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**pA-C**

**Bring back peace**

The news of the return of the Peace Corps to Nepal has delighted many.

**p12-13**

## Up in smoke

It was tragic to see the one party in Nepal that we thought stood for democracy and non-violence stoop so low by calling an unnecessary and self-destructive banda last week (left). Unlike the Maoists, this was one party that did not have the use of political violence as one of its guiding principles, and could point to a long tradition of not compromising on its core democratic values.

**Editorial: Worst system, except for the others p2**

A banda terrorises the public with the threat of violence, and has become the time-tested way for anyone to blackmail the state, and it doesn't even have to be a political party anymore. Anyone can do it. Nepal has deeper structural problems eating away at the roots of democracy.

**BY THE WAY p3**  
by Anurag Acharya  
**Lumpen Gandhians**

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# WORST SYSTEM, EXCEPT FOR THE REST

Every time things are in disarray, there is a hankering for strongman rule. This happens not just in Nepal. Next door, in the world’s most populous democracy, members of the upper crust often get tired of India’s functioning anarchy, the lack of accountability of elected leaders, and blurt out that they could do with a Lee Kwan Yew or a Mahathir.

They forget that they tried authoritarian rule under Indira Gandhi’s emergency in 1975-1977, and it failed miserably. For India, an electoral pluralistic democracy with all its kinks is still the worst form of government except for all the others. The same is true for Nepal.

However messy things get during this transition phase we just have to remember that we had a century of Rana rule, three decades of a partyless absolute monarchy, and five years of a royal-military dictatorship. The democratic decade after 1990 wasn’t much better, but it was better.

Party-based local elections ensured accountability for the first time and had started to deliver development by the mid-1990s. Communities were empowered even with limited political devolution. At the centre feckless politicians were short-sighted and exhibited elastic morals, but they would have been forced to give way to younger, dynamic leaders more responsive to the electorate.

But, as we all know, that was not to happen because the Maoists started their war. To battle extreme left rebels, the Nepali state swung to the extreme right.

Both the ultra-left and ultra-right were by definition anti-democratic and needed violence to get to power and stay there. Democracy, with all its faults, is still a system that can cleanse itself over time because its elected representatives are supposed to be answerable to the people who voted them to power.

This is why it was so tragic to see the one party in Nepal that we thought stood for democracy and non-violence stoop so low by calling an unnecessary and self-destructive banda last week. Unlike the Maoists, this was one party that did not have the use of political violence as one of its guiding principles, and could point to a long tradition of not compromising on its core democratic values.

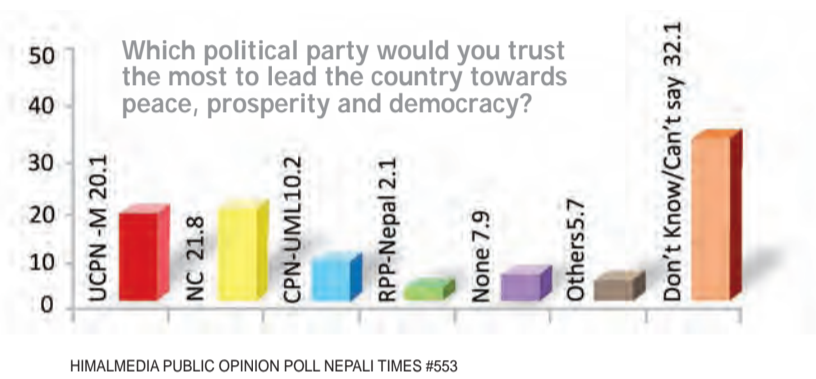
That one decision by the Central Committee cost the party very dearly: it squandered all the social capital it had amassed since 2006. A weak leadership bowed down to pressure from street gangsters on whom it depended for muscle and funding. Earlier, the UML also couldn’t get around to sacking the head of its youth wing, Mahesh

Basnet, earlier this year because he was such an important money bag. Both the UML and NC nurtured militant youth wings to counter the Maoist YCL. But both ended up becoming mirror images of the Maoists and proceeded to criminalize politics with money and violence.

The Himalmedia nationwide public opinion poll in May (Nepali Times #553) showed the NC to be the party people most trusted to lead this country forward. It pipped the Maoists and both were way ahead of the UML, but one-third of the 4,000 respondents were undecided. That cohort is up for grabs for whichever party can show that it is clean, efficient and can deliver. That group will not vote for the party that can burn more tyres on the streets, or vandalise more shops.

The leaders of the Nepali Congress just showed that the tail is wagging the dog in their party. The goons are calling the shots. The party will have to pay a price for this for a long time to come. But for the sake of democracy and development in this country, we hope the NC has learnt its lesson.

Democracy is a long and winding road, but it will get us there. Any kind of authoritarian system, whether it is headed by a Rajapaksa-style executive president or the military, will take us off the edge. Nepalis haven’t lost faith in democracy yet, and Nepal’s friends abroad shouldn’t either. If it is long-term stability they want, a democratic and inclusive constitution that throws up accountable leaders, is the only way to go.



## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### WHEN WEN

This is a well-argued editorial which merges Nepal’s geopolitical reality with the pressures from regional and global powers (‘When Wen’, Editorial, #583). Actually, Nepal has been balancing all the forces surprisingly well for a weak, unstable country bordering China. No doubt, it was the embarrassment of having a monk immolate himself live on CNN that was the main reason for the cancellation of the visit; the Chinese ambassador’s official statement was just a PR tactic.

Peter S

- The mouse-cat-dog image conveys the message of the editorial perfectly. In an ideal world, regardless of size and shape each country would have its rightful place and status, and sovereignty would matter the most. However, in the real world, Nepal is indeed a small mouse, wedged between India and China. Both the dog and cat have large geopolitical interests in the mouse. They will be watching the mouse’s activities very closely and will not hesitate to play political games. The mouse would do well if it cooperated with dog and cat, and not use the two against each other. Also, if the mouse could boost its economy and work towards being a more stable animal, its bargaining power with the bigger mammals would increase and it could be more in control over its domestic affairs.

Tashi Lama

### JUSTICE

This is excellent writing by Rubeena Mahato (‘Justice is Peace’, #583). However, if the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC) is not successful, we should take Nepali war criminals to the International Criminal Court. Dahal and his cronies need to be prosecuted according to international standards just like politicians involved in the post-election violence in Kenya and Ivory Coast.

Poudyal

- Nepal would do well if it learnt from the experiences of other countries which have undergone the process of post-war reconciliation. Post-conflict societies like Peru, East Timor and Morocco dealt with the aftermaths of war by creating independent Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and went through the harrowing process of revisiting past crimes. The commissions organised public hearings and allowed societies to know what happened, forgive and come to terms with the present. The documentary is a good watch and its producers have agreed to make the Nepali version freely available on the internet. Search for ‘Confronting the Truth – Nepali’ on youtube.

‘Usshaf’

- Bravo Rubeena. The last thing we want is violence to be institutionalised in our society. If the perpetrators are granted impunity, they will feel vindicated for their atrocities. There is no other option to justice. The Nepal Army is also guilty of human rights violations during the war and must be investigated and punished accordingly. But I think it is unfair to categorise the Maoists and Nepali security forces in the same bracket. The Maoists started the cycle of violence and counter-violence. They attacked policemen as they slept in their posts and dragged teachers and shot them in front of school children. Remember Ganesh Chilwal and Gyanendra Khadka?

Manohar Budhathoki

- When we have less than six months remaining to write the constitution, the Maoists, NC, UML and Madhesi parties finally struck a deal on the TRC. However, it is no secret that both the Maoists and the security forces do not want to honestly deal with war crimes. Under such circumstances, it is likely that the TRC will be used to cover injustices by cash or some ad-hoc political measures and both the security forces and Maoists will come out relatively unscathed. Therefore it is imperative for competent authorities like the judiciary, to be involved in the TRC.

Nirmal

### FOURTH FORCE

Across online forums it has become a trend to post xenophobic comments against fellow Nepalis whenever there is a discussion on Madhesi leaders or Madhesi politics (‘The Fourth Force’, Anurag Acharya, #583). Do we want to turn into a second Bhutan and expel Nepalis because they don’t dress a certain way or don’t speak the language and practice the traditions of the majority? Yes, the Madhesi Front is problematic, but so are the NC, UML and Maoists. It does not mean we label Madhesi ‘anti-national, pro-Indian’ and force them out of their own country. Isn’t it enough that we went through 10 years of hell and are still trying to recover from it? Do we really need to add ethnic-racial strife to our list of problems?

Renu Shrestha

- Madhesi leader Jaya Prakash Gupta resigned from the Constitutional Commission recently. But that is not enough, he must resign from the government and face graft charges against him just like any other ordinary

citizen of the country. However since he has influential connections both in Nepal and India, I doubt he will be ever punished.

Tapan Das

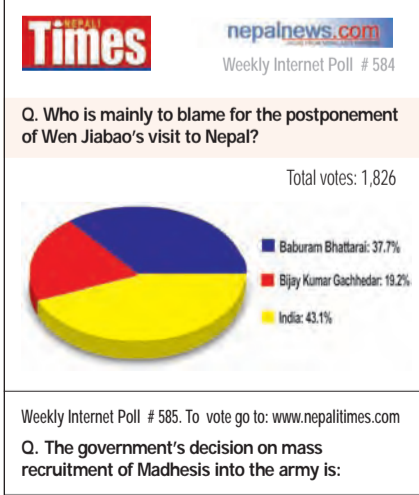
### MOUNTAIN

Thank you for a timely analysis of the trekking circuits across Mount Manaslu. It is indeed a soul mountain (‘Soul mountain’, Rabi Thapa, #583). Next time, I would like to read an article about the impact of climate change on landscapes and local communities across the Manaslu area. As a journalist and a trekker, what did you find were the immediate challenges the locals faced as a result of changing climatic conditions and increase in touristic activities in the area?

K Hill

- Sadly, on the day this article was published, the tea-house before the pass was shut down permanently, because it was built on ‘unauthorised government land’ in a wildlife habitat.

Koji



# Lumpen Gandhians

When defenders of democracy are responsible for the rot, we are doomed



ANURAG ACHARYA



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

Over 200 people stranded at Biratnagar airport last Saturday due to poor visibility were in for more bad news. Criminalised politics had led to another violent death in a Bharatpur jail, and an enraged youth wing pressurised the parent party to call for a nationwide strike. Only this time it was supposedly the 'most democratic' party, the Nepali Congress.

An 85-year-old woman next to me wanted to call her son, who had returned to Dharan after dropping her at the airport. The elderly, the sick, Indian tourists, doctors, we were all stranded, frantically calling to find out what was happening. Some were even hoping the flights would be cancelled because they didn't want to reach Kathmandu after dark with no transportation.

Luckily, the strike was called off just as the fog lifted. But that was only the warm-up. Two days later, the NC called for a 'real' strike and the country ground to a halt again. Congress leaders told the media it was their 'democratic right' to protest, and that they would do so in a 'Gandhian' way without resorting to violence. But a terrorised population wasn't daring to venture out or open shops after taxis were torched, ambulances vandalised and even bicyclists harassed. Government offices in several

districts were ransacked, examination centers were mobbed, pharmacies stoned and Bharatpur airport attacked.

It was a 'successful' banda because by Monday evening, the government took back all the cases against the NC activists in jail and promised to declare Shiva Poudel a 'martyr'. Paudel and his supporters were serving time in a Bharatpur jail for the alleged murder of a UML youth leader Sanjay Lama. Whether Paudel was innocent or a criminal, we will never know and it does not matter anymore.

It has now become impossible to distinguish between a criminal and a politician. In July in Biratnagar, the UML's Mahesh Basnet issued an open threat to a police officer and a newspaper editor for daring to accuse one of his supporters of trying to kill a reporter. Protected by the UML, Basnet challenged the entire state machinery to arrest the attacker from his house. Nobody dared.

This has now become a country where the home minister admits he hires goons to run his affairs, and says, "Oh, I am only doing what everyone else does." Parties mobilise their militant youth brigades to extort money from businesses and hijack government tenders. Media houses are vandalised, journalists manhandled, sometimes killed for speaking up.

We ran into long-staying American, Barbara Adams, on Monday walking past burning tyres on Putali Sadak. With her long white

tresses, she stood out in the crowd of pedestrians. She just shook her head, "Kasto thiyo kasto bhayo yo desh."

A banda terrorises the

public with the threat of violence, and has become the time-tested way for anyone to blackmail the state, and it doesn't even have to be

a political party anymore. Anyone can do it. The protracted transition and stagnant economy means young people have no jobs, and a sizable population of youth is left outside the national mainstream. Disillusioned and hopeless, they vent their anger on the streets, and all political parties are trying to channel this energy to their advantage. It doesn't matter anymore whose flags they carry.

Outside the CA building in New baneswor, a 10-year-old was burning tyres and stoning cars. "Somebody gave me this flag and told me not to allow anybody to pass, so that is what I am doing," he told me proudly. An NC flag waver further down the street was telling a tv reporter: "This is the first time we have called a banda in three years, we will show other parties how bandas should be done."

Nepal has deeper structural problems eating away at the roots of democracy, and those who have bestowed upon themselves the task of defending it are the ones responsible for the rot. 🇳🇵

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# Stability for growth

The new Japanese ambassador to Nepal, Kunio Takahashi, spoke to Nepali Times this week on the importance of political stability for sustainable economic growth and job-creation. Excerpts:

**Nepali Times:** You have been posted to Nepal at a critical time in the country's history with the conclusion of the peace and constitution process. What is your government's assessment of the progress?  
**Kunio Takahashi:** Shortly after I arrived in Kathmandu, the historic seven-point agreement was signed on 1 November by the leaders of the major political parties. Since then, positive and constructive development has been observed with regard to the implementation of the agreement, such as the establishment of the State Reconstructing Commission, earnest initiatives to form a national consensus government, and, above all, the substantive move towards settling the future of Maoists combatants, which has been one of the major stumbling blocks towards peace and democracy. Japan welcomes this progress while expecting that the remaining outstanding issues will also be addressed through the spirit of continued understanding and cooperation among the political leaders. Japan is ever ready to support Nepal's efforts to this end.

Japan's policies towards Nepal appear to be guided less by geopolitics, but would it be right to say that Japan supports the protection of fundamental values like

democracy, pluralism and free press in Nepal?  
Japan's economic cooperation is based purely on our wish to improve Nepal's citizens' living standards and welfare. As you pointed out, Japan espouses democratization through, for example, running several projects to support Nepal accomplish the peace process through its own efforts. These projects include dispatching experts and JICA volunteers, conducting seminars and training, as well as providing technical assistance to empower and strengthen the capabilities of monitoring and evaluation at central and local government levels. Japan also focuses on strengthening the mediation capacity at community level, as well as strengthening the media and the legal sector's support to promote peace building and democratisation.

What would your advice be to Nepali officials about economics and development?  
The development of the private sector is essential for sustainable economic growth. Nepal has been receiving very large amounts of remittance, but this is being used to buy cars, bikes, electrical goods etc, and is not being saved.



Therefore, the huge amounts of remittance isn't utilised fully as investment in the industrial sector. This is the fundamental problem of the Nepali economic sector. Building a mechanism to lead remittance to the industrial sector is necessary for promoting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).  
However, the current situation in Nepal has several problems with regards to introducing FDI: a) lack of infrastructure b) complicated procedures c) labor disputes and d) lack of awareness among investors. Many Japanese businesses don't recognise Nepal as a potential place for business but simply as a nice place to visit for sightseeing so far.  
From the point of view of foreign companies including, Japanese companies, India and Bangladesh are also candidates for investment in South Asia. Therefore, the Nepal government should recognise that Nepal must be competitive among these countries in order to get FDI. I welcome the great efforts of the Nepal government to introduce Investment Year 2012-13 and expect the establishment of a investment friendly environment next year.  
In addition, when we discuss in Japan a new development project in Nepal, the political stability of this country is the main issue. I hope that the Nepal government will resolve its political issues in the near future, as this will definitely help promote more Japanese ODA and private investment in the future.

Japan's cooperation with Nepal has traditionally been on physical infrastructure, is there an effort to reorient this to more direct poverty-alleviation efforts?  
The Government of Japan has supported

Nepal for the last four decades, prioritising poverty reduction, sustainable growth and peace-building. It is true that we think physical infrastructure is very important. Without roads, people cannot access schools, hospitals and markets. Without water supply, people cannot live their everyday lives safely. Without electricity, children find it hard to study at night, small businesses find it hard to operate, and people lack access to unbiased information. We believe that basic infrastructure contributes a lot to poverty alleviation. Besides, large infrastructure projects create huge local employment. For example, about 1,500 local people are employed in the Sindhuli Road Project at present.  
Additionally, Japan is very active in the area of technical cooperation. We think human capacity development is also important for poverty reduction. As of the 2010, Japan has dispatched 1,891 experts and 1,171 volunteers to Nepal. They have worked with Nepali counterparts and local people. And we have received 4,848 Nepali trainees in Japan. As a close friend, Japan will continue this kind of support as a sustainable way of poverty reduction.

Is the tragic earthquake tsunami disaster in Japan going to lead to cutbacks on Japanese overseas development assistance (ODA) to Nepal?  
It is true there was some delay in the ODA procedure just after the disaster. At present, however, the disaster is not having any influence on ODA. Even in the rough period, we didn't reduce the ODA in Nepal. Japan, at this time received a lot of heartfelt support from many countries all over the world, including Nepal. Through this tragic disaster, the Japanese people came to realize how valuable help is when we are in trouble. We would, therefore, like to continue our support to Nepal.

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For a longer version of this interview:



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# Social media as political player

Nepali politicians ignore Facebook at their own peril



The Nepali Congress does not understand the power of social media. This was obvious from the way its US-trained economist-politicians criticised the US Ambassador’s Facebook status updates against Monday’s Nepal banda.

Far from being political, the ambassador’s much-commented-upon post talked about externalities: the economic and social costs forced upon on millions of people when a few politicians encourage their militant youth cadres to go all out to enforce a shutdown. For a political party professing faith in democracy, did it suit NC’s image to push its narrow party-political agenda down everyone’s throat?

The politicians’ criticism also touched upon the envoy’s use of Facebook to share his thoughts directly with thousands of his ‘friends’. How dare, one could hear the NC politicians asking themselves, the envoy use Facebook to reach out to the people directly and thereby cast us in a negative light? But this is where the historic and pre-historic NC leaders need to wake up, rub their eyes and learn how the media world has changed to upend their sense of politics as usual.



To be sure, the NC leaders are comfortable in the world of traditional media. According to Douglas Arellanes, a media maven in Prague, that media is centralised: it has headquarters, physical offices, editors, administrators and so on. That media is also scheduled, in the sense that it adheres to fixed timetables to bring out its dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies and so forth. Sustaining that media requires a lot of money: the payroll is big, and there are rent, utilities and suppliers to pay. That media also operates on a hierarchy-based tight control: publishers decide what priorities to fund, editors decide what to put out, and how, and those selling ads report their sales results to managers. It is with this media a politician could cultivate relationship to get his press releases out to everyone.

But thanks to the Internet, that media is dying slowly. Many traditional media companies now face a hard time to keep raising revenues from advertisers and subscribers who now enjoy a wider range of choices required to meet their ever escalating costs.

As a result, its place is increasingly taken up by social media. Operating as a social media player requires no office and no schedule, hardly any expense, certainly no hierarchy and there’s no one to report to. Instead, it’s easier for a person to set up a presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, or FourSquare and be her own publisher, editor, presenter and writer on anything that catches her fancy. If they are good as in the case of make-up guru Promise Tamang, people will follow her the way they used to follow traditional media outlets, and her influence will rise exponentially. If not, then, there will always be another social media influencer.

Social media is about creating and then deepening authentic relationship with one’s friends and followers by using real-time information without the restrictions faced by the traditional media. If mistakes are made, no problem: just revise or correct them, something that can’t easily be done on a traditional media platform.

According to socialbakers.com, as of December 2011, there are about 1.3 million Facebook users from Nepal. Given Nepal’s youth population, it’s worth thinking that most of these users are young, educated, internet-savvy Nepalis who aspire for a better, more democratic Nepal. Social media allows them to take part in conversations, discussions and debates about issues that potentially shape the future that they want for themselves in Nepal. It will be the misfortune of Nepali political parties if they disregard social media.

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### Excellence series

Dabur Nepal is launching an interdisciplinary discursive program called Dabur Excellence Series (DES) to promote the culture of intellectual discussion in Nepal and provide a platform for sharing ideas and knowledge from multiple cultural locations. The first talk of the series will take place in collaboration with Institute of Advanced Communication, Education, and Research (IACER), Pokhara University and Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

### Smart purchase

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# Musical peace education

Popular Nepali folk rock band, Nepathya, is hitting the road for its fourth concert tour of the country this time with a message of education.

During the war, Nepathya toured the country singing for peace and reconciliation, but the 'Shantiko Lagi Sikchya' (Education for Peace) tour is designed to raise awareness about education as a foundation for long-term peace in the country.

The band will begin on 3 January from Hetauda, travel through 10 districts and

conclude in Gorkha on 21 January (see box).

Nepathya's first tour 10 years ago was at the height of Maoist insurgency. The band wanted to send a strong message to the security forces and the rebels to save schools from violence at a time when classrooms were used as barracks, playgrounds as helipads and football fields for military drills. Nepathya continued touring the country to raise awareness through music

## Nepathya is on the road once again with its message of peace

about the need to keep politics out of schools, and to promote schools as Zones of Peace.

Nepathya's last tour in 2006 followed the signing of the peace accord. In the subsequent years, Nepal has been relatively peaceful, but bandas and protests remain a daily part of Nepali life

and political interference in educational institutions is on the rise.

"It has been five years

since we last toured the country and we look forward to sharing the message of happiness and sorrow with our audience once again," says lead singer, Amrit Gurung, "the boys are very excited to be back on the road." Gurung is going to sing his wildly popular 'Resham', 'Bheda ko Oon Jasto' as

well as songs from his latest albums Mero Desh and Aina Jhyal.

Like earlier years, Nepathya is collaborating with nepa~laya and local organisations to put up its show. Tickets range from Rs 1000, Rs 500 and Rs 300 and all proceeds will be donated to local schools in each respective area and used to build recreational and educational facilities. 🇳🇵

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

Watch Amrit Gurung in concert 🎤

## News from Ujyaalo

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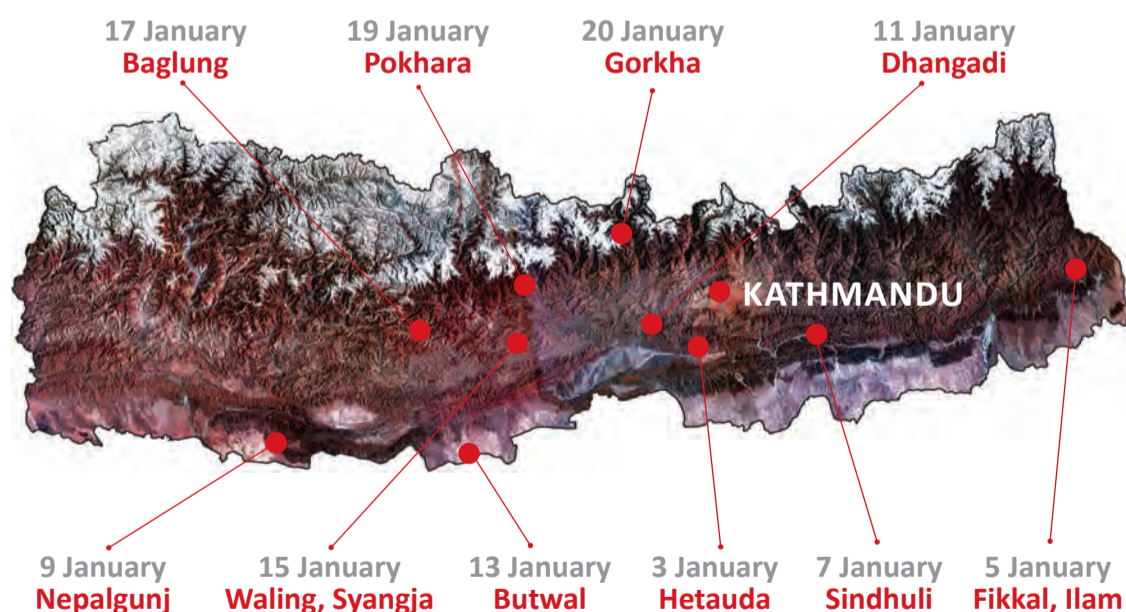


## Amrit Gurung

Amrit Gurung is the only remaining original member of the Nepathya band, and is its lead vocalist and lyricist. He is known for blending folk melodies into new pop and rock tunes. Amrit Gurung's songs carry on the tradition of Nepali folk music to sing about the problems of everyday life in order to lessen the burden.

Nepathya's songs have been about the war, of bereavement, of separation, of longing and love. With his John Lennon spectacles, Gurung is a modern minstrel who travels around Nepal singing about reality. Gurung is an avid photographer and has traversed 70 of Nepal's 75 districts, most of them on foot. It is in these lonely travels through remote trails that he composes his songs. Says Gurung: "Being in Nepathya is like being part of a journey. We still have a long way to go."

## NEPATHYA EDUCATION FOR PEACE COPNCERT TOUR



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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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**Christmas Dance Party**, usher in the festive season with dance, music and more. *Rs 500, 25 December, 1pm onwards, Cube, Kamaladi, 4438017*

**Voodoo New Year's Eve**, party your way into the new year with rocking Djs and stunning beauty queens. *31 December, 7pm to 1am, Hotel Annapurna, Durbar Marg*



**Christmas Eve Special**, wine and dine as you await Santa's arrival. *24 December, 4.30 pm onwards, Vintage Pub and Bar, Durbar Marg, 4254831*

**Snow Fall Party**, OMG Events goes all out for their last party of 2011 with sparkling snow, decorated Christmas trees and Djs to heat up the dance floor. *24 December, 5.30pm onwards, Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg, 4247300*

**New Expressions on the Block**, an exhibition of paintings by eleven

artists. *21 December to 17 January, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4218048, 4438979, www.siddharthaartgallery.com*



**ILoveEnt Christmas Eve Party**, dance away as Djs put you in the holiday mood *24 December, 6pm onwards, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Durbar Marg, 4248999*

**Old Images of Valley**, Anil Maharjan displays paintings depicting the rich culture and traditions of the Newar community. *23 to 30 December, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 9841775055, 5522307*

**Hamro Shorts**, enjoy the screening of short independent movies in this chilly December weather. *Until 29 December, Food Court, Times Square mall, Durbar Marg*



**New Wangden Carpets and Furniture Exhibition**, check out the Wangden Carpet Collection by Rupert Smith or browse through Nepali and Tibetan carpets and furniture. *17 December to 30 January, 2pm onwards, Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 4413580*

**KJC Winter Camp 2012**, ten days winter camp for children between the ages of 6 and 13 organised by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. *2 January to 13 January, 5013554*

**Art Workshop**, learn how to paint and draw under the guidance of Neera Joshi Pradhan. *18, 20 and 24 December, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, www.studiopetals.com*



**Etegame Workshop**, learn to make cards and artwork on tsubjects such as winter, flowers and the environment. *Rs 800 (includes all the materials), 26 December, 10am to 1pm, Cosmopolitan Training Centre, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel, 016217752*



**Tavern Tales**, best selling author Samrat Upadhyay in conversation with Kumudini Shrestha. *23 December, 3.30 pm, Ramalaya, Pani Pokhari*

MUSIC

**Mukti and Revival**, enjoy live music from Mukti and Revival and tasty snack from the street side food court. *23 December, 7pm onwards, Times Square Mall, Durbar Marg, 9802056034*

**Different Strokes**, modern beats and authentic melody come together as Dj Vive and Sarangi maestro Shyam Nepali perform. *24 December, 7pm onwards, The Tantra, Pakanajol, 9841114852*

DINING

**New Dish**, you will be in for a treat here as it serves one of the best pork momo in town. *Khichapokhari*

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

**Cafe Mitra and Lounge Bar**, eat to your heart's content and enjoy 15 per cent discount on all food and beverage items. *24 December to 31 December, Thamel Marg, 4256336, 9851023934, www.cafemitra.com*



**Delices de France Festive Offer**, Celebrate this holiday season with festive delights like roasted potatoes, chocolate truffles and smoked salmon. *Rs 2400 for a three course meal excluding taxes, 15 December to 1 January, Thamel, 4260326, info@restaurantnepal.com*



**The Factory**, a trendy restobar perfect 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*



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

# Animated Competition

Nepal's first 3D animation film competition, One Film 3D Animation Challenge is set to launch the careers of Nepali animators. Organised by Maya Animation the competition will run from December 22 onwards providing Nepali animators with a platform to showcase their work to a larger audience. The event also aims to help aspiring talents broaden their skills while bringing together animation film enthusiasts across the country.

The completion will feature 26 films, out of which eight will be selected for the final round of competition. The winning movie will receive cash award of Rs 5,00,000 and all eight short films will be showcased at various international film festivals.

The quantity and quality of Nepali animation products has improved tremendously over the years, while there has been a marked increase in the number of animation studios and institutions.



## Snippets of the eight films:

- Knowledge:** Directed by Ankit KC, the eight minute long film showcases the importance of education and depicts the life of a boy who is compelled to leave school and start working at a young age.
- Sheru:** The film is directed by Deepak Limbu and shows the friendship between a dog and a boy.
- Sweet Sixteen:** The story documents Nepal's notorious power shortage crisis and the problems Nepalis face during load shedding season, directed by Ujjwalnanda Bajracharya.
- The Tall Tale:** Directed by Bidyasagar Prajapati, the film brings to life the adage tit for tat through the story of a rabbit and a tortoise.
- Bad day:** A film of a modern day love triangle, directed by Subagyaratna Tuladhar.
- No light:** Directed by Sandesh Pradhan , the film depicts the problem of frequent change in load shedding schedules and its effect on the daily lives of Nepalis.
- Asha:** Directed by Pravakar Chettri, it tells the story of the courage of the main character Asha.
- Apothesis:** The film depicts the last few moments of a warrior after being hit by an arrow, directed by Pujesh Joshi.



**Bench Burger**, be it fish or steak burgers, Bench Burger offer many types and tastes yo satisfy your palate. *Krishnagalli, Patan*

**Jazz Upstairs**, the perfect place to relax with friends, listen to good music and have a plate of the best momos in town. *Lazimpat*

**Fire and Ice**, home to some of the most delicious pizza in town. *Thamel, 4250210*



**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. *Pulchowk, opposite Namaste Supermarket*



**Chopstix**, savory Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken; it is one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118*

**BBQ Station**, a place for those of you who simply can't do without meat. BBQ Station offers a chance to make your own Barbeque on coal. *Jhamsikhel*

**Milk Coffee and Cocktail Café**, 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*



**Aalishan**, serves authentic Indian delicacies. Try the special chicken biryani and chicken reshami kabab. *Jawalakhel, 5550039*

GETAWAYS

**New Year 2012**, usher in the next year at Borderlands with music, games and meals. *Borderlands Eco Resort*, for reservations and more information contact 9841849786, 9801026222, [bjshres@gmail.com](mailto:bjshres@gmail.com)

**Celebrate the Holidays at Grand Norling Hotel**, Gokarna, one night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000. *Call 447948*

**The Last Resort**, be a part of the Bungy or Swing Jump Event over the Bhote Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain bike to the Tibetan border. *Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until December, the Last Resort Sales Office, Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700525*

SOMEPLACE ELSE

Dining on a terrace in Thamel is as clichéd as the district’s nightly cover bands, and views are usually limited to water tanks and electric cables. The Heritage Kitchen and Bar, despite a less than extraordinary view of Narsingh Chowk and surrounding trekking offices, offers an inviting interior and an escape from the hodgepodge of the tourist hub. On a rooftop built around a dya chen or a family temple, The Heritage alludes to Newari culture with its black and red tablecloths and emphasis on the building’s traditional architecture. But a flip through its menu recalls someone else’s heritage certainly not Newari, let alone Nepali. Vegetarian or non-vegetarian thali and momos at the bottom right corner defer to top-page offerings like beef goulash and chicken roulade—Hungarian and




# The Heritage

French respectively. Here’s what enticed our hungry bellies: the mushroom stuffed artichoke; paella, the quintessential Spanish rice dish and the panna cotta. The ‘Heritage crispy chicken and chips’, which sounds like a house specialty, isn’t worth a rant or rave. For starters quartered artichoke hearts crowned

with minced mushroom, chili, garlic and green onion made for a savory delicacy. For the main sish we ordered paella, which is like a biryani, but saffron-infused with full pieces of meat and/or seafood (bones, shells and all) and is served in a wide shallow pan inviting forks and fingers from every angle. Heritage prepares chicken,

seafood or vegetable paella, while the more typical mixed version is absent from the menu. As listed, the seafood paella features Arborio rice (a short Italian grain used best for risotto, also available on the menu), mussel, calamari, shrimp, bhukti fish and octopus (we couldn’t find a slither or tentacle of octopus, unless The Heritage



doesn’t distinguish between mollusks). All in all, the rice was slightly al dente, as it should be, and the seafood cooked evenly. A spoonful of paprika and a pitcher of sangria would be the perfect companions for the dish. For dessert the panna cotta, a conspicuous blob of cream and gelatin drizzled with a raspberry sauce, provided a deceivingly smooth and sapid end. Prices and service at The Heritage are standard for high-end dining in Thamel, and the overall experience was equally fair.  *Marco Polo*

*Stand in Narsingh Chowk in Thamel, face southward and look up to the left*

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

# New hope for typhoid



DHANVANTARI  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Recently the medical journal Nature published the genomic sequence (decoding) of the organism which caused the plague (“Black Death”) that killed half the population of Europe in the middle ages. The bacteria was reconstructed from remains of medieval plague victims. Genome sequencing of many organisms has happened rapidly, but has this basic science enhancement of our knowledge helped us in a practical sense for countries like Nepal?

Ten years ago genomic sequencing of the typhoid bacteria (pictured) was carried out. Many scientists at that time wrote ecstatically about how this sequencing would lead to revolutionary changes in typhoid fever treatment. Sadly ten years hence there has been no obvious progress in taking care of typhoid patients. The academic thrill of discovery did not translate to more effective patient outcome.

Because typhoid can affect anyone in Nepal (from highly-placed officials to high-altitude climbers to school children), we all continue to suffer from the lack of prompt, proper diagnosis and treatment for this ubiquitous disease despite a huge gain in theoretical knowledge. What happened?

After scientists sequenced the typhoid bacteria they moved on to other uncharted areas of

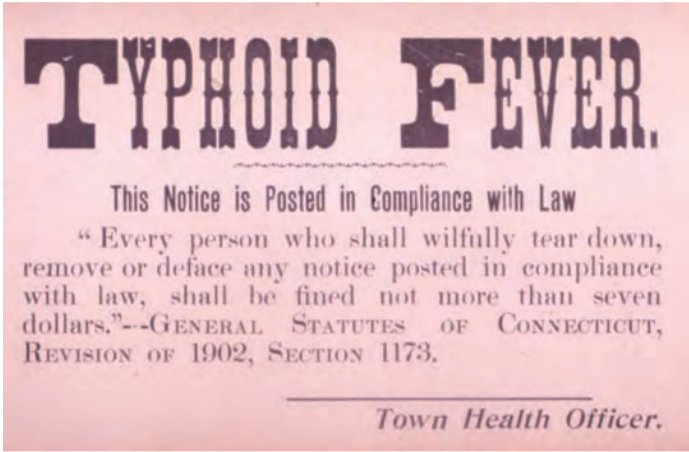
gains in prevention and treatment. This bias towards diseases like HIV is obvious in the funding pattern of the US National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

So it was indeed good news when a new organisation called the Coalition against Typhoid (CaT) pledged to help deal with this neglected disease. At the core of CaT’s mission is a

responsibility to provide a voice for the communities impacted by typhoid fever, to better define and increase awareness of the burden of typhoid at the global, regional and national levels, and to foster use of existing vaccines. CaT does not have a substantial operating budget but relies upon the


collective, cooperative activities of its members to support its work plan.

If we had clean drinking water and improved sanitation typhoid would disappear, but that needs political will. In the meantime we need to increase awareness and have more effective diagnosis and treatment even to inhibit transmission of typhoid.




sequencing. And because diseases like typhoid have no spokesperson or lobby groups and are considered “biblical” diseases confined to the developing world, there is clearly no incentive to take advantage of the sequencing to make cost-effective, accurate diagnostic tools to help with patient care.




Compare typhoid with HIV, which continues to make important



**WEEKEND WEATHER**  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The cold wave is expected to continue, with thick fog blanketing the Himalayan Valleys as well as the Tarai for the third straight week. The fog cover is caused by an inversion layer to which water vapour from winter irrigation and soot particles from cars and industries in India are a contributing factor. Kathmandu Valley pollution levels with dust and diesel particulates is getting worse with inversion, too, but luckily the smog is blown away by mid-afternoon. More of the same for the weekend and into early next week, with frost on the outskirts.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
19-04	19-03	18-01



GOPAL GARTOULA

**“NON VIOLENT” BANDA:** Despite Nepali Congress leaders’ pledge to make the nationwide shutdown on Monday “exemplary, non-violent and democratic”, eight ambulances were attacked in Jhapa while carrying patients to hospitals for emergency treatment.



ANURAG ACHARYA

**TOXIC CITY:** Despite pledging not to burn tyres because the smoke is a health hazard, Nepali Congress activists set off tyre pyres all over the country.



THOMAS L KELLY

**ARRIVAL COFFEE:** Himalayan Java’s fancy new coffee shop at the airport arrival lounge in Kathmandu is getting its finishing touches.



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# The herbal way of life

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



BHRIKUTI RAI

When Carroll Dunham visited Humla 25 years ago as an anthropologist, she was fascinated by the healing techniques that local women practiced.

She was inspired to establish Wild Earth Nepal in 1999 with the aim of helping communities in the Himalayan region generate sustainable income.

Today Wild Earth Nepal produces a wide range of handcrafted herbal goods such as soaps, massage oils, pillows, smudge sticks, and aromatic amulets. The products are sold to customers in over 30 countries including Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, Trump Hotels and The Body Shop.

Nepal is known for traditional Ayurvedic medicines, after all, this was where Hanuman came to look for a potion that would cure the wounded in Ram's army when he invaded Lanka. But Nepal also has good brand value in the west for its Himalayan products.

Wild Earth organisation also makes use of traditional therapies and offers unique spa treatments to its customers.

"We don't need to borrow foreign massage techniques as Nepal is very rich in ancient touch therapies," says Dunham.



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

## Wild Earth uses ancient Himalayan knowledge to create international standard herbal products made in Nepal



Until recently most of Wild Earth's clients were foreigners, however urban Nepalis are slowly warming up to the products.

Wild Earth stays true to its mission by working with remote

and economically fragile mountain communities while purchasing herbs directly from the source, by passing middlemen, so farmers receive maximum income for their raw materials. In addition to

helping villagers earn sustainable incomes, Wild Earth teaches them better and safer processing techniques. The company also has a strict policy against using rare, endangered or improperly harvested plant products.

Wild Earth considers preserving local knowledge as its secondary mission, as many healing practices and medicines have been passed down for generations through folksongs and folklores. "We have interactions with *amchis* (traditional healers) where we discuss methods to standardise traditional practices and share skills based knowledge. We also

want to create recipe books for herbal medicines so that the knowledge is not lost," says Dunham.

In its effort to be socially responsible, Wild Earth regularly provides massages at the Bal Mandir and the old age home in Pashupati and has been donating to charitable causes.

Dunham is content with the work her organisation has accomplished so far and attributes its success to the commitment of the people involved.

She is hopeful that the future will bring new opportunities and says, "Wild Earth Nepal has only been a mediator in introducing Nepal's rich indigenous healing techniques and herbs to rest of the world. But the country's abundant natural resources are yet to be fully explored." 🇳🇵

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Feel the difference

# Barry aka Bir Bahadur

Barry Bialek still considers himself a Nepali at heart

ROSHAN SAWA in ILAM

The 61-year-old surgeon from Colorado, has visited Nepal more than 30 times. He is fluent in Nepali, familiar with Nepal’s social, cultural and political affairs, wears the traditional Nepali ‘dhaka topi’ regularly and prefers to be called Bir Bahadur Subba.

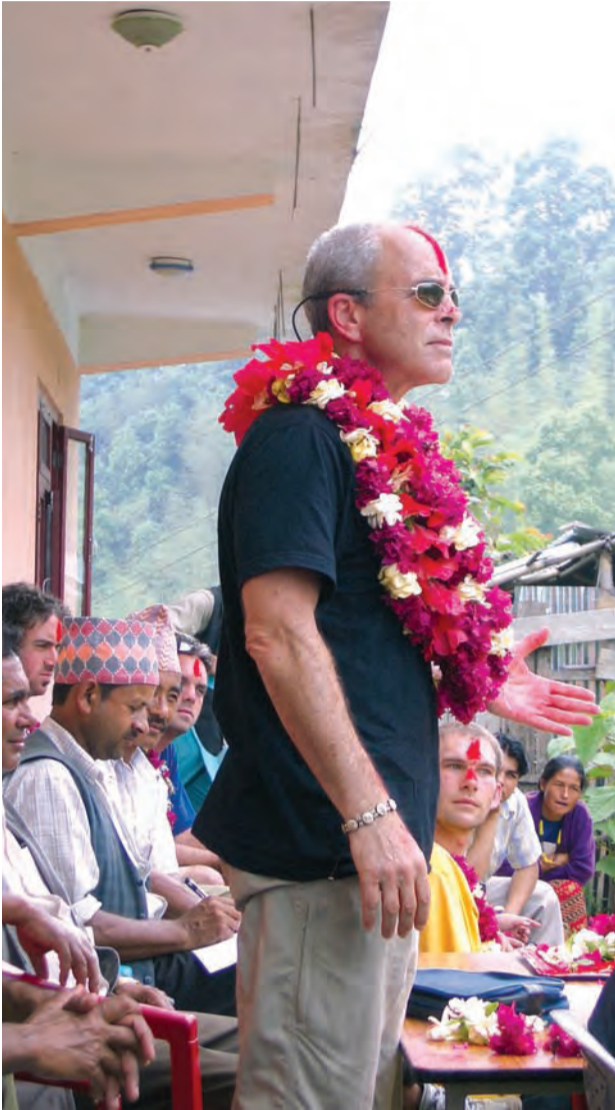
After completing his BA 40 years ago, he had two alternatives: work in the mountain states of the US or volunteer in a developing country half way across the world. After serious deliberation he chose the latter, joining the Peace Corps where he was assigned to teach science at a school here in Namsaling of Ilam district.

Bialek recalls the initial difficulties he had while learning Nepali, his frustration at not being able to speak the language for the first six months and the inaccuracies he found in translated texts used in science modules such as: the ‘Sun revolves around the Earth’.

When Bialek realised his students had no textbooks, he taught science classes using examples from daily life and put together a science laboratory in the school.

Fellow teacher Homnath Adhikari recalls Bialek was well-liked by Namsaling residents. Adhikari himself was inspired when Bialek once asked his class to write an essay on where they wanted Ilam and Nepal to be in 100 years.

“That essay completely opened my



**I SHALL RETURN:** Barry Bialek is greeted by his old friends on return to Ilam (left) where he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1963 (above).

mind,” says Adhikari, who went to set up the Namsaling Community Development Center (NCDC).

Bialek went home after two years to become a teacher in America. He frequently met classmates from George Washington University to discuss ways to implement long-term development projects. Eventually, Bialek decided to dedicate his life to sustainable development in Nepal and returned in 1983 to help launch NCDC with Adhikari. Bialek is now involved with the organisation, Engineers Without Borders which helps projects in developing countries.

NCDC works with VDCs throughout Ilam and across Nepal in environment, agriculture, hydroelectricity, and biodiversity projects. Bialek has set up the Nepal Community Development Foundation in North America to raise money for his work in Nepal. During this recent visit to Nepal Bialek was advising Ilam Municipality on how to turn itself into a ‘green town’.

[www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit](http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit)

'Look east', Kunda Dixit's travel blog, East West

In September 1962, Nepal welcomed the inaugural batch 68 Peace Corps volunteers (pictured, right), becoming one of the first countries in the world to host a program pioneered by president John F Kennedy.

The next 40 years saw at least 4,000 American graduates and professionals serve in Nepal. It was a different, roadless, tvless, phoneless and internetless Nepal in those days, yet the volunteers taught in schools and colleges, trained teachers, assisted at health posts and helped out with agricultural programs. In return they gained valuable experiences living and working in a developing county and forged lifelong friendships. Many volunteers continued working in Nepal as diplomats or in the development and education sector.

The Peace Corps was



**BATCH OF 70:** Peace Corps volunteers from mid 1970s gather for a group photo. Barry Bialek is seated in second row, first from the right

an exploratory American mission visited Kathmandu earlier this year. Sandra Wagner, who once headed the Peace Corps Asian department, has been appointed director of Peace Corps Nepal. the budget for the revived Peace Corps comes from the USAID’s health outlay, sources say. Wagner is expected in Kathmandu in January to prepare the logistics for opening the new office.

The news of resumption of the Peace Corps program has delighted alumnae and friends of Nepal around the world.

Barry Bialek, a volunteer stationed in Ilam in the early 1970s says: “My Peace Corps experience in Nepal opened my heart and mind in ways I had never imagined. I’m very glad the Peace Corps are coming back to Nepal, both for the new volunteers and for Nepal.” (See profile, above.)

## Corps values

closed down in September 2004 after the Maoists set off a minor explosion at the American Information Centre in Gyaneswor. Initially the withdrawal was

meant to last six months, but as the security condition worsened, the Peace Corps suspended its Nepal program indefinitely.

The move to return the

Peace Corps was initiated by Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari during his visit to Washington last year. He made a written request to the US government, and



**GOLDEN OLDIES:** Singha Bahadur Basnyat (left) with Peace Corps volunteers Chris Cluett, Jesse Brandt, Stu During, Stu Ullman and tony Drexler singing old Nepali songs at their 50th year reunion in Washington recently.

Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun with Ambassador Shankar Sharma (above) at the embassy in Washington recently.

# ‘Nepali le maya maryo’

SINGHA BAHADUR BASNYAT

As a young liaison officer at the Peace Corps directorate in Kathmandu, I was assigned to the second group of 39 volunteers in 1963.

The last reunion was in 2008 when we met for the 45th anniversary in Washington state which ended with the volunteers singing Nepali folk songs from 50 years ago. It was this experience that led me to the idea that the 50th anniversary should be marked by a musical get together.

I travelled to the United States in September for the 50th Peace Corps

Reunion, accompanied by guitarists Anil Shahi and Gaurav Basnyat. Since the last reunion, 10 volunteers had passed away. Yet, it was a nostalgic get together in which the most surprising was that volunteers remembered the lyrics and melodies of golden oldies like ‘Ke Bho Ke Bo Hijo Aja’, ‘Balaju ko Baise Dhara’, ‘Jhilke Le Bhagai Lagyo Kanchhi Lai’.

At a reception hosted by Nepal’s ambassador to the US, Shankar Sharma, 100 former volunteers gathered at the embassy in the presence of Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun who joined the group to sing Dharma Raj Thapa’s 1960s hit: ‘Nepali Lai Maya Maryo Bari Lai’. One volunteer even sang a solo of ‘Tada

*Bata Bola Ko Timilai Nai Ho Maile’.*

As a Nepali diplomat who pushed ‘cultural diplomacy’ during my assignments in the US and UK I felt I was just continuing on with my work, making musical connections with a Nepal of 50 years ago. What was surprising to me was how the volunteers still remembered the songs, and how the music and lyrics seemed to link them to rural Nepal so many years later.

The American Peace Corps Nepal Reunion Newsletter wrote, “The group sing along of Nepali folk songs was accompanied by a motley crew of volunteers. They actually remembered the words. No comment about their singing.”

Taking his cue from Terence Bech whose collection of Nepali folk songs was donated to Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Kathmandu (see Nepali Times, #582), a former volunteer Stu Ullman has sent back his collection of the lyrics to 40 songs he used to listen to on Radio Nepal in 1963.

The happiest news for many of us at the reunion was that the Peace Corps is returning to Nepal in 2012. The Peace Corps helped with education and development in rural Nepal 50 years ago, but it is also worth remembering that it continues to serve as a cultural bridge between Nepal and the United States. 🇳🇵

Singha Bahadur Basnyat was Nepal’s ambassador to UK in 1997-2003 and served five years in Washington.



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# Anxious times

Navin Jha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*,  
20 December

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

NEW DELHI--The last minute postponement of Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Nepal has left New Delhi perplexed. Wen's scheduled visit prompted Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to make a trip to Nepal ahead of the Chinese premier. Mukherjee hastily signed the Double Tax Avoidance Agreement with Nepal, which was put on the back burner during PM Bhattarai's India visit. Since the declaration of the Chinese premier's visit, several high profile Indian officials and experts have visited Nepal to gauge the influence that the Chinese visit could have. This shows how much Delhi is alarmed about Beijing's growing presence in Nepal. Indian analysts say it is a failure of Delhi's diplomacy in Nepal. Former Indian ambassador to Nepal KV Rajan says, "It's not the Chinese activities but its their intentions that is of concern."

Delhi has been anxious about its loosening grip on Nepal after the CA election. The South Block sees the Maoists have politicised former Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood's unpopularity

to create bad blood with India. The distance between Nepal and India widened under the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government and although relations have normalized after Bhattarai's visit, the Indians are still deeply suspicious. Analysts say India has realised that Nepal's peace process and constitution drafting



cannot see closure without the Maoists. This realisation prompted the Indians to support the Bhattarai government so that it could keep the Maoists 'engaged', while maintaining its influence. The anticipated visit of the Indian PM to Nepal is a reiteration of New Delhi's engagement policy in Nepal.

# Facebook diplomacy



Dinesh Wagle,  
*Kantipur*, 20 December

कान्तिपुर

Public discontent with Nepal's worsening political condition is spilling over into social networking sites as ordinary Nepalis take part in online diplomacy via Facebook with US ambassador Scott H. DeLisi. However, politicians in Kathmandu are upset with the ambassador and the amount of media attention these interactions are generating.

Throughout his time in office, DeLisi has been openly critical of political parties who have called nationwide strikes. In May 2010 he condemned the indefinite strike called by the Maoists and appealed to them to solve the political deadlock through dialogue. This past week he criticised the NC banda as being undemocratic, angering the party which describes itself as the 'most democratic'. NC leaders have labelled DeLisi's facebook campaign as 'irrelevant and uninformed'. Minendra Rijal was especially critical saying political parties in Nepal do not organise protest programs according to a foreign diplomat's whims, and dismissing DeLisi's remarks as 'unbalanced' and entirely personal.

There are people who see DeLisi's facebook campaign as part of his larger support for the peace process. However, ex-foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey feels such statements and actions go against the Vienna Convention and warned the diplomatic community that unnecessary interference in domestic affairs will make them unpopular among the people.



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# Ethnic Platoon

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 22 December

The government’s decision to induct 3,000 Madhesi into the Nepal Army and create a separate battalion is against existing laws and will set the wrong precedence and tarnish the image of the military. The Madhesi are under-represented in the NA and their number has to go up, but there are reservation policies to address this problem to make the national force more inclusive. Creating an ethnic platoon will not ensure inclusion, it will promote exclusive identity and create a rift in the military.

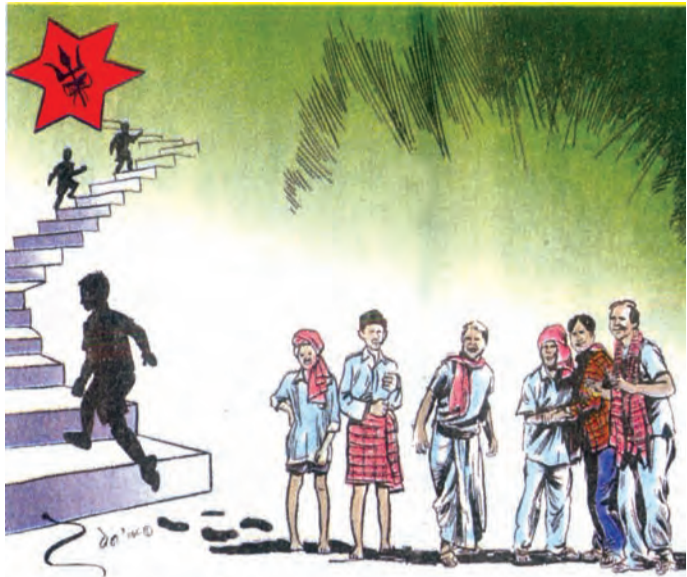
In the past, the military was dominated by a particular group and large sections of the ethnic population were marginalised in the national force. To rectify this

कान्तिपुर



historical marginalisation, a time-bound reservation policy can be effective. Presently, the government has 45 per cent seats in the national army for the under-represented communities, and 28 per cent for the Madhesi alone. If the leaders feel this is too little, they have to resolve it at the political level. But mass recruitment into an ethnic platoon will set the wrong precedence for other communities to demand their own force. Besides, this will significantly increase the

size of the army and put an added load on an already overburdened economy. The decision to create a new battalion is a desperate move by the Maoists to appease the Madhesi coalition partners and remain in power. It is not a secret that Madhesi leaders have been threatening to pull out of the government if PM Baburam Bhattarai doesn’t implement the 4-point deal.



नागरिक Deven in *Nagarik*, 20 December

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ NC’s nationwide strike is not a protest, it’s a satyagraha. ”

NC leader Arjun Narsingh KC



## Sajha Sawal

*Nepal*, 18 December

नेपाल

The BBC World Service Trust has been airing Sajha Saawal, a political debate program, for the past four years. Identified as the BBC’s international charity, the trust was registered with the government’s Social Welfare Council as an INGO. The trust had declared a budget of US \$1 million to run projects



on maternal health, but is spending more than US \$3 million annually and running a program whose content is highly political. The documents state that the funds are raised from the BBC’s internal sources and donors but officials at the trust refused to give any names. An official at the Press Council admitted that the trust’s activities may have gone beyond the mandate in the contract and said further investigation is necessary. At a time when foreign investment in media is still a contentious issue in Nepal, journalists like Shiva Gaule and Dhruba Hari Adhikari say, an INGO should not be allowed to run political debates on national television.

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# More breaking news

The windshields of 10 ambulances were broken throughout the country on Monday's bund. Nepali Congress leaders Jhusil Korala, Shere Bahadur and Gham Chandra pronounced the strike "a grand success and a victory for peaceful, non-violent democratic protest". A taxi was set on fire **non-violently** in Bansbari for daring to defy the threat to stay off the streets. Two patients who couldn't make it to Bir Hospital for medical emergencies died **peacefully** on the way. And in Baglung, the District Education Office was **democratically** vandalised because staff did not heed the call to take a day off. Why couldn't the cabinet spare the population the suffering and just declare both Shiva Poudel and Kim Jong II "martyrs"?



We all know that Nepal's political parties split like **amoebas in heat**. The NC split, united and is on the verge of a split again. Communistic parties are especially prone to



ANURAG ACHARYA

multiplying by binary fission, and at one time there were 22 of them in this country. Communist parties also come together again, as their names show: "Unified" Marxist Leninist (UML), or the "Unity" Centre, or the "United" Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist. After hemming and hawing and not being able to decide to split or not to split, the hard-on faction is

planning a super-duper convention in Kathmandu soon which will decide whether to split. But what are we going to name them? The CPN-M label has already been taken up by Comrade Matrika so the donkey's humble suggestion is to call the establishment faction Ex-United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (EU-CPNM) and the breakaway

faction, the Un-United Communist Party of Nepal (UU-CPNM).



The other entity that seems to be on the verge of a split is the Blue Diamond Society. I know, it's not a political party, but it has a member who is a Constituent Assembly member and hence has all the rights and privileges of a party. And in the grand tradition of political parties in Nepal, the **un-governmental organisation** is likely to be split into two with one faction called The Blue Diamond Society (Lesbian) and the other the Blue Diamond Society (Revolutionary).



After years of deadlock, it is amazing to see how quickly the nearly 300 points of contention in the draft of the new constitution are being resolved. The number of disputed clauses has now been brought down to just 11. Suddenly, the compromises are coming through thick and fast. The Maoists even agreed on Wednesday to abandon the term 'people's war'

from the new constitution. What gives? Chairman Awesome, it seems, is willing to give away everything except the provision for an executive president, since he knows at present he is the only one who can win a national presidential election. So, Fearsome's game plan is to get the constitution quickly over and done with, hold elections within a year, and be the first non-ceremonious president of New Nepal. Moral of the story: **execute** a lot of people and you, too, can be an **executive** prez.



Only in Nepal: The country is so bankrupt it doesn't have **moolah** to import diesel from India. Yet, the government has decided to install two 100 megawatt diesel power plants. And NEA is planning to increase power cuts to 16 hours a day by mid-January, but simultaneously jack up electricity tariffs by 30%. Consumers are going to be delighted.



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