



## Racing with history

Everyone has to take a share of the blame for the futile deadend on 27 May, and for the last four years of dilly-dallying, wheeling-dealing, back-stabbing and give-and-take. Politicians confused the country's long-term interest with the short-term ambitions of egotistical party leaders. They confused genuine devolution of power away from Kathmandu with a disastrously unworkable ethnic division of the country. They engaged in ruthless brinkmanship right till the very end just so they could have the upper hand in elections in six months' time.

When he addressed the nation on Sunday night, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai (right) spoke not as a head of government, not as a leader of all Nepalis, not as a statesman, but as a defensive, haughty party boss delivering his first campaign speech.

### Editorial

We have a situation here **page 2**

Lenin and Stalin carved the Soviet Union up into ethnic Soviet republics with a token nod to self-determination, but kept totalitarian power centred in the Kremlin. Can we expect any better from a party that keeps the portraits of Lenin and Stalin on the wall of its headquarter?

In the next six months we have to try to patch a perilously frayed social fabric and protect our pluralistic democracy during a polarised and volatile campaign for the next election.

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### Out of the darkness

Hapless CA members got a lot of flak for lazing about at tax-payers' expense, but the culture of dissent it established by challenging the frontiers of traditional loyalties and rising above partisan interests to fight for collective rights, is a valuable contribution that will make Nepali democracy much stronger in the days to come.

### BY THE WAY

by Anurag Acharya

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### Not all doom and gloom

Politics notwithstanding, Nepal's macroeconomic indicators are doing well.



After remaining in deficit for two years, the country's balance of payments registered its highest ever surplus during

the first three quarters of this fiscal year, thanks mainly to a stronger dollar.

### MY TWO PAISA

by Paavan Mathema

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### MUSICAL HIGH

A London-based band performs the world's highest gig on Mera Peak to help raise funds for a Nepali orphanage

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Photo gallery plus video





# WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE

Politicians have been shedding crocodile tears, many figuratively some literally, over the demise of the Constituent Assembly. But it was they who kept the most representative elected legislature in our history as a mere rubber stamp body. And when it had outlived its usefulness to them, they abandoned it on Sunday to die quietly in the night.

The most telling, and tragic part is that many are secretly relieved that the CA was dissolved and new elections announced. The happiest were the people of far-western Nepal and the eastern Tarai who had been enduring crippling shutdowns for over a month because of identity politics. Others felt that no constitution at all was better than a fatally-flawed one. Elsewhere, the denouement at least doused the flames of inter-ethnic tensions that were spreading alarmingly on the streets.

But that reprieve came at a high cost: more than Rs 10 billion over four years, lack of focus on development and the economy, long-term damage to societal harmony and well-being from identity-laced politics. Also wasted was the progress made in the CA committees over the

## No constitution at all may be better than a fatally-flawed one

last four years. The next time we sit down to write a constitution, we will have to start from scratch.

The past week has also been characterised by the usual blame game. Let's face it, all sides were guilty of playing politics with the constitution and the peace process, and squandering the opportunity to chart out a just and fair constitution.

They confused the country's long-term interest with the ambitions of egotistical party leaders. They confused genuine devolution of power away from Kathmandu with a disastrously unworkable ethnic division. They engaged in ruthless brinkmanship right until the end, just so they could have the upper hand in elections in six months' time. Anyone who questioned this was immediately labelled 'status quoist Brahmin-Chhetri elite clique out to

protect privilege and power'.

If Prime Minister's Bhattarai's speech on Sunday night was anything to go by, the next six months will be a struggle between those who want to strengthen democracy and those who have repeatedly and publicly stated that their end goal is to capture total state power. It will be between those who want to protect national unity and co-existence, and those who do not.

Nepalis are basically decent and peace-loving, with a high threshold for tolerance and pain. They know their rights, but expect little from the politicians. They are realistic and don't believe promises of a utopian New Nepal.

The priority now is to get this country back on its feet. The NC and UML must let go of their obstructionist objections and join a government of national unity ahead of elections. It is all uncharted territory from here on, and it may make sense to let things settle down a bit by holding parliamentary elections in November, and putting off a constitutional debate until there is more stability.

### ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

#### US NEPALI

As expected, *Nepali Times* gives us only one side of the story ('Us Nepali', Sunir Pandey, #606). If everyone is really against ethnic states as the paper suggests, why are so many people still protesting on the streets? You seem to have interviewed mostly young school children. How can their views be representative of the entire nation?

**Anonymous**

- NT, please don't mislead us with such biased public opinion interviews. Influential publications like yours need to stop regurgitating the narrow views of upper-caste elites.

**Anuj**

- These 'people's voice' pieces are nothing more than classic propaganda.

**Limbu**

- Like rest of the country, the comment threads on *Nepali Times* are also becoming highly polarised. Nepal's high caste elites should realise they can no longer monopolise power, and at the same time Janajatis should stop being so antagonistic and making fools of themselves. Thank you NT for reassuring me that there are many moderate people in Nepal who think like me.

**J Rai**

- Thank you NT for bringing out the voices of ordinary Nepalis with common sense who are pushing back the demands for ethnic federalism and who give the rest of us hope.

**Gaury Adhikary**

- I disagree with the concept of ethnic states, not because I am a 'ruling class' Brahmin who fears losing his privileges, or because I am suspicious of my Janajati sisters and brothers. Rather I am worried that Nepal might disintegrate into communal conflict.

**Scapegoat**

- Nepal has always been a vibrant, multi-cultural society, and we must work hard to maintain this diversity ('Too much politics, too many politicians', Sita Mademba, #606). The best way to achieve this would be to introduce radical social, political and economic policies which level the playing field so that caste and ethnicity no longer matter and we can all be just Nepalis.

**Laxmi**

- Thank you Anurag Acharya for a

truly insightful and unbiased piece ('May or may not', #606). Like you point out, no one needs to be threatened by diversity. I wish more journalists offered perspective like yours, because only then would the Janajati movement succeed.

**Kancha Tamu**

- To a certain extent, NT is also responsible for 'exaggerating the statements of a few loud-mouth hate mongers'. Some of the latest editorials in this paper unnecessarily demonise the Maoists, especially Dahal and try too hard to promote a false sense of unity among 'we Nepalis' as if those demanding equal rights on the streets are any less Nepali.

**Binu**

- Thank you Rubeena D Shrestha for an extremely well-written piece ('National identity crisis', #606). These same questions have been haunting me for a while. Where do I really belong?

**Ramjee**

- This is a fantastic article: perceptive, succinct, descriptive, heartfelt, and logical. And Rubeena Shrestha belongs in Nepal as much as the rest of us.

**Hange**

- I agree with Rubeena Shrestha that Nepalis should be fighting for education for our children, health, water, electricity and basic security, not ethnic states.

**Selina**

- Hats off to Rubeena Shrestha for her simple yet powerful piece. I am a Newar and am extremely proud of my culture, my festivals, my language, my food, and my music. But I don't want an exclusive Newar state for only my community. I strongly oppose ethnicity-based federalism and wish Nepal to be a common garden for all ethnic groups.

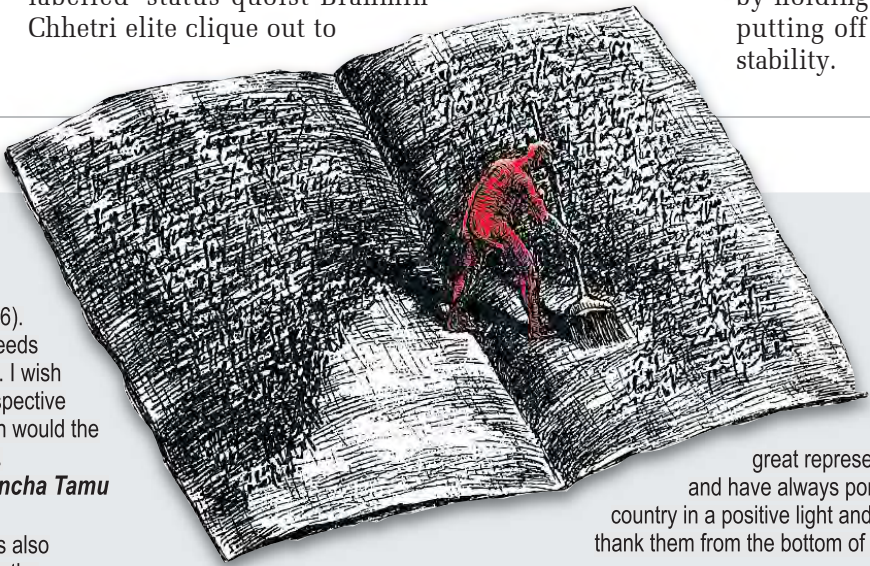
**Sachin Joshi**

- Like Rubeena Shrestha, I also struggled with my identity. Since most of my friends were Kumars, Lals, and Prasads, I wanted to add Kumar to my name so that I would be liked and accepted. But can you imagine how awkward it would be to be called Dorji Kumar?

**Dorji Tsering Sherpa**

- Nepali Times* should translate Rubeena Shrestha's piece into Nepali and send it to Nepali language papers.

**Sherpa**



great representatives and have always portrayed the country in a positive light and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

**Elms**

- I want to resign from my caste and ethnic group. The state, radical-liberal-leftist leaders and 'progressive' Nepalis can keep playing the caste and ethnicity game, but not at the expense of my humanity and personal freedom.

**Kegarne**

- Our new constitution should be inclusive in which every individual is given equal opportunities to grow and prosper regardless of caste and ethnic affiliations. But this doesn't mean we create states which favour certain ethnic groups at the cost of others and promote new forms of discrimination.

**Shristi Shrestha**

Bravo, Amrit Gurung for your honesty, courage, and patriotism ('I am Amrit Nepali', #606). You have spoken on behalf of millions of Nepalis. I will never forget the sacrifices our ancestors made to defend the sanctity of the motherland. Only by staying united can we preserve the diversity in our culture and traditions and build a Nepal where plurality of ideas and thoughts is practiced.

**Anonymous**

- Wonderful article by Amrit Gurung. It needs courage to write a piece like this during times of inflamed passions.

**DK**

- Amrit Gurung speaks the truth. We are unique in many respects but focusing only on our differences won't take us ahead. I am a Chettri, but my family is as poor and oppressed as Janajatis and my forefathers have never been part of the ruling elite. So instead of seeing each other as enemies, let's come together and work as one.

**Khamdesh**

- I share Amrit Gurung's sentiments. It's up to us educated and privileged Nepalis not to lose sight of the dream we all harbour for a peaceful, unified and prosperous Nepal while also engaging in discussions to find solutions to our pressing problems. Nepathya have been

- While I agree with most of what Amrit Gurung says, language is a very tricky and sensitive issue. It's true that Nepali unites us all, but we must make sure that people whose mother tongue is not Nepali are not systematically and socially discriminated as they are today. In schools, in official papers, everywhere Nepali is the de facto language. But this pushes people who are not fluent in Nepali to the fringes. If we are to have a truly inclusive and just Nepal, we must respect and let all languages and dialects prosper.

**Nepali Ket**

- Nepali is the language of a few privileged groups in Nepal. But the language was forced on non-Nepali-speaking populations and is a symbol of social exclusion, cultural hegemony, and lost economic and career opportunities.

**Anonymous**

- The justice that is being demanded on the streets is not for privileged Janajatis like Amrit Gurung, but for those who have been completely neglected by the state. The centre has hardly shown any interest in our culture, language and tradition and has only promoted the culture of the ruling class Hindus.

**Abhishek Gurung**

- Why should marginalised groups abandon their cultural and linguistic identities and their way of life for the sake of harmony? The only reason people thought Nepal was 'united' was because ethnic groups had remained silent. But now they have found a voice and are asking to preserve their identity and culture. They are not trying to impinge on the rights of other groups, they just want recognition and fair treatment.

**Robin**

- Federalism has worked well only in countries where there is a legacy of strong national parties (usually only two or three parties) that do not use ethnic cleavages to bolster their vote banks. But in Nepal there is a growing tendency to politicise ethnic identities and play the 'us versus them' card to gain support.

**S Shrestha**

- I am sick of being identified by my surname and wish people would try to understand my views rather than judge me on the basis of my family name. At a time when surnames and ethnic identities should be slowly fading out, we are creating more ethnic barriers. I am afraid such practices will make Nepal less inclusive and poorer for another hundred years.

**Dhedubadar**

- Certain groups have been suppressed and discriminated for centuries, but it's possible to uplift these communities without dividing the country while keeping our Nepali identity intact. I'm a Limbu, but like Amrit Gurung I am a Nepali first. Let's focus on education and try to build a positive and peaceful environment to smoothen the transition phase.

**Pratik Limbu**

### **Nepali Times** nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #607

Q. What do you think of the Supreme Court's stay order against the CA extension bill?



Weekly Internet Poll # 608. To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. Who is to blame for the failure to declare statute on 27 May?



# Death of an institution



COMMENT  
Kanak Mani Dixit

Nepal's political class and civil society are lamenting the unceremonious demise of the Constituent Assembly. Many internationals are mortified by the turn of events, seen as one more proof of the chicanery of our political leaders.

Indeed, the loss of four years has been nothing less than heartbreaking, a time that should have been spent on healing, rehabilitation and reconstruction. But the CA emerged as a divisive arena rather than a place of compromise amidst diverse demands. If what we want is a good, representative constitution that promises political stability, economic growth and inclusion, we may have been saved from distress.

The primary responsibility for the CA's failure goes to the Maoists as the largest party and part of the state establishment of Nepal since coming above ground in 2006. Pushpa Kamal Dahal manipulated the House for his own purpose, and his radical populism pushed the other parties towards unhealthy compromises that would have made it into the final document.

The entire four-year process of constitution-drafting was conducted under duress, amidst Maoist intimidation and threats of revolt. The Assembly laboured under the shadow of the gun: the cantonments with their combatants remained under Maoist chain-of-command throughout until early April 2012.

The rules of procedure of the CA itself made compromise difficult. The thematic committees required only 50 per cent majority to send their reports to the plenary, and this ensured grandstanding from the start. The fact that both the CA and Legislature-Parliament were made up of the same members fatally affected the possibility of compromise, and government formation always took precedence.

The CA stopped being a House of 601 after its term of office was self-extended at the end of the mandated two years. At that time, the negotiations entered the



BIKRAM RAI

## The Constituent Assembly provided an example of how not to write a constitution

windowless room where 15-20 leaders called the shots, and Dahal took over as the chair of the 'dispute resolution sub-committee'. The original provisions for countrywide public consultations were done away with.

The claim that '80 percent' of the drafting work was complete held no water since critical issues including federalism, governance, separation of powers and electoral process remained unresolved till the last. An agreement was reached on 15 May between the three main parties and the Madhesi force on a mixed presidential/prime ministerial model, mixed direct/proportional elections, and a constitutional court. And yet, on 27 May, neither the CA members nor even the Chair of the Constitutional Committee had the agreed text in their hands. A handful of party leaders sitting across the sofa believed they could decide the fate of the entire country.

We were being handed a system where the president would have a supposed constitutional position but be directly elected from the people, while the prime minister would be chief executive, but be indirectly elected through the

legislature. In the Nepali context, this system was readymade for the evolution of an autocratic presidency, something we would have had to fight for years to reverse. If the fount of all social justice, economic growth and social development is democratic practice, then we were about to lose it with our eyes wide open.

The constitution, if promulgated according to the 15 May agreement, would have introduced a mixed election to the House of Representatives, with 55 per cent of the MPs directly-elected and 45 per cent through proportional representation. This privileging of the proportional system, while promoted as a tool for inclusion, would have weakened the representation of the people at the central legislature. With the identity movements of hill and plain gaining such potency over the past decade, it is intriguing that politicians and activists did not want to fight for 'proportionality' in election candidatures.

A Constitutional Court is not in itself undemocratic. But its installation would have isolated the Supreme Court, which has been critical in recent times for

protecting rule of law and the institutions of state against those bent on destruction.

On state restructuring there was a sudden glimmer of hope on 27 May, with a spirit of compromise in the meeting between the 'Janajati Caucus' and the political parties. It is not clear who pulled the plug, some say the Madhesi forces while others point to 'anti-federalists', yet others point to Dahal who was feeling very vulnerable vis-a-vis the rebel faction within his party.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had other things on his mind, however. Without consulting many of his coalition partners, without resigning from his post as required by practice and decorum, he called for elections on 22 November. He was clearly out of line, but with the President having placed him in the rank of caretaker prime minister, the focus now is on elections.

The job of the polity is now to rescue the elections from its unhealthy provenance, and from the hands of the caretaker prime minister. The polls must be conducted as a healthy and principled exercise unlike the one of April 2008, which was treated more like a part of the peace process.

Looking ahead, the plan should be for a national unity government made up of a few politicians holding the public's trust, who can concentrate on good governance and organisation of the polls. That election, ideally, would be for a Parliament with membership below 300. It would set up a constitutional advisory body to mine the mountain of material from the constitutional debates in the CA. The advisory panel would submit a draft constitution to Parliament which would be debated and adopted within six months to a year.

Nepal has wasted too much time in chaos and uncertainty, ten years of war plus six more, with nothing to show for it other than deepening impoverishment of the already-poor. We were about to accept an immature document as our constitution, out of sheer exasperation and fatigue. That is not how a constitution should be promulgated, and we now know what not to do when we get around to it again. 🇳🇵

A longer version of this article can be accessed at [www.kanakmanidixit.com](http://www.kanakmanidixit.com)

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# Conveniently left



THIS IS IT

Rubeena Mahato

There are conflicting accounts about who delivered the coup de grâce to the constitution on Sunday night. In his off-the-cuff address to the nation Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai blamed “status quoists” in the NC and UML. The NC and UML say it was the Maoists who deliberately avoided a last-minute compromise.

The NC and UML have never really felt any ownership for the demand of a constituent assembly nor for federalism based on ethnicity. These were not their key demands of the 2006 democracy movement, and they went along with it only because the Maoists had to be appeased for peace.

The CA was just a means to an end for the Maoists, and when it was no longer useful, they let it go. Identity-based federalism was proving to be intractable, but the parties had found a workable formula in the offer by Janajati activists late on Sunday to accept multiple-ethnic labels. But the Madhesis didn't agree, and Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal decided to let the CA lapse and announce elections.

It is clear that the 22 November election will be a de facto referendum on federalism based on identity. The Maoists will be painting the NC and UML as those opposed to change, while the NC and



BIKRAM RAI

## Nepalis have moved on, but our communal communists are still dreaming of utopia

UML will do their utmost to prove the Maoists right. It will be an election campaign in which ethnicity and politics will be mixed into a highly combustible powder. Left-leaning commentators are saying social harmony is a euphemism for perpetuating the status quo, almost supporting a descent into anarchic violence. As if communal co-existence and equality are mutually exclusive.

It is necessary to acknowledge past wrongs for the state to take steps to correct them. But does that have to be through extreme hate speech and stoking a revenge mentality unless a questionable model of federalism is approved? The openly racist slogans at the Janajati and Bahun-Chhettri demonstrations across the country give us reason

to fear the worst. Some of this is echoed in writings of commentators who almost seem to want this country to be rent asunder.

By using unrestrained racist language to simplistically heap blame on everything in Nepal's history on Bahun-Chhettris, ethno-communists are taking the country down a dangerous path. Such extreme rhetoric closes the door on dialogue and compromise, and can be precursors to the kind of violence that have destroyed other countries in recent history. On social media, the retaliatory barbs from the other side have become just as alarming.

It is a dangerous assumption that once Nepal's ethnic groups have their states, all problems will resolve themselves. We

have seen from Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Nigeria that it never happens that way. The hate-mongering last week between Rai and Limbu activists over rival claims in Sunsari could be a sign of things to come in other contested territories.

In the marketplace of ideas, public intellectuals are supposed to find meeting points, a common minimum understanding to steer the country towards a peaceful resolution, not become communalists whipping up antagonism and resentment.

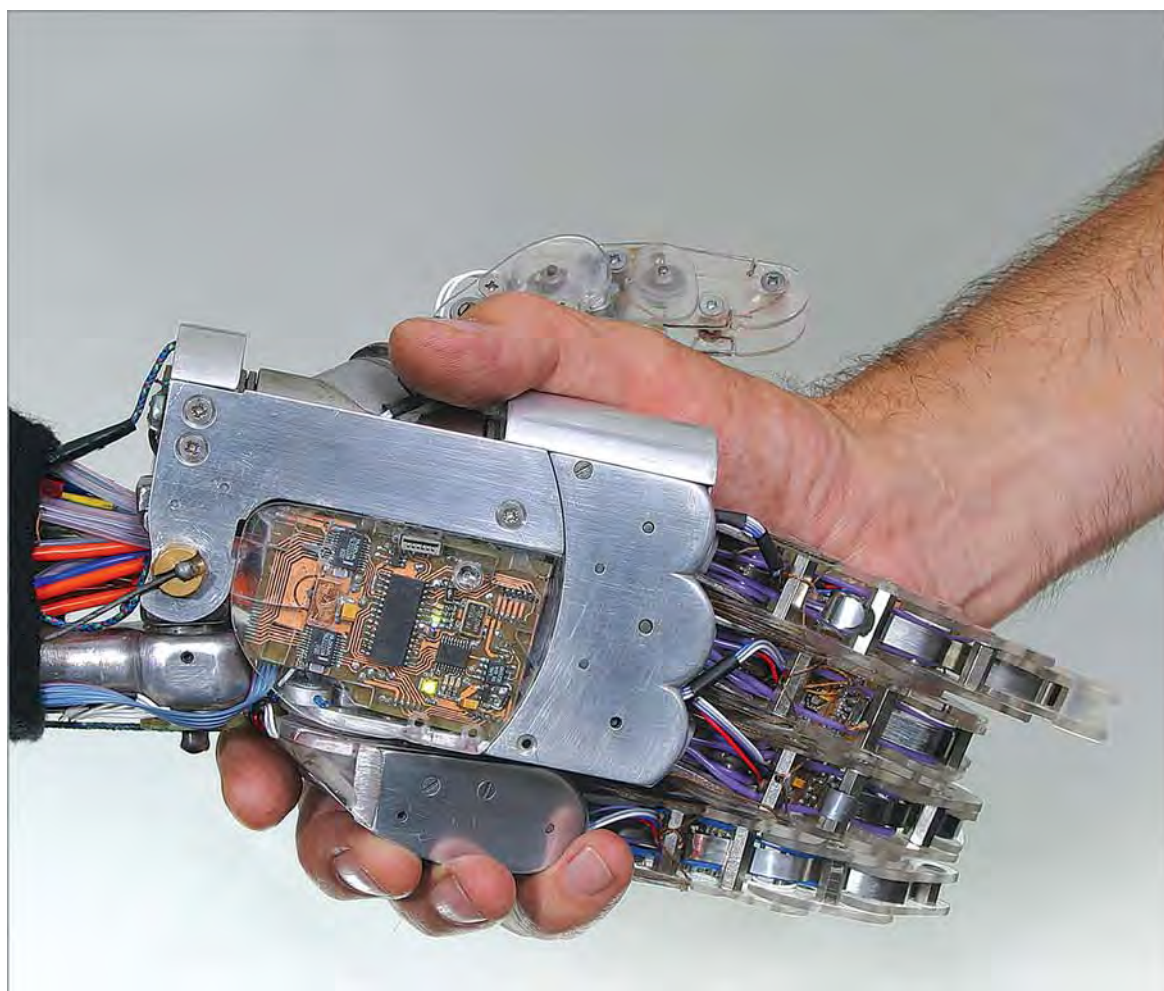
What an irony that the so-called status quoists have more constructive ideas about workable models of federalism than the red elite. They are offering practical solutions on making federalism work, to

realistically improve access of the marginalised to resources and equalise state-community relations. Advocates of non-ethnic federalism, many of them Janajatis themselves, have done pioneering work in decentralisation and community models in the country. But all we hear from the Maoists and their recent converts are slogans. Nepalis are up to here with slogans.

A debate is healthy when both sides come up with compelling arguments. At least this is how it works in democratic and pluralistic societies. Hateful remarks, accusations and provocations are best suited to propaganda-driven communist dictatorships. People don't believe anymore that 'eggs will have to be broken to make an omelette'. Nepalis have moved on, but our communal communists are still dreaming of utopia.

The disillusionment is now complete: except for the party cadre and other opportunists no one really believes the Maoists have the people's well-being at heart when they deliver grand speeches about liberation. The comrades know this, and that is why they will be trying to use the ethnic card in November's elections.

On an issue as critical as state restructuring and system of governance, it may be best to let people decide for themselves. A referendum would allow Nepalis to directly vote for what they think is best for them. Let the people decide, not the pundits, they have always displayed more common sense and compassion. 🇳🇵



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# Not all doom and gloom

## Politics aside, Nepal's macroeconomic indicators are doing well thanks to a strong dollar



MY TWO PAISA

Paavan Mathema

This week, the Nepali rupee reached the lowest level against US dollar with the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) fixing the selling price of dollar at Rs 89.30, and the buying price at Rs 88.70. A year ago on Thursday the dollar was selling at Rs 72.57.

The freefall of the Nepali rupee against the dollar is not good news for the economy, but it is not happening because of anything Nepal has done, or not done. The NPR peg to the INR which cushioned us against our own non-performing economy is now also the reason why the Nepali rupee is affected by the misfortunes of the Indian rupee.

India's widening trade and current account deficits, coupled with declining foreign fund inflows, have depressed the Indian rupee. India spends nine per cent of its GDP in subsidising basic necessities and fuel. With the increase in oil prices, India's trade deficit has increased by 56 per cent this year. Removing subsidies is not an option for an already weak UPA government. The crisis in the Eurozone is not helping either.

Essentially, there is nothing Nepal can do about it. Our rupee leans on its Indian counterpart, and so when the Indian rupee falls, we tumble down too. As the dollar becomes stronger in the global financial market, currencies of emerging markets have depreciated against the dollar. Currently, the Indian currency is one of the worst performing currencies against the dollar.

The dollar can be expected to rise further in the future if the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) does not intervene. RBI's target on arbitrage and speculation in futures and options markets, and its order to exporters of repatriating INR instead of holding dollars seem to have been ineffective so far. So there is nothing we in Nepal can do but wait, and watch, and suffer.

For an import based country like ours, higher exchange rates will put pressure on import prices and push inflation, which currently stands at seven per cent. Merchandise import has increased by 18 per cent to Rs 339.84 billion in the last nine months, and the appreciation of the dollar is unlikely to dampen these figures.



The strong dollar will also make payment of foreign loans and interests expensive. The Rs 20 billion allocated by the government to pay the principle and interest in the current fiscal year's projects will no longer be sufficient. Since fuel prices are bound to rise if this trend continues, expect longer queues at the gas stations, and more political instability as various pressure groups try to use price hikes to fuel street protests.

However, the rising dollar has helped

inflate Nepal's economic figures. If you looked beyond the political news last week, you would have noticed some positive developments on the economic front. Nepal's export has already risen by 15.9 per cent this fiscal year, from five per cent a year ago. Remittance inflow has grown by 36.5 per cent to Rs 248 billion in the same period. Income from tourism has risen by 28.9 per cent. A lot of this has to do with the appreciation of the dollar.

After remaining in deficit for two years, the country's balance of payments registered its highest ever surplus of Rs 91.37 billion during the first three quarters of 2011/12 fiscal year. The gross foreign exchange reserves surged by 42.2 per cent to Rs 386.96 billion in mid-April 2012 from Rs 272.15 billion last year.

The dollar alone is certainly not responsible for these figures. What it shows is that despite political uncertainty, power shortages and strikes, our economy managed to do more than just stay afloat. The test will be to monitor if these figures drop and by how much when the dollar stabilises. The Nepal Investment Board was finally given charge of large-scale prestige projects, but this coincided with the demise of the constitution. It won't help allay investor fear of doing business in Nepal if the country doesn't have a legislature, and not even a constitution.

But if we keep waiting for politics to settle down, we may wait forever. So let's move while we can. 🇳🇵

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Last chance on FATF, #605  
The almighty dollar, #581  
For a few dollars more, #581



# HIMAL

## KHABARPATRIKA

29 May- 14 June

### COVER

Standing in the gallows – PM Bhattarai's soaring ambitions is leading his party into an electoral trap

### EDITORIAL

Poisoned politics

### COMMENTARY

Fact of the matter  
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Failed land revolution  
Fall of the Nepali intellectual class  
Four years of Constituent Assembly  
Reporters in the line of fire

### INTERVIEW

Ishwar Pokhrel –  
General Secretary, CPN-UML

# The Euro awaits its verdict

## Salvaging the Euro dream is a possibility, but how many want it?

The creation of the euro just over a decade ago was a courageous and unique experiment. Today, the outcome – whether the euro will survive, and whether the Europeans are right to keep it – is very much in doubt.

The euro shares important features with versions of the old gold standard, under which countries fixed their exchange rates relative to each other by setting the price at which domestic currency could be redeemed in gold. But there are three differences between the euro and the gold standard – none of which is particularly reassuring at this moment.

First, the gold standard's central premise was that there was a finite quantity of gold in the world. By contrast, the European Central Bank can create more euros if desired. Governments and investors know this, and the result has been much higher debt-to-GDP ratios, with the Eurozone recording a debt-to-GDP ratio as high as 90 per cent at present. If the ECB threatens to cut off support, the whole house of cards can come tumbling down.

Second, financial markets have become huge relative to anything seen under the gold standard. With

the backing of their governments, European banks have become relative to some national economies. But these banks have been operating on a great deal of debt and very little shareholder capital – the essential buffer against potential losses. Any shock to sovereign debt or further downturn in local economies will be transmitted through an overleveraged and undercapitalised banking system to other European countries and beyond.

Finally, for all the talk today of the discipline that the gold standard supposedly provided, countries that adhered to it regularly suspended convertibility – meaning that the domestic currency could no longer be converted freely into gold. But today's Europeans have no domestic currency – just the euro. If any country – for example, Greece – left the euro, all contracts in that country would have to be rewritten. The disruption, particularly to credit, would be profound.

The news focus today is on how hard it is for the Eurozone periphery to adjust and return to growth, owing to the combination of high public debt and actual or perceived austerity

measures. But there is a flip side to the problem: capital is flowing to Germany as the regional safe haven, making credit more readily available there. The dynamics of adjustment within the Eurozone exacerbate the underlying imbalances – Germany is becoming more competitive while the periphery remains uncompetitive.

The recent Greek elections have brought more radical parties to the fore. Alexis Tsipras, the head of the Coalition of the Radical Left has a valid point: 'internal devaluation' – cutting wages and prices – is failing as a strategy. His alternative appears to be to abandon the euro. If Greece can't do better than this, he argues, then it should leave.

But this is not about Greece any longer. Italy, Spain, Portugal, and even Ireland face the same issues, but are at an earlier stage in the backlash. Unemployment is rising, their economies are not becoming more competitive, and the interest rates on their debt continue to rise. These countries may eventually decide to leave. And, even if they don't make that choice, fear of such exits can easily become self-fulfilling. The Euro system was designed

to deliver prosperity and stability for all. It has clearly failed for some countries, and it may fail for many. Severe mismanagement by European politicians has caused damage that will last for decades.

Perhaps a stronger fiscal union, a central ministry of finance, and debt sharing would reduce the difficulties and imbalances enough to allow the euro to survive. Perhaps adjustment will start to

work just in time. There is a lot of shouting in the jury room. Expect a verdict soon.  
**Peter Boone and Simon Johnson**

**Peter Boone is the chairman of Effective Intervention at the London School of Economics. Simon Johnson is a former chief economist at IMF. [www.projectsyndicate.com](http://www.projectsyndicate.com)**





# MUSICAL HIGH

London-based charity performs record breaking gig to raise funds for a Nepali orphanage



## Hat trick on the Everest



**P**hurba Tamang (*pic, right top*) has been running the Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon for three years and has won all three, this time beating his own record by running downhill from Base Camp to Namche in a lightning 3 hours 41 minutes and 31 seconds.

The world's highest marathon race has been organised every year for the last 10 years, and has participants from all over the world with 93 foreigners and 62 Nepali runners this year.

In the women's race, Ang Futi Sherpa (*pic, right below*) won the title for the fifth time in 5 hours 14 minutes 44 seconds ahead of Mingma Lama who finished it in 5 hours 15 minutes 56 seconds while Tashi Jangmu Sherpa was third at 5 hours 43 minutes 23 seconds.

Tamang, who also won the race in 2009 and 2010, took the lead right from the start and maintained it till the finishing line for the third time. He had to drop out from last year's





PICS: NASER GHAZI

RUBEENA D SHRESTHA

When British guitarist Oz Bayldon (see box) came to Nepal in 2002 to participate in an international music festival, little did he know he would be breaking world records and helping build an orphanage in Nepal.

On 16 May, Music4children, the London-based charity founded by Bayldon performed on top of 6,476m high Mera peak for 40 minutes and broke the world record for the highest gig. This was the group's second record in seven years.

Bayldon says he became eager to work for Nepali children after his experiences with street children ten years ago.

"As I was walking around Kathmandu, I met a disabled child begging on the streets. I was buying him some food when I found myself surrounded by 30 street kids and I fed them all for less than £30 pounds. That's how Music4children was born," recalls the 40-year-old.

Bayldon also helps children from poor families in his hometown in south London by offering them free DJ, drama and dance lessons at his pub, The White Lion.

Music4children first entered the record books in 2005 after their performance at Kalapathar Base Camp at 5,545m. The record was surpassed by a German band in Bolivia, but Bayldon was determined to reclaim the title.

"The Germans stole our record and we are here to win it back," he said before his team of 10 volunteers

including four musicians, two DJs, photographers and camera crew left for their two week expedition to Mera.

The money collected in 2005 was handed over to Help Network Nepal, a charity started by Nepalis living abroad, which used the funds to build an orphanage in Dhulikhel. Bayldon says the £35,000 pounds raised from this year's gig will help cover the operating costs of the orphanage for the next three years.

Dinesh Deokota of Adventure First Treks and Expeditions who has been involved with Music4children from the beginning is impressed with the team's commitment and dedication. He says, "Most climbers come to set individual records, usually on Mt Everest. Even though none of the volunteers are professional climbers, they travelled halfway across the world, took part in a difficult trek and performed in the freezing cold just to support Nepali children." He is also pleased that events like these are publicising smaller, lesser known, but equally thrilling peaks like Mera.

Bayldon, however, is not satisfied with being a record holder. He now wants to raise funds for children around the world and looks forward to performing under more challenging conditions. "We have gigs lined up in the Amazonian rainforest, at the North Pole, and one in Mexico where we will be base jumping into a crater. We are just getting started," he says, grinning.

www.music4children.org  
www.helpnepal.net

nepalitimes.com

Watch the band's performance



Jamming up

Imagine a 90-year old man with asthma hiking up a 6000 metre mountain. That's how most of us felt during our trek to Mera. We were so tired by the end that our minds went blank. But once we started jamming we remembered all the amazing people we met during our journey, we thought about our new Sherpa friends, and the children. It was this positive energy that kept us going at sub-zero temperatures.

When we found out we had raised enough money for the orphanage all of us were very ecstatic. It was even more exciting to visit the actual orphanage site in Dhulikhel and see the fruits of our hard work materialise in front of our eyes. Performing on top of a mountain is definitely a huge challenge, but we want to turn our gig into an annual event and continue doing good work for the benefit of children.

Oz Bayldon

marathon

race for health reasons. Kumar Rajbhandari finished a close second with a time of 3 hours 54 minutes 51 seconds and defending champion Sudip Kulung Rai finished third at 4 hours 54 seconds.

"I want to compete in the

race next year and make a new record by winning the marathon the fourth time," says Tamang who also took a \$1,000 cash prize.

"The Everest marathon is a unique adventure sport and serves as a big boost to Nepal's tourism industry just at the end of the mountaineering season," says marathon organiser Shikhar Pandey.

Besides the Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon, there is a separate event called the Everest Marathon that has been organised for the past 15 years along the same route and the next event is in November.

The marathon marks 29 May International Everest Day, the date of the first ascent of Mt Everest by Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953.

www.everestmarathon.com



nepalitimes.com

Faster than the rest, by Sagun Lawoti, #300

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EVENTS



**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATIONS**, a three day event organised by Children for Green New Nepal to mark World Environment Day, programs include a recycled paper fashion show, street drama, mass rally, and documentary screening. 3 to 5 June, Patan Durbar Square, 985112770/9803173798

**Kathmandu Eco Ride 3**, Step for Miles has organised a cycle ride from Patan Durbar Square to Basantapur to mark World Environment Day and promote bicycle rides in the valley. 2 June, 6am to 9am, Patan Durbar Square



**WORDMILL SPECIAL: POETRY UNDER THE SHADE**, spend a quiet afternoon listening to poems from both Nepali and international poets with Nepal's first slam poetry group, the Word Warriors followed by poetry reading sessions by poet Tom Healy. 3 June, 4pm to 5pm, Ramalaya, Pani Pokhari

**Haiku Hangout**, explore unconventional ways of writing haikus while you sip tea and hangout. 9 June, 9am to 3pm, Sarvanam Theatre, Kalikasthan

**Saturday Birdwatching**, Bird Conservation Nepal is organising birdwatching trips to mark World Environment Day. Stroll through the forests of Nagarjun as you observe rare birds. 2 June, 6.30 am, Nagarjun Gate, 9841330576

**Spalsh Fest '12**, Beat the heat this summer with water football, live music and a lot of food and beverages to keep you cool. Rs 1499, 2 June, 10am onwards, Godavari Village Resort, www.water-football.com



**NEPAL APPRECIATION**, an art exhibition by Miriam E Krantz. 24 May to 5 June, 10.30 am to 6pm, closed on Saturdays, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 5522307, www.parkgallery.com.np

**Peace**, 17 artists have come together to set up an art exhibition celebrating Buddha Jayanti. 3 May to 3 June, 11am to 5.30 pm, The Art Shop, Durbarmarg, 4267063, 9841444848

MUSIC

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



**ALBATROSS UNPLUGGED**, Don't miss a live performance by Albatross. 2 June, 7.30 pm, Attic, Lazimpat

**Live Music Night**, Shabnam and Cannabiz band playing every Wednesday, Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex.

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

DINING

**Olive Garden**, one of the finest restaurants in town serving fusion cuisine from the mediterranean. Every Friday, 12 pm to 2.30 pm and 6.30 pm to 10.30 pm, Olive Garden, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818, outlets@radkat.com.np



**G CAFÉ**, spic and span with a palatable menu, this restaurant is definitely worth a visit. Boudha

**Dragon Café**, enjoy momos, sizzlers and vegetable coins at the most reasonable prices. Kumaripati

**Japanese Crepe Station**, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. Khichapokhari and Basantapur. Call 4256655



**CAFE HESSED**, for those with a sweet tooth, offers a delicious range of cupcakes and doughnuts. Jhamsikhel

**New Tushita Restaurant**, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on their penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, 44432957

**Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café**, enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of Boudha stupa. Boudha, 2130681

**Moondance Restaurant**, one of the few places in Pokhara that you just can't miss; wash down its superb pizza

and Lemon Chicken with a glass of mojito. Pokhara

**Boomerang Restaurant and German Bakery**, offers a large selection of cuisine for those who want to enjoy a full meal, if not one you always sample their equally appetising bakery items. Lakeside, Pokhara, 065-461412, 462978, 463474

**Chili Bar and Restaurant**, from Nepali to European cuisine, this restaurant serves delectable dishes along with a dance floor and happy hour serving some amazing cocktails. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Comfort Zone**, expansive restobar with a decent range of cocktails and barbeque meats. Thamel

**Café Du Temple**, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and beautiful roof top view. Patan Durbar Square, 5527127. Boudha, 2143256

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

**Sal's Pizza**, almost round, almost cheap, always delicious, the cheesiest pizzas in town. Lazimpat, behind Jazz Upstairs

**Milk Coffee and Cocktail Café**, coffee house during the day and a cozy

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# Learning from Master Harold



Since its inception, One World Theatre has made it a point to showcase plays on social justice issues. Their latest production, *Master Harold and the boys* is set in apartheid South Africa and explores the fragile bond between a young white boy, Master Harold (or Hally) and his middle-aged black servants Sam and Willie.

Director Deborah Merola's adaptation of Athol Fugard's drama opens in an English style tea-room in the 1950s. We are introduced to Sam and Willie, played by Rajkumar Pudasaini and Ashant Sharma respectively who are cleaning the room, while engaging in childish banter about ballroom championships and the possibility of Willie's girlfriend having two left feet when an angst-ridden Hally portrayed by Alan Gurung makes his entry. In a world where inter-racial relationship is forbidden, the three characters struggle to maintain their camaraderie while upholding social norms. Hally in particular is troubled by the injustices perpetrated by his people against Sam and Willie. Rajkumar Pudasaini gives an excellent performance, switching

effortlessly from the role of a humble servant to a strong, dignified black man. Ashant Sharma's goofy stunts provide comic relief in an otherwise intense play. Debutant Gurung captures the cynical Hally beautifully and is a promising actor. Watch out for the gags between Sam and Willie.

Even though the play is based 50 years ago, Nepali audience can easily relate to the characters' plight. Like Nepal, South Africa also faced numerous problems during its peace process and writing a fair post-apartheid constitution was a huge battle. Sam and Hally's conversation about social reformers closely parallels our own conversations about the need for a saviour. And Fugard's analogy of the world as ballroom dancing where one never collides with another is an apt description of Nepali society.

**Sabhyata Timsina**

Directed by Deborah Merola  
Produced by Mita Hosali  
Moksh, Jhamsikhel  
Opening 31 May till 3 June, 5.30 pm  
Rs 500 or Rs 200 (for students)  
oneworldtheatreinnepal@gmail.com or 9808554122



lounge serving cocktails at night, try its yarchagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbucks. *Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg*



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

**Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar**, have a BBQ lunch and a glass of wine or beer inside the peaceful Garden of Dreams. *Thamel, 4425341*



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

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

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

**Picnic**, enjoy this Korean restaurant which offers heaping portions at affordable prices. *Thamel*



**SINGMA FOOD COURT**, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. *Pulchowk, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078*

**Fuji Bakery**, tucked in Chakupat this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat and banana cake. *Chakupat*

## GETAWAYS



**WATER FRONT RESORT**, this eco-friendly resort has it all whether it be birdwatching, paragliding, horse riding, mountain biking or boating. *Sedi Height, Lakeside, 977-61-466370, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*

**Monsoon Madness**, escape the heat this summer with a two days and three nights package at Shangri La Village Resort in Pokhara. *Rs 4999, Shangri La Village Resort, Pokhara, for more details call 4412999 ext. 7566/7503/7524*

**Holiday at Grand Norling Hotel**, enjoy a quiet weekend at Gokarna. *One night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000, call 447948, Gokarna*

# Across borders

Starting 2 June photo.circle is offering photography classes for amateurs and enthusiasts. The classes will take place on the first Saturday of every English month. Valencia based Nepali photographer Rohan Thapa, and Spanish photographer Arantxa Cedillo will facilitate the first session. They will be sharing their experiences of working in two different continents and cultures.

2 June, 9.45 am, The Bakery Café, Sundhara



ARANTXA CEDILLO



**SOMEPLACE ELSE**

# The Factory




PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

The Factory at Mandala Street is one of those few places in Thamel which was established not for backpackers but for Kathmandu's young and urbane crowd. Very popular amongst the whos who of the valley, The Factory has gained quite a reputation for itself as being the place to be seen at on Friday evenings. The bar menu is extensive and offers everything from fine single malt whiskies to sangria by the pitcher. Factory's décor sets it apart from the multitude of restaurants spread throughout Thamel. Its ultra-modern with an industrial theme running throughout- one that even extends to the restrooms and the (silly) boiler suits that the waiters wear. The bright red cushions in the lounge section provide a vibrant contrast to the otherwise stark walls. Also

someone has gone through a lot of trouble creating intricate designs with rope curtains on the windows giving the place a trippy feel. The resto-bar is apparently packed in the evenings but it was very quite during lunch. Considering we were the only two diners, the service could have been better. I had heard a lot of good things about The Factory and I wanted to give them the benefit of doubt- maybe they were just having an off day. But that streak of 'offness' lasted throughout our meal. Maybe deciding to order Thai dishes wasn't the best idea- but that's me providing them with an excuse. For what right does a restaurant have to display dishes on its menu that it's not too sure about. The Som Tam Kung lacked crunch and was bland- no fire, no fish oil and

there was more carrot than green papaya. The Sautéed Lemon Garlic Prawns were cooked just right, but there was no flavour of either garlic or lemon, and neither did it come nestled on a bed of house mix lettuce as described in the menu. The mixed Chicken and Shrimp was, in a word, disastrous. The recommended BBQ Chicken Thai Style was just a dry chicken cutlet served with rice and sweet chilli sauce. At the cost of sounding nitpicky, the only thing that was good about that dish was the plain boiled rice. Thai cuisine is defined by its robust shrimp, garlic, lemongrass and chili paste that come together to create dishes that are exquisite and packed with piquancy and zest. This is where The Factory goes wrong- the food lacks zing.

The cheesecake was supposed to be the restaurant's saving grace as vouched by a fellow foodie, but the dessert was not available on the day we were there. The dishes are well presented and generously portioned. The prices are reasonable and the place itself is a definite must visit, if for nothing else than just to see and be seen. It's such a pity about the food though.  **Ruby Tuesday** *Look for Sagarmatha Complex and Mandala Street in Thamel. The flight of stairs leading up to Factory is on the left.*





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# The White Ribbon



Michael Haneke, the 70-year-old Austrian filmmaker, made his first feature film when he was 47. Despite this slightly tardy start, as of this week, Haneke has become one of the very few to win the incredibly prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival twice over. His first win was in 2009 for the film *The White Ribbon*, a powerful, disturbing, yet absolutely riveting film set in a small protestant German town just before the beginning of the First World War. His second win, this week, is for his film *Amour*, which follows an ailing elderly couple through their last days together. In honour of this week's win, the Palme D'or being *the* prize in the world of serious cinema, I'd like to revisit *The White Ribbon* – one of the best, most masterful films I have seen in the last few decades, a tour de force that shows a film-maker at the pinnacle of his career. Very soon into the beginning of this unforgettable film,

the pastoral, idyllic German small town setting, shot in classic black and white, is disturbed by a malicious accident. The town doctor is riding home from seeing a patient when just in view of his house his horse trips over a wire that has been stretched out between two trees across the horse's path. Grievously injured, the doctor survives, the horse does not, and everyone is mystified and unnerved by the underhand nature of the crime. The film develops slowly as a wide range of characters are introduced - the doctor's charming and innocent daughter; his helper, the children's nurse who has a retarded son (and who is also the widowed doctor's lover); the town's intractable, stern priest who exacts punishment on his long-suffering children at the slightest show of pride (or any other of the seven deadly sins); the Baron, who is a feudal lord of sorts in the town, and his beautiful, isolated Italian wife and toddler son. As the characters develop, the narrative of the town's series of increasingly horrifying accidents is related to us through the voice of the young, patient, bespectacled school-teacher who is uniquely positioned to know and understand all the children in the town. It is his voice that brings all of the bizarre events into some perspective with its instinctive kindness. When the Baron's son is whipped viciously and found hanging upside down, and the nurse's retarded son is also assaulted, to name a few of the chilling incidents that start to crop up in the slow, pastoral life of the town, everyone is unsettled, everything is off-kilter, and the townspeople are filled with increasing unease as they look towards each other, wondering at the culprit, or, as it becomes increasingly clear – culprits. The film is hard to fit into any kind of genre; it is a drama, tinged with the quality of a thriller, full of events worthy of any successful horror film. Haneke paints his characters without sentimentality, but with understanding. His style is the closest cinematic equivalent to the novel's omniscient narrator; the difference here is that although by the end of the film we have a fairly certain knowledge of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes, we are still left wondering "Why?" As with his other earlier and equally unnerving, excellent film *Cache* or *Hidden*, in English, no fingers are pointed. We are treated to a slow unfolding of a series of mysterious, deeply disturbing events, and are left to decide and wonder as the credits roll. If you haven't seen *The White Ribbon* nor heard of Haneke, now would be the time to fix this gap in your knowledge of truly worthwhile cinema. 🇳🇵

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available at: Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone # 014700092

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

Watch trailer

# Controversial cholesterol



A new finding published recently in the medical journal Lancet, shows that high levels of high density lipoprotein (HDL), the good cholesterol, may not be as good as it was once thought to be. This discovery has caught doctors, scientists, and drug companies off guard. HDL, unlike the bad cholesterol, low density lipoprotein (LDL), carries cholesterol out of the arteries and prevents blockages and disease in the lumen of the arteries. Hence it was believed that HDL protects the heart and ensures a healthy supply of blood and nutrients. However, Lancet has published very disturbing yet compelling evidence which disproves earlier theories about HDL. According to the report, heart attack rates among people

who are genetically predisposed to high levels of HDL and those with lower levels of HDL were no different. In all fairness, there is indeed an immense body of evidence that associates high levels of HDL with low levels of heart attacks. But there is a



difference between association and causal effect. For example, at one time there was only an association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer, but now we can authentically state that smoking causes lung cancer. Such causal data regarding low levels of HDL and

increased incidence of heart disease is lacking. Of course the results from other ongoing research studying the link between HDL and heart diseases are awaited and now more than ever, scientists are holding their breath to see how this cholesterol saga unfolds. Drug companies are sorely disappointed because they were working on commercial drugs which would directly help increase HDL levels. If future studies of HDL successfully replicate the results of the Lancet report, these drugs might no longer be produced. Thankfully the Lancet study has not influenced two important dogmas: high levels of cholesterol (especially LDL) are clear-cut risk factor for heart attacks and statins are still the drug of choice for prevention and treatment of heart attacks in susceptible individuals. So if you are an adult, check your lipid profile regularly. And if it's on the higher side, try changing your eating habits and lifestyle, or use statins after consulting your doctor. 🇳🇵

## WEEKEND WEATHER

The annual tug-o-war between an advancing monsoon and the westerlies willkeep us guessing about the arrival of the south-west monsoon. The reason it is called "south-west" although it arrives in Nepal from the south-east is because the moist, warm wind from the Bay of Bengal makes a sharp westerly turn when it hits the Himalaya. The usual arrival date for the monsoon is 8-15 June, although it has been two weeks late for the past few years. This year, it may be a few days late, and the ebb and flow of the monsoon front has already started. Eastern Nepal got its first drenching on Tuesday before the rains were chased back. Expect brief pre-monsoon thunder showers into the weekend that will give us some respite from the heat, but the high humidity will make it feel hot and sticky.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
30-18	29-17	29-17



BIKRAM RAI

**IN FOCUS:** A van packed with protestors against ethnicity-based federalism joins others stationed outside the CA building on Sunday, the day the CA expired.



BIKRAM RAI

**CARTOGRAPHY:** A girl from the Limbu community demanding Limbuwan state outside the CA building in Baneshwor on Sunday, with a map of the proposed state painted on her cheek.



BIKRAM RAI

**DREAMLAND:** A Kirat girl looks on at the commotion outside the CA building on Sunday.



# Out of the darkness

A national unity government with elections by November is the least parties can now give dejected Nepalis



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

A long chapter in Nepal's political transition that started with the 12-point agreement in November 2005 to the April 2006 democracy movement and ceasefire, the Madhes movement, and the 2008 CA elections ended on 27 May. And it was a letdown.

Lawmakers who had waited all day for a political consensus were close to tears in the darkness of the BICC on Sunday night. "What will I tell my people who have waited for so long for the constitution they believe would finally guarantee their rights and dignity?" asked the crestfallen Dalit lawmaker Bishwendra Paswan, as he stood in a corner of the big hall long after the others had gone.

The damage has been done, and the past is the past. But there are times when the record must be set straight. Last month, Minister for Communication and MJF-Republican leader Rajkishor Yadav told me the final negotiations would be between those who stand for change and those who resist it.

Indeed, the final hours of the CA saw a dramatic polarisation in Nepali politics where all kinds of alliances were formed and parties, civil society groups, sections of the media and individuals took positions in favour of constitution with federalism and against it.

The narratives may differ



NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

and the two sides gave differing accounts of what happened to justify their stance, but by holding a public position to postpone the issue of ethnic federalism in the constitution against the aspirations of two-third of the country's population, the NC and UML have been exposed of their ethnocentric politics.

This has irreversibly damaged the historical image of the two parties as defenders of democracy and their failure to gauge janajati sentiments has irked their leaders to an extent that many have resigned from the party and declared that they

would form their own party and contest the upcoming elections. The history does repeat itself.

Pradeep Giri is a bête noir even within his own NC for speaking his mind. He doesn't suffer fools and didn't mince his words when he told me this week that mainstream political parties suffer from a narrow worldview of identity issues. "The proponents of liberal democracy, represented by the NC and UML and the new democracy represented by the Maoists, both approached the identity debate through their own prisms and failed miserably," he said.

Giri's views go to explain the way subaltern movements gained momentum in Nepal, and how they are increasingly defining the landscape of Nepali politics. The cross-party Janajati caucus and the Madhesi Front were born out of their respective protest movements. But, while the Madhesi were able to assert themselves into a political block, janajati movement remained an off-shoot of an existing ideological debate and fell victim to the squabbles for power. The parties abused identity debate to hold the statute drafting hostage to their partisan politics. The

neglect proved costly as it further radicalised the Janajatis and Madhesi who came together to put pressure on the parties. They hit the streets and mobilised popular support, but the CA was dissolved before a constitution addressing those demands could be passed.

Hapless CA members got a lot of flak for lazing about at tax-payer's expense, but the culture of dissent it established by challenging the frontiers of traditional loyalties and rising above partisan interests to fight for collective rights, is a valuable contribution that will make Nepali democracy much stronger in the days to come

After letting the CA lapse, Baburam Bhattarai called for fresh elections in November. In spite of grave disillusionment the people will still vote, but the parties must first work together to form a national unity government. The Maoists and Madhesi must understand that as a matter of principle they can't, and shouldn't, go it alone. The NC and UML must also call off their protest programs and engage constructively in the government formation process.

Nepalis want the parties, for once, to focus on the people's needs and not their personal greed. A smooth formation of a national unity government is the least parties can do to regain the trust of their dejected constituency.

The dissolved CA has left behind valuable work in the draft that was readied for deadline which should not be wasted. A future CA can carry on where this one left off.

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# Truth without justice is an insult



PICS: NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI

Every few months, Purnimaya visits her family home in Dapcha that is now locked up as she lives in Kathmandu with her children. After her husband was taken and killed by the Maoists, Purnimaya began campaigning for truth and justice, which Maoist party cadres responded to with threats. Purnimaya says she would like to return to live in the village some day.

The case became notorious: the First Information Report (FIR) was filed only after considerable lobbying from family and after lawyers

named UCPN(M) Constitutional Assembly member Agni Sapkota. But police never questioned Sapkota or any other accused, let alone make any arrests. Purnimaya Lama is determined to know why.

"I need proof. If he is dead, let me bury him. If he is alive bring him home. How long must I wait? No matter who we approach no one listens. How long must I live with this uncertainty?" Purnimaya Lama, wife of Arjun Lama.

ROBERT GODDEN

"When a member of a family is disappeared, that family is completely destroyed. If the sons or daughters of our politicians were taken like my brother was, perhaps then they would understand our experience and feelings and be willing to do something about it." Rajeev Kumar Karna, brother of Sanjeev Kumar Karna.

Purnimaya Lama never abandoned her quest for justice. Her husband Arjun was taken by Maoist cadres in 2005. Witnesses say they held him for two months before he was killed.

Yet again Nepal's political leaders are stalling on commitments to prosecute and punish those among them responsible for human rights abuses during the conflict. As they haggle to save their own skins, the voices of victims and their families demanding justice continue to be ignored.

Lawmakers want to replace bills creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and a Commission on Disappearances with a new draft that lacks clauses prohibiting amnesty for serious abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law carried out during the armed conflict. The NC, UML and Maoists have apparently agreed to reduce the commissions' mandate to truth-telling and reconciliation, making it unlikely that anyone would be tried and punished for these horrendous crimes. After a long hard struggle,



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Sanjeev Kumar Karna, Durgesh Kumar Labh, Pramod Narayan Mandal, Shailendra Yadav and Jitendra Jha were shot dead by the Kamala river, after being arrested by security forces on 8 October 2003. They were allegedly involved in Maoist student activities.

“The government does not want to address incidents from the conflict years. They do not want to prosecute the accused because the very powerful are involved. First the Nepal Army and second the Maoist party. There are agreements saying such crimes should be punished but I feel there is a



tacit agreement to brush everything under the carpet”. Govinda Bandi, Senior Legal Advisor, International Commission of Jurists. The tap where Sanjeev Kumar Karna was bathing in the outskirts of Janakpur, (above) when a joint team of the Police and Army arrested him and four other young men in October 2003. Karna and his four friends were later killed by the banks of a river and buried.

economic hardship and intimidation, the proposed changes could deny justice to thousands of victims and their families.

Purnimaya and Rajeev are not alone. Thousands of families continue to seek answers.

“Truth without justice will not only be questioned, it will be unacceptable to us. The community of victims will be compelled to reject such meaningless transitional justice laws and mechanisms,” Ram Kumar Bhandari, Chairperson of National Network of

Families of the Disappeared and Missing (NEFAD).

Amnesty for crimes like these would violate international laws and the commitments Nepal has made through the United Nations. It would also violate the terms of Nepal’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Interim Constitution and indeed the rulings of its own Supreme Court. Nepali leaders calling for an amnesty are ignoring the voices of those most affected by the years of conflict and promoting their own self-

interests instead.

The fate of some 1,300 people who disappeared during the armed conflict remains unknown. Sanjeev Kumar Karna was among the missing. He and a group of friends were beaten and arrested by army and police while on a picnic in October 2003. Five never returned. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) exhumed the last of five bodies believed to be these victims from the banks of the Kamala River in 2011; they had apparently been blindfolded and

executed, but it has yet to confirm positive identification of the remains. A police officer the NHCR recommended for prosecution was promoted to a senior position – further insult to the victims and their families.

Robert Godden is the Asia-Pacific Campaign Coordinator at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International (AI) based in Hong Kong and has worked in Nepal between 2009-11.



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# Unceremonious demise

Editorial, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 29 May

संविधानसभा

Despite drafting a near finished constitution, Nepal's Constituent Assembly was dissolved because it failed to address some crucial issues. There is little doubt that leaders of the major political parties are responsible for the CA's demise. Nepal's CA was internationally recognised as a unique model of inclusion and representation. But its failure to live up to its reputation has led to widespread speculation that constitution drafting is a technical affair which should be left to the experts.

In four years of extended tenure, there were only 122 CA meetings. Initially Nepalis

were hopeful that the CA would address the pressing concerns of the nation. But admiration quickly turned to seething anger when people realised that the body was becoming part of the problem by spending millions of tax payers' money without any tangible return, and its 601 members were loathed for their incompetence.

The unfortunate turn of events mean that seeking fresh mandate is our only viable option. Thus the government's decision to hold elections in November must be seen in this light. However, the work done by this largest representative body should not go to waste and the future CA must build on these accomplishments to save valuable time and resources.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Blame Bhattarai

Kishor Nepal, *Nagarik*, 29 May

नागरिक

After dissolving the Constituent Assembly, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai used the election card, the strongest asset of democracy, purely for political longevity. He made such a major announcement without consulting any stake holders or even his own party. It might come as a surprise to many, but Bhattarai used the farce of fresh elections to weaken Pushpa Kamal Dahal's stature.

The campaign to demonise Dahal and tarnish his reputation

and personality started gaining momentum just as we were concluding the peace process. His way of life, working style and straight forward attitude didn't sit well with the elites of Kathmandu. However, if it wasn't for Dahal's relentless efforts to peacefully transform the Maoist party, Nepal's democracy would still be entangled in a web of violence. Even a stern leader like Girija Prasad Koirala held Dahal in great regard.

Dahal, who was revered as the great hero of the people's war and celebrated as the ultimate poster-boy for

revolution until three years ago is now seen as a traitor and murderer of 15,000 Nepalis. While Bhattarai has portrayed himself as the self sacrificing underdog due to which his popularity has soared.

It is unfortunate that the Maoist chairman is being targeted by Bhattarai in such a manner. If the constitution had been written on time, things would have been different for Dahal. But now he has been cornered, and has no other option than leading the election campaign and facing the public's questions about the CA which will deal a further blow to his status.

## “Angry we may be, we still have to work together.”



BIKRAM RAI

Interview with Baburam Bhattarai, *Nayapatrika*, 31 May

भार्या पत्रिका

**Despite lofty claims from all sides, the CA was dissolved without declaring a new constitution. What went wrong?**

This is not a time for blame game because no matter who did what, there is no alternative to consensus. So angry as we may be, we still have to be patient and work together.

**Then why did the leaders make encouraging remarks on Sunday afternoon saying they were near consensus?**

We had proposed a final negotiation on SRC's 14 state and 6 state models and requested the parties to forge consensus on these two documents. We also said that we were ready for multi-ethnic identity federalism with names that reflect common aspirations. This had created an environment for consensus. But some NC and UML leaders looked set to fail the statute drafting process and dissolve the CA. Their demand was clear- there will be no identity based federalism which was unacceptable to us.

**Why did you not postpone the federalism issue if it endangered the entire constitution declaration process?**

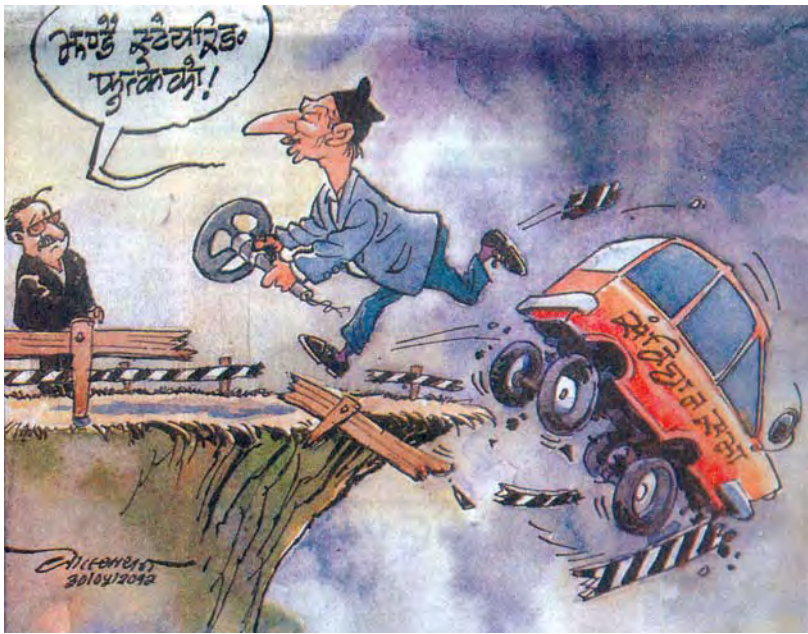
The whole purpose of writing a new constitution was to institutionalise the rights of marginalised communities and without federalism the exercise was meaningless. It is neither fair nor politically wise to go against the aspirations of majority of Nepalis for the sake of a few leaders.

**Couldn't you declare the draft of the constitution and then call a referendum?**

Until the CA was alive, referendum was impossible because it was a legitimate representative body. We could have tabled the contentious issues for voting in the CA, which would have been more democratic. But the NC and UML categorically refused to take matters to the CA.

**What is the way forward?**

The tempers are high now and it will take time to subside. But I am confident everyone will realise we have no other option than to hold fresh elections and it will be impossible to have elections unless all parties come together.



Baburam Bhattarai: Almost lost the steering  
Car: Constituent Assembly

क्रान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 31 May

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ We cannot hold CA elections again. New constitution must be declared by the legislature parliament. ”

Ram Sharan Mahat, NC central committee member, quoted in *Annappurna Post*, 31 May.

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# Cash grows on trees

Dev Pachbhaiya in Palpa in himalkhabar.com, 25 May

हिमाल

When Dhan Bahadur Pun retired from the Indian Army he could have followed his friends and joined a private security firm abroad. But he returned to his ancestral farm in Palpa at age 51 and decided to make a living from his dairy farm and orchard. But his brothers in Thailand told him about this wonder tree for which there was high demand in the perfume, incense and pharmaceutical industry.

Called agarwood, the tree is found in southeast Asia and Assam, but is endangered and its export is banned in Vietnam and other countries. But Pun's 300 ropani farm in Palpa's Bharse village is now lush with adolescent agarwood, and there are another 100,000 saplings ready for transplantation.

The tree by itself is not fragrant, but secretes a thick resin when attacked by a mould which gives it its distinctive aroma and has been traditionally used as incense. Agarwood is now in high demand in the perfume industry.

This is not another get-rich-quick story. It takes 15 years before the trees are mature enough to harvest, but Pun says it is worth the wait because the wood commands prices as high as \$30,000 per kg in the Middle East, Japan, Taiwan and China.



Pun's farm employs up to 40 people and he has put in Rs 7 million of his own savings. He says this is a long-term investment because he won't know the grade of agarwood that he will harvest for another 10 years. He started out with a few saplings imported from Thailand, but has now expanded his nursery and brought in two specialists from Assam to help him in the farm where he also raises 15 water buffalos and 75 goats.

The trees have been planted six metres apart, and in between Pun has planted local fruit and fodder trees and he is helped by his wife, Rukmaya and elder son, Ram. "My younger son doesn't want to farm. He is studying commerce in Chitwan, maybe he will manage the farm when the agarwood harvest starts coming in." Pun is also helping his ancestral village manage local schools, conserve surrounding forests and in local development.

Unlike other businessmen in Nepal who don't like competition, Pun is offering farmers from across Nepal his seedlings at cost price. Pun is using his military background to plan his farm with precision. He uses a GPS to calculate the location, slope and altitude of his farm and says 1,500 metres is the ideal altitude for agarwood farming in Nepal. Because of higher rainfall conditions are best in eastern Nepal.

Says Pun: "Agarwood has huge potential to increase farmer income since across the world native agarwood is almost gone and it must be grown as a cash crop in plantations."

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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,  
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# Effi-जी

**P**rimordial Minister BRB has been accused by critics of behaving unconstitutionally. What else is the man supposed to do? If there is no constitution, everything he does is going to be unconstitutional. In fact, any step he takes from here on (announcing elections, remaining as prime minister, resigning as prime minister, keeping his coalition intact, forming a national unity government, flying business class to Rio (for the environment summit) is going to be illegal.

Being the cunning high caste communists that they are, BRB and PKD pulled the rug from underneath the clueless NC and UML and refused to compromise on federalism on Sunday night, announce elections and then heaped blame on the NC and UML themselves for obstructing the constitution. Poor **Makunay** and **Jhusil** didn't know what hit them. They were just sitting around twiddling their thumbs at **Suchanay's** office, and when summoned to Balu Water ostensibly to declare a state of emergency, PKD looked away and BRB didn't even meet them.

Will someone tell the glorious Nepal Army that the royal days are over, and they don't need to bring out the big guns and wake everyone up at an ungodly hour to welcome Republic Day in the same way they used to wake up Kingji on his birthday? On Monday, as everyone was hungover, the capital was awoken to the sound of heavy artillery opening up at the centre of the city. Is the NAHQ in austerity mode or what? The cannonade included only five shots, instead of the usual 31-gun salute.

Now that protest season is in full swing, Nepal's beggars have decided they will be choosers. Begging bowls in hand, they gheraoed a temple in Biratnagar last week to protest stingy devotees, and held placards demanding alms "no less than Rs 5". That should be do-able. What would be slightly more complicated is if they also wanted a non-territorial province. But if it's any consolation, given the national debt and our balance of payments deficit, the whole country can be set aside for us beggars.

And you thought the Bagmati intersection had traffic jams? Look at the gridlock

this year on the Hillary Step on the South Ridge of Mt Everest. it got a lot of bad press, but Nepal's tourism authoritarians should be proud of what they have achieved. Royalty (don't we need to change that word in these politically correct times?) from mountaineering fees on Mt Everest alone this year surpassed \$3 million. As far as Chomolungma goes, our motto should be : "Climb Mt Everest: The More the Merrier."

With the numbers of climbers projected to increase to about 2,000 per season from the Nepal side alone, we have to implement a Master Plan to ease future congestion on Mt Everest. The proposal calls for a cable car service with all-around glass gondolas from Base Camp to the South Summit from where climbers can take up-down escalators to the top where there will be a revolving restaurant and a coin-operated gas station dispensing artificial oxygen.

Now that **Bohemians** and **Chhetris** are also classified as aboriginals, maybe NEFIN should give membership to the upper crusts and call it a truce. That way, maybe Ashok Rai's Janajati Party can also get the Brahmin-Chhetri vote.

While everybody is wondering whether K-Town is going to be declared the capital of Newa Rajya, the capital of Tamsaling or the capital of SAARC, the Mule's mole in Balu Water reports that Com. Yummy has become so obsessed with the idea of settling down permanently as First Lady that she now regularly dons haku patasi and entertains Hubby's guests with a revolutionary menu of MoMo chas and Chhoila. The only departure from this was Comrade Hasiya's conspicuous commie red sari during the Republic Day function.

Now that elections are coming, shops are springing up with campaign paraphernalia like used tyres, placards, banners, and lathis. But the hottest items are effigies of various political leaders. There is even an effigy-on-demand shop in Lahan which can deliver a highly inflammable lookalike of BRB in half-an-hour.

