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Responsibility to protect

In this prolonged political uncertainty, ad hoc populism passes off for governance. Hoodlums set fire to school buses like this one in Lalitpur on Monday (*left*), they vandalise colleges in broad daylight. A “revolutionary” wing of a “student” body takes responsibility, threatens to do it again, and they do. No

Editorial page 2
Certain uncertainty

one is arrested. In a country where politicians get away with murder, one can't really blame their fundraising protégés for ransacking schools. The lawlessness will grow worse each day that the country drifts along in this purposeless vacuum.

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SETI'S ORPHANS

Two months after the Seti flashflood, victims struggle to overcome the disaster and rebuild their lives.

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CERTAIN UNCERTAINTY

When the social discourse is so politicised, it is tempting for the media to be obsessed with the operational strategy of day-to-day politics. Which party wins and which party loses from the dissolution of the CA? Who gained the upper hand from the truncated budget? Which faction of which party holds the trump card against rivals? And so on.

In fact, no one wins and everyone loses from this prolonged political deadlock, where the only certainty is the uncertainty of it all. The aimlessness of the political parties has already collectively cost them what little support they had. There is widespread disillusionment with their mad scramble for power among ordinary citizens, and even more among the district cadre of the parties themselves.

We have often argued in this space that the only way a caretaker establishment can move forward is to forge a government of national unity. Not that a consensus is inherently desirable in a democracy or will resolve all outstanding issues, but at least it will level the playing field ahead of elections. Elsewhere in the world there is an incumbent disadvantage at elections, but here a sitting government can skew the electoral balance in its favour by arm-twisting the organs of state for advantage.



The lawlessness all around is a result of politics being stuck in a deadlock within a stalemate

The reason things are completely stuck now is that we have a deadlock within a stalemate. The deadlock in the constitution led to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and now there is a stalemate on government formation between those who want the prime minister to step down before a unity government, and Baburam Bhattarai's insistence that the opposition presents a viable alternative. It is clear neither side is in a desperate hurry to end the deadlock: Bhattarai is perfectly happy where he is, and the NC knows an acrimonious dispute will erupt within its senior ranks

between aspirants for the premier's post.

This prolonged uncertainty has encouraged crime and corruption, and made impunity and lack of accountability the norm. Ad hoc populism passes off for governance. Farmers don't have fertiliser, even in the monsoon there is six hours of power rationing, half the city has been demolished in a heavy-handed road-widening spree, and all Baluwatar is interested in is passing by ordinance allowances and facilities-for-life for government alumni.

In this climate of impunity, hoodlums set fire to school buses, vandalise colleges in broad daylight. A "revolutionary" wing of a "student" body takes responsibility, threatens to do it again, and they do. But no effort is made to catch the known ring leaders. This is not really about the English names of colleges or expensive school fees, it never was. It has always been about making an example of those who refuse to give in to extortion demands.

No profession is untouched. Journalists are harassed and beaten. Doctors are manhandled, and hospitals vandalised. High profile political assassinations go unsolved. More than 60 people are killed in highway crashes during a single week, and no one could really be bothered.

The lawlessness will grow worse every day that the country drifts along in this purposeless vacuum. It is time to take certain steps to end the uncertainty, and they are (in order of business):

- Urgently agree on a national government
- Announce a date for local and general elections by spring 2013
- Crack down hard and fast on impunity
- Restore investor confidence

ON THE WEB

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FOUR LEGS GOOD

We have experimented with all systems of governance known to mankind from authoritarianism to socialism to democracy to communism and yet nothing has really worked for us ('Four legs good', editorial, #613). Every time we have a change in system, there is short-lived euphoria, followed by disappointment, the usual blame game and then we move on to the next revolution. Regardless of who is in charge, all our rulers have stuck to the status quo and the "yam between two boulders" policy. It's time to put an end to this merry-go-round governance and understand our geo-political-economical realities. Our leaders have to be smarter, and devise policies that are beneficial to all Nepalis. Otherwise, ten years from now we will be discussing the exact same issues on these pages.

Krishna S

- Arab nationalists, socialists and secularists imposed "development" through military dictatorship in the Middle East. It took almost five decades for the people to rise up, voice their dissatisfaction and topple the regimes. We had our own version of the "Nepali Spring" six years ago, but find ourselves in deadlock once again. I wonder how long it will take for the third Jana Andolan. And what guarantee is there that we will see any real progress even after Jana Andolan III? Nepal's politicians and intellectuals have done irreparable damage to the

country. It's going to take us years to recover.

Anonymous

- Rather than easing Nepal's transition to democracy, the institutions introduced between 1990 and 2006 have added to the country's instability. The multi-party system is a breeding ground for inept, dishonest politicians, the interim constitution is a joke, the CA is dead, and the president is used as a pawn by leaders who run to his office every time they have a minor complaint or want their wishes to be fulfilled. How do we break this stalemate? Should we trust a devil we know (Bhattarai), and hope for the best or should we give the devils (Paudel, Nepal, Khanal, Oli, and Yadav) we don't know, a chance?

Nirmal

- We replaced one Gyanendra with ten other Gyanendras. If this is the fruit of democracy, then glory to Gyanendra and long live the king. He was far better than the thugs we now call our "leaders". The media and civil society were our only hope, but even these institutions have been co-opted by the political parties. Are we common Nepalis doomed to live in poverty without any hope for peace, justice and happiness?

Sunita Regmi

GRAB WHAT YOU CAN

Gopal Guragain has done a fantastic job exposing the Maoist party's lust for power ('Grab what you can', #613). His article is insightful and accurate and one of the best pieces to come out of the Nepali press in recent times. I hope we get to read more of his

incisive critiques in the future. Now *Nepali Times* must ensure that the writer receives sufficient protection as the Maoists have an aversion to truth and are known, as mentioned in the article, to express their disagreement through threats and violence.

Hange

- Guragain's piece perfectly summarises the state of Nepali politics. The Maoists are criminals and their only agenda is to grab power. But I don't think we should worry too much because they will self-destruct in the near future over money. The UML and NC are no better though. They have lost their democratic principles and are willing to stoop as low as possible to win the rat race.

Tilak Sapkota

- This is an excellent, well-argued piece. However, the writer should have also mentioned how India and China sent messages to Bhattarai on 27 May not to go ahead with a constitution that would sanction a 14-state model of federalism because it could lead to full-scale multi-ethnic war in Nepal. In a way, our neighbours saved our house from being burnt to the ground. This also shows that we are being ruled by monkeys with their tails on fire.

Jit

- I completely agree with Guragain's analysis. The Maoists are solely responsible for the current crisis. Development indicators between 1991 and 1996 were quite positive, the country was moving ahead at a brisk pace and radical

changes were taking place. Yes, there was corruption, but the state also introduced institutions like the CIAA to control corruption. Had the Maoists and the king not interfered and messed things up, democracy would have taken self-corrective measures to put Nepal in the right track.

FG

- It's not right to put the entire blame on the Maoists, because the NC and UML were in power for over two decades before the Maoists even entered mainstream politics. Even though GP Koirala is hailed as a godfather, he is partly responsible for flaming the conflict. Journalists like Guragain need to take off their partisan-coloured glasses and analyse issues from a broader perspective.

Shyam

- This article is nothing more than an after-the-fact babble, and the author fails to make any useful future predictions.

KK Sharma

NO GOVERNMENT, NO IRRIGATION

Thank you IRIN for highlighting how ordinary Nepali farmers are suffering because of the absence of an accountable, local government ('No government, no irrigation', #613). The lack of elected officials has affected everything from irrigation to forestry, from primary health to basic education, and spread corruption down to the grassroots, which were relatively clean until recently. But are the big boys in Kathmandu listening?

Roger

- Nepal needs more agricultural experts who can teach farmers in rural areas like Sindhapalchok to make organic fertiliser and pesticides. These products are safer and cheaper than artificial chemicals and the farmers won't have to depend on the government. I also feel that we need to change our attitude towards people involved in agriculture. We don't give them the respect and resources they deserve because they are "uneducated" and from villages. But farmers are vital to a country like ours. It's possible to live without expensive saris, jewelry, and cars, but we can't live without food.

Wilko

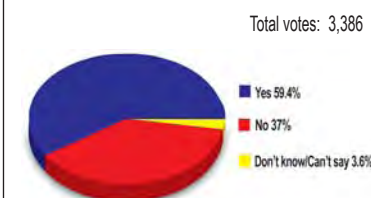
Corrigendum: In the article On a tight budget, Rubeena Mahato, #613, this sentence, "it seems the government did not make an effort to be more inclusive" should read, "it seems the government did make an effort to be more inclusive"

Times

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Weekly Internet Poll #614

Q. Do you think the monarchy will be reinstated in Nepal in any form?



Weekly Internet Poll #615. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will people support a Janajati party?

The uncritical mass



Rubeena Mahato

Student unions of various hues have always used the glaring disparity in Nepal's education sector and the unregulated over-commercialisation of schools and colleges as an excuse to extort cash to fund their mother parties. This act is sanctioned by the establishment, and it is regarded as an acceptable fundraising method.

It is the political culture they have been schooled in. Ever since the Panchayat days when political parties were banned and student unions acted as their proxies, students have been the militant vanguards of their parties. The Maoists only honed this into a fine art by making schools a recruitment centre, training ground, and a fertile source of funds for their revolution.

Now that a faction of the Maoist party has broken off and can't purloin the treasury anymore, it resorts to vandalism, arson and terror of schools as fundraisers. It is a time-tested method and works brilliantly.

The reason schools are targeted is simple. They alone have the cash this time of year just after admissions, when all other businesses are struggling because they have been bled dry by extortion, political uncertainty, militant labour and power outages.

The hoodlums masquerading as students who destroyed computers in colleges in Kathmandu this week will in most likelihood be members of a future parliament (if we have one). The arsonists who torched school buses in Lalitpur and Chitwan may well be ministers 20 years down the line. People who blame the old guard in the political parties for letting the country down and pin their hopes in the next generation have a huge surprise in store.

What is outrageous is the lack of outrage at schools being targeted. We mince words and try to justify the attacks, blaming it on the frustration of jobless youth when it is plain this is about extraction and extortion.

Just think about it, these are school buses not armoured personnel carriers or riot trucks that are being set on fire. Only cowards use terror against buses carrying children.

It's not just schools. Hospitals are regularly vandalised and doctors and nurses in Dharan, Chitwan and Pokhara are physically assaulted. Police often step in to fire tear gas into hospital premises. Yet there is the same silence from commentators and the public. Terrorism thrives in this silence.



In a country where politicians get away with murder, one can't really blame their student protégés for setting fire to school buses

Setting fire to school buses is a crime, vandalising a hospital is a crime, and the silence encourages criminals in the garb of politicians to justify what they do. They have our blessings, they know they are immune and people are powerless.

This impunity obviously thrives because of a weak state, there is no fear of punishment. It's the media's responsibility to highlight the wrongdoing, but when reporters and commentators do take notice, they treat it like an isolated incident. By trying to be 'balanced' and 'neutral' in its coverage the media equates the victims with criminals, legitimising the use of terror and justifying impunity.

This cycle has been repeated so often, the public has been de-sensitised and has come to accept terror, extortion, intimidation and vandalism as the norm. When the known murderers Ujjan Shresthas, Arjun Lamas and Maina Sunars walk around in broad daylight, become ministers, are promoted or share the podium with the prime minister, criminals down the line get the message.

Our dubious moral standards, and elastic ethics have become part of the problem. Criminals roam free because our leaders are comfortable with the use of violence as a political tool, and so are we. When a large number of people, including those in power believe violence is an appropriate form of response, this uncritical mass reaches the tipping point.

During the start of the Maoist war, when the Maoists began to carry out political assassinations, many people supported the killings, applauding the guerrillas for eliminating 'class enemies'. When the end justifies the means, anything is justified.

Our values are tainted by ideologies long considered obsolete elsewhere. We support state harassment of businesses, local opposition to infrastructure projects, militant unions on extortion sprees because the profit motive is considered evil. This spooks the few investors who are still here.

Perhaps we should bring the discussion back to the public sphere. When people are more aware of their rights and responsibilities, when they are clear about the core values they strive to protect, when they begin to understand that the state derives power from us the people, and not the other way round and that it is people who are indispensable and not the government, they will be able to assert their rights and protect their freedoms better. 🇺🇸

[illegible]



BIKRAM RAI

The battery-operated Reva cars are no longer the head turners they used to be five years ago in Kathmandu. The residents of the capital have got used to seeing the tiny vehicles plying alongside motorbikes, minibuses and SUVs on the congested streets.

But the electric cars are likely to gain more popularity among urban Nepalis now that Agni Incorporated, the

authorised distributors of Mahindra vehicles in Nepal, has been granted dealership of Revas.

The Indian multinational bought half the stake in the Bangalore-based company earlier this year which makes the California-designed car that was introduced in Nepal in 2000 by Eco-Vision.

"Reva is not a new name in Nepal, but we intend to increase

its visibility by marketing the brand intensely," says Cabinet Shrestha of Agni Incorporated, which has been the dealer for Mahindra in Nepal. "Extending the partnership in electric vehicles was a mutually beneficial agreement for both of us." Shrestha plans to market the car outside Kathmandu as well, starting with Pokhara and Lumbini.

With the fuel crisis certain to

The little green car

Agni joins the Reva-lution in Nepal

get more acute and petrol more expensive, electric cars are the perfect environment-friendly addition to Kathmandu's roads. The little Reva is often described as "cute" and lets the driver manoeuvre through chaotic traffic and narrow alleys effortlessly and needs very little space for parking.

For those who are skeptical of buying electric vehicles in a country with chronic load shedding, Agni says the car can be charged at home by plugging it to a 220v wall socket for three hours and can run 80km on full charge. The operation cost is less than that of a two-wheeler. Says Shrestha: "It is more or less like charging your mobile phone."

When Reva was first introduced, it was subjected to the same tax rate as petrol and diesel vehicles, making it too expensive for most Nepalis. Only diplomatic missions and international agencies who did not have to pay the tax could afford the cars.

But after intense lobbying by

green groups, the Reva is now levied 40 per cent excise duty, 13 per cent VAT and is exempt from paying the annual road tax. This has meant that there are many more Revas with red number plates. The easy to drive car is a favourite among female drivers in Kathmandu.

Green groups say the cut in import duty is not enough for fully electric or hybrid vehicles, especially if they are used for public transportation.

"We have been vigorously lobbying with the state to reduce tax on zero emission vehicles. The government should not make it expensive to be green," says Shrestha.

With the formal launch of Reva DLX last Sunday, Agni Incorporated says its promo drive is already a big success with a flood of new orders.

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Adventures of a battery bug,
Kunda Dixit's blog East West

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IT'S THE ECONOMY
Chandan Sapkota

Budging on the budget

A caretaker government can't offer much more than a stop-gap budget, but improving the investment climate should be a priority

After much disagreement over the size and nature of budget for fiscal year 2012-13, Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun finally unveiled through ordinance on Sunday, 'The Bill for Authorising Withdrawal and Expenditure from Consolidated Fund for the Services and Works, 2012'. In plain English, that means a partial budget.

The expected expenditure is approximately Rs 161.24 billion, of which Rs 51.29 billion is earmarked for debt servicing and expense of constitutional bodies. The remaining Rs 109.72 billion is equal to one-third of the revised expenditure estimate of fiscal year 2011-12.

It will be just enough to meet administrative expenses and to finance ongoing development, which should be of the same expenditure sub-heads as of the last fiscal year. The tax structure and revenue collection will be guided by the Finance Act 2010-11, which means they won't change until the full budget is unveiled. Moreover, the government is not allowed to use domestic and foreign loans to finance expenditure during this period. It will have to issue overdrafts as per Nepal Rastra Bank Act 2001 in case revenue collection cannot cover expenditure.

The partial budget does not include new programs except for Rs 3 billion for CA election, Rs 3.69 billion for payment to PLA combatants who chose voluntary retirement, and Rs 3 billion for the establishment of the proposed Directorate

of Nepal Army. Understandably, the opposition objects to such ad hoc allocations.

Visibly unhappy with the way he was compelled to unveil a partial budget, Pun defended his track record and outlined what he would have done if a full budget was allowed. He mentioned populist programs like 100 days of employment guarantee to unemployed, free education up to 10+2 level for Dalits, allowances to elderly and handicapped, cultural centres, allowance to girls to attend school and universal insurance, among others.

Pun said the macro-economy had performed better during his tenure than previous years, with the economy growing at 4.6 per cent, up from 3.9 per cent last year and 4.3 per cent in 2009-10. Let us be clear that this happened not due to any special effort by the government, but due to favourable monsoons and availability

of agriculture inputs, which increased paddy production and pushed agriculture growth rate to 4.9 per cent, the highest in the last four years. While the growth rate in service sector remained unchanged at 3.6 per cent, industry sector grew at just 1.6 per cent, which is lower than 2.9 percent in 2010-11.

All this proves that the major constraints to robust industrial activities were not addressed. In fact, the industrial sector is still crippled by power cuts, lack of affordable raw material and qualified human capital, persistent labour problems coupled with an expensive workforce (Nepal has the highest wage overheads in South Asia), strikes, lack of innovation, and a policy implementation paralysis.

The gross fixed capital formation as a share of GDP was 19.6 per cent, the lowest in the past decade. There is no improvement in cost competitiveness and

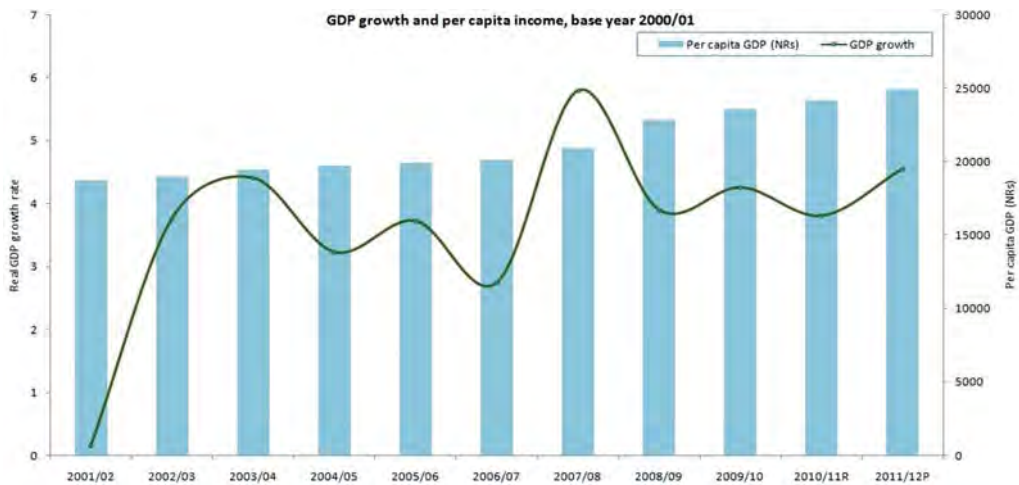
efficiency of the industrial sector. Due to lack of adequate inventory and production hassles in export-oriented sectors, Nepal could not take advantage of weakening of the Nepali rupee against major currencies.

Meanwhile, during the first eleven months of 2011-12, the balance of payments surplus and forex reserves reached a record Rs 113 billion and Rs 427 billion respectively. This wasn't because of any novel government policy or structural changes in the way the economy is functioning, but because of high remittance inflows and net transfers. There are still worrying signs in the economy: inflation is still high (the government's projection of eight per cent for 2011-12 is a gross underestimation), the trade deficit is widening, industrial woes are persistent, recurrent expenditure is rising, fiscal deficit is increasing, financial sector troubles are not sorted out, and some inefficient state-owned enterprises continue to drain taxpayer's hard-earned money.

The budget provides no relief program for the public, who are hammered by soaring inflation. The troubled industrial sector is also not getting immediate relief. The grand plan for Nepal Investment Year 2012-13 is now out of gear, and development will suffer.

The best the caretaker government can do is ensure good industrial relations, maintain investor confidence and earnestly implement ongoing projects by plugging leakages. Importantly, the primary focus should be on sustaining growth rate given the impending impact of late monsoon and fertiliser scarcity during planting season. ■

Chandan Sapkota, a researcher at South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), starts a fortnightly column in *Nepali Times*, It's The Economy. Views expressed in the column are personal. www.sapkotac.blogspot.com



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Seti's orphans

CANDICE NEO in POKHARA

On the morning of 5 May, villagers on the northern edge of Pokhara heard an unusual noise from the Seti. Within hours floodwaters swept away settlements, farmlands and cattle along Kharapani village killing 20 and displacing hundreds.

Twenty-year-old Amrit Pun and 13-year-old Chahana Pun's parents and baby brother along with 10 other villagers from Leknath municipality were at Sardi Khola taking hot spring baths that Saturday. Their parents and brother never returned.

"We weren't expecting the flood, because it wasn't the monsoon season yet," explained Amrit, wiping tears from his eyes. Many sand miners and tourists who had come to bathe in the hot springs lost their lives after multiple avalanches triggered a sudden blockage in the Seti.

The siblings are now looked after by their aunt and uncle, who visit them every day. They have been surviving on food and money provided by the local government, the Nepal Red Cross Society and District Disaster Rescue Committee. Amrit wants to support his family and is desperately searching for employment, but having studied only till fourth grade, jobs are hard to come by. He says if his father was alive, he could have learnt technical skills from him and become an electrician as well.

Chahana is studying in sixth grade at a school 30 km away from her home. Funded

PIC: SIAN CHOOT TONG

Two months after the Seti flashflood, victims struggle to overcome the disaster and rebuild their lives

by a Japanese NGO, the school provides free education and housing to children affected by the flood. Chahana hopes to study in Japan after completing her SLC exams.

Despite the ordeal, the children remain optimistic. Amrit said: "I know our parents will never come back. But our neighbours have been extremely helpful and have taken good care of us during this difficult time. And I am hopeful that once I get a job, I will be able to take care of myself

and my sister."

While Amrit, Chahana and hundreds of other flood victims try to rebuild their lives, heavy rainfall on 11 July set off another flood on the Seti. The river swelled to 15 metres, submerging squatter settlements along the bank in a muddy ooze as the rains washed down the sediments of the May flood from the mountains. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Eye in the sky, # 604



ONLY MEMORIES: Chahana Pun with her brother Amrit Pun holding a picture of their parents and baby brother who were among the nearly 80 people washed away by the flashflood on the Seti on 5 May. Heavy rainfall caused another Seti flood on 11 July, as seen below from Ramghat.



PIC: CANDICE NEO

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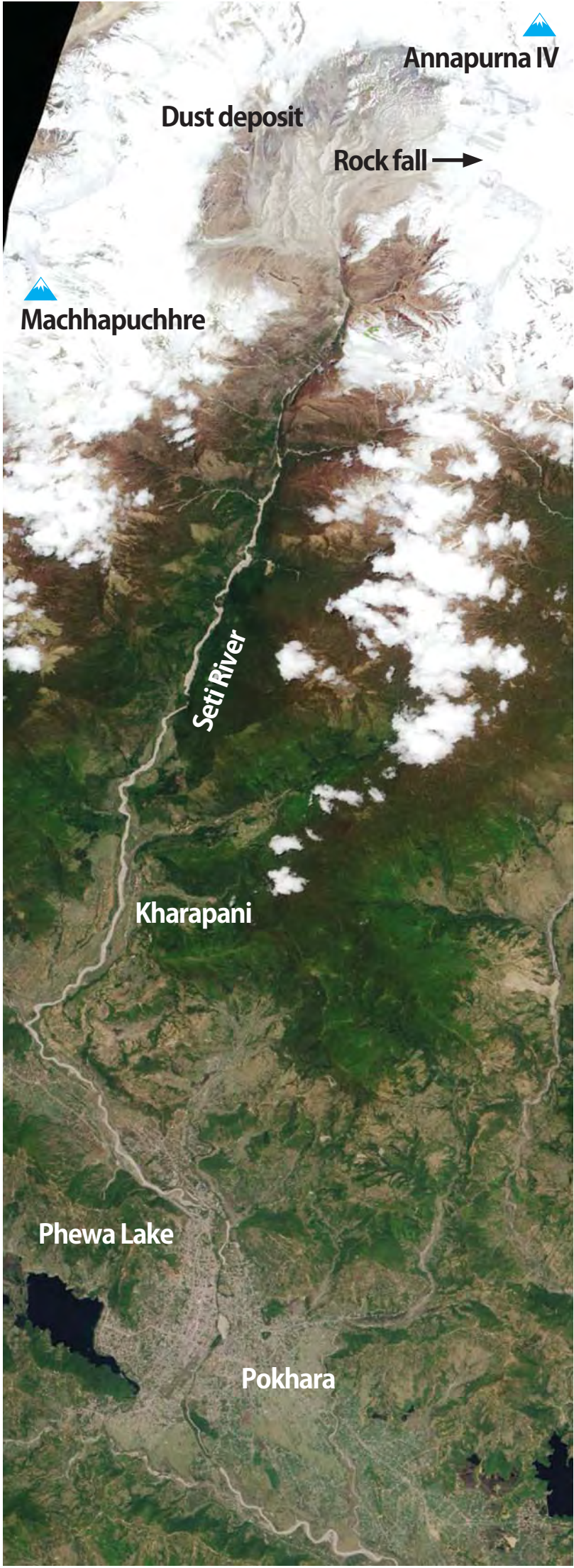
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After the flood

Scientists analysing the flash flood on the Seti River on 5 May, which killed nearly 80 people, have concluded that it was not caused by global warming, but a massive rock fall on the west face of Annapurna IV. This in turn triggered an avalanche which bulldozed glacial debris into the river.

The aftermath of that event is still visible as monsoon rains lash the Seti Basin, washing down more of the sediment deposited upstream. What is flowing down the Seti this week is not water, but a muddy white paste.

That Saturday morning, Russian pilot Alexander Maximov of Avia Club Nepal in Pokhara was flying a tourist on a sightseeing flight at 10,000ft above the Seti and filming it all from a video camera on the wingtip of his blue Aeroprakt plane. Inadvertently, he recorded the dust cloud created by the rock-ice avalanche, and noticed the flash flood coming down the Seti. He radioed a warning to Pokhara that possibly saved many lives, and then raced the flood down the Seti Valley, taking aerial pictures of the river as it tore through villages.

Maximov flew back the

next day and took amazing photographs of the devastation on the ice shelf below the 7,525m-high Annapurna IV in the headwaters of the Seti. Scientists analysing those images have concluded that a rock face very near the summit of Annapurna IV broke off, taking down a part of the ice cornice of the ridge as well.

David Petley a professor at Durham University writes in The Landslide Blog: 'It is clear that the landslide is a huge rockslope failure...on the flanks of Annapurna IV. The mass appears to have fragmented when it reached the lower angled slopes at the foot of the steep section, and to have runout as a rock and debris avalanche.'

Also taking pictures in the days after the event were the eyes in the sky of NASA's Landsat satellite. The image taken on 6 May shows an enormous brown area below the cliff where the rock slide pulverised, and sent a cloud of dust that was carried northwards to the base of the ridgeline between Annapurna III and IV, which separates Kaski from Manang. Despite a technical glitch, the Landsat image also shows the channels through which the avalanche

plunged to the Seti below and caused the devastating flashflood downstream.

Interestingly, the rockfall was not caused by an earthquake, but it created an earthquake that was detected by the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University in the US. Experts there concluded that the landslide moved from east to west and dislodged some 22 million cubic metres of rock that first fell 2,000m into the ice shelf below Annapurna IV and then another 2,000m into the Seti. There, the avalanche of rock and ice moved at 30 metres per second and pushed the water down the River at high speed.

The Seti has seen much bigger floods in its history, one of them occurring about 800 years ago which was of biblical proportions and brought down a wall of debris 100m high to what is now Pokhara city.

Climate change and future earthquakes will exacerbate this danger. Risk management experts say it is better to be prepared with a flood early warning system, and zoning laws that discourage settlements and infrastructure along river banks.

Kunda Dixit

Read also:
David Petley's The Landslide Blog

Kunda Dixit's East-West Blog, Himalayan Tsunami

Alexander Maximov's video of the dust cloud from the avalanche

THE DAY AFTER: Captain Alexander Maximov of Avia Club Nepal took this photograph on 6 May (top, right) showing clearly where the rock face broke off near the 7,525m summit of Annapurna IV and fell on the ice shelf below, creating a cloud of dust and triggering an avalanche that burst into the Seti gorge. The NASA image was taken on 20 May (above).

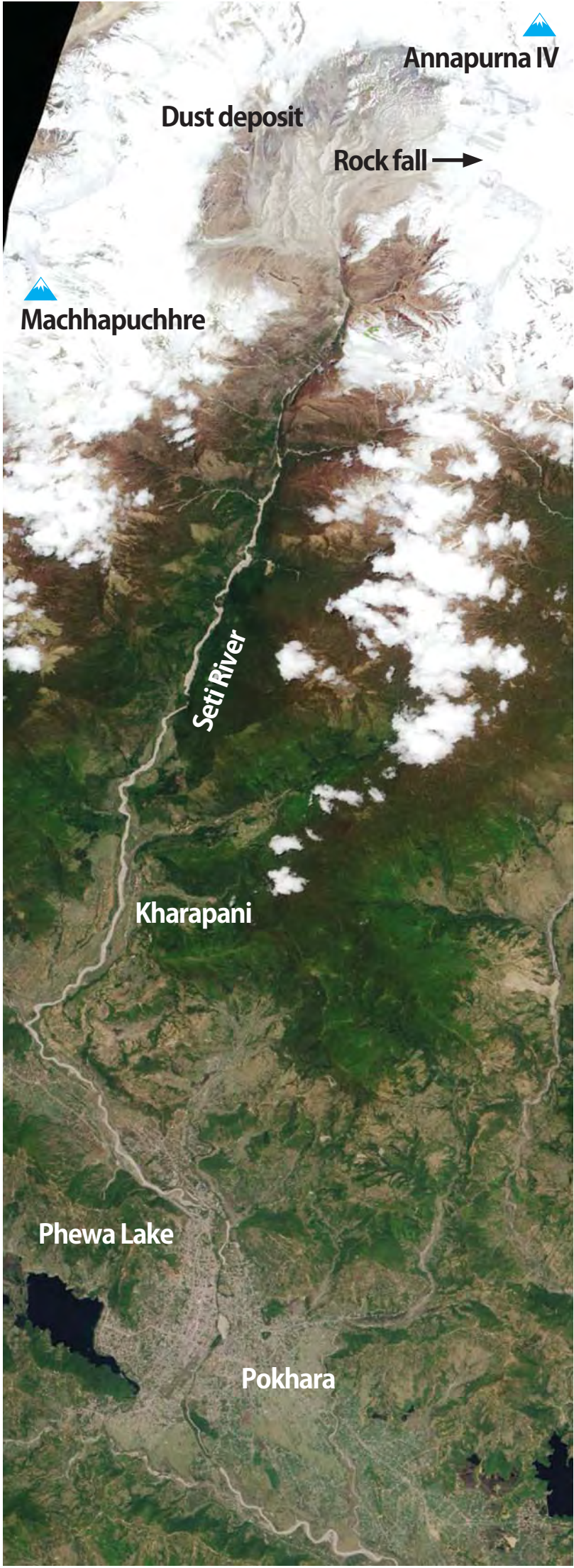
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AVIA CLUB NEPAL

After the flood

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EVENTS

SAM SHEPARD'S TRUE WEST, American playwright's acclaimed play brought to you by The Poetics Theatre Company. Rs. 200 for adults, Rs. 100 for students, 20 July 5pm, 21 July 2pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Yantra 1.0, first ever inter-college and school festival of robotic games. 20 to 21 July, 8.30am, 9841881095, Tripureswor, www.ran.org.np

Highway Ride with Honda, embark on a road trip with the cast of the film *Highway*. 21 July, 6.45am, Kathmandu

I am youth because, a short-film making competition on environmental issues. Rs. 100, register by 6 August, more info at info@yes.org.np

Ultimate Digital Photography Workshop, learn digital photography in 12 years at an affordable price, register by 20 July. Rs 2999, 24 July to 4 August, 7am to 9.15am, 9841240341, New Road

Demystifying Portraiture, a workshop by Spanish photographer

Arantxa Cedillo for photography enthusiasts, who want to meet people and tell their stories through portraits. 21 to 22 July and 28 to 29 July, 9am to 3pm, Jhamsikhel, www.photocircle.com.np

Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge 2012, cycle a full circle around Kathmandu Valley to raise money for Save the Children. Register at www.tinyurl.com/reg-ktm-kora, 21 July, 6.45 am, starting at Patan Durbar Square, 4412508 or email kora@socialtours.com

Shuffle Party, shuffle the night away with music by DJ Pujan and Niral. Rs 300 (pre sales) or Rs 500 (door), 21 July, 1pm to 12am, Topsy Bar and Lounge, Durbarmarg

TEDx Kathmandu, an event where you can share your ideas and engage in great discussions. 28 July, Yala Maya Kendra, register at www.tedxkathmandu.com

Futsal Carnival, enjoy a fun-filled fair as you cheer for your favourite futsal team, dance to the music

of DJ Phuchhey and savour delicious snacks from the food stalls. 28 July, 11am to 7pm, Grassroots Recreational Centre, Mandikatar

MUSIC

Monkey Temple, catch Monkey Temple's brand new album *Shades of Grey* as they perform live. Rs 350, 20 July, 7.45 pm, Trisara Restro and Bar, Lazimpat

DINING

Bhojan Griha, traditional Nepali restaurant that serves great local food with folk music and dance. *Dillibajar*

Chez Caroline, for business lunches and relaxed dinners. *Babar Mahal Revisited*



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

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

Ghangri Café, a quiet and relaxing place with delicious open momos and mouthwatering Chef's Salad. *Pulchok, 5528703*



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

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

Tama, enjoy delicious khaja and taas set, along with a host of other Indian and Nepali snacks at an affordable price. *Gairidhara*

Japanese Crêpe Station, try the unique Nepali khuwa crêpe for a quick fix. *Khichapokhari and Basantapur, call 4256655*

Pokhara Beach Club, a great place with superb views of the lake. Relax, enjoy the amazing dishes, swim or take a boat ride. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



ALCHEMY, an authentic Italian restaurant which serves dishes like Pizza Quatro Stagioni and Spaghetti alla Puttanesca. *Thamel*

Hankook Sarang, from Bibimbab to Samgyeopsal, Hankook offers a wide range of Korean delicacies at affordable prices. *Thamel (opposite Road house café)*

Chili Bar and Restaurant, from Nepali to European cuisine, this restaurant serves delectable dishes along with

Coffee and conversations

There are several reasons to head down to Moksh Complex: music, food, yoga, books. And now you can add one more to the list: coffee. Less than two months old, Karma Coffee is gaining popularity among the regulars at Moksh Complex.

"It was such a shame to see so many different artists walk by one another without exchanging a single word," says founder and Austrian expat Birgit Lienhart-Gyawali. "I figured coffee would bring us all together. We could talk, get to know each other and build a sense of community."

It all began in 2010 when Birgit was travelling and a coffee farm in Begnas, run by an old married couple, caught her attention. Her interest in Nepali coffee

grew and she quit her job and began Karma Trading, which exports Nepali coffee beans to Austria and Germany. The company now hopes to build a brand name under Karma Coffee.

Initially a one-woman operation, the coffee house now has two baristas and several volunteer assistants who freshly grind coffee beans for each serving. What is unique about this place is the pricing, the standard cup is only Rs 30, but donations are welcome.

"My main goal is to promote Nepali coffee and make it affordable for everyone," explains Birgit. "As long as I can run this place, I don't care much about earning huge profits. People should feel comfortable and not worry about over compensating."



Karma Coffee stresses on making best use of resources and not being wasteful. The flower pots that line the balcony are decorated with used coffee filters which Birgit also recycles and turns into lampshades. The ground coffee beans from the filters are discarded onto the plants for natural compost. Adjacent is a showroom full of coffee-related things such as Nepali-made ceramic mugs and coffee filters. With used coffee beans,

Birgit creates "coffee paper" to ship batches of beans.

When asked about the biggest obstacle so far, Birgit is very pragmatic in her response. "The coffee industry in Nepal is relatively new. Farmers are less concerned about quality and are more excited about the money they might make. Proper training is necessary so that they can recognise good quality beans." ☐

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amazing cocktails. Hit the dance floor after your meal. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



BLACK AND WHITE CAFÉ, a great place to spend a quiet afternoon surfing the net with some bakery items like the Swiss Apple Pie and chocolate crêpe with homemade ice cream. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



BISTRO CAROLINE, a highly recommended place to eat and relax. Their chocolate mousse and fish dishes are a must for foodies. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

Just Baked, a cozy café with amazing pastries and a friendly ambience. *Old Baneshwor*

GETAWAYS

Top to Toe Pampering, go the full monty with 240 minutes of facial, body, pedi, mani, and foot massages. *Rs 8600, Gokarna Forest Resort, Kathmandu*



MANGO TREE LODGE, enjoy culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. *Bhetani, Bardiya, info@mangotreelodge.com*

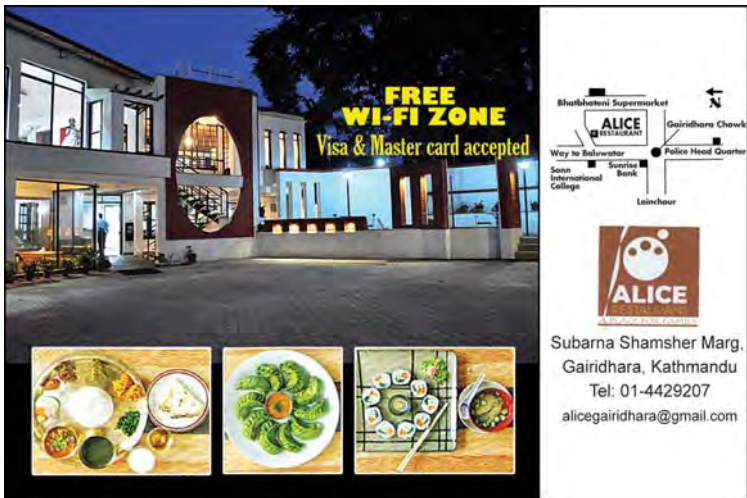
Hotel Landmark, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, The Hungry Eye. *00977-061-462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com*

The Last Resort, offers canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, and mountain biking. Challenge yourself and be adventurous. *4700525, 4701247*



For the love of music

Good news for those who have missed nepa-laya's monthly Paleti sit-down concerts. Paleti will feature a Nepali artist in the last Friday of each month. The series is back after a five-month long hiatus. The much awaited series will begin with a performance by Suraj Thapa and Meena Niroula on 27 July. The duo will perform the best compositions from seven years of Paleti. Set aside a date on your calendar between 9 and 12 August for Paleti Utsav, a celebration of contemporary Nepali music, featuring maestro Ambar Gurung and singers Phatteman, Shanti Thatal and Aavas.



Pumpernickel



PICS: ANNE RENZENBRINK

If you choose the name Pumpernickel to sell bread and cake in Nepal, you better do it well. Pumpernickel, the popular German black bread, sets the bar high for all tourists, expats and well-travelled Nepalis, who miss their daily dose of good bread.

But Nurbu Shrestha, the owner of the long-established bakery in the heart of Thamel, knows what he is doing. He has been to Germany and Switzerland to learn whole-wheat and multigrain recipes, a profitable idea, for almost 35 years now.

I recommend trying one of the delicious sandwiches. They are quite expensive (Rs 140 to 195), but worth their price. The whole grain buns are homemade and a felicitous alternative to the flavourless white toast you often get in Kathmandu. Decorated with lettuce,

tomatoes, onions and cucumber, you can choose between tuna, egg, vegetable, and various kinds of cheese sandwiches. Go for the cheese option. Try to come before noon because the bread might be sold out by then and you need to wait quite a while for a new basket of freshly made bread.

A good Western breakfast needs croissants, proper croissants. Sure, the real pain au chocolat tastes better, but compared to the small boring pastries called "croissant" that are sold elsewhere in Kathmandu, the chocolate croissants at Pumpernickel (Rs 60) are big, have flavour and fill you up.

The croissant goes really well with a cup of delicious milk coffee (Rs 115). The mango lassi (Rs 140) could be a bit cooler but is otherwise also recommendable.

The honey pancakes (Rs 160) are ok,

but nothing more. In fact, I've had better pancakes in Nepal and we better just trust the Americans on that.

A much better alternative is the broad range of homemade cakes. With classics such as black forest, cheesecake, carrot cake or linzer cake behind its counter, Pumpernickel is well equipped. I recommend the carrot cake (Rs 80). Baked with cinnamon and raisins, it tastes just like it would if you make it at home. And I have high standards, because carrot cake is one of my favourites.

The service is fast but a bit indifferent. And I was quite disappointed by the way the food was served, after all you eat with your eyes first.

You can get other kinds of breakfast – cereal, porridge and omelette – served

in the homely decorated place that exhibits photographs by the owner's friend and renowned photographer Mani Lama. Customers, mainly chatting in English, French, Dutch or German, can use WiFi and take a break from city life in the welcoming garden.

I have been to many bakeries abroad to satisfy my craving for real bread and quite often left them disappointed. But I highly recommend Pumpernickel bakery for good breakfast, afternoon tea and cake or just a relaxing dose of caffeine. If only it actually sold Pumpernickel. 🇨🇳

Anne Renzenbrink

Walk towards the entrance of Mandala Street in Thamel, the cafe is on the opposite lane



The Good Wife





MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

The Americans have mastered the art of making captivating television. While HBO has traditionally led the field with dramas like *The Sopranos* and of course, *Sex And The City*, other channels have stepped up increasingly with shows like *The West Wing*, and now *The Good Wife* – the former aired by NBC, the latter by CBS.

The Good Wife with its unfortunately banal name, is another superb show that has now been renewed for its fourth season. Though I hesitate to compare any show to the exceptional *West Wing* (Aaron Sorkin’s inarguable masterpiece, a seven season series chronicling the tenure of President Bartlett, a fictitious democratic president, although one often wishes he were real), *The Good Wife* clearly pays homage to the former’s precise, informative, yet emotionally uplifting writing style, scattered with jokes and littered with clever references.

The opposite of the domestic drama that the name might imply, *The Good Wife* refers to Alicia Florrick (played by the beautiful and talented Juliana Margulies), whose husband, Peter Florrick, Chicago’s swanky Cook’s County State’s Attorney, in an uncanny resemblance to recent politics (John and the late Elizabeth Edwards, Eliot Spitzer, the Clintons) is found guilty of cavorting with a prostitute and other alleged corruptions. As he resigns from office, his wife, Alicia, stands

quietly by him in seeming solidarity just as we have seen on television in the real world, countless times.

With Peter in jail, Alicia, a lawyer by training who graduated from Georgetown Law takes up work as a junior litigator at Stern, Lockhart & Gardner – helped into her position by Will Gardner, a partner in the prestigious Chicago law firm. Met with not just a little antagonism, Alicia slowly but surely wins her way into the firm, and the public’s good graces with her obvious talent as a lawyer and her refusal to become a part of Peter Florrick’s sordid legacy.

The show initially deals more with Alicia’s life, her struggle with working and balancing her children, keeping her annoyingly interfering socialite mother-in-law Jackie (Mary Beth Peil) at bay, as well as her coming to terms with Peter’s incarceration, her dilemma about leaving him, and the obvious flame that Will Gardner, her former classmate, still carries for her. While none of this is even remotely uninteresting, the show slowly evolves into something even more sophisticated. While Alicia remains the main character in many ways, each episode is written to deal with the very complex moral problems inherent in the law.

As the cast of lawyers, all with different political inclinations, fight their battles for their clients, we are confronted with very complex legal theory, none of which is easy to sift through nor agree with, but is fascinating all the same.

It is this very treatment of the viewer as an intelligent being, one that might not appreciate being spoon-fed, that lays at the heart of *The Good Wife*’s excellence.

While Juliana Margulies carries the show with heart and her grave beauty, there are a number of amazing characters, all of whom have equally intriguing stories: Will Gardner, the hyper-ambitious, not always strictly moral, basketball playing lawyer; Diane Lockhart, the only woman partner in the firm, an ardent, sharply witty feminist ideologue who falls in love with a Republican fire-arms analyst; Peter Florrick himself (Chris Noth also known as “Mr. Big” in *Sex And The City*) who slowly plots his return in prison, and wonders how to win back his wife; and last but perhaps most interestingly Kalinda Sharma, the enigmatic, gun toting, in-house investigator at Stern, Lockhart & Gardner, played by the fiercely talented Archie Panjabi – an actor whom I hope to see much much more.

For anyone who scorns TV, I will not argue, but pick up a copy of *The Good Wife* and you won’t regret it. It is one of the shows, like *The West Wing* that you will find yourself watching over and over again, and each time, finding something new to delight in. 🇳🇵

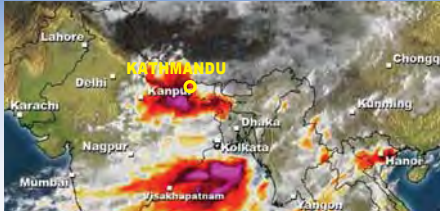
All DVDs reviewed in this column are available at:
Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone # 014700092




nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

WEEKEND WEATHER

The monsoon is now literally pulsating. The moisture-laden trough that hit us midweek finally broke through a lingering high pressure area over central Nepal that had been keeping the monsoon from being proactive. But after dumping over 30mm of rain on Wednesday in Kathmandu, the system is moving on. There will be a short respite before another monsoon pulse that is now gathering strength over the Bay of Bengal comes our way. This is an even more massive system with strong circulation, and could signify heftier rainfall towards the end of next week.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		
27-18	27-19	27-19



MONSOON GETAWAY: Former king Gyanendra Shah with his wife Komal Shah, as their flight to Doha prepares to take off from Tribhuvan International Airport on Monday. Shah and his family are on a three-week long trip to Europe.



LUCKY SURVIVORS: Passengers injured in a bus accident in Dhading receiving treatment at Star Hospital in Kathmandu on Monday. The bus plunged into the Trishuli River, killing 16 and injuring 15 passengers.



LONG WAIT: Devotees queue at Pashupati Nath Temple, Kathmandu, on Monday to mark the beginning of the Nepali month of Shrawan when Lord Shiva is worshipped.



RAINDROPS ON MY HEAD: A cyclist rushes home with a make-shift raincoat as the monsoon broke through on Wednesday evening in Balaju, Kathmandu.

Nepali diarrhoea



DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

With the advent of monsoon, gastroenteritis (diarrhoea) outbreaks will follow. The communicable disease hospital in Teku will suddenly see an influx of patients. The vast majority of cases with diarrhoea are due to bacteria and not other causes like amoeba. However, most healthcare practitioners have amoeba so ingrained in our minds as the most common cause of diarrhoea in adults in Nepal that we treat for amoeba first. But acute diarrhoea which suddenly comes out of the blue (sometimes after a “bhoj”) is almost never caused by amoeba.

Indeed most patients in Teku hospital with diarrhoea will admit to the abrupt onset of their disease, suggesting bacteria as the cause. So just obtaining a reliable patient history helps immensely in determining

treatment as there are different medicines for bacterial diarrhoea versus ameoba diarrhoea.

As we have mentioned in these pages, using and drinking clean water are the keys to preventing diarrhoea in Nepal. Using soap to wash our hands also helps a great deal, even if the water that that flows from our taps is contaminated.

All the water sources (taps, wells, stone spouts) are unfortunately polluted, especially in urban centres like Kathmandu. In fact water from the venerated stone spouts seems to be the most polluted. And several times, Nepali scientists working in enteric illnesses have cultured the life-

threatening cholera bacteria from water from the stone spouts in Kathmandu. When these scientists approached the local municipality with this scary information, the news was greeted with the usual Nepali nonchalance.

There is no choice but to drink boiled water. Drinking boiled water may not be practical for everyone due to lack of fuel or budget constraints. In that case, if someone is still motivated enough, chlorine tablets or liquid iodine can be used to obtain clean water.

Of course changing water pipes that run parallel with sewage pipes would help fix the age-old problem of water-borne diseases once and for all in Kathmandu. Perhaps all the donor money in the health sector for a year should be channeled into changing the water pipes in Kathmandu. If we had the political will to implement this policy, it would be the single most important and revolutionary public health measure carried out in Kathmandu. But at present the sad fact is that for many of us in Nepal, the land of the great Himalayas and bountiful rivers, just obtaining drinking water is hard enough. 🇳🇵



Anger management

Attacks on private schools are a manifestation of the class divide in education



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

After a decade-long armed conflict, Nepal is not yet at peace. The class war is giving way to a caste war, and protracted conflict over identity. But there is another conflict that is brewing, and a harbinger was this week's attack on schools by groups affiliated to the breakaway CPN-Maoists led by Mohan Baidya. The attacks may seem to be politically motivated, but there are deeper, and more disturbing, underlying reasons.

Nepal has a parallel education system based exclusively on accessibility and affordability. Government schools and colleges are cheap, but for the most part offer poor quality education. Private schools are more expensive, but have higher quality of education and show better results in state exams.

To talk about the unfair quality divide between public and private education may have become a futile exercise in a liberalised economy where quality comes at a price. The question really should be: why are government schools so bad?



BIKRAM RAI

Even so, vandalism against well-endowed private colleges should ring bells that there is something really wrong with the structure of the education system in this country.

The government and donors who support the education budget may rejoice that there are more schools in remote areas, enrolment is up, and Nepal will now meet its MDG targets for primary education, but the world has changed since those goals were set 12 years ago. To understand and cope with the complexity of social, economic and political life in the 21st century it is not enough for individuals to be literate anymore.

According to the government's 2002-2003 Economic Survey, the number of students per public secondary

schools was 95.15, while the same ratio for private schools was 46.15. Similarly, the teacher-student ratio for public schools was 28, while there was approximately one teacher for every 10 students in private schools.

In 2009-2010, as the number of students in secondary public schools surged to over 500,000, the divide became even more glaring. The school-student ratio increased to 170 students and the teacher-student ratio increased to 31.42. Comparatively, the numbers stayed as low as 60.51 and 12.26 respectively for private schools.

Besides the numbers, there are unmeasured variables like infrastructure, logistics, quality of teachers and environment for education, which

distinguish private education from public. The divide continues in higher education and is then forever imprinted on certificates. What is most ironical about the system is that despite of a lifelong divide in the classrooms, the students take the same tests and are marked alike in the exams. So it is not difficult to understand who has better chances of making it to the job market.

Last year thousands of young men and women, many graduates and post-graduates, applied for the 3D (dirty, difficult and dangerous) jobs in Korea, more will be applying this year. I still meet my classmate from school who was perhaps more deserving but could not complete his higher education. The state has

failed in its fundamental duty of ensuring that every citizen has the freedom to choose a life of dignity.

Every year there is a shortage of text books and medicines in the remote areas, while the government increases subsidy on petrol, runs unsustainable diesel plants to light up the cities and provides various tax holidays in the name of saving jobs and encouraging business.

During one of the frequent strikes called by the parties in May, a young graduate who was vandalising a motorcycle in Pulchok told me, "I have a certificate but no job. Instead of sitting idle I am doing some politics here." You cannot expect civic behaviour from people in a country governed by uncivil priorities.

Violence should never be glorified in any form, for any end but these are times of soul searching for the more able sections of society. They must see the link between growing anarchism among the youth and the desperation they exhibit.

As long as the state cannot guarantee quality education and even out the playing field, thousands of disillusioned young minds will serve as political ammunition. And it doesn't matter which political party they belong to. 🇳🇵

No man's land

Six years after the end of the war, land continues to be the sticking point in the peace process

ANURAG ACHARYA

In the initial 40-point demand issued by the erstwhile Maoist rebels in 1996, the party called for 'land under control of the feudal system to be confiscated and distributed to the landless and homeless'. They demanded that upper class lands be 'confiscated and nationalised'.

Less than two weeks after submitting their demand, the Maoists launched the 'people's war' on 15 February 1996, attacking police stations.

The man who drafted that 40-point demand is now the prime minister of the country, and it is supreme historical irony that he was handed the same demands by landless people aligned to a faction that has split off from his party.

The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and subsequent political agreements committed the Maoists to return the seized land to its owners, and a government commitment to land reform.

However, in a recent report The Carter Centre has found that these commitments have only been partially fulfilled. While most of the land seized in the hills, mountains, and parts of the eastern and central plains have been returned, in the Mid and Far-Western Tarai where the largest number of seizures had

reportedly occurred, they have either not been returned or given back conditionally.

Bardiya was where large tracts of private farms were captured by the Maoists, especially around the Rajapur area in the western parts of the district. Officials figures show 604 hectares were captured in 24 VDCs, but local politicians and civil society believe the area could be up to 1,422 hectares.

In Bara district, around 5,000 people are living in seized land while another thousand houses have been built illegally in occupied plots in Chitwan. Similarly, in Dang an estimated 1,829 hectares of land belonging to Nepal Sanskrit University, Mahendra Campus, Ratannath Temple and Sowrgadwari Temple have been occupied by the landless, and squatters.

The report cites complex dynamics underlying the seizures, and advises the government against any forced evictions that could lead to violent confrontation between the security forces and the illegal occupants.

"The political parties should stop using vulnerable populations for their political ends," The Carter Centre advocates, adding that a credible committee be set up to determine the principle and procedures governing land return.

Besides calling on the Maoists to return all the remaining seized properties under their control, the report suggests the need for a comprehensive land policy and reform as a long-term solution to



the issue. "Land commitments remain important in the peace process and if left unaddressed, they may cause further challenges in the future," Carter Centre's Sarah Levit-Shore told *Nepali Times*.

In November last year, following the seven-point agreement, the Maoists had expressed a time bound commitment to return the seized land and properties, but the hardliners in the party prevented the return demanding alternatives for tillers, landless, and squatters.

But after the split in the party, the case has become more complicated with the Mohan Baidya group radicalising the issue to garner its support base among the landless. In some districts, landowners were given a share of the harvest, but the Maoists or the groups closely protected by them continue to occupy the land and pocket millions from it.

The owners say authorities have failed to enforce land return and did not want to involve district administration or the police in the matter

anymore. There have been cases where the owners have paid hefty sums to get their land back.

Hundreds of hectares of land are still being occupied in Kailali, Kanchanpur, Chitwan, Sankhuwasabha, Arghakhanchi, Banke and Dhanusha. The government established Local Peace Committees (LPCs) to facilitate the settling of the land disputes, but the committee itself has become a political battleground. As a result, various factions of the Maoists including the ones led by Matrika Yadav, Mohan Baidya and ethnic groups like Limbuwan continue to illegally occupy and harvest public and private land. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Full text of The Carter Centre report

United for truth



Six years after the war, victims on both sides are coming together in their fight for truth and justice

ANNE RENZENBRINK

Sangita Rasaili was too young to understand what was happening when the conflict reached her hometown of Pokhari Chauri, a Maoist stronghold in Kavre. But when the army killed her brother, a Maoist, and her sister, Sangita became an unwilling participant of the conflict.

Phadindra Luitel's father, Guru Prasad Luitel, a teacher in Okhaldhunga, was abducted by the Maoists in 2003 when he was returning from school. They killed him, tied him to a tree and left his body there.

Sangita was a victim of state atrocities and Phadindra suffered from Maoist excesses. But years of pain and an unrelenting demand for truth, justice and compensation have

bought them together.

Sangita admits that even a few years ago there was a clear divide in the movement for justice. 'Army victims' and 'Maoist victims' would meet separately, organise separate protests and approach the state as two distinct groups.

She says the only time both sides met was during meetings and trainings. When they started talking, they realised how much they had in common. No matter who carried out the killings, they have lost family members and friends, endured immense grief and have similar objectives. It made sense to work together as staying divided only weakened their demand and made it easier for the state to ignore them.



BIKRAM RAI

Phadindra agrees that victims should not be divided. "I think victims on both sides are equal," he says.

The other thing they have in common is a legal system that doesn't penalise but rather enables impunity. Six years after signing the comprehensive peace accord, relatives and friends of nearly 2,000 disappeared and 16,000 killed by either side are still struggling for answers.

Unlike other post-conflict countries where some form of transitional justice has been applied, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

(TRC) in Nepal is still at a draft stage. The dissolution of the CA in May has stalled the process once again. Despite the apathy shown by all the political parties, and overcoming their own hardships, both Sangita and Phadindra have not given up on their personal quests for justice.

After the Maoists captured their family land in Okhaldhunga after killing their father, Phadindra Luitel, his two younger siblings and mother fled to Kathmandu. He quit his job two years ago and now works as the vice chairman of the Conflict Victim Orphans

Society. "My job was not as important as justice," he says.

The family borrowed money from friends, neighbours and banks to file a lawsuit against the killers and finds itself in debt. Although the case is now before the Supreme Court, the police is reluctant to pursue the perpetrators, and they receive death threats.

The trauma of losing two children has left Sangita's mother psychologically scarred. Like the Luitel's, the family also migrated to Kathmandu after her father was regularly harassed and

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and justice



PICS: ANNE RENZENBRINK

questioned by the police and army. Sangita Rasaili, however, moved back to Kavre and currently volunteers at the Local Peace Committee.

Both families have received some compensation from the government and legal help from private organisations. But neither is satisfied.

Sangita says the government equates financial assistance with justice. She argues that the government uses money to shut down a case because people within the government are responsible for many of the killings and it's in their interest to close the investigations.

The money helps the family in the short-run, but justice in its true sense has not been given. They still don't know who killed her brother, how they did it and why.

Sangita, Phadindra and thousands of surviving families from both sides want an independent, powerful TRC where victims are part of the decision-making process. They want to know who the perpetrators are, why their loved ones were killed, raped or tortured, where the disappeared are, and they want war criminals to be punished.

Despite suffering, the lack

of support and the political deadlock, Sangita says one has to be optimistic because otherwise there is nothing you can do. They will keep asking for justice, she says.

Phadindra too believes his family and others like them will get justice. "We are still hoping. One day, justice will come," he says. 📺

nepalitimes.com

Giving conflict victims a voice, #610
Truth without justice is an insult, #607



United by loss

Laxmi Devi Khadka and Devisara Wali make a formidable pair, working together as activists campaigning on behalf of families of the disappeared. They know what it is to have a loved one taken away. They have lived through the nightmare. In the ten years since their husbands were disappeared by the Maoists and the state, they have knocked every door for answers, only to be sent back with false hopes and assurances. Victimised by opposing sides of the war, one would not expect the two women to be good friends. But that is what they have been to each other through these difficult years, when friends, relatives and even family turned their backs on them.

"We may have been victimised by different groups but the pain is still the same," Devisara says. Her husband, Suresh was last seen in the district police office in Bardiya. Laxmi's husband was taken by the Maoists when they were about to sleep. "They said they would send him back in 15 minutes, but we never saw him again," she says.

Laxmi and Devisara have continued to search for their missing husbands even as the men who took them threatened them to stop. "How can I give up on my husband? I have kept all his clothes and belongings in the hope that he would be back one day," Devisara says.

Two days after Laxmi's husband was abducted, a local paper in Nepalgunj carried a report that he was executed. But since there has been no official confirmation, Laxmi continues to live in limbo.

"I can't believe he is dead until I see his body," she says. "I keep searching for his face in the crowd. At night when the dogs bark, I still get up to see if it's him."



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“We never demanded ethnic states”

Interview with Rajkumar Lekhi, president of Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, *Kantipur*, 15 July

कान्तिपुर

What prompted the decision to establish an ethnic party?
The country needs a mainstream political party that gives voice to all ethnic and indigenous groups. The dissolution of the CA showed how little the top three parties care about our needs. This is why we want a political party that accommodates people from all communities so that mainstream parties accept our collective agenda.
However, I don't agree on having a party that only represents a single group. It's not practical.

It seems like every ethnic group wants to start its own party. Don't you think this will destroy national harmony?
Like I said, I don't believe in a party based on singular identity. The only way we can take the country forward is by recognising and celebrating our diverse languages, cultures and people. Since many organisations are



already working to address the demands of various ethnic groups, a political party for each group is not necessary.

If there was no demand for ethnic federal states, why were the proposed names based on ethnic groups?
The fear of sharing power made certain leaders uncomfortable. They spread lies about states based on single ethnicity, and used it as an excuse to dash all hopes of a federal Nepal. That was never our demand.
All we wanted was an inclusive federal structure where we could assert our ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities and where we would be treated equally.

Where is the indigenous movement headed towards?
The cultural and social agendas raised by indigenous groups since 2007 has now become a political agenda. If the political parties fail to address them, then the country cannot progress.

“Why aren't we given visa on arrival?”

Devendra Bhattarai, *Kantipur*, 18 July

कान्तिपुर

At the recent Women of South Asia and Sustainable Development conference in Kathmandu, human rights activist and member of Afghanistan's National Assembly, Shinkai Zahine Karokhail questioned the Nepali government's discriminatory visa policy for Afghan nationals.
“As members of the SAARC we talk about mutual co-operation and share the same platform. So why can't we be given visas on arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport?” she inquired. She wanted to know whether Nepal had black listed Afghanistan



because of the ongoing conflict and terrorist activities. She said, “Afghanistan doesn't produce terrorism but is a victim of terrorism,” she explained and added, “thousands of Nepalis currently work in Afghanistan, the Nepali government should ease diplomatic relations for their safety.”

In an effort to promote tourism, Nepal offers visa on arrival to visitors from all but 11 countries, which include Afghanistan, Iraq, Rwanda, Cameroon, Swaziland, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Somalia, Nigeria and Ethiopia. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these nations are not eligible for visa on arrival because of war and terrorism in these lands or the fear of illegal immigrants.
According to an official from the immigration department at the Home Ministry, the decision to not provide visa on arrival to Afghans doesn't fall under the SAARC's jurisdiction. “There are many countries that don't provide us visa on arrival. It's a question of bilateral ties and not a regional issue. We can be liberal with our policies, but if the other country does not reciprocate, then what's the use? It has to be a two way relationship,” said the official.

“We have become a whole”

Naya Patrika, July 18

नयाँ पत्रिका

A month after the split in the Maoist party, senior leaders of the UCPN-M have said that they are committed to end factionalism within their ranks. “We became liberal and allowed anarchy to spread. We will put an end to this, strictly abide by Leninist principles and complete our revolution in a new manner,” said chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal at his party's seventh extended plenum. 4800 people were present at the meeting, half of whom were representatives of ethno-federal units.
The party's earlier policy encouraged members to form ideological factions, but if the new proposal tabled by Dahal is passed, such policies will cease to exist. Dahal also admitted that among the 12 mistakes his party made after signing the 12-point accord, his involvement in the Katuwal case, his party's inability to take others into confidence, and misunderstanding of the Madhes issue were the worst mistakes.
“We have become a whole and will now focus solely on concluding the peace-process and restarting the constitution writing,” added party's vice-chairman, Baburam Bhattarai.



Bulldozer: Broadcast fee

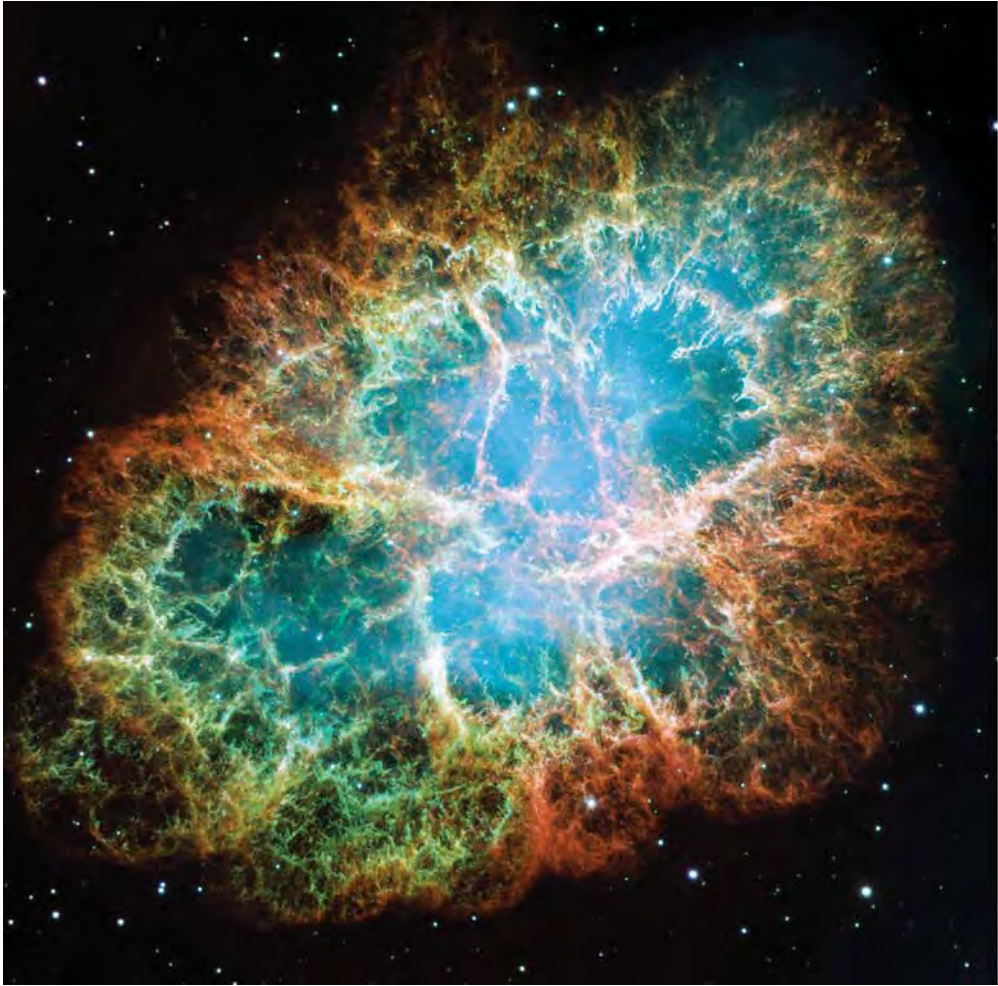
कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 15 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“We will launch a storm of protests and overthrow the prime minister.”

CP Gajurel, vice chairman, Nepal Communist Party-Maoists, speaking at Reporter's Club on 18 July



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Flunking elections since 1990

Santa Gaha Magar, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-30 July

हिमाल

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, as well as indigenous lawyers and lawmakers of the dissolved Constituent Assembly have decided to start a separate party made exclusively of indigenous people. Rajkumar Lekhi, president of the federation, said that the new party will be declared on 9 August to mark World Indigenous Day.

However, past polls have shown that ethnic political parties usually have a hard time attracting voters. Although the indigenous population of Nepal was around 37 per cent at the time of the 2001 census, the seven ethnically-inclined parties failed to win even a single seat during the 2008 CA elections.

Religious and ethnic parties have been a part of Nepali

politics for more than two decades, but those who restrict their membership to people from a single caste, language, or religion cannot register with the Election Commission. While India has the Shiv Sena, and Pakistan and Bangladesh have parties like Jamaat-e-Islami, the fact that such parties have been unable to garner popular support here is proof of Nepal's heterogeneous harmony and interdependence among Nepalis.

Lately, many INGO 'activists' have been strongly demanding ethnic-based parties. The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, which was an NGO until the Madhes uprising registered a huge win in the CA elections. The win brought Madhesi leaders to the national mainstream and they were able to secure powerful positions in government which might be prompting these

indigenous activists to start ethnic parties.

"Although Madhesi leaders rose to power after the CA election, this is a futile exercise of the indigenous federation," says a member of an indigenous party, on the condition of anonymity. He believes that if the indigenous federation is given political form through heavy influence from INGO activists, such a party will neither have a political ideology nor strong leaders.

Former CA member Pasang Sherpa who resigned from the UML to start a new party to protect the rights of indigenous communities feels the mainstream can no longer ignore the 37 per cent of indigenous population. However, NC leader Bhim Bahadur Tamang says, "Any party that fails to safeguard democracy and national interests won't last long."

Rafting versus hydropower

Bikash Thapa, *Annapurna Post*, 18 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

The construction of the 102MW Middle Bhothe Kosi project, which is a subsidiary of Chilime Hydropower Company, has hit a roadblock after protests from the owners of The Borderlands Resort. They argue that building a hydropower plant on Bhothe Kosi will destroy the adventure tourism industry. The resort has even managed to pit locals against one another.

Borderlands earns Rs 10.2 million annually, while the yearly tax Chilime will pay to the state is likely to exceed Rs 1 billion. Furthermore, the 842 million units of electricity would boost



PAAVAN MATHEMA

development, generate employment for locals, and help those who have been displaced or affected by the plant. However, the resort owners claim that the power-station will be able to produce only 52MW and construction would be too expensive since the plant will have to be built underground.

If the plant is built at the proposed site, the water level of the Bhothe Kosi would drop and Boderlands is fearful this will harm tourism and their revenue will decline. But there are plenty of rafting sites further downstream. The 12km stretch from Lamosanguh to Balephi and Balephi to Dolalghat and the Sun Kosi-Chatara area are perfect for water sports in the dry season.

While neighbours, India and China post impressive double-digit growth rates, the decade long war has stunted Nepal's development. And with the country reeling from acute power shortage, the need for hydropower plants cannot be stressed enough. If this project gets aborted, we risk losing Rs 30 rupees for every unit of electricity that is not produced. We cannot let the vested interests of some private companies jeopardise the nation's progress.

The proposed site at Jambu village for the new power house of the 102MW Middle Bhothe Kosi project.

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INTERVIEW

Dhanraj Gurung – Central Committee leader, Nepali Congress



Extending the Extended Central Committee

This was bound to happen. After blowing up government buildings with employees inside for a decade, the Maobaddies are now terrorised by bomb threats in their own offices. After an improved explosive device was found in their lair in Chitwan, the Mau Party is blaming Kaka Kiran and his followers for the attempted blow-job. The Big Baddies now have a lot more to worry about as Comrade Matrix launches his own **New Improved Revolution**, and Kiran Kaka scoots off on a junket to China and tells his Hyphen Baddies to extort anything that moves while he is away.



Kiran Kaka divorced Chubby Lal, but he is already flirting with Comrade Matrikulum. However, Kathmandu's op-ed communists and anal-ists are betting their bottom paisa the merger is not going to be easy because they don't think Mohan "Lin Piao" Baidya will want to be locked up inside the toilet every time there is a small comradely disagreement with The Matrix.



Chairman Awful's White Paper to the Extended Central



Committee had a closed door **Mea Culpa Session** in which PKD listed his party's 12 Mistakes. He must have been tempted to make the #1 Mistake in the 12 Mistakes the 12-point Dilli Agreement. But he didn't for understandable reasons. PKD is now in a race to be even more South-facing than BRB. Anyway, lot of mistakes have come back to haunt the Big Baddies and the latest is the fact that they cooked the books to cheat their own 19,000-or-so fighters in the camps for years. The figure runs into corrodes (if not arabs) and the cash all went to line the pockets of You-Know-Who. Anyway, the issue

is so sensitive that it actually halted proceedings of the Baddie Bash at the **Exhibitionist Grounds** on Wednesday. There are only two ways the Great Manipulator can deal with this: pay off the ringleaders, or find a scapegoat Lal Dusta cantonment commander from the Hyphen Commies. You will know by the time you read this which one it is.



Jay Pee has just shown us that he can strike back from almost anywhere. You have to give it to the guy for chairing his Central Committee meeting from behind bars and dumping his

deputy Rajkishor. When the Ass tried to get a reaction, the expelled **Minister for Disinformation** lived up to his reputation and told us not to believe such lies. Most politicians wait till they are released from detention before they write their jail memoirs, and the latest is Chiranjibi Waggle. But JP has written while still inside. What is this, a writer's retreat?



You can criticise Prime Minister Bhattarai for being dour and uninspiring, but he sure had our welfare at heart when he enforced the seatbelt law, the anti-drink-and-drive drive, and ordered the demolition of half the city so pedestrians are not mowed down.

This is a man who between 1996-2006 could have killed you, now he doesn't want you to die. The latest edict from Balu Water to the Police is to go after smokers puffing in public. Not just in restaurants and cinemas, but you can't even light a fag while walking across **Bugmati Bridge** to ward off the bouquet of odours emanating from below.

Hardest hit are our bored netas, whose only pleasure in life was to blow rings in the air

between burps. Sher Budder, who likes to take a drag, has stopped coming down from Chapali Heights unless Jhusil Dai calls him, which is not very often.



The most demoralised parties these days are the Kangresis and the Eh-maleys, and they seem to have resigned themselves to let Baburam Rajya carry on till Dasain and beyond. Since elections are not going to happen in November, Jhusil believes there is no particular hurry to stake a claim to prime ministership.

The two parties are in such a state of stupor that they haven't noticed **Comrade Ferocious** beaver away beneath them to lure away their Janajati netas. But all his behind-the-scenes machinations seems to have backfired on PKD.

He just wanted the Janajatis to defect to his party, not to set up their own. PKD had even promised them positions vacated by Baidya's Boys, but now he is worried the new Janajati Party will undermine the ethnic politics he has so carefully cultivated as his powerbase.



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