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THE ELECTION MIRAGE

Like a mirage, the closer we get to elections the further they seem to recede. Despite the Election Commission’s assurances that all the logistics are in place, there are doubts about security and voter ID cards being ready before everything closes down for holidays.

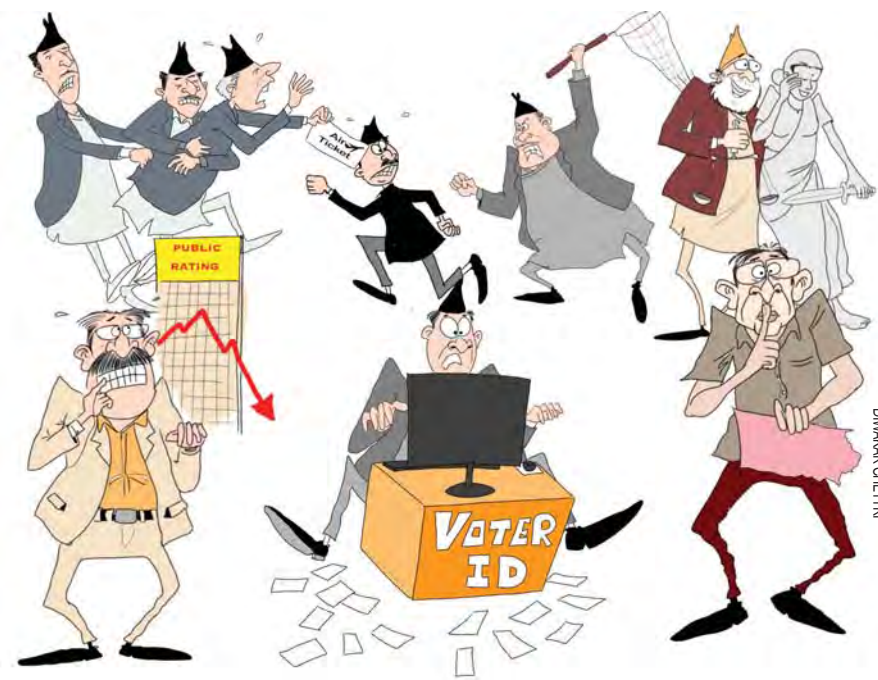
There are other hurdles. Primary among them is the continued obduracy shown by the CPN-M, which is snarling back like a cornered cat. The security apparatus couldn’t even foil Thursday’s forced shutdown, how can we be assured of a peaceful election?

After much cajoling from Sushil Koirala and Madhav Kumar Nepal, the Dash Maoists, as they are called, finally agreed to a roundtable meeting. But overnight someone somewhere pulled the rug out from beneath them and even proponents of the roundtable formula went cold. Everyone has a fairly good idea what happened, but they are not talking. Hardline Dash Maoist, Netra Bikram Chand, suddenly flew to China and came back all mellow and moderate. Only to find that now the other parties won’t negotiate with him.

The government is now readying to push through an ordinance to bring Ashok Rai and Upendra Yadav on board and Mohan Baidya and his rebels are feeling even more isolated. There are rumours of a rift within the ranks between those who want to return to rebellion and those who want to take part in elections with conditions. Which must be why the Dashes are now playing their last card: we will contest elections if you postpone elections.

Given that the CPN-M is not even formally registered as a new party and hasn’t filed its papers in the Election Commission; given that Pushpa Kamal Dahal has kept many senior party positions unfilled till now; given that, unlike Maoist splits in revolutions elsewhere, the comrades haven’t butchered each other; given all this, it does look to many like the ‘split’ in the Maoist movement is a tactical move to increase the bargaining position of the mother party.

Dahal is a worried man. He knows this is not 2008,



Let’s hope history doesn’t repeat itself in November as a farce

his popularity rating is at an all-time low, and his doublespeak and cash stash are exposed. His vote bank is split. He is on the defensive on war crimes. The general strike his party tried to enforce on the capital last Saturday by terrorising commuters was foiled by women who resisted and fought off hired street goons.

This begs the question: was this Dahal’s intention all along to egg Comrade Baidya on to come up with one obstacle after another for elections, using delaying tactics and trying to make sure that elections are only held after the two parties can be united again? We probably won’t know until someone decides to write an objective memoir.

Despite parties drawing up candidate lists this still

doesn’t feel like a country that has elections coming in 66 days. Khil Raj Regmi’s planned 10-day vanishing act at the most crucial time for election preparations is not just a bad idea, it is totally irresponsible. His Home and Foreign Minister had the good sense to cancel, but Regmi is so desperate to grandstand at the General Assembly, he is not listening to anyone. Which is just like him.

Other events that have transpired over the past week do not bode well, either. The CIAA through the Revenue Investigation Department is engaging in a witch-hunt, trampling high-handedly on the laws of the land to harass lawyers like Sambhu Thapa. The fact that Thapa was at the forefront of the civil society-led pro-democracy uprising in 2006, which the current head of the CIAA is accused to suppressing, leads one to conclude that this is political vendetta at its crudest and a threat to others to toe the line.

The government’s inept handling of the Krishna Adhikari murder case showed that this non-political government is actually cravenly beholden to politicians and out to protect powerful people from being answerable to conflict-era crimes. The international community’s conspicuous silence on human rights, justice, and corruption because it doesn’t want anything to offset elections has emboldened Regmi and his henchmen.

The Supreme Court’s dissolution of 17 writ petitions, including the five-month postponement of a hearing on the appointment of the Chief Justice as government head, was a significant reminder that there is no longer any separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive.

We expected a technocrat-led government to be more efficient and less corrupt. We hoped that having a Chief Justice as head of government would at least mean that there would be rule of law. None of that happened.

They say history repeats itself as a farce. That, unfortunately, may be the fate of the November election.

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET
You are throwing pearls to swine ('Skeletons in the closet', Editorial, #672). A Maoist ideologue who believes that the Cambodian genocide is western propaganda cannot be reformed. Let's just hope they don't get elected to perpetrate similar mass killings in Nepal. Good editorial, but wasted on these war criminals.

Jit

● What Nepal needs is to follow in Egypt's footsteps and organise a 'counter-revolution' even if it means with the support of the Indians.

Counter

● And the gullible folks in our beloved Gaijatra Land had pinned high hopes on the learned Dr Baburam Bhattarai. He was said to be a visionary and fearless people's leader who could turn this country around. He has turned out to be an advocate of the devil.

Sharanhari

● Any discussion on Maoism reminds me of the review by Ian Johnson of Jasper Becker's book on the Chinese famine based on official Chinese archives. Not so easy to call that "western propaganda".

Six

RAW DEAL
I do not agree with Anurag Acharya that 'by and large, the Indians are

as exasperated with our politics as we are and New Delhi's interest as well as capacity to dictate the course of politics in Kathmandu is often overstated.' ('A Raw Deal', #672). We do not know if this is the case. The Indians want permanent controlled chaos in Nepal. They supported the Maoist war and removed the king. And now they are comfortable with Nepali politicians stewing in their own s____. What have the Indians got to lose? Nothing. In fact, they gain a lot via access to markets for their goods and services.

Counter

● 'Nepali Congress has always been the favourite for India's own Congress politicians ...' Anyone who writes the above line is ignorant of the Nepal-India relationship.

NS

● I don't think even the Indians quite know what they want with Nepal. The strategy of causing turmoil so that Nepal can become an obedient lapdog hasn't really worked because instability and weak governments in Nepal strengthen anti-Indian forces and enable them to operate from Nepali soil against India. Unless the higher-ups in Delhi can tame RAW and change its focus towards stability in Nepal, India's needless interference will only come back to bite its hand.

Aideeah

● India doesn't have good relations with any of its neighbours, that is because of its unnecessary interventions in their internal affairs and its big brother attitude. India should change the way it deals with Nepal and change the Nepali people's perception, otherwise what it gives is what it gets.

Sanjit

● 'You can scarcely counter ideas of jihad until the ambience in which it thrives is also transformed.' ('The anatomy of radicalism', Ajaz Ashraf #672) Very true and the transformation first has to occur within Islamic societies. The problem of Islamic radicalism and its solution both lie within the Muslim communities and not elsewhere.


Dev Batsya

● 'As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap'. British divide and rule policy is still having a negative impact between India and Pakistan and it has spilled over into neighbouring countries like Nepal and others.

Yam Gurung

DANCING GIRLS
Great piece. As the author says we shouldn't be judgmental about these young Nepali women dancing in bars in Tanzania ('Dancing in Dar', Seetashma Thapa, #672). They seem to be strong enough to adapt to whatever the world has to offer.

Deep



● Very depressing report. Isn't the state supposed to protect vulnerable citizens? You can't just blame lack of opportunities in Nepal, it is also the state's responsibility. Seetashma Thapa has accepted they are vulnerable and sexually exploited and perceived and treated like prostitutes. Would we be judgmental if one of the dancers was someone close to us? Depends whether you have got a lot of callousness or empathy in you.

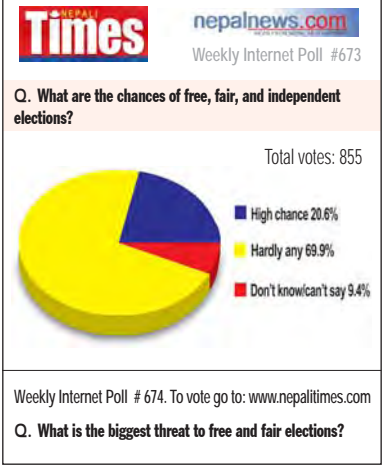
R Rai

Of all places, Nepali dancing girls in Africa now. It just shows how desperate Nepali youngsters are. I would not blame the people who are keen to exploit. It is common knowledge in Nepal by now that seeking foreign employment can have 'harassment' as a default clause.

Salil

● Nepal is now a Federal Democratic Republic empowering gender-oppressed women to take their own decision on their lives and careers. Hats off to them for choosing what they like best, dancing in the bars around the world. It is, however, not true that there are no opportunities in the country. My carpenter and mason make a cool Rs 1,000 a day all in cash payable on daily or weekly basis. They work from 10 to 2 and 3 to 5. These women could have worked on farmlands back home, but obviously they prefer the glittering lights faraway.

Jwahar





DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Dasain's sacrificial lambs

Who will be the scapegoats in Pushpa Kamal Dahal's threat to tackle internal corruption?


the same time send a message to the public that the party doesn't tolerate corruption.

It is well known that Dahal himself, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Hisila Yami, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, and Barsaman Pun control the party's coffers and fundraising efforts. Which is why their names top the list of corrupt comrades in the public

perception. However, the Sherchan Commission, doesn't name any of them, nor does it have the mandate to punish them.

The biggest scandal so far is the scam in the cantonments where as much as Rs 4 billion set aside for ex-guerrillas who didn't exist vanished into thin air. Dahal is likely to point the finger of blame at

PLA commanders who are not completely loyal and maybe thinking of defecting.

There is no doubt that some commanders had itchy fingers, but the rot went right up to the top of the party leadership. Dahal has always been a utilitarian leader and this is a perfect opportunity for him personally to come out smelling like roses. 

Amidst the hoo-hah this week about the raid by the Department of Revenue Investigation on law firms, chartered accountants, and other businesses, one issue that was further eclipsed was corruption and plunder that the Maoist party has engaged in after the conflict ended.



INSIDE OUT

Muma Ram Khanal

It has been more than a year since Amik Sherchan was appointed to head an internal probe team to assess the level of corruption within the party. The committee report has been ready for a while now, but it has never been made public. Now, with elections around the corner, it is very likely that Pushpa Kamal Dahal will use the report to single out a few sacrificial lambs over Dasain.

That report was supposed to have been presented to the Hetauda Congress earlier this year, but although the issue of internal corruption within the party did come up, the report seems to have been put into deep freeze. After this, the voice to reveal the report's contents and name names became older and more strident.

In response, the wily Dahal said that it was not necessary to make the report public since no

cases of serious embezzlement were raised anyway. No senior leader could counter the Chairman's edict, although there was some grumbling in the ranks. Goes to show just how strong the cult of personality is within the Maoist party, no one dares to point out that the emperor has no clothes.

However, within the party congress there were strong voices against corruption, extravagant lifestyles, and a lack of transparency in financial dealings on the part of the hierarchy.

Sherchan brought himself to make the absurd statement that no senior leader was guilty and the laughter and ridicule that greeted this statement in Hetauda were indications of the internal party mood. It was obvious that the report was a clumsy attempt at whitewash.

Last week in Nepalganj, Dahal used a campaign speech to project his party's clean image by raking up the Sherchan report and warned that heads would roll, figuratively speaking, within the party.

He went on to warn that he would unveil the report and guilty comrades would face punishment. It looks like the Chairman is on a witch-hunt ahead of elections to exorcise his own party and point the finger at arch rivals, killing two birds with one stone: sacrifice leaders who are expendable or threaten his dominance while at

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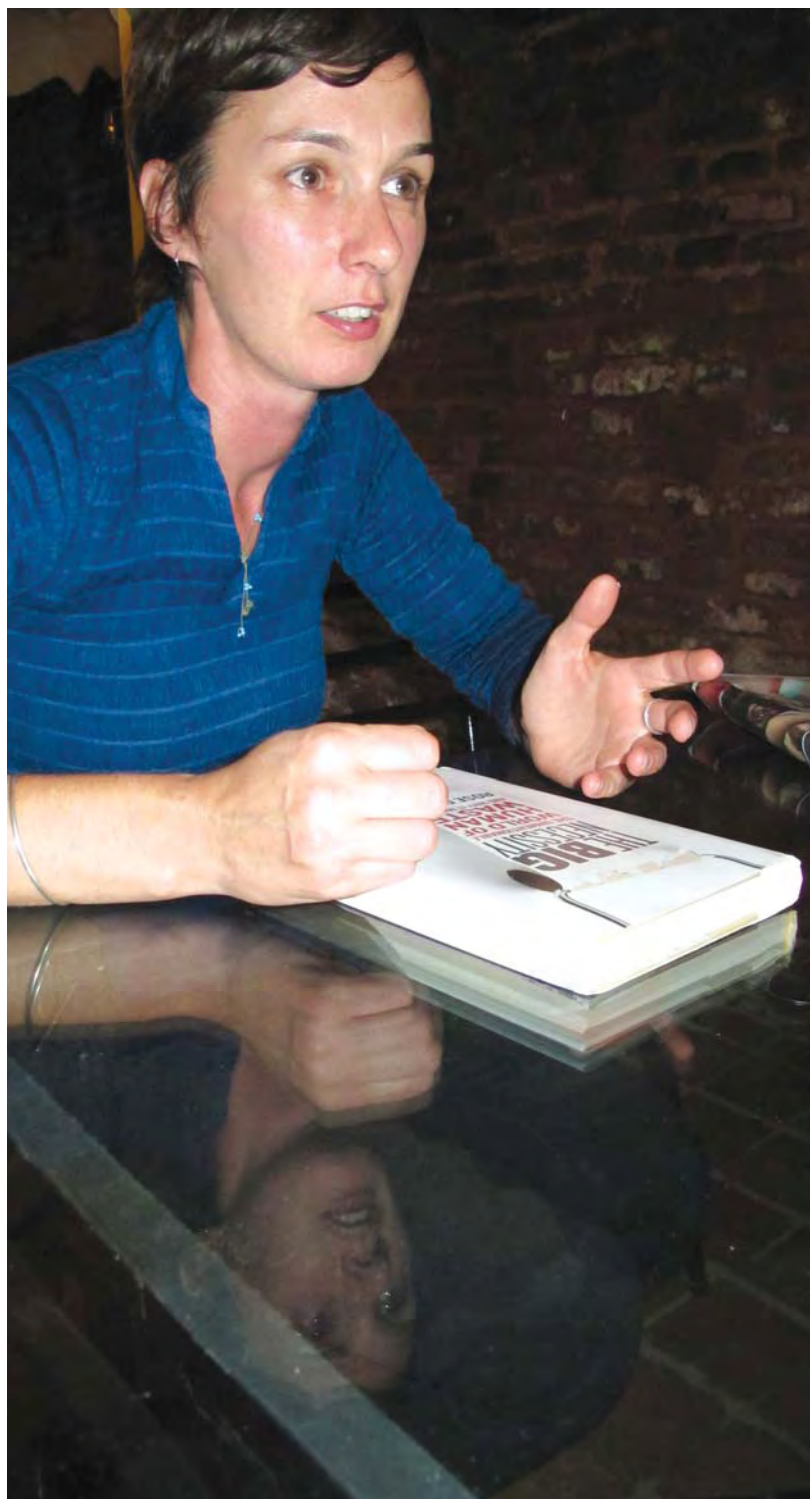
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KUNDA DIXIT

Talking about toilets

UK-based journalist and author Rose George doubles up as a global champion for sanitation. Her book *The Big Necessity: Adventures in the World of Human Waste* (2008) is regarded as a primer on managing human waste. She calls diarrhoea a “weapon of mass destruction”. The lack of access to toilets is at the root of the global public health crisis, killing millions of children under five. George was in Kathmandu this week to study menstrual taboos. WaterAid’s Ashutosh Tiwari and Govind Shrestha interviewed her for *Nepali Times*. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: Since the time you started the research for your book, what has changed globally about sanitation?

Rose George: Public perception toward sanitation has changed positively in the last 10 years. In 2004, hardly anybody was making the connection between water and sanitation, let alone with health. NGOs talked about dirty water, brackish water, and the like. The conversation was primarily about supplying clean water and expanding water supply. There was much prudishness around talking openly about keeping toilet waste separate from water supply mains.

Now, through his Reinventing the Toilet program, Bill Gates talks about toilet and that has made a huge difference. Through his charity, Matt Damon has started talking about sanitation. The king of the Netherlands has been a sanitation champion for years. More than 180 countries have signed on with the UN to mark 19 November as annual World Toilet Day.

Policy makers have started to understand that a relatively small investment on sanitation pays off big in an increase in

school attendance, women’s empowerment, and having a productive workforce. These changes have been gradual and with 2.5 billion people around the world still lacking access to toilets there is lots to be done. But over time, it’s been clear that sanitation has emerged as an issue worth funding and an issue worth talking openly about. An evidence for this is that sanitation has been added as the unambiguous goal number six in the UN’s post-2015 development agenda, whereas previously, in the MDGs, it was there as an afterthought.

In the last two years, we’ve seen an unprecedented momentum toward declaring villages and towns open defecation-free (ODF) areas in Nepal. Does this alone solve sanitation problems?

We have to see ODF as the sharp end of the wedge. On one hand, its effects are tangible. It tips the scale in terms of community members addressing their own sanitation problems. The entire community is indeed galvanised for change and every ODF declaration is accompanied by a sense of real collective



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achievement. On the other hand, declaration alone is not enough the practices need to be monitored over a period of time. Moreover, there's some danger that ODF campaigns may fail when there is no corresponding work on water supply. I have come across villages and schools which have been declared open-defecation free, but continue to lack adequate, clean water supply. For sanitation work to be successful, it is critical to pay attention to water.

Globally, more people these days live in urban areas than in villages. What do you see as challenges for urban sanitation in rapidly growing cities?
Urban sanitation is both complex and challenging. In many rapidly growing cities, the

nature of informal settlements, with insecure land tenure and apathy from the officials, additionally makes the task of providing water and sanitation to those who need the most difficult. Not everybody's waste can be connected to sewer lines. Often, sewer lines themselves end up in the rivers, with untreated waste spilling all over: they thus pose health risks to nearby residents, who are often in slums. Bill Gates and others have been trying to promote non-network sewers, but that will take some time.

Bindeshwar Pathak of Sulab International in India and Jack Sim of the World Toilet Organisation in Singapore have promoted sanitation, but is there a lesson from them for

NGOs to scale up work rapidly?
NGOs advocate a rights-centric model, which is based on the argument that the right to sanitation is a part of human rights. The issues of dignity, privacy, community empowerment, and behaviour changes are important to them. Social entrepreneurs think in terms of marketing and selling sanitation to as many customers as possible by branding it differently from what is available out there. Given that so many people have mobile phones and not toilets, the challenge for NGOs is to make toilets as desirable and as a marker of social status, as mobile phones are. For this, they can look for ways to work with entrepreneurs and private sector to market and sell sanitation as a desirable good.

Oh, shit

When even sex has gradually stopped being a taboo, British journalist and Rose George goes boldly where few men (and women) have dared to tread to tackle the last great taboo: shit.

We do it all at least once a day, we spend three years of our lives in the toilet, and yet we pretend that what comes out doesn't exist. Out of sight is out of mind. The bacteria in human faeces has been the single biggest killer of human beings in history through cholera epidemics, diarrhoeal dehydration, or typhoid. Despite all our technological progress, our inability to separate what we digest from what we ingest makes it a killer of global proportions, as George tells us in her gripping book, *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters*. People prefer to snigger when confronted with the subject, laxative commercials cut away to tasteful animation to show the gut. And the only time we refer to it directly is when we use toilet humour. George converts the scatological into a respectable treatise on medical anthropology. The book is crammed with facts.

- Two million people in the United States do not have access to an indoor toilet
- 2.6 billion people in the world (35 per cent of all humans) defecate in the open
- Milwaukee, New York and Vancouver empty untreated sewage into the sea or ocean
- There is only one toilet for 60,000 people in the slums of Dharavi on the outskirts of Mumbai
- High-heeled shoes were invented in Europe in the 19th century because there was so much open defecation in the streets of cities
- Eighty per cent of the morbidity in the world is caused by faecal contamination
- In developed countries toilet flushes use up to 30 per cent of the household water supply



The Big Necessity
The Unmentionable World
of Human Waste and
Why It Matters
By Rose George
Holt Paperbacks
304 pages
\$10 for hardcover on
Amazon

Squeamishness about bowel emptying kills, is George's message (*see interview*). We'd rather flush the problem down the toilet so as to not have to think about it. George goes around the world meeting people who are taking on excrement head-on. In Japan, she sees robotic toilets that do everything for you, even measure your blood pressure on the go. She interviews Indian toilet entrepreneur Bindeswari Pathak who has built millions of public toilets and pipes biogas for cooking. She meets cleanliness activists in South African and the

inventors of the 'Gulper' in Tanzania. For George, it is a criminal waste to flush human waste by mixing it with clean drinking water. As fresh water becomes scarcer, new sustainable ways need to be found to manage human waste. Reading *The Great Necessity* it gets difficult to tell who is more civilised: people in the 'turd world' where water is often used to clean up after defecation, or the industrialised countries where paper is used to wipe behinds. If you are not one of those who reads a book in the toilet, you can start with this one. After picking through human faeces, George is now in Nepal researching the other great taboo: menstruation. **Kunda Dixit**

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EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Raining gifts

Hyundai's authorised distributor Laxmi Intercontinental has announced Dasain Tihar Ko Offer Super Duper Bumper scheme. Buyers can get cash discount up to Rs 500,000, win gold and two Hyundai Eon cars through a lucky draw.



Spreading wings

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, will increase its Abu Dhabi-Kathmandu service from seven flights per week to a double daily schedule starting 1 November. The new services will be operated by A320 aircraft fitted with 16 pearl business class seats and 120 economy class seats.

Profit sharing

Everest Bank's board of directors approved and signed the audited balance sheet for the last fiscal year. The bank approved payments of 50 per cent cash dividend and issued 10 per cent bonus shares subject to approval of Nepal Rastra Bank and shareholders in the ensuing annual general meeting.



QATAR FLYING HIGH

Qatar Airways has announced a four day sale upto 25 per cent on market fares from 10-13 September. The travel validity for this fare is from 16 September to 11 December. Qatar Airways Privilege Club members and British Airways Executive Club members are now able to earn miles and can begin redeeming them from 1 October 2013 onwards on each other's flights, reads the press release.

Miles to go

Go Ford has sold 2,000 units of Ford cars in Nepal since 2010. The company said the market share of Ford vehicles in different segments has been hugely impressive in Nepali market. GO Ford has introduced eight Ford models in Nepal.



NEW RIDE

Syakar Trading launched New Honda Activa-i at the NADA Auto Show. The Activa-i has 109.2 cc engine, an under seat storage capacity of 18-litre, and ground clearance of 165mm reads the press release. The new Activa-i is priced at Rs 150,900 and will be available in four vibrant colours.

Education first

National College Centre for Development Studies welcomed its new batch of students last week. Speaking at the event, chief guest Aditya Man Shrestha said that development studies was an important subject of great significance to an underdeveloped nation like Nepal.



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LAND OF HER MOTHER

Tsering Wangmo Dhomba's tribute to her mother and her homeland

Tsering Wangmo Dhomba uses poetry because words don't suffice. As the first Tibetan poetess to be published in English, she transcends language and the barriers of space and time to return to *Phayul*, her fatherland.

Her first book of poetry *Rules of the House* was published in 2002 and other books came thick and fast: *My Rice Tastes Like the Lake*, *In The Absent Every Day*, *In Writing the Names* and *Recurring Gestures*. But even when she writes prose, like her latest book *A Home in Tibet*, the sentences are crafted like verse with delicious descriptions of the mountains and lakes of Tibet, and evocative memories of her mother.

Tsering Wangmo's mother, Tsering Choden Dhomba, died in a tragic car crash on new year's day in 1994 on the Grand Trunk Road on her way from Dharamsala. Mother and daughter were very close and hoped one day to go back together to their ancestral village in Kham in eastern Tibet which Tsering Choden left when she was 14, making the great trek over the mountains to Nepal like thousands of other Tibetans.

Tsering Wangmo travels to a land of her mother and looks at everything through her mother's eyes: dewy petals on the plateau's high pastures, yaks grazing in lonely valleys, the shadows of clouds creeping up the green landscape of a brief Tibetan summer.

In Kyegu, she sees flowers which her mother has shown

her in exile in Nepal and Dharamsala, noticing that they are even prettier in Tibet. This paragraph from her prologue to *A Home in Tibet* has some of the most wrenching sentences I have read about the pain of exile:

"The flowers in Tibet were always taller, more fragrant and vivid. Her descriptions, imprecise but unchanging from year to year had led me to an inevitable acceptance that her past was unequalled by our present lives. She would tell me of the knee-deep fields of purple, red and white — plants never named or pointed out to during our years in India and Nepal — that over time served to create an idea of her fatherland, phayul, as a riotous garden. I pictured her wilderness paradise by comparing them not to the marigolds, daisies and bluebells I crushed with my fingers, but to the shapes of household artefacts around me: lollipop, broom, bottle. Disparate objects that surrendered to and influenced the idea, space and hope of a more abundant and happy place."

Tsering Wangmo's mother kept assuring her daughter that they would return to Tibet some day and that their nomadic life in exile was temporary. She writes: 'It was easy to accept that idea in our two-room house in Dharamsala where everything we owned fit into the four aluminum steel suitcases under our two twin cots.' It is almost as if Tsering Choden somehow



knew she would never go back and wanted to instill in her daughter a deep love for the *phayul* she had never seen.

So, after the death of her mother Tsering Wangmo makes a journey to Kham which is actually a pilgrimage to the land of her ancestors and a journey to recognise the old Tibet of her mother's memories and the new Tibet that it has become since 1959. She has never been here, but everything is familiar to her. It is a homecoming that mother and daughter had together imaged and imagined.

It is difficult to read *A Home in Tibet* without a deep dull ache inside when you come to sentences like these: 'Here in Tibet live the people my mother taught me to love before I met them. We are family, and love has undetermined aptitude and great hunger.'

You need not be Tibetan to recognise the universal

emptiness of homelessness and the joys of reunion with one's roots. Confront cruelty with kindness, harshness with hope, seems to be Tsering Wangmo's message as she ends the book with a final prayer: 'There is great strength in believing that things will eventually right themselves. Because they must.'

Tsering Wangmo Dhomba went to college at the University of Massachusetts and did her MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. She is now teaching and pursuing a doctorate in English Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Every year mother and daughter undertook a long pilgrimage from Dharamsala to Bodh Gaya and Kathmandu and the two got a chance to bond well on the road. Travelling overland, meeting monks and fellow exiles from Kham, Tsering Wangmo now thinks her mother was trying to imprint her

daughter with a Tibetan identity inseparable from a devotion to Buddhism. Her mother may also have been preparing her for the future: 'She wanted me to have people who loved me so that if something happened to her, I would have familiar faces to turn to. In this way my mother took care of my future.'

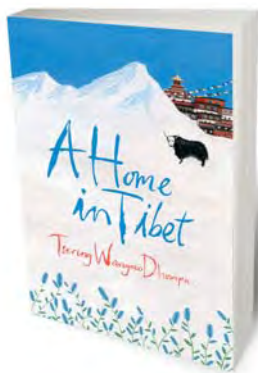
Many of those familiar faces will be present at the launch of *A Home in Tibet* in Kathmandu on Friday.

When she finally travels to her mother's birthplace, Tsering Wangmo discovers where she came from: 'I have come to rely on Dhomba with the foolish comfort that comes in knowing there is a place in the world where generations of my family have lived and died. That thought serves to ground me when I feel unmoored by my transnational nomadic existence.'

Kunda Dixit

Excerpt: *A Home in Tibet*

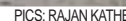
There is an uncommonly harsh beauty to the Tibetan landscape. Its nakedness makes it seem incapable of deception, but under its calm deportment it conceals winds so brutal that yaks are known to die while their jaws are in masticating bliss. On hot summer days the sun licks up the rain within minutes. No puddles are formed; no moisture lingers in the air. It is only the droplets on tiny leaves of the baby radish plant that betray rain.



A Home in Tibet
by Tsering Wangmo Dhomba
Penguin Books India, 2013
320 pages
INR 499 hardback

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"The older generation was not that excited about our festival," reveals Chekyap Gurung, "but now, with the growing popularity of Mustang as a tourist destination, younger Mustangis are returning home to build their land." 🇳🇵



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18
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HONDA

EVENTS



500PX MEET, join Nepali photographers to discuss the lightbox. *21 September, 8am, Basantapur*

Children's Day, remember when you were young? you shone like the sun. *14 September*

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*

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*

O-zil to the Arsenal, come watch the Premier Leagues biggest import make his debut for his new team Arsenal as they visit Sunderland. *14 September, 7.30pm, Arena Sports Lounge, Thamel*

Indra jatra, celebrate the founding of Kathmandu City. *18 September, Basantapur Darbar Square*



BEAUTIFUL LOSERS, watch an inspiring documentary that follows the lives and careers of a collective group of do-it-yourself artists and designers who inadvertently affected the art world. *13 September, 5.30pm, Sattya Media Arts, Jhamsikhel, (01)5523486, 9813485716, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyRAHKTy6hl*

Return to nature, join 22 Nepali artists in a one-day open-air watercolour workshop. *14 September, 9.30am, Kirtipur, (01)5522307, 9841666573, www.parkgallery.com.np/returntonature*



GANGA, a poetry, music and dance piece on the eternal rivers of Asia. *13 September, 6pm, Russian Cultural Centre, Kamal Pokhari*

Click!, join Artudio's beginners photography workshop. *Rs 4,000, 21 September to 2 October, Lajimpat, Registration: (01)4002037, 9851182100, 9851180088*

Lived stories everyday lives, an exhibition showcasing the art of archiving and its intrinsic value to daily life, a travelling exhibition that was previously showcased in India and will next travel to Bangladesh. *12 to 15 September, 12 to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

The Election and the Referendum, showcasing exclusive material on elections in Nepal from the vaults of the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. *12 to 15 September, 12 to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

Planet Nepal 2.1, celebrate the arts and environment, with photo exhibition, film screening, discussions, water fair, and dance performance. *13 September, 11am to 3pm, Alliance Francaise, Tripureswor*

DINING

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

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



CHOPSTIX, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. *Kumaripati, (01)5551118*

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

Cafe Cheeno, comfortable and elegant, Cafe Cheeno is the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and chat with friends. *Patan Dhoka*

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



YAK RESTAURANT, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus and spicy pork spare ribs. *Boudha, Kathmandu*

Club Amsterdam and Café Bar, great food, exotic cocktails, live band, BBQ, and more. *Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463427*

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

Tian Rui, if you're looking for genuinely good Chinese food this restaurant is the place to go. *Thapathali*



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

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MUSIC

Tuborg stage shows, your favourite Nepali rockstars at a town near you. 14 September, Dharan, Public School; 21 September, Pokhara, Pradarshani Maidan; 5 October, Kathmandu, Dasrath Stadium



SHANTI AND SCOTT, catch the musician father and daughter play tunes from the sixties. Rs 200, 13 September, 7 to 8.30pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



CANCION DEL MARIACHI, listen to latin and gypsy jazz with Monsif Mzibri and Hari Maharjan and drink jugs of sangria. Every Saturday, 7pm onwards, New Orleans Cafe, Jhamsikhel

Shastriya sangeet, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon evening. 30 September, 3pm onwards, Kirateswor

GETAWAYS



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

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

Mum's Garden Resort, head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range. *Lake Side, Pokhara, (061)463468, www.mumsgardenresort.com*



LAST RESORT, canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping – test your limits at the Last Resort. *Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247*



GIVE AND TAKE

The Kathmandu Book Swap wants you bookworms to come together to talk books, swap them, and drink a lot of coffee. Take along at least one book that you're willing to lend and take your pick through a best of 3 rock-paper-scissors. Books are expensive and some of them hard to find, why miss this chance to see what other like minded people bring to the table?

Date: 14 September, second Saturday of every month
Time: 2.30pm
Venue: Cafe Soma, Jhamiskhel

<http://ktmbookswap.wordpress.com/2013/08/29/september-bookswap/>



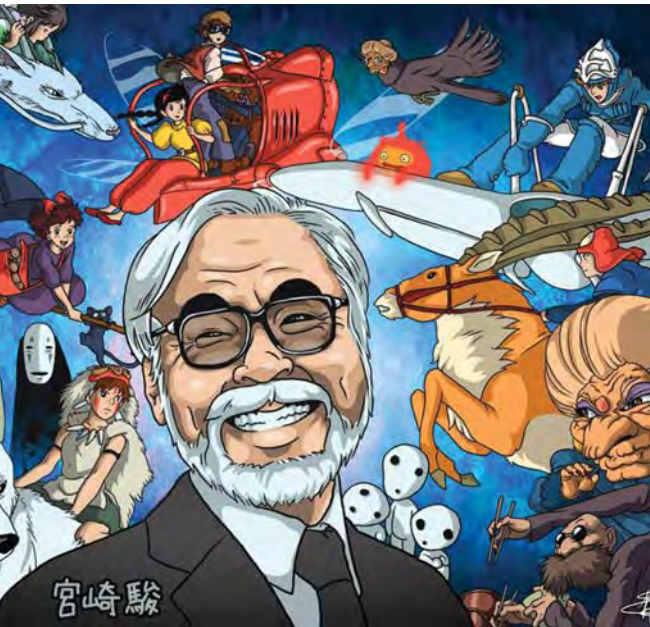
LACES UP

League football is back after international fixtures of little entertainment and limited consequence.

Serie A: It's Milano vs Torino this week in the Serie A, with AC Milan hosting Torino and Juventus visiting Inter Milan. 14 September, 9.45pm; 15 September, 00.45am

La liga: Gareth Bale will look to hit the ground running on his debut against Villareal. 15 September, 1.45am

EPL: Chelsea will try to deal with the setbacks of the international break by visiting Everton, while Manchester United will want to tear Crystal Palace apart to soothe their transfer disappointments. 14 September, 10.15pm, 5.30pm



STUDIO GHIBLI

Japanese artist and filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki announced retirement recently, leaving behind a large body of work spanning 50 years. To honour the great artist Hayao Miyazaki, Sattya is showing his greatest animes all on one day.

11.00am to 12.50pm **Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro**
12.50pm to 1.20pm **Lunch Break**
1.20pm to 3.20pm **Princess Mononoke**
3.20pm to 5.20pm **Castle in the Sky**
5.20pm to 7.20pm **Howl's Moving Castle**

Date: 14 September 2013
Venue: Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel
(01)5523486, 9813485716

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A SCENIC DRIVE THROUGH

This Dasain, take the leisurely route from Kathmandu to Pokhara



POKHARA

After a few days in Bandipur, you could drive on to Pokhara just 1.5 hours away, sample some of the new adventure sports on offer there, or stay at the new fine hotels that have sprung up.

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www.ktmgh.com/waterfront-resort-pokhara.html

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www.pokharagrande.com

ATITHI RESORT

A 10 minute stroll from the bustling city centre, the resort is a quiet sanctuary; perfect for anyone looking for a relaxing stay. Only few months into operation, Atithi has managed to create a name for itself as being one of the best luxury hotels in town.
www.atithiresort.com

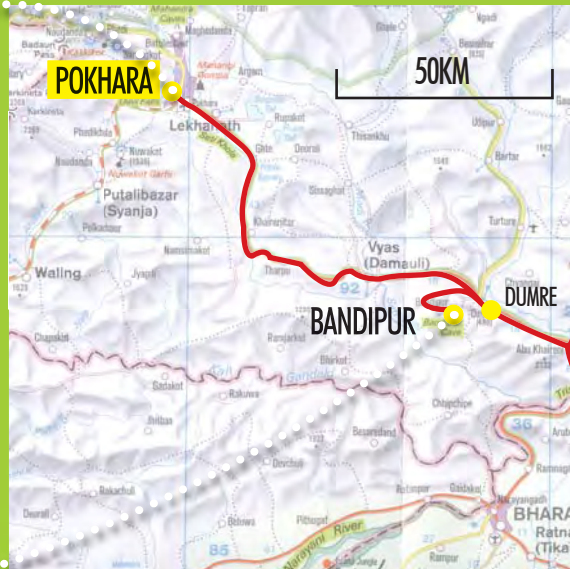
FULBARI RESORT

The ultimate getaway in Pokhara, Fulbari is far from everything but at the centre of all that matters. Golf, anyone?
www.fulbari.com

TEMPLE TREE RESORT

An oasis in the otherwise cacophonous Lakeside. Temple Tree Resort is an ideal getaway for couples, families looking for downtime and health and wellness enthusiasts. The resort fuses tradition, simplicity, and modern comfort with ease.
www.templetreeneepal.com

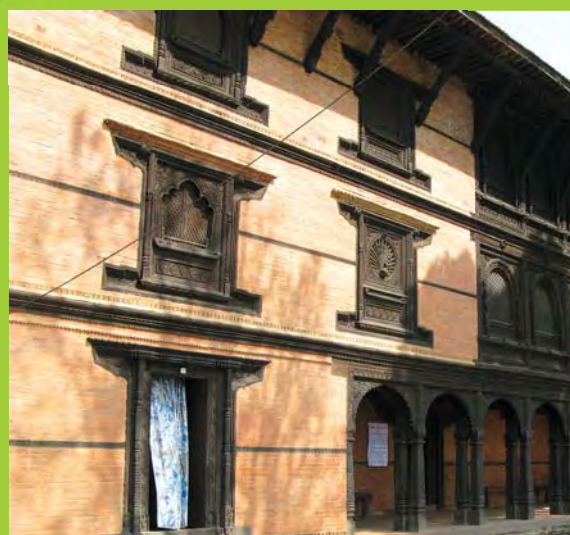
Nepal's highways get a lot of bad press, so roads and the permanently cratered Naubise road. Nepal is better known for trekking, but driving is popular post-monsoon when the landslides have gone and the golden fields are being harvested. 200,000 km across Nepal in the last 15 years. The route from Kathmandu to Pokhara via Nuwakot is one of the best.



BANDIPUR

Back down to the highway to continue on to Bandipur, which used to be a Newar trading town but has, in the last five years, been transformed into a popular hill station that has avoided so far being tempted by Thamel tendencies. Some old houses have been renovated and converted into fine B&Bs, like The Old Inn which is reminiscent of black and white Tudor buildings in England. The cobblestoned, pedestrianised main street is elegant, and there is the breathtaking view of the Central Himalaya from Annapurna in the west to Langtang and beyond in the east. The Siddha caves are a short and scenic hike away. Bandipur now offers a good range of inns, guesthouses, and homestays. Bandipur Mountain Resort located at the north side of the Tudhikhel is the oldest.

Bandipur Mountain Resort
01-4220162
island@mos.com.np



Jet, set,



SRI LANKA

HOW TO GET THERE: fly from Kathmandu to Delhi/Mumbai and then onwards to Colombo. Or from Kathmandu to Bangkok and then to Colombo

ROUND TRIP: starts from Rs 46,400

There couldn't be a better time to visit Sri Lanka. The weather is pleasant and the Indian Ocean is calming down which means you will get to clock in a lot of beach hours. The capital, Colombo, is the perfect launch pad to explore this magnificent island. Head out to Galle Face Road for a cool breeze and try your hands at kite flying. The half kilometre long promenade is teeming with locals during the weekend and is ideal for people watching. If you are in the mood for some exercise, climb the 11-storey high Buddhist temple nearby. In the evening make a stop at the Dutch Hospital, an old hospital building converted into a shopping and restaurant complex.

If you feel like you've spent too much time in the sun and are missing Kathmandu's hills, head to Candy and soak in the history and culture of the island.



INDIA

HOW TO GET THERE: fly from Kathmandu to Delhi, then take a bus to Rajasthan

ROUND TRIP: starts from Rs 15,500. AC Bus from Delhi-Jaisalmer-Delhi: Rs 3600

Nestled in the western corner of Rajasthan, Jaisalmer is a remarkable city that rises magically from the sand dunes of the Thar Desert. Jaisalmer's mesmerising ancient fort, built in 1156, is perched on a hill that directly overlooks the city. It houses five palaces, several temples, and exquisite mansions as well as shops and residences. The havelis, the fort, and its enclosed palace are all carved from the same golden honey sandstone, hence the city's designation as the Golden City. No place evokes exotic camel-train trade routes and desert mystery as well as Jaisalmer.



MALDIVES

HOW TO GET THERE: fly from Kathmandu to Doha and then onwards to Male

ROUND TRIP: starts from Rs 135,438

Tucked away in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives is a spectacular island nation. The capital, Malé, is a bustling city with a hygienic park and innumerable restaurants. It's just the perfect place to forget the dusty, hole-in-the-wall streets of the grand National Museum. The Sultan's Park is a beautiful garden that must be explored.

GH NEPAL'S HISTORY

ra via Nuwakot and avoid congestion on the highway



ometimes justifiably so. But beyond Kathmandu's potholed
ise section of the Prithvi Highway, the roads are pretty good.
iving holidays can be surprisingly pleasant, especially in the
one, the air is clear, the mountains are peeking out of clouds,
amidst festivals. **ROBIN MARSTON** has driven more than
ears and takes us on a spin on this scenic and historic new
vako.



GORKHA

A little west of Mugling, past the Marsyangdi hydroproject, is the (optional) turn off at Khairini leading up to the historic town of Gorkha where it all started. Prithvi Narayan Shah set off from here on his conquests and this is where the famous Gurkhas soldiers get their name. The original fort is a 300m steep climb up from town, but well worth the visit for its magnificent view of Himalchuli.



PICS: ROBIN MARSTON

NUWAKOT

Since the Naubise road repairs will take another four months or more, there is a way to bypass the jams and also take in the sights at Nuwakot. You leave Kathmandu keeping Nagarjun forest on the left. The road climbs to Kakani where you pass the British Embassy bungalow dating back to the 1860s. Stop at one of the rainbow trout farms for lunch while admiring a breathtaking vista of Ganesh Himal sparkling in the clear post monsoon air.

With stops, you reach the busy Trisuli Bajar in four hours. Cross the bridge, past the hydroproject, and wind up in the old bazar which is a real country market with overhanging windows, gold, silver, tailors shops, pots and pans, and *jhimili pote* and *chura* shops. A 20 min climb above Trisuli is Nuwakot Darbar, perhaps the most impressive and well maintained of the old palace complexes outside the Valley. Built by Pritivi Narayan Shah as his forces laid siege to Kathmandu in the late 18th century, these elegantly proportioned brick buildings and temples sit sublimely above the Trisuli River.

Up the hill is The Famous Farmhouse, a great place to break your journey. The Farmhouse and its converted old buildings are family friendly, in residence is a fine turkey (get there before Christmas!) white rabbits, a rescued donkey, ducks, sheep,



and chatty dogs. The gardens and bougainvillea intertwine, the furniture and fittings are an antique collector's delight. There are also a number of modest, but good looking, small hotels on the main road in Bidur town.

Spend a night or two and return to Kathmandu as you came, or better, take the very attractive new road following the Trisuli river for an hour and a bit to Galchhi on the Prithvi Highway, well below all those horrid traffic jams. You could easily add in a couple of hours of white water rafting on the river, but try and get timings right for a lunch stop at River Side Springs Resort near the Manakamana cable car terminal. Good opportunity for a pilgrimage stop as well and if you want to break here for the night there is the secluded Brigand's Bend across the Trisuli on a footbridge.

The Famous Farmhouse in Nuwakot and The Old Inn in Bandipur
Himalayan Encounters, Kathmandu Guest House
01-4700426
info@himalayanencounters.com
Brigand's Bend, Khaireni
01-4371397 (Nima)



It's that time of the year when Nepalis go through their annual moral dilemma: escape the chaos of Kathmandu on an extended holiday or stay on for tika? If you are leaning towards option one, let *Nepali Times* help you plan your travel. We bring you destinations from the hills to the coastlines. Happy picking and happy dasain!



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is a major attraction
explored.



SINGAPORE

HOW TO GET THERE:
direct flights available

ROUND TRIP:
starts from Rs 55,000

One of the few countries where Nepalis still get visas on arrival, Singapore is a multicultural city state that packs a punch for its small size. Visit Gardens by the Bay, the 101 hectare iconic garden dedicated to horticultural artistry in the midst of the city. Right beside it is the Marina Bay where you can enjoy amazing water and light shows every evening. For an authentic slice of the country's history, head to Chinatown Heritage Centre where Singapore of the late 19th century and early 20th century has been recreated. Shop till you drop at the high end stores in Orchard street or at the street side stalls in Bugis. After that relish in the culinary delights that await you at every street corner and if you still have time to spare, visit Sentosa Island and Universal Studios. This little red dot has everything for everyone.



CAMBODIA

HOW TO GET THERE:
fly from Kathmandu to
Bangkok and onwards
to Phnom Penh

ROUND TRIP:
starts from Rs 83,000

Long overshadowed by Thailand, this south-east Asian nation is finally emerging as a go-to destination for holiday makers on a budget. The stunning temples of Angkor are undoubtedly one of the prime attractions of Cambodia. But the chaotic, yet calm capital city Phnom Penh on the banks of the Mekong River is worth a visit too.

Head to Siem Reap for good wine and food and for art aficionados, a stroll around the old market with its colonial and Chinese style architecture will sooth your soul. For those who prefer the countryside, Cambodia's dazzling rice paddies and swaying sugar palms will make anyone melt in delight.



Occasionally one comes across a deftly written film that when wielded by the correct director's hand becomes enormously effective, transcending its fairly humble origins. *The East* a thriller about eco-terrorism and the fraught moral territory on which it is based, was co-written by Zal Batmanglij and Brit Marling and directed by Batmanglij with Marling starring. The film's budget was a meager \$6.5 million and



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

yet every cent of that money has been used to create a thoroughly believable world where no one is quite what he or she seems. The multi-talented Marling who also co-wrote and starred in the excellent *Another Earth* (reviewed previously in this column), plays Sarah, a former FBI agent who has decided to transfer to Hiller Brood, a shadowy, clearly nefarious

private intelligence firm run by a formidable woman called Sharon, played to steely effect by Patricia Clarkson in a role that brings chills down your spine. Always perfectly coiffed and impeccably dressed, we first see Sharon when Sarah goes in to meet her, expecting not to be chosen to go undercover for a coveted position that involves infiltrating an eco-terrorist organisation that calls itself 'The East'. Equally unexpectedly Sharon, after critiquing Sarah's weaker points (too bright, too egotistical), offers her the job. While it is never quite clear why Sarah, clearly brilliant, would leave the FBI for a nebulous institution like Hiller Brood, it is fairly obvious that she has that ugly thing called ambition coursing through her veins. It is only when Sarah leaves her understanding and loving partner Tim (Josh Ritter) for the world of train-hopping and dumpster diving, in search of 'The East' that we get a sense of how resourceful and well trained she really is.

As Sarah becomes part of the group she slowly awakens to the inherent contradictions that are part and parcel of eco-terrorism. As her newfound team poisons pharmaceutical heads with their own flawed antibiotics, Sarah becomes increasingly caught up in the tenderness with which the group treat each other, particularly Benji (Alexander Skarsgård) and Izzy (Ellen Page), who are the incredibly charismatic leaders of the group. The most compelling aspect of this story is the evolution and the moral dilemma of the main character who is played so very intelligently by Brit Marling. Supported by an excellent cast and based off of a truly horrifying reality, *The East* is a film that gets under your skin holding you rapt, asking questions of yourself as well as of the film's utterly riveting characters. While the film ends abruptly and some may feel cheated by this, I do not think that the Batmanglij and Marling duo were copping out when they wrote this ending. Instead, these young, thoughtful and wildly promising new filmmakers are trying to create a slightly different kind of cinema. The kind where their viewers are not force-fed and asked to judge, but rather left to wonder, for themselves, what might happen next to these very real people they just saw on screen and came to know in a few short hours.

nepalimes.com

Watch trailer

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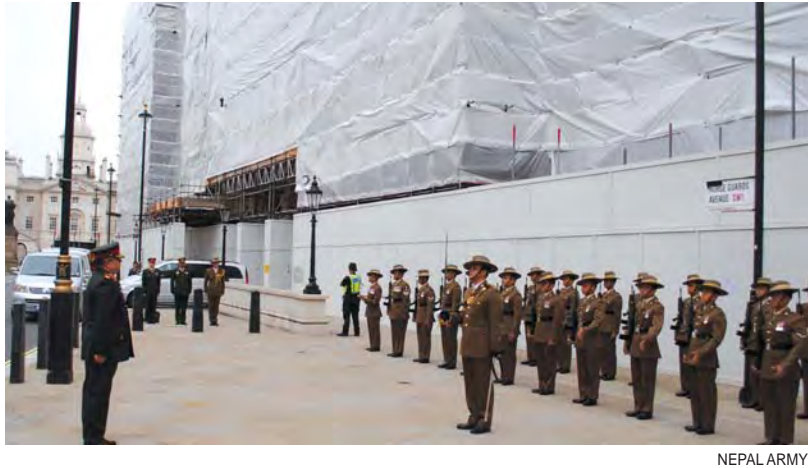
Ground Floor, Mayalu Center
Jamal Sadak, Beside Samsonite
Phone: 4225627

Ground Floor, Below Laxmi Bank
Harihar Bhavan, Pulchowk
Phone: 5524812

HAPPENINGS



REMEMBERING BP: Maoist leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha speaks at a program organised to commemorate BP Koirala's birth centenary on Monday.



STANDING TALL: Nepal Army Chief Gaurav Shumsher Rana, who is in the UK on a week-long trip, visits British Gurkha soldiers at the Gurkha Memorial Horse Guard Avenue in London.



FRESH START: Women attend Rishi Panchami puja in Teku on Tuesday.



SHOE LOVE: A stall owner waits for customers on the first day of Made in Pakistan exhibition at the United World Trade Centre in Tripureshor on Wednesday.

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Pack your bags, October is almost here



ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE, has developed as a destination for adventure seekers and shoppers alike. The city hosts Formula 1 Grand Prix every year during November-December, a testimony of its growing affluence. You could visit the largest mosque in UAE, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque which has 24 carat gold gilded chandeliers and the world's largest hand knotted carpet. For the adventure enthusiasts a safari in the desert of Abu Dhabi is worth trying and so is sky diving at the Abu Dhabi Country Club's Spacewalk facility.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 59,000



HONG KONG

Hong Kong is known for its expansive skyline and deep natural harbor. Victoria Peak, the famous vantage point, provides spectacular views of the city. Make a trip to the Historical Museum to better understand the city's past and cultural heritage. Hong Kong is a sprawling archipelago of 260 islands so hire a speed boat and discover the rugged coastline. Edward Youde Aviary in Hong Kong Park is the best place for bird watching.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 46,000



VIETNAM

Keen to be known for its splendid natural beauty and ancient traditions, Vietnam has transformed itself into a vibrant tourist destination from a war-torn hinterland. Places of interest include the majestic Bay of the Descending Dragons – the Ha Long, Nha Trang the most popular resort town, the Hoi An fishing village, the rice terraces of Sa Pa, and the rich and fertile Mekong River delta. Phu Quoc is the largest island in Vietnam, which has reserves of pristine tropical forest and coral reefs.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 67,000



LHASA

Situated at an altitude of 3,409 metres, Lhasa is one of the highest cities in the world. Lhasa literally means 'place of gods' and the city's rich cultural heritage offers plenty to explore. Yamdrok Yumtso Lake is one of three holy lakes in Tibet and is said to be the female guardian of Buddhism in Tibet. Potala Palace is another landmark in Lhasa symbolising Tibetan Buddhism while Jokhang Monastery in Barkhor square has been a key centre of Buddhist pilgrimage for centuries.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 67,000

Since 1981, Hotel Annapurna's Ghar-e-kabab has been serving the best of north Indian cuisine. Gazals, classical music, and Bollywood tunes emanate from one end of the hall and quite remarkably, Mohan Sunder who charmed the audience with his Sarod play when the restaurant opened its gates, still performs regularly, his lifelong loss of vision inspiring him to place all his other faculties into his life's passion.

The brainchild of Sahadev Rana, Ghar-e-kabab has moved from the first floor

SOMEPLACE ELSE near the entrance of the hotel to the ground floor of the main building, but his influence is prominent. The lighting is still dim, considered romantic by some, and the wood colour paneling on the walls give a feel of the hunting lodges of the Maharajas of yore. Some would prefer lighter and brighter surroundings. The drama of kneading the flour, and the whole chicken or chunks of mutton being lowered into or pulled out of the tandoor can still be viewed through the large glass panes that separate the kitchen from the dining area.

The menu here is not cluttered with Indian, Nepali, Chinese, and European dishes, but there are sufficient choices, especially non-



vegetarian delights and freshly baked rotis in diverse forms and shapes.

At the recommendation of the pleasant young waitress, we chose the fish mahi tikka (Rs 700) to go with our drinks. It was easily the best decision of the evening. Marinated lightly in dahi overnight, lemon juice and ginger paste, and sprinkled with fresh green herbs, this dish alone was enough to guarantee a second visit.

For the mains there was no escaping from butter chicken (Rs 650), barrah kebab (Rs 1,400) and the daal-e-pakeeza (Rs 450). But we also decided to experiment with our palates and ordered Hyderabad Nalli Gosht (mutton, Rs 1,400) and meen (fish) moilee

a south Indian classic (Rs 700), to go with a bowl of plain rice. For balance we ordered some green vegetables and asked them to be cooked in minimum and masala, sensing the meat dishes to be rich in both.

It is a pity restaurants in Kathmandu fail to use the wonderful variety of seasonal greens and vegetables in a proper way. The vegetables would have tasted a lot better stir fried or lightly fried with simple condiments rather than soaked in oil or mixed in overpowering spices, killing the original tastes and food value.

In this diner's view, the goat, more precisely the bakra in Hindustani produced the finest



meat for the table. Baked in the tandoor as the barrah kebab is, after a yoghurt and masala marinate, or cooked slowly in a kadhai on base of purified butter, the desi ghee, with a generous mix of choice spices and herbs, the texture and flavour of the finger licking, juicy bite pieces nearest to the bones, were matchless. The meat was lean but soft, neither tough as with the 'mountain goat' nor fatty as with those grazing on green pastures.

The rotis served in a basket, however, were quite disappointing. One wonders why the restaurant cannot match even the ordinary dhabas of India or Pakistan in

maintaining a constant flow of 'karara' or crisp rotis freshly out of the tawa or tandoors to the dining tables. Although we had eaten too much but the chef kindly offered a taste of some sweet dishes, including the cooling kulfi, which was excellent. 🇮🇳

Rainbow diner

How to get there: Ghar-e-kabab is located on the ground floor of the main building inside Hotel Annapurna in Darbar Marg.

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The miracle men



In his new book, *Second Suns* (Random House), author David Oliver Relin traces the extraordinary journey of Sanduk Ruit (*pic, left*), the eye doctor from the remote mountains of Olangchungola village in Taplejung district, who pioneered modern



DHANNVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

cataract surgery in the country and made high quality, affordable eye care accessible to ordinary citizens. Across the 432 pages, readers also learn about American ophthalmologist Geoff Tabin (*pic, right*) who works alongside Ruit in eradicating preventable blindness and giving thousands of patients from the poorest communities in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia and even North Korea the gift of sight.

The man who grew up to establish Nepal's leading eye care hospital - Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology - had humble beginnings. The nearest school was a week's walk away from Ruit's village. But through hard work and perseverance he won a prestigious

scholarship to study medicine at the King George Medical College in Lucknow, India. After specialising in ophthalmology, he worked under Australian doctor Fred Hollows in ground-breaking cataract surgery. This modern technique, which Ruit helped perfect, involves a deft incision in the cornea, removal of clouded lens, and implantation of intraocular lens into the natural capsule. The surgery is inexpensive with locally made lenses costing around \$4 a piece and recovery is prompt.

Geoff Tabin is an equally accomplished doctor with a strong sense of altruism. A Harvard graduate, a serious tennis player who captained the Yale tennis team when he went to college there, Tabin has summited Everest and many other peaks and is a well-known climber. Despite these accomplishments he shows deep humility when he tells the Dalai Lama that in the field of cataract surgery, "Everything I have achieved, I have achieved with the partnership of Ruit."

Although *Second Suns* does not

provide new information on the doctors, it gives us a fascinating insight into how the innovative duo have come together to achieve their common dreams despite contrasting personalities. Ruit is the grumpier and reserved of the two, while Tabin has the hyperactivity of an adolescent. The writer also depicts Ruit's adeptness in performing cataract operations particularly well. In villages where hundreds of patients are waiting for surgery, speed is of essence.

An important study (referenced in the book) in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology* clearly demonstrated that one of the world's best and fastest eye surgeon, David Chang from the US, took nearly twice as long to operate on each patient as Ruit did. The study also revealed that 91 per cent of Ruit's cataract patients regained normal vision after a day of surgery compared to Chang's 78 percent. This is an essential difference for people who have to walk back home for hours over difficult terrain soon after the operation. At six

months, 98 per cent of both Chang and Ruit's patients had excellent eyesight. In terms of quality, the surgeries Ruit performs in monasteries, schools, and police posts are comparable to those carried out in well-equipped, state-of-the-art hospitals in the US.

There is however a pervading sense of melancholy throughout *Second Suns*. David Relin, who also co-authored the best-seller *Three Cups of Tea* with Greg Mortenson committed suicide in 2012 after it was revealed that Mortenson had either fabricated or excessively embellished many events in the book. Contrary to *Three Cups*, this heart-warming tale about Ruit and Tabin stays true to these miracle men's lives and mission. 



GIZMO by YANTRICK

Keeping tabs

Having successfully bridged the gap between phone and tablets, and popularised the 'Phablet' genre of smart phones, Samsung is back with the third iteration of its immensely well-loved Galaxy Note series. Unveiled on 4 September at Berlin, the Note III is already on the wish list of most gadget-aficionados before its official September end release, not least Yantrick's.


Not content with the Note II's already sizeable 5.5 inch screen, Samsung has decided on a full high-definition 5.7 inch screen for the NOTE III and initial screen grabs and videos appear stunning, as you would expect from a full HD screen. High end Samsung smart phones have let down users in the past by their cheap looking plastic feel and design. However, Samsung has set the Note III in a textured faux-leather case, giving the NOTE III a premium feel.

Running on the company's favourite Android Mobile OS (4.3 version) and powered by a beefy Quad-core 2.3 GHZ processor further supported by a massive 3GB RAM, the Note III is Samsung's answer to your communication and multimedia needs, fitted into one (impressive) multi-tasking capable device. Samsung has



also listened to feedback from customers disgruntled with the traditional 16GB of internal storage on most smart phones and has opted for a minimum of 32GB internal storage for the Note III, which shall be further expandable by 64GB, meaning

quickly running out of storage space will no longer be a problem. Capable of recording videos at full HD 1080p mode and taking pictures at a crystal clear 13 megapixels, the extra storage space is a blessing for those of us hooked to social media. The new Note's battery has also undergone an improvement and users will be pleased with the added battery life that it affords. The Note Series has also been credited with the re-emergence of the stylus Pen and the S-Pen is further expected to be integrated in to the Note III experience, making it a necessary feature, rather than a gimmick.

Bigger, faster, and lighter than the Note II, the Galaxy Note III already looks like it will carry on its predecessor's success. Naturally a top piece of kit is expected with a price tag to match. The Note III's price in Nepal is pegged at Rs 80,000, similar to the price of a decent laptop. However, the gadget is essentially a phone and a tablet both rolled in to one very capable and must-have device, thereby justifying the high cost. Further, to make smart phones more affordable to the masses, banks like Laxmi Bank are offering loans on zero per cent interest for 12 months on EMI basis. So what are you waiting for? 

Yantrick's verdict: beyond its hefty price tag, the Galaxy Note III is a phablet par excellence. Technophiles start queueing up outside Samsung outlets.

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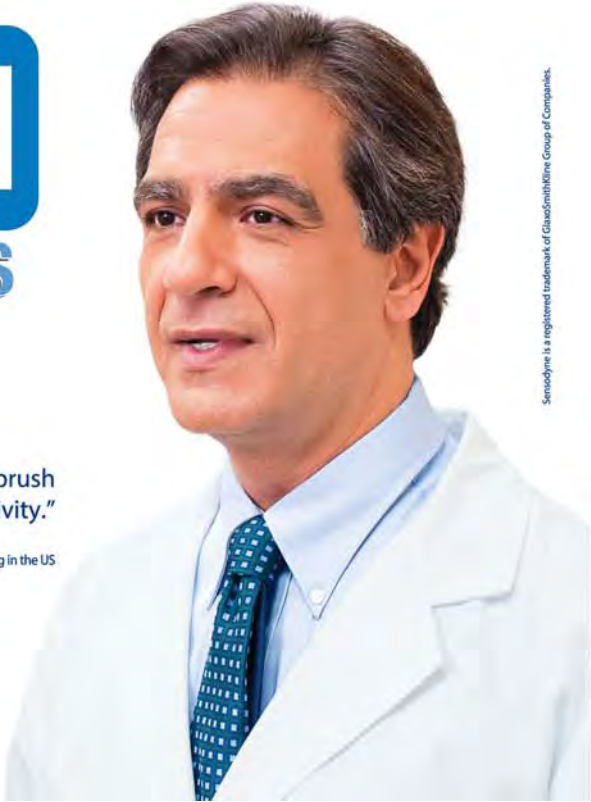
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The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting,' novelist Milan Kundera wrote.

Indeed, those who wield power often try to efface the imprints of their despicable past, recreating on the slate of a cleansed public memory an



LOOK OUT
Ajaz Ashraf

endearing image of themselves. Yet, their darkled past returns to haunt them because of individuals who want to hold the powerful accountable for their misdeeds. Occasionally, though, it is also because of the self-serving compulsions of their comrades-in-arm with whom they shared a common past.

In many countries we have to remind ourselves not to forget. In India last week, Deputy Inspector General of Police DG Vanzara (*pic, above*) released a resignation letter in which he fulminated against Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Vanzara, once Modi's trusted cop, was arrested and now faces trial for killing people in allegedly fake encounters in the months following the 2002 riots in Gujarat.

Vanzara's missile-like missive establishes a connection between the riots and encounters alleged to be fake, declaring as he does that the atmosphere following the burning of a train at Godhra and mayhem of 2002 encouraged Pakistanis to harness the discontent among Indian Muslims to carry out terror attacks in Gujarat. The BJP doesn't like linking riot to terror testifying to the inability of the powerful to shape memory as

they wish.

Might not his letter inspire other canaries to sing about the Modi government's connivance in the 2002 riots? Vanzara goes on to argue: since the CBI investigators claim that he and other officers were engaged in fake encounters, then those who formulated anti-terrorism policy should also be arrested.

It's a logic which should have an inherent appeal for, say, former minister Maya Kondani, who has been condemned to spend her life in prison for her role in the 2002 riots but the person who benefitted most from it is now being projected as a prime ministerial candidate. You can't but wonder through whom the past might decide to whisper its secrets next.

Obviously, Vanzara's intercession on behalf of memory wasn't for upholding the principle of justice, but to protect himself. For Modi, the past has been squeezed of all its benefits, he wants to reinvent a new persona. For Vanzara, this could mean years of languishing in prison. He must, therefore, not let Modi or the public forget the riots and encounters, the memory of which civil society activists have anyway kept alive.

The summons a United States federal court issued last week to Congress President Sonia Gandhi for allegedly shielding those who triggered the 1984 riots in Delhi was another reminder of the power of memory. The memory of 1984 returned because of a law suit filed by the Sikhs for Justice (SOJ) demanding compensatory and punitive damages from Sonia for shielding those accused of triggering the 1984 pogroms. You'd probably think it is an act aimed to harass Sonia.

But ask lawyer HS Phoolka,

who has been tirelessly working to secure justice for the 1984 victims and he has a different take. For instance, an FIR was registered against Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in 1987 for his involvement in the

Memory versus forgetting

India, Nepal, and other countries in the region shouldn't forget to remember their pasts

murder of four Sikhs. After five years of investigation, Delhi's Nangloi police station prepared a chargesheet in April 1992, saying that there was enough evidence to try Kumar. Usually, after a chargesheet is filed a trial happens within three weeks. But 22 years later, the chargesheet against Kumar hasn't been filed.

Again, journalist Sanjay Suri filed an affidavit with the Mishra Commission, which probed the 1984 riots, saying he had seen

Kamal Nath lead a mob which burnt down a Sikh temple and set two Sikhs ablaze. Not only is there no FIR, the Congress has rewarded Kamal Nath with important cabinet posts.

Until justice is done and the ghosts of the past buried, India together with other countries in the region including Nepal, will be doomed to witness the struggle of memory against forgetting. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

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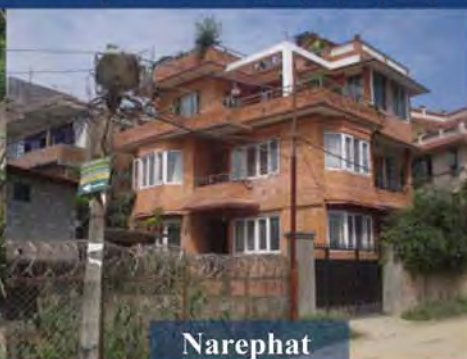
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TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

Arresting corrupt officials at immigration and airport isn't going to solve the problem unless the system is thoroughly cleansed

BHRIKUTI RAI and SUNIR PANDEY

When the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) arrested employees from the Department of Immigration, Airport Customs, and the Department of Foreign Labour last month, many felt the action was long overdue at an airport notorious for corruption and victimisation of migrant workers.

It has been two years since Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal, who was the secretary at the PM's office at that time, submitted a report to the Baburam Bhattarai government detailing the bribery, harassment, and victimisation at Kathmandu airport. The report estimated then that the daily kickbacks and payoffs totalled Rs 2 million.

The CIAA says it is acting on complaints by victims and media reports of recruitment agencies being in cahoots with immigration personnel to extort departing and arriving Nepali overseas contract workers. The agency says 16 officials are under investigation and five others have been charged. "There is enough proof, testimonies, and audio-visual material to prosecute those accused," says CIAA spokesperson Shreedhar Sapkota.

The airport earned notoriety last year when a young Nepali

woman returning from Saudi Arabia was detained for having a false passport, extorted by immigration officials, and raped by a policeman. When the case exploded in the media, it showed just how blatant and widespread the victimisation of vulnerable Nepalis by fellow Nepalis was. Of the accused in that case the rapist and an immigration official are in jail and two are on bail pending trial (*see box*).

Satra Gurung of Paurakhi, an organisation that helps women returnees rehabilitate, says her volunteers have seen customs officials sell departure cards for up to Rs 1,000. "When these women come back from the Gulf, they are mentally ill, some are pregnant, and some come back with children. Above all, they come back nearly broke and airport officials use this vulnerability to corner them," says Gurung.

Many other Nepalis who were given fake documents by recruiters when they left the country get caught on return and are vulnerable and targeted for extortion and abuse by predator officials at the airport and at the immigration detention facility in Kalikasthan. Even if they escape the clutches of airport officials, Nepali workers, especially women, are often abused by their foreign employers. A 37-year-old woman from Jhapa was tricked



LINING UP: Men queue outside Dasrath stadium as they await their turn to submit applications for employment in South Korea.

into boarding the plane to Saudi Arabia via India with a fake passport. In a town called Hayal in Saudi Arabia, her employer beat her, paid her less than her contract, and locked her up. The woman has now returned.

Another 24-year-old from Surkhet went to Saudi Arabia four years ago and came home twice without facing any hassle at Kathmandu airport. On

her third time back last month, the rules were stricter and she was detained because her passport had been forged by her agent. She has been in detention in Kalikasthan for the past three weeks. About 50 women live with her in a small room that is so cramped that detainees can't even lie down properly. Most are in custody for no fault of their own, but for being duped by agents who have given them forged passports. The women are kept for 25 days, fined, and released, but the manpower agencies that gave them the documents are never punished.

Nepalis working in Saudi

Arabia were given general amnesty last month and most of them are returning home. Also last month, the Malaysian authorities cracked down on illegal migrant workers and about 500 of the estimated 60,000 illegals in Malaysia will be returning to Nepal. "If the officers arrested by the CIAA spill the beans about their dealings with manpower agents none of us will be spared," admitted one recruiter on condition of anonymity, explaining that it is the immigration and labour officials themselves who want to be paid off to issue permits to



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MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

those desperate to leave the country.

Following the CIAA crackdown, director generals of all the departments under investigation weren't available to comment on the irregularities in their respective areas.

Ganesh Gurung, former head of the Foreign Employment Management Improvement Advisory Taskforce, says the problems are deep rooted. "The structure in which the foreign employment sector is regulated is itself weak," admits Gurung. "It doesn't stop customs and security employees from crossing boundaries and working hand

in hand with whoever offers the largest bribes."

Gurung says brokers outside the system have inside knowledge of official information and use civil servants as well as security personnel to obtain files for themselves. "If the CIAA stops investigation, activity will increase again," says Gurung

Gurung and his team had made a 30-point report last March on what could be done to improve regulatory standards at the airport immigrations and DFE. Among them are simple measures like fitting CCTV cameras at customs, using an

electronic passport reader at immigration, and replacing cash-and-receipt payment system with electronic transactions. Gurung says that fake passport scams may decrease once Machine Readable Passports are made mandatory in 2015. But having seen passports disappear from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he says his team had recommended the government to burn old ones to avoid them being used in other scams.

After the CIAA crackdown, immigration officials have been protesting by allowing huge queues at the departure and arrival counters, creating a bad impression on visitors at the start of the tourist season and making life miserable for Nepalis. Ironically, it is worse when immigration officials suddenly become strict because students and businessmen travelling abroad get hassled.

Nepali passengers and migrant workers also face harassment at airport customs and the x-ray security machines where bribery is so routine that it is standard operating procedure. Those travelling alone, especially if they are young women or from minority ethnic groups, are particularly vulnerable to extortion and harassment. Passengers have been prevented from boarding flights because they refuse to pay bribes and immigration officials have been caught red-handed on tape receiving bribes.

Asmita Lama (*name changed*) of Solu Khumbu couldn't apply for dentistry college in Thailand this year after being stopped by immigration officials. "I had to board the plane in half an hour, but they wouldn't let me go saying I didn't have a supporting letter from my sponsor in Bangkok," says Asmita. After she showed the sponsor letter, the officials pointed out she needed a letter from the Thai embassy. "I had my visa, my academic certificates, sponsorship letter from Bangkok, but they sent me back citing poor documentation."

Activists working to protect the rights of migrant workers say the problem of extortion and abuse is so rife at Kathmandu airport that the



Waiting for justice

Sita worked as a domestic help in Saudi Arabia for three years before returning to Nepal in November 2012. She was caught at Tribhuvan International Airport for possessing a fake passport. During interrogation at the immigration office in Kalikaasthan, officers took her money and police constable Parsuram Basnet raped her. She went back home to Bhojpur empty handed and exposed her story in the media after finding out she was pregnant.

Parsuram Basnet and another official are now behind bars. Two immigration officials, Tika Pokhrel and Ram Prasad Koirala, were granted bail and the case against them is being heard at Kathmandu District Court. "We are hoping that the officers implicated in Sita's case will be found guilty soon," says Sita's brother, Amar. "But unless officials at the top who oversee the corruption are punished, many young women like my sister will continue to suffer."

CIAA action, although welcome, does not go deep enough to tackle the institutionalised corruption and the culture of impunity. "This is not the first time corruption cases have been brought forward, tighter regulations need to be in place to stop such irregularities," says Mahendra Pandey of Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee, which works for the protection of migrant workers' rights and runs a shelter house for male migrant labourers in Kathmandu. "The few who cooperate with us at the airport and try to change the system are routinely transferred and demanded justification for trying to reform practices there."

Each day the airport receives up to four dead bodies of Nepalis. There is no morgue at the airport, so the Human Remains House of the import-export division is meant to handle this. But the office remains open only from 10am to 6pm, so the coffins are kept at a store room below the parking area at the airport until someone comes to claim them. Ram Kumar Raya, head of cargo at TIA, says, "There are no immediate plans to build

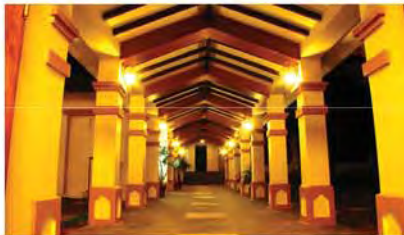
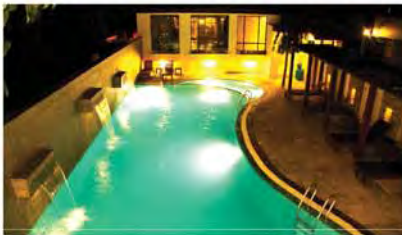
a proper morgue within this fiscal year."

The families of many of the victims have borrowed or sold property to send them abroad and get no compensation. Often, they don't have any insurance either. Meanwhile, the Rs 1,000 that the Department of Labour collects from every migrant worker leaving the country has now reached a staggering total. It could be used to compensate the families of the dead, but no one is willing to take that decision.

A former high ranking official at the foreign employment department said on the condition of anonymity that institutional reform isn't possible during a single tenure. "We updated the database of migrant workers in the Gulf region and encouraged people to go through legal channels," he explains, "but until our staff and other stakeholders change their attitude towards airport, immigration, and the foreign employment sector, it will be tough to put an end to the rampant irregularities."



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GOAL NEPAL

Knocked out

BBC Nepali Service, 9 September



After losing 1-0 to Afghanistan at the semifinals of the South Asian Football Federation Championship 2013, the Nepali national team drew widespread flak for failing to find the goalpost. We caught up with coach Krishna Thapa to get his reaction.

BBC: Why did Nepal fall short once again despite improved performance, rising confidence, and immense support from the home crowd?
Krishna Thapa: Maybe it was just bad luck. Our defence was strong and Afghanistan had only one clear attempt on goal, with

which they scored. We had more than 10 chances of scoring, but we couldn't make it count. Our goalkeeper made a mistake trying to catch a ball he should have punched and this led to the only goal. But we didn't panic after this early setback, we kept on going but it wasn't to be.

Did Afghanistan alter their game plan after the early goal?
Not really. They had physical advantage in midfield where they made good link-up plays, but not in the danger zones. After scoring so early in the presence of 20,000 Nepali fans, their confidence got an immense boost.

Nepal made a number of attacking moves after this, but didn't seem to have any plan. Our players looked like they were panicking?
Yes, in the first half we panicked a little. But in the second half we were aggressive and even sent a forward in place of a midfielder. It was a bad day, nothing worked for us.

Overall, do you feel that Nepal made a good game of it?
We dominated them in the second half. Our tempo increased, we made good moves through the field and provided good crosses through the wings. But their goalkeeper was excellent and we couldn't get past him.

How do you rate Nepal's overall performance?
Our overall performance has improved. Of the four matches, I think we played best against Bangladesh. The Pakistan match was memorable because of the context and the manner in which we equalised.

Click here to listen to the original Nepali podcast.

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #27

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' opinion on sports.

Which do you like the most?

- Football 50.2%
- Cricket 27.4%
- Volleyball 11.7%
- Badminton 3.6%
- Martial Arts 2.8%
- Basketball 1.8%

What could the government do to put Nepal on the global sporting map?

- Invest 28.9%
- Develop infrastructure 27.8%
- Stop politicising sports 19.4%
- Participate in international tournaments 11.5%
- Don't know 11.8%
- Others 0.5%

NEPALI TWEETS

सेनाका बारेमा बोल्छो कि लोकतन्त्र खतरामा, रानाका बारेमा बोल्छो कि शान्ती प्रकृया खतरामा ! कस्तो रमाइलो, रित्तै खाको के हाम्रै ! P

Speak of the white and democracy is threatened. Speak of the red and peace process might get derailed. Indebted to all.

किप्पर चैं घुम्चक जस्तो रैछ बाई अफगानिस्तानको त... #SAFF2013

Oh boy, Afghanistan's goal keeper is like a magnet stopping each attempt #SAFF2013

आज एक हुल नेताहरू पहिला पशुपतिमा भारतलाई जिताइ देउ प्रश्न भन्दै प्रार्थना गर्ने र त्यसपछि साजिश्याटमा झर्ने प्रार्थना करिदिया है भन्दै पुगे कि ?

Did a bunch of leaders visit Lajimpat to inform that they prayed to the Pashupatinath for India's victory today?

चकिलले करै तिनुपटैन जस्तै गरी बकालत गर्नु र चाउचाउमा अबाध तेल मिसाउने अवस्थालाई कोष थाप्नु कथित चौथो अंगमा आएको विचलनका प्रमाण

Advocating that lawyers need not pay taxes and support the billionaire involved in adulteration is a proof that the so-called fourth state is derailing.

Guns 'n elections

Nawaraj Mainali in *Naya Patrika*, 12 September

गयाँ पत्रिका

As the election date draws closer, the trade of small arms is on the rise and the Home Ministry is preparing to release a security plan within the next few days.

Nepal Police, Armed Police, and the National Investigation Department all admit in the report that the profusion of small arms poses a great threat to free and fair elections.

Our porous border with India makes it easier to smuggle firearms. Police say that party members and criminal gangs with political protection possess large amounts of illegal guns and the condition is likely to get worse as increasing number of people with criminal backgrounds join politics.

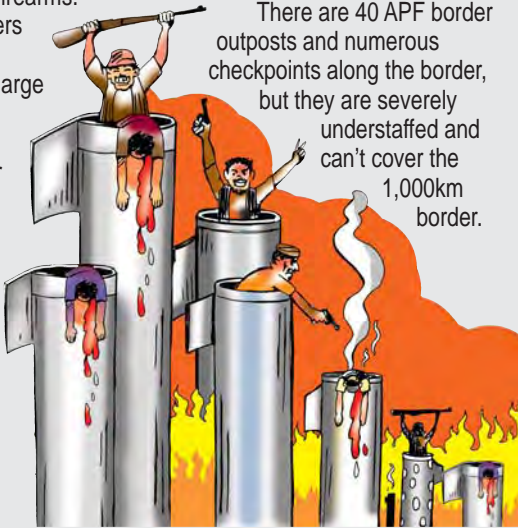
Police say 90 per cent of the firearms available in Kathmandu comes from illegal workshops in the Indian state of Bihar and sell for far more than their original price.

According to the police, three levels of middlemen

operate in smuggling guns to Kathmandu. Indian nationals contact underground gangs in the country and bring the arms through Bhagalpur in Uttar Pradesh and Ramvareti in Bihar. Groups in the Tarai then assume responsibility for transporting these contraband items into Nepal through Gaur and Birganj.

The third group hires drivers as mules to bring in the guns to Kathmandu and other areas. They hide the arms in sacks of rice, sugar, and cement which come in hundreds per truck into the Valley, making it impossible for police to manually check each bag.

There are 40 APF border outposts and numerous checkpoints along the border, but they are severely understaffed and can't cover the 1,000km border.



Ball: All party meet

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in *Rajdhani*, 10 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“We can shift the election date to 30 November if the CPN-M decides to participate. Everyone should know the longer we postpone, the more it will disrupt progress made for the polls.”

Bijaya Kumar Gachhadhar, *Naya Patrika*, 12 September

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“Dedicated my to the party, the people, and change”

Interview with UCPN (M) leader
Narayan Kaji Shrestha,
Himal Khabarpatrika, 8 September

Himal Khabarpatrika: It is said that Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal make all the decisions within the party and they announce their verdict to others. How satisfied are you with the decision making process?

Narayan Kaji Shrestha: Not everything you read in newspapers is true. When we have discussions, I put forth my views and am equally involved in deliberations as well as implementation of official policies. Yes it's true that sometimes the points I and others raise might not get much attention. But the party is also holding a meeting on nationalism for the first time.

So why do we keep hearing about your dissatisfaction with party procedures?

More than the party, I am worried about Nepal's messy politics. Nepal has turned into an old age home for neo-colonialism because our internal decision making capability is very weak. It took the sacrifice of 17,000 lives for the revolution to be successful, now we are squandering it through dirty politics.

Bhattarai resigned because he did not want to share the post of vice-chairman with you. You were upset over the removal of elected party officials right?

I am not a person who gets upset over post and status. I have dedicated my life to the party, the people, and change. But disbanding elected party officials within six months of the general convention is not good. While trying to make changes to the party's organisational structure, we made mistakes and there

were weaknesses. The manner in which Baburam resigned from his vice-chairman post was wrong, but we had to resolve the issue then and there. Although we all agreed that he should be made 'senior leader', Chairman Dahal thought it was not suitable to create a new post at that time.

After Baburam refused to return to being vice-chairman, I talked with Post Bahadur Bogati and both of us decided to resign. Only Baburam knows what is going on in his head. But I am certain he did not leave his post because he did not want to share it with me. Even now we are together in the central committee.

How is your relation with Bhattarai?

When you are working together it is natural to have disagreements over procedures and methodologies.

What about the rift between you and Dahal?

I still consider Dahal a revolutionary leader and have no problems working under him. It's not a big deal to have differing opinions. I have been critical of his past decisions many times. Even when we were underground, I had voiced my discontent with Prachanda-path.

Why did the party split?

The party broke apart because there were major disagreements about how to conclude the peace process and how to take the constitution writing process ahead.

But now the UCPN (M) is under a one-man leadership?

That is due to circumstances and not a long-term consequence. We shall settle those organisational issues at the national convention after elections.



RISHIRAM KATEL

Whichever community the party visits, it promises a separate state for them. Is this not problematic?

We have not gone around distributing states to anyone. All we want is federalism based on identity and capacity.

What is your definition of identity?

We should not look at identity in terms of ethnicity or caste. Federalism must address the identities of marginalised and minority communities who have remained outside the purview of the national mainstream so far. But we also need to maintain a balance between identity and capacity.

How should war-era cases be handled?

We should move forward with a broad understanding. All issues should be resolved according to the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. That is why we need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as soon as possible.

Then why are those who have been judged guilty by the court being recommended as election candidates?

I don't believe the court is god. In the case you are referring to, the court failed to follow due procedure. But we will accept its decision.

Can elections take place on 19 November?

Rest assured, elections will happen on time.

Will Mohan Baidya's party take part in polls?

We can't say for sure at the moment, but there are positive indications from the party. They haven't completely reversed the decision they made in Pokhara to boycott elections though.

Any prospects of unification?

Currently there have been no concrete steps to bring the two parties together. Unification is not possible until we iron out political and ideological differences.

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Kick ass, or kiss ass?

The reason for all this lingering uncertainty about November elections is that no one in the gubberment seems to be sure what to do with the Dash Baddies: whether to kick ass, or kiss ass. So they are doing both.

The confusion is reciprocal because a politburo meeting of the Dashos at the Baidya Bah base camp the other day broke into a bout of all-out name-calling as everyone tried to outdo each other to have a more radical stance to put pressure on the Higher Up Mechanics. Some warned that if the Cash YCL went ahead with its “1 booth, 200 youth” threat, the Dash would retaliate with “1 booth, 1 tooth”.

In the end, the conclusion was that the party should reunite to face elections, but since there isn’t enough time to get things organised for November it was decided to rattle sabres and keep making a big show of imparting military training to youngsters at the edge of the jungles to persuade the political parties to postpone polls pronto. PKD, MKN, SBD are all tempted, but a higher-up authoritarian is saying, “November, or bust.”

A joke doing the rounds is that there is another reason the Hyphen Mau are called ‘Dash’: because they keep dashing off to China from time to time. But, in all seriousness, it does look like the Land of the Dead Mao wants Dash to unite with Cash and go for elections, while the Land of the Live Mao wants them divided at polls.

So, moving right along to the next point on our agenda this week, we shall present a brief update about the state of our one and

only international airport. The runway has stopped cracking up, so the heavies are landing and taking off as usual. The rhesus monkeys that had occupied the departure area demanding that they be allowed to leave the country to work as lab animals in Texas have called off their sit-in. But ever since unfortunately named CIAA started rounding up officials from the Department of Irritation for taking bribes from migrant workers, the immigration-wallahs have been on go-slow allowing huge queues that snake out of the arrival hall almost to the tarmac. Ditto for departure. Things can still be speeded up, of course, for a fee.

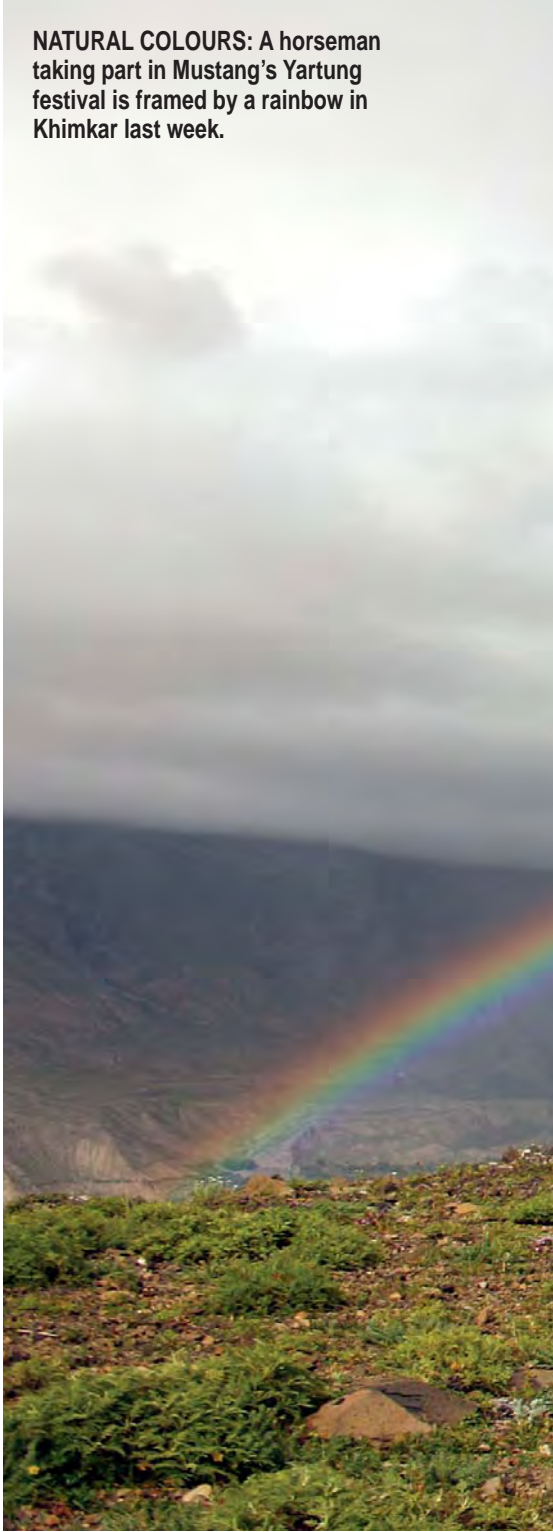
However, the latest crisis at the airport is the case of the vanishing valise. A line at the misplaced baggage counter recently turned out to be composed of passengers lining up to report items stolen from their checked-in luggage. There are brigands on the loose who intercept luggage between the time it leaves plane’s cargo hold and the time it gets to the carousel, open locks, and help themselves to the content. Visitors are thus acclimatised on arrival to all the excitement that Nepal has to offer.

Once prospective candidates from the same party start beating each other up over tickets, you know that elections are around the corner. It’s not just the Kangresis that have two blocs, the Koirala family itself now has at least five factions. SuziQ, determined to carry on her father’s grand tradition, wanted the Biratnagar ticket and when she didn’t get it, gheraoed her own party’s

office until Uncle Jhusil banished her to Kalikot, while he himself is contesting in multiple constituencies. This is a time-honoured tradition in Nepal where netas who only stand from one place aren’t taken that seriously. Awesum is standing from Kathmandu and Janakpur, but has abandoned Rolpa because no Cash can even enter the Dash stronghold anymore. Even if the bosses lose in all the places they contest, however, there is still hope and this is exemplified by Makunay who lost in both constituencies and still went on to be prime minister.

The Ass’ vote for Nepal’s Alfa Male goes to Loktantra Man, who has deployed the full weight of the CIAA to go after people who have crossed him in the past. We don’t hear of any Cash Baddie paying any income tax on Rs 4 billion that vanished from the cantonment budget, but the CIAA and their buddies from Revenue are going for small fries with a fine tooth comb. Overzealous CIAA operatives raided the 90th birthday party of kangresikatering king, BL Sharma, and booked him for inviting more than 50 guests.

Last Saturday’s Tij Un-Bunned was organised by the Cash Baddies’ Newa State Council which takes its orders directly from BRB and First Lady Yummy. But guess what the surnames of the office bearers of the Newar Autonomous Region are: Poudel and Dahal.



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