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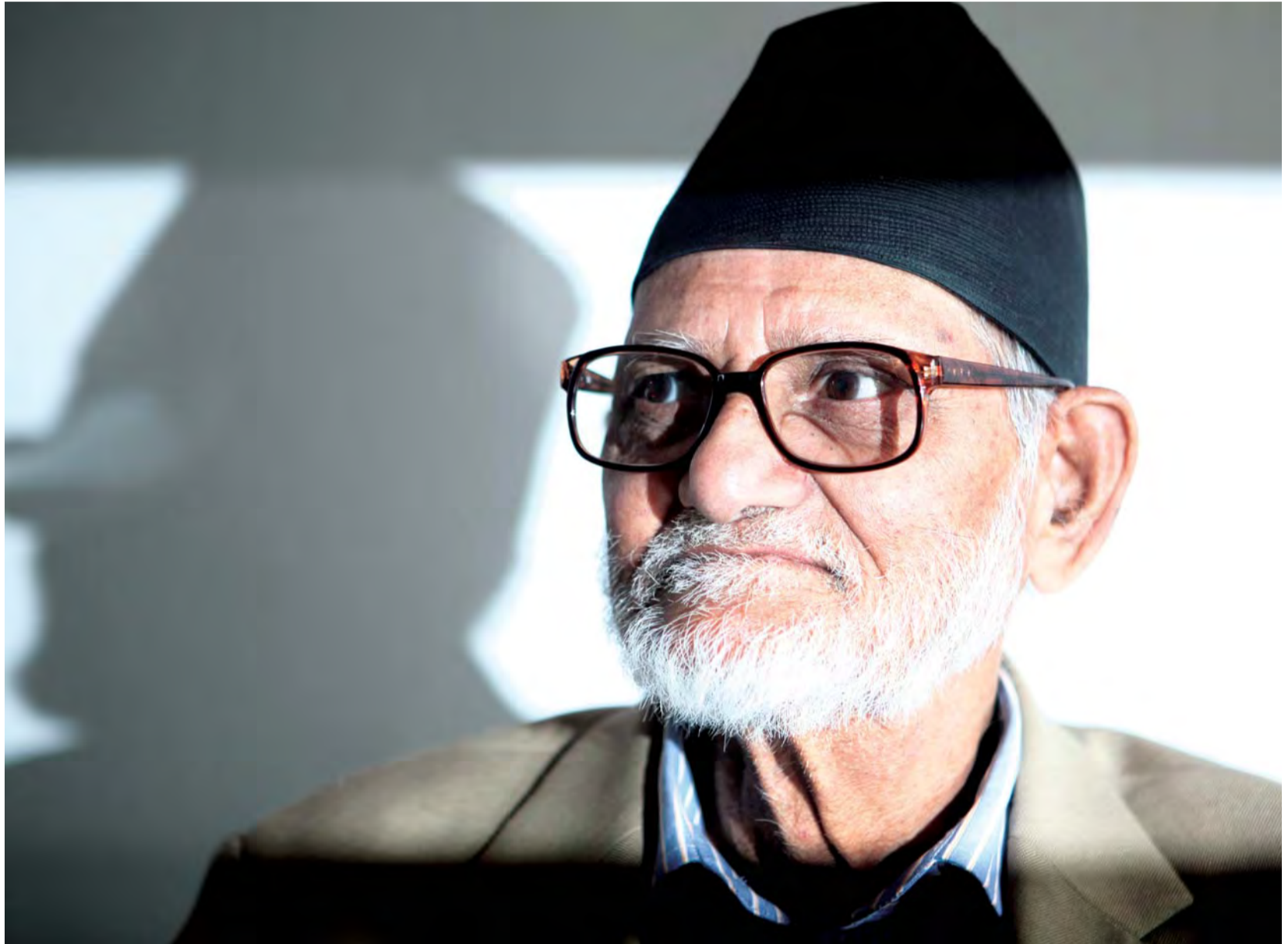
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BIKRAM RAI

## Making a big deal

With President Yadav's second deadline for a consensus looming, Nepal's leaders this week tried to take advantage of each other's greed for power.

The Nepali Congress finally pushed aside internal rivalries to put up party president Sushil Koirala as its prime ministerial candidate. The Maoists quickly signalled that they could agree to this as long as it formed part of a 'package deal'. That is probably a code

word for key ministries for the Maoists in case the NC has prime ministership.

But the package will most likely also include NC acquiescence on an executive presidentship and federalism, two stumbling blocks in the draft constitution which the NC had steadfastly not agreed to. However, the Maoist calculation could also be that it sees in Koirala a personality singularly lacking in charisma and

popularity which would give the NC an electoral disadvantage in the next elections.

It is unlikely that the NC will agree to abandon its stand on mixed system of governance in the new constitution. "The contentious issues of the constitution cannot be a part of the ongoing negotiations. It must be decided by the future CA," NC leader Laxman Ghimire told *Nepali Times*.

But there are those within the party who will be urging

**WALKING SHADOW:** NC President Sushil Koirala at the party's Central Working Committee meeting in Sanepa on Wednesday afternoon. The party unanimously named Koirala as its candidate for prime minister earlier in the day.

Koirala to agree to the Maoist deal because of the perceived incumbent advantage in the next elections.

Contentious elements in the new constitution like system of government and state structure are going to be divisive issues in the elections anyway, and political observers say it would be premature for the NC to agree to them as a pre-condition to lead the government.

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# CENSORING THE CENSUS

The good news about the 2011 Nepal Census report issued last week by the Central Bureau of Statistics is that it looks like Nepal finally defused its population bomb. The country's population growth rate, which was hovering at about 2.5 percent is now falling past the 1.3 percent mark and the average fertility rate has seen a sharp decline.

The bad news is that the youth bulge is huge, with nearly 55 per cent of the population below the age of 25. Members of this baby boomer generation are now entering the labour market at the rate of nearly 500,000 a year. Half that number is migrating to work overseas, the rest are left to fend for themselves (see page 12-13).

It doesn't take a Nobel laureate to figure out that Nepal's population pyramid will have enormous political ramifications in the years ahead. No matter which party gets to rule this country, leaders will have to come to grips with providing domestic jobs for the backlog of unemployed as well as hundreds of thousands of young adults who will be entering the labour market every year.

Democracy's demographic challenges are going to make governance so thorny and complex that one wonders why the parties are so desperate to get to power. But we already know the answer to that: the leaders are so obsessed with politicking that they are oblivious to the looming job bomb.

When they do show some interest in demography, it is to play identity politics and claim that the census is somehow biased against Brahmins, or Janajatis, or Christians, or Hill people, etc. Economists have already pointed out flaws in the census for not counting the absentee population, and grossly underestimating the



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## Our leaders are so obsessed politicking, they are oblivious to the looming job bomb

number of people who are working in India and other third countries at any given time.

Those burning the census report at Thapathali this week citing ethnic undercounting obviously ran out of an agenda, and once more took recourse in fanning the flames of identity politics out of desperation. It's not just the Janajatis whose population has gone down, there is a massive depopulation of mid-hills with some districts

showing as much as one-third of its population "missing" compared to 10 years ago, due to out-migration.

What is going to have a real profound impact on future politics, though, is the fact that for the first time in Nepali history, more people now live in the narrow strip of Tarai plains along the Indian border than in the Pahad and Himal. Some of this is because of the high natural population growth in the plains, but much of it is due to transmigration of people from the hills and from across the border. One can argue over which of these is the main factor in Tarai growth, but what is clear is that the plains are now a melting pot. Carefully handled, this can moderate politics, but irresponsible short-sighted politics can turn the Tarai into an explosive ethnic cauldron.

The census result shows dramatic improvements in literacy, especially in the percentage of women who can read and write which has soared from 37 per cent 10 years ago to 57 per cent. As literacy goes up, it will have a positive impact on a slew of indicators, including the fertility rate, maternal and child mortality, age of marriage, and future enrollment of children in school.

The youth bulge, melting pot demographics, and urbanisation can all be turned into forces of good and for progress. But only if there is the political will to follow through on the positive changes seen in the census, and to avoid the pitfalls of short-term political advantage.

Nepal is not a small country, it is the world's 40th most populous. It is also not poor. Just poorly-governed, and for far too long.

### ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

#### POLITICS FOR POLITICS' SAKE

As the editorial points out quite correctly, our experiments with authoritarianism have turned out to be major failures and democracy does seem like the best option ('Politics for politics' sake', #632). However, I also understand why we Nepalis are nostalgic for a benevolent dictator. It's been more than two decades since we became a democratic nation and still we are hanging in the balance between a failed state and a 'fledgling' democracy. Twenty years is a long time, we should have at least set a strong political framework by now. But look what's happening, we are stuck with the revolving door of leaders, a never ending search for consensus, and nobody seems to care about the 26 million Nepalis, about federalism, about the constitution. How long should we wait and tolerate this 'messiest system of government'?

Tara R

- I don't understand how the editor still believes that the elections will 'stabilise' Nepali politics? What kind of stability is he talking about? The one which helps everyone to take a pause and enjoy a temporary, conflict-free environment while the 'trad pols', as you call them, loot, plunder, and further solidify their power base. The Maoist thugs have unfortunately been legitimised through the so-called 'free and fair' elections, and they have learned extremely well from their NC and UML counterparts that in a dithering 'democratic' state like Nepal, which lacks effective democratic institutions, has extremely low literacy standards, complete asymmetry of information, a compromised media,

and a deeply corrupt bureaucracy, you need might (money, military etc) to dupe the electorate to remain in power. How else would you explain the clamour for all to get the Home and Finance portfolios rather than worrying about the sorry state of our country? And what is this farce about 'taking turns' to rule the country? Is this how a functioning democracy works?

We really do not have time on our side and cannot afford to be mired in the democratic experiments for centuries like the Europeans did. I think it's time to take some bold steps, restore the basics of a functioning polity (rule of law for starters), and start investing in education, health, infrastructure, and most important, strengthening our democratic institutions.

Prithvi Raj

#### OUR AMA, OUR HERO

The moment I found out Pushpa Basnet had won CNN heroes and saw her acceptance speech - so humble, so heartfelt, and so touching- I broke down ('Our ama, our hero', Dan Archer, #632). Our politics is a mess, but its people like Pushpa who keep this country running and give us hope that all is not lost. Whether she won the award or not would not have really mattered because she is a loving ama and a hero at heart. But she has worked so hard in the past decade that she deserves the international recognition and the funding that comes with it. And I am certain Pushpa will use all the money towards her children and nothing else.

Renu Shrestha

- Pushpa Basnet has shown that humanity and compassion always win.



We are proud that Nepal ama has produced a daughter like her so that she can take care of her little brothers and sisters.

Pushpa's fan

- True heroes and stars always put others before self. I salute Pushpa Basnet for devoting her life to the children of jailed inmates in Nepal and wish her a healthy long life so she can continue making her children happy and giving them a better future.

Tashi Lama

- There are many humanitarians in Nepal who work for international organisations, pocket six-figure cheques, drive around in expensive jeeps, and hold conferences and eat and drink at five star hotels in the name of the poor people. And then there

are others like Pushpa Basnet who spend every single paisa for the benefit of the poor. May god send many more Pushpa Basnets.

Anonymous

#### THE DIAMOND IN THE HILLS

Erik Bouchard seems like a wonderful, kind-hearted person who has understood that we are in the world not just to make money, but also to share our knowledge and skills and make people happy ('The diamond in the hills', Skye McParland, #632). Keep up your good work in Lamjung Erik. I am sure the children at Diamond Hill Academy appreciate and love you for the amazing work you are doing.

Rabin Shrestha

#### COMMITTING TO THE FUTURE

Climate change experts in Nepal need to think about Humla and Jumla before boarding their flights to fancy international conferences ('Committing to the future', Raju Pandit Chhetri, #632). What are the people in those districts going to get out of a meeting in Doha? The millions spent on organising a high-profile conference could have gone to the target groups instead.

Loku

- Yes, we need to make climate change a priority and find ways to minimise its impact. But I am afraid that like most other issues in Nepal, our environment will also have to take a back seat to politics. Donors will keep pouring money, but there will be no national level policies to guide the

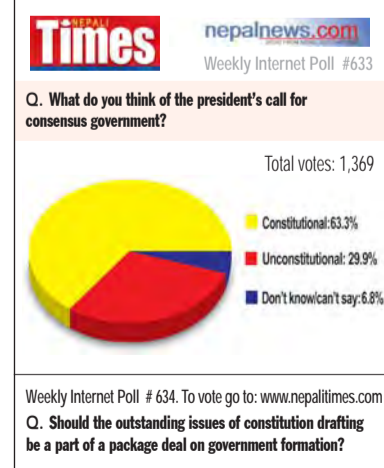
programs and ensure that people and regions that need funding the most are receiving help. And if or when the state finally wakes up, it might be too late.

Shanta K

#### REINVENTING BRAND NEPAL

Pooja Tandon's article on how Nepal can overcome its landlocked disability was a theoretical exercise at best ('Reinventing brand Nepal', #632). While we may be at fault for not finding ways to make the best of what we have, but dealing with India at two levels is something that neither Switzerland or Dubai, the two examples she cites, face. We are compelled to deal with Delhi as a sovereign country, while Indian states are not duty bound to follow most of Delhi's half-hearted directives. Yes, we can't blame India for all our troubles, however, geo-politics has played a decisive hand in holding back Nepal's economy.

Armugam



# Coming and going

If your house is on fire and you don't make any move to put it out, your neighbours will be worried



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

Everybody laments the current political deadlock. But the real reason why there is a deadlock is even more lamentable: it is because by seeking government leadership, each party wants to manipulate the electoral process for its advantage. What could be a bigger travesty for democracy in Nepal?

Once again Nepal's political parties have shown that they are simply incapable of managing their affairs. Karan Singh's visit last week was not overt meddling, but it just means that if your house is on fire and you don't make any move to put it out, your neighbours will be worried. Singh's visit apparently didn't go down well with the PMO and the Foreign Ministry even though it was a direct message from New Delhi that India wants Nepal to start putting out the blaze.

But the parties have done little to show that they are capable of fire-fighting. Loud op-eds and rabble-rousing commentaries



BIKRAM RAI

in the media blame Baburam Bhattarai or President Yadav for the current political mess. But the pundits miss the point. The solution to the stalemate is not in the hands of the prime minister or the president, it is with Sushil Koirala, Jhala Nath Khanal, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Two probable solutions would be to ensure a Maoist or Madhesi Morcha-led unity government with the NC and

UML getting portfolios of their choice. Second is an NC-led unity government with power sharing with the Maoists and Madhesis. While the first option remains unconditionally open for the opposition, for the ruling parties to hand over the leadership to the NC, it is reasonable that they would want an assurance that the party which had until two months ago been against CA elections, is committed to holding polls. On

both instances, the ball seems to be in the opposition's court.

Appointing Sushil Koirala as its candidate, the NC has demonstrated that it prefers leading the government. Now, it has to explain to the people what it intends to do once in power. The party has so far maintained that it would talk about its agenda only after being handed leadership, which is odd coming from a party that claims to be the most

democratic among the lot.

On Wednesday, Pushpa Kamal Dahal put forth a condition of agreeing on the date of holding CA elections in April before considering the NC's leadership. This is an indication that the Maoists and Madhesis have enough incentives to go for the polls. After running the government for over a year, the Maoists feel they have done enough to woo the voters, but are nervous about the split within their party. As long as they have the Madhesis with them, the Maoists are willing to face polls.

Since the day the CA was formed, the peace process and constitution drafting were held hostage to government formation. Six months after its dissolution, things have not changed. By seeking leadership of an electoral government, each party wants to ensure results in its favour so that it can effectively dictate the peace process and constitution drafting to suit its own ends.

The extended deadline given by the president to forge agreement on the government formation will expire on Friday. It will be nothing less than a miracle if the parties meet that deadline. The parties agreed on consensual politics in the interim constitution, but have been unable to develop a culture of give and take. The fear of losing too much has made them unwilling to compromise on the stakes. Unless they let go of that fear, deadlines will just keep on coming and going. 🇳🇵

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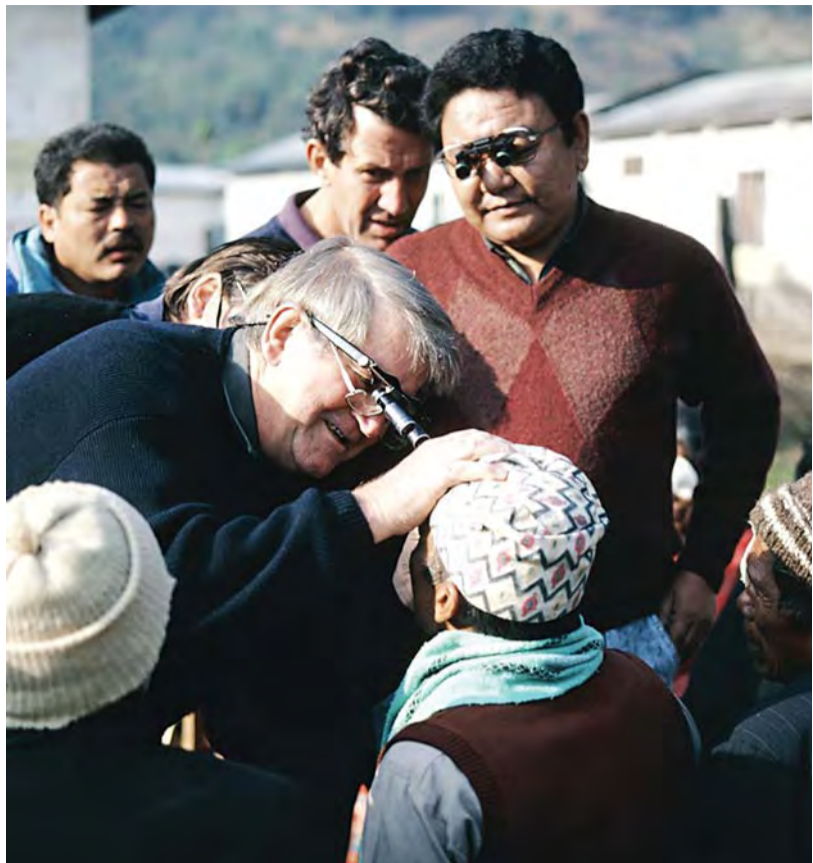
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MICHEL AMENDOLA

SKYE MCPARLAND

When Sanduk Ruit, a young doctor from Olangchungola village in the remote mountains of north-eastern Nepal met Fred Hollows, an Australian ophthalmologist, in the 1980s, they had no idea they would radically transform eye care in the country and make it possible for thousands of Nepalis to see again.

While travelling together in 1981 for the National Blindness Survey, Hollows and Ruit were

appalled to discover that 80 per cent of Nepalis suffered from blindness that was curable or easily preventable. With most Nepalis living in remote areas, access to hospitals was difficult and travelling to cities was simply too expensive. So they left diseases like cataract, trachoma, and glaucoma untreated which eventually led them to lose their sight.

The two doctors made it their mission to bring the highest standard of eye care to people living in the poorest and hardest to reach corners of Nepal. In 1988 Ruit and Hollows' wife Gabi started

# Two decades of vision

## Two doctors turn their vision of providing world-class eye care to poor Nepalis into reality

**INCREASING VISIBILITY:** Ophthalmologists Fred Hollows (left) and Sanduk Ruit (right) examine patients at an eye camp in Mustang in 1992.

an Australian support group called the Nepal Eye Program Australia to raise funds. After Hollows was diagnosed with cancer, he along with Gabi and friends started the Fred Hollows Foundation so that they could carry on his vision even after his death.

Following in his mentor's footsteps, Ruit opened the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology (TIO) in Kathmandu in 1994 to provide affordable eye care to the poorest and pioneered the modern cataract surgery where only the clouded lens are removed and an intraocular lens implanted into the natural capsule. However, to succeed in his fight against cataract blindness, Ruit needed lenses at more affordable prices.

At that time, a lens cost \$150, which was out of the budget of ordinary Nepalis. That is where the foundation stepped in and started a modern intraocular lens (IOL) manufacturing laboratory in Kathmandu which produced lenses at \$4 apiece. Since then, the IOL which is now run by an all-Nepali team has produced three million lenses and exported them to more than 75 countries around the globe.

Although Hollows didn't live to see the good work done by his organisation and TOI, he was fondly remembered during the foundation's 20th anniversary celebrations at the Siddhartha Art Gallery in October.

"We are incredibly happy to be partners with TOI. Tilganga has been exceptional in lifting the standards of eye care not just in Nepal but around the world, and made the country a leader in ophthalmology," Rex Shore, program developer for the foundation told *Nepali Times* after the function.

In addition to providing inexpensive treatment and high quality care, Tilganga has made a name for itself as a top research and training institute. Training is an integral part of TOI's motto and nurses here are taught to take greater responsibility in preparing patients for surgery.

Keeping true to its aim of bringing eye care closer to Nepalis, doctors from Tilganga frequently travel to remote areas for microsurgical eye camps and have performed thousands of cataract operations. They also train health workers to run eye care centres more efficiently and reach out to more patients. In a country where people are highly reluctant to donate organs of family members due to religious beliefs, Tilganga's eye bank has been working relentlessly to raise awareness and encourage more Nepalis to donate and give someone else the gift of sight.

In two decades, Tilganga and the Fred Hollows Foundation have bought about outstanding innovations in eye care. And by providing Nepalis living in remote communities with access to excellent services, they are inching closer to their dream of ending preventable blindness in the country. 

[www.tilganga.org](http://www.tilganga.org)  
[www.hollows.org.au](http://www.hollows.org.au)

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# An economic facelift

How successfully China changes its economic model will ultimately determine its prospects for further growth and continued stability

ZHANG MONAN

For three decades, the dividends from Deng Xiaoping's initial decision to open China's economy to market forces, and to the world, have fuelled rapid growth. Until recently, the key was China's vast supply of low-cost labour, which provided the foundation for the country's export-oriented model. Concentrated in coastal China, this model produced an uneven distribution of output and established a unique pattern of high savings and low consumption. Indeed, China's savings rate rose steadily following the onset of market reforms, from 38 per cent of GDP in 1978 to 51 per cent in 2007.

Economic growth is determined not only by factors of production such as labour, capital, and technology, but also by institutional arrangements. Through 30 years of reform, China has successfully completed the institutional transition from a highly centralised planned economy to a dynamic market-based system. Beginning from rural tiered management based on the household contract system, Chinese reformers supplemented public ownership with various other forms, with the market increasingly playing its fundamental role in allocating resources under the macro control of the state.

Reform coincided with increasing globalisation, unleashing forces that restructured not only the Chinese industry, but also production processes around the world as China challenged established manufacturers and became part of global supply chains. Developed economies' massive outsourcing of traditional manufacturing, high-tech manufacturing, and even some low-end services has brought exciting opportunities for emerging markets that, like China, have resource and cost

advantages, strong market potential, and industrial support capabilities.

Today, however, the catalytic power of Deng's initial changes has waned, with rising wages, weakening external demand, and increasing competition from other emerging economies indicating the exhaustion of a growth model premised on exports and investment. In particular, the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent eurozone debt crisis have forced Chinese officials to forge a new path for future growth.

Most important, export-led growth must give way to domestic economic drivers. This implies the need to upgrade


by 2020 – the target set at the Chinese Communist Party's 18th Congress in November – is likely to release 64 trillion renminbi (\$10.3 trillion) in purchasing power, with China's huge internal market gradually becoming a new long-term driver of domestic and international growth.

This model presupposes that China will develop domestic capital, rather than simply relying on foreign investment. To be sure, the ability to attract and absorb external financing has been an important reason for China's accelerated industrialisation, marketisation, and integration into the global economy.

Thirty years ago, this was the most efficient and practical strategic choice for China, owing to its lack of capital and advanced technology.

But a country's economic development ultimately depends on its ability to accumulate capital and allocate it efficiently. With 90 trillion renminbi in banking assets and \$3.2 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves, China is now playing a significant role in global finance. And yet the high volume and inferior quality of these assets have also posed challenges to the country's ability

to complete the transition from trade power to financial power, and thus to exploit the competitive advantages of Chinese capital.

After three decades of growth on a scale unprecedented in human history, China's new leaders are facing a historical turning point. Whether China successfully changes its economic model will ultimately determine its prospects not only for further growth, but also for continued stability. 

[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)



Zhang Monan is a fellow of the China Information Centre, fellow of the China Foundation for International Studies, and a researcher at the China Macroeconomic Research Platform.



China's industrial structure, accelerate the formation of human capital, facilitate technological progress, and undertake further institutional reforms.

If successfully implemented, this agenda is likely to reverse global savings and consumption patterns that have underpinned large imbalances in recent years. China is responsible for the savings side, while the US disproportionately accounts for the consumption side, ultimately turning the Chinese into America's creditors.

Of course, global savings and consumption patterns have undergone significant change since the financial crisis, with both the West and China trying to restore internal equilibrium. Doubling average household income

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Spreading wings

Qatar Airways has announced that it will launch its first long-haul Boeing 787 commercial service from Doha to London Heathrow on 13 December. Qatar is now the first airline to operate regular scheduled flights to the UK with Boeing's next generation aircraft. The company will



also begin scheduled flights to Chengdu in China from 19 March onwards. The Doha-based airline will operate three-flights-a-week to the capital of Sichuan province in Southwest China taking its total weekly frequency across the country to 41 non-stop services spread across six cities.

### Good businesses

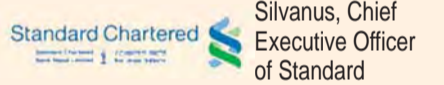


Surya Nepal Asha Social Entrepreneurship Award (SNASEA) will honour five best social entrepreneurs from among 84 applicants on 18 December. SNASEA

2012 will also feature an additional award called NBI Agent of Change for businesses that support enterprise development. An initiative of Change Fusion Nepal, supported by Surya Nepal and National Business Initiative, SNASEA rewards and recognises Nepali social entrepreneurs who create value for the the people and planet.

### Numero uno

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal has been awarded the prestigious 'Bank of the Year' award at The Banker Awards 2012. The award was presented to Joseph



Silvanus, Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bank Nepal. This is the third time Standard Chartered Bank Nepal is being recognised. It had bagged the award in 2002 and 2009 as well.

### Miles to go

Thai Airways recently celebrated 45 years of operation in Nepal. The airline honoured top 10 ticket sales agents and five cargo agents to celebrate its anniversary. Thai Airways first started flights to Nepal on 4 December 1968.



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# Move aside Bieber and Bollywood

Rapper PSY has single-handedly put Korean pop-culture on number one spot in Nepal and around the globe

BHRIKUTI RAI

From flash mobs across continents to UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon breaking into the quirky horse gallop dance with his fellow South Korean rapper Park Jae-sang, popularly known as PSY, Gangnam Style has spread like wildfire.

With its addictive beats and hilariously creative dance moves, PSY's song has racked up more than 876 million hits on YouTube since its release in July and is now the most watched video around the world after dethroning teenage heartthrob Justin Bieber's Baby. However, long before the rapper shifted global eyeballs to the Korean peninsula, Korean pop-culture also known as K-pop, Korean wave, or Hallyu was already sweeping across Asia's shores.

Cable television specially

the popular Arirang channel first bought Korean dramas and pop stars into our living rooms in the early 2000s. As Internet access grew, video sharing sites like YouTube pushed K-pop from relative obscurity to the astronomical fame of Gangnam Style in 2012.

Urban Nepalis' fascination with K-pop started as South Korea opened its doors to Nepali migrant labourers in 2008. As hordes of people lined outside the Korean embassy for work visas, language schools mushroomed across the country and Nepalis took an interest not just in Hangul, the script, but also its music, fashion, and culture.

A stroll around the streets of Basantapur, Darbar Marg, and malls around the Valley will tell you how obsessed teenagers are with K-pop. Everything from the dress, shoes, and accessories

to the hairstyles and make-up of popular singers, bands, and actors are eagerly emulated. Hard-core fans even memorise entire dance routines and lyrics of popular bands like 2NE1 and Big Bang.

"My sister used to watch a lot of Korean dramas and that's how I got hooked. I like the way the male pop singers dress up. They are not exactly 'manly', but very chic, flamboyant, and have a wild sense of fashion," admits 18-year-old Bivit Gurung, a student at Modern Indian School.

Nepal's retail and fashion businesses are riding high on the K-wave. Established almost a decade ago, The Korean Shop in Kantipath was among the first stores to introduce Korean-style clothes in Nepal along with foods like kimchi and Ramen noodles.

"When people come in, they

know exactly what they want, sometimes they bring photos of their favourite actress or bands to show us," says shop attendant Pooja Shrestha. Unable to keep up with a surge in demand, The Korean Shop recently opened a new outlet in Kumaripati, Lalitpur.

Similarly, cosmetic shops like Koreana which rely solely on Korean products are not only sustaining themselves but also making profit, indicating how robust the market is. "People think it's only teenagers driving the market, but even middle-aged women and men visit our shop. Korean culture has huge mass appeal," admits owner Kumar Shah.

The entertainment industry is not far behind either. DVD vendors do good business selling pirated copies of Korean serials and movies and sales compete neck to neck with Bollywood heavyweights.

"Ever since they started showing Arirang on cable tv, I have been hooked to Korean serials and music videos. The songs are very flashy and you just can't take your eyes off," adds 22-year-old Tseten Deky, a college student.

Even Kollywood is cashing on K-pop. Instead of feeding audiences with watered down Bollywood mush, directors and producers today are increasingly turning to Korean movies for 'inspiration'. Nepali film *Sano Sansar* lifted scenes from the blockbuster *My Sassy Girl* while *Mero Euta Saathi Cha* was a remake of the popular Korean movie *Millionaire's First Love*.

Since 2007, the Korean Embassy in Nepal has been

**PSY-TED: PSY inspired quirky t-shirts and fashion are making their way to Kathmandu as seen here in Darbar Marg and a girl browses through a collection of Korean DVDs at a store in Patan(below).**

hosting a bi-annual film festival and the queue of enthusiasts gets longer each year. "We have been receiving amazing response at the festival here and with the immense popularity of PSY's Gangnam Style, I am sure this year it's going to be even better," says Shiva Pokharel, research officer with South Korean embassy's culture department.

While fashion tastes are undergoing a K-revolution, Nepali palates are also gradually changing. There are now over half a dozen Korean restaurants in the Valley from Haankook Sarang, Picnic in Thamel to Pyongyang Okryu-Gwan in Darbar Marg and Sa Rang Chae in Jawalakhel promising to serve authentic delights of South (and North) Korea.

"Nepalis don't like experimenting a lot with their food, but thanks to movies and soap operas, they are warming up to Korean staples like kimbap and bibimbap," says Suraj Gurung of Haankook Sarang which now has an outlet in the eastern town of Dharan as well.

While PSY's 'dress classy and dance cheesy' inspired horse dance, may probably fizzle out in a few months, the mass appeal of the Korean culture is here to stay. 🇰🇷



SUNIR PANDEY



BHRIKUTI RAI

nepalitimes.com

K-Wave, #478  
See video



# Psyching tourism

Fourteen-year-old Alexis Martinez from Texas is on a holiday in Seoul, learning the dance made famous by South Korean musician PSY in his music video Gangnam Style. Like Alexis, thousands of tourists around the world are making their way to South Korea to experience the Gangmania first hand.

The song, which describes the district south of Seoul’s Han River that is known for its trendy clubs, high fashion, and lavish lifestyle, is one of the most viewed videos on the Internet, and the South Korean government is looking market K-pop’s most famous export to attract even more foreign travellers.

“I think Gangnam Style is bringing up Korea’s brand value,” says Je-Sang-won, who heads the Korea Tourism Organisation’s (KTO) Hallyu, or Korean Wave, division, “we did a survey in Los Angeles and found that 70 per cent of respondents said they wanted to visit Korea after they saw the video.”

But very few people predicted PSY would become a global phenomenon. “PSY isn’t the typical idol type or even really handsome, but I think this makes him more interesting and exciting,” he explains, “it’s great to see that he’s promoting Gangnam to rest of the world.”

Out on the streets of Gangnam, PSY’s image can be found on video billboards and on cardboard cut outs in front of shops. Some merchants in Seoul say that ever since Gangnam Style went viral, they have seen an increase in foreign shoppers.

“I think it has created a positive image for the neighbourhood. People are excited to be here, they sing and laugh. It’s a good atmosphere,” admits Om Jong-ryul who sells roasted nuts at a stall right outside Gangnam metro station.

Kwon Da-na manages a boutique clothing shop in Gangnam’s fashionable Apgujeong neighbourhood. “Sometimes there are more foreign customers than Korean shoppers coming to my store. When I turn on Gangnam Style and open the door, some people come in off the street,” he says, adding that some customers even start dancing.

South Korea is breaking the 10-million tourist mark for the first time this year and according to KTO, K-pop’s growing international attraction has something to do with it. But like any pop song, what’s trendy today could be out of style tomorrow and some tourists here say Gangnam Style might be reaching its peak already.

Inside KTO’s Korean Wave gallery, Singaporean teenager Connie says she’s a big K-pop fan, but she’s heard enough of Gangnam Style. “I think it’s nice but it got too over popular after a while. It’s annoying because it’s everywhere,” says the 17-year-old.

But for Alexis, Gangnam Style and its wacky horse dance aren’t getting old. She says it’s easy to learn and maybe that’s why it’s so popular around the globe, “It’s bringing the world together, I guess, it’s cool.”

Jason Strother  
www.asiacalling.org



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## EVENTS

**BATO KO CINEMA**, six movies, six screenings, six awesome chances to watch amazing documentaries in the streets of Patan. 6 to 21 December, Thursdays and Fridays, 6pm onwards, Patan, 9813485716, (01)5523486

**Green solutions fair**, learn new ideas for a clean, green living; cycle rally to Godawari will start from the Nepal Tourism Board at 8.40am. Free entrance, 8 December, 10 am to 4 pm, ICIMOD Knowledge Park, Godawari, half-hourly bus available at Jawalakhel, 9841876696, 9841275806, 9851058768

**Katha-kuro**, opportunity for young aspiring writers to learn the art of narrative storytelling at this feature-writing workshop with journalist, blogger, and aspiring filmmaker Pranaya Rana. Rs 1,000, 15, 16, 22 and 23 December, 10am to 2pm, Ting's Tea Lounge, Lazimpat, editor@ventzine.com, apply at <http://goo.gl/o7Sed>



**PHOTO CIRCLE FORTY FOUR**, featuring a talk by US-based photographers Annu Palakunnathu Matthew and David H. Wells, and a presentation by participants of Photo Circle's Memory and Identity workshop. 7 December, 5.30pm, Metro Park (second floor), Uttar Dhoka

**Adolescent girls in Nepal between tradition and modernity**, an exhibition of Thomas Kelly's works which reveal the risks and challenges faced as well as the opportunities available to young women in Nepal. 7 to 16 December, 8am to 6pm, Indigo Gallery, Naxal, (01)4413580

**Rode microphone seminar**, learn with Greg Simmons how to correctly and effectively use microphones for your recording sessions. Rs 1,500, 15 December, 10am to 5pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np



**PIANO LESSONS**, a month-long tutelage under Thomas Duvigneau who shall be teaching rhythm, sight reading, scales, simple and advance harmonisation, piano solo, and comping. 9 December to 9 January, 5 classes a week, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

## MUSIC



**Shastriya Sangeet**, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon night. 13 December, Ram Mandir, Battisputali

**Live at Café 32**, live music, and delicious food every Friday. 7 December, 6pm onwards, Café 32, Battisputali, (01)4244231



**KCM INTER-COLLEGE MUSIC COMPETITION**, rock the living daylights out of your competitors, and win up to Rs 145,000 in cash and kind. Rs 5000 registration fee, 15 December, 10am to 7pm, Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap, (01)5201997

## DINING

**New Tushita Restaurant**, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on its penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, (01)44432957

**Falcha**, give yourself away to the twin pleasures of lemon jeera chicken and mutton handi kabab. Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur



**CHILLY BAR AND RESTAURANT**, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. Lakeside, Hallanchok, Pokhara, (061)463614/463163

**Magic Beans**, coffee, cakes and sandwiches with a magical touch and taste. Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, (01)4230914

**Sarangkot Fordays Restaurant**, have a Sarangkot special breakfast while enjoying spectacular views of the mountain ranges. Sarangkot, Pokhara, (061)696920, 9817136896

**Café Du Temple**, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and a beautiful roof top view. Patan Darbar Square, (01)5527127

**Mike's Breakfast**, huge breakfasts and an endless supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Naxal, (01)4424303

**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

**Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café**, bide your time in our free wi-fi zone as you enjoy our wood-fired pizzas, home-made pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok. Boudha, (01)4485585

**Rox Restaurant**, enjoy Sunday Pranzo at Rox Restaurant. 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, (01)4491234



**CINNAMON GRILL AND LOUNGE**, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. Jhamsikhel, (01)5521339

**Lhasa Bar**, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. Thamel, 985101043

**Saigon Pho**, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lazimpat



**SHANGRI-LA KITCHEN**, cook your own Gyakok at this newly opened restaurant. Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

**Irish Pub**, for the simple reason that the place actually feels like a bar. Don't miss out on their Irish coffee. Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, (01)4416027



## GETAWAYS

**WINTER CAMP AT BORDERLANDS**, send your kids packing into the jungle to develop their leadership, communication, and basic life skills while taking part in outdoor and extracurricular activities such as tent crafting, rock climbing, canyoning, abseiling, cookery classes and art, music and dance lessons. 5 to 12 January, Borderlands Resort, Bhotekoshi, (01)4381214, 9802025666, [www.borderlandsresorts.com](http://www.borderlandsresorts.com)



**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)462908/463 096/464897, [www.landmarkpokhara.com](http://www.landmarkpokhara.com)



**DHULIKHEL LODGE RESORT**, located on a hilltop the resort offers a magnificent vista of valleys, foothills, and mountains to the north. Dhulikhel, (011) 490114/494, [www.dhulikhellodgeresort.com](http://www.dhulikhellodgeresort.com)

**Mindfulness Meditation**, join Jharna Bajracharya for a deeply enriching journey into your mind. Rs 1,400, 16 December, 10am to 4pm, Pranamaya Yoga Studio Boudha, Pipal Bot, register via info@pranamaya-yoga.com, 9851002920

## Mountains on the silver screen

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF) is back for its 10th year. This year, 62 films representing 28 countries will be screened in the competitive, non-competitive, and Nepal Panorama categories.

The festival will see the Nepal premiere of the much-awaited *Soongava – a dance of orchids*. Top ten films from the Educating Nepal short film competition will also be featured in the festival, and all movies are

eligible for Audience Award.

Besides the screenings, KIMFF will host talks on grassroots filmmaking, 'Know Your Himal' quiz, photo and alternative book exhibitions, and documentary and filmmaking workshops.

7 to 11 December, 11am to 5pm, Rastriya Sabha Griha, Nepal Tourism Board, Brikutimandap, (01)4440635/5542544 [www.kimff.org](http://www.kimff.org)

## Selected schedule

## 7 December

NTB, The Art of Flight, 3.30pm.  
City Hall, Khyi Rgan, 5pm

## 8 December

NTB, Bachelor Mountain, 10.30am; Snohulemannen (The Snow Cave Man), 2.30pm  
City Hall, The Andes Adventure, 1pm; Who Will Be A Gurkha, 5pm

## 9 December

NTB, Waking the Green Tiger, 10.30am; 'How relevant is Gurkha recruitment today?', 3pm  
City Hall, The Sound of One Leg Dancing, 11am; Extinct, 1pm; Ertefae Omid (High Hopes), 3pm

## 10 December

NTB, 'Learning to Breathe – 50 Years in the Mountains', 12.30pm; Qui A Tue Natacha? (Who Killed Natacha?), 2.15pm; An Epic Tale, 5.45pm  
City Hall, 'Educating Nepal' Shorts Awards Ceremony, 10.30am; What happened on Pam Island, 12.30pm; "Know Your Himal" Quiz, 2.30pm; Mental Nord (Selection of Nordic short films), 4pm

## 11 December

NTB, Animation and shorts, 11am; Panel discussion on the challenges and relevance of grassroots filmmaking, 1pm; Eyes and Ears of God-Video Surveillance of Sudan, 3pm  
City Hall, 1st Afghan Ski Challenge, 11.30am; Soongava, 3pm; Himalayan Gold Rush and Award Ceremony, 5.30pm



SUNIR PANDEY

## Where am I?

Confusion greets the unsuspecting visitor at the Patan Museum. A 100 human feet radiate outwards from the centre of the courtyard, where the Keshav Narayan temple stands firm. These are not stray footsteps of all the visitors that might throng to a place of worship, but are the echoes of the same person's feet. Perhaps the devotee in this art-installation stumbled here by chance, and had so many places to go to that she couldn't decide to go anywhere at all.

Nearby, was the Peak of Communism: tin pails turned upside down, their bases melted

and risen like mountains, an image of transformation into a majestic piece of rock which was, ironically, entirely hollow in the inside.

Deep inside the museum's courtyard, onto Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre's premises, were excavations of the present day Valley: pillars and columns made not of cement and sand, but embedded with the undecaying plastic of polythene bags and junk food sachets.

The sense of decay in Neelkanth was so powerful that it assaulted every sensory organ. In an adjoining installation, a mechanical tree grew, never mind its poor qualities as a substitute, in a room of glass and concrete.

Another depiction of environmental loss: metal sparrows found themselves in garbage dumps, sand banks, and construction sites. The clean and the green are so rare in today's urban spaces that only a real wooden log can truly serve to congregate real-life pigeon. Contrast this natural happening with another wooden log, but this one with glass mushrooming on its surface: no birds gathered here.

The imagination boggles at the Kathmandu International Art Festival, what are you waiting for?

www.artmandu.org, runs till 21 December

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**SOMEPLACE ELSE**

## Carpe Diem

with a customary plate of steamed chicken momos (Rs 80). There was nothing spectacular about the dumplings. The covering was thick, some parts felt uncooked, and the generous portion of readymade masala took away from our gastronomic pleasure. Next came the chicken balls (Rs 110). The eight deep fried balls, which came with a side of carrots and shredded cabbage, were too salty for our taste.

The highlight of our meal was undoubtedly the boneless chicken chili (Rs 120). Well-done to the core, crisp around the edges, and lightly fried, the pieces of chicken went down smoothly. The meat along with onion, capsicum, and tomato toppings had soaked in all the sauce and oozed flavour. As the live band was still in full swing, we ordered yet another round of appetiser: aalu sandeko (Rs 50). It's hard to go wrong with this simple Nepali snack, but our potato was doused in mustard oil and the coriander, tomato, onion, and ginger were not at all well-mixed. The oil simply

overpowered our senses and destroyed the dish.

We wanted to end with something from the lunch and dinner selection and since we had overdosed on chicken, we got jeera (cumin) rice (Rs 50), but could not find anything to complement it. The rice was surprisingly good, with the right amount of jeera and very light on the tummy. The momo achar on the side, however, was not needed.

If Saurav and Subham want to sustain their joint in the long run, we suggest they work on adding a little variety to both the finger food and drinks menu. Even if they decide to stick to their 'less is good' motto, the little that they offer has to be prepared with more care.

However, what Carpe Diem



PICS: BHRIKUTI RAI



lacks in terms of food, it more than makes up in its atmosphere. The place is lit in neon red light, with huge posters of popular Hollywood stars from the 1950s decorating the wall and is usually engulfed in a cloud of smoke (not a place for those who have

problems with second hand smoking). Saurav is excellent with his guests. He will sit down to have a chat and even stop his performance mid-way through if he feels that a customer is not being served the right way or is unhappy. Although there are few waiters, they are pretty quick with their service. And the price is exceptionally reasonable. So gather your group of friends and head down to Carpe Diem on a Friday night. 🇳🇵

Trishna Rana

How to get there: travel south from the main bus stop in Biratnagar, before you reach Roadcess Chok, if you look on your right, you will see Hotel Pacific, Carpe Diem is on the ground floor. 9852028278

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# MASTER and COMMANDER

## The Far Side of the World



All of the best films of the year usually come out in the fall in a run up to the Academy Awards held around February of the following year. While I continue to maintain that the Oscars are not necessarily the best gauge for good cinema, the truly great films do come out in the fall regardless. This is usually because during Cannes, Venice, Sundance, Toronto, and other film festivals, all of which occur earlier in the year, promising films are bought by bigger studios and it usually takes till the latter half of the year for the mechanics (and the marketing) to be ready for a wider release.



Unfortunately, some of the more promising films for this year are yet to be available to us, so, in order to celebrate true quality, I'd like to review a relatively old favourite from 2003.

Peter Weir's *Master and Commander* is a masterpiece, even with its unwieldy and awkward title. Based on Patrick O'Brian's beloved 20-volume series on the adventures of Captain Jack Aubrey and his friend, Stephen Maturin (the ship's erudite, cello playing doctor), the film chronicles the adventures of 'Lucky Jack' and his much cherished ship the

'Surprise' as they chase a French warship, the 'Acheron', up, down, and around Cape Horn during the Napoleonic Wars.

The story is almost episodic with its little vignettes, its biggest charm laying in the way Peter Weir depicts the bonds of friendship. Aubrey, played by the charming roguish Russell Crowe is hell-bent on catching the Acheron to the point of losing all perspective, and it is Paul Bettany's character Dr Maturin that gently balances the headstrong captain's willfulness. Over the course of the film, the friendship between these two is sorely tested, and not found wanting.

Equally charming are the large supporting cast of midshipman, officers, and crew, who are too many to mention here individually, yet it would be a crime to leave out the brave and very endearing performance by Max Pirkis as the barely teenage midshipman who also carries the title of Lord William Blakeney. Suffice to say that this little boy's courage is one of the main anchors of this layered and surprising film.

I say surprising because while this is indeed a film about war, the sea, cannons, and 'men' (there is not a single female character, by the way), it also has unexpected warmth, tenderness, and humour.

Working with an amazing script where each character always says just the right thing, with just the right words, there are, in addition to the main element of adventure, also elements of the natural world (Dr Maturin is an avid naturalist), medical science (of the time), and music, as Jack and Stephen end many of their evenings together in the captain's cabin playing together (Jack also plays the violin) to suit their moods. Most of the vignettes are punctuated by the unforgettable music played by these two characters as the Surprise lurches across the unfathomable waters.

As a viewer who has seen this film a number of times, I am always left yearning for more stories with these same, dear characters. Luckily, lately in Hollywood there have been rumours that some studios have expressed interest in a sequel. Meanwhile, in the words of one of the catchy little songs in the film, "Don't forget your old shipmates, Luc."

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

# Taking wealth out of health



As we have regularly mentioned in these pages, in countries like ours where there is no social security net, sickness can put immense pressure on families, driving some into poverty. However, certain states in south India are offering relief to the poor through a scheme called Arogyasri.

A public-private partnership, Arogyasri has been targeting

those who live below the poverty line (BPL) and providing them with quality medical care for catastrophic illnesses like heart attacks, traumatic injuries, chemotherapy, and radiation for cancer etc.

For example there is a set fee that the government insurance will pay for common cardiovascular procedures such as angioplasty and stent placement to pacemaker implantation to coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG). Follow-up costs are also included in this scheme. The scheme provides Rs 200,000 for each family per

year plus an additional Rs 50,000 on recommendation of a technical committee set up by the scheme. Other states in India are also trying to simulate this successful program from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to deal with escalating health costs.

Unfortunately in Nepal, people have to be financially well-off or politically well-connected to be able to pay when a family member becomes severely ill. Ordinary Nepalis have to either borrow money from commercial banks and loan sharks at exorbitantly high interest rates, or sell off their lands, cattle, and jewellery to pay medical bills.

While one segment of society is buried under debt and forced into wretched lives with no health insurance, the other has access to the latest equipment, a wide range of experts, and medical care befitting royalty. Clearly the Nepali government, industrialists, and perhaps even donor agencies need to narrow this gap and start thinking of building a scheme similar to Arogyasri and replicating its success here.



**HANDS UP:** UCPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal addresses members of the Newari community in a program organised at Itum Bahal on Tuesday.



**FIREFLY:** A massive fire broke out at Bhutanese refugee camps in the eastern town of Beldangi, Damak which left hundreds homeless on Tuesday.



**HELPING HANDS:** Children get ready to clean the Bagmati River with the help of teachers and parents as part of the International Volunteer Day celebrations in Teku.

### READERS' PHOTO



**OPERATION SMILE:** After a long day in the fields, a woman is satisfied with her harvest in Godawari.

### WEEKEND WEATHER

A jet stream has guided some clouds from the western Indian shore to the central Himalayas, but the moisture it carries will not result in high rainfall yet. It might induce light snowfall in the high hills and add to the delight of trekkers. The Westerlies from the Arabian Sea have by now become a regular feature, but their moisture is divided between the Pakistan-Afghanistan area and the Himalayas. This weekend, the Valley will see partly cloudy skies, and maximum temperatures will drop by three degrees in anticipation of a cold winter.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
19°-12°	16°-12°	16°-12°

# Imagine PM Narendra Modi

The election in the Indian state of Gujarat is significant both for India and its neighbours



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

Should Gujarat's chief minister, Narendra Modi, triumph for the third time in state polls it would increase pressure on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to project him as its prime ministerial candidate for the 2014 general election.

This is a remarkable feat for a man to whom the United States has refused to grant a visa and with whom the British government did not have any relationship until two months ago. Both decided to shun Modi because of his alleged role in the grisly riots against Muslims in 2002, sparked off in retaliation to the burning of a train in which 59 Hindu activists were returning from the Hindu holy town of Ayodhya. It was a veritable state pogrom against Muslims, over which Modi presided.

Modi's alleged complicity in the riots is bound to make the international community, particularly Muslim countries, apprehensive if the BJP were

to anoint him as its prime ministerial candidate. For long, he conflated the Muslim with the terrorist, and Islam with backwardness.

Should the BJP project him as the prospective prime minister? At this question BJP leaders are likely to reprimand you for seeking the approval of Uncle Sam and India's erstwhile colonial master, simultaneously poooh-pooohing the clout the Muslim countries can wield.

Yet these leaders were overjoyed when *Time* magazine put him on its cover and went to town at the British government's decision in October to renew ties with Modi, whom they had boycotted after the 2002 riots. The British government cited 'national interest' to justify its rethink on Modi, a point BJP supporters often harp upon to claim that as prime minister, he can't remain pariah to foreign countries, who would not wish to risk their commercial interests in India.

The logic of self-interest has bolstered the hope of the BJP that most of its existing or potential allies, despite their deep dislike for Modi, would



SATISHUPADHAYAY.BLOGSPOT.COM

veer to rallying behind him, as it is only he who has the mass appeal to wrest power from the Congress-led coalition in Delhi. Would they for the ideological reason of secularism sacrifice their chances of securing a share of power, ask BJP leaders.

Most of the BJP's current or potential allies are confined to just one state. Most of them are also crucially dependent on Muslims to win a majority of seats on their home turf. Considering that Modi is anathema to Muslims, these potential or existing allies fear their support for him could weaken them in the state where they command influence.

For them, secularism is the cloak they must wear to both retain their attraction for Muslims and scare the BJP from openly projecting Modi as its prime ministerial candidate. They would rather have the debate over Modi prolonged, thus fanning the hopes of both his supporters that he could become India's prime minister as well as that of his detractors that he might not.

Ordinarily, this could have been the BJP's preferred strategy. But the party is riven by competition among its second generation leaders. Further, the BJP's hope of exploiting the corruption charges against the Congress government has diminished

because its own leaders have been accused of defalcation of public funds. Desperate to capture power, many BJP leaders believe Modi is their best bet for victory, for he can polarise the electorate along the religious divide as well as gather votes because of his credentials as the man who could usher in development.

The BJP's warring leaders have their own calculations. They know the BJP under Modi can improve its performance but can't form a government on its own. The potential allies could then be worked upon to offer support in exchange for denying the post of prime minister to Modi. But they also believe the demands of coalition politics will persuade Modi the prime minister to take the middle ground and refrain from building a cult around him.

His record in power for over 10 years in Gujarat doesn't inspire confidence. He chased out his rivals from the party. He whipped up emotions, harping on Hindu or Gujarati pride. To sustain such politics, Modi needs to create enemies. Now imagine Modi as India's prime minister: his emotive style of politics will demand he create enemies capable of terrorising the entire nation.

Such enemies will be so much simpler to find outside India, particularly the neighbours. It has been Modi's trait to feed on the weak to become strong personally. Ultimately, Mr Strong is Mr Bully. 🇮🇳

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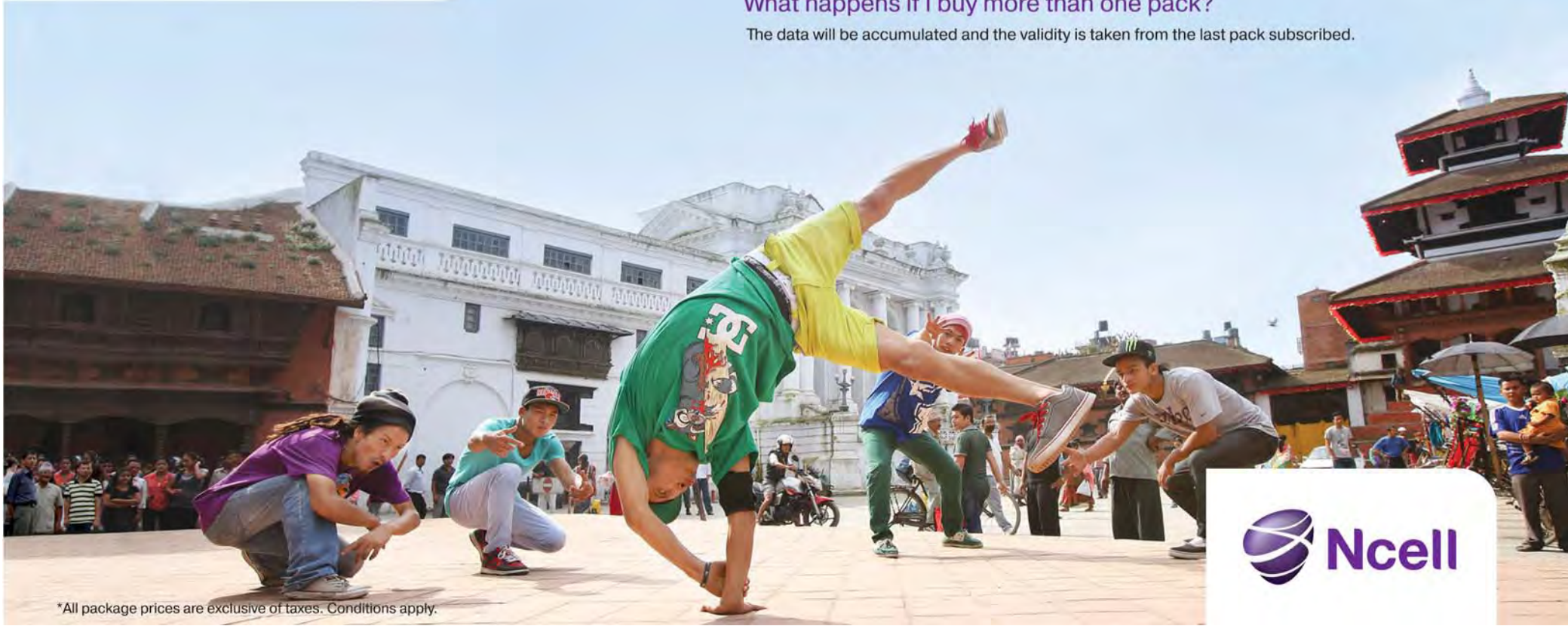
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# MIND THE GAP

RAMESH KUMAR

**As Nepal's population pyramid experiences a youth bulge, many young adults will simply have no jobs when they enter the labour market**

Last year, 110,000 Nepalis competed for 1,500 non-gazetted posts in the civil services. The Public Service Commission needed to fill 1,000 program officer posts, it received 100,000 applications. For an opening of 1,350 posts in the police force, there were 40,357 applicants. 29,000 candidates applied for 45 first-level assistant officer posts at Nepal Rastra Bank's branches outside the Valley. And long queues of hopeful job-hunters lined up outside Nepal Telecom and Nepal Electricity Authority.

"We lined up from six in the morning to submit our documents. There were hundreds on the street for an opening for five posts. It felt like I was queuing up for movie tickets, I had never seen anything like that," recalls 27-year-old Isha Rai who applied to the post of section officer at Nepal Bank in 2011. She didn't get the job.

As the country's population pyramid experiences a

youth bulge, an ever larger employment crisis looms over us. More than half of Nepal's 26 million strong population are economically active, in other words between the ages of 15 and 64. About 500,000 young adults enter the job market annually, but the market is able to absorb only ten per cent. The remaining join the three million Nepalis working abroad in India, the Gulf, South Korea, Malaysia, US, and Europe. In 2011 alone, 3,84665 Nepalis packed their bags and escaped rising unemployment at home.

Although the 2011 census puts the unemployment rate at only two per cent, this number is highly skewed. It does not account for the 30 per cent who are currently under-employed or the 68 per cent involved

in subsistence farming who contribute around 35 per cent of the GDP.

Political interference means infrastructure development, hydropower projects, and other big programs are all lying dormant and the inability of successful governments to bring out timely and complete budgets has stunted the country's economic growth and job-creation.

"While there are some jobs for skilled labourers in the finance, tourism, and IT sector, for most young Nepalis finding jobs is extremely challenging and the political instability is only making things worse," says economist Chiranjibi Nepal.

During the fiscal year 2008-2009, 302 businesses were

registered at the Department of Industry which provided employment to around 20,000. This figure shrank to 160 in 2011-2012 and the number of people employed was slashed by half. The industry's contribution to the GDP also plummeted from 10 per cent about five years ago to a meagre six per cent.

"With no new industries or investment, job creation is at an all time low," admits Manish Agrawal, vice chairman of Employers Council at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

The private sector has shown no signs of growth either and its current GDP input stands at 14 per cent, down from 18 per cent in 2007-2008. While the state employs 80,000 in civil service,



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Choosing polls: April elections is an opportunity for the parties to bring a closure to the protracted transition

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#### COMMENTARY

Enough is enough – Kedar Bhakta Mathema  
Necessary moves – Pursotam Dahal  
Beware Mr President – Swagat Nepal

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Remittance economy  
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90,000 in the army, 58,000 in the police and 150,000 teachers, it is in no way equipped to stem the creeping unemployment rate.

As the labour market competition gets intense, more and more parents are doling out millions for their children's higher education and professional training. Even families with meagre resources are selling land and jewellery or taking out loans so that their children don't fall behind in the rat race. However, rampant nepotism and corruption mean that even deserving and competent candidates have a hard time finding employment. Many take up jobs for which they are over-qualified or fall prey to scams.

Last year, desperate candidates were found paying millions in bribe to officials in promise of entry into the army, police, and other government offices. Increasing number of youngsters are relying on illegal channels to go abroad, using forged documents and risking exploitation at the hands of agents and employers.

However, experts say the

potential to generate jobs especially in agriculture is huge given that our economy still relies heavily on agriculture. "If we can modernise our farming techniques, move towards industrial farming like the West, increase productivity, then agriculture will become more attractive and pull in the huge unskilled workforce," explains Ganesh Gurung, former member of the National Planning Commission.

Self-employment and small businesses could be another alternative suggests Komal Bhatta, communications officer of the Employment Fund Secretariat in Helvetas Nepal. But for people to start their own business, they need vocational training and a network of support from the state and financial institutions.

As parties obsess over meeting deadlines and forging consensus, nobody seems concerned about the unemployed and frustrated youths in the country. If quick solutions are not found, these men and women can turn into potent ingredients for future unrest. 🇳🇵

# Staying put



SLC graduate Lakpa Sherpa from Memar, Solukhumbu district earns an enviable five-figure income from his farm every month. For the past three years, the 42-year-old has been growing cauliflowers, cabbages, pumpkins, radish, and tomatoes in his green house. While mulberries, pears, ginger, and herbs blossom in his nine acre plot.

Keen to use environmentally friendly

farming techniques, he also produces his own organic fertiliser and uses waste from the farm as compost. Although transportation of goods is a problem due to the difficult terrain, he has no complaints. He sells his produce at the bazar in Salleri and Nelema and also at the local market and earns enough to sustain his family of five.

"At times I felt like leaving everything and looking for jobs abroad. I even got a few offers, but I knew that if I worked hard on my land, there would be enough opportunities to earn and make a name for myself," admits Lakpa.

His farm is now a research and expertise centre for the locals. School children, housewives, and fellow farmers come to inquire out about his practices and get information on modern farming methods. Even farmers who were planning to give up agriculture and move to the cities or search for foreign employment, are having second thoughts after seeing Lakpa's success.



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# Farewell to a good soldier of politics

Pursotam Dahal, *Annapurna Post*, 5 December

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

At a time when public figures who are willing to make a sacrifice and show restraint are becoming increasingly rare, Bhim Bahadur Tamang was a living example of his democratic beliefs. His disdain for power politics, and his intent to develop a culture of respect within the political fraternity were appreciated by his colleagues and opponents alike.

Tamang was a very gifted intellectual. Knowledgeable about everything from the Vedas, to world history, religion, philosophies, and sciences, he was equally capable in discussing modern issues, and was an erudite advocate of democracy. He was perhaps the most capable candidate from his generation to lead the country, but unfortunately his own party chose to sideline this philosophical giant.

However, ordinary Nepalis recognised his worth and queued up outside his house in Sanepa to pay their last respects. They stood in line for hours as a show of genuine

affection, not as formality.

Identity politics has shaken the core of Nepali society today. Many groups are searching for their individuality because they

don't want to identify as Nepalis. They want to be known as Gorkhalis, Rais, Limbus, Newars, Tamangs, Gurungs, Madhesis, Yadavs, Chaudharys, and even Brahmins and Chhetris instead. In fact, no one is prepared to be a Nepali.

Bhim Bahadur Tamang alone chose to be known as a Nepali. He was born a Tamang, but deep inside he belonged to no particular caste. His nationalism made him a Nepali, politically he was a democrat, and as far as social justice was concerned, he was a thorough socialist.

Currently, all political parties are running around the president and looking to extend the deadline. If the NC had promoted figures like Tamang, our political landscape would have

looked extremely different. Instead the party became caught up in personal ambitions, and failed to understand the need of the moment. Indeed, the democratic aspirations of an entire nation have been strangled by this self-righteous approach.



## Removing roadblocks



DINESH SHRESTHA

Kishor Nepal in *Nagarik*, 6 December

नागरिक

The nomination of Sushil Koirala as a prime ministerial candidate by the Nepali Congress has paved way for the exit of Baburam Bhattarai's government. Despite spearheading several popular programs, the inability to hold timely elections will be the highlight of his one year stint in

office. Bhattarai's failure to hold polls has also reflected badly upon the UCPN-M's political credibility and even his well-wishers in the party now advise him to find a safe exit.

To be sure, Koirala still has a long way to go before convincing the Maoists and Madhesis to accept his leadership in the all-party government. Besides, the parties have to agree on filling

the vacant constitutional posts including those of the Election Commissioners to ensure free and fair elections. But the ongoing negotiations between political parties is premised on outstanding issues of constitution drafting like the form of governance and type of federalism, which could impinge upon the mandate of the future constituent assembly. The parties should take these agendas to the elections and let the people decide for themselves rather than holding up the polls.

UCPN-M's insistence on seeking an agreement on the sticking issues at a time when there is unanimous agreement to go for CA elections seems irrational. The party still represents a political force that has stood for radical change, which gives it a comparative advantage. So for their own sake, the Maoists must create an conducive environment for the polls to take place even if it means giving the green light for an all-party government under Koirala.

## Flying out

Prakash Shah, *Karobar*, 4 December

कारोबार

As the domestic airlines undergo a major financial crunch, many young Nepali pilots are struggling to find work or find themselves unemployed as companies look to downsize. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, more than 250 pilots with Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) are currently unemployed. Imbalance in demand and supply is the main cause behind the pilots' predicament and it is forcing them to look for jobs abroad.

"While greater numbers of new pilots who train abroad are returning to Nepal, many domestic airlines are shutting down. This is a huge problem," says Captain Ang Gelu Sherpa of Nepal Pilot Association.

Since the open aviation policy of 1994, dozens of private airline companies have shut down. Necon Air, Cosmic, Everest, Karnali, Asian, Lumbini, Gorkha, Manang Air have all closed operations. Besides the national flag carrier Nepal Airlines which is heavily indebted, only a few airlines like Buddha, Yeti, and Tara and two helicopter companies have been able to maintain their strong position in the market.

Nepal's horrendous air safety record hasn't helped the aviation sector either. The two most recent crashes involved Agni and Sita Air. While Agni has stopped operations, Sita and Guna Airlines are struggling to remain afloat. Many pilots of Sita and Guna are almost jobless because of the reduced number of flights. While hundreds of Nepali pilots spend millions on training courses and sit for their CPL examination, their future back home remains bleak.

### NEPALI TWEETS

**Karan Singh** *Follow*  
करन सिंह र आतिफ असलम आए गए भने जुनै जन्मै अपडेट्स दिन्छन् नेपाली मिडिया तर भीम व तामांग विरामी भएकौ पत्तो नि पाइएन।

Nepali media constantly updated us about Karan Singh and Atif Aslam's visit: when they came, when they left, when they took toilet breaks. But none of them knew about Bhim Bahadur Tamang's illness.

**Govinda Adhikari** *Follow*  
कान्ति र शान्ति दुवै कालमा आदर्श नछाड्ने भीमबहादुर दाइलाई अन्तिम जय नेपाल !

A final farewell to Bhim Bahadur Tamang who stood firm on his principles during times of peace and unrest.

**Rohini** *Follow*  
हामी नेपाली भोट हाल्न पायौं भने राम्रा मान्छेलाई नि जिताउन सक्छौं तर के गर्नु देशमा चुनावको 'यु' नै हरायो #CNNHeroes2012 #PushpaBasnet

If given the opportunity, we Nepalis can also vote for capable candidates, but the 'e' from elections has disappeared from the country. #CNNHeroes2012 #PushpaBasnet

**Ushaft** *Follow*  
अमेरिकाले डिभी चिट्ठा बन्द गर्दा हामी कान्तिकारी नेपालीहरूलाई विकल्प दिनु पर्दैन? आन्दोलन र दबाव दिएर भए पनि यो निष्पक्ष फिर्ता गराउनुपर्छ।

Before cancelling the diversity visa lottery, the US government should have at least given us revolutionary Nepalis some alternatives. We must make the Americans take back their decision through pressure and people's movement.

**Prapti Sharma** *Follow*  
२४ सै घण्टा टुइटरमा झुण्डिएर बस्नेहरू र हाम्रा नेताहरू उस्तै लाग्छन् मलाई त कुरा मात्र गछेन कामकैसी गर्ने हैनन् #Nalayak

I feel those who spend 24 hours on twitter and our politicians are the same: all talk no work. #useless



Lock: anarchy

कान्तिपुर Dipak Gautam in *Kantipur*, 6 December

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Nepal is indirectly being ruled by the foreign governments.”

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha quoted in *Annapurna Post*, 5 December

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# In the dark

# The lack of curriculum in braille means that the future of blind students remains bleak

MINA SHARMA

**'E**ducation for all by 2015' is a slogan that sounds hollow to visually-impaired students of Nepal.

In addition to the lack of texts in Braille, blind students are further plagued by the examination system which they say isn't practical for them. Sita Subedi a graduate of Padma Kanya Campus says it is difficult searching for people to write for her during exams. "I waste most of my time during exams explaining the concept to the person writing for me," Sita laments.

Ramesh Pokhrel of Pokhara is a blind teacher who has been teaching at Kalika High School for the last 16 years and has similar complains. "It is a challenge for teachers as well who have to teach without books in Braille and proper training," he says.

In 1964, Laboratory School in Kirtipur introduced education in Braille. Since then, there has been very little done to help blind students. For the

past 50 years, the examination system has remained the same and no new teaching materials have been developed. Many schools don't yet even have Braille notebooks, slates, or stylus which means blind students have to rely solely on spoken words only.

Nepal Blind Welfare Association started publishing books in Braille in Nepal since 1986. However, due to the high cost of production very few books are published. A set of Braille books costs between Rs 1,700 to Rs 17,000. The budget of Rs 4 million that the Ministry of Education sets aside for every three years, cannot support the number of books required every year, informs Ramesh Pokhrel, General Secretary of Nepal Blind Association.

Last year's budget helped publish 528 sets of books for school students. Of the total books there is only one set available for every ten students. Recently the Nepal Blind Association with the support of the Education Department published 300

sets of Braille pictures which will be helpful in subjects like Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Three sets each will be distributed to 90 schools where visually impaired students study. However, the 700 or so students in medium and high schools don't have access yet.

Audio libraries in Pokhara and Kathmandu have provided some relief to blind students and

the Blind Welfare Association also plans to expand mobile libraries in different districts.

Till then it is an uphill battle for the visually impaired in Nepal. For them there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for at least a few years. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Feeling words, #508

## Helpful Him

Engineer Him Gautam used to work at the Department of Water Supply before he lost his eyesight in 2001. Back then the only education software available for visually-impaired people was in English. Gautam then began working on similar software in Nepali language which was successfully completed in 2008. The technology is now available to 200 blind people across the country.

With the support of an Australian foundation, Gautam is now working on his own software for blind people in Nepali language called Triveni. Similarly, he has also developed a font converter software that converts eight fonts of Nepali language in Unicode with audio.

## Paralysed

A professor of Nepali at Ratna Rajya Campus since 2000, Govinda Prasad Acharya is among very few blind people teaching in colleges. He says that blind students' problems are made worse by the lack of disability-friendly educational institutes. The central library at Tribhuvan University also lacks educational materials and resources for blind students. "Although they have been demanding for better facilities, the university administration has turned a deaf ear," laments Acharya.

## Hanging on

Supragna Aryal is a blind student who passed her grade 12 examinations with the support of an NGO and more importantly by listening to lectures with the help of a friend. Aryal experienced a lot of difficulties as she was unable to find a person to write for her exam. "At times I don't even feel like a real student," says Aryal. She is apprehensive about attending college because of the lack of proper educational materials.



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# Who says we are emotionless?

Does it say something about us that we are always so obsessed here in Nepal with strongman rule. You'd have thought that after 350 years of the Shahs, 100 years of the Ranas, 20 years of the Koiralas and 2 years of Lotus Flower that we'd have enough of maharajas. In the roaring nineties, while netas were boasting that they'd turn Nepal into 'another Singapore' or 'another Switzerland', it became fashionable to say that Nepal really needed a Lee Kuan Yew or a Mahathir, but poor us, we were stuck with Gyan Bahadur.

Things must have really got much worse because now there seems to be a feeling that even a benevolent dictator will not be able to turn things around in Nepal anymore, we need a mad, malevolent one. Someone who can crack the whip, make trains run on time, or do public amputations of members of the public who urinate on street corners. Which must be why His Honour the Prime Minister doesn't have on his wall the portrait of Lord Buddha or Grandfather of the Nation Prithvi Narayan Shah, but of Soviet Alpha Male Comrade Joseph the Stalin.

Uncle Joe is so popular among the Baddie brass that PKD and BRB have even started looking like him, combing the hair back with gel and sporting thick Georgian moustaches. But we need



someone with an even more fearsome reputation than Stalin, which must be why swastikas are popping up all over Nepal. One INGO that runs a network of community libraries all over the country even has a wall motto that it ascribes to Sir Adolf Hitler. Wait, I thought he called it Fatherland?

Talk of the town last week was whether visiting strongman King Karan was preparing to install another strong man here. There was a déjà vu moment when everyone was reminded of 23 April 2006 when the Maharaja of

Kashmir met the Sri Punch Maharaja of Kathmandu in a last-ditch, ill-fated attempt to save the monarchy. But who says the country is going to the dogs because our Nattering Netas of Negativity don't get along? They all got invited to the bash in Bijaybas in honour of His Royal Highness last weekend. The Good, the Bad, and the Agni were all there, toasting to each others' wealth while Animal Sam Sher doubled as barman. Observing all the back-slapping bonhomie at Maharaj Ganj, the visiting dignitary must have thought, hey no problem in Nepal yar, they all get along like a house on fire.

The survey result last week that placed Nepalis as one of the least emotional people in the world outraged a lot of us Nips who yowled and snivelled with disbelief. The Cranticurries want to bring out a julus in an emotional protest and burn a hardcopy printout of the report. How can we be classified as unemotional when our comrade leaders weep in public at the drop of a hat? But the survey was reportedly based on the lack of emotional outbursts in Nepal over 16 hour daily power cuts, and total absence of rage over having to wait for 4 hours for 5 litres of gasoline. Any other country would have ratcheted up 230 revolutions per minute by now.

While still on his extended honeymoon in Chandigarh, self-exiled Dear Leader Prakash has admitted in a FB interview that he should have divorced his second wife and married the third before eloping with her. "I have made a grave error in judgement," he admitted before going on to promise to elope legally next time round. Meanwhile, it looks like another royal scion in self-imposed exile in Siam is soon going to run out of countries giving him asylum at the rate he keeps getting arrested for possessing dope. The Clown Prince is in custody for trashing a hotel in Bangkok and a villa in Phuket. Maybe he should just give up Phuket and come back to Surkhet.

Poor Makuney, got gheraoed by emotional Nepali villagers in Parsa this week who were ticked off by the Mao-Mad coalition government not delivering on services and infrastructure. They didn't care that MKN is now in the opposition or that he actually contested and lost his parliamentary seat from neighbouring Rautahat. Just as the locals were trying to figure out whether they should slap another eh-maley leader, or just chuck him into the Auriya River over which they had been demanding a bridge for quite sometime, the Balm Neta was rescued by Birganj's Finest. But they still managed to chase his SUV out of the village and out of sight.




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