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BIKRAM RAI

"I'll smash your windshield unless the prime minister resigns"

The UML's Youth Association Nepal declared a four-day 'morning banda' this week to pressurise Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai to resign. The party said it was closing down the streets for only four hours a day because it didn't want to 'inconvenience' the public. But they enforced their shutdown by terrorising commuters who dared to get out, like this one in Dillibajar on Sunday morning. The police intervened on time and the car and its occupants escaped unscathed.

The opposition parties claim that a national unity government is the only way to break the constitutional void. The NC can't decide whom to field as prime ministerial candidate, and this is making the UML impatient. The reason for this hurry is that political parties have no other source of cash to finance a future election campaign except to try to get into government and fill their coffers. Ransacking the state treasury while in office has become standard operating procedure.

Nepal is not poor, only poorly-governed. And it will stay that way unless the electoral process is reformed with strong laws to regulate campaign financing.

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Unfree and unfair

Nepal will remain poorly-governed unless we reform the electoral process with strong laws to regulate campaign financing.

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by Anurag Acharya



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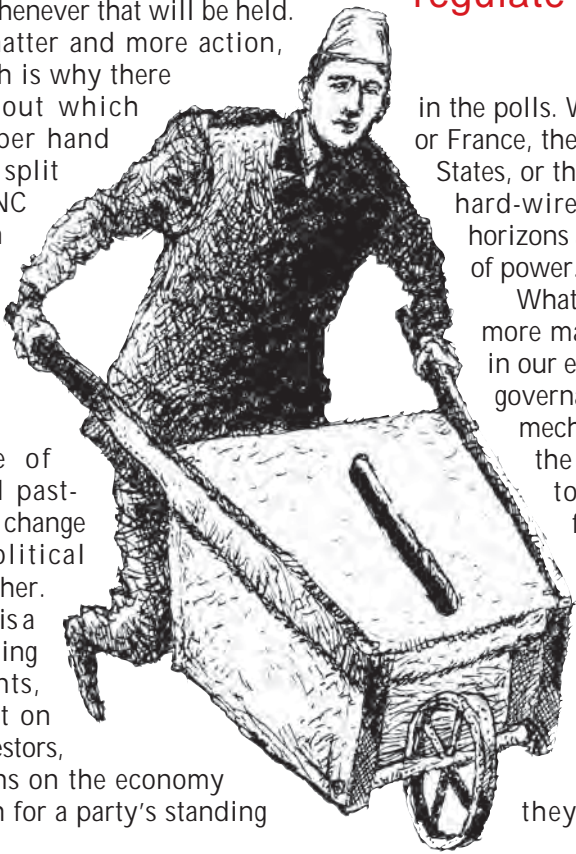
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UNFREE AND UNFAIR

The Kathmandu chattering class is a bit full of itself, and likes to collectively call itself ‘buddhi jibi’: literally, pundits who make a living out of punditry. It is getting to sound like an echo chamber, as self-proclaimed intellectuals dissect the electoral arithmetic for the next polls, whenever that will be held.

We could do with less chatter and more action, but old habits die hard. Which is why there is microscopic analysis about which Madhesi faction has the upper hand in the Tarai, what the Maoist split means in the far-west for the NC and how the UML can regain lost grassroots support. There is speculation about how issues of federalism and ethnicity will play out, and how identity politics could upset all calculations.

Guessing the outcome of elections is an international past-time, and we can’t do much to change the way politicians and political parties approach elections, either. Universally, the run-up to polls is a time of populist policies, whipping up paranoia about immigrants, accusing rivals of selling out on natural resources to foreign investors, or postponing urgent decisions on the economy because of what it might mean for a party’s standing



Nepal will remain poorly-governed unless we reform the electoral process with strong laws to regulate campaign financing.

in the polls. Whether in recent elections in Greece or France, the forthcoming elections in the United States, or the next polls in Nepal, politicians are hard-wired to behave with short-term time horizons and be single-minded in their pursuit of power.

What is different about Nepal compared to more mature democracies is that fatal flaws in our electoral process lead more directly to governance failure. Elections should be the mechanism through which citizens select the most efficient and honest managers to make laws and run the country for four years. But the way they are actually run, elections embed corruption into the body politic so that the rot spreads right through society.

Political parties have to raise money from businesses to finance elections either to buy votes or buy goons. When they get to power they have to repay their benefactors

in contracts. There has been so little investment and businesses are so cash-strapped, however, that political parties have to make sure they amass as much resources as possible while in government so they can finance future campaigns. Incumbent politicians today don’t even try to hide the plunder of the exchequer while in office because it has become standard operating procedure.

Nepal’s multi-party democracy started decaying almost as soon as it was restored in 1990. It wasn’t for any inherent flaw in the system, but the way it was mishandled by those with electoral mandates. Freedom fighters from the 1960s who suffered long years in jail and exile showed very early on that they couldn’t handle power. Suffering incarceration and persecution for the cause of democracy doesn’t, it seems, necessarily guarantee leadership qualities.

Neither, it seems does taking up arms: the Maoists in power have proved to be just as greedy and selfish as the other fellows. The only difference is that they have honed ransacking the treasury into a fine art, and combined with past and on-going extortion, this gives them a formidable war-chest. You can be sure the current Maoist-Madhesi coalition will step down when it has had its fill, and there is nothing left to steal from the state.

They say Nepal is not poor, only poorly-governed. And it will stay that way unless we reform the electoral process with strong laws to regulate campaign financing. Until then, all intellectual navel gazing about the relative standing of the parties is pointless.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

ECONOMIC TAKEOFF

The stalemate over the new international airport in Pokhara is ridiculous, but it does not surprise me one bit (‘Economic takeoff’, editorial, #616). What were we expecting? A new international airport to be built peacefully without any political meddling? Like the editorial says, I think Nepalis wouldn’t mind even if politicians were pocketing kickbacks as long as things happened and the country moved ahead. But in our country there is lots of corruption and zero brains.

Anita Khadka

● This week’s editorial hits the bull’s eye. Our politicians and bureaucrats are greedy half-wits, who would turn down opportunities for progress if they feel they have nothing to gain, whether it is power or windfall. India has its share of corrupt ministers, but they take their 10 per cent and are not hell bent on sabotaging entire projects. If our leaders really cared about Nepal’s growth and development, they would improve the airports around the country, build new ones in the Tarai, complete hydropower projects etc without much hassle. There is plenty of international interest and funding isn’t a problem either. It’s these incompetent, selfish men who are our biggest hurdle.

ST

● I think it’s a terrible idea to build an international airport in Pokhara. People visit Pokhara for its quiet and peaceful environment, not to have huge airbuses screaming down the tarmac every five minutes. Build the second airport in the Tarai region along the Narayangat to Bhairahawa corridor instead and leave Pokhara for the tourists. The present domestic terminal serves them well enough.

Akashj Grg

● The domestic airport in Pokhara is

the second most profitable and busiest airport after TIA in Nepal, which means it has the capability to generate more income in the future and pay off its debts. There is a demand and an urgent need for a new international airport and we should not delay the process any further, because it will not only boost the country’s economy, but provide easier travel options for local and international tourists.

Sujeet Grg

● What’s the use of talking and writing about corruption and how corrupted Nepali leaders and bureaucrats are? If we really want to solve the problems, we need to put the top dogs from the political parties behind bars. Our political environment will change immediately and become more conducive to business and investment.

Sunil Pradhan

SAKE OF OPPOSITION

Nepal’s opposition parties and their hate mongering against the present government are clear reflections of bigotry prevalent in the country’s polity (‘For the sake of opposition’, Anurag Acharya, #616). Parties who have nothing to offer are busy denouncing others. The UML youth on the roads can only irk ordinary citizens, as their two bosses have already acceded to the chair, but offered nothing. The NC also loves the musical chair of power. It is ironic to see they don’t go to polls, but to the streets, don’t seek votes, but strike and yet they declare themselves, as if by virtue of some divine superpower, the ‘defenders of democracy’. No one needs autocrats like these self-declared democrats.

Binu

● Anurag, is this is a case of Bhattarai being the least rotten apple among a basket full of rotting apples? But how long should we console ourselves with

the ‘best of the worst’? I know the younger leaders who are our ‘future’ are not much different than their current bosses, but will there be a time in Nepal when we can vote for the best among a crop of really good, well-qualified and honest candidates?

YB

● While defending the PM, Anurag forgets that if the CA is revived, Bhattarai will be thrown out since he will lose the support of the Baidya faction. So why would he agree to reinstate the CA? It was Dahal who floated the idea of reinstating the CA, not Bhattarai.

Prakash Joshi

● The article seems to be written on behalf of the incumbent government. Bhattarai has shown complete disregard for unity, co-operation and consensus and seems determined to cling onto power at any cost. And yet the writer heaps praises upon him.

Sanjay Gelal

HIMALAYAN TEACHER

Thank you Jana Ašenbrennerová for introducing us to an incredible teacher and a wonderful human being like Durga Dhakal (‘Himalayan Teacher’, #616). The sincerity and devotion with which he teaches make him a great role model. Very few teachers (or other professionals) would willingly leave behind their families and the relative comforts of Pokhara and base themselves in a harsh place like Mustang. I wonder how many other Dhakals there are in the country whose stories we haven’t heard yet. Imagine the immense impact these teachers could make if only they had strong state support and adequate resources.

Sweta K

● Since this kind of news rarely appears in our mainstream newspapers, Dhakal seems like a

fictional character straight out of a movie. But I truly appreciate and respect Dhakal sir’s dedication to his work of educating children of the Himalayas despite the considerable hardships.

SL

● Hats off to the man who enjoys sharing knowledge with his students. We often portray Mustang as an arid ‘desert land’ of Nepal where there are no basic amenities. But Dhakal shows us that if we are willing to work hard and commit ourselves, it’s possible to make a living and make a difference even in rugged Mustang.

Anonymous

● Thank you Jana for the article. I have nothing but great admiration for people like Dhakal. This is the way Nepal and Nepalis should be.

Binod Gurung

● The pictures pretty much speak for the whole article. We need more passionate teachers like Dhakal in Nepal.

Ambika Kambang

ENGINEERING A FUTURE

The group of young engineers turned farmers are great inspiration for all of us (‘Engineering a future’, Anurag Acharya, #616). It’s great to see them pioneering their own future and destiny. Keep up the good work.

RK

● Hats off to these men who are the real youth leaders of Nepal. If everything goes smoothly they will be in history books one day.

Gaurav Gautam

● Although I appreciate the ingenuity and enthusiasm of the engineer-farmers, what kind of message does this send to young students who are aspiring to be engineers, doctors or other specialised professionals? ‘Don’t bother, and waste

your time and money in college, try your hand in subsistence farming, or carpentry, or brick-laying’. As the country’s population grows and land holdings get smaller, even subsistence farming will no longer be enough to sustain families. Then what will all the doctors or professors turned farmers do?

Nepali

RUGS TO RICHES

Kunda Dixit mentions in his report that many words came into Nepali language via Mongolia and Persia (‘From rugs to riches’, #616). I visited Mongolia in 2004 and met then President Natsagiin Bagabandi who is a historian and a scholar. He asked me where in Nepal I came from and I told him I was from Gulmi. Rather curiously, he then asked me if it was near Palpa. I said yes, and he then said that an old word for ‘Nepal’ in Mongolian was ‘Palapa’. A Buddhist monk from Nepal had apparently visited Mongolia long ago and said he came from Palpa, near the birthplace of Buddha in Lumbini. So Mongolians knew Nepal as Palapa for a long time. President Bagabandi visited Nepal in 2001, but did not manage to visit Palpa.

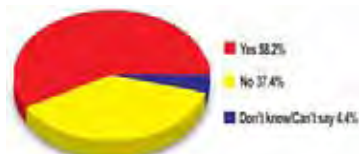
Kul Chandra Gautam



nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #617

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

Total votes: 1,471



Weekly Internet Poll # 618. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think of Prime Minister's statement regarding external influence in Nepali politics?



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BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

The political parties in Kathmandu may still be undecided about what the “new” Nepal would look like, but here in the east people seem to have already decided at the level where it matters the most. Travelling across five districts of Nepal’s east, one gets a sense of what real grassroots aspirations are: a more accountable and accessible state.

Thousands of Janajatis taking to the streets in Kathmandu may have spread fears of national disintegration, but here on the ground the quest for identity is not the bogey it is being made out to be. The national media has been exaggerating fears of communal violence and focuses a lot on negative reports about groups enforcing shutdowns, and social media promotes hate speech. But here, the reality is different. People have become more tolerant of differences and accept the necessity of a more inclusive society.

“They tell me now I am citizen of a Limbuwan state. I don’t care what that means as long as we can have politicians we can reach,” Purna Shrestha, a 37-year-old daily wage earner from Jorpokhari of Panchthar district told me. Shrestha has never been beyond Jhapa and doesn’t really care who rules in Kathmandu.

Yadunath Khanal has been teaching Political Science for the last 15 years here in Panchthar’s local campus, and says most misgivings about local movements stem from a preconceived mindset and failure of outsiders to empathise with people’s quest for autonomy.

In the last few years Nepalis



ANURAG ACHARYA

A diverse unity

In eastern Nepal, people have come to better accept each other’s culture and identity

in general have become more accommodating in their outlook, developing an understanding for each other’s culture and identity. In the Tarai these days, a Madhesi is treated with more respect by a non-Madhesi civil servant, which is quite a departure from the rude and dismissive behaviour of the past. Similarly, from a monolithic state, we have become a nation of diverse cultures where Eid and Udhali are celebrated with the same enthusiasm as Dasain and Gaijatra.

At a cyber cafe in Phidim, which was in the throes of yet another shutdown called by CPN-Maoists, two young students were critical of the nationalistic backlash on social media against identity politics. “I don’t understand why people have to add ‘Nepali’

to their names to assert their Nepaliness,” said one, “when I greet you with ‘sewaro’ is it any less of a Nepali greeting than ‘namaste’?”

What started out as a political demand for a federal state has now moved beyond the political realm to become a social movement which does not seek to undermine nationalism, but to strengthen it by cementing Nepal with its diversity.

In Biratnagar and Itahari, the rickshaw drivers are from the hills and plains, and converse easily in their own languages with passengers who also understand and respond in those tongues. In a bus from Dharan to Dhankuta, or from Panchthar through Ilam, there is a multitude of voices in various local languages that represents a

linguistic microcosm of eastern Nepal. No one from the dominant castes in the bus seem to see that as a threat to their Nepaliness. We pass signboards and gates not just in local languages, but in long-lost local scripts that had fallen into disuse.

According to Sunsari-based journalist and writer Bhawani Baral who has published several books on the Limbuwan and other identity-based movements in the east, demands for political autonomy have become more coordinated, restrained and mature. “Remember, these were homegrown movements and lacked leadership, so it is natural that they were anarchic, but that is slowly changing,” he told me.

Indeed, the nine factions demanding Limbuwan are now

organised under a coordination committee while an armed Khumbuwan movement recently renounced violence and has pledged to enter peaceful politics.

There is no such thing as a righteous stance in politics, there are only politically-correct decisions. Whether we like it or not, identity politics is here to stay at least until we as a nation are prepared to deal with it as a necessary path to redress past exclusivity. To do that, the old-fashioned centralised decision-making must first give way to a more progressive politics that includes all.

Our leaders should stop telling people what is good for them and start listening to what they want: a federalism that celebrates Nepal’s diverse identities. 🇳🇵



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Making schools safer

BHRIKUTI RAI

Every time an earthquake hits anywhere in the world, alarm bells start ringing in Kathmandu, classified as the city most vulnerable to a catastrophic quake.

On 18 September last year, a 6.8 magnitude earthquake rocked eastern Nepal and northeast India. The number of casualties was miraculously low, but the fact that a faraway earthquake killed three people in Kathmandu was a warning that brought back memories of the Great Earthquake of 1934 which killed 10,000 people in the Valley.

Nepal ranks high on the list of nations at risk from earthquakes, and Kathmandu is the world's least prepared city for earthquakes. Japan and New Zealand proved that even in the deadliest of earthquakes, preparedness can help reduce and avert the loss of lives.

"Despite our vulnerability to a powerful earthquake, the lack of preparedness here is mind boggling," says Amod Dixit of the Kathmandu based Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) as he took visiting Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Foreign Affairs Richard Marles on a walkabout through the warren of narrow alleys in Patan this week.

Marles was here to inspect progress on a project to retrofit schools in Kathmandu Valley to make them earthquake resistant which is being supported by AusAID and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Earthquake experts say that unsafe construction will result in widespread damage to the Valley's urban core, and most of the existing schools and hospitals will be destroyed in a big earthquake. Retrofitting schools and hospitals will not just help save lives, but the buildings themselves can serve as shelters in the aftermath of a future earthquake.

If an 8.0 magnitude earthquake like the one in 1934 were to hit Kathmandu, as many as 100,000 people would be killed outright, many more would be injured and 1.5 million people would



Visiting Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Foreign Affairs Richard Marles (right) inspecting the retrofitted classrooms of Tri-Padma Vidyashram School in Lalitpur

Functioning and undamaged schools can provide hope and shelter in the aftermath of a future earthquake in Kathmandu



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

be homeless. Many of those killed and injured will be students if the quake happens during school hours. Most school buildings in eastern Nepal came down in the earthquake last year, but students were spared because it happened in the evening.

Under the AusAID and ADB-funded School Sector Reform Programme,

15 schools in the Valley have been retrofitted in the last fiscal year and nearly 121 more will be completed in the coming year. The retrofitting programme only covers government schools, and experts are worried about thousands of private schools housed in unsafe buildings.

"Many private schools are housed in

residential buildings, which are rarely monitored for earthquake safety putting hundreds of children at risk," says Jhapper Singh Vishokarma, engineer with the Department of Education, which is working with technical assistance of NSET to make schools safer.

Walking past the congested residential areas of inner Patan where houses look nothing more than stacks of bricks fighting for every inch of space, Marles made his way to the spacious premises of the Tri-Padma Vidyashram School in Lalitpur. The school has recently been retrofitted and hopes to serve as a shelter for the local community after an earthquake. The students and teachers have been practicing earthquake safety drills over the past year, which has helped spread awareness about earthquake safety beyond schools.


"We are proud to be one of the safest schools in the community," said a beaming Bidya Panday, the school's principal.

Since schools have the largest concentration of people on any given day, building safe schools will not just help save lives. but also be the best way to pass on earthquake safety information to families and the community.

"Schools build future citizens and this project protects the future," said Marles after visiting the school where students performed an earthquake safety drill. Teachers and students talked with Marles about how they have been sharing their earthquake preparedness knowledge with their families and friends.

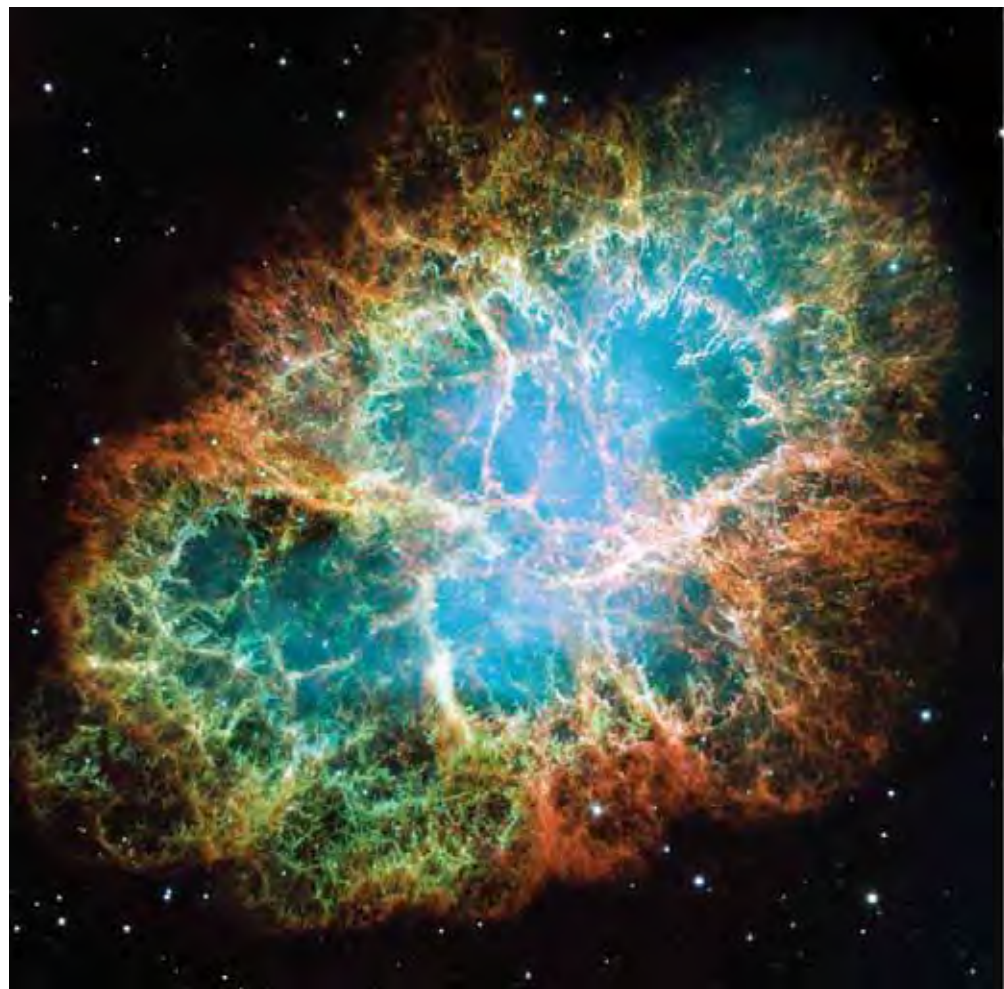
"Awareness is key," he added as he walked along the wide hallways inspecting the retrofitted classrooms.

In 2009, Nepal's international partners and the UN got together to form the National Risk Reduction Consortium to better prepare for future disasters, including earthquakes. School and hospital retrofitting was considered the best place to start.

The UN's Resident Coordinator, Robert Piper, accompanied Marles on the school inspection. He told *Nepali Times*: "To protect the future, children need to be safe first and the time is now."  www.nset.org.np

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Where the earthquake will hit the hardest, #587
Unsafe schools and hospitals, #536
Not if but when, #531



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Renting a womb

India's surrogate mothers bear other people's babies to escape poverty

SHAIKH AZIZUR RAHMAN
in GUJARAT

Cradling a crying newborn in her arms, 28-year-old Kruti looks into the face of the baby boy she will soon have to give away. She gave birth a few weeks ago for a Canadian couple at a clinic in Gujarat.

It's the second time she has carried another couple's child in a rent-a-womb trend that is part of India's growing medical tourism industry where commercial surrogacy is now worth \$2.5 billion each year. "It's my choice to become a surrogate mother," says Kruti, "I feel good about myself for helping a childless woman have a baby."

Critics suggest the practise exploits women in poverty, but Kruti says she has few other options. "I'm illiterate, but I dream that my own children will be educated in a good school. For that, I need lots of money," she explains.

And she's not alone. It is estimated that surrogate mothers delivered 20,000 births across India last year. Most mothers

are poor women living in urban slums and can earn up to \$10,000 for carrying a baby, a huge amount for women who earn less than Rs 200 a day.

Rimi is 27, and delivered her first surrogate baby last January. She got paid \$6,000 and introduced five other women from her slum to the clinic.

"Since my husband dumped me three years ago, I could not raise my two children by myself," she says, arguing that she sees nothing wrong with the practice.

Clinics charge parents between \$12,000 and \$30,000 for the surrogacy service for a package that includes fertilisation, the surrogate mother's payment and delivery of the baby at the hospital.

According to the World Health Organisation, up to 10 per cent of couples worldwide are unable to have children. Many of them visit in-vitro fertilisation clinics, and around two per cent need surrogate mothers to help them give birth to a child. India has about 1,000 in-vitro fertilisation clinics, and more than half of them provide commercial

surrogacy.

Surrogacy is allowed in some states in North America, but in India it's two to three times cheaper. And while some people support surrogacy itself, others say it sees babies treated as commodities and there are no laws to protect the rights of surrogate mothers. The women often don't get any special pre- or post-natal care.

A draft law called the Bill of Assisted Reproductive Technologies was finalised two years ago, and aims to protect Indian surrogate mothers. It is due to be tabled in parliament this year and if it passes, commercial surrogacy will remain legal, but with stricter regulations.

Under the draft law, a woman acting as a surrogate mother must be between 22 and 34 years old and can only give birth to a total of five babies, including her own children.

Rimi, who has two children of her own, says she aims to be a surrogate mother again. She says: "It is the truth that I did it for money. We all do it for the money."

www.asiacalling.org

BIZ BRIEFS

Spreading wings



Dragonair, the sister airline of Cathay Pacific, will increase its services from September onwards and offer daily flights between Kathmandu and Hong Kong. The company has been operating flights to Kathmandu since 2007.



Party central

Sprite organised a Mega Beach Party at Pokhara with 400 winners of the Sprite Bato Clear Challenge, which encourages the youth to think of 'fresh' ideas for various situations. The winners also received mobile phones.

Bhaktapur calling

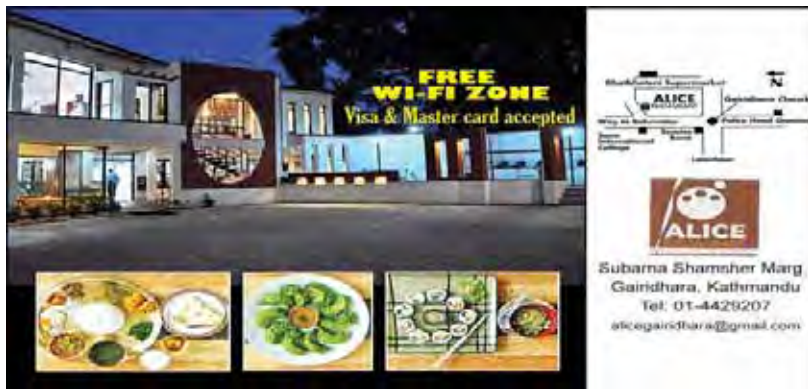


Syakar, sole authorised distributor of Philips in Nepal has opened a new outlet in Surya Binayak, Bhaktapur. The showroom features LCD/LED TVs, music systems and a range of other home appliances.

Encouraging entrepreneurs



Surya Nepal Asha Social Entrepreneurship Awards (SNASEA) is calling for application and nomination for social entrepreneurs. The award, sponsored by Surya Nepal, organised by ChangeFusion Nepal and supported by National Business Initiative, brings the good work of exceptional entrepreneurs into the limelight.



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Seeing beyond the obvious

The power of one man's photography to bring alive Nepal's landscape, history and culture

ALBAN VON STOCKHAUSEN



6

PICS: THE MUKUNDA BAHADUR SHRESTHA COLLECTION/NEPAL PICTURE LIBRARY

Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha, a photographer barely known to the public today, spent the 1970s and 80s travelling across Nepal, photographing its mountains, cultures, and people – images that introduced the country to the world. An exhibition at Siddhartha Gallery from 10-20 August allows exciting insights into the sources of visual heritage contained in his archive.

Shrestha's travels took him to the Himalayan mountains, festivals and places of cultural

and historical importance. The images were part of his professional career, but the real treasures in his photographic archive can be found elsewhere: Shrestha also photographed for himself and his family, developing further his unique and very personal style of portraying people and capturing situations of everyday life and ritual.

In these works his true mastery of the medium becomes obvious, reaching beyond the habitual skills of a craftsman, Shrestha extensively experimented with the aesthetic

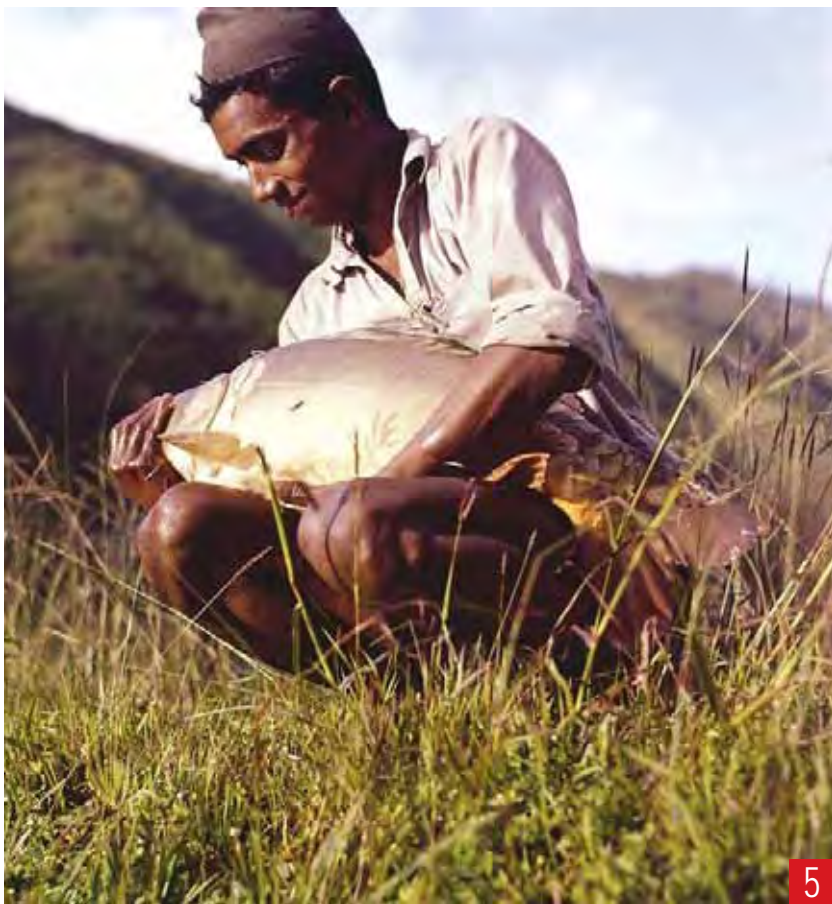
quality of images, trying out different perspectives and composition techniques as well as formats. He was always in search for a photograph that captured the personality of a person or the emotional and aesthetic quality of a certain scene in the best possible way.

When the Nepal Picture Library team visited Shrestha's home for the first time, out of his closets and from under his bed came countless boxes and bags full of negatives and slides he had collected over the years, none of which had ever been seen in public. In the year following the discovery, more than 11,000 slides and negatives from his collection were digitised in archival quality using the latest Hasselblad scanning equipment.

Looking through Shrestha's photographs and collection, the importance of archiving projects becomes obvious- especially in the context of the rapidly changing cultures of Nepal. The vast transformative process the country has been going through in the last decades also had its aesthetic implications. The visual appearance of everyday life has changed dramatically and irrevocably. The aesthetic outlook of profane and religious life of the Nepali people has changed parallel to the upheavals of the political



7



system. Even though Nepali culture has constantly evolved and changed in the past, the aesthetic transformations have speeded up to an extent that was unknown in the past.

Today, a long time after his photographs were taken, Shrestha's oeuvre has grown in importance, reaching far beyond its mere aesthetic qualities. Many of the photographs he took over the years are of great value for historians and people interested in the anthropology of Nepal. A journey through the historic imagery allows the viewer a glimpse into the past and the photographs bear the power to revoke the cultural transformations brought about in the past decades for a few moments. In future, scholars wishing to work on the cultural systems of vanished cultures will have to rely heavily on archives and historical collections.

It is projects like Nepal Picture Library that preserve visual heritage by treating and rescuing images as primary sources. They might not have been of great relevance at the time when they were created, but today, in a changed cultural context, their contents suddenly become of great importance. Nepal Picture Library not only contributes to the study of Nepali photography, but also

generates knowledge and raises questions about how issues of memory, identity, and history can be explored through images. 🇳🇵

Alban von Stockhausen is a Nepal based anthropologist and photographer who has worked in several international projects on ethnographic images and photographic archives.

**Postcards and Beyond
The Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha Photo Collection
11- 20 August
12 noon - 7 pm
Siddhartha Art Gallery
Baber Mahal Revisited**

MAKING MEMORIES:

- 1. Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha in an undated photo.
- 2, 4 and 8. In the aftermath of the 1959 Tibetan uprisings in Lhasa, large numbers of Tibetan refugees crossed the border into Nepal. But not everyone fled the Chinese invasion. Numbering over 6000, the Khampas, often known as the last Tibetan warriors, were strongly built, long-haired men who travelled around on horsebacks and interacted little with the locals.
- 3 and 7. Taken about 40 years ago, this set of photos depicts the bathing of the Machhindranath chariot. The ceremony takes place at Chobhar, where the Bagmati flows out of the Kathmandu Valley (1970s).
- 5. A huge fish caught in Phewa Lake in Pokhara during a visit by King Mahendra (1968).
- 6. Trekking somewhere in the mid-western mountains, Shrestha took this photo of three young girls and a dog (1970s).



EVENTS



KABAB AND BIRYANI FESTIVAL, showcasing a wide variety of kababs and biryanis from across South Asia. 9 August to 26 August, The Yellow Chilli, Bluebird Complex, Tripureshwor, 4101088

Rainbow City, a mural art project with discussions, lectures and workshops with artist James Burn. Rs 300, runs until 14 August, 9am to 4pm, Kathmandu University School of Arts, Mandikatar



CLIMBMANDU, outdoor festival to promote climbing culture among the youth in Kathmandu. 18 August, Astrek Climbing Wall, Thamel, info @ climbmandu.com, 4785454

Farmers' Market, sale of fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, fruits. 12 August, 9am to 12pm, New Orleans Café, Patan, 5522708

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

Graphic Guff, meet Kathmandu-based graphic designers, discuss the art and craft behind designing, and showcase your own samples. 11 August, Cuppas Café, Putalisadak, www.sattya.org.np

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



THE RISE OF THE COLLATERAL, art exhibition by Manish Harijan. 22 August to 20 September, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, 4218048

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

MUSIC

Number of the Beast, a concert in tribute to heavy metal band Iron Maiden. Rs 125, 11 August, Mahalaxmi Chowk, Patan, 9802060710



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

Nepfest 3, band competition with cash prizes and a chance to open for Polish band Decapitated. Rs 5000 for registration, 25 August, 12.45pm

DINING

Himalayan Java, this Thamel establishment, more known for its coffee, serves excellent sandwiches too. Tridevi Marg, 4422519

Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area evokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. Thamel, 4701170



HADOCK, big compound with ample parking space, their western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. Jhamel, 5546431

Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. Thamel, 4701510

Pumpernickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread, experiment with their goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. Thamel, 7.30am-7pm, 4259185



LHASA BAR, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. Thamel, 985101043



BOUDHA STUPA RESTAURANT & CAFE, enjoy wood fired pizza with the superb view of Boudha stupa on the backdrop and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night. Boudha, 2130681



LHAKPA CHULO, try their tender steaks and Thai-style salads. Jhamsikhel

Casa de Cass, offers continental delicacies, baked goodies, brewed coffee and everything in between. Jawalakhel



LAZY GRINGO, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Jawalakhel

New Dish, you will be in for a treat here as it serves one of the best pork momo in town. Khichapokhari

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



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

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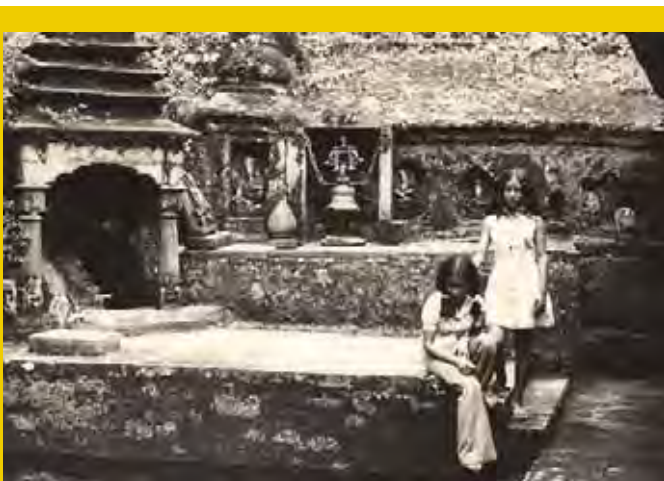
Pataleban Vineyard Resort, Japan-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks, and picnics. *Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364*

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



HAATIBAN RESORT, tucked away near a jungle at the side of a hill with a 270 degree view of the Valley. *Pharping, Kathmandu, 4371537, 4371561*

Balthali Village Resort, a small, cozy retreat with bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. *Balthali, Kabhre, 9851075818*



Images of yesteryear

Photo Circle and Nepal Picture Library bring you Postcards and Beyond, an exhibition of photos by Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha who spent the 70s and 80s travelling across the country taking photos of people, mountains, cultures and lifestyles for the Nepal Tourism Board. In addition, local and international photographers will give talks on anthropological, political, ethnographic pursuits through photography. Pictures may also be purchased online.

11 August to 20 August, 12pm to 7pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, www.photocircle.com, 5013501, 9841750949.

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SOMEPLACE ELSE

Taas and sekuwa of yore (read about ten years ago) were shady, dimly-lit joints where the Nepali man went to cohort with his male friends, have a few drinks and gorge on meaty delights. By the end of the evening, as he was tottering back home, he would ask the sauji to 'home pack' a few plates for his dutiful wife and children.

Fast forward to Taas and Tawa Restaurant in 2012, and you will find that there is absolute gender balance. No longer dark and dingy, the place is clean, open and utilitarian. Furnished with pale-stripped wooden tables and chairs, the atmosphere is welcoming and surprisingly chic.

The menu offers taas, sekuwa, bhutan and such. For those uninitiated in these Nepali delights, they are generally mutton and chicken skewered and cooked over a slow flame. Taas is the latecomer among these and was introduced in Kathmandu a mere decade or two ago. It was the



specialty in the Tarai and travellers purportedly saved up to indulge in it. The skinless bits of meat are marinated overnight and shallow fried over a specially built thick iron griddle (tawa) until tender. Taas is served with puffed rice, spicy and sour radish pickle, pickled ginger and green chilies that add a piquant crunch and bite.

Chusta (Rs 170) is pan-fried pieces of large intestines of the castrated goat that is crisp on the outside and the fat inside just bursts in your mouth, definitely a dish to be enjoyed piping hot. The vegetarians need not worry because mushrooms, paneer and potatoes are cooked with the same care and detail. There are the usual culprits

gracing the Nepali section of the menu: alu sandeko, peanuts, chili chicken, and yes, momos. The mutton ones (Rs 140) of the steamed kind are lush with meaty goodness.


The mutton soup (Rs 80) is delicious. Using mutton bones in a thick tomato and garam masala based broth, it is sinfully delightful, reminiscent of a mulligatawny and absolutely delicious. Add a little squirt of lemon to release the flavours and luxuriate in its thick goodness.

Shiva Piya and Prasanna Shrestha, both originally from Narayanghat started their first Taas restaurant in Teku six years ago. Since then they have opened another outlet in Nagpokhari and this is their third venture. Shiva tells me, "Nepalis love their snacks. Rather than having an extensive menu that offers every type of cuisine, we decided to specialise in what sells. Eating out in Nepal basically means going out for a few drinks accompanied by snacks and then heading home for a dal bhat



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

dinner." Their formula has worked very well. They also place the utmost importance on hygiene and have open kitchens in all three restaurants. "It helps us maintain quality control and encourages the staff to retain cleanliness and order. Also since the patrons can see how the food is prepared, they trust us more," adds Shiva.

Taas and Tawa is the perfect spot to grab a quick lunch, lighter than a full plate of dal bhat, but filling nonetheless. It is also very popular among bankers who like to network and discuss business and with families during the weekend who come to enjoy the live telecast of the Olympics on the large screen. 

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there:
In Pulchok, enter the street opposite Namaste Supermarket heading towards Suzuki showroom, about 60 metres in, turn right.



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TRISHNA



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

The dexterous and adventurous Michael Winterbottom, a sometimes under-rated British filmmaker has made yet another surprising film. As ever, none of his works even remotely resemble each other in style or genre even though he is quite prolific, directing sometimes up to two films a year. His films are always searching, sometimes almost experimental, at other times quite classical (check out *9 Songs*, or *A Mighty Heart* for examples of the former and latter respectively).

With *Trishna*, Winterbottom has taken yet another new turn in directing, choosing to adapt Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, but, set in India, and starring the doe-eyed Freida Pinto as Trishna.

The film is a character study, and Pinto is captivating in it. Having previously thought her to be a bit banal, she surprises in this film, carrying its weight with elegance and grace, even in the most emotionally difficult scenes. Pinto is only 27-years-old, yet she manages to be both girlish and womanly, switching from one to the other through the film that chronicles the life of a young village girl in Rajasthan who happens to catch the eye of an upper-class Indian man who has just returned from Britain to look after his family's posh, palatial hotels.

After Trishna's father has an accident and wrecks the jeep upon which the family's livelihood depends (she is also in the vehicle at the time of accident), Jay Singh, played by the newcomer Riz Ahmed, who speaks with an unfortunately grating, almost petulant English accent, offers her a job in Jaipur at one of his father's hotels. Suddenly able to earn enough to support her entire family, Trishna, the only educated daughter, takes the offer and moves to Jaipur, reluctant to leave her family, but left without choice.

She arrives at the hotel with a broken arm, and is picked up by Jay himself at the bus station. They speak with each other in English, as he is not comfortable in Hindi. She also initially calls him "Sir", and seems oblivious to his obvious attentions, something quite apparent to

the rest of the hotel staff.

I will not describe the course of the love affair, but I will say that it is disturbing. More than anything, it is Trishna's obvious vulnerability and innocence that disturbs; one cannot help but wonder when things will fall apart.

As always it is Shakespeare who put it best in *The Rape of Lucrece*: "Beauty itself, doth of itself, persuade the eyes of men without an orator". Trishna's loveliness is perhaps more of a curse then, instead of a blessing, because though it does bring her love, and a change of circumstances initially, it is not enough to circumvent the enormous chasm of social inequality.

As Raj's behaviour towards her devolves, Trishna is strangely passive, up to a point. This enigmatic passivity is the biggest weakness in the script, however it does not harm the narrative irreparably.

Shot beautifully and with one tremendous performance, *Trishna* is worth seeing for its sensitive and skilled portrayal of the horrors of a love affair gone awry and the tragedy that can sometimes accompany the very beautiful and pure of heart.

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

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer



Changing times



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Before antibiotics came to the rescue, our job as physicians was mainly custodial: we tried to take good care of patients and provided them with love and sympathy. Whether the patient survived or not depended on the natural history of the disease.

Our Nepali patients knew this all too well. For example, typhoid fever was called "myadhe joro" (fever with a limited time span). Generally the fever lasted for three weeks and if you survived 20 to 25 days with fever, then you would be fine.



Physicians' lotions, potions, and pills made little difference. American physician, Lewis Thomas observed in 1937 that if being in a hospital bed made a difference it was mostly the difference produced by warmth, shelter, and food. But when

antibiotics became widely available starting from the 1940s and 50s, methods of treatment changed forever.

There are now effective prevention and treatment measures for many infections and non-infectious illnesses. We have moved beyond treatment in a big way into the realm of evidence-based medicine. Many hospitals in the west especially in the United States are now run

by administrators and nurses at various levels who make sure doctors follow rules and regulations set by the administration so that infection is under control.

For example in many US hospitals there are random camera monitors to ensure

doctors follow rules (like wearing masks and head covers) while performing even minor procedures on patients so that infections are prevented. Even senior doctors are reprimanded if they are found disobeying these rules. Naturally many senior doctors have not been able to adapt well to these changes.

In addition, many doctors in the west are experiencing insurance-company hassles, government regulations, malpractice litigation, not to mention nurses and fellow doctors bearing tattoos and thinking nothing of their behaviour.

By comparison, we Nepali physicians have it easy. We don't have to fill out long forms after every visit nor do we have to worry too much about malpractice litigation, although Nepali lawyers are clearly lurking in the background.

But surely we Nepali physicians have to ask ourselves if we are always working in the best interests of our patients (when we don't follow simple guidelines like washing hands with soap and water), even if in the US and other developed countries seemingly unnecessary hassles may be interfering with patient care.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The monsoon is almost past its peak now but a low-pressure trough is still lingering around the foothills of the Himalays. The Western region saw plenty of rainfall earlier but the monsoon is now expected to shift towards central and eastern Nepal. Temperatures will not soar anytime soon and humidity will remain high. Expect light daytime rain on Friday and Saturday and a sunny interval on Sunday. Monsoon rainfall will remain constant throughout nights.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26-21	25-21	26-21



BIKRAM RAI

RAINY TRIATHLON : A man tries to cycle, while another struggles to walk through water-clogged streets in Nayabajar after heavy downpour on Sunday afternoon.



KRISHNA SINJALI

ETHNIC IDENTITY : People watch a Lakhe Dance in Birtamod, Jhapa during the program to mark the 18th International Day of the World's Indigenous People on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

ROAD CLEARANCE: The road near Singha Darbar is deserted during the 6 to 9 am transport strike called by the UML affiliated Youth Association Nepal on Wednesday morning.



BIKRAM RAI

UNDER MY UMBRELLA: Devotees line up near Krishna Mandir in Patan on the occasion of Krishna Janmashthami on Thursday.



MINA SHARMA

For the last eight years, hearing-impaired Nepalis have been working relentlessly to get the state to change its laws so that they can obtain their driver's licence. However, the government is reluctant to address the issue and doing its best to stall the process.

In countries like the US and Japan, the hearing-impaired can drive private and public vehicles. However, Nepal's Motor Vehicle and Transport Management Act 1993 Article 47 prohibits people who cannot hear sounds on the street to drive.

"Why are the hearing-impaired denied driving licences, when vehicles aren't even allowed to use horns around schools, hospitals and other sensitive areas? This is outright discrimination," says Raghav Bir Joshi, the only hearing-impaired member of the now defunct CA.

Joshi, who got his motorcycle licence 30 years ago and his car licence in 1996, used to drive his own car to the CA meetings and is leading the movement for deaf drivers. "When hearing-impaired people get behind the wheels, our entire focus is on driving and we use the rear-view mirror frequently, which decrease the likelihood of accidents. I have been driving for the past three decades and have had no mishaps so far," he explains.

Shrijana Singh, the first female deaf driver in Nepal, started driving after seeing the hearing-impaired in Sweden driving. Like Joshi, she hasn't had a single accident in the last three years since she started riding her scooter.

Although national law forbids issuing licences to the deaf, Nepal signed the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 which calls for countries to guarantee fundamental rights of the disabled and treat them equally at all times.

To avoid addressing this paradox, the state is pushing the campaigners into a bureaucratic maze. They are sent from one government office to another. Officials make promises to grant licences when there are 'safer' roads and better services. But the assurances are

mostly just lip-service.

In 2006, a petition requesting the government to repeal Article 47 finally reached the cabinet after years of passing through administrative loops. But since the cabinet did not consider it a 'priority', the file was promptly returned to the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management (MoLTM) and eventually misplaced.

In August last year, Deputy Attorney General Prem Raj Karki sent a letter urging the ministry to provide better road signs, hearing aids, and 'special' mirrors for the hearing-impaired so that they can get their licences. However, Anil Gurung, under-secretary of the MoLTM argues the demand

ON THE MOVE: Deepak Kumar Shakya (left) along with members of Kathmandu Association of the Deaf pose with their vehicle of choice.

for licences cannot be met because it is against the law.

In the absence of state support, the hearing-impaired have learnt to use loopholes in the driver license test to their advantage. Since an applicant only needs to disclose her blood group and the trial examinations do not test speaking or hearing abilities, sometimes its easy to 'pass off'. At other times, a deaf candidate's chance of being granted or denied the permit is entirely dependent on the mood of the officials.

Problems arise when deaf

License to ride

Hearing impaired Nepalis demand the government to reconsider laws that bar them from driving

people have to renew their licences. Deepak Kumar Shakya, president of Kathmandu Association of the Deaf, obtained his licence long after he actually started driving. But when he went to renew it after five years, officials seized his license and told him deaf people couldn't drive. Shakya has now resorted to driving without a licence, which could land him in a legal mess if he gets caught. Babukaji Sherpa has also been driving without a license since it was confiscated in the same manner.

Sushil Karmacharya, 30, who has US and Nepali licences, says the government refuses to give permits to the hearing-impaired because it assumes disabled people have no skills or capabilities and thinks they are useless. Unless this attitude changes, Karmacharya feels it will be hard for the community not just to obtain driver's licences, but also to make real progress.

nepalitimes.com
Different but able, #574
Differently-abled, #179



Sushil Karmacharya who is hearing-impaired owns an electric vehicle

PICS: BIKRAM RAI

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CANDICE NEO in POKHARA

Secondary school teacher Shrikanta Sapkota never thought that as a visually-impaired person he could ever use a computer. But in the last few years, he is active on Facebook, and uses the Internet daily to prepare his lesson plans.

This has been made possible by a unique cyber cafe in Pokhara that specialises in teaching the blind how to navigate the net. The Inclusive Empowerment Center (IEC) is a non-profit working to encourage interaction between the blind and the sighted, one of the first in Nepal. Two out of the 10 computers in the IEC cafe are equipped with JAWS, an assistive audio technology that aids the blind to navigate websites, reading out everything on the screen and guiding users to read and type on the computer.

Sapkota, 26, who used to depend on his peers to check emails, felt that being computer illiterate was a handicap. "Sometimes I have private emails that I don't want people to see," he says, "now I can do everything myself, it makes me feel more independent and confident."

The part-time radio journalist also finds that being able to use the computer challenges the stereotypical assumptions in Nepali society towards the blind. "People used to think that blind people are a

A unique cyber cafe in Pokhara empowers the visually-impaired by making the Internet accessible

burden and can't do anything," he adds, "but I want to show them otherwise." Sapkota learnt computer skills at IEC and now frequents the cyber cafe daily

and uses the computer for about an hour each time.

As a social enterprise, profit from the cafe goes directly to the funds used to train students

at the IEC (read box). Founder Khom Raj Sharma, who is also visually-impaired, felt that equipping young people with computer skills allows

them to gain more knowledge and enables them to get better-paying jobs.

"Nowadays, there is so much information online, that blind



PICS: SIAN CHOO TONG



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WEB SIGHT: Khom Raj Sharma (left) teaches Sagar Subedi (right) how to use the Internet. Sharma surfs the web at his cafe during his free time (below).



Not left behind

Despite being born blind with his left eye and having lost his sight in his right eye, Khom Raj Sharma has been passionate about computers ever since he realised how much his sighted peers use the machine. That was 12 years ago.

"They were doing everything on the computer, writing, watching movies, sending messages. I was so amazed," he recalls. So he enrolled at the Technical and Skills evelopment Center for Blind and Disabled in Kathmandu for six months.

Since then, he has been an advocate for computer literacy of the visually-impaired and founded the IEC in 2009 to train the blind in computer skills. He says: "Now everything is done online. How can we be left behind?"

says. While he pays about Rs 1,500 for the class, students with financial difficulties get their course fees lowered or waived.

However, out of the 60 blind people trained by the IEC, only five are active users at the cyber cafe. "Many of them are still not confident enough to use the computer regularly," Sharma says. "We still need to encourage them."

To motivate them, the cyber cafe gives a 50 per cent discount to visually-impaired users. Sighted customers have to pay Rs 35 an hour. The IEC also installs the Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) software, another assistive technology for the blind, in the personal laptops of the trainees to aid them in their private use.

Reading books is also no longer a problem, as the cyber cafe can help scan physical reading materials and convert them into a version that can be understood aurally. Sharma says: "I'm looking forward to the day when blind people can have access to the computer if they need it and can use it without support."

nepalitimes.com

Not seeing is believing, #575
Soldering on, #575

See videos of Sharma and Subedi surfing the net



people are disadvantaged just because they can't use the computer," Sharma says.

Another regular user, Sagar Subedi, wants to take an even greater leap: he intends to do computer engineering in the future after he has mastered programming. The 24-year-old sociology undergraduate has been learning how to use the computer for about six months with one hour classes at the IEC every morning.

"It helps me keep in touch with friends overseas," he says. As a massage therapist, the Internet also allows him to read reviews of his service on online travelling guides such as TripAdvisor. An unsuccessful eye operation during early childhood caused him to lose his sight in his left eye, while his right eye deteriorated.

But Subedi remains undaunted and constantly seeks to gain more knowledge through cyberspace. "Being able to Google for information helps me in my studies," he

Business for a cause

Nepali social entrepreneurs are on the rise, but they could do with more support

ANNE RENZENBRINK

The neighbourhood surrounding PN Campus and Pokhara Institute of Engineering is dotted with internet cafes where locals and tourists of all ages can be found using Facebook, skyping with friends or making calls to India, US, or the UK. The IEC Cafe (*pic, below*) is no different, except that some of its most regular customers are visually-impaired.

Khom Raj Sharma, founder of the Inclusive Empowerment Centre (IEC), started the cafe in April to promote computer literacy among the visually-impaired. The centre has been providing computer, Internet and English language training to the blind for the past four years. With the new cafe, students can now use computers with assistive technology and surf the net for less than Rs 20 per hour. The earnings from the cafe help support the centre, which means Sharma and team don't have to depend on donors and can use the profit to cover training fees for those who can't afford.

With more and more organisations like IEC learning how to balance their bills while also being self-sufficient and socially responsible, social entrepreneurship is catching up quickly in Nepal.



ANNE RENZENBRINK

At the forefront of this revolution is Change Fusion Nepal (CFN), which provides mentoring, financial assistance, and tools for networking to social entrepreneurs like Sharma. Established in 2008 by Luna Shrestha Thakur, CFN enables young entrepreneurs to start ventures that are financially independent, sustainable, and focus on social and environmental issues.

"Some people think business only means earning profits. What they forget is that they can reach out to the community, or look after the environment and still make money," says Luna.

Change Fusion supports entrepreneurs between 18 and 35 years who want to solve problems through market-driven models and are willing to give back to disadvantaged communities or reinvest in development. Once an idea is approved, CFN helps the entrepreneur develop a business plan and find funding through individuals or other organisations.

Besides the IEC in Pokhara, Change Fusion is also supporting 29-year-old Pushpa Basnet who takes care of 35 children whose parents are incarcerated. She trained the mothers in jails to make handicrafts and textiles and

sells these items to pay for the children's education and upbringing.

Says Luna, "Pushpa is educating the children, and making sure they don't end up in poverty, while also imparting skills to the mothers so that when they come out of jail, they can earn a living."

Santoshi Rana, media, communication and programme coordinator says CFN focuses on quality rather than numbers. "We are happy to groom just one person if she has the potential to make a positive and long-lasting impact on a large community rather than grooming five people who can only help one other individual," explains Santoshi.

Although Luna and her team mentor entrepreneurs for a year and equip them with basic skills, individuals have to make use of their networks and resources to sustain their businesses in the long-run. "We give them the platform, but how far they progress, depends on them," Luna says.

CFN is organising a three day night-bazaar at Babermahal Revisited in September where young social entrepreneurs from all over Nepal will get to showcase their products and network with buyers and designers. It

will also host the annual Surya Nepal Asha Social Entrepreneurship Award to honour businessman and women who have made exceptional contributions to their communities and bring their good work into the limelight.

Despite CFN's best efforts, neither the government nor the private sector has really warmed up to social entrepreneurs. A quick search on google reveals legions of organisations willing to fund, support and launch ingenious businessmen and women in countries like India, Thailand, Cambodia

and South Korea. But Nepali entrepreneurs have to manage with minimal capital, and miss out on international exposure and vigorous promotion.

Luna hopes the success stories of budding entrepreneurs like Basnet and Sharma will convince more Nepalis to take up social entrepreneurship as a career and encourage universities and colleges to include entrepreneurship courses in their curriculum. She also wants to see the private sector step up and take the lead in nurturing future social activists-cum-CEOs.

"Every country needs young social entrepreneurs, because they bring wealth, generate employment and solve problems. But we need to make sure they are well-prepared," she says.

www.changefusionnepal.org

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The 100 million party fund

Senchhelung Limbu in
Karobar, 25 July

कारोबार

As Finance Minister in 2008, Baburam Bhattarai won plaudits from the unemployed when he established the Youth and Small Business Self Employment Fund. After he became prime minister, this fund turned into a source of cash for his party's cadres and Rs 130 million was doled out to cooperatives owned by them from November 2011 to February 2012.

A major objective of the programme is 'to provide loans at subsidised rates to communities that have traditional skills like Kami, Sarki, Damai, Dhimal, Rajbanshi in order to improve their living standards'. However, none of the cooperatives have followed this guideline.

Even though the fund's rules stipulate that banks and cooperatives may not impose interest rates higher than 12 per cent, some banks are charging up to 24 per cent interest. Deputy-chairperson of the fund, Punya Prasad Regmi does not deny this, but says monitoring and regulating it is not important.

Two cooperatives Labourers Martyr Memorial Consumer Cooperative Limited (LMM) and Himshikhar Savings and Loans Cooperative Limited received Rs 50 million each from the fund and are registered in Kathmandu and Lalitpur under the chairmanship of Maoist trade union leaders Ganesh Prasad Regmi and Shiva Prasad Kattel respectively. Madhuban Savings and Loans Cooperative Limited

operated by Maoist leaders and cadres in Gulmi received Rs 30 million.

As soon as these cooperatives received the money, the officials promptly took out loans for themselves. Seven members of the Maoist Newa Rajya ethno-federal unit and secretaries of trade unions took between Rs 80,000 to Rs 165,000 from LMM. None of them are unemployed, whereas the rules of the fund state that only the jobless can apply for a loan.

businesses ever saw the light of day.

The official rule states that cooperatives registered to one district may not operate in other districts. But both LMM and Himshikhar have openly flouted this rule and distributed loans as far as Kaski and Nuwakot. None of the groups that took loans have started new businesses as stipulated. In fact, Himshikhar even provided a loan of Rs 100,000 to Daily Sandesh, a non-existent newspaper.



BIKRAM RAI

Similarly, LMM provided loans of Rs 1.98 million to Rs 3.8 million to five groups of Maoist cadres led by Baburam Gautam, Jagat Bahadur Simkhada, Kumar Prasad Panta, Rajan Timilsina and Usha Devkota. Over the next three months, all five groups registered their own cooperatives and none of their intended livestock, food grain and sports equipment

Sashi Kumar Lamsal of Lalitpur's Cooperatives Division says these activities have not been monitored because of 'political reasons'. Bosses of the Kathmandu Division say that the fund provides money to cooperatives, and it is up to the cooperatives to act responsibly.

nepalitimes.com
Read the Nepali version online

Employing the nation

Editorial, *Blast Times*, 6 August

The government's plan to extend the youth self-employment programme throughout the country is a welcome step. At a time when unemployment has led to the mass exodus of youths to foreign countries, such programmes will prove crucial in retaining skilled and unskilled manpower.

However, prolonged political transition and instability pose great challenges to implementing the programme. The government must understand that in the absence of political support from the opposition parties, even the best-designed projects will fail to deliver the desired results. The Youth and Small Business Self Employment Fund has already spent 2.7 billion so far, but has failed to make significant impact in terms of bringing down the staggering unemployment rate.

In the past, such projects have been used by parties to dole out large sums to their cadres and party loyalists. But to avoid misappropriation and ensure transparency, the state has decided to run the programme through cooperatives and government controlled banks in 240 electoral regions of all 75 districts. An accountable mechanism such as this will help ensure that the target of employing 50,000 youths will be met. However, the government still needs to take the opposition into confidence and seek their support if it wants the programme to truly succeed.

Strike off the strikes



BIKRAM RAI

Editorial, *Fiddim Post*, 29 July

The nation reeled under a series of bandas called by various groups in May. The strikes severely disrupted the day-to-day lives of common Nepalis, crippled the economy and there was widespread destruction of public and private property. But the state remained a silent spectator. Although

Nepalis were disappointed that the constitution could not be completed on time, dissolution of the CA meant that they wouldn't have to face frequent strikes. But the nation is once again under the grip of regular bandas.

The indefinite strike called by CPN-Maoists in Panchthar this week paralysed normal life. Schools and businesses

closed down and hundreds of passengers were left stranded. It was only after severe pressure from all sides that the strike was called off after three days.

Disruption of normal life under political pretext is unacceptable. People suffered a lot during the decade long war and they are worried that the protracted transition might usher in a new conflict. In the absence of political stability, the economic crisis will only deepen, impunity will be rife and there will be anarchy on the streets.

Strikes called in the name of seeking justice go against the very principle of justice. It is not a democratic assertion, but an undemocratic culture, which must be opposed. The parties must promise to not hold the nation hostage to their political demands and find peaceful ways of putting pressure on the government. The greatest wars in human history were won through peaceful movements.



Note: Prime Minister

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 5 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Prime Minister Bhattarai has floundered in the question of nationalism. ”

Krishna Bahadur Mahara, UCPN (Maoists), quoted in *Kantipur*, 5 August

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Grin and bear it

So the grovelment has finally buckled under pressure of the extortionists to force colleges with English names to change their names to Nepali. Since the names of gods and goddesses like Saraswati and Lakshmi are already taken, schools will have to resort to using the names of demons: Rakshasa Medical School and Research Centre, Asura Academy, Mahisasura College of Management, etc. But what to do with existing colleges with established names? The solution may lie in turning the college names into the closest approximations to their Nepali counterparts according to this table:

OLD NAME	NEW NAME
Pentagon College	Jangi Adda Kalejo
Lincoln College	Koirala Collage of Mismanagement
King's College	Rastrapati's College, Pvt Ltd
Elite Academy	Awesome Academy and Bar
Chelsea International	Manang Marsyangdi National
St Xavier's School	Sri 3 Acharya Bal Krishna School
White House International College	Baluwatar Antarik Bidyalaya
NASA School	Sarba Nas School

Now that its days are numbered, the government has decided that the civil service should be more civil towards citizens. Instructions have gone out to all govt offices that employees will have to greet all visitors with smiles. The government will run special etiquette classes for cranky staff with laughter therapy so they can welcome

those seeking services with a cheerful demeanour. But all this may backfire. A citizen who comes to complain about sewage coming out of his water pipe may not want a civil servant to be grinning all over the place.

For those of you who were wondering what all those chucka jams and half-assed bunds this week were all about, here is a quick summary. The NC, UML and Kiran Kaka's Kranticurries all want Babuji to step down from prime ministership. So the Youth Association Nepal terrorised the population, broke the windscreens of Maruti taxis, vandalised garbage collection trucks, set fire to random motorbikes, and harassed shopkeepers. Perfectly logical thing to do to bring down a govt. Works every time.

The trend of kangresi netas trooping off to the cooler continues unabated. The latest to be put behind bars is ex-education minister GR Joshi for siphoning off the education budget 15 years ago. The wheels of justice in Nepal may turn slowly, but they turn surely. Joshi was dashing off op-ed pieces about mismanagement in the education sector till a day before he was sent off to prison. And in the grand tradition of kangresis writing jail journals, Joshi will probably dash off a book or two as well by the time he comes out. As it is, it doesn't look like the NC has its act together to get into government any time soon (ask Kamred KP) so Joshi may as well salvage the situation, make things cosy for himself in his cell and catch up on the news with JP and the gang who are already in Bhadra Gaol.

It's not just VAT Bhateni and other private companies who are getting a free ride by evading taxes. Even the government is sucking the government dry. The Nepal Telecommunication Authority has cut all communication channels with Nepal Telecom over its refusal to pay 3 arabs it owes to NTA in royalty. Only in Nepal: NT is scamming the state, it is fleecing customers dry, it provides the shoddiest mobile service in the known world, and yet it distributes a fat bonus to its bloated staff.

Comrade Bum Dev says his Unfed Marxist-Leninist party is not willing to join the opposition bid to oust the BRB govt because "the people are confused at the moment and cannot make up their minds". Oh yeah? Go ahead, point the finger at the people again for your lack of gonads. Mr Leftist God then heaped blame on the monsoon rains for prolonging the Bhattarai grovelment, saying people are too busy planting rice to join a street movement at the moment. What next Kamred, are you going to blame your own party's flip-flopping on global warming?

And lastly, but not leastly, we can't let this week pass without another mention of Prof Mooney, who keeps revealing more dirty linen about India's support for the Maoists in their war against a democratic government in neighbouring Nepal. According to the good prof, BRB was thick as thieves with uncooked honcho Mr Horlicks and another handler (code name: Bournvita). So, is Mooney trying to embarrass the Baddies at the behest of powers-that-be in Diilli, or is he shooting his mouth off just to be noticed so that contributors of NNSD will have something to rage about?



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