

A NATION'S HEALTH

There used to be a time when Nepal's health statistics were the worst in the world. The country's maternal and child mortality figures were off the charts, and worse than many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nearly 1,000 mothers out of every 100,000 died at child-birth because the simplest delivery techniques and knowledge were not available with rural midwives, or remote area health posts. Child marriage was so common that many mothers gave birth at 15, were severely anemic, under-nourished and over-worked.

Children died of simple infections and vaccine-preventable diseases. Diarrhoeal dehydration and acute respiratory infections meant that one in every five children did not live to be five years old. Three-fourths of all children were undernourished.

Things have improved dramatically in the last 20 years. Thanks largely to higher literacy, especially among girls, the average age of marriage has been pushed back. Nutrition levels have improved with greater awareness. Tens of thousands of Female Community Health Volunteers scattered across rural Nepal have done more for the improvement in maternal and child survival than anyone else. The spread of roads has meant that mothers with delivery complications can now be rushed to hospitals.

This is not to say that we can now sit back and relax. There has been a worrying plateauing off in the past two years of female literacy, and as a consequence mother-child survival rates have stagnated. The cholera epidemic in Doti this month has shown that we haven't learnt a thing from the Jajarkot outbreak two years ago that killed nearly 400 people, mainly children. Half of Nepal's children still go to bed hungry every night, they are vulnerable to opportunistic infections. Water-borne diseases are still major killers, so new safe drinking water systems are needed, existing ones must be properly maintained. Climate variability and chronic drought is lowering the water table, water sources are contaminated.

Selecting medical school applicants with district backgrounds and who have worked their way up as paramedics improves chances of doctors serving in rural Nepal



BIKRAM RAI

As we have often argued, these are not health problems but an outcome of political neglect and apathy. Most politicians, legislators and civil servants are so engrossed in their power games and purloining the allocations to VDCs and DDCs that couldn't care less if there is a cholera outbreak in their district. Vaccination campaigns for polio and Vitamin A are disturbed by political shutdowns and strikes, with devastating consequences on public health.

Despite all this, as other countries have before us, Nepal is moving from a phase when public health was mainly concerned with prevention of infections to one

where cure is becoming increasingly important. Even though 1,500 new doctors graduate from private and government medical schools every year, Nepal has only two doctors for every 10,000 population: the lowest rate in Asia.

Most of those doctors do not want to serve in rural areas, and either migrate to the cities or move abroad where they can earn more. In many districts like Mugu, the hospital is just a building with no equipment and no staff. Retention of medical personnel in rural hospitals has now become a major crisis. Highway accidents have become the main killers of young adults in the country, but most district hospitals have unserviceable x-ray machines and operation theatres. Private hospitals are out of reach of a majority of the population, and there is a crying need for a national health insurance system.

Fortunately, there are now hospitals like the one in Bayalpata in Achham, and a new social audit of rural health care that gives local communities a voice in demanding better services. There are medical schools like the Patan Academy of Health Sciences which are working to motivate graduates to serve in rural hospitals. A study by the Kathmandu-based Nick Simons Institute published this week in the British Medical Journal, and also featured in this issue (page 12-13), tracks down graduates from the Institute of Medicine over the past 22 years to look for factors that increase the likelihood of graduates serving in district hospitals.

The study shows that selecting medical school applicants who have a rural birthplace, have studied in the districts and have worked their way up as paramedics, improves the likelihood of the doctor serving in rural Nepal after graduation.

Nepal's public health crisis is far from over. Preventing infections through awareness, safe drinking water, reducing indoor pollution and vaccination campaigns should still be top priority. But it is also necessary to ensure that rural hospitals have trained medical staff at all times.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

UNFREE AND UNFAIR

Why do we simply assume that a western style parliamentary democracy is the best system for all countries? ('Unfree and unfair', editorial, #617). Having parties and elections are not necessarily signs of improvement or advancement of a society. If the party leaders are all criminals and effectively rule criminal gangs, how can anyone expect a good person to step forward from among them to and help society? King Mahendra knew how to treat politicians. He understood that they would destroy Nepal if they were allowed to come to power.

Danny Birch

● Yes, it is pathetic when people call themselves 'budhi jibi'. It is only in least developed countries like Nepal where people with barely developed mentalities describe themselves as intellectuals and think they are superior to others. It is disgusting.

Prabhakar

● We have elevated political goons as our leaders and they have robbed us blind. All is not lost, yet. We Nepalis are waiting for a knight in shining armour with the courage to take on corrupted politicians. The current male dominated structure must be dismantled. Nepali women will make much better leaders than white-haired, pot bellied men that are ruining our lives each day.

Durga Shrestha

● Voters do not choose or select party candidates. They only endorse

those already selected by the party by giving tickets to stand for elections in different constituencies. Vote is not selection, it is endorsement of one or the other candidates of the party. And as such, they are the representatives of the concerned party, not of the constituencies.

KK Sharma

DIVERSE UNITY

A very fine-tuned piece by Anurag Acharya ('Diverse unity', #617). I don't know whether I've been out of the loop for too long, but I never saw anyone address the Nepali-surname issue before. From the day people started becoming 'Nepalis' on Facebook and twitter, I considered it an utter waste of time. Adding Nepali to your name, does not make a 'desh bhakta', but pretentious bedroom nationalists.

'Seven'

● Nepal will become a 'melting pot' by 2025 and the ethnic mosaic will gradually fade. Youngsters from today's generation are meeting with people from diverse ethnic, religious, social backgrounds in their work places and choosing partners based on their personal preferences. A Nepali class seems to be finally emerging.

Bhaicha

● This is a remarkably unbiased article. The author has considered both sides of the story in an impeccably impartial manner. Unlike some journalists who only quote people that fall in line with their own

views, Anurag Acharya shows balance. The range of views on federalism elicited during his travels clearly spans the entire range of views we see in Nepal today. This is precisely the exceptional type of journalism that I expect to see in the new federal Nepal

Anonymous

● Federalism is a social movement which aims to celebrate the nationalism of various groups on their own terms and is a manifestation of the aspiration of hitherto marginalised communities to be treated at par with fellow citizens. Unfortunately, the bahun-chhetri dominated cynical media floated the idea that federalism would divide the country and destroy communal harmony. I hope we get to read more positive stories such as this one in the coming days.

Binu

● Great article Anurag. We must respect and not disparage other people's caste and ethnic identities. However, we must not use these identities as manipulative tools to prove ourselves superior to others. Everybody is equal in the eyes of god.

Anil Limbu

Hats off to Anurag for this wonderful piece. Every caste and religion must be respected, given equal opportunities and not divided on the basis of caste system. Then only will our country will become a beautiful garden of four castes and 36 different sub-castes.

Vishal

SAFE SCHOOLS

Post-earthquake disaster management is great, but pre-disaster mitigation through enforceable and practical building codes, and proper infrastructure development need to go hand-in-hand with post-disaster management ('Making schools safer', Bhrikuti Rai, #617). Unfortunately in Nepal, this aspect has been largely ignored. If we are serious about minimising casualties and damage, measures must be followed more aggressively through enforcement of building codes and certification of construction.

Ananta Baidya

LICENCE TO RIDE

I don't think 'not being able to hear sounds on the street' is a valid reason to prevent the hearing-impaired from getting their driver's licences ('Licence to ride', Mina Sharma, #617). If you've driven around in the Valley, you will know that most vehicle owners blow their horns without any purpose: the road ahead is clearly blocked, but they still feel an incessant need to press the horn and annoy everyone. These traffic noises do nothing to improve on-road safety. If the hearing impaired can pass their practical exams, then there is no reason why they should be denied licences.

Mukta S

● The traffic-lights don't work, the roads have huge craters and

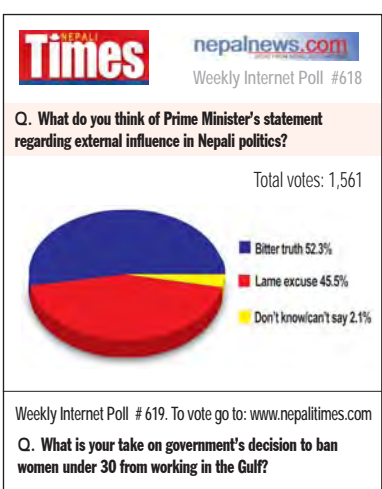
many Nepali drivers are extremely reckless. When our roads are not friendly even for the hearing-abled, I think providing licences for the hearing-impaired is dangerous.

Sanjay Gelal

BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

I saw the photos on print and had to come online to comment ('Seeing beyond the obvious', Alban Von Stockhausen, #617). Although print media is dying a slow death, it is still the best medium to publish photos. The digital ones don't do justice to Shrestha's superb work. Also I completely agree with what the writer says about photographs being like history books which give us a glimpse into Nepal's identity from 40 years go. Kudos to the Nepal Picture Library team, keep up the good work.

S Karki



In an ailing state

If this is the state of city ho spitals, imagine what it is like in rural areas



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

Conversation overheard at a barber shop in Biratnagar one evening this week: “Should I make the booking? I can confirm it tonight if you can pay 10 lakhs by tomorrow morning. But if you can’t, remember I have others waiting in line.”

You would be forgiven for thinking that this man, waiting for a haircut, was a stock broker or a real estate dealer. But he is not. This man was talking to the father of an aspiring medical student who had obtained high marks in the medical entrance result of BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences in Dharan (BPKIHS) in Dharan. But admission is not guaranteed, and the man boasted he could use his political influence to get the boy into any college as long as he was willing to pay up.

There are 18 private and government medical schools in the country, half of them are in Kathmandu. They produce up to 1,500 doctors a year, and there are thousands of others who graduate in nursing, assistant health workers, anesthesiologists and x-ray technicians. Yet, there are district hospitals in this country which don’t have a single doctor, health posts have no trained personnel and the messenger boy often fills in for the abset auxiliary nurse midwife.

Medical service in the country is a glaring divide between urban and rural health care, the exorbitant fees for simplest medical procedures and for consultations by physicians in private clinics. Families sell their land to afford surgical fees charged by private hospitals for a relatively minor operations. A treatable medical condition can be a death sentence.

Kathmandu Valley alone has 65 hospitals, most of them private. What passes for zonal and district hospitals cannot cope with demand, they never have the required doctors and staff, most doctors run



BHRIKUTI RA

private clinics just outside the government hospitals and refer patients to themselves.

Auto mechanic Satrugan Kusiya’s wife gave birth to a son at Biratnagar’s Kosi Zonal Hospital on Saturday evening. The child was born with complications, and the doctor advised him to admit the child in neo-natal intensive care. There were no beds available and the child was rushed in ambulance to the BPKIHS in Dharan, 50km away. There were no beds there, either. Miraculously, the baby survived 18 hours without proper medical attention, and was finally admitted into intensive care on Sunday afternoon.

“I don’t earn that much, if I had money I’d have taken my baby to Kathmandu,” Satrugan told me, sobbing, “I had to watch helplessly as the baby struggled for life.” Even in the government hospital, Satrugan had to go out to find a private pharmacy to buy medicines, injections, bandages.

The absence of quality health care in the villages forces people to make long journeys to the cities, but once there they find government hospitals overcrowded, understaffed and ill-equipped. The private hospitals are slightly better, but are out of reach of most Nepalis.

“If you don’t book an expensive cabin, even the nurses don’t visit you regularly,” complained Gafar

Miyan, 68, as he lay in a general ward of a private hospital in Biratnagar. Many run out of money, and entire families camp out in the open outside hospitals here, waiting for treatment for their relatives.

Bishwa Nath Adhikari is a physician at the newly-opened Nobel Medical College here, which treats more than 1,100 patients every day from remote parts of eastern Nepal in its out-patient department.

“The government hospitals

just can’t cope with the demand,” says Adhikari, “it is the government’s responsibility to invest in quality rural health care, but there is a systemic failure.”

Young medical graduates are reluctant to serve in remote areas citing lack of facilities and low pay. Half of those who graduate every year ultimately leave Nepal, and those who remain behind prefer to work in city hospitals (see page 12-13).

Surya Lama is a young

medical intern at Nobel in Biratnagar who has been studying under a government scholarship. He says the medical profession in itself is not profit driven but the failure of the state to invest adequately in the health sector has corporatised it.

Lama took me aside in the corridor, and said matter-of-factly: “I may still go and serve in the rural areas but my friends who have spent millions for their education will not.”

HIMAL

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Ramzan kareem

This festive season, Nepali Muslims pray for greater representation and equality

TRISHNA RANA

It's 12 noon on Friday. A steady stream of men in white caps emerges from Jamal, Durbar Marg and Kamaladi and converges at the Nepali Jame Masjid and Kashmiri Takia Masjid to offer Friday prayers known as Jumma.

The two mosques are 500 m apart, and on a regular Friday are fairly crowded. But on five Fridays during the holy month of Ramzan in August, they are teeming with devotees. The women, far less in number, have a smaller, separate prayer hall (*pic, above*). Once Jumma is over, most return to their daily chores while some take time-off to shop at the Jame Market.

For four weeks every year, Nepali Muslims who form up to seven per cent of the population, observe Ramzan by fasting from dawn until sunset. This year's Ramzan falls between 20 July and 19-20 August (depending on the sighting of the new moon). Families start their day at three in the morning to have sehri, a heavy pre-fast meal to last the

day.

At about 7PM they break their roja (fast) with dates, lime juice, fruits, sewai, samosa, pakoda, beaten rice, and chickpeas. After maghrib (the evening prayer) families usually sit down for more elaborate meals with pulao, kheer and sweets. For those who cannot make it home on time to break their fast, the mosques serve iftar meals every evening.

"We not only abstain from food and water, but all worldly pleasures and negative thoughts. Ramzan teaches us the right way to conduct ourselves during the remaining 11 months," explains Gulam Rasul Shahi, chairman of the Islamic Federation of Nepal.

The festival also helps break down class barriers. For 30 days the privileged understand what it means to be hungry, and the better off are required to give a certain amount of their income and wealth as zakat (charity) to madrasas, underprivileged relatives or to the poor and homeless.

"Rich, poor, young, old, everyone sits together and is served the same meal," adds high-school teacher Sominda Thebe.

Ramzan, however, is not only a Muslim celebration. Like Dasain it brings the larger community together and in districts with substantial Muslim populations like Kapilbastu, Parsa, Bara and Sunsari the holiday mood is palpable. Stores are decked up, office hours are made more flexible, and Hindu neighbours and friends are invited to join

iftar and eid celebrations.

"Non-Muslim Nepalis have always taken interest in the festival, they ask about our customs and are generally very respectful even in the days before we became a secular state," explains Nabila Banu, a 23-year-old student. "When I was in college, my friends insisted on having dinner only after I broke my roja and changed their dinner timings and at the place where I currently intern, my co-workers make it a point not to eat in front of me."

Despite this, Nepal's

Muslims are among the most marginalised groups in Nepal. Adult literacy among Muslims is only 30 per cent, compared to 57 per cent overall. Few Muslims in the Tarai own land, and most work as farm hands. The group is under-represented at the national level and lacks a strong political presence.

"Our condition is worse than the Dalits," says Muhammad Zakir, general secretary of the National Muslim Struggle Alliance which is a coalition of 30 Muslim organisations. "The state refuses to accept our religious laws. There are maybe about five Muslim civil servants in positions of power. In other parties, Muslims are just token members."

Despite progress in inclusion, Muslim leaders are

Tracing roots

Over the centuries, Muslims from different parts of the subcontinent and Tibet have made Nepal their home. More than 95 per cent of Nepali Muslims live in the Tarai. Some communities in the Tarai settled there even before unification in 1770. The Ranas brought in tillers to clear forests in the 19th century, and in the 20th century landowners were invited to oversee the administration and finances of the newly-cultivable land.

The Muslims in the Valley can be divided into three broad categories. Kashmiri Muslims who got here in the 1500s during the time of King Ratna Malla. They worked as scribes and interpreters, manufacturers, musicians and even courtesans in the Malla court. Today, the Kashmiris are the most educated, well-off and dominant Muslims in the Valley who own businesses and are even in politics. The second migration to Kathmandu took place during the mid-1600s when Muslims from northern India came to Nepal during Pratap Malla's rule. The 'Hindustani' Muslims are adherents of the Deobandi school and follow the Quran more strictly than the Kashmiris. They own the Nepali Jame Masjid. Muslim migrants from Tibet came mainly after the Chinese annexation in 1950.

In the central and western hills, Muslims came in as early as the 1600s, brought in by the kings to make weapons. They are now known as Churautes, or bangle sellers. A smaller group of Muslims from Bangladesh of Bihari origin who fled to Nepal during the 1970-71 war are settled in the eastern Tarai. Most eventually migrated to Pakistan, but many stayed behind.





PICS: BIKRAM RAI

disappointed that their voice has been drowned out by the demands of the Madhesi and Janajati movement. “Yes many of us are Madhesis, but our language is different, our culture is different and our needs are different too so we want to be recognised as a separate identity. We are not only asking for religious rights, we also want our political and economic rights to be addressed,” Zakir told *Nepali Times*.

Muslim leaders say Nepal’s secular republic status is just a façade, and Nepali law still forbids people from preaching their faith. “The leaders make revolutionary speeches, but in reality they are narrow-minded and too greedy to share power,”

says the chairman of the National Muslim Federation, Taj Mohammad Miya.

While the demands and concerns of the community are real, there is no single ‘Muslim voice’ or ‘Muslim movement’ in Nepal. The community is heterogeneous, and divided along regional, and linguistic lines, sects, places of origin, and economic background. Nepali Muslim women find themselves doubly marginalised within the community (*see box*). 📺

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Money, modernity and madrasas, #609
Muslims want identity, representation, #440

Beneath it all

SEEMA KHAN

The 2006 Jana Andolan propelled Nepal’s marginalised communities into the national mainstream. Muslim men became visible, and there has been a trickledown effect on women as well. We had five Muslim women CA members and the National Women’s Commission is currently headed by a Muslim woman. Muslim women, however, are still at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

Only nine per cent of Muslim women are literate. Many parents, especially in the rural areas, don’t send their daughters to schools because they don’t want them to wear skirts or be in co-ed classrooms. Women shouldn’t be made to sacrifice education for religious reasons.

There is a lot of double standards within our community, too. The men want the state to recognise Muslim Family Law, but when we ask them why women are prohibited from inheriting property, they point to the National Code even when Islamic law clearly allows women to inherit property from parents and husbands. Also those who advocate that women dress modestly, and maintain decorum are usually the ones who are indecent.

NGOs and political parties have played a big role in making Muslim women more visible and bringing their struggles into the public sphere. However, there is still a tendency among NGOs to include Muslim women for tokenism to please their donors. Community organisations are the most effective in improving the capabilities of the women.

Opening a women’s department in a political party, or making women members of central committees are not enough. Women have to be part of the decision-making process and need to be groomed for future leadership, only then will there be real progress.



www.nmwws.org.np

Seema Khan is founder and chairperson of Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society.

Lost priority

Nepal can be more competitive by improving investment and upgrading infrastructure



IT’S THE ECONOMY

Chandan Sapkota

Each time a Nepali delegation attends bilateral trade talks, one issue never changes: plea for duty free access and concessions. They seem to forget the fundamental factor that will enable us to export more is the ability to competitively produce goods and services in the first place.

It is not that tariff and non-tariff barriers are unimportant to increase exports. The fact is that these largely help in trade facilitation, whose importance is high only when we are able to boost production competitively. Sadly, this is not the case right now. Rather than begging for more concessions during trade talks, the primary focus should be on effectively tackling constraints faced by the industrial sector, improving investment climate, and then seeking bilateral assistance to enhance production efficiency. Otherwise, even if we get greater market access and concessions, we won’t be able to fully utilise them.

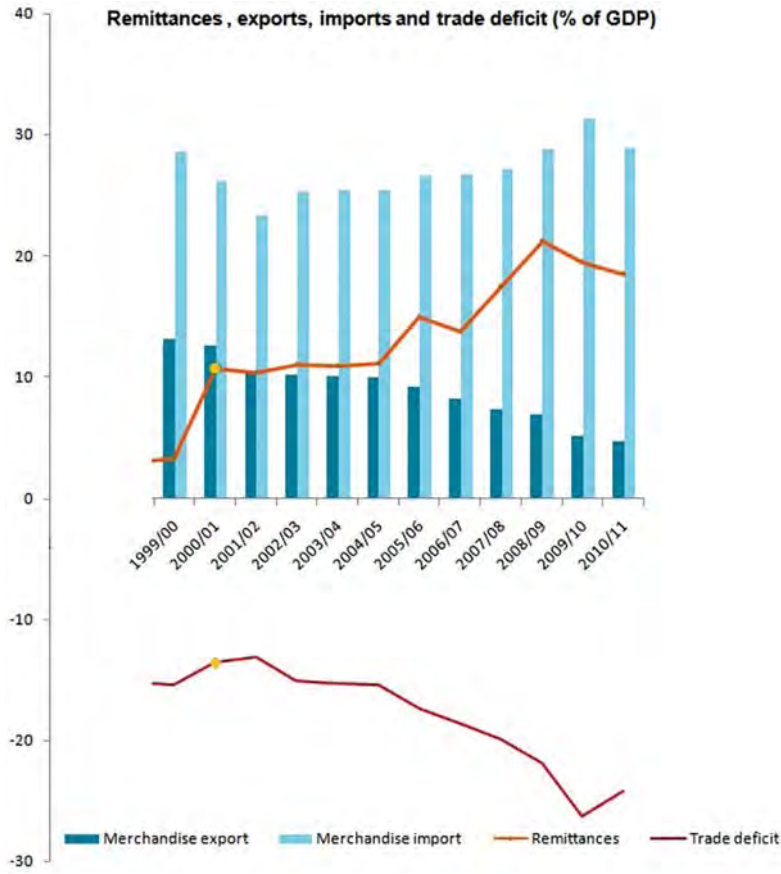
For instance, at the Nepal-China Consultative Meeting on Monday, Nepal requested China to help decrease rising bilateral trade deficit, which reached Rs 45.7 billion in 2010-11, by offering favourable market access, among others. China already provides zero tariff facility to 4,721 export items of Least Developed Countries, including Nepal. Though some of the export items of interest to us are not included in that list, Nepal is simply unable to take advantage of the zero tariff facility on other goods. The reason is that even with such concessions our exporters are unable to competitively produce goods to compete with Chinese counterparts.

The only way China could help us narrow down trade deficit is by investing in the prerequisites for competitive production: supply of electricity and technology transfer in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Other than this there is very little China can do to decrease bilateral trade deficit because Nepal is rapidly losing the market pie to more competitive producers and is also importing more Chinese goods each year.

Similarly, during a meeting between commerce secretaries of Nepal and Bangladesh in July, Nepal asked Bangladesh to provide concessional market access to 146 products, to which the latter agreed in principle. Nepal has requested such concessions with almost all trading partners, including India and the US. The irony is that despite knowing that our producers and exporters will be unable to utilise such concessions without improvement in industrial relations and investment climate, we still plead for them by wasting resources and energy.

For instance, Nepal gets duty free access for almost all manufactured goods exported to India. Still we are unable to take advantage of it due to domestic production constraints. A case in point is the export of iron and steel, whose total import by India was \$8.3 billion in 2010. Of this, Nepal’s share was just 1.22 per cent. Note that Nepal gets duty free access to the Indian market like no other country. The minor non-tariff hiccups in trade with India don’t fully account for our inability to increase exports there.

Nepal has an unsustainably high merchandise trade deficit (25 per cent of GDP). The rapidly increasing imports are primarily financed by remittances. Exports started declining rapidly after 2000-01, the same year the Maoist insurgency intensified, as a result of disruption in production and deteriorating investment climate. Driven by lack of employment opportunities, the same year also marked the beginning of the exodus of a large number of youths for overseas employment. It resulted in high remittance inflows (around 20 per cent of GDP). In 1997-98, income from exports constituted the largest share (37 per cent) of total foreign exchange earnings. Currently, while its share is less than nine per cent, remittances contribute a whopping 62 per cent to total forex reserve.



The high dependence on remittance financed imports as a result of low domestic output and uncompetitive exports is widening the trade deficit. To decrease the gap, there is no other option but to increase production and exports. What is barring us from doing so? Inadequate supply of infrastructure and poor investment climate are the two key factors.

First, firms are operating below potential due to insufficient supply of electricity and lack of workforce. Second, cost of production is rising due to the compulsion to run diesel guzzling generators and multiple hurdles along the poorly maintained trade routes. Third, poor investment climate arising from labour militancy, extortion, frequent strikes, disruption of supply chain, and high cost imposed by syndicates along with rising cost of doing business in general are eroding industrial strength.

These are making production uncompetitive and exacerbating our ability to utilise readily available market potential abroad. Solving these should be the first priority of our leaders instead of begging for market concessions during each bilateral trade talk. It is the responsibility of not only the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, but all line ministries, political parties and the private sector. 📺

www.chandansapkota.wordpress.com
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PICS: RAJESH KC

Adhunik makes a come back

SUJEEV SHAKYA

In a city obsessed with beauty pageants, fashion shows, and innumerable events that propagate a mutual admiration society, it was a breath of fresh air to be offered four evenings of pure, unadulterated Nepali adhunik music.

Nepa~laya's Paleti concerts have contributed significantly to institutionalising the not-so-popular genre of modern Nepali music, and bring together the Nepali speaking world through songs.

Last week's Paleti series, conducted with nepa~laya's well-known penchant for perfectionism (the shows started precisely at 6:00pm to the second) was a world class event. The concert itself, performances, logistics, all went like clockwork, nothing was left to chance. It demonstrated yet again that Nepalis are capable of organising events to meet international standards.

The world over, music in



the classical and semi-classical genre have a cult following that is not exactly mass market. As Kiran Shrestha of nepa~laya explains, that is why it was up to the royal families of Nepal in the past to patronise the arts.

King Mahendra took state

patronage of Nepali music and culture to a higher plane by importing singers from Darjeeling. Queen Aishwarya did try to emulate her father-in-law, but did not succeed much because she seems to have enjoyed playing politics with



art more than backing deserving singers. King Gyanendra was a keen fan of ghazals himself, but was satisfied with inviting his favourite singers to the palace, and stopped at that.

Nepali adhunik suffered in the 70s and 80s, as English-

YESTERDAY ONCE MORE: The Paleti concert series this week had Aavas (left) with his guru, Ambar Gurung, veteran crooner Fateh Man (below) and Shanti Thatal sing to packed houses in four performances.

speaking Nepalis on both sides of the border believed that it was old-fashioned. This trend has been reversed now as globally exposed Nepalis find their own music can compete with ghazals from the subcontinent.

The Paleti festival demonstrated that Nepali society has come of age and there are people who would not mind paying high ticket prices to listen to tunes they were familiar with from the days of shortwave Radio Nepal.

The richness of Nepali adhunik in lyrics, melody and rhythm has been derived from the strong classical music influence of Bengal via Darjeeling. Nepali voices did not just have to compete with Bengali music but also each other, and the genre has benefited from this burst of creativity.

Ambar Gurung and Shanti Thatal are the products of that generation and environment, who delivered some of the most immortal and powerful songs of the period. Many of these 'golden oldies' were sung at Paleti last week.

Among the younger generation, there is Ambar Gurung's protégé, Aavas, who sings for a whole new generation of Nepalis in songs that evoke our own angst, disillusionment and aspirations. For young Nepalis, one-take singers or artists performing live to an orchestra accompaniment, are things of the past. Today's Nepali singers are mostly heard singing along to digital tracks. The Paleti micro-concerts that have kept the tradition alive by regular monthly events at nepa~laya's R-shala were scaled up seamlessly last week at the DAV School hall which had great ambience and acoustics.

As with the many things it does, nepa~laya has demonstrated that using globally tested tools of excellence, good event management, not cutting corners on costs, can deliver world class events in Nepal. Looking forward to an encore of the Paleti festival next year. 🇳🇵

Sujeev Shakya is Chair of Kathmandu Literary Jatra, Nepal's annual international literary festival

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Girl power

Bihar is boosting female literacy by distributing free bicycles

As the bell sounds the end of the school day at Rohua state high school in Bihar, India, students in blue and white school uniforms stream out of their classrooms. Two thirds of them are girls.

The school is a long way from home and girls like Anguri Khatoon ride 5 km roundtrip every day to get to class. The ninth-grader returned to school last year after a three-year gap, mainly because the bicycle shortened her commute.

“My father is poor, he couldn’t afford a bicycle and that is why I had to drop out of school,” she says, “now I have my bicycle I’m happy to be back at school.”

Five years ago, the Bihar government distributed bicycles to encourage girls like Khatoon to go to school. The program – now adopted in several other states in India – has been so successful that it has boosted the female literacy rate in what used to be India’s poorest state.

Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojna (Chief Minister’s Cycle Scheme for Girls) was started in 2007 for students in Grade 9 and above by Bihar’s Nitish Kumar, who is largely credited with the transformation of his state. There used to be 2.5 million children out of school in Bihar, after the scheme ws started that has dropped to 770,000. In Rohua’s school itself only 40 per cent of students used to be girls, now it is more than 60 per cent.



While poor parents often prioritise sons’ education, the bicycle scheme has seen many girls return to class, says Rohua school principal Shashi Bhushan Prasad Singh. “Bicycles have changed things for village girls who chose to stay at home,” she says, “now they’re coming to school regularly.”

Village women in Bihar traditionally only do household chores or unskilled labour. Girls often get little attention from their parents because eventually they will get married and go to their husband’s family home. Although many families own bicycles, girls rarely get the chance to use them to go to school, but now that the girls have their own bicycles, changes are taking place.

“Many of these girls are from very poor families. Their houses, their diet and their clothes, everything is very pitiable, but their thinking started to change after they got the bicycles,” says Singh. “Girls who never left their houses before are now coming out and performing very well in school.”

More than 1.2 million bicycles have been distributed to Bihar’s school-age girls over the last five years and now the number of girls in Grade 9 has crossed 600,000, an astounding six-fold increase.

The impact of educated girls helps develop society, explains Ramchandra Mandal of the Bihar Education Department. “If we educate a boy we educate one person, but educating a girl means sending the light of education to many. Her children will never remain illiterate,” he explains.

Women’s rights activist Sangeeta Shahi says that distributing bicycles to girls has also given them a sense of independence and empowerment. She says: “Until recently village mothers could not dream of their daughters attending school, but today the girls have come out to fulfil their mothers’ dreams.”

Shaikh Azizur Rahman in Bihar

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Winds of change, #560

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EVENTS



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

Kabab and Biryani Festival, showcasing a wide variety of kababs and biryanis from across South Asia. Runs till 26 August, The Yellow Chilli, Bluebird Complex, Tripureshwor, 4101088

A Retrospective Exhibition, Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha’s photographs of Nepal from the 60s and 70s. Runs till 20 August, Siddhartha Art Gallery Babarmahal, 9801065064, 5013501

Father’s Day at Radisson, surprise your parents and celebrate the day with

R Sigdel Ghazal Ensemble. Rs 500, 17 August, 6.30pm, Radisson Hotel

Farmers’ Market, sale of fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, fruits. 19 August, 9am to 12pm, New Orleans Café, Patan, 5522708

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

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

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY



WORKSHOP, for photography novices who want to shoot street. Rs 2000, 24 to 28 August, 7am to 10am, Padma Party Palace, Birganj, 9845092943

MUSIC

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



LORRY’S, a newly opened restaurant with great ambience and good food, their Bistecca Al Funghi is a must try. Jhamsikhel

Rox Restaurant, enjoy Sunday Pranzo at Rox Restaurant. 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyattt Regency, 4491234



SAIGON PHO, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lazimpat



MOONDANCE RESTAURANT, one of the few places in Pokhara that you just can’t miss; wash down its superb pizza and Lemon Chicken with a glass of mojito. Pokhara

Public Cave, while their continental and Italian dishes like pizzas, sizzlers and springrolls are a hit among customers, their main attraction is karaoke. Dihikopatan, Pokhara, 9856032958



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

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

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



KOTETSU, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lazimpat



PRAWIN ADHIKARI

In Huang Weikai’s meticulously crafted documentary *Disorder* (2009), the omniscient deity is a MetLife dirigible floating above the megalopolis of Guangzhou, while the emphatically uninsured life of the city unravels, skein by strained skein, one madness at a time. After all, somebody has to watch over the miasma that is any city overwhelming its physical, moral and spiritual extremes. *Disorder* is part of a festival of independent documentary films from China being shown this weekend in Kathmandu.

The film opens with a spontaneous, gushing fountain in a busy street. Water soars high. It is something joyous, it recalls a more pure kind of ambition. When it falls, it breaks into beads, makes the oldest music on earth. Soon, two sleek cars square off under the fountain. A bystander explains: “They’re fighting for a turn.” A turn to wash the car under the thick downpour. “That is expensive water,” another bystander says.

This tension between the civic and the individual runs through the different strands of this vast, complex collage assembled from thousands of hours of amateur video footage. The grainy black and white look distills the chaos, leads the eye to the ideas, unpacks the absurd in the everyday.

A man stands on the brink of a bridge, the river to his back, brandishing a banner with demands. The chief of police must come and talk to him, or he will jump. “Why can’t you guys help me?” he demands from the policemen watching him, but they seem merely annoyed – you got the publicity you wanted, they say. The stubborn man won’t budge. He is threatening suicide, but he has stripped down to his shorts. Where are his pants? His shoes? He must have put them aside, neatly folded, so he can go home after his suicide. He blinks in the afternoon sun, a little miffed at the inattention, a little bored with his own pantomime. He is fighting the system, but the system refuses to register his rage. Thus, the tension dissipates, his protest is rendered

Even the suicidal get bored

quotidian, banal.

In this collage, a man writhing under an expensive imported car could be a conman trying to finagle a bit of cash. He demands to be taken to a hospital. But when another man regains consciousness in the hospital, he is horrified by the idea. “I’m just a truck driver,” he says. Don’t treat me, don’t give me an IV drip, give me a glass of milk and I’ll be on my way. The nurses have to insist that he lay down and rest, that they won’t ask him for any money. Where does the con end and the hurt begin?

A cockroach in a bowl of noodle soup in a restaurant leads to a moment of Kafkaesque density. The customer picks the bug with chopsticks, cradles it in the soup spoon, gingerly returns it to the bowl and waits for the hygiene inspector, who embarks upon a carefully weighed observation: “There is no telling how this cockroach got here. Each person has his own version of what happened.”

The documentary filmmakers’ ‘objectivity’ isn’t any different from how a cat toys with a mouse: the hapless, sometimes quixotic, often helpless subject is always too close, much too interesting to not paw it out of a sadistic need to see what happens next. Even if it is a baby girl abandoned by a bush, along what appears to be a busy path. A woman with a little girl tries to feed the baby some leftover formula in the girl’s bottle, but the formula has curdled. The woman asks her toddler, “You want to take the baby home?” The child waddles away from the baby. “She won’t drink the milk. Let’s go,” the woman says, and is gone.

What sort of a hell reduces an abandoned baby into a roadside attraction, a pet to be petted and fretted over for a minute or two, before going home to cook dinner? The ending of *Disorder* is perhaps the most disturbing sequence – here is injustice, heroism, terror, helplessness, the ineffectualness of a brutish system that can’t fathom why the weak will come forth to defend others just as weak, and is hell-bent upon keeping the outsiders out, keeping the poor more poor, while SUVs square-off to wash their cars under the geyser gushing from a broken water mains. Here we see how thin the veneer of order is, and how many it takes to restrain one individual angered beyond patience. How hard it is to keep just one man down, on orders, under threat, if he decides to stand.

China Expose
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
18-19 August
www.filmsouthasia.org/newsevent/newseventid-17

Timings:

Super, Girls! Dir. Jian Yi (attending) 2007. 73min. By invitation only
Searching for Lin Zhao's Soul Dir. Hu Jie (attending) 2004. 115 min. 18 August, 1pm
Petition Dir. Zhao Liang 2009. 123 min. 18 August, 4pm
Beijing Beseiged by Waste Dir. Wang Jiuliang 2011. 72 min. 18 August, 6.30pm
Disorder Dir. Huang Weikai (attending) 2009. 52 min. 19 August, 4pm
Last Train Home Dir. Fan Lixin 2009. 87 min. 19 August, 6pm

GETAWAYS

Saturday Nights at Borderlands, music, barbecue and much more for a memorable Saturday. *Rs 2100, 18 August, 2pm, Borderlands Eco Adventure, Sindhupalchowk, 4381214, 4381425*

Shivapuri Village, eco-tourism close to the Shivapuri National Park replete with a charm of bygone days. *Patiswara, Shivapuri National Park, 4017725, 9851034141, info@shivapuri.com.np*



DHULIKHEL LODGE RESORT, located on a hilltop and offering a magnificent vista of valleys, foothills, and mountains to the north. *Dhulikhel, 11-490114/494, dhulikhellodgeresort.com*

Haatiban Resort, tucked away near a jungle at the side of a hill with a 270 degree view of the Valley. *Pharpi, Kathmandu, 4371537, 4371561*

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



Defying gravity

Climbmandu, a carnival of wall-climbing, aims to promote climbing culture among the youth in Nepal. Up to 100 participants will compete against each other, scaling walls as they look to show their prowess in bouldering, lead, speed and dyno categories. Besides this, there are non-competitive segments for junior climbers between 11 and 17 years and a live band will entertain guests throughout the day. Enjoy plenty of good food and drinks from an assortment of vendors while you watch athletes defy gravity.

18 August, Saturday
Astrek Climbing Wall
Bhagwan Bahal, Thamel
4785454
info@climbmandu.com



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Map showing location near Bhatbhateni Supermarket, Gairidhara Chowk, Police Head Quarter, and various banks.

SOMEPLACE ELSE

The name says it all. Amigos at Nagpokhari opened just 20 days ago and pledges to serve real Mexican food, not the Tex-Mex variety. Olé.

From tacos to burritos to tostadas and taquitos, Amigos has them all. The eatery is small, cosy, and the owners have painted it in bright primary colours to try to give it a Mexican feel. There is also the obligatory picture of a farmer in a sombrero chucking avocados, but sadly the place doesn't have actual guacamole because avocados only come 'into season' in late September.

We went all out for this lunch. We started with the Mexican platter (Rs 500) - chili

Amigos Fresh Mexican Grill

rellenos, flautas, quesadilla and tostada. White flour, chicken bits and cheese, deep fried with salsa and sour cream, what's not to like? Unhealthy and fattening, true, but it's not like we walked in expecting a salad bar.

The spicy chicken wings (Rs 200), battered and fried and then tossed in Amigos' signature spices, are crunchy to the bite, but overly greasy and lack the oomph that you expect from Mexican cuisine. The hot dipping sauce is not hot and the salt was missing.

The chicken enchiladas (Rs 200) on paper sounded just like the unhealthy, soul-satisfyingly delicious lunch option we were looking for: flour tortillas smothered in cheese and enchilada sauce, filled with chicken and bell peppers, served with Mexican rice and refried beans. On the plate however, it was a different story altogether. The sauce emitted a fermented whiff and the tortillas were sad and soggy. And the cheese, I wanted a plate 'smothered' in cheese and all I got were a few bits grated on top.

We ended our meal with



sopapillas with honey and powdered sugar. These were nice and warm and lightly spiced with cinnamon that imbued it with flavour.

My arteries were groaning with the assault they had taken with this influx of saturated fats and oils. But it would all have been worth it if my palate and tongue had been delighted, however, that was not to be.

The service is good and



the staff is very nice and super helpful, but the food has to improve. I would think that Mexican cuisine would be the one that would be the most easy to adapt to our Nepali palate with its emphasis on chili and salsa, and that's what is missing at Amigos: the zest, the tang, the spice that define Mexican dishes. But I will go back because I hear they serve mighty fine margaritas and sangrias,

pleasures I couldn't indulge in this time round.

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: In Naxal, Nagpokhari, pass Mike's Breakfast and KTM bikes and watch out for the colourful green and red signboard that announces Amigos presence.



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The Bourne Legacy



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

The fourth in the installment of the stylish and groundbreaking Bourne films, starting with *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007), *The Bourne Legacy* is a worthy continuation of the superb series of action films by Doug Liman, who directed the first one, and the great Paul Greengrass, who directed the second and third. Tony Gilroy, who made the unforgettable *Michael Clayton* (2007), helms this latest installment perfectly competently, but with rather less style than Greengrass.

Jeremy Renner, who made his breakthrough with the spectacular Oscar winning *The Hurt Locker* (2008) replaces Jason Bourne (played previously by Matt Damon), as Aaron Scott, another agent from one of the various secret operations spawned from the Treadstone programme. He is being hunted by the usual nefarious government operatives bent on exterminating every trace of the aforementioned programme after a public relations fiasco created during *The Bourne Ultimatum*. In that film Pamela Landy (played by the coolly intelligent Joan Allen) aided by Jason Bourne attempts to expose the government's illegal and secretive attempts to create a behaviourally modified group of super agents who are at the top of the game, but also heavily medicated with mysterious little green and blue pills without which they would suffer horrific withdrawal symptoms.

Made to be simultaneously in the same cinematic time frame as the third film, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, Aaron Scott is on a gruelling survival-training mission in the depths of the Alaskan wilderness just as Jason Bourne is creating havoc in the bowels of the CIA.

As Scott fights his way through the wilderness we witness his pill taking regimen and his astonishing physical prowess as he leaps from crag to crag and at one point, grapples with a wolf.

Not wanting to give away too many surprises, I will summarise by saying that both Scott and Dr Marta Shearing (played by Rachel Weisz), the only surviving researcher at the company that manufactures the pills and the virus that goes with it, find themselves on the run from the all seeing eyes of the government task force that is determined to find them. While this might seem like an all too familiar plot line, it is the

two main characters and the riveting action sequences that keep the film from becoming an annoying repeat of its precursors.

Perhaps what is most interesting though, is not just the action, but also the slightly unexplored theme of a studied amorality that chooses not to address the ethical problems inherent in being the type of government agents who don't question their mission, and scientists who are willing to immerse themselves in an experiment that seeks to permanently alter human behaviour.

These are the stereotypes that Scott and Shearing exemplify, and while Scott's is explained away (however inadequately) by the retired Colonel Eric Byer (played by the ever excellent Edward Norton) when the two are on a mission in a dialogue where he calls themselves the "sin-eaters" – meaning people who carry out morally indefensible acts for the greater good



– Dr Shearing's position and choices are never quite explained, leaving a slightly bitter taste in the mouth after the film.

The Bourne Legacy, however, remains interesting and worth watching primarily because it portrays these characters as such, without judgment– a position quite rare in action films where often good and evil are clear-cut. The Bourne films have always demanded the viewer's full attention; they don't baby us with any kind of dumbed down dialogue or over simplification of characters or plot. This is perhaps one of the greatest pleasures of watching the latest installment of a still great franchise, always an astonishing accomplishment in Hollywood.

The Bourne Legacy is currently playing in theatres

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Snake bite



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

We get to read about snake bites quite frequently in newspapers these days. Living in Kathmandu we can only imagine the danger that snake bites pose to our fellow citizens in the Tarai. Tourists ask me about the likelihood of travellers being bitten. My answer is pretty simple: tourists have little to worry about because venomous snakes are more of an occupational hazard for farmers in the Tarai during summer.

Tarai residents must think we are wimps because we worry about leech bites in the summer. Imagine how much more frightening and deadly a snake bite is. Conservative estimates suggest that there are about 20, 000 snake bites and 1000 fatalities, almost all in the Tarai.

Unfortunately, since snake



bites primarily affect the impoverished, prevention and medical management of snake bites have been neglected. Furthermore, there is a shortage of information. For example, many Nepali doctors will consult Western textbooks to treat snake bites. But treatment of pit viper snake bite from the Sonoran desert in Arizona, USA (which are usually what are discussed in Western textbooks) is going to be significantly different than

Nepali snake bites. Russell's vipers, kraits and cobras are the three well-recognised types of venomous snakes in Nepal. While kraits and cobras cause more neurological and breathing problems, viper bites seem to cause acute kidney or blood problems.

Dr Sanjib Sharma, who has published extensively on snake bites in Nepal in international medical journals, has shown that prompt transfer of victims to proper healthcare centres on the back of motorbikes can help save lives. Dr Sharma has trained healthcare professionals to administer anti-snake venom (when available) and provide artificial ventilation when necessary.

Offering rewards for killing venomous snakes has been used as a method of preventing snake bites, but the ecological impact may be detrimental as snakes keep the rodent population in check and help with agriculture. Knowing the behavioural patterns of snakes is a more useful preventive method. The kraits in the Tarai seem to bite mostly at night when people are sleeping on the floors. Sleeping above ground level will obviously help. Using mosquito nets has also shown to be effective against snake bites in the Tarai. Most snakes bite on the feet and legs while farmers work in their fields. Indeed Russell's vipers are so common in paddy fields that it is imperative for farmers to always wear proper foot gear. Carrying torch lights or lamps at night will be helpful. Simple measures like these will go a long way in preventing snake bites.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The monsoon is taking its mid-August breather, as happens every year. There is some respite from the rain, but not from the humidity and the afternoon sun which will make it pretty sticky and oppressive. The trend from now will be a combination of low pressure systems bringing moisture from the Bay combined with afternoon buildup over the mountains with thunder and lightning. Heavy bursts of rain will occur, mainly along the Valley rim towards later afternoon. Interesting fact: Godavari's annual precipitation is double that of the city. Night and morning temperatures are now below 20 celsius.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28-18	30-19	30-19



BIKRAM RAI

GOING STRONG: Leaders of 21 political parties under the leadership of UCPN-Maoist Pushpa Kamal Dahal declared the formation of Federal Democratic Republic Alliance on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

DOUBLE FACED: Members of UML affiliated Youth Association Nepal wear masks of PM Bhattarai during a protest rally at Bagbazaar on Monday and demand for his immediate resignation.



BIKRAM RAI

SELFLESS SURGEON: Dr Govinda KC of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital on the third day of his hunger strike. KC is protesting against the use of political influence in the appointment of officials at the Institute of Medicine.



BIKRAM RAI

MEANWHILE... Staff of TUTH on a relay hunger strike on Wednesday demanding that the agitating doctors resume their duties. Expressing solidarity with Dr Govinda KC's hunger strike, the Faculty Doctors' Association of TUTH have halted OPD services.



COMMENT

Rabindra Mishra

Some took leave from work, some cancelled their prior engagements, some travelled several hours, and all of them braved the humid heat of the South Korean summer this month to give away a portion of their earnings to fellow Nepalis back home.

The 200 or so Nepalis who had packed the community hall in the centre of Seoul were well aware that the function they were attending just offered a documentary film of the work being done by the HELP NEPAL Network (HeNN), a unique charity that mobilises overseas Nepalis to donate small sums to improve education and health in remote parts of Nepal. There wasn't going to be any music, dance or comedy from visiting Nepali artists, there would be no food or drinks. But still they came, they stayed, and they queued up to donate generously.

Those attending were expected to dig into their own pockets and give away whatever they could to the Network's ambitious plan to set up a Rs 100m endowment fund. By the end of the two-hour programme, Rs 600,000 was raised. Nearly 200 other Nepalis who could not be there deposited over Rs 400,000 in a special bank account.

In my 12-year association with various charities, I have not come across such an overwhelming response. More than Rs 1 million was raised in two hours, this had never



Rs 1 million in 2 hours

Korea's Nepali diaspora donates generously to help Nepalis back home

happened before. Moreover, it came from Nepalis who were not that well-off. Over the years I have seen that Nepalis who have less tend to be more generous than those who are relatively well-off.

HeNN promotes practical philanthropy by encouraging Nepali individuals and institutions to assist health and education projects in Nepal without relying on foreign donors. It asks Nepalis around the world to sacrifice a bottle of beer or a few cups of tea a month, and donate the small amounts to the Network.

Back home in Nepal, the Network has so far built more than 40 schools, libraries, run numerous health camps and supported victims of natural and fire disasters. It will also start an

orphanage for 40 girl children in Dhulikhel soon. It is running a health post in Murma of remote Mugu district and another health post in Siraha.

The Network does not spend any of the funds donated on administration, and has a separate endowment fund to cover overheads which was set up with grants worth Rs 7 million from 25 overseas Nepalis and Rs 10 million from entrepreneur Siddhartha Rana. HeNN meets its office expenses from the interest from that fund.

As a new sustainable fund-raising initiative, the Network decided last month to launch an ambitious fund-raising plan to set up a Rs 100 million HELP NEPAL Charitable Endowment Fund with the help of Nepalis both in and outside of Nepal.

It hopes to raise Rs 1,000 each from 100,000 Nepalis to reach the goal.

In fact, the Network has already raised Rs 3 million in less than six weeks which includes the contribution in Seoul. Many Nepalis donated Rs 100,000 each, including Korea-based restaurateur and social worker, Rudra Sharma, a key sponsor of the Seoul fund raising event.

"The spontaneous donations from so many Nepalis in such a short time were a clear indication of the trust Nepalis have on the HELP NEPAL Network," Sharma said.

Raghu Tripathi, the Editor of HelloNepalKorea.com, one of the organisers of the event, said he was pleasantly surprised at the willingness shown by

Nepalis to help Nepalis back home. "If Nepalis elsewhere in the world are as generous, it will make a huge difference in improving the lives of Nepalis back home," Tripathi said.

The HELP NEPAL Network initiative is endorsed by *Nepali Times*.

Rabindra Mishra works with the BBC World Service and is the founder president of HELP NEPAL Network. www.helpnepal.net

To donate online:
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Public participation in public health

Communities in western Nepal act to improve local governance and healthcare

BHRIKUTI RAI in KAILALI

With the monsoon at its peak, the rice planting season is in full swing here in the plains of western Nepal. But the paddy fields around Chaumala and surrounding villages are empty.

The locals have all gathered under the shade of a large mango tree in the premises of Chaumala Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) and are engaged in intense discussion about their pressing health concerns.

It is called 'social audit day', a programme introduced by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in 2009 to strengthen local participation in decision-making, accountability and transparency in health services. It provides a platform for healthcare workers to build trust and discuss issues concerning the community with the public and VDC officials.

"We are here because we want to tell the health officials there is a shortage of iron pills and condoms in the villages and that is affecting our work with the community," explains Sabitri Aryal, a local health volunteer, when asked why she attended social audits.

Local participation in decision-making has helped health providers identify and respond more urgently to local needs. "The audit is making it easier for us to identify problems, as well as come up with solutions through the full participation of the community," says Shova Mani Bhatta, an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife at the Chaumala primary health centre.

As the discussion proceeds, it is clear that the audit doesn't just encourage locals to communicate their community's health needs, but also allows service providers to explain their side of the story.

At Chaumala, locals complain about being mistreated by health professionals which discourages them from visiting the centre. Kaushila BK, a Dalit woman, says she was sent away with her pregnant daughter-in-law because of lack of facilities. "How are we going to take care of ourselves when government health facilities meant for poor people treat us like cattle?" BK asked the health centre officials. Other participants, many of them mothers with toddlers in tow, nod in agreement.

Manager Ram Chandra Panday admits there is poor quality service, but says it is due to lack of infrastructure and health professionals. "Our hands are also tied. The drugs do not reach here on time



Why some doctors

The most serious problem with Nepal's healthcare system isn't just that there aren't enough hospitals, but that there aren't doctors even in the hospitals that exist in remote areas.

Nepal's ratio of doctors to patients is improving, but is still the worst in Asia: there are only two doctors for every 10,000 population, compared to 60 per 10,000 in Cuba. And even these doctors are concentrated in the cities.

Retention of qualified medical staff in rural Nepal has always been a problem in a country where most doctors and nurses either migrate to the capital, or go abroad.

The reasons are fairly obvious: better pay and facilities attract doctors who have to recoup the huge investments they make in financing their medical education.

Now, a new study by a group from the Kathmandu-based Nick Simons Institute (NSI) published in this week's British Medical Journal analyses data of the graduates of the Tribhuvan University's Institute of Medicine to find out what makes a Nepali doctor practice in rural Nepal instead of moving to Kathmandu or migrating abroad.

The study has looked at criteria like gender, age, birthplace, or pre-medical education of 436 of the 727 graduates of the Institute between 1983-2004 to see if there is a pattern in their decision to serve in rural areas. The study found that 27 per cent of the graduates worked outside Kathmandu, 37 per cent practiced medicine in Kathmandu and 36 per cent of the doctors had gone abroad. Of these, three-quarters were in the United States, eight per cent were in the UK, with the others scattered in Australia, South Africa

and other countries.

'Doctors graduating in later years were more likely to practice in foreign countries and less likely to practice in rural Nepal,' the paper states, adding that male students made up 88.3 per cent of all graduates and were more likely to remain in Nepal and work in rural areas than their female classmates.

The research paper was prepared by the NSI's Mark Zimmerman, Rabina Shakya, Bharat Pokhrel, Basista Rijal, Ritendra Shrestha and Arun Sayami of the Institute of Medicine and Nir Eyal of the Harvard Medical School.

The findings also show that those with pre-medical education as paramedics were twice as likely to be working in Nepal and 3.5 times as likely to be in rural Nepal, compared with students with a college science background. Also, medical students whose grades were in the lowest third of the class were doubly more likely to be working in rural areas than those with higher marks. Medical graduates born in rural areas and older graduates were both more likely to stay in Nepal and work in the districts.

'Policy makers in medical education who are committed to producing doctors for underserved areas of their country could use this evidence to revise their entrance criteria for medical schools,' the report concludes. 'Selecting students with this background does not guarantee eventual rural practice, but it seems to increase the likelihood.'

Although the proportion of Nepali graduates of the Institute of Medicine who migrate abroad is quite high, things are not as bad as in Ghana where three-

New study finds factors that make Nepali doctors more likely to practice in rural Nepal instead of moving to Kathmandu or migrating abroad





NAME PLEASE: A representative from a local mothers' group takes down the names of the participants at the social audit

PICS: BHRIKUTI RAI



Remote control

Achham district has one of the worst health parameters in Nepal, largely because of low literacy, poor drinking water and lack of basic health facilities. It has the highest incidence of HIV in Nepal, and one in every five children is severely malnourished. But in the last three years, the government's neglected Bayalpata Hospital has been managed by a US-based group who set up Nyaya Health. Established by two doctors from the Harvard Medical School, it runs Bayalpata Hospital under a unique public-private partnership with the Ministry of Health. The 15-bed hospital has a staff of 54, many of them volunteers, and provide free, quality healthcare to the people of Achham and even neighbouring districts. With a new surgical ward in place, Bayalpata has already made a dent in Achham's poor health statistics, especially by enabling C-sections to be performed for complicated pregnancies. "The hospital is god-sent for us," says Kare Bhul,

58, of Chandika VDC who was diagnosed with HIV three years ago and has been receiving anti-retroviral treatment here. "Had it not been for Bayalpata Hospital many of us would have died by now." Working in a remote district like Achham is demanding for the team at Bayalpata, and the major challenge is recruiting and retaining doctors to stay. "Given the remoteness the application for many crucial positions including physicians and surgeons hasn't been robust," says Gregory Karelas of Nyaya Health Nepal. Nevertheless Karelas is hopeful that this unique model of reaching to the poorest of the poor with quality healthcare will be replicated in other areas of Nepal and attract motivated doctors to serve in rural areas. **Bhrikuti Rai in Achham**
www.nyayahealth.org

nepalitimes.com
Everyday is mother's day, #552
Resurrection Achham, #528
Dr Farmer comes to Nepal, Blog

and the doctors appointed for PHCC fail to show up on a regular basis," Panday explains to those gathered. The budget and expenditure of the Primary Health Care Centre is also made public during the audit. "We want to make the workings of the Centre as transparent as possible and gain the community's trust," says Panday. By promoting good governance at health centres, the project helps fill the vacuum created by the absence of elected VDC representatives. In 2011, the District Health Office with support of the German aid agency, GiZ, started the social audit programme in 16 villages in Doti district. "As we had decided during last year's audit we conducted regular awareness programmes on

cholera prevention and cut down on staff leave so that we could closely monitor cholera related cases," says Bhakta Singh BK of Durgamandau Health Post. Durgamandau VDC in Doti is one of the many areas where commitments made during SA have helped supply drugs on time and counter cholera outbreak. "Social audits provide people with a voice to hold local health supervisors accountable in a positive environment," explained Susanne Grimm of GiZ. Back in Chaumala the discussion gets livelier as people start voicing their opinions with greater confidence. The meeting concludes after health managers promise improved health services. As participants walk away from the health centre, it is

clear the participatory approach works. But locals are also worried that health officials always have an excuse when things don't work: lack of budget, qualified personnel or facilities. And there are always promises that are never kept. Sabitri Aryal stays till the end, and tells us with a sigh: "I hope the commitments made today won't just remain on paper and we get to see improvements." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com
Born to live, #606
Nepal's real heroines #371

stay and others go away

quarter of all graduates leave the country after graduation. The paper shows that putting more emphasis on rural birthplace, rural education and a paramedical background rather than on high entrance scores in medical school exams may favour retention of doctors in Nepal. The government's Institute of Medicine was set up in 1978 to train doctors to serve in the remote rural areas of the country. However, over the years with the advent of private medical schools the emphasis has changed. Although set up before the NSI study came out, the Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) has been trying out a novel approach to ensure that its graduates serve in the districts by changing the philosophy of its curriculum. Sixty per cent of those enrolled in the batch that will be graduating in 2016, for instance, are from underprivileged families mainly from rural areas. Their scholarships require them to work for two to four years in the districts during medical school. If they don't, they won't get to graduate. The students will be posted to remote area hospitals every six months for two weeks each so they get over their fear of the unknown, and get to see how they can make a difference right from the start of their training. PAHS hopes that this will improve retention of doctors in rural Nepal. PAHS selects 60 students from over 2,000 applicants, choosing those with personal qualities that ensure more compassionate and empathetic

physicians will enter the public health system. Private and government medical schools produce 1,500 doctors each year, but half of them migrate overseas and the ones that stay choose to work in urban areas. 🇳🇵 **Kunda Dixit**

For full report of the NSI study in the British Medical Journal:
www.bmj.com/permissions

nepalitimes.com
Missionary zeal, #538

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

More than a third of the doctors who graduated from the government's Institute of Medicine now work abroad. Breakdown by country:

188	United States
20	United Kingdom
8	Australia
8	South Africa
7	China
4	Canada
4	Japan
2	Bangladesh
2	India
2	New Zealand
2	Sweden
9	Others

“Nationalism is not an excuse for self-indulgence”



Baburam Bhattarai, *Kantipur*, 12 August

Renowned English novelist George Orwell has said, “During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.” In the last few weeks, the mainstream media has been disseminating misleading news and prejudiced opinions on nationalism which must be contested. Nationalism is not a mantle for fulfilling vested interests of a few individuals and political parties, nor can it become an excuse for self-gratifying intellectual indulgence.

It is an issue of great national importance which requires the shedding of personal and partisan bias in favour of responsible and scientific debate. There is great confusion in the public discourse regarding various expressions of nationalism. The Gorkhali nationalism constructed by the Khas-Aryan rulers of this country subverted other forms of nationalism for many years. As a result, people were forced to assimilate into a pseudo-national culture that celebrates only one kind of Nepaliness, while making contradictory claims about diversity. Also at a time when our two neighbours are competing to become global superpowers, we have to get over our conventional anxiety and cash in on whatever geopolitical leverage we can get. But few individuals are creating a ruckus of nationalism and deliberately trying to paint a negative picture about the present government’s efforts to improve relationships with India and China and change Nepal’s historical equation in the region. They should be warned that playing off nationalistic sentiments against one another in a desperate attempt to covet power could push the nation into permanent crisis.

nepalitimes.com
Read the Nepali version online

Invisible hand exposed

Dhruba Kumar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 31 July-16 August

SD Muni’s essay in *Nepal in Transition: From People’s War to Fragile Peace* reveals the true colours of the Maoists and the degree to which party leaders surrendered to Indian interests so that their revolution would have Delhi’s backing. It is worth remembering that Muni’s book emerged right after the Baidya faction accused the Maoist leadership of being heavily India-leaning and spilt from the mother party. It is also no mere coincidence that decisions taken by both Maoist governments have served Indian interests. Before waging the war, Baburam Bhattarai submitted a 40-point demand to the government which included a proposed ban on Indian films. But after he became Prime Minister, Bhattarai signed BIPPA, a treaty guaranteeing protection of Indian investments in Nepal. Muni’s essay states that the Maoist leadership signed a written agreement with India to “never go against Indian interests” in return for Delhi’s backing for their revolution. Cautious that the rise of

Maoist activity in Nepal would provide impetus to the Naxalite movement, India was quick to label the Nepali Maoists as terrorists even before the Nepal government. India’s intelligence agencies were deeply suspicious of Nepal’s Maoists, but it was through these agencies that the Maoists made contact with the Indian establishment.



These revelations must be understood as the Indian government’s official exposé of the Maoists. The information presented in the essay concern high-level political decisions and thus cannot have been made public without the permission of the Indian government, the

foreign ministry and intelligence agencies. Muni would not have been so insensitive to reveal state secrets so casually. Having been a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University for many years, Muni is an academician with keen insight on Nepali politics. He has studied the decade long conflict in great detail and the contexts, arguments and evidences presented in his book are not invalid. Muni reveals he and other figures played a crucial role in establishing good relations between their government and the Nepali Maoists. Once India felt that it could use the Maoists as puppets to fulfil its whims, it guaranteed protection and provided refuge to Maoist leaders in Siliguri, Noida, Delhi and elsewhere. The essay illustrates how foreign powers play Nepal’s political parties against each other to accomplish their geo-political goals. For the Maoists to talk about nationality after this exposure is nothing short of hypocrisy. It’s time political parties as well as the general public engaged in serious discussions about the dangers and repercussions of these revelations on the independence, self-esteem and future of Nepal and Nepalis.



No home away from home

Nagarik, 14 August

During the last budget, the government decided to permit foreigners as well as non-residential Nepalis (NRNs) to purchase apartments in Nepal worth \$200,000 or more. However, due to disagreements among government officials there has been a delay and the procedure is stuck in limbo. Icchyaraj Tamang, president of Nepal Property and Residency Development says that in the absence of a final approval from the government, real estate agents are forced to turn away many prospective buyers. He urges concerned authorities to complete the administrative procedures immediately because this would not only boost the housing industry, but also improve the country’s economy. Gopal Giri from the Ministry of Land Reform and Management said the process will be concluded soon.

Trouble in Trishuli

Nagarik, 14 August

The government has revoked the licence of Nepal Water Energy Development Company (NWEDC), which was involved in the development of 216 MW Upper Trishuli-1 hydropower project, and the future of the \$500 million venture, scheduled to be completed by 2018, is now uncertain. According to sources at the Ministry of Energy, officials are planning to give the licence to IDS and Hydro China Company instead. Just two days before NWEDC’s licence was cancelled, Secretary Hari Ram Koirala had asked Hydro China and IDS to apply for the licence. According to the source, IDS belongs to former Finance Minister and UML leader, Bharatmohan Adhikari’s relative Sujit Acharya. After the ministry decided to scrap the licence of Trishuli-1, the World Bank and other donors requested Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai to revoke the decision. Although the PM ordered Koirala not to cancel the licence, Koirala refused to follow his directions. A proposal was sent to the cabinet to allow NWEDC to work for one and half year as per the energy act. The cabinet’s Financial and Infrastructure Committee is divided over reviving NWEDC’s. While some in the committee are pressing for fresh tender, others want NWEDC’s licence to be revived. The committee has asked for more details from the Ministry of Energy to take a final decision over the future of Trishuli-1. In addition to Upper Trishuli-1, the secretary at the Ministry of Energy has cancelled the licences of three other projects. Questions are now being raised about why the ministry is discouraging projects that could help solve the country’s energy crisis.



Photo: UCPN-M
Small box: Anti-corruption committee
Big box: Complaint box

Kantipur Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 12 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“So what if I am going to jail ? In this country when regimes change, the records are also expunged. I will remain active in politics from behind bars.”

NC leader Khum Bahadur Khadka after being convicted by the Supreme Court on corruption charges on Tuesday.

66TH INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA



INCREDIBLE INDIA
India witnesses more than 5.5 million annual foreign tourist visits. The tourism industry in India is expected to generate an income of US\$ 275.5 billion by 2018



PROCESSING GROWTH
To achieve market potential, India's food processing sector calls for over US\$ 250 billion in investments



TERRA PHARMA
India will join the league of top 10 global pharma markets by 2020, with total sales reaching US\$ 50 billion



TALENT AND YOUTH POWER
50 percent of India's population is under the age of 25 years. 7.7 million join the workforce every year



MICROSOFT'S WINDOW TO THE FUTURE
All tooling work for Microsoft's software for mobile devices is carried out in India



A SOFTWARE HUB
The 2.3 million strong Indian IT-BPO industry is all set to grow 400 percent by 2020



HEALING THE WORLD
3,500 India drug makers export medicines worth US\$ 10 billion to over 100 countries

INDIA-NEPAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

The programme of India-Nepal economic cooperation was launched in 1951 and the objective of the programme was and remains to supplement the efforts of the Government of Nepal (GoN) in Nepal's national development.

Small Development Projects (SDPs)

- Cover all districts of Nepal, over 12 million beneficiaries
- Under this programme, India has built: Schools, Multiple campuses, Specialized training institutes, Libraries, Primary health posts, Maternity centers, Hospitals, Rural/urban roads and Bridges, Canals, Drinking water projects, Cold storages, River training projects, apart from training of senior GoN officials, organization of Eye Care Camps
- 213 school projects ongoing or completed



- Since 1994, India has gifted 342 ambulances and 66 school buses covering 70 districts in Nepal. 20 more ambulances and 4 school buses being gifted on 15 August 2012
- Eye care camps organized by Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh through funding by the Government of India: Since 2001, a total assistance of NRs. 21.10 crores extended by the Government of India. More than 1,07,000 surgeries performed, more than 37,000 students have been provided with optical devices under School Eye Health Care Programme launched in 2007

Development of Infrastructure at Four Border Check Posts along India-Nepal Border

- Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) are being built at 4 points on the India-Nepal Border namely: Raxaul(India)-Birgunj(Nepal), Sunauli (India)-Bhairahawa (Nepal), Jogbani(India)-Biratnagar (Nepal) and Nepalgunj Road(India)-Nepalgunj(Nepal)
- Construction of ICPs on the Nepalese side is to be fully funded by the Government of India
- Construction work has started in Raxaul and Jogbani, on the Indian side. On the Nepalese side, work on ICP at Birgunj has already started. Land for the ICP at Biratnagar stands identified. Work is expected to start soon. Cost of these ICPs is estimated at over NRs. 800 crores
- Decision has also been taken to start the work on the ICP complex at Nepalgunj/ Nepalgunj Road. Land on both sides stands identified

Development of Railway Infrastructure at 5 Border points along India-Nepal Border

- Government of India has accepted the request of Government of Nepal for the establishment of cross-border railway links at five locations on the India-Nepal border:
 - i) Jaynagar in India to Bardibas in Nepal (68 km)
 - ii) Jogbani in India to Biratnagar in Nepal (17.65 km)
 - iii) Nautanwa in India to Bhairahawa in Nepal (15.30 km)
 - iv) Rupaidiha in India to Nepalgunj in Nepal (12.11 km)
 - v) New Jalpaiguri in India to Kakarbhitta in Nepal (39.92 km)
- Land acquisition for the Jaynagar-Bardibas and Jogbani-Biratnagar rail links is underway by GoN. Estimated cost of the two rail links proposed to be taken up in the first phase is more than NRs. 1040 crores
- Three more rail links i.e. Nautanwa(India)-Bhairahawa(Nepal), Nepalgunj Road(India)-Nepalgunj(Nepal) and New Jalpaiguri(India)-Kakarbhitta(Nepal) via Panitanki are also envisaged

Road Infrastructure in Terai

- MoU with GoN signed in January 2010
- The project envisages the construction 19 roads in Phase I equaling 605 kilometres at an estimated cost of NRs. 1100 Crores. The project has been divided into 6 packages
- Work has already started on the project roads
- Phase I will be followed by Phase II covering about 900 kilometres
- More than 88 lakh people are expected to benefit from the emerging network

Nepal-Bharat Maitri Emergency & Trauma Centre in Kathmandu

- 8 floor structure with 200 Beds facility being built with an estimated cost NRs. 150 crores
- Handing over to GoN expected soon



On the occasion of India's 66th Independence Day, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to our friends in Nepal and to the Indian community.

We take pride that despite the plurality of cultures, languages, religions, customs, faith and traditions, our people are bound together by a deep-rooted secular, democratic identity. Our Constitution, promulgated on 26th November 1949, articulates India's diversity and ensures that all its citizens, regardless of region, religion, caste, race, language or gender, enjoy equal rights.

The saga of our freedom struggle involved the sacrifices of countless men and women. The Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who gave shape to our quest for independence, described *Swaraj* as the inalienable right of the Indian people to get freedom and the fruits of their toil so that they may have full opportunities of growth. This spirit was reflected in the famous 'Tryst with Destiny' speech of our first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru on the midnight of 15th August, 1947. He spelt out the objectives of our independence thus:

"To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty, ignorance and disease; to build a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation; and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman."

Our leaders deeply felt that countries could no longer be split by narrow domestic walls. They pledged to cooperate with nations and peoples of the world for nurturing peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity. India is pursuing its quest for equitable economic growth internally hand in hand with readiness for burden-sharing in the sub-continent and a partnership of growth with all its South Asian neighbours, in particular with Nepal, with which India's ties are more multi-faceted and more multi-layered than its ties with any other country in the world.

India and Nepal share a common inheritance. We have the same civilisational values. Our social and cultural ties permeate all aspects of our lives. Since India became independent in 1947, India has proactively promoted bilateral educational, scientific, commercial and economic exchanges between our two countries. We have done so because we believe that the welfare of our two peoples is irrevocably interlinked. Therefore, we consider that Nepal's success in meeting the challenges that lie ahead for it will equally be India's success.

We wish the people of Nepal every possible success as they engage in completing the historic task of drafting a new Constitution that reflects the needs and aspirations of people of Nepal and guarantees them stability, multiparty democracy, inclusiveness, and prosperity.

On this very special day, I wish fellow citizens and our friends in Nepal every possible happiness and success.

Jai Hind
Jai Nepal-Bharat Maitri

15 August 2012

भारतीय राजदूत, काठमाण्डू
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
KATHMANDU



Jayant Prasad

Dakshinkali-Kulekhani Road link

- 26-km long road that forms a part of the 62-km long Kathmandu-Hetauda road connecting the Kathmandu valley and the Terai region
- Project is nearing completion

Army Welfare Activities

- Disbursement of pension worth NRs. 2000 crores annually to GoI Pensioners
- Welfare schemes amounting to more than NRs. 11 crores executed every year
- Educational scholarships for 518 students
- 1,24,000 medicine packets are being distributed
- 17 Solar Projects have been executed benefiting around 1.5 lakhs people



Scholarships

- 21 scholarship schemes provided to 1765 Nepalese students annually to study in Nepal and India

Upcoming Projects

- Sabha Griha at Birgunj
- Polytechnic at Hetauda
- Eye Hospital at Kapilavastu
- Mahendranagar-Tanakpur Road link
- Nepal-Bharat Maitri Pashupati Dharmashala
- Science Learning Centre at Khumaltar, Kathmandu



EMPOWERING PEOPLE

The e-Choupal or rural internet empowers India's 220 million farmers



OUT OF THE BOX

The size of the Indian television industry is projected to be US\$ 13.3 billion by 2014



A WELL-ENGINEERED FUTURE

India's revenue from engineering research will be US\$ 45 billion from 2020



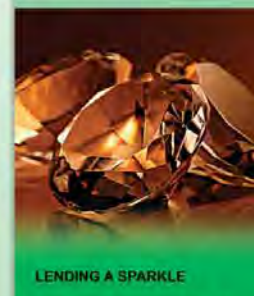
REFINING CRUDE POWER

India's petroleum refining capacity would increase to 255mtpa by financial year 2012



A GEM OF A MARKET

India's diamond jewelry market will grow at a whopping 95 percent between 2010-15



LENDING A SPARKLE

India currently exports 95 percent of the world's diamonds



GROWING ON THE FAST TRACK

India exported 74,305 heavy and medium commercial vehicles in the second half of the financial year 2011



THE GOLDEN SKY LINE

India is the leading real estate investment market in Asia. Construction margins in India are also double that of the world average



NEW WINGS NEW DIRECTIONS

Boeing's Bengaluru Technology Centre is helping the company build fuel-cell powered futuristic aircraft



MANUFACTURER PAR EXCELLENCE

India has been ranked second in terms of manufacturing competence globally



Corruption in the time of cholera

Yarsa prices soared this year not because of the harvest shortfall but because of the higher-than-usual demand from China. Apparently the active ingredient that gives the **caterpillar fungus** performance-enhancing qualities is an alkaloid that is non-detectable in drug tests for sports competitors. Which should set lightbulbs flashing at the Nepal Olympic Committee: if we could ban yarsa exports and raise our athletes solely on a diet of yarsagumba for the nest four years we should surely win some golds in the marathon and weight-lifting categories in the Rio Olympics.



After spending corrodes on voter education, the **Erection Commission** appears not to have had much success with educating our politicians to register themselves into the voter's list. Politicos who still don't have voter IDs and couldn't be bothered about casting their ballots in the next election include such democracy stalwarts as Jhusil Da and Johnny-come-lately Sitaula, Gutch, Pashu Some Share, and our very own Prime Minister Chubby Lal Baje. Guess they are only interested in getting elected, not in actually casting a vote.



To compare Firanghi Minister Kaji Naran Kamred to a leopard would be to grossly underestimate his ability to change his spots. He has lately done a complete U-turn and gone off on an India-bashing spree to become a bit of a pain in the backside for BB as well as Chairman Lotus Eater. At the recent Baddie plenum, **Kamred Kame-Kazi** showed signs of being afflicted with foot-in-mouth disease, he just couldn't keep his trap shut. He was trying to outdo Baidya Ba's line on Dilli, and then went straight off to tell hacks at the Otter's Club that he would get BIPPA scrapped. Guess who

showed up at the Hilltop the next morning?



Things still continue to reverberate from the Baddie Plenum at Bhrikuti Mundup where where the comrades turned furniture into missiles. All this has raised eyebrows across the political spectrum about the Qazi's newfound assertiveness. The most sensational thing this guy ever did was get a **hair transplant** and an expensive **tooth job**, while the rest of his comrades were underground fighting a war. Now, the Farang Minister has suddenly gone off on

warpath against Nepal's donors and INGOs. The question is whether he is doing so to expand his turf and pocket his cut, or is he just carrying out orders from the High Command.



The grovelling coalition's **banning spree** continues. They started off with banning drinking and driving and smoking in public places, then they made us the laughing stock of the world by banning all individual trekking. Now, women below 30 are banned from going to work in the Gulf. Now, they have banned disruptions of essential services for six months: which means what, that they have banned load-shedding, dry taps and diesel shortages? The cabinet has become so prohibitionist that any problem that crops up, they immediately announce a knee-jerk ban. What next, a ban on cholera outbreaks? Or ban Ban from coming to Lumbini?



Khum Budder may have been corrupt two decades ago, but reading the Supremo Court's verdict against the defendant made many laugh: the ex-minister apparently misappropriated the piddly sum of 90 lack roops. It does look like the pot calling the kettle an African-American

when incumbent ministers today rake in nothing less than corrodes of dollars. In the old days ministers used to take their cuts, today they just thrust their hands into the treasury and grab what they can. Earlier, they used to be satisfied with their 10% from hydropower contractors, today they award hydropower contracts to themselves which they have over-invoiced by 100%. The question in everyone's mind is: do we have to wait another 20 years for today's crooks to get behind bars? Anyway, Khoom doesn't seem to be that worried about spending 1.5 years in his cell, he is just wondering if there is wifi.



Comrade Awesome has once more tried to take everyone for a ride to play identity politics. He has formed a federalist front, as if anyone is against federalism. His grand design of luring janajati figures from the UML to his party backfired with janajati leaders opting out of the NGO-sounding Social Democratic Pluri-Nationalists. They probably got turned off after googling the word 'pluri' and finding that it is a medical term used to describe ominous- sounding medical conditions like: '**pluri-centric blastoma**' and '**pluri-glandular secretions**'.



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