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## Democratic deficit

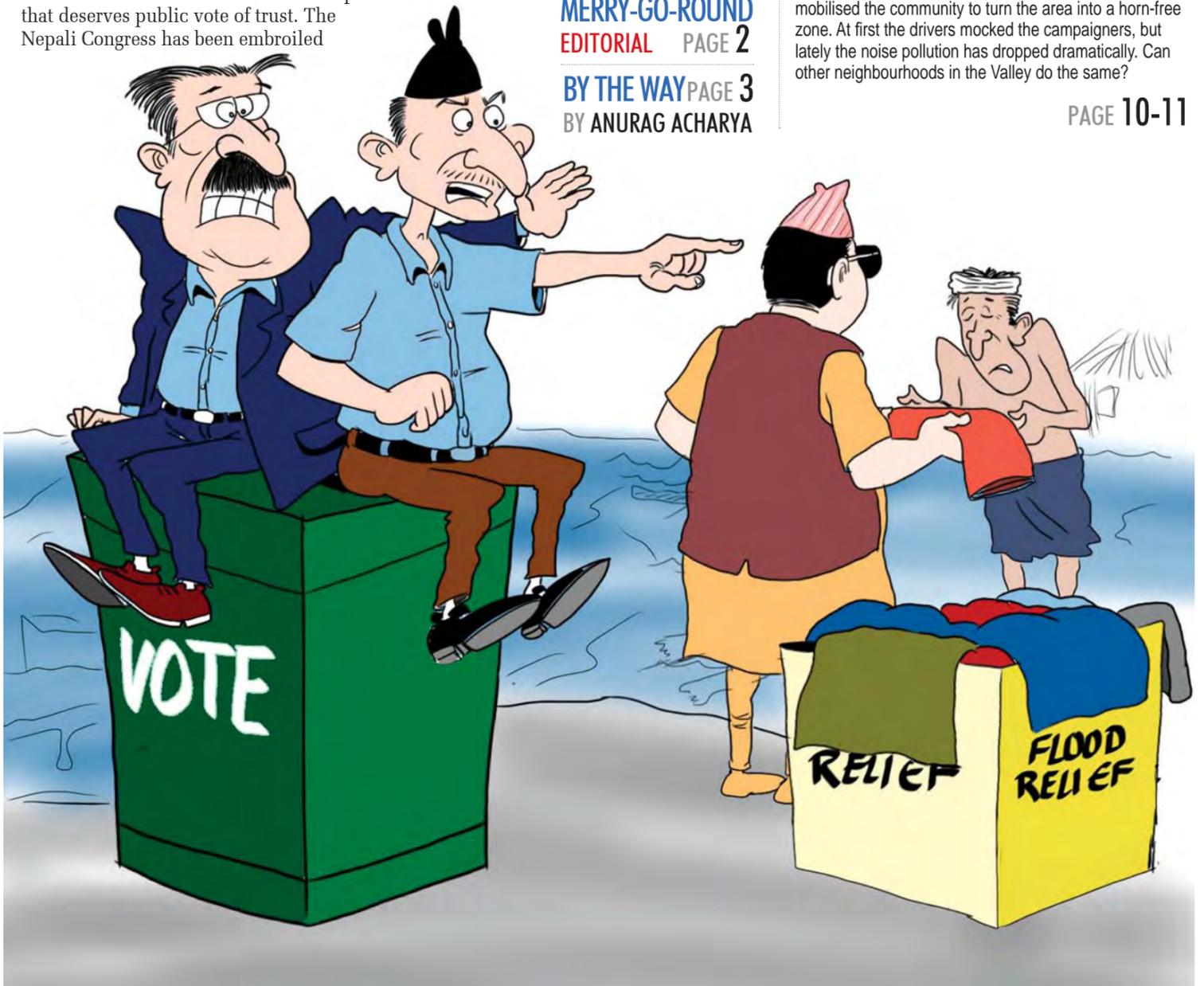
It is an indication of just how defensive and insecure the political parties have become that they lashed out the way they did this week at ex-King Gyanendra's visit to distribute flood relief in western Nepal. The former king is no saint, but the parties are just exposing their weakness and trying to hide their lack of performance in the past six years by threatening to put the ex-king in jail. On the other hand, the breakaway Baidya-Maoist wing is taunting the parent party by threatening an improbable alliance with Gyanendra.

No political party in Nepal today can boast of a credible and stable leadership that deserves public vote of trust. The Nepali Congress has been embroiled

in an intra-party feud between Koirala and non-Koirala factions for more than a decade now. The UML has its own ideological and political disorientation to cope with after the exclusive all-Bahun leadership led to an exodus of Madhesi and Janajati leaders last year. The Madhesi Front is also enmeshed in a facade of unity amidst squabbling over leadership. But the party which is undergoing the biggest political crisis at the moment is the UCPN-Maoists. The only thing the High Level Political Mechanism has been able to give the people is a high level of cynicism.

**MERRY-GO-ROUND**  
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

**BY THE WAY** PAGE 3  
BY ANURAG ACHARYA



## (NO) HORN PLEASE

Residents of the Bhaishipati neighbourhood got so fed up by the early morning honking from a nearby bus stop, they mobilised the community to turn the area into a horn-free zone. At first the drivers mocked the campaigners, but lately the noise pollution has dropped dramatically. Can other neighbourhoods in the Valley do the same?

PAGE 10-11

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# MERRY-GO-ROUND

Frustrated with the doubts and delays about polls, several international interlocutors have told Nepal's top politicians in recent meetings that "any election is better than no election". Really? You sure?

They have reason to be exasperated when Nepal's feckless rulers engage in mud-slinging during one-on-one meetings, but are all smiling and back-slapping buddies in collective gatherings. All of them swear by their commitment to hold elections, but in internal party meetings voice doubts about polls in November. In fact, the doubts are getting to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. With 120 days to go, the Election Commission (EC) is going through the motions of preparing elections, but commissioners themselves are disgruntled about foot-dragging by politicians.

The CPN-M is not just boycotting elections, it has also threatened to unleash fire and brimstone if the polls go ahead. The other smaller parties too are sulking. The deadlock within the constituency delineation commission persists even as its term expired on Wednesday, and as party proxies within it haggled about where and how many constituencies to add. Chairman Tahir Ali Ansari got his commission to form a cross-party task force to break the deadlock, but without avail. The crux of the matter is that the 2011 census has shown huge increases in population in the Tarai and Kathmandu Valley with a dramatic depopulation of mid-hill districts. But there may not be enough time to start tampering with the existing 240 constituencies if we are to have elections in November. In fact, the parties which are most vociferously pushing for a revamp of constituencies could be the ones which are not so keen



**Elections will focus everyone's minds on the future, a future that most politicians seem reluctant to face**

on polls now.

The internal power struggle within the UCPN (M) has been resolved temporarily by Pushpa Kamal Dahal centralising power in his own hands and this has removed a major distraction. However, Dahal is getting increasingly worried about his falling popularity

his inability to reunite his party before elections and to forge an electoral alliance with the Madhesi parties. Without that, the main Maoist party's fear of getting trounced in November is legitimate. Several public opinion polls also bear this out. Which could be why Dahal seems to be secretly egging on Mohan Baidya to put a spanner in the works.

The parties may have initially rejoiced at Baidya agreeing to an all-party conclave, but it is now looking like the roundtable idea is actually a ploy to delay polls. Anyone can see that Baidya's precondition that the Regmi government step down is foot-dragging. Questions remain about why Baidya has even asked for an all-party meeting. What is the agenda? Is it to end the prolonged transition, and create further instability?

The Election Commission, for its part, is going ahead with business, pretending as if nothing is wrong. While there are huge obstructions on the road to November, it is wasting time to chide the ex-King and his daughter-in-law's trust for distributing flood relief in western Nepal. There are much greater violations of the election code of conduct happening which should preoccupy the EC.

In a sense, the internationalists may be right. At least elections will focus everyone's minds on the future, a future that most politicians seem reluctant to face. The bottom line is this: do the political parties want to continue with this perpetual uncertainty or steer Nepal towards a stable state?

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### BACK TO THE PEOPLE

An editorial that is yet again full of wishful thinking ('Back to the people', #665). If Nepal's leaders really bothered about respecting the public's desire then the country would have had a constitution by now. Besides the results of these surveys are hardly indicative of how parties will perform at the ballots and there are other more effective ways to bolster vote banks (one being identity politics that is sure to rear its ugly head in the months ahead). We will just have to wait it out until the main parties forge agreements that give them maximum leverage during election season, public sentiments be damned.

Pra S

- November elections is not going to happen. If you do not know this by now, then you are plain stupid. The UCPN (M) does not want elections and it will use Mohan Baidya as a pawn to disrupt polls. It's really foolish for Nepalis to pin their hopes on communists who have blood on their hands.

Suman Ghimere

### FEDERATION OF FACTIONS

The UCPN (M) has been a 'pati' for quite some time ('A federation of factions', Muma Ram Khanal, #665). We have to see if the two wily Brahmins, Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, can resurrect their dwindling political fortunes from this wreckage. Once heroes of Nepali urban daydreamers (their support base in rural areas came mostly from terrorising the most defenseless) they are now being looked down as the worst villains of contemporary Nepali politics.

Bishu Nepal

- Bhattarai wins the 'most two-faced leader to have walked the earth' award hands down, his political chicanery is on a completely different level. He goes around portraying himself as a 'martyr' who sacrificed the post of vice-chairman for the greater good of the party and cadre, when all he really wants is the coveted chair of chairman. But his charade is getting so old that most of us can see right through it. Bhattarai should just retire from politics and go back to the jungle to meditate, Nepalis will genuinely thank him.

'Khaobadi'

- Rather than being about institutions and processes, Nepali politics revolves around personalities. Earlier it used to be individuals like Gyanendra Shah and GP Koirala. Today it's the three comrades: BRB, PKD, and Mohan Baidya who are holding the entire country hostage. Unless we find a way to move beyond individuals and focus on the basics of democracy, Nepal will continue to limp along at an excruciatingly slow pace. Unfortunately, this malady seems like a legacy of our feudal past.

Renu Shrestha

### GLOBAL BLIND SPOT

Very well written article ('In the global blind spot', Trishna Rana, #665). Nepal's international image lies in complete tatters, yet not a single leader seems mildly bothered. Even the perennial 'basket-case' of South Asia - Bangladesh - has catapulted itself to one of the major trading partners of the West and is now touted as a role model for other developing nations. Shame on us.

- As a foreigner I would have to agree that Nepal's image is on a downward spiral, however the way Western media

SP

covers the 'developing' world is part of the problem. At a time of great financial crunch, most media houses don't have the resources to send journalists on long-term assignments to far corners of the world. The result is lazy journalism where information is lifted from dodgy internet sources and even 'in-depth' reports fail to pick up on nuances and local ground realities choosing instead to paint entire continents and regions in broad strokes. So it's not surprising that in the eyes of the international media, Nepal is either a shangri-la or a failed state ravaged by a decade long war.

SaSa

### MITHILA INFLUENCE

Thank you *Nepali Times* and Bhaskar Koirala for giving this subject - of how the Malla dynasty in Bhaktapur has direct links to the Mithila Kingdom - the attention it deserves ('Bhaktapur's Mithila Influence', #665). When we look at the history of the subcontinent, the lines between 'Indian' and 'Nepali' get blurred, as do those between Newari and Madhesi. Bhaskar's proposal for an archaeological dig at Simraoghar is an idea that both governments should take up seriously.

Pranay Jha

- Very fascinating: the people of Bhaktapur could be the original Madhesis.

Jwahaar Talchabhadell

- Great work Bhaskar Koirala, well researched and well written as always.

Janne manche

### THIMPU GETS MESSAGE

Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, and now Bhutan have all been humiliated at one time or another by India because of its quest for regional

dominance ('Thimpu gets the message', Rahul Gomez, #665). Which is why it was not surprising when most of India's neighbours quietly cheered on as the Chinese pushed into its territory in Ladakh earlier this year. At the end of the day, Indian security is tied to a peaceful and prosperous neighborhood and there cannot be meaningful and lasting peace if the country adopts such an arrogant, domineering, and uncooperative attitude towards those living around it.

Aideeah

- Pushing for 'true' Bhutani democracy (one that looks after India's interest alone) will increasingly strengthen anti-India feelings there. India cannot rob Bhutan's hydropower resources to feed its energy starved industries and expect the small neighbour to dance to its tunes all the time. Ornamental wordings like 'eternal friendship' or 'traditional friends' will only find place in documents drafted by babus of South Block. It's better if Bhutanis realise this before surrendering all their rights to the 'big, bad, brother'.

Armugam

- Yes, India is a bully. I still remember my eight-year-old self in queue for hours to get two kgs of sugar in 1989. We sisters in line for sugar, mother in line for kerosene. Despite my tender age, I resented India though I could not understand the politics. India got its way, established 'democracy', and the rest is history.

Nidhi

- India has screwed up neighbours whenever its self interests have been ignored, mostly when countries like Nepal and Bhutan get closer to Beijing.

Raghav

- The mistreatment of Bhutan by India acts as a tight slap to those in Nepal who believe in the emotional 'big brother' relation. Altruism rarely exists in international relations and India has already shown how poor it is in building good relations with neighbours.

Bibek

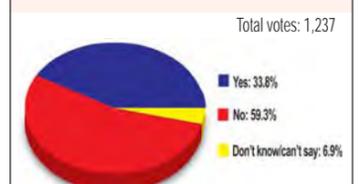
### FORGOTTEN

Thank you *NT* for the story on Dharmaraj Thapa ('Have Nepalis forgotten Dharmaraj Thapa?', Sunir Pandey, #665). I have probably read his poems and songs during Nepali class in school, but to be completely honest I didn't recognise his name instantly. I am not saying all young Nepalis are ignorant, but there are very few of us who know about Thapa and actively appreciate his music. He is a national treasure and there are hundred others like him. Yet we have failed to give them the place in history that they truly deserve. Both the state and Nepalis are responsible for this sad state of affairs.

Ishani R



### C. Should the two Maoist parties unite for elections?



Weekly Internet Poll # 667. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

C. Do you think UML leader Madhav Nepal's visit to India will improve his party's performance in the upcoming CA elections?



# DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

The pretensions of senior party leaders with democracy stand at odds with their internal authoritarianism

BIKRAM RAI



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

National and international attention is now on Nepal's November elections which is expected to chart out a roadmap for the country's political future through constitution drafting. The prospects of polls have brightened as all parties have grudgingly agreed to participate, but the painfully long transition has sucked out ideals and principles on which the institution of politics rests.

No political party in Nepal today can boast of a credible and stable leadership that deserves public vote of trust. The Nepali Congress has been embroiled in an intra-party feud between Koirala and non-Koirala factions for more than a decade now. The party has been all but stripped of its socialist history between leaders like Girija Prasad Koirala and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in the past and now between Sushil Koirala, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Ram Chandra Poudel. There is seething discontent among younger NC leaders impatient with the ageing and discredited leadership.

"How can we expect fresh vision for a new republic from a bunch of old men who refuse to unlearn and relearn?" a young NC leader asked at a program recently. The impatience has been heightened by polls which show that although more than half the electorate is still undecided, Congress leaders are ahead of the others by a slight margin.

Similarly, the UML has its own ideological and political disorientation to cope with. The exclusive all-Bahun leadership led to an exodus of

Madhesi and Janajati leaders last year. The party is seen to be 'regressive' on inclusion and federalism. Besides, the UML is reeling under Jhala Nath Khanal's fickle leadership, Madhav Nepal's flip-flopping, and KP Oli's reactionary politics.

The so called fourth power, the Madhesi Morcha is also enmeshed in a facade of unity amidst squabbling over leadership. The fear of losing out to the NC and the Maoists and some nudging from down South have forced the Madhesi parties to seek an electoral alliance. But there are good, bad, and the ugly here too, as netas jostle for influence in a region that now has more than half the electoral constituencies.

But the party which is undergoing the biggest political crisis at the moment is the UCPN (M). After the split, the largest party in former CA had hoped to establish its credibility and legitimacy nationally and among neighbours. However, power and greed have corrupted the top leaders, eroding their popularity and the Maoists will have lot of explaining to do when they face the public in November.

Some analysts see the resignation of party Vice-Chairman Baburam Bhattarai as a result of the power struggle with Dahal, while some project it as an exemplary act of sacrifice by the senior leader to make way for a younger generation. But the move seems to have been a strategic means to lay the groundwork to forge unity with Mohan Baidya led CPN-M. There is speculation that Dahal went into damage control mode after being cornered by Bhattarai's resignation and forced all his top leaders to resign. By dissolving the party standing committee and politburo, Dahal may have centralised power in his own hands, but he has sent the wrong message just before elections.

Things are a little more complicated in the rump party as leaders like CP Gajurel and Netra Bikram Chand seem determined to quash attempts at unity and instead have floated the idea of forging an alliance with 'nationalist' forces represented by ex-king Gyanendra. The enemy of your enemy is a friend.

In any case, the UCPN (M)'s

extended party plenum this week dissolved the internal democratic structure and reverted the party to a wartime leadership arrangement with Dahal as the supreme leader. For a party striving to build its democratic credentials, this is a grave setback and not to say that it will only dampen the Maoists' prospects in the upcoming elections.

The leaders of the self-styled 'high level political mechanism' may be patting themselves on their backs for bringing national politics on track, but their legacy of bigoted leadership still threatens to destabilise this country. Their pretensions with democratic elections stand at odds with their internal authoritarianism. 🇳🇵

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BIKRAM RAI

# Powerless future

This year's budget allocation for energy sector, like previous years, is all too cosmetic

BHRIKUTI RAI

The budget announced by the interim finance minister last week was the first full budget to be presented in time for years. It has prioritised the energy sector and aims at massive reforms in generation of hydropower, construction of transmission lines, and distribution system with a Rs 30 billion allocation.

Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala said huge investments were required in the hydropower sector to relieve the country from the curse of load-shedding within three years. This is not the first time a budget has promised an end to power cuts.

The Pushpa Kamal Dahal government set out a goal of generating 10,000MW in 10 years and the Madhav Kumar Nepal government that replaced him was even more ambitious in aiming for 25,000MW in 20 years. A task force set up in 2011 to look at power scenarios said it was possible to generate 2,000MW by 2014 through power projects for domestic consumption, another 10,000MW by 2024 through a combination of run-of-the-river and storage projects, and 18,000MW by 2029 through

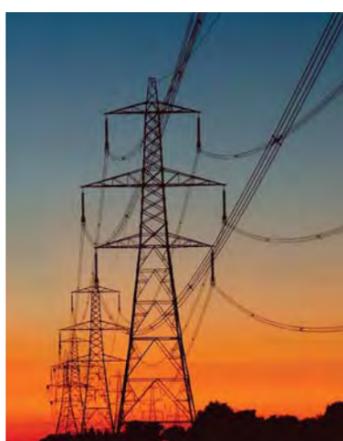
export multi-purpose mega projects like Karnali and Kosi.

It is 2013 already and the country's total installed capacity stands at a mere 746MW and only 40MW was added last year. Hydro experts and power producers fear that even doubling the allocation for energy compared to last year will not eradicate load-shedding.

"Thirty billion rupees isn't really a very big investment in the cost intensive hydro sector, but we will have to see even if this amount is really translated into tangible progress on the ground," says hydro analyst Ratna Sansar Shrestha.

Of the Rs 30 billion budget, the government has set aside Rs 1.05 billion for 140MW reservoir type Tanahu Hydro Project while Rs 4.66 billion has been earmarked for five government funded projects including Upper Trisuli 3A, Upper Modi, Raghughat, Chameliyagadh, and Kulekhani III. Enlisted under 'projects of national pride' is Upper Tamakosi that will receive Rs 2 billion for timely completion.

While it may sound a lot, the 30 billion budget for energy will be scattered among various projects increasing the uncertainty of their completion. Add to that the



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PRODUCTION (MW)		
697.9	705.6	746
TRANSMISSION LINE (KM)		
2,000	2,000	2,000
CUSTOMER NUMBER		
1,854,475	2,053,259	2,238,052
2010/11	2011/12	2012/13*

endless red tape, opposition from the locals, constant shuffle of officials in the ministry, frequent changes in government with different set of priorities, and towards the end of the fiscal year, like always, there won't be much to show.

Last year not a single kilometre was added to existing

transmission lines (*see box*) despite the Rs 6 billion earmarked for it. Two years ago, a mere 9MW was added to the national grid. This year Rs 13.5 billion was set aside for constructing cross-border transmission lines, north-south corridor lines, and east-west power lines.

But unless government bodies like NEA improve their institutional capabilities, it will be difficult for them to mobilise such large amount of money. An official from the Ministry of Finance who is all too familiar with NEA's laid back attitude says, "When we asked them to take as much money as they want to tackle load-shedding in three years, the NEA's leadership stayed mum."

NEA has been counting on Upper Tamakosi (456MW) for relief from load-shedding and NEA's Sher Singh Bhat like always sticks to his argument about how power cuts will be history once it is completed in four years.

But demand for electricity is projected to exceed 1,700MW in the next five years and by the time Upper Tamakoshi, Upper Trisuli 3A, 3B and Chamelia are completed, they will only add 586MW to the grid. This means

there will still be a shortfall of over 400MW at full capacity and we will need extra installed capacity to cover for the winter deficit.

Experts say the inability of successive governments over the past 15 years to add generation capacity to keep with demand has continued with the current technocrat government. Koirala's budget, for instance, doesn't really have short-term programs to tackle the immediate crisis. Petroleum is going to get scarcer and more expensive and there is no strategy to lessen the economy's dependence on imported oil.

It is clear that people who neatly tie the red ribbon over the budget briefcase don't know or don't care just how bad the energy scenario is. Throwing billions at the problem is not going to solve it. It is a miracle the country is still functioning despite a daily six-hour power cut during the monsoon and 16 hours a day without electricity in winter. But even miracles have shelf life. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

The urgency of the energy emergency, #566  
Hello darkness my old friend, #619

**BIZ BRIEFS**



**Crime check**

Sunrise Bank provided money to Metropolitan Police in Gothatar for the construction of a permanent police station in the area on Sunday. The bank believes the new station will be instrumental in curbing crimes in the area.

**Two more**

Laxmi Bank has opened two new branches in Wahling, Syangja and Kohalpur, Banke. With the latest additions, Laxmi now has 33 branches across the country. Both Wahling and Kohalpur branches offer ATM services.



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**Fun learning**

CG Education has partnered with EduSports, India's premier school sports enterprise to implement systematic sports and games programs in the pre and primary levels in CG schools. "Bringing

EduSports to Nepal is very exciting as it enables us to provide a balanced education to children and contribute to their overall development," said Nirvana Chaudhary, Managing Director of CG Education.

**Happy Birthday**

Mega Bank celebrated its third anniversary on Monday at a function organised in its premises. Speaking at the program Dr Madan Kumar Dahal, the chairman of the bank said, "Within a couple of years we plan to have a total of 50 branches operating all over Nepal." The bank also presented Rs 100,000 to Mahakali Kana Jyoti School which was destroyed by the recent floods in Kancharpur.



**Educational visit**

THAI Thai Airways recently organised a familiarisation trip for the top seven travel agencies of Nepal. The six-days tour included exploration of the Sanctuary of Truth, Damnern Saduak & Rose Garden, and dinner cruise on Loy Nava.

**Filmy awards**

Westar Properties has collaborated with the National Film Awards to sponsor two categories: Best Actor Male and Best Actor Female. The prize money worth Rs 1 million will go towards purchase of a Westar apartment. This year's winner are Jivan Luitel and Nita Dhungana.



**New Partners**

Qatar Airways signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Carnegie Mellon University for collaboration in the field of education, scientific research, and social development. The MoU was signed by Qatar Airways CEO

Akbar Al Baker and Dean and CEO of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Dr Ilker Baybars.

**Money matters**

Samsara, a leading money transfer company participated in a training on Compliance program conducted by Moneygram on 16 July. Headed by Priyanka Kadam and Nabajyoti Barua, of Moneygram South Asia Region, the training focused on AML Policies and Procedures, Regulatory Examination, KYC, Privacy and Security policies and regulatory guidelines for the Remittance industry in Nepal.



**Won it**

James Hogan, President and CEO of Etihad Airways won the Executive Leadership award at the annual Airline Strategy awards held in London. Last year Hogan was

named CAPA Aviation Executive of the Year. "I am very honoured to have been recognised by fellow leaders within the global aviation industry," said Hogan.

**Smart energy**

iEnergy provides energy efficiency solutions and technologies developed in UK by ENIGIN to Nepal. iEnergy's products include real time energy management system (Eniscope), intelligent motor energy controller (IMEC), air conditioner energy saver (ACES), chiller unit energy saver (CUES), and high efficiency LED lights and solar street lights.



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**Ujyaalo gets brighter**

Load shedding, even in the monsoon continues to cripple Nepal's economy and everyday life. To promote the use of solar power in urban centres, Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala announced subsidies for FM stations wanting to upgrade to solar. But Ujyaalo Radio 90 Network (ujyaaloonline.com), a nationwide news service provider to 150 local stations across the country, had already switched to solar power last winter

Aptly named Ujyaalo Ghar (bright home), the four-storey building in Jawalakhel is powered by 10KW solar panels, which cater to the energy needs of its 60 employees and enable round the clock production for both radio and internet.

"We had been planning to go solar for a long time, so when we moved to our new building we thought why not also make the switch," says director Gopal Guragain of the six-month old hybrid solar system. Although some FM stations in Jumla and Bajura run on solar power, their operations don't need as much power as Ujyaalo's.

The 55 solar panels on the spacious terrace give Ujyaalo Ghar a unique look in the quiet



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

neighborhood of Jawalakhel. Although the station spent close to Rs 2.5 million on installation, Guragain is confident of recovering the cost in a few years.

"We were spending around a million every year on generator fuel and during shortages the cost would shoot up," says Guragain. The company has already slashed its monthly electricity bill by half and is on its way to recovering the initial cost. The solar panels come with a guarantee of 15 to 20 years and save time and effort that goes into the maintenance of diesel generators.

According to Guragain, Ujyaalo Ghar was designed with sustainable use of energy in mind. The building is not just solar powered but also harnesses rain water to replenish ground water.

"With ample sunshine last winter, things went smoothly for the new converts to solar power. "Even on cloudy days, we had enough backup to last us for 10 hours," says Guragain. "The initial investment might be high, but the returns far outweigh the cost."

nepalitimes.com

No alternative to alternative energy, #649  
Here comes the sun, #584

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# Rebels with causes

Gandhi, Assange, Snowden all tried to restore the moral compasses of their societies



LOOK OUT  
Ajaz Ashraf

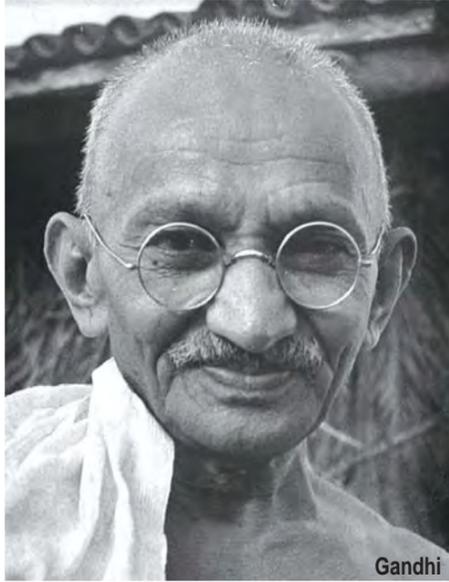
America's clandestine mining of electronic data sends some important messages about its culture: that it is justifiable to encroach upon the privacy of others, that it is morally sustainable to suspect and spy on friends on the suspicion they could work against your interests, that hypocrisy is an acceptable code of behavior, and that the powerful are tacitly permitted a leeway with laws and norms they had themselves helped formulate.

Indeed, the international drama involving PRISM whistleblower, Edward Snowden, and the United States is a contest over the principles of morality underlying the organisation of our society.

This is what goaded Snowden to leak information on the eavesdropping. He was an individual rebel raging against an arrogant, implacable state. Rebels seek to restore to their societies the moral values set aside in the wielding of power, or reset the moral compass in the present that is different from the past.

The last decade, particularly, seems to have spawned a rash of rebels in different countries and cultural contexts: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and Bradley Manning; the Tunisian fruit-seller, Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire and triggered an upsurge against authoritarian governments in West Asia; the Standing Man (Erdem Gunduz) of Istanbul; Anna Hutsol, the Ukrainian who bared her breasts in 2008 to register her opposition to sex tourism, sparking off the FEMEN movement; and Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal, who have railed against the culture of corruption in India.

However, rebellious attempts to redefine or reset society's morality button are not of recent vintage. For instance, recall the refusal of Gandhi in 1893



Gandhi



Assange

to disembark from the first-class train coach, reserved exclusively for whites in South Africa. Tossed out on the platform at Pietermaritzburg, the humiliating experience inspired Gandhi to wage a battle against racial discrimination.

Though it took nearly a century to dismantle the apartheid system, there are nevertheless three lessons for us to draw from it. One, rebellion necessarily entails a transgression of laws. Two, it is inevitably directed against the



Snowden



Manning

state which is the principal designer of society in modern times. Three, morality underlying constitutional framework requires both constant vigilance and periodic rethinking. These two goals the rebel through his or her precipitous actions serves.

Why do some individuals risk severe punitive action in defying the state, which typically perceives rebellion as an attempt to diminish its powers? Perhaps the clue lies in the rebels' sharing

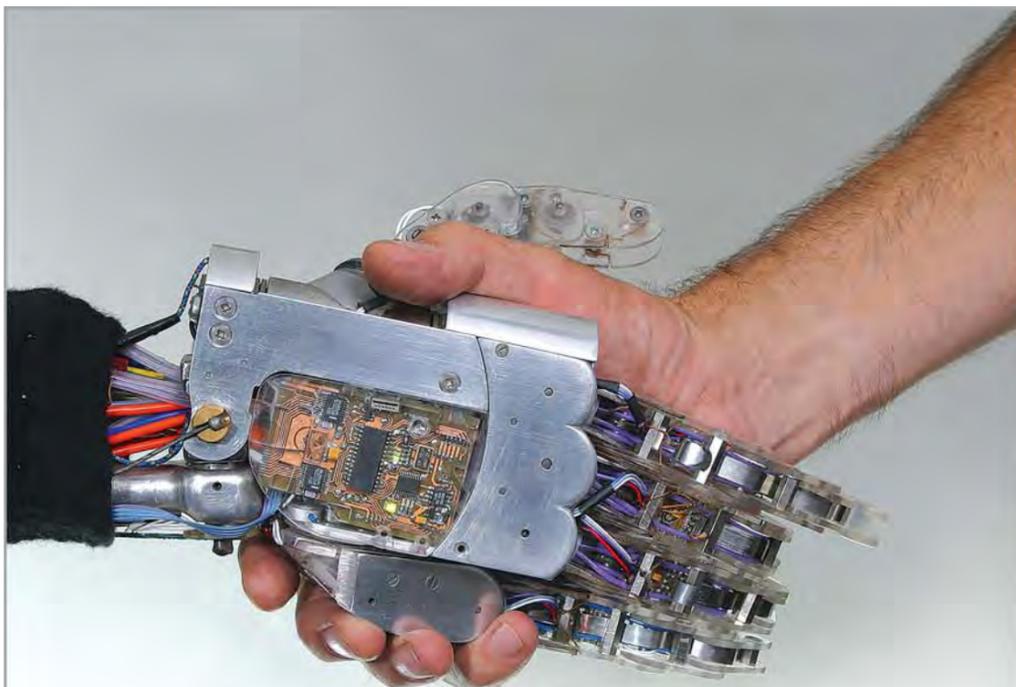
partially the psychology of the martyr, who is willing to court suffering, at times even death, to secure justice – the defining goal of social morality. In the absence of justice, life to them does not appear worth living. In other words, rebels are prepared to accept martyrdom as a consequence of their action undertaken for the larger good of people.

Obviously, unlike the Tunisian fruit-seller or the young Chinese who stood defiantly before a column of tanks as they rolled menacingly into Tiananmen Square in June 1989, Snowden and Assange weren't willing to court martyrdom. We deduce this from their decisions to seek asylum. Their rebellion was in the non-corporeal cyber world. Their battles are fought in secrecy, in the anonymity the internet provides, against a state indulging in flagrant violations in an arena difficult to slot in neat categories of nation-state, territorial boundaries, and sovereignty.

The cyber-world is a relatively new reality that is creating its own ethos, new ideas of individuality, social compact, power, and rebellion against it. Yet even cyber rebels take the risk of protracted suffering. Despite America and its allies hounding Snowden or Assange, they are doomed to encounter continued defiance from those who rebel with the click of the mouse. Through complex, still unfolding processes the internet has set free the individual more than ever before, threatening to throw open the secretive state and diminish its powers.

Indeed, what binds cyber rebels is their challenge to the state, which violates norms of morality in its quest to become a behemoth frightening to both the recalcitrant and the obedient. The rebel is locked in a mismatch, an unequal battle, almost always doomed to fail. But then, rebellion, particularly of the individual, is scarcely ever designed to win. Rebels merely seek to undermine the moral authority of the state, turning its enterprise illegitimate, until, over the years, it feels compelled to change its behaviour. 

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It has been a fairly normal July in terms of rainfall for Kathmandu, but rain has come in sporadic bursts with dry spells in between. This weekend is going to see more short, heavy bursts. By midweek next week the major monsoon trough building up in the Bay of Bengal will carry in another pulse into eastern and central Nepal which should bring us more sustained long-term rain. Cloud cover in the day will keep temperatures in the 26-28 range, but it will feel hotter because of high humidity.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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**DIRT PILE:** A crane loads garbage from the waste depot in Teku. Plastic bags make up 10 per cent of the Kathmandu's total waste.



## Trash to treasure

Disheartened by the government's ineptitude in controlling the use of polythene bags, a young team at CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal) began Banners to Bags last year with the goal of lessening fellow Nepalis' unhealthy reliance on plastic bags. Using discarded flex banners provided by organisations, Banner to Bags makes shopping bags, gym bags, purses, and files that customers can buy from Karma Coffee in Jhamsikhel or order in bulk.



"The work we do is part of a broader environmental awareness initiative to get people thinking about creative and practical ways to reduce waste," says Rushka Sthapit of Banners to Bags. [www.cwin.org.np](http://www.cwin.org.np)  
9841229346/ 9813403662

BIKRAM RAI

# PLASTIC WARS

With no workable policy for management and disposal, Kathmandu Valley continues to choke in mountains of toxic plastic waste

BHRIKUTI RAI

Citizens of the capital snorted in derision as Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) withdrew its much hyped ban on plastic bags last month. Even before KMC could complete the month long promotional campaign in June, Nepal Plastic Manufacturers' Association (NPMA) filed a writ and the Supreme Court issued a stay order bringing the project to a grinding halt.

With the court ruling in favour of manufacturers, KMC has once again been pushed back into inaction and hollow rhetoric. Says Rabin Man Shrestha, chief of the Environment Management

division at KMC, "We will continue our efforts to minimise the use of plastic bags in the city and discourage people from using low quality bags."

Ten per cent of the garbage piled up on Kathmandu's streets is plastic bags. More than 60 plastic industries produce 50 tons of polythene bags every day in the Valley. The daily demand across Nepal is over 300 tons and manufacturers pay Rs 600 million in taxes to the state every year. However, most of these bags do not meet government standards and there are numerous unlicensed producers as well.

Manufacturers and green activists say the KMC was wrong to enforce the ban without long-term planning and

without providing alternatives to plastic bag producers and users. "Unless a cheaper and more convenient alternative is found people will continue using polythene bags despite the obvious environmental damage," explains Bishnu Thakali of Women Environment Preservation Committee which has been collecting and recycling waste in Kathmandu for the last 15 years.

Kathmandu's recent history is littered with similar stories of empty slogans and failed campaigns as KMC has tried and failed to get rid of the non-recyclable plastic bags. It has been ten years since a government directive required all manufacturers to start phasing out the production of plastic bags. In 2002, the Supreme

Court ordered the government to enforce the decision. It was never heeded.

A decade later the Ministry of Environment promulgated the Plastic Bags Regulation and Control Directive 2011 that imposes a fine of Rs 500 - Rs 50,000 on those still manufacturing and using bags thinner than 20 microns because of their toxicity and the fact that they can't be reused. The same year Govinda Shah, science and technology minister of the time, made a valiant attempt to ban plastic bags below 20 microns thick. To kick start the program, Singha Darbar was declared "plastic free". But the ban did not even last a few days. Leading department stores too have tried to wean shoppers

away from plastic, but without much success.

While Kathmandu gropes for an answer, other parts of the country have successfully implemented plastic bans. Ilam municipality banned plastic bags in 2010 and it has worked. Both shopkeepers and shoppers are slapped fines of up to Rs 500 if found using them.

With no workable policy in place to either curb the use of plastic bags or manage its disposal, the Valley seems destined to choke in mountains of non-biodegradable and toxic plastic waste for years to come. ❏

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Out of sight is not out of mind, #574  
Plastic-free Ilam, #526

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**EVENTS**



**FARMER'S MARKET**, get your supply of fresh, local produce. From fresh baked breads to organic veggies all in one stop. 27 July, 9 am to 12 pm, 1905 Restaurant and Bar, Kantipath

**Critical Mass**, be a part of a cycling movement that is taking place in 300 cities around the world and pedal around town on the last Friday of every month. 26 July, 5.30 to 7.30pm, Tudhikhel

**Goalmari**, Bangladesh's Own Island, a photo exhibition by Bangladeshi photographer Munem Wasif on Bangladesh's water problems. 25 July to 15 August, 10am to 6pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku road, (01)4241163/4242832

**Bottoms up**, take your taste buds and olfactory nerves on a joy ride at the 10th Annual wine tasting festival at Kilroys. Rs 200 per glass, Rs 800 per half litre. July to August, Kilroy's, Thamel, (01)4250440/41

**Goal**, team up with friends and take on other teams in the KTM Nights Cup futsal tournament. Rs 8000 per team, 27 to 28 July, 8 am to 8pm,

Grassroots Recreational Centre, Mandikatar, 9841342635

**A People War**, an exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through 10 years of insurgency. Everyday except Tuesday, 11 am to 4 pm, (01)5549948, www.madanpuraskar.org

**Cut!** write a script, win \$2700 prize money, and make your own movie. Deadline 15 August, www.newnepalcinema.com/script2013



**LEARN TAI CHI**, relax and refresh your body and mind and improve the internal harmony of body, mind and spirit. 1st week of August, 6 to 7 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Gyan Dojo, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel, (01)5521120

**Report it**, hone your report writing skills at this three day workshop. Rs 6000, 26 to 28 July, 9.30am to 4.30pm, CareerMaster Nepal and HR Development Center, Pulchok, Lalitpur, (01)5524891

**Photography Workshop**, learn the tricks of basic photography with in-class lectures and practical shooting

assignments. Rs 4000, 21 July to 14 August, Sundays and Wednesdays, 5 to 7pm, photo.circle HQ, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, learning@photocircle.com.np

**Word Warriors**, enjoy slam poetry from this popular group and perform one of your own. 3 August, 1 to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa

**Take the Lead**, meet Anil Chitrakar, the author of Take the Lead: Nepal's Future has Begun. Rs 100, 27 July, 3 to 5 pm, British Council, Lazimpat, register at: himalayanreaders@gmail.com

**Reflective Instances**, a joint painting exhibition by four young artists. 2 to 19 August, Park Gallery, Pulchok

**A Step for Freedom**, a painting exhibition by eight young upcoming women artists from Pokhara. 2 to 11 August, 12 to 6 pm except Saturdays, Artist Proof Gallery, New Orleans, Pulchok, Lalitpur

**Reflective instances**, a joint exhibition of four painters Bhawana Manandhar, Rajesh Manandhar, Niraj Chitrakar, and Ganesh G C. 2 August, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, (01)5522307, www.parkgallery.com.np



**LOUDER THAN A BOMB**, a story of four teens competing in the largest youth poetry slam. 26 July, 5.30pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, (01)5523486

**DINING**



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

**Chez Caroline**, exquisite food, glorious sunshine and more. 9am to 10pm, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070/4187



**TAMAS-LAYA**, promises a refined dining experience, try the prawn tempura, fisherman's fish, and Balinese chicken satay. Naxal, Kathmandu

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

**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

**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



**NOYOZ**, this tiny little joint serves food that tastes like your mother's home-cooking. Bhatbhateni

**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

**Wunjala Moskva**, treat your palette to Newari and Russian dishes in the lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams. Naxal, (01)4415236

**Capital Grill**, the American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes. Bhatbhateni

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



**MUSIC JAMS**, enjoy great live music every Tuesday. *7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel*

GETAWAYS

**Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**, announces summer bonanza offer. Make the resort your home for a price you just can't beat. *Dhulikhel, (011)490114/494*

**Himalayan wellness centre**, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel, Budhanilkantha, open all week, *9801066661, www.himalayanwellness.com.np*



**WATERFRONT RESORT**, the lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday. *Sedi Height, Lakeside road, Pokhara, (061)466303/304, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*



**MANGO TREE LODGE**, culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. *Bhetani, Bardia, info@mangotree lodge.com*



A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN

One World presents Eugene O' Neill's famous American masterpiece directed by Deborah Merola. This famous drama filled with Irish-American comicality and lyricism tells the story of Phil Hogan, a wily tenant farmer, his outsized daughter Josie, and Jamie Tyrone, Jr. , who comes for a fateful date in the moonlight. What begins as a rustic farce gradually connects the audience with the cleansing power of redemption .

The cast features Rajkumar Pudasaini as Jamie Tyrone, Deeya Maskey as Josie and Aashant Sharma as Hogan with support from Alan Gurung as young Mike Hogan and Sameer Dixit as T. Stedman Harder.

Date: 26 to 31 July  
Time: 5.30pm  
Place: The Theatre Village, Lajimpat



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The long road

Shanta Chaudhary's journey from a kamalari to lawmaker in the CA was a long and difficult one. Even after she came to Kathmandu and sat in the Constituent Assembly, she faced contempt from other representatives and the media because she could not read and write. With the release of her book *Kamalari dekhi sabhasad samma* (From kamalari to lawmaker), Chaudhary hopes to leave her critics mincing their words. *Nepali Times* caught up with the debutant writer to find out about her journey.

**Nepali Times: What is your book about?**  
**Shanta Chaudhary:** It's about my personal struggles as well as the hardships faced by people from my community.

**Why did you decide to write a book?**  
Many people were interested in writing about me after finding out my story. But I felt that nobody could write about my experiences better than me. While I admit that the book is hardly a piece of literature, I hope it can be a source of inspiration to others.

**How have readers reacted so far?**  
Those who have read the book like it. I now want the general public to also read it and share their thoughts with me.

**What encouraged you to join politics?**  
Becoming a lawmaker would never have been possible without the help of others. I was able to gain valuable experience from the protests we launched on behalf of the landless. I guess it was a combination of all this and coincidence that brought me here.

**How did you help the kamalari cause during your time in the CA?**  
All the issues I raised were lost because the constitution wasn't written. But I took the voice of the kamalaris, kamaiyas, and landless to the CA and because of my efforts the government allocated some money for former indentured labourers. I am the first woman to fight for the freedom of kamalaris and have also worked to improve the condition of victims of sexual abuse.



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# (NO) HORN

A maddening love for horns and lack of respect for neighbours has turned Kathmandu into one of the noisiest cities in the world.

TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

It's ten in the morning. Hundreds of cars, two wheelers, and tempos are jammed bumper to bumper in Thapathali. As the police signals the traffic to move ahead, a chorus of horns erupts all at once, like an orchestra performing a rehearsed symphony. Unfortunately, there's nothing pleasant about this ensemble.

As if the incessant honking from inconsiderate drivers was not enough, Kathmandu's residents also have to put up with the ear-drum splitting bellows of banned pressure horns, one of the leading sources of noise pollution in the Valley. Used mostly by large four wheelers - trucks, buses, minivans - these horns produce upto 120 decibels, while a standard horn produces only around 70-80 decibels.

"Long term exposure to high decibel sounds increases stress, blood pressure, aggression, and even leads to hearing loss in extreme cases," informs Dr Suman Raj Dangol, ENT specialist at Vayodha Hospital. The safe exposure limit is 85 decibels for eight hours a day, anything above that and our health is affected.

After multiple failed attempts to crackdown on the use of pressure horns, the Metropolitan Traffic Police re-launched its drive against on 2 July. It has confiscated more than 1,200 pressure horns and digital horns in the past three weeks and is slapping fines from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 on offenders. "We will continue our campaign until we get rid of all illegal horns," says DSP Pawan Giri, spokesperson for the Metropolitan Traffic Police Department.

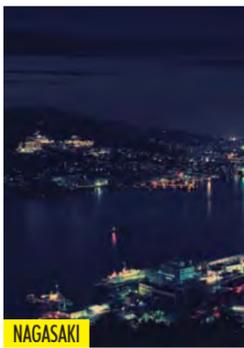
As news of the campaign spreads through word of mouth, many drivers have started voluntarily removing their pressure horns. Ram Krishna Shrestha, 36, a driver at Lalitpur Yatayat says he got rid of his horn last week after he found out about the campaign from fellow drivers. "This is a good initiative, but it will only be effective if the police can give it continuity," he says. "And honking isn't only the drivers' fault. Many pedestrians just don't leave the way forcing us to use horns regularly. They need to be taught traffic rules too," Shrestha adds.

While traffic police is busy confiscating pressure horns from owners of four wheelers, many motorcyclists are also guilty of using the illegal contraption. Custom made horns that are louder and produce a sound similar to that of trucks are becoming increasingly fashionable among young bikers. "Most of my friends have the new horn, so I also got one," admits 19-year-old Dawa Tenzing.

To cater to this young market, bike companies are now offering digital horns in their vehicles which produce 105 decibels and are almost as loud as pressure horns. However, these companies are exempt from legal action on technical ground: only modifications count as violation of traffic rules.

Valley drivers are also notorious for abusing horns in 'no horn' zones around schools, hospitals, and government offices. Those who honk in such areas can be fined between Rs 100 to Rs 300, but this rule is rarely implemented and as the Motor Vehicles and Transport Management Act 1993 does not provide a clear definition of horn-free zones, vehicle owners are not sure most of the time. In the absence of proper guidelines and enforcement, communities have stepped up to control noise population on their own (see box).

While the ban is a step in the right direction, the misuse of horns won't stop unless we address a larger social issue at hand: our lack of respect for other people's space and privacy. What does it say about our culture that finds it acceptable to blast morning bhajans or the latest Bollywood hits on loudspeakers without a second thought for neighbours? Until we change our attitude and learn to be more caring and considerate of those around us, the tooting and blaring is here to stay. 🇳🇵



# PLEASE!

of respect for others are turning noisiest cities in the world



BILASH RAI



BUENOS AIRES

## NOISE MAKERS

A study conducted by the World Health Organisation in 2010 lists New York as the noisiest city in the world followed by Tokyo, Nagasaki, and Buenos Aires.



BIKRAM RAI

## NO MEANS NO

Frustrated by the blatant abuse of horns, Hari Bahadur Thapa, a resident of Magar Gaun, Bhaisipati, got together with his neighbours and decided to make the community a horn-free zone. After consulting with the VDC head, local police, and bus owners/drivers that provide public transport in the area, they installed a no-horn zone sign in the neighbourhood this May.

"The drivers were completely opposed to the idea at first and mocked us," admits Thapa. "It took us several weeks just to convince them of the importance of reducing noise pollution." The use of horns in Magar Gaun has decreased dramatically and Thapa is happy to see tranquility return to his hometown.

## SONIC BOOM

When Tribhuvan International Airport was built in 1949, Kathmandu was home to about 400,000 residents. Today, it is one of the most densely populated metropolises in the world and as the Valley becomes smothered by urban sprawl, more and more families are being forced to live directly under the flight path.

"In the beginning I had a very hard time sleeping," says Usha Parajuli of Koteshor. "I have gotten used to the booming sound whenever planes fly right over my head, but it is still very annoying," she adds. While the constant clamor is undoubtedly a big irritant, the negative health effects have not yet been studied.

The Valley's bowl-shaped topography amplifies the sound and prolongs the echo and planes have to climb on maximum power to get over the surrounding mountains. Officials at Civil Aviation Authority say they are exploring alternative routes that take planes away from densely built-up areas and reduce the sonic boom. But for now Parajuli and hundreds like her will continue to go to bed to the tunes of Boeings landing and taking off.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## SOUND OFF

Decibel is a unit used to measure the intensity of sound. Prolonged exposure to sounds measuring at or above 85 decibel levels can lead to gradual hearing loss.



QUIET ROOM  
60DB



TELEVISION (AVERAGE)  
70DB



RINGING TELEPHONE  
80DB



TRACTOR  
90DB



MOTORCYCLE  
100DB



CAR HORN  
110DB



AMBULANCE SIREN  
120DB



JACKHAMMER  
130DB



AEROPLANE AT TAKEOFF  
140DB

# DETACHMENT



played by Adrien Brody, a sensitive and highly talented actor whose portrayal of Henry Barthes - an emotionally detached substitute teacher - is particularly nuanced and therefore particularly heartbreaking.

Barthes is a wanderer, taking advantage of his transient teaching positions so that he never settles, never engages, and never forms attachments aside from his commitment to his ailing, aged grandfather whom he supports in a nursing home.

But this time, in an unnamed high school, something changes. Barthes is an enigmatic, romantic figure to his teenage students, an adult who seems withdrawn, but occasionally exhibits signs of caring passionately. The high school students are the epitome of disenfranchised, disenchanting teenagers, their teachers struggling to reach these young people through their teenage angst (for everyone who can remember that horrific time as a teenager, you will understand and cringe).

As Barthes starts to care for his students and particularly for one disturbed, but very talented girl called Meredith (played by Betty Kaye, Tony Kaye's daughter), he also develops a relationship with a fellow teacher, Sarah Madison (played by the lovely Christina Hendricks) and reluctantly becomes temporary flatmates with Erica (Sami Gayle), a young, maladjusted, neurotic,

but vulnerable teenager who has fallen into prostitution to support herself.

Slowly, as all of these relationships begin to influence him, Barthes evolves, his teaching becomes ever more relevant to his teenagers, and his humanity starts to manifest. However, *Detachment* is by no means a feel-good movie. There are tragedies, deaths, and ugly sordid secrets. Perhaps too many to create a truly cohesive story, and yet, what a story it is.

*Detachment* is a testament to the power of teachers who care; teachers who are good human beings and have direct access to young adults at the most difficult time in their lives and can make a difference, through their teaching and through their actions.

Education can change people's lives, always for the better, and just one exceptional teacher can touch and save the lives of myriad haunted young souls. So, all you great teachers out there, you know who you are, and thank you. As for the bad ones (and yes, I do want to sound didactic), well, you know who you are too, so, watch *Detachment* think about the immense power you wield, the impact you can have, and, for pity's sake, if you don't care about your students and you can't teach, perhaps it's time to quit. 📺

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com) [Watch trailer](#)

GIZMO by YANTRICK

## Slim n trim

A beautiful 4.7 inch screen greets you when you first switch on Colors Mobile's X Factor HD phone. The stunning high definition screen clarity coupled with vibrant colours and the sleek design all point towards an ultra expensive set that you would normally spend months saving up for. But at a modest Rs 23,500 (modest for a smart phone), X Factor HD is priced at one third of the Android smart phone industry benchmark, the Samsung Galaxy S4.

Running the same Android Jellybean software as the Galaxy S4, the look and feel of X Factor HD's software are intuitive and crisp. Even a first time user will be breezing through the commands, settings, and application after a few hours of use. Powered by a Quad Core 1.2 GHz processor and with 1 GB RAM on board, the phone is seriously fast and can easily handle graphic and memory intensive applications with ease.

Taking pictures at a crisp 8MP and recording videos at 720p, X Factor HD is certainly capable of producing pictures and videos that look very impressive on your phone and on your computer. The Wi-Fi and 3G capabilities paired with the impressively large screen, make internet browsing a pleasant experience, in comparison to smaller phones with cramped displays. Watching video clips and movies on the X Factor is also comfortable, especially when you do not have a choice with the load shedding. The built in speaker is also loud and good enough, and for the price, you really can't complain much.



### SPECIFICATIONS

- 4.7 inch multi-touch screen
- 1.2 quad core processor
- 8MP BSI Rear (HD video recording)
- 2MP front camera
- Jelly Bean V 4.2.1
- 7.8 mm thin
- 3G support
- 1,800 LiPo battery
- IPS Screen with 178 inch viewing angle
- Gyro Sensor
- DTS Sound
- Plays Full HD 1080X1920 video

X Factor HD's battery life is also impressive and a full charge in the morning lasts a day of moderately intensive phone use (calls, texts, emails, internet browsing, music, videos, and games), which is more than you can ask of some more expensive smart phone models. Packed with extras like LED flash, G-Sensor, Proximity Sensor, Light Sensor, Digital Compass, Gyro meter, FM Radio and DTS sound, X Factor is a smart piece of kit from Colors Mobile. The only downside is the limited 4GB storage space. However, limited storage is forgivable given the myriad of features along with the impressive design and build Colors has managed to pack into the set and you can always add up to 32GB of extra storage via a Micro SD card for just a few thousand rupees.

Most serious smart phone buyers/users don't even waste a second glance at Indian made smart phones. However, Colors Mobile's X Factor HD is certainly doing something about that and at what price. 📺

**Yantrick's Verdict:** the latest from Colors pleasantly surprises with its slim body and an even more attractive range of features.

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RE VIEW

BIKRAM RAI

# Palace of dreams

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* finds a fitting reprise in Nepal

Beli Basnet arrives from Gangtok at her sister Tara's flat in Bagbajar and has no choice but to share a congested apartment with her abusive brother-in-law Shankar. The elder Beli weaves elaborate tales about her being in town and the couple find out the sisters' ancestral lands have all been sold off to cover hospital fees of their family. As Beli's coiffured sensibilities come

in conflict with Shankar's brutish ways, they do each other irreparable damage and she is forced to retreat to her world of dreams, or what remains of it.

Tennessee Williams' iconic play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, enjoyed successful stage performances in the late 1940s, with the likes of Jessica Tandy, Marlon Brando, and Anthony Quinn in lead roles, and was

even made into three films. In the Nepali version, *Swapnamahal*, the impatient and urban landscape of New Orleans to which the sisters' sprawling family lands belong, is replaced by their dream of owning a 'palace of dreams'.

To realise this dream, they aspire to make it big on silver screen. But after an unsuccessful early marriage, Beli returns from Bombay to Sikkim with no stardom to show for and teaches English for a living. Tara and Shankar, it is learned, were also in the film industry but now make music videos after their first and only film bombed at the box office.

While the couple grudgingly accepts the limits of their success, Beli still has delusions of grandeur and uses mock-sophistication - elaborate clothes, expensive perfume, and beauty regimes - to mask ageing, alcoholism, and a fading shot to stardom that never existed.

Melodrama breaks out in the cramped Bagbajar apartment. Beli's delusions are reassured by the woe-be-me adhunik

Nepali music as she lapses between dream and reality, speaking Bollywood Hindi of the films of her imagination but still accusing Shankar of being an Indian.

The class difference in the original play is replaced here by caste. To Beli, Shankar is the outsider, the rogue, the carnal and apish "Madisey". But as the cloistered world of Nepali society is left in tatters after the end of the Panchayat, Beli's arrogance catches up with her and she loses the respect of all her allies, including her sister.

Starting with Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, Freelancers Nepal's third effort *Swapnamahal* does not disappoint. 🇳🇵

*Swapnamahal*

Written by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Eelum Dixit

Translated by Samuna KC

Cast: Samuna KC, Sarita Giri, Pramod

Agrahari, Bikram Singh Tharu

Rs 200, runs till 18 August, all week except

Mondays, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar,

(01)694269, 9841605535



SOMEPLACE ELSE

dirty little secrets. We should perhaps remember that chemicals are in fact the principle basis of all matter and not something we should view as inherently, irredeemably dangerous.

That said, riding on the wave of (often legitimate) public health concerns is hardly the worst marketing strategy in the world. The good things I'd heard about Rato Mato, along with the number of occupied tables on the evening we attended, suggested that this eatery might well be delivering something more than the promise of non-toxic tucker.

Our meal began with Rato Mato's 'special' fries (Rs 80), made so by a crisp spicy coating and a Thousand Island-esque dipping sauce. We also took the BBQ chicken skewers (Rs 180) to task and found the mildly piro marinade delicious, even if the meat was perhaps a little overdone.

Main courses arrived before we'd devoured the starters, although in fairness we had dithered, probably causing a certain amount of frustration for an evidently efficient kitchen. We ordered the pork chops (continuing this column's breathless hunt of the best plates of pig available in this fair city) and the parsley pesto pasta (in a noble if half-hearted attempt to acknowledge that some of our readers are vegetarian).



PICS: CC

## RATO MATO

I'm sorry to report that neither dish lived up to the recommendations we'd heard: the pork (Rs 260), smothered in gravy and served with a slightly cold mash, was tough and more than a little dry. The pasta (Rs 270) - which ought to have been beautiful in its simplicity - was oppressed by its grated cheese topping and had stuck together to form an unfortunate, oily

mass. We picked at both plates before surrendering, ordering the chocolate mousse with crème (Rs 120), which, while an improvement on the mains, did not provide the rich, intense shot to the arm that I was by then counting on.

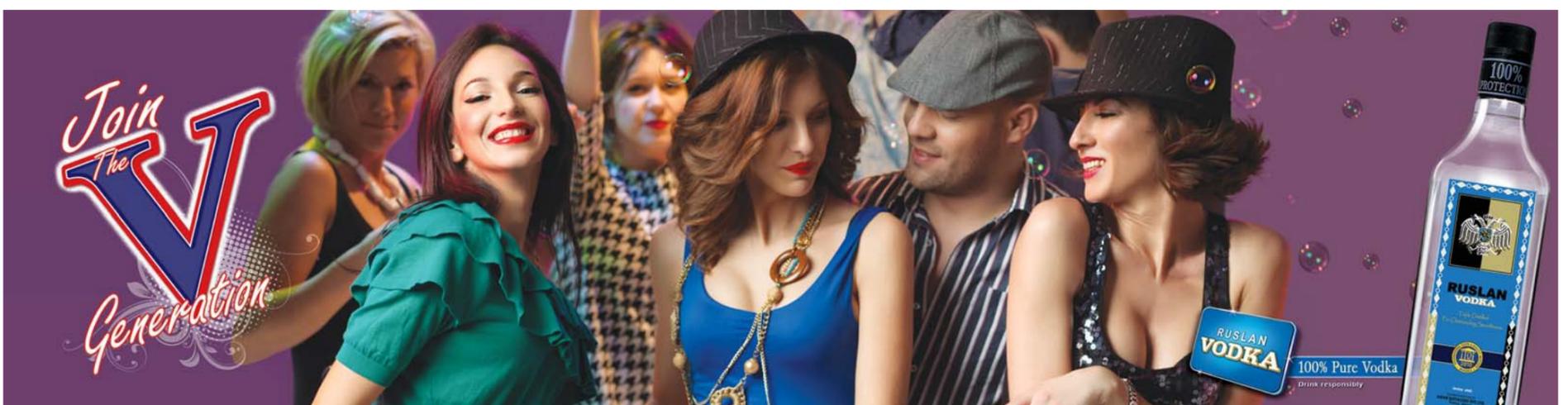
A slice of cucumber sitting in a tall glass of complimentary water was a nice touch, as was the presentation of all of the dishes that came our way. This, in fact, appears to be Rato Mato's strong suit: brush strokes and drizzles of sauces and condiments carefully dispensed over our plates, fine curls of chocolate atop the crème of our dessert, and so on. Everything looked fantastic, but very little of what we ordered truly delivered on taste.

Attempts to promote Nepal's

growing organic produce market are, of course, nothing to sneer at, and the modest number of restaurants doing so should be commended for both their innovation and their response to consumer concerns. I highly doubt that a meal dominated by 'chemicals' would have bettered our experience at Rato Mato. But I did leave wondering if I could whip up a quick snack from the mutant vegetables and mass-produced rubbish in my fridge when I got home. 🇳🇵

CC

*How to get there: from the British School, walk straight through Arun Thapa Chok. Rato Mato is on the right hand side, more or less opposite Top of the World Café.*



# The humble soap



DEVYANI SHYAKOTI



**C**ountries and companies spend millions every year on public health research, but the results of these studies are not always applicable or relevant to Nepal. The 2002 study conducted in the slums of Pakistan, however, not only provides a blueprint for other countries in South Asia but also reinforces the belief that even simple, preventive measures can save lives in poor communities which lack proper health facilities and services.

Supported by US consumer goods giants, Procter and Gamble, the study aimed to see if a new antibacterial soap could prevent diseases. Field workers fanned out in 25 randomly chosen slum neighbourhoods in Karachi to distribute soap, some with triclocarban and some without. The two soaps looked exactly alike. They encouraged people to use the soap generously and wash their hands in these five contexts: after defecation, after cleaning an infant that has defecated, before preparing food, before eating, and before feeding infants. A family was provided two to four bars of soap, with regular replacements.

Eleven neighbourhoods used as a 'control' group received pens and paper instead of soap. They were free to continue using soaps as they had done in the past, but were given no supplies or health education. For one year, the fieldworkers conducted weekly visits to the families to check if their instructions were being adhered to and to collect data.

Analysis of the data revealed that children in households that received soap and proper instructions experienced a 50 per cent decrease in pneumonia cases and 53 per cent in diarrhoea cases as compared to the control group that wasn't provided with soap. More surprisingly (and disappointing for P&G), using soap properly proved good enough to decrease incidents of diarrhoea and pneumonia in children. The triclocarban antibacterial agent in the soap did not provide any extra protection.

The discovery that normal soap and knowledge of how to use them could decrease people's chances of catching diseases even in communities with widespread poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding, and access only to contaminated water for drinking and cleaning, was stunning. And the study became part of a milestone paper that was published in *The Lancet* in 2005 with Bangladesh-based public health and sanitation expert Stephen Luby as lead author.

More than three and half million children die due to diarrhoea and respiratory infections every year in developing countries such as ours. Using soap generously clearly ameliorates this condition. People have strong ideas of purity in South Asia and wash themselves frequently. But regular, proper use of soap is a must, as it enhances the capacity of water to solubilise and remove pathogens from the hands, thus helping reduce both respiratory and digestive problems. Just washing the 'involved' hand after defecation won't wash you of your sins. ☑

## LIFESAVER

**3.5** MILLION

CHILDREN UNDER FIVE DIE EACH YEAR FROM ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES AND DIARRHOEA-RELATED DISEASES LIKE CHOLERA AND DYSENTERY

**50%**

REDUCTION IN RISK OF PNEUMONIA AND 25 PER CENT IN RESPIRATORY INFECTION RATES IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE WHO WASH HANDS WITH SOAP

**19%**

DECREASE IN MORTALITY RATES WHEN BIRTH ATTENDANTS WASH HANDS WITH SOAP BEFORE DELIVERY

**EVERY \$ 3.35**

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**15** OCTOBER

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SOURCES: WWW.GLOBALHANDWASHING.ORG/WWW.GLOBALSOAP.ORG/WWW.UNICEF.ORG



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**HAPPENINGS**



BIKRAM RAI

**FAREWELL:** Chairman of election council Khil Raj Regmi, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and Narayan Kaji Shrestha (l-r) pay their tributes to founding member of Communist Party of Nepal, Nar Bahadur Karmacharya, who died on Tuesday.



NEPAL ARMY

**NI HAO:** Nepal Army Chief Gaurav Shumsher Rana (left) meets Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission Xu Qilang (right) on Monday during his week long visit to China.



RSS

**SAFETY FIRST:** A woman in Kalagaudi, Kanchanpur abandons her home on Saturday. Thousands of families in the district have been displaced due to flooding caused by incessant monsoon rains.



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# The new fascism

JOHAN GALTUNG

The atrocious Second World War left behind lasting damage by lowering our standards for what is marginally acceptable. War is bad but if it's not nuclear war, the limit has not yet been reached. Fascism is bad, but if it does not come with dictatorship and the elimination of an entire people, the limit has not yet been reached. Hiroshima, Hitler, Auschwitz are deeply rooted in our minds. And we distort them. Hiroshima makes us disregard the state terrorism against German and Japanese cities, killing citizens of any age and both genders. And Hitler and Auschwitz make us disregard fascism as the pursuit of political goals by means of violence and the threats of violence.

It takes two to make a war, by whatever means. But it takes only one to make fascism, against one's own people, and/or against others. What is the

essence of fascism? A definition has been given: coupling the pursuit of political goals with massive violence. We have democracy exactly to prevent that, a political game for the pursuit of political goals by nonviolent means and more particularly by getting the majority, as demonstrated by free and fair elections or referenda, on one's side.

A wonderful innovation with a logical follow-up: nonviolence even when the majority oversteps lines or limits, for instance, as written into the codes of human rights.

The strong state, able and willing to display its force – including through the use of capital punishment – belongs to the essence of fascism. That means

absolute monopoly on power, including the power that does not come out of a gun, including nonviolent power. And it means a view of war as an acceptable activity of the state, normalising, even eternalising war. It means a deep contradiction with an omnipresent enemy, like Aryans against non-Aryans, or Judeo-Christianity against Islam, glorifying the former, demonising the latter. It means unlimited surveillance of one's own people and others, made possible by postmodern technology. What matters is fear: that people are afraid and abstain from protests and nonviolent action lest they are singled out for the ultimate punishment: extrajudicial execution.

## A strong state, able and willing, unleashes unlimited surveillance on its own people

More important than actually checking everybody's email and web activity and listening to telephone calls is that people believe this is happening. The trick is to do so indiscriminately, not focusing on suspects only but making people feel that anyone is a potential suspect. The even more basic trick is to make fascism compatible with democracy.

There are many ways to achieve this alloy. First, a reductionist definition of democracy as multi-party national elections. Second, making the parties close to identical in matters of 'security', ready to use violence internationally or nationally. Third, privatising the economy under the heading of 'freedom', the other bridging word, essentially granting the executive power over the judiciary, the police and the military – a move for which there is already manufactured consent. To arrive at that consent, a permanent crisis with a permanent enemy ready to hit is useful, but there are other approaches.

Just as a crisis defined as 'military' catapults the military into power, a crisis defined as 'economic' catapults capital into power. If the crisis is that the West has been outcompeted in the real economy, then the finance economy – the huge banks – start handling the trillions under the formula of freedom.

If freedom is defined as the freedom to use money to make more money, and security as the force to kill the designated enemy wherever he is, then we get a military-financial complex, the successor to the military-industrial complex in de-industrialising societies. They know their enemies: peace movements and environment movements, threats to security and freedom respectively by not only casting doubts on killing, wealth, and inequality, but also framing them as counter-productive. Both movements say that you are in fact producing insecurity and dictatorship. Both operate in the open, are easily infiltrated with spies and provocateurs, thereby eliminating badly needed voices.

So, here we are. Torture as enhanced investigation, de facto camps of concentration like Guantanamo, habeas corpus eliminated. Those who pull the veil aside - Julian Assange, Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden - are criminalised, not those building fascism. The old adage: when democracy is most needed, abolish it. [www.ipsnews.net](http://www.ipsnews.net)

Johan Galtung, rector of the Transcendental Peace University, is author of *The Fall of the US Empire - And Then What?*



# Tinker Tailor Snowden Spy

LILIA SHEVTSOVA

Snowden's exposé sparks a long over-due debate on security, privacy, and freedom

A worldwide media frenzy has turned the plight of the rogue American intelligence analyst Edward Snowden into something resembling a John le Carré novel, full of suspense and intrigue. Whose spy is he? Who will grant him asylum? Will he be able to outmanoeuvre the National Security Agency as it attempts to force him to return to the United States to stand trial on charges of theft and espionage? And what will US President Barack Obama say to his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, at their scheduled meeting in Moscow – where Snowden is currently taking refuge at Sheremetyevo Airport – this September?

The real espionage, however, lies not in Snowden's decision to release NSA secrets, but in the surveillance programs that he exposed. The leaked information highlighted the West's long-ignored failure to strike an informed balance between security and

liberty. Current political and economic uncertainty has exacerbated the situation, driving policymakers to settle on simplistic solutions that, as Snowden made starkly apparent, can undermine the values that the West espouses.

This is not true only in the US and the United Kingdom, which happen to be entangled in the Snowden scandal. The reluctant responses by Germany and France to evidence that the NSA has been conducting unprecedented surveillance of their officials indicate that Europe's governments may also be involved. Indeed, it now appears that America has shared its intelligence trove with Germany's spy services when needed.

A state that emphasises security over civil rights and liberties is easily hijacked by security agencies. While America's 'war on terror' demands a stronger emphasis on security, the NSA's activities expose an alarming

willingness to violate the privacy of millions of individuals – including in allied countries, whose constitutions and sovereignty have also been breached.

Monitoring individuals' private lives is not just limited to the state and its security services. Major global telecommunication companies – such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Skype – have assembled secret stockpiles of personal information about their users, which they share with the NSA.

Beyond the obvious violation of individuals' privacy implied by such activities lies the danger that these firms will later make a deal with authoritarian regimes in Russia or China, where little, if any, effort is made to preserve even the illusion of privacy. Google already has some experience in turning over information to China's security services. Against this background, it is impossible to know whether these companies are

already spying on Western leaders, together with the NSA.

The discussion about security, privacy, and freedom that the Snowden drama has sparked is long overdue. But the scandal has begotten many losers. Snowden has effectively given up his future. The US and Obama have lost their claim to the moral high ground. And liberal democracies' apparent inability to protect their citizens from infringement of their individual rights has undermined their standing at home and abroad.

Russian society will also pay a price, with the NSA's surveillance programs giving the Kremlin ammunition to defend the expansion of state control over the Internet and other aspects of citizens' personal lives. Similarly, the scandal will likely inspire China to strengthen its Great Firewall further.

The ordeal's only victor is Putin, who now has grounds to dismiss US criticism of his authoritarian rule.

Indeed, at the slightest provocation, Putin will be able to point to America's hypocrisy for spying on, say, European Union facilities as part of expanded surveillance programs supposedly within the scope of the war on terror, and for hunting Snowden after accusing Russia of unfairly prosecuting the whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky.

Snowden did not create the security-privacy dilemma, but he did illuminate a deeply rooted problem that Western leaders have long tried to obscure. One can only hope that his actions and the resulting scandal will compel Western leaders to reassess their approach to national security – and not simply lead them to try to conceal it better. [www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)

Lilia Shevtsova is Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Moscow.

# ROAD KILL

Nepal's most deadly epidemic is happening on its highways

DUNCAN MARU in ACHHAM

We were performing an ultrasound of a young boy with pericardial tuberculosis at Bayalpata Hospital in remote Achham district when we heard the jeeps pull up outside. The patients, bloodied and distressed started to pour in.

Soon, the district-level government hospital was filled with 20 patients. One had already died and our team got to work, suturing, casting, and giving fluids and banded blood. There were six fracture cases that were of such extent and complexity that we would refer them to Nepalganj

Medical College, a 12-hour ride away.

Highway accidents have become an epidemic in Nepal and the roads of western Nepal are particularly dangerous. And as with nearly all diseases, the poor are the most vulnerable. In the 12 months ending April, more than 110 accidents have killed over 140 individuals in the far-west alone. Since then, a dozen more have died.

Furthermore, road traffic accidents ranked as the number one cause of disease burden among children between 5 and 14 years of age in Nepal. This is because pedestrians, passengers, and cyclists are most often the

victims of road traffic accidents, rather than the drivers themselves.

Drunk driving is a major contributor, with most accidents taking place in the late afternoon and evening hours. Though fatal road traffic accidents are declining in the Kathmandu Valley due to the stricter drink-drive policies, it is still a problem in far-western Nepal. Nearly half of the drivers involved in accidents and brought to Manipal Teaching Hospital in Kohalpur showed evidence of alcohol consumption. In a separate hospital study of 870 traffic accident admissions, 17 per cent



# Nepal's highways of death

SUNIR PANDEY

It is just before sunrise at Kalanki bus station and the gateway to 59 of Nepal's 75 districts is already buzzing with activity. Night buses crammed with passengers have just started arriving in Kathmandu. They are the lucky ones. Cargo trucks are preparing to head back to the Tarai, some of them will not make it to their destination in one piece.

Nepal's highways are one of the most dangerous in the world and the chances of a bus,

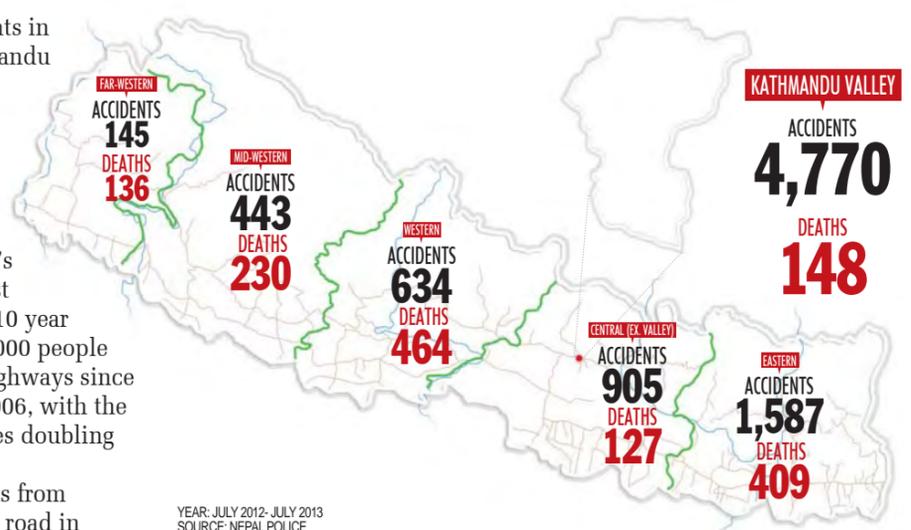
truck or car having a crash are more than 100 times higher than in Japan and 10 times higher than even India (*see chart*). Because of Nepal's topography, poor road conditions, careless drivers, and lack of regulation, the chance of passengers surviving an accident is also much lower here than anywhere else.

One person died in every five accidents in Nepal in the last year, whereas the figure for Japan is one death in every 150. Nepal's fatality rate per accident goes higher as one travels westwards, with nine deaths

for every 10 accidents in the far-west. Kathmandu has seen a dramatic decline in traffic fatalities, with only one death for every 33 accidents.

More people have died on Nepal's highways in the past decade than in the 10 year conflict. Nearly 10,000 people have died on the highways since the war ended in 2006, with the total annual fatalities doubling in that time.

15 July 2013: Bus from Baitadi went off the road in



were found to be driving under the influence.

The Department of Roads and the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport have taken an active role to address traffic safety in the Public Roads Act (1975), Vehicle and Transportation Management Act (1993), Local Self-Governance Act (1999), and Roads Board Act (2002). Though Nepal is still greatly in need of enhancing core road policies, some progress is being made. In February the Department of Transport Management strengthened the written portion of the drivers' licence examination in hopes

of keeping unfit drivers off the roads. It also established a Vehicle Fitness Centre to repair and maintain public vehicles.

But the single most important initiative has been the no drinking and driving policy in 2011. A study has shown that the number of traffic accidents in 2012 decreased by 23 per cent compared to the previous year. In the far-west, a new system of time cards has been introduced to control speeding vehicles on the hilly roads of Doti, Achham, Bajura, Bajhang, Baitadi, and Dadeldhura after the devastating accident in Doti earlier this year.

More needs to be done, including:

- Restricting and regulating night buses
- Mandating seat belts on buses and controlling overcrowding
- Stricter legislation and enforcement of driving while intoxicated
- Increased funding for highway improvements
- Strengthening emergency response systems of hospitals through increased funding for training, emergency room supplies, and ambulance services
- Mandating proper and timely maintenance of private and public vehicles

- Stricter enforcement of driving licence rules
- Increased public campaigns on traffic safety
- Increased presence of traffic police on highways and local roads
- Setting and enforcing mandatory helmet use for cyclists, motorcyclists, and their passengers

There are economic costs to bus owners for many of these interventions and the costs of improvements to consumers—many of whom rely upon bus transportation for their own survival—could be substantial. The task of addressing the

highway accident epidemic in Nepal is huge, but there is a real opportunity for saving lives with targeted policy interventions that are effectively implemented. 

*Duncan Maru, MD, PhD, is co-founder of Nyaya Health International. This paper was co-authored by Nirajan Khadka, Associate Director of Community Health with Nyaya Health Nepal, and Manaswi Sangruala.*

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com) 

Further reading



**FISHING OUT:** Armymen try to pull out the bus that fell into the Madi River in Tanahu in July this year.

PAWAN POUDEL

Dhading. 3 killed. Driver had been at the wheel for 14 hours straight, had been speeding, and may have fallen asleep.

**6 July 2013:** Bus fell off the Madi Bridge in Tanahu. 11 killed. Witnesses said the driver swerved to save children crossing the bridge.

**12 January 2013:** A bus veered off the Bhim Datta Highway in Doti at 3 AM and fell 700 metres into the valley below. 33 killed. The speeding bus skidded on ice.

**13 October 2011:** Bus fell into the Sun Kosi River on Khurkot-Nepalthok section of

under construction section of BP Highway. 44 killed. Overcrowded bus should not have been plying on dangerous, incomplete mountain road.

**3 May 2011:** Bus fell off the Khurkot-Nepalthok section of the BP Highway. 11 killed. Driver negligence.

Police know what causes most of these accidents: dangerous, poorly-maintained, slippery, and narrow mountain roads, landslides, overcrowded buses, carelessness, and drunkenness of drivers. However, they seem powerless to control overloading and

FATALITIES PER  
**100,000** VEHICLES PER YEAR

-  NEPAL **1,677**
-  AFGHANISTAN **1,448**
-  BHUTAN **306**
-  THAILAND **119**
-  INDIA **100**
-  CHINA **36**
-  JAPAN **7**



reckless driving. Even if police investigations find drivers guilty, powerful transport syndicates with political protection set them free.

“The government has tried to retire vehicles more than 20 years old, but it hasn't been able to enforce it for years,” says Pawan Kumar Giri, spokesperson for the Traffic Police. But ultimately it is careless driving on treacherous roads that is the main cause of Nepal's high highway fatality rate.

One success has been the anti-drink-and-drive campaign

in Kathmandu and other urban centres. However, because of the lack of police manpower not all the roads in the country can be covered. Giri says the number of accidents and fatalities will keep on increasing if the government doesn't bring stronger laws to show it is serious about preventing accidents.

He says: “We need to improve road infrastructure and regulate the management of passenger vehicles. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure passenger safety.” 

# “Abolishing the monarchy was a mistake”

Sunday, July 21st, 2013



Interview with Shashank Koirala, leader of the NC and son of former Prime Minister BP Koirala, *BBC Nepali*, 19 July

## BBC: Whose philosophy – BP Koirala or GP Koirala – is more pertinent in the current political scenario?

**Shashank Koirala:** I still stand by BP Koirala's beliefs. He agreed with the king as far as nationalism was concerned, but held a very different view on democracy. Nepal abolished the 240-year-old monarchy in 2008, but look at the state of the country in the past 10 years. We had a chance to set things right before the 2006 uprising by bringing the Maoists to table. If Girija Prasad Koirala had taken a firm step, Nepal would have been in a better position. If we don't mend our ways soon, it is going to be very unfortunate.



However, abolishing the monarchy and becoming a republic were big mistakes. In 2006 when people came out on the streets to protest, there was not a single leader of BP's stature who could bring the situation under control. Views on secularism and federalism were shared

by most parties, but declaring the country a republic was solely a Maoist agenda. The idea of abolishing the monarchy came out from the Maoist camp.

## You don't agree with the NC's current policies, what are your recommendations?

We need to first focus on preventing Nepal from breaking apart. The parties need to agree on holding CA elections as soon as possible to give people a constitution within the next two to four years. Local elections also need to take place. Like BP said we need to think of the country first.

## How can we put the country back on track?

BP always spoke about nationalism and nation building, but nobody seems to be bothered about these values any more. He used say that the king would protect Nepal's nationalism because it is in his interests. But now people only talk about dividing the country along ethnic lines. If CA elections don't take place in November, it will push the country further into anarchy. Our biggest priorities should be nation building and writing the constitution.

Do you mean Nepal should follow BP's blueprint to correct past mistakes?

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Listen to the full interview on BBC

# Say no to monarchy

Editorial, *Kantipur*, 22 July

कान्तिपुर

Lately, former-king Gyanendra Shah has become more active and visible in politics. As a civilian, he is free to participate in politics or assist flood victims in western Nepal. But what is more troublesome than the ex-king's political ambitions, is the dubious behaviour of leaders of various political parties who are cosy up to Shah.

Shashank Koirala, a central member of the NC, recently voiced his support for the monarchy and although this opinion is not shared by his party, Koirala's statement is still worrisome. Similarly, leaders

of CPN-M Mohan Baidya and Netra Bikram Chand, who have been extremely vocal in their opposition to polls, said they too are open to the idea of collaborating with the ex-king for the sake of national sovereignty. What do these latest developments say about the credentials of the NC and Maoists, who once played such a crucial role in ushering democracy in the country? And what will it do to the revolutionary image of the Maoists when leaders like Baidya begin looking wishfully towards the former monarch as an alternative?

Although it is true that Nepal is now running under

covert control of international forces, bringing Shah back into the political fray is not the solution. Such a move will only strengthen the right-wing establishment and devalue the achievements and ideals of the 2006 Jana Andolan like federalism and secularism.

For the past eight years, political parties have continued to make and repeat mistakes. Not writing the constitution and failing to institutionalise democracy will be seen as their biggest failures. But this doesn't mean that the political transformations of the past decade or the people's movement were mistakes. The only alternative to a republic is a stronger republic.

The threat to Nepal's nationalism comes from external forces gaining power due to poor governance and indecisiveness of our leaders. The solution lies in working towards building a conducive environment for free and fair elections. It is important that political parties overcome their veil of ignorance and learn a few lessons from the past. The sooner they do this, the sooner the country can move ahead.



BACHCHU BK



## Belbari's victim speaks

Maya Sharki's testimony *Mysansar.com*, 24 July

मैयेश संसार

I was returning home that evening when a man grabbed me from the back. Before I could scream for help, he pushed me to the ground and covered my mouth. It was already dark so I couldn't recognise the attacker, but judging by his voice, I presumed it was Jiwan from my village. He had me in a chokehold and began forcing himself on me. When I bit his hand and screamed for help he threatened to kill me and strangled me again.

It was only when people from nearby houses came out with torch lights that the assailant ran away. I went to the police and told them I had been attacked by Jiwan and could identify him by the bite marks on his hand. But when Jiwan was brought to the station, I saw no signs of injury on his hands. I thought I had wrongly accused him. On my way home, Jiwan's mother slapped me and said that since I was a Dalit, I wouldn't be able to do anything and I would pay for my actions.

A village meeting was called on Monday morning to sort things out. But since the meeting didn't begin until 8, I left for work. Later when I was called back everyone started hurling abuses at me and asked who had instigated me report to the police. When I said I did it out of my own will, the mob suddenly started punching and slapping me. They tore my clothes, covered my face in soot, and made me wear a shoe garland.

I even apologised to Jiwan and said I wouldn't repeat what I did. But the mob just didn't stop.

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Listen to the full audio clip on Mysansar

## NEPALI TWEETS

**Aneesh Malla**  
जवसम्म देशमा भाषिक, जातजातिय तथा लैंगिक समानता हुदैन तबसम्म बेलबारीको घटना दोहोरि रहने छ भन्ने कुरा खाँड न बुझेको ? संवेदनहीन हामी !  
Incidents like those in Belbari will keep recurring unless we have linguistic, ethnic, and gender equality. When will we understand? We are so insensitive!

**Bipendra Karki**  
राहन बाँडलेलाई नरोक, सक्छौं भने घन्टा आतंक मच्चाउने सय आतंककारीको पाता फर्काउ । #आघारसहित  
Don't stop those who are distributing relief material to flood victims, instead stop the terrorists and extortionists. #CodeOfConduct

**Kedar Sharma**  
खुसी हुनु कि दुःखी ?  
बेलबारीको घटना चरित्रमाया तामाङको अभियानले ज्यायसँगै पायो। आज कुटिएकी घेनीको अभियानले २० वर्ष पछि अर्को पुरस्कार पाउला।  
Should we be happy or sad? A victim of trafficking, Charimaya Tamang, won the Magsaysay award today for her work on behalf of other trafficked women. Maybe the woman who was beaten today will receive an award 20 years later.

## WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #20

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result of interviews is about Nepalis' travel habits.

### Did you go on a family holiday last year?

No: 60.7%  
Yes: 39.1%  
Won't say: 0.2%

### Why not?

No time: 39.6%  
No money: 27%  
No interest/habit: 16.7%  
Don't know: 7.2%  
Not safe: 4.1%  
Won't say: 1.8%

### What do you think of the government's decision to make one family holiday per year compulsory for some of its employees?

Good: 65.5%  
Bad: 22.4%  
Don't know: 11.5%  
Won't say: 0.3%



CPN Prachanda Pvt Ltd

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitij in *Annapurna Post*, 22 July

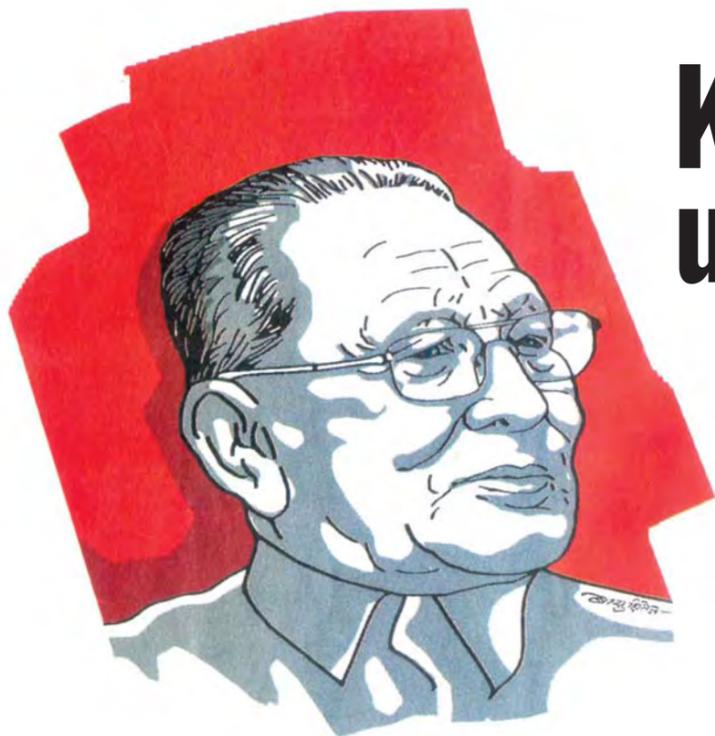
## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“So add CA seats for both areas and both camps will be happy.”

UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal reacting to suggestions that population growth in Kathmandu is higher than in the Tarai, *Naya Patrika*, 25 July

BASU KSHITIJANIPURVA



# Karmacharya's unfinished revolution

Netra Panthi, *Naya Patrika*, 25 July

गठौं पत्रिका

It's 1949. Nepal is still under the grip of the autocratic Rana regime. People are not allowed to write, talk, or speak in public. Organised politics is out of the question. Elsewhere in the world communism is beginning to take hold.

In China, military and political leader Chiang Kai-shek is about to abscond. Soviet Union is ruled by Stalin. Papers published in Prague, Czechoslovakia are broadcasting communist instructions and philosophies around the globe. Farmers in Telangana (present day Andhra Pradesh) have seized hundreds of acres of lands and are distributing them to the poor. Over in West Bengal, the Indian Communist Party is organising massive rallies chanting, "We have to follow the Chinese, follow the Chinese."

Inspired by these events and wanting to start a people's revolution in their own homeland, four young Nepali men - Nara Bahadur Karmacharya, Pushpa Lal Shrestha, Niranjana Govind Baidya, and Narayan Bilas Joshi - establish the Communist Party of Nepal in Kolkata on 22 April, which is also Lenin's birth date. The party's main goal is to depose the Rana rulers and start a people's revolution because the leaders believe simply following Gandhi's principle of non-violence is not going to be enough.

In the six decades since then, the country has undergone immense transformation from a cloistered Hindu Kingdom to a progressive secular republic and Karmacharya, Shrestha, Baidya, and Joshi were major catalysts for these changes. On Wednesday, Karmacharya, the last of the founding fathers, passed away at the age of 90,

with his lifelong dream of a people's revolution unfulfilled. Those who didn't bother to check up on him while he was bedridden in hospital, turned up at Paris Danda and Khula Manch to pay their last respect and shed crocodile tears.

Karmacharya was inspired to join politics after he witnessed the execution of martyrs Shukraraj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, and Dashrath Chand in 1941 for revolting against the Ranas. He was just 16 at that time. "After seeing the martyrs being hanged, I realised that the Rana rule had to be abolished and that's why I entered politics," Karmacharya would say.

He started out with Surya Bahadur Bharadwaj's Democracy Association ('Prajatantra Sangh'). Pushpa Lal was also a part of this group. The members called themselves communists and read revolutionary books from India like *Messages of Communism* ('Samyabad ko sandesh'). After being caught multiple times and tortured for protesting against the Ranas, Karmacharya left for Kolkata along with a friend in the mid-1940's.

Before starting their own communist party, the four men took a week long training from leaders of the Bengali Communist Party. Karmacharya was also deeply influenced by the teachings of Bengali leader Nripendra Chakraborty whom he credits for inculcating in him communist ideologies, principles, and conduct.

Today the original party has split

and divided variously with over a dozen communist parties each calling itself '24 carat' authentic. When asked about his thoughts on the replication of parties, Karmacharya would generally respond, "Most parties are only 'communist' in name. You cannot be a true communist party without your own army."

The veteran politician believed that revisionism within the party began in 1956 when Tanka Prasad Acharya and friends started the Jatiya Janatantrik Sanyukta Morcha. But he was most disheartened by the split during the fourth party convention in 1983 and the breakup of the unity centre in 1994 due to disagreements over whether to participate in the 'People's War' or not. Karmacharya decided not to be a part of the armed conflict.

Before he took the plunge into politics, Karmacharya used to be a champion basketball player and also a trained singer. "When I joined politics, my only goal was to bring down the Rana regime. So I gave up all my hobbies. From when I was 17 or 18, politics became my dream and my work," he said. He even sacrificed his family life and remained unmarried so that he could devote his 100 per cent to the party.

Nara Bahadur Karmacharya created Nepal's first communist party, which despite its internal fragmentation is at the forefront of the country's politics today. With his death, Nepal's leftist establishment has lost an honest and upright leader.

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# Four-party dictatorship

Those who say Nepal's political parties can't get along are dead wrong. They get along like a house on fire, amicably deciding everything collectively in a spirit of fair play and equal sharing so that no one is left out. In fact, our current four-party dictatorship is a model for egalitarian political cohabitation.



Everything is decided on the basis of distributive justice and band-fand between the parties: road contracts, ambassadorial appointments, promotion of secretaries, and even the winners of the annual film awards. If there is a dispute, it is easily settled in the spirit of compromise. When diplomatic appointments need to be decided urgently before the Election Commissariat's Code of Conduit deadline kicks in, the Kangresis are given the SAARC Secretary General, the Cash Baddies get Delhi, the UML gets UK, the Madhesis get Thailand. You can tell the relative clout of a political party by seeing who gets to be envoy to Burma or Egypt. Same with police promotions, secretarial appointments, and civil service transfers. And when the budget

for a district is unspent, the four parties sit down and divide up the dough among themselves. Every year, three national media awards are doled out by the Ministry of Misinformation. This year the NC, UML, and Cash appointed one candidate each to be the recipients. Works beautifully and everybody gets his share in this superbly functioning and well-oiled system. When power sharing is working so well, why have elections?

Although the gobarmnt of Chief Minister Kill Raj is supposed to be in charge, it has now become quite apparent that it can't

move even a pinkie without the approval of the High and Mighty Political Commission. And the most powerful commissar in the commission is none other than The Grand Ayatollah Commandante Awesome himself who has a hotline to the Regmi regime with instructions on day-to-day governance matters. That is why Sri Tin Pro-Chandra holds court every morning in Lajimpat and the long line of votaries bearing offerings in return for favours there is much longer than in Balu Water.

With this week's kerfuffle in the Cash Baddies, PKD has proclaimed himself Supreme Leader so that he is now not just Top Dog, but Only Dog. It is hard to say who won and who lost in the Clash of the Titans. BRB thought he had outsmarted both PKD and NKS by abruptly resigning as vice chairman, whom he described as 'weeds' in his speech to the Plenum. But PKD forced his entire top brass to step down and declared himself Great Leader. NKS is now out of the ring, but BRB and PKD are warily circling each other. It ain't over until the referee counts to 10 and declares a knockdown.

The way the monarchy is back in the news these days, one would think we seriously miss it. The guilty are scared of their own shadow and that is what seems to be happening with political parties vis-a-vis Gyanendra Sir. The ex-kingji has become a convenient stick for political parties to threaten and blackmail each other with. So Baidya Bah, like a jilted suitor, threatens the Cash Baddies that if they don't pay him more attention he will start dating royalists. This worked: BRB got so jealous he threatened to put KingG behind bars (he didn't say anything about what he'll do to Kiran Kaka). The other political parties, which have been doing bugger all about flood victims in western Nepal, sitting on their asses, and twiddling their thumbs, also expressed their grave concern about kingG going around being kind to fellow-Nepalis. Asked one angry neta: "Who gave him the permission to become generous all of a sudden?"

You can be sure the Election Commission is serious about polls in November because it has become strict about those who flout its Code of Conduct. So while the Higher-than-ever Political Mechanism appoints ambassadors left and right, it has pulled up the ex-princess for handing out rice and sugar to the people of Dadeldhura. Ummm, sir, the Himani Trust is not a political party. Yet.



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