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## Life lessons

**D**urga Dhakal (*pic. above*), 48, is the principal and an English teacher at the Janabal Secondary School in Marpha of Mustang district. Surrounded by the Annapurnas

on one side and Dhaulagiri on the other, he often walks along the Kali Gandaki to avoid waiting for a bus that may never show up.

He's been based in this

region for years and lives in the school hostel along with his colleagues. Besides sharing a room to live in, a stove to cook on, and the same jobs, they share another commonality, their wives and children live away, far enough that visits are rather rare.

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A new Pokhara airport can be the perfect stop-gap alternative to benefit the whole country.

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by Anurag Acharya

There can be no consensus as long as the opposition holds true to its definition

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# ECONOMIC TAKEOFF

There is an apocryphal joke about an Indian minister of infrastructure who invited his Nepali counterpart to his villa in Gurgaon. The Nepali minister was puzzled, and asked: "How can you afford a mansion like this?" The Indian minister took the Nepali minister to the window, and said: "See that highway? Ten percent."

Five years later, the Nepali minister invited his Indian counterpart to an official visit to Nepal and took him to his villa in Pokhara. The Indian minister was impressed, and asked how he could afford such a huge palace. The Nepali minister took the Indian minister to the window and said see that airport? "No," replied the Indian minister. "Exactly," replied the Nepali minister, "100 per cent."

All we can do, presumably, is laugh about the new Pokhara airport. In 1976, the government acquired 500 hectares of land to build a new airport to serve what was then a small town. The old airport was built for DC-3s, and was unsuitable for larger aircrafts. Thirty-six years later, Pokhara's population has grown ten fold, tourist arrivals last year hit 200,000, there are 40 tourist buses plying between Kathmandu and Pokhara every day, the land for the airport is still there, but there is no airport. Finally, there is movement.

The Chinese Exim Bank has reportedly said it is willing to offer a soft loan to support the entire \$305 million project, but only Chinese firms are allowed to bid under the Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) formula. Now, the four unions affiliated with the four main political forces in the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) say the



SIAN CHOO TONG

**A new Pokhara airport can be the perfect stop-gap alternative to take the pressure off Kathmandu, and benefit the whole country.**

project is too expensive. They seem determined to put a spanner in the works.

The Chinese bid is reportedly for a 3,000m runway with parallel taxiway, two terminals, a hangar, cargo terminal, radar and air traffic control equipment. If built, Pokhara airport with its air-bridges would be more modern than Kathmandu's antiquated, corrupt and urine-reeking airport. Which is why we also see nothing wrong with handing over the management of Kathmandu airport to whichever international private

company is foolish enough to take over it.

The party-affiliated unions opposing the new Pokhara airport suspect someone is making big bucks out of this deal, and they want their share. This is the same reason why Nepal Airlines lost the offer of two heavily discounted Airbus last year because members of a parliamentary committee weren't in on the deal. Also the reason why the Upper Trisuli project last week had its license revoked on the day that the agreement was supposed to be signed in Canada because someone high up didn't get his (or her) kickback.

Pokhara Airport is an ideal second international airport because it can be finished in two-and-half years from go-ahead, it can be the catalyst for growth for the whole central Nepal, overseas workers can fly off from Pokhara itself and take the pressure off the capital, and it can be the diversion airport for airlines which are losing millions to frequent closures at Kathmandu airport due to poor visibility. It can be the perfect stop-gap before another more ambitious airport is built in Nijgad or Bhairawa. It's not just Pokhara that needs a new airport, the whole country needs one.

Nepali officialdom has the worst combination of stupidity and greed. If they were at least smart and corrupt (like the Indian minister in the joke) they'd take their cut, let the economy grow so their pie would get bigger, as would their share. Here in Nepal, we extract from the pie until there isn't a pie anymore. The culture that is taking this country down is that if a rival has something, I want it. And if I can't get it, I'll make it impossible for you to have it either, the country be damned.

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### TWO TO TANGO

Thank you for this insightful editorial ('Takes two to tango', #615). President Yadav has been a blessing for Nepal and Nepalis. He's perhaps the only level-headed statesman who is neither loud nor confrontational and carries on with his duties with an absolute sense of calm and has set a very high standard for the office. We must thank our lucky stars. Otherwise, can you imagine Prachanda or GP Koirala as the head of state?

Sameer

- The former king starts to create a stir, and *Nepali Times* immediately rolls out this saccharine piece on the surrogate shree panch. Predictable, but not wholly unjustified. Yadav is well-regarded, and it isn't difficult to see why. The blunt-spoken, unpretentious president is a refreshing contrast to the ridiculous arrogance and criminal incompetence of our netas.

However, the editorial loses all credibility when it refers to Yadav's office as the institution "which replaced the monarchy as the symbol of national unity." Let's leave aside the fact that this office was cobbled out of thin air through two slapdash amendments to the interim constitution by the terminally dysfunctional and now defunct CA. Let's also ignore the truly unedifying political horse-trading and fractious squabbling that animated the selection of Nepal's first president and VP. Let's even overlook the fact that a sizable portion of the public doesn't seem to believe that the aforementioned "replacement" was even necessary, as illustrated by a poll that NT recently ran in its online

edition.

Instead, let's focus on something a bit more obvious: Nepal's president was not actually elected by the people whose unity he is purported to represent. If the editorial's premise is that the president represents "how far we have come" since the bad old days of the monarchy, how exactly does that reasoning work?

John Kelleher

- Heroism aside, what can we expect from Yadav and Bhattarai apart from their usual rhetoric of holding CA elections and calling for consensus between the big boys? What guarantee is there that these two can make tough decisions and break the current deadlock? I think the past four years have clearly demonstrated that both the caretaker PM and president can't think outside the box. I, for one, am not hopeful.

Nirmal

- Ram Baran Yadav is no different than a Deuba or a Poudel. He is as corrupt as his friends in the NC. How can we call him our savior when he signed an ordinance which allowed the gang of criminals to live luxuriously while ordinary Nepalis starve in places like Sindhupalchok due to severe food shortage?

Sonam Tsering

### REVOLUTION BEGINS AT HOME

The thick-skinned crooks posing as leaders will continue to loot and you and I will continue to watch ('Revolution begins at home', Anurag Acharya, #615). Unless there is serious revolt within all parties to oust the leaders and send them behind bars, nothing will change. Let the Koiralas, Nepals, Bhattarais rot in prison and bring in a

new crop of younger, more qualified leaders. That is our only hope.

Sunil Jha

### BHAKTAPUR

Thank you Lucas Grimm for your exhaustive research and terrific analysis of the restoration project in Bhaktapur ('Bhaktapur', #615). Both Kathmandu and Lalitpur need to learn town management from Bhaktapur. Also I feel that when the Shah dynasty took control of the Valley, the rulers failed to recognise the rich heritage of the Newar community and did not encourage the natives to preserve their architecture. Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur would have been in far better shape if the Shah kings had been more far-sighted.

Bhusan Timla

- The writer mentions the Germans involved in the Bhaktapur Development Project (BDP) in great detail, but forgets to name the Nepali managers and engineers who have been part of the project since the beginning ('The rebirth of Bhaktapur', #615). Project chief and internationally trained engineer, Pant, successfully initiated, led and managed the project, maintaining good rapport between the Germans and locals as well as the government of the time. If the writer had looked into earlier documents, this aspect of BDP would have been clear.

Follower

### WHY SHOULD A FILM BE REAL

I think I was one of the few viewers in the entire theatre who liked *Highway*, because the movie gives us a healthy dose of reality ('Why should a film be real?', Molly Jo Gorevan, #615). Our society is plagued with countless problems from the lack to security

to forced marriages to adultery. So it was great to see these real life events reflected on screen.

Rishav

- We are not looking for films that are real, but films that are realistic. Although *Highway* has its weaknesses, it is certainly realistic. While protagonists in other Nepali films join 'fight clubs' that don't exist in our country to escape poverty, it was refreshing to see the story of a Lahurey dealing with impotency.

'Baajey'

- Highway* comes as a breath of fresh air at a time when no-brainer Bollywood movies like *Dabaang*, *Bodyguard* and *Bol Bacchan* are joining the 100 crore club and running to packed theatres in Nepal and encouraging Nepali filmmakers to stick firmly to nonsense script. But I am afraid most Nepali viewers don't like using their brains when watching movies, so *Highway* will do really well in international film festivals, but won't be a favourite among the masses in its home country.

Having said that, an extra 30 minutes would have actually helped *Highway*, and since we are already used to watching three hours of drama on the big screen, it wouldn't have been a big deal. Also I felt like a fine actor like Saugat Malla was terribly wasted with so many of his scenes chopped off.

Anonymous

- The problem with Nepali movie goers is that they enter theatres with a preconceived notion that if it's a Nepali film it is bound to be bad. As a result, even great movies like *Prem Pinda* and *Nuwafung* fail to garner

appreciation from our audience and are labelled 'flops' while films like *The Last Kiss* and *Kathmandu* manage to run house-full for weeks.

Kamal Joshi

- The movie might not have the airbrushed clichés of Hollywood or Bollywood movies, but it definitely makes use of clichés. There is the token trans-woman, gay character, divorced doctor, and a dance club girl. The only characters missing were a black, a Southeast Asian and a disabled person. However, there's nothing wrong with having such characters, since no Nepali film has dared to explore these unique stories. Let's hope the themes resonate with Nepali audiences and get them thinking.

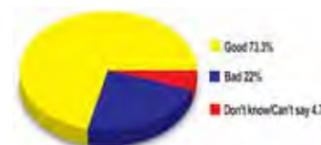
Carr

Correction: Horst Matthäus was misidentified in the photo that we published in Lucas Grimm's 'The rebirth of Bhaktapur' (#615). The person shown is not Horst Matthäus. We apologise for the mistake.

**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll #616

Q. What do you think of Nepal Rastra Bank's decision to allow Nepali investment in the foreign market?

Total votes: 1,786



Weekly Internet Poll # 617. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Were the secretaries right in resigning from their posts to protest the appointment of chief secretary?



# For the sake of opposition

There can be no consensus as long as the opposition holds true to its definition



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

There is a saying in Nepali that if you have a problem with a person, even his breath starts to stink. The opposition couldn't have made it more clear how much it despises this government and the man who runs it.

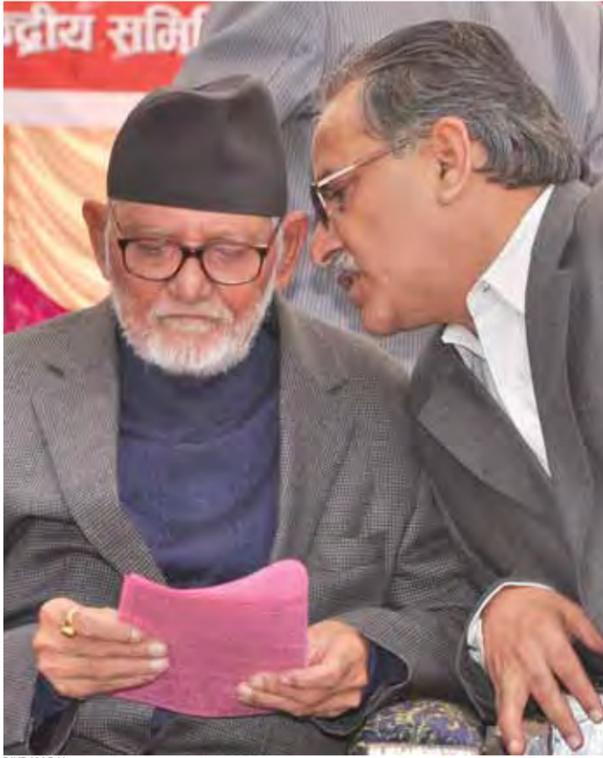
The parties may be in a state of denial, but the consensus politics which began in 2006 after the signing of the CPA ceased to exist the day Pushpa Kamal Dahal's government took over. Every government since then has had to resign under severe opposition pressure and the politics of negation which began in the aftermath of CA poll result continues with parties outside the government doing all they can to unseat the one in power.

This wasn't the way it was supposed to be in the transition phase. It was supposed to be all about agreeing to disagree, but getting along with the task of constitution and nation building. In any other country, an opposition with less than a

third of the support in the last House could have done little to trouble a majority government. But these are extraordinary times in Nepal where nothing short of a consensus works, especially when it comes to writing a constitution and completing the peace process.

The government that fails to forge that environment inevitably comes under the hammer. Baburam Bhattarai may have the most revolutionary ideas to transform this nation but the populace grinding under a burden of survival during this transition is past caring.

"I have done everything with the best intentions, but somehow friends in opposition find a way to create controversy," the otherwise calm and collected prime minister said dejectedly in a recent interview. He seems to have realised that he cannot forge consensus with an opposition that is true to its



BIKRAM RAI

definition. In a democracy, an opposition is supposed to put a spanner in the works, but our democracy is still under construction and requires working together.

The institutions of the state are too weak for their effective mobilisation by the government during the transition. The resulting failure of law and order, undersupply

of public goods and services, and malfeasance in bureaucracy have triggered public wrath against the government. A man who had an envious public rating one year ago is today being hounded in both the mainstream and social media.

In her book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker says prejudice becomes a powerful visceral force, especially when it is expressed less at the level of belief and more as a social-imaginative and emotional construct surreptitiously shaping public perception. Fricker calls it an epistemic dysfunction arising out of general frustration.

To be fair to Bhattarai, none of his predecessors did any better since 2006, in fact they were worse. And therein lies the rub: if it was so easy, anyone else could have done it. Bhattarai knew what he

was getting into and now, unlike his predecessors he does not have an easy choice of making way for the next government because there is no constitutional provision for another government to take over without elections.

The NC and UML for their part understand that they can't coerce the government out of power, and must either agree with its agenda to either revive the CA or go for another elections. So the opposition is doing the only thing it can do: oppose.

Two weeks ago in this column I argued that a constitution declared by any other body except a constituent assembly elected by the people would be illegal as per the interim constitution and go against the spirit of the 2006 people's movement. The decision by the NC conclave this week to pressurise the government to hold parliamentary elections (and not a CA election) is sure to further widen the rift between the ruling coalition and the opposition.

In the coming weeks, expect the usual verbal platitudes from leaders about a consensus, but you can be sure they will do nothing to make that happen. ■





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TONG SIAN CHOO

# Up in the air

## Politics as usual has stalled hopes of any real progress in Pokhara's new international airport

TONG SIAN CHOO AND  
CANDICE NEO in POKHARA

**A**board outside the 500 hectare fenced enclosure on the outskirts of Pokhara claims the regional international airport is 'under construction'. However, except for a few grazing buffaloes and idle bulldozers, there is no sign of anything going on.

When China's Exim Bank agreed to provide a \$145 million soft loan for the airport, it looked like the project would finally take off after languishing for 38 years. However, political bickering and resistance from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) have stalled

hopes of any real progress.

The problem started soon after Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun signed a MoU with CAMC Engineering, a Chinese construction firm which offered the lowest bid of \$305 million for the project without waiting for the results of the process in which only Chinese companies were allowed to bid.

CAAN unions affiliated with major political parties are protesting the decision saying CAMC's bid is too expensive, and that it won't be possible for CAAN to repay the interest on top of maintaining operation costs of a new international airport here.

A study conducted by a private Nepali engineering consultancy last year estimated the airport would cost \$180

million. However, this figure was for a smaller airport. The Chinese bid document is reportedly for a 3,000m runway with parallel taxiway, two terminals, a hangar, cargo terminal, radar and air traffic control equipment.

Questions are also being asked about why the deal was hurriedly pushed through without making the bidding process public and political parties suspect the Maoist government of forging an under-the-table deal. However, ex-CA member and Maoist leader from Kaski, Rajkaji Gurung is quick to defend Finance Minister Pun's decision to move ahead with the contracting process.

"That is how the Chinese work. The

delegation wanted an assurance from their Nepali counterparts that the project would go ahead despite changes in government in the future. Once the government gave its guarantee, the formalities were finished very quickly," he explained to *Nepali Times* after a public hearing here last week.

This state of limbo has angered locals in Kaski, especially the business community which has formed the Pokhara Regional International Airport Construction Concern Committee. The pressure groups accuse politicians and bureaucrats in Kathmandu of sabotaging the project.

"People in Kathmandu think Nepal is Kathmandu. We want them to know that we exist and Pokhara exists," said a visibly frustrated Krishna Mohan Shrestha, president of Pokhara Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the hearing.

The locals are so outraged that they are threatening to shut down the domestic airport if construction of the new airport is not given the green light. Speaking at the meeting, former FNCCI chairman, Ananda Raj Mulmi explained, "We have conducted numerous studies and they all show that the new airport is not only financially viable, but also practical. The power brokers in Kathmandu need to understand that when the airport gets built, it will not only benefit Pokhara, but boost the economy of the entire country. There are no losers, only winners."

Given Nepal's slow paced progress, the new international airport has the potential to trigger economic growth in Pokhara and surrounding districts by promoting tourism and providing employment to locals. The new airport can also serve as an alternative when bad weather shuts down Kathmandu airport. Nepalis travelling abroad or coming home, especially into central Nepal, can avoid the capital and slash six hours from travel time.

CAAN's concern over payments of loans seems to many here as being politically motivated. Parties as usual are vying for control of the largest piece of the airport pie without caring about the damage done to the economy, and Nepal's reputation in the international community. 

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Editorial, Economic takeoff  
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# Failure to yield

Lack of fertiliser and delayed monsoon are depriving poor farmers of their only source of income and stunting the country's economy



IT'S THE ECONOMY  
Chandan Sapkota

While the government boasted an increase in growth rate to 4.6 per cent in 2011-12, the highest in the last four years, the country faced an acute shortage of fertilisers and delay in monsoon by about two weeks. Although the state cannot control the monsoon, it has almost complete control of the supply of fertilisers.

Unfortunately, its inability to swiftly handle procurement and distribution will result in a decline in agricultural production next year, particularly paddy and maize. More importantly, it will lower growth rate, increase food prices further, which will then heighten overall inflation, and compel poor farmers in the far and mid-west regions to migrate to bordering Indian towns for seasonal employment.

The importance of agriculture for inclusive development and to support modest economic growth cannot be overstated. About 76.3 per cent of households in Nepal depend on agriculture for livelihood and 83 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. Furthermore, the agricultural sector constitutes about 35 per cent of the country's GDP. Since growth of the services sector after 2001-02 is almost constant and growth of the industrial sector is very low, the agricultural sector largely determines the overall economic growth rate. Its average growth in the last decade was 3.3 per cent, which is higher than 2.4 per cent



GOVINDA LUITEL

growth of the industrial sector.

Between 1990-91 and 2000-01, overall economic growth hinged on the performance of the non-agricultural sector, which grew at an average 7 per cent (far higher than 2.5 per cent of the agricultural sector). The main reasons for the poor performance of the non-agricultural sector are the destruction of infrastructure and erosion of industrial capacities, due in large part to the Maoist insurgency and supply-side constraints, including labour militancy.

It indicates that the agricultural sector is still the backbone of our economy. The government's negligence

to supply adequate fertilisers in time and initiate remedial measures to counter the impact of late monsoon clearly shows how much importance it gives to this sector despite lofty talks about agricultural revolution and commercialisation.

Initially, the delay in monsoon severely affected maize plantation in the hilly region, which contributes 76 per cent of total maize production. It was followed by a shortage of fertilisers just before plantation of paddy all over the country. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Development, paddy was planted in

just 62 per cent of farmlands in mid-hill, 54 per cent in upper-hill, and 44 per cent in the Tarai.

This means the 5.5 per cent growth and 7.5 per cent inflation target set by the central bank in the latest Monetary Policy 2012-13 won't be met. The decline in agricultural production along with the never-ending labour and power problems in manufacturing sector will bring down growth rate well below the target despite the services sector's constant growth, thanks to remittances.

Second, the short supply of food grains will exert pressure on already escalating food prices. It

will be compounded by the projected high food prices in India and other major cereal producing countries, owing to low rainfall and droughts. Since one-third variability of domestic prices is determined by prices in India and the remaining two-thirds by domestic production and supply conditions, overall inflation will be far higher than the figures projected. It will mean more hardship for common Nepalis and erosion of their purchasing power. There is a high probability that more people in the far and mid-western regions will migrate to India for work as a result of decrease in income from agriculture and worsening food insecurity.

There is little the government can do now to influence production this year as planting season is ending in a few weeks. However, it can still introduce measures to limit the impact of shortfall in production on the economy and food security. First, the state should ensure that there is an adequate supply of fertilisers for next year. Enough money should be allocated for procurement of fertiliser as no private player is going to jump into this market given the deep distortions.

Second, the government should be ready to import enough food to bridge the gap between demand and supply as the country is very likely to experience food deficit just a year after having surplus production. Major grain producing countries (including India, which already had 21 per cent less rainfall than average) badly hit by droughts and floods might restrict export like they did in 2008 at the height of global food price hike.

Third, it should plan ahead to guarantee adequate food supply in perennially food insecure districts in the far and mid-west. Fourth, development partners need to be ready to scale up food aid, if necessary.

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# From rugs to riches

Mongolia struggles to make democracy work and share more equitably the new wealth from its mineral hoard

KUNDA DIXIT in ULAANBAATAR

When they tell you in Mongolia that their resource-rich nation has the “Dutch Disease”, one wishes we in Nepal could catch that disease too. The term is used to describe a sudden and large inflow of foreign investment following the discovery of natural resources (usually oil), and the bonanza is accompanied by widespread corruption. We have corruption in Nepal too, but without the natural resource bonanza.

What is happening in Mongolia today is a gold rush, literally, as huge deposits of gold, coal, copper, uranium and oil have been discovered underneath the Gobi Desert. Suddenly a country half the area of India, but with only 4 million people, sees itself staring at riches that could make it regain the glory days of Mongolia's

most famous son, Genghis Khan.

But for now, even though royalties from the mines have started coming in, Mongolia is still struggling with the transition from communism as a Soviet satellite, and making democracy work in this sparsely-populated land.

They say you can gauge the level of corruption in a country by the size of the potholes on the streets of its capital. If it is any consolation, roads of Ulaanbaatar have even bigger potholes than the ones in Kathmandu. Mongolia's mining industry and Nepal's hydropower sector are similar stories of resources squandered in countries that shouldn't be poor. Politicians in both countries are too narrow-minded and corrupt to make democracy work and distribute income from natural resources equitably.

In Mongolia and Nepal, the democratic transition has lasted more than two decades, and in both countries elected leaders have let their people down because of greed, ambition and a chronic inability to prioritise the national interest.

Just like Nepal has a big potential buyer in India for its water resources, Mongolia has a huge export market in China for its mineral wealth. And in

both countries this breeds suspicions of the perceived colonial intentions of the southern neighbour. Despite what Stalin did to erase all memory of Genghis Khan and the Soviet-era pogroms against Tibetan Buddhism, the Mongolians seem to tolerate the Russians more because it provides a counterbalance against the Chinese.

Still, things are moving in Mongolia. Mining contracts have been awarded, there are provisions where every Mongolian has a share in some of the big copper and gold mines. Once a sleepy backwater, today Ulaanbaatar has the look of a boomtown, sleek new high-rises are going up, new highways are being built and the potholes are being filled. There is a reinstatement of Genghis Khan as a national cultural icon and a campaign to change the western image of him as a rapacious looter to a world leader who brought civilisation to Europe (*see box*).

Last month, Mongolians voted in elections in which money-minded ex-communists battled the democratic parties. After prolonged bargaining, the Democratic Party finally agreed to form a coalition with populist “resource nationalists” who want to reduce the

**MINGOLIA:** Ulaanbaatar (*below*) has the look of a gold rush boom town as money from its vast mineral wealth starts pouring in. Half of Mongolia's population of 4 million lives in the capital, but in most of the countryside (*above*) life goes on as it did during the times when Genghis Khan rode across the steppes.

presence of foreigners in the mining sector.

Much in the same way river projects in Nepal become political ping-pong, so it is in Mongolia with its mines. The government will be led by the DP's Norov Altankhuyag, but populist parties like the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and Mongolian National Democratic Party will demand their pound of flesh for support. Both want to limit the open-ended contracts that foreign mining companies got under the previous regime, and hope to nationalise the lucrative coal and copper mines. They want an agreement by a previous government with a Canadian-Australian mining giant to exploit the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine to be renegotiated. Sound familiar? 



# Remnants of a realm

From the moment you land at Genghis Khan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar, the persona and visage of the great conqueror never leaves you. You shop at the Genghis Khan shopping complex, go to a Khan Bank ATM, nibble on Genghis Khan chocolates and buy Genghis Khan vodka at the duty free.

A four-hour drive east of the capital, on the road leading to his birthplace, the Mongolians have erected a 100m high stainless steel statue of Genghis Khan astride a metal stallion (*pic, below*). You can see it from miles away: a white apparition glinting in the sun. Visitors can go up an elevator and climb on top of the horse's head to get a close-up view of Genghis Khan's face as he gazes across the steppes.

In a museum below the structure, you learn about how a herder named Temujin from the edge of Siberia went on to conquer most of Eurasia in the 13th century and ruled an empire that stretched from Korea to Austria, to leave a mark on modern human history.

The Mongolians have always been sensitive about European portrayals of him as a ruthless conqueror who raped and pillaged his way across Asia. Genghis Khan himself was responsible for this terrifying reputation because, as a brilliant tactician, he exaggerated his brutality in psywar.

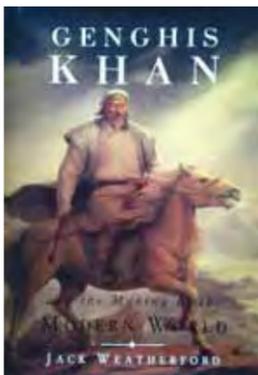
From his birth in 1162 until he died in 1227, Genghis Khan conquered in 25 years of military campaigns more than the Romans did in 400 years, in what historian Jack Weatherford calls the First Mongol World War. He used the superior horsemanship of his warriors to strike with lightning speed, using pincer movements and outflanking techniques that are still taught in military academies around the world. He adopted the hardware of warfare of the places he conquered to deadly effect, introducing gunpowder and catapults.

He understood the importance of communication, his troops travelled light and rode horses that they ate when the mammals had worn themselves out. They developed cartography into a fine art, and maps made then were used much later on the Silk Route.

After his conquest, Genghis Khan's empire was probably the world's first free trade zone, opening up business between Asia and Europe for the likes of Marco Polo to follow. Mongolians were animists who revered the Eternal Blue Sky and the Earth, yet as they conquered lands with new religions Genghis Khan and his descendants amalgamated them into the empire, fostering harmony and tolerance between beliefs. Much before Europe, the Mongolians practised the separation of state and religion.



KUNDA DIXIT



Yet, despite these civilising influences, the Mongolian "hordes" were a negative stereotype in Eurocentric history books, which has been handed down to present-day English vocabulary. "Mogul" is the Persian formulation for Mongolian, and it is used to describe someone fairly ruthless, like a media mogul. The word "hurray" comes from the Mongol collective sacred praise, "hurree".

The Nepali word "paisa" comes via Persian from the Mongolian "paiza" which was the name for gold and silver medallions worn by traders as an early form of credit cards during transcontinental horseback rides. The Nepali word "khubi" (which means the quality of a person) comes from the Mongolian word for the spoils of war which Genghis

Khan's army distributed according to the need of every individual and family. In fact, the Dalai Lama gets his name from the Mongolian word, "dalai", which means ocean of knowledge.

Pax Mongolica introduced not just military hardware, but also spread the use of maps and the compass, developed the first postal system, and was using paper and printing two centuries before Gutenberg. Genghis Khan adopted a universal script for his empire derived from present day Uzbekistan.

Genghis Khan's sons welcomed Tibetan Buddhism, assimilated many of its tenets into their own concept of the Eternal Sky and even introduced the Tibetan script. If the Soviets had not destroyed the Tibetan monasteries here, Mongolia could very well have been called Northern Tibet.

It was the Mongolians who introduced trousers to Europe, and when the army of Genghis Khan's son stopped in Vienna, they found it wasn't worth conquering Europe because it was too poor. Genghis Khan's empire was created by conquest, and a lot of it was brutal, but not any more so than other conquerors before, or after.

At the Hustai National Park in central Mongolia you can look across an endless steppe under an enormous cobalt sky, a landscape almost unchanged in the 800 years since Genghis Khan set forth to end what he saw as internecine fighting between Mongolian tribes, by unifying them.

The Park is home to a herd of the Mongolian wild horse, the takhi, which has been transplanted here from Europe and rescued from the brink of extinction. Like a lot of other things in Mongolia, the horses are just a remnant of a realm that spread across the world and left its mark.

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**EVENTS**



**FARMERS' MARKET**, sale of fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, fruits. 5 August, 9am to 12pm, New Orleans Café, Patan, 5522708

**Gooners' Gathering**, annual meet of official Nepalese fan club. Rs 100, 4 August, 12pm to 4pm, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka

**Monsoon Exhibition**, an exhibition of civic technology and media art. Open until 3 August, Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1am to 4pm, Jawalakhel, <http://monsooncollective.org/>

**A few words in material Nepali**, a residency solo exhibition by Robert Cervara Amblar. Open until 3 August, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Patan Museum

**Master Training Workshop**, training for teachers who want to make their classrooms lively. Rs 600 per session, runs till 31 August, only Fridays, 8am to 1pm, The British Council, Lainchaur, 4410978

**I am youth because**, short-film making competition on environmental issues. Rs 100, register by 6 August, [info@yes.org.np](mailto:info@yes.org.np)

**Graphic Guff**, meet Kathmandu-based graphic designers, discuss art and craft of designing, showcase your own samples for criticism. 11 August, Cuppas Café, Putalisadak, [www.sattya.org.np](http://www.sattya.org.np)

**Production Oriented Theatre Training**, two-month long workshop for acting enthusiasts on every aspect of theatre. Rs 3000, 7am to 9am, register by 24 August, Sarwanam Theatre, Kalikasthan, 4438947, 9841978353

**Corporate Futsal 2012**, 5-a-side league and knockout tournament for people in the business world. Entry fee Rs 25,000, 19 August, 5.45pm, Thamel, 9841386652



**PALETI UTSAV**, a four-day celebration of Nepali Adhunik music. 9 August to 12 August, DAV School, for tickets contact 9851103922, 9818192569

**MUSIC**

**Resonance**, newly formed contemporary pop-rock band performing originals and established standards. Rs 200, 3 August, 7.30pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



**NUMBER OF THE BEAST**, a concert in tribute to heavy metal band Iron Maiden. Rs 125, 11 August, Mahalaxmi Chowk, Patan, 9802060710

**DINING**

**Manny's Eatery and Bar**, special lunch packages for a quick snack or filling lunch. Jawlakhel, Shaligram Complex, 5536919



**BRONCO BILLY**, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which get a big thumbs-up. Pulchowk, opposite Namaste Supermarket



**KAISER CAFE RESTAURANT & BAR**, have a BBQ lunch and a glass of wine or beer inside the peaceful Garden of Dreams. Thamel, 4425341

**Tonic Restaurant**, amazing food fit for family dinners or a night out with friends. Pokhara



**MIKE'S BREAKFAST**, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Naxal, 4424303



**GRILL ME**, a restaurant with a warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. Jhamsikhel, 5535294 Summit Hotel, savour the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. Jhamsikhel, 5521810

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

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**FLAVOUR**, promises to pack a punch with its Chicken Sub and Bratwurst. Pulchowk

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



**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

**Byanjan**, enjoy great food at an affordable price. Shrimp cocktails, Grilled Fish and desserts are favourites among guests. Lakeside, Pokhara



**SALT AND PEPPER**, a resto-lounge with a wide variety of dishes to choose from like Hakka Noodles, Hong Kong Chicken and Honey Chili Potatoes. Lakeside, Pokhara



**CINNAMON GRILL AND LOUNGE**, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. Jhamsikhel, 5521339

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**Pataleban Vineyard Resort**, Japan-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks, picnics and picnics. Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364

**Raniban Retreat**, monsoon special 40 percent off of usual tariff, bed and breakfast at Rs 900 per person per night. Pokhara.

**Charikot Panorama Resort**, enjoy mountain views and local culture in the historic town of Charikot. Special packages on offer. Charikot, Dolakha, 5529463, thapamaag@gmail.com



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**SOMEPLACE ELSE**

**FALCHA**



exceptionally reasonable prices (the most expensive dish on the menu is Rs 350).

Falcha mostly serves Newari cuisine, but also offers like Nepali and Indian dishes. Though the dessert menu is limited to just three items, a wide selection of smooth, rich coffee is available.

The samay baji (Rs 320), which is the de rigueur Newari khaja set, comes replete with all the regular goodies like sandeko alu, bara, spicy choela and alu tama. The fried lungs, or swyon as they are called in Newari, take a little getting used to but the fine combination of flavour, texture and taste can convert even the most squeamish and pickiest eater into a determined organ meat nibbler.

Falcha was serving mutton handi kebab as the 'special of the day' on the day we visited. Soaked in marinade juices, and cooked slowly over low heat, the pieces of meat were soft, juicy and filled with spices. I definitely want to go back for some more. We also had Falcha's rendition of chicken biryani (Rs 200), which I really enjoyed because the dish was not drenched in oil and ghee.

The piece de resistance, was lemon jeera chicken (Rs 350), the aforementioned most expensive dish in Falcha. It would be all too easy to



describe the dish as well-herbed, spiced fried chicken, but I would be doing a gross injustice to the cook. Each bite exploded in my mouth with flavours, the tangy lemon complementing the crunch and bite of the cumin seeds that are rubbed into the chicken bits before frying.

Falcha was a delightful find. Warm, welcoming, completely unobtrusive with zero pretenses, it's obvious why this little eatery has become so popular in such a short time.

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Falcha is tucked away in a little alley right opposite St Mary's main gate in Jhamsikhel.



Falcha is a Newari which means traditional resting places that also served as venues for meetings, celebrations and festivities. Falcha in Jhamsikhel aspires to be all of those and



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

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# Batman: The Dark Knight Rises



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

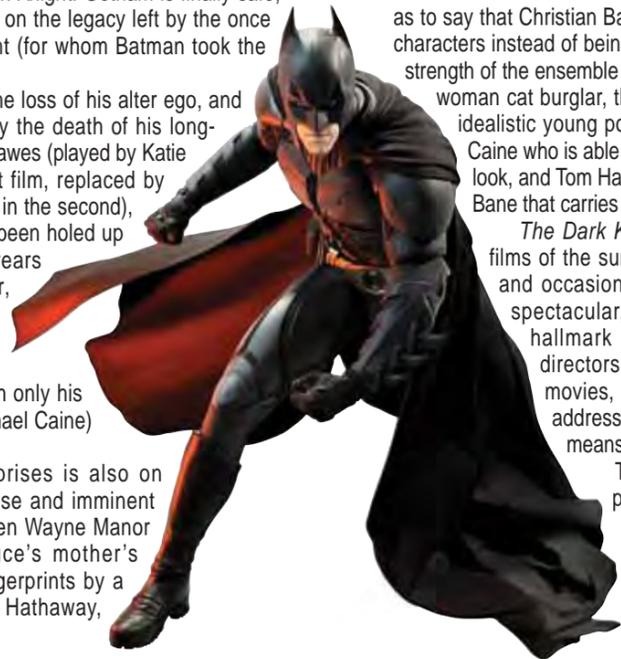
Christopher Nolan's films have always been exceptionally dark and the Batman trilogy starting with *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008), and ending with the newly released *The Dark Knight Rises* are no exceptions. Nolan, a director known for his complex, sometimes convoluted, story lines (think *Memento* in 2000, and more recently *Inception* in 2010) continues to a certain extent to be slightly esoteric in many ways.

I would not particularly advise that one go see the final or even the second part without having watched the preceding ones. Nolan, along with his brother Jonathan and David S Goyer developed the final installment to the trilogy so as to create a narrative arc spanning the entire three films, with crucial details and characters from the first two films surfacing in the final.

At the beginning of the film, Batman has deserted Gotham City, having taken the blame for crimes he did not commit at the end of *The Dark Knight*. Gotham is finally safe, having made good on the legacy left by the once heroic Harvey Dent (for whom Batman took the blame).

Shattered by the loss of his alter ego, and tragedy stricken by the death of his long-time love Rachel Dawes (played by Katie Holmes in the first film, replaced by Maggie Gyllenhaal in the second), Bruce Wayne has been holed up for the past few years at Wayne Manor, a surly recluse debilitated both mentally and physically, and with only his faithful Alfred (Michael Caine) for company.

Wayne Enterprises is also on the brink of collapse and imminent take-over, and when Wayne Manor is robbed of Bruce's mother's pearls and his fingerprints by a cat burglar (Anne Hathaway,



whose character is the Cat Woman culled from comics and previous Batman films), Wayne is finally spurred into motion, discouraged by Alfred who is afraid of his inherently destructive side, yet anticipated eagerly by certain law enforcement, Gary Oldman as Police Commissioner Gordon, and Officer Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) who have begun to hear disturbing rumours of an anarchic army being recruited and trained in the sewers of Gotham.

Enter Bane, a mysterious, terrifying figure, seemingly unbeatable, hyper-organised, and unfortunately, a step ahead of the good guys all the time. Interestingly, there are many villains in this film, as are there many heroes. Morality in action films is mostly clear-cut, but Nolan has always managed to walk the line in portraying the nebulous area between true evil vs people afflicted by some incurable trauma. Similarly, the good guys are not infallible either: Commissioner Gordon is wracked by guilt for concealing Harvey Dent's extraordinary transgressions and allowing his stalwart crime-fighter friend, the Batman, to take the blame.

Also questioned, though not resolved, over the course of the film is the question of state authority, and whether certain decisions made for the "greater good" are necessarily the right ones.

In a film like this, which runs at a whopping 2 hours and 44 minutes, it is easy to lose the plot, and even worse to not be able to connect with any one character. I would go so far as to say that Christian Bale's Batman is often just one of the characters instead of being the central one. However, it is the strength of the ensemble cast: the sly wit of Anne Hathaway's woman cat burglar, the stoic heroism of Gordon-Levitt's idealistic young police officer, the very great Michael Caine who is able to pull at the heart-strings with just a look, and Tom Hardy's fearless, fierce performance as Bane that carries the film.

*The Dark Knight Rises* is one of the biggest films of the summer for a reason, it may be long, and occasionally convoluted, but the action is spectacular, as promised, and it carries the hallmark of one of today's most talented directors. Not as mindless as other action movies, Nolan's films have at least tried to address some of the complexities of what it means to turn to the dark side, and why.

The *Dark Knight Rises* is currently playing in theatres. 🇳🇵

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

Watch trailer

## Porter power



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

For centuries, Nepali porters have made a name for themselves carrying enormous loads on their backs using just a namlo (headstrap) on their foreheads. But many people are baffled by how they manage to sustain themselves for hours and hours.

Obviously lowland porters carrying heavy loads face immense difficulties at high altitude. These problems need to

be addressed effectively so that porters do not suffer from life-threatening mountain sickness and frostbite.

However, today's article will focus on the physics and physiology behind Nepali porters' ability to manage the big burden on their shoulders.

An interesting study conducted by Norman Heglund et al a few years ago showed that African women carry loads on their heads more efficiently than US army recruits carry heavy backpacks. The investigators used African women's ability to conserve mechanical energy and the "improved pendulum-like

transfer" during each step to explain the differences. The physics was hard to understand for novices, but scientists felt the explanation was adequate.

The same investigators came to Nepal around eight years ago to see how efficiently Nepali porters carried their load. The results were fascinating.

At an altitude of about 3000m, Nepali porters were asked to walk around a 51m track at five different speeds carrying six or seven loads according to their ability. Then the energy cost of carrying these loads was determined by measuring the amount of oxygen consumed and the amount of carbon dioxide exhaled using various instruments.

When the researchers compared the results with the studies done on Europeans, marine recruits and African women, they found that Nepali porters were far more efficient. They carried loads which were 30 per cent heavier than the maximum load carried by African women for the same increase in metabolic rate.

The physics and physiology behind our porters' ability to carry large weights are still not completely clear. But one of the tricks our porters use is to take frequent breaks while going uphill which reduce muscular work and increase overall efficiency. 🇳🇵



BIKRAM RAI

### WEEKEND WEATHER

We are now midway through the monsoon season, and this year we saw the manifestation of the trend in earlier years of late starts, gaps in precipitation and if this is the way it's going to go then the monsoon will last until the end of September. Precipitation is also erratic, with parts of western Nepal getting extra rain, the trans-Himalayan regions of Dolpo, Mustang and Manang had droughts and got rain only in late-July. Kathmandu will continue to have night rain, and afternoon buildup into the weekend, with normal temperatures.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26-19	28-19	28-19



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**PARTY PEOPLE:** Nepali Congress president Sushil Koirala (right) inaugurates the national gathering of district presidents of the NC in Bahrabise of Sindhupalchok district on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

**SACRED THREAD:** Priests tie sacred thread on Hindu devotees at Bagalamukhi temple in Patan on the occasion of Janai Purnima on Thursday morning.



BIKRAM RAI

**STRONG TIES:** Political leaders and Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Yang Houlan attend a program to mark the 57th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Nepal and China.



BIKRAM RAI

**CAUGHT AT LAST:** Police arrested Kashi Ram Gurung, chairman of Unity Life Insurance who amassed Rs 3.83 billion by cheating people through his business.

# Engineering a future

A group of college graduates choose farming over white-collar jobs

ANURAG ACHARYA

Nirab Bhattarai, 28, wakes up early every morning and catches the 6:30 bus from downtown Ratna Park to Sankhu on the Valley's eastern edge. After an hour long hike, he reaches his small farm on the foothills of Shivapuri National Park.

In 2010, Nirab and his seven friends travelled to Gagal village to get away from the city's chaos. "We stood on the edge of the hill and stared at the congested Valley below us and wondered how it feeds itself," recalls Nirab. The group of unemployed electric engineers joked amongst themselves about buying a patch of land and starting commercial farming.

While other young professionals look to build their CVs and make easy money, Nirab, an MBA graduate, and his friends chose to get their hands dirty over the typical nine to five job. Today, they can be found on their farm, tilling the land, watering seedlings, picking cucumbers, and grazing cattle.

Nirab admits it hasn't been easy starting out in a field for which they are not qualified. They lost 100 bulbs of mushrooms planted last year due to lack of care. "We know how to use machines, but dealing with animals and plants is a completely new experience and we are still learning," he explains.

Sushant Karki, who quit his job at an airlines company to help Nirab in the farm, remembers being ridiculed by his coworkers for leaving a comfortable job and wasting his engineering degree. But Sushant has no regrets. "Rather than jumping into the ugly rat race, we are engineering our own future," says the proud farmer who believes agriculture has huge potential as demand for food will continue to grow with less hands toiling and more mouths to feed.

Nepal has gone from becoming a food exporting nation to a food importing nation in less than a decade. The country spends millions

every year importing fruits and vegetables from India to feed Kathmandu's three million residents. With fuel prices likely to rise, Nepalis will have to pay more for their food in the coming years.

The group is working on creating an organic farm and wants to turn it into a commercially viable venture. They recently built a shed above the vegetable garden to replenish the soil below with manure and urine. They also planted grass on the slopes to hold the top soil together. Water from the kitchen is drained into the garden. Instead of pesticides, the farmers have begun using repellent plants to drive away insects.

"The vegetables we buy from the market are laced with harmful chemicals and pesticides and do more harm than good. By growing our own food we make sure our families are eating healthy," says Sushant.

However, not all of the eight men are full-time farmers. Mahabharat Shrestha works with



the state's rural energy program, but dashes off to the farm on weekends. Says Shrestha, "It gives me immense satisfaction to grow my own food, but I cannot commit full-time to farming because it doesn't pay all my bills."

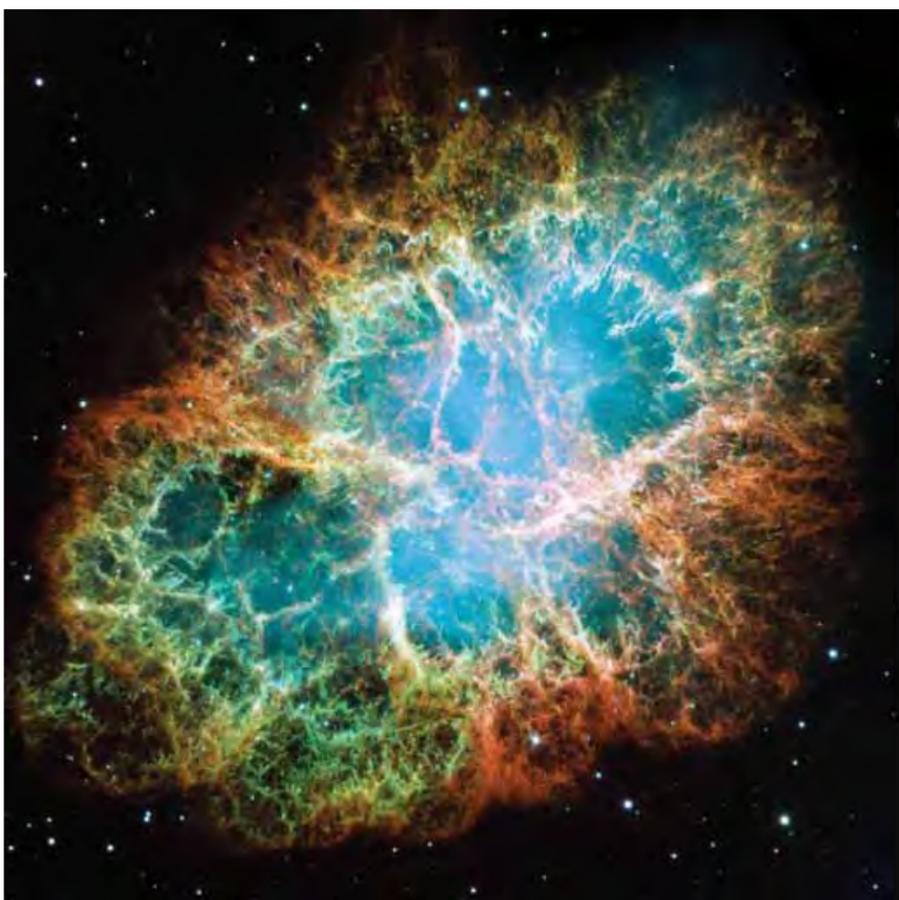
In an effort to decrease the staggering unemployment rate, the government launched a youth self-employment program

in 2011, which provides vocational training and loans up to Rs 200,000 to young Nepalis so that they can start their own businesses.

Nirab and friends have applied for the loan which will help them expand their farm. "It's not a big amount, but if you are motivated, then it's enough to get you started," say the farmer-engineers. ■



ANURAG ACHARYA



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# HIMALAYAN TEACHER

Durga Dhakal overcomes the rugged landscape of Mustang and devotes his life to a job he loves

JANA AŠENBRENEROVÁ in MARPHA

**T**he man wears a well ironed suit and shiny shoes. He puts on a baseball cap, grabs his briefcase and heads out to the mountains to go to work. He walks miles on a rocky road, crossing muddy paths, jumping over streams and traversing sagging bridges to make it to the meetings he occasionally has in a school in a neighbouring village.

Durga Dhakal, 48, is the principal and an English teacher at the Janabal Secondary School in Marpha of Mustang district. Surrounded by the Annapurnas on one side

and Dhaulagiri on the other, he often walks along the Kali Gandaki to avoid waiting for a bus that may never show up.

He's been based in this region for years and lives in the school hostel along with his colleagues. Besides sharing a room to live in, a stove to cook on, and the same jobs, they share another commonality: their wives and children live away, far enough that visits are rather rare. Dhakal's family lives in Pokhara. He occasionally flies there to visit them. Not too often, he adds sadly.

Having a job he loves and

colleagues he enjoys makes the lack of other options more bearable. He talks on the phone with his wife regularly, however those conversations are rather brief. They don't discuss much, intimacy is gone after years of being apart. It's not a long distance romance, it's mostly logistics.

Dhakal sits in a restaurant, his face candlelit, as the power is out. He sips some raxi, to ward off the cold nights here at 3,000m above sea level. "Our life is brutal in a way," he says, remembering his distant family.

Loneliness is a tough void

to fill, even with incredible landscapes from the top of the world. Heart and soul have different priorities, let alone the brain.

My last glimpse of him was as he taught English to a handful of students even though he was unwell. He kept walking around the class however, joking with his students, teasing them and encouraging them at the same time.

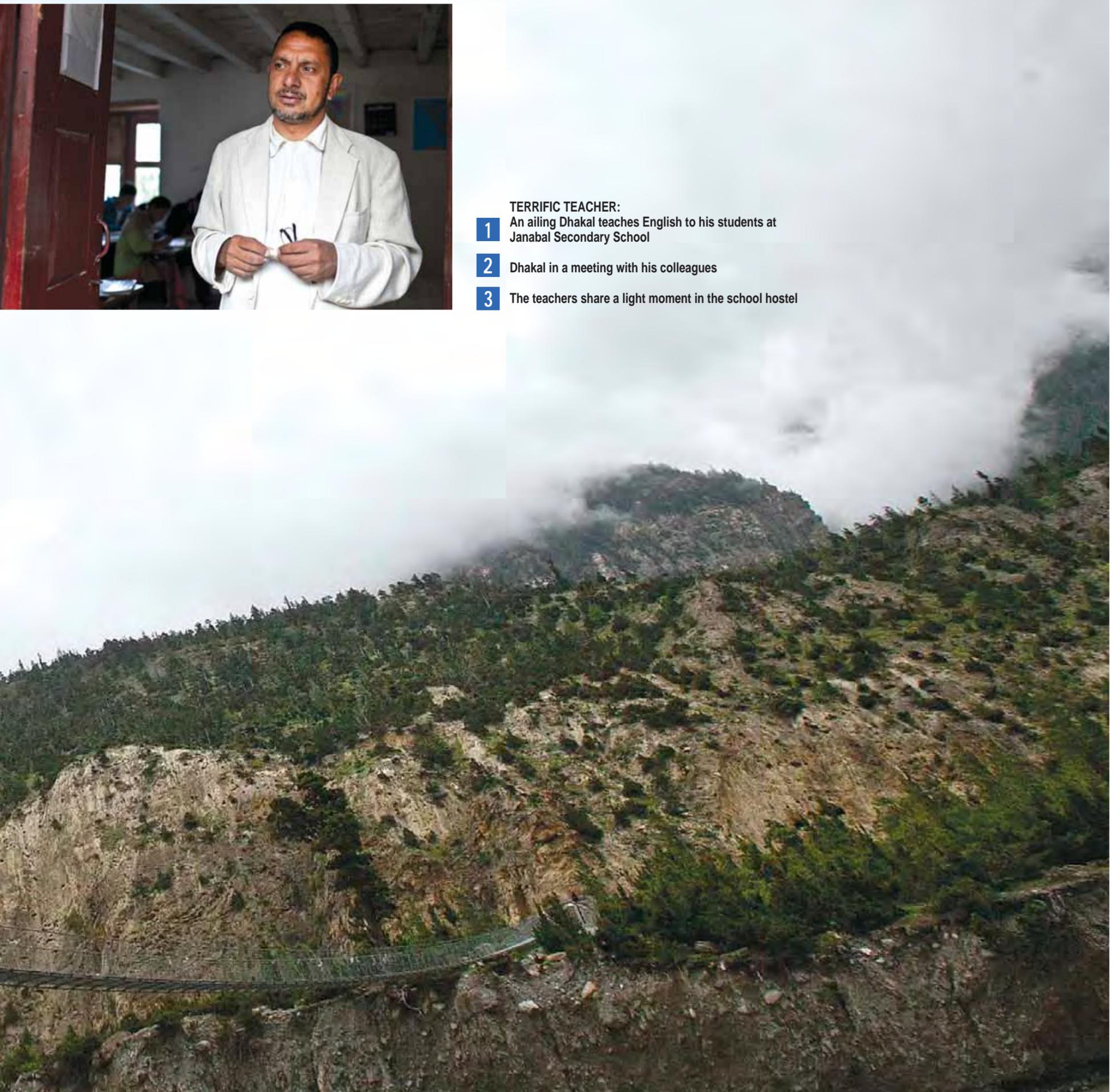
"It was kept as an extraordinary life of loving," he wrote on the blackboard. 





**TERRIFIC TEACHER:**

- 1 An ailing Dhakal teaches English to his students at Janabal Secondary School
- 2 Dhakal in a meeting with his colleagues
- 3 The teachers share a light moment in the school hostel



# Tough talk with Bhattarai

Interview with PM Baburam Bhattarai, *News24 Television*, 30 July



**Did you think you would remain in your position as PM for this long?**

**Baburam Bhattarai:** I wanted to complete the peace process and constitution writing by 27 May and handover the leadership. But I had to stay longer because the situation demanded it. The difference over federalism was the main reason the constitution writing couldn't be completed on time. So far in my tenure as the PM I have tried my best to accomplish as much as I could. But my individual effort alone wasn't enough. This is why we could only reach the 99 metre mark. We fell short by one crucial metre that has landed us in this difficult position.

**The army integration process is in quandry again and your party leaders are now saying that integration is not possible.**

**So what did we get after all the bloodshed, wasn't the lives and times of so many young people wasted for nothing?**

We are at a crucial point in history in establishing a new order. Such historical change cannot be brought about in a few months or few years. It may take decades to fully overthrow the old order and install a new one. Other countries have taken decades to fully implement and bring change and I believe we are also headed in the same direction. So I am not disappointed.

**How long will you use the rhetoric of historical change to pacify the public? What about socio-economic reforms to address people's everyday problems?**

Such reforms can only be brought through a budget which I haven't been able to present. While I am still actively pushing the reform agendas, those from the old order are still resisting change. We are still in a transition period so everything cannot be solved immediately.

**Of the 40 point demands that the Maoists had presented to the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba before starting the armed struggle, that included scraping discriminatory**



**treaties, distributing land to the homeless ...**

I am well aware of what I had written in the 40 point demand, you don't need to remind me about them. Could you just proceed directly to the question?

**What demands have been accomplished so far?**

We are still working towards those goals for which we picked arms in the first place. Since the new order is yet to be implemented we cannot address many of the demands. Furthermore, the need of the hour is to complete constitution writing which will pave way for other important issues to be addressed. It's only been five years and though our main political objective has been partially met we still have a long way to go.

**So how and on what basis will the election take place on 22 November since the Election Commission (EC) has already declared that polls can't be conducted without amending the statute?**

No, the EC hasn't said anything like that. We are already working on the legalities to take the election forward. Laws relating to the election will come through an ordinance which will then open the doors for election.

**The recent article by SD Muni has revealed secret relations between your party and India. Maoist leaders are said to have contacted the Indian PMO in 2002. What do you have to say about that?**

In December 2001 after the army was mobilised and the king was slowly taking all power in his hand, we contacted the heads of many countries including India, China and the US and even informed United Nations to make them aware of the situation.

**You have been accused of being a roadblock in the formation of a national unity government. How long will this government last?**

The government will stay in place until elections are conducted. I am ready to hand over power as soon as parties can reach consensus on key issues.

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

Watch the interview



Editorial, *Naya Patrika*, 1 August

गया पत्रिका

The Election Commission (EC) has formally announced that it won't be able to hold fresh Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on 22 November. On the eve of 27 May, the deadline to finish constitution writing, the government dissolved the CA and announced fresh polls. However, it failed to look into constitutional and other legal provisions concerning elections. The EC has said that it cannot formulate rules and directives for elections in the absence of clear legal provisions.

It is clear that the state didn't take into account legal formalities concerning elections and also failed to discuss the matter with other political parties. The government couldn't even amend electoral laws and the interim constitution before the 22 July deadline. At a time when there is no parliament and all the political parties are busy bickering, there is almost no hope for consensus to amend the Interim Constitution.

On the one hand, the government isn't willing to budge unless differences over controversial issues are resolved. On the other hand, the opposition parties NC and UML have refused to cooperate unless the current government steps down. All of this is dragging the country into deeper political and constitutional void. The political parties have pushed aside the welfare of the nation and the people to fulfill their personal greed.

The EC's top post will soon be vacant and the remaining officials are also approaching retirement. These posts are unlikely to be filled anytime soon because of the dissolved parliament. It will be difficult to hold elections through a commission, which has no head. It's not just the government, but all political parties who were a part of the CA are responsible for the existing political and constitutional deadlock. The parties now need to help clear all legal hurdles concerning election and take the country forward before it's too late.



Barbells: Peace and constitution

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 29 July

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**



" We carried bombs and used guns during the war. I don't understand why people should get so worked up about chairs being thrown. "

Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, UCPN(Maoist), quoted in *Jana Astha Weekly* 25 July

# Meaningless ordinance

Editorial, *Kantipur*, 29 July

कान्तिपुर

Just when it is unable to reach consensus with other parties, the government is trying to unilaterally bypass election laws by recommending the president to sign two ordinances. Consensus between parties is necessary to hold elections as well as to make amendments to the interim constitution so that elections can be conducted in November.

The government is not just trying to reinstate the constituent assembly through the CA Election Act 2007, it is also trying to bypass several important requirements such as the voters' list through the 'Ordinance for the amendment of some election

acts'. Amendments to these two acts are needed before elections can be held, but more important is the amendment of the constitution itself. The interim constitution 2007 permits voters who are 18-year-old by November 2007 to vote in an election, but there are one million more voters who have reached that age in these five years who might not be able to exercise their rights if the constitution is not amended. Unless political consensus to overcome constitutional hurdles is found, no ordinance can make the election possible.

Generally, once an ordinance recommended by the government is signed by the president, it becomes as good as law and the succeeding government is charged to pass the ordinance in the parliament

within 60 days. But the president is not satisfied with the government's willingness to pass ordinances for political solutions and constitution amendments without seeking agreements with other parties. He has already spoken in public that a democratic government cannot function through ordinances. If it goes on like this, the conflict between president and prime minister is bound to escalate.

The government can't create a favourable environment for elections on its own. Instead of focusing on ordinances that make no sense, it must concentrate on finding consensus between the opposition and ruling alliance. If Prime Minister Bhattarai isn't able to do that, he must make way for other political solutions.

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# Breaking new grounds

SAMJHANA POUDEL

While her friends were off to attend their first day of school in Deukhuri, Dang, Urmila Chaudhary started working as a kamlari (girl-child indentured labourer) for a Rana family in Kathmandu. When she saw her brother on tv taking part in a protest of squatters, Urmila felt the urge to return home. After years of pleading with her owners, the family finally allowed her to meet her brother who was participating in a sit-down protest in front of Singha Darbar.

This chance opportunity turned her life around. Her brother's persistent efforts freed her from bonded labour in January 2007 and now she studies in grade nine in Dang. Last year, a German woman called Natalie wrote a 350 page biography on 22-year-old Urmila, who travelled to Germany to promote the book.

Organisations involved in the kamlari movement estimate that there are around 11,800 kamlaris in Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Dailekh. Although 11,000 among them have already been freed, due to the apathy shown by the state towards their rehabilitation, the number is rising again as many former labourers return to their old masters. In December 2011, around 100 freed kamlaris gathered in Nepalgunj and announced a collective campaign for the freedom of bonded labourers.

Gita Tharu of Bardiya, who was a kamlari since she was nine, is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in education. Although she is glad to have broken free from the antiquated system, she is worried that society still has not changed its views of bonded labourer. She is committed to keep on campaigning for the welfare of kamlaris and is currently working at Room to Read in Bardiya.



**LIVING FREE:**  
Ex-kamlari Urmila Chaudhary speaks at the launch of her biography in Germany

18-year-old Bishnu Chaudhary from Deukhuri wants to be lawyer and fight for justice for freed kamlaris like herself. Having been a kamlari since the age of seven, Bishnu did well on her SLC scoring 70 percent. She is now studying in grade 11 in Dang in the same school as Urmila.

While in school, Bishnu took part in campaigns to free kamlaris. Her school threatened to expel her, but that did not deter her. Now the same teachers who were unimpressed with her activism are influenced by her hard work. Bishnu was awarded the International Kamlari Advocacy Award in 2010. Now, she advocates for freedom for all kamlaris through a show called Mukti Aawaj on Radio Highway in Dang.

Instead of complaining about their past struggles, the former kamlaris are currently working for the rights of those who are still trapped in bonded labour. The three women met prime ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Baburam Bhattarai and tried to convince them to put an end to the horrible tradition and provide rehabilitation to ex-kamlaris. All three prime ministers broke down and shed crocodile tears, but failed to deliver on their promises.

"After Nepal was declared a republic, we went around submitting letters to the prime ministers. They all seemed supportive, but nothing has happened so far," says Gita who believes freed kamlaris, parents and the state have to work together to eradicate the problem.

Urmila, Gita and Bishnu take a keen interest in politics and regularly meet with ex-CA members like Shanta Chaudhary and Sukdaiya Chaudhary to discuss how they can get to positions of power so that they can lead their communities and bring about real changes.

"Only those politicians and representatives who were kamlaris understand our problems," says Urmila. "They inspire us to continue with our struggle."

nepalitimes.com

Bonded labourer to CA member, #611  
A costly freedom for kamlaris, #441

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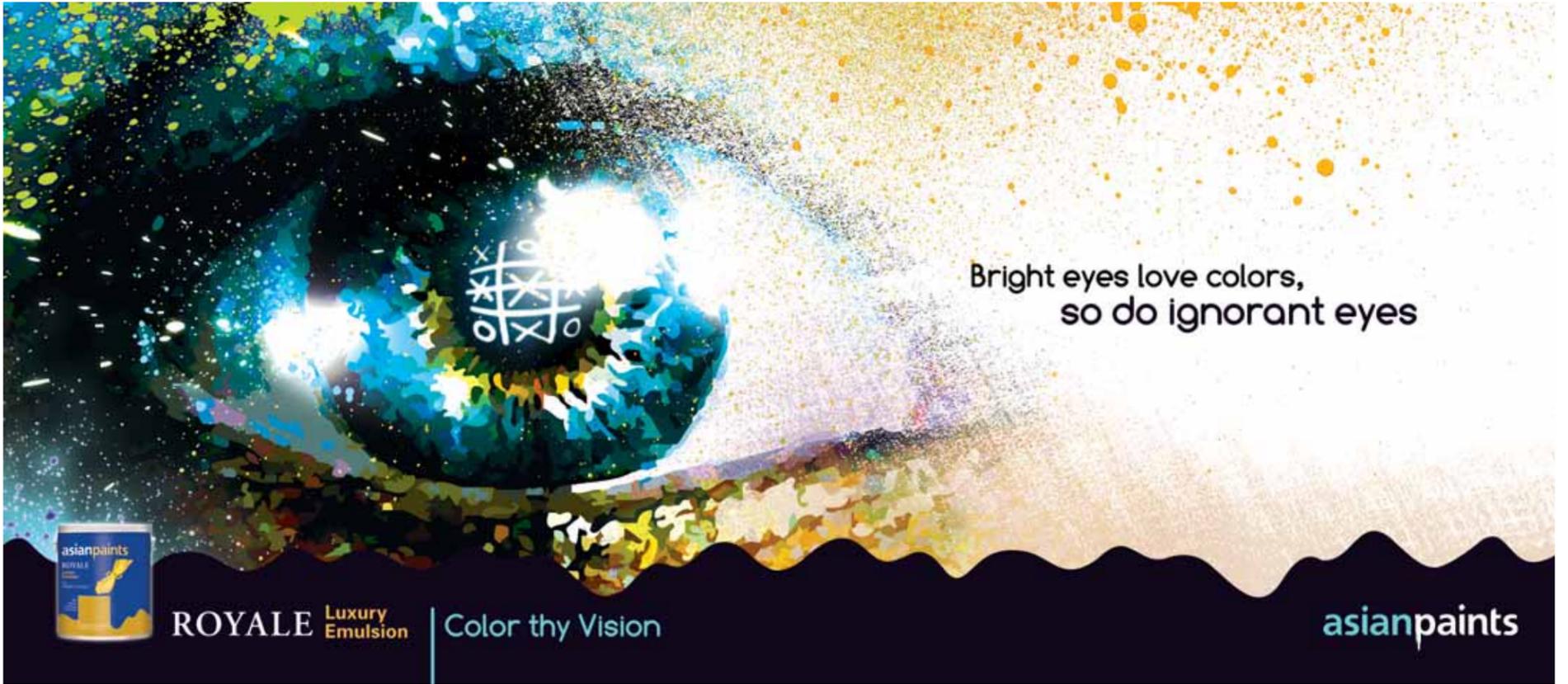
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Closing date is August 13, 2012.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview.

Working For a World Free of Poverty



# All the news unfit to print

This week we take a look at real headlines from the Nepali media, and follow them up with unreal news items below them, like:



## Boxing Declared National Game

The National Kick-Boxing Knockout Tournament got underway at the Bhrikuti Mandap last week with the first round of bouts at the Maoist Party Plenum that left two players severely injured.

Inaugurating the championships, the Minister of Unsportmanlike Behaviour and Irrigation said that at a time when there was a Boxer Rebellion going on in the country the game was a great way to pass time, and added: "Despite prolonged political deadlock, kick-boxing is an appropriate game for Nepal and with proper training our politicians could even make it to the Winter Olympics in Russia in two years."



## Miss Canine Crowned

BY A NEWS HOUND

Not to be outdone by the plethora of human beauty contests, Kathmandu's canine population held its own Mr and Mrs Dog pageant this week. Contestants were judged in the Hottest Dog, Dog-Eat-Dog, Best Son-of-a-Bitch and Most

Photogenic Tail-between-the-Legs categories.

Pukuli, a six-year-old mongrel bitch was crowned Miss Canine Nepal, and won the pageant for the best answer in the interview round in which a judge asked her whether she was optimistic about Nepal's future. Her winning reply: "We have a bright future ahead of us. I read in the papers today that the country is going to the dogs."



## Cannabis Farming in Parsa Reaches All-time High

Simara-Excuse me, oijdf if I can't seem dkjf to type this jdf in straight;[?], but it gives me great pleasure to ;jklkjoi report that ganja harvests kdjf this year in Parsa was goooood, yar. "Yup, this is good sh%& and there's lots more where that came from," said a notoriously reliable source who was also stoned out of his %\$#@ mind and didn't want his name disclosed.



## Flesh Trade Mushrooming

As the living standard of the Valley's middle class rises, so has demand on the flesh trade, according to Hoof and Mouth Pvt Ltd, meat packing wholesaler at Kalanki. The same, however, couldn't be said of the mushroom industry which according to latest figures has not been mushrooming at all.

## Vegetable Farming Yields Fruit

Farmers in Dhading have been astounded this week by the fact that their tomato fields have yielded a bumper harvest of oranges. "I think this proves once and for all that the tomato is actually a fruit," stated one farmer.



## New holidays announced

The Gubberment of Nepal has brought out a new list of nationalistic holidays for the Fiscal Year 2069/2070 that will take into account days that have symbolic cosmic significance.

All solar and lunar eclipses, comet passages, Leonid showers, meteorite strikes and collisions with asteroids will henceforth be commemorated with nationwide (and in some cases planetwide shutdowns). All Super Novae will be declared holidays retroactively since it would take two billion years for light from the distant explosions in the Andromeda Galaxy to get to us. The activities of all heavenly bodies will be strictly monitored by a special Celestial Committee, and the sun and moon will henceforth be under added surveillance since they are also depicted on our national flag.

"The Gregorian Calendar is not suitable for Maoist Federal Democratic Republics like Nepal," said the Astrologer General in an interview, "that is why we have decided to follow the Lunatic Calendar."

## Mountain Goats To Get Transit Visas

Thousands of mountain goats have already started lining up for their visas on the Tibetan Plateau for their annual two-month trek to enter Nepal for the Dasain festivities. They have finally been granted one-way transit visas by the Nepali Consulate in Lhasa, the Department of Livestock and Immigration at the Ministry of Animals announced today.

"They wanted multiple entry-tourist visas, but we were convinced they had no intention of returning to Tibet, so we gave them one-way entry permits gratis and threw in a free medical checkup," said an official in the Alien Goats Registry at the Department.

The first mountain goat to cross the border on International Tourism Day will be garlanded, given a Nepali topi and taken around town in a caparisoned elephant before being led off to be decapitated.

## Other great headlines:

- Man Renews Passport Before Expiry
- Wild Elephant Injures Farmer with Axe
- Two Trucks Collide, One Hurt

(Regurgitated from Under My Hat)



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