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As his party prepares for its first convention in 22 years this weekend, it looks like Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai is here to stay on in Baluwater. He has systematically removed all obstacles to ensure his longevity in power.

He bought time in 2012 by playing off rival NC factions against each other, and confronted President Ram Baran Yadav by manoeuvring the Army chief to oppose any move to replace the caretaker. He then defused possible civil society opposition by floating trial balloons to nominate "independent" non-political candidates for PMship. He is now leaking to the press that he has a secret plan to make a Supreme Court Justice prime minister after the convention.

He defanged his own party chairman, co-opting his support in the party convention by striking a deal not to challenge Dahal's continuation as chairman of the party and to ensure that he will support his candidacy for the next president.

He has got the security chiefs on his side, convinced the international community that he alone can guarantee stability, and assured everyone he is for elections in May and it is actually the opposition that is against it.

The party convention, therefore, will be an anti-climax. Anyone expecting fireworks between Dahal and Bhattarai in Hetauda will be disappointed. The deadline to announce a date for elections by 31 May will lapse, the NC-UML led protests will fail to get traction, and the coast will be clear for Bhattarai to continue for as long as he wants.

Kunda Dixit

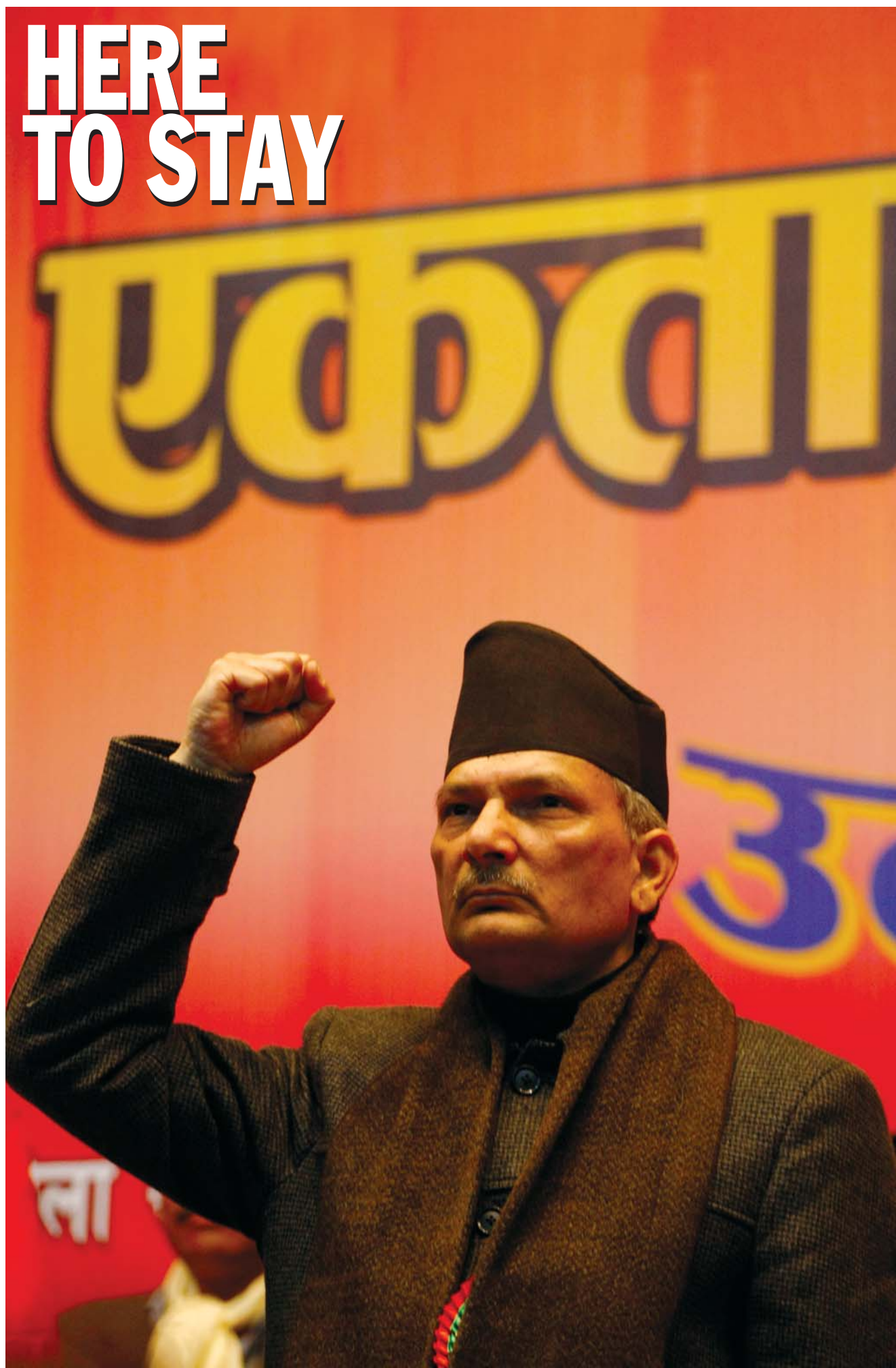
MIND YOUR LANGUAGES

Mark Turin on the race against time to document and support Nepal's increasingly endangered linguistic diversity

page 12-13

Editorial
Speaking in tongues

page 2



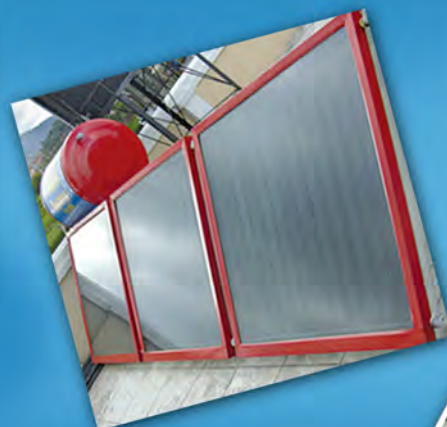
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SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Disagreement over the form of federalism killed the Constituent Assembly last May over demands for self-rule for Nepal's bigger ethnic groups and giving more emphasis to their languages.

Identity politics became an easy way for political parties, especially the Maoists, to garner support but it did tap into historical grievances about marginalisation and a long-felt belief that promotion of the lingua franca was undermining the existence of the country's other languages.

The 2011 census showed a surprising increase in the number of languages and dialects spoken in Nepal from 103 to 123. This wasn't because more languages were being spoken, but because people had become aware and proud of their identities.

As anthropologist Mark Turin argues on page 12-13, Nepal's linguistic diversity mirrors the country's ecological diversity and is an important identity marker. Language is an emotive issue, and if not treated adequately can lay the seeds of future conflict, especially when leaders cannot resist the temptation to make populist capital out of it at election time.

In the past, Nepali was promoted as Nepal's national language because the fragile nation state needed symbols of nationalism and unity vis-à-vis Hindi in India. Today *Mero Nepali* and *Hamro Nepali* books, successors of *Mahendra Mala*, continue to foist antiquated nationalism on students from Darchula to Panchthar and from Manang to Nawalparasi.

While Nepali became the identifier for the Gorkhaland movement in India, where Nepali speakers were considered one ethnic group whether they were Limbu, Gurung or Bahun, back in the motherland we have seen a challenge to the linguistic hegemony of Nepali.

Last year's census shows that 11 million out of 26 million Nepalis (around 45 per cent) consider Nepali



KUNDA DIXIT

The responsibility to preserve and nurture the diversity of Nepal's linguistic heritage lies with the state

their mother tongue. Maithili is second with three million speakers (about 12 per cent) followed by one and half million Bhojpuri speakers. While the national language and the Tarai languages thrive, the remaining 120 languages along with those that did not make it into the census, are fighting a losing battle against the homogenising forces of Nepali and English.

The importance of marks in Nepali in SLC and

subsequent civil service exams essentially puts non-Nepali speakers at a disadvantage and lies at the root of their under-representation in government and other salaried jobs. Pragmatic parents, therefore, prefer that their children learn Nepali and English in school, eroding proficiency in their own mother tongue.

Surveys have shown that children learn best in their mother tongue, and students the world over are more than capable of learning multiple languages simultaneously. But most public schools are on tight budgets and cannot afford to offer classes in local languages. Private schools are better endowed, but they respond to parents' demand for English education.

In 2011, Dharmashila Chapagai, Nepal's State Minister for Health and Population, spent seven agonising minutes labouring through her speech in English at a UN meeting on AIDS in New York. Bloggers ridiculed Chapagai for her diction and posted deriding comments. She could have easily spoken in Nepali, but chose a language she was clearly uncomfortable with because she saw it as a status symbol.

The goal should be to make Nepalis trilingual: fluent in their mother tongue or local language, fluent in Nepali so they can communicate with other Nepalis, and fluent in English so they can speak with the outside world.

Nepal's languages are dying. The number of people who speak one of them, Kusunda, is down to single digits. When a language becomes extinct, we lose a culture, a whole way of life, and a vocabulary of indigenous knowledge forever. The responsibility to protect citizens lies with the state, and so does the responsibility to preserve and nurture the diversity of our linguistic heritage.

Otherwise, by the time the next census comes around in 2021, many of the 123 languages will have vanished.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

GOING ROGUE

Very sharp and incisive editorial ('Going rogue', #640). This piece is an urgent reminder to the ruling parties to get their acts together before time runs out and Nepal is ostracised internationally. It's good that the editor links the political stalemate with the lack of progress on Nepal's ratification of its international commitments. But is Baburam Bhattarai listening? He seems too busy intimidating journalists and human rights activists.

Henny

Everything is going according to plan for Bhattarai and he is on his way to achieving his ultimate goal: dismantling the state. He even has control over the army, a feat Pushpa Kamal Dahal couldn't accomplish. The only sector still opposing him is the media, which is why journalists might be his next target. Watch out.

Deep

I am not sure if editorials in national papers like this or even protests in front of Baluwatar will make any difference to Bhattarai. The man clearly does not give a damn about Nepal's reputation at home or abroad. And until he fulfils his goals, no one can push him from his mighty chair. Like many Nepalis, I too had great hopes from Bhattarai, our first PhD prime minister, but now I will just wait quietly for his next move.

Nepali keti

All this time Dahal and Bhattarai have been making fools of Nepalis as well as the opposition. Until these two are removed from Nepal, there will be nothing but chaos and unrest. So the choice is clear.

Deepak Shrestha

JUSTICE, INTERRUPTED

No justice done to Sita means no justice done to all poor and powerless ('Justice, interrupted', Bhrikuti Rai, #640). Injustice somewhere means injustice everywhere. Sita's case is not only her story, it is the voice of all Nepali women who are suffering the same injustice in every part of Nepal. Every woman should stand strong in solidarity with her until the criminals are put behind bars for life.

Tashi Lama

If it is any consolation, Sita is not alone. We and thousands of others have been doing the same since the last 30 days through a movement now dubbed #OccupyBaluwatar. We admire her courage and strength. 'We' will be granted justice, one way or another.

Rajesh

We salute this young woman's courage and pray that she achieves her aims. No justice, no peace.

Mark Croy

It's good to see Nepalis fighting relentlessly for Sitas across the country, but knowing Bhattarai and



BHRIKUTI RAI

friends, this fight will probably need to go on for months. There are more big fishes to take care of for BRB: avoiding polls, avoiding TRC, extending power. Eradicating gender violence might not even be on his list.

RT

VOICE OF THE VICTIMS

Ram Kumar Bhandari begins his column by saying 'the transitional industry in Nepal has turned the entire peace process into a project' ('Voice of the victims', #640). However, it should have been the opposite: 'the transitional justice project in Nepal has turned the

entire peace process into an industry'. And Bhandari is one of those who has been reaping the most out of this industry.

Sushil Chandra Jha

PAIN IN THE PLAINS

The situation of Madhesis is extremely worrying ('Pain in the plains', Anurag Acharya, #640). The people there die everyday of the cold, while the Madhesi netas are busy looting the state coffers, all in name of inclusiveness. The demand for federalism has become the most effective instrument for the corrupt and criminals to make themselves rich.

Anonymous

KINDNESS COUNTS

What a bouquet of heart warming stories ('Every act of kindness counts', Santa Gaha Magar, #640). Is it just a coincidence that all these selfless individuals are women? Amidst the gloom and doom of scary headlines of demagogue leaders, here are ordinary Nepalis making extraordinary contribution to those less advantaged. Congratulations to all the Rakshas, Sharmilas, and Dikshas out there.

Shila Rajbhandari

For crying out loud, when are journalists in Nepal going to catch up with the world? Social Worker is a protected title. Only people with Social Work degrees (BSW/MSW) are allowed to call themselves social workers. If the

writer used this title, 'There are many young Nepali women who are like CNN heroes' he would've sounded more positive and remained neutral.

Kaji

Could the writer not find any male social workers?

Casual Observer

HIGHWAY IN AMERICA

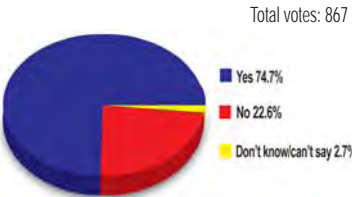
I appreciate Deepak Rauniyar's effort to reach as large an audience as possible ('Highway in America', Mark Turin, #640). But when I see that only his own crew or 'near and dear' ones love this film which was clearly rejected by ordinary cine-goers, it makes me sad. Next time, please make a film for Nepali audience, otherwise just stick to making wedding videos.

Binod



nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #641

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



Weekly Internet Poll # 642. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Was the government right in banning the film *Badhishala*?



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The disappearance of truth

After six years of platitudes, there will be no truth telling and the worst war criminals will walk free



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Two weeks ago a retired army officer in an online interview threatened a military coup if there is an investigation into war crimes. Other media did not pick this up and there was a conspicuous silence in the dailies. This was an act of unmistakable intimidation by an ex-army man who still claimed influence over Nepal's republican army, and one would presume his remarks were sanctioned by the brass.

All this is good news for state security personnel who tortured, raped, murdered, and disappeared people: you don't have to worry about your crimes being raked up because your former enemy is your ally now. Baburam Bhattarai and Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal assured Kathmandu-based ambassadors that the pending TRC Bill will meet international standards. But in all likelihood there will be no investigations, and even if there are, they will be followed by mass amnesty. There are neither provisions for truth seeking, nor prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity under the newly proposed Disappearance, Truth and Reconciliation Bill forwarded by the government to the president's office.

Bhattarai's argument is that wartime excesses like the ones by Col Kumar Lama and the murderers of Dekendra Thapa

come under the purview of the TRC, and he has been publicly advocating a general amnesty so as to "protect the peace process".

Three years ago, a committee headed by Rakam Chemjong drafted two separate TRC and DC bills. Despite several gaping holes, it had the framework which the victims could use to fight for justice. Most importantly, it criminalised forcible detention, rape, torture, and custodial killings and there was no room for pardon in such cases. But the present bill has not only removed the clause which prohibited amnesty in those crimes, it removed all options for prosecution.

Bhattarai told the diplomats he was helpless because the president was sitting on his bill. What he did not tell them, and what the envoys knew full well, was how his government tampered with the earlier draft to water it down to such an extent that fellow comrades and state security will be off the hook.

Article 13 of the proposed bill states that the committee will have the mandate to investigate cases, provide financial reparation to the victims and ensure reconciliation, but it will not have the authority to recommend prosecution even in cases of grave violation of human rights. Further, the provision of command responsibility in such cases has been conspicuously removed from the bill. The provision



KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

under article 22 also gives the committee the right to initiate victims' reconciliation with the accused, without perpetrators having to accept the guilt for the crime, while article 23 provides for amnesty in all kinds of cases.

"If the present bill is passed as it is, it will make a mockery of justice and expose the Nepali state's unwillingness to prosecute war criminals. This will invite further international responses like we saw from the British government in the Col Lama case," says lawyer and

rights activist Govinda Bandi.

The Maoist-led government may be having problems agreeing with the opposition parties on a consensus government, but in not pardoning war criminals there is a consensus. This leaves victims and their families with no choice but to resort to international instruments.

Under Article 2 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, every individual whose rights or freedoms have been violated

has the right to an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity. The article, along with Rule 157 of customary international law, provides universal jurisdiction on cases of suspected war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The extent to which the present state machinery is willing to go in hiding the dirty secrets of the war can be seen

in its ban on the feature film, *Badhshala*, which depicts the story of the notorious Bhairabnath Barrack where the royal Army detained, tortured, raped, and executed suspected Maoists.

Director Manoj Pandit says that although the movie is fictionalised, it is based on historical facts which is probably why it was banned. The conflict has been over for eight years, but it looks like the ghosts of the past will haunt us for a long time to come. 🇳🇵



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FLYING ANGEL: Kitty Houghton, who was a victim of a random murder in New Hampshire on Monday and seen here flying over the sierras last year, was an enthusiastic supporter of Nepali women pilots like Capt Sabina Shrestha and Flight Officer Monica Prajapati at Petaluma airport in California.



Broken wings

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN PILOTS
The Ninety-Nines, Inc.
NEPAL SECTION

The death of Catherine “Kitty” Houghton this week has shocked Nepal’s growing community of women pilots who were inspired by her to set up the Nepal Section of the Ninety-Nines.

Kitty was a Peace Corps volunteer in eastern Nepal in the mid 1960s, spoke fluent Nepali along with 13 other languages, and remained connected to Nepal after retirement from the US Foreign Service. She visited the country several times to support educational and other initiatives in Dhankuta, and to interact with and encourage Nepali women pilots.

The Ninety-Nines is an international organisation of women pilots and as International Membership Chair, she focused especially on women pilots from developing countries. In the last few years she had taken several initiatives to support Nepali pilots, including helping to start and mentor the Nepal Section, making a video on the Nepal Section members’ visits to the United States.

“Kitty Houghton was a remarkably talented and vibrant individual who touched many lives,” said 99s International president, Martha Philipps, “she had friends

all over the world and the sympathy messages immediately started pouring in to the 99s. Much of the growth of the international membership of the 99s is directly attributable to Kitty. We will miss her terribly and will think of her often.”

Houghton, 70, was stabbed to death in a random attack in a New Hampshire hotel lobby on 28 January by another guest she had never met. She had travelled there from California for the board meeting of a school from which she graduated in 1960. A 37-year-old man from Vermont is in custody, but police don’t know the motive.

“We are all shocked and deeply saddened by Kitty’s untimely death,” said George Varughese, Director of the Asia Foundation in Nepal, who frequently flew with her, “Kitty was a good friend of Nepal and a great supporter of women pilots in Nepal.”

Kitty was deeply interested in aviation safety and pilot well-being in Nepal, wanting to always connect pilots with each other, with air traffic controllers, and civil aviation authorities in order to improve the conditions for aviation in Nepal.

“Kitty will be sorely missed but never forgotten,” the Nepal Section of the Ninety-Nines said in a statement, “the women of the Nepal 99s commit to realising her vision for female pilots in Nepal.”

www.ninety-nines.org

nepalitimes.com

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Too hot to handle



Burma's rulers lift censorship but revoke licence of its first sex magazine

BANYOL KONG JANOI
in RANGOON

As the first light of dawn brightens the streets of Rangoon, news vendors are busy distributing the day's magazines and journals. As Burma frees up its press and the country takes faltering steps towards democracy, circulation is booming.

But there is one magazine missing this morning: *Nhyot*, Burma's first sex magazine. Only 1,000 copies of the first and only edition of *Nhyot* (meaning 'allure') were published, and it sold out as soon as it hit the shelves. But the magazine had its licence

immediately revoked, the first since the end of military rule.

Editor Ko Oo Swe admits the first issue of *Nhyot* raised many eyebrows, but said his magazine was aimed more towards educating readers about sex than titillating them.

"Nowadays we're exposed to many kinds of adult entertainment such as online sex, sex web pages, and offline adult entertainment in hotels or clubs," he says, "we wanted the magazine to make people aware about sexually transmitted diseases."

The first issue did combine sex education and entertainment and a red label on the front page warned readers the magazine contained adult material, and

was to be sold to those above the age of 18 only.

Burma's Information Ministry, which now allows coverage of opposition figure Aung San Suu Kyi and critical political coverage, found sex too hot to handle. It accused the magazine of breaching its licence as a fashion publication by printing sexually explicit articles and photos.

Official estimates put the number of Burmese with HIV/AIDS at 200,000, but in reality the number is said to be much more because of prostitution and injecting drug users. Nearly half of those afflicted are women.

Burma is still a conservative society compared to neighbouring Thailand, and many are shy to talk about sex or HIV, or even to read about it in magazines. Public health experts say that only by openly discussing sex can the spread of diseases be stopped.

Says Hmu Hey Thar Khae, a health worker: "This magazine helped our work a lot because it reached lots of people across the country, we have to spread awareness about preventing sexually-transmitted diseases such as HIV." But she adds that the pictures in the first issue need not have been so vulgar.

But Zin Mar, a 22-year-old accountant, says she can't wait to see the next edition. "We need a magazine like *Nhyot* to spread knowledge. We can't learn about this from our family or from school, our culture doesn't allow it," she admits. "If we don't know anything," she says, "we're always more likely to do something wrong."

Ko Oo Swe plans to appeal the censor board's decision, and once the magazine restarts, wants to add more content, focus on HIV prevention, and tackle issues like violence against women.

www.asiacalling.org

Listen to podcast of this article on:

nepalitimes.com



BIZ BRIEFS

New leadership

Cathay Pacific Airways appointed Charlie Stewart-Cox as the airline's General Manager for South Asia, Middle East, and Africa. Based in Mumbai, Stewart-Cox will be responsible for overseeing the business and operations of Cathay Pacific and Dragon Air in the three regions.



CATHAY PACIFIC

Security check

Everest Bank has become the first commercial bank to receive the licence of Depository Participant from CDS and Clearing Ltd. It is now the authorised agent of Central Depository System and can handle various securities like equity, bonds, and warrants.



Cash rich

Syakar Trading, the exclusive distributor of Honda generators and power products in Nepal, announced the first winner of its Honda Scratch Card offer. Sakil Dev Chaudhary from Kathmandu received Rs 20,000.



Freshness first

Bluefin Freshmart opened its new outlet in Pokhara. Popular for seafood, chicken, and pork items imported directly from Thailand, Bluefin has three outlets in Kathmandu as well.

Going mobile

Manakamana Development Bank has launched Manakamana Mobile Money. The mobile banking service allows utility payments, fund transfer, and account transaction alert.



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Strong partnership



Carlsberg and the English Premier League have agreed to a new three year deal which makes Carlsberg the official beer partner. The deal will run for three seasons from 2013/14 until the end of the 2015/16 season of the Barclays English Premier League.

Perfect swing

Chaudhary Group is organising the annual CG Open Golf Tournament at the Gokarna golf course on Saturday. Around 100 amateur golfers will take part in the one-day tournament.



Climb up

Astrex Climbing Wall and NepalSutra are organising Wall Spiders, a wall climbing competition on 22 and 23 February. Nepal Mountaineering Association, Nepal National Mountain Guide Association as well as the International Federation of Sports Climbing (IFSC) are helping with technical assistance.

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Bandana Sharma sits in an empty classroom in Kalanki, Kathmandu (2003).

EVERYDAY EPIPHANIES

There is comfort to be found even in the disorder that defines Nepal

Half-sunken boats lie abandoned in Phewa Lake in Pokhara, Kaski (2010).



A lone chair with a pair of trousers in a hotel room in Dharma, Mugu (2006).



ALL PICS: FRÉDÉRIC LECLOUX


FRÉDÉRIC LECLOUX

“Why Nepal? Why do you come back?” I’ve been asked often. I falter, unable to formulate anything neither consistent nor convincing. Disorder. This ‘why’ lies in a nebulous angle of my mind, elusive but dense.

I realise a certain match between my own disorder and the one that defines these towns and villages where I keep coming back, season after season. A certain match with this territory that does not know the void and where auspicious stones have been erected in the few places that were left virgin by the secular hustle: this territory that appeases me.

Descending from the airport each time I return, shaken up by the traffic jam and the insane driving, suffocated by the racket, the lead and the nitrates, I simply slip into a world where I already exist, soothed in the shadow of its chaos. A world in which I feel recognised. A glance, a dog, a twisted line of ragged walls, a

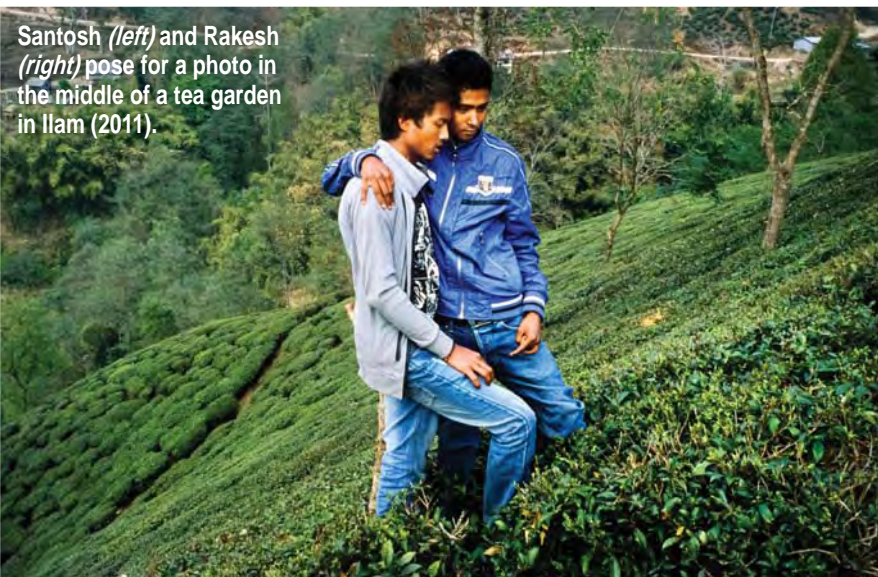
pond, a ladybird on the half-open window of the car, a butcher’s shop on the pavement, the spasms of a bus, the light burn of the tea on the lip. I receive them as solace.

Nothing offends me: death, violence, fever, the air drizzling with dust and heavy metals, the overload of the space. I am in the right place. A place that is searching for balance, a balance between order and disorder, between fiction and reality. This is the Nepal I capture on my lens and where I begin to find my answer to “why Nepal?” 
www.fredericlecloux.com



Frédéric Lecloux, a Belgian photographer, is displaying almost two decades of his work from Nepal at Alliance Française from 31 January onwards. This text is translated and freely adapted from an excerpt of a yet unpublished French book *Ne plus voyager*.

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EVENTS

CHHAPROMA, the screening of this new trilogy of short films will be followed by discussion with acclaimed filmmaker Tsering Rhitar Sherpa on independent filmmaking. 1 February, 11.45am to 2pm, Martin Chautari, 9841442228

Everyday epiphanies, an exhibition of photographs on Nepal by Frederic Lecloux. 31 January to 13 February, 10am to 6pm, Sundays to Fridays, Alliance Francaise, Tripureswor



PODCASTING AND AUDIO STORYTELLING WORKSHOP, learn how to develop, produce, and edit a compelling and dynamic audio story and reach a wider audience through the internet. Rs 1,000, 13 to 27 February, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel

Earth, body, mind, find all the Nepali artists' work from the recently held

Kathmandu International Art Festival in one place. 30 January to 13 February, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

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



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

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

Pondering moments, an exhibition of paintings by artist Seema Acharya. 3 to 8 February, Imago Dei, Naxal, 9841038675

Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival, the seventh edition of the annual NIIFF will explore issues related to Nepal's minority. 25 to 28 April, City Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, (01)4102577, ifa_festivals@yahoo.com, www.ifanepal.org.np



DINING

8 DEGREES, from lemon lassis to spicy pork stews, this is a great place to try continental dishes. *Jhamsikhel*

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



TRISARA, with dishes like flambeed prawns, crispy chicken, and khau soi, it would be a folly to ignore its aromas. *Lajimpat*

Tonic Restaurant, amazing food fit for family dinners or a night out with friends. *Pokhara*

Cibo, a sandwich bar at heart, this cafe serves one of the best sandwiches in town. *Lajimpat*



LORRY'S, a newly opened restaurant its bistecca ai funghi is a must try. *Jhamsikhel*

Cafereena, the extensive menu has something for everyone. Try their famous chips chili. *Sherpa Mall, Darbar Marg*

Moksh, it may be well known for its cultural events but the food in Moksh is mighty fine. *Jhamsikhel*

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



CLUB AMSTERDAM AND CAFE BAR, great food, exotic cocktails, live band, BBQ, and more. *Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463427*

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

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

Pumpnickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread, experiment with its goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. *Thamel, 7.30am-7pm, (01)4259185*



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COVER
Vicious circle: Under state endorsement, Nepal is becoming an international headquarters for human trafficking

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Stop the Prime Minister

COMMENTARY
What I saw, Haribansha Acharya
The accused must not walk free, Gunaraj Luitel

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Makeshift lives



Shelter is a documentary based on the lives of slum dweller Meena Basnet and her daughter Nirjala. Meena recounts how she came to the capital from Udaypur, became a widow soon after her marriage, and gave birth to Nirjala in a field. Nirjala, meanwhile, has converted to Christianity, much to the disapproval of her mother, but does well at school as long as her mother can pay her exam fees. Amidst this tale of grinding poverty and faint hope, the men in power in Kathmandu rouse the emotions of the poor, while the government decides to bulldoze the slums of Thapathali. What will become of Meena and Nirjala? 1 February, 1.45 to 3pm, free entry Sarwanam Theatre, Kalikasthan, 9841526593



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

I felt like I was going to a friend's house for dinner when I stepped into Cafe Cheeno (which I am told means keepsake in Nepali). The inner dining area features a couch, a mini-library, and a wine rack. Intricate traditional art adorns the walls and even the ceiling. Along one wall runs a shelf where tote bags and other souvenirs are on sale. The welcoming atmosphere makes Cheeno the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and chat with friends on a cold day. If the weather is fine and the sun is out, however, you might want to make yourself comfortable at the outdoor garden instead. A wooden door leads to a charming cobblestoned courtyard, walled off from the noise, dust, and

Cafe Cheeno



chaos outside. There are a number of interesting sights to check out while waiting for your food to arrive, like a wooden pagoda in the centre of a vegetable plot, a swing and a loom where you can buy

even helping me shift my bags when the evening chill nudged me inside. The starters are a little pricey, with the mini fried-chicken (Rs 350) being tasty, but nothing extraordinary. The potato wedges are a far better option, for just Rs 175 you get a platter of thick-cut potatoes lightly fried and covered with crunchy herbs and spices, the perfect appetiser for your main course. For those of us watching our waistlines, the roasted pumpkin soup (Rs 235) will do nicely: light, smooth, and slightly exotic. You're spoiled for choice at Cafe Cheeno when it comes to the mains, with a great selection of pastas, steaks, ribs, and other such Western dishes. For a lighter lunch, opt for a steak sandwich (Rs 250), a change from the typical burgers and hotdogs found at other restaurants. The steak is tender, the glazed onions give it an extra crunch and it's accompanied by a generous serving of French fries. If you have the time (and the appetite) the Breaded Chicken (Rs 450) is immensely satisfying. Although the chicken is average at best, the spaghetti topped with grated cheese in tomato sauce and the grilled vegetables make it a delicious and filling meal on the whole.



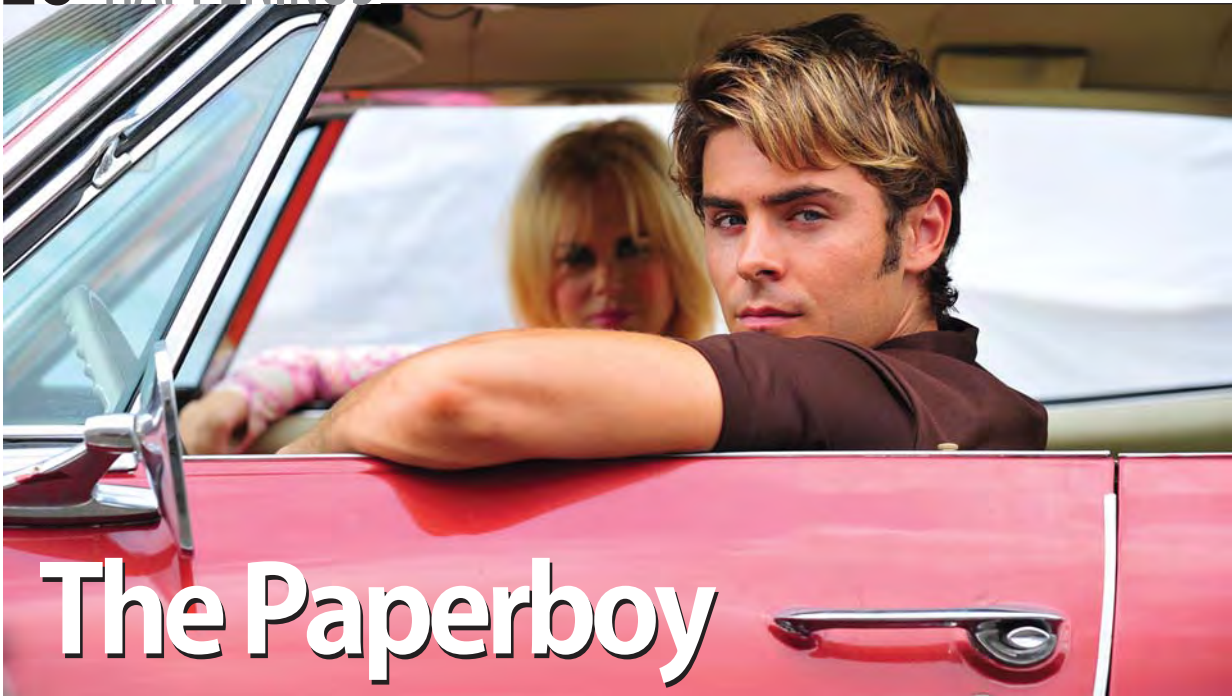
PICS: SULAIMAN DAUD

Cheeno also offers an enticing dessert menu of cakes, cookies, and ice cream, although I was simply too full to indulge. But its elegant decor and comfortable setting will certainly draw me back again, perhaps with a group of friends to sample both the desserts and Australian wines. If you're on your way to do some shopping at Bhat-Bhateni next door, keep an hour free in your schedule for a meal at Cafe Cheeno. Sulaiman Daud

How to get there: from the Patan Dhoka post office, walk north along the main road and turn left into Krishna Galli leading to Bhat-Bhateni shopping centre, and Cafe Cheeno is on your left.

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MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Lee Daniels is one of the few black directors working in Hollywood today. Critically acclaimed for *Precious* (2009) a film about a young black girl who fights her way through her abused childhood, with *The Paperboy* Daniels has produced and directed yet another troubling, but haunting film about race, class, gender, and homosexuality, all of which are encapsulated in a gripping film noir set in a small town in Florida, aptly named Lately.

The film revolves around a central murder mystery involving the killing of the town's reviled Sheriff, a cruel white man who is hated by both his own and the black community for his atrocities and indiscriminate killing. A man called Hillary Van Wetter (played by John Cusack in an astonishingly sociopathic turn) is convicted of the crime and put on death row.

Enter the titular paperboy Jack Jensen (he delivers the town newspapers that his father publishes), played surprisingly well by an otherwise almost too good-looking Zac Efron. Jack is back at home after being kicked out of college for emptying the campus pool one night in a drunken prank. An avid swimmer with a wounded heart, Jack's one solace is his mother's wedding ring, which she left behind when she abandoned her two sons and husband.

It is when Jack's brother Ward (Matthew McConaughey) comes back from Miami with a fellow reporter in tow to re-investigate the Van Wetter arrest that things start to go awry.

The trio is aided by the slightly crazed Charlotte Bless

(played by an avidly vampy Nicole Kidman), a woman who occupies her time by writing erotic love letters to inmates on death row. Claiming that she and Van Wetter are in love and want to get married, Charlotte provides the journalists the crucial 'in' with Van Wetter.

As relationships start to develop and evolve, Jack falls in love with the disturbed but still vulnerable and undeniably gorgeous Charlotte. Over the course of their developing friendship and the ongoing investigation, several incidents occur that expose the vulnerable and ugly underbelly of rural 1960s Florida.

The story, vividly told through the voice of Anita (played by the singer Macy Gray), the black housekeeper for the Jensen family, is permeated with an atmosphere of archetypal evil lurking just outside of the frame, finally manifesting itself towards the end of the film in a finale that sears itself into the brain.

Films like these are little gems that often do not have the backing of huge studios that push on their behalf during awards season. Regardless, Nicole Kidman has been nominated for 'Best Supporting Actress' for her unforgettable portrayal of a woman who just cannot help herself but is completely unapologetic about it.

I will warn you that *The Paperboy* may not be to your taste. It is often over the top and very violent, but this is Lee Daniel's style. It is this very style backed by intelligence, undeniable directorial skill, and an intimate knowledge of his deeply flawed but very human characters that make for such a compelling film. Watch it, you'll get to the end, and watch it all over again for the nuances you missed. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Keep your kidneys running



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Forty-year-old Ram Maya has been feeling queasy for the last three months. She is easily exhausted and has trouble sleeping. Recently she noticed some swelling in her ankles. She was not pregnant, but when the doctor checked her serum creatinine (an index of kidney function) it was clearly abnormal. She was also noted to be anemic.

Although she had been diagnosed with high blood pressure fifteen years ago, she took her medicines for a few months and stopped because the symptoms had disappeared. Also as the pills were quite expensive, she was quite happy to be saving money.

Ram Maya is suffering from chronic kidney disease (CKD), an increasingly common problem in Nepal as evidenced by the growing number of patients lined up outside



dialysis centres like the one in Bir Hospital (pic, below).

Healthy kidneys perform a number of duties to help the body function normally. Besides getting rid of waste, they keep a good balance between water and electrolytes. They even function as glandular organs to make erythropoietin, a hormone (the same one that cyclist Lance Armstrong took for doping) which helps produce red blood cells.

No wonder Ram Maya was anemic and tired because she lacked erythropoietin. In majority of cases, chronic kidney disease is strongly associated with uncontrolled hypertension as in Ram Maya's case or diabetes, another

escalating health problem among Nepalis (in fact, South Asia has more diabetics than anywhere else in the world). Many patients with CKD also die of heart attacks because the important risk factors (diabetes and hypertension) are similar for both CKD and cardiovascular diseases.

It's not possible to completely 'cure' CKD, but there are ways to slow the progress of the disease and prevent cardiovascular complications.

If you are 55-years or older, have diabetes or hypertension or family history of renal failure, get checked for chronic kidney disease immediately. Once diagnosed, you will need to make some major changes in your diet and lifestyle to prevent kidney failure. The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is high in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products containing little saturated fat, and cholesterol. Lowering sodium intake, quitting smoking, exercising regularly, and keeping blood pressure and blood sugar level under control are also critical. 🇳🇵



SEEING RED: Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai (left) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal (right) greet the audience gathered at Khula Manch on Wednesday for the Federal Democratic Republican Alliance (FDRA) meeting.



HELLO GOODBYE: Outgoing Chinese ambassador Yang Houlan bids farewell to Army Chief Gaurav SJB Rana at the Army Headquarters in Bhadrakali on Thursday morning.



COLD BATH, WARM HEART: Women take a dip in the Salinadi River after praying for the good health and prosperity of their families on the first day of Swasthani festival at Sankhu on Sunday.

READERS' PHOTO



PUBLIC LIFE: Residents of Khokana in Lalitpur gather near a water well to wash their clothes.

WEEKEND WEATHER

There are a series of westerly disturbances that have swept Nepal in the past week, but none of them held much precipitation. There has been some cloud cover, and some dusting of snow at higher altitudes, but nothing much to cheer farmers. The trend will continue into the weekend with in and out sunshine on Friday. Maximum temperatures will remain below 20 because of the thick Indo-Gangetic haze that will filter the afternoon sunshine. Minimum temperature will remain low and mornings will be misty.



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|--------|----------|--------|
| | | |
| 17° 5° | 19° 3° | 19° 3° |

Nation in perpetual rage

In its pursuit of the 'national', the Indian media ignores the 'local'



GUEST COLUMN
Ajaz Ashraf

The expanding footprint of India's national media and its campaign style journalism have projected India as a nation in perpetual rage. It is debatable whether this rage is national in its sweep and depth or it has such an appearance because of the media's projections of it, reflecting the concerns and priorities of those whose task it is to determine what constitutes the story.

It is through the media that a people spread over a vast geographical area evolve common perceptions about the vital issues pertaining to them, thereby developing a sense of belonging to a national community. The content of the media is consequently deemed to reflect the quality of conversation the nation is engaged in.

The conversation India is seemingly engaged in, as discerned from its media, is one of shock, disenchantment, and seething rage. Last year, fledgling politicians Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan riveted the nation for weeks through allegations of corruption against the rich and powerful. The media's fervour for corruption, though, seemed to dampen as soon as the irrepressible duo brought the corporate czars into their crosshairs.

Campaign style journalism reached a new apogee after the brutal rape of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student in Delhi. The extensive media coverage of the tragic incident, and the debate on patriarchy and gender inequality it sparked off compelled Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to deliver a nationally televised speech and institute a commission to recommend changes in laws to



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deal with sexual offences.

Even before the fury over the rape had abated, the nation found yet another reason to turn apoplectic: this time over Pakistani troops beheading one of the two soldiers killed. The bristling tone of media reports, with a little help from protesting Shiv Sena activists, led to the return of Pakistani hockey players and New Delhi temporarily suspending the agreement to grant visa on arrival to those above 65-year-old.

Corruption, rape, Indo-Pakistan relations share certain common features. Delhi was the proscenium on which the drama of corruption and rape unfolded. All the dramatic personae, the heroes and villains alike, belonged to Delhi or had made it the epicentre of their activities. Jammu and Kashmir is far removed from India's capital, yet it is here that occurrences have been traditionally interpreted and transmitted India-wide.

Perhaps the problem stems from the use of the word 'national', which is often synonymous with Delhi. Since Delhi also happens to be the place where most national media houses are located, their extensive coverage of agitation in the city catapults them into the national consciousness. They are subsequently discussed and analysed threadbare, reality is

what we see on the tv screen.

Perhaps in a country of a billion-plus, the turnout of crowds agitating at different places over an issue can be a barometer of the national mood. We could also quibble over what the size of the crowds ought to be. Perhaps some would want to factor in social media. Others would say a rage is national based on the impact it could have on the voting pattern.

The growing role of the media in determining what constitutes the national, despite its inherently contentious nature, is provoking a litany of complaints, particularly against the 24x7 tv news channels. One has to just drive out of Delhi to sense the popular discontent, even anger, against the media. This is largely because people believe the media is short-sighted and self-obsessed, guilty of conflating Delhi and the metros with the national, and ignoring what they describe are the 'real issues' confronting the nation.

For them, the creaking infrastructure, interminable power cuts, galloping prices, grinding poverty, and rampant unemployment are issues the national media should build its relentless campaigns on. The marginalisation of the local in the national media, in some ways, mirrors the earlier failure of national political parties to respond to regional aspirations, ultimately culminating in the

fracturing of the Indian polity and emergence of a clutch of regional and caste outfits. It is a failing which seems to have afflicted the media as well.

Think of the last time an incident outside India's metros prompted the national media to launch a campaign on it. Think why the stories of brutality reported from outside the metros don't shock the media into demanding justice. In other words, the media is being accused of what the Indian political class has been for decades: neglecting the hinterland, allowing it to languish and decay, and concentrating its energies on cities where its members reside.

In the 21st century you don't exist if you are not in the news. It is the job of the media to ensure that people living in the periphery also feel that their existence and problems matter in the national scheme of things. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

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MARK TURIN

Nepal’s extraordinary biological diversity is matched by a similar level of cultural and linguistic variety. For a country with a relatively small landmass, 123 languages used as mother tongues remain an impressively high number and mean that Nepal is home to more language families than Europe. It has more distinct and individual languages than those officially recognised across the European community.

Language death is often compared to species extinction, and some experts believe that they have found an inverse correlation between language diversity and latitude. Areas rich in languages also tend to be rich in ecology and species. Around the world there appears to be a co-concurrence of rich flora and fauna and languages, as in the Nepal Himalaya which has 5,400 species of higher plants and more than 860 species of birds. This high level of biodiversity per unit area is matched by a similar degree of linguistic variation.

Yet, it remains a race against time to document, protect, and nurture Nepal’s increasingly endangered linguistic diversity. While some of Nepal’s languages are thriving, most notably Nepali, many other speech forms used by Nepal’s many distinct communities are not faring so well. The key measure of a language’s viability is not only the number of people who speak it, but the extent to which children are still learning and using the language, and the degree to which inter-generational transmission continues.

There are many reasons and ways by which mother tongues become endangered. Declining speaker numbers

It is a race against time to document and support Nepal’s increasingly endangered linguistic diversity

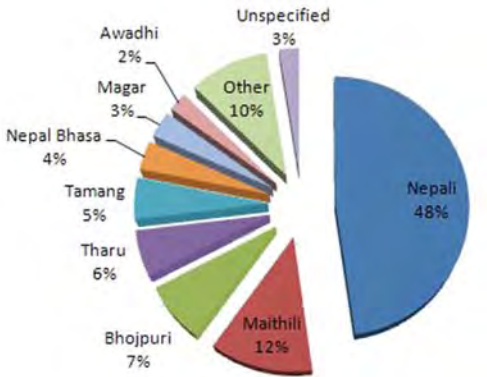
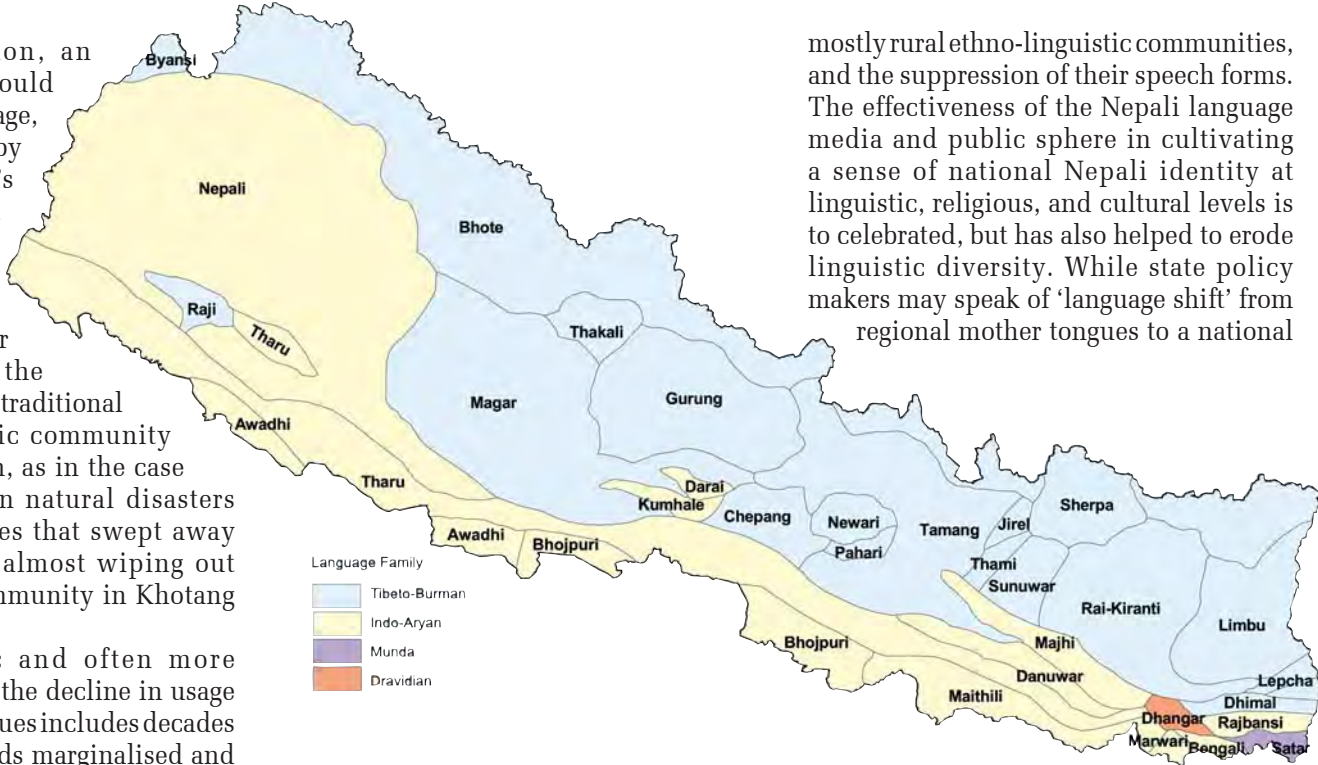


is the most common, an example of which would be the Kusunda language, recently documented by Tribhuvan University’s Central Department of Linguistics, and found to have only a couple of speakers left. Other reasons for the decline include the transformation of the traditional habitat of a linguistic community through deforestation, as in the case of the Raute, or even natural disasters such as the landslides that swept away two entire villages, almost wiping out the Koi-speaking community in Khotang district.

A more prosaic and often more pernicious reason for the decline in usage of Nepal’s mother tongues includes decades of state neglect towards marginalised and

mostly rural ethno-linguistic communities, and the suppression of their speech forms. The effectiveness of the Nepali language media and public sphere in cultivating a sense of national Nepali identity at linguistic, religious, and cultural levels is to be celebrated, but has also helped to erode linguistic diversity. While state policy makers may speak of ‘language shift’ from regional mother tongues to a national

language, members of the affected community may feel rather differently about it, and perceive this process as a form of encroaching ‘linguicide’. One way to support endangered languages is through mother tongue instruction. While some suggest that learning ‘through’ Gurung or Bhojpuri at school would disadvantage children who speak these languages at home





LEARNING HER ABC'S: Grade 2 student at the Jana Jyoti School in Geeling of Mustang district learning Tibetan. The school is one of the few in Nepal that puts an emphasis on mother tongue instruction.

KUNDA DIXIT

when compared to mother tongue Nepali speakers, years of robust international research shows that children learn best in their mother tongue and perform better in their studies over time. The high rate of school absenteeism and dropouts among young students from non-Nepali speaking backgrounds has been directly linked to the challenges they face in a culturally and linguistically alien classroom.

Curriculum development is an important element in the development of mother tongue language materials. Historically, government-funded mother tongue initiatives simply translated Nepali language primary school books into other languages, without regard for cultural differences. Such schemes are doomed to fail, since the content of a school book must reflect the cultural, dietary, and religious values of its students. As for the suggestion that if students learn through their mother tongue they won't learn

Nepali or English properly, we would do well to remember that most of the world is resolutely multilingual and that young minds have an amazing capacity to learn, absorb, and process language. It's not a question of either the national language or one's mother tongue, since many languages can be learned, taught, and used simultaneously. 🇳🇵

Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist who has worked in Nepal for 20 years. Collocated at Cambridge and Yale universities, he directs the Digital Himalaya Project (www.digitalhimalaya.org) and the Yale Himalaya Initiative (himalaya.yale.edu).

Listen to a three-part BBC series on linguistic diversity with a focus on Nepal. 🎧

nepalitimes.com 🖱️

A mother of mother tongue education, #343

GOING, GOING, GONE ...

- UNESCO's classification system to measure endangered languages:
- Vulnerable - most children speak the language but only at home
 - Definitely endangered - children no longer learning language as 'mother tongue'
 - Severely endangered - spoken by older generations, while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
 - Critically endangered - the youngest speakers are grandparents or older, they speak it infrequently
 - Extinct - there are no speakers left

Medium is the message

In a bid to promote education in the mother tongue of Nepalis, the government is trying through its School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015) to introduce multilingual education in about 7,500 schools across the country. However, there are less than 30 schools where the medium has been changed to mother tongues in primary level.

"The government has formulated guidelines and the Interim Constitution of 2007 even has a provision for primary level education through mother tongues, but as always, implementation has been



the hardest part," says linguist Amrit Yonzon who also heads the Multilingual Education Society in Nepal.

While there are text books for 20 mother tongues at the primary level, and *Naya Goreto*, a textbook for non-formal education, is published in 14 languages. However, experts note that just translating books is not enough, and the local culture that the language represents should also be included in the text.

Says Yonzon: "Unless elements of local culture are infused in the curriculum, mother tongue based education won't be effective."

Bhrikuti Rai

THANGMI VOCABULARY



HIKMAT KHADKA

RESCUE EFFORT: Mark Turin (centre), returns a grammar book of the Thangmi language to one of his principal research partners and language teachers Man Bahadur Thami (right) during an interview for a BBC Radio program in Kokati, Sindhupalchok last year.

Mother tongues consist of far more than grammar and words. The Tibeto-Burman language, Thangmi, is spoken by a community of around 30,000 people in Dolakha and Sindhupalchok, and has a wealth of unique indigenous terms for local plants and animals with ritual and medicinal value.

As fluency in Nepali increases, much of this local knowledge is falling into disuse. When children cease to speak their mother tongue, the oral transmission of specific ethno-botanical and medical knowledge is also put at risk. Linguistic diversity is an integral component in ecological stability and the delicate fabric of cultural life.

The Thangmi language has four semantically distinct verbs all of which are translated into English as 'to come', reflecting something of the terrain in which the speakers live:

yusa: 'to come from above' (down the mountain)
wangsa: 'to come from below' (up the mountain)
kyelsa: 'to come from level' (around a natural obstacle)
rasa: 'to come from an unspecified direction'

Martyrdom 101

Salokya, Mysansar.com, 29 January

Today is 16 Magh, Martyrs Day, a government holiday. We have been celebrating this day since the end of the Rana regime in 1951. Dasrath Chand, Shukra Raj Shastri, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, and Gangalal Shrestha were given death sentences this very week 72 years ago. These four are not the only Nepali martyrs though. Many new and old have been added to the list. But the exact number is hard to determine.



The Home Ministry officially declared 101 Nepalis as martyrs following the 2006/2007 people’s movement. People who were killed by the police, killed by criminal gangs in the Tarai, and even those killed due to personal enmity are all included in this list. Out of the 101 martyrs, 26 were involved in the 2006/2007 movement, 30 in the Madhes uprising, four were ‘religious martyrs’, and one was a journalist. Countless civil servants (employees from local bodies, from the Agriculture Research Council, from the finance field, teachers,

even students) also made the Home Ministry’s cut. But how many of the 101 martyrs do you recognise? And why are there so many different categories of martyrs?

Those of you anxious about how so many people made it to the list in such a short time, hold your breath because these are just statistics from the Home Ministry, there are thousands more. When Pushpa Kamal Dahal was the prime minister, 8,000 Nepalis killed by both sides during the armed conflict were declared martyrs according to the recommendations made by the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. The families of the ‘martyrs’ received Rs 100,000 each as compensation. When Baburam Bhattarai came to power he gave out an additional Rs 200,000 to families of those who were killed or disappeared.

While the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction’s list includes genuine victims like journalist Dekendra Thapa (who has not been called a martyr by any newspaper in the past two weeks), there are many bizarre cases like that of a nine-year-old boy who was killed when he mistook a bomb for a toy. There is also the mysterious case of Kulman Pariyar and Laxmi Thapa who the document says were killed on 2 October 2001, but the reason is not disclosed. According to *Nepal Saptahik* newspaper, Kulman and Laxmi were lovers who committed suicide after rumours of Laxmi’s pregnancy spread through their village. I don’t know what qualifies these two as martyrs, maybe the government should put them under the ‘love martyr’ category. Both Kulman and Laxmi’s families have received compensation from the state.

If we scrutinise these lists further, I am sure hundreds of Kulmans and Laxmis will turn up. www.mysansar.com

“I am against nepotism and refuse to give in to their greed.”

Dil Bhusan Pathak interviews former commissioner of Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA) Keshab Sthapit on Tough Talk, *News24*, 28 January

Dil Bhusan Pathak: You said you would build a lovers’ park and underground parking spaces in Kathmandu, but people didn’t take you too seriously.
Keshab Sthapit: Despite pressure I have always dreamt big and worked tirelessly to make those dreams come true. It’s usually the older generation that criticises me, the younger ones have been very receptive and welcomed my ideas.

You went from backing the UML to being pro-king and now you support the UCPN (Maoist)?
I don’t care much about political ideologies and affiliations. I work with those who want to build a better and prosperous Nepal. I stayed away from party politics for a while, but now I am a general member of the UML and I hope to do meaningful work.

The same government which made you the commissioner of KVDA, sacked you. Why?
None of the KVDA projects and plans was approved by the cabinet. And although PM Baburam Bhattarai had promised his full support, we were neither given any office space nor provided with resources. The PM had also said we would be allowed to work independently, but there was constant interference from Hisila Yami, her personal assistant, and others close to Bhattarai. I refused to follow their orders. When they realised they



couldn’t get any benefits from KVDA, they said I was incompetent and were not comfortable working with me.

Did you tell the PM about the constant intervention and pressures?
Yes I told him that I couldn’t work under such pressure from Hisila ji and would no longer report to her about the functioning of KVDA. It is ridiculous to ask me to give jobs to 20 of her relatives when the organisation itself is in such a poor state. Although he assured me that he would take care of things, I was sacked.

The Supreme Court (SC) has intervened in your case, what’s the verdict?
Yes the SC has stayed the government’s decision to dismiss me, but since I have already been removed from my post I cannot go back as commissioner unless the court orders.

If and when the SC reinstates you, what projects do you have in the pipeline?
Since Kathmandu is vulnerable to major earthquakes, the first project would be to prepare the Valley for such a disaster, raise awareness, and build emergency shelters. I would also work towards urban regeneration and making the newly expanded roads pedestrian and disabled friendly.

What if the PM calls you back?
I am ready to cooperate with Bhattarai or anyone else for the sake of nation building. However, the state needs to give me complete independence. I am against nepotism of any sort and refuse to give in to their greed.

nepalitimes.com
Watch the interview



Sign: D-E-K-E-N-D-R-A
Bhattarai: I’m a well read man and that sign clearly says D-O-L-L-A-R-S.

नागरिक Ramesh KC in *Nagarik*, 29 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Dahal should lead the electoral government, not because he is honest, but because there are times when you have to give the keys to a thief to protect yourself.

Gagan Thapa, central committee member of the NC on *Kantipur Television*, 29 January

NEPALI TWEETS

Nilamber Acharya
१७सालका चार शहिदलाई सम्झौं। अनियन्त्रित, अनुत्तरदायी, स्वेच्छाचारी एकतन्त्रात्मक शासनविरुद्ध संघर्षको मुद्दान सम्झौं। लोकतन्त्र बलियो पारौं।
Let’s remember the four martyrs of 1997 BS. Let’s remember the source of struggle against uncontrolled, unaccountable, autocratic, one-man rule. Let’s make democracy stronger.

swapnil
आज वीर शहीद, भाग्यदा भाग्यद लडिमरेका ‘भीर शहीद’, पाटी झडपमा खुस्केका ‘उन शहीद’, आफ्नै बोकेको पड्केर मरेका ‘बम शहीद’ सम्झौं। श्रद्धाञ्जली
Condolences to brave martyrs, to ‘cliff martyrs’ who died while running away, to ‘don martyrs’ who died during political scuffles, and ‘bomb martyrs’ who died when explosives in their hands went off.

Anamol Mani
कुरा सुन्दा यस्तो लाग्छ, सेनाको पोशाक लागेर लुट्ने पो पाइन्छ, सेनाको पोशाक लागेर बलत्कार र हत्या गर्ने पाइन्छ सिलेमा बलाएर प्रचार गर्ने पाइन्छ ?
You can loot, rape, and murder in army uniform, but you cannot make a film and publicise it?

जाइलो ज !
अहिले सेनाको पोशाक प्रयोगको विषय विवादमा ल्याउनेले प्रेमपिण्ड वसन्ती जस्ता फिल्ममा श्रीपथ समेल प्रयोग हुदा खु बोल्या येनन त / #यघशाला
Those trying to ban the film *Badhshala* because it uses army uniforms didn’t utter a single word when films like *Prem Pinda* and *Basanti* used the crown. #Badhshala

Kalpana Bhattarai
नेपालमा स्वतन्त्र व्यक्ति त पशुपतिनाथ मात्र छन्, तर उनी त देवता परे, अनि उनलाई प्रेम पनि किन बनाउनु! अखिर देश पशुपतिनाथले बनाइरहेकाछन्।
Prachanda said yesterday that an independent person should be made the next PM. But who is really independent in this country? Pashupatinath is probably the only one, but he is god. And why should we make him PM? He is already running the country.

SMRITI DHUNGANA
हाम्रो लागि एकदम साहसिक पेशा हो र हाम्रो गृह मन्त्रीले भन्या हुन त्यही भएर जहिलेपनि हामीलाई हमला गरेका होलान क्यारे. हाम्रो साहस ईनलाइ
The home minister said journalism is a very brave profession. That must be why he is always attacking us, to test our bravery.

Compleekated
पहिचान बनाउने प्रयत्नमा अस्तित्व संकटमा परेको अवस्थाको हामी
In our effort to create an identity, we have put our existence in danger.

The cash Maoists

Online Khabar, 27 January

With the party’s general convention in Hetauda only a week away, the UCPN(M) is preparing to funnel large sums of money for the occasion. Known as South Asia’s richest party, just how much money does it have?
When the Maoists joined mainstream politics in 2006, they had a meagre savings worth Rs 17,460. A year after they signed the peace treaty, their savings soared and reached Rs 1.5 million. This amount tripled in the third year of the peace process to Rs 4.4 million. The party had a field day when chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal became prime minister in 2008. It saved a further Rs 7.7 million in 2009, but faced huge losses (up to Rs 5 million) when Dahal resigned. According to figures posted at the Election Commission (EC), the party’s savings increased to Rs 4.3 million after deputy-chairman Baburam Bhattarai came to power and today the UCPN(M) has savings worth Rs 7.7 million.

Along with its savings, the party’s expenses have also grown enormously. The Maoists earned Rs 132 million in the last fiscal year and spent Rs 128 million during the same time. In 2007 their expenses (Rs 14.5 million) were nearly nine times less than today. The UCPN(M) has never been transparent about its finances and has no treasurers from the central committee to the lowest ranks. It has been accused of looting the state coffers during both Dahal and Bhattarai’s reign.

However, after the EC threatened to cancel the registration of parties who would not submit audits, the Maoists, like all other parties, were compelled to submit a six-year record of income and expenditure. The Maoists told the EC that they had Rs 4.3 million in savings, but top leaders are now trying to hoodwink the general convention’s organising committee that the party is experiencing huge losses.

Dahal, Bhattarai, and co are likely to feed the same lie to their rank and file in Hetauda to prevent another chair throwing incident like the one last July where cadre got angry after their leaders failed to give an account of the money that was meant for ex-combatants.
www.onlinekhabar.com

The invisibles

HARI BANSHA ACHARYA

In my three decades as an actor, I have travelled to major towns and cities across the country. I enjoy meeting Nepalis on the way and the trips are always fun. This past month, however, the Antenna Foundation Nepal's crew and I left the Valley with a different motive. We wanted to meet Nepali brothers and sisters, we wanted to understand their pain, and document their everyday struggles. Our journey took us from the far West districts of Accham, Dadheldhura, Doti, and Dailekh to the underbelly of the Tarai.

Despite abundant natural resources, Nepalis in the far-western districts are forced to live in unimaginable poverty. They are the forgotten people and there is little here to suggest the presence of the Nepali state. Poverty is rampant throughout the country as well, but this region is a different case all together.

Children are malnourished, parents and grandparents are too weak and ill from hunger, very few can afford healthcare. Hardest hit by the decade long conflict, the region is still struggling to come to terms with its wounds and deal with the staggering number of war orphans. Parents have no one to look after them and 10-year-old boys think about migrating to India in search of jobs.

Our leaders in the capital make anti-India speeches in the name of protecting our nationalism. But if they really loved Nepal they would provide jobs to the thousands of young men and women from the west who leave home and travel south every year in order to feed their



SPEAK UP: Hari Bansha talks with teachers from Bal Matri School in Bhim Pokhari, Baglung which has banned corporal punishment.

ANTENNA FOUNDATION NEPAL

The people of the far-west and the Tarai are suffering in silence because of the state's short-sightedness and neglect

families. If only the people of Accham, Dadheldhura, Doti, and Dailekh could earn a living in their own villages, they could send their children to schools, and the young educated ones would slowly end traditions like chaupadi.

When we filmed them, the people shared their stories hoping we would help them out. But all we could do was to assure them that the rulers in Kathmandu would hear their voices. It broke my heart to make such hollow promises.

The people living in the remote villages of Tarai are also suffering due to

state apathy. They look at neighbouring Bihar's extraordinary progress and feel disillusioned. They wonder: what went wrong? Development has come to a grinding halt, there is no electricity, no water supply, and jobs are scarce. People try to make a living out of a few hundred square metres of land or work as daily labourers.

The Madhes uprising disrupted the social harmony in places like Rajbiraj. Most Pahadis abandoned their homes and migrated to Kathmandu, Hetauda, Biratnagar, and north of the highway.

Only those who had no other option dared to stay back. Today there are sign boards written in Nepali throughout the market. We ask the people if the authorities put these up forcefully, they tell us these boards have been here all along. They didn't want to rewrite the messages in Hindi and writing in Maithili was hard. Madhesis want their Pahadi neighbours to return and blame the parties for igniting communal violence in a relatively peaceful, multicultural society.

It feels like the state has completely abandoned Nepalis living in these remote hinterlands. And in the absence of locally elected bodies and government appointed VDC secretaries who refuse to stay in villages, there is no one to listen to their problems, no one to help them.

However, despite the immense suffering Nepalis are fending for themselves. Families in the far-west make use of information from local radios and newspapers to educate their children on safe sex and warn them of the dangers of contracting HIV/AIDS while working in India. In Janakpur, street dramas performed in local languages like Bhojpuri and Maithili are making residents more aware and proud of their mother tongues. They don't care about identity politics, they simply want to preserve their linguistic heritage.

Nearly 55 per cent of Nepal's population is below the age of 25 and many of them live in the far-west and the Tarai. By turning our backs on them, we are undermining our potential for progress. They deserve better. www.afn.org.np



Actor Hari Bansha Acharya travelled from the far-west to the plains of Tarai last month interviewing ordinary Nepalis for Antenna Foundation Nepal's 'Maile Je Bhoge' (What I went through) program.

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



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C'mon do something crazy

Anyway, Nepal has made it to the Lonely Planet's 10 Most Memorable Places to Visit in 2013 list. Which got us thinking about making a list of 10 slogans to promote Nepal as an even more memorable destination:

1. 'Visit Nepal, See Stars'. No light pollution in Nepal because there is no electricity, and Kathmandu is the only capital in the world in which the Milky Way is visible from the city centre.
2. Nepal is a Cardamom and Ginger Superpower. 'Visit Nepal and Spice Up Your Life'.
3. Nepal has held Guinness Records for everything from the world's shortest man to the world's fastest clock. 'Come to Nepal and Set Your Own World Record By Doing Something Crazy'.
4. Large parts of the country have still not been declared Open Defecation Free. 'Come to Nepal and Do It In the Open'.
5. Nepal is the ninth most corrupt country in the world. 'Help Eradicate Poverty By Bribing the Natives'.
6. Communism is alive and kicking in Nepal. 'See Stalin resurrected and Mao rise from His Maoseleum'.

7. Time travel is not science fiction anymore. 'Visit Nepal and Go Back to the 17th century'.
8. When you see the shortage of power, water, gas, diesel you will never complain about your petty problems again. 'Visit Nepal, All My Troubles Seem So Far Away'.
9. Lack of water can also be turned into a tourist attraction. 'Visit Nepal, Get That High and Dry Feeling'.
10. 'The World's Most-Memorable Airport, Kathmandu'. The longest immigration lines, shortest bus rides from plane to terminal, friskiest friskiers, and most fragrant loos.

Alert readers will have followed the saga of Ketchup Stopit who was appointed by BRB to head the KTM Valley Commission, and then unceremoniously dumped last week by First Lady Ghusila. The Supreme Court has ruled saying he should have his job back, but by then Stopit had gone on tv spilling the beans about why he got the sack. Apparently he refused to approve kickbacks to fill Comrade Yummy's tummy, and the last straw was a payoff from a luxury hotel on Kanti Path. But the former mayor of Ktown got so carried away with his



confessions he also revealed that he had introduced the Maoists to Chinese arms dealers during the war. Whoa, comrades, is that the way to treat your arms broker?

Speaking of whom, Comrade Hasiya has been given a carte blanche by Comrade Hatoda and runs a parallel PMO from her office in Blubber Mahal. Now that Hubby Kamred's days as Pardon Muntri seem to be numbered, the standard operating procedure is that decisions on all big contracts from multifuel powerplants to jet purchases are made by the First Lady's secretariat. Any govt official who stands in the way is immediately transferred by a cabinet

decision. Having broken national records on corruption, Ms Ghusila has now broken the world record for nepotism by getting seven siblings and relatives top jobs. The conjugal pair may be Raja Birodhi, but they sure emulate Raja Paksa.

It is not true what people say about Comrade Red Flag being a Delhi implant. In fact, never in our nation's history have we been as independent as we have been under the reign of Prime Minister Bharu Ram. Just look at the evidence: we haven't had an ambassador in Delhi for nearly two years now. In fact, not having a sitting envoy there means our plenipotentiary is not unduly beholden to the powers that be in the Indian capital. (Some even say: with Laaldhwoj as PM who needs an ambassador in Delhi?) If we don't have an ambassador there, why keep the embassy? Let's sell off the Barakhamba property and earn a couple of arabs in INR to pay Nepal's overdue bills to Indian Oil so they resume regular diesel supplies. The other way we have asserted our sovereignty is by stopping flights by Nepal Airlines to Indian cities. There. Serves them right.

Now we know why BRB is in no hurry to replace justices of the Supreme Court, he has hatched a top secret plan to promote the Chief Justice to replace him.




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