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DIFFERING DRESS CODES:
Police women on duty look on as a woman dressed in a bright red sari passes by after attending a Teej program.

BIKRAM RAI

THE BETTER HALF

In our obsession with dead-end politics, a news item last week on the shocking surge in female foeticide in Nepal went barely noticed. The report delved into how the legalisation of abortion five years ago has led to the proliferation of ultrasound clinics across the country allowing parents to terminate pregnancies if they are girls. Activists estimate that 50,000 unborn females are aborted in Nepal every year.

The slaughter of daughters

is the result of deeply-rooted patriarchal values, a preference for boys in many Nepali cultures, a belief that sons are needed to perpetuate the family lineage, the need to pay dowry to marry daughters, and the reluctance to allow daughters to inherit property. This is largely an urban middle-class phenomenon across South Asia, and is so entrenched that despite the spread of education and gender awareness, old habits die hard.

However, increasing numbers of Nepali women are breaking stereotypes and getting their PhD degrees, serving in the army and police force, climbing Mt Everest, running ministries, while juggling their domestic responsibilities side by side. These women show that if given a chance, they can take care of their families, earn a living, and be as independent as their male counterparts.

More on page 2



CLIFF THREADGOLD

Bigger, better, and broader by Dasain?

by **Sunir Pandey**

The government's no-nonsense approach to road expansion is up against diplomatic pressures

page 12-13

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SLAUGHTER OF OUR UNBORN DAUGHTERS

In our obsession with dead-end politics, a news item last week on the shocking surge in female foeticide in Nepal went barely noticed. The investigative report by Ramji Dahal in our sister publication *Himal Khabarpatrika* delved into how the legalisation of abortion five years ago has led to the proliferation of ultrasound clinics across the country allowing parents to terminate pregnancies if they are girls.

The legislation was passed to give women a choice, to reduce Nepal's appalling maternal mortality rate, and to stop the practice of relatives accusing young daughters-in-law of abortion just to put them behind bars. The law has benefited tens of thousands of women across Nepal, and freed many innocent unjustly jailed women. But as abortion became easier, it has resulted in the appalling spread of female foeticide.

Activists estimate that 50,000 unborn babies are aborted in Nepal every year after parents find out through ultrasound scans that they are girls. This does not include abortions carried out without parents knowing the gender of their babies, half of which are likely also girls.

The slaughter of daughters is the result of deeply-rooted patriarchal values, a preference for boys in many Nepali cultures, a belief that sons are needed to perpetuate the family lineage, the need to pay dowry to marry daughters, and the reluctance to allow daughters to inherit property. This is largely an urban middle-class phenomenon across South Asia, and is so entrenched that despite the spread of education and gender awareness, old habits die hard.

The discrimination against girls in Nepal now starts even before they are born. As they grow up, many girl children are stigmatised within families and by society: discouraged from going to school, fed last, not taken



KUNDA DIXIT

Every year in Nepal 50,000 unborn babies are aborted after parents find out through ultrasound scans that they are girls.

to hospitals if they fall sick, married off young, denied citizenship, abused or trafficked, sometimes by their own relatives.

This is why, while women live longer than men in most developed countries, the ratio of men to women in Nepal is skewed at 1.04 to 1. In his well-known research paper, Amartya Sen calculated that the preference for sons in China and South Asia had resulted in more than 100 million 'missing' women.

Surveys carried out in Nepal have shown that half of those who want sons visit clinics to determine the sex

of the child. If it is a girl, the daughter-in-law then faces pressure to undergo an abortion and is tortured or even killed if she refuses.

- Twenty-one year-old Jyoti Harijan's husband poured kerosene on her and set her on fire after she gave birth to a daughter.
- Indu is the mother of two daughters, and was five months pregnant when her teacher husband Rohit beat her so badly she lost her baby. He then married another wife.
- Prerana and her husband are from well-to-do families in Kathmandu and graduates of an Australian university, but the mother of two daughters left her husband after being tortured and forced to abort four times after ultrasound scans showed the foetus to be female.
- A mother of two daughters in Sindhupalchok was pressured to take an ultrasound after she became pregnant and forced to abort, but the foetus turned out to be a boy. The hospital paid her Rs 100,000 and threatened her not to reveal the story. Some doctors tell mothers their babies are girls, even if they are not, just to lure them to abort and make more money.

These horror stories are becoming increasingly commonplace, and thrive because of the lax implementation of laws that ban sex selective abortions, and prohibit termination of pregnancies after more than 12 weeks. Weak regulation of hospitals, corruption, and the over-commercialisation of medical care are also to blame.

But the real culprit for Nepal's female genocide is patriarchy in all its deplorable manifestations. The only long-lasting remedy to such deep-seated injustice is to accelerate efforts to eliminate gender discrimination through education, better regulation, and law enforcement.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

BORN AGAIN CA

This is a very well argued editorial, but I have major misgivings about going for general and local elections without closure on the federalism debate ('Born-again CA', Editorial, #621). Identity-based campaigning and ethnic tension will make any future elections violent and far from free and fair. So although it does look like Dahal is trying to gain maximum leverage by reinstating the CA, that may be the least harmful of all the terrible options we have.

Bob

- The Prime Minister admits he is no longer in control, the President's hands are tied, we are functioning without a parliament, constitutional bodies do not have leaders, and there is no budget. This prolonged vacuum is a recipe for disaster. Reviving the CA or holding elections are both viable options, but they are just that: options. If the politics fails, both options can be catastrophic. If the politics can be sorted out, both are good options.

Ram Ashish

- Those who say 80 per cent of the constitution was already completed by 27 May are wrong. How could most of the constitution be written when disagreements over major issues like identity based federalism, constitutional court and executive presidential system were yet to be resolved. When all those years were not enough for parties come to an agreement over contentious issues, Dahal wants us to believe that if the CA is revived he can magically forge consensus among one and all.

Govind Giri

- Somebody please just write the constitution so that we can all get back to business. How hard can it be? A constitution is a set of universal rights, it's hardly political and doesn't need specific stipulations about the interest of every little group, district, ethnicity etc. We could probably download a constitution from the internet, and fill in the blanks.

Danny

- 95 per cent of Nepalis don't care about reviving the CA and are sick of listening to Dahal, Bhattarai and other leaders blame each other for the demise of the CA or the lack of consensus. All we want is law and order, harmony, and most of all education and employment opportunities. We will choose peace and prosperity over constitution any day.

Suman Uprety

- All this talk about 'briefly' reconvening the CA is simply a Maoist tactic to prolong the party's time in power. The Maoists don't want elections because they know they will not get a majority. Also Dahal is determined to dislodge Bhattarai from office and he sees a CA revival as the fastest way to make that happen.

Jung

- We have wasted an incredible amount of money and energy in the last six years, but have very little to show in terms of achievement. The political class has been running the country without local and general elections. Democratic rules which are respected elsewhere are being blatantly bypassed by those in power. And highly vitriolic leftist



KUNDA DIXIT

discourse has become the new political language of Nepali society. Where do we go from here?

Nirmal

- Regardless of our political affiliations, Bhattarai took the right decision on 27 May to dissolve the CA. Had the CA not been aborted that night, Nepal would have slid down a slippery slope of ethnic violence. He should take credit for saving the country and try to convince other parties to take part in elections.

Pundit

JUST NEED JUSTICE

It's sad that even six years after signing the peace accord, the truth and reconciliation process for victims on both side of the war remains in limbo ('Just need justice', Anurag Acharya, #621). Yes the country is suffering a constitutional crisis,

but there is no reason why an autonomous committee with an independent code of conduct cannot be formed to investigate war crimes and bring the perpetrators to court. Considering how much arm twisting goes on in Nepal it would be a good idea to have an international justice organisation on board so that leaders cannot bully their way through and to ensure that victims and their families' quest for justice is not hampered by vested interests.

Tara B

MUSTANG

Thank you Kunda Dixit for your fantastic description of Mustang, its geographic history, landscape and culture ('Monsoon in the rainshadow, #621). After reading the article I felt as if I had visited the place first hand and it definitely made me want to take explore Lo Manthang on

horseback before Mustang loses its mystique with the arrival of roads and hordes of tourists. This piece also reminded me that we have so many great locations within Nepal that we as domestic tourists are yet to discover.

Asmita T

- The rest of the world which wants Mustang to remain a museum doesn't have to worry about the Mustangis because given the chance they will turn the road into their path to prosperity.

Jill H

ANNAPURNA

What an irony. While Bhattarai's men are busy snatching private lands in Kathmandu in the name of road extension, natural resources (like the Annapurna area) which belongs to every Nepali are being treated as some gang's collective property ('In the shadow of Annapurna', Gopal Guragain, #621).

Who cares

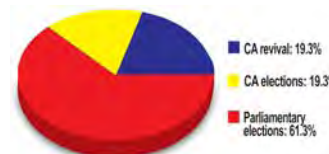
Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #622

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

Total votes: 1,783



Weekly Internet Poll # 623. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think of the US government's decision to remove the UCPN-M from its terrorism list?



GUEST COLUMN
Bimbika Sijapati Basnett

Last Dasain, I overheard an elderly relative blessing someone nearby: “I hope you get a job in an international development organisation, and when you do don’t forget to take your great aunt around in a big jeep.”

Though amusing at the time, the remark was a glaring reminder of the impact of the development industry in Nepal. Multilateral and bilateral agencies, international NGOs and community groups benefiting from donor support now make up an economic sector just like manufacturing, banking, and tourism. The development industry employs people, transacts services, carries ideologies, and negotiates politics.

More than 60 per cent of Nepal’s development expenditure comes from overseas development assistance, supporting basic services in health, education, water, sanitation, and infrastructure to benefit marginalised communities. More recently, the development industry has been playing a critical role in supporting demands for greater social inclusion.

Development organisations have been strategically empowering previously excluded communities to demand greater rights and recognition. However, it is also exacerbating existing development challenges and producing new forms of inequalities and exclusions.

The development sector is an important and highly sought-after source of employment for educated Nepalis. Jobs are well-paid and also include other benefits such as pension schemes,

health coverage, education subsidies, training, or overseas travel. These are justified on the grounds of professionalising the sector and providing incentives to employees.

But the unintended side effect has been to diminish the Nepali state’s capacity to compete, and to reduce its ability to attract and retain high quality human capital. The ‘best and the brightest’ have either been absorbed by the development industry or are constantly negotiating ways of benefiting from it. The ranks of bilateral and multilateral agencies are filled with government

The development industry

While international donor agencies preach equality and inclusion, their own practices and policies couldn’t be further from it

officials who have jumped ship.

The development industry also creates ‘rents’ for employees in the form of higher education overseas, travel to attend workshops and trainings, and consultancy opportunities for civil servants. This has altered the incentive structure in the government bureaucracy.

Rather than performing signed responsibilities, many government officials are actively seeking ways of capturing rent. Mid and senior government officials at district and central levels often take unpaid leave from work as consultants in development organisations.

There has been a steady increase in graduate and post-graduate programs in development studies throughout Nepal. Their focus is not to critically examine the development sector from a multi-disciplinary perspective, but to produce effective and efficient development bureaucrats who are able to manage projects, or carry out monitoring and evaluation.

Students are trained to market themselves adequately for creative development jobs rather than to pass the government civil service exam. The glamour of a job in the development industry attracts students to these schools and perpetuates the view that government jobs are inferior.

The development industry is producing new inequalities and exclusions not just between ‘Nepali nationals’ and ‘Nepali internationals’, but between nationals and internationals. Senior decision-making positions within agencies are set aside for internationals, and Nepali citizens are not allowed to compete for them and have to work under the supervision of international

‘experts’, regardless of their qualification and experience.

This divide is reinforced by a significant difference in pay scale between national and international staff, which is particularly visible when Nepali staff and their international colleagues travel domestically: the subsistence allowance varies considerably.

Hierarchies within the development industry on the basis of citizenship are often justified on the grounds that international staff are more competent, have cross-country experience, and are politically neutral. But the growing numbers of Nepalis with qualifications from leading universities question such justifications. Because of its command over financial and technical resources, the development industry can define what constitutes knowledge and creates a ‘knowledge hierarchy’.

In-depth understanding of the Nepali economy, society and polity are often relegated as secondary or peripheral to knowledge of global contexts.

The development industry is one of the largest and most influential actors in the processes governing the restructuring of Nepal. While it preaches equality and inclusion as a fundamental agenda for new Nepal, its own day-to-day practices and policies couldn’t be further from it. It is time that the Nepali state and society also hold the development industry accountable. 🇳🇵

Bimbika Sijapati Basnett teaches at the Nepa School of Social Sciences and Humanities in Kathmandu.

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The politics of foreign aid, #620
Politics of aid, #478
Donor dynamics, #476

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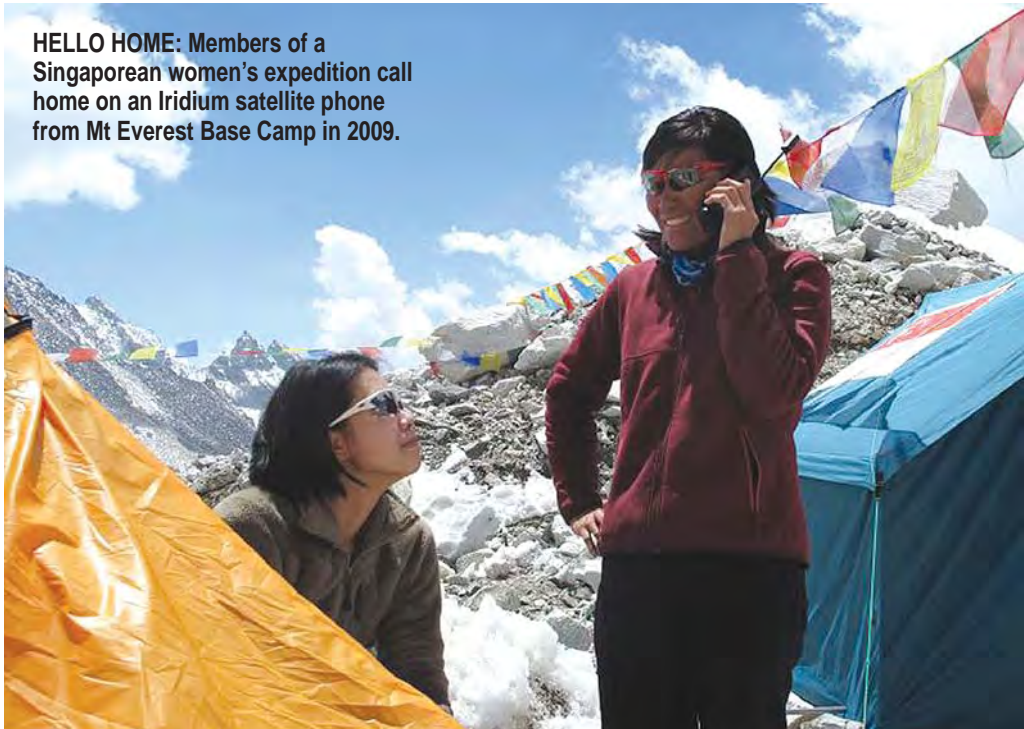
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HELLO HOME: Members of a Singaporean women's expedition call home on an Iridium satellite phone from Mt Everest Base Camp in 2009.

Beam it up

Satellite phones will be an essential item for Nepal during treks and emergencies


Now that the trekking and mountaineering season is about to start, the worry for tour organisers as well as tourists is how to keep in touch while on the trail. In the past year, Nepal's mobile phone providers have built base stations at the base camp of Mt Everest, and along sections of busy trekking routes. The jury is out on which provider has the best coverage, but phones that take multiple SIM cards of NT, Ncell, and Hello would be the best bet. CDMA phones and modems have more coverage in remote areas, but work mostly in and around the district capitals.

But there are still large parts of remote Nepal that are out of reach of GSM signals, and this includes the increasingly popular Budi Gandaki Trail, Rolwaling, Langtang, and Dhaulagiri. Here the only way to keep in touch will be through satellite phones. Among satellite phones, there are three choices: Inmarsat, Iridium, and Thuraya. Here, too, people have their favourite phone systems, and all three have their pros and cons in terms of cost, reliability, and signal quality. Most people still choose satellite phones by their looks, and as with human beings, this can be deceiving since beauty is only skin deep.

Thuraya and Inmarsat provide coverage through geo-stationary satellites that orbit the earth 36,000km out in space above the equator so that

they are always above the same point on the earth's surface. Iridium, on the other hand, links handsets to a fleet of 66 or so low-orbit satellites only 600km above the earth's surface. Unlike mobile phones, satellite phones need to be pointed at the satellite and you need to be outdoors-sometimes they don't even work inside tents. Iridium has a shorter time lag, while geo-stationary satellites have up to two seconds lag during conversations. In terms of coverage, Thuraya

specialises in the Asia and north-Africa region, while Inmarsat phones work all over the world although both don't work as well at the poles (which shouldn't affect us here in Nepal). With Iridium, there are always three satellites within range no matter where you are in the world. Cost-wise, Iridium phone sets tend to be more expensive, and the subscription and cost per calls are also more. Iridium tends to drop calls more often as it switches satellites, and this adds up the cost of calling. Iridium, Thuraya, and Inmarsat all have dealers and showrooms in Kathmandu, and most of their customers are trekking and mountaineering groups as well as relief agencies. During the war, however, Maoist guerrillas as well as the security forces were using satellite phones too. There is now also interest from embassies, aid agencies, and Nepali companies which want to prepare for a major earthquake that will throw out all communications, including

mobile phones. "We have to be prepared for an eight magnitude earthquake that is sure to hit Kathmandu someday," says Anudan Jung Rana of the Dubai-based Thuraya dealer, Constellation, in Kathmandu. "It will be critical for coordinating search, rescue, and relief." Next month, Thuraya is introducing its XT Dual model which can accommodate two SIM cards, one for the satphone, and one for normal mobile service. It has a stronger body and better battery life compared to earlier models. It can also be hooked up to a laptop and used as a satellite modem for Internet. Since remote trekking areas (or Kathmandu after an earthquake) will not have electricity, it is a good idea to also buy a 5-50W solar charger to keep the phones and laptops going. 

nepalitimes.com 

Keep in touch, #495

PAY AS YOU GO

 <p>THURAYA Thuraya pre-pay has a flat rate of \$1.49 per call except for hard-to-reach destinations. The post-pay calling rate is \$1.34. Thuraya to Thuraya calls are \$0.90 a minute. It also offers special SIMS for 80 developing countries, including Nepal, where the calling rate is \$0.75. The XT Dual will cost up to Rs 145,000, while earlier models are cheaper.</p> <p>www.thuraya.com www.constellation.com.np 01-5549252</p>	 <p>INMARSAT I4 Technologies is the dealer for the London-based Inmarsat and is offering its IsatPhonePro for about \$700 plus. Prepaid users pay 95 cents per minute to call anywhere in the world, while post-paid users pay 68 cents.</p> <p>www.satelliteinnepal.com/inmar.html 01-4223282/1993</p>	 <p>IRIDIUM Iridium's standard offer is a \$70.99 monthly fee with 20 minutes free and \$1.29 for every additional minute. The annual fee is \$499.</p> <p>www.iridium.com</p>
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Linked for life

When it started operations 17 years ago, WorldLink was run from a single room. Today, it is the largest private Internet Service Provider in the country. *Nepali Times* spoke to chairman Dileep Agrawal about how far the IT sector has progressed in the last two decades and the challenges ahead.



Nepali Times: How do you assess the progress of the IT industry in Nepal in the last 20 years?
Dileep Agrawal: Not only have IT businesses mushroomed in the last two decades, but we have been able to reach the homes of millions of ordinary Nepalis and increase their access to high-end technology. Most urban families in Nepal have at least one computer and increasing numbers are connected to the Internet through their mobile phones or through cable. The younger generation in particular is very hooked. You can see them surfing the net while on a microbus. However, due to the government's outdated policies, we have not been able to bring in latest technologies like WiMax.

How do you compare your company's performance within and outside the Valley?
Although Kathmandu is our primary market, our services are available in 58 districts. We have also teamed up with Mahabir Pun to come up with ways to expand our services to rural areas. In Dadeldhura and parts of Eastern Nepal, our wifi-based services

are really popular.

What kind of policies should the government introduce to ensure the IT sector's growth?
Firstly, the state must update existing infrastructure so that they meet international standards, and bridge the gap between us and rest of the world. Also, instead of viewing private companies as a threat, the government should create a level playing field for everyone.

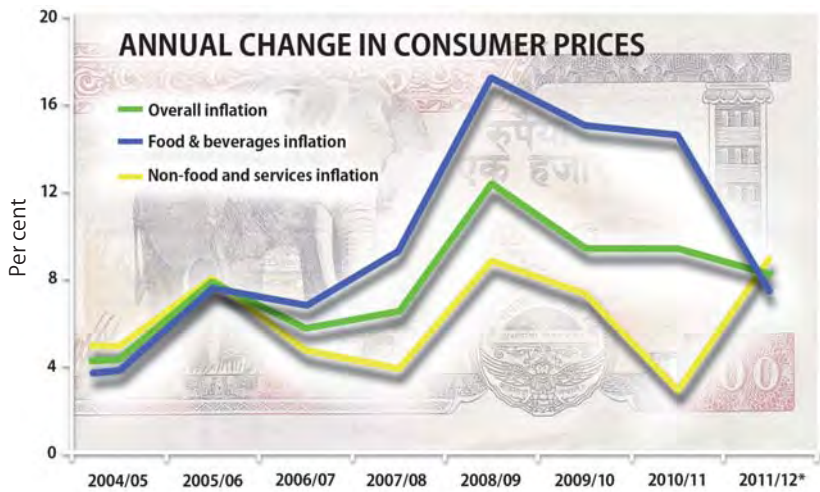
What special services can patrons look forward to as part of your 17th anniversary celebrations?
We are extending our monsoon package, and offering two months worth of extra services on cable internet, and one month extra on wireless service. Both come with free installation.

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the IT sector?
Only two per cent of Nepalis use cable internet, so opportunities are plentiful. However, IT policies need to be changed and made more conducive to innovation and creativity. Infrastructure also needs a major overhaul. Only then can private companies and entrepreneurs take full advantage of Nepalis' growing appetite for up-to-date technology.



IT'S THE ECONOMY

Chandan Sapkota



Sticky prices

Steep inflation and mounting food prices will leave a big dent in Nepalis' wallets this festive season

In its latest annual macroeconomic update, the central bank estimated inflation to be at 8.3 per cent, higher than the seven per cent target set in the budget and monetary policy for 2011-12. Nepalis who are struggling to cope with rising prices, especially food prices, find this figure hard to digest. Inflation is eroding people's purchasing power, who spend around 65.1 per cent of their consumption expenditure on food, and is hitting low income earners the most.

The central bank's figure is low because it gives 46.82 per cent weight to food prices and 53.18 per cent to non-food and services prices while determining inflation, which means that non-food prices have more influence on inflation. Such practice is inconsistent with a recent research that shows hike in food prices contributes about three-fourths of overall inflation.

The price movements, especially of food items, in

the huge informal economy and the current debatable weight given to food and non-food items mean that official inflation figures underestimate the actual prices people pay in the market every day. The central bank's figures which show a decline in food and beverage inflation from 14.7 per cent in 2010-11 to 7.7 per cent in 2011-12 do not reflect reality.

Prices in Nepal have historically moved in tandem with prices in India, thanks to our pegged exchange rate and huge volume of imports. About one-third of price variability here is determined by prices in India. After 2007-08, when

the global economy was struck by food, fuel, and financial crises, prices in Nepal started to remain stubbornly sticky at high level. It showed one directional changes only in response to food production and availability domestically, ie when supplies went down, prices went up. But when supplies moderated, prices remained sticky at high level. What happened?

As monetary policies (money supply and interest rate) have little traction on inflation in Nepal, supply side constraints and oil prices are weighing heavily on food and non-food prices. Since aggregate consumption has always been

high (about 90 per cent of GDP) for a long time, there is very little extra pressure coming from demand side. Major pressure is exerted by supply side factors along with unjustified price speculation and rigging of product and factor markets by middlemen.

First, some wholesalers have deliberately withheld stocks to bump up prices in order to earn abnormal profits on the eve of Dasain and Tihar when the demand for essential food and non-food items is pretty much price inelastic (demand hardly changes with respect to changes in prices).

Second, though recurrent bandas temporarily disrupted distribution of essential items, wholesalers and retailers capitalised on the strikes to stick to higher prices even after the normalisation of supplies. Third, middlemen are distorting prices and calculatingly keeping them high. For instance, transportation cost and some leakages do not fully justify more than 50 per cent increase in prices of fruits and vegetables after they reach Kalimati from Dharke of Dhading. Powerful politically affiliated middlemen and associations act both as monopsonists (only they purchase food from farmers), and monopolists (only they sell food to wholesalers), in effect depriving farmers of the true price by stifling competition and also burdening consumers with artificially inflated prices.

Fourth, each time supply

disruption occurs and oil prices are raised, there is inflationary expectations in the market, especially among retailers who preemptively up prices and keep it higher than the norm of taking 10 to 20 per cent profit only.

Fifth, the frequent hike in fuel prices and load-shedding hours have increased cost of production, which are ultimately reflected in the retail prices. Such fluctuations affect costs at production site, distribution chains, and retail stores. Furthermore, the continually rising imports of goods, especially those from outside of India, and the depreciation of the Nepali rupee have further pushed up prices.

Now, what can the government do about this?

For imported goods, there is little it can do to influence prices because they are determined externally. For those goods produced and sold domestically, especially food items, there is no other option but to strictly supervise distortionary activities by the movers and shakers of the market. It means clamping down on middlemen, setting up fruit and vegetable wholesale markets in strategic shopping locations, monitoring retail prices, and booking those who deliberately withhold supplies against the existing supply policies. Furthermore, the government could also lower import tariffs on food items, raw materials, and intermediate goods. 🇳🇵

www.sapkotac.blogspot.com
www.chandansapkota.wordpress.com

BIZ BRIEFS

Safety first

Morang Auto Works (MAW) recently conducted Yamaha Safe Riding Science workshops at Nobel College in Sinamangal to teach students about road safety. Eight colleges in Kathmandu have already participated in the program and helped their students become more aware.



Easy banking

Everest Bank recently launched five cash deposit machines. Customers can now use these machines that have real time cash deposit feature instead of queuing at the cash counter. The cash deposit machines have been installed in New Baneshwor, Lazimpat, New Road, Pulchok, and Chabahil.



Seeing is believing

Generation Next, the authorised distributor of Dell products in Nepal has opened Dell Concept Store at Putalisadak. The concept store will showcase Dell products such as laptops, desktops, printers, projectors, LCDs, and LEDs.



Six clean years

Clean Energy Development Bank has completed six years of operation. It is the first national level development bank focused on investment of the nation's abundant natural resources. CEDB has won National Best Presented Accounts Awards 2011 presented by The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN).



Hand in hand

Nepal Merchant Bank (NMB) and Ekata Development Bank have partnered to provide NMB's Local Cash Management System (LCMS) and remittance services. Now customers from both banks can take advantage of services from each other's branches. NMB has 20 branches, one extension counter and 23 ATM outlets across the country.

Festive facelift

New Madan Furnishers recently underwent renovation and is set to welcome patrons to its newly upgraded showroom in Kupondole. It is offering up to 60 per cent discount on curtains, carpets, bed sheets, sofa covers, and other new arrivals this festive season.



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Sharing what she knows

An illiterate female farmer dreams of setting up an agricultural college one day.

TONG SIAN CHOO in KASKI

Growing up in Begnas village in the stunningly picturesque Kaski district, Saraswati Adhikari has been close to the land since childhood.

The knowledge of the seasons and the weather, seeds and their planting times, the herbs and fruits in the surrounding forests all come naturally to her. Saraswati cannot read or write, and she learnt these things from her parents and in-laws who themselves got the knowledge from their parents.

Today Saraswati is not just a source of knowledge for farmers in Kaski, but from various other parts of Nepal and even foreigners. More than 130 trainees from different corners of the world visit Saraswati's

farm overlooking Begnas Lake every year to learn about organic farming, agro-biodiversity, and permaculture. With her husband, Surya, she grows 160 plant species like medicinal herbs, rice, vegetables, and fruits, including the less common ones such as coffee, kiwi, and avocado in her hillside farm.

Saraswati gives full credit to the Pokhara-based organisation, LIBIRD (Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research, and Development), a non-profit that seeks to conserve local biodiversity so farmers can benefit. Saraswati and Surya took part in a LIBIRD training 15 years ago where they learnt about using the rich plant life of the surrounding mountains to breed new crop varieties and preserve locally-adapted seeds.



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KNOWLEDGE FARM: Saraswati Adhikari cross-pollinates rice stalks in her farm in Kaski to improve her crops and preserve agricultural biodiversity. She shares this knowledge with farmers and volunteers from Nepal and abroad. The award-winning farmer has produced seven new varieties of rice.

LIBIRD

Today, Saraswati's farm not only meets the needs of her family, but also serves as a learning centre where visitors can rent rooms as part of a homestay program to gain knowledge about organic farming.

"I am very happy and satisfied now that I have become more famous," Saraswati laughs, half-mocking herself. She is encouraged by people from other parts of Nepal and overseas calling her on her mobile to acknowledge her efforts, and ask for advice on vermiculture or coffee production of which the couple are pioneers in Nepal.

Most foreigners come from the US and UK and depending on the season up to 10 volunteers stay at the farm every month to help with chores and learn organic farming techniques, or get first hand experience in coffee planting and processing.

"My biggest satisfaction is that I am able to share my knowledge and learning with my visitors, and let them take the knowledge back to farms in their own homes," she says.

Besides conserving agricultural biodiversity, she and her husband have also successfully improved local varieties of rice by cross-breeding. With the support of scientists from LIBIRD and other groups, Saraswati's farm has produced up to seven improved varieties of rice, including the famous Pokhareli Jethobudo which

is favoured by consumers for its soft texture, unique aroma, and taste.

As the breeding process requires intense concentration, Saraswati has taken over the role from her husband as his eyesight is failing, and his hands are not dexterous enough for crossing rice stamens. In 2010, Saraswati was given the Best Innovative Farmer Breeder by LIBIRD.

As a result of their hard work, the family income has tripled from the increased harvests and from renting rooms to homestay guests and volunteers. The Adhikaris have therefore been able to afford to send their son abroad for studies.

At a time when Saraswati and her husband should be thinking of retirement and enjoying the fruits of their lifelong work, the couple is brimming with new ideas. Although she cannot read or write herself, Saraswati's dream is to set up an agricultural college in Kaski to help other farmers preserve their traditional farming knowledge from disappearing forever.

Says Saraswati: "As long as my eyes, ears, and hands can support me, I will continue to do my best and pass on what I know to a new generation." 🇳🇵

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EVENTS



REAL SCHOOL OF NEPAL, cheer for your schools at the grand finals of Real School of Nepal. 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, 10 am to 6 pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

Sizzler promotion, enjoy mouthwatering sizzlers at the Terrace Garden. Rs 777, Runs until 31 September, 1 to 9 pm, 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

Photography Workshop, Canon School of Imaging offers you an opportunity to enhance your skills and gain in-depth knowledge on the nuances of digital photography. Rs 4500, 1 to 10 October, 5.15 to 7.15 pm, Maitri Bhawan, New Road, 2083206, 2013186, workshop@canon-nepal.com, register by 30 September

Ncell Nepal Literature Festival, prepare yourself for lively discussions at this celebration of literature and you might just get to question your favourite writers. 20-23 September, Nepal Academy, Kamaladi



BHAKTAPUR STREET FESTIVAL, celebrate the centuries-old cultural artistry of Bhaktapur. 22 September, Bhaktapur Darbar Square

Cycle for Tourism, brave the heat and cycle for two days from Kathmandu to Sauraha on a tour led by the cyclist Pushkar Shah in order to promote domestic tourism and cycling culture. 27 to 29 September, 9803607694, 9841876696, nepal.wcf@gmail.com

Electric Car Rally, share or drive your electric vehicles to Sanga and enjoy a fun day at Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre to raise funds for the centre. Rs 500, 15 September, 8 am to 2 pm, Sanga, Kabhre

Inheriting Statelessness, an exhibition of paintings by Saroj Bajracharya along with the launch of the book *Future of History*. 21 September to October 5, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 9803187665

Japanese Culture Exchange Program, a showcase of dance, music, arts, and documentary to raise funds for children's home. Rs 500, 21 September, 6 to 8.30 pm, Patan Darbar Museum, Patan, ladmystiqua@facebook.com

Weaving Art and Change in Nepal, featuring limited edition of carpets, sculptures, books, and paintings. 23 September to 7 October, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, 4218048, 4438979

Sandook Annual Showcase, a chance to purchase meticulously handcrafted ornaments and other products. 15 to 16 September, 11 am to 7 pm, Shriti, Jhamsikhel

MUSIC



SPECIAL NIGHT AT DELICES, watch guitarists Hari Maharjan and Daniel Givone jam up and take advantage of the discounted prices. 14 September, 8 pm, Delices de France Restaurant, Thamel, 4260326, 9803818253, info@restaurantnepal.com

Golden Moments, catch famed Beatles-tribute artists Gary Gibson and Richard Neale belt out the classics all night long. 14 September, 7 pm, Meconopsis Boutique Hotel, Pulchowk

All Nepal Battle of the Bands, see if you can hit the right notes at this nationwide music competition. Rs 5000, auditions on 6 October, 9841779176, 9803750550

DINING



PUBLIC CAVE, while its pizzas, sizzlers and springrolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke. Dihikopatan, Pokhara, 9856032958

Shangrila Kitchen, try its Gyakok and a wide variety of cocktails. 9 am to 10.30 pm, Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

Little Italy, go vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special, chocolate bomb. Darbar Marg



SALT AND PEPPER, a resto-lounge with a wide variety of dishes to choose from like hakka noodles, Hong Kong chicken and honey chili potatoes. Lakeside, Pokhara

New Tushita Restaurant, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on its penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, 44432957



DECHENLING, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, its pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel

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GETAWAYS

Hotel Barahi, enjoy a great view of Phewa lake, cultural shows, or indulge in the scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery in the hotel premises. *Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-460617/463526*



Godawari Village Resort, dive into the icy pool to escape the sweltering heat. *Rs 1099 for adults, Rs 699 for children, Saturdays and Sundays, 5560675*

Hotel Landmark, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye. *Pokhara, 061-462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com*



Monsoon is far from over, but the festive mood has already set in. Lifestyle Expo 2012 will add to the festivities in the run up to Dasain and Tihar celebrations from 12 to 16 October. The expo is one of a kind mega fair that will cater to the demands of modern consumers by bringing more than 300 exhibitors under a single roof.

Himalmedia, House of Rajkarnikar, Direction Nepal, and Global Expositions Management Services are collaborating to bring the ultimate consumer gala event in

MAHA MELA

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a month's time. The expo will provide a one stop solution for festival shopping with style. Popular clothing lines, gadgets, home décor, and furnishing outlets will all be housed under the same roof for your convenience. If you are planning on a family trip during the holidays, travel agents at the expo will help you pick the most sought after destinations at bargain prices.

If you are tired of shopping for Dasain clothes, you can check out the hottest two wheelers and four wheelers, or sample the latest mobiles, laptops, and music systems. School and college goers can take part in inter-college band and quiz contests. The best bands stand a chance to win cash prizes up to Rs

250,000 and recording contracts. For those who are looking to get inked, the expo will host Kathmandu's top tattoo parlours.

And the fun does not stop there. There will also be more than a dozen events including rock concerts, karate demonstration, dog shows,

fashion show, talent shows, and spectacular fireworks. So mark your calendars and get ready for five days of non-stop fun, food, and bags full of festive goodies. See you at the expo.

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SOMEPLACE ELSE

On 4 March 2012, Mahabir Pun announced through Facebook that he was opening a restaurant in Thamel to fund the Himanchal Higher Secondary School and Nepal Wireless Networking Project. He appealed to his friends and well wishers to help him collect Rs 1 million, but made it clear he wasn't asking for donations. He would return the loans in three



Mahabir's Centre for Nepal Connection

years at 10 per cent interest. Money poured in from across the world, and six months into the campaign Pun revealed that Mahabir's Centre for Nepal Connection had opened its doors.

Located on the first floor of Sagarmatha Complex in Mandala Street, if all goes according to plan, the Centre will become a hub not just for those looking to bring about real change in Nepal, but also for those looking for a good meal. It is a commendable thought that every single rupee from the restaurant's revenue is used to educate youngsters who could someday grow up to be the next Mahabir Pun.

The place came together very organically. Kathmandu's mayor, Keshav Sthapit, financed the furnishings. Architect Sanjay Shrestha designed its interiors for free with ceiling light which mimic a circuit board. Shrestha also used environmentally-friendly LED lights that utilise no more than 33 watts at a time. Lavazza donated an espresso machine, the projector is a gift



from Chaudhary Group, and WorldLink is providing free wifi. Binod Shrestha, who has worked in the Gulf was hoping to start his own restaurant, but didn't have the financial means. He has joined the centre as the head chef and receives training about food preparation, storage, hygiene, and cooking tips from a chef in San Francisco, virtually, every day.

Moving on to the food, we

had nachos with mango salsa for starters. A cheesy plate of refried beans and jalapeno peppers served with a knock-out salsa. The dish was fiery, tart, sweet, and crunchy all at once. We followed this with chicken marsala, a grilled chicken seared in olive oil with mushrooms, onions, and port wine. The port adds a rich welcome flavour to the dish. I will definitely go back to the Centre, for there are many

dishes on the menu that I want to try, such as the beef patty melt and the red wine chicken which are said to be heavenly. Also the farm-house salad already has its long list of admirers and I can't wait to join the list. And most exciting of all, the dessert menu will be out in about a fortnight.

For someone who eats out so often, I like the idea of indulging myself without feeling guilty because I know my money is helping improve someone's life even if in a very small way. I really love the message that Pun is promoting through his restaurant: we don't have to wait to make a big difference, together all our small contributions will amount to a big change eventually.

On a separate note, we have decided to remove the rating system because we feel our readers base their judgments only on the number of 'forks' we award rather than what we say about the food. The 'forks' also don't do justice to my entire gastronomic experience. Besides, eating out in Kathmandu is like taking part in a lucky draw: one day I might love the food served by a restaurant, but the next day the same place might disappoint me. 🇳🇵

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: In Thamel, get to Mandala Street and Mahabir's Centre for Nepal Connection is on the first floor of Sagarmatha Complex.



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Julie and Julia



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Nora Ephron, the writer and director of beloved films such as *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), *You've Got Mail* (1998), and most recently the brilliant and heartwarming *Julie and Julia* (2009) died this year on 26 June.

To call her just a film maker would be unfair, considering that she was also a journalist, essayist, playwright, producer, director, and an avid blogger. Beloved by her family, friends, and various audiences, and readers for her wit, charm, and verve – it is with great regret that I review here today her final film *Julie and Julia* (2009), knowing with a heavy heart that this is the last, scrumptious, imminently re-watchable film that will come from her extraordinarily creative mind.



For anyone who has known and loved the Meg Ryan-type clever, tender, romantic comedies, *Julie and Julia* will not fail to delight. It has the usual Meg Ryan persona in Amy Adams, who plays the “Julie” part of the title based on the real life memoirs of Julie Powell - a young writer who has a boring desk job and one day, out of frustration and love of cooking, decides to take on Julia Child’s comprehensive cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, tackling each recipe and then blogging about it from her boring nine to five job.

Though this aspect of the film is not boring in any way, one

almost pities the very talented Amy Adams who is pitted against the phenomenon of Meryl Streep playing an unforgettable Julia Child as the film flashes back and forth in time, outlining the sometimes hilarious, sometimes painful struggles of these women as they pursue their passion of cooking.

Does this sound light, fluffy, and banal? Light and fluffy yes, but never banal, the film soars with humour and warmth, with a wonderful supporting cast and luscious hunger pang inducing cooking sequences.

As Julia Child faces off with snotty French chefs at the Cordon Bleu who initially turn their nose up at her because she is a woman, she is supported by her loving diplomat husband Paul, played to perfection by Stanley Tucci. Similarly Julie is also encouraged by her husband Eric (Chris Messina) who is alternately frustrated and delighted, all the while being extremely well-fed, throughout his wife’s experiment.

It is not that these films are particularly meaningful or profound, it is just that the *Sleepless in Seattle*, *You’ve Got Mail*, and *Julie and Julia* trio carry the hallmark of a remarkable woman who clearly knew how to live, and eat, really really well, keeping all important things in perspective, and was somehow also able to channel these skills into some very fine, heartwarming, soul cleansing cinema.

Settling into any of these films is like settling into the arms of a loved one, or dear friend, ready with either a favourite blanket or a glass of excellent red wine and knowing that the next few hours will be bliss.

Ephron’s passing induced an astonishing number of loving obituaries and essays memorialising her legendary warmth, her unwavering friendship, and her ability to give perfect advice on everything from how to find the best restaurants to how to travel in perfect comfort.

Tom Hanks, who starred in both *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You’ve Got Mail* wrote that to thank him after one of their collaborations, Ephron called him up to inform him that someone was coming to their house to plant a tree for them, and which kind of fruit tree would they like? They chose oranges, and are nourished by that tree’s fruits to this day.

Another favourite anecdote by one of her obituary writers entails overhearing a young woman walking down the street talking on her cell phone saying, “I didn’t even know her, but I still feel like crying”. This is more or less how I feel, but, having her films to watch is somewhat of a comfort. 🇳🇵

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Watch trailer

Curing cancer



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

To the surprise of many people, improvement in cancer treatment which had remained stagnant for decades is finally taking off, and revolutionary treatments, if you have the financial means, are now available.

In 1971 US President Richard Nixon declared war on cancer by signing the National Cancer Act. Nixon’s administration had hoped that unlike the disastrous war in Vietnam, the fight against cancer would be a more popular campaign leading to a quick victory. More than 40 years later, Nixon’s crusade which brought this dreaded disease into the limelight by providing more political and

financial support for research, diagnosis, and treatment seems to have finally made an impact.

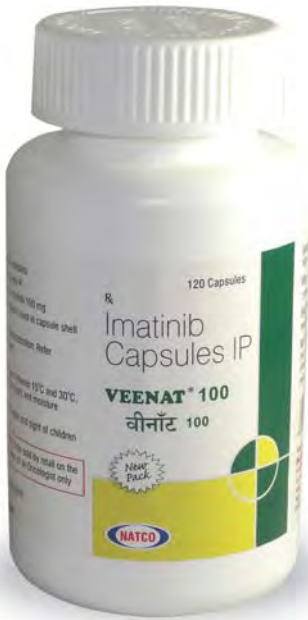
Even though treatment for cancer boils down to burn (radiation), slash (surgery), or poison (chemotherapy), research has now made it possible to deploy highly targeted relatively non-toxic agents guided by genetics. This therapy not only includes drug, but also substances called monoclonal antibodies which have brought about important, therapeutic advances. For example Trastuzumab, sold under the trade name Herceptin, is a monoclonal antibody which is now effectively used to treat certain types of breast cancer. Monoclonal antibodies for common cancers such as lung and colon cancer are also available these days.

Imatinib (sold as Gleevec in the US, Glivec in Europe and

Australia, and Veenat in India), used against a special kind of leukaemia called chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML), is the poster boy for new cancer drugs which are different from monoclonal antibodies.

Gleevec costs about US \$50,000 per patient for a year, but due to the generosity of people from abroad and a Western drug company, hundreds of patients with CML in Nepal can obtain this effective drug for free. Gleevec’s working mechanism is genetic based, so unlike other cancer drugs which indiscriminately kill off all dividing cells (hence people on chemotherapy may go bald), Gleevec targets particular cancer cells.

Many other cancer drugs like Herceptin are very expensive and not freely available to patients in countries like Nepal. Manufacturing these new cancer drugs in developing nations is difficult due to long-standing patency laws. Western governments and drug companies claim that these stringent laws need to be in place to make new drug discoveries possible. However, as expensive cancer therapy becomes more and more effective, difficult ethical questions will arise for which there will be no easy, clear-cut answers. 🇳🇵



NIRANJAN SHRESTHA

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: Artists show solidarity with fellow artist Manish Harijan at a program on Thursday to protest against the death threats made to Harijan by activists of World Hindu Federation.



BIKRAM RAI

PARABENS: Ambassador Marcos Borges Duprat Ribeiro (left) welcomes VP Parmananda Jha (centre) to a gathering at the embassy on Friday evening to celebrate Brazil’s 190th Independence Day.



BIKRAM RAI

BILATERAL TALKS: PM Bhattarai and Robert O Blake, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, hold a meeting on Tuesday to discuss bilateral and regional issues.



BIKRAM RAI

LIFTING SPIRITS: Hisila Yami (centre) joins women at the Army Officers’ Club in Sundhara on Saturday to celebrate the upcoming Teej festival.

WEEKEND WEATHER

This dramatic satellite-radar composite taken on Thursday morning shows how the monsoon has now started its retreat from northern India. A westerly has swept a low pressure system over central India almost in a straight north-south line. This is the same trough that brought us heavy rain on Tuesday and Wednesday nights in Kathmandu. The moisture from this system will have a lingering convection effect over the mountains, bringing afternoon thunderstorms into the weekend. Mornings will be clear, and the maximum temperature is dropping another two degrees.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28°-17°	27°-17°	29°-18°



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Ijhar Pamariya of Laxmipur of Sarlahi district was returning home last Monday after working in his fields all day. The 50-year-old farmer was passing a road block erected by locals who were protesting the delay in the installation of electric transformers, when six Armed Police Force (APF) men attacked him with batons and boots.

The tired farmer did not even have the strength to defend himself against the indiscriminate beating. He died on the spot. The post-mortem confirmed death due to severe beating.

“I told them he was just a passerby, but they kept punching and kicking him and then they also attacked me,” said Jamiruddin Mansoor, who was injured. Twelve villagers were also hurt, including 40-year-old Jailam Khatun who was sitting inside her home when the APF ransacked it and beat her up too.

A few months ago, a rickshaw-puller from Shivanagar of Kapilvastu district was killed by men from the APF and Nepal police near the Indian border. According to the report filed by the victim’s family, Mangare Murau was transporting alcohol from across the border when the police asked him for a bribe. The poor man had nothing to offer and was beaten and kicked. Murau died two days later.

The increase in police brutality in the Tarai in recent months ironically comes at a time when the overall security situation has actually improved, and Madhesi militancy has waned. The blue-and-grey camouflage fatigues of the APF, however, have become synonymous with harassment, corruption, and physical attacks.

In the immediate aftermath of the Madhes movement in 2007, the eastern Tarai was wracked with violence by militant groups as well as the security forces. The armed groups killed and



OUTRAGE: Locals vandalise a police vehicle after APF men beat 50-year-old farmer Ijhar Pamariya to death in Siraha district’s Laxmipur VDC on Monday.

Preyed by the state

extorted, and the state responded by deploying the APF. Now the threat from criminalised gangs has gone down and replaced by high-handedness and violence by the generally non-Madhesi armed police.

Dipendra Jha of the group Tarai Human Rights Defenders, told me: “The special powers granted to the CDO and designated local authorities by Articles 5 and 6 of the Arms and Ammunitions Act, allow them to arbitrarily detain a person for investigation in the name of public security, but there has been widespread misuse of these powers”.

Last year, a case was filed in the Supreme Court challenging the CDO’s quasi-judicial powers under the act and argued that such powers to a single authority were being abused. The court responded by directing the government to form a committee to recommend necessary changes in the act within six-months. One year on, the act has still not been changed.

In the last six months, there has been an increase in the Madhes of cases of

The hopelessness of Madhesi youth combined with state repression is a dangerous mix

‘crossfire’ fatalities, illegal detention, and custodial killings. There are plenty of cases where police have been found to be involved in illegal detention of innocent Madhesi youths.

Ajit Lal Karna, a 26-year-old student from Janakpur, was abducted and tortured by the Central Investigation Bureau and Mahottari police before mysteriously releasing him near the Indian border. In some cases, the victims have died of torture, but the families have no way of proving the fact because no arrest warrants or charge sheets are filed.

The state has failed to protect its citizens during this prolonged transition

from the very institutions it runs to serve them. In the absence of elected representatives, people have been at the mercy of local bureaucrats and the powerful police for the last 10 years. The corruption and misuse of power has become intolerable, and young Madhesis feel targeted again.

An average of 1,000 young Nepalis leave the country every day from Kathmandu airport, many of them are young men from the Tarai headed to Malaysia or the Gulf to work. No one keeps any record of how many cross the border to find work in India. With no jobs and few prospects, the young people of the Madhes have few options but to migrate. This is a recipe for another disaster in the Madhes: the hopelessness of the youth combined with state repression.

Back in Kathmandu, a young Madhesi student who works as a barber to make ends meet told me this week: “Whenever I go back home, the police look at my clothes and hair and frisk me. How often does it happen to Pahadis, I wonder?”



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Bigger, broader, and better by Dasain?

The government's no-nonsense approach to road expansion is up against diplomatic pressures



1



2



3

SUNIR PANDEY

When Baburam Bhattarai came to power last August, he promised to give the choked roads of the Valley a major facelift. A year later, streets around Kathmandu have been dug up, houses built along roads have been demolished, sidewalks have vanished, and bulldozers are lined up along major thoroughfares. All that remains are heaps of bricks and rubble, and the city has turned into a dust bowl.

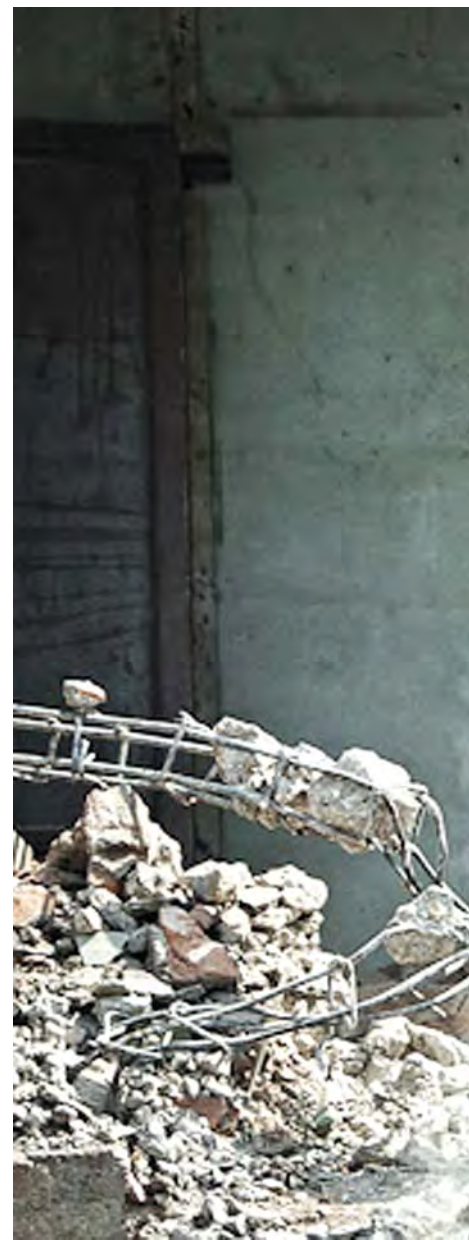
Although locals of Maharajgunj, Baluwatar, Lazimpat, Kamalpokhari, and Tahachal have been vocal in their protest against the government's forceful demolition drive, it has not stopped the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee (KVTDC) from completely tearing down 100 houses and partially bulldozing a further 425. More than Rs 350 million has already been spent on the demolition program and the Department of Roads' (DoR) purse is expected to be lighter by Rs 450 million by the time all the roads are rebuilt.

The government's no-nonsense approach has surprised many, and earned Bhattarai more praise than contempt. However, officials at KVTDC are quick to point out that road expansion plans were laid down 33 years

ago. "The Prime Minister has taken a bold decision to begin what should have been finished decades ago," says Ram Prasad Shrestha, an engineer at KVTDC. According to him, the building code was amended twice in 1993 and 2008, but earlier governments failed to muster up enough political courage to actually implement the policy.

According to the code, structures have to be built at a certain distance from the centre of the road or else they are illegal. But with the government keen to make up for lost time, even legal properties have not been spared.

Rita Rimal bought a piece of land above the Dhobikhola River in Buddhanagar. When the river threatened to wash away her holdings, she built retaining walls. Now her property has fallen prey to the KVTDC's river control program, another



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5



6

development scheme that is keen to ride the road expansion momentum.

While the Maitighar-Tinkune, Shital Niwas-Baluwatar-Dillibazar, and Lainchaur-Golfutar stretch are on top of the government's priority list, it has earmarked the road from Kamalpokhari to Ratopul to connect the city centre with the airport. 70km of roads have already been bulldozed in the capital, and there at least 20km more to go.

Bhattarai has promised to give Nepalis bigger, broader, and better roads by Dasain. But with one month to go until the festival, the campaign faces newer hurdles along the Lainchaur-Bansbari section. Earlier, the government got around the stay order petitioned by some influential residents of Lazimpat, but this time it is up against immense

diplomatic pressures.

The American, Japanese, and French embassies lie along the Lazimpat road, and the former has asked the state to pay up to \$5 million in damages should its walls be razed down. The Japanese embassy says it will cooperate with the Nepali government as long as diplomatic norms are observed.

According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Missions, "a host state must take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity".

But if the government decides to pay all or some part of these damages, it will open up a can of worms and everyone affected will be entitled to compensation on

their own terms. According to KVTDC's Ramesh Kumar Kafle, compensation is given according to government estimates, which is lower than the market price.

People who depend on the roads for their livelihood, have an altogether different concern. Santosh Sah who owns a small restaurant on the Kamalpokhari-Ratopul section, says he is struggling to pay his bills because patrons have stopped visiting his shop due to the dust and grime. He had to sell his land in the Tarai just to keep his business alive. The next time the roads are widened, to ease traffic or otherwise, his shop will be gone. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Follow the river, # 511
Traffic travails, # 485
The real fast track, # 485

- 1 BRING DOWN THE WALL: The remains of a half demolished wall in Bansbari.
- 2 RECYCLING: A man searches for useable bricks to rebuild near Gyaneshwor.
- 3 OPEN ALL HOURS: A shopkeeper in Budhanilkantha keeps his business running even after half the building was torn down.
- 4 ALMOST CHOKED: A boy clears the debris after houses in Gyaneshwor were bulldozed.
- 5 LAST ONE STANDING: A house in Gyaneshwor awaits its destiny.
- 6 RETURNING HOME: A boy searches through the remains of his house in Hattigauda.



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Unhealed wounds



KRISHNA SINJALI

Bimal Khatiwads, *Kantipur*, 9 September

कान्तिपुर

Purna Bahadur Buda of Thawang, Rolpa took up arms and joined the war when he was just 16. He took part in some of the bloodiest encounters during the conflict including those in Agrakachi's Sandhikharka and Rolpa's Khara where hundreds of his friends lost their lives. Though he survived numerous battles, he now regrets being alive because even six

years after the end of war he hasn't received the compensation allocated for the wounded, and is compelled to walk around with bullet shells and shrapnel lodged in his body. "I became a Maoist and risked my life, but the party hasn't even bothered to take these bullets out of my body, what can I expect now?" he says.

Buda who is now the party's company assistant commander opted for voluntary retirement during the regrouping process due to his injury. However, the monetary package he received wasn't enough to cover medical expenses of removing bullets. So he bought a plot of land instead and runs a small grocery shop to earn a living at the squatters' village in Padampur, Chitwan. Like Buda, more than 220 former Maoist combatants who chose voluntary retirement have settled in the squatter areas around Padampur and work as daily wage labourers.

Buda hopes to celebrate this Dasain with his parents in Rolpa, but knows that the injury won't let him fully rejoice the festivities. "Our seniors are busy enjoying all the opportunities and privileges, while people like us are still waiting like we did in the beginning," he laments.

Damaging discrimination

Jitendrakumar Jha, *Nagarik*, 10 September

नागरिक

Renu Kumari Marik is a third grader at a primary school in Malet near Rajbiraj. Unlike most of her classmates, she sits alone in the last bench. "No one wants to sit with me and even the teachers are reluctant to come near me because I belong to the Dom community," she says.

Doms are part of the Dalit community in Tarai who work as sweepers and cleaners. 11,000 Dom people live in Saptari alone. However, Dom children throughout the district have very low attendance rates, and are unable to continue their education because of the discrimination they face at school. 60 per cent of Dom children do not attend schools, and only 10 have passed their SLC exams.

While teachers cite the lack of awareness among the Dom community for low attendance, and say they are only in schools for the scholarship money, Dom families say they are discouraged from sending children to school because peers and teachers behave rudely towards them and make them feel unwelcome. "There is a huge ruckus every time our children touch their classmates who belong to a different community," says local resident Rajendra Marik.

Many private schools in the region simply don't admit Dom children fearing backlash from non-Dom parents who might take their children to other schools. Dom families often have to hide their identity, and travel faraway areas to get their children educated.



UNDP

"People will bring down Dahal and Bhattarai one day"

Interview with Khadga Bahadur Shrestha, ex-combatant and UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's driver, *Jana Aastha Weekly*, 12 September

आस्था

Jana Aastha: How did you join the Maoists?

Khadga Bahadur Shrestha: A friend encouraged me to join the people's war. I participated in more than 32 battles including the one in Chainpur which was unforgettable.

What was unforgettable about the war?

It was a difficult battle. We were hungry and it was snowing. We weren't wearing shoes and there were leeches everywhere. Very few of us survived the war. Many have now migrated abroad in search of jobs.

How did you become Dahal's driver?

I drove the vehicle that we used in the eastern front during the war while fighting under Barsa Man Pun's command. I also drove Dev Gurung's vehicle for sometime. Later Pun told Dahal that he should use an experienced and mature driver like me.



Many of those who fought alongside you are among the richest and most powerful people in Nepal. How come you are still a driver?

I am a committed party member and am willing to pick up a gun again if necessary. But I am not trained to loot and extort the public. So I am using my skills to survive until the party assigns me some other task.

But many people benefited personally under Dahal, didn't they?

Earlier, I used to ignore all this. But when it became too obvious, I told Dahal: "Comrade, this is wrong. You should stop it." He

merely replied, "These are just anomalies that will gradually be weeded out during the course of the revolution." If I disclose everything about Dahal, people will beat him to death. But I must speak about his relationship with Ajay Sumargi. Sumargi has bought off every single person close to Dahal to have access to him. There is no limit to Dahal's wrongdoings. When a leader turns his back on the people and joins the mafia, he is capable of anything.

Are you saying he lied about everything?

The Dahal I know can put up any act. He can cry or smile at will but it's all fake. Once I took him to my village where he stayed at my place. But later, I realised that he was just putting up an act to please us, the same way Rukmangad Katwal ate with his hands in the officer's mess.

How do you assess Dahal and Bhattarai's leadership in the party?

Dahal and Bhattarai are worse than Govinda Raj Joshi and Khum Bahadur Khadka and their fate will be worse than Gyanendra Shah's. People will bring them down one day.



नागरिक Robin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 8 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"Nepal will treat Tibetan refugees as per its international commitments, but has to first look at its geo-political interests."

DPM Narayan Kaji Shrestha speaking to visiting US Assistant Secretary of the State Robert Blake, 12 September

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Doing Mr Zedong proud

With India getting ready to raise the price of petroleum again next week, it may behoove the union of nine student unions here to save everyone the trouble and wait for the next fuel price hike in Nepal, and bundle all the bunds into a big fat combo strike before Dasain instead of these piecemeal shutdowns. The students can't even be trusted to organise a proper hurt-all. First, they announced it would be on Sunday, and abruptly changed the date to honour National Hero BP Koirala, throwing all our plans haywire. Then they said it would be dawn-to-dusk on Wednesday, and changed their minds again to say it would only be from 6am to 12 noon. Then Ram Raja, Nepal's pioneer bombardier breathed his last, and the bund was reduced to 6am to 10am to honour the memory of the departed soul. Dudes, get serious. How can you run the country when you grow up if you can't even shut the country down?



The students have a lot to learn about the art of mayhem, and should take inspiration from the employee's union at



Greenwich Hotel which, in a list of 17 demands to management this week wanted all employees serving more than 20 years be given medals containing one kilogram of gold each. That will be one helluva medal, and begs the question how the staff in the autumn of their lives intend to wear it around their necks. Besides, with the price of gold bullion this week crossing Rs 170,000 an ounce, and given that there are 25 employees who have served over 20 years, the hotel management will have to fork out \$2 million to make 24 carat gold medals.



So the Americans lifted the terrorist tag on the Baddies the very week that they (the Mau Mau) decided to let bygones be bygones and pardon themselves

for all wartime atrocities. There is speculation about whether it is the Bracket Baddies, the Hyphen Baddies or the Matrika Baddies that the folks out in Foggy Bottom decided are now not really terrorists after all. None of the three groups that swear by Mr Zedong have publicly renounced violence, and one wonders whether the Americans know something we don't. The Bracket comrades have called for a bund on Friday which they have warned will be "enforced strictly to make it a grand success" which is a euphemism for setting fire to motorcycles that dare to go out into the streets, vandalising unarmed taxis, and generally smashing anything that moves. The Hyphen comrades, not to be outdone, greeted the lifting

of the terror tag by wrecking the bus of Delhi Public School in Dharan on Monday for defying their extortion demand, and admitted to the vandalism saying the school had an "Indian name". Guess the Kirkpatrick Doctrine is still in force: 'We don't care if they are sonsofbitches as long as they are our sonsofbitches.'



So it seems the Euro envoys were given the runaround by the Farang Ministry, which forwarded their request to meet the Prez about the TRC bill to Shital Nibas. But when Xenophobic Minister Kame Kazi found out, he gave his bureaucrats a tongue lashing. The media was summoned to publish a leak that the ministry had told the Europeans off, while the minister himself was reassuring the ambassadors that there was no problem. The Enigmatic Qazi, meanwhile, slyly got the Cabinet to reimburse him Rs 3.5 million in tax payers' cash for his spinal treatment in Japan.



The govt in its infinite wisdom has almost decided to go for a five-day week and give Sundays off in order to reduce the demand for electricity, and

shorten load-shedding to 12 hours a day in winter. Um, tell me how this works: Govt wants to reduce power cuts so we can have electricity to work, but wants us not to work on Sundays to save electricity. Besides, how is 15 million Nepalis staying home on Sundays to watch Hindi teleserials going to save electricity? The only way to completely remove load-shedding is to give everyone a three-month vacation.



The final irony this week was that Baidya Kaka came to see Prime Minister Baburam ("I'm Not In Charge") Bhattarai in Singha Darbar and delivered to him a 70pt ultimatum at the exact spot where BRB himself had delivered a 40pt demand to Prime Minister Brave Lion in February 1996. Com Laldhoj must have felt a familiar sense of déjà vu, especially when he saw that many of the demands were actually ones he himself crafted 16 years ago: ban Bollywood movies, stop Indian cars' entry into Nepal, recapture Kalapani, etc. A gold medal coming right up for Baidya Kamred.



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