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BIKRAM RAI

In and out of focus

A state can't be in transition forever. Since 2006, Nepal has been treading the thin line between progress and anarchy, no country can survive such uncertainty for long, something will have to give. It is time the politicians vying for berths in government realised the extent of the suffering that their greed and short-sightedness is costing the long-suffering people of this country, the people whom they have always taken for granted.

Editorial page 2



ILAM REVISITED

Nepal's most developed and educated district now also aims to be its cleanest and greenest. With investments in hydropower and education, the district is also recycling water and has a ban on plastic bags. The reason for success is a political consensus among the political parties, something that has eluded our national politics.

page 11-13



Road rage

If he is remembered for nothing else, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai would like to leave his mark on Nepal's capital with his ambitious road expansion drive. But he is finding that demolishing buildings was the easy part.

page 6-7

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THE POWER OF ONE

When Pushpa Basnet won the coveted CNN Hero Award last week, social media was abuzz with comparisons with her namesake, Pushpa Kamal Dahal. One paper published a cartoon in which the social worker was tagged 'Pushpa Hero' next to the Maoist Chairman who was labelled 'Pushpa Zero'. Indeed, Pushpa Basnet's award did not just draw attention to the plight of disadvantaged Nepali children and her struggle for social justice, but also demonstrated the power of one. She showed how one person can make so much difference in the lives of so many by being selfless, compassionate, and committed.

When Pushpa Basnet stepped out of the airport in Kathmandu on Saturday night, we all celebrated her sacrifice on behalf of disenfranchised toddlers forced to grow up behind bars with their jailed mothers. Exactly a year ago, Anuradha Koirala, was also recognised as a CNN Hero for her two decades of relentless work at Maiti Nepal on behalf of trafficked young women.

There are hundreds of everyday heroes in Nepal like Basnet and Koirala. Most work in relative obscurity to improve the lives of fellow Nepali children, women, elderly, disabled, sick, and the unemployed. Basnet's effort to educate the children of incarcerated parents, and Koirala's work to rescue and rehabilitate women sold off as sex slaves are just two among many other heroes among us. We don't know about them because the Nepali media is so cynically obsessed with politics that it has no time to search for them. And perhaps the social workers prefer to work in anonymity.

Basnet and Koirala's well-deserved international recognition masked the abject failure of the Nepali state to protect and take care of its most vulnerable citizens. Six years of foot-dragging have unnecessarily lengthened the political transition and made the state even more



BIKRAM RAI

In the absence of the state, Nepalis are either fending for themselves or helping other Nepalis in their struggle for day-to-day survival

invisible. Nepalis are either fending for themselves or helping other Nepalis in their struggle for day-to-day survival, or to battle injustice and discrimination.

In a country where government mattered, there would

be shelters where women who have been trafficked, or are at the risk of being sold into slavery could find refuge. There would be institutions of the state that could spring into action to rescue women like Shiwa Hasmi who, in a tragic irony, was burnt alive by her suitor in Bardiya even as ceremonies were held this week to mark Human Rights Day.

There would also be children's homes for those who are abandoned or whose parents are unfit to look after them. Unfortunately, the only government-run orphanage, Bal Mandir, has set a terrible precedence. Not only is it notorious as a hotbed of corruption and mismanagement, but there are horror stories of rampant physical and sexual abuse and trafficking by members of its own staff.

If our leaders cared to look beyond musical-chairs politics, senior citizens would not have to spend the winter of their lives on the streets. While we count the billions spent supporting 601 CA members, five prime-ministers and their cabinets for four years, we leave out the opportunity cost of missed development. Millions of children have missed out on education, hundreds of thousands of farmers have had to sell their lands and migrate abroad, tens of thousands of young women have been sold by family members to traffickers. This is the real cost of the past six years.

A state can't be in transition forever. Since 2006, Nepal has been treading the thin line between progress and anarchy, no country can survive such uncertainty for long, something will have to give. It is time the politicians vying for berths in government realised the extent of the suffering that their greed and short-sightedness is costing the long-suffering people of this country, the people whom they have always taken for granted.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

CENSORING THE CENSUS

We Nepalis can politicise everything on the face of the earth and now we are using the census as another tool to play identity politics ('Censoring the census', Editorial, #633). How about we focus on the real issues instead? Let's get the elections over with so that a stable four-year government can come in and kick start the economy and generate jobs and opportunities for the millions who will enter our labour force in the next decade. Like the editorial points out, if we ignore this youth bulge, it will come back to haunt us in the future and I am sure no Nepali wants another protracted conflict.

Renu R

- Why hasn't the Central Bureau of Statistics published the long awaited data on district-wise ethnicity by now? The changes in the past 10

years are going to be crucial for state restructuring and the sooner the figures are made public, the better it will be for the future of the country.

DG

- It's disgusting to see politicians using the census as an excuse to hide their ineptness and depriving the people of reality. Nepal desperately needs a strong middle class that can produce educated and honest men and women who can become better leaders in the future.

Sunita Gurung

MIND THE GAP

It isn't surprising to learn that thousands of young Nepali adults will have no jobs when they enter the labour force. Nepali rulers have always used citizens as a diplomacy currency in the international markets and collected huge revenues in the past and present ('Mind the gap',

Ramesh Kumar, #633). Government officials are getting richer, while the hardworking people are becoming poorer.

Yam Gurung

- Why do we always complain? Every job seeker can become a job creator. It's only a matter of motivation and training, and that is where effort is required.

Shreeti

- Most business owners and industrialists don't care about job creation, they only want to maximise their profits.

R Rai

COMING AND GOING

I don't agree with Anurag Acharya's claim that President Ram Baran Yadav shouldn't interfere ('Coming and going', #633). In my opinion, the president is the only one who is capable of clearing the hurdles and allowing elections to happen. Since the deadline he set has brought no positive change, Yadav must focus on forming a technical government for a short period with the sole mission of conducting polls. And since the main political parties have been unable to come to any sort of basic agreement, the least they can do is to let the president delegate this task to a more efficient group. An electoral government sans parties is not what many political pundits would love to see, but they should at least try not to fall completely into this undemocratic trap.

Anonymous

AN ECONOMIC FACELIFT

China has certainly solved an economic problem, and it looks set for another

five to ten years of growth ('An economic facelift', Zhang Monan, #633). But more than the financial turnover, China should start worrying about social harmony because its next generation of citizens are graduating out of college and they'll start questioning their political freedom. When these questions overshadow everyday economic concerns, then China's clock will stop for another 50 years. That is why it is crucial to have both political and economic development at the same time. Nepal is going through a rough phase, but I am glad that we Nepalis are at least talking about the constitution and our democratic rights.

KiranThapa

- Economic stability provides firm foundations to achieve political stability, and eventually social harmony. Since democracy and freedom are quintessentially pluralistic, nations have all the rights to arrive to them independently, and through different routes and alternative paths. Adaptability rather than rigidity is the path to survival and prosperity in the long run.

Anonymous

IMAGINE PM NARENDRA MODI

I am not condoning the actions of the Shiv Sena or BJP, but doesn't Ajaz Ashraf have anything else to write about? ('Imagine PM Narendra Modi', #633). How about writing on the program against minorities in the 'land of the pure' or the plight of the Kashmiri pundits, or Tehmur's atrocities against hundreds of thousands of Hindus or about mosques being built at holy Hindu sites of Mathura/Varnasi by Muslim emperors? This list could go

on and on. There are other people who have also faced hate crimes and atrocities, please give their stories some space as well.

Navjot Singh

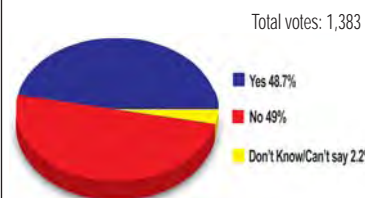
- It's wrong to accuse Ashraf of attacking Hindus and favouring Muslims just because his last name indicates that he might be an adherent of a certain faith. His articles focus on the mentality of politicians like Narendra Modi and Bal Thackarey who take advantage of radical supporters and their tribal mentality

Tashi Lama

Note: We encourage our readers to send us pictures of daily life in Nepal with a brief description - location, subject and thoughts on the image - to juanita@nepalitimes.com. We will upload the photos onto our social media on Facebook and Twitter, and publish the best ones on our Happenings section. Photos should be in hi-res (300dpi), horizontal form and maximum 2MB.

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #634

Q. Should the outstanding issues of constitution drafting be a part of a package deal on government formation?



Weekly Internet Poll # 635. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. Do the parties deserve another extension if they fail to meet the president's fourth deadline?

Telling truth to power

When the conscience keepers of society show elastic ethics, it is time to worry



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

One of the indicators of an ailing democracy in any society is the dumbing down of the media and the suppression of the views of the other side.

In the last two decades, the Nepali media has exercised greater freedom than those in other South Asian countries, deregulating radio and unshackling the press. However, the Nepali media faces threats to freedom from over-commercialisation, politicisation, state pressure, and self-censorship. The nexus of crime and politics has made it dangerous for journalists to use their constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms.

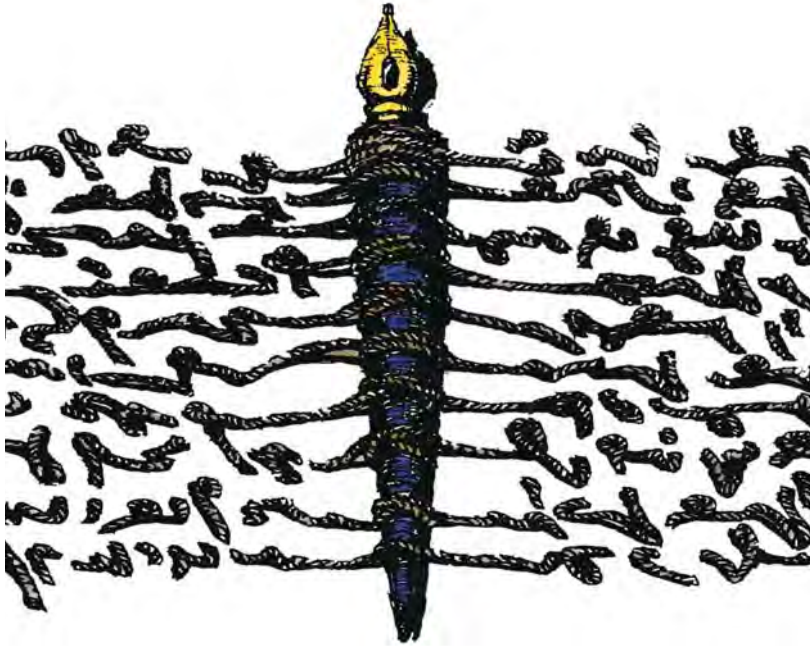
Beyond the stereotype of flag-waving journalists and away from the glamour of celebrity media, there are hundreds of young reporters who are struggling to be heard. While the decision to quit media and apply for a manual job in South Korea may be

driven by financial needs, when journalists are forced to put their pen down it can only mean one thing: the costs are getting higher in this society of telling truth to power.

A dejected Madhesi journalist told me this week, "The mainstream press in Nepal is still only paying lip service to inclusion and identity, and our voices are getting drowned out."

One of the greatest achievements of the 1990 movement was the opening of the Nepali media space and the democratisation of the radio spectrum. Fearless reporting and critical commentaries through the difficult years of war and during the Gyanendra era 2001-2006 often came at a heavy price. Uma Singh, Dekendra Thapa, Birendra Shah, Krishna Sen, Gyanendra Khadka, and Ambika Timilsina were killed during the conflict and transition. They contributed to strengthening Nepal's democracy and upholding the free press, and lost their lives doing so.

It may be difficult for a self-proclaimed, free-thinking journalist to admit that the Nepali media has become an extension of the political war



in which contending editorials and op-eds are perennially engulfed in a bitter war of ideas, each seeking to establish itself by attacking the other. When civil society itself is polarised, it is unrealistic to expect the media to behave differently. But it is when dissenting voices are stifled by political infiltration of the media or political figures buying into press holdings that there is concern for the well-being of the free press. We in the media often forget that it is not our freedom that needs protecting, it is the citizen's

right to independent information that we uphold.

A local reporter in Panchthar who works for a mainstream daily told me recently that he had no say in the way his reports are edited by his parent paper in Kathmandu. "Sometimes they get published in a way that compromises our professional integrity," he lamented.

Recently the Information and Communication Minister ostensibly sacked the editor of the state-controlled NTV for broadcasting live an opposition rally. The misuse of state

media by the government of the day is not new, all previous governments did it to varying degrees, but it does point to the continued erosion of the public service role of the broadcast media.

More worrying still, professional associations and journalist unions which claim to work in the interest of media practitioners, function as sister organisations of political parties which float their own panels during their elections.

Today, Nepali politics is at a juncture where the old democratic forces led by the NC and UML have allowed their fear of the authoritarian left to uphold the status quo, while the Madhesis and Janajatis allying with the ruling Maoists are siding against the opposition. The lack of mutual trust between these partners of the peace process is at an all-time high.

In such a situation, the role of the media is to moderate the debate and create a positive environment for dialogue and agreement between the two sides. Instead, overtly biased cover stories and editorials make matters worse, polarising the national debate further. Dissenting voices are edited, toned down, or even censored.

The political and economic stakes in media houses are increasingly dictating the agendas they set. But tumbling circulations and the dipping popularity of their products should remind the bosses that there is a difference between selling news and selling detergent. 🇳🇵

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Tolerating intolerance

As long as countries and individuals continue to put up with bigotry, the mistreatment of minorities will not end

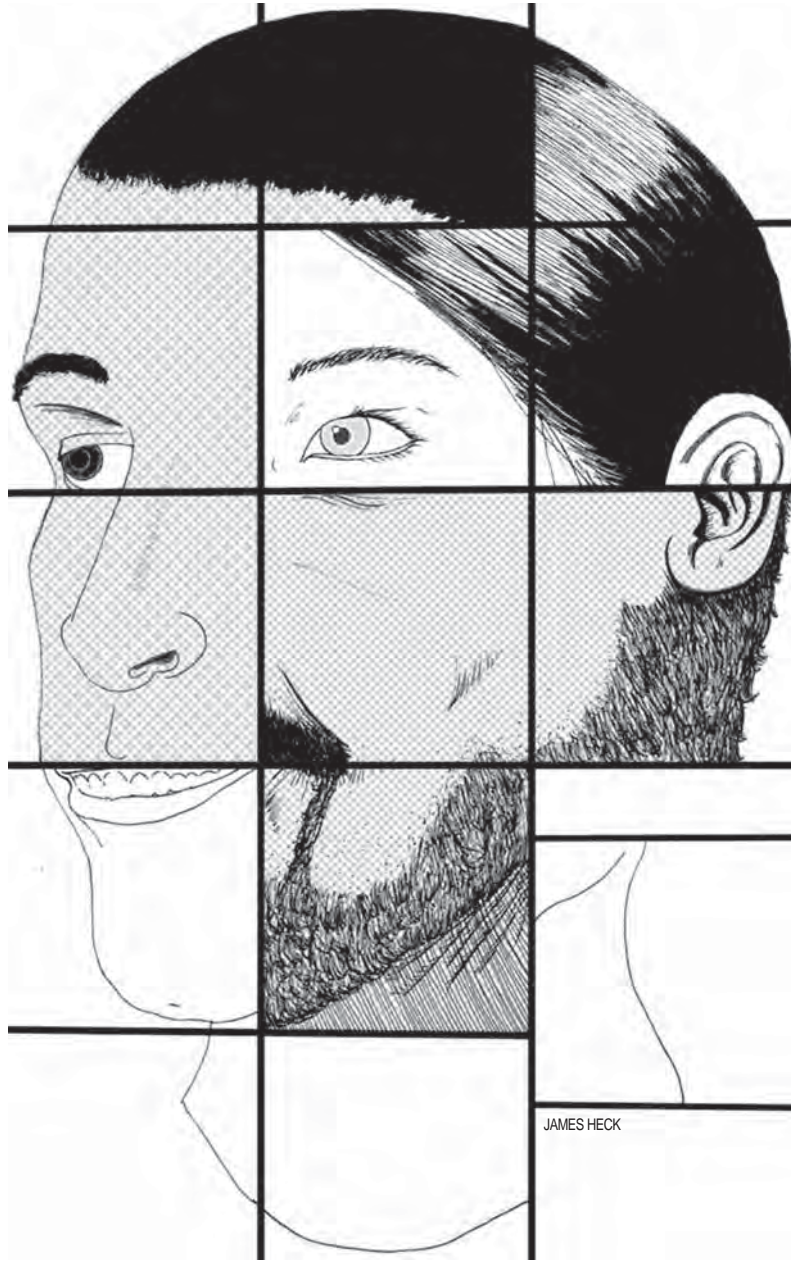
Throughout history, mistreatment of minorities – whether ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, regional, ideological, sexual, or other – has fuelled violence and devastated societies worldwide. Egregious cases in the last century include the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, the Khmer Rouge killing fields in Cambodia, and the genocide in Rwanda.

The abuse of minorities, and reactions to it, often are linked to fault lines in conflicted societies. Minorities tend to experience economic inequality and political marginalisation. This negative trend shows no sign of waning. While international treaties, national laws, more and stronger institutions, improved education, and efforts by organised religious groups to foster respect for minorities can help to ameliorate the problem, collective efforts have so far fallen woefully short.

The problem will not disappear until people stop tolerating intolerance. And recent history – from the indiscriminate killings by the Lord's Resistance Army in central and eastern Africa to the attacks against Christians by the Pakistani Taliban – shows that bigotry remains deeply embedded.

Moreover, globalisation and instantaneous communication technologies have made it impossible to contain conflict within national borders. Domestic economic and political grievances can now buttress discontent across regions and continents.

Ethnic conflict in countries such as Kenya, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and the former Yugoslavia underscores the challenge of reducing – and eventually eliminating



– intolerance. But some other multiethnic societies such as Tanzania and Burkina Faso have largely escaped communal conflict. Others, including Belgium and Cameroon, have avoided serious conflict, but have experienced significant acrimony over the treatment of linguistic and regional minorities. And, in different periods, Lebanon has managed and mismanaged official policy toward religious and ethnic minorities. Understanding the factors at play in these countries

can help policymakers and religious and civil-society leaders to address intolerance.

Intolerance emanating from organised religion is perhaps the most inexcusable. On the one hand, all organised religions teach peace and love for others, and they have often intervened successfully to prevent or mitigate conflict. On the other hand, at certain times in their history, organised religions have allowed, encouraged, and even propagated hatred and violence. And fringe elements often use

religion to espouse violence against particular groups.


In recent decades, Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders failed to speak out early and effectively against the genocide in Rwanda. Similarly, rather than condemning the adoption of terrorist tactics by the Taliban in Afghanistan, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and al-Shabaab in Somalia, and the destruction of Sufi shrines in Mali by Ansar Dine, a radical Islamist sect, Muslim leaders have remained largely silent. While none of these groups represents a majority point of view, they do exert significant influence and probably believe that they are acting in the interest of the majority.

Developments following the Arab Spring might provide some indication of the prospects for religious tolerance. In Egypt, with its 10 per cent Coptic Orthodox Christian minority, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi won the presidency in a free and fair election, after which Morsi resigned from the party, saying that this would allow him to represent all Egyptians more effectively, and promised that he would respect minority rights. Yet subsequent actions designed to give him unprecedented executive power raise concerns about these early positive steps.

By protecting minorities, Morsi could demonstrate to other governments and political movements the importance of minority rights and encourage them to behave likewise. But it remains to be seen whether his Islamist political base, including hardline Salafists, who won some 20 per cent of the parliamentary vote, will be tolerant of the Christian minority in the months and years to come.

Syria will be an even more important test. The Alawites, who comprise only 11 per cent of the population, dominate President Bashar al-Assad's crumbling regime. While the ruling minority has been generally tolerant of Christians, Kurds, Druze, and Turks, who together comprise 29 per cent of the population, the regime has long oppressed the Sunni majority. If a Sunni-controlled government replaces the current leadership, its decision to protect minorities' rights would be particularly encouraging.

Democratic governments are often perceived as more respectful of minorities, given that, unlike autocratic regimes, a democratic system with an elected legislature, independent judicial system, strong civil society, and free press provides citizens with opportunities to express their views and pursue justice. But while democracies do have a better record of protecting minorities, a democratic system does not guarantee respect for minorities any more than autocracy ensures their repression. An enlightened autocrat can be just as protective of minority rights as a solidly democratic government.

That said, when it comes to respecting minority rights, democracies have a far better record than autocracies. This is one of the main reasons why, throughout history, democracies have rarely fought each other. 

David H Shinn

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David H Shinn, a former US ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, teaches at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.



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ECONOMY STUPID
Puja Tandon

Look at any graduating MBA class and you will immediately notice the glaring imbalance between the sexes. In a batch of 100, there might be 30 female students at most. These women perform as well or better than their male counterparts, are highly ambitious, and equipped with the skills and business acumen to succeed at the highest ranks of the corporate food chain. But 10 years after graduation, most are lost to mid-management and only two or three break through the glass ceiling and climb further up.

Last week at a conference of chartered accountants in Kathmandu, there were hardly 20 women in a hall of more than 150 participants. The sex ratio is similarly skewed in the boardrooms: there are no women CEOs, senior government officers, journalists, judges, hotel managers or tour operators. Very few HR managers are women.

According to the 2011 census there are now one million more women than men in the country. Education opportunities have improved drastically at least in the urban areas and the odds

of progression are fairly equal. Yet the gender disparity in the entry level management is baffling and it only gets worse as women managers graduate to senior levels. Why do Nepali women shy away from senior management positions both in the public and private sector?

Does our traditional education system train them to undervalue their competence? Or are women so disillusioned with aggressive corporate competition that they have no aspirations to be a part of the C-suite? Or are there socio-cultural barriers and invisible biases at play?

One way to explain this gap is to say young, talented Nepali women are more attracted towards positions in NGOs, INGOs, and bilateral aid agencies. Job security, flexible work hours, perceived status of working with an international agency and a preference for more cooperative and less competitive environment are taking them away from the corporate corridors. This further discourages young girls because they have no role models or mentors to guide them.

The other reason why so few women are heading government institutions, judiciary, bureaucracy, financial institutions, businesses and enterprises is because of the boys' club mentality. Men have dominated the upper echelons and boardrooms for so long, that there

are many visible and unseen barriers to entry for women. The male-culture prevalent within corporate circles alienates many women and the lack of family-friendly work climate makes it tough for them to balance the demands of work and home. Besides, deep rooted beliefs about women's roles mean that they receive unequal pay for the same job, or are pigeon holed into positions that have little prospects of career advancement.

However, research shows that women are more adept at skills needed to succeed in decision-making environments. Women display greater intuition, mental flexibility, long-term planning, imagination, articulation, and have better social and people skills than men. A Credit Suisse research shows that stocks of few global companies performed better after inclusion of women on company boards, which made these companies little more risk averse and a little less leveraged. Women on boards can make corporations a bit more conservative in taking unwarranted risks and building shareholder value.

If there were more women in Nepal's corporate sector, perhaps cooperatives, development banks, and finance companies could have avoided the current financial fiasco as their female board members would have tempered risky investments and checked for governance lapses.

Engaging more women in businesses, therefore, is not just about promoting diversity or gender equality in the workplace. It's about bringing the best talents on board and making use of their vision and skills so that the company can perform better. It's time the public and private sector recognised the unique contribution as well as the needs of its women officials and started providing flexible working options. Female managers on their part will need to take greater initiative to take their careers ahead, and become mentors for younger managers. ☑

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Happy homes

Everest Bank launched a special promotional scheme called Griha Prabesh Yojana under



which customers can receive housing loans to purchase, construct, repair, and renovate residential buildings and apartments.

Global connections

Qatar Airways has announced the launch of direct scheduled flights from Athens to New



York starting mid-2013. Athens is a key point on the airline's 31 European route network, introduced in 2004 initially with six-flights-a-week.

Selling steps

KFA Business School organised a training workshop called Just Sell on 7 and 8 December.

The workshop aims to teach participants various methods of generating sales and managing sales accounts through a structured sales process.

Click click

Canon has launched three mid- to high-end models of PowerShot compact cameras. PowerShot SX50 has 50X optical zoom while PowerShot G15



and PowerShot S110 provide powerful image processor and 12.1 megapixel for unparalleled clarity. Primax is the authorised distributor of Canon in Nepal.

Safety first

Nabil Bank launched Nabil eSecure, the first of its kind service in Nepal that allows Nabil card members to enjoy the privileges of online shopping, safety and conveniently.

Winter high

Etihad Airways has announced special fares for its Coral economy class flights. The offer is valid from 4 to 31 December for both ticket sales and travel to eight destinations around the world from Kathmandu.



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SUNIR PANDEY

If he is remembered for nothing else, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai would like to leave his mark on Nepal's capital with his ambitious road expansion drive. But he is finding that demolishing buildings was the easy part, coordinating between various government departments and rebuilding the roads are much more difficult.

A year after bulldozers tore through the narrow roads up Lajimpat and Gairi Dhara, some of them are being blacktopped. But Kathmandu is still looking like it has been struck by a mega-earthquake and the streets are enveloped in a perpetual pall of yellow dust.

Facing flak for the slow reconstruction, Minister for Physical Planning, Works, and Transportation Hridayesh Tripathi took a group of engineers and journalists to inspect the progress. Tripathi admitted work was slow, but that road-expansion was top priority for the coalition.

Kathmandu's streets are enveloped in a perpetual dust storm as road-expansion grinds on

So far, only parts of two priority areas have been blacktopped: Kamal Pokhari-Gaushala and the Sital Niwas-Baluwatar road. Work started on Wednesday to tarmac the Bhagwati Bahal-Bhatbhateni stretch.

There are still some houses that have refused to be torn down, and there are bottlenecks near the Russian, Chinese, French, American, and Japanese embassies which have refused to give an inch.

On one stretch from Sano Gaucharan to Sifal Chaur, half the road is taken up by debris, while the water mains below the other half have been ravaged by traffic. As a result, the road is obscured by a fog of dust and turns into a river of sludge when water is supplied once a week.

Rajan Sarki was forced to close his shoe shop near Maligaun alley because the hut in which it was rented was torn down. "The rent here is higher, and my old patrons don't yet know that I have shifted here," he says. Bakeries, groceries, and meat shops have been similarly affected, not just by the move but also by dust.

The government is keen to finish laying down water and sewage pipes and moving electricity poles over the winter before blacktopping the roads. Altogether 95km of roads have been earmarked

ROAD RAGE



ALL PICS: THOMAS BELL



TOP PRIORITY: The government has earmarked the above roads for immediate blacktopping (brown: widened roads, black: blacktopped sections).


for re-construction, but the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee (KVTDC) wants to increase it to at least 116km.

“There is no end to the number of roads that need to be widened,” says Ram Prasad Shrestha, an engineer of KVTDC. “We had picked up speed during the early part of the drive, but recently things have slackened because of the uncertainty over the budget.”

Although most people in Kathmandu credit the Bhattarai


government of “at least doing something”, among those who have lost property and haven’t got compensation there is festering anger. The cost of tearing down and widening roads has already exceeded Rs 1 billion, and completing the blacktopping will cost another Rs 5 billion, and that does not include compenstation. 🇳🇵

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EVENTS

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



BIRDWATCHING, catch a glimpse of one of the 34 species of globally threatened bird species who call Nepal their home. 15 December, 7am, Phulchoki, departure from Godawari Bus Park, 9841330576



LEADERSHIP IN SOUTHASIA, diplomat, writer, thinker, and former governor of West Bengal, Gopalkrishna Gandhi will address chronic issues that continue to affect and ravage Southasian societies. Open to all, 18 December, 3pm, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg, (01)4472807/5547279

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, Lajimpat, editor@ventzine.com

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 to use microphones correctly and effectively for your private 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



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

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

DINING



SALT & PEPPER RESTRO LOUNGE, espresso, mocha, latte, frappuccino, cocktails, liquor, beers and flavoured shishas, with an outdoor lake-view terrace. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463484, 9846210568, www.saltandpeppernepal.com

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

Alfresco, visit for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999



KOTETSU, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lajimpat

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



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



CHOPSTIX, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. Kumariapati, 5551118

GETAWAYS

Winter camp at Borderlands, send your kids packing into the jungle where they get 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, cooking and art, music, and dance lessons. 5 to 12 January, Borderlands Resort, Bhotekoshi, (01)4381214, 9802025666, www.borderlandsresorts.com

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



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

Mango Tree Lodge, indulge in culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safaris at the Bardia National Park. Bhetani, Bardia, info@mangotree lodge.com

Hotel Heritage, enjoy the exquisite architecture and traditional ambience, but make sure to book your rooms online with NepalSutra. Bhaktapur, 01-6611628, info@nepalsutra.com



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



YIN YANG RESTAURANT, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. Thamel, 10am to 10pm, (01)4701510

Dragon Chinese Restaurant, try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. Lakeside, Pokhara



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

Public Cave, while its pizzas, sizzlers, and spring rolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke. Dihikopatan, Pokhara, 9856032958

Changing childhood



Well-known photographer Thomas L Kelly gives us a rare insight into the world of young Nepali girls and boys as they navigate their way through different kinds of Nepal: the traditional and modern, the privileged and deprived. Organised by the German aid agency GIZ, the exhibit Adolescent Girls in Nepal: Between Tradition and Modernity displays photos of girls carrying heavy loads on the fields, girls who dream of becoming football stars, nurses, and teachers, and girls whose certificates from religious schools are not accepted. Each potrait reveals the challenge of being a young female in today's Nepal, but also their strong will and desire for a better future.

7 to 16 December, 8am to 6pm
Indigo Gallery, Naxal
(01)4413580

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The Heritage Kitchen and Bar



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY



our palate with its vibrant flavours. This spicy curry cooked with coconut milk is seasoned with fish sauce, lemongrass and galangal, and goes great with plain steamed rice. In addition to its quick friendly service, The Heritage boasts an open terrace and food that is indicative of other Thamel restaurants of a similar standard, all of which guarantee that I will return to The Heritage once again. You will too.

Housed in a refurbished old Newari building called Deva's Arcade, the Heriatge Kitchen and Bar is decorated in carved wooden pillars, red and black draperies and glossy brasswork. In the storeys above and below, there is an art gallery, a traditional craft store, and a newly opened pashmina shop, all of which offer a visual treat even before one enters the restaurant. However, the two-year-old Heritage owes its popularity through word of mouth by satisfied consumers, and not the mock-cultural milieu. These days, it boasts a new menu that the owners hope will draw not only tourists and trekkers but also locals back to Thamel. While the façade suggests that the menu would be swamped by Nepali and Newari delicacies,

this was thankfully not the case. The emphasis, surprisingly, was on Thai cuisine. The Thai beef salad (Rs 350) comes with marinated and char-grilled rump steak cut into slices into which are tossed cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, mint and coriander, and mixed in a sweet and spicy sauce. The ground and roasted crispy rice on top adds an

interesting texture to the dish. Phokso (Rs150) or fried lungs in Nepali style was the other surprisingly good appetiser we sampled. Fried pieces of goat lungs slathered with tomatoes and chilies were a pleasant change from the regular versions we had elsewhere. Since we were told Thai food was the chef's specialty,

we ordered the Khao Pad Kapro Kai (Rs 325): minced chicken cooked with black mushrooms, served with plain rice and topped with a fried egg. The dish didn't quite pack the punch that is typical of Thai dishes but still stimulated our taste buds. The Kang Phed Kai Nua (Rs 400) remained true to its Siamese roots, zinging about

How to get there: get to Narsingh Chok (it's the second crossroad) in Thamel, and turn left, after about 100 metres, look up to your left and you'll see the signboard. For Thamel regulars, the entrance to The Heritage is right next to Sandwich Point. (01)4254343

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ARGO



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

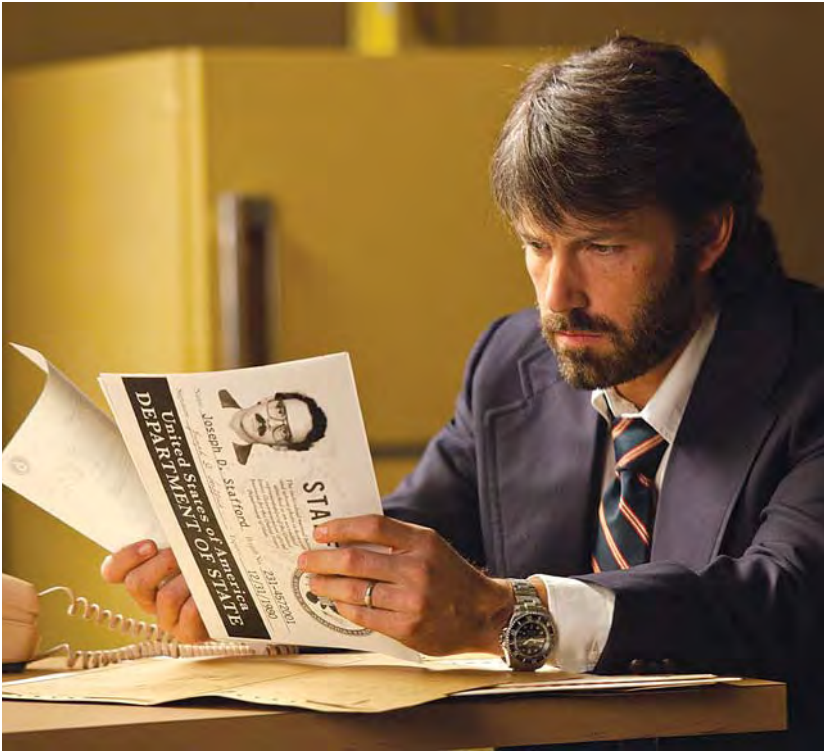
Ben Affleck's career after his and Matt Damon's shining moment at the Academy Awards when they jointly won an Oscar for writing the screenplay of *Good Will Hunting* (1997) was suspect for a few ignominious years when he made films like *Daredevil* and the now infamous *Gigli* (both in 2003), the latter with his paramour of the time, Jennifer Lopez.

Fortunately, Affleck has proven himself worthy when he embarked on his directing career making his first outstanding film *Gone Baby Gone* (2007), a thriller starring his younger brother Casey Affleck and Michelle Monaghan. He followed that film with another astonishingly good one, *The Town* (2010), another thriller in which he starred as well as directed. Now, with *Argo* his third feature, he continues his rise as a new talent in Hollywood, cementing his reputation as an actor/director who makes bankable cinema of meaning and worth.

Argo is an interesting hybrid of suspense and near farce, a film that a less talented director would have mucked up royally. Based on a true story, it chronicles a rescue operation that Affleck's character Tony Mendez, a CIA specialist (in rescuing hostages), concocts when six Americans escape from the storming of the American embassy in Tehran in 1979 and are forced to hide out at the Canadian Ambassador's residence masquerading as his Canadian house guests.

The historical background that surrounds the film is nicely summarised in an opening voice-over so that no viewer will find herself totally uninformed. As the hostage crisis unfolds, the US State Department finds itself at loose ends as to how to rescue the six Americans who will, in the Tehran of that time, stick out like sore thumbs.

It is Mendez who dreams up the idea of pretending that the hostages had been in Iran ostensibly scouting locations for a science fiction type film à la the *Star Wars* trilogy which



had already spawned a number of cheaper knockoffs that decade.

Working against time to create a plausible back-story for their dangerously ludicrous cover, Mendez teams up with two trustworthy real life Hollywood characters, Lester Siegal and John Chambers, played respectively by the two greats - Alan Arkin and John Goodman. Together, they register a fake company, sweet talk their way into Hollywood, and buy the rights to a trashy sci-fi film script titled *Argo* to complete their cock and bull story.

It is with consternation and real doubt that the State Department finally sanctions the rescue operation, and the film with Affleck's skilled direction moves smoothly between the comedic absurdity of the Hollywood farce that is essential in establishing the existence of the fake film and the deadly serious predicament of the refugees as the Iranian militia draws closer to their hiding place.

Argo is one of those rare films, based on a true story, that actually succeeds in maintaining suspense even while most of the viewers have guessed the probable outcome. That is good story-telling at its best.

One can only hope that Affleck, like Clint Eastwood, will be around acting and directing for a long while to come. If his first three films are any indicators, his career ought to be a fine one. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

The final 300



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Long before Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Edmund Hillary started their mountaineering careers, Edward Felix Norton and Theodore Howard Somervell set a world altitude record in the spring of 1924.

The two British climbers reached about 300 metres below the Everest summit without supplemental oxygen. But since they were so breathless and exhausted they couldn't carry on any further. For more than five decades after that spring no one crossed the last 300 metres without supplemental oxygen.

Norton and Somervell were expert mountaineers of their generation. They ascended Mount Everest wearing hobnail boots and tweed jackets, without the comfort of insulated boots or down jackets that today's climbers have access to. In the 1924 expedition, there was

no oxygen equipment that worked and climbers were still experimenting with various machines.

What they accomplished that day in terms of exposing the human body to such high altitude and cold was a medical and physiological landmark. The difficulty breathing at these altitudes is captured in many documentaries where the excessive panting of the climber is the dominant noise in the background. This panting is



BIKRAM RAI

bad enough even with oxygen cylinders.

Although Sherpa and Hillary finally climbed Everest in 1953, they had oxygen bottles to support them. It was only in 1978 that Italian Reinhold Messner and Austrian Peter Habeler completed the final

300 metres that had eluded Norton and Somervell without supplemental oxygen. But why did it take 54 years for climbers to successfully ascend to the top without additional oxygen?

Scientists in the 1920s and 30s believed that without supplemental oxygen, the human body would have reached its point of exhaustion and even taking a single step would be impossible. So conquering Everest was out of the question. This conclusion arose from the maximum oxygen uptake which determines a person's level of fitness. However, the calculations were misleading as Messner and Habeler proved. Other medical reasons were the overpowering hypothermia (cold temperatures) and hypoxia (lack of adequate oxygen) that caused climbers to turn back.

Clearly climbers like Norton and Somervell were outstanding human beings. Norton went on to become the governor of Hong Kong, and Somervell gave up a promising career as a surgeon in England to become a medical missionary in South India. 🇳🇵



BIKASH DWARE

CHEERS: Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and Vice President Parmananda Jha during the International Human Rights Day program at Singha Darbar on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WINNER-TALK-ALL: Kesang Tseten, director of *Who Will Be a Gurkha* and winner of the first prize and the audience award at the Kathmandu International Mountaineering Film Festival, interacts with the audience at City Hall on Saturday after the screening of his documentary.



BIKRAM RAI

CANDLE IN THE WIND: A woman lights oil lamps during Bala Chaturdasi festival which is celebrated in memory of departed family members at Pashupati on Tuesday.

READERS' PHOTO



DESIREE FRANCIS

HIGH SKILLS: A young student learns the art of Thangka making at an institute in Thamel.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The blizzards that swept through northwestern Nepal on Tuesday may have seemed freaky to some, but it is the season for strong westerly fronts to affect the mountains and trans-Himalaya. Not much of the moisture in that system got as far as Kathmandu, but there will be cloud cover on Friday and into the weekend that will bring snow flurries to Himalayan valleys down to 3,500m. The system is accompanied by strong winds at higher altitudes, so expect bumpy domestic flights. Kathmandu Valley will suffer from a combination of inversion smog in the mornings that will filter sunlight and bring down the maximum temperatures.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
19°-6°	20°-5°	20°-4°

The town less travelled

TRISHNA RANA

The eastern district of Ilam has a lot going for it. With one of the highest literacy rates in the country and exceptional local leadership, it is a model of development for its poorer cousins like Taplejung.

Tea and cardamom farming have sustained families for generations and the trade is still going strong with farmers looking to go organic to boost their incomes. The Green City initiative has made plastic bags a thing of the past and locals are working together with the municipality to manage solid waste (see page 12-13).

However, it takes a quick three hour drive into Darjeeling to realise how much of Ilam's potential is going to waste especially in tourism. On the other side of the border, throngs of tourists from Kolkata, Sikkim, and an equal number of foreign travellers jostle for space in the city's famous Chowrasta square.

From early morning, visitors line up at road side stalls for a breakfast of omelette sandwiches and momos and the hustle and bustle continues till late at night. While some of the Western crowd come here to relax, enjoy the panoramic views, and visit tea estates, others use Darjeeling as a stopover before or after their Kangchenjunga trek or to climb Sandakpu, the highest peak in the region.

On the Nepali side, except for devotees who come to Mai Pokhari and NGO workers on field visit, you hardly see any tourists around Ilam. Scruffy guesthouses litter the main street. Ilam bajar shuts down promptly after sunset, although



KUNDA DIXIT

a few restaurants remain open till 7pm.

"The government only cares about the Kathmandu, Chitwan, and Pokhara golden triangle. Outside of those three cities, it hasn't made much effort to promote tourism or build infrastructure," explains Dharma Gautam, a civil society activist.

While Ilam excels at most development indicators, it has fallen behind on tourism

There are no records of the number of people who visit every year and neither are there any information centres. Visitors either have to scour the internet for info or find their way around through word of mouth.

Darjeeling and Ilam are not much different in terms of geography: beautiful tea gardens, panoramic views

of the Kanchenjunga range. In fact Ilam is cleaner and more peaceful than the Indian town. Migration over the years from western Nepal has led to a fusion of Tamang, Gurung, Lepcha, and Brahmin cultures and lifestyles. And the landscape stretching from the Tarai to the hills is home to many species of animals and

birds including the red panda.

The entire district is connected by well-built roads and buses run regularly, although they tend to be overcrowded. The Sandakpu trek can be done from the Nepali side as well from Deurali.

The point is not to turn Ilam into another Pokhara. But there is money to be earned

even through small-scale tourism. Home-stay programs offering local Ilami flavours can be an option. Agritourism can be another alternative where students and interested visitors can live on farms and experience the production process first-hand.

Mingma Sherpa who runs the well-known Hotel Chyangba along with her family (*pic above*) gets a steady stream of local customers during lunch. When we ask her what Ilam can do to attract more tourists, she replies matter-of-factly, "What tourists?"

The backbone of the district's economy and the bread earner for generations of Ilamis, the tea industry pales in comparison to Darjeeling. While, the Darjeeling Tea brand is recognised around the globe, tea from Ilam only sells in the domestic market. People even travel all the way to India to see tea being processed in the estates.

The tea industry in Ilam, on the other hand, has very little state support and is thriving mainly through the efforts of individual farmers and cooperatives. Surya Khadka, manager of Suryodaya Organic Tea Industry Cooperative in Fikkal, says the farmers are trying to use more organic fertilisers to attract international buyers. But he adds that the lack of technical know-how is a problem. When a major bug infects the tea gardens, they have no experts to turn to and have to control the disease through trial and error.

"The National Tea and Coffee Development Board has been of no help to us. The board does not even have a tea expert, it's ridiculous" he admits.

While Ilam excels at most development indicators, it has fallen behind on tourism which could inject more money into the local economy and lift living standards.

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Green Ilam gets greener

BHRIKUTI RAI in ILAM

Nepal's easternmost district of Ilam is known for its diligent citizens and scenic tea gardens, but it is also showing the way about how towns can be cleaner and greener with community participation and competent leadership.

The main strength of this district bordering Darjeeling in India is its educated population, and the visionary leadership of its elders. The district capital is now a model municipality promoting health, education, and an environment-friendly outlook

by being the first district in Nepal to ban plastic bags.

"The town council has a clear workplan to develop infrastructure while conserving the environment," says Kamal Mainali, environment officer at Ilam municipality, "and it is all geared to improve the quality of life of our people."

Ilam has shown that the absence of district and municipality elections for the past 14 years does not necessarily mean a lack of accountability. The municipality has for the past 30 years worked closely with visionary local non-profits like the Namsaling Community Development Centre (NCDC).

NCDC's climate change officer Aava Shrestha told us during a recent visit: "Natural resource management and energy efficiency are central to the concept of developing Ilam as a Green City and that is what we are working to do." (see box)

Ilam's network of micro hydro power currently benefits 20,000 people in and around Ilam, and has only three hours of power cuts a day. Two wards are using bio gas for cooking and to generate fertiliser for vegetable farms, and work has started to install solar-powered street lamps.

Ilam banned the use of plastic bags in 2010, earning it the Green City credential. The scheme is working well: shopkeepers are fined Rs 500 and shoppers fined Rs 200 on the spot for using plastic bags. The fine was a deterrence in the beginning, but most people now voluntarily shun plastic bags.

"We had to take this drastic step not just because plastic was littering the streets, but

Partnering for Ilam

Inspired by a Peace Corps volunteer, Homnath Adhikari started Namsaling Community Development Centre (NCDC) to uplift rural development in Namsaling VDC, Ilam 30 years ago. Today Namsaling is a strong partner of the Ilam municipality in implementing successful development projects that have put Ilam on the national and international map.

With the strong foundation laid by the Environment Protection Act of 1997, NCDC now runs a large number of programs in cross-cutting environmental themes that has helped the locals of Ilam and surrounding districts improve their quality of life. Ilam's success has been replicated in other parts of Nepal as well.

NCDC in collaboration with Alternative Energy Promotion Centre has been advocating sustainable energy not just

in Ilam, but in the entire eastern region and also installed 84,000 improved stoves (*pictured above*) to reduce the use of firewood and improve health. The group is also involved in biodiversity conservation and the revival of community forestry along the Indian border.

"The incidents of illegal logging and poaching have decreased after the community and officials began working together," says Hira Bahadur Ghale of NCDC.



Eastern Nepal's model township is on its way to becoming the country's first Green City



SAM KANG LI

also because it was polluting water sources, clogging water pipelines, and producing toxic fumes when burnt at garbage dumps,” says Dharma Gautam, a civil society activist. The municipality has set aside land to process bio-degradable waste and turn it into compost.

One of the major focus of Green City is on solid waste management and the municipality is raising awareness to create zero waste at source. Each shop has a large green bin for disposing waste, and many have started sorting waste. There are dustbins attached to every electricity pole on the road, and litter-free zones have been declared to protect water sources.

Namsaling is working with the municipality to develop community managed water supply systems. The town’s population has doubled to 32,000 in the last 10 years, yet there is reliable water supply.

The 25-bed district hospital

will soon start recycling all its water by filtering it through a reed bed. Green belts have been set up by reforestation denuded slopes around the town.

The key to Ilam’s success has been that unlike national politics, the local political parties have worked together on good governance. “The co-operation of all the political parties and the decision of locals on priority projects have helped Ilam even during tough times,” explains Gautam.

It also helps that Ilam’s budget has increased by almost 25 per cent in the last few years because it was rewarded for its performance in overall development indicators. It was declared the best municipality in the eastern region last year and stood sixth nationwide. Now, Ilam’s success is being replicated in other municipalities in eastern Nepal and the rest of the country.

“We have been to many

districts in the west including Humla to train communities there based on our experience in Ilam,” says Aava Shrestha.

With its close proximity to Darjeeling, education has always been a priority in Ilam. The Mahendra Multiple Campus here now has a masters program, and it is expected to not just retain locals but also attract students from other districts.

Hotels in Ilam are gearing up to boost income from tourism. “There is a lot to be explored in tea tourism with Ilam’s rich history and scenic beauty,” says Kedar Sharma, a journalist turned entrepreneur in Ilam who has moved back to his native town from Kathmandu (see box). 📺

nepalitimes.com

Rest of the country has lot to learn from Ilam, East West Blog by Kunda Dixit

Plastic-free Ilam, #526

Ilam calling

For journalist Kedar Sharma returning to his village in Karfok, Ilam after living in Kathmandu for almost three decades was anything but planned. It's been a few months since he and his wife Kiran headed east to give life to their long cherished dream of starting a restaurant and the couple admit they are loving every minute. Says Kedar : “We are still getting used to the laid back way of life in Ilam while also working on setting up our restaurant Barpeepal Bisauni in Aitabaare.”

They have turned their abandoned ancestral farm in Karfok into their new home and started organic farming there. Sharma says Ilam's potential as a toursit hub is yet to be explored. He hopes that with Barpeepal they will be able to introduce local delicacies of Ilam like niuro (fern) and makai chyakhla (cooked corn grits) to travellers and also promote tourism. “We don't want to be like any other eatery that you find in Ilam bajar serving momo, chow mein and burger,” says Sharma, “we want it to be a palce where people can come, lounge, enjoy good food and learn what Ilam has to offer.”

“People’s hopes are pinned on me”

Rama Parajuli in *BBC Nepali Service*, 10 December



Rama Parajuli: Can you deliver a solution to the current deadlock by Wednesday?
Pushpa Kamal Dahal: Talks are going on. We decided that we should meet informally because at all party meetings, we tend to take strong positions. Once we reach a consensus through personal consultations, we will sit together once again.

Everyone has pinned their hopes on you, but you keep changing your position, how are you going to solve the deadlock this way?
All my words have been twisted in the media. My only concern is to work out alternatives to the current stalemate. And the ones who say I change my position when I'm trying to come up with different solutions do not understand what I'm doing.

If you think things will take care of themselves once you become prime minister, are you ready for it?
Even if I was to become a PM, the influence I have on making sure there is a consensus would not decrease. But I want to avoid talking about these

imaginary scenarios. Still, you and a lot of friends have been asking, and if through dialogue I find myself in the PM's chair, I will not back down from taking responsibility.

At the moment Baburam Bhattarai gets all the credit for the good work done by the government, while you are criticised for its bad decisions. Many people say that as long as this government is in power, it will be bad for Prachanda's reputation.
I agree with your statement that the longer this crisis continues, I will be affected the most because I lead the biggest party. We are an important stakeholder in the peace process, and I represent all the promises of progress that were made during the 2006 uprising. All criticisms as well as people's hopes are pinned on me, which is a challenge but also something I take great pride in. Still, I feel the opposition, traditional forces, status-quoists, and old power-centres are trying to embarrass me at all costs, and I cannot give any guarantee. People tell me that it is up to me that it is in my hands, but they never support me when I really try to make things happen.



So ultimately if the solutions to all problems lie with you, then you must also make some compromises.
I agree and our party has been reiterating that all alternatives have to be discussed. We have been talking to all the parties, the Madhesi parties, and even to the CPN-M. We have to come to an agreement about many things, and must compromise. In the next few days, there has to be an understanding between the NC, UML, and us, and mainly between the NC and us. Just like the close discussions between Girija Prasad Koirala and myself

made the 12-point agreement in 2006 possible, the current crisis hinges on what the NC and us decide.

By agreement, do you mean a mixed system of governance?
No, no, not only that. That could be one alternative, but there could be others as well. In any case, there has to be an understanding between the NC and us. I told the leaders of the UML and NC just now not to take any decisions in excitement, because we must provide a solution.

Your party has split and your militia has been integrated. Are you scared and trying to avoid the elections?
That is totally untrue. Yes, the party has split, our soldiers have been integrated, and the crisis grows. But ask every member of our rank and file, and they will tell you how confident they are. I made calculations of all 75 districts and think we are not weak at all. In fact, we deeply suspect that it is parties like the NC and UML who want to lead the government and postpone polls in order to weaken us.

Are you ready to hold elections in April 2013?
Yes, we are fully ready and committed to polls in 2013.

PM encircled by corruption

Balaram Baniya in *Kantipur*, 11 December



On Sunday, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai said: "It looks like the corrupt will finish us off." He went on to single out local government, development projects, labour, land reform, education, and health sectors as being specially graft-ridden.

The irony of it all was that he was giving a speech on the occasion of the international day against corruption, and he and his party lead all these sectors. Bhattarai himself heads the ministries of urban planning, energy, and agriculture. Maoist vice-chairman Narayan Kaji Shrestha himself is the minister of local development. The labour ministry is headed by Maoist secretary Post Bahadur Bogati, land reform is led by another Maoist leader, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and the education minister is also a Maoist, Dina Nath Sharma.

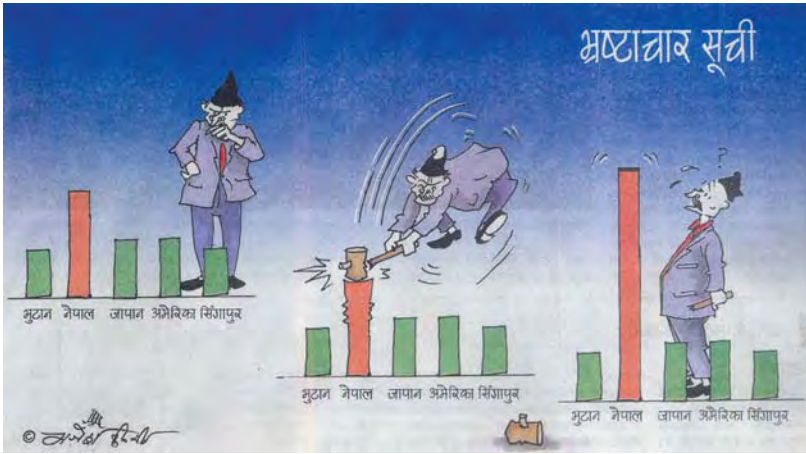
And the latest example of how there is illegal political interference in development projects is the prime minister's own urban development where he has appointed his sister-in-law as the head of the Kathmandu Valley Drinking Water Pvt Ltd (KUKL). Bhattarai's wife, Hisila Yami is said to



have put pressure on the Kathmandu and Lalitpur municipalities to put her sister, Timila, in charge of the state-owned company. Timila replaces Prayag Lal Joshi who was appointed to his post through open competition four years ago.

The energy ministry which is headed by Bhattarai himself has pushed through a controversial proposal to increase the capacity of the Upper Trisuli 3A project by 30 megawatts. This increases the project cost by Rs 4 billion and extends the time of completion by two years. Two reports by the NEA had said the capacity addition on a project that has already started construction is not feasible. Member of the NEA board, Krishna Dulal was removed for being against the proposal to increase the capacity of the project.

The most corrupt ministry is local development, mainly because there haven't been local elections for a long time and because political interference is rife. For being against transfers within the ministry, the prime minister and the deputy prime minister moved Sital Babu Regmi to the president's office. Land reform is also tainted, and the prime minister was responsible for appointing the controversial Nagendra Jha to the post of joint secretary. Jha is the same person who handed over Rs 800,000 to the wife of Hindu activist, Kashi Tiwari, who was murdered by Bhattarai loyalist Prabhu Sah three years ago. Education minister Dina Nath Sharma has also inducted into his team tainted Surya Gautam caught helping his own wife cheat in state exams.



Corruption ranking. Bars (left to right): Bhutan, Nepal, Japan, America, Singapore

नागरिक Rajesh KC in *Nagarik*, 7 December

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Why be scared of me, just a buffalo herder? I am the guardian of the constitution, just trying to do things according to my principles.”

President Ram Baran Yadav quoted in *Kantipur*, 13 December

Diplomatic disaster

Roshan Khadka, *Naya Patrika*, 12 December



Nepali Ambassador to Brazil Pradyuman Bikram Shah was seen riding a government issued vehicle with a local woman named Lu Jaretti. Sources say the two have been in a relationship for the past one year and numerous photos of the couple on

Jaretti's Facebook corroborate this claim. In one picture, the Nepali ambassador to Kuwait Madhuban Paudel has commented, "Wow, I am so jealous." Sources add further that the ambassador does not come to office on time most days. "He comes late and returns early," admitted one. However, most officials at the embassy are tight-lipped about the whole affair because they fear losing their jobs.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently undecided about whether to take action against Shah. "We are aware about Ambassador Shah spending a lot of time with Jaretti and the photos on Facebook make this clear," said an official from the ministry.

Shah's wife, singer Pyaru Shah lives in Kathmandu and had earlier lodged a complaint against her husband for taking a female helper to Brazil. The ambassador is also known for leaving all his family members at his residence whenever he goes out.

ब्राजिलमा यो के गर्दै छन् नेपाली राजदूत ?



सरकारी सुविधाको गाडीमा उनी स्थानीय युवतीसँग कहिले



LOUD N CLEAR: Dikpal Dev Pageni (*far right*), director of Hamro Internet Radio of Australia in the studio with his colleagues and Keshabh Khadka on air for Radio Yuva in Texas (*below*).

Making global airwaves

Nepalis broadcasters abroad are connecting the diaspora to communities back home



GANESH ACHARYA

Five years ago, if Nepalis living outside the country wanted to tune into to their favourite radio programs from back home they would have to scour the internet for hours. Many Nepali radio channels didn't have an online presence and even if the listeners had access, streaming audio was problematic.

Today not only are local radio stations improving their websites and extending their reach through the internet, but those studying or working abroad are establishing Nepal's presence on the global airwaves by providing news, information, and entertainment to the diaspora community in their mother tongue. There are now six stations in the US and Australia, and a couple in South Korea.

Gurkha Radio on British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) was the first Nepali language radio channel outside the country. Started in 1952 in Singapore to serve the Gurkha police and their families, the channel broadcasts on different FM and AM stations across 38 countries as well as on the internet. Currently there are 15 BFBS correspondents based in Nepal and the British radio recently opened a sister station in Kathmandu.

On the other side of the Pacific, Nepali language broadcasters are taking over the airwaves. Sanjeev Parajuli from Texas turns on the Radio Yuva app on his iPhone every morning at 6am and is a devoted listener of host Badri Sapkota's Dharma Sandes (religious messages). "Every time I tune in, I feel like I am at home in Nepal," says the 24-year-old student.

Keshabh Khadka, a bio-medical engineer and Ashish Shrestha, an electronic engineer started Radio Yuva in Dallas, Texas a year ago. The duo began their journey hosting a talk-show called Khas Kura (special talk) at FunAsia AM, a South Asian radio channel. Although Keshabh was anxious of about whether listeners would tune in and how they would react, he is pleased with the station's a stable following. Today thousands of users turn to Radio Yuva on their android and apple devices as well as through their website and the station employs 10 part-timers.

"Shows like NepMasti and Good Morning America provide recent news and gossip from Nepal and also the latest movie and pop songs, so our listeners don't have to go searching on YouTube or other sites," says Keshabh, "celebrity interviews are very popular with our audience."

Down under in Australia, Hamro Internet Radio and Himalayan Radio have been filling Nepali

homes with familiar sounds. With four stations in Sydney, Darwin, Perth and Brisbane, Hamro Internet runs 12 shows per week. Director Dikpal Dev Pageni hosts Prasanga (experiences) as well as a show where he talks to Nepalis scattered across the globe through Skype called Sansarbhari Nepal (Nepalis around the world).

"Our radio focuses on Nepalis living in Australia, but our team is very diverse, we have Indians and Australians running shows," explains Dikpal.

Although a small studio can function on a few laptops with internet connection, difficulties getting licences, managing time between part-time workers, and lack of funding are keeping potential broadcasters at bay. "Our programs are becoming increasingly popular and our audience wants more shows. But we don't have enough money at the moment to expand," laments Keshabh of Radio Yuva. 🇳🇵

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Political scenarios for 2013

As the political stalemate drags on, the Ass has taken the trouble of listing all the possible direction this great nation of ours could take in 2013:

1. Jhusil Da is PM and we all die of boredom
2. BRB continues as PM for life
3. President extends deadline for formation of consensus govt till December 31, 2022
4. PKD outfoxes BRB and makes himself PM
5. BRB outfoxes PKD and makes Yummy PM
6. We resurrect the monarchy and restore the Malla dynasty
7. Subcontract the country to LKY or GMR
8. Make Padam Kunwar a benevolent dictator of the proletariat
9. Prez appoints an Ass as prime minister
10. The world is ending next week, so who gives a fig?



Everyone blames the political stalemate on disagreement over

a consensus government. The real reason is the upcoming general assemblage of the **Unified-but-Divided Maobaddie** party next month and the struggle for control between Lotus Flower and Red Flag. Signs of this have been apparent for some time, but it has now manifested itself in fist fights where PKD goons are giving BRB goons bloody noses and vice versa. It used to be the Dash Baddies and the Cash Baddies who were at each other's throats, but Bash Baddies have also joined the fray. There is a tug-o-

war to woo senior comrades, and PKD seems far ahead with the combined war chests of Messrs Mahara, Postman, Ugly, and Prabhakaran who between them control telecom, illegal sand and boulder mining, and have a monopoly on bulldozer rentals. For his part, BRB has wooed over Artha Man Pun and the two of them wield absolute control over state coffers.



With all their energy expended on the coming showdown in January, Unserer Fuhrer is keeping everyone confused by pushing a new candidate for PM everyday. On **Sunday** he tells the president to call for a consensus government, on **Monday** he tells BRB to confront the president, on **Tuesday** he informs the

Kangresis that Jhusil Da has his blessings, on **Wednesday** he puts forward Comrade Cloudy as his preferred candidate, on **Thursday** he presses eh-Maleys not to agree to Jhusil, on **Friday** he tells Gutch there must be a Madhesi PM, and on **Saturday** he says maybe there should be a civil society prime minister. The multi-tongued Chairman's gameplan is to allow BRB to continue until the convention and then swiftly move to make himself the next prime minister. He would then run circles around everyone so there would be no elections in May. But just as PKD is determined to take over, BRB is equally determined not to let go. The wily Comrade Chairman seems to have hoisted himself by his own petard but is convinced that ultimately money can buy him love. Deputy PM and Firanghi Minister Kaji Naran Kamred has now decided his future lies in hanging on to the Chairman's coat-tails. After giving donor agencies and INGOs a hard time on aid policy and registration, he has now trained his sights

on the prime minister and president, accusing them of hobnobbing with foreign ambassadors and alien visitors without his permission. In a long tirade last week, he said he was so sick of his boss not listening to him that he is tempted to retire from politics and go seek nirvana. No one really believes Kaji wants to go to Kasi, and the real reason for NKS' emotional outburst seems to be the fact that he wasn't invited to the bash in honour of visiting King of Kashmir thrown by Lord of the Animals at Bijaybas.



No sooner did we see our ambassador in Brasilia in flagrante on FB cavorting with a luscious Brazilian lawyer than the tabloids have been full of rumours of Comrade Top Man being treated to a special screening of Talash in the arms of geishas. Eye-witnesses said they found the Gas Minister's moves more entertaining than the on-screen drama.



Wake me up when there is a consensus.



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