news and views that may come with the politicisation of community media, competition means a push towards larger transmitters. Increased overhead costs lead to heavier reliance on commercial sources of revenue and a reorientation of community stations towards the market.

In a market-based model of media sustainability, the sponsors and advertisers are the buyers while the readers, listeners, and viewers are the consumers. Buyer demands usually overrule consumer demands, at least as long as they don't hamper the credibility of a media outlet to the extent that it turns off the media consumer. But the sustainability of community radio lies not in commercial sources but in the creation of social capital. When community stations rely on the market, they risk alienating the community. Other than profit or non-profit status, there is nothing to distinguish a community station from a commercial station in Nepal.

Even though many stations broadcast in several languages, the actual amount of time devoted to local language programming is small. Many programs in Nepali may not be fully relatable to local language speakers.

Where stations increasingly rely on commercial sources of revenue, this situation is unlikely to change. Local language programming may have little attractiveness to advertisers due to a lack of purchasing power among local language listeners, exposing the market's limitations.

Syndicated programming centrally produced by NGOs and private production houses comprises a large percentage of community radio airtime. While this is a way for stations to cut costs and broadcast quality programming, it does reinforce traditional Kathmandu-centrism, eroding local orientation.

Stations outside of Kathmandu have been shown to have more news programs than stations established inside the Valley, primarily sourced from content providers based in Kathmandu and dominated by national politics. As such, community stations can be said to be as national in outlook as any commercial station.

Investigative pieces probing local corruption are seldom carried out, perhaps a result of safety concerns or pandering to political or financial patrons. While centrally produced programs on crucial issues such as constitution-making and federalism do incorporate local voices and offer quality analysis on complex subject matter to resource-strapped stations, it is clear that some of the most important decisions facing Nepalis

are largely out of the reach of real grassroots participation.

A true community station requires local orientation and community accountability. Ownership by traditionally dominant local groups and political parties goes contrary to this ethic. There are numerous community radios which do exhibit excellent practices, but in many cases the word "community" has been captured for self-serving ends.

The Community Radio Performance Assessment System, a point-based method of scoring the "health" of community stations, is now identifying model community stations while providing incentives and support for stations with lower scores. Almost half of the total score is devoted to the local orientation of programming and community ownership and participation. The results should offer a good baseline from which an appropriate system of classification, development guidelines, and regulation can evolve in a sector emerging from its infancy. It is in the effort to reclaim the title of "community" that democratic processes in community radio can flourish and community radio can endure as a principal agent of democratisation. 🇳🇵

*Anthony Wille is with the Graduate Program in International Affairs, The New School, New York.*

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# 7 billion +

Family planning and reducing resource consumption can help tackle the population crisis

As the global population surpassed 7 billion people this week, addressing the challenges associated with a still-growing world population will require a two-pronged response, according to experts with the Worldwatch Institute.

The combined measures of empowering women to make their own decisions about childbearing, and significantly reducing global consumption of energy and resources would move humanity towards environmentally sustainable societies that meet human needs.

Roughly 4.5 billion people have been added to the world population in just the last 60 years, according to UN estimates, putting increased

strain on the world's ecosystems and resources. Because humans interact with their surroundings far more intensely than any other species, it is accelerating climate change and driving species to extinction.

To some extent, these outcomes are now unavoidable, says the Worldwatch Institute; we'll have to adapt to them. But in order to improve the likelihood that they will not be catastrophic, governments need to reduce population growth and address the environmental and social impacts that continued population growth will have.

"It is precisely because the human population is so large and is growing so fast that we must care how much we, as individuals and

nations, are increasingly out of sync with environmental sustainability," said Worldwatch President Robert Engelman, an expert on global population. "The challenge becomes even more with each generation. Fortunately there are ways to practically and humanely slow population growth and reduce the impacts associated with the growth that occurs."

Earlier this year, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched '7 Billion Actions', a campaign to highlight positive actions by individuals and organisations addressing global development challenges.

"Addressing global population growth is not the same thing as controlling population," Engelman said. "The most direct and immediate way to lower birth rates is by assuring that women can make their own choices about whether and when to bear a child."

He said that the world's energy, water, and materials consumption must also be controlled through greater use of conservation, efficiency, and green technologies. He recommends two solutions:

- Empower women to make their own decisions about childbearing
- Consume fewer resources and waste less food

Humans appropriate anywhere from 24 per cent to nearly 40 per cent of the photosynthetic output of the planet for food and other purposes, and more than half of the planet's accessible renewable freshwater runoff. In addition to overuse of finite resources, humans waste large quantities of food every year.

Industrialised countries waste 222 million tons of food annually. If fewer resources and less food were wasted, the world would be able to feed more people and use fewer resources. With nearly 1 billion hungry people worldwide, wasting less food would also mean utilising existing resources, not new ones, to feed them. ■

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# Strange encounters

I am truly going to miss the lawlessness of Kathmandu’s streets



COMMENT  
Cai Yun

As a foreigner living in Nepal, if you are not equipped in the art of hard bargaining, you are doomed.  
Vendor: “That is 2,500 rupees.”  
Me: “What?” (Walking away)  
Vendor: “How much do you want? Just look at how nicely it is crafted. Genuine antique.”  
Me: “500 rupees.”  
Vendor: “Oh-ho. I told you 2,500 rupees and you say 500 rupees, are you kidding me? Ok I give you Nepali price now, not tourist price. 1,500, exclusive.”  
Me: (Walking away, waving)  
Vendor: (Running to catch up) “Don’t go away! How about 1,200? 1,000? Tell me how much you want to pay.”  
Me: (No comment, pretend to look at another shop)  
Vendor: “Wait, wait. 800? ...700? Ok ok 500 hundred it’s yours. You are very lucky today.”

Hmm... am I really lucky? After living in Nepal for a few weeks, I thought I had learnt the tricks of the trade in bargaining, yet I still ended up paying more than I should have. No matter what, it seems, foreigners will always pay more.  
“To take a taxi there, it would be around 200 rupees for us,” Nepali friends would tell me, “but for you they won’t go for anything less than 300.”

The guava from a street vendor should be cheaper, but I know I am paying the “foreigner tax” even when he has come down by half. And worse, a Nepali friend buying bananas on my behalf has to pay more because the fruit seller knows it is for me.  
The dual pricing is state-sanctioned because there are different prices everywhere you go. To a certain extent this happens in most Asian countries, but nowhere is it as institutionalised as in Nepal. To enter the Patan Museum, there is a different price for Nepalis, another one for SAARC countries and another one ten times more for “other foreigners”.

A recent news item that showed Chinese tourists in Nepal spend on an average two times more than other tourists made me wonder. Chinese are the world superpower in bargaining. Maybe we are just less effective in bargaining overseas because of language issues? Very early on in my stay I decided there is no point trying to fight this price apartheid, and accept it as a part of Nepali culture, and an honourable contribution to uplifting Nepal’s economy.

It is surprising how quickly one gets used to Kathmandu’s infamous traffic. At first it looks like a chaotic blend of trucks, buses, motorcycles, scooters, bulls, dogs, goats, push carts and even two-wheel tractors that are used for rice planting back in China, but in Kathmandu are attached to trailers loaded high with cement bags. There are few zebra crossings, and even on the ones that exist, vehicles have the right of way. The road centre line is just a suggestion, everyone ignores them. The roads are heavily cratered, and these are euphemistically called “pot holes”.

But within my first week of arrival I was negotiating all this as if I was born here. Real traffic rules are broken all the time, but the unspoken rules of the road are steadfastly followed and they seem to work perfectly. Every vehicle pokes into every available space creating a complete gridlock, but somehow inch-by-inch this hopeless monstrous mess inevitably untangles itself.

And the amazing thing is that everyone manages to keep their cool. Despite the anarchy on the streets, this is probably the country in Asia with the least road rage. No one is shouting obscenities and making rude gestures even though they have every reason to. There is a live-and-let-live quality to Kathmandu’s street ecosystem, and as the time comes for me to leave for the reverse cultural shock of adjusting again to spotless clean streets where cars glide along on their lanes, it suddenly hits me that I am truly going to miss Nepal’s lawlessness. 🇳🇵



KALAM  
Rabi Thapa

I am a tree-hugger. I officially became one somewhere in a rainforest north of Townsville, Australia, sometime in the mid-nineties. As a participant in the annual

Students and Sustainability conference, I’d signed up for the suitably hippyish ‘Council of All Beings’. Out of town, on the highway and off it, pretty soon we were deep inside the pregnant silence of a Queensland rainforest, listening to a bearish professor explain that here, we humans were only one of many Beings sharing a space. Before we settled down for

might have climbed up as a child. The solidity of it. The uprightness of it. The life inside of it, and, once you find yourself at bark-level, the many lives outside of it.  
Unfortunately, there are few trees to grant you such communion in the encroaching patchwork of cement and brick that is our modern-day capital. Which is why the ones that remain

# Alien attack

Fast-spreading weed threatens national parks





# Arbor ardor

Can't see the trees for the cement and brick?



PICS: RABI THAPA

are all the more precious, linking us as they do to an oft unspoken memory of a pastoral past, real or imagined.

The other day I came home to find a gang of men busy chopping down the old bottlebrush tree fronting the ramshackle mansion next door. A pony-tailed Tamang boy had climbed all the way up and was hacking his way down, branch by branch. They may have had good reason to destroy the tree (and the extensive network of epiphytes growing on it), but in some unreasoning way, I didn't want to hear it. The axe had laid open the

waxy red core of the trunk; it hurt me to see it. While the men discussed the price of timber, all I could think about was how we used to strip bottlebrush trees of their seeds at school, and shoot them at each other through the shells of Mon Ami biros masquerading as blowpipes.

Finally they set about the trunk, and when it fell groaning, I figured that they were probably taking it down because it was blocking telephone lines. Or someone needed to make use of the plot. Whatever the reason, empty space took the place of the shaggy greenery that had once filled it. Maybe

they would put up a brand new telephone pole here, lifeless, but conveying modern life to our units. In a parallel process, the century-old mansion itself was in the process of being torn down, wing by wing, and would soon be replaced by an assembly line residence of faux tiles, cornices and cantilevers. For now, discarded wooden shutters lay next to fallen bottlebrush branches, awaiting cremation.

There are of course plenty of trees out there in the countryside. But the casual manner in which we take down these long-term denizens of the Valley (decimate the huge eucalyptus trees in front of Shivapuri Boarding in Baluwatar, and why not the firs along Narayanhiti?) speaks of a certain vision for our city, one that excludes green spaces. Such a vision is no vision at all. If we continue this way, the worse-off among us will be little better off than the animals in cement cages up in Jawalakhel.

In truth, this is something that each homeowner with a garden can do something about. But it's not enough, and even that requires some prioritisation. In the brave new world of Nepal, nothing is sacred, save the pipal trees that still stand as islands in the flow of city traffic. Thank god for that, at least. 🇳🇵

It is paradox that the International Year of Forests 2011 is being marked in Nepal by a fast-spreading weed vine that is literally choking trees to death in the Tarai.

The alien creeper is sweeping across Nepal from east to west and has devastated trees in the Chitwan National Park (CNP), threatening more than half the park's vegetation.

Known as "lahare banmara" by locals, the weed has the Latin name *Mikania micrantha*, and has covered nearly a quarter of the national park in Chitwan. *Mikania* is like the previous banmara weed which is a native plant in Mexico and arrived with American wheat aid in the 1960s.

The super weed, native to south and central America was introduced to India during world War II to camouflage army camps. It was first reported in Nepal in 1965 in Ilam where it probably came through tree saplings imported from northeast India.

"But it is in the past few years that it has suddenly gone virulent and already has spread as far west as Dang," explains Naresh Subedi at the National Trust for Nature Conservation, who is also doing a PhD on how invasive plant species are affecting rhinoceros.

Chanda Rana of the group, Save the Environment, is also concerned about the weed affecting the rhinoceros habitat. "Mikania needs open space and grasslands next to river banks which is where rhinoceros graze," she says. The weed destroys a plant that is called "rhino's apple" because the animals love the fruit." Before rhinos, the weed also affected the wild buffalo herds in Kosi Tappu by smothering the buffalo's preferred plants.

Chief Warden Jhamak Karki of Chitwan says the weed is now a serious enough threat for the park to go on a war footing. *Mikania* is prolific because it produces as many as 40,000 viable seeds every year per plant which is dispersed by the wind. The weed can also propagate itself with a broken stem. Livestock refuse to eat the weed and the only use for it is to use as fuel. Herbicides are not recommended because of the toxic effect on the environment.

While research into fighting this menace continues, Rana says: "The only way we have seen so far to fight the weed is to physically uproot every plant, but this is time consuming and difficult." 🇳🇵

Stuti Sharma

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**Digital Photography Workshop-VII**, learn the tricks of the trade from well-experienced and professional photographers and artists. *Limited seats available so book your seats by 31 October, Fees: Rs 2500, 2 November to 12 November, 6.30am to 8.30pm, Artudio, Jyatha*

**Voodoo Ghar**, celebrate Halloween with DJ BPM. *31 October, 5pm to 11pm, The Tantra, Thamel.*

**Food, Hygiene and Sanitation Training**, organised by Global Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Education in collaboration with Apex International Food Consultants. *1 November to 3 November. Mandikhatar, 4650176*

**Existence: Ashtitwa**, an exhibition of paintings by Prithvi Shrestha. *24 October to 17 November, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4218048, 4438979*

**Blow up the Spot**, live performances by artists from Kathmandu and after party with DJs like DJ Niral, DJ Rabbit and DJ Finzok. *4 November, 6pm onwards, Club Platinum, Durbarmarg*

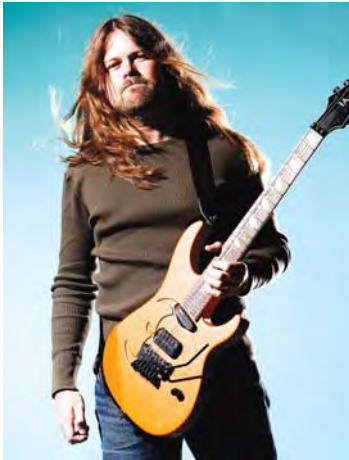


**Exquisite collection of Fine Art**, prints and paintings by artists Uma Shah, Neera Pradhan and

Seema Shah. *Till 6 November, 10.30 pm to 6pm, Closed Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Park Gallery, RNJC Pulchowk, Patan, parkgallery@wlink.com.np, 5522307*

**As It Happens**, an exhibition of paintings by Soni Shakya. *Till 17th November, 11am to 6pm. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4218048*

MUSIC



**A Day with Mattias IA Eklundh**, famous metal guitarist and vocalist Mattias is coming to Kathmandu to hold a workshop for metal fans. *31 October, noon onwards. Tone Music Store, Gahana Pokhari*

**Kites Band**, A cosmopolitan rendezvous to unwind in the evenings presenting live music by "Kites" Band and snooker to refresh. *4pm to 11pm. Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, 4411818 ext. 1330*



**Vesper Café**, has quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps. *Jhamsikhel*

**Jazoo**, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special barbeque set for a mix of everything. *Jawalakhel (near the zoo), 5538321*



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



**Bu keba**, the newest organic restaurant in town, offers continental and Indian food along with chef's originals. *Sanepa*

**Black Pepper Café & Pub**, cosmopolitan dining and drinking in a traditional style courtyard, try the



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Kathmandu-Peshawar fund-raising "drive"



What better way to end the festive season than to donate generously to a fundraising drive (literally) for the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC)?

The Centre is organising a Volkswagen Beetle rally from Kathmandu to Peshawar and back to raise more than \$100,000 to fund the care and rehabilitation of poor Nepali patients who are paralysed by spinal injuries. The sky blue Beetle will take two weeks to cover the roundtrip distance of 2,000 km and will pass through Lucknow, Delhi, Amritsar, cross the border to Pakistan at Wagah, Islamabad and turn around in Peshawar.

The 1973 model VW beetle will be driven by the Centre's founder and editor of Himal Southasian magazine, Kanak Mani Dixit, who himself suffered a spinal injury during a trekking accident in Manang in 2000. The fundraiser through three SAARC countries marks the tenth anniversary of the Centre and the expansion of its bed capacity from 39 to 51.

The fundraiser hopes to draw supporters and donors before flagging off on 4 November, Friday from the SIRC in Sanga at 10AM, and at stops along the way in Nepal, India and Paksitan. Segments of the trip can be "bought" at \$100 per mile.

[spinalinju@wlink.com.np](mailto:spinalinju@wlink.com.np)  
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Donate online at [www.sirc.org.np](http://www.sirc.org.np) through the BigGive project in cooperation with Livability Ireland, partner of the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre





apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service. *Kopundole Height, Lalitpur, 5521897, 5536926*



**The Factory**, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on their cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*



**Yin Yang Restaurant**, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Get a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of their western dishes. *Thamel, 10am to 10pm, 4701510*

**Dhaba**, for an excellent range of North Indian delicacies, try their unbeatable Kashmiri Gosht. *Thapathali*

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



**Singma Food Court**, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. *Pulchok, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np*

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



**Bronco Billy**, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. But really, we can't wait to try their Margaritas. *Pulchok, opposite Namaste Supermarket*



GETAWAYS

**The Last Resort**, one stop for Adventure Sports, bungee jump over the Bhote Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border. *The Last Resort Sales Office, Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700525*

**Grand Norling Hotel**, countryside weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. *Gokarna, 4910193*



**SOMEPLACE ELSE**

‘**Y**oukoso mase!’ Without fail the entire staff at Kotetsu cordially greets customers as they enter the sushi bar and teppanyaki in Lazimpat. For the last six years and counting, the former textile trader Kensei Tomita and his wife and retired schoolteacher Sumiko Tomita have given fish fiends and beef buffs a reason to splurge. Free of the frills, flames and flying shrimps commonly found at teppanyaki chains like Benihana, Kotetsu is for the serious foodie. Its open kitchen atmosphere lends to

# Kotetsu


transparent preparations—very neat, very clean. At its heart is the *teppan*, a wide iron plate where prime cuts of meat weighed to the gram like Australian beef (Rs 1400 for 180 grams) or Kobe beef (Rs 2200 for 100 grams) and seafood like full squid and salmon are cooked right before our eyes. Seared then covered with a metal bowl to ensure an even cook, the chicken at Rs 600 is on the lighter end of the billing scale but is nothing short of *oishii*—delicious. A traditional teppanyaki, the Okonomiyaki is a savory pancake of bacon layered between fried egg and a batter of flour, yam, cabbage, and green onion and drizzled with a thick, tangy sauce that tastes like Worcestershire. The heavy cake resembles a Newari bara or a mound of Thanksgiving stuffing. Dedicated to high quality, Kotetsu imports fresh fish,



mollusks and crustaceans every other day to the valley. Raw or grilled, the ocean viands are sure to exceed expectations. For sushi the selection is standard and prepared meticulously by a veteran master of the art. The Ryan Maki is six pieces of spicy tuna and rice tightly rolled into perfect bites. The sashimi platters charge a hefty toll but for good reason. A splurge at Rs 3,000, the Special Sashimi presents a rainbow of cuts



PICS: MARCO POLLO

of fish that left a neighboring Japanese patron highly impressed. But don't be deterred, sashimi plates like the mackerel for Rs 700 and the octopus for Rs 600 are available. In a landlocked country, seafood is bound to be pricey, and Kotetsu's is worth every rupee. So when indulging in its sumptuous imports, be sure to order rounds of cold or hot sake and forget your woes.  *Marco Pollo*

*Northbound on Lazimpat, bow to the Japanese ambassador, cross the bend and spot the white sign in Japanese*

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# Patients or patents?



Ten years ago Dr Yusuf Hamied, chairman of the Indian drug company, Cipla, stunned the global health community by drastically decreasing the price of anti-AIDS drugs. Thanks to this initiative the price of the AIDS cocktail of drugs is now about 20 cents a day, a fraction of what it used to be. In 2001, there were about 2,000 people in the developing world receiving these drugs, now that figure is over 6 million. AIDS, because of the availability of these drugs, is no longer a death warrant.

Dr Hamied had to deal with the patent rights of the drug companies and governments of Western countries who were not keen to give them up. In general it came down to making these drugs available on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, which means the patent owners were motivated to give up their exclusive rights

(which usually lasts for 20 years) for making the drugs based on helping the poor person with AIDS. Ten years hence the battle lines are drawn again between patent rights and patient rights for Western drugs for non-communicable diseases like cancer and diabetes which are plaguing



the developing world. These diseases are generally the consequences of better and longer life. Poor nations want freer patent rules. But Western nations and big pharma (Roche, Pfizer) are saying that for continued incentive for further discoveries and invention of drugs (like breast cancer medicine, Herceptin) they need to push for patent rights.

The indefatigable Dr Hamied is again in the picture willing to make these expensive cancer and diabetes drugs as copy cat, knock off drugs using biotechnology. He is joined by his Chinese drug company friends (BioMab) to help make the drugs available at a fraction of the Western price. Don't be surprised if we start obtaining our cancer and diabetes drugs from the Chinese border town of Khasa.

This time Western governments and drug companies are taking a long, hard look. They are contemplating not giving up their patent rights as easily as they did with the AIDS drugs. At this rate they fear the lack of incentive for new discoveries, the humanitarian factor notwithstanding.

The United Nations is currently tackling the issue of rampant non-communicable diseases in the developing world, and the stage is set for heated debates regarding patents that will affect the lives of millions of patients worldwide. 🇳🇵



WEEKEND WEATHER  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The prevailing south-westerlies are keeping minimum temperatures still in the double digits in Kathmandu because it brings warm winds. It also blows up the pollution haze from the Indo-Gangetic plains, which is what is keeping the mountains obscured from the Valley. The haze has the effect of filtering solar radiation, thus keeping maximum temperatures a degree below what it would otherwise be. The weather pattern of immediate interest to us is a huge low pressure circulation in the Arabian Sea which stretches almost from Oman to India's west coast. This is throwing up moistures, which could ride the westerly jet stream and speed towards us at short notice Sunday evening onwards. Snow flurries in the high Himal, with fast-moving cloud cover in the midhills.



FRI	SAT	SUN
26-12	24-10	25-09



BIKRAM RAI

**READY FOR THE NIGHT:** The Swayambhu Nath Temple lights up with Kathmandu city glowing on the backdrop for Laxmi puja on Wednesday.



SITA MADEMBIA

**FLOWER GIRL:** A young girl carries a basket of marigolds in a market in Bhedetar, Sunsari, on Tuesday, ahead of Laxmi puja when the demand for flowers soars.



BIKRAM RAI

**FEEL THE JAZZ:** The Window Seat, a band from India performs at the finale show of Jazzmandu in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

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# Arniko's skateboards

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Feel the difference



**NEPAL TO SWITZERLAND:** Kiran, a local wood craftsman, carves Arniko's signature on a skateboard in his workshop in Patan (*top*). Arniko's store in Zurich, Switzerland showcases its skateboard and accessories (*bottom*).

To Nepal's famous handicraft exports, now add another unusual item: skateboards. Yes, handcrafted wooden skateboards Made in Nepal by Marius Arniko Arter. Born in Nepal, Arter had spent most of his early years in Kathmandu before he returned to Switzerland with his parents. When he came back in 2004 to the place he once called home, his love for Nepal was rekindled and he decided to stay. A keen skater, Arter searched for a skateboard in Nepal. When he couldn't find it, he put his carpentry skills to work and made two boards, imprinting it with local carvings. "My skateboard attracted a lot of interest back in Switzerland," Arter recalls, "everyone wanted one."

With backing from Swiss friends, Arter returned to Nepal in 2007 and started Arniko Skateboards, naming it after the Nepali middle name his parents had given him. The company logo has a stylised Nepali flag and he got local wood craftsmen to carve designs on the skateboards. The Canadian Maple and glue required to make the boards are imported, but everything else is made in Nepal. "We try to pick up ideas from Nepal to transform them into designs," explains Arter. "We even have one with mountaineer Tenzing Norgay's face and more recently, a long board with a woman playing the sitar."

Apart from skateboards, Arniko also manufactures a clothing line of t-shirts, hoodies, pants, and accessories in Nepal. The production materials used at Arniko are certified by Confidence in Textiles, IMO Control, Fairtrade International and Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production. The Arniko Skateboards store at Mandala Street in Thamel easily catches eye because of the sturdy designer boards that hang on its walls. Arniko's boards are made in the '70s slalom style, not readily available in the international market. "These are ideal for urban and downhill cruising," explains Arter, "so although we are not a global brand, those interested in old-school skateboarding recognise us." Arniko Skateboard also has stores in Switzerland and sells online.

Arniko sells up to 200 boards a season and each one is a work of art. Says Arter: "Some people buy the boards to simply hang them on the wall." When asked why he prefers to work in Nepal, Arter replies: "Working here is not easy but this is where I was born. This is my bit to make Nepal's name recognised around the world". [arnikoskateboards.com](http://arnikoskateboards.com) Paavan Mathema

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Making of Arniko Skateboards

Born in Nepal, and with 'Arniko' as his middle name, Marius crafts hand-carved skateboards in Kathmandu for export to Switzerland



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# Now, meditation tourism

Once is not enough for Dhamma Pokhara’s vipassana courses

DORJI TSERING SHERPA in KASKI

As meditation centres go, you cannot find a better place in the world than the hills overlooking Lake Begnas in Kaski. Just 40 minutes east of Pokhara, the location amidst lush forests and the Annapurnas reflected on the ripples of the lake, is soothing even for those who don’t come here for meditation classes.

Dhamma Pokhara was established three years ago here to conduct meditation courses that participants say has transformed their lives. The once-a-month training is conducted by teachers nominated by guru S N Goenka in the tradition of the Sayagi U Ba Khin. Participants say they are at ease even before the course starts because of the serenity of the surroundings, and the tranquility enhances the process to purify their minds.

“I never believed such a beautiful place existed in the world,” said a student of vipassana after completing her course recently.

Her teacher described the Dhamma Pokhara centre as a “four very” area. “It is very green in the summer, it is very cool in winter, it is very soothing in the spring and it is very beautiful all year around,” he says, laughing.

Vipassana’s origins date back to the time of the Buddha more than 2,500 years ago when a rich and generous man, Anath Pindika, purchased a plot of land for a meditation centre from a prince by paying an exorbitant sum.

When people asked him why he paid so much, he is said to have replied: “The price tag is nothing compared the benefit it would give to people.”


The Dhamma Pokhara centre was similarly bought by Ratna Devi Bajracharya, a devotee and student of Vipassana from Kathmandu, who donated the property to establish a meditation centre even though she could have easily sold the prime tourism real estate that stretches from the top of a ridge down to the

banks of the lake. But, like Anath Pindika, she decided to set up a meditation centre to help people stressed by the demands of a modern lifestyle.

Lots of vipassana enthusiasts chipped in to help get the Dhamma Centre going three years ago with the construction, landscaping and fixing up the water supply and other utilities.

Donations from vipassana teachers, students, organisations made Pokhara’s meditation centre possible. Nepal Vipassana Center helped with conducting the meditation courses in the early days.

Dhamma Pokhara is already very popular among Nepal-based expats and tourists, as well as locals for its 10-day vipassana course. “I just wish there were more Nepalis who would learn this wonderful technique of purifying the mind,” says Nara Bahadur Guruji who runs the centre.

Just as the tourism brochures say about Nepal, it could also be said of Dhamma Pokhara: “Once is not enough.”  [www.pokhara.dhamma.org](http://www.pokhara.dhamma.org).

# Vedic yagya in Panauti

STUTI SHARMA

It’s a material world, and the modern lifestyle brings with it higher stress levels. Individually, people practice yoga and meditation to try to regain their mental equilibrium. But one group is tackling societal stress and collective tension by organizing a yagya: an ancient Vedic practice of prolonged prayer and chanting. It is all happening in Panauti outside Kathmandu next week, and its prime mover, Martin Gluckman of the Vedic Society denies it is all mumbo jumbo.

“There is now scientific proof that society’s mood and its spiritual harmony can be ensured with yagyas, there are favourable changes after the ceremony takes place,” Gluckman told *Nepali Times* as he put finishing touches to the ceremony which will last a week and is expected to be visited by thousands from Nepal and abroad.



Yagyas are ancient proto-Hindu practices organised to restore harmony in societies torn by upheavals. They use the holy fire which burn ayurvedic plants amidst the chant of holy mantras and prayers.

A similar yagya in South India last year was credited with better harvests and healthy rainfall. Says Alex Hankey of the Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine: “By collecting a large amount of data


and samples of places where yagyas were done regularly, we came to realise that collective meditation can influence society.”

A soma yagya is a “super yagya” that invokes “soma” the nourishing elixir of life and nature. Soma yagyas are performed to increase the society’s cohesiveness and harmony, and involves the burning of the soma plant from the high Himalaya which is put into the holy fire. “Besides praying for peace and harmony in

Nepal,” Gluckman says, “the soma yagya in Panauti is expected to create conditions for healing, love and peace on the planet.

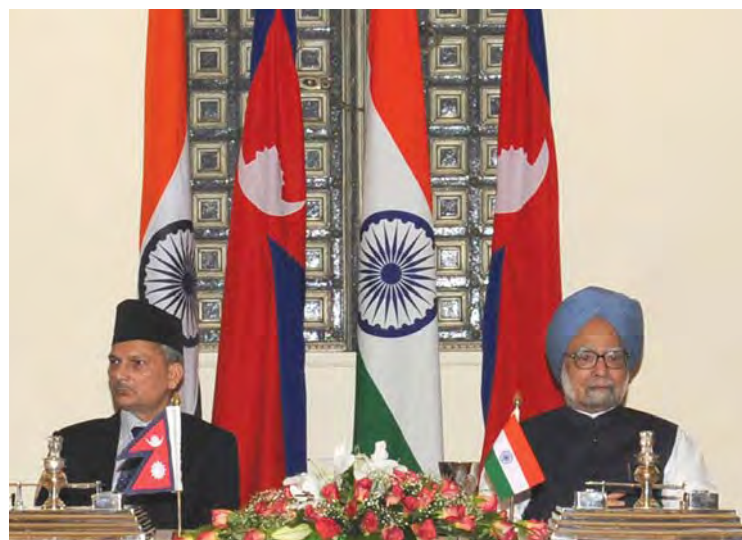
Gluckman and Hankey feel yagyas like the one planned for Panauti persuade people to be mellow, be less aggressive and be considerate members of society.

Gluckman, a South African Hindu environmentalist and spiritualist, organised a soma yagya in Auroville in south India last year with the help of the Institute for Studies in Vedic Sciences and Agnihotra USA.

Although small scale yagyas are common in temples across Nepal, they normally involve animals sacrifices which is unacceptable as it promotes mindless violence. Says Gluckman: “Vedic Society is reviving an ancient celebration of peace as a gift to Nepal for it has gifted the world its enriching ayurvedic knowledge.” 

*Soma Yagya*  
6-11 November  
Panauti, Kabhre District  
[www.vedicsociety.org](http://www.vedicsociety.org)





# Turning guns to pens

Economics trumps politics in India-Nepal relations for the first time



CHALO DILLI  
Jyoti Malhotra

Probably for the first time during the visit of a Nepali leader to New Delhi in recent times, economics trumped politics. When Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai met Manmohan Singh last week it was evident there was a new pragmatism in dealing with Nepal.

Indian policy makers, who say they have been burnt, bitten and bruised each time they tried to "influence" good old friends in Nepal, seem to have now decided they will, as much as it can, stay away from playing political sides in Nepal. Meaning, if Bhattarai wants help with the peace process or writing the Constitution, he will have to ask for it.

But officials say this shouldn't be construed as a new touch-me-not approach towards the Himalayan republic. South Block, that elegant old red stone building in Delhi which houses the ministries of foreign affairs and defence as well as the prime minister's office, has noticed a big difference it dealing with Bhattarai in comparison to his predecessors.

The trouble is that all this bon homie in Delhi about Nepal's new prime minister does have an equal and opposite reaction in Nepal. Bhattarai has been greeted by a barrage of criticism since he returned Monday to Kathmandu from hardliners within his own party and the UML.

"Tell me what you want," Manmohan Singh is said to have told Bhattarai, "and India will do its best to give it." This message was as true for the \$1 billion credit line that Kathmandu was hugely keen be announced during the Bhattarai visit, to building a fast-track highway from Kathmandu to the Tarai. Unfortunately, the requests came too late for the Indian bureaucracy to process it in time for the visit.

Bhattarai had expected opposition to the Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Act (BIPPA) back home, but what Indian businesses and officials can't understand is what Jhala Nath Khanal and others opposed to it gain by blocking Indian investment in Nepal. After all, they say, Nepal has signed the BIPPA with several other countries.

The most important takeaway from the visit was the signal that India was ready to return to business-as-usual and would, indeed, open its heart as well as its purse-strings based on mutual trust between the two governments. It was also the recognition that India and Nepal can't do without each other.

Bhattarai has the support of Pushpa Kamal Dahal within his party, and there is now only the Kiran faction playing spoiler. The prime minister was trying to appease critics from within his own party by raising the cases pending against several Nepali Maoists in detention in India.

Bhattarai understands more than any of his predecessors that Nepal could benefit from being the bridge between India and China, but he affirmed that India constitutes a special relationship for his country. He spoke wryly about his own image at his first public meeting in Delhi: "In Nepal, they call me a pro-India agent, and in India they call me an anti-India agent."

Still, oratory is not Bhattarai's strong point and he seems to know it. He also seems to know that the time for rhetorical flourishes and symbolism is long over in India-Nepal relations. It is time to work towards economic and trade cooperation to create jobs and raise growth rates in Nepal.

Bhattarai wanted India, the self-declared economic engine of the neighbourhood, to pump money into his country in investment, trade, loans and aid. For its part, India seems more than ready and willing to apply the "Afghan model" with Nepal.

India has disbursed millions of dollars across Afghanistan, including in micro-finance projects to help dig tubewells, build schools, set up sewing machine units for women. The idea is to train and skill a war-torn population, to build and create a new country after decades of civil war.

India hopes it can replicate this in post-conflict Nepal as well. If the Maoists and the Nepali Congress can compromise on the peace process, India has offered help in rehabilitation and skills training for ex-combatants.

Barshaman Pun 'Ananta' till five years ago was a guerilla commander, planning and leading attacks on military bases. In Delhi last week he was dressed in a business suit and tie as Nepal's finance minister.

Ananta laughed as I asked him about this transformation. "I have used a gun, and now I have to use a pen," he said. "But the motive remains the same, to assist in improving the lives of the people of Nepal."

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# Power and prosperity



Kantipur, 22 October

The changes brought about by microhydro plants and small Peltric sets have made a huge difference to local livelihoods in the remote areas of Nepal. The kerosene lamps has become a thing of the past. Many households now have computers instead and telecom companies have been able expand their services to the villages by installing their towers in the remote corners of the districts. Life in villages of Solukhumbhu district will never be the same. Not long ago, locals in Solukhumbu were forced to pay Rs 200 per litre of kerosene just to light their house. But today villages here run cyber cafes, FM stations and highvision cinema halls. Small-scale industries have been set up. And while the nation prepares

to face annual power famine this winter, villagers in Solukhumbu enjoy uninterrupted power supply. After the extension of 33 KV line from Devighat in the year 2000, most villages in Dhading district are electrified. Economic activity has brought prosperity and jobs. Every village in Kabhre district has access to electricity today. There are 53 industries and 20 business centres using electricity from the national grid. Micro-hydro supplies power to those places where there is no national grid. There are 57 micro-hydro plants and around 3,000 households in the district use

solar system. Chilime, the first nationally funded commercial hydropower project that came into operation in 2003, led to a spurt in investments in Rasuwa district. Several medium and small scale projects including 57 MW Syangjen Hydro Project and 60 MW Trishuli A are underway. Besides, locals have made investment in 7 MW Dhunche Diksha and 15 MW Phalukhola hydro power projects. Sindhupalchok district saw its first power project in 1970s when China built the Sunkosi project. According to Naresh Pandey, the district chief of NEA, 72 of 75 VDCs in Sindhupalchok now have electricity. Some 2,773 households benefit from micro hydro and 200 household have solar set at their homes, although tourist destination like Helambu and other remote areas are yet to get access to electricity.

# Corrupt airport official

Dechen Doma Sherpa in *mysansar.com*, 21 October

I am Dechen Doma Sherpa, originally from Solu Khumbu and residing in Kapan, Kathmandu. In spite of being a citizen of Nepal, I was harassed at the Tribhuvan International Airport by a corrupt and irresponsible government official with the last name Basnet who questioned my nationality. "You are Sherpa, so how can you prove that you are a Nepali citizen?" he asked. Even though I had my passport and citizenship, he said I needed some more documents to prove that I was a Nepali citizen. To get me through the checking he asked me for Rs 150,000. Because I didn't have the money to pay him, he cited the lack of enough documents and sent me home. The official however

did tell me to go to the CDO Office the next day to get all the required documents and even offered to come along. He accompanied me to the office where he consoled me that he would help me get all the necessary documents. After gathering



the documents, he said that it would still be difficult for me to leave the country as the Maoist government had tightened some rules and I would have to pay money at the airport. In the end he talked me into paying Rs 100,000 to get me through the checking and I was finally able to board the flight.

nepalitimes.com

Conversation in which Immigration Official solicits bribe from Sherpa

# BRB doublespeak

Gagan Thapa in his Facebook page, 26 October

Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in 1991: "Foreign investment in the industrial, business and financial sectors should be ended, only then will Nepal's nationalism be strong." Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in 2011: "Without foreign investment in the industrial, business and financial sectors Nepal can never aspire for economic prosperity. That is why the BIIPA Agreement is a nationalist proposal." I support the prime minister's newer view. Dr Bhattarai came up with his new way of thinking quite easily, but how expensive it turned out to be for the nation: 20 wasted years and 15,000 lives lost.

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# Political protection

Binita Dahal in *Nagarik*, 17 October

नागरिक

Ujjan Kumar Shrestha and Renuka Poudel first met at a rice mill in village where they fell in love at first sight. Ujjan was married so they decided to elope. Eventually, she won acceptance from his family members. But this love marriage claimed life of three innocents.

On 24 June 1998, Ujjan was still fast asleep at his home in Okhaldhunga-7 Tarkebari, when two porters woke him up at around 3 am, insisting that he take them to Ghodi Danda Bazar. On the way, after 45 minute walk, Ujjan was alarmed when a torch light fell on his eyes. He saw a group of people hiding up in a terrace.

“Run” a sound warned from behind a stone boulder. The porters stepped back. They were Renuka’s

brothers Dor Bahadur and Thal Bahadur, Balkrishna Dhungel, Puskar Gautam who had brought along their fellow comrades. Ujjan was scared to death. A bullet passed through his skull and he went tumbling down the terrace. He died instantly. They hurled his body into Kosi river.

Two months after the incident, both the porters admitted to the court they were acting under orders from Renuka’s bothers plan. Based on the statement of the porters, the Supreme Court slapped a life time imprisonment on Dhungel, who had fired the shot. Renuka’s brother and two porters have been released after serving the jail terms. Ujjan’s murderer Balkrishna Dhungel is now a Maoist CA member.

Meanwhile Puskar absconded to Kathmandu, and worked as a journalist for a decade. The police

never arrested him. He went to the UK for higher studies in 2007, returned to Kathmandu and is now living in Delhi. His case is still pending in Okhaldhunga district court.

“Ujjan’s body was never found,” said Sabitri Shrestha, Ujjan’s sister who has been fighting for justice for the past 13 years. “We performed his last rites without his body as commanded by police.”

Despite threats from Maoists, Ujjan’s brother Ganesh Kumar filed a FIR against the culprits. Sabitri recalls that Dhungel had announced in a public speech in the village that he would murder Ganesh Kumar too. Fearing for his life, Sabitri asked him to come to Kathmandu.

When Ganesh Kumar returned home after four years in 2002, the Maoists were alert. On 22 November, six strangers came to his house while he was working in fields. Unable to



recognise him, they asked his 14-year old daughter Ranjana to identify him. They shot him dead right in front of her.

Ranjana could not bear the guilt of pointing her father out to his murderers. She too committed suicide in 2006.

The Maoists have seized all property belonging to Ujjan’s family. They bombed his house and his family members have never been able to go back to village for the past five years.



Arrow: Nationalism

नागरिक Deven in *Nagarik*, 25 October

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Prachanda is a RAW agent.”

UCPN-M General Secretary, Ram Bahadur Thapa



## Power, money and Madhes

Bharat Bimal Yadav in *Nagarik*, 17 October

नागरिक

During the April 2006 people’s movement, there were cordial relations between Madhesi leaders. But when power politics started, hostilities grew. Leaders spilt up parties for money. There were financial irregularities within parties and betrayals by fellow revolutionaries which forced me to retreat from active politics.

All these parties which carry the flag of Madhes have only two goals today : money and power. It is surprising that the remark about Madhes separatism has come from a defense minister, Sharat Singh Bhandari. Everyone knows when and why Bhandari became a Madhesbadi. How can the

Madhes be separated from the country simply because Bhadrari declares it? The majority of people in the Madhes would never concede to this. The Madhes revolution was a cry for equality and identity. Separation was never a demand of the Madhesi people. Madhes politics lacks principles. There is no crucial difference between the agendas of the so called Madhesi parties. We don’t need nine different parties that claim to represent Madhes.

When there was a movement going on in the streets for democracy, these Madhesi leaders were either circling Delhi or supporting the king. Today, they have become the staunchest republicans. What per cent of people



from Madhes do they really represent is clear from the number of votes they recieved. The truth is that the most radical section of Madhesi politicians today are the sons-in-laws imported from across the border who have no mass base. Madhesi politics has been hijacked by these people.

After looting from everywhere they could, they are now doing politics in the name of Madhes and Madhesi people. It is sad that the national parties are viewing the Madhes issue from the eyes of these opportunistic leaders. They should listen to the people instead. Until this trend persists, Madhesi people will not have anything to be glad about.

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# Breaking News: BRB Breaks Down

You know it is a slow news day in Nepal when the wire services start filing stories about toilets being built on Mt Everest. So the highest mountain in the world is going to be declared an "open-defecation free zone". This doesn't affect the Ass one way or other because yours truly is not in line to set a new world record to take the highest dump in the world. But the reason the high-level authoritarians have taken this step is because the poo pile on the South Col is now so high there is nowhere to pitch a tent. Apparently there are **freeze dried droppings** there from as far back as the unsuccessful 1952 Swiss Mt Everest Expedition. OK, there will now be outhouses with commodes from Camp I to Camp V, but how is that going to help? Frozen turds will still be coming out pulverized from the bottom of the Khumbu Icefall in a couple of centuries. Be that as it may, there is cause for serious concern: global warming is melting the Himalaya and it's going to thaw out everything. Everything.



The Maldivian government is getting

pretty exasperated, apparently, with the frequent change of government in Nepal: five in the last five years at last count. The reason is that no sooner had they sent an emissary to invite Makunay for the SAARC Summit, than he was gone. So, the envoy was dispatched again to invite Jhol Gnat, and he too was out. This week, the Maldivian emissary was back to deliver the invite from President Nasheed to Prime Minister Bhattarai. The question is, will Bhattarai still be PM on 10 November when the first SAARC summit in the **southern hemisphere** kicks off on Addu Atoll?



Breaking News: BRB Breaks Down at JNU. Really, what's with our comrades? You'd expect the iron-fisted former guerrillas to have hearts of stone, but they've turned out to be **cry babies**. Even Comrade Ferociousness has a habit of shedding a strategic tear or two when the occasion so demands.

And when Padam Dai heard the prime minister speaking haltingly in Nepal Bhasa at a new year function the other day, he couldn't stop his tears either. Could that be because

## NA chief off to US

REPUBLICA  
KATHMANDU, Oct 16

Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Chattraman Singh Gurung on Sunday left for the United States to participate in the 14th Annual Chiefs of Defense (CHOD) Conference on "Multilateral Approaches to Maritime Security (MARSEC) in Asia-Pacific" scheduled to be held at Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Issues such as assistance on **bilateral marital security** in the Asia Pacific region and management of natural disasters will be discussed during the four-day conference organized by the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), informed the Directorate of Public Relations, Nepal Army.

Army chiefs from 27 different countries are participating in conference. Commander of Asia Pacific Command, Admiral Robert Willard, will address the conference. Gurung will return home on October 26.

he couldn't bear to hear how BRB was butchering the mother tongue? But when his turn came to speak, Padam Dai himself got the year of Nepal Sumbut wrong. Someone tell the prime minister to quickly brush up on his Sherpa, Gurung, Tamang and Magar since their new years are around the corner and we don't want any more crying.



Despite tears shed, the prime minister's Delhi visit seemed to have gone well. Except he didn't get to meet Sonia because, we were told, she was still recuperating. But then the very next day Sonia was seen at a photo op on 10 Janpath with **Jigme the Fifth** who had brought along his new bride for a darshan, before whisking her off (wife, not Sonia) on a honeymoon in Rajasthan.



It was when BRB got back home that all hell broke loose. One expected Mohan "Comrade Pokhrel" Baidya to raise fears of "**Sikkimisation**". One expected Comrade Cloud to skewer Comrade Red Flag. It was even quite expected that Comrade Mahara

should hop off to China while Laldhoj was in Delhi. And it would surprise no one that PKD would be working behind the scenes to stab BRB in the back. But the most unexpected was Comrade Cloud suddenly having a go at Unserer Fuhrer and accusing him of being an uncooked operative. What gives? Cloud must see an opening to use the nationalism and the ethnic card to make a break for prime ministership himself. Interestingly, only the previous week Lotus Flower commiserated with cadre that he made a mistake sacking Gen Cutwal in 2008, and that he only did so because Cloudy (who was then defence minister) insisted.



First he promised us a deal in "45 days", then BRB said "after Dasain". With no progress, he said, "before the India visit". Then it was "after Tihar". Tihar is over, and now the prime minister is promising a deal "after Chhat". You can be sure he is now going to say "**after Lhosar**".





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