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BIKRAM RAI

Turn for the worse

Less than a week after assuring Nepal-based envoys that he was going to ensure the Truth and Reconciliation Bill reflected international norms, the Bhattarai government on Wednesday at midnight sent police to detain policemen in Dailekh involved in the investigation of a journalist's

murder in 2003.

The case of Dekendra Thapa, the Dailekh reporter who was tortured and killed by the Maoists during the war, has become emblematic of the state of impunity in the country. It also reflects the determination of the Maoists in government not to dig up wartime atrocities by their cadre and by the army and

police.

The irony of the midnight action in Dailekh was that district police chief Sharada Prasad Chaudhary, and Inspectors Indra Subedi and Kiran Neupane were held by a police unit sent from Surkhet and Nepalgunj and accompanied by truckloads of about 600 Maoist YCL. All three were transferred on Thursday afternoon for failing to maintain 'peace'.

Dailekh has been tense this week as the Maoists staged

their District Convention, and the opposition parties tried to prevent Prime Minister Bhattarai on Wednesday from attending to protest his attempts to stop the investigation into the Dekendra case.

Among the police team investigating the case, only Inspector Binod Sharma is still in his job. 🇳🇵

Rogue state
Editorial page 2

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GOING ROGUE

We might as well get used to Nepal becoming an international pariah



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Nepal's present rulers are pushing the country into a state of statelessness so systematically that it almost seems deliberate. It is now coming up to nine months that a caretaker government is being led by a lameduck prime minister. We haven't had a parliament since May, and no sign that there will be elections any time soon. The Supreme Court is being depleted of justices, the Election Commission is commissioner-less, as are the corruption watchdog and other constitutional bodies.

The president could break the logjam, but his role is ceremonial and the use of residual powers is restricted by an interim constitution that has no precedence for this kind of checkmate. The bureaucracy and police are demoralised by political intervention, and the resulting impunity has set off a crime wave, especially in the Tarai (see page 11).

No breakthrough is expected till the Maoist Convention ends in Hetauda next month, where Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is expected to make his push for leadership of the party and government. Other leaders seem to be veering towards the nomination of a 'Third Person' from a smaller party to lead an all-party election government.

But the prolonged uncertainty has already taken its toll on investment, development, and economic growth. In the absence of elections, Nepalis are voting with their feet: 1,600 of them fly out of Kathmandu airport every day to work abroad.

Internationally, we have become a human rights pariah, known as a country that is ruled by war criminals who have pardoned themselves. We also risk becoming a financial pariah unless the government sends the president a bill ratifying by ordinance an anti-money laundering law.

Nepal narrowly escaped being blacklisted

by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) by endorsing the Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition Treaty through ordinances in June. The third bill on Anti-Organised Crime Act was not passed because of political pressure from the Maoists and their Madhesi coalition partners, who fear travel bans for their ill-gotten wealth. The draft bill also got snared in politics as the opposition put pressure on the president not to pass ordinances.

Nepal was put on FATF's 'grey list', but this will again come under review at a plenary meeting in Paris in February. Unless the Finance Minister takes urgent steps to endorse bills on anti-terrorism and organised crime, amendments to the act on anti-money laundering and automation of the Financial Information Unit (FIU) at the Nepal Rastra Bank to ensure transparency and exchange, Nepal risks being declared a rogue state.

For a country so dependent on tourism, migrant labour, exports and foreign investment, this would be catastrophic. It will put our international trade and reputation at risk and Nepalis living abroad will be under stricter surveillance and scrutiny. Nepal risks being permanently blacklisted from all international financial transactions, and join the ranks of outcast states like North Korea and Iran.

International banks could block the accounts of Nepali diplomatic missions, just like Citibank which has closed the accounts of Nepali missions in Washington and New York. Foreign donors could impose more stringent conditions for aid and grants once the country is blacklisted.

Politicians the world over have short-term time horizons and are notoriously selfish, but only in Nepal are they so unmindful of their own self-interest.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

TRANSITIONAL INJUSTICE

The seemingly docile Baburam Bhattarai is unleashing a wave of dictatorial whims, and also shattering the hopes of Nepalis ('Transitional injustice', Editorial, #639). The families of thousands more Dekendras who lost their lives won't ever forget and forgive those for raging a seemingly futile war and especially Bhattarai for being the biggest obstacle in healing the wounds of the bloody conflict.

Kroor Singh

GET USED TO IT

Thank you Damakant Jayshi for your incisive analysis of Bhattarai's megalomania ('Get used to it', #639). Like most Nepalis I had been asking the same question: what gives Bhattarai the confidence to be such a big bully? We saw Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Madhav Nepal, and Jhalanath Khanal come and go without much fuss. This man, on the other hand, is adamant in remaining in Singha Darbar and will probably continue ruling for the next 10 years unless something drastic happens.

But should we have to wait till the day his handlers down south have a change of heart to remove him and bring back some semblance of democracy? I am as sceptical as you about a third people's movement because even the popular movements in the past were fuelled largely by vested political groups and cannot be called spontaneous in the true sense. But there must be some other way to

stop Bhattarai from turning into a full-fledged dictator.

Renu Shrestha

- I don't understand why the parties hate an electoral government of technocrats. In Nepal political parties are pretty stubborn about their own beliefs so why is the president, who could not get a green signal from India, wasting time requesting them for a consensus government to make elections happen? Periodic elections have nothing to do with consensus government, it has to do with a competent government that has the capacity to command institutions to conduct polls in a free and fair manner.

Anonymous

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

This is the time where the very essence of justice is being hijacked by a few elites for their parochial political gains ('Skeletons in the closet', Anurag Acharya, #639). Justice must be seen as even-handed and crimes committed by both sides need to be given equal weight.

Binu

- Our scholars, politicians, academics, doctors, engineers, and human right activists are all prisoners of conscience. In their opinion, violence, abuse, and torture are legitimate until they meet their interests. But what they don't realise is that you reap what you sow. When torture, terror, impunity, and injustice become part of the culture then it is never going to end.

Mexx Nepali

UMBILICAL OF IMPUNITY

While Kanak Mani Dixit's blog captures the outrage that is rightly directed at the UCPN-M for their position on Col Lama's arrest and the Dekendra Thapa case, it continues the *Nepali Times* line of blaming the Maoists for 'transitional injustice' ('Umbilical of impunity', www.nepalitimes.com). It remains a fact that the entire political establishment is committed to impunity. That is the problem: if it was only one party, there would be much more room for pressure. What is required is advocacy that targets the entire establishment (including the NC, UML, and the NA) who together with the Maoists represent a united front against truth and justice. One can only hope that Dixit is using the access he has to non-Maoist leaders to argue the position just as strongly there. It is just strange he chooses not to do so in print. As long as those advocating for justice advance narrow political agendas the chance of progress in ending impunity will be small.

Simon Robins

- In a country like Nepal there is no need for a separate transitional justice mechanism. All we need is a group of honest lawyers who are able to resuscitate the deaths for the sake of justice. The people who Dixit believes should be involved in human rights jurisprudence aren't any good because they are only concerned about fooling donors to run NGOs and enjoying foreign trips in the name of justice.

Nirmal Ghimire

SICK CITY

Thank you *Nepali Times* for raising your voice against Kathmandu's air pollution ('Sick city', Anna-Karin Ernstson Lampou, #639). Just a small correction: WHO guideline value for PM10 is 20 micrograms per cubic metre and for PM2.5 it's 10 micrograms per cubic metre. As these are the guideline values for annual mean they should be used as reference values while assessing the health impacts of Kathmandu's air quality. It should also be noted that air pollution levels in winter in the Valley are much higher than the annual mean because of temperature inversion, lack of rain, and operation of brick kilns.

Bhushan Tuladhar

- As a Kathmandu-basi who has lived here all her life and who drives in this dust bowl, I can only imagine what my lungs must be going through. What else can we do on a personal level except buy one of the bulkier masks that actually provide some protection and maybe start walking to work even if it's for two days a week to lessen our contribution to the city's pollution? Moving out of the Valley and settling somewhere slightly less polluted might also be a good idea, but as we all know it's easier said than done.

RT

- My wife and I had planned to spend winters in Nepal during our retirement, but after our most recent visit we have sadly had to drop that plan, due to the pollution and congestion in the Valley.

As much as we enjoy spending time with family and friends in Kathmandu, it's not very appealing to spend months in dust, sitting in gridlocked traffic, dealing with power and water shortages, and wondering if our house is going to be stripped bare by thieves, when there are much more pleasant alternatives.

Anonymous

- I love Nepal, but winter in Kathmandu stuffed up my breathing. I came back to Australia with breathlessness and throat irritation. Ten months later they found out the problem was asthma. Things that irritated my breathing were dust on the Ring Road, street cooking fires, car fumes, incense, and carpet glues. I dread to think what long-term effects these have on Nepalis' health.

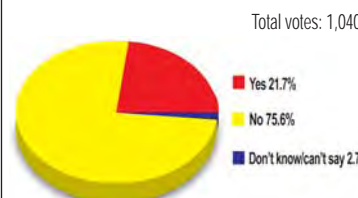
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Weekly Internet Poll #640

Q. Will separate street protests by the opposition and the ruling alliance pave way for an electoral government?



Weekly Internet Poll # 641. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should more politicians interact with the public on social media?

Voice of the victims

The transitional industry in Nepal has turned the entire peace process into a 'project'



GUEST COLUMN
Ram Kumar Bhandari

The longer this endless transitional period drags on, the more painful it is for us families of victims of the conflict. The past month, especially, has proven beyond doubt that truth and justice are not priorities for this government.

The Disappearance, and Truth and Justice Commissions, which should have addressed the grievances of victims have themselves become victims of political horse-trading. The leadership is preoccupied with attaining and retaining political power by any means, undermining and instrumentalising justice.

Government and non-government efforts have abused and wasted resources generated in the name of victims and abused them for their own political or fund-raising ends. The trend is to look at victims 'only as victims', and not as campaigners of justice. This perspective has not changed even after the failure of the constitutional process.

After facing abuse during the conflict, the families of victims now face abuse by the government, political parties, corporate non-governmental groups, and partisan civil society activists. A donor-oriented, state-controlled process has not allowed a victim-centred discourse. The state has played with the psychology of victims, either throwing money at the problem in the name of reparation, or ensuring that its disbursement is partisan. The transitional industry in Nepal has turned the

entire peace process into a 'project' in which the financial beneficiaries are the state or non-state actors, and not the victims.

The present caretaker government is exploiting the political fluidity after the dissolution of the CA, and has tried to merge the two commissions on disappearance and justice, violating the right of victims to know the truth and secure justice. There is a long history of justice denied in Nepal starting with those who ordered the hangings of Gangalal and Dasharath Chand during the Rana regime. Those who were found to be the key suppressors of the 1990 and 2006 people's movements were never held accountable. The recommendations of the Dhungana, Mallik, and Rayamajhi Commissions all gather dust, blacklisted individuals were never made public.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's latest moves to protect those involved in wartime atrocities just follow this trend. Kuber Singh Rana who was implicated in wartime excesses was promoted to police chief, the Nepal Army's Raju Basnet who was involved in the disappearances of civilians from Bhairabnath Battalion was rewarded. Ironically, policemen known to have been involved

in the death and torture of Maoist journalist Krishna Sen were promoted by this Maoist government.

For the families of victims, the only bright spots have been the investigation into the detention, torture, and murder

of Dekendra Thapa and the arrest in the UK of Col Kumar Lama. But in both cases, the Maoist government has shown its contempt of justice. The opposition parties spoke out against Col Lama's arrest, and then proceeded to shamelessly

politicise the Dekendra Thapa case. The government's response to these cases have not just weakened the discussion on the proposed commissions, but also undermined the truth and justice agenda of the victims.

The leadership of the army, police, and administration as well as the former rebels has tried to protect each other from the need to face up to the guilt of their past. But a cathartic coming to terms with the crimes of the conflict is necessary to stop vengeance and a relapse into violence and conflict.

The families of victims want truth, they want to be compensated, and they want justice. But these demands have been sidelined in the current state of impunity and mutual accommodation between former enemies. When they are raised, the victims' agenda tends to be just a fund-raising bullet point for Kathmandu-centric NGOs. This actor-tendency of civil society groups ends up paying lip service to victims, and holding superficial dialogue.

Although the Maoist government seems to be slightly more receptive to a reworked bill on the formation of proposed commissions after a stern warning from donors last week, it doesn't look like there is the political will to go through with it. The bill languishing with the president was written by former war criminals, and is not acceptable.

The voices of victims need to be heard if a new bill is going to be drafted, otherwise the state of impunity will persist, undermine long-term peace and ensure that our wounds from the war never heal. ■

Ram Kumar Bhandari represents a network of the victims of the conflict and is chairperson of the Committee for Social Justice.



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The hall was packed with students, faculty, film buffs, and members of the public for the screening of the new wave Nepali feature film, *Highway*. Although the movie has been screened in mainstream cinema in Nepal, this was only the third time it was being shown in the United States.

Last week, the Yale Himalaya Initiative and the Nepali Association of Yale Affiliates (NAYA) hosted the screening of *Highway* and a discussion with the director, Deepak Rauniyar (*pic, right*), in New Haven, Connecticut. The movie has generated considerable debate within Nepal and outside and having finally seen it, I can appreciate why. The film is as provocative, risky, and powerful as it is unusual, and it's a credit to the creativity of the director, the producers, the brilliant actors, and crew that they pulled it off.

I have never seen a film like this, from Nepal or anywhere else, both in terms of its genre and the flexible elegance of its composition. The premise and conceit of the plot, a series of characters thrown together by chance on a long distance bus journey, battling through numerous

Highway in America

Mark Turin reviews *Highway*, a unique and searing film that deserves a place in Nepal's film history

strikes along the way, was convincing and poignant. As a social drama that illustrates how fate can shape lives in an instant and how fair-weather friendships can be made and broken in the space of a bus journey (note: the much-abused and put upon band are left to fend for themselves in the rain at the end of the film) is a powerful metaphor for the tensions that lie at the heart of contemporary Nepali society. These passing allegiances of expedience, between unlikely partners singularly committed to the common goal of reaching Kathmandu in a timely manner, works so well precisely because the narrative resists easy turns.

Highway is innovative in its use of handheld digital cameras, non-invasive

audio, a jaundiced-feel yellow filter that creates a pervading sense of melancholy. It uses the risky but successful technique of permitting actors to improvise dialogue and thus escape from the overly hammed screeching monologues to camera that characterise poor Nepali films and TV dramas, not to mention the Bollywood 'photocopies' from which the director is so eager to escape.

Asked about audience reaction in Nepal, Rauniyar conceded that some loved it, while others hated it. The director remains more interested, however, in how viewers perceive and experience the movie than in its critical receipt, which has been arguably mixed.

"One complaint among Nepali

cinema goers," Rauniyar noted, "was that they found the film too short and were insufficiently entertained." Since *Highway* resists easy classification (it is certainly no Tourism Board-sponsored crowd pleaser, nor is it DFID-funded documentary for social good) the job of marketing and distributing the film is not easy.

We can only hope that critical acclaim in Berlin and Montreal, not to mention simultaneous release in eight cinema halls in Australia, will in time help to give this unique and searing film the place that it deserves in Nepal's film history. It is certainly at the top of my list of movies to screen in my Himalayan Film course at Yale next year.

www.highwayfilm.com

Mark Turin is an anthropologist and linguist who directs the Yale Himalaya Initiative and the Digital Himalaya Project (www.digitalhimalaya.org)

nepalitimes.com

"Why should a film be real?", #615 Highway, #615

Hero

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Narendra Pyasi
Ekai Pal Pani

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A GROUP OR DUO WITH VOCAL

Robin & The New Revolution
Hamro Dosh

BEST ARRANGEMENT

Gopal Rasaily
Baadal Haru

POP / ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Adrian Pradhan
Saath

FOLK RECORD OF THE YEAR

Rajesh Payal Rai
Khaui Kasam Bhaakera

BEST COMPOSITION

Raju Singh
Baadal Haru

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Reema Gurung Hoda
Samaya Sangeet

BEST NEW ARTIST

Navakranti
Priye

BEST VOCAL COLLABORATION

Raj Acharya & Anju Pant
Najarko Timro

FOLK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Bhanu Oli & Juna Prasai
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BEST ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Robin & The New Revolution
Hamro Dosh

SONG OF THE YEAR

Krishna Hari Baral
Jamana Kharaab Chha

BEST SONG ORIGINALLY RECORDED FOR A MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

Bhakta Raj Acharya
Aago Ko Raap Jeewan

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Shreya Sotang
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ECONOMY STUPID
Puja Tandon

Is your business not able to tap into capital markets? Are you running out of financing options? Private Equity (PE) could be your best bet. An investment in shares (not traded on the stock exchange) of private, unlisted companies, PE provides an alternative source of funding for businesses who don't have easy access to conventional financing through banks or capital markets. PE firms also provide management expertise which is often lacking in small businesses.

PE investments are ideal for developing countries like Nepal where capital markets are not very mature, and where companies have a hard time raising money because they lack collaterals such as land,

property etc. PE can be used to expand Nepal's transitioning economy by promoting entrepreneurship in the private sector. Businesses neither have to be big or hugely successful, instead PE funds make the most difference when used in companies that are 'good enough' but need an injection of capital.

Investments can also be used to boost agro-businesses. Through PE, farmers who would otherwise find it impossible to get funds from banks, can move from subsistence agriculture to more commercial production, increase their competitiveness through better branding and gain greater access to markets.

As PE investments come with a certain degree of handholding and technical assistance in maintaining accounts and adhering to governance guidelines, social and environmental issues, they benefit businesses in the long-

term by improving the way they are managed. For example, more than 90 per cent of businesses in the country are still family run with under developed and at times practically non-existent corporate governance procedures. PE partners can instil transparency and make these businesses tax compliant so that untaxed informal returns and outflows are gradually brought into the formal economy.

However, investments in privately held companies by their very nature are riskier than investments in publically traded companies. Investors can lose all their money and the risk is higher in companies with high leverage. Furthermore, political instability, rising inflation, and comparatively illiquid investments (most effective exit for PE funds being through Initial Public Offering, though offloading to existing promoters is a good enough option), add to the risks.

However, local PE funds can address these issues to a great extent through their understanding of the local business practices and culture, market, and management expertise. For example the lack of liquidity can be resolved by encouraging mergers between enterprises. Close monitoring, strategic inputs, and managerial handholding can offset the other major risks.

With middle-class families on the rise who are increasingly spending their disposable incomes on consumer and luxury goods, Nepal's consumer service industry in particular looks encouraging. Insurance companies, non-residential Nepal's (NRNs), and entrepreneurs willing to take a risk can expect plenty of opportunities. 🇳🇵

BIZ BRIEFS

Easy access

Yeti Airlines announced discounted airfares and guaranteed seats for those travelling to Simikot, Jumla, Dolpa, Rara, and Bajura from its Kathmandu-Nepalgarh sector. Yeti Airlines along with Tara Air will continue the combo fare throughout the year. UN-WFP Aviation Safety Unit has approved both Yeti Airlines and Tara Air with registration status.



Multitasking simplified

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Flying feat



Qatar Airways has become the first airline in the world to operate with the new navigational approach Required Navigation Performance – Authorisation Required (RNP-AR) at Tribhuvan International Airport. RNP-AR reduces pilots' workload and allows them to navigate through difficult terrain easily.

Fun holidays

Entire Travels and Tours signed a memorandum of understanding with Thomas Cook to work as a Gold Circle Partner and authorised franchise sales partner to start its outbound tour packages to the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, Africa, and Asia.



Moving forward



Atma Ram Murarka was elected as the chairman of NMB bank during a board meeting. Until now, Murarka was a board member representing promoters of the bank. NMB has a network of 21 branches and 23 ATMs across the country.

Healthy start

Everest Bank organised free health checkup camps for patients in Bhadrapur and Birtamod on 17 and 18 January. More than 300 people attended the camp which was helped in the early diagnosis of diseases.



Better together

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EDUCATING NEPAL

Shiksha Nepal is spreading the joy of reading by bringing books closer to children

BHRIKUTI RAI

As buildings are torn down and bulldozers fight for legroom with motorcycles, micro-buses, and pedestrians, the Shankhamul-Baneswor stretch looks like a warzone. A modest five storied house at Shankhamul is among the few roadside buildings that were saved from the Bhattarai government's road rage. On the fourth floor is a large room where 24-year-old Prem Bohara is busy rummaging through heaps of books scattered across

the green patchy carpet. This is the office of Shiksha Nepal, an organisation spreading the joy of reading by bringing books closer to children throughout Nepal.

Few schools in Nepal have libraries and reading books other than what is required by the curriculum is still a luxury for many. Started by Prem Bohara and Megha Pradhananga Malla in 2012, Shiksha Nepal believes that reading stories and poetry in Nepali and English will help children improve their comprehension, expose them to

diverse cultures and lifestyles, and make them well-rounded citizens.

"It's not just remote villages, many schools in big towns don't have libraries either. So Nepali children don't develop a habit of reading outside of class. Sadly even those who like to read, can't find books," explains Prem who caught the reading bug late in life (see box).

Prem, Megha, and their team are currently busy trying to collect 100,000 books for the Euta Kitab Literacy Campaign 2015 so that every child in Nepal has a book.

Three thousand books have already made their way to the Shankhamul office mostly through individual donations. And in June last year the organisation gifted 1,000 books to students in five schools around Dolpa, Prem's home district, as part of the pilot project for Euta Kitab.

Benefactors are asked to donate children's books instead of adult novels because they aren't very useful for students in remote Nepal. And to make giving easier, specially for those living abroad, Shiksha Nepal accepts monetary gifts.

HAPPY READING: Students of Shree Balmindir Primary School in Dunai, Dolpa (above) and Shree Shahid Shukra Primary in Lahana, Dolpa (right) with their new books donated by Shiksha Nepal.

"Many people don't know what books are suitable for young children in public schools in Nepal, so we also encourage our supporters to give us money which we then use to buy age-appropriate books," explains Megha.

Seeing the success of the pilot project in Dolpa, schools



PICS: SHIKSHA NEPAL



Driven by books

Swami Vivekananda's autobiography is the only book Prem Bohara remembers reading during 13 years of schooling in Dolpa. "We read one of the chapters from his autobiography in our Nepali class in grade 10," recalls Prem. He was 18 when he first visited a library, the one in his college in Pokhara. Since then he has been bitten by the book bug and spends hours reading in the library.

With his new found hobby, Prem began collecting books and taking them back to his village in Majhphal, Dolpa whenever he could find time and would give them to the local children. Within a year, his friends were donating so many books that the 24-year-old journalism graduate did not know what to do with them. So he started Shiksha Nepal in 2012 with his friend Megha to make it easier to manage the books and reach out to more children.

What began as a holiday project is now a full-time job for Prem and he says the response from donors as well as the children who are reading books has been overwhelming. Through the Euta Kitab campaign, he hopes to help children across Nepal develop a love for reading from a young age, something he did not get to do as a boy. Says Prem: "Books locked behind glass cupboards used to scare me. But now I want to see those books in the hands of Nepali children."

help ship books to parts of the country that are not linked by road networks yet.

As he sorts through the maze of books at his office, Prem says, "The joy of seeing little hands holding these books is what keeps us going."

www.shikshanepal.com

in Butwal, Bhairawa, and even Bhaktapur are keen to partner with Shiksha Nepal. Some are offering to send their own staff to Kathmandu so that Prem and his team don't have to make the journey half way across the country.

However, schools must meet certain criterias before Shiksha Nepal agrees to hand over the books. The team goes around the country from school to school to determine how sincere administrators are about continuing the project in the long run and whether they can build a basic library for their students.

"Dumping books and leaving is not going to help the children, that's why we have to make sure our partner schools are committed and equipped to keep the project running," informs Megha, "the library does not have to be fancy, just a room with furniture and book shelves."

Once a school is approved, Shiksha Nepal provides basic training to teachers and community members so they know how to effectively run a library, circulate books, and encourage children to read.

"We don't want to see the books locked behind glass cupboards like decoration pieces, that defeats the whole purpose," says Prem.

Shiksha Nepal will begin distributing books as soon as it has a big enough collection for five to six schools. It is currently trying to partner with airline companies in Kathmandu and asking them to

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EVENTS

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT, an opportunity to master the skills required for a gregarious public life taught by media personality Malvika Subba. *Rs 3000, Rs 2000 for students, 1 to 3 February, 11am to 1pm, Umanga Hall, Indreni Food Land, New Baneshwor, 9851001569*

Renewable energy week, explore possibilities for wind energy in Nepal. *Runs till 26 January, Bhrikuti Mandap, Nepal*

Professional email-writing workshop, improve your communication skills and make email-writing a strong aspect of your resume. *Rs 4000, 30 to 31 January, 10am to 4pm, Career Master Nepal, Pulchok, (01)5524891/9849224932/9843031776*

B-boying competition, shake and brake, and do whatever it takes to win cash prizes up to Rs 50,000. *26 January, 10.45am, Dasrath Stadium, 984925612/9849685110/9841721736*

Film competition, make a short, attractive, and appealing film on the themes of 'wealth creation' and/or 'economic development' and win prizes up to Rs 165,000. *25 January, 9851015260*

Ultimate photography workshop, explore studio photography with highly experienced photographer Shahnawaz Mohammad. *Rs 5,000, 30 January to 2 February, 7am to 9pm, The Image Park, New Road*

AESTHETICS IN PHOTOGRAPHY, a five-day photography workshop with Norwegian photographer Morten Krogvold. *6 to 10 February, apply by 25 January, www.photocircle.com.np*



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INTIMATE NEPAL, an exhibition featuring the works of young Nepali photographers. *16 to 28 January, 10am to 6pm, except Saturdays, Alliance Francaise, Teku, (01)4241163/4242832*

Theatre training, gain a comprehensive grounding in the performing arts. *1 February to 29 April, Sushila Arts Academy, (01)4015643, www.sushilaartsacademy.com*

MUSIC



RATO MATO, Diwas Gurung will team up with his old bandmates from Albatross to play songs from his album Rato Mato, so get a taste of Nepali neo-folk while it lasts. *Rs 200, 25 January, 7pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel*

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

DINING



EVEREST STEAK HOUSE, an old-school joint for everything steak, indeed a sanctuary for meat lovers. *Thamel, Chhetrapati Chok, (01)4260471*

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*



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

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

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

Tamarind, a multi-cuisine restaurant, which offers an exquisite range of drinks and food. *Jhamsikhel*



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



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

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



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Shivapuri Village, eco-tourism close to the Shivapuri National Park replete with a charm of bygone days. *Patiswara, Shivapuri National Park*, (01)4017725, 9851034141, info@shivapuri.com



CHARIKOT PANORAMA RESORT, enjoy mountain views and local culture in the historic town of Charikot. Special packages on offer. *Charikot, Dolakha*, 01-5529463, thapamaag@gmail.com

Haatiban Resort, tucked away near a jungle at the side of a hill with a 270 degree view of the Valley this is the ideal weekend getaway for Kathmandu residents. *Pharping, Kathmandu*, (01)4371537/561

Return of the native



Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival (NIIFF) is ready to kick off its seventh annual festival and filmmakers from all backgrounds who have an interest in indigenous issues, knowledge, and culture are invited to apply.

Each year, NIIFF explores indigenous themes, and this year's program will focus on

'Equal Access and Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Media'. The selected films will be screened by Taiwan Indigenous Television and receive royalty from the station.

25 to 28 April, City Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road (01)4102577, ifa_festivals@yahoo.com, www.ifanepal.org.np



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

As newcomers to the Valley, we have been looking around for a place which is close to our workplace, serves delicious food, and is also gentle on our wallets. The Village Cafe in Pulchok ticks all three boxes.

Started by Sabah Nepal (SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers), the cafe employs around 30 women who would otherwise be completely dependent on their husbands, fathers, or sons for



their livelihoods. The women use their indigenous culinary knowledge to whip up tasty Newari dishes seven days a week.

The dining area is located in the open, with large umbrellas to provide shade. The plants and flowers placed beside the tables give the impression that you're eating in a garden, a welcome respite from the noise and dust of the city. Next to the restaurant is a shop run by Sabah Nepal, selling handicrafts, clothes, and accessories and offers an interesting diversion while you wait for your order to arrive.

If you are unfamiliar with Newari cuisine like us, we suggest you ask the waitresses for recommendations. The women are more than happy to explain each unfamiliar item on the menu and always serve with a smile. The menu is a little confusing, made up of four separate laminated pages instead of one booklet. However, there are useful descriptions in English printed beside each dish.

For starters we ordered a plain bara (Rs 500) and mushroom bara (Rs 90) from



a number of other toppings like egg and vegetables. The plain bara was excellent, fluffy, crisp, and very tasty. The mushroom bara, while bigger and laced with shredded black mushrooms, was a little soggy and not as good as its plain Jane cousin.

The cheese pakoda is by far the best thing on the menu. For just Rs 90, you get five deep fried cheese balls, crunchy, and full of flavour. It was so good we ordered a second round and were tempted to add another plate.

For variety we tried both



PICS: CINDREY LIU

the egg and the peanut butter chatamari. The egg chatamari (Rs 60) was a little spicier than expected, while the peanut butter chatamari (Rs 90) seemed better suited for a dessert than a main course since it was so saccharine. Although we ordered a 'large' portion of chicken chhwela (Rs 150), it came in a small bowl barely enough for one. Fortunately the chicken itself was delicious, lightly fried, and marinated in a spicy red sauce.

We ended our lunch on a sugar-high with

two yamari dumplings. The chaku yamari (Rs 35), stuffed with sweet dark molasses and sesame seeds, contrasted strongly with the khuwa yamari (Rs 35), with its lighter filling of raisins, cashews, and condensed dry milk. While both make for excellent desserts, the contrast between them is remarkable and speaks to the diversity of Newari dishes.

With its home-made quality food and affordable prices, we will probably make The Village Cafe our regular lunch and dinner joint. However, its small portions may not satisfy someone who has skipped breakfast and would like a very filling meal. Then again, you could always order second and third helpings. And as foreigners, we probably need some time getting used to Nepali portions.

Best of all, we left with a content tummy and happy heart knowing that our meal (in a small way) was helping disadvantaged women become bread earners for their families. Sulaiman Daud

How to get there: From the Ashok Stupa alongside Pulchok Road, follow the road north past the NCell telecom building and look out for the Village Café's sign on the left.

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MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

Lincoln is Steven Spielberg's masterpiece, with a little help from Daniel Day-Lewis. In many ways, this latest profound and layered film is Spielberg's most thoughtful and adult film to date. Perhaps that is an absurdly lofty thing to say about the beloved director of *Jaws* (1975), *E.T.* (1982), the *Indiana Jones* films (well, not the last one), and yes, the first *Jurassic Park* (1997), but all of these aforementioned films, though spectacular and imminently watchable do not have even a fraction of the gravitas of *Lincoln*.

Based in part on Doris Kearns Goodwin's biography of Lincoln *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, the film concentrates on the final four months of the president's life when the civil war is coming to an end and the South is on the verge of surrender. Recognising that slavery can only be truly abolished in America by adding an amendment to the constitution itself, and this too before the end of war after which the former status quo of enslavement may be re-established, Abraham Lincoln and his trusty advisors race against time and the turning tide to create a nobler, freer United States of America.

While everyone knows the tragic end of Lincoln's life, I imagine not many of us have given it any real thought outside of our school history books. Watching Spielberg's film will change that.

By some sort of intangible actorly alchemy, Daniel Day-Lewis has become Lincoln himself, channeling that great man's spirit, if you will. When he speaks in his weary but always humorous voice, everyone around him is riveted,

enraptured by his long-winded but endearing anecdotes and jolted by his endless wisdom and magnanimous nature.

Following a marvelous, highly sophisticated script by Tony Kushner, Day-Lewis is supported by an equally marvelous and colourful cast, including Sally Field as Mary Todd Lincoln, Joseph Gordon-Levitt as their eldest son Robert, David Strathairn as William H Seward, the long suffering Secretary of State, Tommy Lee Jones as Thaddeus Stevens, one of the few men of the time who truly believed that all men are created equal, and James Spader in a hilarious turn as William N Bilbo, a republican party operative hired by Seward and Lincoln to scurry around garnering enough votes to pass the now famous 13th Amendment to the American constitution, ending slavery altogether.

This is a film about the power of words, and the personality of a great man who changes the world with his extraordinary strength of character. The heart aches when looking upon Lincoln's aged face, his deep set eyes turned inward in profound thought, and then again twinkling with sly mischief.

As the film unfolds and one grows to care ever more deeply for this man, for both his private and public grief, it is with a sinking heart that we remember the terrible night of his assassination at the theatre. To be honest, when I realised that Spielberg would not shirk from depicting that last awful event, I closed my eyes, opening them only for the final scene.

I haven't yet seen all of the other Best Picture nominees for this year's Academy awards, and while I hope and imagine Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* will be another kind of masterpiece, part of me screams for Spielberg, Kushner, and Day-Lewis to be awarded for a film that will stand the test of time and remain a classic for all. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Out of grasp



DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

For two months, 57-year-old Ram Bahadur had been staggering around the house and feeling unsteady. He had difficulties turning over in bed, sitting, and getting out of his car. He was drooling, his handwriting became smaller, and his hands trembled while resting. Not wanting to whine, he kept quiet. However, as the months passed, his symptoms got worse so he finally went to see a doctor who told him he had Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease occurs when certain nerve cells in the brain deteriorate and cannot produce an important substance called dopamine. As a result, the brain loses its ability to communicate messages about normal muscle movement. What causes these nerve cells to deteriorate is not known. But genetics and age play a huge role in the onset of the disease.

As in Ram's case, patients may experience tremor in the hands and rigidity of arms, legs, and trunk with a gradual slowness of movement. Emotional changes are also often



present, and simple tasks such as talking, walking, and eating may become difficult.

Although Nepali doctors are familiar with the disease, as with most other illnesses in the country, quantitative data is based exclusively on research carried out in developed countries. Approximately one percent of the 65 and older age group and 2.5 per cent of the 80 plus population are affected by Parkinson's.

The diagnosis is made clinically, so no fancy blood or imaging tests are required except perhaps to rule out other problems which simulate Parkinson's disease. These 'look alike' problems could be drug-induced (for example, anti psychotic drugs) Parkinsonism or post-traumatic Parkinsonism (note: with classic Parkinson's disease there are no prior triggers like drugs or trauma). Even Alzheimer dementia patients experience rigidity and slowed movements during the later stages of their disease which could throw off doctors trying to make a diagnosis. It is important to make these distinctions because therapy may be different. For example, if the symptoms are due to exposure to certain drugs then the specific drug needs to be stopped or replaced for definitive therapy.

Exercise can help maintain physical and mental functions in Parkinson's disease, and drugs to increase dopamine levels in the brain or to improve the brain's ability to respond to dopamine are available. Such medications can reduce tremor, stiffness, and slowness and improve muscle control, balance, and walking. Patients can also find help online among a wide variety of support groups. 🇳🇵



THE WALL: A man walks by as members of UML-affiliated student union take out a rally at Exhibition Road on Tuesday demanding the government to punish the murderers of journalist Dekendra Thapa.



TRUE STORY: Nepali Congress president Sushil Koirala (centre) chats with Ram Chandra Paudel (right) at the party's central committee meeting in Sanepa on Sunday.




BOARDING SCHOOL: Students travel to school in a muscle-powered cart on the Surkhet-Nepalganj highway on Tuesday afternoon.



UP AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN: A man carries hay for his donkeys and cattle early in the morning in Simikot Lagna, Humla.

WEEKEND WEATHER

Kathmandu will continue to freeze under a cold spell caused by winds sweeping down from the mountains. Combined with moisture from last week's rain, this will cause morning ground fog in the Valley as well as some of the transverse river valleys in Central and Eastern Nepal. There is no major westerly disturbance, just some fast-moving high altitude cirrus on the jet stream. Afternoons will be warm, but still below 20 celsius and it will feel colder because of fresh breeze.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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ALL FALL DOWN: A warehouse near the Nepal-India border in Jamunaha, Banke district lies in ruins, symbolic of the paralysed economy in rest of the Tarai.

SUNIR PANDEY

Pain in the plains

Six years after the bloody uprising in the plains that claimed 52 lives, the Madhes still simmers



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

On a cold January afternoon six years ago this week, a few obscure Madhesi leaders gathered at Maitighar Mandala and torched copies of the interim constitution saying it did not address their desire for recognition and representation. Euphoric about sidelining the monarchy and reclaiming Singha Darbar, the coalition of former Maoist rebels and democratic parties in the interim government ignored the protests, and underestimated the anger. Some actively stoked the Madhes fires, hoping to use it to weaken Maoist influence in the Tarai. Demonstrators at the Mandala roundabout were

arrested, sparking further protests, first in Lahan and then in the rest of the Tarai. Dozens of Madhesi leaders from various parties, including sitting ministers, left their jobs and defected. The protests turned violent, leaving 56 dead, stoking Pahadi-Madhesi tensions and forcing tens of thousands of Pahadis to flee the Tarai. The government finally relented and included the agenda of federalism and inclusion in the interim constitution. Along with republicanism and secularism, Nepal was to be a federal and inclusive state. Six years later, the inclusion bill died with a legislature that was allowed to lapse. Had Nepal gotten its constitution on 27 May last year, 23-year-old Arjun Sah from Mahottari would have gained citizenship of this country in the name of his mother. But in a few months, he will be a stateless MBA graduate instead.

He will have no job, no property rights, no travel documents, and will join thousands of other young Madhesi youths who are born in the shadows and live in perpetual exclusion. The decade-long conflict and seven years of power deadlock have paralysed the national economy, jobseekers far outnumber available jobs. Out migration from the Tarai to the Gulf, Malaysia, and India is greater than ever before. But Madhesis like Sah don't even have the luxury of leaving, at least not legally. The Madhes still falls in the penumbra of the Kathmandu-centric media, and the simmering anger and frustration of more than half the people of this country who live in the plains are often ignored or forgotten. Falling between the cracks are stories like that of 19-year-old Sukhi Lonia who was killed last month in Banke allegedly by police acting

on instructions from a local strongman because Lonia had dared to marry a girl he had his eyes on. "Every month we receive at least half a dozen cases of illegal arrests, detention, torture, and sometimes fake encounters by the police," Dipendra Jha of the Tarai Human Rights Defenders (THRD) Alliance told me this week. Illegal detention and torture is rife in Siraha, Sarlahi, Saptari, Mahottari, Rupandehi, and Banke where poor Madhesi boys are arbitrarily arrested by the police under the Arms and Ammunitions or Narcotics Act, only to extort money from the family. It is getting increasingly difficult to distinguish between criminals and politicians, and police routinely act hand-in-glove with smugglers and kidnappers. The Home Minister's constituency of Sunsari has become a hotbed for crime and contraband

trafficking. A 22-year-old man from Siraha was recently arrested by the police who allegedly demanded Rs 500,000 from the family for his release. Last week, locals attacked Upendra Yadav at a function organised to mark six years of the Madhes uprising in Saptari. At a different function in Siraha, the families of 2007 martyrs refused to grant the podium to the Minister for Information and Communication Raj Kishor Yadav. Madhesis' anger is now directed at their own leaders who have neglected the interests of their own constituency. In this January's murky, sunless winter public dissatisfaction with betrayal simmers like a straw fire in the plains. It is only a matter of time before the fire bursts through again. When Martyrs' Day is marked next week, the families of those killed in 2007 will ask their leaders: what did they die for? 🇳🇵

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Every act of kindness counts

There are many young Nepali women social workers out there who aren't CNN Heroes

SANTA GAHA MAGAR



Diksha Chapagain of Taplejung lives with a family of 27 members on the outskirts of Kathmandu. They are not blood relations, but disadvantaged people whom Diksha has adopted. Her 'family' includes eight-month-old Ashrita and 70-year-old Bir Bahadur Tamang, and 16 others

are of school-going age.

Ten years ago, when Diksha was 20, she saw a child rummaging through a rubbish pile looking for something to eat. She took him to hospital, but found out he could not speak, so she started taking care of him on her own. Diksha found the need of Kathmandu's

poor and abandoned so great that she set up the Pabitra Samaj Sewa Nepal.

When her children go to school, Diksha goes house-to-house collecting clothes, food, or money for the upkeep of her 'family'. All the children share the same surname, Nepal, and call their simple house, which is

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BIKRAM RAI

HOID my hand: Menuka Thapa (left) and Diksha Chapagain take care of Homeless and DISADVANTAGED children at their HOMES.

became single six years ago, she realised how difficult life can be for young women who live alone. So with six other single women, Sharmila set up the Samida Women Development Forum in Lajimpat which provides training and life-skills to victims of domestic abuse.

Menuka Thapa, 31, runs Raksha Nepal to educate and rehabilitate women who work in the sex industry, and she is currently sheltering 10 women and 25 minors. Menuka has educated and trained more than 300 girls and women so they can stand on their own feet. Menuka knows their pain because she grew up as an orphan herself in a family of nine siblings. She came to Kathmandu to learn music, but saw how women at dance restaurants were abused and set up Raksha Nepal. Menuka says rescuing exploited girls is difficult because dance bars and the sex industry enjoy political and police protection.

Says Menuka: "No one would work in the sex industry if they had a choice. No woman should be driven to such desperation." 

www.rakshanepal.org.np

nepalitimes.com

The power of one, #634
Growing up behind bars, #570
Nepal's hero, #527

built on government land, home. Sabita Uprety, 26, of Dolakha used to work at the National Disability Fund, but left to do more meaningful work for children with mental and physical disabilities. She set up her own shelter in Sinamangal where the children learn to do ordinary things until they are

confident enough to go to school on their own. It isn't easy for Sabita to raise money to run her home, so her centre charges parents who can afford to pay for their children's rehabilitation. So far, Sabita has helped more than 30 children overcome their disabilities. When Sharmila Thapa



Brick by brick

Nanda Bahadur Shrestha and his wife Laxmi came to Kathmandu 26 years ago looking for work, and found a job at a brick kiln in Dhapakhel. Brick by brick, they saved enough to rent some land to farm tomatoes and vegetables, and their income doubled. Nanda got himself trained at the Nepal Agriculture Research Council in Khumaltar and with money borrowed from a community development scheme, expanded their farm.

Nanda and Laxmi spent their childhood gathering firewood and fodder in the mountains of Dolakha, today they earn enough to send their children to good colleges in Kathmandu. Daughter Samjhana achieved distinction grades in her SLC exam and is studying nursing while son Saroj is doing well in high school. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the parents live for their children, and they are living proof that dedication and integrity has its rewards.

The farm has now grown, the Shresthas have added four cows and a buffalo, and make up to Rs 30,000 a month selling milk and vegetables. The two have now bought a plot of land, and hope to build a home that they can pass on to their children.

Rati Maharjan

शहर सफा राख्न उठेका छन् हात, हामी सबै मिलेर दिनु पर्छ साथ।





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CIAA under threat



BIKRAM RAI

Arjun Subedi, *Nagarik*,
23 January

नागरिक

The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has stopped investigating over half a dozen high-profile cases due to political and administrative pressures. Cases including embezzlement of funds meant for Maoist combatants, misuse of the youth self-employment fund, financial irregularities in Kathmandu Metropolitan’s physical infrastructure development, fraud in the compensation provided to conflict victims, and misappropriation of irrigation project funds are all collecting dust at the CIAA office.

The misuse of funds meant for former Maoist combatants was confirmed a year ago, however, the CIAA has not shown any

interest in the case so far. “Since Maoists themselves decided to investigate into the matter, we didn’t think it was necessary for us to get into it,” said former secretary Bhagwati Kumar Kafle at that time.

Similarly, a case was filed at the CIAA last year after it was revealed that Maoist party was doling out money to its own cadre from the youth self-employment fund. However, details of further investigations have not been released till today. The compensation package to help families and victims of war also came under the radar when the state refused to include families of security forces. However, the commission couldn’t take the investigation forward because of the government’s order. Compensation provided to families of the Madhes movement martyrs also faces a similar fate.

According to procedure, once the CIAA confirms fraud cases, it has to pass them onto the special court. However, as many incumbent ministers and high-ranking officials are suspected to be involved, these cases are unlikely to move ahead any time soon.

Officials at CIAA admit to immense political pressure and intervention. “As soon as a case is filed against influential officials, political leaders, or ministers, the pressure starts to accumulate. How do we work under such circumstances?” confessed a CIAA official on the condition of anonymity.

In the absence of a parliament, CIAA’s operations have been further hampered since it now remains without commissioners. The agency is supposed to have five commissioners including a chief commissioner, but is currently managed by a secretary. Bhoj Raj Pokharel, former chief of the Election Commission says, “How can an independent and constitutional body like the CIAA function under a secretary who is constantly pressurised by his superiors.”

However, Ganesh Raj Joshi, secretary at CIAA says these are all false allegations: “Although it is difficult to work without commissioners the investigations and cases at CIAA haven’t been affected.” According to Joshi the irregularities regarding the youth employment fund and fund for former combatants are under investigation. He also claims that none of the proceedings at CIAA has been stopped due to political pressure.

Difficult take off

Prakash Shah, *Karobar*, 21 January

कारोबार

Out of 33 candidates only Saurav Pratap Shah managed to pass this year’s Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) test, which qualifies pilots to fly in Nepal. The 50th CPL test administered by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) was the first computer-based exam and was based on Europe’s Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA) standard.

Officials at CAAN believe the result might have been affected because of the new question pattern. The CPL test usually has a pass rate of 80 per cent, but this year’s result is the worst ever on record. Even the deputy director general of CAAN, Min Raj Upadhyay, was shocked by the results.

The result has left the 32 candidates distraught, and they are blaming CAAN for setting questions that are higher than the required level. “We were asked questions for captain’s level which even those who have passed earlier CPL tests won’t be able to solve,” said one on the condition of anonymity, “we are not asking for easy questions, but it’s not fair that we were asked questions that are meant for captains in Europe.” The candidates claim the questions they were asked are meant for those who have completed the three year captain course.

However, CAAN has denied such allegations. “The European standard test cannot be blamed. The exam was problematic only for those who returned from the Philippines and South Africa,” explains Upadhyay.

With air crashes happening with frightening regularity, CAAN has made the technical examinations for pilots and technicians tougher and implemented strict criteria following Europe’s JAA. Since there is no provision for aviation courses in Nepal, students spend millions of rupees abroad. However, the dwindling number of domestic airlines means that unemployment is soaring. According to the Air Pilots’ Association, there are more than 300 unemployed pilots in Nepal who have passed the CPL test.

NEPALI TWEETS

Baburam bhattachai
युद्धको जमै युद्धकालै मात्र शान्ति दिन सक्छ । सम्राट अशोक सबभन्दा ठूला शान्तिदुत बनेका थिए । त्यसैले 'लालध्वज' वाट आशंकित नबने ।

Only those who understand the pain of war can provide justice. Emperor Asoka became the biggest messenger of peace. That’s why don’t be suspicious of ‘Laal Dhwoj’.

Archana Karki
पिय प्रधानमन्त्रिले आशावादी बन्नुपर्ने पाँच कारण न दिएछन् तर कुनै पनि कारणमा उनको कुनै उल्लेखनीय भूमिका वा योगदान न देखिँदैन ।

Our dear prime minister gave us five reasons (on Twitter) to be hopeful, but he has made absolutely no contribution to any of these.

Navin Parajuli
@brb_jaaldhwoj देसवासोको नाममा सन्देश बक्सर टिक्टरमा साच्चै सवारी भा हो कि, कसैले हाम्लाई उल्लु बनाका हुन् छल्ल्या पढिलुपयो सरकार!

Dear majesty, please clarify whether you have joined twitter to give messages in the name of the public or is someone trying to fool us?

कानीदास
फर्लायोसको भौड देखेर कमरेडले तुइटर मै चुनाव गर्ने घोसणा गरे भने गगन थापा ले हाने पक्का छ ।

If Comrade decides to conduct elections on Twitter because of the horde of followers, then Gagan Thapa is sure to lose.

Dukunepal
लालध्वज -- नेपालीलाई सामन्तवादको नर्कबाट सिधै पुजीवादको नर्कमा जाख्दै. यहि हो माओवाद भनेको?

Laal Dhwoj – taking Nepalis straight from feudalism’s hell to capitalism’s hell. Is this Maoism?

संवेदिनी
आफ्ना छोरी एमए लि पढाउचन, ा जनता छोरी जनयुद्ध लडाउचन, ा कोटी बाबुराम (डेकेन्द्रकी छोरीको आंशुले निम्नाई पोल्छ । हेरौना, पापीका नाइके!)

You sent your daughters to university, but sent the people’s daughters to fight a war. The tears of Dekendra Thapa’s daughter will burn you Baburam. Wait and watch, leader of sinners.

बटुवा Saurav
वाटो बटुवा मैनि छैन अस्पताल बियामो मैनि छैन हैन हो कमरेड जनवाद भनेको यहि हो

The streets are not pedestrian-friendly, the hospitals are not patient-friendly. Comrade is this what people’s rule means? #Minbhavan #Civilhospital

“Put ourselves in Dailekhis’ shoes”

Interview with NC leader Ram Sharan Mahat, *BBC Nepali Service*, 23 January



Rabindra Mishra: Was it right to prevent the PM from entering Dailekh?

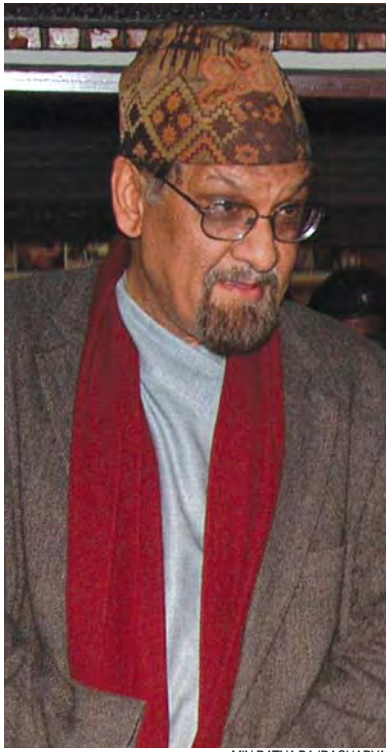
Ram Sharan Mahat: Under normal circumstances, no. But this is a special case because the residents of Dailekh had great expectations from the state, the government only added insult to their injury.

But surely parties like the NC and UML, who claim to be the vanguards of democracy, could have discouraged their cadre from knocking down trees and blocking the roads?

In the past two weeks, the Maoists tried to demonstrate their power by bringing in hordes of cadre from other districts. Dailekhis were only trying to counter the Maoists and challenge the PM for intervening in a criminal case.

What do you have to say about your cadre’s violent ways?

This happens everywhere on the local level when outsiders try to mess with their existence, such anger is understandable. The cadre were not following our directions, it was a totally spontaneous outburst.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

But surely your silence means approval?

How can you say that we have remained silent when we have only opposed the government’s sudden power show in Dailekh at a time when all the locals are demanding justice? You must have heard that women came out on the streets to protest against the Maoists’ atrocities. Should we oppose that as well?

Does that mean your party believes in an eye for an eye?

It is easy for us to stay in Kathmandu and talk about human rights and international standards, but only the locals of Dailekh know what it must be like to live under constant threat even in a democracy. We must put ourselves in their shoes before coming to conclusions.

Besides the PM said a few days ago that he was a Marxist revolutionary, that he was no Gandhi, and that he believed in an eye for an eye. Maybe Dailekhis learnt from the head of their government.

How democratic is it for your cadre to try and take control of the district?

Who did this, I don’t know. I was in Dailekh a few days ago, and everyone was protesting peacefully. The protests must be understood as a spontaneous response to an inhuman atrocity faced by one of their own.



Wall: Accused of serious crimes
Placard: Joint campaign for blanket amnesty
Briefcase: European Union

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 20 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“You will meet the same end as Dekendra Thapa.”

UCPN(M) cadre to journalists in Dailekh, *Kantipur*, 24 January



BHRIKUTI RAI

More than a month after Sita filed a complaint against officials at the Department of Immigration (DoI) and the police constable who raped her, the 20-year-old's quest for justice remains in limbo. And while long queues of protestors continue to gather outside Baluwatar in her support, Sita and her family are gradually losing hope.

Sita worked as a domestic helper in Saudi Arabia for three years before

returning to Nepal in November. She was caught at Tribhuvan International Airport for possessing a fake passport. During the interrogation at the immigration office in Kalikasthan, police constable Parsuram Basnet agreed to help her out only if she gave him a part of the 9,500 Riyal (Rs 222,624) she had saved while working abroad.

When she refused, Somnath Khanal of DoI took her money, saying it was for 'high-ranking officials'. Once

Justice, interrupted

Sita and her family say the state's obstruction of justice is slowly killing their spirits

FADING SMILE: Sita, with her nephew on her lap, is frustrated by the state's delaying tactics and indifference.

HALL OF SHAME: Police constable Parsuram Basnet, Senior Assistant Somnath Khanal and Section Officer Ram Prasad Koirala (l-r)



DoI let her go, Basnet took her to a lodge in old Bus Park promising to help her get back to her home in Bhojpur. He then proceeded to rape her throughout the night. After Khanal was caught, he confessed that section officers Ram Prasad Koirala and Tika Pokharel were also involved. All three were suspended, but Koirala and Pokharel who have close ties to the NC and CPN-M respectively have 'disappeared' since the incident.

Sita's high-profile case helped put the spotlight on gender violence and pressured the government to form a monitoring committee to investigate cases of gender violence including those of Saraswati Subedi of Anamnagar, Bindu Kumari of Bara district, and Chhori Maiya Maharjan of Kathmandu.

The committee which submitted its report to the prime minister on 16 January also implicated DoI's Director General Suresh Adhikari and Director Lekh Raj Pokharel. However, both men still remain in their posts. Angry protesters burnt the report in front of

Baluwatar last week saying the state was providing political protection to the criminals and trying to silence Sita through monetary compensation.

Sita is unaware about the report, but is getting increasingly impatient with the state's obstruction of justice. While Basnet and Khanal are now behind bars, she wants section officers Tika Pokharel and Ram Prasad Koirala to be jailed immediately. "I don't understand why the government is delaying the process and refusing to punish the criminals," asks a frustrated Sita.

She admitted to having an abortion during a radio interview with BBC Nepal last week, and says she is ready to face the consequences. "Most of my relatives and friends in Bhojpur will eventually come to know about my situation," she admits, "I just hope they won't treat me like a social outcast."

Instead of focusing on the past, she wants villagers to appreciate her courage and fight for justice. "What happened was not my fault. I hope I will be able to help other young girls from falling in the same trap," she says. Sita

is currently in therapy to recover from the emotional and physical trauma.

However, Sita's struggle is starting to take a financial toll on her family as they shuttle back and forth between Bhojpur and the capital. Her parents had to go back home last week to take care of her youngest brother who is living with their grandfather. Even her brother in Kathmandu who has been her strongest advocate so far, is getting disillusioned by the state's apathy. "It took my sister a lot of courage to come forward, I don't want her hopes to be shattered," he says.

While Sita is determined to fight to the end, she too has her weak moments, "We have been going from one government office to another appealing for justice and have reached this far, but the state's lack of interest is killing our spirits."

Bhrikuti Rai

nepalitimes.com

Predator state, #636

Interview with BBC Nepali

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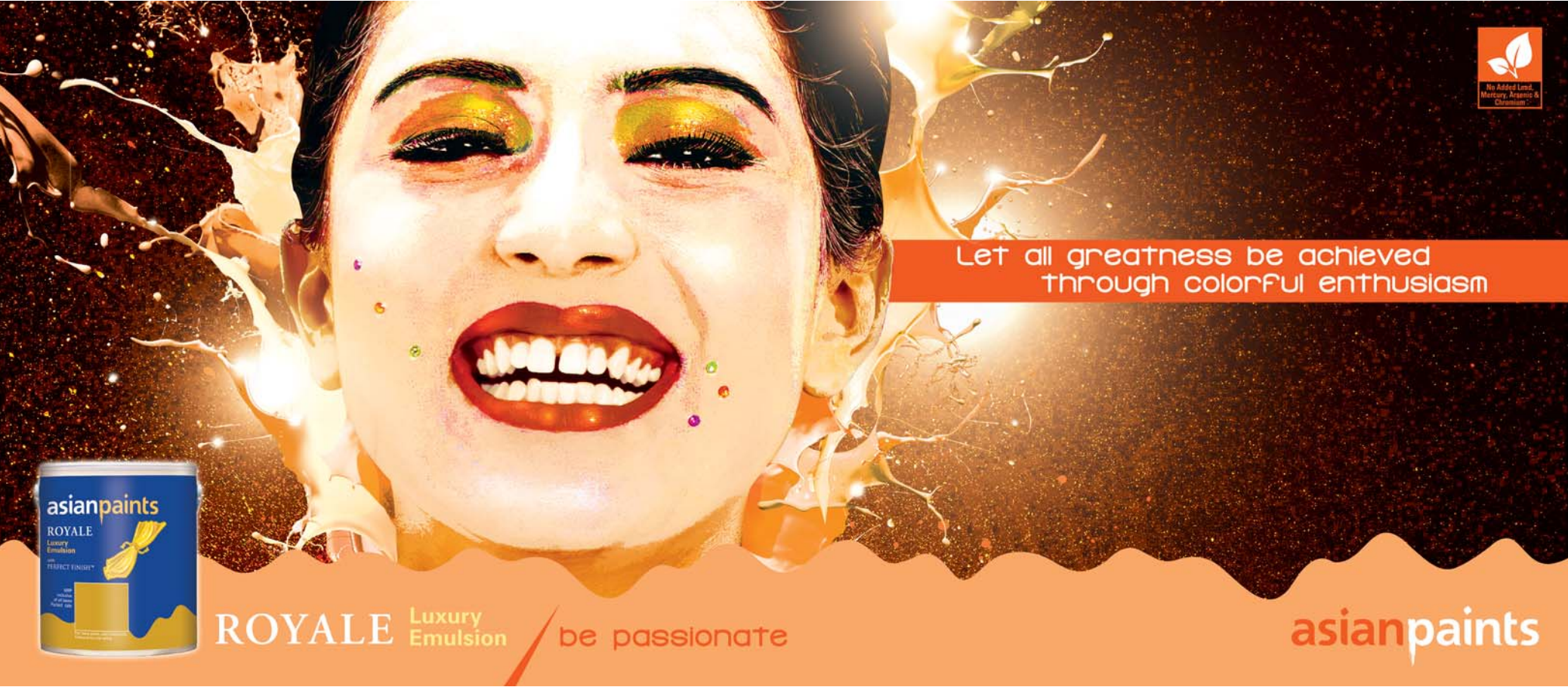
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Nepal's #1 Joke



moment in Gorkha, he got carried away and voiced his innermost secret desire of badly wanting to be prime minister. When the next morning's papers gave it banner treatment, he said it was just a 'joke'. At this rate, Comrade Awe-inspiring is not just going to be prime minister soon, he is also going to be Nepal's #1 Joker. The man is getting paranoid about being hauled over the coals at the ICC, which doesn't worry him as much as not being able to junket in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and London. So he has figured that the best way to eliminate the threat of persecution for perpetrating war crimes and to defuse the powder keg of an internal investigation of his involvement in purloining cantonment allowances is to be PM.

Although Chairman Lotus Flower may be a habitual liar, he has this awesome habit of once in a while blurting out the truth. But whenever he does that he immediately retracts his truthful statement, saying he was just joking. Remember, a couple of years ago, he was caught on candid camera saying he tricked the UN into thinking there were 30,000 guerrillas, and when the tape was broadcast repeatedly by tv channels he said: "Har, har, har, was just pulling your legs, yar."

The other day, during an unguarded

United by their shared fear of persecution, Lotus Flower and Red Flag have come to a working arrangement whereby they are dangling elections to deflect attention away from their efforts to protect war

criminals and obstruct justice. After flatly rejecting Jhoos Da's candidacy and convincing the Prez that it will never happen, they are now promoting a 'Third Person'. The civil society stalwart they proposed is saying, "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full," and has kept a meaningful silence over the Dekendra affair so as not to spoil his chances of making it to Balu Water. But it does look like the consensus PM candidate will be someone from a small party who is not standing for elections himself and who is acceptable to all. And the Ass can only think of three people who fit that bill: Brave Sun, Dear Leader Kim Il Sung Bijukchhe, and Mahanta Tagore.

In the latest example of doublespeak, PKD last Friday assured sceptical Kathmandu based envoys (BTW, how come the North and South ambies didn't attend?) that the TRC Bill already met international standards. He then comes out of the Shang and tells waiting reporters that the TRC Bill is a shining example of transitional justice, and the Prez should ratify it by ordinance. Maybe this time the firanghis will finally realise how this man has taken them, us, and everyone else for a ride all along.

But have to hand it to Unserer Fuhrer, the man never gives up. After his tongue of the slip confession that he would make a great prime minister, he is now talking

tough ahead of the Hetauda Convention next month to appease hardcore cadre accusing him of going soft and abandoning the revolution. Which is why PKD is promising fire and brimstone and a return to voylence from one side of his mouth, while with the other he is smoking the peace pipe with Lal Doze.

- And in our ongoing Only in Nepal Series this week we present the following:
1. When police started cracking down this week on taxis fleeing passengers, taxi drivers went on strike in Tin Coonay demanding their right to cheat.
 2. Homely Minister Gutch fell asleep during a program in Sunsari where businessmen were asking the government to 'wake up' to control extortion.
 3. Irritation Minister Yadav's SUV was car-napped from residence, setting off a police red alert. Turns out his drunk son-in-law had taken it out for a spin.
 4. Wall graffiti next to garbage pile: 'Provide jobs to unemployed youth.'
 5. Cash Baddies who control the Finance Ministry send out letters to businesses to extort 7 corrodes for their party convention.
 6. The prime minister tweets saying we can 'shoot him' if he can't turn Nepal into Bihar.
 7. Police arrest police in Dailekh.





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