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## On a high horse

The arrival of a new road in Upper Mustang threatens to disrupt a traditional way of life in which horses and mules play an important part. It also raises questions about how long this area can remain restricted for tourists. It looks like the end of the road for Mustang's centuries old way of life, but despite the road there are alternative high trails for trekking and horseback travel that could revive Mustang's unique equine culture. Windhorse prayer flags flutter in the wind on a high pass near Geeling (below).

Full story page 12-13

## Mustang's future

Mustang is usually preceded with words like 'lost', 'hidden' or 'forbidden'. Today it is none of those things. New picture book on Mustang by Dinesh Shrestha and Mark Whittaker.

page 6-7

Kunda Dixit's East West blog:  
[www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit](http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit)

## Born-again CA

Reviving the CA is undemocratic, it is an insult to the citizens of this country, and a violation of accepted rules and norms. The only way forward is for the prime minister to get the president to announce a date for new polls.

Editorial page 2



KUNDA DIXIT



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# BORN-AGAIN CA

Some people believe in reincarnation. So there is some logic to arguments put forward by those who say there is life after death of the Constituent Assembly.

The country is sinking into a black hole with a lame duck prime minister trying to rule by ordinance, a ceremonial president who doesn't want to rock the boat, no parliament, no constitution, no budget, no investment, no governance, no development, and no idea about when elections will be held.

Reviving the ex-CA will bring back a certain certitude, focus our minds on fixing the constitution, and hauling ourselves out of the morass we have gotten ourselves into. A born-again legislature would force political leaders to make one final push for consensus on the points of disagreement on the constitution which they could not achieve four months ago. This could come as part of a package agreement where the parties also strike a deal on an interim government to take us to the next elections. In short, the country would start moving again.

There is nothing wrong with hoping for the best, and being optimistic. But it is difficult to see how there can suddenly be an agreement which eluded leaders earlier. The CA's second coming is a bad idea, it is like making a blunder to correct a mistake. Taking the country back to the dangerous dead-end of 27 May would not solve any problems, it would take us back to the brink and force us to relive the spectre of communally-laced street violence.

The idea of reincarnating the late unlamented CA



BIKRAM RAI

## Politicians are afraid of elections, they should be forced to go back to the people

is being pushed by a few discredited political leaders who have nothing left to lose. It is mainly the project of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who has been stoking identity politics with an eye on his own political career, no matter what that may do to the country. Given his wily ways, he has been working on the morally bankrupt and disgraced wimps in the other parties.

Depending on what works with each of them, he has been dangling carrots and massaging egos with Sher Bahadur Deuba, Sushil Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal, and Jhalanath Khanal to rustle up a consensus on CA revival. The strategy seems to be working, Koirala and

Nepal are wavering while the others were for revival all along because they thought it would help them fulfil their personal ambitions.

But the unspoken reason all these scheming gentlemen want the CA back is because they are terrified of elections. By now, Dahal must have seen the writing on the wall and noticed his plummeting approval ratings in polls. He knows that in the next elections, even his own party votes will now be split. And the kindest thing we can say about most NC and UML leaders is that they are honest enough not to have very high expectations of themselves. The Madhesi parties have splintered so often and are of such ill repute because of blatant corruption that if it wasn't for the Tarai vote bank, they'd not fare well either.

Reviving the CA is undemocratic, it is an insult to the citizens of this country, and a violation of accepted rules and norms. The only way forward is for the prime minister to get the president to announce polls for VDC and DDC councils, and general elections for a new parliament that can perhaps serve for its first six months as a constitution-writing body.

There is the danger that campaigning will be along ethnic lines and parties will whip up identity politics to mask their non-performance on development and the economy. There could be repeats of the voter intimidation and cheating of 2008, but those issues can be addressed by strict new Election Commission guidelines.

We don't want to be haunted by the ghost of an undead CA, the politicians should be forced to go back to the people.

### ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

#### ONE YEAR ITCH

Baburam Bhattarai's government is a perfect example of how Kathmandu centric government works and how ignorant Kathmandu based media is ('One year itch', Editorial, #620). It has been more than a year of big talks and sweet promises from our 'revolutionary' PM, and yet journalists and media honchos have not stopped gushing about how he is a 'natural' leader and how he is the only one who can take the country out of the current deadlock. It's time to get over the hype and discuss whether Bhattarai actually delivered on the duties of a head of government.

Nirmal

- In any other country people would be outraged that a prime minister without a mandate who has gone well beyond his termination date is still heading the government. But in Nepal we are still discussing his 'achievements' and convincing ourselves that since there are no better alternatives we should let him continue and hope for the best. Yes, Bhattarai is definitely more decent than Dahal or Koirala or Khanal, but what about the rule of law? Are we just supposed to turn a blind eye to rules because the country is in crisis?

Anita Khadka

#### HIGH AND DRY

There are many towns and cities in Nepal like Panchkhal where local livelihoods are being challenged by climate change, but the communities do not know how to handle it ('High and dry', Madhukar Upadhyaya, #620). Although Upadhyaya helps bring this critical issue into the public sphere, it would have been better if he had

discussed potential strategies that the locals could use to lessen the effects of climate change.

Gopal Raj Joshi

- Having been born and raised in Panchkhal, I have seen firsthand the changes that Upadhyaya describes in the article. Year after year, paddy cultivation is getting delayed by a week or two. This year we could not even sow paddy because of water shortage. Maize plantation was also pushed back by almost two months. Such delays not only hurt subsistence farmers, but disrupt the town's economy. Also if this trend continues, there will be no water in Jhiku Khola to pump even if pipes are dug hundreds of metres deep.

Nashib

#### PRIVATE WATER FOR THE PUBLIC

I don't understand why Nirendra Basnet has problems with entrepreneurs stepping in to supply water when the state has clearly failed in its duty ('Private water for the public', #620). Basnet wants the government to regulate these businesses and levy taxes on them. But if they are prospering and serving the citizens, then there is no need for the government to get involved. Besides, whenever the state has intervened in private enterprises it has done nothing more than hinder growth through uninhibited corruption.

- Natural resources like water must be controlled by the state. If private entrepreneurs are given free reign, they



RAMESWOR BOHARA

will focus on maximising revenue, but not pay attention to protecting the environment. This is where the government needs to set the rules and make sure that businesses are following international environmental standards such as allowing the water source to recharge, using proper filtration systems and taking care of surrounding areas.

Anonymous

#### DISAPPEARANCE OF TRUTH

Thank you Ram Kumar Bhandari for your passionate plea on behalf of the families of the disappeared ('Disappearance of truth', #620). You have overcome your personal loss to lead a non-partisan campaign for

truth and justice for people disappeared by both sides during the conflict. But I'm afraid your campaign may be in vain because the Maoist government will never admit to its war-time atrocities and will classify them as 'political assassinations'. And as long as they do that, the state security forces will also go scot free. Justice is a long way off.

Deng

- Nepali politicians should be ashamed of themselves for proposing such notorious ordinance to the president. I am also surprised that the CA members involved in preparing the draft bill on TRC and DIC are keeping silent. NHRC tried to get the government to provide it with the draft copy of the ordinance so that it could review and comment on, but the state ignored the appeal.

Subodh Pyakurel

#### UNDER THE BRIDGE

Thank you Gopal Gartaula for a truly heart-touching story and hats off to the community who started a school out of their own meagre resources despite immense hardships so that their children are literate and get a better shot at life ('The school under the bridge', #620). If only the state provided some support to devoted teachers like Dhana Laxmi Rai, and if NGOs in Kathmandu offered to construct permanent buildings, these children would have a realistic chance

of breaking out of the cycle of poverty and moving up the economic ladder.

Khusbu R

- This is a wonderful and inspiring article about a community whose back is against the wall, but which is still determined to give the children a better future.

Shaligram Bhattarai

#### THE POLITICS OF FOREIGN AID

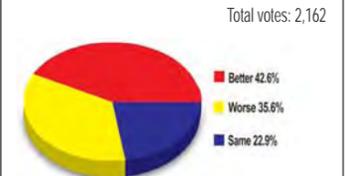
Donor communities cannot get away by blaming the government for all the ills such as 'statelessness', 'impunity', and 'exclusion' ('The politics of foreign aid', Sunir Pandey, #620). The donors have been bypassing the state and enforcing their own development agenda and pushing their priority projects over the last 10 years. So they must take half the blame for creating the current state of development anarchism. And the Nepal government should take the other half of the blame for giving donors a free hand to dictate development policies.

Arun Adhikary



Weekly Internet Poll # 621

Q. How do you rate Baburam government compared to previous governments?



Weekly Internet Poll # 622. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the best way to resolve the present deadlock?



# In the shadow of Annapurna

The Annapurna conservation project must find ways to reconcile its conflict with locals over resources



**COMMENT**  
**Gopal Guragain**

On a year that the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) should be celebrating the 25th anniversary of its exemplary work in eco-tourism and conservation, it has been given a death sentence by the government.

This July the Cabinet decided not to extend the management of ACAP by the Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and gave the trust six months to seek an alternative. This comes as the ACAP management finds itself in increasing confrontation with local populations over control of the region's resources.

The Annapurna area stretches over five districts and 57 VDCs in central Nepal. The terrain rises from the sub-tropical Seti Valley at 800m above sea level to Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, among the top 10 highest mountains in the world. It contains the Kali Gandaki gorge and Tilico, one of the highest lakes in the world. These topographical extremes give the region some of the greatest biodiversity found on the planet, with 474 species of birds, 1,200 types of fauna and exuberant plant life.

The Annapurnas get 100,000 trekkers a year and in the last 25 years has raised Rs 1.55 billion from visitor fees alone, this money and other donor support being ploughed directly into local development. Over the past two decades, ACAP has built 107 schools, 16 community health posts, 181 bridges, 28 micro-hydro projects and trained thousands of local people in the tourism industry.

ACAP's success rested on three pillars: the unique concept among young and committed Nepali environmental activists in the 80s that conservation was only possible through local participation, the full backing and patronage of the royal palace and resources that this could mobilise, and last but not least, the leadership and involvement of the local Gurung community. The pioneering role in ACAP of Chandra Gurung, who was born and bred in the area, was a major factor in its early success. Gurung's trust in his community, and his community's trust in him, were the

vital ingredients in the success.

Chandra Gurung's tragic death in the Ghunsa helicopter crash in 2006 was a big blow not just to the Annapurnas, but also to the other conservation areas in Nepal where the ACAP model was being followed. The post-2006 political transition and turmoil also took its toll, and ACAP is now suffering from the same political interference and greed that has plagued other areas where Nepal has seen some progress.

In the absence of elected village and district councils, Nepal's local government is in the hands of the three main political parties at the centre. Accountable to no one, and driven by the party's need to raise funds, political cadres have been using provisions in the local self-governance act to wrest control over natural resources from ACAP's local Conservation Committees.

Last month the residents of Lwang

Ghalele (pictured) poured out their woes during a radio program. "Our crops are being destroyed by wild animals, we don't get any compensation," said one, "we can't fish in our own streams, we can't even pick deadwood, ferns or bamboo shoots from the forest. If we can't benefit from conservation what is the use?"

Such sentiments are a far cry from 25 years ago when locals were happy about ACAP's conservation work. ACAP obviously needs to re-invent itself for a new age when there are roads everywhere, and new rules must be in line with local self-governance laws and clearly define who has the authority over natural resource exploitation.

The DDCs and VDCs are now demanding that they get half of ACAP's income from trekking fees. In the absence of charismatic leadership, ACAP began to lose out on the trust of



GOPAL GURAGAIN

the local people. Had local elections been held, this conflict would have been much more intense by now.

The problem now is that although the government has said ACAP should be handed over to someone other than NTNC by end-January, there is no other entity which can be trained on the conservation achievements of the past and entrusted with the management of ACAP.

The only solution perhaps is to have better coordination between the Conservation Committees and

the VDCs in all 57 villages, and improve linkages between the DDCs to coordinate ACAP activities in all five districts. But it is unlikely this can be done in the next four months. So the best approach is to let ACAP be managed by NTNC until a new mechanism can be found, and wait for a time when there is less political interference. □

Gopal Guragain is a broadcaster and the founder of Ujjalo Multimedia [www.unn.com.np](http://www.unn.com.np)



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**BACK TO THE PEOPLE:** The home-stay program in Ghalegaun in ACAP has injected money into local conservation and community development.



BADRI PAUDYAL

# Conservation of interests

BHRIKUTI RAI

Nepal's Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) survived a war, upheavals in Kathmandu and the tragic death of its founding members in a helicopter crash six years ago. But it may not survive the interference of short-sighted politicians during the country's present fluid transition.

The future of Nepal's largest protected area is in jeopardy after the Cabinet's surprising decision in July to terminate the management of the internationally acclaimed eco-tourism project by the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) which had been running it for the last 25 years.

The NTNC had asked the government for an extension of its management for another 10 years to facilitate the handover of resource administration to local councils. But the Cabinet

ignored the endorsement of the NTNC mandate by the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC), and instead directed it to find an alternative arrangement.

ACAP was pioneered by late conservationist Chandra Gurung and it is internationally recognised as a role model for sustainable

## Nepal's internationally acclaimed Annapurna eco-tourism project has also fallen prey to political interference

tourism development that injects tourism income directly into the village economy. Gurung and five of Nepal's top conservationists were among 25 killed when their helicopter crashed in November 2006 during a visit to the Kanchenjunga area to replicate ACAP's accomplishment in eastern Nepal.

"It shocked us all," recalls

ACAP's Lal Gurung of the Cabinet's decision. "In the absence of a legal framework and skilled grassroots conservation leaders, the abrupt exit of NTNC will jeopardise late Chandra Gurung's conservation legacy." ACAP is NTNC's largest undertaking and covers an area of 7,629 sq km. It is inhabited by over 100,000 people of various

ethnic groups, and it includes Upper Mustang and Manang.

Conservationists admit that many of ACAP's strict rules on energy use, forest conservation and infrastructure development may have to be modified given the spread of roads into the high mountain areas. But they say the Cabinet's decision seems to have been influenced by

the 35 companies who have hydropower licences in the Annapurnas.

Like the controversy over resorts inside Chitwan National Park and changes in the regulations governing community forestry, the Cabinet's decision on ACAP could have far-reaching impact on model conservation efforts for which Nepal is internationally recognised.

Juddha Gurung of NTNC says it is unlikely that the government will completely scrap ACAP. "The government doesn't have the resources nor the capability to take over ACAP, and there will be an international hue and cry," he adds optimistically, "I think the government will eventually decide to extend the NTNC's mandate over ACAP's management."

Annapurna locals say ACAP is already finding it difficult to control timber and wildlife poaching, and its eco-tourism regulations are getting difficult to enforce. But ACAP could have a

role in mapping out and developing trekking routes away from roads, and finding a new eco-tourism model for restricted areas like Upper Mustang.

ACAP is already embroiled in controversy over the annual Rs 50 million it collects in fees from trekkers to Upper Mustang. Locals want 60 per cent of that money to be channeled to the district as agreed, but it is not happening. Lal Gurung says the arrival of the road could mean Upper Mustang trek royalties will drop, but adds the government has not made any decision about whether or not to lift the restricted status of the area.

NTNC and ACAP were working on an exit strategy to handover the conservation area to VDCs and DDCs in the Annapurnas, but accountability could be a problem in the absence of local elections. "We had plans to handover ACAP to the locals by 2022, but the government's hasty decision has halted everything," says Juddha Gurung.

The loss of Nepal's pioneer conservationists in 2006 and the 10 year war pushed back the country's gains in eco-tourism. Second generation conservation leaders were beginning to learn the ropes and were gaining experience. But needless politicisation has disheartened them as well and 25 years of solid achievements are in danger of being wiped out.

Representatives of 57 VDCs from the Annapurnas have written to the Prime Minister's Office and line ministries to demand that the Cabinet review its six month ultimatum.

Says Lal Gurung, "Unless there's a legal framework in place to fully handover the management to locals and the people there are capable and accountable, NTNC should be allowed to continue managing ACAP." 🇳🇵

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# Czech aid for water



KESHAB ARYAL

There is a new entrant in the long list of countries which provide foreign assistance to Nepal: the Czech Republic. In partnership with the Centre for Inclusive Social Development, the Czech Republic this week handed over a drinking water well to the Machhindra Bahal community in Patan. *Nepali Times* spoke to Zuzana Boukalova of the Czech company Vodni Zdroje, who has been actively involved in Nepal since 2008.

**Czech Republic in Nepal?** Well, we would like to do more, but it all depends on the financing. Unfortunately, Nepal is not a priority country for the Czech Republic so financing projects here is difficult. But our interests do lie chiefly in hydro-geology. We completed the Eureka project in Chitwan where we tried to find ways to deal with arsenic content in the water. We also finished another project in Sankhamul where we dug new wells and installed water tanks near the Bagmati river.

**Nepali Times: How did this water project come about, and why Macchindra Bahal?**

Zuzana Buokalova: This project was based on a site analysis done by Czech experts in September 2011 as well as the discussions with stakeholders of Macchindra Bahal community. It is a pilot project, so we will see where it goes after this.

**Any new projects lined up for the immediate future?**

Next year, we plan to start another pilot project related to artificial recharging of groundwater in Patan. We have a new partnership with the National Academy of Science and Technology and we hope that it will serve as a bridge between Nepal and the EU.

**Is this the first of many water-related projects financed by the**

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Power on hold

Hydropower development company, SN Power, has decided to reduce its staff in Nepal due to the lack of progress on new projects. The company which has been working exclusively in emerging markets in Nepal since the last 10 years, is a joint venture between Statkraft and Norfund. SN Power is currently



negotiating with the government to develop Tamakoshi-3 (650MW) as it has already received power development agreement for the project. For now SN Power has decided to put on hold its new business and activities in Nepal while still retaining its engagement with Himal Power and working on the 67MW Kirne Project.

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### New partnership

NMB Bank and Gaurishanker Development Bank have partnered to provide NMB Bank's Local Cash Management System (LCMS) and remittance services. Now



customers of both banks can take advantage of banking services from each other's branches. NMB Bank has 20 branches, one extension counter and 23 ATM outlets across the country.

### Upgraded ride

SG Global, distributor of Mahindra 2 wheelers in Nepal has introduced Rodeo RZ. It is an upgraded version of Rodeo with 125 cc Z series engine, which offers mileage upto 59.38 kmpl, mobile charger, under-seat lighting, side-stand buzzer and body coloured mirrors. The scooters are available in seven colours.



### Super hot wheels

HH Bajaj, the authorised distributor of Bajaj motorcycles in Nepal has launched Bajaj Pulsar 200NS in the market. The two-wheeler has been upgraded and is the first motorcycle in the world to adopt the triple-spark technology.



The technology provides fast and optimal combustion, increased performance and efficiency. The Pulsar 200NS has a top speed of 136kmph and can accelerate from 0-60kmph in 3.61 seconds and from 0-100kmph in 9.83 seconds. It is available in black, red, blue, and yellow.

### Fifty million mark

Coca Cola has received fifty million "likes" on its Facebook page. Using the new application on its Facebook page, individuals can collaborate with the company and other Facebook community members to develop ideas that help spread happiness around the world.



### 3D and more

CG Electronics, authorised distributor of LG in Nepal, has introduced new models of LG 3D Cinema TV. The



### Safe and trendy

Morang Auto Works, the sole distributor of Yamaha motorcycles in Nepal, has launched an upgraded version of the Yamaha FZ-S with new safety features. The FZ-S has a large disc brake, monocross suspension, and new chain protector for better balance and safety on the road.



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MULE TRAIN PASSES THE ORGAN PIPE CLIFFS OF CHHUSANG



PINK BUCKWHEAT FIELDS IN LO MANTHANG



MARK WHITTAKER

It was the sort of Facebook message one can only dream about. My friend Dinesh Shrestha from Kathmandu wrote: 'We are interested to write a book about Mustang by you.' I inferred that Dinesh, a photographer, wanted me to write some words for his latest book.

Dinesh had produced some stunning books like *Timeless Kathmandu* and *Nepal and its Splendour*. Who wouldn't want to get in on some of that grandeur? I knew that Mustang was a rarely visited pocket of Nepal, nestled between Tibet to the north and the Himalaya to the south. While trekking on the Annapurna Circuit in 2002

I'd stood at the sign which said: 'Halt, you are entering the forbidden kingdom of Mustang. Trekkers found beyond this point without a permit will be thrown in the Raja's dungeon.' Well, not exactly those words but that was the gist of it.

So as I had looked along the enormous stony valley 10 years ago, a chain of donkeys seeming to barely move in the distance, I was captivated by the romance of the forbidden.

But also the absolute timelessness of the scene. Marco Polo could have looked at the same view and seen nothing he didn't recognise.

No European had been allowed to set foot in Mustang until 1952 and even after that only a handful were let in until it was opened to very

# The future catches up with Mustang

Mustang is usually preceded with words like 'lost', 'hidden' or 'forbidden', today it is none of those things

VIEW OF NILGIRI AND TILICHO PEAK FROM TSARANG



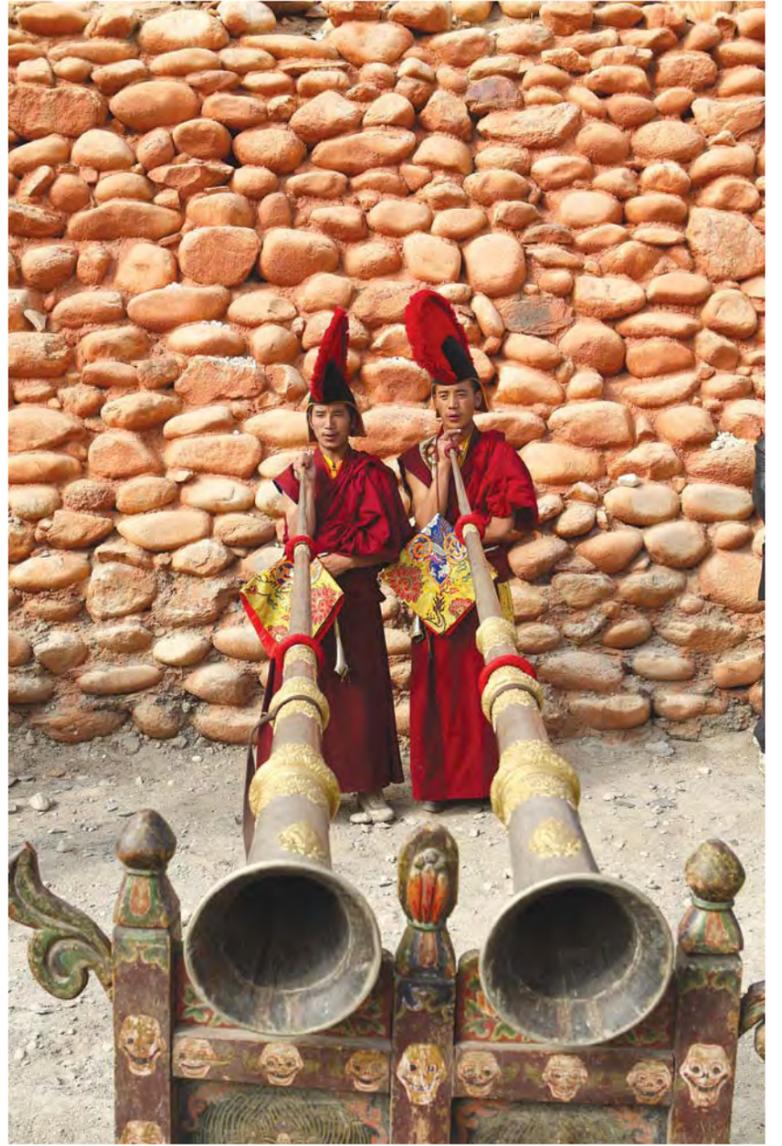
DANCER, LO MANTHANG



CHHUSANG'S FERTILE FIELDS



MONKS BLOW HOLY HORNS IN LO MANTHANG



MUSTANG'S KING JIGME PRABAL BISTA IN HIS STUDY



SHOP OWNER, TSARANG



ALL PICS: DINESH SHRESTHA

limited tourism in 1992. Now, it averages about six visitors a day. They had always faced a five day walk to the walled capital, Lo Manthang, but big changes are afoot.

I didn't realise it, but Dinesh was asking me to come and see a place that was in the midst of being connected by the arteries of the modern world. A year-round road and Lo Manthang will no doubt soon be changed irrevocably by its pulse.

'Will I get to meet the king?' I messaged Dinesh.

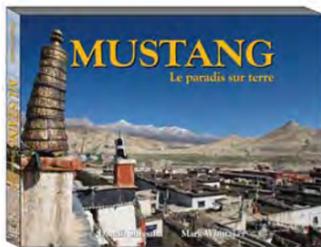
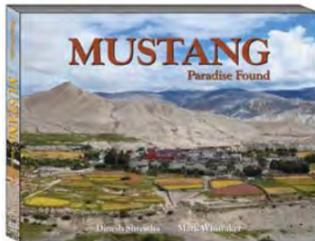
'Yes we will meet Raja if he is there,' Dinesh replied. 'I always meet him whenever I go there.'

'I'm in then.'

Mustang usually has words attached to it like 'lost', 'hidden' or 'forbidden' perhaps preceding the word 'kingdom'. Today it is

none of those things, yet it has maintained something of that mystique. Since 2008, it has been possible to travel all the way there from Kathmandu by truck in the dry months (surely one of the most spectacular road trips on the planet), but Mustang is still relatively difficult to get to and it still surprises the visitor with its stunning vistas and the stubborn way it clings to its culture.

Indeed the culture is fighting back. Crumbling holy art is being restored, monasteries have been rebuilt and refilled with the sound of young monks in robes studying the ancient Buddhist ways. Dinesh's photos will go down as a historical monument to this pivotal moment in Mustang's history because it's never going to look this way again. 🇳🇵



Mustang: Paradise Found (English)  
Mustang: Le paradis sur terre (French)

Dinesh Shrestha and Mark Whittaker  
Himalayan Map House, Kathmandu, 2012

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**EVENTS**



**REAL SCHOOL OF NEPAL**, cheer for your schools at the regional finals of Real School of Nepal competition and support them all the way to the grand final in Kathmandu. 9, 12 and 25 September, Budhanilkantha School, Kathmandu

**Call for Ideas**, Youth Action Fund encourages all 19 to 27 year olds to share ideas that will make a positive impact on a range of social issues. Apply by 15 September, 9801038093, ram.yaf11@gmail.com



**EVOLVING WITHIN**, an exhibition of paintings by the Kathmandu Quartet. 8 to 17 September, 10am to 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

**Made in Nepal Product and Service Exhibition**, third annual exhibition which will promote locally made goods. Runs till 9 September, Bhrikuti Mandap, 4117104

**Sizzler promotion**, enjoy mouthwatering sizzlers at the Terrace Garden. Rs 777, 7 to 31 September, 1 to 9pm, Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu, 4411818

**Barfil**, charity screening of the latest Bollywood flick. 14 September, QFX Kumari, Kathmandu, for tickets call 9841245862, 9849302685, 9841751968, 9808336264, 9841630124

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



**FARMERS' MARKET**, sample fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, fruits and other local offerings. 9 September, 9am to 12pm, New Orleans Café, Patan, 5522708

**MUSIC**



**NEPFEST IV**, let the Polish band Decapitated knock your head off with its hard-hitting heavy metal music at this concert also featuring bands from USA, Singapore, Dubai and the local scene. Rs 400 for early birds, Rs 500 at

venue, 8 September, 12 to 10pm Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap, 9849480827, 9841277757, 5541322



**COBWEB @ LORRY'S**, rock veterans performing live. 8 September, 7.30pm, Lorry's, Jhamsikhel

**DINING**



**TAMAS-LAYA**, promises a refined dining experience, try the prawn tempura, fisherman's fish and Balinese chicken satay. Naxal, Kathmandu

**Boomerang Restaurant & German Bakery**, offers a large selection of cuisine for those who want to enjoy

a full meal and desserts. Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-461412, 061-462978



**YAK RESTAURANT**, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus and spicy pork spare ribs. Boudha, Kathmandu

**Sarangkot Fordays Restaurant**, have a Sarangkot special breakfast while enjoying spectacular views of the Himalaya. Sarangkot, Pokhara, 061-696920, 9817136896

**Tass and Tawa**, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve

your palate for the heavenly Chusta. Pulchowk, Kathmandu

**Chilly Bar & Restaurant**, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. Lakeside, Hallanchowk, Pokhara, 061-463614, 061-463163



**CLUB AMSTERDAM CAFÉ BAR**, great food, exotic cocktails, live band, BBQ and more. Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-463427

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**FALCHA**, give yourself away to the twin-advances of lemon jeera chicken and mutton handi kabab. Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur



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Location: to be confirmed – potentially Dhaka, Kathmandu or Islamabad

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**SOMEPLACE ELSE**

To the delight of foodies in the Valley, a little bit of Italy has come to Darbar Marg. Little Italy restaurant chain, a popular fine-dining eatery offering vegetarian Italian cuisines in India, has opened its first outlet in Nepal. You might be wondering: Italian and completely vegetarian? The idea takes a little getting used to especially for an inveterate carnivore like me, but once you get over the initial shock, Little Italy does not disappoint.

The moment I opened the menu, I was intrigued by a sign that read: Jain on request. When I asked the helpful and informed maitre, he told me that Little Italy accommodates religious and cultural dietary restrictions and will prepare meals without onion, garlic and



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

**Little Italy**

all underground vegetables at the request of Jain patrons.

The 'ristorante and bar' sports mint green walls offset by dark wooden furniture. It's uncluttered and the ambient lighting creates an aura that is chic in its minimalism. The thick glass walls insulate the noise so you forget that you are in the midst of bustling Kathmandu.

We started with the Fungi Trifolati (Rs 380), which

is made of tiny fresh baby mushrooms sautéed with garlic and Italian herbs, served with a side of garlic bread. Since the restaurant bakes it bread daily, the ones on our plate were fresh with a crispy crust. The Insalata Mista (Rs 255) salad with lettuce bits, tomatoes, cucumber mozzarella cheese in balsamic vinegar and extra virgin olive oil dressing was light and fresh.

Little Italy is renowned for its wood-burn pizzas and

as there are a lot of choices, we went with our servers recommendation, the Sicilia (Rs 430). A thin pizza with fresh tomato sauce, mozzarella, mushrooms, garlic and here it gets very interesting, pickled onions and sun-dried tomatoes marinated in chili sauce, garnished with fresh basil. The sweetness of the pickled onions and the texture of the sun-dried tomatoes elevate this dish beyond the ordinary. And the cheese comes from the restaurant's factory in Pune.

The Pasta Al Sole Di Sicilia (Rs 410) is a dish I imagine Don Corleone's nonna would have prepared for him. Simple and easy, but packing a bunch of

flavours, this would have had the Mafiosi kissing his fingers and shouting, "Bellissimo, eccellente!"

The perfect ending to my very excellent meal was the chef's specialty, the chocolate bomb (Rs 280), an oozing mess of warm melted chocolate baked in a light chocolate sponge casing served with vanilla ice cream. I was in dessert heaven.

Little Italy deserves a special mention for sticking to its roots. When I ordered my dishes, I was fervently hoping to be served authentic cucina italiana instead of the usual cumin, coriander, and asafetida laden 'Indianised' version that other Italian restaurants in town dole out. But Little Italy gets full marks for creating truly authentic flavours and textures. Also I reallu like that the table is set with a tray of condiments so you can season your meal with spices and sauces to suit your taste. I will definitely go back and take my friends and family along because it serves excellent food that is meant to be shared. Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Little Italy is in Darbar Marg, on the third floor of a new complex opening up next to Bentley's and Benetton.



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# MAONSOON WEDDING



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

Made in 2001, yet refreshingly relevant even today, Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* is one of those films that one can re-watch over and over again, each time finding something new and delightful.

This is partly due to the excellent ensemble cast, the brilliant script, written by Sabrina Dhawan, and the Dickensian nature of the story, set in New Delhi, but with characters from all walks coming together for one of the great milestones in life.



Nair is a brilliant and diverse director, having started as a documentarian and making her debut as a feature film maker with the brilliant *Salaam Bombay!* in 1988. Since then she has made films like *Vanity Fair* (2004), *The Namesake* (2006) and *Amelia* (2009) to name a few. The first two are adaptations of novels by William Thackeray and Jhumpa Lahiri respectively and the third a bio-pic about Amelia Earhart, the legendary American pilot who disappeared while flying over the Pacific in 1937 and who was never found.

Some of her films have been brilliant and others

disastrous, but they've all shared a gigantic ambition and a willingness to take on diverse and difficult subject matters, a trait essential in any good director.

*Monsoon Wedding's* scope may seem microcosmic initially, but its genius is that it actually is able to portray a great deal of social issues inherent in Indian society. Issues that are still very much present today more than a decade after the film was released.

The story centres around the arranged marriage of young Aditi, played by the beautiful, husky voiced Vasundhara Das, who agrees to marry an NRI based in Texas, a slightly banal Parvin Dabas as Hemant Rai, in order to get away from her affair with a married man who will most probably never leave his wife.

As with all weddings, the family is slightly crazed by the preparations, each in their own way. The great Naseeruddin Shah plays Lalit Varma, Aditi's loving father who is constantly on the phone with the tobacco chewing, mobile wielding Dubey (Vijay Raaz) who is in charge of the wedding tent, ensuring there's enough ice, and being suitably sycophant-like while extracting large sums of money from the harassed father of the bride.

The Varma family is diverse and scattered all over the globe, with cousins, uncles, and aunts flying in from Australia and the US, each with their own set of issues and all having their distinct foibles. Add into the mix a dark family secret, and a delicate love story involving Dubey and the Varma's Christian maid, the shy and gentle Alice (Tilotama Shome) and you have a riveting tragic-comedy with a cast of unforgettable characters.

A word here about the importance of appropriate cinematography: *Monsoon Wedding* wouldn't have been as captivating without the hand of Declan Quinn the brilliant cinematographer who is able to bring to the screen the vibrant colours and grittiness of the Delhi metropolis at the height of the monsoon season.

It isn't easy to combine beauty and reality, and anyone who has ever been behind any kind of camera will know that 'point and shoot' normally produces quite hideous results. Therefore, a line of respect to the person who wields the camera and who coordinates the enormous lights and manages the numerous filters and other gimmicks that eventually create the magic that is cinema – allowing us viewers the indulgence of believing for a few short hours that we are onlookers into a window of reality.

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

**WEEKEND WEATHER**

The monsoon is on its last phase now, with the daily pattern changing to clear bright mornings with afternoon thunder showers and night rain. There is a large monsoonal trough brewing in the Bay of Bengal as seen in this satellite image from Thursday morning, though, and this could bring heavy squalls into the weekend, accompanied by afternoon buildup. The minimum temperature will fall another notch to a pleasant 17 degrees, but maximum could shoot up to a sweltering humid 33 degrees when the sun is out in the afternoons.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
32°-17°	32°-17°	33°-18°



BIKRAM RAI

**SELF IMMOLATION:** A student is rushed to the hospital after his face accidentally caught fire while burning an effigy of PM Baburam Bhattarai in front of Tri-Chandra campus on Thursday during a strike organised by UML affiliated ANNFSU to protest against NOC's decision to hike fuel prices.



BIKRAM RAI

**WRITING ON THE WALL:** A woman signs her name on a signature board on Wednesday at a program commemorating National Anti-human Trafficking Day. The campaign is making demands that 2013 be recognised as the Year Against Human Trafficking.

# Mystery fevers



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Just like the predictable monsoon rains, unknown fever outbreaks are a common occurrence in Nepal during summer and reports of mysterious fever from across the country have started to pour in already. Many of these fevers may actually be common diseases like typhoid, typhus, and leptospirosis masquerading as raging fevers. However, as laboratory facilities throughout Nepal are pretty dismal, diagnosing fevers becomes tricky.

Almost a decade ago, about 900 consecutive fever patients were examined at Patan Hospital to find out what was causing their illness. Many well-known conditions such as typhoid (the number one aetiology) were correctly identified. But two diseases (typhus which is different from typhoid, and leptospirosis) were completely

overlooked by all the physicians who were in-charge of treatment. Surprisingly, typhus and leptospirosis turned out to be the third and fourth laboratory-proven causes of fever in those 900 patients after pneumonia.

A crucial lesson that emerged from this milestone



study was the importance of conducting investigative research to solve mysterious health conditions. Only when healthcare experts systematically study fevers in a given community will they be able to chronologically identify the causes of fever for that group.

Crucially, drugs for fever

patients may have to be started on an empirical basis (ie relying on experience and observation) even before test results for blood culture, if available, are in. This pre-emptive strike with antibiotics is important to prevent complications associated with the organism causing the fever. Once again, figuring out the best drug to prescribe based on earlier studies done in the community is vital.

Large studies conducted in Nepal have shown that adequate doses of certain antibiotics are very effective in the empirical treatment of particular fevers. It is advisable that government health teams carry these antibiotics during their rescue missions to fever outbreak sites. Many of the studies regarding antibiotics and fever from institutions like Patan Hospital have been published in well-known medical journals and are easily accessible.

Clean drinking water and better sanitation would go a long way in curbing frequent outbreaks. However, as it will take many years for our government to provide all Nepalis with access to clean water, the next best method is to febrile patients.



BIKRAM RAI

**GRID-LOCKED:** Vehicles came to a grinding halt on Thursday morning near Kamaladi due to the hour long strike called by student organisations affiliated to different political parties to protest against the price hike of petroleum products.



NEPAL ARMY

**FAREWELL:** Lt Gen Gaurav Shumsher Rana (left) formally took over the post of Nepal's Army Chief on Thursday following a farewell reception for outgoing chief Chhatra Man Singh Gurung (right) at Nepal Army Headquarters on Wednesday.

# Just need justice

The proposed Truth and Reconciliation Bill has qualified even the most gruesome crime for amnesty



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

When the peace agreement was signed in November 2006, the parties had agreed to set up a high-level Truth and Reconciliation Commission to probe cases of serious human rights violations during the war that had just ended. The Commission was envisioned as a mechanism to help heal the country and rebuild society. During the Madhav Nepal-led government two bills were prepared to separately address the cases of disappearances and extra-judicial killings as well as torture. But the bill was never actually tabled in the interim legislature and remained in limbo for the next four years, bypassed by other priorities. Even so, human rights activists kept up the pressure on successive governments. So when the Maoist-Madhesi Cabinet forwarded a unified bill to the president's office last week, one would assume

the matter would have been addressed satisfactorily. But there are serious reasons to doubt the effectiveness of the bill to redress war atrocities. In the last four years, the two bills were never tabled in the interim legislature. It is worth questioning: what prompted the parties to agree on a unified bill and push it through at a time when there is no legislative body to deliberate upon it? Reshma Thapa of the New York-based International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) says there were problems with the previous drafts as well, but the combined bill is worse. Gaping holes give the proposed commission power to grant amnesty for all cases, and give the Attorney General's office the final say on which case will be filed in court and which will not. The Attorney General is a politically-appointed government lawyer and irrespective of the party that comes to power, the decision to take up the case will be a political one. Article 25 of a previously-drafted TRC bill had a specific provision that forbade amnesty in cases of custodial and unarmed killings, rape, torture, and forced disappearances.

However, the new draft has conspicuously removed this provision, qualifying even the most gruesome crime for amnesty. The Maoists and the opposition are both guilty in turning this into a toothless document. Perpetrators of extra-judicial killings among the Maoists like Bal Krishna Dhungel, Agni Sapkota and Prabhu Sah are not just walking freely, but have become CA members and ministers in government. Similarly, the army has been sheltering the accused like Niranjana Basnet and Bobby Khatri despite the Supreme Court's order

to present them before the court. At the Advocacy Forum, rights activist Mandira Sharma told me she has registered over 120 conflict-related rape cases, most of them by security forces. Not a single person was ever prosecuted. In November 2004, Lt Jibesh Thapa and four of his colleagues from the Bhawani Baksh Battalion in Dailekh allegedly tortured and raped a woman in Khursanibari VDC. The District Police Office refused to register her case after which she moved the Supreme Court. But the court scrapped the case on a technicality. In Banke, soldiers from the Bhimkali Battalion abducted two minors from their house on pretext of questioning them about their father, an alleged Maoist. The girls were tortured and raped for three days. Despite being a civilian case, the trial was

conducted in military court which convicted one of the accused of illegal detention, but turned down the rape charges. Another accused Ajit Thapa was subsequently promoted. UN Resolution 1820 states that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, and stresses the need for its exclusion from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes. It calls upon member states to comply with their obligations for prosecuting persons responsible for such acts. Furthermore, the principle of jus cogens in customary international law mandates that domestic laws be consistent with international laws and treaties, and those that are at odds become automatically null and void. The present draft bill is an eye-wash and Nepal stands in violation of international obligations when it grants blanket amnesty to alleged perpetrators of war crimes in the name of reconciliation. According to the rights group, INSEC, 935 people were forcibly disappeared during the decade long conflict, out of which 825 have been taken by the security forces and 110 by the Maoists. Other counts put the total at more than 1,200. There are still no reliable figures in cases of sexual violence during the conflict because most victims are unable to speak up for fear of social stigma and further victimisation.



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# MONSOON IN THE RAINSHADOW

May be one last time on horseback to Lo Manthang



KUNDA DIXIT in MUSTANG

Tashi Wangel (*pic, above*) leads his horses up to the 4,000m pass on Choya La and mutters a mantra at a cairn bedecked with colourful prayer flags fluttering in the wind.

A jeep can be heard straining up the switchbacks, and soon arrives in a cloud of dust. Mustang is experiencing the same transition from horses to automobiles that Europe went through during the industrial age.

"With the road there will be no need for my horses," says Wangel, adjusting the harness on a 10-year-old blue roan named Tomar. "This is the last of them, I will either sell them off or not replace them when

they die."

Horses, mules, and donkeys have always been a part of Mustang's landscape and culture. Horses, in particular, have a prominent place in Tibetan lore and language, not just as a means of transport but also serving as a potent symbol of speed, certitude, and good fortune. But all this is about to change soon with the arrival of the road from the south that will make it possible to drive from Pokhara to Lo Manthang in less than 12 hours.

Along the old Kali Gandaki horse trail there is anticipation and apprehension about the new road, and what it will mean for Mustang's 'Restricted Area' status that limits tourism and requires every trekker to pay \$650 for a 13-day permit. The Annapurna Area



Conservation Project (ACAP) makes Rs 50 million a year from trekking royalties and is supposed to plough back 60 per cent of it to Mustang's economy, but much of that money vanishes in Kathmandu's bureaucratic sinkhole.

"When the road is opened,

Mustang should also open, it can't be treated like a restricted area anymore," says local businessman, Deb Gurung. Indeed, most tourists along the trails are already put off by vehicles on a route they had been promised was pristine.

But Lo Manthang's former

VDC chairman Indra Bista fears that abolishing the \$50 per day trekking fee and lifting restrictions will turn the fragile region "into another Thamel". He said: "If we open up Upper Mustang, cheap tourists will flood in and we will see a repeat of the Annapurna Circuit

GOOGLE EARTH



## The world catches up

Looking down at the 360 degree view of Upper Mustang from a hilltop in Geeling, one understands why landscapes can be sacred. To the south are the Annapurnas and Nilgiri, to the north the pastel canyons of the Kali Gandaki under an inky blue sky, and to the west the dark, wet mountains veiled by a gauze of rain.

This is terrain textured by millennia of wind, rain, and snow after being raised from the shores of the Tethys Sea 60 million years ago. It is hard to imagine that the multi-coloured organ pipe cliffs of Chhusang were once a sea coast, or that ammonite fossils on the banks of the Kali Gandaki 4,000m above sea level were once crustaceans that slithered on the ocean floor.

Mustang's terrain inspires awe and wonder even if you don't know about the geology of its genesis, which is probably why this has been a place of such spiritual and cultural significance. This isn't just Tibet, it is proto-Tibet. This is what the Tibetan Plateau must have been like before Buddhism arrived, and before the Chinese came. From the neolithic caves carved into the soft vertical conglomerate walls of the canyons to the historic monasteries, sacred springs, and lakes, this is a valley made holy by a primordial blend of geology and mythology.

Hindu and Buddhist sages of the Himalaya all visited and



meditated here. Milarepa the poet saint passed through. Guru Rinpoche, who brought Buddhism to Tibet, chased a demoness from the Samye monastery in Lhasa all the way to Mustang and finally slayed her here. It is her blood that is believed to have dyed the surrounding cliffs red. The exact spot where that happened 1,300 years ago is Lo Gekar, the oldest Tibetan Buddhist shrine in Nepal.

The kingdom of Mustang was established by Ame Pal 800 years ago, and the ruins of his imposing fortress overlook Lo Manthang where his direct descendant, Jigme Prabal Bista, still rules 25 generations later. Now, with a new road from Pokhara snaking its way up to the trans-Himalayan plateau, Mustang's centuries-old way of life is bound to change as the rest of the world catches up.



ALL PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

where trekkers bargain even at tea shops."

Such ambivalence is repeated up and down the trail this peak monsoon season, the last before the road is built. Some worry about Mustang's delicate culture and environment, while others argue everyone can benefit from tourism if it is opened.

Historically, Mustang always fell between the cracks, although it briefly became the epicentre of Tibetan resistance to Chinese occupation in the 60s with the CIA-supported Khampa uprising. But after Richard Nixon met Mao in Beijing, the Dalai Lama called on the fighters to lay down arms and the Nepal Army hunted down the last remaining Khampas.

The new democratic

government in Kathmandu opened up the area to limited tourism in 1992, but access to the kingdom within a republic remains restricted. ACAP's fees and rules now seem out of date and anachronistic.

Whatever happens to Mustang's restricted status, visitors already get vivid reminders of a district on the verge of momentous change. Tractors overtaking mule trains on the narrow trails, Applebee's Cafe has arrived, and at Kagbeni the ACAP office carefully checks to see if trekkers have brought back all their trash, and then tosses the day's collected garbage over the cliff into the Kali Gandaki.

In Kathmandu, as the debate continues about ACAP's own future (see

page 3,4) no one is thinking and planning for the future of Mustang's tourism. Because Nepal doesn't care, it is the Chinese who are distributing free rice and wheat, the Indians are equipping schools, and the Americans are helping restore monasteries.

Till 50 years ago Loba families all contributed to sending donkeys down to Butwal to bring up a year's supply of essentials. Today there are no donkeys left. The mules will soon disappear.

As for the horses, Wangel thinks he will keep one just for old times' sake. "But with time, even that will be replaced by a motorcycle," he adds as he corrals his horses and feeds them on the ground floor of his home in Lo Manthang.

Others are not as pessimistic.

Despite the road, there are alternative high trails for trekking and horseback travel in Mustang, and the road will make the trail through Tangbe, and Drakmar, and the Damodar Kunda treks more accessible.

"As much as possible, horses need to continue to be presented as viable and exciting modes of transport for tourists," says anthropologist Sienna Craig, author of *Horses Like Lightning*, a book about Mustang's horses.

The rugged, arid landscape of Mustang has ensured that the Lobas are hardy folk. They have travelled every winter to India and beyond to trade, and today every household has someone in Hong Kong, Seoul or New York. They are worldly-wise and cosmopolitan, they have taken in stride every challenge history has thrown their way.

**THE IRON HORSE:** Tashi Wangel worries his horses will have no work now that the road has arrived in Lo Manthang. But the road could make side valleys like Drakmar's red cliffs (above) more accessible and keep the horses occupied.

And if Kathmandu provides resources, and allows them to make their own decisions, Mustang can come to terms with its road and make the best of it. 

Read the longer version of this article and interview with Sienna Craig, author of *Horses Like Lightning*.

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

The kingdom within the republic, #581  
Last trek to jomsom, #383

# 'NC is open to reinstatement'

Interview with NC President, Sushil Koirala, *Kantipur*, 2 September

क्रान्तिपुर

**Kantipur: Is the latest tripartite meeting making desired progress?**

**Sushil Koirala:** We are very concerned about the deteriorating political environment in the country and are trying our best to reach an agreement on major issues. The name, number and territorial boundaries of future federal states, as well as the form of governance are being discussed in great detail.

**What are the chances of agreement on federalism?**

There are major differences between the NC/UML and the UCPN-M regarding the nature of federalism. But I feel the Maoist chairman has realised the urgency of the situation and seems serious in finding a solution. I am hopeful that we can find a solution sooner than later.

**Are you in the process of ending the deadlock through dialogue and reinstating the CA?**

We haven't decided on that yet. The Maoists want to end the deadlock through dialogue and reinstatement of the CA, while we are proposing an all party government that would forge agreement on outstanding issues. But if there is immediate consensus on all issues, the CA can be reinstated.

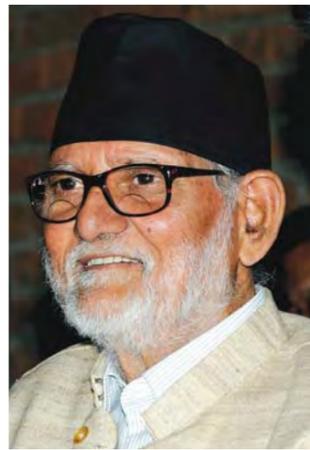
**But Dahal blames you for the lack of consensus among parties?**

It surprises me and I have questioned him about this. I have always adhered to BP's political vision of seeking reconciliation through dialogue and feel there is no other way of ending the present political impasse. An

unstable Nepal is not in anybody's interest including our neighbours India and China.

**The Maoists head the government now and have even formed an alliance with other parties. Do you think reconciliation is possible under these circumstances?**

The alliance in the name of federalism is a sham. Who is against federalism in this country? If they are blaming us then they should remember that GP Koirala was the first politician to stand in favour of federalism.



We are only concerned about the nature of federalism and the number of states.

**If your party decides to go for re-elections, will you reject the possibility of reinstatement?**

The party will decide what it thinks is best for the country. We will agree on whatever helps end the deadlock as quickly as possible. Although majority party members want re-elections, we are also open to the possibility of reviving the CA.

**Do you think the president should play an active role in the current process?**

No, the NC is not in favour of encouraging any unconstitutional move by the president. Even the president has made it clear that he has no intentions of playing an active role.

## Yashuda Kumari versus the state

Dilli Acharya, *Rajdhani*, 3 September

राजधानी

After Yashuda Kumari Baral completed her grade 12 exams, she left home and made the one day journey from Kalkot to Kathmandu in search of employment and better opportunities. But more than ten job applications, and a year later, she is still unemployed. As a last attempt, she has filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court demanding that the state introduce a new act to address the problems faced by more than four million unemployed Nepalis.

While Article 18(1) of the Interim Constitution states that every citizen shall have the right to employment, Article 18(2) promises to provide social security to women, labourers, senior citizens, the disabled, and the helpless.

Baral who is physically handicapped since the age of four is pursuing her undergraduate studies in Kathmandu while supporting her siblings' education on the side. However, she clarifies that she didn't file the case just to get a job. For her it is more of a symbolic battle against the state and she feels she is representing thousands of unemployed youth in the country.



Leaders: Our full concentration is on peace and constitution

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 2 September

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The scheduled bilateral meeting was replaced by unofficial talks on the sideline without the Foreign Ministry's knowledge. This is unusual.”

A high level Foreign Ministry official quoted in *Kantipur*, 3 September

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# The missing half

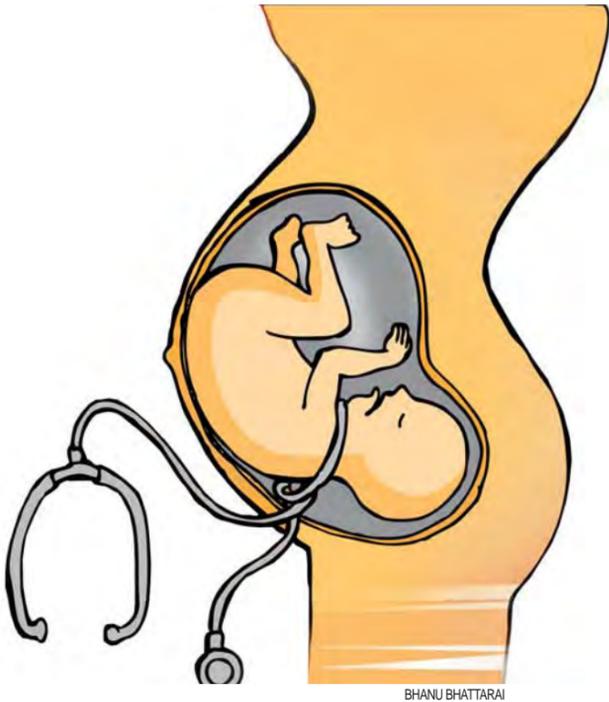
Perana had to file for divorce when her husband started torturing her for failing to give birth to a son. Under pressure from her husband's family, the mother of two daughters had to undergo 12 abortions in 12 years of her marriage. After being coerced into divorce, she left her well-paying job in Kathmandu and migrated abroad.

When a priest told Bimala's husband that his wife would only bear a son after giving birth to four daughters, he began drugging her as soon as she became pregnant. After she became pregnant for the fourth time, she refused to abort her baby and was beaten till she had to be hospitalised. Now she is seeking legal advice.

Another woman in Jhapa was burnt alive by her husband, and rescued by neighbours, who rushed her to hospital in Dharan. Her father says Jyoti's husband wanted a son and tried to kill her in a fit of rage after she gave birth to a daughter.

Nepali families' increasing obsession with male children and the subsequent rise in sex selective abortion are clear indicators of how deep rooted old patriarchal values are and how far the country is from achieving gender parity. Superstitious beliefs such as only a son can carry forward the family's lineage and perform the last rites of his parents so that they reach heaven have fuelled this epidemic.

Abortion was made legal in Nepal to control population and lessen maternal mortality rate, as well as to address domestic violence against women. According to government statistics, 700,000 cases of abortion were recorded in the last 10 years, out of which 439,074 took place in the rescued five years since abortion was legalised. However, instead of protecting and empowering woman, the service has been widely abused to selectively abort female foetuses.



BHANU BHATTARAI

A study conducted by UNFPA in 2009 revealed that most women are open to having children of either sex, but out of those whose first born is a daughter, 81 per cent said they wanted a son next. It is estimated that more than half of those who wish for sons secretly visit hospitals to determine the sex of their babies. This is when family pressure starts and many mothers who refuse to end their pregnancy are met with violence.

Women's rights activist Sapana Pradhan says it is illegal to determine the sex of the foetus before abortion and terminating pregnancy after 16 weeks is also a criminal act. Ultrasound technicians, doctors and even mothers who are involved in the practice are punishable by law. However, since most abortions take place in private clinics and families and doctors go to great lengths to maintain secrecy, it's very hard for authorities to detect the crime.

Although people assume that female foeticide is more prevalent in rural areas where literacy rate is low and superstitions guide daily life, nothing could be further from the truth. The Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2011 shows that cities register twice as many cases of foeticide than villages. But rural women who abort are far more vulnerable because they don't have access to high-end gynecological facilities like their urban counterparts which means many undergo the procedure at home.

Names have been changed to protect privacy  
Ramji Dahal

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# One prime minister a day

How on earth are we going to accommodate all these **nattering netas of negativism** whom Comrade Chairman has promised to make prime minister? Not to worry, Awesome has thought of that. He is going to ensure one new prime minister every day till Dasain, that way everyone will get their turn to be in Singha Darbar.

☞

The three parties are meeting again and have vowed to strike a deal by the end of Bhadau, but they forgot to invite the Madhesis. This new initiative is the brainchild of PKD who, if he can't be an executive president, wants to be a kingpin. Awesome has been lobbying tirelessly to get everyone to agree that reviving the CA will be the least messy option for everyone. To do this, the Ass' fly in the wall tells us he promised **Jhusil Da, Jhol Gnat and Brave Lion** prime ministerships, and told Makunay he'd make a fine president to succeed Ram Baron. He's also told the pluri-nationalists he is backing them to the hilt. You'd think by now that these guys would see through Chairman Chubby Lal being economical with the truth. But no, they are all licking their chops and have suddenly warmed up to the idea of bringing the CA back from the dead.

☞

Uncle Gutch is in a dilemma. As Minister of Affairs at Home he gets to appoint a new police chief, but there are two candidates who have arrived at his office bearing gifts and the candidate who should legitimately be the next chief is too straight to offer anything. No prizes for guessing that Gutch will go for those tantalising **12 corrodos**.

☞

The talk of the week in the corridors of power is the new spat between **PM BRB** and **DPM NKS**. So, it seems Ram meets Man in Teheran in secret, but does not invite Kaji who is miffed and spills the beans as soon as he gets back. The two were together throughout the trip, they flew back business this time, and had plenty of time to sort things out. And yet the Foreign Minister attacks the Prime Minister in public, and accuses him yet again of being an Indian stooge. Either the Qazi feels slighted because he desperately wants to be an Indian stooge too, or the Firanghi Minister can't resist being on the nationalist bandwagon for the next elections where he and BRB will

be contesting from Gorkha. **Question:** How come NKS is so powerful that BRB can't sack him on the spot for insubordination? **Answer:** PKD.

☞

Now we know why there hasn't been an ambassador in New Delhi for nearly a year. Why do we need an ambassador when all outstanding issues can be sorted out regularly by the two prime ministers at the highest level in Teheran, New York, etc?

☞

All this behind-the-scenes wheeling dealing has left PKD too tired to do any house hunting it seems. Three months after coming under fire at the Seventh Extended Plenum for his luxurious lifestyle and promising to move to more modest accommodations, Comrade Awestruck has found out there just aren't any red-coloured 12-bedroom bungalows with swimming pool and parking to accommodate 15 cars to be paid for by the government. Comrade Sita and House-hunter Lal have been at it for months, but what they have seen so far are just a tad too modest for a **kingmaker** of PKD's stature.

☞

Still on the subject of **Minister of Extra-terrestrial Affairs, Kamred Kommie Kaze**. His Excellency has finally admitted Nepal won't be hosting the SHARK Summit in May 2013 because (get this) we don't have enough Mercedes Benz limos to pick heads of state at Terrible International Airport. If the CA is revived, there won't even be a venue to host South Asian leaders. We had 10 years to fix Tin Kunay since the last Summit, but we did nothing and now there is no time to finish putting the fountains and flyovers either. Kazi is distraught because he thought he'd finally get an audience with Mr Man.

☞

Late breaking news from Thailand that the clown pince (ours, not theirs) is up to his shenanigans at Irish pubs in Krung Thep Maha Nakhon. **Ex-HRH Porous** is doing the round of watering holes in the City of Angels and recently got into a bit of a scrap at his kids' school so police had to rescue the children. Ex-majesty Kingji it seems has excommunicated and defrocked his ex-heritor to the ex-throne.



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