



## Coming this winter: 20 hour power cuts daily

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Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has got his energy czars to ensure that load-shedding does not exceed 12 hours a day this winter, but with no addition in generation capacity and no transmission lines, it doesn't look likely.

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You ain't seen nothing yet

**Hello darkness my old friend**  
by BHRIKUTI RAI  
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**BY THE WAY** page 11  
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**Textbook history**  
The identity movement in Nepal started much before the donors arrived here. To blame outsiders for Nepal's ills is to excuse the mistakes of our rulers and misread history.



**INTERVIEW** page 3

David Seddon, co-author of *Nepal in Crisis: Growth and Stagnation at the Periphery* (1980) warns about the dangers of defining social exclusion only in terms of caste and ethnicity.

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# YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET

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 this winter there will be electricity for only four hours a day.

Load-shedding is now a given, and like with all other shortages in this country, people have learnt to cope. Just like organisms adapt to small incremental doses of poison, Nepalis adapt to hardships heaped on them. But nothing is going to prepare us as individuals, 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 were distracted by fighting, by infighting, 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 20-hour power cuts 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 100MW. 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 irresponsibility. Our rulers have ensured that we as a nation take a great leap backward to the dark ages.

To shed some light into the crisis, as it were, let us look at the short-term projections. In five years, demand is set to rise to 1500MW which means we will need an installed capacity of 4500MW so as to



Power used to come out of the barrel of a gun for the Prime Minister's party. It should now come out of a hydro-electric turbine.

cover for the winter deficit. The projects expected to be completed in the next few years, including Upper Tamakosi, Upper Trisuli 3A and 3B, and Chamelia, will only add 586MW to the grid. Which means the shortfall is here to stay for the next five years, even if those projects are completed on schedule. But at the rate at which licences are being mysteriously revoked, and then equally mysteriously re-issued a week later, that is not likely.

Foreign investors are being harassed either by the government, by local extortionists, or by the hydro mafia. Projects that were on the verge of starting construction have suddenly been stopped, local opposition has stalled three big projects with Indian investment, like Arun III, Budi Gandaki and Upper Karnali. The Brazilian investor, Engevix, is on the verge of pulling out of the 400MW Lower Arun.

The only long-term solution is to start building new plants in the 2,000MW range right away, and it would be even better if they are storage projects like the West Seti. For that to happen, Nepal needs to be more investment-friendly, tariffs need to be revised to make it worthwhile and the bureaucratic hurdles need to be smoothened. (See page 12-13).

NEA has said that the reason for the electricity shortfall this monsoon season was less than average rainfall in July and August and the grid collapse in northern India which lead to the reduction of Nepal's power import. What they fail to mention are the real reasons: incompetence, corruption, mismanagement and political interference.

To be sure, things have been moving. In the last government, the UML Energy Minister Gokarna Bista tried to remove the log jam on projects until his government itself was removed. The former parliament's Committee on Natural Resources completed the most detailed analysis yet of the problems and recommended solutions. Prime Minister Bhattarai doesn't have to re-invent the wheel, he should just read that report and get into action. Among the recommendations:

- Political consensus on future strategy, less political interference in the work of NEA
- Generate enough power to meet domestic demand for value-added industry and only then export
- Immediately commission a reservoir project in each development zone
- Unbundle transmission and distribution, address inefficiencies, corruption, pilferage

Power used to come out of the barrel of a gun for the Prime Minister's party. 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 so there will be no power cuts by 2018.

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### WHY SOME DOCTORS STAY

NSI's research on Nepali doctors gives us great insight 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 within and not be forced. Also the fact that doctors are leaving Nepal to work abroad shouldn't be made a big deal since people from other professions also migrate. I have seen pilots leaving the country and working for foreign airlines, and engineers working in the Middle East.

Anonymous

- 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 fix 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 (countless hours of load shedding, poor transportation), the working conditions are poor, safety standards are neglected and 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 minority who can't face 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.

Ajiv 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 am against 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 medicines 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 English language. If the doctor's English is poor, he is less likely to emigrate. I completed my MBBS from Kolkota and my classmates were mostly from rural West Bengal. They did their +2 in Bengali 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 Kolkota, Delhi, etc) have emigrated to USA, UK and the majority with poor English have stayed behind.

Manohar Budhathoki

### A NATION'S HEALTH

I don't blame Nepali 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. Have you seen the living conditions in Mugu? You have to be more altruistic than Mahatma Gandhi to give up a medical career in the west to pursue your inner calling in such places.

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? Charities constructed literally thousands of hospitals in the West (and many in India) long before government came to dominate the healthcare field. Government-mandated or funded national health

insurance would probably provide improved care if it were implemented in Nepal, as would increased spending on rural clinics and hospitals.

Thomas

### LOST PRIORITY

Chandan Sapkota makes some great points about Nepal's trade competitiveness ('Lost priority', #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 cost in Nepal is 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, militant labour, rule of law, regulation etc) helps, but without lower labour cost, Nepal won't be able to compete regionally or globally.

Anonymous

- Excellent piece as usual from one of Nepal's most incisive commentators on finance and economics. It is disheartening to know that we go around begging for trade concessions (which we should not have to in the first place given that free trade is such a powerful mantra) instead of solving basic problems such as lack of electricity, constant labour problems, and poor infrastructure in the country.

SJ Thapa

- It makes me laugh when Bhattarai, whose 'optimistic political theory' led to the massacre of 17,000 Nepalis,

promises to take the country's growth rate into double digits. I'm not sure he has any idea about how to create a diversified economy, and his claims sound like hollow promises. He should save his revolutionary speeches for later and work on providing basic facilities like electricity and road networks and ensuring a manufacturing-friendly environment first.

Nirmal

### 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', Rabintra Mishra, #618).

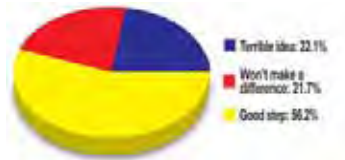
Raju



nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #619

Q. What is your take on government's decision to ban women under 30 from working in the Gulf?

Total votes: 1,586



Weekly Internet Poll # 620. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. The President's refusal to approve election related ordinances is:



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# "A DANGEROUS RACISM"

**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 been 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 there, 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 has become more dense.

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 the view that roads are largely disruptive?**

Yes and no. 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 can 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 communications. The IT revolution has meant that in a way it is not roads that is so important now as it is the spread of ideas and information and how people use that. That is a positive for Nepal because the statistics suggest that there is now very widespread use of social media and mobile phones. We haven't seen the implication of this yet in Nepal or anywhere, it will be profoundly revolutionary.

**You also saw overpopulation and the lack of employment as fuel for future unrest, that prediction was borne out. We were accused of being 'radical pessimists' at the time as all the dependency theorists were. The impact of malaria eradication in the 1960s, which 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 but I don't think we picked up the importance of that as much as we should have done. In retrospect, in 70s and 80s there was a massive relocation of population 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 great 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 lead-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.

David Seddon, co-author of *Nepal in Crisis: Growth and Stagnation at the Periphery* (1980) and other books on Nepal, spoke to *Nepali Times* in Kathmandu this week about why the dire predictions about the country he made 32 years ago haven't come true. He now warns of the dangers of defining social exclusion only in terms of caste and ethnicity.



KUNDA DIXIT

**Given the contradictions in Nepali society and economy in the 70s did you feel 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, meanwhile, ordinary people carry on the best they can, and labour migration continues to bring in 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 universal human 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 not 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 marginal and weak. Federalism is a dangerous division even on territorial and development basis.

**But when identity-based federalism becomes a political ideology as it has now, it isn't easy to backtrack.**

We should never have got to this point, but for some reason federalism, as you say, has grown to become a political ideology. If federalism is now on the agenda, and all things I have been saying are sort of out of date, then the best one could hope for is a geographic, economic federalism in which there is proper democratic representation. 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 that is something that every party needs to address, including, and one might even say particularly, the UCPN and CPN. There is no doubt that there is dominance, but this is not just a caste and ethnic dominance, this is about all those who are wealthy and powerful. As an old Marxist, I would emphasise the class nature of this dominance. What needs to happen is that there should be an opening up of opportunities in government 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 solely 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 Nepal 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 ethnicity-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 classes, they talked about social exclusion in terms of caste and ethnicity which then became the conventional wisdom and dogma. Development agencies have moved from economic and infrastructure into social development, and political interference. You can debate whether that is legitimate or not, but I think not.

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

Read the longer version of the interview





TIGER TOPS

LUKAS GRIMM

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 time 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 against renewing the lease in 2010, but then let the resorts stay for another two years because of Nepal Tourism Year 2011. On Thursday the Cabinet formed a committee made up of the Ministers of Forest, Finance,

Tourism and Environment to look into the issue and submit a report for further action. Resort owners had wanted an independent research team to study the net impact of the resorts and the Park's carrying capacity. 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 crores 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 internationally-recognised models for sustainable ecotourism which have worked well for years. But Acharya 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

# Resorting to politics

## The future of resorts located inside Chitwan National Park hangs in the balance after their licence renewal is embroiled in politics

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, Kristjan 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 their location and other facilities. Tiger Tops alone pays the government Rs 10 million a year. The five other hotels include Safari Narayani, Chitwan Jungle Lodge, Machan Wildlife, Island Jungle Resort and Temple Tigers.

Resort owners also reject criticism that the presence of tourists inside the Park disturbs wildlife, arguing that most guests are ecologically conscious and in any case the presence of the hotel is a deterrent against poachers. Studies conducted over the past 40 years show

that Chitwan's famous rhino and tiger populations have rebounded. In fact, there has been zero poaching of tigers and rhinos for over a year now.

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 have made it easier to keep a check on poaching.

Whether the licences are renewed or not, it is clear 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 at least 130, and there are more than 500 rhinos besides scores of other mammals and more than 420 species of birds.

Chitwan is listed as 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. 🇳🇵

Conflict vs conservation, #316

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# Chuck the wildlife whiz

Tiger expert Chuck McDougal gets the Brian Hodgson Award for his work to save the Chitwan tiger



Charles (Chuck) McDougal had such an interest in South Asia that at age 11, together with a school friend, he decided to set off from Washington to meet the Dalai Lama. They were detained by the police in Chicago while walking along Lake Michigan in solar helmets.

Chuck's interest in the subcontinent never waned, and he did a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of New Mexico researching ethnic groups in Orissa, and then came to eastern Nepal in 1964 to study the Kulunge Rai. He stayed, starting a trekking company and exploring new trekking routes in the Himalaya.


He partnered with Jim Edwards and founded the Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge in Chitwan in 1972, pre-dating the establishment of the national park for which Chuck lobbied. His interest in conservation 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, he 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, stripe identification and pugmark identification.

With the late Tirtha Man Maskey, Chuck drew up the initial anti-poaching strategy for Tarai parks setting up intelligence units and a reward scheme. Chuck has trained a new generation of Nepali scientists and conservationists, including Bhim Gurung, a former lodge manager at Tiger Tops, who recently received his doctorate in tiger conservation.

Chuck McDougal remains a key non-executive director of Tiger Tops, with special responsibility for conservation and research programs; a senior trustee of ITNC, a UK Registered Charity and unofficial advisor to numerous charities and official bodies.

His academic attainment as an anthropologist, coupled with his amateur (in the technical meaning of the word) naturalist has given him a breadth of vision (coupled with over 40 years of experience in Nepal, India and Bhutan) and a very human appreciation of the needs for wildlife conservation as identified through his lifelong commitment to that icon of the sub-continent – the tiger. His research continues under his deft leadership in his eightieth year and long may he continue to provide insight, inspiration and, above all, leadership to current and future conservationists in Nepal and the rest of the Indian sub-continent

Chuck's relentless efforts have not gone unnoticed. On 20 July the British Embassy in Kathmandu recognised his extensive conservation work in the Himalayas with the Brian Hodgson Award. The award was established by Himalayan Nature and was named after Nepal's second British resident who documented many different species of wildlife between 1833 and 1844. 

Lukas Grimm



**SELF-PORTRAIT:** Chuck McDougal's famous camera-trap portrait of a tiger in Chitwan during his study of the Chitwan ecosystem in the 1970s became world famous and was on the cover of his book, *The Face of the Tiger*.

## London in Kathmandu

Previously known as Informatics College, Islington College underwent a facelift last year and is now affiliated with London Metropolitan University (LMU). *Nepali Times* caught up with Sulav Budhathoki, Chairman and CEO to learn what IC has to offer Nepali students who desire an international degree.

**Nepali Times: How is Islington College (IC) different from other colleges in Nepal?**  
**Sulav Budhathoki:** Our curriculum is the same as the one in London where it is designed. The exams are held in Kathmandu, but questions are prepared and papers are checked in the UK. Besides outstanding computing facilities, we also provide students with access to e-libraries at LMU and students in Kathmandu can easily transfer to LMU at any time.

**So Nepali students don't have to spend a lot of money going to London anymore?**  
That is right. Students at our Kathmandu college can complete the same course at 10 per cent of the cost in the UK. And if they want to go to London at any point during their studies, their credits will be transferred without any difficulty.

**What are the courses you offer, and are you planning to expand into other disciplines?**  
Currently, we offer three undergraduate courses in computers, media technology and IT. We are planning to introduce postgraduate degrees in business administration and computer science within 2013.

**Do many of your students stay in Nepal or do they go abroad to work after they graduate?**  
It's quite difficult for students to find job opportunities in Nepal. But some students who joined our college with the sole intention to go abroad have started working in Nepal and I have seen a drastic change in their mindset. Some years ago, most students wanted to leave Nepal immediately after high-school, but now most of them want to at least finish their undergraduate studies here.

**Your college has a good record for job placements. How did that come about?**  
Through our links with ISPs, our students are already working there full-time and several others are interning at banks and other private companies. We participated in an education fair a month ago and got to network with a lot of top IT companies in India and hope to build new relations.

**What possibilities and challenges do you see in the education sector in Nepal?**  
Nepal can be an educational hub for students from Indian cities near our border. In fact, we plan on addressing the educational needs of foreign students very soon. The biggest challenge in Nepal is to overcome political instability. The other challenge we face as educators is to provide quality education, one that includes diverse methods of learning: lecture, presentations, workshops, field visits etc.



### BIZ BRIEFS

#### Happy holiday

Arihantholidays.com was launched recently with the aim of providing wholesome holiday experience. Focusing on satisfaction of the customers, it offers online services to book holiday packages, domestic and international flight tickets, hotels, railway and bus tickets, and car rentals.



#### Real winner

Eureka residential school from Dharan is the eastern region winner of the Real School of Nepal 2012. It is a national level competition where schools from all over Nepal are competing in various categories. It will be held in Eastern, Western and Central regions followed by a Grand Finale in Kathmandu.



#### Farmer friendly

Everest Bank has established a specialised branch called Krishi Udhyan Bikash Shakha at Rajbiraj, Saptari for the development of agricultural sector. With this, the bank now has 47 branches, two extension counters, 20 revenue collection counters and 60 ATMs.



#### Winning click

Canon EOS 5D III has been awarded with the best advanced SLR title for the year 2012-2013 by European Imaging and Sound Association (EISA). EOS 5D III is equipped with a full-frame 22.3 megapixel CMOS sensor that can shoot up to six frames per second.





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PICS: TONG SIAN CHOO

# The voices of their minds

For the first time in Nepal, a radio station in Pokhara tackles the taboo subject of child sexual abuse

TONG SIAN CHOO in POKHARA

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, child welfare activists say, but it is shrouded in secrecy because of taboos. Victimised girls often keep their ordeals to themselves, and families almost never go to the police.

Sharma was so moved by what she heard in school, she led a group called Team Organising Local Institute (TOLI) in her former secondary

school which used peer counselling to help mainly female victims of abuse.

"In Nepal, girls and boys are not equal," Sharma explains, "girls don't even want to seek help from counselors after something has happened because they think their families will find out."

To reach out to a larger public, TOLI started working two years ago with a Pokhara radio station, Radio Taranga, to address sexual harassment and abuse problems in Nepal with a program called 'Manko Awaj' (My Mind's Voice). It aims to raise awareness of sexual abuse among young women between 14-18 in their schools, neighbourhoods and homes.

Radio Taranga's Himnidhi



**SPEAKING THEIR MINDS:** Gauridevi Sharma (top) Gauridevi Sharma counselled her peers who faced sexual harassment and abuse in her school and is now a presenter at Pokhara's Radio Taranga's program Manko Awaj with Himnidhi Laudari and Ravina Ale (below).

Laudari says students from this age group have been found to be "very prone to sexual harassment". Over the past two years, more than 100 students from 58 secondary schools in Kaski and Tanahun district, including boys and girls, have been interviewed to share their views and experiences. In

addition, parents, teachers and child welfare activists are also invited to the studio to discuss how talking about the problem openly may help curb abuse.

In the very first episode of Manko Awaj, Sharma shared her experience of how male teachers often put their hands on the shoulders of

girl students, or made other advances. "The girls actually feel uneasy about it, yet they are scared to tell the teachers because they fear punishment, and some are really punished," Sharma said.

The former coordinator of TOLI's 'Safe Environment for Girls' program, Dudh Kashi Gurung, has been handling up to 30 child sexual abuse cases each year since 2009.

"Nepal is a patriarchal society, some teachers sexually harass their students," she explained, "but it is very difficult for the victims to talk about it." Gurung noticed that in cases of rape, parents did not even lodge a complaint with the police. "They are afraid word will get out, society will stigmatise their daughters, and it would be difficult to marry them off," she added.

The lack of awareness about sexual matters among young adults complicates this problem further. "It is seen as acceptable for boys to tease girls," Laudari 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 Aawaj 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 Aawaj' is broadcast every Saturday 7.30-8pm and can be heard online at: [www.radiotaranga.com](http://www.radiotaranga.com)

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Divya Shrestha



# Boys no more

Discrimination against girls in Pakistan is so strong that families cross-dress their daughters as boys so they can move more freely about town

MUDASSAR SHAH

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.



**LAST DAY OF FREEDOM:** Rafiqa Sayed enjoys her last day dressed as a boy, and plays with a toy gun. Her parents dressed her as a boy so she could go to school in Peshawar.

"I used 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." 📺

🔊 Listen to podcast of this story:  
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## EVENTS

**IMAGINING THE CONTEMPORARY CITY**, a talk by prominent architect Biresh Shah. 24 August, 5.30pm, Indian Cultural Centre, Balmaldir, Naxal, 4412715, [icc.kathmandu@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:info@restaurantnepal.com)

**Teej Festival**, four days of Teej 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, 44425898, 9851045969

**Saturday Bird Watching**, catch native birds like the Spiny Babbler, Slender-billed Scimitar-babbler 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 till 26 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 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

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

## 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



**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](mailto:info@restaurantnepal.com)

## DINING

**Irish Pub**, laid-back bar ambience and a cultured selection of drinks. Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, 4416027



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



**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. Lakeside, Pokhara, 065-461412

**Tamarind**, 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 CAFÉ**, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. Thamel

**Cafereena**, the extensive menu has something for everyone. Try their famous chips chilly. Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg



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

**Japanese Crepe Station**, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. Khichapokhari and Basantapur, Call 4256655

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**NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT**, relaxing ambience and good food, don't miss out on their penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. *Lazimpat, 44432957*

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

**Bu keba**, 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, 4215068*

## GETAWAYS

**Saturday Nights at Borderlands**, music, barbecue and much more for a memorable Saturday. *Rs 2100, 27 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*



**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, dhulikhellodgeresort.com*



**LAST RESORT**, canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking-challenge yourself and be adventurous at the Last Resort. *Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchowk, 4700525, 4701247*

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# Tamas-laya



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

**T**amas in Sanskrit signifies a lifestyle of decadence, indulgence and indolence. Tamasic activities include eating meat and drinking alcohol. And 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 been around for over five years and has become an established hotspot, this new venture of Puja Chand Thakuri and Prem Bahadur Gurung promises to outdo its predecessor. It hasn't had its official opening yet, but draws in full houses every evening.

The restaurant's lure lies in

its décor with a huge tree as its centre piece. The bar in the courtyard, the open kitchen, the smell of freshly baked bread wafting through the air, the white walls and the shimmering curtains all come together to create a shangrila in the midst of a mess that is Kathmandu. Laya means coming together of and at Tamas-laya, nature and pleasure are intrinsically intertwined. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on aesthetics, not only of its surroundings, but also in the preparation of food and service.

Cosmopolitan, sophisticated, trendy and upscale, Tamas-laya wants

to highlight fine dining experience and has hired Chef Lama to create a menu that could rival those of five-star establishments in terms of quality and taste. The diverse and multi-ethnic food on offer is reflective of the changing attitudes of Kathmanduites towards food.

We started our meal with the Greek salad- a crunchy, fresh platter of lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, olives and feta cheese. We followed this with prawn tempura and chicken satay cooked the Balinese way. The spices infuse this snack with zest and tang and is truly delightful. Also the freshly ground peanut sauce accompanying

the chicken satay deserves a mention. I scooped it up with bread sticks flavoured with carom seeds and I think they should start serving the sticks as a separate snack.

For the main course, I had the fisherman's fish. I love words more than I love food and the alliterative sound of that dish had me hooked. Grilled fish fillet, served over mashed potatoes and bitter cucumbers drizzled with parsley butter, with a tomato concasse was delicious as the clashing flavours came together to create this beautiful meal. The fillet

came with a mushroom fish stew, a light airy consommé of goodness in each spoon.

Tamas-laya opens at 7am for breakfast and hosts special themed nights thrice a week: Oriental, Arabic and Italian, with Saturday being barbeque day.

There have been complaints of service being slow and waiters not being the most competent, but these are teething problems that are sure to be sorted out by the time they open officially.

I like places that have character, ambience, where stories are spun and related, where the music sets the mood and hands touch tentatively for the first time across the table. There is the promise of new intimacies, renewed romances, large memorable meals, music, song and a rejuvenation of the senses. Such is the allure of Tamas-laya. 🇳🇵

**Ruby Tuesday**

**How to get there:** In Naxal, right next to Mike's Breakfast, 100 metres or so from the Police Headquarter.

**8.5**  
out of 10



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# SALMON FISHING in the YEMEN



MUST SEE  
Sophia Pande

What struck me initially as a slightly disastrous title altered significantly after watching this delightful film directed by Lasse Hallström (who also directed *Chocolat* in 2000, among various other light-hearted confections). Somehow, in my mind post-viewing, the title, though clearly a mouthful, has come to represent the whimsical philanthropy embodied by the film. The first thing that strikes everyone is the absurdity of the title: "Salmon in the Yemen? How absurd". Well, exactly. The premise of the film is an unusual request made by Sheik Muhammad (played by the craggily beautiful Amr Waked), 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 Alfred "Fred" Jones (Ewan McGregor), a government employee who is an expert in salmon fisheries via a consultant Harriet Chetwode-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, Maxwell steamrolls all involved. 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 wires 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 land by creating a system of irrigation that would also include salmon 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 fact, a supremely enjoyable one) the film surpasses its genre mainly because of its excellent script written by Simon Beaufoy, who adapted Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). 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 (well, not Scott Thomas's character, but she excels all the same). There are many delightful scenes and little moments in this gem of a film that is occasionally silly, but more often incredibly moving. 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 fictional. *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.

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available at:  
Music and Expression,  
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Watch trailer



# The humble aspirin



DHANVANTARI  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

The possibility of using aspirin to prevent cancer was a 'serendipitous finding'. Aspirin has long been regarded as a drug which prevents and helps treat strokes and heart attacks. The findings about aspirin helping protect patients against cancer were a byproduct of studies which were primarily designed to further define the role of aspirin in patients with strokes and heart attacks. This kind of chance discovery, known as serendipitous finding, is common in biomedical research. Indeed penicillin too was discovered serendipitously. Serendipitous is derived from Serendip, the old Sanskrit name for Sri Lanka. In an 18th century play by Horace Walpole called *The Three Princes of Serendip*, the princes made remarkable discoveries that they were not seeking during their travel to Sri Lanka. Hence serendipity came to mean a chance discovery. Results of a large meta-

analysis (pooled studies of 25, 570 people who either took aspirin or a placebo) revealed that the aspirin group had 21 per cent less chance of dying of cancer when compared to the placebo cohort. The longer the duration of aspirin therapy, the greater the benefits. Pancreatic, brain, lung, stomach and prostate cancer were



some of the cancers that were prevented. Peter Rothwell and colleagues at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford carried out the study which was recently published in a major medical journal. However, further research and consensus among

the scientific community are required to determine whether people should definitely take aspirin to prevent cancer. 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 the treatment (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 in taking aspirin on your own without consulting a doctor.

## WEEKEND WEATHER

The weekend will see a continuation of the current pattern of heavy cloud cover, high humidity, short, sharp bursts of rain mostly in the eastern and central parts of the country. In the Valley, the hills on the rim will 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 Godavari has twice the annual precipitation to the town centre. The minimum temperature will remain below 18, but the maximum will start climbing by Sunday.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27-18	31-18	30-18



**HANGING ON:** Captain Bijay Lama greets Dr Govinda KC of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital on Saturday. KC who was protesting against the use of political influence in the appointment of officials at the Institute of Medicine ended his fast unto death after six days on Saturday evening.



BIKRAM RAI

**I SURRENDER:** Former minister Khum Bahadur Khadka, who was convicted of corruption and sentenced to 18 months in prison by the Supreme Court arrives at Dillibazaar jail on Wednesday following his surrender in Kathmandu.



BIKRAM RAI

**NIGHT OUT:** Passengers in the night-metro bus which started service from Friday night onwards. Kathmandu Metropolitan City in partnership with National Federation of Nepal Entrepreneurs started the service in Kathmandu and Lalitpur.



BIKRAM RAI

**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.



# Textbook history



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

Kathmandu's mainstream pundits 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, used the same leverage to enter Kathmandu politics by signing the 12-point agreement in New Delhi in November 2005 with the seven parties.

Just because after all these years a professor who carried the letter from his friend, Nepal's current Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, to Raisina Hill spills the beans it doesn'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.

This week, two other reports made headlines: the

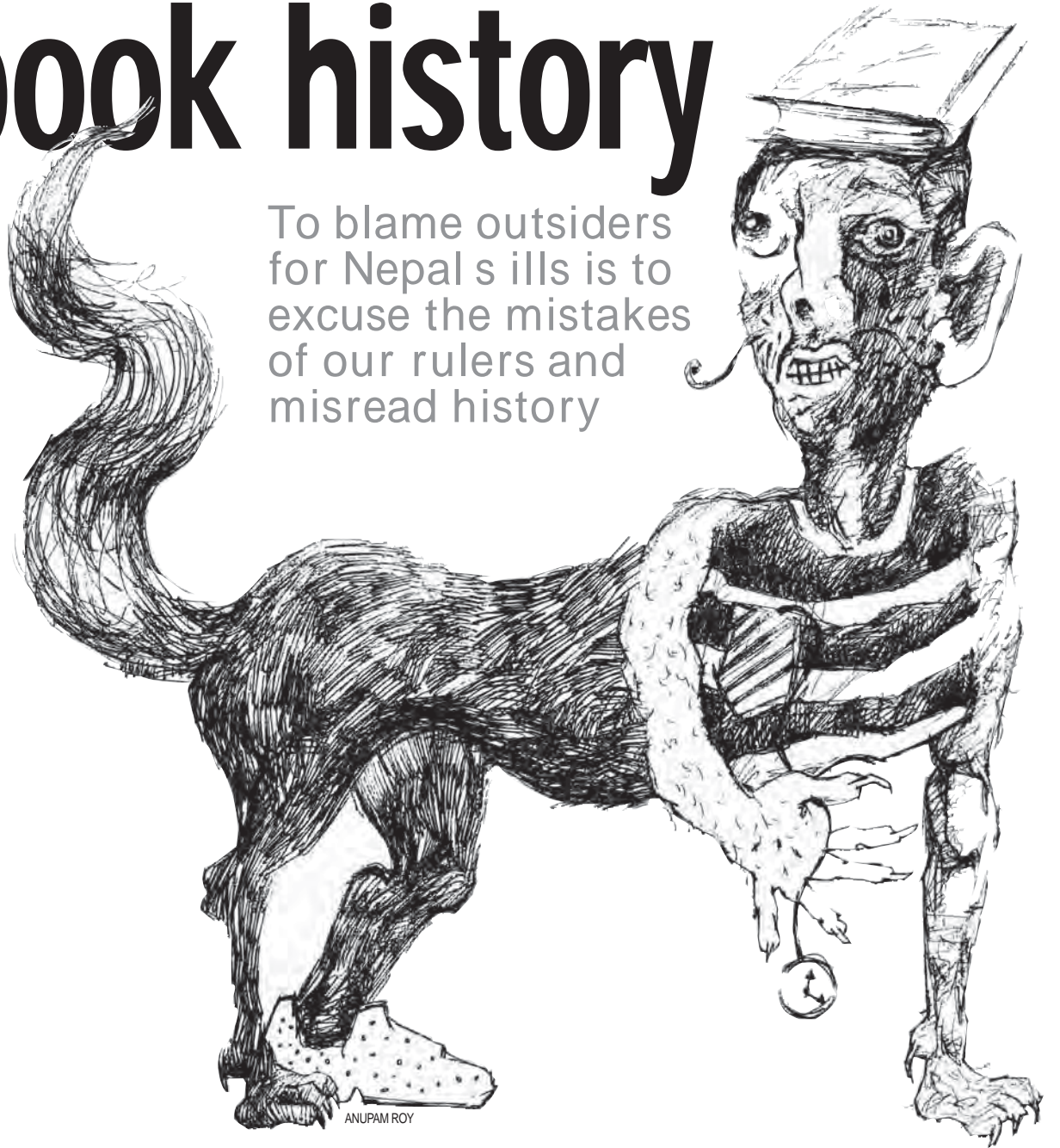
unpublished DFID-World Bank paper on inclusion and the UN's Development Assistance Framework report, whose content were deliberately leaked to the media because powerful people in the government reportedly wanted to censor them. The editor and columnist who revealed their contents accused powerful Brahmins inside and outside the government for pressuring both 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 pressure from high up to stop its publication. "But I do know that there are very influential people who strongly hold a self-serving view that the debate on federalism and identity in Nepal was started by the donors," he said, "which is not only a gross misreading of the history of such movements, but also a form of intellectual dishonesty since these people certainly know otherwise."

On a visit to eastern Nepal earlier this month, political science lecturer Yadunath

To blame outsiders for Nepal's ills is to excuse the mistakes of our rulers and misread history



Pokhrel and journalist Bhawani Baral recounted how Kathmandu-based media had wrongly portrayed local movements for identity as sectarian and divisive. They told me how the Limbus have exercised self-rule in the region for centuries through 'kipot' system, which is often wrongly assumed only as a land management system.

The identity movement in Nepal started much before the donors arrived here. The Nepal Bhasa Andolan throughout the first half of the 20th century, the establishment of the first Janajati organisations, the Tharu Kalyankari Sabha in the 1940s, the women's movement that began even earlier, and the many attempts to enter

Pashupati by Dalits in the 1950s were all early assertions of identity. Even federalism and autonomy which many claim to be a Maoist concoction in Nepal was first raised by the Tarai Congress in the 1950s and then by Gajendra Narayan Singh of Sadbhavana Party in the 1980-90s.

There is nothing in the DFID report that we didn't know, or hasn't been acknowledged by past governments in this country. The Ninth and Tenth Plans are replete with references to systemic marginalisation and the need to correct them through gender, caste, ethnic and regional empowerment. So, why this new ultra-sensitivity? Who in the Maoist-Madhesi dispensation is directing the

Foreign Ministry and the NPC to censor anything in donor documents 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. 🇳🇵

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The politics of power is making Nepal powerless

# Hello darkness my

BHRIKUTI RAI

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 *Nepali 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 Kusaha to Kataiya through which additional power can be imported from India in winter. He also added that Nepalis should be 'more frugal' about using power. "Close curtains for insulation instead of using heaters and make maximum use of the sun during daytime 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 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 powercuts in winter 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 load-shedding 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 for







BIKRAM RAI

# old friend

winter's peak demand. In the next five years, NEA projects demand will rise up to 1700MW, which means we will need an installed capacity of almost 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 2,300MW 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 (IPPAN).

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 hydro is our number one priority," Pant told *Nepali 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. 🇳🇵



## Hydro first

Trying to entice investors to put their money into hydropower in Nepal is like swimming upstream in the monsoon. Still, the newly-set up Nepal Investment Board (NIB) is preparing valiantly to make major changes in the country's hydropower policy.

"We are working with private investors, hydropower experts and all stakeholders to discuss and work on current drawbacks of the policies that have derailed hydro development in the country," says Radhesh Pant, head of NIB. "Hydro is our number one priority so we want to get things right at the policy level first."

With a Power Development Agreement (PDA) template in place, Pant is optimistic about pushing forward major hydropower investors who have so far been reluctant to come in for the last three years. The template is for hydropower projects above 500MW and is applicable to four mega hydro projects-Tamakosi 3 (880MW), Upper Karnali (900MW), Upper Marsyangdi (600 MW) and Arun 3 (900MW). The NIB will sign individual agreements that will be negotiated and tailored to fit different projects.

Investors seek government assurance through the PDA that helps avert any possible political, economic or policy uncertainties during the construction phase. Arun III and Upper Karnali's Indian investors have been taken to the Supreme Court by litigators challenging their export-oriented strategy. Pant is confident the Court will favour the projects since they have agreed to provide required power to Nepal before exports.

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From light to darkness, #541  
Hydrocratic dream, #553



# Violence starts at home

Satrugnan Kumar Sah for the Centre for Investigative Journalism in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 14 July

संसार

Educated, aware and self-supporting, Binita Thakur who teaches Maithili at Ramsagar Multiple Campus in Janakpur is something of an exception in a patriarchal society that is keen to keep women like her down. But even she is not free from the clutches of society. Twenty-two years ago, Binita got married only after her parents could scrape together Rs 45,000 in Indian currency to pay as dowry.

"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 brides' 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 Lalita Mandal and went abroad to work. While he was away, his family raised questions about Lalita's

any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse. But most cases end with the perpetrators getting a clean chit.

Ghanodevi 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 wives to get beaten up after being told to 'shut up'. Her husband Ramswaroop 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 loathe to send their daughters to school because they must then find son-in-laws more educated than them, consequently raising dowry prices. Aaratidevi Mahato, 22, was married off at 14 when in grade eight, and she was not allowed to attend school after that.

Puja Kumari 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 900,000 dowry they had to pay her husband's family.

The government announced 2010 as 'Year Against Domestic Violence', but out of the model projects to be run in 15 districts, only eight were implemented. Even awareness programmes and paralegal services to women have brought little change.

There are 930 NGOs in Dhanusa and Siraha alone, most of which operate for 'women's welfare' and dozens that claim to organise local awareness programmes. But all this seems to have made little difference to the incidence of domestic violence in the eastern Tarai.

On the one hand, project-coordinators complain that the government doesn't care about the staggering number of crimes carried out against women, while on the other, police underline the necessity to deal with these cases on the basis of mutual agreement because there is no legal provision to imprison the perpetrators and carry out investigations.

Amidst all this, one question arises: who must then organise campaigns against such social evils? The answer is simple, the residents of Mithila themselves. Scholars Rambharos Kaapadi and Yogendra Prasad Yadav say it is now up to the younger generation to discard dowries and end domestic violence. But first of all, it is the educated, respected, and wealthy who must lead by example, sacrifice this medieval ritual and become examples to society at large.



ERISHA SUWAL

character and soon Ram Baran returned home to marry a third time. Ram Baran paid elders Rs 25,000 to 'cancel' their marriage. Lalita, in turn, received Rs 100,000 as payback. Disowned by her husband and forsaken by society, Lalita has nowhere to go.

Dhanusa 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, 213 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 society and told to let go of it.

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

## Labour and the law

Editorial in *Karobar*, 21 August

कारोबार

Two companies with multinational investors are once again facing labour problems: KFC and Pizza Hut have been shut for a week now. Meanwhile, workers of Thai Airways in Kathmandu have given the airline an ultimatum to fulfil various demands. Once more, there are serious concerns about Nepal's investment climate at a time when the country needs to attract more foreign investors to create employment and raise the economic growth rate.

There is an urgent need to diversify from remittance inflows to industrialise through foreign direct investment and provide employment to 400,000 young Nepalis who enter the labour force every year. This is the wrong time to be letting labour problems scare away foreign investment. Both multinational restaurant chains had been providing salaries and facilities that went beyond the government-stipulated minimum. In the past there have been similar demands from workers at other companies for terms exceeding the government's standards.



BIKRAM RAI

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, 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.



PM: I won't quit now

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 19 August

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"Actually I wasn't any less anti-Indian as prime minister than I was during the war. I am not any less anti-Indian now than when I was prime minister."

Pushpa Kamal Dahal telling select invited journalists, quoted in *Tarun*, 20 August

## "No aid is greater than sovereignty"

Interview with Dipendra Bahadur Chhetri, Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission, *BBC Nepali Service*

BBC नेपाली

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 where people didn't have citizenship. But the government has gone door to



door distributing citizenship certificates, and we are perplexed why such positive efforts were accommodated in the report only after we requested them. References to

impunity, and that too phrased as 'extreme impunity' are also unacceptable to the government.

If the UN wants, we can sit down and discuss how to resolve these differences. However, unless phrases that jeopardise the government's position are excluded, it will be a document drafted by the UN alone and not the government.

As far as not signing the document harming our chances of receiving foreign aid is concerned, I would say no amount of aid is greater than Nepal's sovereignty.

Listen to the full interview



# Licence to loot

In the absence of local governance, Dipsung VDC in Khotang has become a hotbed for corruption

SAINDRA RAI

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 Khetraraj 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 for the construction of a child-development centre, Rs 70,000 to develop a village profile, Rs 15,000 as economic assistance stipends, Rs 25,000 as administrative costs, Rs 20,000 to construct a telecommunications tower, and Rs 8,000 as salary to VDC employees.

"In the absence of elected representatives, entire VDCs have fallen into the pockets

of secretaries and nobody has a clue what is happening," admits Gunaraj Timsina, former chairperson of Ward No 9 in Dipsung.

Consumer-committee chairpersons are no better. As chairperson of Sungkhola Microhydel Project's (SMP) consumer-committee, Muktinath Timsina took Rs 50,000 to provide pipelines to farmlands of 125 families in Dipsung under the Somkhola Irrigation Project. In fact, there is no river called Somkhola anywhere around Dipsung or in neighbouring areas.

But Timsina says in his defence, "I did not pocket that money. We dug a pond, but the money ran out so we filled it back."

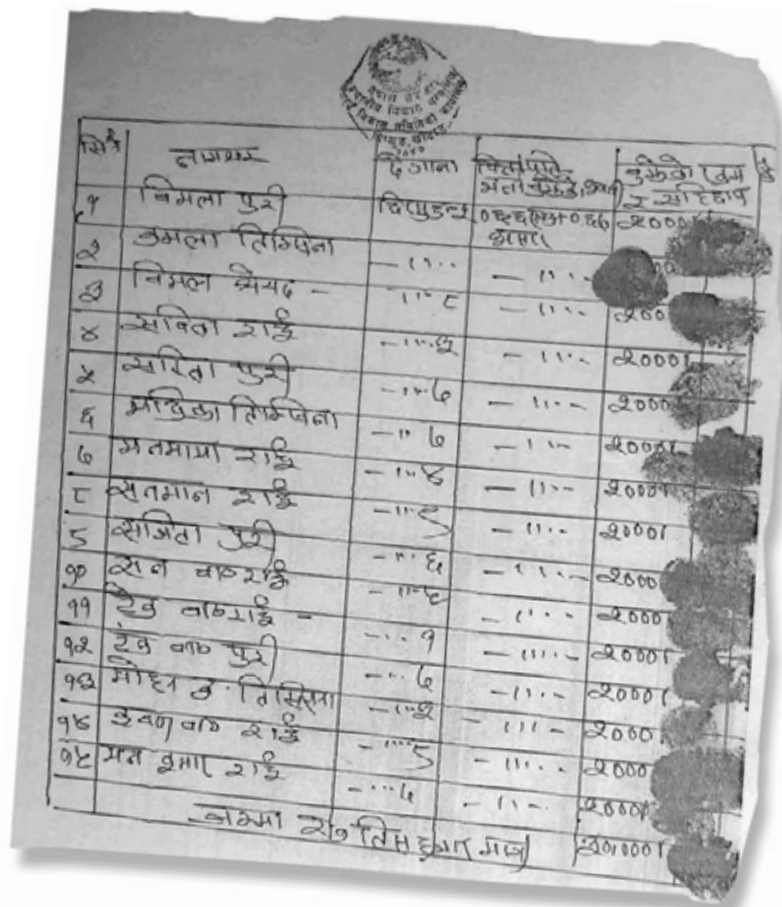
Timsina similarly hijacked Rs 50,000 from DDC funds three years ago in the name of SMP by creating a fake bill. Even though he had embezzled Rs 3.2 million in the last seven years, the DDC approved his fake bills. Last year, Timsina even won the support of locals for a Rs 900,000 plan to buy electricity 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 Khotang 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 Bhattarai distributed Rs 8,000 each to ward-chairs 13 years ago. Of the Rs 2.6 million allocated for Dipsung 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



क्र.सं.	नाम	दिनांक	किसिमको रकम	कुल रकम
१	बिमला पुत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
२	उमला तिमिसेना	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
३	बिमला खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
४	अरिता खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
५	अरिता पुत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
६	मधुका तिमिसेना	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
७	मनमाया खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
८	सुनमान खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
९	अरिता पुत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
१०	सुन वरुण खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
११	रेव वरुण खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
१२	रेव वरुण पुत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
१३	मोहन उ. तिमिसेना	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
१४	उमका वरुण खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००
१५	मनमाया खत्री	२००९/१०	०५५५५५००००	२०००००

but says, "The signature on that receipt is not even mine."

Man Bahadur BK, the only literate Dalit in Dipsung, is the main beneficiary of the budget provided for Dalits. Like others, he also created a fake bill for buying a machine from a store in Diktel. The owner was Man Bahadur's relative and could not

refuse his request.

Of the Rs 11.7 million allocated to Dipsung in the past 18 years, up to Rs 4.5 million has been hijacked by frauds and Dipsung has turned into a breeding ground for corruption. ■

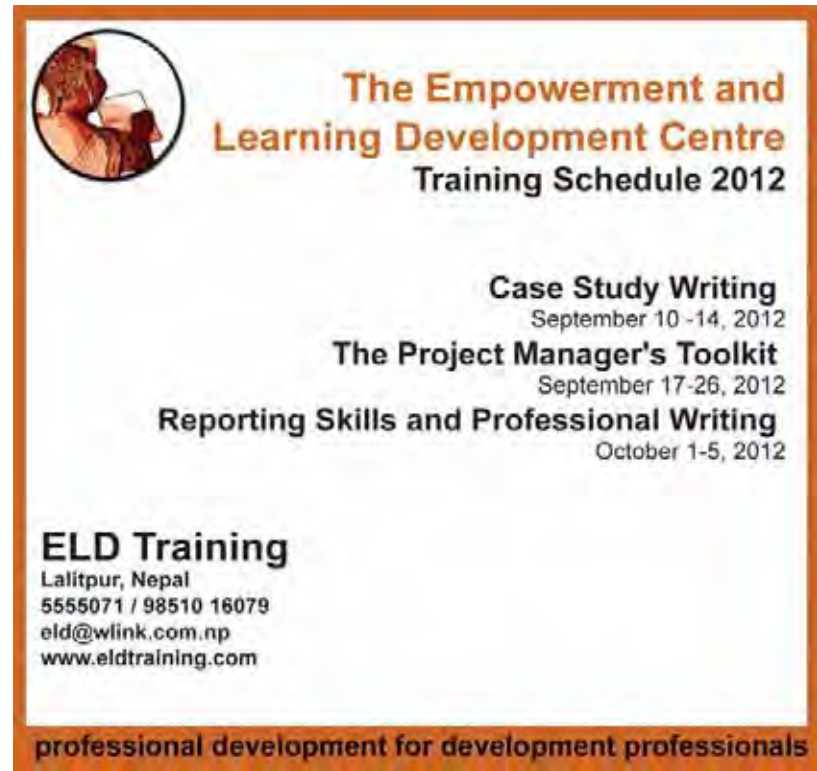
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# Load-shedding more than 24 hours a day

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. A NEA official, speaking off the record and on condition of anonymity provided we

didn't reveal that he is actually the Director General, told this **Donkey** we are looking at 20 hours of load-shedding from December onwards. The good news is that there can't be more than 24 hours of load-shedding daily, right? Wrong. Next winter, if all goes according to plan, electricity will have to be rationed for only five hours a day on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

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 for 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 Dasain, 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.



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