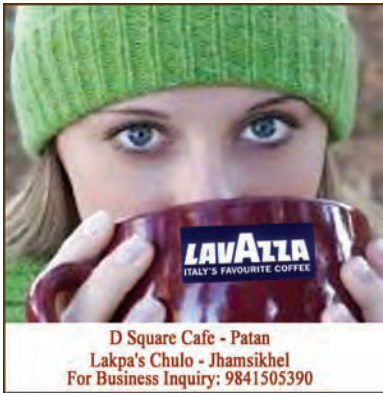




Axed

The government's attempt to roll back the gains of community forestry through an amendment to the Forest Act is a direct attack on grassroots democracy and successful local management of natural resources. It will only benefit the logging mafia and dismantle Nepal's internationally-recognised conservation success story.



KUNDA DIXIT

Editorial page 2
Uprooting grassroot democracy

This Is It page 12-13
by **Rubeena Mahato**
If it ain't broke, don't fix it

Out on a limb page 12-13
The anatomy of forest plunder in Dadeldhura

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SINK OR SWIM

Student union leaders from three major parties go white-water rafting to improve teamwork, leadership and trust. If only we could get their bosses to do the same.

page 6-7



UPROOTING GRASSROOT DEMOCRACY

In stark contrast to the foot-dragging in parliament over the ratification of three key international agreements on money-laundering, terrorism and extradition (the deadline lapsed last week, but the government lobbied to buy more time citing political instability) it has displayed unusual speed in pushing through new amendments to the 1993 Forest Act.

There is something very fishy about this. The Madhesi-Maoist coalition's undue haste in legislating amendments could destroy Nepal's community forestry program that has taken 30 years to build, and is accepted internationally as the best-working model for local natural resource management. As is usual with these things, the reason the government and sections of the bureaucracy want these amendments is because the trees local communities nurtured are now fully grown, and there is big money to be made by chopping them down.

Nepal's traditional systems of managing local forest and water were recognised when Elina Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2009 for her study in Nepal of the management of the commons. Ostrom has often said that the prize actually belongs to the farmers of Nepal whose management of irrigation for long-term sustainable yields she researched 30 years ago.

When community forestry was first introduced as a pilot project in Sindhupalchok in the 1980s in an Australian-funded initiative, it built on these traditional conservation practices that had then been destroyed by state intervention and nationalisation. Community forestry gathered pace in the 1990s because it dovetailed perfectly with grassroots democracy and local self-

Nepal's community forests survived the war, now they are threatened by peace.



governance. The result is there to see across Nepal's midhills where canopy cover expanded by 20 per cent between 1990-2010. Landsat images taken twenty years apart in Sindhupalchok (*see pictures*) show a dramatic increase in forest cover because of community-based conservation efforts.

But as the trees grew into maturity and acquired commercial value, it coincided with the post-conflict erosion of local democracy, state-sanctioned corruption through all-party mechanisms and the criminalisation of politics. The fact that most community forestry user groups survived the war and pressure from corrupt

politicians proves how resilient the model is.

It has to be said that the Madhesi parties and the Maoists never really came to terms with the community forestry concept. The Maoist because it is just too democratic and too decentralised for their liking, and also because of a perception that forestry user groups across Nepal are UML-dominated. The Madhesi parties have seen the Tarai's hardwood forests as timber to be mined, and not as a natural resource to be conserved.

In recent months, forests in Dadeldhura, Sindhuli and Makwanpur, among others, that communities took decades to protect and nurture have been systematically logged. The culprits are either DFOs working in collusion with local gangs that enjoy political protection, forestry user groups infiltrated and corrupted by local businesses, or infrastructure projects that are forced through just so contractors can lay their hands on timber. All these factors have a common cause: the absence of accountable local-elected councils, the political disarray at the centre and state-sanctioned corruption corroding the community spirit.

The proposed legislation will undo in a few swift months what took 30 years to protect. It will weaken the power of community forestry user groups, and legitimise illegal logging across the land. It will further erode grassroots democracy, and profit a few local crooks at the cost of communities.

Nepal's community forests survived the war, now they are threatened by peace.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

TWO LEGS

The Maoists have succeeded in hoodwinking Nepalis, the international community and the editor of this paper ('Two legs good', Editorial, #592). Bhattarai and his comrades are now in the 'protracted war of attrition by other means' phase which means they have modified their tactics, but their ultimate goal remains the same: state capture. And so far they have done well by securing prominent positions for themselves on the national level.

K K Sharma

- The corrupt and immoral Maoist leaders have lost sight of their ideologies, let their cadres down and are responsible for the failure of the 'people's revolution'. If Mohan Baidya, Ram Bahadur Thapa and CP Gajurel want to save face, they should get together and expel Dahal from the party and the country.

Sonam Tsering

- Dahal is a traitor who has betrayed his own party and the Nepali people. If the German president was forced to resign over corruption charges and the former Israeli president was impeached for sexual abuse, why is that crooks like Dahal are treated like gods in Nepal? It's time we held him accountable for his misdeeds and made him pay.

Kamal Pradhan

- Constitution writing is headed towards another dead end, there is

a severe lack of basic necessities, the people are suffering and yet there is no public outcry against these murderers of 15,000 Nepalis? The opposition leaders are no better. They accede to every whim of Dahal and Bhattarai and prefer to remain silent on important national issues. Have they made secret pacts with the Maoists or do they not care as long as their pockets are full?

Shanthi Shrestha

TINDER DRY

Whenever there are discussions on the Madhes, the 'they are not real Nepalis' debate arises automatically ('The Tarai is tinder dry', Navin Jha, #592). But why embarrass ourselves by trying to figure out who is more Nepali or claiming that a fellow Nepali is a foreigner? Let's show pride in being Nepalis regardless of where we live.

Suedip Joshi

- The call for a unified Tarai-Madhes is bizarre. Wasn't the Madhes movement intended to end the centralised government system and establish more accountable and efficient state governments? What guarantee is there that there won't be another centralised government in Tarai itself say in places like Birganj or Biratnagar? Also before asking questions about inclusiveness, Madhesi leaders need to reexamine themselves and show greater sincerity towards the Madhesi cause. Since 2007 there have been successive governments in which Madhesi politicians have held key positions and yet they've failed to address the demands of the region. All they have done so far is to blame the



hill establishment for not delivering on its promises.

XYZ

- It is wrong to claim that there is more development in the hill and mountain regions than in the Tarai. Except for corrupt and criminal politicians, this country has failed to serve people of all ethnicities and geographic locations. So the demand that Tarai be given greater priority and a larger share of the nation's development resources is unfair.

B

INVEST IN WHAT?

The restrictions set by Nepal's Labour Act is a big deterrent for investors ('Invest in what?', Ashutosh Tiwari, #592). An updated version of the Labour Act was prepared with assistance from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but it has been languishing on the shelves for the past few years. The good news is that unlike building

roads or setting up new power plants, the Labour Act is a paper document which can be introduced at zero cost. While the new act won't address all the barriers to investment, implementing it would show that Nepal Investment Year is more than just lip service. However, the bad news is that the Maoists and their affiliated unions will not let the act pass through.

Thomas

- The labour unions in Nepal are ridiculous, and the Maoist-affiliated unions are the worst. They camp at factories, eat and drink for free, halt production and take workers out on political rallies and then demand to be paid. It's impossible to fire a union employee who does not show up to work or whose performance is not up to company standards. However, such mob-like behaviour will only lead to their ultimate demise, because when leeches have no blood to suck, they die.

Bridohi

- Investing in Nepal is a cruel joke with 18 hours of power cuts, no petrol, no gas, and add to that extortion by the YCL, who follow orders from Dahal and Bhattarai. I would recommend the current lot of investors to cut their losses and pull out. Let the PhD genius prime minister and his 'fearsome' comrade come up with their own economic recovery plan.

Suman Pandey

- I am confused by Ashutosh Tiwari's argument. Everybody knows that Nepal is governed by criminals and

thugs. But asking businessmen and investors to pull out will do more harm than good and won't make people's lives any easier. Is the writer running out of patience or does he predict a regime change in the near future?

Dravin Bahadur Shrestha

ABSURD CLASSIFICATION

Thank you, Lok Bahadur Khadka for sharing your 'Nepali pan' with us ('Absurd classification', From the Nepali Press, #592). You are 100 percent Nepali and any government-sponsored classification that does not recognise you as a true Nepali and does not give you the same rights as any other Nepali is wrong and politically motivated. We need educated, fair-minded, forward-thinking, honest, and just leadership to build an inclusive and progressive Nepal. Unfortunately, such people are in short supply.

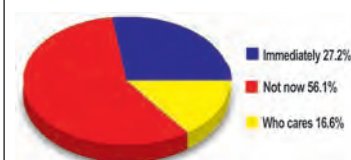
A Nepali



Weekly Internet Poll #593

Q. Should Baburam Bhattarai step down?

Total votes: 2235



Weekly Internet Poll # 594. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. Which is the most corrupt institution in Nepal?

The judiciary must first do justice to its own credibility

BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

The Supreme Court's recent verdicts in landmark corruption cases, and its decision to put a cap on extension of the CA are celebrated as an example of judicial activism, but there are mountains of impunity and cases still pending. While



Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha had commented before retiring last year that corruption could be substantially checked by ensuring competency and integrity of judicial heads.



Today there are at least a dozen high profile corruption cases pending. Government



The nation is still preoccupied with the peace process and statute drafting and questions of transparency and accountability have fallen victim to the political deadlock. The media has done its bit, but corruption is so widespread and accepted that citizens take it as a given. Almost as important as an activist judiciary is overcoming public apathy.

The judiciary has a challenging task of doing justice to its own credibility before it commands moral clout, besides legal authority, to deliver justice. 🇮🇳

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त्रैमासिक ग्राहक भने हरेक दिन र हरेक क्षण योजनामा मात्र सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।

*सर्वहस्त लागू हुनेछ



MY TWO PAISA

Paavan Mathema

Get on with it

What could be more 'anti-national' than holding the country's economy hostage?

Nepal narrowly escaped being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global anti-money laundering watchdog, this week.

As the FATF plenary sat in Paris to decide Nepal's fate, we were running around making intense diplomatic efforts at home and Paris. Nepal was at high risk of being blacklisted for not endorsing the bills against money laundering but was allowed to remain in the list of countries with 'Improving Global Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing Terrorism Compliance'.

The transitional political situation and the fact that the bills in question are already being tabled in the parliament were factors that are said to have influenced the FATF's decision. Ratification of key UN Conventions (International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime) in June 2011, also helped.

Nepal now has two months to pass the three bills, Mutual Legal Assistance Bill, Extradition Bill and Bill Against Organised Crime, that were supposed to be endorsed by 2011. But since the timing coincides with the CA extension when legislators will be completely distracted, we are sure to have another cliffhanger in May.

These bills will help Nepal develop a healthy financial system, create a positive investment environment and boost international trade. But they are stalled in parliament right now because the hardline faction of the Maoists believes that the bills are against national interest and are being imposed on the direction of 'imperialist forces'. These self-professed 'nationalists' chose to boycott

the meeting when the bills were being tabled for endorsement in the parliament before the deadline. The real reason for obstructing the bill seems to have been the hardliner's desire to see their own prime minister roast slowly in the fire.

It is difficult to understand what can be more against national interest than holding the country's reputation hostage and not implementing anti-money

laundering measures. Nepal could have easily joined the other 15 countries, including Pakistan and Sri Lanka, that were blacklisted last week.

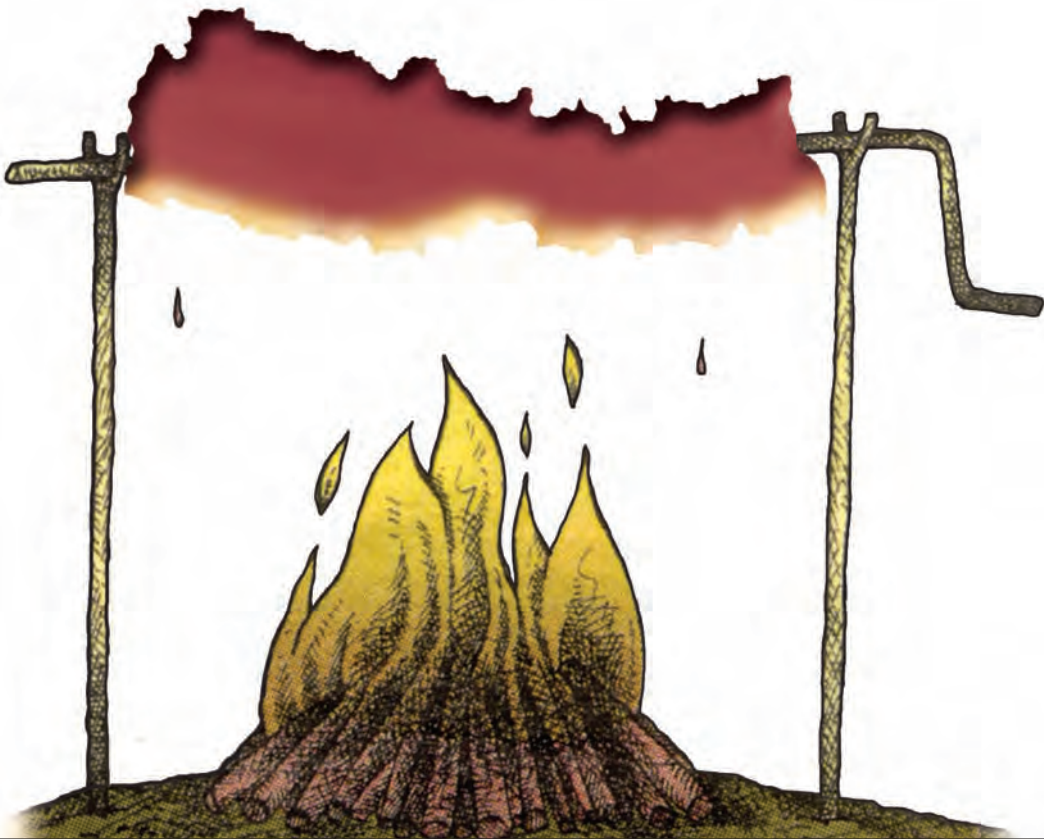
The country still faces a host of money-laundering threats, including those resulting from narcotics trafficking, corruption, smuggling, tax evasion, fraud and human trafficking. Money laundering is also rife because of the country's largely cash economy, fat informal sector and extremely porous border with India.

The consequences of being blacklisted will hit the financial sector and the economy hard. Nepal Investment Year 2012-13 will be dead in the water if the bills are not passed by June. The few investors that are ready to recognise Nepal's potential despite the poor infrastructure, energy and labour problems would also turn away. Nepali banks would lose their credibility and imports would suffer as banks abroad may or may not honour local letters of credit. Exports on the other hand might become more expensive as the costs rise.

International banks could block bank accounts of Nepali diplomatic missions abroad. Visas would be denied to Nepali nationals. It would also be difficult to process foreign donors would impose more stringent conditional ties for aid and grants once the country is blacklisted.

Nepal should use this borrowed time wisely and endorse the bills. What can be done in two days should not take two months. The Maoist obstructionists should understand the repercussions of not fulfilling international commitments in fighting the flow of dirty money on the economy.

Doing so would prove that they have lots to hide and are themselves afraid of being extradited, or are sheltering crooks engaged in money-laundering and smuggling. 🇳🇵



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NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

All in the same boat

Party-affiliated students go white-water rafting to improve on teamwork, leadership and trust

BHRIKUTI RAI in GORKHA

The previous time leaders of various student unions came together was for a shutdown last month to protest the government's decision to hike fuel prices. Together, leaders of student unions affiliated with the Maoists, UML and NC set about vandalising vehicles that dared defy their strike.

But this time the same student leaders weren't burning tires on the streets, they were paddling furiously to keep their rafts on track on the white waters of the frothing Trisuli River. For two days last week, they left behind their political ideologies, rivalries and worked as a team to hone their leadership and communication skills.

"It is extremely important for young student leaders to be team players, which is what we tried to enhance through the program," says Megh Ale of Borderlands, which organised the two-day white water rafting program for young politicians in collaboration with the group, Demo Finland, a Finnish cross-party co-operation, seeking to foster mutual understanding and a constructive and inclusive political culture in developing countries.

"Now we should get our party leaders to also go rafting together."

Sarita Rayamajhi,
ANNFSU student leader

And in the evening, after a day on the river, huddled around a camp-fire on the banks of the Trisuli the student leaders vented all their frustrations on the leadership of their parties. They all agreed that their leaders lacked the vision to drive the country forward, and there was an utter absence of trust.

Said Mohammed Rafi Halwai of Madhesi Youth Forum: "If everyone of us trust each other and communicate effectively most of the tasks can be completed on time."

The exercise also simulated the importance of trusting the leadership and the responsibility of the leader to take the team forward. Participants were divided into groups irrespective of their political affiliations, and they had to raft down the Trisuli. The main goal was to move ahead as a team to get to the destination. And they did just that.

"Metaphorically the raft became the nation, and they had to take it forward," explained Ale, who said the student union leaders needed the same skills in navigating politics today.

Sarita Rayamajhi from All Nepal National Free

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BORDERLANDS

Student Union (ANNFSU) Kavre felt mixing up the participants across party lines in one boat underlined the importance of trust and teamwork. Rayamajhi was so happy with the outcome, she felt the leaders of political parties should also have been part of the rafting program.

“Maybe then they would learn to put nation building ahead of their party’s needs and trust each other more,” she told *Nepali Times*.

Nima Giri of Nepal Student Union felt there is a wide communication gap between student wings and their parent parties. "We don't want to be

mere appendages to the parties to be mobilised only as a show of strength on the streets, we want them to take our plan of action seriously," Giri said.

The student leaders all agreed that the rafting exercise will have a positive impact on upcoming union elections which is usually national elections in a microcosm, and makes it to the news for all the wrong reasons.

“Since we got to interact and work with our friends from other parties, the level of tension and animosity will definitely decrease during the election,” Giri said.

Most of the young leaders have common goals but rarely get the platform to connect with each other on a personal level. Basu Gautam of Demo Finland said: “We want to create a lasting bridge between the student wings of different political parties so that they can work alongside each other.” 

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PHOTOJOURNALISM WORKSHOP

EVENTS

PHOTOJOURNALISM WORKSHOP @SATTYA, learn to take pictures that speak for themselves. 25 February, 1:00 pm onwards, Sattya Space, Jawlakhel. Call 5523486

2nd Nepal Human Rights International Film Festival. Till 26 February, Nepal Tourism Board, Call 4437965

Tibetan Losar Celebration, enjoy Losar with the thumping beats of DJ Shishir and DJ Sundyp. 24 February, 5:00 pm onwards Club Platinum, Durbarmarg



PLACID NUANCES, 7th solo exhibition of acrylic and water colour paintings by Neera Joshi Pradhan. Till 16 March, Park Gallery, Pulchowk

Welcome Summer, Red Carpet is all set to welcome summer in style. 25 February, 1:00 pm onwards, Club Paltinum, Durbarmarg

2012- The Leap, enjoy the best of Salsa and jazz music. 29 February, 5:30 pm onwards, 8 degress, Jhamsikhel. Call 4420564

Ladies Night, every Wednesday at Casablanca, enjoy the music, drinks, karaoke and happy hour. Casablanca Lounge, Babar Mahal Revisited

MUSIC

Live music by SIGN band every week except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 7:30 pm onwards, Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Call 4411818

Kutumba Playing for Heritage II, Kutmba will be travelling across Nepal. to generate awareness on preservation and protection of local heritage Till 15 April

Baja Gaja, playing live every Tuesday, 7: 30pm onwards at Moksh, Pulchowk. Call 5526212

Live music at Jazzabella Café. Every Wednesday and Friday 6pm onwards, Jazzabella café, Jhamsikhel, Patan. Call 2114075

Ides of March, be a part of the epic concert with bands like Antim Grahan, Jindabaad, Severe Dementia and Laakhey performing for a good cause. Nepal Hemophilia Society. 31 March, 1pm to 8pm

DINING

UPSTAIRS CAFE, a delicious range of Vietnamese cuisine to sample. Maharajgunj, near the US embassy

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza, homemade pastas and the one and only tibetan gyakok. Boudha, 012130681, 9841484408.



BENCH BURGER, be it a fish or a steak burger, Bench Burger offers many types and tastes for your palate. Krishnagalli, Patan



IRISH PUB, for the simple reason that the place actually feels like a bar. Don't miss out on their Irish coffee. Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, 4416027

Him Thai Restaurant and Bar, for the most authentic Thai cuisines in town. Lazimpat, 4418683

Tama, enjoy delicious khaja and taas set, and host of other Indian and Nepali snacks at a reasonable price. Gairidhara.

Station BBQ, try the table top grills for self-cooked barbeque or order mutton skewers and pork chops. Jhamsikhel

Summit Hotel. Savour the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. Jhamsikhel, 5521810



Café SOMA, enjoy scrumptious brunch and indulge in crepes with sugar and lemon. Jhamsikhel

Attic, comfy lounge/bar ideal for Friday night drinking before hitting the dance spots. Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat, 984161476



GHANGRI CAFÉ, a quiet and relaxing place with delicious food. Although known for their open momos, their Chef Salad is equally mouthwatering. Pulchowk, 5528703



BUDDHA BAR, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. Thamel, 9851053235

Just Baked, try the most amazing fruit tart and succulent brownies in town. Old Baneshwor



DRAGON CAFÉ, enjoy momos, sizzlers and vegetable coins at the most reasonable prices. Kumaripati

Chopstix, savory Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. Kumaripati, 5551118

The Factory, a trendy restobar with great food, drinks and zesty music. Try the cheesecake, it's a must. Mandala Street, Thamel

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

Under the moon

Fairytales abound in all cultures. But finding the right kind is not the easiest task for modern Nepali parents. They may have grown up listening to their own parents and grandparents spinning tales of kings and giants and talking animals, but find themselves quite without the time or the wherewithal to do so themselves. What's more, there is little written material in English available that derives from local folklore. John Jackson's *Tales for Great Grand Children*, a baker's dozen of illustrated stories based on the author's travels through Nepal and India, steps into the breach admirably.

The tales retold and 'worked up' here by Jackson range from the whimsical to the macabre. In 'The Cold Side of the Moon' we witness a debate between a lion and a tiger about why it is so very cold; in 'The Hole in the Roof' a woman worries about how to get rid of a giant that has gobbled up her foolish husband. There are stories of wild spirits that enchant kings, elephants that fall in love with lotus flowers, and turtles that want to fly. Adults and children alike will delight in the story of Chhepu, the malformed creature too ashamed to show himself to Manjusri when he lets the water out of the lake of the Kathmandu Valley. The stories are told with such charm and attention to detail that they shimmer in front of you like the visions your grandparents wove for you once upon a time. The imaginative title pages and lavish watercolours by Daniela Terrazzini heighten this effect. At once universal in their messages and very local in their flavour, Jackson's tales are a perfectly judged blend of the familiar and the fresh. And is this not the essence of a story?

'Tales for Great Grand Children' is being released as a limited hardback edition but kids will be bowled over by the iPad version, complete with animated drawings and narration, to be released on 28 February. 🇳🇵

Rabi Thapa

www.jjbooks.com/our-books/tales-for-great-grandchildren



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CASA DE CASS, offers continental delicacies, baked goodies, brewed coffee and everything in between. *Jawalakhel*

Cinnamon Grill and Lounge, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. *Jhamsikhel, 5521339*



DHOKAIMA CAFE, exquisite atmosphere, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. *Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. *Thamel, near Chhetrapati Chok, 4260471*

GETAWAYS

The Last Resort, be a part of the Bungy or Swing 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*



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BIKRAM RAI

Ruling the street

K garira.com is organising an all women scooter rally on 8 March to mark International Women's Day. The rally will start from Kathmandu Darbar Square, pass through major landmarks of the valley and finally end at Bhaktapur Darbar Square. Participants will be provided refreshments at various checkpoints. Awareness programs related to women's issues are scheduled to take place after the rally. The band Abhaya and the Steam Injuns will perform at the start and end points. Leading women entrepreneurs and celebrities will take part in the rally and celebrate womanhood.

8 March, 8 am onwards
Registration fees: Rs 250/- (including T-shirt and refreshments)
Call 9851043398 for more information



PICS: MARCO POLLO

Moving on up. Owners of Upstairs Café in Maharajgunj (not to be confused with Jazz Upstairs) have opened a second location in Lazimpat, an aesthetic upgrade from the quick-paced, casual canteen. The two-week-old Saigon Pho boasts an upscale feel, while serving generous portions at the same midscale prices.

Spacious, inviting, hip. The renovated manor provides ample seating on two levels (and plans for rooftop dining are slated for this summer). Its carmine interior and sable furniture take after the duotone bowls so characteristic of East Asia; paper lanterns and cushions soften the modern setting.

But the difference between the two establishments isn't merely cosmetic. Exclusive to Saigon Pho, the Vietnamese-Nepali owners throw in new additions to their Vietnamese preparations, once again extending the city's gastronomical



dictionary:
Ga nuong mia. In my experience the average Nepali isn't a fan of sugared meats like Sweet and Sour Pork, but this uniquely Vietnamese appetizer consisting of minced chicken or pork barbecued on a sugar cane stick is worth reevaluating even the most pigheaded comfort. The



savory, succulent pork balances so well with the sweet, fibrous stalk.
Thit kho trung ga. A welcomed entrée to the table, the Vietnamese stew like this pork rendition with boiled eggs is as traditional and common as pho. Morsels of pork with bone and fat-in swim in a consommé seasoned with fish sauce,

coriander and red chilies.
Bun thit nuong tom. Dry, flat rice noodles topped with spring rolls, peanuts, fried garlic, pickled carrot shreds and choice of meat are a house specialty that celebrates the diverse fluency of the Vietnamese palate. Sunken in a subtly sweet sauce and incorporated well, the bowl is satiating. Go for the barbecue pork or tofu over the separate minced chicken sugarcane sticks. You'll see why.
Pho dac bief. The titled dish is nothing new but is a mainstay worth mentioning. The Special Pho consists of sliced beef and chicken and shrimp rendered in a simmering broth garnished with lime, green onion, coriander, basil and bean sprouts. Plum and chili sauce make the dish.
Che bap. Still no *che ba mau* but a nice finish, the sweet corn in coconut milk dessert renders a warm and filling nightcap.

Saigon Pho serves authentic plates in a classy setting and should be lauded and frequented for its specialized cuisine. The proprietors however could be a bit more daring and introduce even more exotic specials like doi huyet (something like a French boudin), oxtail, tendon, or tripe pho. Is Kathmandu ready? 
Marco Pollo

Face the Shangri-La Hotel in Lazimpat and turn 180°



A Dangerous Method



- sex, repression, violence, obsession, and the fate of human civilisation. It is therefore apt that *A Dangerous Method* is about Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, the forefathers of psychoanalysis and the first brave few who dared to posit the now pop culture theory that sexual repression is the root of all neuroses.

Based on the true story of a highly disturbed patient, a Russian Jew named Sabina Spielrein (Keira Knightley), who is deposited at Carl Gustav Jung's (Michael Fassbender) exclusive clinic in Switzerland, the film chronicles Jung's budding interest in 'the talking cure' and its effect on the half-demented Spielrein. Kiera Knightly's terrifying, contorted performance is spine-chilling, and it is her unexpected acting skill that truly highlights the improvement Spielrein is able to make with the help of the now widely practiced psychiatrist's couch method.



MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

There is always something eerie and specific about a David Cronenberg film. Horror, explosions, emotions that most people would never dare to admit to. These have been his trademark and his genius for many years over the course of films as diverse as the post-modern *Videodrome* (1983), *The Fly* (1986) a film of the 'scientific experiment gone awry' genre, the clever mind and reality-bending *eXistenZ* (1999) a better film than the now cult-like *The Matrix* (also made in 1999), and more recently the excellent and atmospheric thriller set in a foggy London about the shadowy Russian mob, *Eastern Promises* (2007).

Cronenberg, a Canadian, has often been funded by the government to produce his risky but critically acclaimed films. Today he is one of the most adventurous and skilled directors in the West. In the world of cinema, a Cronenberg film is a rare and specific kind of hybrid animal: science and horror intersecting with high drama and violent action. There is a distinct departure from that in *A Dangerous Method* (2011). Everything that Cronenberg has ever dealt with overtly is now beneath the surface, subtle, instead of in-your-face. In many ways all of the themes that Cronenberg has been fascinated with over the years culminate and are manifested in this film

Slowly Fassbender's uptight but mystically inclined Jung develops a bond with Freud through Spielrein's case and its success. The episodic quality of the theater-based screenplay highlights how difficult it must have been then, at the beginning of the 20th Century, to develop highly technical theories without an element of personalised discourse. The two men struggle with each other's ideas and tendencies and Viggo Mortensen's wonderful performance humanises the now mythical Freud into a warm, slyly humorous, cigar smoking father-figure who slowly starts to disapprove of Jung's mysticism. In fact, it is the generally outstanding performances through-out that carry along the series of events in this highly intellectual and very talky film.

As Spielrein's life becomes more interlinked with both Freud and Jung, she recovers and becomes a psychoanalyst and intellectual heavy-weight in her own right. It is when she instigates an affair with the tightly wound Jung that the film starts to deal with the dark corners of the human mind.

There are many layers and intricate discussions in this incredibly complex film (pun intended). Today, we take our neuroses for granted, we are able to talk ourselves through them, mostly. None of this would have been possible without the crucial events that took place in Switzerland and Vienna on the eve of the first and second World Wars, in the lives of three extraordinary individuals. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

[Watch trailer](#)

Universal health insurance



DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

Most health care in Nepal is paid out-of-pocket. Catastrophic health care expenditures are the major cause of indebtedness and poverty of many Nepali families.

Twenty-year-old Shital Rai was all smiles that morning during medical rounds. Three days ago in Khotang in eastern Nepal, he had high fever and rapidly became somnolent. His relatives, fearing the worst helicoptered him to Patan Hospital where he was diagnosed with meningitis, treatment was promptly instituted, and he recovered quickly. If he had been in Khotang without treatment, his condition may well have deteriorated and he might have died. His family paid about Rs 1,00,000 for the helicopter ride and about Rs 10,000 for hospital treatment.

Fifty-five-year-old Kanchi Maharjan had been feeling nauseated and drowsy for

weeks until her family took her to a hospital where she was diagnosed with chronic renal failure. Hemodialysis (cleaning the impurities in the blood) was begun, and she became alert and well-oriented. The change was dramatic, but the improvement would only be temporary if she did not continue to have at least two dialysis sessions a week at a cost of Rs 20,000.



Taxi driver, Kumar Babu, 55, suffered a heart attack while driving, but after the diagnosis was made, he had no money left to pay for a stent placement in his blocked heart vessels which would cost Rs 1,00,000.

What is to be done to deal with these practical health problems in Nepal so that the

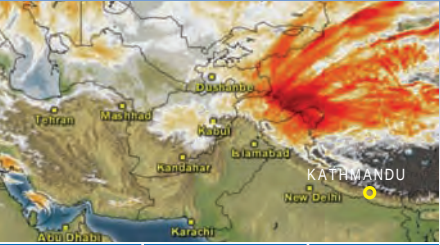
patient and his or her family are not helpless at the time of need? Here are some possible solutions:

The entire population should be covered by a universal health insurance package with financing from a combination of public, employer, and private sources. Cost-effective interventions should include health promotion and disease prevention. Government spending on health should be increased. A comprehensive health information and surveillance system needs to be instituted. A national network of pharmacies for generic, low-cost drugs needs to be available. Consensus-building mechanisms through public debates involving government, civil society, health professionals, academia, private sector, and the media need to be promoted.

All arduous tasks. But if we don't start now many individual Nepali families will continue to suffer and be emotionally torn between financial survival and seeking debt to pay the bills for a loved one with a catastrophic illness. 🇳🇵

WEEKEND WEATHER

A high pressure system reigns supreme over north India and the western Tibetan plateau. This has coursed a fresh northwesterly circulation into Nepal, which will in turn clear the air and offer spectacular mountain views right across Nepal into the weekend. Kathmandu Valley will be crisp and sunny, although the morning smog will take until about 10AM to lift completely. The maximum temperature will ease up to 25 by Sunday due to the sun shining through unfiltered by dust or mist. The minimum will also go up, but will still stay in the single digits.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
25-09	24-08	25-08



BYE BYE: Information and Communications Minister Jaya Prakash Gupta being transported to Dillibajar Jail after the Supreme Court slapped a one and half year jail term and Rs 8.4 million fine for corruption. Gupta is the first sitting minister to get convicted on charges of corruption.



EXCUSE ME: Fire engines make their way through a single-laned road to control a fire outbreak at a house in Asan on Monday.



BAMBOO BY BAMBOO: Japanese volunteers help build and renovate old homes in Kakarbhittha, Jhapa, on Sunday, under the Habitat for Humanity initiative of Habitat Nepal.



WHISTLE BLOWERS: Traffic police personnel traveling in a crammed pickup truck in Kathmandu on Monday.

“then they set her ablaze...”

NARAYAN DHUNGANA
in CHITWAN

Nepal doesn't make it to the international headlines often. But last week, foreign wire services were filled with stories from Madi Valley, Chitwan, of a gruesome murder. A 40-year-old widow and a mother of two, Dhegani Mahato, was beaten and burnt to death for being a 'witch'.

The person who set Mahato ablaze was none other than her own brother-in-law, Bikana Mahato, who is also a local Maoists cadre. Locals say that Bikana often boasted of his closeness with the Maoists, and had no fear of the police.

Superstitious Bikana had been accusing Dhegani of being a witch after his son-in-law, Bikram, fell ill. His superstition was fuelled further by Jogeshwor, who claims to be a shaman. This

wasn't the first time Bikana had alleged someone of being a witch. Many other women had already fallen victim to his abuse.

Bikana, who had been arrested for harassing Dhegani, was released only four days before the fatal incident. Neighbour Radhika Chaudhari says that he began planning the murder as soon as he was set free from prison. "He was also chanting, dancing and beating a drum to exorcise evil spirits that he believed plagued his son-in-law," recalls Radhika.

Dhegani had been warned by Bikana's wife, but she didn't take it seriously. On the evening of 17 January, Dhegani left her house to use the latrine, with no idea that Bikana and his accomplices were waiting for her. She was beaten brutally, but the locals heard her screams only after she was set on fire. She was dead by the time anyone had courage to intervene.



PICS: NARAYAN DHUNGANA

"I rushed when I heard her screams," recalls Dherdari Mahato, her neighbour. "They had set her ablaze and threatened to kill me too."

Investigations reveal that Bikana was involved in a land dispute with his father, Jhari Mahato. He had won the case, but was forced to give a small piece of land to Dhegani on insistence of village mediators. "He thought of me as his enemy, but he killed his sister-

in-law instead," said Jhari Mahato.

Eleven people have been arrested in connection to the murder after Jhari Mahato filed a complaint. District Police Chief Bhupal Kumar Bhandari stresses on need for strict punishment not only for Bikana but also the bystanders who let Bikana carry out such a heinous act.

As he was being arrested, Bikana was heard mumbling that one witch had been killed

CRIME SCENE: Dhegani's father-in-law, Jhari Mahato, points to the spot where she died. (left) Her children hold her picture.

and there were 11 more in the village. The women are demanding life sentence for the culprits, in fear that Bikana will be released again and will come after them. Says Radhika, "If he can kill his sister-in-law, he can kill any one of us too." 🇳🇵

Also in India

GAYATRI PARAMESWARAN in RAIPUR, INDIA

Among all the states in India, Chhattisgarh is where violence against women accused of being 'witches' is most prevalent. Each year, dozens of women are lynched or burnt to death.

The state passed the Witchcraft Prevention Act that carries a three years imprisonment in 2005, and three women in Lachkera, a village about 80 km from the state capital, have used that law to protect themselves from accusations of witchcraft.

Twelve years ago, villagers in Lachkera accused them of being witches because of a fight in the village over religious matters. "They took away all our clothes and set them on fire, and we were paraded naked in front of the whole village," recalls one of the women, Teertha Bai. "They shaved our heads. We were crying, no one stepped forward to save us."

The women were beaten and tortured for eight hours and were lucky to survive. In many similar cases across India, the woman dies from injuries. With help from local activists, Teertha Bai and two other women took their case to court in 2006 and the case became a landmark as for the first time the defendants won a case. But the 17 men convicted of attack only served a year in prison.

Despite this, the head of the women's legal aid group, Shashi Sail, says the law is a significant step forward, but much more needs to be done to combat this medieval scourge. She says, "For women who have been victimised or accused of being a witch, the law has given them hope when there wasn't any, they no longer feel helpless." The women were awarded over INR 100,000 in compensation, but so far have only received money for medical expenses.

Dinesh Mishra, an activist fighting violence against women accused of witchcraft, blames poor education for the prevalence of this practice, where men blame local women after they lose relatives to diseases. "In Chhattisgarh, all 4 cases witchcraft accusations are because of illnesses, and illiterate and ignorant people find a local woman to be the scapegoat."

Mishra, who is a physician, says witchcraft is related to a belief in black magic and faith-healing. People who don't know how diseases spread think they fall sick because someone casts an evil spell.

Then there is the strict social hierarchy in the village that prevents people from opposing the village elders when they declare someone a 'witch'. 🇳🇵



FIGHTING BACK: Teertha Bai (right) with two other women in Chhattisgarh of India took the villagers who tortured them for being 'witches' to court and won.

nepalitimes.com

This article was first broadcast on Asia Calling
www.asiacalling.org



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THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

For everything that goes wrong in this country, our leaders always have someone to blame. Usually it is some opposition figure, an invisible enemy or the foreign hand. But it is clear we don't need outsiders to bring the nation down, we're doing pretty well by ourselves.

The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is preparing to amend the Forest Act of 1993, which if endorsed by the parliament, would effectively demolish Nepal's successful, and globally-recognised community forestry program. A quarter of all forests in Nepal are managed and protected by over 17,000 community forest user groups.

But fearful of losing control and tempted by profits from the timber trade, the amendment proposes new restrictions that would undermine the fundamental principle of community forestry: manage local resources through grassroots democracy. Communities have been running health posts and

The government's proposed changes to the Forest Act are handcrafted to sabotage Nepal's widely-acclaimed community forestry movement

repairing bridges from proceeds of forests they have protected. The government wants to take that money away from them.

The amendment will restrict community forests to only those areas which cannot be developed as 'block' or 'collaborative' forests. There will be limits on the maximum area for community forests, user groups will not be able to fix rates for forest products anymore, and they will have to pay half the proceeds from sales to the state. To top it all, communities will be at the mercy of DFOs (district forest officers), who have acquired a well-deserved reputation for corruption, to renew their operational plans.

The ministry says it had to act because there is illegal logging in community forests. But there are plenty of examples



of how the forests are the first to go if the state gets involved. User groups throughout Nepal have proved that they are perfectly capable of managing forests, raising local living standards, and protecting watersheds. Bringing in a corrupt and callous state is to guarantee the destruction of Nepal's forestry success story.

To be sure, the philosophy of community forestry has never really caught on in the Tarai, and the prolonged political

transition has tainted some user groups. Illegal logging has been reported mostly from the Tarai districts which account for 5 per cent of community forests, and in the midhills in some forests which were in the process of being handed over. But corruption in a few villages is no reason to dismantle the entire program.

If the government really wants to control illegal logging, why not go after corrupt ministers who have amassed

wealth in 'pre-paid' transfers of DFOs and local groups who run protection rackets? A well thought-out government propaganda is in place to prove that community forestry has failed in Nepal and is being fueled by local media and pseudo experts.

A study conducted by the Swiss group, HELVETAS, however, has shown that there is 33 per cent more forest cover in Dolakha district than 20 years ago, and the growth of canopy

Out on a limb

DEWAN RAI

Nepal's forests are threatened by politicians protecting illegal loggers and corrupt forest officials

Last Dasain, villagers in Gaurikhan of Dadeldhura were woken up by a fleet of bulldozers roaring through the thick sal forests nearby. They were happy because it shortened their trip to Mahendranagar.

A 25-km road was constructed through the community forests on Chure hills, but suspicions were aroused because a road for just four households seemed fishy. The corruption watchdog, CIAA, started investigating.

"All evidence point to a premeditated plan involving political leaders, forest officials, user group members, contractors and local authority," says Krishna Prasad Dhungel at the CIAA. "It is impossible for smugglers alone to successfully carry out a plan of that magnitude without political protection."

Dhungel's investigation team visited the field last month and found loggers used chain saws to fell trees and truck them away on the newly-constructed road. He counted at least 25 trucks in Jogbudha valley alone. The team found that timber worth Rs 12 million was cut from six community forests in two months.

Federation of Community Forest User Groups (FECOFUN) President Apsara Chapagain blames the Chure Conservation Program formed under President Ram Baran Yadav's



initiative in 2010. The program aims to conserve the fragile Chure landscape, but community forestry user groups suspect the government wants to take back the forests they nurtured.

"It was natural for the villagers to be worried if the government decides to take over the forest they preserved for

years," she explained. "Political parties in cahoots with smugglers and local administration cashed in on this fear."

Chapagain is critical of the government's proposed amendment to the Forest Act which will levy a 50 per cent tax on timber sale, and other provisions that would undermine the

community forestry concept. The District Forest Officer (DFO) is given the power to decide on the future of community forests

"Even today, DFOs are demanding bribes, imagine what will happen if they are given even more discretionary authority?" asks Chapagain.

Yagyanath Dahal at the Ministry of Forests defends the amendment, saying it aims to regulate forestry. "We found the involvement of community forests in illegal logging particularly in the Tarai," he told the *Nepali Times*. "to argue that we are trying to take over the user groups is ridiculous." But Dahal readily admits that only five per cent community forest user groups could be involved in illegal activities.

Former forest minister Dipak Bohara had proposed the amendments to the act because he feared the user groups had 'captured' forests across the country. His two successors did not move the amendment file until the Baburam Bhattarai government came to office last year.

Current minister, Mohammad Wakil Musalman came up with a provision of setting up a monitoring mechanism and lifted the logging ban three months ago after which the Dadeldhura clear-cutting went through.

Dhungel at the CIAA is adamant to bring those who committed the environmental crime to justice. He told us: "It is too early to say for sure, but the political parties are directly involved. No matter who they are we will bring them to justice." 🇳🇵

ain't broke



cover in community forests were double that of government or privately owned forests. Unlike what the ministry wants us to believe, the model remains a success. User groups across the country have built schools and roads with the profits of the forest and an obligatory provision to reserve half the membership in user committees for women and disadvantaged communities has made local democracy more inclusive. It is not hard to see who

benefits from the smear campaign against community forestry. They are the same crooks who plundered Nepal's forests to near extinction during the Panchayat, and are now eyeing the savings of user groups that run into billions. The new legislation is a case of medicine being worse than the disease. If the government is really serious about saving Nepal's forests, it should stay away and leave them in care of the communities. 🇳🇵

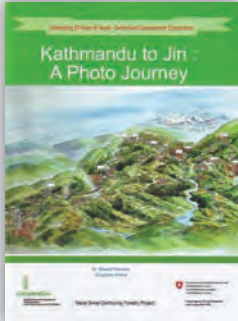
YESTERDAY AND TODAY: The barren, arid hillside in Dandapakhar in 1975 (*left*) and in 2005 (SDC). Landsat images taken in 1990 and 2010 (*right*) of Sindhupalchok, north of Kathmandu, showing growth in vegetation due to community forestry (HELVETAS).

nepalitimes.com

Village forests go through midlife crisis, #509
Seeing neither forests nor trees, #375

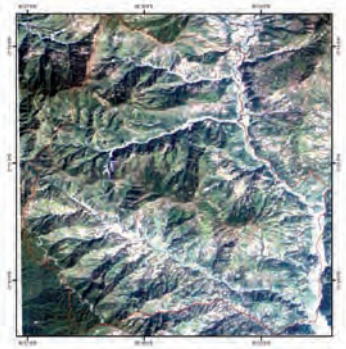
Before and after

The hills of Kavre, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha used to be barren in the 1970s. But after the community forestry initiative took hold in the region, the districts have been transformed. This dramatic change is illustrated in a new book published by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) to mark 50 years of being in Nepal, *Kathmandu to Jiri: A Photo Journey*.



This book consists of 19 pairs of before and after photos that clearly show changes in landscape over three decades along the highway from Kathmandu to Jiri, and what is most striking is the increase in forest cover because local communities and forest user groups have been in protecting their forests. The book also details how forests have helped agriculture by preserving watersheds, protecting the mountains from landslides, and promoting tourism.

Kathmandu to Jiri: A Photo Journey
Dr Bharat Pokhrel and Anupama Bhatt
Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project
SDC, 2011
Also available online on pdf:
<http://www.intercooperation.ch/offers/news/photojourney-Nepal-NSCFP>



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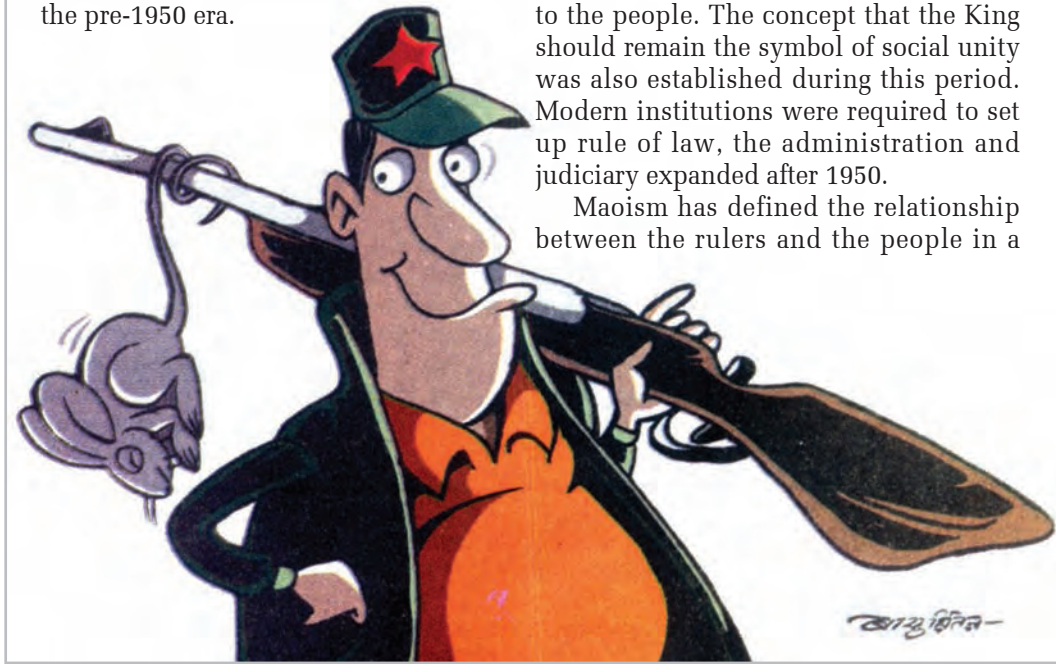
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16 wasted years

Ajaya Bhadra Khanal in *Annapurna Post*, 22 February

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट

Following Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's return from Bihar where he was enlightened on development, Falgun Seven came to Nepal but Democracy Day didn't. The revolution of Prachanda and Bhattarai is circuitous and it is taking us back to the pre-1950 era.



BASU KSHITIZ /ANNAPURNA POST

Maoism and the Rana regime have a lot in common, the Maoists just want a new kind of feudalism. Along with the monarchy, the Maoists also discarded nationalism. And the last 16 years have been wasted because of the Maoist 'people's war'.

There were some important achievements of the 1950 revolution: it established the principle that the king and the rulers should always be accountable to the people. The concept that the King should remain the symbol of social unity was also established during this period. Modern institutions were required to set up rule of law, the administration and judiciary expanded after 1950.

Maoism has defined the relationship between the rulers and the people in a

curious way. One year after launching the their armed struggle, Bhattarai used the Leninist concept of ethnicity to raise the intensity of war. However, despite the use of 'people' in theory, only centralisation has found place in Maoist practice. Questions are raised within the party that Prachanda, who has become the Napoleon of *Animal Farm*, put Maoist ideology above people, and himself above ideology. In this way, if we analyse the last 16 years, we will see that the Maoists are accountable to Maoism, not to the Nepali people.

Maoism recognises the rule of party high command rather than the rule of law. Prachanda himself has stated that the Maoist 'people's court' is above the Supreme Court. The party, rather than the government, holds the reins over the state's administrative machinery. It is because of this that the Supreme Court has been forced to annul the decisions of the government one after another. The conflict between the Supreme Court and the government has arisen because the party's documents are above the country's constitution. On top of that, the fact that the government, instead of taking action against criminals convicted by the

Supreme Court, is intent on rewarding them, has deliberately ridiculed the rule of law.

Whether it was by looting during the war time, or creating fake combatants during peace time, whether by creating people's government during the wartime or embezzling state funds during peace time, the Maoist party has been making a lot of money. Like in Mohan Shamshere's time, how much money the Maoist headquarter or Prachanda have, is a secret known only to Prachanda and a handful of businesspeople.

The Maoist 'people's war' is most responsible for weakening nationalism. Our PM had to go to Bihar to learn that the secret of development is rule of law and good governance.

If that is so, then why did we have to go through a 16-year war and transition and suffer the loss of 16,000 lives? Just so we could have a republic? If prosperity, freedom and nationalism are our goals, then why did the Maoists weaken all these three through the war and continue to do so?

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KAPILDEV KHANAL

Four after four

Kapildev Khanal, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 13-27 February

हिमाल खबरपत्रिका

For the past three years, students from Gyandfedi in Nuwakot district have been repeating fourth grade, because no school in the region offers classes beyond the fourth standard. In the absence of further schooling, the children are forced to remain in the same class year after year or risk being trafficked to India. Citing the shortage of students, the district education office had revoked Ghayankfedi Primary School's permit to run classes up to fifth grade in 1985. Another school, Indrayani Primary, is in a far worse condition where the principal has been missing for the past three years and where teachers are regularly absent.

Even though the government had allocated 1.7 billion rupees as the education budget for Nuwakot between 2008 and 2012, schools have shown no signs improvements. The District Education Office plans on spending a further 18 million rupees to build new infrastructure during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. But locals are not sure how this fund will help resolve the turmoil the schools in Ghyandfedi and surrounding areas find themselves in.

Final verdict

Interview with Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi in *BBC Nepali Service*, 22 February

BBC नेपाली

BBC Nepali: In the wake of the Supreme Court verdict, will the judicial council take actions against special court judges (who acquitted JP Gupta)?

Khil Raj Regmi: The action will be taken after the judicial council completes its investigation to ascertain whether or not there was intentional wrongdoing on behalf of the judges in question.

Why is further investigation necessary when the Supreme Court bench has itself ascertained 'serious and intentional misappropriation' in the case?
The bench did indicate misappropriation but it is important to investigate the nature and level of misappropriation and determine the extent of culpability.



अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 18 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“More than many others, I know how Brahmins cheat people.”

Pushpa Kamal Dahal in *Nagarik*

Safe passage

Naya Patrika, 23 February

नयाँ पत्रिका

Senators James P McGovern, Frank Wolf and Joseph Wright have sent letters to Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and President Ram Baran Yadav urging the government to provide exit visas to Tibetan refugees and abide by the 'gentlemen's agreement' reached between Nepal and the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Nepal's failure to address the concerns of Tibetan refugees and its attempts at obstructing their free movement seem to have irked the three Congressmen and they have made their displeasure clear through their letters.

The President's office, office of the Prime Minister and the foreign ministry haven't responded to the letters yet and government representatives claim they know nothing about the correspondence. "We have no idea if a letter has been sent. The government is committed to the sovereignty of its neighbouring countries and sticks by one China policy," said Tirtha Raj Wagle, deputy spokesperson of the foreign ministry. But a high ranking officer from the home ministry says that the government is aware of the growing concerns of the US over the treatment of Tibetan refugees: "It is better to remain silent on this issue at the moment. We can't change our foreign policy just because some country wants us to."



“Integration in three weeks”

Interview with Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' in *Nagarik*, 20 February

नागरिक

You resigned from your position because of your tussle with the army. But now it seems like you are on their side. Why are you so keen on integration?

Dahal: We never had problems with the army. There was conflict because the army chief refused to follow the government's decision. Now we have come to the final stages of integration and if we can quickly conclude this process it will be in the larger interest of the country. As the leader of the biggest political party and commander of the PLA, the Nepali people are expecting me to achieve these goals. That is why I have been trying to speed up integration and calling for greater cooperation with the army.

The army says that if the ex-Maoist combatants fulfill due process they can be promoted up to the rank of Major. What are your thoughts?

It's okay for the army to make such statements. But we have to be mindful that we are in a very delicate phase of the peace process, so solutions have to be sought through political consensus and the army has to show flexibility. The seven-point agreement does not stipulate that ex-combatants cannot occupy posts higher than a Major. Ideally, we would like to have a Maoist representative at the directorate; because it would help us complete the integration and conclude the peace process faster.

So when do you expect the peace process to be completed?

I would say within 15 to 20 days, once we figure out a working plan.



Will the constitution writing also gather speed after that?

Peace process does not just mean decommissioning the cantonments. There are other crucial matters like forming a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, commission on the missing people, and rehabilitation of people affected by the war. Constitution writing is also a part of the process. Within three weeks we will complete army integration, the constitution will be written and then no one can blame the Maoists any longer.

But there are several contentious issues in the constitution. How do you propose we deal with them?

There are differences on issues of state restructuring, governance and judicial system. But the major debate is over the basis of state formation and that is going to be the most difficult part in creating a new constitution.

Bihar and Nepal

Sambhu Shrestha in *Drishti*, 21 February

दृष्टि

Democracy by definition means rule of law. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had to go to Bihar to figure out that integrity is vital to a country's progress. It is because our leaders have not been accountable that decades of democracy has kept Nepal way behind Bihar. Among all the others, it is the Maoist party that has pushed this country back. The Maoists are not committed to democracy, and this has put a big question mark over the future. Maybe it was to give Bhattarai a lesson or two in governance that Bihar Chief Minister

Nitish Kumar made him the chief guest at the Patna conference.

The Maoist party is emulating the Laloo government in Bihar that looted from the state coffers. Just as previous ministers in Bihar used to engage in blatant corruption, Bhattarai's cabinet colleagues are doing the same. The government is following the same characteristics that we thought were the trade

mark of 'Bihar-style politics'. There are ministers in government who talk about separatism, that is how incompetent this government is.

Who gave Prachanda the right to publicly challenge the Supreme Court? Who gave Bijay Gachhedar the right to direct the administration to distribute citizenships to foreigners? Nepalis are worried about such disgusting actions. These are not good signs for the future of democracy and rule of law. If things are allowed to go on like this, it will bring back dictatorship.

Without a democratic dispensation even the Maoist party will cease to exist. They abandoned a war they knew they couldn't win. But if the Madhesi and Maoist parties do not accept a democratic process we will take 50 years to achieve what Nitish Kumar achieved in five years in Bihar.

That is the only lesson the Maoists need to learn from Bihar for a 'safe landing'. Otherwise they will take themselves and the country down.



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Headlines on deadline

Everytime his erstwhile majesty Kingji goes off to India and meets Sonia and/or Kali Baba, it triggers rumours again among Kathmandu's chatterati that there is a plot afoot to revive the monarchy. And so it happened this time. No sooner had kingG slipped back into the country under cover of darkness last week, than word spread that he had the blessings of Godmen down south for the baby king proposal to enthrone king-in-waiting Hridayendra as a cultural monarch.

Although we have it on good authority that **clown pince palas** (as they call him in Bangkok) is said to be ticked off they are skipping one generation to pick his son. Parasji himself moved from Singapore to Thailand, probably because of the strict lèse-majesté laws there and they are pretty much used to heir apparents making asses of themselves. Anyway, ex-CP Paras' latest escapade was not on Pat Pong in Bangkok but on Park Street in Kolkata where he got roughed up one night last week by a local Bong gang after a drunken brawl. Stay tuned.



The other guy who is against the return of the monarchy is **Comrade Caesar Maximus**, not because he is a republican but because His Eminence Prachanda Pratapi Bhupati has ambitions to become a Maharaja Dhiraj himself at some point. This is probably why he is looking forward to his Delhi trip next week, where he is expected to pay his respects at unusual pilgrimage sites for annointment.



Meanwhile, BRB is feeling a wee bit beleaguered as PKD starts in earnest to pull the rug from under him. Awesome is even trying to convince gullible kangresi top guns to make a go for prime ministership ("the UML had two turns, we've had two, now it's your turn") just so he can have his deputy out of the way. The real question everyone is asking is whether BRB deliberately leaked Chief Sab's proposal on integration, or he just naively gave it to PKD to look

at not realising that it was PKD himself who was the architect of the proposal. Anyway, the long and short of it was that the **fhit hit the san** within the army brass and the proposal was dead in the water. Who is really directing policy on Nepal these days, the MEA or the Indian Army?



Someone quickly tell the prime minister's outriders that there is no way around a traffic jam, you have to wait like everyone else. (If the traffic jam stretches all the way from Solti Mode to Tribhuvan Salik you know the media house has clout.) Case in point was the Kantipur anniversary bash on Wednesday when **Mustang One** tried to outmaneuver the traffic by crossing over to the wrong side of the narrow road and promptly trapped itself and everyone else in a massive gridlock that lasted well over an hour. Comrade Yummy was waiting at Megha Malahar for her "Baje" to turn up, and was overheard saying: "He's always late." Memo to Prime Minister: you should've just walked from solti Mode.

Suggestions for those planning to invite the prime minister, president or vice-president to cut ribbons, light lamps, launch books or officiate at weddings: please ensure that the function starts after 9PM so as not to bring the entire nation to a halt? Just a suggestion.



The Ass congratulates the winners of this week's **Headlines on Deadline Contest**. And the winners are (the Ass' asides in brackets):

Prez gnaws at Gupta remark

(Wouldn't it have been better for the prez to gnaw at Gupta himself? There is nothing like a good old-fashioned cannibalism.)

CIAA ANNIVERSARY SANS COMMISSIONERS

Top bureaucrats vie for topless body

(Even better: 'Headless Body Found in Topless Bar')

Yak grazers come into contact

("Ground Control to Major Tom: We have contact with Yak.")

Putin vows to boost Russian population

(Is he going to do this single-handedly or is there going to be a distribution of labour, as it were?)

Nepali maidens bang Thais for cup hat-trick

(At which point we must mention that Thai girls are rumoured to have quite a few tricks with hats, or without, if one prefers.)

Girls return with head held high

(Traditional Nepali victory ritual is to decapitate the captain of opposing team and take his or her head home as trophy.)




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