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Hot spot

There are two types of carbon that cause Himalayan snows to melt. One is carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning that heats up the atmosphere through the greenhouse-effect. The other is tiny particles of solid carbon given off by smokestacks and diesel exhausts that are deposited on snow and ice and cause them to melt faster. Both contribute to the accelerated meltdown of the Himalaya. Yak herders below Ama Dablam (right) now cross grassy meadows where there used to be a glacier 40 years ago.

Nepal's delegation at the Rio+20 Summit in Brazil later this month will be arguing that the country cannot sacrifice economic growth to save the environment. Increasingly, that is looking like an excuse to not address pollution in our own backyard.

Full story by Bhrikuti Rai page 12-13

NO WATER? NO POWER? NO PROBLEM

How to live without electricity and water page 5

Mother country

Federalism and governance were not the only contentious issues in the draft constitution that was not passed on 27 May. Provisions on citizenship were even more regressive than in the interim constitution. There is now time to set it right.

EDITORIAL
page 2

OP-ED by George Varughese
and Pema Abrahams
page 3



BIKRAM RAI

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Only the Taliban treats women worse

There are many levels of discrimination entrenched in Nepali society, but women of all castes and creeds face double ostracisation. Our citizenship laws have always been backward, but the draft provision in the new constitution was even more regressive than the interim constitution. Only children of a Nepali mother and a Nepali father would have been eligible to citizenship. What's wrong with that, you may ask, because it puts the father and mother on an equal footing. But it is clear that these new laws have been proposed to deter children of



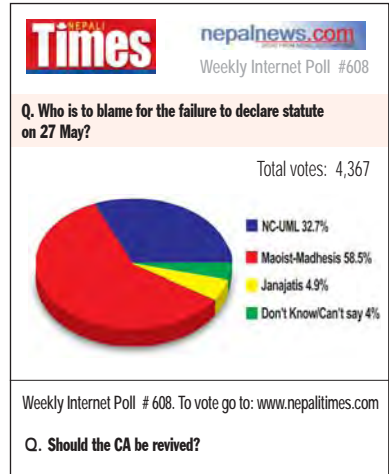
A foreigner woman marrying a Nepali man gets citizenship almost immediately, and their children get citizenship by descent. But the process is endlessly complicated for a foreigner man marrying a Nepali woman. Such a blatantly unfair clause was very nearly enshrined in our constitution had it been passed on

Given the open border with India and a bureaucracy not known for honesty, Nepal has to be sensitive about citizenship procedures. But this can, and should, be done without including openly discriminatory provisions in the new constitution, if it is ever written.

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

Six years after signing the comprehensive peace accord, victims of war and their families are still seeking justice and the state has failed to fulfil its duty ('Truth without justice is an insult', Robert Godden, #607). Our leaders will take action only if they can use the truth and reconciliation process for political leverage or if they find people who can be turned into scapegoats in

Anonymous



GEORGE VARUGHESE and
PEMA ABRAHAMS

In May, CA members drafted citizenship provisions in the country's long-awaited constitution, almost guaranteeing that approximately 2.1 million out of nearly 30 million Nepalis will remain stateless.

The specific draft provision that is deeply problematic and regressive refers to how a child may obtain citizenship by descent in New Nepal: a child would be granted Nepali citizenship if both mother *and* father prove they are Nepali citizens. In contrast, the Interim Constitution (2007), the Citizenship Act of 2006, and a Supreme Court directive of 2011 all provide for citizenship if a child is born to a Nepali mother or a Nepali father.

The 'and' provision will increase the number of stateless children in Nepal as it requires the presence of both parents at the time of registration. The absence of either parent would be enough to disqualify the child. It also means that children with one Nepali and one foreign parent would be ineligible for citizenship if the foreign parent cannot (due to conflicting provisions) or does not wish to take on Nepali citizenship.

A compromise suggested by some CA members is that the 'and' provision be accompanied by language permitting exceptions to be made in 'special situations'. But vague language permitting exceptions abandons the crucial matter of citizenship to bureaucratic discretion and does not provide any assurance that statelessness in Nepal will be reduced or



BIKRAM RAI

Stateless in New Nepal

Inclusion without citizenship is impossible

avoided. In fact, even under the relatively liberal provisions of the Interim Constitution, bureaucrats had used their discretion to avoid providing citizenship through the Nepali mother if the father was identified as a foreigner.

The debate between 'and' and 'or' has characterised the current discourse on citizenship with strong and competing notions of gender: proponents of the former favour a stricter law to deter land ownership issues resulting from cross-border marriages of Indians with Nepalis and to preserve what they see as gender equality (both parents' names will be written on the child's citizenship certificate). Proponents of the latter advocate for individual identity and value, equal access to rights for all Nepalis, and protection against future generations of stateless persons.

Some of those in favour of 'and' have expressed fear that

if 'or' were chosen, Nepal would transform from a patriarchy to a matriarchy. This dangerous conflation of patriarchy with patrilineal, and individual value and independence (or an absence of patriarchy) with matriarchy, should be immediately addressed and clarified in order to ensure a fair, well-informed debate and outcome.

Critical to the citizenship discourse is that it should not be positioned solely as a gender empowering or disempowering debate. Nepal today is a fledgling democracy at a crossroads, and is struggling to achieve a common understanding of the process of nation-building and of a national identity. The added complexity of millions of stateless people can pose serious threats to internal peace, stability, and security.

Most countries that have faced ethnic and class-based conflicts have struggled to redefine nationality laws and citizenship after conflict. The

key has been to naturalise those that are born on your soil (jus soli) and/or whose birth giver (mother or father) are citizens of that country (jus sanguinis). The logic being that if you keep them stateless on your soil, you create a community of people without allegiance – political, social, or moral – to your country.

For Nepali women, securing legal proof of citizenship can be difficult, especially when a male family member refuses to assist them (for example, if he does not accept that the child is his) or is simply unavailable to do so because he's away working in another country, like millions of Nepali migrant workers. Statelessness also has a particularly pernicious impact on children, which often impinges on their rights to education, affordable healthcare, and land ownership.

The Election Commission indicates that the number of people without citizenship papers is higher than

2.1 million. A large number of these did not vote in 2008, and unless the restrictive provisions on citizenship are changed, this number will only increase. Under proposed constitutional provisions, the children of these stateless parents could also be excluded from access to citizenship, and as generations unfold, Nepal will see sharp increases in an undocumented, uneducated population that could lead to significant and costly political and administrative hurdles. The denial of citizenship and participation in political process for a significant portion of the population will severely undermine democracy in Nepal.

As Nepal looks to finalise a new constitution, it is critical that its leaders examine the issue of citizenship outside the context of individual interest groups and power centres in its polity. If Nepal's lawmakers do not lead by example, the entrenched patriarchy and xenophobia of their constituencies will lead the country towards a looming crisis of statelessness and a potential regeneration of political instability and violence. 🇳🇵

George Varughese is country representative and Pema Abrahams is a program associate for The Asia Foundation in Nepal. Views and opinions expressed here are those of the individual author and not of The Asia Foundation.

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pabrahams@asiafound.org

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State of limbo,
by Rubeena Mahato #590

In the name of the father,
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Stateless in their motherland,
by Kunda Dixit, #563

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“Cooperation in earthquake preparedness and eco-tourism”

New Zealand's ambassador to Nepal, Jan Henderson, spoke to *Nepali Times* about her country's relations with Nepal and her visit next week for the opening of a new consulate office in Kathmandu.

Nepali Times: Given the long history of bilateral ties, why has it taken so long for New Zealand to open a consulate in Kathmandu?

Jan Henderson: Indeed, New Zealand has had a consulate in Kathmandu since 1980, reflecting the warm, positive and long standing relations between New Zealand and Nepal. The event on 12 June is to mark the shift of the New Zealand consulate to its new premises in Kathmandu, which should enable easier access and functionality. I am delighted to participate in the celebration of the move to the new office.

Which areas do you see the most potential to build on cooperation given the goodwill in New Zealand towards Nepal?

The 1953 ascent of Mt Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Mr Tenzing Norgay was a tremendously proud moment in



our history. Sir Edmund Hillary was appointed as the New Zealand High Commissioner to Nepal from 1985-1989. The development work of his Himalayan Trust organisation forms an enduring legacy. And 2011 marked the 50th anniversary of Khumjung School which was the first school built by the Himalayan Trust in 1961. I was delighted to visit Nepal last year to participate in the Trust's anniversary celebrations.

The New Zealand government established the Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship in 2008 to facilitate visits to New Zealand by young leaders from India and Nepal. We also have some valuable education connections: currently we have about a dozen postgraduate students from Nepal studying in New Zealand under the New Zealand Development Scholarship Scheme. There is potential for still closer cooperation, and some of the priority areas we are interested to develop include:

- Earthquake preparedness. Our countries share a vulnerability to earthquakes. This is an area where we could share experiences and expertise around building technology and disaster response.
- Eco-tourism. Our two countries are both welcoming to visitors. We share a strong interest in sustainable and environmentally sound development and in promoting and protecting our great natural scenery. We could explore what more we can do together to learn from each other on making our natural beauty easily accessible for visitors in a eco-friendly way.

Are there any other areas of development in Nepal that the New Zealand government would like to focus more on in the future?

The New Zealand government also

supports activities run by New Zealand organisations with their partners in Nepal. Priority is given to sustainable economic development activities, but we also consider applications that focus on basic human needs, human development and disaster risk reduction activities.

What is your assessment of the on-going constitution process in Nepal?

The New Zealand government welcomes the process of reconciliation in Nepal and we encourage continued progress towards agreement on a new constitution.

What are some of New Zealand's own experiences with Maori rights that you think would be relevant for Nepal?

The Treaty of Waitangi [in 1840] is New Zealand's founding document and provides Maori with a particular status as co-partners with the Crown. The Maori name for New Zealand is Aotearoa (meaning 'the land of the long white cloud'). We are proud of our bicultural heritage in New Zealand. Maori language schools and innovative community-based business initiatives are two areas which may be of interest to Nepal. We place a great deal of importance on inclusion: for Maori but also for other ethnic groups. Our parliament overall is increasingly diverse with growing representation by New Zealanders of Maori, Asian and Pacific Island origin.

A leadership program with a difference

In January 2008, Lisa Choegyal was in Auckland to attend the state funeral of Sir Edmund Hillary with several of her Sherpa friends. It was a grand affair that was televised throughout the world.

There, Choegyal met Geoffrey Lorigan, founder and CEO of the Institute of Strategic Leadership (ISL) who offered a scholarship to a Nepali Sherpa in memory of Edmund Hillary.

Ang Phuri Sherpa of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was selected as the first Nepali candidate to attend ISL's Strategic Leadership Program (SLP) in Queenstown on the South Island of New Zealand.

Since then, ISL has taken people like two-time Everest summiteer, Dawa Steven Sherpa, CA member and gay

rights activist Sunil Babu Pant, NC leader Gagan Thapa, and CEO of Mercantile Office Systems, Sanjib Raj Bhandari.

Choegyal, who is now the honorary New Zealand consul general in Kathmandu, says: "The feedback from all Nepali participants over the years has been that it was a life changing event, and it is also an example of the unusually strong relationship forged between Nepal and New Zealand, originally inspired by Sir Edmund Hillary's achievements and work."

ISL supports participants to build their organisation's leadership capabilities, encourage development and innovation, and assist with change initiatives. The ISL scholarship includes fees



of the one week course, but participants have to find their travel and accommodation expenses. There are now over 1,100 ISL alumni all over the Asia Pacific, including six from Nepal.

Says ISL's founder Geoff Lorigan: "All Nepali participants have been standouts: intelligent, gracious, wise and it's been an honour to have their involvement and contribution to the class."

Last year's attendee, Gagan Thapa says the ISL training

sessions made him think about himself, analyse his motives and re-evaluate personal targets. "I could relate it very well with my own committee in parliament where there are members from various political parties with different backgrounds," Thapa told *Nepali Times*, "I learnt to accept differences, and make them work for an inclusive outcome."

CA member Sunil Babu Pant agrees, saying the Strategic Leadership Program in Queenstown gave him a chance to reflect, reaffirm his vision and think about how to make his personal goals gel with what his society needed. "It was a way to find out where I want to lead next," Pant said.

Dawa Sherpa felt like he

was "carrying the burden of the world on his shoulders" and was under constant pressure to solve the problems of his group, Astrek, single-handedly. "What the program helped me realise was that these expectations were mostly self-imposed, unrealistic, and very unhealthy," Dawa Sherpa told us, "ISL helped me find a clear path from where I stood to where I wanted to be."

Sanjib Raj Bhandari of Mercantile expected the program to be about leadership, but found out it was more about "self-management" and using those skills in the office environment. He says: "I have been to a lot of leadership programs, but content-wise this was the best."

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LIGHTS, CAMERA, CENSOR

New Nepali movies struggle to pass the censor board's obsolete moral standards

SUNIR PANDEY

Picture this scene from the film *Loot*. The innovative Haku Kale has been working for months on his ingenious plan to rob a bank. On the eve of the big day, when every detail should fall in place, Haku Kale arrives at headquarters to find the band of misfits he carefully recruited and trained, fighting like a bunch of schoolboys. In a fit of rage, intensified by wild camera movements, he spews forth a selection of words that can't be printed here. *Loot* got away without much cuts, but with the censor board becoming stricter, other films might not be as lucky. Before a movie can be released in theatres, producers have to send their reels to the board requesting

it to be censored, rated and cleared. If the board finds 'immoral' or 'objectionable' material, it asks filmmakers to delete these scenes. If the producers don't comply, the board doesn't issue a rating and the movie can't be released. Nishcal Basnet, who wrote and directed *Loot*, says, "The profanities were situational and completely in line with the characters. Even young children use these words frequently in their everyday lives. I don't think the board is really concerned. It just doesn't want to get into a bureaucratic mess." Currently the board is made up of seven members, out of whom four are ministry employees and the other three are 'experts' nominated by the government. All explicit content is at the mercy of their scissors. History tells us that oppressive regimes have always regarded cinema as a

tool of social control. In fact, the ideals sought to be protected by our own censors have hardly changed since the Panchayat days. National interest, social harmony, libel and morality are ambiguous terms open to the interpretation of the ones in power. The censorship of *Dasgaja*, *Aago*, *Dasdhunga*, and *Loot* proves that such ambiguity remains only to serve political purposes. Censorship of all creative work finds its way into legislation in the name of maintaining social norms and preventing 'untoward' activities. But the censors' tendency to focus exclusively on 'sex scenes' while overlooking depictions of graphic violence suggests that none of them have an understanding of media. It is the same hypocrisy that removes a film-poster of a bare-backed woman to prevent accidents, while right in the middle of Purano Bus Park, the city's central transport hub,



a hoarding board advertises an emulsion by depicting a woman's posterior remains undisturbed for months. This lack of understanding is also echoed in the draft version of the Ministry of Information and Communications' Media Policy 2012 that was made in sole consultation with JICA, the Japanese aid agency. The draft shows that censorship still remains, and is likely to remain for years, an ideological base in the government's understanding

of film as a mass medium. The need to adopt strict age-based ratings does not fall among any of the draft's 16 points. Filmmaker Bhusan Dahal says, "Why do censors get to determine social evils? Films are essentially a mode of expression and a reflection of society. I think Nepali society has become more violent. We are also increasingly liberal and open about sex and use swear words on a regular basis. Considering sex a taboo and censoring films



BIKRAM RAI

Selling

Quality seems to be the last priority for Nepali filmmakers

TRISHNA RANA

Nepali filmmakers have uncovered a hit formula for creating trailers and designing posters: display as much kissing, sex and skin as possible in less than two minutes or on 81 by 81 inch sheets. Under this formula, story line, central characters and quality are irrelevant. The motto seems to be to sell sleaze and lure audiences to theatres at any cost. *Chapali Heights* tried it and now the producers of *The Last Kiss: A Unique Love Story* have applied the same technique. But a film promising to be a 'love story' replete with steamy bedroom scenes is



for their sexual content seem outdated.”

However, there is a downside to this trend of making ‘real and gritty’ cinema. In an attempt to cash in the supposed popularity of obscenities, the latest Nepali film, *The Last Kiss: A Unique Love Story* is littered with profanities and lurid depictions of sex even after censorship (see below). While comments made on its Youtube page are hardly cerebral, they

still show that viewers are not gullible and won’t be impressed by crassness alone.

Such tasteless, loud and vulgar films reveal how little these filmmakers, like their censor board counterparts, understand cinema, or the audience. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com
Loot, Must See # 592
See trailer and videos: 📺

sleaze

actually a psychological thriller with relatively few sexually explicit moments, barring the introductory song and the occasional use of the ‘m’ word (which have been bleeped out at the request of the censor board).

However, once viewers get over their disappointment at being misled by promotional materials, they find out the producers are using another marketing tactic: senseless and gory violence. Perhaps the increasing aggression and brutality we see in our movies today reflect the volatile state of Nepal.

When audiences are made to sit through two hours of continuous bloodshed, fighting and a never-ending chase sequence in a forest, then something is seriously wrong with the film. It doesn’t help that *The Last Kiss* also has a very weak plot, poorly executed climax, clumsy (almost clownish) actors and plagiarised background music. In the end all the characters are killed and the audience is left to wonder why they were put through the charade.

Makers of films like *The Last Kiss* underestimate Nepali moviegoers, both the ones who

frequent Guna Cinema, Gopi Krishna and Pushpanjali as well as the multiplex crowd. Kollywood insiders don’t realise that growing access to Hindi, English as well as Korean, Tamil, and European cinema has made movie buffs more sophisticated and they can distinguish between good films and films where script, acting, and editing are mere afterthoughts.

Lack of finances and technical knowhow is not the problem. Our filmmakers are already shooting in foreign locations, building elaborate sets and experimenting with computerised fight sequences. Lack of original story ideas cannot be blamed either. If writers looked in the right places, they would unearth a lot of stories that need to be told in a country that has undergone a decade long war and finds itself in transition. It’s the ‘anything works’ attitude of industry people and disregard of the public that have stalled Kollywood’s progress.

Sex, violence and melodrama might sell tickets, but intelligent and honestly made films wouldn’t hurt the box office either. 🇳🇵

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EVENTS



ODISSI DANCE, the Indian Cultural Centre presents a dance performance by a highly acclaimed Odissi dance troupe led by Madhavi Mudgal. 8 to 9 June, 5.30 pm, Moksh Live Restaurant and Bar, Jhamsikhel (8 June) and Army Officers' Club, Sundhara (9 June)

Collision, artist Binod Pradhan presents a series of paintings which depict nature fused into urban landscapes. 5 June to 30 June, 5.30 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal

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



IN SEARCH OF PEACE, Bhairaj Maharjan depicts various forms of Buddha in his art exhibition. 5 to 30 June, 5.30 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal

Poolside Party, cool off this summer by the pool; you can also enjoy magic shows, concerts and b-boying on the side. 9 June, 1pm onwards, International Swimming Complex, 9849108101

VocaBOOM, enroll your children in English classes to improve their writing skills, grammar and confidence. For ages five to 15, every Saturday starting from 9 June, 9am to 1pm, Bridgewater International School, Jwagal, hopthemail@gmail.com, www.vocaboom.com, 9851023188



NATURE SPEAKS, an art exhibition by renowned artist Ragini Upadhyay Grela about the need to protect nature and the neglect it suffers. 19 May to 18 June, 11am to 7pm (closed on Saturdays), Solace International Designs, Lazimpat

EURO CUP 2012, kick off the Euro Cup with music and drinks to keep you pumped up. 8 June, 7pm to 12am, Cube, Kamaladi



MUSIC

SIGN, Live music by SIGN band every week except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 7.30 pm onwards, Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Call 4411818

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

Nepfest IV, Nepfest will be back for all music enthusiasts with Decapitated this September. 8 September, 12.45 pm, Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap

DINING

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NEW DISH, grab filling meals like pork momos, spring rolls and chop seufs with excellent value for money. New Road

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BOOMERANG RESTAURANT & GERMAN BAKERY, offers a large selection of cuisine for those who want to enjoy a full meal and desserts. Lakeside, Pokhara, 065-461412



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

The Heritage, escape the hodgepodge of the tourist hub as you relish delights like paella and panna cotta. Thamel

Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. But really, make sure to also try their margaritas. Pulchowk, opposite Namaste Supermarket



CHA CHA CAFÉ, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghettis and burger steaks. Thamel



CIBO, a sandwich bar at heart, this cafe serves one of the best sandwiches in town. Lazimpat



CAFE U, a homely ambiance with a fusion of Japanese and Filipino delights. Closed on Tuesdays, Sanepa



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फोन: ०१-४२६८६५६, ४२६५१०० (Ext. २०४/२०५), इमेल: circulation@nagariknews.com



MAGIC BEANS, coffee, cakes and sandwiches with a magical touch and taste. *Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, 4230914*



THE ORIENTAL TEAROOM AT PIPALBOT, has rather complicated opening hours but a mouth-watering spring menu. Try their sake-cured salmon for lunch and twice-cooked caramelised pork belly for dinner. *Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal*



CHIKUSA, enjoy a cup of freshly ground coffee with syrupy pancakes, waffles and crêpes. *Thamel*



TRISARA, with dishes like Flambeed Prawns, Crispy Chicken and Khau Soi, it would be a folly to pass this eatery. *Lazimpat*

TUKUCHE, the place to be if you crave authentic Thakali cuisine. The restaurant offers both indoor and outdoor sittings. *Tukuche, Uttar Dhoka*

GETAWAYS

Hotel Barahi, enjoy a great view of the lake, cultural shows, splash around in their big swimming pool this summer or savour scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery in the hotel premises. *Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-460617/463526*



SUMMER RAFTING, beat the heat this summer with one-day rafting, BBQ, cocktails and DJ sessions. *Rs 2500, 9 June, 10am to 6pm, Sukute Beach Camp, 9841270354, 98413325589*

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, a peaceful place to stay complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna. It also hosts three restaurants to cater to your hungry tummy. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, 977-61-465819*

Euro 2012 kicks off

The much awaited UEFA Euro 2012 kicks off on Friday with hosts Poland up against 2004 Euro Cup winner Greece. The match, is scheduled to take place at 9.45 pm and will be preceded by the opening ceremony. The tournament is co-hosted by Poland and Ukraine with 16 countries vying for the trophy. A total of 51 nations participated in the qualifying round to join the two host countries in the tournament. The final will be held on 2 July at 1.30 pm. Football remains a popular sport in Nepal and venues around town are expected to screen some highly anticipated matches.



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

Moondance Restaurant



One of the longest standing establishments on the Lakeside restaurant lane in Pokhara, Moondance Restaurant is recommended in several guidebooks, including the *Lonely Planet*. So it was only fair to them, and us, that we took time to sample their menu during our trip.

Even if you aren't aware about Moondance's reputation, its cosy, inviting ambiance is likely to attract you. It's romantic character is quite appealing to honeymooners that flock to Pokhara. Pick your seat in the candle-lit patio, the warm indoors or the veranda upstairs, which also has a pool table.

Like most restaurants in Pokhara, Moondance is not a specialty restaurant, boasting a selection of Thai, Italian and

Indian dishes along with Nepali favourites and its own ingenious creations.

We'd been told that the pizzas at Moondance are must, which come in basic or feta cheese in nine and 12 inches. Mushrooms, salami, olives, green peppers, smoked chicken- you can fill your pizza with a wide selection of vegetarian and non-vegetarian toppings. However, our Feta Cheese and Tomato with Tuna pizza (Rs 340) didn't exactly blow our minds. The crust was fine but the sauce lacked the sumptuousness one usually expects. Perhaps our expectations were too high.

The Chicken Enchilada (Rs 290) was the star of our meal. The oven baked tortillas wrapped around tender chicken and soft vegetables sautéed in a spicy sauce, was delicately balanced in flavour

and heat. The enchilada was topped with cheese and served with rice and salad, perfect companions to the spiciness of the dish. Also, available in vegetarian variety.

From the Thai kitchen we picked the Chicken Red Thai Curry (Rs 390). The creamy texture of the curry went perfectly with the chicken and vegetables, cooked just right to bring out the flavour. The distinct coconut milk essence was well-balanced with spices and a spoon of the rich curry with rice was just heavenly.

The Crispy Rainbow Trout (Rs 890) seemed tempting, but we were too full to order more. The Indian dishes at Moondance are also quite popular. For dessert, we ask you to

try the Lemon Meringue Pie, highly recommended by the patrons as well the *Lonely Planet*.

Moondance has an air of a place that has been around for a while, and its waiters treat all patrons, Nepalis and foreigners, with the same hospitality. Moondance's owner believes that customer is the king, and if you aren't satisfied with your order, they'll make it again for you, even twice. 🇳🇵

PM

Just a few steps away from Barahi chok. Walk along the Lakeside, you will find Moondance next to Hotel Landmark.



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Bright Star



Jane Campion astonished the world with her sublime film *The Piano* – in 1993, a film that won her the Palme d’Or that year at Cannes, and got her nominated in the ‘Best Director’ category for the Oscars. She was, at that point in time, only the second woman who had been nominated. Campion’s exquisite sensibility is unique and her films are all singularly original. All of them resonate with her hallmarks-gorgeous cinematography, and a certain kind of mystery and romance that is hard to pinpoint. Some directors are instinctively able to create an indelible atmosphere within their films - Campion is one of them.

It was only in 2009, with a few films in between and then a bit of a hiatus in filmmaking that *Bright Star* was released. It was first shown at Cannes that year, and while it was liked, it did not win any awards. This is indeed a shame because the film is one of the best of that year, and as some years are good, and others lamentable, let me qualify by saying that *Bright Star* is an incredibly fine film for any year.

The film centers on the poignant love story between the romantic poet John Keats and the love of his life Fanny Brawne. As most people know, Keats, now revered as one of the most talented of the Romantic Poets, died at 25, destitute, his talent under-appreciated by critics but worshipped by his friends and fellow poets.

Even as one goes into the film knowing there will be a tragic end, the story is so beautifully filmed, the characters so engaging, and the love story so very



tender that it is impossible to be unmoved. The film is often punctuated by Keats’s ravishing poetry - recited in the film by most of the characters without an ounce of pretention, which is astounding given the heavy nature of the poems and their subject matter.

Fanny, played by the often under-rated Abbie Cornish, is wonderful as the witty, independent girl who is not ashamed to defend her own art (she is an extremely talented seamstress and needlewoman) against Keats’s friend and benefactor Mr Brown (played to unctuous perfection by Paul Schneider) who is obviously possessive about Keats and fears Fanny might lead him astray (from his poetry).

Ben Whishaw plays Keats with brightness in his eyes and a frailty to his physique that is both captivating and painful to watch. This wonderful cast is rounded off by Kerry Fox as Mrs Brawne, Fanny’s warm-hearted mother; Edie Martin and Thomas Brodie-Sangster complete the Brawne family as Fanny’s adorable little red-haired sister ‘Toots’ and loyal, sensitive, violin playing brother Samuel.

It is with a wrench that one leaves this little world of Campion’s making where there is tragedy and death, yes, but also beauty and love, where people speak in full sentences and with wit and sincerity. When Mr Brown sends a valentine card to Fanny to belittle her, Keats is beside himself when he learns of it. While confronting his friend who continues to disparage Fanny, Keats utters, “There is a holiness to the heart’s affections. Know you nothing of that?”.

In any other film, the audience might have burst out laughing at the line. In *Bright Star* we rejoice at the sentiment instead.

This film is a love story in the truest sense of the word, there are no glib happy endings and no one miraculously comes back to life. Keats’s love letters to Fanny Brawne are easily available online. They haunted Campion for so many years that she made a film about them. For their readers today they are an unforgettable reminder of the ability of words to live on in the mind even after death. 🇳🇵

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

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Amazing stem cells

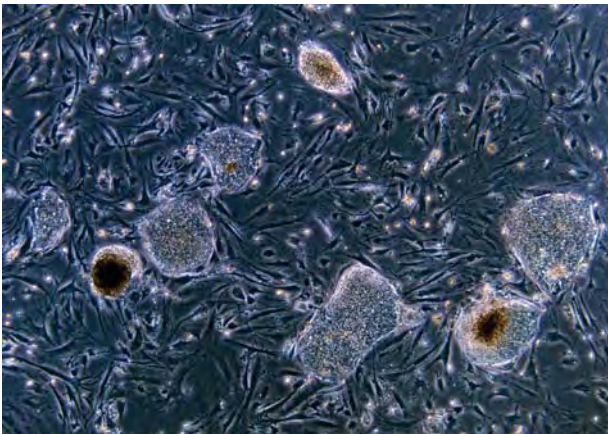


Writing about stem cell research and its benefits appears unrealistic in one of the least-developed countries like Nepal, but clearly this area of research is very intriguing.

What are stem cells? All the cells in the blood and many tissue cells are derived from stem cells. Because these cells have the ability to change or ‘morph’ into any cell type in the body, they are potentially very useful. For example, in diabetes, heart disease, spinal cord injury, and Parkinson’s disease, stem cells can replace the damaged or injured cells and help the organ function properly again.

These potential benefits are the basis for the growing

excitement regarding the use of stem cells for a wide range of medical conditions including the above examples. Because these cells are derived from human embryos which have to be destroyed, there is an ethical issue involved that has not been properly resolved and may drag on. These ethical issues border on grey areas and are subject to



one’s religious background and interpretation of the law in the countries where such research is conducted.

As the head of United States’ National Institute of Health (NIH), Francis Collins is one of the most powerful men

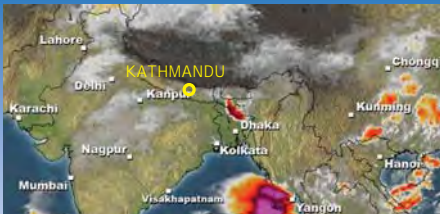
in American science today. Despite his strong faith and Christian roots, Collins is a fervent advocate of stem cell research. Unlike other people of his stature and background like Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking, Collins is an example of how reason and faith are compatible. He has even written a best-selling book called *The Language of God*.

Even among his fellow workers at NIH, Collins is an oddity because only seven per cent believe in god. Hence Obama was probably delighted to appoint this brilliant man as the head NIH, thereby bringing together two disparate groups: science and faith. Let’s hope that in the years to come stem cell research with

the help of people like Collins will advance the understanding of diseases like diabetes and heart disease which are now rampant in Nepal. Subsequent treatment that may result from this research could be groundbreaking. 🇳🇵

WEEKEND WEATHER

The southwest monsoon is running 4-5 days behind schedule, and hit the Kerala coast on Tuesday. During normal years, the monsoon arrives in Kathmandu about 10 days after that, so this gives us an ETA of 15 June or so. The low pressure troughs are itching to ride up the mountains, but are being blown back by a jet stream that is still dallying south of the Himalaya. It’s when this stratospheric non-weather wind migrates northwards that the monsoon finally makes a break for it. However, precursor moisture is building up over the southern flaks of the Himalaya and this should produce some noisy thunderstorms and short, sharp bursts of rain in the midhills over the weekend.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
31-19	31-18	32-17



BIKRAM RAI

ASTRONOMICAL TRANSIT: Venus passes across the face of the sun, as seen from Ramkot, Kathmandu, on Wednesday morning. The next such transit will take place in 2117.



ANURAG ACHARYA

MUD BY MUD: Children transport mud to rebuild their fire-gutted house in Siraha’s Aurhi village. The fire spread over an area of 3 km, destroying over 470 houses.



BIKRAM RAI

TEMPERATURE RISING: A student holds a paper globe to show the effects of global warming during a program organised to mark World Environment Day in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

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PICS: ANURAG ACHARYA

NOT BREAKING NEWS

The 'national' media has no time for the personal tragedy of the poorest villages of Nepal's poorest districts



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

SIRAHA -- While the media in Kathmandu can't get enough of behind-the-scenes intrigue about elections after the demise of the CA, here in dirt poor eastern Tarai, people don't have the luxury of discussing politics.

Aurhi in Siraha was ravaged by a devastating fire last month that rendered 600 families in two VDCs homeless. The prime minister visited the village while it was still smouldering and promised immediate relief and cash compensation for the victims. The media followed him around, and tv channels reported the visit live.

"I had never seen so many cars in

our village, some with dish antennas on their roofs," recalled excited tenth grader, Prabhu Yadav. But when I visited the village this week, there were no outsiders except a few relief workers distributing construction materials, mosquito nets and plastic buckets to the families.

Scrabbling in the ashes was a family cooking half burnt grains of wheat salvaged from their charred home. Mehrun Khatun is living in the open with her five children, she asked me to relay this message to Kathmandu: "Can you tell the prime minister we need the money he promised now so that we can survive and rebuild our homes. When the rain comes there will be disease, and the children will be sick."

In nearby Shivanagar VDC, 137 homes were destroyed in another fire two weeks before Aurhi. That fire didn't get much media attention because the

devastation wasn't big enough, and because neither the prime minister nor any high-profile public figure visited afterwards. Peasant families sold oxen and borrowed money to rebuild their homes, but none of that made it to the news.

The national media gave us a blow-by-blow account of the month-long protest in the Far West last month, and the smallest of political demonstrations in Kathmandu are classified as 'Breaking News', but it has no time for the personal tragedy of the poorest villages of Nepal's poorest districts.

"The prime minister's helicopter flew right over us and Miss Nepal probably does not even know the name of our village," Bishnu Dev Yadav, whose 12-member family is homeless and destitute after the fire, told me.

Media is centred on the centre. This is true not just in Nepal, but all over

the world. The periphery doesn't sell, so the periphery isn't covered. Nepali journalists have struggled for press freedom, and for people's right to know, but who really decides what is news, who should get priority in coverage, and what influences these decisions?

The reason Aurhi and Shivanagar did not grab headlines for long could be that there was only one death. The media has moved on and will probably ignore the disease and deaths that will stalk survivors for years.

A fire in Siraha, or an epidemic in Dailekh, do not make it to 'Breaking News'. To make it to the headlines, the event has to be in or close to the capital, relatively well-off people should be affected, the number of victims should cross a certain threshold. And the prime minister or Miss Nepal should pay a visit, that will always get you a headline. 🇳🇵



Up in flames

Life has not been kind to Mohammad Salim, 37, and his family. If the daily struggle for survival in this hard scrabble part of eastern Tarai was not enough, Salim's family was among 477 households who lost everything in a devastating fire that ravaged the village of Aurhi on 15 May.

Salim had gone to Qatar two years ago, but got arrested for overstaying and had to be rescued from jail. He was still repaying Rs 200,000 to a recruiter in Kathmandu for a job that did not exist, when the fire hit.

It took 36 hours for fire fighters from Siraha and nearby districts to put out the wind-fanned blaze that reduced six wards of the VDC to cinders. "Tube wells exploded like bombs, cattle were burnt alive, I still hear them

screaming and cannot sleep," recalls Mehrun Khatun who lost everything, but managed to gather her five children and run for safety.

The Red Cross has been working with the government to distribute food grain, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, utensils and donated clothes. Habitat for Humanity is providing temporary shelter and basic construction material. Habitat's Rashmi Manandhar said she was working to set up to 50 temporary shelters a day in a race against the monsoon.

CDO Dhruba Prasad Dhakal has been trying to get the government in Kathmandu to release the Rs 25,000 compensation for each family that the prime minister promised after his inspection. A relief truck that was

sent to the scene of another fire in Shivanagar had to withdraw because a fight broke out among desperate locals. "We don't have enough for everybody because Shivanagar only gets surplus relief from Aurhi," said Dhakal who has been asking the prime minister's office that both villages get compensation.

Besides people, there are cattle that survived but with severe burns. Many livestock have died because of the lack of treatment. Dhakal said a veterinary team had been deployed, but there was no sign of it.

After the fire in Aurhi, the police and the army were here, and Maoist cadres cooked and fed families for a week. The media was here in force, and even Miss Nepal came with boxes of instant noodles. Now that the rains have come, everybody is gone. There are no cameras anymore, just a handful of relief workers with limited supplies and long lines of people desperate for food. 🇳🇵

Anurag Acharya in Siraha

Backtracking in Brazil

MARTIN KHOR in GENEVA

With only a few days to go before the start of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, there are signs that developed countries are attempting to backtrack from the commitments they made at the original Earth Summit of 1992 to assist developing countries to move towards the path of sustainable development.

There are also fears that the conference, dubbed Rio+ 20, may not fully reaffirm the political commitments made 20 years ago. Some progress on the summit's declaration was made during the final preparatory meeting last week in New York. But only 70 paragraphs out of a total of 329 have been agreed on, leaving negotiators with the daunting task of coming up with an agreed text by the time the political leaders meet on 20-23 June.

Differences are evident in the three new issues being addressed by the Conference: a) the concept of the green economy, b) how to define sustainable development goals, c) and what new institutional framework to create to house future activities on sustainable development.

But more worrying is the attempt by developed countries to dilute the principles agreed to in Rio 20 years ago, and to backtrack on pledges to assist developing countries.

Thus the North-South divide affects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), and commitments on technology transfer and finance. The CBDR was one of the Rio Principles adopted in 1992. It was agreed that all countries have a common responsibility to protect the environment, but also differentiated responsibilities because the rich countries should shoulder the main

part of environmental action due to their greater contribution to the ecological crisis and their greater economic resources.

In recent negotiations, the United States has made it clear it cannot accept references to CBDR. This is a cause of great concern to developing countries, grouped in the G77 and China. For them, the clear reaffirmation of the CBDR principle in particular and the Rio principles in general is politically crucial. Otherwise Rio+20 would be retreating from the goals of the original Earth Summit.

The US, EU, Canada and Australia do not even want any reference to technology transfer in the title. Wherever the words 'technology transfer' appear, there is an attempt to change it to voluntary transfer on mutually agreed terms and conditions. This is backtracking from the previous commitment by developed countries – in the 1992 Rio Summit, the 2002 Johannesburg Summit and others – to transfer technology on concessional and preferential terms, or on fair and most favourable terms.

On the issue of finance, developed countries are resisting renewal of the traditional commitment to providing new and additional funds. The draft also urges developed countries to make additional concrete efforts towards the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their GNP to development aid, which had been in the original Rio action plan. But Canada and the US want to delete this, claiming they never agreed to this target.

The G7 and China proposed that developed countries provide new funds exceeding \$30 billion a year from 2013-17 and \$100 billion a year from 2018 onwards, and to set up a sustainable development fund. But most developed countries objected to the mention of figures and the fund. Many officials from developing nations are worried their countries are being asked to take on more obligations, without corresponding new commitments to support them.

As negotiations resume in Rio on 13 June, it is hoped that there will be a change of heart by the developed countries on these issues. That is needed to enable rapid progress on other issues to improve the capability of developing countries to protect biodiversity, convert to cleaner energy and ensure sustainable development. (IPS)

Martin Khor is executive-director of the South Centre, an inter-governmental organisation of developing countries based in Geneva.

Getting real in Rio

Over 172 countries are taking part in the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development to mark 20 years since the first Earth Summit held in the Brazilian city. Nepal's official delegation headed by Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai will take part in the conference and raise issues relating to converting Nepal into a 'green economy'. He will also speak on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and highlight Nepal's fragile mountain ecosystem and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to mobilise resources for forest conservation and carbon cutbacks.

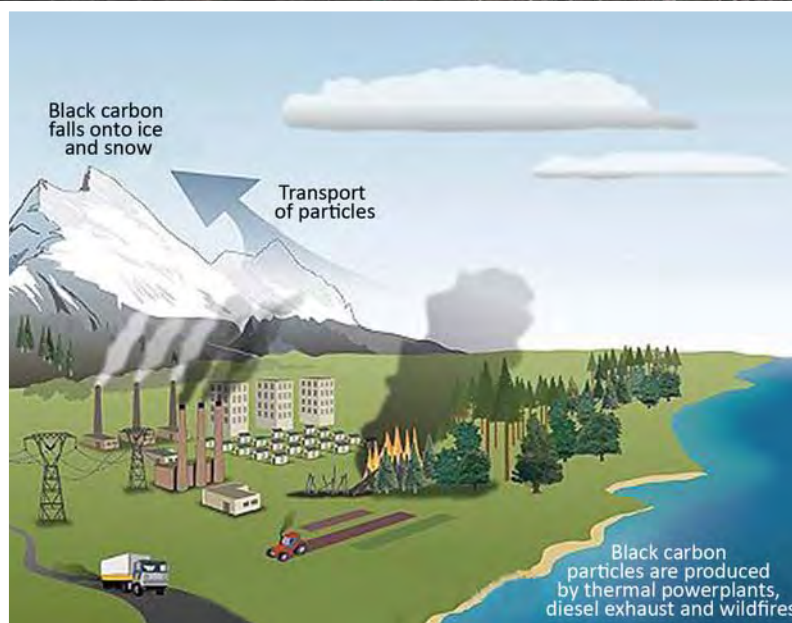
"We do not have equal footing with the developed countries so the issues of sustainability raised at the conference need to go hand in hand with development," explains Krishna Gyawali, secretary at the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology. The delegation will also seek support from the international community for the progress made in Nepal in community forestry, micro-hydro, biogas and solar energy.

Nepal will also seek support to preserve the biodiversity in the Himalaya which is vulnerable to climate change. Says Gyawali: "We will press for a separate window in the Green Climate Fund to support conservation efforts in developing mountain countries."

www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/

Dirty snow is melting our mountains faster

BHRIKUTI RAI in KHUMBU



Instead of whining about emissions by rich countries, we should stop our own pollution that is accelerating Himalayan meltdown

Every morning Agostino Da Polenza walks up the lateral moraine of the Khumbu Glacier to take measurements as the wind makes colourful prayer flags flutter noisily. That same wind carries soot particles that is melting the mountains faster.

The Italian scientist and mountaineer has been working at the Pyramid International Observatory below Mt Everest since 1987, and has seen the rapid retreat of the glaciers around him even in the last 25 years.

"The ice used to come right up to there," he says, pointing towards the jumble of boulders and gravel in the Khumbu glacier, "now it has retreated up beyond base camp."

Da Polenza and the late professor Ardito Desio set up the Nepal Climate Observatory Pyramid (EvK2Cnr) in a unique

collaboration between the Italian Research National Council and the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, at an altitude of 5,050 m in Lobuje.

The EvK2Cnr has been researching the effect of global warming on the Himalaya, and recently turned its attention to the impact of 'black carbon' on accelerating the melting of ice and snow. Black carbon is essentially fine soot and ash produced by diesel exhausts, thermal powerplants, brick kiln smokestacks and forest fires, and should not be confused with gaseous carbon dioxide.

The United Nations Environment Programme says there is evidence increased black carbon deposits on Himalayan glaciers make them absorb more sunlight, accelerating glacial and snow melt.

"Although glacier melting

is predominantly due to global temperature rise, the deposition of pollutant particles like black carbon can enhance this effect," says Paulo Bonsani of the Italy-based Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (ISAC). Wind-blown ash from huge pre-monsoon forest fires and their deposit on glaciers may reduce the albedo effect (reflectivity) of the snows by about five per cent, and deposits have grown three-fold in the past 40 years, researchers say.

Arnico Panday, lead atmospheric scientist at ICIMOD, says: "It has been accepted that black carbon contributes to accelerated glacial melt, what remains is only the quantification of the effect for concrete analysis."

Historical emissions of greenhouse gases by industrialised nations have



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

traditionally been blamed for melting of the world's permafrost, leading to sea level rise. Today, India and China have overtaken the rich countries in total greenhouse gas emissions, and there has been a big increase in their black carbon generation.

Nepal's delegation at the Rio+20 Summit in Brazil later this month will be arguing the country cannot sacrifice economic growth to save the environment, and will demand compensation to adapt to the impact of climate change. Increasingly, however, that is looking like an excuse to not address pollution in our own backyard that is contributing to the melting of the Himalaya.

Scientists discount anecdotal evidence of freakish weather, but say evidence of glacial retreat, receding snowlines are rapid and undeniable. They are trying to find which of the root causes are most to blame: natural warming after the Little Ice Age 600 years ago, global warming caused by carbon dioxide emissions, and more recently, deposits of black carbon soot on the snows.

Pollution from rapid industrialisation of India and China are carried by prevailing winds to be suspended permanently over the Indian Ocean in what UNEP calls the 'Asian Brown Cloud'. These



Everest in real time

Want to see what the weather is like on Mt Everest in real time? Thanks to the SHARE Everest 2011 project, EvK2Cnr, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology and the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology have installed a solar-powered webcam at Kala Pathar (5,675 m). The camera has broken the previous record for the highest camera on Mount Aconcagua in Argentina. The webcam is resistant to high wind and low temperatures and transmits images via wireless to the Pyramid at Lobuje during daylight hours, which are then uploaded live onto the internet. www.evK2Cnr.org/WebCams/PyramidOne/everest-webcam.html

aerosol and soot particles result in surface dimming of sunlight and solar heating, decreasing the intensity of the southwest monsoon over India and a north-south shift in rainfall patterns in eastern China.

Scientists say that instead of using global emissions as an excuse to do nothing,

countries in the region should immediately start working on reducing solid pollutants caused by their increased use of fossil fuels. This would not just slow the melting of Himalayan permafrost, but also save them money from more efficient fuel-burning.

While it might take some time to cut emission from industries, simple lifestyle changes like switching to improved cooking stoves in the mountains would also help.

"Promoting clean air initiatives would address glacial melting as well as indoor pollution," says Raju Laudari of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre in Kathmandu which promotes clean cooking stoves that reduce firewood use by a third.

Back at the Pyramid in Lobuje, Laxman Adhikari helps monitor the instruments measuring black carbon. He has noticed the Khumbu Glacier below him recede further and further up the valley, and says: "If it keeps on melting at this rate, I don't think my children will know what glaciers are."

nepalitimes.com

Defrosted, #479
The melting Himalaya #427
Global warning for the Himalaya, #276
Hazy future, #563

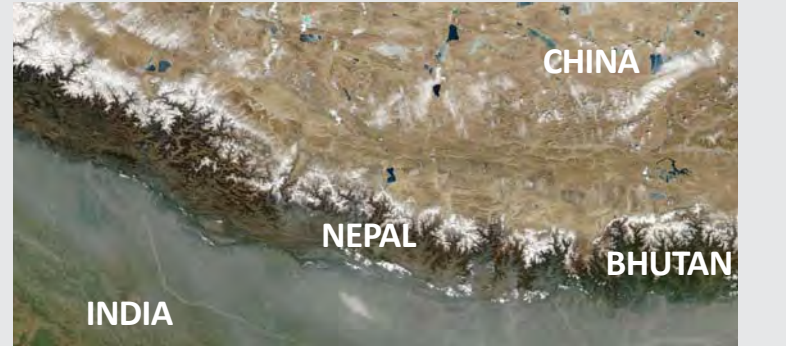


LIQUEFACTION: The Imja Glacier below Mt Lhotse has melted to form a lake where there was only ice 30 years ago (*left*). Italian researcher Agostino Da Polenza at the Nepal Climate Observatory in Lobuje, Laxman Adhikari with the black carbon measuring equipment and a trekking lodge spews smoke in Chhubung (*above*).

Dirty bricks

There are two types of carbon that cause Himalayan snows to melt. One is gaseous carbon from fossil fuel burning that has been heating up the atmosphere through the greenhouse-effect. The other is tiny particles of solid carbon given off by incomplete burning of diesel and coal.

India burns 25 million tons of coal annually just to fire its brick kilns. Kathmandu brick kilns are responsible for half the air pollution, and in winter it sits at ground level due to temperature inversion. The soot particles from the smokestacks mix with diesel exhaust to form a layer of soot over southern Asia that is thousands of kilometres long and up to 4,000 m thick. Prevailing winds waft them over Himalayan glaciers, melting them faster.



NASA

There are cleaner brick kiln technologies available, but cost and lack of government enforcement in Nepal and India have kept the old stacks belching away smoke. Greentech in India has tried out improved kilns that ensure more complete burning of coal, saving fuel and cutting soot emission. Similar projects have been tried out in Kathmandu, and the BrickClean Network has been encouraging kilns to clean up their act. Baking hollow bricks would also save money.

The best alternative may be to do away with kilns altogether and work with Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEB) in which clay is mixed with cement in a 96:4 ratio and compressed with a manual compactor. The resulting bricks are even stronger than kiln-baked bricks, and do not pollute.

nepalitimes.com

Green bricks, #539
Better climate for education, #425

Big Three to become Big Six?

Kantipur, 2 June

कान्तिपुर

Unified Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist
GANGA BC

Only if something miraculous happens will the Maoists remain one party. Otherwise the party is on course for a split. The miracle needed is for Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to abandon his alignment with Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and join the dissident Mohan Baidya group. The Baidya faction has already declared that it cannot trust Prachanda because he says one thing and does another. While the Bhattarai faction was holding its central committee meeting in Paris Danda last week, the Baidya faction was having its own parallel meeting in Kupundole in which it was going through the process of formally declaring a new party. After the constitution deadline expired on 27 May, matters have come to a head as bad blood between the two factions grew irreparably. Both sides have now nearly given up on trying to save the party's unity,



but Prachanda has said he is willing to give it one last chance by stepping down as Chairman if that helps save the party. The Bhattarai-Prachanda faction says it will keep talking to the Baidya group till the last moment and go for an extended politburo meeting on 29 June.

Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist
DURGA KHANAL

Ashok Rai is a veteran UML leader and has been minister three times. Currently he is the vice chairman of the party. But he is at the crossroads: whether to stay with the NC or split off with his Janajati and Madhesi colleagues. Rai's comrade-at-arms, Prithvi Subba Gurung is facing a similar dilemma. Politburo member Gurung has become minister once, and is also on the verge of deciding whether to stay on in the UML or launch a Janajati party. Former CA member Pasang Sherpa has already left the party. Some Madhesi and Janajati UML members are carrying resignation letters in their pockets and may decide to quit at any time. The indigenous and Madhesi members are dissatisfied with the party's stance on federalism based on identity, and complained

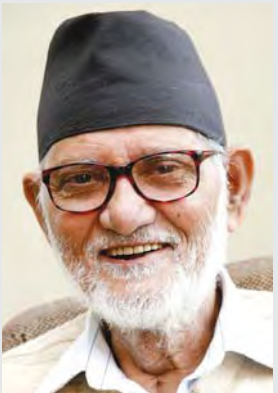
that the leadership completely ignored their views. Their conclusion is that senior leaders of the parties are responsible for the failure of the CA. Gurung said that even when his group



decided to step back from the demand for a unitary ethnic province and agree to mixed identity, and other parties had agreed, his own party had decided not to go along. UML leaders haven't given up on trying to save the party, there are hectic behind-the-scenes negotiations going on to save the party. The dissident Janajati members say that if the party leadership responds to their demands, the party can be saved. An extended meeting of cadres is scheduled for later in June.

Nepali Congress
KULCHANDRA NEUPANE

The root of the problem within the Congress is the deep-seated rivalry between party president, Sushil Koirala, and Sher Bahadur Deuba. The quarrel has paralysed party decision-making and has percolated down to 40 district committees as well. Party leaders aren't even able to go to their constituencies because the dispute has halted the formation of 32 departments and affiliated organisations including the student union. There is also dispute over the composition of the parliamentary board, the unit that decides



on party tickets for the next election. The NC leaders designated to mediate have themselves been polarised. Arjun Narsingh KC says ego, personality clash and mutual mistrust among leaders are the main problems. Youth leader Gagan Thapa says party heads should hand over mediation to his generation. He says: "This is not a big problem, us young leaders can resolve it if they gave us the responsibility."



eKANTIPUR

Questionable silence

Nepal, 3 June

नेपाल

Journalists were widely targeted during the recent banda called by the Janjatis. 67 cases of violence against media personnels were reported during the three day period, whereas in the Far West, 89 attacks were carried out in 15 days. This is probably the biggest attack on the Nepali press after April 2006.

Surprisingly, the international community who used to speak out vocally against cases of aggression against the press, has preferred to remain silent. Except for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters San Frontiers, no one has formally condemned the attacks. Chairperson of Freedom Forum Taranath Dahal said, "The donor community would dispatch missions when similar events happened earlier, bu they didn't even issue a press release this time." So what should we make of this silence when the Nepali press is being openly attacked?

Please return the keys

Nepal Samacharpatra, 5 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

It's been more than a week since the CA and parliament expired, but most CA members have not returned the government vehicles yet. Even after the parliament secretariat sent out letters, only 20 vehicles have been handed back. According to the law, all state vehicles must be returned within one week of the CA's conclusion.

Ram Chandra Poudel of the NC and chairman of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal, Upendra Yadav are among the leaders who are still using government cars. Similarly, heads of various CA committees including Ramesh Rijal, Sushila Kandanwa, Padmalal Bishwakarma, Gurung Subedi, Kulbahadur Gurung, Sandhya Dev haven't handed over their vehicles either. The UML's Bhim Acharya, and Dalit Janajati party's Bishwendra Paswan who had been ordered by the Supreme Court to return the vehicles even before the CA's dissolution are also holding onto government property.



Cliff: Constituent Assembly election II

Dahal: Where are you going? That's a dead end.

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in Kantipur, 4 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ They are trying to pit Nepalis against one another and turn this country into Afghanistan. ”

Sushil Koirala quoted in Nepal, 3 June

Left turn

Sanghu, 4 June

साधु

The Maoist party continued its long tradition of neutralising opposing voices through money or force by buying off *Nagarik*, one of Nepal's major dailies. Dahal is believed to have bought 48 per cent of *Nagarik's* shares and has already paid Binodraj Gyawali Rs 40.6 million out of the promised 60 million.

After Kishor Nepal was appointed the chief-editor, the paper suddenly changed its stance from being

pro-democracy to hero-worshipping Dahal and blaming the NC and UML for the CA's demise. And now that the paper is Pushpa Kamal Dahal's mouthpiece, it has started boycotting all news related to Mohan Baidya. While journalists at *Nagarik* have criticised these moves, the NC and UML leaders are unhappy that all major media houses like *Nagarik* and *Kantipur* are turning leftist.

Kantipur Daily's Sudhir Sharma is a Maoist supporter while Kantipur Television's Tirtha Koirala, Image's

Mahendra Bista and most other chiefs of television channels are left leaning. Similarly, *The Kathmandu Post's* Akhilesh Upadhyay, *The Himalayan Times's* Ajay Bhadra Khanal, *Republica's* Kosmos Bishwokarma, *Rajdhani's* Rajan Sharma, *Nepal Samacharpatra's* Kapil Kafle are all anti-Congress. *Annapurna Post's* Jiwendra Simkhada, on the other hand, supports Ram Raja Prasad Singh's Nawa Janabadi Morcha.

The NC is fearful of losing its influence over the media and is planning a comprehensive media policy to reclaim control.



BIKRAM RAI

SUSHILA BUDATHOKI
and MINA SHARMA

These are only some of the many heart-wrenching stories of thousands of Nepali women who are sexually abused, physically tortured and even murdered by their Nepali recruiters and employers in the Gulf.

Last month, six women were rescued from a building in Kathmandu where an agent had kept them locked up after the husband of one of the victims reported her as missing.

Until 2007, Nepali women were being trafficked in large numbers because going to the Gulf for employment was banned by the government. Purna Chandra Bhattarai, the director general of the Foreign Employment Department, admits that the state lifted the ban and legalised

individual contracts for domestic workers after growing pressure from the media and civil society. But sending workers abroad without legal protection and proper verification of employers, exposes the women to exploitation and abuse in Nepal itself.

"Making sure that your citizens are safe and well protected should be a priority for any country, but the Nepali government legalised individual contracts, without putting in necessary safeguards," says Bal Bahadur Tamang, chairman of Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies. The multi-million dollar migrant labour sector, the largest contributor to the country's GDP, however, seems more important to the government than its expendable population.

In June last year, the Kuwait government decided to drop immigration charges against all illegal

workers, after which 1,300 Nepali domestic workers contacted the Nepal Embassy there, requesting to be rescued. At least 15 women had children born after they were raped by employers.

The risk for Nepali women working in Gulf countries is so serious that only a handful manage to get out alive and without being abused. Last year, Durga Chunar of Gorkha was beaten to near death by her employer in Kuwait. She was rescued by the police and sent back to Nepal after receiving treatment for a month at the embassy.

"I am lucky to be alive. But I want to tell my Nepali sisters and brothers to not go to that country," Chunar told us, weeping.

Others are not so lucky. Between 2008 and 2010, 18 Nepali women committed suicide in Lebanon of which 12 had gone through recognised

- Shanti Lama from Lalitpur (left) was raped by a recruiter who promised her a good job in Kuwait if she kept quiet. Nine months later, she was sent back by her employers when she gave birth to a baby girl.

- Prema Rana of Surkhet was locked up for five years in her employer's house in Lebanon, she returned without being paid. She says she was tricked by a recruiter named Sher Bahadur Lama.

- Ganga Sunar of Baglung was sent to Saudi Arabia by her recruiter on a forged passport. She committed suicide while there.

- Binita Thapa of Chitwan returned mentally disturbed from Lebanon. Her husband is in debt trying to get her treatment.

“Even slaves are treated better”

recruitment agencies.

Poor, illiterate women are the most vulnerable because they have no idea about the 'Kafala' system practiced in most Gulf countries according to which workers cannot quit or choose their employers. Passports and legal documents are deposited with employers, leaving them at their mercy.

Manju Gurung of Pourakhi, an organisation set up by returned women migrant workers themselves, says the lack of transparency and accountability of the contract system are responsible for the exploitation of domestic workers. "When a woman directly enters into a contract with her foreign employer, it becomes difficult to legally identify or implicate the Nepali recruiters," she explains.

According to a UN report, at least 111 Nepali women are trapped in various jails across the Middle East, 88 have committed suicide, and 31 remain unaccounted for. Out of the 2,820 migrants rescued from these countries, 415 suffer psychological trauma, 86 were raped, and 32 have returned with babies.

Unless the government is serious about enforcing the provisions of the Foreign Employment Act and creates a safety net for migrant workers, these statistics and the lives of countless Nepali women will only get worse. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

To hell and back, by
Rubeena Mahato #598

“They are all bad”

I am from Damauli. I do not know how to read or write, so when my sister called from Saudi Arabia and said the job was easy and paid her well, I decided to go. I asked the local agent in my village and with the help of her brother in India, I went to Saudi Arabia. I was promised \$500 per month, but after working for nine months, they only gave me four months salary. They tortured me and wouldn't give me food for days. Often, the wife would tell her husband to beat me but luckily he did not listen to her. I advise Nepali women not to go to Saudi Arabia. There are no good or bad households in Saudi Arabia, they are all bad.
Lila Pariyar was rescued by Paurakhi in February 2012.

Maids in the Gulf

Qatar	669
Saudi Arabia	133
UAE	3,236
Bahrain	357
Kuwait	8,646
Oman	273
Lebanon	205
Israel	472

(There are an additional 1,311 in Malaysia and 4,000 in Hong Kong)

आयो आयो “आयो नून” घरे राम्रो थुप्रै गुन

आयोडिनको कमीबाट हुने विकृतिहरू:

१. गर्भ तृहिने, मृत शिशु जन्मिने, अङ्ग भङ्ग भएको शिशु जन्मिने, जन्मेको शिशु चाँडै मर्न सक्ने ।
२. बच्चाहरू बहिरा, लाटा, लठ्ठेउरा, बामपुङ्के, डेडो आदि हुन सक्ने ।
३. पढाईमा कमजोर भई पटक पटक फेल हुनुको साथै खेलकुदमा समेत पछाडि पर्न सक्ने ।
४. गलगाँउ आउने, सुस्तमनस्थिति हुने ।
५. आयोडिनको कमीले I.Q. Level कम हुने ।
६. आयोडिनको कमी भएमा मानिसहरूमा आलस्यपन आउने, काम गर्ने क्षमतामा कमी आउने ।
७. आयोडिनको कमीबाट गाईवस्तुले दुध कम दिने ।

आयोडिनको कमीबाट हुने विकृतिहरू उपचार गरेर हटाउन सकिदैन । त्यस्ता विकृति आउन नदिन एकमात्र उपाय आजै देखि आयोडिनयुक्त दुई बालबालिकाको चिन्ह अंकित पाकेटको नून मात्र प्रयोग गर्नु ।

साल्ट ट्रेडिङ कर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड

केन्द्रीय कार्यालय: पो.ब.नं.: ४८३, कालिमाटी, काठमाडौं, नेपाल
फोन नं.: ४२७०३९५, ४२७०१९४, ४२७१२०८, फ्याक्स नं.: ९७७-९-४२७१७०४, ४२७१३९५

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Washing dirty Lenin in public

Kathmandu's finest are now looking even more stylish with snazzy new eyewear donated by the Govt of Oz. But as breathalysers malfunction and our traffic cops go back to getting drivers to say "Aah", what Kathmandu's bravest really need are industrial strength gas masks to protect them from halitosis and multi-drug resistant tubercle bacilli. And with the news that a policeman was beaten up this week by a drunk driver who didn't like the idea of breathing into the tube, it looks like the traffic police also needs to be equipped with a couple of hand grenades. However, if the international community really wanted to show its concern for Nepal's long-term welfare, it would give the top leaders of all 36 political parties correctional glasses to compensate for their astigmatism, short-sightedness and myopia.

✽

There used to be a time when people used to smuggle into Nepal commodities that Nepalis needed for their daily household use like VCRs and VAT69s. Then smugglers found out there was a huge market across the open border, so Nepal became the trans-shipment point for digestive biscuits and gold biscuits, steel utensils and Chinese thermos flasks: whatever was in short



supply in India's license raj. These days, with global trade and China's rise, Nepal is a frontline state for the transit of contraband in the other direction, items like yarsagumba and tiger pelts. More and more, what is being smuggled through Nepal is not even found in Nepal, like red sandalwood, ivory, pangolins and, most recently, dried sea horses. And therein lies Nepal's economic salvation: to specialise in being a backdoor transit point for the trade in all commodities that are banned by CITES and other international treaties and for

which there is a huge demand in China: iPhones, stealth drones and shark fins.

✽

The last two weeks after the dissolution of the CA hasn't seen a single bund, chukka jam or hurt-all in Nepal. This has reaffirmed the belief of most Nepalis that having no government at all is much better than having one. In fact, the chances of a government making major boo-boo's is so great, the chances of them plundering the exchequer so real, that we are much better off without a

govt. The constitution was so controversial that the country has been at peace ever since we decided not to have one. The government should ban the government and let the people get on with their lives.

✽

What's with our political party leaders and their obsessions with resorts? Even when there was an elected Constituent Assembly and Parliament, good facilities, air-conditioned rooms and a canteen at the BICC, they insisted on meeting in Hatiban, Gokarna, Radisson or Godavari. The Finance Ministry, which has been keeping track of bills says the four parties spent 4 karods in the past six months wining and dining in resorts. And now that the CA has died, the parties are still inviting Kathmandu-based diplomats to various resorts and five-star establishments to explain their side of the story. And usually it is for one party to whine and lay all the blame on the other parties. This must be the only country in the world where instead of keeping domestic quarrels to themselves, our leaders insist on washing their dirty Lenin in public.

And this must also be the only country where random ministers from foreign countries can just waltz in, meet the prime minister and other political actors, throw press

conferences, without informing the Foreign Ministry. And they come uninvited even when the Farang Ministry says diplomatically the time may not be right. Guess it's not just Nepali ministers who like junkets to exotic places. Ever since our Ministry of Firanghi Affairs moved to the former royal palace, it doesn't have much to do except maintain mobile toilets on its premises for the long queues waiting to apply for MRPs.

✽

And talking about whining, the Baddies have apparently censured Kaji Naran Kamred for weeping in public, and have henceforth banned all such un-communistic public displays of emotion with immediate effect. This will probably mean Chairman Maximus has to pull himself together since he often chokes up whenever the subject turns to his involvement in various extra-judicial killings by his cadre during the war.

✽

Now we understand why the Kangresis and the Eh-maleys are so insistent on the prime minister stepping down: they want the job so they can lead the Nepal delegation to the Rio+20 Environment Summit and loll around Copacabana Beach in thongs and stuff.




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