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BIKRAM RAI

KUNDA DIXIT

The four main political forces finally decided on Wednesday that the proposal to revive the Constituent Assembly was dead in the water, and the least problematic option now would be to announce elections for spring. Although this has untangled one political knot, many others remain.

The party leaders are used to agreeing to things in a 'package deal', and that is going to be the first order of business: forging a consensus on the composition of an interim government that will oversee elections. Past experience shows that those negotiations can drag on for months. If a deal is not struck by Dasain, the Baburam Bhattarai government could stay till mid-November and even beyond.

There seems to be an agreement that elections will be for a smaller parliament this time that will also initially double up as a CA. The polls

could also be combined with local elections to save money, and to kickstart development and improve accountability at the grassroots.

There are differing opinions on the legal complications about announcing fresh elections, mainly because the interim constitution doesn't have provisions for another poll. But experts say the President could step in to remove obstacles following the doctrine of necessity, even though the stipulated ratification by a parliament within 30 days will not be possible.


Elections will also have administrative challenges: the Election Commission and other constitutional bodies are headless. Voting ID distribution hasn't been completed, and there will be 2 million more voters above 18 since the last election in 2008.

But by far the greatest danger is that it will be an ethnic election in which campaigning will focus on identity. Negotiations on the draft constitution were stalled

earlier this year precisely on the point of the character, shape, and number of federal provinces. In the Madhes, for example, the election could be a de facto referendum on ethnic-based federalism. Given the temptation and willingness of various political leaders to whip up identity politics, the campaign period as well as election day itself could see violence. Janajati and some Madhesi activists are already threatening an agitation to protest the decision not to revive the CA.

It goes without saying that the Election Commission should

be independent and have the necessary clout to punish those flouting campaign guidelines. It should also be vigilant about preventing irregularities, voter intimidation, and booth capturing seen in 2008. The parties may also revert back to their old habit of wasting time and postponing elections to buy time, and the EC should be empowered to crack the whip.

Despite all the potential pitfalls, Nepal needs an election to get moving again. A fresh mandate could lift the logjam, but only if a smooth all-party understanding can ensure voting that is free, fair, and peaceful. 



BY THE WAY
 by Anurag Acharya
 The recourse to new elections is the result of mutual distrust among the parties, rather than the need to seek a new mandate.

page 11



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INTOLERANCE OF TOLERANCE

In an unfortunate confluence of events, last week's anti-American violence across the Muslim world over a purportedly 'blasphemous' Youtube video coincided with the death threat by extremists in Nepal against an artist for paintings deemed sacrilegious.

By now, it is clear that the rage that first swept the streets of Benghazi, Cairo, Tunis, and Jakarta was not so much about insults to the Prophet in some obscure voice-over of an internet video soundtrack, but an organised campaign to exploit religious sensitivities for political ends. It is a clash of the civilised versus the uncivilised, between secularism and fundamentalism, between open society and tyranny, between freedom and control.

In Kathmandu, last week activists of the World Hindu Federation (WHF) manhandled and threatened to kill artist Manish Harijan for works displayed in the exhibition, 'Rise of the Collateral', at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. But instead of protecting the artist's constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of expression, the Kathmandu district administration summoned Harijan and gallery owner, Sangita Thapa, and forced them to agree to remove the paintings. Instead of shielding the gallery, they sealed it.

Harijan's paintings are graphic and playful depictions of members of the Hindu pantheon as super heroes. The artist's main intention seems to be to lampoon globalisation and its intersection with institutionalised religion. At most, one can fault Harijan for a lack of good taste in some of his paintings, but there is nothing there that doesn't already exist in some of the more explicit examples of tantric religious objets d'art in this country. If Harijan's paintings are offensive to the WHF, it should also go around demolishing the intricately carved struts and eaves of Kathmandu Valley temples.

We have seen time and time again in this country proof of the convergence of leftwing and rightwing forces to constrict the democratic middle space. During the Panchayat, the monarchy colluded with the communists to suppress democracy. During the conflict, the army-backed monarchy was negotiating behind-the-scenes with the Maoist rebels to sideline parliamentary parties. In



In a democracy, you can't threaten to kill people who hurt your feelings

fact, there is growing evidence that the so-called Maoist 'revolution' was originally a project of the extreme left and right to pull the rug from under the democratic parties.

Even after the ceasefire, and after they became the largest party in the 2008 elections, the Maoists have harassed, intimidated, extorted,

infiltrated, and physically assaulted the media and other democratic institutions. Every day one gets more proof that all splinters of the Maoist ideology still see pluralism, press freedom, and democracy as obstacles on their path to totalitarian control. The terrorist tag may have been lifted, but the Maoists still rule by fear, and have never formally abandoned the ideology of violence.

The Maoist communists in government have found common cause with the monarchist Hindu right. By threatening the Siddhartha Art Gallery the administration has sided with extremists not just to violate universal covenants, but to stain Hinduism's time-honoured spirit of tolerance and acceptance.

To be sure, international conventions on freedom of expression come with a statute of limitations. The freedom of one individual cannot infringe on the freedom of another. Various countries and cultures have different thresholds for this boundary, and there is inevitable tension when accepted norms of freedom in one culture clash with norms in another.

Examples are the fatwa on Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the violent protests over Kurt Westergaard's cartoon in the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, or even the case last week of Aseem Trivedi, the Mumbai cartoonist who was jailed for desecrating India's national emblem. But as the drafters of the First Amendment to the US constitution realised 200 years ago, censorship is a slippery slope. If you start selecting what is not acceptable, where do you draw the line?

Various governments use the justification of state security, social harmony, defamation or pornography to enforce controls on free expression. But freedom doesn't come with any warranty, it must be protected by its maximum application. One cannot be half-free.

And the very freedom that allowed Manish Harijan to paint also provides those who feel offended by them to protest non-violently. In a democracy, you cannot threaten to kill someone who hurts your feelings. The state should be protecting the artist, not the would-be assassin.

BILASH RAI

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

UNBORN DAUGHTERS

What a hard hitting title for a hard hitting editorial ('Slaughter of our unborn daughters', #622). As the author correctly points out, in a politics obsessed nation like ours, social issues always get pushed to the back seat. Sometimes I am tempted to label all the families who kill female babies in the womb as sick, disgusting people. But there must be some sort of logic (no matter how twisted) behind these murders, right? Or is it simply just a deep hatred of women kind?

Khusbu R

- What an extremely terrible practice and the saddest part is that it's not only the uneducated, poor masses, but even the educated middle-class carrying out female foeticide. However, the real aftermath will be felt in the next ten to 20 years when small boys reach marriageable age. Many won't be able to find wives, and those who do will have to pay big dowries to the brides' families. Since this practice is rampant in India and China, Nepal won't be able to 'import' girls from neighbouring countries either. These are ingredients for major social unrest.

Wilko

SHARING WHAT SHE KNOWS

Thank you *Nepali Times* for consistently showing us that there are stories out there other than politics, and there are people who rather than giving speeches are using their hands to build better lives ('Sharing what she knows', Tong Sian Choo, #622). As long as

there are selfless devoted women like Saraswati Adhikari in this country I will not lose hope.

Janakraja

- I salute Saraswati and her husband for their continuous efforts in breeding plants. We, agricultural graduates, do not have the confidence of cross pollinating plants, but their hands are dexterous. We hope LIBIRD produces many Saraswatis all over the country.

Shyam

- Excellent reporting. Farmers in Nepal are far ahead and more innovative than technicians and planners and we must find ways to promote remarkable farmers like Saraswati and her husband.

Ram Chandra Khanal

BIGGER, BROADER, BETTER

Baburam Bhattarai seems to be stuck in the 1960s Soviet mindset which saw wide roads as symbols of progress ('Bigger, broader, and better by Dasain?', #622). But some of the most advanced cities in the world like London, Paris, Zurich, Boston, and San Francisco have the narrowest streets. Bigger roads are not always an indication of development, and narrower streets are actually better for community building. Rather than tearing down half the city, couldn't Bhattarai and his government have thought of adding overhead rail-tracks or making sure there is better enforcement of traffic rules?

Nasdp

- Bhattarai is making his mark by destroying things that belong to others, not by creating anything new like

power-plants, hospitals or airports. So what's the difference between this Bhattarai and the one who launched a war 16 years ago?

Thomas

- The issue with the US Embassy should not be a major problem if dealt properly through diplomatic channels. The idea is to finish the job not only of dismantling, but cleaning up and building wider roads. It would look ridiculous on the part of the Americans or others to have their embassy walls occupy half the street. National and international media can force these countries to voluntarily dismantle their walls in shame if it comes to that. Just imagine a story in *Al Jazeera*: 'The US occupies half of a Kathmandu street'.

Dhedubadar

- Kudos to all the people who had the guts to demolish illegally built structures. No one should be spared not even the diplomatic missions, because they too need to follow the host country's law.

Ram Neupane

DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Great article by Bimbika Sijapati Basnett on the contradictions and inequalities within the development industry ('The development industry', #622). I feel that even if the government can't provide the pay of international organisations, it could adopt the successful practices of NGOs and INGOs and accept new ideas to become more competitive.

Tara

- It's interesting how in the UK for example, development workers are paid comparatively badly, whereas in Nepal,

even national staff is paid comparatively well. Also I think Nepali staff are not preferred for leadership positions because of differences in work culture. We recruited two Nepalis consecutively as leaders of our Nepal mission, but neither worked out. Having said that, there are lots of Nepalis working at the international level. If you visit UN offices around the world, you can see how Nepalis have benefited from the international system. Admittedly only a few are at the highest levels, but I can think of a few chiefs in Southeast Asia.

OI

- Nepali nationals are not allowed to compete for international consultant's position by the ADB and World Bank even in 'loan projects' in Nepal. Our government should insist during loan negotiations that Nepali nationals get preference over expats as the loan is to be repaid by Nepal. This will effectively reduce brain drain of Nepali professionals.

Manasa

- I learnt nothing new from this article. Common Nepalis indulge in the exact same conversation in tea shops and the more privileged ones at expensive hotels and private gatherings. Instead of bickering, the author could have provided innovative solutions as how to overcome the shortcomings of the development industry.

Srkr

- It's certainly politically correct to bash development aid and the development industry. One may be lauded for trumpeting this tune, but not all international organisations are corrupt and not all of them are around to make a

buck by exploiting poverty. The author should consider the successes of international development strategies in improving the lives of Nepalis, particularly in the health sector, even through a brutal civil war and assess some programs for what they are actually doing.

Critic

- I do not agree that qualified Nepalis working for the development industry are weakening the state. If this was true then would Nepal have higher capacity if the development industry just went away, and Nepalis started working for the state or being self-employed? The argument that the development industry is producing new inequalities and exclusions between Nepalis is also puzzling. Would the author recommend that we shut down the industry to remove these inequalities or provide the same compensation as that of government civil servants to decrease the gap?

Samjhana

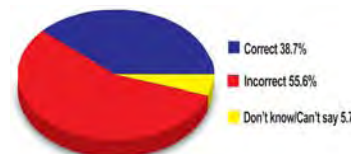
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nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #623

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

Total votes: 2,347



Weekly Internet Poll # 624. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who should lead the electoral government?

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Six years after Nepal's top conservationists were killed in a helicopter crash, communities work to conserve their legacy

BHRIKUTI RAI in KAILALI

The Ghunsa helicopter crash on 23 September 2006 devastated Nepal's nature conservation movement by taking the lives of 24 people, among them six of Nepal's pioneer conservationists. Six years on, the void is slowly being filled by community-based environmental groups who are protecting the legacy of putting local people at the centre of conservation activities.

Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal (CSUWN) is one such project, which since 2008, has integrated wetland management with improved local livelihoods. Protecting Nepal's endangered water bodies is important not just to conserve groundwater for human use, but also to save wildlife and migratory birds.

"Unless people at the grassroots understand the importance of conserving the wetlands that they are dependent on, it is difficult to conserve them at all," explains Top Khatri of CSUWN.

Water resources in Nepal

are often seen in terms of their hydropower potential only, so marshes, swamps, floodplains and lakes, which form a vital part of Nepal's aquatic ecosystem, often get left out of the conservation discourse. Although wetlands account for only five per cent of Nepal's total surface area, they are integral for recharging aquifers and providing a habitat for wildlife, especially

migratory birds.

Among the nine wetlands in Nepal designated as being of international importance, CSUWN manages Ghodaghodi Lake in Kailali (*pic above*) in the far west and Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in Sunsari. Ghodaghodi is a key link between the Siwaliks and the Tarai, and a corridor connecting Bardia National Park with Sukla Phanta Wildlife

Reserve and it is home to 226 bird species.

Says CSUWN Ghodaghodi field manager Rajkumar Poudyal: "The aim is to sustain its biodiversity while developing tourism infrastructure and sustaining the livelihoods of local people".

Ghodaghodi has an 11-member committee that takes ground-level decisions on conserving the lake. CSUWN

will hand over the management to the committee next year.

Women from the Tharu community around GLA are actively involved in producing traditional mats and baskets from munj, a grass that grows along the banks. "Now we are able to earn money selling munj-based products to visitors at Ghodaghodi Lake", says Asmita Chowdhary of Sukhad village (*see box*). Many households



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ALL PICS: BHRIKUTI RAI



Weaving empowerment

Anita Chowdhary and Asmita Chowdhary of Sukhad VDC of Kailali are no longer stay-at-home moms. Everyday they leave for work with the four wheel cart which is their make shift shop for selling munj-based products like baskets and mats. They sell up to six items a day to visitors at Ghodaghodi Lake. Tharu women like Anita and Asmita blend their indigenous weaving techniques with contemporary styles. Shyam Badan Shrestha of Nepal Knot Craft Centre has been training them in new techniques so their products are more marketable. Nepal Knot Craft Centre and Organic Village have set up a joint-venture to promote and sustain the local enterprise. Says Shyam Badan of Nepal Knot Craft: “Women not just learn to infuse contemporary style in their products, but also get a market for their handicrafts”.



nepalitimes.com
Knotting for Nepal, #594

have also started using biogas and improved cooking stoves to decrease their reliance on firewood. Bipat Ram Chowdhary of Sukhad who works with CSUWN's local chapter says that locals are involved in restoration of wetland sites, weeding, cleaning invasive species, and maintaining floating islands for water birds. Community anti-poaching networks have also been established to stop illegal wildlife trade. “People now understand that reviving biodiversity takes a lot of time, effort, and money,” says Poudyal.

The Ghodaghodi and Kosi Tappu initiatives have already shown results. Since 2010, the Cotton Pygmy Goose whose breeding site was restricted to Pokhara has adopted Ghodaghodi also as a breeding site. Similarly, the Common Moorhen which earlier used to breed only in Kashmir has also moved to Ghodaghodi. CSUWN carries on the ethos of Nepal's senior conservationists like Harka Gurung, Chandra Gurung, Mingma Sherpa, Tirtha Man Shakya, and Yeshe Lama who were among those killed in

Ghunsa six years ago. The group had just visited the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area to hand over management to local communities. Says Hum Gurung of Bird Conservation Nepal: “We are carrying on the vision that our environmental gurus passed down to us by getting local people to help protect the wetlands so that they benefit, the country benefits, and so does the planet”.

nepalitimes.com
Wetlands are not wastelands, #590

BIZ BRIEFS

Sleek ride

MAW enterprise, the sole distributor of Skoda has launched the luxury sedan Skoda Rapid along with three options Active, Ambition, and Elegance. The Rapid, which is available in five colours, has a 1.6 litre petrol engine capacity and 1,598cc, MPI 16 V DOHC engines. Skoda also unveiled discounted prices for the new Rapid, starting from Rs 29,99,000.



F for Furniture

Index Furniture, a Thailand based furniture company has opened its flagship stores in Nepal. The two outlets in Lazimpat and Jawalakhel will provide customers with a vast selection of functional designs from Thailand and other countries like Italy, Denmark, and Sweden.

New address

HH Bajaj has launched a new showroom in Bhairahawa to provide customers with high quality sales, service, and spare parts. The new Bajaj showroom Bajh Automobiles in Siddharthanagar will soon begin sales and distribution of Bajaj bikes in Bhairahawa.



Raining discounts

Morang Auto Works, the sole distributors of Yamaha bikes in Nepal, has launched its Dasain and Tihar scheme called 'Yamaha Dashain TiharAayo-Khusi Laayon'. Patrons can now enjoy cash discounts up to Rs 10,000 with the purchase of every Yamaha bike.

Swift cash

International Money Express has opened its 33rd IME centre in Chandragadhi, Jhapa. IME has been providing remittance solutions since 2001 and plans on opening 100 IME centres within the current fiscal year.



Natural beauty



Laavanya Luxury Ayurveda has launched a unique blend of oils and herbs called Ultimate Beauty Serum which helps remove blemishes, pigmentation, scars, and stretch marks.

Adventure on wheels

Tri-Nation Escape 2012, the first cross country drive organised by Mahindra Adventure will end on 22 September in Bagdogra, India. Since 11 September, 27 expedition vehicles have been making the exhilarating journey across India, Bhutan, and Nepal.



Mean machines

Go Ford, sole authorised distributor of Ford, introduced the compact car Focus, which is a new variant of Ford Ranger and the luxury SUV Kuga. The new pickup Ranger features a 2.2 litre petrol engine. Similarly, Kuga is equipped with a 2,521cc petrol engine and offers a cruise control system and voice command among other hi-tech features.





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Early birds get the prize

Nepal has one in every ten species of birds found in the world. But as hunting and pesticide use spread along migratory routes, and habitat destruction, especially of wetlands continues, many of these birds are endangered. Still, Nepal is one of the world's most popular bird-watching countries, with Pulchoki, Chitwan, Kosi Tappu, and Sukla Phanta topping the list. Thousands of bird watchers from around the globe spend days walking the trails and trying to locate elusive birds. Until recently bird watching was limited to foreigners, however urban Nepalis are slowly warming up to the hobby as was evident by the surge of photographs that Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) received during its first bird photography competition last month.

Thirty-one photographers submitted 108 photographs as part of the fourth International Vulture Awareness Day, and a panel of four judges chose the top 48 photos which were put on display at Nepal Academy of Fine Arts in Naxal at the beginning of September.

"Twenty years ago we would find birds foraging in our gardens or making nests under our roofs. But birds are getting increasingly rare in urban areas today", explains Hum Gurung of BCN, "we organised the event because we want to encourage students, locals, and bird lovers to go out, walk through the countryside, and learn about various species found in our country".



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Susheel Shrestha
(1st Prize)

I captured this Snowcock at an altitude of 5180m in Gorakshep inside Sagarmatha National Park. I was descending from Kala Pathar when I saw the bird, and spend the next two hours nearby taking almost 80 shots before I was satisfied. The job of a wildlife photographer is unpredictable. I have spent weeks in Chitwan, Bardia, and Sukla Phanta and still have not been able to photograph a single tiger. I have also taken a few falls while trying to photograph animals at awkward angles, but I love it.



Yatra Thulung
(3rd Prize)



Seejan Gyawali
(2nd Prize)

I had taken many photos of the Pied Kingfisher before, but I wanted to capture the male and female together in one shot because it's very rare to see them together. It took me three hours to get the winning shot. I have been working as a trekking and bird watching guide for the past five years. Earlier, I didn't have my own camera so although I did all the hard work spotting birds and animals, my guests got to capture the images. But now I have my own device and get to click whenever I want.



I took this photo of an Oriental Pied Hornbill while I was travelling with friends in the forest in Dharan. I was extremely fortunate because I didn't have to wait for hours. I started off working as a photographer in a Kathmandu daily and took up wildlife photography four years ago to support myself when I moved back to my hometown in Hansposa, Sunsari. Although the cost of equipment is quite high and there is not much money initially, we get to archive different animal species in the country and make people aware. The money comes with experience and years.

nepalitimes.com

Change in the air, #583
Not just for the birds, #583
Learning all about the birds and the trees, #383

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EVENTS



REAL SCHOOL OF NEPAL, cheer for your school at the grand finals of Real School of Nepal. 25 September, Budhanilkantha School, Kathmandu

Nepal's heritage talk, enjoy an interesting lecture by Axel Plathe, UNESCO representative to Nepal, on managing the country's natural and cultural heritage during a time of rapid change. Rs100 for members, Rs250 for non-members, tea or coffee included, 26 September, 6 pm, Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat

NADA auto show 2012, check out the latest cars and motorbikes in town and see if you can strike a deal. Rs50, Rs100, 19 to 23 September, 10 am to 6 pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu

Battlefield, team up with your friends for the ultimate paintball game and vanquish rest of the pretenders for a Rs25,000 cash bounty. 21 to 22 September, 12pm onwards, Sanepa, Lalitpur, 9841339302, 5013057

Photography workshop, Canon School of Imaging is offering amateurs an opportunity to enhance their skills and gain in-depth knowledge on the nuances of digital photography. Rs4500, 1 to 10 October, 5.15 to

7.15 pm, Maitri Bhawan, New Road, 2083206, 2013186, workshop@canon-nepal.com, register by 30 September

Bhaktapur Street Festival, celebrate the centuries-old cultural artistry of Bhaktapur. 22 September, Bhaktapur Darbar Square

Indra Jatra at Red Lakhey, celebrate one of the most cherished festivals in the Valley with traditional music, lakhey dances, homemade aila, and the best of Newari cuisine. Rs350 for children, Rs750 for adults, 29 September, Red Lakhey Restro and Bar, Darbar Marg, 4257705

Social entrepreneurship bazar 2012, sample the products, services, and ideas of social entrepreneurs from across Nepal and enjoy culinary delights, and the arts and music from across Asia. 4 to 6 October, 9 am to 4 pm, Babarmahal Revisited, 01-4462254, 9813198453, changefusionnepal.org

Every donor is a hero, contribute to saving human lives at this nationwide blood donation campaign. 21 September, Kathmandu, Pokhara, Nepalganj, Bharatpur, 9849151877



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

Inheriting statelessness, an exhibition

of paintings by Saroj Bajracharya along with the book launch of *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, ladymystiqua@facebook.com

Weaving art and change in Nepal, featuring limited edition of carpets, sculptures, books, and paintings and a talk program by Isabella Holding on 26 September. 23 September to 7 October, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, 4218048, 4438979

MUSIC



ROCK THE VALLEY, catch Nepali Rock legends Cobweb and various artists perform as an acoustic ensemble for the first time. Rs300, 29 September, 6.30 pm, 1905 Restaurant, Thamel, 9841849786, 9801026507



SPECIAL NIGHT AT DELICÉS, for the last time this year, Hari Maharjan and Daniel Givone bring you gypsy jazz. 21 September, 8 pm, Delicés de France Restaurant, Thamel, 4260326, 9803818253, info@restaurantnepal.com

All Nepal battle of the bands, see if you can hit the right notes at this nation-wide music competition. Rs5000, auditions on 6 October, 9841779176, 9803750550



DINING

BYANJAN, enjoy great food at an affordable price. Shrimp cocktails, grilled fish, and desserts are favourites among guests. Lakeside, Pokhara

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



PERI PERI, home of legendary Portugese flamed grilled chicken, enjoy dishes served with the trademark piri piri sauce. Jhamsikhel, 9808563803

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



FUJI BAKERY, tucked in Chakupat, the bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat, and banana cake. Chakupat

Shambaling Hotel, this newly opened hotel promises a fine dining experience. Boudha

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RANIBAN RETREAT, situated at the other end of the Phewa lake and nested inside the Raniban forest and the World Peace Stupa, this retreat has one of the best views of the Annapurna range, Phewa lake, and Pokhara. *World Peace Pagoda, Pokhara, 977-61-692136, 9841382053*

Catch the literary bug

After the success of last year's literary event, Ncell and The Bookworm Trust are back with the second edition of Ncell Nepal Literature Festival. Aiming to attract up to 10,000 visitors, the festival will feature 90 eminent writers from Nepal and abroad. Meet your favourite men and women of letters and take part in lively discussions, poetry recitals, book launches, and signings. Also included are interactive talks ranging from children's literature to the economy. 20 to 23 September, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi

20 September, 5 to 6 pm, 'Almost single', Jharana Bajracharya in conversation with Advaita Kala
21 September, 11am to 12pm, 'Media speak: how media talks to us', moderator Narayan Wagle
12 to 1 pm, 'Lucknow boy', Yubaraj Ghimire in conversation with Vinod Mehta
4 to 5 pm, 'Rewriting myth', Amish Tripathi
22 September, 12 to 1 pm, 'Plagiarism: from academia to journalism'
3 to 4 pm, 'The Outlook Years', Kunda Dixit in conversation with Vinod Mehta
23 September, 3 to 4 pm, 'The beat generation', Abhi Subedi in conversation with Sunil Gangopadhyay
5 to 6 pm, 'The three pillar economy: mantra for prosperity?', Ram Sharan Mahat, Yubraj Khatriwada, Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, and Jhalak Subedi, moderator Kiran Nepal



Indian writer Advaita Kala

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SOMEPLACE ELSE

A week of incessant downpour and the drop in temperatures had us craving for warm, fulfilling food and what better than soup and stew to beat the chill. With gyakok on our minds, we landed in Boudha which boasts of all sorts of eateries that promise 'authentic' Tibetan cuisine. But we had been told that if we wanted a MSG-free wholesome bowl of Tibetan hot pot, Shangri-La Kitchen (part of Hotel Tibet International) was the place to go. And what a treat it was.

Gyakok is a complex dish that the chef needs two hours to prepare, so calling (01-4488188) the restaurant ahead of time is highly recommended. As we waited for the highlight of our evening, we tried sokrul (Rs 280) and chicken chili with olive oil

Shangri-La Kitchen

(Rs 250) as starters.

Sokrul, shredded beef fried in tempura batter, was soft and tender but a little dry. A dash of lemon could have worked wonders. The chicken chili too was not quite up to the mark. The sauce in which the chicken was marinated had not completely soaked in, so the layers of flavour were missing and by the time our tongues journeyed into the centre of the chicken, it was quite bland.

Our second round of orders – mushroom fried with white and red sauce (Rs 350), sweet and sour pork (Rs 380), and a bowl of rice (Rs 150) – made a better impression. The mushroom was very well-done: the sauce had the right thickness, and the combination of white and red wines was exquisite and easy on the palate. The juicy cubes of pork (fat-in) lathered in thick, tangy honey and lemon sauce with diced pineapple, capsicum, and onion were ideal for sweeping up what remained of our rice.

Just as we were savouring the last pieces of pork fat, our much-awaited fare arrived. The chicken broth was bought



to us in a copper pot with a chimney-like opening on top, and a burner at the bottom through which a constant flame brought the soup to a boil. We had a large selection of ingredients to dunk into the soup: cellophane noodles, tofu, bok choy, chopped cauliflower, potato, carrots, beans, black mushrooms,



prawns, fish balls, and boiled eggs. Cooked and consumed over a long time, the gyakok allows a relaxed dinner with long conversations. We put in the ingredients and refilled our bowls throughout the evening as the soup continued to simmer silently on its own.

Now I can't really say what real hot pot cooked in a

Tibetan household tastes like, but having had gyakok at a few other restaurants, I can vouch that Shangri-La Kitchen's was by far the best. With no MSG or readymade generic masalas, the soup is strained twice which makes it very light and extremely healthy.

Spending Rs 4,000 on gyakok and Rs 150 for a bowl of rice seems like a draining experience for foodies on a tight budget. But in its defense, I have been charged more at some of the nondescript eateries in Jhamsikhel. Besides, the gyakok is meant for four people (or five if your friends have a small appetite) so it comes down to a thousand bucks per person, and on a regular night, an order of gyakok should fill even the emptiest tummies.

Shangri-La Kitchen is an oasis in the otherwise cacophonous Boudha and my only complaint is its slow service. Other than that, the servers are extremely friendly, and the head chef Laxman Bhandari will even sit down to have a chat. 🇳🇵

Trishna Rana

How to get there: From Chabahal chowk, take the road that goes to Boudhanath stupa. You will see Hotel Tibet International on the right-hand side just a few blocks before the main gate of the stupa.

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Michael Clayton



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Perhaps the best film of 2007, and also sadly one you may have missed, *Michael Clayton* is a stunning gem of a film, electrifying in its story arc, with restrained but gorgeous cinematography by the immensely talented Robert Elswit, and produced by a slew of greats including the late Anthony Minghella, Sydney Pollack (who also stars), Steven Soderbergh, and lastly George Clooney himself who also plays the titular character of Michael Clayton.

George Clooney, the mega Hollywood star acts in the distinctly unglamorous role of a qualified lawyer who has, due to his own moral laxness, been demoted to being the 'fixer' or 'janitor' of the prestigious New York law firm of Kenner, Bach and Ledeen which has been the leading law firm on a class action suit against U-North, an agricultural products conglomerate that has been accused of poisoning an entire town in Milwaukee.

When the lawyer in charge of the case, Clayton's friend and colleague, a rambling genius called Arthur Eden (played by Tom Wilkinson), stops taking his medication (he is a manic depressive) he turns rogue against U-North and his own law firm and starts to make overtures to one of the plaintiffs – a simple small town girl called Anna – claiming he has proof that U-North knew all along that their product was poisonous. Michael is sent to 'bring him in' – he is seen by the company's partners, including Sydney Pollack as Marty Bach, as highly skilled in resolving the firm's many such nuisances.

As the complicated plot unfolds, Tony Gilroy, the very skillful writer and director also weaves in the backstory of Michael Clayton's life. Although clearly a high-earning, valued entity at his law firm, he has also worked there for over a decade without making a partner. When he decides to open a bar in Brooklyn with his down and out recovering alcoholic brother, Timmy, he uses up all his savings in what is to become yet another failed small business. In debt, with



a brother who has relapsed into his alcohol habit, we see a man who is in his mid-fourties, divorced, with an albeit adorable son, Henry, drifting around in a sticky amoral morass of a job which he is also, sadly, astonishingly good at.

When Tilda Swinton's neurotic but also coldly calculating character Karen Crowder, the lead consul for U-North, hires a thuggish but highly trained duo to wire tap and trail Arthur Eden, things start to slowly spin out of control. The surveillance turns into a highly efficient assassination, made to look like suicide, and while Michael is crushed he is not surprised, having dealt with people with some form of mental instability all his life (he himself had been addicted to gambling; poker in particular).

It is the lack of a suicide note from a previously meticulous, mentally ill but still brilliant Arthur that sets off small alarm bells in Michael's head. When he learns that Arthur had actually brought Anna to New York on the very day of his death, he becomes convinced that someone, somewhere, has been involved in Arthur's death.

It is impossible to recount what follows without giving away some very powerful plot details and one particularly poetic and resonant scene involving horses in the Westchester dawn.

Watch the film, the last scene in particular is riveting, and you'll find yourself wanting to rewind and watch it all over again, if not the whole film. This is the kind of film that is so well written and directed that it is an organic almost living entity – it will live on in your mind. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Giving rabies a shot



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Human rabies is a fatal illness. Unfortunately, about 75 per cent of human rabies cases in the world (about 55,000 annually) is found in South Asia. Rabies is caused by a virus and transmitted in the saliva by the bite of rabid animals. In the US bats are often implicated for transmitting the deadly infection. In Nepal the most commonly infected animals that transmit rabies to humans are dogs followed by cats. What about rabies from monkeys?

Many people in Swayambhunath and Pashupatinath are bitten or scratched by monkeys on a daily basis. As mammals, monkeys should be able to easily transmit rabies, but probably because they are too clever to be bitten by dogs, there is almost no documentation of rabies being

caused by monkey bites. But clearly no one wants to be the first on this list. So the precautions prescribed below may be useful.

Children are particularly vulnerable to rabies because they may not tell their parents after they have been bitten or nicked by a rabid dog. This may turn out to be fatal because after a usual incubation



period of about a week to two months, the child may come down with rabies. Rabies is under-diagnosed because of poor documentation and lack of proper diagnosis in our part of the world. Furthermore, the complete manifestation of rabies with hydrophobia (fear of water) and terror- stricken behaviour that are depicted in movies may

be absent. So what can be done? Taking care of stray dogs would be a great idea, but this requires tremendous political will. The second best thing in Nepal is to be properly vaccinated with human rabies vaccines which are available especially around Teku Hospital area in Kathmandu. In case of a bite, regardless of prior (pre-exposure) vaccination, the wound needs to be properly cleaned daily with liquid iodine or soap and water as the virus hangs around the site of bite for a long time. A 'top off' shot or two to boost the immunity will be required even if prior vaccinations have been taken.

If prior vaccinations have not been taken and especially if the bite is severe, then immunoglobulin (a kind of 'pre-emptive response' medicine, different from the vaccine) needs to be administered. Although immunoglobulin is available around Teku, supply is erratic and expensive. Hence 'pre exposure' vaccination is best. Luckily after a bite by a potentially rabid animal, the Nepali government does usually administer rabies vaccination for free at Teku Hospital. 🇳🇵



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

PAKISTANI PIECE OF CAKE: Arshed Saud Khosa, ambassador of Pakistan (right), cuts a cake during his country's Defense Day with Commander in Chief of Nepal Army, Gaurav Shamsher Rana (middle), and Pakistani Colonel Mumtaz Hussain (left) on Saturday at the Hyatt.



BIKRAM RAI

LADIES IN RED: Women line up patiently outside Pashupatinath and await their turn to perform Tij poojas. During this festival, women fast for the good health and prosperity of their husbands.



BIKRAM RAI

HOT WHEELS: A model shows off a new motorbike during the first day of Nada Auto Show 2012 on Wednesday at Bhrikuti Mandap in Kathmandu.

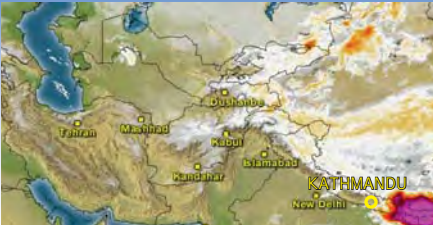


MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

NO-NO CA: Chairman of the Constitutional Committee, Nilamber Acharya, speaks at a function at NTB on Tuesday about the illegitimacy of a revived Constituent Assembly. He said holding new elections is the only alternative to the current political deadlock.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The annual phenomenon of a retreating monsoon is a sudden resurgence of prolonged rainfall lasting several days. These dying gasps of the monsoon which we saw this week is caused by the autumnal migration of the stratospheric jet stream to the south side of the Himalaya which pushes back moisture-laden air from the Gulf step by step. This is actually the pre-monsoon tug of war between the two systems in reverse. This animated weather-radar composite shows the large purple mass now moving from west to east. Expect a further drop in minimum night temperatures to 14. While mornings will be cool and misty, maximum temperatures during the sunny afternoons will remain high at 29, and it will feel hotter because of the humidity.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27°-15°	29°-14°	29°-14°



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Zero sum game

The recourse to new elections is the result of mutual distrust among the parties, rather than the need to seek a new mandate.

The instructive words from Shital Niwas on Sunday had forced the parties into a marathon meeting which finally resulted in an agreement on Wednesday. Although the parties have been notorious for backing out of agreements, the decision to go for elections has 'resolved' the deadlock for now. The ghost of the Constituent Assembly can rest for the time being, but nobody can say for certain that the elections will take place in April.

The opposition NC and UML were not in favour of reviving the CA because they did not have numerical strength in the dissolved house, but neither were they super keen on new elections for fear they may lose. But now, the vertical split in the Maoist party and the multiple splintering in the Madhesi camp has suddenly boosted the NC and UML's interest in new elections.

The Maoists and Madhesi parties wanted to revive the CA because that is their comfort zone. They tried their best to avoid going to polls because they realise they do not command popular support anymore and may not retain the same political strength in the polls. The fear of intervention by the President and unrelenting opposition may have forced them to agree on elections, but members of the ruling coalition have a 'plan B' up their sleeve and will bargain hard to retain leadership in the electoral government, unless there is a broader agreement on federalism and other sticking points in the constitution drafting.

The serial corruption scandals and vertical splits may have significantly weakened the Maoists, but it will be a mistake to believe the NC and UML have become stronger. Assuming that the Baidya and Matrika-led factions of CPN-Maoist contest polls (they maintain they won't), the Maoist votes will be divided. But the two old parties have clearly failed to appease the sentiments of the Janajatis, Dalits, Muslims, Tharus, and Madhesis, who together constitute more than 70 per cent of the population. There are also reasons to believe that many Janajati and Madhesi leaders in the NC and UML may leave the party in the event of an election. In short, the net effect will not favour them.

Nonetheless, in a democracy when politics is deadlocked, going for a fresh mandate is the best option. Because of the extent to which public



So, da...we just keep dancing around??

opinion on federalism has been polarised, however, there is a real danger that the election campaign will be fuelled by ethnic sentiments and may turn violent. In Madhes, for instance, the election is sure to be a referendum on the Madhes Pradesh. The realignment

taking place in the Madhesi camp (with unity talks between Upendra Yadav and Mahant Thakur) is an indication that federalism and Madhes may once again decide the fate of elections, like they did back in 2008.

On the surface, the Maoists,

Madhesis, and Janajatis may seem natural allies due to their common agendas on identity and federalism, but the personal ambitions of leaders and overlapping political constituencies will make electoral alliances unlikely. For the same reason, the NC

and UML are unlikely to forge a partnership. Eventually there will be fierce competition come elections, and the country's weak law and order mechanism will be hard pressed to ensure free, fair, and peaceful polls.

Even if the elections are peaceful, chances are, nobody will get a clear majority which makes a coalition government inevitable. The Madhes-based parties and fringe left parties will once again play a decisive role in forming the government, as well as voting inside the CA.

It will be old wine in a new carafe. The new CA under old leadership will not be any different. Once again, bargaining for portfolios will delay government formation and the issue of constitution drafting will go into the back-burner once more. We have seen in the past how parties which do not have numerical strength in the assembly have obstructed its regular proceedings and forced the other side into backdoor political negotiations.

The intention is not to question the rationality of the decision to go for polls, but it is better not to expect any dramatic breakthrough. The recourse to new CA elections is inspired by mutual distrust among the parties, rather than the need to seek a new mandate.

If the parties want to gamble with 30 million lives by going for polls in a country where nobody is in charge and nobody seems to give a damn, they better give us good reasons to believe the new assembly will not become a proxy to the decisions taken by the three male party chieftains. If that is the case, reviving the old assembly would have been a safer and much cheaper bet. 🇳🇵

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Huddled masses yearning

GOPAL GARTAULA in JHAPA

Even in the refugee camps for people from Bhutan here in eastern Nepal, this week's Tiji festival was a time of singing, dancing, feasting, and fasting. But 52-year-old Ranmaya Chamling has never felt as lonely as she did during

After being separated from their homeland 20 years ago, many Bhutanese refugees resettled in the West are now separated from their families

this year's festival. She and her husband Tek Bahadur are the only ones from their 20-member family still

remaining in the Sanischare Camp in Jhapa. The others left for Toronto earlier this year under an international program to resettle refugees in the United States, Canada, UK, Norway, Netherlands, New Zealand, Denmark, and Australia.

However, Canada and the UK recently announced they would not be taking any more refugees, and this has worried families like the Chamlings who fear they will be resettled elsewhere and be separated from their children.

"This Tiji was unbearable", Ranmaya said, "first of all because the family is now far away, and also because we are afraid we may not be able to live close to them when we are resettled".

Ranmaya and Tek have filled out forms for resettlement in Canada, but the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Migration Organisation (IMO)



that are administering the resettlement say, there is no guarantee that the families will be together. Teams from Canada and the UK are visiting the camps next month to assess the remaining applicants, but UNHCR says it can't be sure whether the humanitarian need to keep families united will be

heeded. For Ranmaya this uncertainty is agonising. She says: "It is even worse than when we risked our lives to flee from Bhutan 20 years ago". Bhutan evicted 100,000 of its people, one-sixth of its total population, in 1990-92 as part of an ethno-centric campaign



MOVING PEOPLE AROUND
When Bhutan evicted 100,000 of its Lhotsampa population in the early 1990s, the refugees were settled in camps in eastern Nepal. After deadlocked negotiations on repatriation, eight countries agreed in 2008 to take in the Bhutan citizens. So far, more than 71,000 refugees have been resettled, and there are another 35,000 to go.

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PICS: GOPAL GARTAULA



THE LONG WAIT: Ranmaya Chamling and her husband, Tek Bahadur (*left*), fear they will not be resettled close to their children in Canada, as do Phulmaya Magar, her husband Lal Bahadur, and sons Buddha and Subhas (*above*). The Chamlings and Magars have lived along this lane in the Sanischare Refugee Camp in Jhapa (*right*) ever since they were evicted from Bhutan 20 years ago.



against its Nepali-speaking citizens. That population has now grown to 120,000 with a whole new generation of refugee children born in the camps in Jhapa and Morang. After years of fruitless talks between Nepal and Bhutan about repatriating the refugees, in 2008 the international

community decided to start third-country resettlement. So far, 71,000 refugees have left, nearly 90 per cent of them for the United States. Of the 35,000 who are still waiting for resettlement, some may not be sent to the same country their families have gone to. As the refugee numbers shrink,

the seven camps have been collapsed into four. Phulmaya and Lal Bahadur Magar are also alone in their bamboo hut, after two of their sons and grandchildren left for Quebec last year. Two more sons of the couple are still left in Jhapa, but now don't know whether they can also go to

Canada or not. Says Phulmaya: "We can't wait for the whole family to be reunited again, but I wonder if UNHCR will understand our plight". The resettlement process is long and bureaucratic, and starts with the families first filling forms. Then the host country looks at the applicants and decides whether or not to take them, after which there are health checkups and orientation classes about the countries the refugees are being sent to. They are then taken in buses to Bhadrapur airport to fly to Kathmandu for their onward journeys. Many of the refugees have for the first time in their lives found the dignity of citizenship after first being thrown out of their homeland and living in stateless limbo in refugee camps for two decades. The younger children are doing well in their new host countries, but there are reports that elderly refugees are having

a difficult time adjusting. Older refugees generally tend to do better if they are close to their children and grandchildren. Ranmaya was 32 when she and her husband were driven out of Bhutan with their small children. They still hope they will one day see their motherland, but for the time being all they want is to be reunited with their children in Canada. Ranmaya and Tek Bahadur sit inside their low-ceilinged bamboo hut gazing silently at the monsoon raindrops falling on puddles outside. Says Tek Bahadur: "We were first torn away from our homeland, and now our families are torn apart".

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No refuge when refugees leave, #568
Those who want to stay, #568
Gross National Shame, #551

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HIMAL Khabarpatrika

17 September-1 October 2012

COVER

Unsustainable compensation: the government's plan to spend Rs 67 billion in the name of conflict victims will be a heavy burden on the fragile economy.

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On the extreme right

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TRAVEL FEATURE

Kailash Mansarovar

A difficult dream



Interview with Nepalis in Japan and South Korea, *BBC Nepali*, 12 September

Each year thousands of Nepalis migrate to Japan and South Korea to earn a foreign degree while working part-time jobs in hopes of saving up. But fulfilling these dreams has proved to be extremely challenging.

Rudra Simkhada, who studies in a university in Tokyo says, "It is difficult to meet expenses when the Japanese government allows us to work only 28 hours a week." He admits that most Nepali students come to Japan with the intention of earning big bucks, but they quickly learn how different reality is.

"Most jobs that are open to immigrants like construction work, and farm help are physically demanding so female students have a harder time finding employment," says Jhuma Maharjan who also works and

studies in Tokyo.

Jigyan Kumar Thapa, who works as researcher and translator in a Japanese media company says, "A Japanese academic notes in her research how Gorkhalis were known around the world for fighting enemies with their khukuris. Today they use the same khukuri to chop meat and vegetables in restaurants." There are over a thousand Nepali restaurants in Japan which employ more than 6,000 Nepalis.

Ram Khatri, who has worked in five-star hotels in Kathmandu, is currently a cook in Saino restaurant in downtown Tokyo. "Our employers don't tell us what our job responsibilities are and

there are no fixed working hours either. Depending on the demand, a person has to cook, clean, and serve guests at the same time. Sometimes I have even cooked for hundreds of people on my own," he says. Khatri also revealed that migrant workers are often mistreated by owners and made to work without any food or salary.

Things are no better for those who work in South Korea under the government's EPS program. "The government lied to us. We were told we would have to work 40-45 hours a week, and provided with training, clothes, and food. But we are made to work 70-75 hours a week with only two days off in a month and so far the Korean state has provided us no services," complained a woman who works as a farm help in Korea.

"Many Nepali men and women marry Koreans to gain entry into the country, and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse," adds researcher Manju Thapa about the deplorable conditions of Nepali immigrants.

The politics of Tij

Mitra Pariyar, *Nagarik*, 12 September

नागरिक

Like earlier years, this year's Tij was also celebrated with much pomp by the diaspora community. Despite their busy schedules, Nepali women all over the world gathered in each other's homes, put on their best saris, enjoyed dar together and danced the day away just like their sisters back home.

However, as people in Nepal become more aware of their identities, there is growing political consciousness among the immigrant population as well. Some Janajati women, who have been celebrating Tij for decades, are now questioning why they should take part in a Bahun-Chhetri festival. Some of my Janajati friends, who have been living in Sydney for a long time, are also raising their voice against the Nepali language which they feel is a Bahun tongue. They do not consider Nepali their national language and insist on speaking English or their own languages. In a way, they are right. But I don't know if they realise how much the world, and particularly the African continent, has suffered because of the worldwide dominance of the English language and western cultures.



BIKRAM RAI

Currently, non Bahun-Chhetris in the UK, US, Australia, and India are undergoing a severe identity crisis. If they celebrate Tij, their Janajati leaders get angry, if they don't, they must distance themselves from other Nepalis who still follow the tradition. But what kind of world do we live in where Nepalis celebrate Christmas, but not traditional festivals like Tij and Dasain? Those who boycott these festivals in Nepal are trying to make a powerful political statement. But how does this logic extend to those who have settled abroad when even Bahun-Chhetris are discriminated against and treated as Janajatis in foreign countries.

Also the increasing hate speech against Bahuns and Chhetris in social media is hard to understand. I don't think scolding Bahun-Chhetris will lead to prosperity for Nepalis or Nepal. As a member of one of the most marginalised communities, I am also angry. Yes, we have been dominated and victimised for centuries and still are to a large extent. But we must direct our anger at Bahun leaders, not our Bahun neighbours. Cursing, hating or inciting violence against a few ordinary people who happen to belong to the 'upper' caste or naming states after ethnic groups are not long-term solutions to our problems.

Electoral passage



Editorial in *Kantipur*, 20 September

कान्तिपुर

Four months after its dissolution, the fate of the Constituent Assembly has finally been sealed. The parties have agreed not to revive the dissolved house and go for polls in April 2013

instead, with a broad agreement that the elected body will function as a CA for one year and then convert itself into a parliament. The parties have also agreed on a five year term for the elected body, but are yet to agree on its size.

This is a welcome step, but the parties must not repeat the past mistake of exhausting the legitimacy of the house. There is no doubt that conducting free and fair elections in the present situation will be challenging. Besides, the parties also have to take political decisions to remove legal obstacles before the elections can be held. It is also crucial that election commissioners be appointed at the earliest.

The parties have agreed to make the next electoral government into a national government, but they must be clear on who will lead it. Indeed, in the wake of protracted deadlock, going for elections seems like the most viable option, which in turn should yield the constitution in the shortest possible time.

Better late than never

Sureshraj Neupane, *Nepal*, 16-23 September

नेपाल

The number of former officials of Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, who are joining private banks and financial institutions is increasing at an alarming rate. The list consists of former governors, executive directors, and directors. Former governors include Satyendra Pyara Shrestha, who is presently the chairman of Nabil Bank, and Ganesh Bahadur Shrestha, founder chairman of Alpice Everest Finance Limited.

Associations between Nepal Rastra Bank's former officials and private banks have turned out to be highly controversial, specially when ex-officials take up positions in financial institutions

they once monitored. Many officials have also been involved in various transgressions and are putting the central bank's reputation at great risk.

According to the Rastra Bank act, governors and deputy governors are not allowed to join any financial institution within one year of their leave or retirement. However, officials rarely follow the rule. Former deputy governor, Lekhnath Bhusal, for example, joined Nepal Bangladesh Bank as its advisor less than a year after his retirement from the central bank. This violation became public only when trouble started brewing at Nepal Bangladesh Bank. Bhusal was later fined Rs 20,000.

Although it is not new for banking experts to continue working in the same sector, the recent trend of

former officials joining institutions they had previously monitored does raise some serious questions. Former governor, Dipendra Purush Dhakal, says ex-officials should not be prevented from joining the private sector, rather action should be taken against them if they are involved in financial irregularities.

The central bank is now planning to amend its rules to discourage this practice and safeguard its image. Deputy governor Maha Prasad Adhikari, explains: "Former officials who are tarnishing the bank's reputation will be evaluated seriously by our leadership." He says the bank will introduce a new policy as soon as possible to put a stop to such unhealthy and unethical practices before they spiral further.



Signboard : CA revival
Ballot box: Constituent Assembly
Arrow: Fresh mandate

नागरिक Deven in *Nagarik*, 19 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Since the NC and UML rejected our call to revive the CA, we will not agree to their leadership in the next government. ”

UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal quoted in kantipuronline.com , 19 September

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Those who grew up in Kathmandu Valley in the 80s and 90s have fond memories of the green and white trolley bus as it snaked through the capital's major thoroughfares. Starting from Tripureswor and ending at Surya Binayak, the Chinese-gifted buses served the residents of the Valley silently and smokelessly for more than three decades for 15 paisa per ride, later increased to Rs 5.

But like all other public services run by the state, the trolley bus service fell victim to political interference, neglect, and corruption. Instead of extending the routes, even the one route collapsed. By 2009, the trolley buses had ground to a halt and its Min Bhavan terminal with 32 rusting buses was turned into a dorm for the Maoist YCL.

The trolley bus service, the Kathmandu-Hetauda cargo ropeway, Nepal Airlines, fire hydrants, post boxes, and other public services now live only in the public memory.

When Juddha Shamsher Rana established the fire brigade in 1938, hydrants were installed at critical junctions in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. Most of these Juddha, Bhim, and Bir 'dhara' were knocked down during the road expansion drive, and the few that still stand do not have any connections to the mains.

Today whenever there is a fire, fire engines have to first make a trip to fetch water. "When there is a fire in Makhan, we have to spend 45 minutes travelling to Mahankal by which time houses have been reduced to ashes," says fire truck driver, Rajendra Bahadur Shrestha.

It's not just the fire hydrants, the three fire brigades in the Valley have fallen into disrepair as well. In a valley with 3.5 million population there are only four functioning fire engines. These fire trucks not only serve Kathmandu residents, but also travel as far as Kavre and Dhading.

A study done by Juddha fire brigade estimates that the Valley needs one central fire station with 10 branches, 16 fire engines, and at least 200 fire fighters. However, the state has neither been able to repair and upgrade existing infrastructure nor add much needed smaller fire engines which could navigate the tiny alleys of Kathmandu.



Vanishing public services

Post boxes, trolley buses, ropeways have all faded from the landscape of Kathmandu's memory

FO CHEE CHANG



RSS

Another public service to fall by the wayside, as it were, are post boxes. Fifteen years ago the bright red unique temple-shaped boxes in New Road, Ram Shah Path, Dilli Bazar or Putali Sadak would be teeming with personal

letters and official documents. Today, except for letters from the Agricultural Development Bank and Land Revenue Office, no one uses them says Bandhu Bastola, a senior official at the General Post Office.

Administrative documents, legal notices, bank statements, and newspapers are still mailed via post. Private houses, apartments, and commercial complexes all have mail boxes at their main entrance, but the post boxes are gone.

Established in 1878, Nepal's postal service which covers more than 3,800 VDCs with 3,991 offices and 20,000 employees is still capable of reaching Nepalis living in far corners of the country. However, the progress made in the past 134 years has been wiped away by state neglect.

The century old Hetauda-Kathmandu cargo ropeway which has been out of order for 13 years also lies in ruins. In its glory days, the 42km ropeway could make the journey from Kathmandu to Hetauda in four hours. The US-funded

service used to run 10 hours and transport 220 tons of goods every day, provide employment to 900 Nepalis and was a vital fall-back when landslides and floods destroyed the highway in 1995. A year ago, the government was in the process of reviving the ropeway and two private companies in Hetauda had even shown interest, but the plan was aborted mid-way.

In the past few years trees, public toilets, water fountains, parks, and traditional rest houses have also slowly faded from the landscape of Kathmandu's memory. Instead, the city resembles the aftermath of an earthquake with the half-finished road expansion drive. 🇳🇵

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Flying in a ropeway over Nepal, #491
Last stop. #501

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10 cunning ways to cut load-shedding

For all of you who were thinking of temporarily emigrating to New Zealand this winter to escape the daily 20-hour blackouts, let me sound the all clear. No need to press the panic button, folks, get on with whatever you were doing. The reason is that our PhD prime minister has met the energy czars and come up with a cunning plan which is top secret and is only published here if you promise not to tell anyone. It is a 10-point strategy that will eliminate load-shedding completely for the unforeseeable future:

1. The prime minister will get the fratricidal organisations belonging to his kranti-curry party to go on indefinite nationwide strike and bring all the country's industries to a grinding halt after Dasain. This will cut peak hour electricity demand by half.
2. The grubberment will declare four-day weekends this winter.
3. Nepal's population will be reduced by 3 million in the coming fiscal year by giving people free passports and paying for one-way tickets to the Gulf.
4. Cable and satellite channels will be banned with immediate effect so people will stop watching tv thereby eliminating a major source of power consumption.
5. Crack down on hookers. Not rounding up street walkers, but

dismantling the wires hooked to transmission lines that are responsible for one third of the power loss in this country. (This, for once, is a deadly serious suggestion.)

6. There are 5,000 treadmills in Nepal, installing dynamos in all of them will turn gyms into generators and add another 10 megawatts to the grid.

7. About mid-January ask every loyal citizen of this country to go take a leak in the Kulekhani Reservoir in order to augment its generation capacity.

8. Ask the Japanese to donate us one of their decommissioned nuclear power plants.

9. Put Nepal Airlines' two 757s out of their misery and permanently ground them to rig up their four jet engines as powerplants to generate 20 megawatts.

10. Use hot air emitted during meetings of top leaders to generate steam to power turbines as a source of limitless geo-thermal energy.

PKD fooled UNMIN into thinking he had 35,000 gorillas. Six years later, there are only 1,400 who have passed their

written exams to get into the army. We don't yet know how many will flunk their physicals. Anyway, whole timers who were deemed not to be real fighters trooped into the National Human Rights Commission the other day to complain that their fundamental human rights had been violated by categorising them as 'unqualified' and they demanded compensation. Let me get this straight: people who pulverised the shin bones



of class enemies by crushing them with rocks, or chopped off the hands of teachers suddenly want their human rights protected?

If BRB is so squeaky clean as everyone is led to believe then how come his protégés Bal Krishna Dhungel and Sujit

BK who have been accused of murder are still walking free, and are going to be pardoned by none other than the attorney general (himself a prime ministerial appointee)? The truncated TRC hasn't even been passed and pardons for war crimes are already coming in thick and fast. Then there is the mysterious case of Shri Jha. Remember him? He is the chap who was caught in flagrante bribing the family in Birganj who was bumped off by Bhattarai's sidekick, Sri Prabhu Sah. Anyway, guess what, Jha is promoted to head the juicy property mapping office, this time probably not to give bribes but to take them.

In other news: when he was prime minister, Awesum got his Miscommunication Minister Mahara-Jadhiraj to award crony communist Sue-Margie a lucrative telecom licence for next to nothing. And now he has sold off his shares to a Cyprus-registered holding company for a cool 70 million smackeroos or so, and of course everyone gets his cut. Why would

anyone in their right mind bother to be corrupt and take piddly kickbacks in this country when they can rake in deals like that?

Finally, it's unofficially official: the dead CA will not resurrect itself. For BRB this is a victory over PKD who wanted to revive the CA, and he expects haggling over interim govt to drag on beyond Dasain. The netas had already slipped into election gear with Upadro Kamred secretly dating Thakurji for several months now. The TMLP boss is thrilled with the idea, not just because he would get the big chunk of the Yadav vote, but also because he has finally found a way to shut the Gutch up. He knows Upadro is hoping to clean up his image, but politics is all about you-scratch-my-backside-I-scratch-yours. Never underestimate the crafty Gutch, who after he got whiff of Thakur and Upadro playing footsie, called up kinsman Lux-man and firmed up the Tharu vote. The Homely Minister also got back at BRB this week for sabotaging his candidate for top cop by leaking to the press that the PM's candidate is actually a war criminal.



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