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DEVAKI BISTA

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Parties are nervous about falling popularity and want to delay polls

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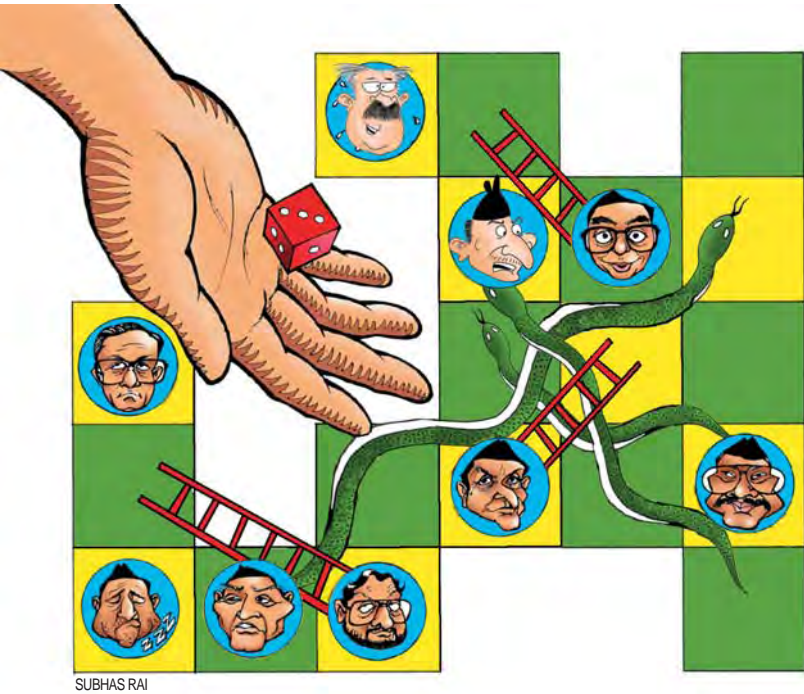
GETTING COLD FEET

There are only so many ways you can keep saying the same thing every week. But it has to be said again that although all the blame seems to be heaped on the Baidya Maoist-led group of 33 smaller parties for obstructing the November elections, it is actually the UCPN (M) and the establishment Madhesi parties who are slyly working towards the same end.

The M&M are going back on the very agreements they were signatories to in the presidential ordinance that made way for the interim electoral administration. That agreement stipulated the number of seats and constituencies in the next CA elections, but the UCPN (M) and Madhesi parties are now having second thoughts. They are shifting the goalposts again on electoral constituencies and going back to a 601 seat CA and old proportional representation provisions.

Whatever spin the protagonists put to it, the ongoing talks between the four-party mechanism and the littler dissident parties look like a futile exercise because of the mutually exclusive list of demands from the 33. Some want the Khil Raj Regmi government to resign, some want just the High-Level Political Committee to be dissolved, others just want Regmi to abandon his Chief Justiceship, some want the entire four-party, 11-point agreement and the 25-point ordinance to be scrapped and be replaced by an all-party roundtable. Still others want the electoral constituencies to be rearranged to reflect the results of the 2011 census, while some want the proportion of candidates nominated under proportional representation increased, or the deadline for voter registration extended. Everyone wants rules that will give them a numerical advantage in polls.

Even if the UCPN (M) and Madhesi parties are not actively colluding with the dissidents and egging them on to put up these pre-conditions, it is clear they benefit from



For a party to refuse to go to the polls because it may not fare well, undermines democracy and its own credibility

the delaying tactics. The reason is that both have read the writing on the wall, seen the public opinion surveys, and are running scared that they will be trounced at the ballot box. It is natural for political parties at election time to be curious about whether conditions are favourable for them, but to refuse to go to the polls because they may not do well at the ballot box undermines democracy and

their own credibility

Even non-Maoists voted for the Maoists in 2008, either out of fear or because they thought giving former rebels the ballot would encourage them to give up the bullet. But having squandered their mandate during successive tenures in government, both the Maoists and Madhesi know that it is not going to be a cake walk this time. Besides, the Maoists have split, eroding their rural vote banks. Some of the discredited leaders within the NC and UML are equally nervous about facing voters, but they are secretly happy to let the dissident parties and the Maoist-Madhesi combine take the blame for being spoilers.

Which is why the Maoists and Madhesi parties are blowing hot and blowing cold, being wildly optimistic one day and wildly pessimistic the next, and giving contradictory statements to the media. Some have started saying “Let’s postpone elections till April.” Indeed, if some of the demands of the 33 and the Maoist-Madhesi alliance is to be accommodated, there is no way the Election Commission can conclude preparations in time. But there are dangers if polls are postponed till May 2014.

Firstly, there is the political minefield over who should succeed the Regmi government or whether it should continue. The UCPN (M) and especially Pushpa Kamal Dahal, will be blamed because he was the chief architect of making Regmi head an interim government to conduct polls. The four political parties and their leaders will suffer further damage to their credibility.

If the public’s apathy and lack of confidence in the parties and the electoral process decline even further, it could irreversibly undermine democracy, benefit the extremists of the left and right, and make a future election whenever it is held, meaningless.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

HUMLA’S GREEN HOUSE EFFECT

So delighted to read good news about Humla Development Initiative (HDI) and how far it has progressed and the positive impacts it has had on the people of Humla (‘Humla’s green house effect’, Sunir Pandey, #667). May their livelihoods become easier and sustainable. Keep up the spirit.

Rabindra Roy

- Well done Yogi ji and HDI team. Life in Humla must be very harsh, but this is a testament to how even small-scale initiatives can lead to major changes in people’s lives. I look forward to visiting you someday soon and witnessing this change firsthand.

Nirmal Rijal

- Enjoyed reading this piece. Great work Sunir Pandey.

Rajan Kathet

LOST CROWN AND COUNTRY

Excellent article by Pranav Budhathoki (‘Lost crown and country’, #667). Gyanendra Shah is not what this country needs, far from it. He gets big crowds because Nepalis love spectacles, they will stand around and watch just about anything. And what better spectacle than a former king, who thought of himself as an incarnation of lord Bishnu, distributing flood relief to people in need? In any case, his lot ruled over Nepal for a long time and lived princely lives while keeping the

country dirt poor. I’ll take a corrupt, but elected leader anytime over a corrupted unelected one.

SK

- Gyanendra could possibly play a much needed role in our democracy. He is there, but beating the wrong drum. He may be smart, but lacks the heart to really reach out to Nepalis. The former king would do well to surround himself with better advisors.

Amal Gurung

- A Nepali tries to help flood victims in the far-west and suddenly there is such a hue and cry right from the election commissioner to Maoist leaders. Some want to jail him, some want to exile him, and some just can’t stand the possible popularity this might bring him. As an ordinary Nepali, what am I to understand from this incident? I now understand that this man is important, that he can make a difference, and is giving sleepless nights to our so called leaders. Politicians need to be scared.

Anonymous

- Old Nepali habits don’t die easily, do they? Someone lends a hand to flood victims (regardless of his motives) and we are all up in arms whining about it. I would like to know what these naysaying armchair analysts have done to help the disadvantaged people of this country? Something is far better than nothing.

PRai

- Pranav, I understand you have the freedom of speech, but your writing is

so full of cynicism. I used to love your articles but not after this ‘one sided, hatred, self-labeled opinion’. Like me, millions of Nepalis are having a change of heart, we shall talk after elections take place, if they do.

BG

- I smell a rat here. Pranav, can you name a person whom you as a Nepali trust at the moment? If I am not wrong, you are also thinking of Gyanendra as an answer.

Gorkha Nepali

ECONOMY, STUPID

Punish the guilty responsible for this horrible decline of the economy (‘Economy, stupid,’ Editorial, #667). We all know who the big players are in this game. If Nepali people could get rid of 20 men from the highest corridors of power today, we could get back on track. Every Nepali deserves the opportunity to live in peace and prosperity and if we know what the problem is, then we must find a solution. Unfortunately, we don’t have the backbone or pride to take a stance.

Nirmal Kafle

- Finally, an article that calls a spade a spade and highlights what is important: the economy.

Indra G

- Does anyone remember how Pushpa Kamal Dahal once promised to turn Nepal into Switzerland? Well the only thing he has ended up achieving is to fill his Swiss account.

Parbati Pokharel

ECONOMY FIRST

The author makes some excellent points about how to improve Nepal’s economy by boosting investments and demands (‘Believing in Nepal’, Srisanth Srinivasamadhavan, #667). However, I feel that most of the recommendations are closely linked: without improving tax collection (and proper tax utilisation), I don’t see many of the other things falling in place.

Morten Rolsted

- Great points Mr Srinivasamadhavan. Although your article was written keeping the economy in mind, I think it would have made more sense if you had also touched upon the political instability that has hijacked Nepal’s prosperity for years.

Luv Nepal

- Why don’t our politicians and bureaucrats have the common sense that Mr Srinivasamadhavan has? Sometimes it looks like foreigners care more about Nepal than we do.

Jaya N

FULL CIRCLE

I agree with Muma Ram Khanal’s analysis of the Maoist party (‘Revolution comes full circle’, #667). At this point, the NC, UML, and Madhes-based parties are also against polls because they know people are frustrated with them and won’t vote in their favour. Kamal Thapa’s RPP is the only one who will benefit if elections take place in November.

Kalyan Bhattarai

SINGING NUN

Watching Ani Choying Drolma perform alongside AR Rahman was like seeing contemporary art and traditional Tibetan art come to life (‘Ani meets AR’, Sahina Shrestha, #667). Ani truly has a melodious voice which is enhanced by the words of the powerful mantras she sings. I wish her all the success for future performances.

Tashi Lama

- I don’t want to sound like a spoilt sport, but I didn’t find the song as exceptional as it was hyped up to be. Ani Choying’s part in particular was rather disappointing. Perhaps she will make a greater impact and impression when the full version is released later this month.

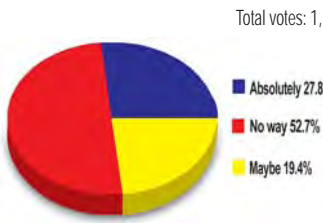
Shaili



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #668

Q. Do you think elections will happen on 19 November?



Weekly Internet Poll # 669. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you make of the CPN-M's 18-point demand?





Fluid political landscape

Extremists and political actors in the plains have found a fertile breeding ground in the state of statelessness and discontent

Khum Bahadur Khadka of the NC, who served time with Gupta and will be released next month after serving his sentence for corruption, has already pledged his support for Gupta.

Gupta will not be allowed to contest elections even if he wanted to, so he has taken the self-righteous position of not hankering for power. His Tarai Madhes Campaign is supposed to be for the 'sensitisation' of Madhesi youth, but appears to be a disguised political mobilisation. His meeting with Jay Krishna Goit in India was also suspicious. Various political parties have been similarly using the excuse of bringing armed groups into their fold to set up vanguard forces for elections.

The quickest way to defuse this situation is to hold elections and pave the way for restructuring of the state and ensuring Madhesi autonomy over its destiny. But the political landscape is so fluid that November elections are once more uncertain and even if they happen, it is doubtful they will be truly free, fair, and peaceful.

Anurag Acharya is Program Officer at the Centre for Investigative Journalism.



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

In the good old days, people from outside Kathmandu Valley used to refer to the capital as Nepal. And over the centuries, the high and mighty in Kathmandu took that literally to ignore the rest of the country.

Even after democracy in 1990, the preoccupation of those who clawed their way to Singha Darbar remained the same. They pushed the country into a bloody conflict and six years ago let the Madhes burn.

As the country prepares for another election, angst is growing again in the plains.

Lack of jobs, crumbling infrastructure, and a sense of being let down by their own leaders have left the region in a state of dangerous hopelessness.

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly last May dashed Madhesi hopes for autonomy and self-rule, giving impetus to extreme voices calling for a violent uprising against Kathmandu. Extremists and political actors who have nothing to lose have found a fertile breeding ground in this state of statelessness and discontent. However, as with most cases of political extremism, it is not about the welfare of the disenfranchised but exploiting their discontent to gain power.

There are three forces in the Tarai who are against elections. The MJF-Nepal led by Upendra Yadav says it will take part in polls, but has some populist demands to appease the plains constituency. Through the ongoing negotiations with the High Level Political Committee, Yadav is just trying

to consolidate his position and will join the election process.

Two weeks ago, Jaya Krishna Goit of the Tarai Liberation Front issued a statement attacking the current breed of Madhesi leaders for betraying the 'One Madhes' agenda. But he did not say anything against elections. Most armed groups operating on both sides of the border are not political in nature and chances are that they will be up for hire as campaign muscle. Last week's attack on MJF-N's Mahottari leader is a case in point. Some of these groups were hounded by the state during the Madhav Nepal government and feel betrayed by top Madhesi leaders who they believe failed to protect them at the time.

The third force which has the potential to create turmoil in the Madhes before elections is not a group, but an individual. After being released from jail in March, the corruption-tainted JP Gupta has maintained that he was

framed by the state for standing up for the Madhesi. But he has never bothered to explain the vast wealth he was accused of accumulating in office.

Another tainted leader,

nepalitimes.com

No Madhesi wave, #391
Calling all moderates, #366
Not out of the woods yet, #410
Three years later, #486



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Insecure elections

If we must have elections in November, better ensure they are proper elections



GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

Now that the Baidya Maoists appear to be showing slightly more flexibility, the election for another Constituent Assembly is beginning to look more likely. Various public opinion surveys have shown over the past six months that the people want elections in the fervent hope that it might finally somehow help bring closure to this messy political transition.

This support for election, however, exists even though the people know fully well that the CA-2 will be composed mostly of the very same politicians who couldn't get the earlier assembly to write a new constitution and used it shamelessly to line their own pockets and fill up party coffers. Despite being badly cheated, voters this time would like to use their franchise to register their disillusionment with politics-as-usual. Provided, of course, they are not terrorised by party cadre.



Which is why a fool-proof and effective security in the campaign period and during voting is of utmost importance if the election is to have any meaning. Our goal should not be elections just for the sake of elections.

However, Nepali politicians seem too busy with politics-as-usual to notice just how disenchanted the populace is. When cheating and intimidation get votes, the least of their worries is public opinion. The parties now number more than 120 and they are talking once more about a jumbo assembly of

601 members so that everyone gets a piece of the cake.

Some parties demand ethnicity-based federalism. Although because donor funding has dried up for this agenda, erstwhile top guns seem to be deserting that particular bandwagon. One survey after another has shown that most people do not want the division of this densely multi-ethnic country into arbitrarily carved autonomous enclaves in the name of federalising the country. But since public opinion doesn't matter for populist rabble rousers,

politicians pretend not to see the writing on the wall.

The root cause for the self-centred nature of our politicians and their chronic lack of accountability is the fact that they come from the ranks of the feudal elite in our traditionally agrarian rural communities who have always imposed their own verdict on their underprivileged and disadvantaged constituents. Their game plan for elections, as in the past, will consist of vote-buying, intimidating, cheating, and ballot stuffing. And for good measure, they try to stoke ethnic and geographic loyalties for vote banks. The YCL's violence and vandalism in Chitwan this week were reminiscent of the Maoist use of muscle in 2008 and could presage what will happen in November.

Despite vestigial feudalism, however, Nepalis vote intelligently when elections are free and fair, as we saw in 1991 and local elections thereafter. Two Nepali innovations, forest user groups and mothers' groups, also show that grassroots democracy is alive and kicking in this country. Direct stakeholders in the communities irrespective of their caste,

class, and gender differences are already empowered to participate in their own decision making.

As things stand, going by the various poll results, the contest in the upcoming election is going to be mainly between two positions: one favouring federalisation of the country and another against it, the latter favouring devolution of authority to the grassroots for accelerated local development.

Therefore, in order to enable people to cast their ballot freely, security arrangements for November must be of the top order. But the police, Armed Police, and Nepal Army may not be up to the task. At present, security personnel are so demoralised that they are bystanders when political goons hold entire districts hostage.

On the geopolitical front, neighbours India and China which purportedly want to see a politically stable Nepal, must coordinate the leverage with the parties so that they behave themselves. The aim should be to try to have a deal on the main facets of the constitution even before elections so it won't really matter who wins. That is the only way to avert another stalled CA.

Independent election observers too must do their homework early and not behave like the parachutists of 2008 who were so eager to see free and fair elections that they ignored evidence to the contrary. 🇳🇵

NOMINEES

BEST NEW ARTIST

- Amir Sheakh - Kadke Najar
- Bipul Chettri - Dadhelo
- Joint Family Internationale - Netaji
- Sunita Limbu Thebe - Hawale Pani
- Ujjwal KC - Eklo

BEST SONG ORIGINALLY RECORDED FOR A MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

- Arjun Pokharel - Ma Royen Sandhai
- Kali Prasad Baskota - Ekkai Chhinma
- Mahesh Khadka - Hami Hindne Sunaulo Baato
- Rajaure Santosh - Yo Mannai Usto
- Suresh Adhikari - Sara Sara Wara Wara

BEST VOCAL COLLABORATION

- Babita Manandhar & Kamal Khatri - Aatmama
- Jhuma Limbu & Rajesh Payal Rai - Dherai Bhayo
- Lata Mangeshkar & Ram Krishna Dhakal - Bachjunjellai
- Milan Amatya & Pramod Kharel - Diye Hunthyo Malai Nisani
- Nisha Deshar & Dawa Gurung - Timile Chhune

BEST FEMALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE

- Astha Tamang Maskey - Harek Saas Sita
- Bishnu Chemjong - Hawama
- Garima Rai - Aauna
- Shreya Sotang - Basanta Chhayeko
- Shreya Sotang - Yo Chhoriko Rupai

BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE

- Bipul Chettri - Dadhelo
- Hemant Rana Magar - Timro Ek
- Lochan Rijal - Chetana
- Nabin K. Bhattarai - Fika Fika
- Yash Kumar - Shanka

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A GROUP OR DUO WITH VOCAL

- Joint Family Internationale - Netaji
- Karma - Kahile Kanhi
- Mukti & Revival - Nagarkot
- Prayom - Aaudai Chhu
- Saayaas - Eklo Jindagi

FOLK RECORD OF THE YEAR

- Birahi Karki & Tika Pun - Manakamana Mai
- Bhoj Raj Kafle - Pet Khaali Narou Nepali
- Kamali Kanta Bhetuwal - Jhim Jhim Parell
- Raju Pariyaar, Tika Pun & Raju Mahotra - Resungako Shir
- Tejas Regmi & Bishnu Majhi - Radha Piyari

BEST POP COMPOSITION

- Bipul Chettri - Dadhelo
- Joint Family Internationale - Netaji
- Kalyan Singh - Timro Ek
- Kamal Khatri - Aatmama
- Nhyoo Bajracharya - Hawama

BEST ROCK COMPOSITION

- Bikash Bhujel - Eklo
- Mukti & Revival - Nagarkot
- Prayom - Aaudai Chhu
- Saayaas - Ganatantra
- The Axe - Hamro Nepal

BEST ARRANGEMENT

- Ashok Rai - Bhet Hola Jaba
- Ashish Abiral - Doorri
- Kiran Kandel - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Kiran Kandel - Baanchhunjellai
- Kiran Kandel - Jeevan Yadi Geet Ho Bhane

BEST COMPOSITION

- Ashish Abiral - Doorri
- Deepak Jangam - Jeevan Yadi Geet Ho Bhane
- Hari Lamsal - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Shikhar Santosh - Baanchhunjellai
- Shila Bdr. Moktan - Bhet Hola Jaba

BEST ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE

- Mukti & Revival - Nagarkot
- Prayom - Aaudai Chhu
- Saayaas - Ganatantra
- The Axe - Hamro Nepal
- Ujjwal K.C. - Eklo

BEST FEMALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE

- Kunti Moktan - Bhet Hola Jaba
- Nisha Deshar - Jeevan Yadi Geet Ho Bhane
- Rajina Rimal - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Sangeeta Rana Pradhan - Aagoko Jhilka
- Sunita Limbu Thebe - Hawale Pani

BEST MALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE

- Biswo Nepali - Doorri
- Manoj Raj - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Pramod Kharel - Dulchheu Merai Dilko
- Satya Raj Acharya - Chhadera Malai Gaye Pani
- Swaroop Raj Acharya - Ti Aankhama Aanshu

POP / ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- Hemanta Rana Magar - Mero Aakash
- Mukti & Revival - Sadhai Bhari
- Prayom - Aaudai Chhu
- Saayaas - Kathaibari
- Ujjwal KC - Nyano Sahar

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- Deep Shrestha - Yatra 2
- Hemant Rana Magar - Mero Aakash
- Mukti & Revival - Sadhai Bhari
- Prayom - Aaudai Chhu
- Ujjwal KC - Nyano Sahar

SONG OF THE YEAR

- Anand Adhikari - Banichunjellai
- Rajendra Thapa - Doorri
- Raju Babu Shrestha - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Sindhu Rana - Aagoko Jhilka
- Yadav Kharel - Saarangeeeko Taar

RECORD OF THE YEAR

- Bishwo Nepali - Doorri
- Kunti Moktan - Bhet Hola Jaba
- Manoj Raj - Paaniko Phoka Jastai
- Nisha Deshar - Jeevan Yadi Geet Ho Bhane
- Sangeeta Rana Pradhan - Aagoko Jhilka

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SIAN CHOO TONG

Taking off with China

China's Exim Bank is going ahead with a Rs 15.5 billion loan for the much-delayed new airport in Pokhara and extending another loan for the purchase of Chinese-made turboprop aircraft for Nepal Airlines' domestic operations.

Officials from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Aviation, Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), and Nepal Airlines held talks with a Chinese delegation led by Exim Bank's Deputy General Director Lee Dan on Tuesday in Kathmandu to finalise the deal.

China CAMC Engineering Company won the bid for the Pokhara airport last year with a quoted price of Rs 28.6 billion. However, when it was found that this was almost double the estimate by previous consultants, CAMC agreed to the lower amount. CAAN is now evaluating the CAMC feasibility for the airport and will come up with changes in the final project before construction begins. Only Chinese companies were allowed to bid for the project.

Nepal Airlines is also going ahead with the acquisition of four Y-12A STOL and two MA-60 turboprops from Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) Holdings for US\$ 30.5 million. The MA60s were originally ordered for Nepal Army during the conflict and an advance had already been paid when there was regime change in Nepal in 2006 and the deal fell through.

Under the re-negotiated contract, China will provide one MA60 for free and Nepal Airlines will buy three Y12As and get one free. The state-owned airline plans to use MA-60s for trunk routes like Pokhara, Bhairawa, Biratnagar, Dhangadi, and Nepalganj and fly the Y12s to short remote area airstrips. But even here, CAAN needs to first provide airworthiness certificates for both planes. 🇳🇵

BIZ BRIEFS

Discounted rates

Etihad Airways is offering exclusive discounts on Pearl Business and Coral Economy Class flights to New York, Chicago, and Washington DC. The offer is valid until 15 August and tickets purchased can be used to travel from September to October.



Smart paint

Pashupati Paints recently launched a smartphone app that will enable customers to select the colour of their choice within the comfort of their homes. The app also carries detailed information about the company's dealers all over Nepal and is supported by both iOS and Android devices.

Winning numbers

The winners of Rs 100,000 for the final week and the bumper prize winner of Pepsi 20-20 campaign have been



announced. The weekly winners are 497542X, 814270L, 250005F, 298765Y, 625272F, 244909G, 344018Y, 999275R, 391669T, 738917U while the winner of the grand prize worth Rs 2 million is 487669X. The seven-week campaign concluded on 6 August.

Better savings

Everest Bank launched a new deposit product called Asha 2070 fixed deposit. The product is targeted towards individuals who desire higher return than the regular fixed deposit reads the press release.



New offer

Himalayan Bank inaugurated its 40th branch office at Betrawati in Nuwakot. The bank has so far mobilised Rs 53.07 billion in deposits and disbursed Rs 41.05 billion in loan and advances. Himalayan Bank and American Express



have launched Himalayan Bank American Express Gold Credit Card in Nepal. The card is available in two variants – domestic (India and Nepal) and international. According to the press release the domestic card also offers discount on hotels and spas.

Ramadan Karim



Qatar Airways celebrated Ramadan by hosting an Iftar dinner in Kathmandu last week. The dinner saw distinguished guests from Qatar Embassy, Malaysian Embassy, Saudi Arabian Embassy, Egyptian Embassy, and many officials from the Haj Committee.

Hold my hand

Canada Nepal Development Foundation's President Dundi Raj Khanal donated Rs 42,000 to Pavitra Samaj Sewa Nepal. CNDF supports the education and health of 25 orphan children in Kathmandu.



New beginning

Bihani social venture will begin services from 16 August. According to the press release it aims to provide a platform for individuals (especially those over 50) to share their experiences along with learning from each other, so that they can bring about a difference in their lives as well as that of others.

Bottoms up

Royal Kathmandu Himalaya Beverages has launched Royal Big Master Red Wine. Priced at Rs 385 the wine is targeted towards middle to high class families reads the press release.

Electronic way



Sunrise Bank signed an agreement with SDS and Clearing for electronic archiving of the share trading. The agreement was signed by Sunrise Bank's CEO Surendra Man Pradhan and CDS and Clearing's CEO Subodh Sharma Sigdel.

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The Nepali make up

Is our sense of Nepaliness so fragile that we need to get worked up about every perceived slight against our nationalism?



When MTV Coke Studio released a teaser for the song *Zariya*, a collaboration between AR Rahman, Ani Choying Drolma, and Jordanian singer Farah Siraj on 1 August, social media in Nepal was abuzz. Most seemed impressed by how effortlessly Rahman and his international team transcended national and cultural boundaries. But there was a smattering of Nepalis incensed by the studio’s description of Ani Choying as a ‘Tibetan Buddhist’ nun. ‘How dare they? She is a Nepali, she is ours,’ they screamed on social networking sites. This was taken as another example of a deliberate affront to Nepal’s pride and of Indian hegemony. Next day, Coke Studio backed down and changed Ani Choying to ‘Nepali nun’. But this week, when a monk set himself ablaze at Boudha, no one was in a



hurry to claim him as one of our own. He was just a ‘Tibetan’, an outsider. What made Ani Choying distinctively Nepali in the public psyche but not a self-immolator? While Choying is a Nepali citizen of Tibetan ethnicity, perhaps she thinks of herself as a Tibetan first and agrees with Coke Studio’s original label. If she was any ordinary person, her dual identity and loyalty would have immediately raised red flags and caused us to be circumspect. But since she is a celebrity, her multiple identities posed no threat to our fickle nationalism and fragile self-esteem, so she was exempted from public scrutiny. When Prashant Tamang, a native of Darjeeling, won the Indian Idol contest in 2007, he was proclaimed as a son of the soil. It was the same mindset that led us to claim Tenzing Norgay as a Nepali in 1953. Our severely circumscribed definition of who we deem to be a fellow ‘Nepali’ stems in part due to fear of the

‘other’ inculcated by the state. Governments abhor ambiguity, so the more people fit into neat boxes, the easier it is for them to control the population. Nepal’s rulers have been no different. From the ‘daura suruwal, dhaka topi, Nepali bhasha’ nationalism of the Panchayat era to our parochial citizenship laws, there have been continuous attempts to wipe off any traces of grey areas and force a monolithic identity upon a multilingual, multicultural nation. Beyond antiquated symbols of national pride (the land of the Buddha and Mount Everest) we don’t actually seem to know who we are, but we know for certain who we aren’t (not Indians). It’s not surprising then that seven years after Nepal became a secular republic and despite provisions in the citizenship act of 2006 for certificates to be issued based on a mother’s papers, officials at District Administration Offices frequently turn women away. Having a Nepali father is still the easiest way of gaining citizenship. Lawmakers we entrusted with writing the new constitution for a New Nepal almost drafted an

even more regressive citizenship law that would have rendered thousands of children from the most marginalised communities stateless. While there is some patriarchy at play here, the main reason why officials are hesitant to allow children of single mothers to become Nepalis is because they think it will open a Pandora’s box of ‘others’ who might then become eligible. In an obscure online list of 10 top hiking trails in the world this week, the Himalaya was placed number one with pictures of a lake in Ladakh. Jubilant Nepalis started celebrating as if we had just won the world cup, forgetting that it wasn’t the country that was voted number one but the whole mountain range. When someone pointed out that the lake was in fact in India, he was nearly cyber-lynched. Social media provides a fertile ground for this insecure nationalism to play itself out. Pseudo-patriots tweeted profanities and attacked Sarita Giri, president of Nepal Sadhbhawana Party, this week for suggesting that the government declare the dhoti as the national dress and Hindi the national language of Nepal. While Giri’s recommendation only serves to replace one obsolete version of nationalism with another, the online outbursts remind us of how weak our sense of Nepaliness is. Even the thought of having to think outside of the box seems unacceptable. 🇳🇵



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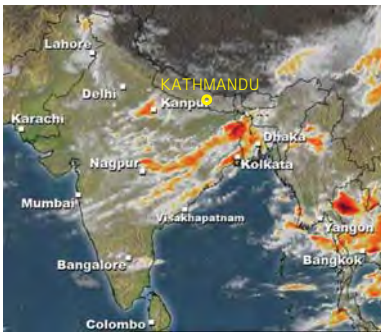


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The major monsoon build up in the Bay of Bengal will continue to bring more rain over the weekend. Expect heavy precipitation as thunderstorms continue to intensify in many parts of eastern and central Nepal with temperatures dipping to 16-18 range. Cloud cover will continue in the day time with light showers.

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Reeching for the stars

PRANAV RAJOURIA

As a kid, long before she was a household face in Nepalis' living rooms, Reecha Sharma would sit in her living room watching Bollywood movies for hours. In school she took part in almost every acting competition and won as many awards. Little did she know her religious devotion to cinema would one day help her seal the top spot in the industry she had grown to love. Although Sharma's father wanted her to become a nurse, he had a dramatic change of heart after watching her music video and realising just how good she was.

"I am just happy to be here," beams the former TV artist who even after three successful movies in a row - *Uma*, *Loot*, *Highway* - shows no signs of smugness. Her stellar performance as a young girl forced to join the Maoists and take up arms against her brother in Tsering Rhitar Sherpa's *Uma* won her the love of critics and ordinary Nepalis alike. "Out of the six films I have completed, I enjoyed working on *Uma* the most because Tsering was immensely encouraging," admits the star.

Sharma made her big screen debut in 2009 with *First Love*, a film about friendship, love, and betrayal. "When I look back, I am surprised by how much I have grown since then," she says. She truly has. From playing a caring mother who's forced to take up prostitution in Deepak Rauniyar's *Highway* to her much talked about role in *Uma*, Sharma has shown her range as an actor and has emerged as the go-to star for filmmakers who want to try something 'new'. "It's good to be a part of the industry at a time when people are willing to experiment and not just rely on age-old

formulas of song-dance-romance," says the 28-year-old.

In her five years in Kollywood, Sharma has also learnt to be more cautious when it comes to selecting scripts and bemoans a bad habit among producers and directors of handing out scripts to actors just weeks before shooting. Preparation she believes is a key to good performance. "I turn down last minute scripts because I believe in becoming the character, not acting it out," she explains with refreshing candor.

After the success of *Uma*, Reecha Sharma is now one of the most sought after actor in Kollywood

At times she finds it a bit disheartening to see actors both in films and theatre not getting the respect and recognition they deserve. "When the cricket or football team return after playing abroad, people queue up outside the airport," she says. "But when we return from international shoots or award festivals, no one bothers. Maybe as the industry progresses, Nepalis will start appreciating our hard work and have a better opinion of the profession."

For aspiring actors and actresses, she has one simple advice: "Acting is not only about attitude and talent, but also about technique. Make the effort to learn basic concepts and theories, go to acting school."

nepalitimes.com

See photo gallery



SURYA KARKI

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EVENTS



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*

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*

With love from blank to you, join Katha Satha and Word Warriors to write your own love notes and share your tale of love and longing in a three-day writing workshop. *Rs 150, 12, 14 & 16 August, 2 to 4 pm, photo.circle, Arun Thapa Chowk, Jhamsikhel, Apply here goo.gl/VTyCPW by 11 August*

Open day, clearance sale, photo exhibition and film show. *10 August, 10am to 7pm, Café Mitini, Lajimpat, (01)4002070, nepalseacenter@gmail.com*

Kathmandu book swap, Love Books? Love Coffee? Join other bookworms to exchange books and drink your favourite brew. *Second Saturday of every month, 2.30pm, Yellow House, Sanepa, ktmbookswap.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/august-bookswap/*

Reflective instances, a joint exhibition of four painters Bhawana Manandhar, Rajesh Manandhar, Niraj Chitrakar, and Ganesh G C. *2 to 19 August, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, www.parkgallery.com.np*

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



CUT! WRITE A SCRIPT, win \$2700 prize money, and make your own movie. *Deadline 15 August, www.newnepalcinema.com/script2013*

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



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*



SWIM AND LUNCH, enjoy your weekends with a dip in the pool and savour a mouthwatering lunch with a glass of beer. *Rs 999, Saturdays, 11am to 6pm, Waterfront Resort, Pokhara, (61)466 303/304, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*

Gunla, the Newari month of festivities has begun, be alert with your cameras to take great photographs. *7 August to 6 September*

Visions, exhibition and sale of 55 photographs and artwork by Thymi, Momo, and Yusha. *8 to 10 August, 12 to 8 pm, Trisara Garden Restaurant, Lajimpat, (01)4410200, 9818097880*

DINING



FRIEND'S CAFE AND BAR, new address for Spanish delicacies. *Thamel*

Tushita Restaurant, offering a mix of Nepali, Indian, Chinese and continental dishes, pleases everyone. *Lajimpat*



RED MUD KITCHEN, enjoy a cup of coffee after work before going back home. *Thapathali*

Vienna Bakery, bring your favorite afternoon read, order a cuppa, and lounge around in this charming little bakery. *Jhamsikhel*

Mama's curries, if you like curry and want to avoid inflated menus, this is the perfect place to go. *Jhamsikhel*

Marronnier, visit this restaurant for a taste of Western cuisine as seen through Japanese eyes. *Pulchok*

Café du Temple, spectacular food, better view. *Patan Darbar Square*



RUM DOODLE, a Mecca for mountaineers, Rheinhold Messner included. *Thamel*



THE YELLOW HOUSE, the sumptuous breakfasts on offer here is probably one of the best in town. *Sanepa*

Sarangkot Fordays, of all the great places to eat in Pokhara, this is literally on top. *Sarangkot, Pokhara*

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Live music at Jazzabell, drink, eat, and enjoy live music with old friends every Wednesday and Friday, Jazzabell Cafe, Patan, (01)2114075

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Haatiban Resort, climb up to Chandragiri in the morning for a royal view of Kathmandu Valley and jog down to the hotel for a relaxed evening. Pharping, Kathmandu, (01)4371537/56



Belle France

Another month, another host of events at the Alliance Francaise Centre:

15 August, Les chansons d'amour, a film on the trials of love by Christophe Honore, 7pm, Free entrance

23 August, Le banquet des anges, a concert by Aurelie Barbelin and Nicolas Meyer, 6pm, Free entrance, Russian Culture Centre

18 to 27 August, 'Around the Boz in 80 Years', conference, dance workshop and performance, Free entrance, Alliance Francaise



A MONTH OF JAZZ

Good news for music students, Sonia Megias will be holding composition, arranging, and choir classes throughout August.

Megias began composing at a very early age and is a Fulbright Fellowship student. She currently lives in Madrid, where she conducts the choir Coro Delantal and teaches composition at Centro Superior Katarina Gurska.

Date: 9 August - 4 September
Time: 11 am onwards
Venue: Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel
Fees: Rs 5,000
www.katjazz.com.np
www.soniamegias.es

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RANDOM REVERIES

Bikalpa Art Centre presents an exhibition of the work of three women artists Bidhata KC, Kurchi Dasgupta, and Pramila Bajracharya.

KC centres her work on nature, Dasgupta's paintings deal with urbanisation and women, while Bajracharya works with feminine figures and urban landscapes.

Go see how contemporary women artists with divergent styles deal with a wide variety of subjects.

Date: Runs till 14 August
Time: 11am to 6pm
Venue: Bikalpa Art Centre, Jhamsikhel
(01)5013524, www.bikalpaartcenter.org



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China prepares to make its mark on the global sporting map, once again

TRISHNA RANA in NANJING

2008 Summer Olympics, 2010 Asian Games, 2013 Asian Youth Games, 2014 Youth Olympics: China is putting itself on the global sporting map and how. From 16-24 August around 3,000 athletes from 45 countries, including 13 from Nepal, will descend upon Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu Province, for the second edition of Asian Youth Games (AYG). Like the inaugural AYG in Singapore in 2009, this year's event will serve as a curtain raiser for the Summer Youth Olympics.

Nurtured by the Yangtze River for centuries and home of the Ming dynasty, Nanjing is not only one of the oldest cities in China, but also its fastest growing, next only to Beijing and Shanghai. However, unlike its prodigal cousins Beijing (Olympics) and Guangzhou (Asian Games), the city doled out a relatively modest budget of \$160 million for the games and still has managed to set high standards.

"Our main goal in hosting the games is to open up Nanjing to the outside world and spread the Olympic spirit of friendship and mutual understanding," says Yang Weize, party secretary of Nanjing Municipal Committee. "We also wanted to show that these targets could be achieved not through extravagant spending, but by making best use of available resources."

Keeping with its cost-conscious policy, instead of constructing new stadiums the municipality kept itself busy in refurbishing and upgrading existing sporting facilities like the Nanjing Olympic Sports Centre which was built for China's National Games

NEPAL'S YOUTH BRIGADE	
Aslesha Lissanevitch	Tennis
Abhishek Bastola	Tennis
Sichhya Shrestha	Badminton
Dipesh Dharmi	Badminton
Aditi Dhital	Swimming
Sirsih Gurung	Swimming
Miraj Prajapati	Swimming
Nitesh Poudyal	Fencing
Phupu Lamu Khatri	Judo
Himprawa Khatri	Judo
Sangita Khadka	Athletics
Mani Kumar Lama	Table Tennis
Manita Chitrakar	Table Tennis

in 2005. A 40 minute drive from downtown Nanjing, the centre is one of the 15 sporting venues that will be used for the games and will host the opening and closing ceremonies as well as competitions in track and field, handball, diving, swimming, and squash.

The main stadium has a capacity of 62,000 with a gymnasium, natatorium, tennis court, and an IT hub in its vicinity. The tracks and seats have been scrubbed, painted, and polished and with new lightings, the complex looks as good as new.

The only building to be literally built from barren land is the Athletes Village in the western part of the city. Housed within the grounds of Nanjing University of Technology (NUT), the 22 dormitories will accommodate all the teenage athletes and team officials for two weeks in August. Once the games



READY, SET, GO: Municipality workers wash and scrub the athletic track at the Nanjing Olympic Sports Centre (above). Students from a local school light torches at the flame-lighting ceremony in Nanjing in May (right).

TRISHNA RANA

are over, they will be handed over to the university and turned into staff quarters. What has been most impressive about the lead up to the games is the organisers' efforts in promoting educational and cultural exchanges between the athletes and young students of Nanjing and getting them involved in promotion and

preparation. Under the 'Heart-to-Heart' program, 45 primary and secondary schools in Nanjing paired up with a member country or region in Asia to learn about the history and culture of their 'adopted' countries. "AYG is meant for the youth and we have so many talented young adults. So instead of international celebrities, we decided to let local



Nuts about Nattu

After performing online for years, YouTube star Natasha Shah released her debut album last month

SUNAINA RANA

Every time Natasha Shah aka Nattu comes on stage - which is quite frequently these days - she immediately cracks a joke to calm herself. But if there are nerves, the audience wouldn't know. Everything about the 23-year-old singer, song writer, comedian, and aspiring director - the dapper blazer, perfectly spiked gelled hair, and that impish smile - exudes confidence. And when she starts crooning the latest single from her new album or a rendition of Maroon 5's *One More Night*, hearts begin to flutter. Growing up in a musically inclined family, Natasha remembers how she loved being the centre of attention at family gatherings; turning the living room into an impromptu stage, strumming her miniature guitar and belting out her all-time favourite



PROMISE TAMANG
Promise Tamang is the second most subscribed make-up artist on YouTube. Although not formally trained, her fine skills have earned her subscribers virtually from every corner of the world. Tamang is known for her chameleon like personality, transforming into famous

celebrities and characters in just a few strokes of the brush.
1,610,453 subscribers
190,424,505 views
Most watched: Fairy Barbie Princess (**12,738,309** views)
www.youtube.com/user/dope2111



SHREYA RAI
Twenty-year old singer and artist Shreya Rai from the UK, has been uploading covers of her favourite songs on YouTube for the past three years. She is known for her perfect rendition of old classics. Her cover of *Yo Jindagani* originally sung by Amrit Gurung of Nepathya was shared by the man

himself on Facebook calling Rai's version 'beautiful'.
2,112 subscribers
177,704 views
Most watched: Lag Ja Gaale (**45,020** views)
www.youtube.com/user/dryroti



PARCHA PRODUCTIONS
Besides organising dance parties and other social events, Parcha Productions (they recently co-organised Nepathya's concert at Wembley) are also the makers of twisted, if somewhat loud, parodies and music videos that appeal to the Nepali diaspora living in the UK and elsewhere.
1,941 subscribers
548,666 views
Most watched: Om Shanti Om - Parody (**159,058** views)
www.youtube.com/user/ParchaProductions

IN RAISER



students carry out the ceremonies and help with the games," explains Weize.

While students from the School of Design at Nanjing University of Arts assisted with designs for the emblem, slogan, and posters, over at NUT more than a 1,000 volunteers were trained over five months as language assistants, MCs, and paramedics. Says Vice-

President Gao Ming, "Our students have a unique opportunity to make friends with people their age and learn about different cultures. It will also be a good experience for the athletes to interact with local students and know China a little better."

It's time for the fun and games to begin. www.nanjing2013.org



WWW.NEWS.CN



Take the lunge

When Abhishek Karki tells others he is a fencer, the first question he is asked: 'Is it even a game?', followed closely by 'Isn't it dangerous to play with swords?'. A champion player, Karki fell in love with fencing while studying in Kolkata and is one of the pioneers of the game in Nepal.

While modern fencing traces its *épée* to 18th century Italy and France, in Nepal it's still a relatively new sport. The Nepal Fencing Association was established in 2009, but since it is not registered with the National Sports Council it does not qualify for any financial or infrastructural support from the state. Equipment (a beginners' kit consisting of swords, protective gear, and clothing costs anywhere upwards of \$150) are all donated from abroad and there is only one training and practice hall in Shivapuri School in Baluwatar at the moment. Professional fencers train and play on rubber, aluminium, or metallic piste (mat), ours have to make do with a hard, concrete floor.

Karki currently teaches 45 young students at Shivapuri along with two other coaches. One of his students, 16-year-old Nitesh Poudyal from Royal Academy India School, is flying off to Nanjing this week to participate in the Asian Youth Olympics. Karki says while Nepali players specially those from martial arts background have a natural proclivity and superior skills, lack of monetary incentives and proper infrastructure hamper their progress and discourage others from joining.

"We invest a lot of time and energy on students, send them to international events. But when they are finally ready, they leave for foreign employment. This is very discouraging," admits Karki. "If the government could guarantee jobs to our top athletes like India does, Nepali sports could move ahead."

However, with the Armed Police Force and the Army School in Bhaktapur showing interest in developing the sport, fencing might finally be taking a match-winning lunge in Nepal.

Nepali Babu-Made in Nepal. The young singer would often accompany uncle Deepak Thapa of *Bidesh janey mayalu* fame to his studio where she says she began to understand the intricacies of the business.

In school she bagged lead roles in musicals every year, winning the talent competition in Grade 10 being one of her most cherished memories. As the lead singer of her college band, she would always be the first person to get her group registered for gigs and competitions around town where she mainly played metal and heavy rock for the first year and later shifted to more calming rock and roll.

Like most young artists today, Natasha began her musical career on YouTube. In 2004 she posted an original number called *Ma dherai*

maya garchu (Nattu's song) which went viral and racked up close to 200,000 views. But she only found out about her celebrity status four years later when she was in London studying for her diploma in music.

Encouraged by the positive response, she uploaded more acoustic covers as well as original numbers like *Pahilo maya*, one of her most popular songs. Within a year, Nattu had enough hits to make her a local celebrity among the Nepali diaspora in the UK. Performances at Nepali charity events and gatherings like Nepali Battle of the Bands where she came second and weekend gigs at Fusiliens Pub followed.

By the time she completed her degree and returned home in 2011, Natasha had built a small but loyal following in Kathmandu with

more than one million views and 4,000 subscribers to her channel. "Performing in London was definitely easier because Nepalis there always cheered me in unison. I was one of them," she admits. "In Kathmandu, I am judged, sometimes unfairly, by a small number of music lovers and critiques, it is difficult to please all of them."

Natasha released her self-titled debut album in May this year. The seven tracker, an interesting hybrid of English and Nepali pop ballads on love, heartbreak, friendship, escapes the derivative nature of the genre through her sheer conviction and individuality of voice. "I don't like following the crowd, that's not my style. Even though I am most comfortable performing acoustic, I experimented with a lot of different

instruments for the album," she explains.

You can catch Nattu on Friday nights at popular hangouts in the Valley jamming with band mates Ajit, Kishor, Birat, and Pema. And when she's not practicing and performing, you'll find her riding her Suzuki DR around town or writing scripts for comedy videos. "I have been singing for as long as I remember, but I feel my real calling in life is to make movies. I want to become the Farhan Akhtar of Nepal. I adore his talent and versatility," she says about the Indian actor, director, singer as she breaks into a wide grin. nepalitimes.com

Watch Nattu's videos



YAMA BUDDHA'S RAP BATTLES

Taking his cue from American freestyle rap battles, Yama Buddha gathered (mostly) pubescent Nepali boys to see if there was any gangsta among them. Verbally at least, because in its initial stages the battles were limited to 'yo mama' jibes. But some of the artists are revelations as far as Nepali rap

is concerned and have already spawned imitators.

36,624 subscribers

4,667,815 views

Most watched: Raw Barz Laure vs Unik Poet (559,600 views)

www.youtube.com/user/thelyricalsoulja



LEX LIMBU

According to the grapevine, all you need to do to keep abreast of the latest happenings and gossip from Nepal, is to simply call up Lex Limbu in the UK. Limbu's popular blog is now the one stop destination for Nepalis on all things Nepal. On his YouTube channel, he shares everything

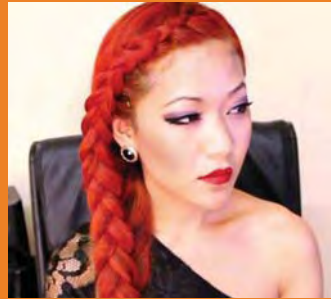
from music videos to his views on a diverse range of subjects.

2,094 subscribers

3,718,263 views

Most watched: Akha Akha- Kohi Mero Nepali (136,685 views)

www.youtube.com/user/lexlimbu



YESHI DOLMA LAMA

Based in Germany, Yeshi Dolma aka Yeshigaga is best known for her Sir and Student parody skits, a comical take on Nepali school teachers. Besides collaborating with boyfriend Tenzin Tsele for these videos, Yeshi is also an aspiring make-up artist who

regularly transforms herself into K-pop stars on her channel.

8,606 subscribers

1,162,966 views

Most watched: Sir and Student Part 2 (177,325 views)

www.youtube.com/user/yeshigaga

BEFORE MIDNIGHT



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Once in a while you come across one of those special films that tackle important subjects with fierce passion. Richard Linklater's three films *Before Sunrise* (1995), *Before Sunset* (2004), and now *Before Midnight* (2013) all tackle the issue of romance. Granted this overarching, exalted idea of 'romance' evolves over the course of three films into a real pondering over the nature of long-lasting relationships; still, I would say that the three main writers do have a palpable, quite touching belief in the true possibility of romance over the course of a single relationship, however intermittent and difficult to maintain.

Perhaps what is so special about these films, in addition to their real, unaffected charm, is the incredible collaboration between the director, Linklater, and his two actors, Julie Delpy, who plays Celine, and Ethan Hawke, who plays Jesse. Delpy and Hawke have worked with Linklater on writing the latter two of the seemingly simple, but actually incredibly sophisticated scripts and it is

without a doubt that none of these three films could have been made without any one of the trio.

In *Before Sunrise*, Celine and Jesse meet on a train while travelling in Europe. As one is wont to do as a young adult, the two talk all night, falling in love with each other's ideas. These two young beautiful people are markedly more tempered when they meet again, nine years later in *Before Sunset* when Jesse, now a successful writer, visits Paris, where the very French Celine has been living. She visits the bookshop where he is speaking and the two embark again on yet another day marked with long playful philosophical conversation.

Nine years later we have *Before Midnight*. Jesse has indeed stayed with Celine, they have two astonishingly cute twin girls and they are on summer vacation in Greece. Jesse is still a successful novelist, but Celine is at a crossroads in her career.

The two are clearly past their 'honeymoon' period, struggling between their work, bringing up the twins, and the departure of Hank, Jesse's son, who has just spent his summer holidays with them and is going back to Jesse's former wife who loathes both him and Celine even nine years after the fact.

The film begins with Jesse and Celine driving back from the airport after having dropped Hank, with the twins asleep in the back. Their conversation turns alternately sour, sweet, playful, teasing, deadly serious, and reverts to an easy, comfortable exchange that is emblematic of their relationship.

The writing is so sharp and sure that this first scene quickly lays the groundwork for understanding what is niggling at each of them and these issues become crystallised over the course of a long, boozy Mediterranean lunch at their holiday home, surrounded by friends.

By the time the couple are walking to their hotel room, which has been bought as a gift by their friends so that they can have a romantic night on their own, well, let's just say everything comes out. And yet, the dialogue, though it deals quite viscerally with the nitty-gritty ugliness of quotidian life, never strays far from real philosophical, existential questioning.

No matter how much these two very different people may fight, they have one thing in common, they love each other and they are articulate. They talk, they fight, they talk. And this in the end saves them. What will happen in another nine years, no one really knows, but I hope that Celine and Jesse will still be taking long walks and talking deep into the night. 🍷

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer



GIZMO by YANTRICK

Cab convenience

Every morning as Yantrick leaves for work, Kathmandu's traffic does its best to discourage her from taking the bus. At rush hour 750,000 vehicles claim first-come rights on any strip of tarmac, compelling her to hail down a cab and be taken for a ride again and again.

Well, Appli Kali's Taxi Fares Nepal is here to save our lunch money. The app designed by a group of Nepali software engineers does just what its name suggests – calculates the fare from your starting point to your destination in the Valley. If the fact that its website is down because of high traffic is any indication, it seems Kathmandu's crawlers have long been waiting for an app of this kind.

The app is very minimal and, owing to its small size, loads almost instantly. At the first interface you are asked to choose where you are taking your taxi from, where you want to end up, and bam, you have the bill on your palm before you even step into a cab.

On the bottom of the screen, an information button shows you the current authorised rates for day-time and after-hours. Clicking on the policeman icon gives you an option to send complaints to Kathmandu Metropolitan Traffic Office via SMS.



But the most impressive feature of the app is a route simulator that takes advantage of Google maps to find out the fare from point A to point B, lets you zoom in and out, and set markers for both points. There's plenty of room for improvement though, because the shortest route can sometimes guide you wrongly through a one-way street or a normal ride through town will take a Ring Road detour.

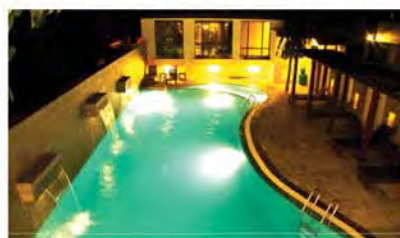
Another fault its makers will surely better in coming days: a shortage of options in the start and destination boxes. Ideally you should be able to go to

and from anywhere in Kathmandu, but this isn't the case. For example, if you select 'Airport International' as your starting point you can only choose, for some reason, 'Naya Bus Park' as your end point. Bizarre, really. When Yantrick took a taxi to Patan Dhoka, the app got lost before we even made it to Bagmati Bridge!

Minor glitches aside, the greatest thing about this app is that users can finally calculate the exact distance of their rides and do the math without worrying about whether taxi drivers are ripping them off. From her experience, Yantrick has found out older drivers will agree to go by untinkered meter and it's usually the younger ones who have the nerve to be reckless.

The app is available on both Android's Play Store and Apple's App Store and will take less than a minute to download (absolutely free). 📱

Yantrick's verdict: It's still early days, but at least with this app you can find out an approximate fare before you even hit the road.



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RE VIEW

Travelling Without Moving

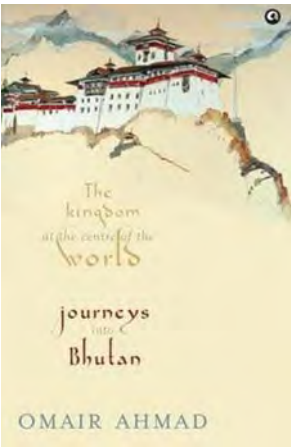
We have come to expect production values from Aleph Book Company and *The Kingdom at the Centre of the World: Journeys in Bhutan* does not disappoint with its delicately rendered cover of a dzong suspended, as it were, in time and space. Nonetheless, it is the stated mission of author Omair Ahmad to tether the mystery of Bhutan to the mainstream of the wider world and he begins by name-checking milestones on the road to Thimpu – the introduction of Buddhism by Padmasambhava in the 8th century, the state’s consolidation in the 17th century, its fraught relations with Tibet, China and British India, the refugee crisis of the 1990s, and the latter-day curiosities of Gross National Happiness and guided democracy.

But Ahmad is not dealing in serious history here. He opts for a more palatable hodgepodge of folklore, journalism and travelogue, divvied up into sections too brief to do their subjects justice; it’s frustrating that a book that means to enlighten us on Bhutan finds it necessary to rely on such a mash-up. Ahmad’s easy, anecdotal style leads him to lazy statements, and when he attributes the domination of the Drukpa school of Buddhism to 11th century mystic Milarepa, there is no real consideration of the significance of either.

However, the simplicity with which Ahmad outlines Bhutan’s religious and secular evolution

serves some purpose and the reader begins to grasp the difficulties the tiny kingdom has faced throughout its miraculous survival in a rough neighbourhood. Ahmad also, by recounting the invention of the suspension bridge in Bhutan and the tea-fuelled Duar Wars with the British, manages to posit Bhutan as less isolated, if not quite the centre of the world.

If unbiased historical analysis is not Ahmad’s forte, however, we have a right to expect real insights into Bhutan’s character, earned through hard miles off the beaten track. Instead we are served up with vignettes of a few tourist sites, supplemented with weak anecdotes culled from previous visitors. Is the writer being disingenuous when he claims that as a political advisor in New Delhi in 2005, he found ‘almost no concrete information about the country’? Or perhaps he is trying to convince us that information was scarcer than it was, so as to present his own travels as more adventurous than they actually are?



The Kingdom at the Centre of the World: Journeys in Bhutan, by Omair Ahmad, Aleph Book Company, 2013


To his credit, Ahmad does have a go at setting the scene for the inevitable discussion of ‘the Nepali issue’. Several chapters explain Bhutan’s anxiety regarding its independence and national character before Ahmad works up the nerve to address the question of the Lhotsampas, the ethnic Nepalis who comprised a third of Bhutan’s population before approximately 100,000 left to become refugees in Nepal from the late 1980s onwards.

Ahmad describes the escalation of conflict between overzealous but non-violent state authorities seeking to implement nationalistic ordinances and violent

Lhotsampa revolutionaries and suggests that those ethnic Nepalis who doubted their ability to cope left while many others stayed on. One senses that Ahmad is trying to be balanced, but in supporting the hypothesis that the vast majority of those in the refugee camps were actually Nepalis from Nepal and India, he risks sounding like an apologist for ethnic cleansing,

not least when he dismisses activist Tek Nath Rijal’s account of his decade-long incarceration in Chamgang jail, which allegedly employed mind control techniques, as ‘something from the X Files’.

Refugees dispensed with, Ahmad moves on to an admiring account of the Fourth King’s development philosophy, detailing how he abdicated in favour of his son and guided the country to democracy. En route, he offers this remarkable justification for Bhutan’s homegrown indicator of development, Gross National Happiness. The consequences of unhappiness are to be seen everywhere, Ahmad declares; Bhutan has not failed to notice how this has led to conflict across the region. Once more, there is no analysis of what Gross National Happiness might offer as an alternative to Gross National Product, merely the banal claim that Bhutan has decided to prioritise the happiness of its citizens. But which state in history has not claimed to have the interests of its citizens at heart?

It is this simplistic view of things, finally, that dismays the reader looking for a solid depiction of Bhutan. For all the book’s claims, Ahmad perceives little more than your average, informed tourist. This is not the definitive book on Bhutan you have been waiting for: it really is just one man’s journey. 

Nepali Kukur



SOMEPLACE ELSE

LE SHERPA



PICS: CC

Back in December 2011, *Nepali Times’* former food connoisseur Marco Pollo, didn’t enjoy his dinner at Le Sherpa. “[S]lapping on a French article to ‘Sherpa’ does not a French restaurant make,” he withered, before adding a series of tips for the restaurant to ponder.

In turn, online commenters didn’t take too kindly to Mr Chicken’s review. One respondent called it “[S]hameful and vindictive,” while another called it “empty”. One even went as far as to quote Shakespeare, in order to

register his disgust.

Nearly two years on, Le Sherpa has undergone changes that our former reviewer might just approve of. Adopting a broader, pan-European menu, the listings at least promised to live up to its almost unparalleled ambience. But could it deliver, where before it left us wanting?

We started with a tapas-style plate of hummus, quail eggs, griddled vegetables, and sundried tomatoes and French bread (Rs 460). So far, so good – the hummus was unusually (but not unpleasantly)

acidic, counterbalancing the richness of the quail eggs well and setting us up for heartier mains.

The restaurant’s main courses are noticeably meat-centric, but for readers concerned about Nepal’s bird-flu crisis, you’ll be pleased to know that your options are hardly limited, with only one chicken dish appearing on the menu. Not wanting to fall fowl (I know) ourselves, we opted instead for the slow-roasted pork belly (Rs 900) and the rabbit tortellini, served in a cream and white wine sauce (Rs 760).

The former was as succulent as

one can expect from a hog cooked slowly under a thick layer of its own fat – which, in this meal’s only real flaw, lacked the crispy, golden brown outer edge we’d hoped for. Presented impeccably atop the smoothest, creamiest mash in town, the sauce was too sweet for my partner in crime, but perfect to me.

The latter was a dish of rich rabbit meat, encased in small, but perfectly formed fresh pasta parcels. This was a definite highlight, with just the right level of garlic permeating through the sauce. Be warned, though: the

tortellinis resembled little bunny ears perhaps a little too closely for anyone squeamish about eating anything that was, prior to its slaughter, cute.

Wrapping up a lunch that would have felt extravagant in Paris, London or Rome, there was only one natural choice for dessert: the crème brûlée (Rs 320). The last reviewer was especially critical of this offering, informing the uninitiated of the caramelised crack we should expect to hear when digging in, before giving way to a rich, smooth custard. I’m pleased to report that the dessert behaved itself this time around, with a thin, super-sweet crust yielding to the spoon like plate glass.

Clearly, things have changed at Le Sherpa: high standards across the board, from the kitchen to the courtesy. Upon leaving, I felt genuinely sorry for the owners, who have clearly invested so much and committed themselves to meaningful improvements, but are left with the dustbowl chaos on the Lajimpat road outside – hardly inviting to the patrons Le Sherpa aims to woo, or to win back.  CC

How to get there: walk north from Shangri-la Hotel, Le Sherpa is located inside the Ramalaya complex, opposite the Volkswagen showroom.



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BIKRAM RAI

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600
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2009
NEPAL'S FIRST BIRD FLU OUTBREAK

SPREADS ONLY FROM INFECTED BIRDS TO HUMANS

IN THE EVENT OF AN OUTBREAK: REPORT SICK OR DEAD BIRDS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

VISIT A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF YOU FALL SICK AFTER CONTACT WITH BIRDS

PREVENTION: COOK EGGS AND CHICKEN AT HIGH TEMPERATURE

USE DIFFERENT UTENSILS FOR COOKED AND RAW MEAT

WASH HANDS WITH SOAP OR HAND SANITISER BEFORE AND AFTER HANDLING MEAT

COVER MOUTH WHEN COUGHING OR SNEEZING



As Nepalis are forced to pry themselves off chicken momo and chicken chili once again, the question on everybody's mind: what exactly is the difference between regular flu and bird flu? Well for starters seasonal flu comes around mostly in winter and can potentially be prevented through vaccines. Avian influenza, on the other hand, is more lethal. This type of flu is so notorious that it is often compared to the Spanish flu of 1918-19, another avian strain, which spread

across the globe in a mere three months and wiped off almost 50 million.

In May 1997 a child from Hong Kong died of H5N1, a common strain of bird flu, becoming the first known human victim. After 18 cases and six deaths in Hong Kong, the virus appeared to be under control and possibly eradicated by the end of 1997. However, it reared its ugly head again in 2003 and has continued to evolve and spread. More worryingly, a new strain of virus called H7N9 was detected in China earlier this year, but quick action from the Chinese government meant that the number of cases after April dropped drastically.

The Achilles' heel of the

virus lies in its inability to be transmitted from human to human. Humans are infected only when they come in contact with diseased birds making poultry farmers, butchers, and cooks who deal directly with livestock and raw meat most vulnerable. Among the more than 600 confirmed cases reported worldwide through July 2013, nearly all were acquired by direct contact with poultry, with person to person spread being almost non-existent.

Aside from agricultural intervention (ie culling the birds), the other means of control is vaccines and antiviral agents. If oseltamivir (an anti-viral agent) is started within the first 48 hours of symptoms, the benefit is significant. But cost and availability of the drug are impediments. While countries in the west have hoarded vaccines in case of an epidemic, they are not available here in adequate doses. So what should those of us in Nepal do?

Proper cooking kills the virus so we should only eat meat that is fully cooked and served hot. If eggs are consumed, they should be hard cooked and certainly not runny. Eating or drinking dishes that include blood ('ragati') from any animal is highly discouraged.

Since 95 per cent of viruses like bird flu enter our bodies from contact between our fingers and the mucous membranes of our eyes and nose, maintaining good hygiene and cleanliness is imperative. Washing hands often with soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser is a good idea as is covering our mouths and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not our hands) when coughing or sneezing. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



MIN RATNA BAJRACHAYA

CELEBRATION TIME: The Newar community marks the beginning of the auspicious month of Gunla on Wednesday at Swayambhunath.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHAYA

RAMZAN KARIM: Leaders of political parties enjoy their Iftar dinner organised by Azaad Foundation at Hotel Everest in Baneshwor on Sunday.



BIKRAM RAI

ROCK ON: Students at a concert organised by Ganesh Man Singh Foundation on Saturday at Basantapur to support the victims of the recent flood.

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Computers in schools without textbooks

SUNIL POKHREL

If the new budget is actually implemented, 20 per cent of the schools in Nepal may soon have computers and internet connections. Finance Minister Shankar Koirala set aside a whopping Rs 1 billion to hook 7,123 schools to the net in the coming year.

Although this is a small proportion of the 35,000 government schools in the country, the decision was extraordinarily bold and ambitious. Providing support for rural community schools to leapfrog into the age of the internet is laudable, but the Department of Education (DoE) which is supposed to implement this plan is woefully unprepared.

The DoE has been a perennial underachiever. Just look at its record of annual non-delivery of text books to schools around the country. If the department can't deliver books, how can it deliver computers? The dismal SLC pass rate also points to the shameful failure of the education bureaucracy. How can a country move forward when 72 per cent of high school graduates are labeled 'failures'? Even if we ensure computers and internet



WWW.MAGNUS.ORG.NP

Not enough homework has been done on an ambitious program to equip 20% of government schools with computers and internet

in the classroom, how are they going to change that result?

Many teachers and district education officials erroneously equate learning with typing on a computer. The government's hefty budget allocation, one hopes, is not limited to teaching children keyboard skills and

allowing teachers to hook up on Facebook, but to expose them to computer-aided teaching and learning. Before sticking a computer to every classroom, DoE officials have to be first helped to develop digital learning content for different subjects and grades so that the


machines will be a meaningful resource for both teachers and students.

ICT integration into classrooms will require teacher training to integrate computer-aided learning. But the SLC results this year shows that teachers lack training and motivation even for rote learning, let alone producing critical thinkers. This is the collective failure and indifference to the Department of Education and most District Education Offices to quality in the classroom.

Nepal's politicised teaching fraternity has other priorities besides raising students with an all-round education relevant to their community and society. Teachers all moonshine as political cadre, union activists or have NGOs. And with elections coming up they are also mobilised for other duties like polling and census data gathering.

The problem is not hardware. It is the software: computer literate and enthusiastic teachers who can motivate and inspire children to use the vast knowledge base in the internet to expand their horizons and make a difference in their learning environment. Just putting a computer in the classroom will be a colossal waste of money.

Computers also need electricity and even schools that have power don't have lights for most of the day. Government schools will get Rs 160,000 from the state for computers and printers and will have to add another Rs 40,000 from local resources. There seems to be no allocation for internet fees, maintenance, upgrading computers, and running costs.

The government hasn't done its homework on integrating computers into schools. It simply seems to want to spend a lot of money for a showpiece program that is neither cost-effective nor sustainable. 

Sunil Pokhrel is a curriculum expert at Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Nepal.

see page 16-17

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BHRIKUTI RAI

It started on the most non-serious date, April Fool's Day this year. But four months later, Nepal's latest online media portal, *Setopati*, has shot up to become one of the most visited Nepali language site. Its brand of long-form journalism with in-depth coverage and analysis has shown that serious journalism is possible and it needn't be in hardcopy anymore.

"We moved to the online platform because this is where the future of journalism is," says Binita Dahal, one of *Setopati*'s reporters who left *Nagarik* last February. Dahal's recent 2,700 word profile of one day in the life of heart surgeon Bhagwan Koirala

got 110,000 hits in less than a week. She says: "The reach of an online news portal may still not match a newspaper's print circulation, but the stories generate immediate feedback and create a huge buzz."

Online journalism in Nepal got a kickstart from king Gyanendra's military coup in February 2005, when media looked to cyberspace to bypass controls. The second wave for online media has come with the proliferation of cheap smartphones using 3G connections. A quarter of Nepal's population is now online, there were 6.84 million internet users as of mid-June and nearly 2 million of them were on Facebook. Another factor that has boosted online readership of Nepali language portals is the large diaspora population.

As a result, publishers in the mainstream media are no longer looking at online journalism as a passing fad and have invested in pushing digital versions of their own publications. "We need to reinvent ourselves and our products so that young readers can be engaged on our sites for longer," says Akhilesh Upadhyay, editor of *The Kathmandu Post* which has a presence in the www.ekantipur.com portal. "Newspapers and magazines have done



"We are still in the learning-by-doing phase."

Binita Dahal
Setopati

well in the last two decades, but if we don't make our online content strong we will be swept away by the digital wave that is gaining momentum in Nepal."

In terms of numbers, the readership of Nepali language portals has grown exponentially in the past two years. Soon after it started, *Onlinekhabar.com* topped the list of Nepali news portals with an average of 160,000 unique visitors per day. Started by a group of journalism students in 2006, the portal's traffic is mainly diaspora dominated. "The growth of

online media has been encouraging, now all we need to do is tap into the readers' pulse that is turning towards multi-media content," explains Dharma Raj Bhusal who founded *Onlinekhabar* and edits it.

Appetite for multi-media content among internet users in Nepal has spiked as connectivity spread and bandwidth increased across the country. Nepal's telecom companies and internet service providers (ISPs) paid Rs 3.76 billion to international carriers in bandwidth fees alone in the last fiscal year, up from Rs 2.58 billion in 2011-12.

However, not everything is smooth sailing in cyberspace. Although the readership has increased dramatically, online ad sales are still negligible. This brings up the issue of sustainability and could mean that the sudden surge of readership could be a flash in the pan as online news ventures come and go.

In fact, digital media experts say most Nepali news portals are still not using the full potential of online sites for interactive, dynamic, multi-media content. "It is hard to recall having come across any exclusive online journalism piece showcasing full multi-media potential available today," says Dharma Adhikari of Media Foundation, a research and policy institute.

A quarter of Nepal's population is now online and traditional media is being left behind

WIRED





“I spend more time online than reading books and newspapers these days. The technology overwhelms me all the time, but I am catching up one step at a time.”

Akhilesh Upadhyay, Editor,
The Kathmandu Post

Senior editors say even younger journalists don't come with digital and multi-media knowhow. And even if they do, young reporters and bloggers enter a rigid newsroom hierarchy where the gatekeepers have an archaic perspective on journalism.

“Publishers know the tide is turning, yet they are reluctant to invest in the medium and take advantage in the shift in readership patterns,” says Umesh

Shrestha of www.mysansar.com, one of the most popular Nepali language blogs. Shrestha who used to work as a reporter and online coordinator for *Nagarik* says resistance from hardcopy colleagues to move beyond updating the website with newspaper content was frustrating. However, he is optimistic about the future of online journalism in Nepal: “This is the future, so investments will pour in to get ahead in the online race.”

There are some Nepali reporters who have already moved on from traditional media to explore the potential of the new media. “*New York Times*’ Snow Fall project showed the potential of multi-media storytelling. Nepali journalists also need to start looking for innovative storytelling ideas online,” says Rajneesh Bhandari, who worked at Kantipur Television for seven years before starting out as multimedia journalist.

It's not just established newspapers that are going digital-first, Nepal's FM radio networks have also extended their reach worldwide through live streaming with integrated newsroom for text, audio, and video production.

Ujyaalo 90 national radio network's www.ujyaaloonline.com integrates its radio content (*see video*) for online not just in text and podcasts, but also through video. “Our reporters go to the field and bring content for all three types of media,” says Gopal Guragain, founder of Ujyaalo. “The aim is not just to get ahead in the news breaking business through online, but to create dynamic content to keep the readers engaged and active.”

Recognising the growing presence of online news portals in Nepal's changing media landscape, the Federation of Nepalese Journalists has formed the Digital Media Committee. Last week the committee organised the first national seminar to discuss the state of online media in Nepal and decided to draft a code of conduct for online journalists. A five-member committee led by Ameet Dhakal, editor of www.setopati.com, will prepare draft of the code of conduct and another 10 member group led by Arun Baral, editor of *Onlinekhabar* will make necessary recommendations to the FNJ Digital Media Committee to resolve legal provisions concerning online media.

Younger readers are moving to online, but advertisers are still stuck mainly with print. Advertising Association of Nepal has lumped online medium in



“One can't really predict how the technology is going to change so the best we can do is prepare ourselves to stay afloat during the massive digital wave.”

Gopal Guragain
Ujyaalo 90 Network



“I think publishers will soon understand the potential of online media and take advantage in the shift in readership patterns.”

Umesh Shrestha
www.mysansar.com

the ‘others’ category since negligible per cent of Nepal's Rs 3 billion advertising pie today goes to online. “Even after eight years in the business we still have a tough time convincing advertisers who are used to seeing the products on television and newspapers,” says Dharma Raj Bhusal of *Onlinekhabar*. Nepali news portals make up to \$500 a month from Google AdSense, but have hardly any local advertising, which makes the business model for online media still iffy.

Experts say the online revenue is a global one and will require serious study and business plan to address market needs. Says Ujjwal Acharya, digital editor at *Annapurna Post*: “Nepal's online media is still in a trial and error phase, we are still trying to find a sustainable business model.”

This week, the online company Amazon's founder Jeffrey Bezos bought the family-owned old media, *The Washington Post*. Such an acquisition may still be a long way off in Nepal, but old media here must also adapt to a more online readership or wither away. 📺

ELECTION FEVER



With elections due in November, media critics have their eyes set on the online media. In the run up to the constitution deadline there was a spike in postings and the internet became a virtual battleground as netizens engaged in debates on federalism based on identity. This time cyberspace will be an even bigger virtual battleground in the campaign period. “The most accessible medium is usually the most cluttered,” says Dharma Raj Bhusal of *Onlinekhabar*. “With the presence of party mouthpieces online this election is going to get nasty.”

But experts say this is where online media literacy will be tested as readers and users navigate the information clutter and try to separate facts from propaganda and choose between platforms. Online media may still reach a fraction of the readership, but because journalists depend on Twitter, Facebook and blogs, it has a multiplier effect.

TIMELINE

1994

MERCANTILE OFFICE SYSTEMS BEGINS COMMERCIAL EMAIL SYSTEM

1995

MERCANTILE STARTS FULL ONLINE ACCESS OPERATING VIA LEASE LINE THROUGH NEPAL TELECOM WITH 150 SUBSCRIBERS

THE KATHMANDU POST GOES ONLINE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS WEBSITE

1997

HIMALMEDIA STARTS HIMALSOUTHASIA.COM

1999

NEPAL TELECOM LAUNCHES GSM, TELECOM PENETRATION 2 PER CENT

2000

NEPALTIMES.COM GOES ONLINE BEFORE HARDCOPY

KANTIPUR PUBLICATIONS STARTS KANTIPURONLINE.COM

2004

UNITED WE BLOG BEGINS

2005

SPICE NEPAL, FIRST PRIVATELY OWNED GSM OPERATOR LAUNCHES MERO MOBILE

2008

NTC INTRODUCES BROADBAND INTERNET THROUGH ADSL

2010

TELECOM SUBSCRIBERS REACH THE 10 MILLION MARK

2010

1.25 MILLION INTERNET USERS

2010

NCELL LAUNCHES 3G INTERNET

2013

APPROX. 2 MILLION FACEBOOK USERS IN NEPAL

2013

6.68 MILLION INTERNET USERS, 6.25 MILLION ACCESS INTERNET THROUGH MOBILE HANDSETS

Justice delayed and denied



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Rameswor Bohara’s blog, *himalkhabar.com*, 4 August



For Nanda Prasad and Ganga Maya Adhikari, who were on a hunger strike outside Bir Hospital and Baluwater asking for investigation into their son’s murder, 7 July brought devastating news. After their case was taken up by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and presented to the government, Home Minister Madhav Ghimire told them flatly that his government couldn’t apprehend the guilty.



“There are legal difficulties to this case, which is why we can’t investigate,” Ghimire told the Adhikari couple and the NHRC at Singha Darbar on Wednesday. Such a statement, from a minister whose job is to look after people’s security, is sure to be the end of the line for the Adhikaris. In June 2004, their

son Krishna was dragged from his home in Phujel of Gorkha district, taken to Chitwan, and killed cruelly by the Maoists. Nanda Prasad and Ganga Maya have spent the past few years going from one government office to another seeking justice. When they started a hunger strike outside Baluwater at the time Baburam Bhattarai was prime minister, the police forcibly admitted them into a mental asylum.

In March, the NHRC had recommended that the government put the guilty on trial, provide compensation to the couple, and

ensure they return home safely. But Bhattarai ignored the directive, arguing that this was an insurgency-related case and swept it under the rug like many other wartime atrocities committed by both sides.

According to the complaint the Adhikaris filed at the District Police Headquarter in Chitwan, Januka Poudel and other Maoist cadre are involved

in the murder. Poudel was Hisila Yami’s assistant while Bhattarai was in Baluwater. When the Adhikaris came to Kathmandu to seek justice, the PM did everything in his government’s power to quash the investigation.

Right now, a chief justice leads the government and the Adhikaris had hoped this meant the Regmi government would listen to their plight and deliver justice. After Ghimire’s statement, all their doors are shut and there is no hope left.

Ghimire says his hands are tied by the government’s interpretation in 2006 of the Terrorist and Destructive Activity Punishment Act 2058. Although Ghimire says he will do all he can to compensate and rehabilitate the couple, they haven’t asked for money, they just want justice.

Minister Ghimire’s answer sounds like an excuse not to address conflict-era crimes because of the personalities involved. But it ignores the Supreme Court’s decision which sets a precedent that nothing should stop investigation of crimes against humanity committed during the war. A SC bench, with Regmi on it, had pronounced a life sentence on Maoist Bal Krishna Dhungel for using war as an excuse to commit murder. But the Maoists pardoned him, and nominated him to the CA.

Now, the Adhikaris’ failed struggle for justice has put a moral question mark on a government headed by a chief justice.



Baidya’s demands for CA Elections

Himalkhabar.com, 7 August



1. Terminate the 25-point deal
2. Dismantle the HLPC and bring every party for a roundtable meeting
3. Postpone elections
4. Create a national unity government
5. Explain why the constitution could not be written in 2012 and guarantee that the same mistakes won’t be repeated
6. Sign previous agreements and decide remaining issues through the CA
7. Agree in principle about major contentious issues
8. Guarantee to decide other issues through democratic means
9. Constitution must include a clause which prevents heads of the government from dissolving the parliament
10. Enforce all agreements regarding ex-combatants, marginalised communities, and enforce inclusive quotas
11. Agree on proportional representation on multi-party democracy principles
12. Elections have to be fully proportional because this is the only way to be truly inclusive
13. Scrap the Citizenship Act so that foreigners may not get Nepali citizenship
14. Scrap decisions taken against national interest
15. Scrap humiliating Nepal-India treaties
16. Follow up on previous agreements in which the government agreed to scrap various laws
17. Investigate missing persons, recognise martyrs of Jana Andolan, and rehabilitate the injured
18. Fulfill the demands of the PLA, army, police, and citizens who were dismissed from their positions

NEPALI TWEETS



आमा

रक्सी खाने, घुरोट खाने, सुती खाने अनी रिचाज काडे वै क्यान्सर हुन्छ भनेर सिक्काले कोट्याउने... कती धेरै सचेत भएका होलान मान्छे हरू
They smoke, drink, and chew tobacco, but scratch their recharge cards with a coin because they think it will give them cancer. People are so aware.



Sanjeev

पहाडै हिन्दु उच्चजातीय पुरुषवादी मनोविज्ञान बोकेको केन्सीकृत राज्यको विकल्प बाबुरामजीय प्रगतिशील हिन्दुस्तानपरक संघीयता नै हो न ?
#सोच्दै

Is Baburam-ly Progressive Indiawards Federalism the only alternative to Hilly Peoples’ Hindu High Caste Patriarchal Centralised State? #Thinking



Sabdachitra

सानिया गान्धीलाई सुशीलले नेपाल भ्रमणको निम्तो दिएछन्। राजीवसँग नेपाल आउँदा सानियालाई पशुपति छिन् दिएनन् भन्ने सुनेरै सानेमा। हो-सोइन कुन्ती!!

Sushil Koirala has invited Sonia Gandhi to Nepal, which reminds me of a rumour from years ago of how she was not allowed inside Pasupatinath. Is that true?



Buddhi sagar

यदि शरीरका अंगहरु फुकाल्न मिल्ने भए। माइकोवालाहरु खुट्टा, दाइ, कम्मर, टाउको सम्मै फुकाल्न लाउँथे। माइ टकाउन भएकाले हान वै छुट हुन्थ्यो

If we could detach all our organs, these micro-drivers would have our limbs, backbone, hips, head, all of them dismantled. Discount on hands because we use that to pay them.

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #22

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’ health.

Has anyone in your household fallen sick in the last two months?

Yes **72%**
No **25.3%**
Don’t know **2.7%**

What was it that made you ill?

Fever **30.4%**
Cold and cough **20.7%**
Headaces **10.7%**
Limbs shaking **9.3%**
Diarrhoea **8.9%**
Accidents **6.7%**
Sore eyes **1.9%**
Don’t know **1.5%**
Won’t say **0.7%**
Others **9.3%**

No voter left behind



IFES

Editorial, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 6 August



We can’t be sure whether elections will take place on 19 November, but the achievements made by the EC so far have been rather impressive. The bottom line, however, is that there is no real alternative to polls so all the existing hurdles need to be overcome for free and fair elections to happen on time.

More than 500,000 people who voted in 2008 haven’t applied for voter ID cards. Studies estimated that there would be at least one million new voters since the last election in 2008, but instead we are down by five million. Experts point out that this

number is unusually high because many don’t have citizenship cards yet. According to a study done by the Forum for Women, Law, and Development, 4.3 million Nepali of voting age are deprived of citizenship certificates.

The EC’s own records show that altogether 1.2 million Nepalis are eligible to vote. Three million are working abroad at the moment, whereas in 2008 the number was 1.9 million. And those who are 18 or older stands at 16.4 million. This means up to 700,000 citizens are still missing from the electoral list.

It would be a travesty if so many citizens are deprived of their right to vote. So while the government’s willingness to extend the registration deadline after the EC’s meeting with Khil Raj Regmi this week is a welcome sign, it must first find out why these people didn’t bother to show up outside their district and ward offices. If this requires all parties to agree on making amendments to the electoral law, then the commission should move ahead immediately.

Since we don’t have a method of allowing our non-residential population to vote, none of them will be able to choose their representatives. It is near impossible to incorporate them for November’s election because technical issues of this kind take a long time to devise and implement, but the state must make sure that at least those who currently reside in Nepal are not left out.



Baidya: “I say tension, you hear election ... you say election, I hear tension.”

Sign: High Level Political Mechanism

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 8 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“If the four parties pay attention to our demands, there will be elections. If not, then no polls.”

MJF Chairman Upendra Yadav, *Naya Patrika*, 7 August

Yes they will, no they won't ... they will?

Nepal's political cartoonists are having a field day with Baidya Maoists' ever-changing stance. Ever since April Fools' Day when Khil Raj Regmi became head of the government, CPN-M has become a master of double speak, circulating wildly contradictory statements about the CA elections in November. One day they say they will take part, next day they pull out because the government sent them a 'humiliating' letter. Everyone thought it had come to a climax when party secretary Ram Bahadur Thapa smashed a mock ballot box with a hammer on stage, much to the delight of his comrades. Not one to let sideshows falter him, Chairman Baidya again told the press that his party was positive about talks because – surprise, surprise – it had received a more 'respectful' request. Here's what cartoonists came up with this week:



"Push the elections away and we can talk."

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in Annapurna Post, 4 August



Baidya: "We warn you not to hold elections ... or else ... we'll be obliged to enter talks."

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in Annapurna Post, 6 August



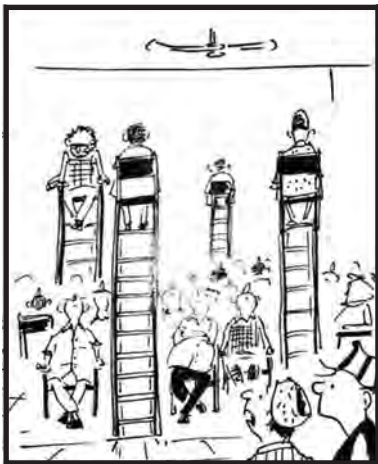
"That's Marx, that's Lenin, that's Mao... and who's this one wearing a crown?"

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 26 July



People's Nationalism

नागरिक Rabin Sayami in Nagarik, 30 July



"Talks between High Level politicians and the disgruntled parties."

नागरिक Rajesh KC in Nagarik, 6 August

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Awesome’s other mistakes

It was bound to happen sooner or later: the Dash Baddies have brought out a list of the most corrupt among their erstwhile comrades-at-arms in the rival Cash Baddies. No prizes for guessing who are the Top Three on the list:

1.PKD
2.HYB
3.KBM

But you are surely not going to see Loktantra Man Sing charge-sheeting any of these klepto-komreds any time soon. Apparently the Dashies did an asset search of the Cashies and found that the row of high rises on the airport road from Maiti Ghar to Tin Kune gave a whole new meaning to the term ‘Prachanda Path’.

Some confused readers have written in to ask the Donkey to print a glossary of all the code words used in Backside to describe various Mau Mau factions, just so it’s easy for them to tell who’s who. Well, here goes:

Dash (Baidya)
Cash (Prachanda)
Bash (Baburam)
Hash (Hisila)
Rash (Ram Bahadur)
Mash (Mahara)
Gnash (Narayankaji)

In the old days, there used to be strict guidelines about keeping His Majesty the King’s pictures in government offices. And the more sycophantic ones



would add a portrait of Her Majesty as well. Some Panchayat ministers would get so carried away they’d also hang pictures of the Father of Nation, His Majesty King Tribhuvan, and a likeness of Grandfather of the Nation His Majesty Prithvi Narayan the Great. But after 2006, there are no hard and fast rules about which portraits should adorn the walls of government offices, so it is usually posters of film stars and other goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. There is a vague rule that civil servants can hang either a map of Nepal, or a portrait of a martyr of their choice. But in the absence of clear guidelines and because all government positions today are a result of band-fand between the four-party syndicate anyway, officials have started putting up photos of their party mentors. During the Panchayat, heads of the Sports Council used to be die-hard Mandalays and now they are dyed-in-the-wool Maobaddies. Not surprising, therefore, that the new

head of Khel Kood Parisad has pictures of Comrades Owesome and Laldhoj hanging on his wall. The man must have a pretty good idea which side of his toast is buttered because he is now making way for Dear Leader Comrade Prakash to gain Council membership as the head of the recently registered Nepal chapter of the World Pentathlon Association. And that was when the world finally found out that Awesome Jr’s real name is Sakar. Not Sarkar, Sakar.

Now that all our political leaders are on FB and Twitter, the job of a political reporter has been made much easier. We no longer have to go to the news, the news comes to us. The most prolific among them is @BRB_laldhwoj, and one wonders why Regmi Sir also doesn’t follow suit and get a Twitter account. Since we all know his handlers are researchers and analysts, here is a great Twitter handle for him: @KRR_baldhwoj. But politicians should take a few lessons on how to tweet responsibly and follow the soon to be drawn up Code of Ethics for online users. Politicians should tweet information only on a need to know basis. For instance, why is it absolutely necessary for Nepalis to know that RCP is ‘undergoing’ treatment for a severe case of assteroids?

Soon after PKD accused the other parties of being ‘chicken’, across the country chicken are being slaughtered and buried. Is there a message there? Awesomeness also compared his party to ‘eagles’ and instructed the YCL to prowl the country like ‘lions’. Who does he think he is, Farmer Jones? And what is this, *Animal Farm*? Comrade Chairman was in a confessional mood the other day and admitted to having committed Four Mistakes. This self-criticism shows that PKD is a true blue Maoist because Mao was in the habit of getting his colleagues to confess to a list of Six Deviations and launch Five Anti-Campaigns before sending them off to die in plane crashes. Our own Helmsman was being a bit modest and left out a whole bunch of other mistakes he has made:

- Brag about taking the UN for a ride in the Shaktihkor tape (should have also confessed to siphoning 5 billion from combatant allowance)
- Send goons to kick Ass’ ass in 2008
- Say different things to different people (should have said different things to the same people)
- Raising \$3 billion for Lumbini (should have raised \$6 billion)
- Missing out on saying “Hi” to Sonia Ji in Delhi (ask her to be FB friend)
- Should never have agreed to the 12-point, 7-point, 11-point, and 5-point agreements
- Having Prakash as son (and not Padam Kunwar)
- Sending 16,000 people to heaven (should’ve asked God first)



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