The High Level Political Committee is inherently undemocratic, it does not respect the result of the election and will hinder the chance of a coalition government being formed anytime soon. As the two parties that espouse peaceful democratic change and the parties that got the most votes, the onus is on the NC and UML to take the lead together and set an example. Membership of the HLPC allows the Maoists to exert far more influence than its diminished mandate allows. This week, Dahal and Co finally realised their folly and have stopped talking about a boycott of the CA. But it may be premature to break open the champagne just yet, we are still frozen on Step 1 after the election.
WRONG MECHANISM

When the four-party cartel made up of the Nepali Congress, UML, the Maoists, and the Madhesi Front agreed on their 11-point deal last November, I like millions of other party workers were hopeful that the High Level Political Committee (HLPC) would be resurrected after elections. A new mandate from the people does not mean going back to the same political agreement and obsolete formula by which the mechanism back from the dead. Far from forging a consensus, as was argued, the HLPC prolongs the political uncertainty and adds insult to injury to the results of the recent elections.

It is clear that the UCPN (M) was for reviving the HLPC because it meant the party could maintain its dominating influence over political decision-making despite its stinging electoral rebuke. For the NC and UML, as the two largest parties, the committee has become a convenient way to buy time to paper over mutual differences over power-sharing. It is a shame that the two biggest democratic forces should choose this undemocratic path just because they can’t agree on the formation of a new government. The Nepali public dutifully went to vote when asked to do so and gave the parties another chance to prove themselves. But the NC and UML are showing the same irresponsibility that we have come to expect of them.

All the political parties, from the Maoist left to the royalist right, are facing severe internal pressures from cadres to be included in the Proportional Representation lists of their parties. A process that was designed to make the new Constituent Assembly more inclusive has become a cynical exercise for the pursuit of allowances and other perks of CA membership. The HLPC has become a convenient way for the party leadership to sidestep those pressures and use it as an excuse for the delay in finalizing the deal.

The Interim Constitution requires the CA to sit within 21 days of the announcement of the final results of the elections after a new prime minister calls it to convene. Far from the CA sitting, we don’t even have an agreement on whom to nominate to the CA on the thorny issues in the new constitution?

The UCPN (M) leadership, especially Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, has still not come to terms with his poor showing. He has threatened to boycott the new CA unless there is an independent inquiry into alleged election rigging. Members of the HLPC want Dahal and Co. to exert far more influence than his diminished mandate does. This week, Dahal and Co. finally realised their folly and have stopped talking about a boycott. But it may be premature to break open the champagne just yet.

The HLPC is inherently undemocratic, it does not respect the result of the election and will hinder the chance of a coalition government being formed anytime soon. As the two main political parties go to the bench, the remaining parties that got the most votes, the onus is on the NC and UML to take the lead and set an example.

NEPALI NELSON

NEPALI NELSON could have been Nepal’s Nelson Mandela. He has been above party politics and kept his country’s interest before his own (‘A Nelson in Nepal’, Trishna Rana, #685). Alas he just turned out to be another ‘mandalay’.

Harka

There is no new Nepal in the offing. It seems to have been turned into a country where her own peasants are kicked in the back and a devil from outside is worshiped.

Danny

I wonder why Nepalis don’t consider BP Koirala the founding father of modern Nepal? Perhaps someone could give a small history lesson on why he has been relegated to the dustbin. BP did as much as anyone could give a small history of

Namah

Nelson Mandela was, undoubtedly, an exceptional leader who united a divided society and moulded South Africa into a rainbow nation. Yes, his term as president was marred with major debates, but he had the foresight and humility to step down when things did not work out. Nepali leaders, on the other hand, fight for the kursi until their last breath. Personally I have very low expectations from our politicians, so when they do mess up, I don’t feel as disappointed as others do.

Sandhya Parajuli

Nepalis would rather see a constitution made yesterday. But that is not going to happen. In fact, nothing is going to happen within a year. The wise man said: If you want different results, do things differently. But we want different results from the same people who have not (and are incapable of) learnt from their mistakes. So they will keep doing whatever it is that they are good at and we will keep getting similar results. B

If there is indeed a provision in the interim constitution which says the president and vice-president will remain in office until the new constitution is crafted, then such a provision should be removed because it harms the democratic spirit. The Nepali Congress and likeminded people will want Ram Baran Yadav to continue in office to counter the inconvenience they could face in the future, even if it comes at the expense of the country. The NC and UML are failures. The power-sharing agreements between the major parties that got the most votes, the onus is on the NC and UML to take the lead and set an example.

Ganesh R

Why is Muma Ram Khanal using Madhav Nepal as an example to argue that Dahal should step down as party chairman? Isn’t Nepal the same man who became prime minister through back door channelism? Is it when telling Dahal to turn into one of those ‘exemplary figures’ in his list of most democratic personas of Nepal?

Anonymous

ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY

Finally someone has recognised the power of local democracy in the 1990s and how it empowered local communities (‘The roots of democracy’, Editorial, #685). It would have eventually helped stem the rot at the top if this editorial puts its so well. But what I am surprised about is how our ‘progressive’ civil society stalwarts and donor exponents have chosen to forget that achievement in their unquestioning support for the Maoist cause, even though the former revolutionaries proved how hollow their idealism was. And now after 17,000 lives lost, we have to start all over again to ‘rediscover’ grassroots democracy.

Anonymous

Kathmandu I knew when I first moved there in 1983 (‘The Valley from the 80’s’, Raju Rupakhet, #685); I knew nothing stays the same, but there is no excuse for how Kathmandu has been destroyed by pollution and lack of city planning. I still love the city, but it makes me very sad.

Margaret Kerr

CORRECTION

In the ‘Red Heads’ (Tearing Dicker Gunog, #686), it was erroneously said that red headed vultures were spotted in Nepal. But it was the first sighting of their nests, not the birds. Also Krishna Mani Baral was wrongly called an oncologist (cancer doctor), he is an oncotherapist, a last expert.

Anonymous

41 YEARS AGO

The photos of the Valley from four decades ago remind me of the
The moment of truth

The newly elected legislature offers another opportunity for the country to confront the dirty truths of the conflict.

"Don’t go so far, my son," Mana Maya BK of Jogimara in Dhading recalls telling her son Raj Kumar 11 years ago. He was only 15 years old, an eighth grader who wanted to share the burden of his father. “Tell Baba I’ll come back with money, in time to sow maize," he wrote in his three letters. But he never came back.

In February 2002, 17 innocent young men from the tiny village of Jogimara working as contract labourers to build an airport in Kathola of Kalikot were killed by Nepal Army along with 20 other villagers suspected of being Maoist insurgents. Seven years after the conflict ended, the families have not got full compensation, nor have they been told who killed nearly all the young men in their village.

Pramila Shrestha whose brother Raj was also killed in the incident is angered and pained by the insensitivity of the state. "They did not even bother to tell us that they killed my brother. We came to know about it through the radio after one and half month. My mother committed suicide because she couldn’t live with the grief. How come we aren’t even told who did it? Don’t we have the right to know?" she asks.

Last week, the families of the 17 Jogimara victims travelled once more to Kathmandu to seek truth and justice, ironically on International Human Rights Day. There was no media fanfare.

Seven years into the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord that promised a Truth Commission, the political parties are too scared to open the can of worms. There is an underlying fear among top Maoist leaders along with prominent NC leaders in power then and high ranking officers of Nepal Army and Police, who oversaw and overlooked war crimes, that they may one day have to answer for the atrocities. With both sides of the conflict now in legislative and executive positions, there is little hope that the new CA will form an impartial truth commission.

Maoist governments promoted army and police personnel involved in the most egregious violations of human rights and the other parties have ignored Maoist perpetrators. The media, rights bodies, and international community cherry pick cases to suit their own agenda, without lobbying effectively for the formation of an independent commission that should be investigating cases on both sides.

“I have no hope from the so-called defenders of democracy in Kathmandu who are benefiting from our loss," says Gita Rasaili whose 17-year-old sister Reena was dragged out of her house in Pokharichaur of Kavre at midnight on 12 February 2004, gang-raped, and killed. Two years before the incident Gita’s brother, a Maoist cadre, was killed by the army, because of which she joined the rebels. Reena was a hardworking student who volunteered for the government’s adult literacy program teaching elderly folks in her village.

For six days, the villagers mourned her death and refused to perform last rites, demanding that the guilty be punished. Devi Sunar, who was also witness to the crime mobilised the villagers because of which they abducted her 16-year-old daughter Maina Sunar, tortured, and killed her in the army base.

For the 17 young men of Jogimara killed 800km away in Kalikot, for Reena Rasaili and Maina Sunar of Kavre, for journalist Dekendra Thapa of Dailekh, and Muktinath Adhikari of Lamjung, for the 36 bus passengers killed in Madi by a Maoist bomb, there has been no justice.

Only an impartial and empowered truth commission can provide effective redressal to the families, bring perpetrators on both sides to book, and assuage our collective conscience. But this needs public pressure and unbiased campaigning by rights activists, media, and international community.
No one should be too surprised to overhear an endangered language spoken in the heart of Manhattan. New York City is home to more than 800 languages, more than a 10th of the world’s total number of speech forms, the most linguistically diverse urban settlement on earth. The clicks and tones that a yellow cab driver just used on the phone to his cousin may well have been in a language that is endangered because their speakers have ceased to use them or are simply dying.

There is now cause for hope. While the dispersal of speech communities across the globe has led to the demise of some languages, technology popularised by globalisation is playing an equally important role in their revitalisation. Through the internet and mobile communications, people are reconnecting with fellow speakers using digital tools to revive languages on the endangered list.

Of the world’s remaining 6,500 languages, up to half will no longer be in regular use by the end of this century. Grizelda Kristiňa, the last surviving native speaker of Livonian, a Uralic language, died in June 2013. With the death of its last fluent speaker, the Bo language, one of the 10 Great Andamanese languages, became extinct in January 2010. Boa Sr had lived on the Andaman Islands her whole life, surviving not only the devastating tsunami of 2004 by climbing a tree, but enduring many waves of foreign invasion and disease that preceded it. Her language was of great antiquity and contributed to our understanding of humanity’s linguistic heritage.

From 2005, Boa Sr worked with Anvita Abbi, professor of linguistics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, to document not only her language but also the cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge that it relayed. While Boa Sr’s passing marked the loss of another speech form, a comprehensive archive of digitised audio, visual, and textual documents is now available for future generations.

Kusunda is one of more than 130 languages indigenous to Nepal. A language isolate, unrelated to any other known human speech form, Kusunda was until recently believed to be extinct. In 2004, members of the Department of Linguistics at Tribhuvan University made contact with a fluent speaker of Kusunda, resulting in the first grammatical description of this unique language. While effectively moribund, with little chance of becoming a popular vernacular again, the typologically distinct Kusunda language has now been carefully documented, even if its communicative power and the cultural world in which it thrived are lost for good.

It’s easy to forget that most of the world’s languages are still transmitted orally with no widely established written form. While speech communities are increasingly involved in projects to protect their languages – in print, on air, and online – orality is fragile and contributes to linguistic vulnerability. But indigenous languages are about much more than unusual words and intriguing grammar: they function as vehicles for the transmission of cultural traditions, environmental understandings, and knowledge about medicinal plants, all at risk when elders die and livelihoods are disrupted. Many speakers of endangered, poorly documented languages have embraced new digital media with excitement. Speakers of previously exclusively oral tongues are turning to the web as a virtual space for languages to live on.

The internet offers powerful ways for oral traditions and cultural practices to survive, even thrive, among increasingly mobile communities. Videos of traditional wedding ceremonies and songs are recorded on smartphones in London by Nepali migrants, then uploaded to YouTube and watched an hour later by relatives in remote Himalayan villages connected to the internet. Similarly, Skype and WeChat are powerful technologies that help sustain increasingly dispersed communities of speakers living across different time zones.

Community-based language documentation projects are increasingly bridging the digital divide by prioritising field-based audio-visual recordings and interviews with elders who still have fluency in the language, building online archives that protect cultural patrimony and establishing local cultural museums. Effective managers of community documentation projects now worry as much about securing the right domain name and hosting for their presence on YouTube, Twitter, Kickstarter, and Facebook as they do about traditional fundraising. Earlier editions of UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger were available only in print – expensive to produce, difficult to disseminate, and quickly out of date. UNESCO’s most recent atlas offers an online, interactive interface that allows users to contribute comments and suggest amendments, an example of effective crowd cataloguing. In such cases, digital technology sustains conversation and facilitates wider participation, inviting contributions from community members and language speakers themselves. Globalisation is regularly, and often uncritically, pilloried as a major threat to linguistic diversity. But in fact, globalisation is as much process as it is ideology, certainly when it comes to language. The real forces behind cultural homogenisation are unbounding beliefs, exchanged through a globalised delivery system, reinforced by the historical monolingualism prevalent in much of the West.

Monolingualism – the condition of being able to speak only one language – is regularly accompanied by a deep-seated conviction in the value of that language over all others. Monolingualism, then, not globalisation, should be our primary concern.

For the last 5,000 years, the rise and fall of languages were intimately tied to the plough, sword, and book. In our digital age, the keyboard, screen and web will play a decisive role in shaping the future linguistic diversity of our species.

www.yaleglobal.yale.edu/unesco-atlas

Mark Turin is a linguist, anthropologist, and broadcaster who directs the Yale Himalaya Initiative and the Digital Himalaya Project.
Microfinance’s macro potential

Microfinance is, at its core, an effort to provide financial services to people who are not served, or are under-served – by the formal banking system. With appropriate, accessible, and fairly priced financial services, people can build their savings, cover the costs of unexpected emergencies, and invest in their families’ health, housing, and education.

The International Finance Corporation estimates that microfinance has reached some 130 million people worldwide in the last 15 years. Over this period, microfinance has been lauded for its potential to advance financial inclusion and enable people to escape poverty. But it has also faced harsh criticism, with some lenders being accused of profiteering.

Despite the industry’s widely publicised pitfalls, its potential to improve the lives of the poor cannot be ignored. The question now is how to ensure that microfinance becomes the industry that the world needs. To this end, three important steps must be taken.

The first step is better regulation. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) come in many forms – mainstream banks, non-financial companies, finance and leasing companies, non-governmental organisations, cooperatives, and trusts – and follow a variety of business models. All of these intermediaries must be recognised and regulated according to the needs of the economies in which they operate.

Inadequate regulation is most damaging to those who need microfinance services the most. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the 2010 microfinance crisis in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh – a hub of MFI activity – when a decade of explosive growth, fueled by aggressive and reckless lending practices, came to a head.

The second step, to be taken by the microfinance industry itself, is to create effective mechanisms for assessing the industry’s impact. As it stands, some governments and academics are uncomfortable with the fact that MFIs, which are supposed to be providing a public good by advancing financial inclusiveness, are pursuing profits.

But the failure of some MFIs to differentiate between profit-seeking and profiteering does not mean that sustainable microfinance should not yield returns above costs. The business of providing financial services to the poor requires commitment. Without profits, MFIs are unable to invest in the talent and product development needed to serve people for the long term.

Many governments have now implemented interest-rate ceilings and margin caps to curtail excessive profits for MFIs, while ignoring the margins of the market’s non-organised alternatives, like pawnbrokers. In order to provide a more balanced perspective on the microfinance industry compared to other kinds of financial-services providers, MFIs need to do more to measure and explain their social and economic value.

The third step concerns technology. Mobile connectivity is transforming the global financial system by enabling remote, rural populations to access financial services for the first time. Mobile-payment systems like M-Pesa are changing how people transfer, receive, and save money in many developing countries, including Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

For the microfinance industry, such systems represent an important opportunity, as they enable borrowees to apply for, receive, and repay loans on their mobile phones, using a network of local agents to deposit and withdraw cash. But without robust regulation, MFIs cannot cash in on most of these developments.

Although microfinance has already helped countless people worldwide, the World Bank estimates that some 2.5 billion adults still lack access to financial services. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders – including governments, regulators, banks, and civil society – to ensure that microfinance continues to be part of the solution. See www.project-syndicate.org

PRAKASH THAKKER

Microfinance is a tool for reducing poverty. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to make it a success.
Nepal’s Three Curses

The country’s rapidly ageing population is caught in the vortex of politicians, bureaucrats, and donors

The first curse of Nepal’s governance is domestic political failure, resulting in poor governance and continued destitution of this country’s long-suffering citizens.

The chronic mindless misconduct of politicians masquerading as ‘the people’s representatives’ is leading to another squandering of the electoral mandate. The horse-trading, wheeling-dealing, and backroom bargaining prove that the so-called rulers of Nepal have learnt nothing.

The second curse is also internal: the bureaucracy that we are saddled with. Civil servants are inspired by a similar penchant for power and pelf as their political masters, but without any need for accountability. No one elected them, so they seem to be answerable to no one.

The third curse has to do with the omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient donors. Although each stated goals of most donor agencies remain essentially altruistic, their field officers often allow the saviour syndrome to get into their head. While the expat community, by definition, remains relatively handicapped on account of its transient nature and lack of sufficient familiarity with the depth and diversity of Nepal’s developmental experience, this has never deterred it from trying to create its own monuments.

Local officials, of course, are only too willing to go along with the donors’ favour of the month fancies in exchange for material incentives and junkets. Although expert donor officials are generally assisted by national professionals, the latter in their bid to make the most of their lucrative employment often end up becoming holier than the Pope.

It goes without saying that there are many exemplary foreign and local officials who are thoughtful, listen to what locals have to say, and encourage their participation in activities designed to be catalytic. There are remarkable examples of foreign supported interventions that have had sustainable and long-lasting impact in raising the living standards. All of them worked because they encouraged participation and let local people own the process.

Sadly, the latest victim of the Three Curses is Nepal’s elderly. The country has a rapidly ageing population with 8.24 per cent (2.2 million people) over 60 years. As life-expectancy increases and birth rates fall, this proportion will grow to 20 per cent or more in the next two decades. Nepal’s mostly mountainous topography and predominantly rural character would make its ageing population far more challenging to manage.

Learning from the widely acclaimed effectiveness of community user groups in forestry and child survival, a consortium of organisations working with the elderly has adopted the concept of Senior Citizens User Groups to empower older people to help themselves. Three months ago, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MWCSW) welcomed and endorsed the approach. Since the local bodies’ legislation already requires the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MFALD) to earmark a proportion of annual development grants for senior citizens, the MWCSW requested 10 per cent of the money to be used by proposed senior citizens’ user groups.

The top brass of the MFALD, however, has delivered an oral verdict that its policy of ‘social mobilisation’ precluded such a ‘targeted approach’. Further investigation revealed that in 2010 four donor agencies (UNICEF, DFID, SDC, and UNDP) had ‘advised’ the ministry to promote a ‘novel’ institution in the VDCs: the Ward Citizens’ Forum, presumably to achieve accelerated development of the ultra poor through equitable distribution of resources.

In paper, the forums are supposed to be made up of representatives of various interest groups in the ward such as women, children, farmers, and the ultra poor. But since most of them are not organised in the communities, such ‘representatives’ are indeed handpicked by the feudal elite who tend to dominate such community discussions.

In addition to structural problems, these so-called citizens’ fora are largely superfluous and often generate conflict. While they too adopt the same infrastructural projects such as building and rebuilding roads or schools and so on (calling into question the ultra poor related goal), they have no money of their own and recommend them to the VDCs for funding where it is the ‘all party mechanism’ that decides. So with the MFALD swearing by what has been fed to it by the donor consortium, Nepal’s senior citizens continue to be deprived of the 10 per cent welfare formula.

Nepal’s women, children, and marginalised have long suffered the brunt of the Three Curses; now it is the turn of the elderly.

Bikari Krishna Shrestha is an anthropologist and a retired civil servant.

Christmas & New Year Celebrations at Hotel Himalaya

Christmas Eve Dinner
Counter at the Lobby
10 am to 8 pm

A Traditional 5 course dinner with live music and a complimentary glass of wine or a bottle of beer
@ Rs 2493 nett per person at Café Caron.
7 pm onwards.

Christmas Day Brunch
Lavish Buffet
with a complimentary glass of wine or a bottle of beer
@ Rs. 1699 nett per person at Café Caron.
12 noon onwards.

Fiery Night
with Live Band
Connection on New Years Eve

Lavish International Buffet
Free Flow of Drinks · DJ Peaks
Door Prize Galore

For Reservations call: 5393900

Bihari K Shrestha
GUEST COLUMN

Drinking from the Same Pail
There are no major westerly fronts in sight, so we will continue to have hazy afternoon sunshine and clear weather only around New Year. Some high altitude cirrus riding the jet stream will flush by, which will raise the minimum temperatures somewhat over the weekend, but nothing to worry about. The temperature in Kathmandu will plummet to lows of 3-4 degrees in the morning with thick fog until noon.

KATHMANDU

AYESHA SHAKYA

O ut beyond Bollywood hits, American pop, and adhunik Nepali songs, which are more often than not an amalgamation of the other two, is Bipul Chettri’s music.

The tinkling of cow bells and the soothing interlude of ‘om mani padme hum’ in his latest offering Mountain High has echoes of the Himalayas. “Mountain High is about my spiritual home, a place where my soul rests in peace, a place where I am pulled by a strange sense of familiarity,” explains Bipul. “The song is about the outer mountains reflecting the mountain of love and compassion within me.”

In Asaar, the singer reminisces about a loved one and recreates the gentle monsoon mood from his hometown of Kalimpong, India with the gentle strumming of his guitar. Wildfire, which introduced Bipul’s music to listeners and gained him loyal fans, is more upbeat. He says the debut song was inspired by the wildfires of Darjeeling and also depicts the dreams and passions raging in his heart.

In an industry where some artists hesitate to embrace their roots, the 33-year-old stands out from his contemporaries. Although the songs are minimalistic, Bipul’s poetic lyrics about the city where he grew up and his surroundings bring us closer to home. As he poignantly rekindles the nostalgia he feels for his past, listeners are pulled into his reality, making us experience Bipul’s emotions and thoughts as our own.

While most of us stumbled across Bipul around nine months ago when he first uploaded Wildfire on SoundCloud, a German-based online audio platform, the singer’s journey began during his young days at St Augustine’s School in Kalimpong. He later got a diploma in classical guitar from Trinity College, London. “Music was something that came easily to me since I was a kid. It was this incredible discovery that I was never tired of doing and talking about,” he wrote to us in an email. “Music gave me a sense of identity and influenced my life in a way that I could not have imagined.”

Taking inspiration from his day-to-day life to compose music, the earthy jhyaure melodies that Bipul creates perfectly encapsulate the Nepali folk-rock genre and are hugely popular among Nepalis both at home and abroad as is evident by the outpour of support on his SoundCloud account. To fans, his music is ‘soul-gasm’ because the artist pours his heart out to make music not just for our ears, but also our souls.

“The best part of my job is the love and warmth I get from the audience. It feels incredible to know that my songs have touched so many souls and that I can bring a smile to the faces of complete strangers. It is overwhelming,” he admits.

Bipul, who currently heads the Arts Department at Vasant Valley School in Delhi, is working side by side on his album The Sketches of Darjeeling, slotted to release early next year in the Indian capital. While the music teacher has kept a low profile so far, performing only at select fundraising events, he says he is really excited to sing in front of Nepalis in Nepal soon.

nepalitimes.com

Listen to Bipul Chettri’s songs

THE SOUND
OF OUR SOUL

A singer from Kalimpong revives our love for Nepali folk songs with his earthy jhyaure melodies
Tell your story, make a 1-2 min video about how girls are changing the world, contest open to girls aged 12 to 25, winner takes $10,000. Deadline 31 December, www.letgirlslead.org

Tree of life, an exhibition of the paintings on the Mithila cosmos by SC Suman. Runs till 6 January, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

Child and family photography workshop, learn how to take photos of your child before it grows up. Rs 3,500, 19 to 21 December, 7 to 9.30pm, 9841279544/9841240341

GODAWARI CALLING, celebrate Alumni Day and reminisce the sublime and the ridiculous of your schooldays with fellow Godawarians. 28 December, 9am onwards, St Xavier’s School, Godawari

Merry Christmas, deck the halls with bows of folly. 25 December

Early days, a workshop for new photographers and hobbyists who want to explore possibilities of a career in photography, free gift hamper worth Rs 1000. Rs 2,999, 25 to 31 December, 7 to 9 am, Image Park, New Road, 9841279544, 9841240341

Narratives of faith and memory, an exhibition of paintings on the lost sculptures of Kathmandu by Joy Lynn Tumer. Runs till 21 December, 10am to 4pm, Patan Museum, www.kathmanduarts.org. (01)5044810

Winter camp, give your children a chance to make good use of their holidays by learning music, arts, and drama. 29 December to 10 January, 10.30am to 4.30pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)215354, www.katjazz.com.np

PAYBACK, after the disappointment of a 6-3 loss, league leaders Arsenal host Chelsea. 24 December, 1.45am

CLIMATE+CHANGE, an awe-inspiring educational science exhibition about climate change and Nepal’s Himalaya. December to April, Nepal Art Council
MUSIC

Party, celebrate Christmas with the makers of jazz music in Nepal, solos, combos, choir, food, and goodies. Free entrance, 22 December, 12pm onwards, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamshikhel, (02) 302356, info@katjazz.com.np, www.katjazz.com.np

Christmas jam, live concert by Adrian Pradhan and Sabin Rai. 24 December, 6pm onwards, Tamarind Restro, Jhamshikhel and Embassy Restaurant, Panipokhari

GETAWAYS

DHULIKHEL MOUNTAIN RESORT, turn a new leaf by taking advantage of New Year’s offer. Per person with bed, breakfast & dinner, double/twin for Nepali/expats/foreigners at Rs 5,000/USD 75/USD 85 and single supplement for Nepalis/other nationals at Rs. NRS.1500/USD 15, taxes extra. Reservation: (01)4420774/6, (011)490660, sales@dmrnepal.com, reservations@dmrnepal.com

Park Village Resort, take advantage of the Christmas offer for Nepalis and you just might win a two-day three-night stay in Pokhara. 24 December, Rs 2,499 for individuals, Rs 9,500 for couples


Waterfront Resort, spend your Christmas Eve at the lake city of Pokhara and you might win a trip to Bangkok. 24 December, Rs 2,999 per head, Rs 8,500 per couple

Belle France

Another month brings a host of activities at the Alliance Francais Centre

The shortest day, screenings of various French shorts on the occasion of the shortest day in the year. 21 December, 10am to 7.30pm

Playing on the earth, submit two photos to this competition and you just might end up

Seed freedom, food freedom

The food security problem may be deepening, but there is no shortage of controversy regarding some of the so-called ‘solutions’. Activists say genetically modified food will be the ruin of agricultural countries while experts and businesses say there is no other viable alternative. What is the future of Nepal in the era of Monsanto? Join world renowned environmental leader Vandana Shiva’s lecture on the impact of free trade agreements and subsequent movements to safeguard seed freedom.

22 December, 3pm, The Shanker Hotel, Lajimpat

Education for peace

For the seventh time, Nepathya is setting off on a nationwide tour to 10 new cities, this time with the aim of voicing the concerns of children.

20 December Abu Khaireni, Tanahun
22 December Myagdi, Beni
24 December Gagan Gaunda, Kaski
29 December Patan Darbar Square

nepalaya.com.np, (02)4422469/4437893

LOSAR

Nepal’s communities celebrate the lunar new year in the following months.

30 December, Tamu Losar, Gurung New Year
15 January, Maghi Parba, Tharu cultural holiday
31 January, Sonam Losar, Tamang New Year
2 March, Gyalpo Losar, Tibetan New Year

WHY CAN’T A CAR BE GREEN YET BIG ON FEATURES?

SMART PHONE CONNECTIVITY AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION 12” TOUCH SCREEN INFORMATION SYSTEM REGENERATIVE BRAKING SYSTEM

MORE FEATURES IN THIS NEW AGE ELECTRIC VEHICLE:

• Hill Hold • Reverse Camera • EPI Navigation • Bluetooth • iPod connectivity • One-touch Foldable Seats • Projector Headlamps • Rain Defogger • Electric Wing Mirror • Keyless Entry & Start/Stop • 4-JBL Speakers & 2 Tweeters • CD/SD/USB/AUX/MDI/ Multi SDI • Smallest Turning Radius (3.5m) • Driver Information System • Automatic Transmission • Regenerative Braking System • 12” Touch Screen Infotainment System • REVeil Technology to activate reverse charge

EXPERIENCE THE DRIVE FOR YOURSELF TEST DRIVE OUR SHOWROOM

Agriendeavour Pvt. Ltd. | Mohan Hyatt | Tel: 441391, 447351 | Fax: 441390 | www.mahindra2s.com
facebook.com/mahindra2s | twitter.com/mahindra2s | youtube.com/mahindra2s
As Kathmandu prepares for yet another nippy winter without electricity, let alone central heating, Nepali Times recommends ways to stay warm inside your home.

**CAFÉ HESSED**
Known for its delectable doughnuts and cupcakes, the café is bringing in Christmas with festive themed cupcakes. For some, the sweet treats may just be too pretty to bite into.
Jhamsikhel, 9803608601

**HOLIDAY BITES**
The festive hues of red and green may be missing from much of the city, but bakeries around town are compensating for their absence with an array of popular Christmas specials.

**WARMING THE COCKLES**
As Kathmandu prepares for yet another nippy winter without electricity, let alone central heating, Nepali Times recommends ways to stay warm inside your home.

**Firewood stove**
Remember the old days when everyone sat around the fire and grandmother gave out ladlefuls of soup? Well, you can replicate this open hearth procedure by installing a firewood stove in your living room. The stoves are cheaper in the long run than burning electric and gas heaters, but take heed to reduce emissions and increase efficiency by burning, always at a low flame, only dead wood.
Price: Rs 100,000

**Biomass briquettes**
Fuel prices rose drastically in the last five years and, encouragingly, so did the use of biomass briquettes. As a heating alternative to traditional energy sources, briquettes are an almost win-win acquisition. Not only are they made from waste, but also emit less smoke than wood and cost (in both financial and environmental terms) far less than petrol fuel. Warm your feet, boil your soup, heat your rooms.
Price: Rs 30 a piece
Burn time: 40 minutes per piece

**HERMANN HELMERS**
Hermann’s has probably the best assortment of Christmas specials. With the heavenly smell of freshly baked goodies wafting through the kitchen, it is a treat just to be inside the bakery during the holiday season.
Jhamsikhel, 5524900
PUMPERNICKEL BAKERY
A favourite among locals, backpackers, and expats, Pumpernickel will be baking batches of Christmas cookies this holiday season.
Thamel, 4259185

JULIE’S CAKES AND PASTRIES
A sinful assortment of Swiss chocolates on display will make any human cry out in delight.
Kupondole, 5539862

JUST BAKED
Although this neighbourhood hotspot will not roll out any Christmas specials this week, patrons can still enjoy the ever dependable pastries, cakes, and buttery cookies.
Old Baneshwor, 9808663505

FIJI BAKERY
The increased loadshedding hours has deterred the owners from taking a risk with Christmas orders, which only gives us one more reason to binge on Fuji’s supremely delicious sour creams.
Chalukpat, 5260678

GERMAN BAKERY
Ditch their universally loved rich chocolate cake and pick up a Christmas stollen cake for all to share.
Jawalakhel, 5523789

EUROPEAN BAKERY
The busiest bakery in this residential neighbourhood will be serving some traditional Christmas delights. Anyone up for rich fruit cake?
Baluwatar, 4422047

CHINA HEAT
From Taplejung to Kanchanjupur, Chinese-made goods are making a name for themselves as thermal solutions. Here’s our pick for cold Kathmandu nights:

1. Lay out an electric mattress (Rs 1,500) beneath your bed sheet and plug it in half an hour before you go to bed. Comes with regulator.
2. Coming in single and double sizes, these velvet-covered fibre-filled quilts (which could mean either polyester or eiderdown) start from Rs 2,000 and above.
3. Fill hot water bags (Rs 500 and onwards) with boiling water and tuck them into bed for turbo heat. Be careful to leave out one fourths unfilled and eliminate air while screwing the plug.
4. On days when you need to take a bath, but the sun refuses to shine to work your solar panels, immersion heaters (Rs 500) are essential.
5. Some days will be so cold that you will feel your woollen pants need extra help. Enter tights (Rs 1,000 and above). After all, why should girls have all the fun?

Gas Heaters
With half of Kathmandu’s offices burning generators during loadshedding hours, electric heaters seem redundant during the dry season. But as long as cooking gas is available, at whatever price, gas heaters are rupee for rupee a better investment. Equally handy in offices and living rooms.
Price: Rs 6,000 upwards
Burn time: 100 hours on a 1.5kg cylinder

Made in Nepal
Two home produced chocolates maybe the best Christmas gifts this season

Sristi Joshi Malla started Moni’s Creations in 2005 to produce handmade stained glass, beads, candles, and chocolates. “It all started as a hobby, but with time it grew into a business,” explains Malla, who sells her world-class chocolate and other handicrafts as corporate gifts, wedding and birthday presents, and during Christmas.

Moni’s Creations has something of a cult following among discerning Kathmandu locals and expats for its uniquely flavoured chocolates in custom-made boxes. A favourite is the silky smooth truffle and other specialties that Malla created with inspiration from trips abroad, are chocolates with almond, mint, butterscotch, cappuccino, crunchy cracker, and other tempting fillings.

A relatively new player in the market, Columbus Chocolates makes delicious dark chocolates which are produced at a factory in Gwarko. The reasonably priced chocolates are currently sold at three outlets in Patan: Namaste Department Store, Home Grocer, and Shrestha Food. Besides chocolate bars, Columbus also produces special gift boxes on order. If you want a taste of these home produced delights, head to St Xavier’s school this weekend, where the makers are running a stall.

Moni’s Creations
(01)443 21 22
Boxes start from Rs 400 onwards
Columbus Chocolates
9851143300
After the onslaught of the *Twilight* films (although I will admit that I watched every single one and that too in the theatres) it is a relief to finally have a franchise that gives us intelligent and capable protagonists with a sense of humour. Kristen Stewart’s annoying and glowering Bella Swan is a sadly flat and pathetically fragile character compared to Jennifer Lawrence’s Katniss Everdeen – who embodies loyalty, integrity, strength, and as an added bonus: wields a fierce skill with a bow. The icing on the cake is that, although she does have, like Bella, two perfectly acceptable boys head over feet in love with her, neither of them is either a werewolf or god forbid – a vampire.

But I’ll stop teasing and move on to the good stuff: *Catching Fire* is the second instalment in the *Hunger Games* quartet (there will be two more films after this one based off of the three books by Suzanne Collins). While the first film was captivating enough, this second film rises above the usual ‘film for young adults’ category in a detailed and spirited adaptation of what are a thought provoking series of books.

Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mallark (Josh Hutcherson) have survived the 74th annual Hunger Games (a horrific tournament/reality show where a boy and a girl from each of the 12 districts must compete to death, with only one coming out alive) and miraculously both have come out alive – saved by their love for each other – a gimmick that their mentors came up with in order to try and salvage both their lives.

Katniss’ bravery during the previous games has made her a symbol of rebellion – the mockingjay pin that she wears becoming the code for all who wish to stand up against the might of the horrifyingly suppressive Capitol.

Katniss and Peeta are forced to tour the districts as the victors of the past year’s Hunger Games. On their tour, they are confronted with open rebellion and people raising their hands in the two-fingered salute that has come to represent defiance and solidarity.

As they witness increasingly more brutal acts of suppression by the state, they are also confronted with another, even more deadly turn of events (mild spoiler alert: the 75th Hunger Games will reap ‘tributes’ from among the previous surviving victors of the games. And so the horror begins again.)

*Catching Fire* is therefore not a film for the weak of stomach. It deals with children being forced to kill each other and with a murderous state. One must also come to terms with a status quo that involves immense poverty, repression, and of course, hunger. While film is overall a voyeuristic medium where the audience is complicit with the protagonists in all their adventures – one can’t help but be just a little bit more self-reflexive in a film like this which involves such truly grave subject matter.

So we root for Katniss and Peeta, willing them to live, but even as we do, we are aware of the inherent moral problems at the crux of this. Perhaps this is the greatest achievement of *Catching Fire*. 
**Indreni Khojda Jada**

If you are the type to dissect a movie based on its technical finesse, then you will find a lot of things wrong with *Indreni Khojda Jada* (Chasing Rainbows), a feature by Sahara Sharma which was judged the best fiction film in the Nepali Panorama at the recently concluded Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival.

The poor post production makes this 88 minute long feature far from an easy viewing experience. The camera work is shaky and one wonders whether there would have been a different outcome had the makers spent more than a month on shooting. But where Sharma strikes gold is in her storytelling. It is simple and resonates with the audience, so much so that we are willing to overlook the glitches and accept one of the most honest movies of our times.

The film revolves around three siblings who come to Kathmandu with the hopes of making it big. From the first scene, where the siblings are shown talking about their dreams of leaving the dingy two bedroom apartment and moving somewhere better where they won’t have to worry about getting through each month with Rs. 3,000, we are drawn into their lives. Instantly we feel for them and this connection deepens with the unfolding of each individual story.

The eldest played by Sanam Pyakurel is the responsible one, keeping track of the monthly expenses and making sure everyone saves enough for the long awaited television set. In the youngest sister’s role is first time actor Kritika Lamsal, who is perhaps the biggest dreamer with hopes of landing in the US on a diversity visa. Her attempts at perfecting the American accent make for some of the most heartwarming scenes in the movie.

The brother (Dipak Ghimire) is an underachieving student who dreams of owning a television so he can have his friends over for live football matches. Ghimire is perfect in his role as the playful brother whom everyone loves to hate and squabble with. His repeated suicide attempts (in consultation with Google) which include drinking Mentos candies and Coke are hilarious. Ghimire’s character is the most well sculpted with Sharma balancing his funny antics with moments of deep reflection and emotion thereby avoiding over-the-top performances.

After numerous short movies, *Indreni Khojda Jada* marks the wonderful silver screen debut of the talented filmmaker Sahara Sharma who has donned the hat of writer, director, and cinematographer for this particular movie. Our wait for a good storyteller has finally come to a dreamy end.

---

**Review**

**Indreni Khojda Jada**

**Mezze by Roadhouse**

which promises a more eclectic menu than its cafe branches.

But pizza still makes up a large proportion of the menu and many of the toppings on offer are in fact quite familiar. We tried one, the smoked salmon (Rs 650), just to check that standards weren’t slipping. This pricey topping was still pretty generous and perfectly cooked – so far, so good.

The waiters were a little befuddled (the restaurant was only two weeks young at the time of the review), but seemed to cope well with the pressure of an all-new venue. There were some kinks to iron out: one didn’t know exactly what the vegetarian mezze platter (Rs 650) consisted of, while another apologised for the delay while kitchen staff finalised the presentation of a dish no one had ordered before. But this was a busy Friday lunch service and overall, staff coped admirably.

That platter brought together freshly prepared hummus, mini pita breads, a baba ganoush, cream cheese, and other goodies. The presentation was worth the wait, but for the price I’d have expected something a little flashier: the thimble of marinated olives felt especially like phoning it in.

A coriander-crusted chicken kahab (Rs 230) looked great, but for all the greenery on display, that fresh, floral flavour of the herb was oddly impossible to locate. The chicken itself was tough, dry, and overcooked. We finished off with a chocolate mousse (Rs 230) from a dessert menu entirely borrowed from – you guessed it – Roadhouse, which was rich, satisfying, and with a hint of liquor, but was neither light nor airy enough to really be called a mousse.

What’s definitely new is the menu. Many restaurateurs have opted to ape this formula with varying degrees of success and Fire & Ice has maintained only one location, friendly staff, and yes, reliable satisfying pizzas.

**Someplace Else**

How to get there: Mezze by Roadhouse is located on the top floor of the new Mercantile shopping mall, on the corner of Darbar Marg opposite the palace museum and the traffic police headquarters.

---

**Architectural Designs**

Let professional take care of your dream

**Modular Kitchen**

Starting from Rs. 1 Lakh onwards

**Bed Rooms**

as per Vastu & Fengshui

---

**NPM Interior**

NPM Interior & Architectural Design Specialized in Apartment Furnishing

ONE STOP PROPERTY SOLUTION

**NPM INTERIOR.COM | 9813898383 | 9851106064**
using the reliable South Col route, after the team scaled Everest. The first climbers to the peak were Norgay and Edmund Hillary, who wanted to make sure they got to the top even if it meant using supplemental oxygen. The team leader, Tom Hornbein, two members of an American team, who climbed Everest using a difficult new route - the West Ridge. What many in the audience did not know is that Hornbein, now 83, is also a well-known doctor.

Hornbein and Unsoeld’s successful climb of the West Ridge to reach the summit is truly a milestone in the annals of mountaineering. In fact Jon Krakauer, author of Into Thin Air, calls this feat the greatest Himalayan climb in US mountaineering history. The 1963 expedition was the first attempt by the Americans to climb Everest. The team leader wanted to make sure they got to the top even if it meant using the South Col route that Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary had used a decade ago to become the first climbers to the peak. Only after the team scaled Everest using the reliable South Col route, did they decide to tackle on the dangerously difficult West Ridge. Hornbein and Unsoeld were super keen to climb the infamous route on the mountain’s west side. As soon as they heard that other members in their party had summited Everest, they were ready to go. What they did not realise is that the route they had picked, was almost impossible to conquer. But once committed and part way up the West Ridge, they discovered that there was no going back. The die had been cast. To this day, the West Ridge continues to be the ultimate man vs rock in Everest climbs.

The duo finally made it to the top by advancing through a couloir (a track, now called the Hornbein couloir) and reaching the summit at about 6.15 pm, a very late arrival time for safe descent. As Hillary famously said when asked if he believed George Mallory had scaled Sagarmatha before him, “It is important to safely descend the mountain to make it count.” In fact, most climber deaths on Everest occur on descent after having successfully ascended the mountain.

On descent, the American climbers had to make a bivouac (a very basic shelter) at about 8,000 m without tents, sleeping bag, or supplemental oxygen. An important reason why they survived the night and made history was because there was minimal wind on the mountain at the time. Obviously their relentless motivation to succeed helped tremendously.

Tom Hornbein went back to the US and became a professor and chairman of the department of anaesthesiology at the University of Washington in Seattle. Among the many young American doctors he trained was Dr Tom Fell, who came to Shanta Bhawan Hospital in the 1980s. Fell trained young nurses to become anaesthesia assistants. In many far-flung districts where there are no anaesthesiologists, these assistants play a crucial role in administering anaesthesia to patients so that surgeons can perform the required surgery. The Nick Simons Institute in collaboration with Nepal’s Health Ministry has been working on this anaesthesia program for years.

After his Everest expedition, Hornbein never returned to Nepal. He says he cannot deal with the countless changes that have taken place here since 1963. Perhaps through his student Fell, he will be remembered not only for his West Ridge feat, but indirectly also for his contribution to medicine in Nepal.
Wrong Direction: Political activist Anna Hazare ended his indefinite hunger strike on Wednesday after a watered down version of the anti-corruption Jan Lokpal Bill was passed in both houses.

Indian political activist Anna Hazare has come to epitomise men who are diminished in their triumph. For over two years, the septuagenarian Gandhian sat on fast and protests by activists who now form the nucleus of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to press the Indian Parliament to enact a national ombudsman law to check corruption. After the AAP’s strong showing in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, this demand was accepted and the bill passed in both houses on Wednesday. Hazare broke his week-long fast.

Yet, the adoption of the Jan Lokpal Bill for an ombudsman did not stop many from alleging that Hazare’s triumph was pre-arranged, that he had gone on fast days before the winter session of parliament because the government had assured him it would put its weight behind the bill. This the government did because the AAP’s astonishing performance in the Delhi Assembly had rattled India’s entire political class including the Congress and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

People chose to see in the passage of the bill a tacit understanding between Anna and the mainstream parties. It was a watered down version of the bill that Hazare’s team had framed months ago with Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan, who broke away from the ageing leader to participate in election despite his objection. The bill that the parliament adopted, retains government’s control over the investigating agency entrusted with the task of probing allegations of corruption against public servants.

During the week Hazare sat on fast, he and his followers engaged in a heated exchange with AAP members. Ultimately, they were expelled from the site of fast, leaving none in doubt about the severing of relationship between AAP members and remnants of Team Anna who had together constituted the popular front against corruption. The relationship between the two had been strained for a while: Hazare had not only refused to campaign for the AAP in Delhi, but had even tried to divert the money collected for the anti-corruption movement. Hazare said the AAP had been using his name in its campaign even though its leaders knew that ‘Anna SIM cards’ had been sold and the proceeds turned sullenly silent and then acerbic.

Around the time political parties of all hues began rather hypocritically, to question the AAP’s source of funds. Hazare too joined the chorus. He wrote a letter to Kejriwal claiming there were allegations against him to divert the money collected for the anti-corruption movement. Hazare said the AAP had been using his name in its campaign even though its leaders knew of his opposition to their participating in politics and that ‘Anna SIM cards’ had been sold and the proceeds misappropriated. To many it seemed an outwitted leader, in pique, was backstabbing his lieutenants perched on the cusp of astounding success.

The AAP’s strong showing also brought out Hazare’s vanity. A day before he sat on fast on 10 December, journalists reminded him of his past observations that if he were to contest election, he would lose his security deposit as he did not command money and muscle power, considered essential for electoral success. Then came the stinging question: how did he then explain Kejriwal and the AAP’s triumph?

Hazare paused for a while before saying that had he campaigned in Delhi, the AAP would have swept the polls and Kejriwal would have become chief minister. This was an incredible display of petulance and pettiness. In accepting a watered down version of the bill and in provoking and criticising the AAP, Hazare has thrown in his lot with the political class, not because he believes in its rectitude and sagacity, but because he wants to weaken the leaders who have decisively stolen a march over him.

ashrafajaz@gmail.com
Nepal needs to be prepared before it demands the return of its stolen religious figures from foreign collections.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor stolen from Wotol in Dhulikhel in 1985 had changed hands for about $50,000. It was returned in 1989.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor, stolen from Dhulikhel in 1985, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum Wiesbaden in 1985.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor, stolen from Bhaktapur in 1984, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum of Indian Art in Chicago.

Many of Nepal’s stolen religious objects have now been inventoried thanks to the painstaking work of art historians and researchers like Nepal’s Lain Singh Bangdel and Jürgen Schick.

Many of Nepal’s stolen religious objects have now been inventoried thanks to the painstaking work of art historians and researchers like Nepal’s Lain Singh Bangdel and Jürgen Schick. Schick and Ena, Bangdel’s daughter, were among 140 participants at the conference organised by UNESCO. Art scholars from Asia, Europe, USA, and South America discussed about possible regional and international collaboration among concerned stake holders to prevent illicit trading of cultural property.

The symposium’s outcomes will foster our fight against illegal trade of artworks in South Asia. We made good progress to develop a common strategy for the prevention of illegal traffic and the restitution of illicitly traded objects,” says Plathe.

Bhish Narayan Dahal, director general of the DoA is confident about coming up with a comprehensive inventory by next year. “We are already working on the inventory and are still trying to convince local communities and families to help us with the documentation since many of the artefacts belong to families here,” explains Dahal.

A 12th-century figure of Vishnu with Lakshmi and Garuda was stolen from Chyasalhiti, Patan in the late 1970s and is currently at Musée Guimet in Paris.

“Art Theft from Nepal, have provided valuable pictorial documentation of the objects in situ in the temples and bahals of Kathmandu. In the absence of reliable records at the Department of Archaeology (DoA), the two books are about the only proof that can help Nepal to demand the return of stolen artefacts. Schick and Ena, Bangdel’s daughter, were among 140 participants at the conference organised by UNESCO. Art scholars from Asia, Europe, USA, and South America discussed about possible regional and international collaboration among concerned stake holders to prevent illicit trading of cultural property.

The event was picking up from where it left off after a previous meeting in 2001 that adopted the Kathmandu Declaration on the illegal trade in cultural property. That declaration urged the Nepal government to update laws against trafficking in heritage property. But the conflict put everything on hold.

UNESCO head Axel Plathe now looks forward to strengthening transboundary cooperation to curb trafficking of cultural heritage. “The symposium’s outcomes will foster our fight against illegal trade of artworks in South Asia. We made good progress to develop a common strategy for the prevention of illegal traffic and the restitution of illicitly traded objects,” says Plathe.

Bhish Narayan Dahal, director general of the DoA is confident about coming up with a comprehensive inventory by next year. “We are already working on the inventory and are still trying to convince local communities and families to help us with the documentation since many of the artefacts belong to families here,” explains Dahal.

A 12th-century figure of Vishnu with Lakshmi and Garuda was stolen from Chyasalhiti, Patan in the late 1970s and is currently at Musée Guimet in Paris.

“The museum wanted to hand the Uma Maheswor and Vishnu back to Nepal earlier, but the discussions didn’t go ahead,” Buzin told Nepal Times, “we hope to overcome the frustrating and difficult delays and hopefully have the idol back in its country by 2015.”

When it was stolen 30 years ago, the Uma Maheswor was being actively worshipped by devotees in Kathmandu Valley, like hundreds of other religious objects that were sold and smuggled out of the country in the great plunder of the 1980s when many temples were ransacked.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor stolen from Wotol in Dhulikhel in 1985 had changed hands for about $50,000. It was returned in 1989.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor, stolen from Dhulikhel in 1985, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum of Indian Art in Berlin.

A 12th-century statue of Uma Maheswor, stolen from Dhulikhel in 1985, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum of Indian Art in Berlin.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor, stolen from Dhulikhel in 1985, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum of Indian Art in Berlin.
when they are restored to their original temples. A 400-year-old manuscript hand-drawn in ink and watercolours was stolen from the Patan Museum in 2003. The manuscript made up of 21 accordion-like folios containing tantric depictions of the energy centres of the human body had been on sale along with two smaller ones in the antiquity market in Nepal and was bought with Austrian funds for Rs 90,000 and donated to the Patan Museum in 1997. The Patan Museum Project thought the museum would be the best place to keep it, not just for its historic and educational value, but also so that it would not be exported. The copper repoussé Lakshmi Narayan and Garuda figure that was stolen from the Sundari Chok in Patan has now been replaced with a replica even though the original was found and will eventually be out on secure display.

Jürgen Schick estimates that 90 per cent of rare and high quality idols have been stolen from Kathmandu since the 1960s. “The thefts have declined mostly because there isn’t much works of art to be displayed at a museum or a collector’s living room, they are part of a living culture and tangible identity. We need to do our part to get them back home.”

Bangled is now an Associate Professor of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar and says it is important for young Nepalis to understand the importance of what has been lost in the last 50 years and the need to get the religious objects back. She adds: “Now that our politics is finally back on track, we need to continue my father’s work and start the task of bringing back Nepal’s stolen artefacts.”

**Nepaltimes.com**

In the land of gods, #63, Patan’s crown jewels, #517 Christe’s restored stolen Nepal works, #408 Interactive map Interview with Jürgen Schick

Art scholars on Himalayan and Southeast Asian art in the US helped identify four painted wood covers of palm-leaf manuscripts as the property of the National Archive in Kathmandu, which had been on display in Nepal German Manuscript Project in 1970. One of them is a 12th century wood cover which is believed to be one of the oldest known painted art objects in Nepal. They were returned to the National Archive in August.

I have always been an artist, but when I visited Nepal in 2003, I felt an identity crisis. I finished a Bachelor’s degree in art, however, I felt disenchanted with the contemporary art world. Much of what I had seen – even created – didn’t move me, didn’t do my good in the world, and wasn’t accessible to a wide audience. I considered giving up art entirely. But encountering the Kathmandu Valley, I was enamoured by the rich and meaningful cultural heritage kept alive by artists today. I was inspired to paint again and learn all I could about Himalayan art. In 2006, I first noticed thefts of sacred art. Through research, I found a few publications: Lain Singh Bangdel’s ‘Stolen Images of Nepal’, Jürgen Schick’s ‘The Gods are Leaving the Country’, and Kanak Mani Dixit’s ‘Gods in Exile’. They gave striking photographic evidence of the thefts of 120 Buddhist and Hindu sculptures. They also raised some unsettling questions: what has happened in those communities since the thefts, does worship continue, have replicas been made?

Since 2010, I started visiting sites of previously documented thefts. I recorded the memories shared by people and inquired about additional thefts. I kept a database, which will be published at www.rememberingthelost.com. I strongly feel devotees should be able to continue traditional practice as the gods can safely live in their communities again.

After exhibiting in Nepal, I intend for my paintings to travel around the world, offering people the chance to see where their murtis originate from and hear stories shared by those communities.

Joy Lynn Davis is currently an artist in residence at Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre in Patan. Her exhibition ‘Narratives of Faith and Memory: Remembering the Lost Sculptures of Kathmandu’ will run until 21 December at Patan Museum.

**JOY LYNN DAVIS**

The 19th century bronze sculpture of Suryabheru in Patan was stolen in 1984. The head of Saraswati (above), stolen from Patan in the early 1980s, is currently at the Chitwan Museum.

Lost and found in Kathmandu

**Park Vision Inn**

Park Vision Inn, Telkot your weekend getaway with magnificent views. Just 23 km from Kathmandu on the way to Nagarkot.
Interview with NC leader Gagan Thapa,
BBC Nepali Service, 18 December

who is ‘we’?
Except the decision-makers at the top,
almost everyone else who won direct
elections in the 19 November polls is involved.

Your predecessors also raised similar
issues, but senior leaders didn’t take
their proposals seriously.
All our friends who won the elections this
time, remember the promises they made to
their constituencies. We will not make the
same mistake of keeping quiet if the party
heads don’t listen to us.

But all your friends seem to be siding
with the top brass.
I have found that the same people who
used to take this matter lightly and who
now have come back with a mandate no
longer think of it as a joke.

What are some party procedures
that you would like to see changed
immediately?
First, we must make the discussions
within our party more transparent and
not hide our decisions from the public.
Secondly, those who have been given
the responsibility to talk with other
parties and discuss possible alliances,
must not go around giving speeches
when not a single agreement has been
reached. We must not fool the public
like this.

How do you envision the CA will
function this time round?
After the first session of the CA, we
will have to create a timeline for writing
the constitution within a year. Based
on this, drafting committees will be
formed and within two or three months,
they will present a written report to the
CA. Every party may not agree with
the contents of the document; so we
will spend the next two months trying
to iron out differences. If there are still
disagreements, they will be resolved
through voting.

How hopeful are you of personal
success in CA-II?
Last time, we took liberties in the
name of consensus. This gave us
some advantage, but ultimately led us
nowhere. This time, if we as MPs can
prevent the political discourse from
spilling outside the CA, we will have
done our job.

Baburam Bhattarai, Facebook, 13 December

New beginning

After our party’s defeat in the 19 November elections, I took time off for self reflection and have come up with a few resolutions. I hope to receive suggestions and support from my well wishes.

• Our revolution was aimed at creating a better society, culture, and power structure. But in the present political scenario we couldn’t distinguish ourselves from other leaders. So Nepalis didn’t want to gamble with our new political agenda and chose the old parties instead.

• People had great expectations from me because I had been continuously raising several pressing issues. But in the absence of institutional capacity, I couldn’t implement my plans. For instance, on the night of 27 May 2012, I wanted to extend the tenure of the Constituent Assembly by announcing an emergency. But opposition leaders and colleagues from my own party pressured me to step away from the decision and I had to oblige. This proved to be the biggest mistake of my life.

• I will now remain committed on three issues:
  1. National independence and inclusive nationalism
  2. Inclusive democracy
  3. Inclusive development

• To achieve this I will collaborate with leaders from other parties and organisations who share similar perspective on these issues.
Editorial, Kantipur, 18 December

When bombs went off before and during November’s elections, the CPN-M claimed innocence. However, a month later, party Chairman Mohan Baidya brazenly admitted that his cadres were involved in these acts of violence.

But what had eight-year-old Samir Khadgi done to the CPN-M to have his arm blown off at Bhotebahal on election day? A party that claims to represent the people and continuously accuses others of selling out, deserves a total boycott for the suffering it unleashed on innocent civilians.

Looking at the past behaviour of the breakaway Maoists, it seems like they are still stuck in the insurgency era. And instead of contributing to the peace process and providing relief to those who suffered from the excesses of the decade long war, Baidya and Co are bent on pushing the country to the brink of anarchy again. The decisions made at recent party meetings are proof of this. The CPN-M says it wants to build a people’s army and cancel the 12-point agreement, moves which are completely against the flow of current politics.

Nepal neither needs an armed revolution nor is there any legitimate ground for politics of violence. The 12-point agreement signed in 2005 helped put an end to the conflict, bid farewell to the monarchy, established the first constituent assembly, and integrated the two warring armies. Although a lot has changed in these eight years, the country is still far from meeting the goals that were laid out in that document. Based on the pact, the second constituent assembly will write a new constitution and it is therefore imperative to safeguard the spirit of the accord.

At a time when we are looking to establish a federal republic democratic Nepal, there is no place for politics of violence or exclusion. It is essential that we end the transition by bringing the CPN-M back into mainstream politics. Other parties too must do everything in their power and honestly approach the Maoists and accommodate their grievances. However, if Baidya and his men decide to go against the spirit of change and return to violence and anarchy, history will prove them losers.

They will be wiped out as a political force and will be remembered as thugs.
The story that dominated all others, overshadowing even the power-sharing negotiations for the next coalition, was The Kiss. Now that it looks like she ain’t getting into the PR list of the Mao Buddy Party that she joined out of revolutionary zeal, Kollywood’s Rekha Thapa has been turning her attention to the welfare of the downtrodden by donating rice by the sack loads to the Raute community in the jungles of western Makawanpur. There was slight problem, though. Rautes, being slash-and-burn farmers, don’t need rice, they want pigs. The Raute chieftain pretended to be happy enough to get the rice. However, to show just how much she loved the Raute, Rekha got carried away and planted a kiss on the startled cheek of said chieftain. Problem was, the Raute rank and file took umbrage, saying smooching was out of bounds in their hunter-gatherer culture and took it as an insult, boycotting the rice. Rekha has had quite a lot of explaining to do back at party HQ in Kathmandu, too.

By the way, since when have blue plated vehicles with diplomatic impunity been allowed to install sirens so they can tear through traffic at the Bagmuddy Bridge? We can understand police, fire trucks, and ambulances being in a hurry. But what is so precious about the time Nepal’s donors have on planet earth that they can’t wait like everyone else stuck at the Thapathali intersection? Is there a cutoff to the annual ODA budget a donor agency has to earmark to be allowed to have a siren to establish its slot in the pecking order? Will $50 mill do it?

The Ass has it from unusually reliable sources that the reason the finalisation of the PR list has hit a snag is because party leaders are bargaining for kickbacks. Let’s say you are a businessman who wants to be included in the UML’s list and you come from a marginalised family of traditional millionaires. Simply deposit a sack of cash worth, say, 20 lacks with JN’s PA at Balkhu and you’ve hit the jackpot. The PR lists have become a huge source of revenue for the NC and UML to replenish war chests depleted by the elections as CA membership is auctioned off to the highest bidders. That is what the delay is all about.

Madhesi parties that didn’t win a single FPTP seat, but have collected a few PR slots each have to field proportionate female candidates. As reported by a weekly, all the biggies are therefore nominating the only females they can trust: wives and sisters, and in one case even a grandmother, to the Constituent Assembly. So Shri Rajinder and Shri Raj Kishore are taking along their respective wives, as is Comrade Anil who has nominated his wife, Dimple, to the CA. Sanat Oui, meanwhile, has picked his girlfriend and Com Upadra has settled for his favourite sister-in-law. Good thing these leaders have only one wife, otherwise all hell would have broken loose. In addition to all the housewives in the new House, it looks like we will also have quite a few office wives in it.

Finally, here is a simplified summary of this week’s politics: Chairman Awesome has desperately tried to deflect attention away from his failure as party leader by accusing the EC of electoral fraud. But at next week’s Central Committee meeting PKD is expected to come under intense pressure to give up his chairmanship. PKD knows better than anyone else that there is no afterlife in a communist party and is reluctant. BRB’s Facebook self-criticism appeared to be a mea culpa, but was actually a veiled attack on Lotus Flower. As the sabres are sharpened and rattled, PKD is doing what he does best: threatening to join the Bagbuddha.

The Ass