Coming this winter: 20 hour power cuts daily

TRAVEL SHOPPING KO NAYA ADDRESS

An efficient experience in online travel business, driven by sound IT infrastructure coupled with the dedicated team of expert travel advisors, Arihant Holidays offers exotic holiday packages, competitive hotel list, extensive travel destination options and of course the larger selection on airline tickets making holidays an extremely happy experience.

For more details:
Hunting Line: 4033800
Toll Free No: 1660-01-16600
Write to us info@arihantholidays.com

wwwarihantholidays.com

LINEA
THE POWER TO GUARANTEE ADMIRATION

Fiat

Authorized Dealer:

Shreea Adventure Outlet


www.sreea.com

24 - 30 August 2012
16 pages
Rs 30
The bad news is that despite us being in the middle of the monsoon, NEA has just raised power rationing to seven hours daily. Even worse news is that if the inter there will be electricity for only four hours a day.

Load-shedding is now a given, and like with all other things in this country, it is a source of irony and exasperation. Just like organisms adapt to small incremental doses of poison, Nepal is adapt to hardships heaped on them. But nothing is going to prepare us if individual, families and as a country to the looming dark winter ahead.

There are lots of excuses for the current crisis. The conflict delayed big projects like Middle Marsyangdi and Kali Gandaki A. In the absence of storage projects, in the time of peak winter demand we have the lowest generation capacity from run-of-the-river schemes.

But Nepal’s successive rulers can’t say they had no warning. Alarm bells have been ringing for decades. Politicians have been distracted by fighting, by greed and corruption, but by and large, they were just incredibly incompetent. The prolonged transition since 2006 has meant that there was either no political will, or too much political interference, to recognise and resolve the emergency.

Which is why we are now faced with the spectre of 24-hour blackouts. Despite this winter despite all the warnings, only 8MW of power was added to the grid in the last fiscal year, while the increase in demand was 1000MW. This fiscal year is even worse: there has been zero augmentation in supply. Not even in the worst- governed country in the world is there such ineptitude.

This fiscal year is even worse: there has been zero augmentation in supply. Not even in the worst-governed country in the world is there such ineptitude. And Kali Gandaki A. In the absence of storage projects, in the time of peak winter demand we have the lowest generation capacity from run-of-the-river schemes.

But Nepal’s successive rulers can’t say they had no warning. Alarm bells have been ringing for decades. Politicians have been distracted by fighting, by greed and corruption, but by and large, they were just incredibly incompetent. The prolonged transition since 2006 has meant that there was either no political will, or too much political interference, to recognise and resolve the emergency.

Power used to come out of the barrel of a gun for the nation’s priests. It should now come out of a hydro-electric turbine. If there is one thing the Nepali people will thank Baburam Bhattarai for, it will not be the token gesture of riding a Mustang, but acting now there will be no power cuts by 2018.

WHY SOME DOCTORS STAY
NSI’s research on Nepali doctors gives insights into the motivating factors and backgrounds that make doctors want to stay or leave the country. Why some doctors stay and others leave, Kunda Dixit, #618. However, doctors should be allowed to work wherever they want and the wanting to serve in rural or the urban community should come from them because the fact that doctors are leaving Nepal to work abroad shouldn’t be made a big issue.

I have seen pilots leaving the country and working for foreign airlines, and engineers working in the Middle East.

Anon

• People go places where they believe they have better opportunities and better shot at a good life. Give them a chance to make a good life and you’ll find the root cause of why there are so few doctors serving in rural Nepal.

Roshan

• Like other professionals, we doctors should have the freedom to choose where we work and the right to dream of a better future. Many doctors don’t want to practice in Nepal because there is minimum facility (outpatient, emergency, load shedding, poor transportation), the working conditions are poor, safety standards are low, and the costs of living in the country is politically volatile. But there are equal number of doctors who prefer to work here for our people and country. Rather than criticising the ministry, doctors who can’t live this chaos and choose to go abroad, the government should appreciate the ones who have stayed behind. At the end of the day it does not matter whether we are in Humla or Houston because we are serving people wherever we go.

Aijiv Mishra

• There is no problem as long as the doctor working in a rural area is satisfied and serving out of her own will. However, I fear the higher policy makers changing the selection criteria for medical students just because doctors are not going to the rural areas. Such a move prevents smart and capable students from entering medicine. Also in a globalised world where doctors are international commodity, the rhetoric of ‘serving your nation’ does not make sense. Doctors should be utilised wherever they are the best fit. Those who have the aptitude to develop new medical fields or find the cure for AIDS, should go to places where top-notch research facilities are available and not be forced to limit their services to rural areas in the name of nationalism.

Dilip Kumar Yadav

• NSI has done a good piece of research. However, one other obvious factor is the doctor’s knowledge of the language. If the doctor is English is poor, he is less likely to emigrate. I completed my MBBS from Pokhara and my classmates were mostly from rural West Bengal. They did their +2 in Bengal and not in English (unlike in Nepal) and most of them had poor English. Among my batch mates, those with good English (from cities like Kolkata, Delhi, etc) have emigrated to USA, UK and the majority with poor English have stayed behind.

Manohar Bodhatthodi

A NATION’S HEALTH
I don’t blame Nepal medical professionals for not wanting to work in rural areas or for migrating abroad (A nation’s health, editorial, #618). We can preach ‘holier than thou’ attitude to others, but to actually live and practice in remote areas is an entirely different thing.

Manohar Bodhatthodi

Anon

• No political consensus on future strategy, less political intervention in the work of NEA.

Thomas

LOST PRIORITIES
Chandan Sapkota makes some good points about Nepal’s trade competitiveness (‘Lost priorities’, #618). The only way we can be competitive vis-a-vis other provinces of India or China is if we lower our labour and non-labour costs. Unit-labour costs in Nepal are very high relative to productivity. This is because our labour market is joined at the hip with higher paying labour markets of the Gulf and Southeast Asia. Lowering non-labour costs (infrastructure, militarily, rule of law, regulation, rule, etc.) helps, but without lower labour cost, Nepal won’t be able to compete regionally or globally.

Krishna S

• In the hospital in Tansen, out of all the staff, there are only two Nepali doctors, the rest are foreign volunteers. The foreign volunteer doctors, who are Christians doing charity work, highlight the possible role of charity in medical care in Nepal. What role should charitable organisations play in Nepal in providing care to rural areas and to the poor? Don’t they literally thousands of hospitals in the West (and many in India) long before government came to create the healthcare field. Government- mandated or funded national health insurance would probably provide improved care if it were implemented in Nepal, as it would increase spending on rural clinics and hospitals.

Thomas

Irresponsible to blame Nepali doctors for not wanting to work in rural areas. Most of them have left because they were poorly paid and working in bad conditions. Leave it to the government to do something about the problem.

Kunda Dixit

• We should save our revolutionary speeches for later and work on providing basic facilities like electricity and road networks and ensuring a manufacturing-friendly environment first.

Raju

1 MILLION IN 2 HOURS
The best part about the donation made by hard working Nepalis in Korea is that they did not want their names to be inscribed on pillars or temple walls or appear as philanthropists and humanitarians on TV and print, like some shameless elites and businessmen in Nepal (1 million in 2 hours, Rabindra Mishra, #618).

Nirmal
Nepali Times: You made some pretty dire predictions about this country 30 years ago. Yet, Nepal hasn’t collapsed or become a failed state. How do you explain that?

David Seddon: At that time we felt that agriculture in particular was incredibly limited, and there was a growing problem of food security. That has proven to be unduly pessimistic. Nepal has over the years managed to maintain enough food supply to meet its requirements.

What hasn’t happened is the kind of green revolution transformation of agriculture, cash-crop and commodity production. We returned to the same areas in the mid-1990s, and did a re-study on a smaller scale, and two things mainly struck us: there was still very little progress on cash crops, in fact if anything there had been a retreat, and people seemed to be relying increasingly on remittances from abroad.

Your other dire prediction then was that Nepal was on the brink of environmental collapse. But even then, despite problems, there has been progress in the last 40 years.

That is right, we have been proven again to have been unduly pessimistic about environmental change. In hindsight, in most areas of the western and eastern hills, deforestation and land degradation did continue on until the 80s and remain a serious problem. But in the eastern hills which we again studied in the 90s, there has been a certain amount of natural regeneration in the highest areas, in the middle hills there has been significant reforestation partly because of community forestry management, and farmers are now increasingly involved in maintaining the environment and integration of cropping and forestry, it has become more widespread.

The other reason for regeneration is that people have been increasingly travelling away from rural areas, and there has been a reduction in the area under cultivation. You could see this positively in environmental terms, but there has been a reduction in the rural capacity of food production.

Your first book was on the impact of roads. Do you still hold that view that a road is a geopolitical and economic tool? I think that in the short-run building roads is not cost-effective, but it can be argued that over a long-term, roads provide arguably a necessary but not sufficient condition for development. They provide a foundation from which other road networks and other forms of change can develop, and their full positive impact can’t be felt for 40 years or so. I think one should add in modern terms to roads the idea of community.

The IT revolution has meant that in fact it is now roads that is so important now as it is the spread of ideas and information. Roads of the 1960s opened up the Tarai, is the great development intervention in Nepal with long-standing implications. Ten years later, we were already beginning to get some sense of the migration from the hills to the Tarai and that absorbed population growth to a very significant degree.

It was a safety valve for the next 20 years, and contributed to the large output of agriculture in the Tarai. We underestimated that kind of transformation. Another thing that we didn’t pick up until we did the “New Lahurey” study in the late 90s was the huge increase in migration. But migration did not really become a safety valve for employment until the mid-90s. The lack of employment and frustration in the head-up to the People’s War were very real. When we returned in the 90s, we found two main things happening: the lack of development of cash cropping in the western hills, and the growth in remittances from abroad.

Given the contradictions in the Nepali society and economy you felt that something like a Maoist revolution was inevitable? It was a very economics-grounded analysis, but we did say at the end of Nepal In Crisis that we didn’t see a way out other than some sort of dramatic political transformation. I personally came back in the 80s and worked on Nepal: A State of Poverty where I did see the beginnings of organised movements for a political alternative. The two Jana Andolans were opportunities to move forward. Since 2008 there has been a period of political stalemate, and the ordinary people carry on with the best they can, and labour migration continues to bring remittances.

There are some signal failures: hydropower is an area where there has been a complete failure to capitalise on Nepal’s major potential. It is the political and legislative crisis that people are focused on, but underneath there is a continuing economic crisis in the failure to create an economy that generates employment and productive growth.

One of the reasons for the constitutional and political stalemate post-2008 has been the demand for identity-based federalism. You have been slightly critical of that idea. I have been very critical. For me the strength of the Maoist movement was that it was class-based. Sometime during the middle of the war, the Maoists for tactical reasons began to see ethnic identity as a basis of support and out of that came what I think is a dangerous and misleading philosophy: that you can address ethnic and caste inequalities, which undoubtedly exist and need to be addressed in society, by recognising them as ethnic groups which have some sort of vote in so far as they are from an ethnic group or caste.

For me that fundamentally violates human universal and democratic rights, and it’s a recipe for disintegration and chaos. It is really not the basis for an effective state. It also has the dangers of ethnic cleansing. So I am surprised that the Maoist have maintained what has now become a flawed ideology. The danger of this is the endless proliferation of groups. There is no so-called ethnic autonomous region proposed in which the ethnic category is the majority, even. So not only do you have a problem of majority overwhelming the minority, but you have the problem of states which are defined by the ethnic identity of a minority.

But the parties were very close to accepting federalism with multiple identities. Federalism will add another layer of government, bureaucracy and so on, it is expensive and this is something Nepal can afford whatever shape it takes. If it doesn’t actually divide Nepal into economically strategic and sensible regions or provinces, there is the danger of comparative disadvantage. If you happen to be in the Karnali and there is no central government to redistribute resources, you are always going to remain behind. The idea of the proper democratic participation, what is needed is a re-examination of electoral constituencies so they do represent the populations in them.

Still, how will that address the serious imbalance caused by the historical caste domination of the bureaucracy and government?

I think it is so serious that every party needs to address, including, and one might even say particularly, the UCPN and CPN. There is no doubt that there is domination, but it is not just a caste and ethnic domination. This is about all those who are wealthy and powerful. As an old Marxist, I would emphasise the class nature of this domination. What needs to happen is that there should be a breaking up of opportunities in society and economic and political parties for people from ethnic groups and castes, but more generally for all disadvantaged people. It’s all about who has power and control, and to define it only on the basis of ethnicity and caste is dangerous racism.

How much do you blame Nepal’s international partners for this?

What happens in Nepal is mainly for Nepalis to determine. But there is no doubt that the international community has played its part since the 1950s in shaping the way development and political discourse has taken place. They have tried to improve things where possible, partly through technical assistance and providing infrastructure. On ethnic-based federalism, led possibly by people in the World Bank and supported by DFID, there is this concern about the exclusion of marginal peoples, and the agenda of inclusiveness.

Unfortunately, whether it was because anthropologists were involved rather than radical economists, the frame of reference was very much in terms of caste and ethnicity, rather than class. And although poverty became important, people did not talk about workers and peasants and disadvantaged castes, they talked about social exclusion in terms of caste and ethnicity which then became the conventional wisdom and dogma. Development agencies have been dictated from outside, rather than the need for a development, and political interference. You can debate whether that is legitimate or not, but I think not.
When their lease expired in mid-July, resorts located within Chitwan National Park thought they would renew the agreement as they usually do before the autumn tourist season, and business would go on as usual. This is the renewal process has become snarled in politics, and the six resorts inside the Park are bracing themselves for the worst.

The government had decided in mid-July, resorts whose lease expired would renew the agreement, and the six resorts inside the Park would not have this problem. They say they are willing to abide by the verdict of the study, and leave the Park in five years if it is negative.

"It's all about money and politics, it is not about conservation and wildlife," says one outraged resort owner, who declined to be named, "why else would the ministry deliberately cut itself off from the crowds we pay in royalty to the Park every year?"

Krishna Prasad Acharya, director general of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), says the lodges within the Park are international ly-recognised models for sustainable ecotourism which have worked well for years. But Acharya also said the Department would be bound by whatever decision the government takes.

The resorts inside the parks include Tiger Tops, which pioneered ecotourism in Nepal with its tree-top rooms and put Chitwan on the international tourism map since the 1970s. Resort owners say the autumn season is now ruined because it is too late to take reservations. Some 3,000 employees of these hotels have demanded alternative employment, and threatened an agitation.

Tiger Tops is taking bookings for the autumn season, but shifting guests to its Karnali Lodge and Tharu Lodge properties at extra expense. The annual international elephant polo tournament is also being moved from Chitwan to Bardia.

"Tourism doesn't kill tigers, and there is no scientific evidence that Tiger Tops has been detrimental to the environment. In fact there is evidence to the contrary that it is a positive force for conservation, the national park and the country," Chairman of Tiger Tops, Krizjan Edwards, told Nepali Times.

"Conservation is sensitive therefore controls need to be carefully put in place to regulate the lodges in and around the national park," Bantawa said. The dispute between resorts situated inside and outside the Park is not new. Those outside say they cannot compete with those inside, as they cannot take private elephants inside the Park for safaris unless they pay a fee, and can only offer guests elephant rides through the buffer zone.

Resorts located within the Park do not have this problem as their elephants already live inside the park. But owners of the resorts within the Park say they have to pay hefty royalties for the lodges and other facilities. Tiger Tops alone pays the government Rs 10 million a year. The five other hotels incude Safari Narayani, Chitwan Jungle Lodge, Machan Wildlife Island, Jungle Safari and Temple Tigers.

Resort owners also reject criticism that the presence of the lodges and tiger populations have rebounded to 130, and there are more than 500 rhinos besides scores of other mammals and more than 420 species of birds. Chitwan National Park was established in 1970 at a time when tigers and rhinos there had nearly been hunted into extinction. Today, the tiger population has rebounded to 130, and there are more than 500 rhinos besides scores of other mammals and more than 420 species of birds. Chitwan National Park is a World Heritage Site, and UNESCO representative in Nepal, Axel Plathe, said: "In theory, businesses within the Park are not only protecting a UNESCO world heritage site, but also investing in the development of surrounding areas. Such decisions should be made on a bureaucratic, not political level."

According to reports in the Nepali Times, there was actually a spurt in tiger and rhino poaching just after the war ended when some of the resorts had closed down. Officials at the DNPWC confirm that the presence of the lodges has made it easier to keep a check on poaching.

The debate between resorts and the Park hangs in the balance after their licence renewal is renewed or not, it is clear that Chitwan National Park needs resorts in its immediate vicinity catering to high-end tourists who support the upkeep of the Park. If the resorts inside the Park are closed, the caretaker function they fulfilled over the years must also be maintained. Chitwan National Park was established in 1970 at a time when tigers and rhinos there had nearly been hunted into extinction. Today, the tiger population has rebounded to 130, and there are more than 500 rhinos besides scores of other mammals and more than 420 species of birds. Chitwan National Park is a World Heritage Site, and UNESCO representative in Nepal, Axel Plathe, said: "In theory, businesses within the Park are not only protecting a UNESCO world heritage site, but also investing in the development of surrounding areas. Such decisions should be made on a bureaucratic, not political level."

Chitwan wildlife experts say decades of ecotourism efforts and Nepal's attraction as a major wildlife tourism destination are on the line.
Chuck the wildlife whiz

Chuck McDougal was an American conservationist and photographer who spent much of his life in Nepal, where he worked on various conservation projects. He was known for his contributions to the conservation of the tiger species, and his work in the Chitwan National Park.

Chuck's interest in South Asia began at an early age. He started a trekking company and explored ethnic groups in Orissa, and then came to eastern India in 1984 to study the Khasi in northeast India. He stayed, starting a trekking company and exploring new trekking routes in the Himalaya.

In his 40 years of research on the tiger, Chuck has written Face of the Tiger (Andre Deutz 1977) and a major study on the ecology and conservation of the tiger is due to be published by Harvard later this year. Chuck's most significant work is the Long Term Tiger Monitoring Project, an ongoing research study of the tiger population of western Chitwan from Kasara to Ledaghat. The research has developed a skilled cadre of manpower in Nepal with expertise at camera trapping, pugmark identification and jaguar identification.

Chuck's work in Nepal led him to research the habits of the tiger for the Smithsonian's Nepal Tiger Ecology Project. In his 40 years of research on the tiger, Chuck has written Face of the Tiger (Andre Deutz 1977) and a major study on the ecology and conservation of the tiger is due to be published by Harvard later this year. Chuck's most significant work is the Long Term Tiger Monitoring Project, an ongoing research study of the tiger population of western Chitwan from Kasara to Ledaghat. The research has developed a skilled cadre of manpower in Nepal with expertise at camera trapping, pugmark identification and jaguar identification.

Chuck's work in Nepal led him to research the habits of the tiger for the Smithsonian's Nepal Tiger Ecology Project. In his 40 years of research on the tiger, Chuck has written Face of the Tiger (Andre Deutz 1977) and a major study on the ecology and conservation of the tiger is due to be published by Harvard later this year. Chuck's most significant work is the Long Term Tiger Monitoring Project, an ongoing research study of the tiger population of western Chitwan from Kasara to Ledaghat. The research has developed a skilled cadre of manpower in Nepal with expertise at camera trapping, pugmark identification and jaguar identification.
The voices of their minds

... and get a free

SPECIAL Limited offer

Don’t buy
Nepali Times Subscribe

PICS: TONG SIAN CHOO

When Gauridevi Sharma was 14, a close friend confided that her father had raped her. Another friend then told her that a classmate was making unwanted physical advances. Sexual abuse by close relatives and friends is common among teenage girls in Nepal, while child welfare activists say, but it is shrouded in secrecy because of taboos. Victimised girls often are not equal,” Sharma says, “and the only way that can be changed is by spreading the message that it is not normal, and it is an offence.” Manko Awaj is a radio package that includes drama, songs, and poems written by students and has a lively format that makes it popular among young listeners. The show also informs girls where they can seek help and support.

Manko Awaj reaches out to about one million listeners in Kaski, parts of Tanahun, Parbat and Syangja districts on evening prime time and is also available online. Laudari would like the program to be syndicated throughout Nepal, but even the funding for the existing programs is running out by the end of this year. Sharma says she is now more confident in speaking up for girls’ rights, and in giving advice over the radio. Listeners call in to seek help, like a girl who was nearly raped by a hotel waiter. Sharma immediately called the TOLI hotline, the police arrested the man who was found guilty. Police say the number of reported cases of sexual harassment and abuse has doubled since Manko Awaj started broadcasting in 2009. Sharma also senses a change in the attitude of male teachers towards female students: “They are more sensitive now, and girls are more confident about speaking up for themselves.”

Radio Taranga is on 107.6 in Pokhara. Manko Awaj is broadcast every Saturday 7:30-8pm and can be heard online at: www.radiotaranga.com.
For as long as she can remember Rafiqa Sayed has been dressed like a boy by her parents, she even went to a boy’s school in Peshawar. She had grown to like being a boy, but last week when she turned 10, Rafiqa suddenly had to be a girl.

She is among many young girls known as bacha posh (girl in boy’s clothes) whom parents dress up as boys just so they can move about more freely and go to school in the conservative culture of this arid and rugged border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

“I used to get angry when people would call me a girl,” the 10-year-old Rafiqa told a visitor, “I would start beating and fighting them.”

Bacha posh wear boy’s clothing and enjoy all the freedom that boys have in society and girls don’t: from going to a boy’s school to playing sports. Like any Pakistani boy, Rafiqa still speaks loudly and makes direct eye contact when she talks. She says she enjoys the freedoms she was granted as a boy.

“I used to go to the Barra Market with my father and buy boy’s clothes for myself, and some other things for my sisters. Nobody asks girls what they want to buy for themselves,” she says.

Under Pashtun culture, sons are valued more than daughters and only sons can inherit their father’s wealth and pass down family name. While some families disguise their daughters as boys so that they can easily work on the streets, Rafiqa’s father Rahman had other reasons.

With nine daughters, he also badly wanted to have a boy. “Some people dress up their daughters as boys because of poverty, but I dress my daughters as boys because I don’t have a son. I think of her as my son and that makes me happy,” he says.

But after six years of being a boy in disguise, Rafiqa is dressing like a girl again because her father is worried he will have a difficult time getting her married. So now it’s Rafiqa’s 4-year-old sister Nasreen’s turn to be a boy.

“I enjoy wearing a boy’s outfit and sitting with male guests at home,” says Nasreen. “My mother tells me that I will have a brother soon if I dress up like a boy.”

The bacha posh tradition has existed in Pakistan for centuries. It is believed to have started when Pakistan had to fight their invaders and women needed to be disguised as men so they could also fight, or so they could be protected.

But for many the key question is: will there be a day when Pakistani girls get as much freedom and respect as boys? Taj-ud-Din, an expert on Pashtun history and culture is critical of the tradition.

“We’re showing that we’re far behind the civilised world where men and women should have equal rights and treated equally,” he says, “the practice also has negative psychological impact on young girls.”

Rafiqa is having her own adjustment problems being a girl again and misses her freedom. After being a boy for so long, the feeling of being somehow inferior is now ingrained in her mind.

Say Taj-ud-Din: “It’s like showing them that men are more superior to women, and it’s the parents who are making the lives of these girls miserable.”
EVENTS

IMAGINING THE CONTEMPORARY CITY, a talk by prominent architect Biresh Shah, 24 August, 5.30pm, Indian Cultural Centre, Balmandir, Naxal, 4412715, icc.kathmandu@gmail.com

Monsoon Sensation, dance salsa, b-boying, belly, kizomba and celebrate the monsoon, 24 August, 6.30pm to midnight, wear gold, Meconopsis, Pulchowk.

INTERNATIONAL NIGHT MARKET, chance to purchase shoes handpicked from international destinations, 27 August, 4.45pm. Garden of Dreams, Thamel, 4425340

The Rise of the Collateral, art exhibition by Manish Harijan. Runs to 20 September, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, 4218048

Délices de France, a ‘Party for Kat’ organised by the dogs of Kathmandu. 25 August, 6pm. Délices de France, Ganesh Man Singh Building, Thamel, info@restaurantnepal.com

Music

TEJ Festival, four days of Tej festivity complete with food stalls, shopping opportunities and fashion shows to be enjoyed not only by women, but also their families. 23 August to 26 August, 10am to 7pm, United World Trade Centre, Tripureshwor, 4442598, 9851045669

Saturday Bird Watching, catch native birds like the Spiny Babbler, Slender-billed Scimitar-kabiber and Scarlet Minivet. 25 August, 7am, Shivapuri National Park, 4381214, 4381425

Kabab and Biryani Festival, showcasing a wide variety of kababs and biryanis from across South Asia. Runs 25 August, The Yellow Chilli, Bluebird Complex, Tripureshwor, 4101088

Farmers’ Market, sale of fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, and fruits. 24 August, 9am to 12pm, New Orleans Café, Patan, 5522708

Master Training Workshop, training for teachers who want to make their class rooms lively. Rs 600 per session, runs 15-31 August, only Fridays, 8am to 1pm, The British Council, Lainchaur, 4410978

Street Photography Workshop, for photography novices who want to shoot.

Dining

IRISH PUB, laid-back bar ambience and a cultured selection of drinks. Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, 4416027

Délices de France, a multi-cuisine restaurant, offers an exquisite range of drinks and food. Jhamsikhel

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

CHA CHA CAFE, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. Thamel

No Name Restaurant, friendly ambience with palatable dishes-try their delicious momochas. Putalisadak

Heynag’s, a chic restaurant with live music, try their grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad.

EVEREST STEAK HOUSE, an old-school joint for everything steak, and indeed a sanctuary for meat-lovers. Thamel, near Chhetrapati Chowk, 4260471

No Name Restaurant, friendly ambience with palatable dishes-try their delicious momochas. Putalisadak

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

Tamarinid, a multi-cuisine restaurant, offers an exquisite range of drinks and food. Jhamsikhel

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepal Mhusa cope for a quick fix. Khichapokhari and Basantapur, Call 4256655

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

CHONGQING FAST FOOD, gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. Thamel

CHA CHA CAFE, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. Thamel

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepal Mhusa cope for a quick fix. Khichapokhari and Basantapur, Call 4256655

MUSIC

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

EMAD GABRA LIVE, catch the CD launch of this Egyptian artist music is tinged with Nepali sarangi. 24 August, 7pm onwards, Délices de France, Ganesh Man Singh Building, Thamel, info@restaurantnepal.com

Photo Exhibition and Auction at Cuppas, aiming to create a platform where photographers and potential patrons can interact. 31 August, 3.45pm, Cuppas, Putalisadak

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

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

EMAD GABRA LIVE, catch the CD launch of this Egyptian artist music is tinged with Nepali sarangi. 24 August, 7pm onwards, Délices de France, Ganesh Man Singh Building, Thamel, info@restaurantnepal.com

Photo Exhibition and Auction at Cuppas, aiming to create a platform where photographers and potential patrons can interact. 31 August, 3.45pm, Cuppas, Putalisadak
NEW TUSHTA RESTAURANT. relax, premium and good food, can’t miss out on their coffee and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, 4442057

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

Bhuta, the organic restaurant in town offers continental and Indian cuisine along with chef’s originals. Sanepa

1905 RESTAURANT, feast on roasted delights within this culinary palace whose walled premises and green garden make it an oasis within the city. Kantipath, 4215088

GETAWAYS

Saturday Nights at Borderlands, music, barbecue and much more for a memorable Saturday. Rs 2100, 27 August, 2am, Borderlands Eco Adventure, Sindhupalchowk, 438124, 4381425

Shivapuri Village, eco-tourism close to the Shivapuri National Park replete with a charm of bygone days. Palatins, Shivapuri National Park, 401723, 9881041471, info@shivapuri.com.np

FULBARI RESORT, enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days, Call 4461918, 4462248

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort, located on a hilltop and offering a magnificent vista of valleys, foothills, and mountains to the north. Dhulikhel, 11-490114/494, dhulikhelodge resort.com

LAST RESORT, canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking—challenge yourself and be adventurous at the Last Resort, Dolakha, Sindhupalchowk, 4700235, 4701247

Tamas-laya at Naxal lets you escape the stress of everyday life and be coddled, even if just for a while. In the hedonism it promises, while Tamas in Thamel has a lifestyle of decadence, Tamasic activities include eating meat and drinking alcohol. And Tamas-laya at Naxal lets you...
HAPPENINGS

W 
What struck me initially as a slightly disastrous film was the delightful one directed by Lasse Hallstotm (who also directed Chocolat in 2000, among various other light-hearted comedies). Somehow, in my mind post-viewing, the title, though clearly a mouthful, has come to represent the whimsical philanthropy embodied by the film. Indeed, penicillin too was discovered serendipitously. There are many delightful scenes and little moments in this film that strike me initially as a slightly disastrous title. The romance blossoms charmingly between Harriet and Fred, but it is the friendship that develops between the Sheikh and these two determined supporters that is most touching. At a time when the Middle East seems opaque and terrifying more often than not, it takes brave and ingenious writers and directors to portray another, better version, however fictitious.

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen is a perfect example of how one can make a light-hearted film with a core of goodness at its heart. One can’t help but wish that there were more such films out there.

The premise of the film is an unusual request made by Sheikh Muhammad (played by the drop-dead beautiful Ewan McGregor), a Yemeni ruler of unspeakable riches whose passion is fly fishing, something he indulges in at his private castle in Scotland where he owns acres of land through which run salmon-rich streams.

The Sheikh contacts Lord Fred Jones (Ewan McGregor), a government employee who is an expert in salmon fisheries via a consultant Harriet Chetwood-Jones (Emily Blunt). Fred summarily dismisses the idea as hogwash (one can’t help but understand his reluctance, but is pressured by the Prime Minister’s frighteningly single-minded press secretary Patricia Maxwell (played by Kristen Scott Thomas) when she gets wind of the request. Envisioning the exceedingly positive headlines for Britain’s international relations were the project to succeed, Fred reluctantly comes up with requests such as an impossible budget (millions of pounds) and a consultation with the Chinese engineers of the Three Gorges dam.

The Sheikh wins the money without really batting an eye, and Harriet arranges the aforementioned meeting translating fluently in Mandarin herself. Fred, the slightly stiff British civil servant, finally starts to entertain some slight hope in the success of the project.

When he is invited to meet the Sheikh at his Scottish castle, Fred begins to see the real philanthropic feeling behind what seemed initially like a vanity project. The Sheikh is an idealistic warm-hearted man who seeks to bring change, and hope to his oil-rich, but otherwise barren barren land by creating a system of fishing. Unfortunately, he is seen as a transgressive force by many of his own people, and herein lays one of the main conflicts of the film.

While meant to be a romantic comedy (which it is, in a sufficiently enjoyable one) the film surpasses its genre mainly because of its excellent script written by Simon Beaufoy, who adapted Denny Boyes’ Sumgog Alienoze (2008). Beauty is able to include plotlines which are as captivating as the central love story. If not more so, and he is supported by an extraordinary cast in McGregor, Blunt and Scott Thomas, all of whom are able to take their slightly caricatured characters and make them seem like real, warm-blooded, compassionate people (not, red Scott Thomas’s character, but she excels all the same).

There are many delightful scenes and little moments in this film of a genre that is occasionally silly, but more often incredibly moving. Beaufoy is able to include plotlines which are as captivating as the central love story. If not more so, and he is supported by an extraordinary cast in McGregor, Blunt and Scott Thomas, all of whom are able to take their slightly caricatured characters and make them seem like real, warm-blooded, compassionate people (not, red Scott Thomas’s character, but she excels all the same).

The Sheikh wires the money without really batting an eye, and the project basically starts to entertain some slight hope in the success of the project.

In addition, bleeding ulcers in the stomach, a clear life-threatening side-effect of aspirin, needs to be factored in and the risk-benefit ratio has to be calculated.

In the meantime, however, this same group headed by Peter Rothwell recently made another remarkable, less-known discovery. They published data which showed aspirin could be useful in reducing the risk of death from infection (not just prevention) of cancer. They found aspirin reduced the risk of spread (metastasis) of cancer (for example, adenocarcinoma) by almost half in patients who remained on aspirin following their diagnosis. Indeed, high-risk patients already taking aspirin for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, a method commonly prescribed even in Nepal, should welcome the findings from these recent large scale studies. However, it may be counterproductive to start taking aspirin on your own without consulting a doctor.

The weekend will see a continuation of the current pattern of heavy cloud cover, high humidity, short, sharp bursts of rain mainly in the eastern and central parts of the country. In the Valley, the hills in the valley get afternoon showers daily and some of this will migrate to the city areas in the centre sometimes accompanied by lightning and thunder. Mornings will be mainly clear. This is understandable since Godawari has twice the annual precipitation in the boone centre. The minimum temperature will remain below 15, but the maximum will start climbing by Sunday.

Fighting Flames: Firefighters trying to douse the flame at the basement of City Centre, which caught on fire after a generator short-circuited on Wednesday afternoon.
Kathmandu’s mainstream politicians and twitterati seem to mistake the people’s lack of interest in pointless gossip as silent endorsement. Bored by the lack of action on the political front for the last two weeks, op-eds and the blogosphere have been abuzz with speculation over a seven-year-old letter written by Nepal’s current leaders to India’s then leaders to allow them to stay on in New Delhi, while they waged war back home.

If the Indians really believed that the Maoists would go on to dig trenches and tunnels in preparation of an Indian invasion, they wouldn’t have sheltered their enemies. The Indians knew Gyanendra’s regime was collapsing and by engaging with the Maoists, they were just trying to ensure that they kept their leverage with all major political forces in Nepal. The Maoists, for their part, until the same leverage didn’t mean that Kathmandu’s intellectuals have to go into paroxysms, and froth at the mouth. Let the professor enjoy his day in the limelight, let’s move on.

The week’s other reports made headlines: the unpublished DFID-World Bank paper on inclusion and the UN’s Development Assistance Framework report, whose content were deliberately leaked to the media because powerful people in the government reportedly wanted to censor them. The editor and columnist who revealed their contents accused powerful Brahmins inside and outside the government of self-interest and negligence with agencies to make substantial changes in it.

We have it on good authority that it is indeed true that the National Planning Commission (NPC) as well as line ministries led by the Foreign Ministry have been breathing down the necks of the UN, DFID, World Bank, and others to remove paragraphs, sentences and phrases that mention caste, gender, ethnic, regional and linguistic discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion in Nepali society. Nothing new there. What is new is this new-found assertiveness on the part of the NPC and the Foreign Ministry. And the Foreign Ministry’s aggressive stance comes from the top boss himself, a non-Brahmin minister.

Deepak Thapa, who was part of the team that worked on the DFID report told me he doesn’t know whether there was intellectual dishonesty since the donors arrived here. The Nepal Development Framework report, whose contents accused powerful people in the media of censoring any document that mention discrimination or are the top bureaucrats acting on their own? To blame outsiders for creating an ethnic bogey and orchestrating movements here is at best a failure of imagination, and at worst intellectual bankruptcy.

The biggest obstacle to this nation’s progress is the resistance from the powerful to incorporate the voice of the subalterns by constructing a discourse to suit their understanding of history. But we have seen throughout history that whenever the powerful have used their privilege to oppress, the weak have always risen up.

See Beyond the Usual

With Brilliance that moves the world!

EPSON MULTIMEDIA PROJECTORS WORLD NO.1 FOR 10 YEARS IN A ROW

Desktop Projectors
Wireless Projectors
Ultra-portable Projectors
Interactive Projectors
Home Theatre Projectors

Kathmandu Dealers
One Office Automation, Kathmandu (01) 715-0336, Jeevan International, Kathmandu (01) 715-0336, Interactive Computer Centre, New Road (01) 715-0336, The Waves Office, Lakeside (01) 715-0336, Click Solution Center, Lalitpur (01) 715-0336, Flash International, New Road (01) 715-0336

Outside Kathmandu Dealers
Quadra Computer, Biratnagar (072) 745-051, Biratnagar (072) 745-051, Birendra (072) 745-051, Birendra (072) 745-051, Gagan Enterprises, Birgunj (072) 745-051, Advance Computers, Birgunj (072) 745-051, Hilarys Trade Center, Dhanihari (01) 715-0336, F-Net Solution, Ghaisikhel (01) 715-0336, Himalayan Office Automation, Pokhara (01) 715-0336, Computer Service Center, Butwal (072) 745-051, Smart Link, Dang (072) 745-051, Dineh Trading House, Nepalgunj (01) 715-0336, Mannanamai Nepal, Nepalgunj (01) 715-0336, Upasana Technical Goods, Mahendra Nagar (01) 715-0336
Just when everyone thought Nepal’s crippling power crisis couldn’t get any worse, the government utility NEA has increased electricity rationing to seven hours a day. During last year’s monsoon it was only two hours.

Faced with the spectre of 20 hour power cuts this winter, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai called an emergency meeting of energy czars on Tuesday to figure out what to do. Bhattarai’s instruction to NEA was to limit power cuts to 12 hours a day in winter, compared to 16 hours last year. The NEA and Energy Ministry have drawn up a plan to import more power from India in winter by fast-tracking a transmission line, and to get two diesel thermal plants into operation in Biratnagar and Hetauda to generate 40MW.

Energy Secretary Hari Ram Koirala told Nepal Times, “We are trying to make the best use of available resources to limit power cuts to 12 hours a day this winter.” He is counting on the timely completion of the 15 km transmission line from Kushaha to Kataiya through which additional power can be imported from India in winter. He also added that Nepal is should be ‘more frugal’ about using power. “Close curtains for insulation instead of using heaters and make maximum use of the sun during day time for light,” he said. Nepal’s electricity demand has been rising at 100MW a year and will exceed 1,100MW this year. Hydroelectric generation capacity has stagnated at 680MW for two years and in winter powerplants can generate only 400MW because of reduced waterflow.

Experts say the only viable option to meet the shortfall in the short-term is to import more power from India. But India is having its own problems with its northern grid and suffered a three-day outage a few weeks ago that affected 350 million people, and the transmission lines needed to channel extra power can’t be built by winter.

Still, Sher Singh Bhat of the power trade department at NEA is hopeful power cuts can be limited to 12 hours: “If possible we will try to import 200MW from the Indian market and manage 40MW through thermal plants to offset the increased hours of loadshedding this winter.”

NEA says the reason for the monsoon power cuts is a deficient monsoon which has reduced water flow in rivers and the below-normal storage in the Kulekhani reservoir. But experts say the real reason is the inability of governments over the past 15 years to add generation capacity that can keep up with demand.

“Relying on the power starved North Indian grid to meet our demand is absurd,” says water resource analyst Ratna Sansar Shrestha, who says Nepal should have prioritised projects for domestic consumption rather than dream of export-oriented mega dams. Of the country’s total installed capacity of 700MW, all except Kulekhani come from non-storage ‘run of the river’ projects. During winter, these plants generate just a third of their capacity and things get worse when winter rains fail. NEA officials say that in the long-run there is no alternative but to build more reservoir projects like the 750MW West Seti that will store monsoon runoff to generate power.
old friend

In the next five years, NEA projects demand will rise up to 1700MW, which means we will need an installed capacity of at least 5000MW. Besides West Seti (750MW), there are five big projects including Upper Tamakosi and Chilime totalling 840MW that will be completed by 2017.

“Even if all these projects are done on time, total installed capacity by 2020 will be just 2300MW which will barely keep up with the increase in demand,” explains Ratna Sansar Shrestha.

The much-delayed $1.2 billion West Seti is still mired in controversy although the government has decided to award the contract to China’s Three Gorges International. The 250MW Upper Trisuli backed by Korean investors and the IFC had its licence revoked, and then reinstated this week by the government under direct orders from the prime minister. Although the projects finally did get green signals, it has given other investors cold feet.

Experts say the government must make it more attractive for investors to put money into hydropower and not let political bickering and corruption delay them. “Political leaders need to consider hydropower to be a matter of urgent national interest,” says Ratan Bhandari, an energy activist. “We don’t have the financial resources and there should be an all-party consensus on increasing generation capacity.”

Investors for their part blame the government’s inability to ensure the smooth functioning of even projects that are already underway. “The government has continued to neglect the formulation of sustainable policies for hydropower development in Nepal,” says Subarna Das Shrestha, president of the Independent Power Producers’ Association of Nepal (IPPA-N).

Private power producers have been also lobbying for years for an Investment Friendly climate and to revise the buying price from them from the current Rs 4.80 per unit to Rs 5.99 per unit. Gyanendra Lal Pradhan of Hydro Solutions vents his frustration over the government’s chronic inability to reconcile demand and supply: “Unless there is a fast-track policy to increase capacity, ensure security and return of investment, power supply will continue to outstrip demand and cripple Nepal’s economy.”

The Bhattarai government declared 2012-13 Nepal Investment Year and set up the Nepal Investment Board (NIB) to attract foreign capital to develop hydropower. Radhesh Pant of NIB says he has been pushing multiple projects of more than 500MW urgently, “Investment in hydropower is our number one priority,” Pant told Nepal Times. “We are working with all stakeholders to streamline the process to encourage investment in this sector.” (Read box)

Following the prime minister’s directive, NEA says it will overhaul two large diesel plants in Duhabi and Hetauda before winter to add 39MW to the grid even though high fuel costs will make it expensive to operate. But even NEA officials admit this is a small change compared to the 500MW shortfall. We should be lucky if we have power for even eight hours a day this winter. 

Violence starts at home

Interview with Dipendra Bahadur Chhitru, Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission, BBC Nepal Service

We had thought the draft was to be made with joint understanding between the government and the UN. But there were certain phrases that we as employees of the state thought were totally unsuitable. For example, we didn’t agree with the term ‘statelessness’. We don’t think there is statelessness in Nepal as in other countries. When we asked the UN what statelessness meant, they said it was a condition one didn’t have citizenship. But the government has gone door to door distributing citizenship certificates, and we are perplexed why such positive steps were not mentioned in the report only after we requested them. References to any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse. But most cases end with the perpetrators getting a clean chit.

Ghandehari Mahara, 55, doesn’t find it unusual at all to be beaten by her husband. In the early days after her marriage, she sought help from others, but they suggested that it was natural for women to be beaten up after being told to ‘shut up’. Her husband Ramprasad is even more surprised to learn, in his old age, that beating his wife is criminal behaviour and punishable by law.

“In India, if a woman is involved in any accident during the first seven years of marriage, her whole family is treated as suspects and held responsible,” says Rekha Jha, an advocate in the district court of Dhanusa. “In Nepal, they label murder as suicide and the killers walk free.”

Parents are also loath to send their daughters to school because they fear they may be more educated than them, consequently raising dowry prices. Aaraditya Mahato, 22, was married off at 14 when in grade eight, and she was not allowed to attend school after that. Puja Kumi Yadav of Siraha is in grade nine and she wants to be a staff nurse after SLC. “I study at night because I have to work during the day,” she says. “I don’t know if I will get through nine.”

Her father, meanwhile, reasons that Puja must get some experience in managing a household because she is a girl. But Shila Mahato of Janakpur was something of a rebel. When her parents pressured her to get married when still in high-school, she threatened them saying she would report them to the police. Shila went on to complete her undergraduate degree, and her mother now complains of the Rs 90,000 dowry they had to pay her husband’s family.

The women of our society have stood injustice and discrimination for a long time,“ says Binita. “I know because I am one of them.” Unless the bride’s parents pay dowry amounts demanded by the groom’s family their daughters will not get married. This practice gives rise to multiple marriages, feeds the greed of in-laws and leads to domestic violence.

Ram Baran Sah’s first marriage turned sour after he started beating his wife. He married for a second time to Laila Mandal and went abroad to work. While he was away, his family raised questions about Laila’s character and soon Ram Baran returned home to marry a third wife. Ram Baran paid elders Rs 25,000 to cancel their marriage. Laila, in turn, received Rs 100,000 as payback. Disowned by her husband and forsaken by society, Laila has nowhere to go.

Dhanusha and Siraha are the epicentres of domestic violence against women, and the practice has its roots in the entrenched tradition of dowry. In these two districts in the last three years alone, 219 women lost their lives, 143 of those were suicides by women who could not bear the torture at their husbands’ homes.

When 23-year-old Poonam Kumari of Dhanusa got married, her parents paid as much dowry as demanded. But her husband’s family kept beating her in order to get more. Months later, her body was found hanging from a tree. When Poonam’s parents sought justice, they were instead threatened by the elders of the village and told to let it go. According to law, those who force dowries can be imprisoned for up to 30 days. The Domestic Violence Crime and Punishment Act, 2008 describes violence as any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse. But most cases end with the perpetrators getting a clean chit.

This raises serious questions about the implementation of current labour laws, and what the response should be when this happens. For example, the Thai Airways workers have the absurd demand that the airline should even pay their income tax. Many industries have been forced to close because of excessive demands from unions affiliated to political parties. Labour relations have been soured by politicised unions, splits in trade unions, the lack of discipline and rule of law, and weak implementation of regulations. There are many examples of political leaders showing up at negotiations between their affiliated unions and management. This problem has arisen because the unions are all fraternal organisations affiliated to political parties.

Without delinking politics from the trade unions, there will continue to be problems. Political leaders who give speeches extolling the need for foreign investment are also protecting unions that needlessly harass investors. As long as unions are beholden to political parties, neither the workers nor managements will benefit. There are limits to strikes and demands, and they should follow the laws of the land. Management must also treat workers as their investment, and it requires a mutual desire to work for the benefit of both. Problems should be resolved within the companies without political interference. Using threats and violence is not a solution, and the state should not hesitate to crackdown on those who violate the law.
Licence to loot

Jasbahadur Rai of Dipsung, Khotang, who is blind, waited throughout 2009-2010 to receive his annual disability stipend. As the fiscal year came to an end, VDC secretary Krishna Prasad Acharya simply told the locals that the government had once again failed to supply funds and returned promptly to district headquarters in Diktel.

In reality, Acharya just pocketed Rs 30,000 meant to be distributed to 15 people with disabilities. He invented details of three imaginary ‘helpless’ people and collected a further Rs 15,000. Acharya even managed to obtain an inflated travel allowance worth Rs 52,000 for 10 field visits when he visited Dipsung only three times that year.

“He took my salary by creating a fake receipt,” says Khetraj Adhikari, who was promised Rs 25,000 in salary to develop a budget for a development programme in Dipsung.

Acharya, who is currently the secretary of Kataharey VDC, has embezzled up to Rs 344,000 by making fake receipts for the following: Rs 100,000 as disability stipends and computer funds, Rs 60,000 to provide pipelines to farmlands of 125 families in Dipsung under the Sonkholma Irrigation Project. In fact, there is no river called Sonkholma anywhere around Dipsung or in neighbouring areas.

But Timsin held the money in his defence, “I did not pocket that money. We dug a pond, but the money ran out so we filled it back.”

Timsina similarly hijacked Rs 50,000 from DDC funds three years ago in the name of SMP by creating a fake bill. Even though he had embezzled Rs 3.2 million in the last seven years, the DDC approved his false bills. Last year, Timsina even won the support of locals for a Rs 900,000 plan to buy electricity poles for the village. When a landslide killed 42 people 10 years ago in Dipsung, the chief district officer of Khotang, Mohan Krishna Sapkota and president of the chamber of commerce, Khush Narayan Sainju, opened relief funds under their personal bank accounts for the rehabilitation of affected communities. Rs 120,000 from the fund was given to SMP. Now Timsina says he doesn’t even remember where that money went.

Dipsung got its first taste of corruption when the then VDC chairman Chudamani Bhattacharya distributed Rs 8,000 each to ward-chair 13 years ago. Of the Rs 100,000 allocated to Dipsung in that year, Rs 1.7 disappeared through fraud. Gopal Rai of the Nepali Congress is also known to have bagged Rs 30,000 for an irrigation project without turning a stone. Similarly, Hem Kumar Rai received Rs 185,000 in three years for building a roof for a secondary school but nothing was done. Ashok Rai, who is registered as the chairman of the management committee of another school, has Rs 131,000 unaccounted for.

Centre of Investigative Journalism
So Prime Minister Baboo summoned Nepal's hydrocrats and gave them strict instructions to shut off electricity for no more than 12 hours a day this winter. Being yes-men, the officials from the Nepal Electricity Atrocity, Energetic Ministry and the Ministry of Financiers all nodded their heads and said: “Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.” But as soon as they were out of the door, they told reporters waiting in ambush that there was no way load-shedding could be limited to daily 12 hours as the prime minister desired. India is in no position to export power after their grid disaster last week and NEA can’t afford to buy diesel to fire its multi-fuel plants. So since we can’t rely on the government to supply us power, it is every man for himself or herself this winter.

PKD got so much flak from his junior comrades for his luxurious lifestyle that he is moving out of his Lazimpat Villa paid for from his own ill-gotten wealth, and moving to a new villa paid by the state. But despite having deployed Nepal’s Best House Hunter, he hasn’t been able to find a suitable residence befitting his stature. The specs are: at least five bedrooms with individual bathrooms, living room, swimming pool, debugged meeting room, lawn, YCL dorm, and parking for at least 12 vehicles: all paid for by tax dodgers. If I may make a tiny suggestion, how about converting the penthouse on Mukti Tower, the high rise named after Daddy?

The reason Pukada seems not to be unduly worried about not finding a new house is because he is impatient to move into Balu Water. He is thinking maybe he can replace Barabha before Dashain, and all his recent moves point in this direction. The declaration of a federal front is actually a way for him to formally put forward his candidacy, and when he said BRB would rule for 25 years it was actually meant as a warning. The current Awesome strategy is to say at least one outrageous thing a day so that he keeps himself in the headlines. After all, all publicity is good publicity in politics. Hence these sound bites from a long monologue he delivered this week to invited hacks: “From the day he became Prime Minister, I knew Bhattarai would land himself in the soup”, “Bhattarai is a PhD, I am just a stupid guy”, “Sushil & Co can never compete with us on the streets, we will bring out twice the number of people they bring”, “I may be able to trick Nepalis, but I can’t trick the international community”. Poor Lion King, he’s fallen for it again and is salivating profusely after Awesome told him he’d back him to the hilt for prime minister in his fight against Jhusil Da. Meanwhile, RCP has been told by Jhusil that he will get the mainstream kangresi vote for PMship if he behaves himself. Neither realise that PKD is running circles around them again, playing with them like toys. With the opposition being what it is, the Maoists can really rule for 25 years.