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A DAY OF OUR OWN

There may be more women than men in Nepal, but their numbers hardly match up outside the census report. Only 172 out of 575 Constituent Assembly members are women, there has never been a female chief justice, and the current cabinet has only two women ministers.

It doesn't stop there. We have also denied our daughters a shot at being Nepali. Our parliament passed a law in 2006, on par with international covenants, that women could pass on their citizenship to their children, only to be 'amended' – so long as their husbands are Nepali citizens. As a result there are at least 4.3 million people in Nepal who don't have papers and can't get an education, job, or own property.

Despite the immense challenges women face – at home, on the street, at their workplace – it is not all bad news. Women all across Nepal have overcome discrimination, violence, abuse, and family disapproval to set examples for everyone. Read our Women's Day special feature to find out more.



MACHO NATIONALISM PAGE 3
HOMEMAKERS TO HEROES PAGE 7
THEIR LADY EXCELLENCIES PAGE 16-17
RUNNING THE HOUSE PAGE 16-17

HARIZ BAHARUDIN



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NOT JUST HALF THE SKY

At a time when all 365 days in the calendar have been ‘booked’ for the international-day-of-this and the international-day-of-that, 8 March has lost a lot of its lustre.

In a society like Nepal where patriarchal values are so entrenched in the ‘men-stream’ culture, every day should be International Women’s Day. The first thing we have to change in this country is the absurd decision to declare 8 March a holiday only for women. This year it is a Saturday, but International Women’s Day should be marked by striving even harder for gender equality in the workplace.

Nepal’s underdevelopment is a direct result of culturally-sanctioned gender discrimination. Superimposing district-wise data for female literacy over the figures for extreme poverty, malnutrition, child marriage, maternal and infant mortality gives us an almost perfect match. Nepal’s poorest districts (east-central Tarai, mid-western mountains) are also where female literacy is lowest, where the caste system is most entrenched, and where other forms of inequality and discrimination thrive. Nepal’s dramatic progress in reducing maternal mortality in the past 15 years is the result of the doubling of the national female literacy rate in that period.

It is ironical that for a country with such progressive legislation on gay, lesbian, and transgender rights, we seem to be regressing in women’s issues. Out of 21 ministers sworn in last week in the new coalition cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, only two are women and there isn’t a single Dalit.

The titles of articles in this newspaper over the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, The war on women, Rape for ransom.



Let’s not ‘celebrate’ International Women’s Day on Saturday. Let’s mark it as a day of mourning.

The discrimination against girls in Nepal begins even before they are born, as the rising incidence of female foeticide shows. An estimated 50,000 unborn urban babies are aborted in Nepal every year after parents find out through ultrasound scans that they are girls. This does not include abortions carried out without parents knowing the gender of their babies, half of which are likely also girls.

As they grow up, many girl children are stigmatised within families and by society: discouraged from going to school, fed last, not taken to hospitals immediately if they fall sick, married off young, denied citizenship, abused or trafficked, sometimes by their own relatives. The preference for boys in many Nepali

cultures is a result of deeply held patriarchy: a belief that sons are needed to perpetuate the family lineage, the practice of dowry to marry daughters, the reluctance to allow daughters to inherit property, not allowing mothers to pass on citizenship to the children they raised.

The only remedy for Nepal’s female genocide is to aim for universal enrolment for girls in schools and to revise the curricula to make them more gender-sensitive. Only about 15 per cent of the teachers in Nepal’s high schools are female.

But let those without sin cast the first stone: only 13 per cent of the members of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists are women. And although media is now more sensitive to gender issues, the entertainment media perpetuates the commodification, stereotyping, and stigmatisation of women. Female literacy may have empowered women, but the culture of male dominance in society is perpetuated.

As we reported last year, there is an ongoing rape epidemic in the eastern Tarai districts and the reason it has not abated is because instead of being punished, rapists are rewarded by being made to marry their victims. Gang rapes are performed and filmed with mobile phones to be copied and sold as porn. Trafficking of women for sexual slavery has increased and the only difference is that more and more girls are bought and sold within the country.

Let’s not ‘celebrate’ International Women’s Day on Saturday. Let’s mark it as a day of mourning for the way we mistreat women.

nepalitimes.com

Nepal's gender apartheid, #646
The war on women, #637
Rape for ransom, #635
Slaughter of our unborn daughters, #622

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

BETTER LATE
What a gloomy editorial (‘Better late than never’, #696). The writer attempts to lift the mood by comparing Nepal with Bangladesh, Thailand, and Ukraine and arguing that Nepalis aren’t doing too badly, but his argument falls flat on the face. You cannot compare countries that are so different. Although political infighting in Bangladesh is as bad as Nepal, its economy is moving ahead, exports are booming, and investors are pouring in. The tragedy with Nepal is that its political problems are so unnecessary and the people are being held hostage by selfish, greedy, short-sighted leaders. If Nepali politicians wanted to get rich quick, they should have built huge hydropower projects and new airports for the sake of kickbacks. Unfortunately, your leaders don’t even have the brains to be corrupt.

Najam

- Are we supposed to be happy that after a decade long armed conflict, four years of haggling over the new constitution, another two years of dillydallying over elections, we finally have a government? Our lives weren’t all that great even when we had a legitimate government, so why should we care about how many Janajatis, Madhesis, Bahuns, and Chhetris made it into this one-year Koirala government. First

provide jobs for all Nepalis and then talk about diversity, inclusion, and new constitution.

Sumeet Shrestha

MERCY OF MERCENARIES
I am going to withhold my judgment against Dil Shova Shrestha until the investigations are over (‘At the mercy of mercenaries’, Trishna Rana, #696). But what has bothered me the most about the Amako Ghar saga is the argument that since Dil Shova ji is doing good work taking care of homeless children and elderly citizens, she should be exempt from scrutiny, even more so because she is illiterate and was not aware of the standards that she had to maintain to run an old age home/ orphanage. Part of this is definitely the government’s fault because it has done little to monitor the thousands of residential care facilities around the country. I can basically house 10 children in a small room and call that charity. Something needs to change.

Anita

- There has been severe criticism of Dil Shova on social media about her mishandling of Amako Ghar. Some friends have lauded *Nagarik’s* ‘investigative journalism’. But it’s really sad to see people passing judgment on somebody’s character. It is clear that the woman is not as highly educated as some of us who have commented on her and not exposed to all the norms of successfully running an orphanage and

old age home. Besides, if the authorities knew all along that Amako Ghar was in a mess, why didn’t they take any action?

SR

SEWAGE CANAL
As a 61-year-old man who grew up in Kathmandu, I am very pleased to hear that the government is finally cleaning up the Bagmati River and trying to restore it to its former glory (‘The sewage canal’, Sunir Pandey, #696). However, seeing the abysmal success rates of past projects, I am skeptical about the Bagmati program. In the past two decades, Nepalis have been promised everything from 24 hours electricity and drinking water to trains for daily commute with little to show for. Let’s hope things are done differently this time round.

Rajib Shakya

- Swimming in the Bagmati would be fun. But first I would like to have regular supply of tap water so that I don’t have to buy jars upon jars of dirty mineral water every day. I hope the government delivers on its promise soon.

Shanker Sharma

- Water treatment and separating sewage are certainly good ideas, but why not adopt re-naturalisation of rivers, a process that is used all over the western world? Framing rivers in walls only increases the risk of flooding and other disasters. So I wonder why the

Asian Development Bank is financing a project for the construction of walls that will make floods even bigger downstream during the monsoon and drain Kathmandu of the last bit of water during the dry season? There must be a well-kept secret behind this scheme because common sense dictates that the river be kept slow and wide and no more walls, houses, and streets be built, which would seal even more surface in the Valley. I really hope there are public discussions about the benefits and potential harms of the project before it is too late.

Catrin Froehlich

- I hope the Nepali government will learn from the recent floods in the UK. The British government ignored the advice of environmentalists to dredge the rivers in time and it is doling out huge amounts of taxpayers’ money in compensation. Unfortunately, the puppet leaders of Nepal, who have a lot to gain in commissions, might not listen to professional opinion either.

Yam Gurung

RURAL REVOLUTION
Farmers’ cooperatives have enabled women to handle their own businesses and become self-sufficient (‘Rural revolution’, Tsering Dolker, #696). As a result, both men and women are now generating income for their families and balancing out the responsibilities. The benefits of cooperatives are evident and should be encouraged throughout

Nepal, however they need to function within a more structured mechanism.

Shristi Gajurel

- If cooperatives and farmers in rural Nepal are doing so well then why are thousands of young people leaving the country every day? We need to remember that seed money alone isn’t going to uplift poor Nepalis. I bet the farmers are spending a large chunk of their earnings on diesel for generators and buying seeds and fertilisers in the monsoon. Also they are forced to sell their crops in the local market for very low prices. It’s time for Nepalis to move away from agriculture and for the government to prioritise the manufacturing sector which will boost the local and national economy.

Sapana Thapa

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #697

Q. What do you make of the size of the new cabinet?

Total votes: 332

Adequate 71.1%

Undersized 16.3%

Don't know/can't say 12.7%

Weekly Internet Poll # 698. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Which of the following will happen first?





HARIZ BAHARUDIN

In 2006 Nepal passed the Citizenship Act, which guaranteed Nepali citizenship to children born to a Nepali mother or a Nepali father. This move



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

fulfilled/satisfied international covenants, was lauded internationally, and seen as a victory by Nepali women's rights activists. However, in 2012 the Constituent Assembly

members drafted a new provision, which stated that Nepali citizenship would be granted only to those who can prove that their mother and father are Nepali citizens.

An estimated 4.3 million Nepalis lack citizenship rendering them stateless. They cannot register birth, buy or sell land, acquire passports, open bank accounts, sit for high school examinations, register to vote, or even get a mobile phone card without citizenship papers.

Arjun Kumar Sah, 24, was born in Nepal to a Nepali mother and Indian father and

Macho nationalism

A Nepali man can marry anyone and his child will be Nepali, but if a Nepali woman marries a foreigner her child can be denied citizenship

has lived in the country all his life. When Sah turned 16 he applied for citizenship, but was told that he couldn't because his father is not Nepali. When the Citizenship Act passed, Sah went back to apply through his mother's name but was denied again. Early last year Sah filed a writ in the Supreme Court against Nepal's Home Ministry, District Administration Office, and the Prime Minister's Office demanding citizenship through mother. The SC asked them to furnish reasons why Sah was denied citizenship, but nine months later Sah hasn't got a reply.

If a Nepali man marries a foreign woman, their children get citizenship based on descent. However, when a Nepali woman marries a foreigner, their children can only get naturalised citizenship. The role and identity of a woman appear not to matter. A Nepali man can marry anyone and his child will be Nepali, but if a woman marries a foreigner her child can be denied citizenship.

Deepti Gurung is a mother of two daughters. She wants to register their birth so they can become citizens, but every time she is at the local ward office or at the Chief District Officer's (CDO) office, they ask her to identify the father. The father abandoned them

when they were young and Gurung raised her children herself. The CDO has the sole authority to decide who gets citizenship.

Most Nepalis denied citizenship live in the Tarai where marriages across the open border are common, especially among the underprivileged. The state's suspicions and ultra-nationalistic fears about Indian men marrying Nepali women and claiming citizenship are at the root of the discrimination. The number of stateless Nepalis is growing every year in a chain reaction because parents without citizenship are bearing children.

Stateless Nepalis are vulnerable to threats, extortion, and exploitation every step in their lives. They become victims especially when they want to migrate to work, as many do because of the doors for proper jobs and education are shut in their own country.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly is supposed to draft a new statute within 2014 and this is the right time to set right this historical injustice and the state's violation of the human rights of its citizens. The place to start is to treat all Nepalis as equal: children of Nepali fathers and Nepali mothers should

have equal right to citizenship.

Nepal's officialdom as well as elected members of the CA should get over their paranoia over Nepal losing its sovereignty because Indian men

marry our women. The third order of business is to dilute the dictatorial and arbitrary powers vested on the CDO over citizenship by forming independent citizenship committees. Then there are the cultural norms of our patriarchal society where parents are reluctant to let daughters inherit property, which has a bearing on the citizenship debate

The 4.3 million stateless Nepalis, many of them women, never bothered to apply for citizenship papers because the district capital is so far away, or they are intimidated by the cumbersome process, and are not aware that it is their right to have the papers. But the real root of the citizenship problem lies in our macho nationalism. 🇳🇵



nepalitimes.com

Mother country, #608
State of limbo, #590
Stateless in their motherland, #563



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FROM CABIN 16-17

Nanda Prasad and Ganga Maya Adhikari are on the 134th day of their fast-unto-death at Bir Hospital, being kept alive through a protein tube to the neck, but they have not been visited by representatives of Western embassies, international human rights organisations, the UN, and OHCHR.



COMMENT
Kanak Mani Dixit

The couple is protesting the brutal murder in 2004 of their son, Krishna Prasad Adhikari, a 16-year-old schoolboy who had nothing to do with the conflict.

The killing cannot be considered 'political' just because the perpetrator was a Maoist. The ruling by the Supreme Court as well as OHCHR's own handbook on application of the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Nepal under international standards both indicate that there is no option but to apply the criminal justice system on this case.

Even if the legality and process were unclear to some, it would still seem the duty of the international community to visit the couple on the grounds of sheer compassion. All the Adhikaris demand is: our son was murdered, we want the perpetrators and others involved to be identified and prosecuted. Having sought justice for nine long years and having been inhumanely treated by the police and state, they came to the conclusion that the only way to get justice was through a satyagraha.

The couple has refused to heed the continuous plea of activists that they need to remain alive to see justice done and end their hunger strike. But such is the level of the couple's scepticism about



BIKRAM RAI

What could explain the international community's disinterest in addressing wartime excesses?

the ability and commitment of the police, state administration, politicians, and rights activists, that they are unwilling to take food in the absence of arrest and credible prosecutions against the accused.

The newly formed parliament is slowly taking up the matter, the topmost levels of bureaucracy is exercised. One can make out that police has not shown due diligence and is lagging in investigations. Well-known civil society activists have been unconcerned, never bothering to visit Cabin 16-17 of Bir Hospital where the Adhikari couple is kept under intravenous medication and

protein-feed.

Neglect of the demand for justice will leave a permanent open wound on the body politic and the cumulative pain of the victims can rise to explosive proportions over time – just remember the events, Bhairabnath and Bardia disappearances, Doramba and Madi mass killings, and the names, Maina Sunar, Muktinath Adhikari, Guru Prasad Luintel, Arjun Bahadur Lama, Dekendra Thapa.

The international community is duty bound to support any society that is challenged on human rights and democracy. While engagement

with constitution writing or the day-to-day conduct of politics would be considered interference on sovereign affairs, not so actions to protect human rights and pluralism. Over the decade of conflict and the transitional period of eight years since, Western embassies and aid agencies were quite involved in matters of human rights and democracy. They supported the National Human Rights Commission, forensic investigations, investigation teams such as Doramba, visiting Bardia to study the disappearance of Tharu youth by the state security, and so on.

Could it be that the aid agencies and embassies believe they would be perceived as 'playing politics' in showing concern for the

DIRECT LINE: The Adhikari couple is being kept alive through intravenous medication and protein feed in Bir Hospital since they began their fast-unto-death in October 2013.

Adhikaris? They may think that the Maoists will derail the constitution-writing, but the need for justice for wartime excesses by either side must be investigated and prosecutions carried out.

Nepali society, especially after being placed back on the democratic track by the November 2013 elections, is not so feeble that it cannot stand up for justice and challenge the positioning of the Maoists and state security forces, including the Nepal Army, on transitional justice. Besides, what kind of constitution do we expect to be written if the drafters cannot even stand up to those who have raped, murdered, disappeared, and tortured?

However, the lack of international concern about the Adhikaris probably has little to do with worries about the constitution-writing and more with fatigue about human rights in Nepal. In the end, it is the Nepali people who should be up to the fight for justice (and they are), but a little bit of interest of the world community would help.

Energised by the need to move on to revive development and economic growth, the major donors and embassies seem to be putting human rights matters on low burn. If true, this is unfortunate. The people want growth and prosperity, but they also know that any attempt at economic growth conducted in the absence of rule of law, human rights, accountability, and activation of criminal justice system will not be sustainable. There is direct line from Cabin-16-17 at Bir Hospital to a prosperous Nepali future. 🇳🇵

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Justice denied, #684
Just want justice, #658



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Ncell Nepal Premier League, the first of its kind cricketing event is all set to take place in April. The tournament is being organised by Cricket Association of Nepal in partnership with Zohra Sports Management and is sponsored by Ncell. Six teams will compete in T20, 50 overs, and two-day formats played over two months.



Bottoms up

Shree Mahakali Wine recently launched Qasson Mead Wine in the market. "The wine is made from the Muscat Hamburg grapes and sweetened with fresh orange blossom honey," reads the press release.

Dream ride

United Traders Syndicate, the sole authorised distributor of Toyota vehicles in Nepal, has announced the launch of the 11th Generation Toyota Corolla. "The new Corolla comes with an all-new exterior and interior design," read the press release.



Re-appointment

Former Miss Nepal Sadichha Shrestha will continue as Everest Bank's brand ambassador after the bank renewed her contract for one more year.

Spreading wings

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Saving Brazil's blonde monkeys

KUNDA DIXIT
in POCO DAS ANTAS, BRAZIL

Deep in the rainforest of Brazil's Atlantic coast, there is a sudden rustle in the canopy high above. There are flashes of orange in a golden blur against the dappled sky above. They look like birds, but are actually a family of the endangered golden lion tamarin monkeys foraging on the tops of the trees.

Luis Paulo Ferraz peers through a pair of binoculars and identifies the family, he knows the individual juveniles and their parents by name. As the Executive Secretary of the Golden Lion Tamarin Association, it is his responsibility to protect this marmoset species, which has been rescued from the brink of extinction.

The frolicking tamarins remind Ferraz, who spent three years in Nepal in the early 2000, of the red pandas that are also canopy dwellers in the Langtang National Park. "There are similar challenges to saving them," he says, "if you want to

save the flagship species you have to save its habitat and in doing so you preserve a lot of other living things."

The tiny squirrel-sized animals are endemic to southeastern Brazil, but only five per cent of the Atlantic rainforest that used to be their habitat remains today. The species nearly became extinct, its numbers plummeting to less than 200 in the wild 30 years ago. Today, thanks to a model conservation effort, the monkeys have rebounded to 1,700, but cling to shrinking forests north of Rio de Janeiro. There are another 500 tamarins in zoos around the world and there is a program to reintroduce some of them back into the wild in Brazil.

The threat to the blonde monkeys isn't as much from predators or poaching, but loss of habitat. What remains of the rainforest is fragmented and the animal's gene pool is shrinking. And while the Amazon gets all the attention and resources, funding to save the coastal jungles and the pressure on land are serious problems.

"If it is so difficult to



KUNDA DIXIT

NO MONKEY BUSINESS: The golden lion tamarin is rescued from the brink of extinction in Brazil's rainforest by protecting what is left of its habitat.

fundraise for the tamarin, imagine what it must be like to raise money to save frogs," explains Ferraz, who says the monkey is an umbrella species whose protection will help safeguard what is left of Brazil's Atlantic rainforest.

The tamarins are now on Brazil's R\$20 currency notes

and conservationists are lobbying to get the monkey nominated as the official mascot of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

The Association needs to generate awareness so that it can raise money to build migration corridors for the animals to connect the fragmented Atlantic forest. A new highway now threatens to cut the Poço das Antas Biodiversity Reserve in half and there is a proposal to build forested bridges above the road so the tamarins can pass.

That is a stopgap measure,

but the real good news may be Rio state's decision to plant millions of trees and save more of the Atlantic rainforest and the tamarin's habitat.

Says Ferraz: "In Brazil and Nepal, the challenges are the same: how to use the celebrity status of the flagship species to save enough of the habitat to protect the ecosystem and preserve biodiversity." 📺

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UPPER CRUST

Alfresco restaurant at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza has introduced a special pizza menu this spring.

With Chef Expertise curating your order, relish not only Italian but also American, Arabic, Australian, Chinese, Danish, French, Mexican, Swedish and Thai flavours in the delicious toppings.

Sample authentic Neapolitan pizzas, an Australian Classic, Swedish thin crust pie pizza gotaland Danish pizza and 14 others if you feel like a culinary adventure.

Alfresco Restaurant, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Runs till 9 March



THE RIGHT NOTE

For connoisseurs of all ages and persuasion, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory presents a free music education programme.

1. Master classes and workshops by James Miley and team from Williamette University, USA, on guitar, piano, bass, drums, wind instruments, and improvisation.
24 to 28 March, 2014, 8am to 9pm

2. Training for music teachers by Mike Nord, music educator at Williamette University.
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12 March, a talk by Arun Rana, Tek Gurung, and Tika Ram Adhikari on aquatic resources conservation and adventure fishing. *3 to 5pm*

12 to 15 March, an expo of organic farming technologies, services and produce. *11am to 6pm, 9849519933*

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*Women in concert,
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AWARDS





Road to Equality

If women are to play an equal role in politics, change needs to take place at the grassroots level. That was the main lesson from Tuesday's seminar (*pic, right*) on 'Electoral System and Women's Representation in Nepal: Need for Reform?' organised by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Demo Finland, UN-Women and Embassy of Finland.

Representatives from political parties, civil society, and Constituent Assembly members shared their views on how to ensure women's equal participation in Nepal at the day-long session.

In an opening session, Under Secretary of State from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Anne Sipilainen said that Nepal has a good reason to be proud of having 30 per cent of women representation in the Constituent Assembly.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel advocated that women should be



given more opportunities to participate in local development processes. "By grooming them at the local level, they can learn to compete with men as equals and then go on to represent at a national level," explained Pokharel.

Having achieved almost 50 per cent of women's representation in parliament under the Proportional Representation (PR) system, Finland sets a great example for others to follow. Female politicians in Finland have also enjoyed appointments in key positions including Tarja Halonen who served as president from 2000-2012. In contrast, only 10 women made it to Nepal's second CA under direct elections.

"One of the biggest challenges is overcoming

society's patriarchal mindset, which often results in discrimination towards women," said Finnish politician Heidi Hautala, who is a member of the Green Party. "There also needs to be consistent efforts to train female politicians. Hence, less focus should be on campaigning and more on ensuring that women have the skills to design sound policies when serving for office and the authority to enforce policies."

The session also noted the importance of legislative measures like the temporary quota system in giving the under-represented sex a chance to run for elections. Strict enforcement of such measures will ensure that equally competent women are made visible and heard and send a

Finland sets a great example in gender equality for others to follow





2



3



4



5



6

strong message to society to embrace female leaders. However, there are several barriers that limit women from actively participating in politics Hautala pointed out. Even today in the villages, boys go to school, while girls have a hard time breaking out of the confines of the four walls of their home. This is in stark contrast to Finland, which places a heavy emphasis on education. All Finnish children are entitled to free pre-primary education. A good first step for the Nepali government would be to provide equal access to education, so that women can be informed. She also thinks that there should be more investment in the quality of secondary and tertiary education and men should shoulder the household responsibilities equally. “Women need to believe in themselves and believe they are equally capable,” said Hautala. She recounted a visit to the community forestry where the female guides failed to speak up even though they had a rich knowledge of the forests. “The women were not used to having their say and felt that their voice didn’t matter.”

Lack of financial resources is another limiting factor that prevents women from taking part in elections. Political parties prefer to spend resources and funding on male candidates over female ones. As IDEA regional director for Asia and Pacific, Leena Rikkila Tamang suggests, state funding could go a long way in giving women the much-needed financial support. “Nepal has already pioneered in the region for having 33 per cent female representation in our first constituent assembly, which is not a bad position to be in however, the fear is to maintain and upgrade,” explained Khimlal Devkota of UCPN (Maoist), one of the speakers at the seminar.

100 Years of Women’s Voices

To celebrate Finnish women’s journey to equality, the National Council of Women of Finland has produced an exhibition called ‘100 Years of Women’s Voices and Action in Finland.’ In 2006, Finland celebrated the 100th anniversary of a pioneering parliamentary reform that introduced equal political rights for women. The new law, passed on 1 June, 1906 made Finnish women the first women in the world to become members of parliament. The exhibition presents various historical milestones and photographs that feature women in various spheres of society, from homes, offices, social work, and politics. One of the features is a gallery of remarkable Finnish women, leading up to the country’s former president, Tarja Halonen. Says IDEA Gender Program Coordinator Deepti Khakurel, “Nepali women can reflect on Finnish women’s struggle and be inspired from this exhibition.”

100 Years of Women’s Voices
11-15 March
Siddhartha Art Gallery

1 WOMEN AND WORK
The White Ribbon Union pressed for 10 per cent of female representation in the police force. This picture shows participants of the 1939 women’s police force.

2 WOMEN AND THE DAILY ROUTINE
Women’s organisations have played a significant role in spreading information about healthy food, an important agenda of the 1950s the White Ribbon Union.

3 WOMEN AND THE DAILY ROUTINE
In the 1940s, chairwoman of the Finnish Gymnastics Federation Kaarina Kari drew up a plan for physical training of expectant mothers.

4 WOMEN AND WORK
In 1984 the Finnish airline Finnair employed its first woman co-pilot.

5 WOMEN AND WELFARE
Over 200,000 Finnish women were engaged in voluntary work in the Lotta organisation (the Women’s Auxiliary Services), which was active between 1921 and 1944 in the last war.

6 WOMEN AND WORK
Riitta Uosukainen, the Speaker of Parliament demonstrates her favourite Kalevala Jewelry.

7 WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY
Dr Maikki Friberg (1861–1927) was an important role model for Finnish women and an advocate for peace.

8 WOMEN AND WELFARE
A children’s home run by the Association of Kalevala Women.

FROZEN

The Oscars have come and gone, all the usual suspects have won, among them the widely beloved *Frozen* – a long overdue smash animation hit from the Walt Disney Animation Studio (not to be confused with Pixar which the Disney corporation acquired



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

in 2006). And so this week I'd like to review this gently feminist, lovingly drawn film that breaks away from the usual Disney paradigm – putting forward a slightly different alternative to finding true love as the be all and end all.

Which is not at all to say that the film therefore robs us of a rather good love story – quite the opposite in fact. There are several charming, albeit unconventional, love stories in *Frozen* and one fairly straightforward one that will capture the hearts of every, even the very secret, romantics.

The story begins adorably with Elsa (Idina Menzel) and Anna (Kristen Bell), two little princesses who grow up playing together carefree in their oblivious childhood, watched over by their doting parents. When Anna, the youngest and the livelier,

wakes up her older sister Elsa to play – the two sneak off to make use of Elsa's magical powers which allow her to create ice and snow. In the midst of harmless fun, Elsa accidentally shoots some of her power into Anna, causing her to lose consciousness. The King and the Queen enter horrorstruck and just in time to rush Anna to the benevolent Troll King delightfully called Grand Pabbie and played by the wonderful voice of Ciarán Hinds, who is able to save Anna but in the process causes her to forget the course of the evening's events and the fact of her sister's magical powers, which are deemed uncontrollable due to the incident.

The girls grow up and apart in a marvelously planned out montage where Anna cannot quite

understand why Elsa is just not the same. When their parents die at sea during a storm their mutual alienation is complete.

There are many adventures that follow and personally I much preferred the second half of the film to the first, mainly due to the entrances of Olaf (Josh Gad) a hilarious carrot nosed snowman, a reluctant young man named Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), and his reindeer Sven (who doesn't speak, but is delightfully drawn with a distinct personality) all of whom join Anna in a quest to save Elsa from herself and the eternal winter that she brings upon Arendelle in her distress after her magical powers are outed at her very own coronation.

Frozen is a merry distraction for many adults even while it is a great teaching tool for the very young who are often fed with the honeyed spoon that encourages sickly happy endings with two lovers kissing. Instead of just pure sugar, though this particular film provides surprising turns of events, a lot of bursting into song (a bit too much for this writer's liking), but more importantly portrays beautifully a very deep and real storyline that shows that the bonds between sisters, when nurtured, can be stronger than almost any other thing in life – a warming and worthy message to hang on to for Women's Day. 🇳🇵



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HAPPENINGS



TWITTER

LONG TIME: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala (*right*) meets Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (*left*) during the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit in Myanmar on Monday.



HARIZ BAHARUDIN

SUPER WOMEN: Recipients of Celebrating Womanhood Navadevi Awards pose for a photo during the presentation ceremony at Hotel Soaltee on Tuesday.



GAGANSHILA KHADKA

GET SET GO: An athlete takes part in a long jump during the 5th President Running Shield Tournament at Tamghas, Gulmi on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

HAPPY NEW YEAR: A man offers his prayers at Boudhanath on the occasion of Gyalpo Losar, the Tibetan and Sherpa New Year, on Sunday.

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The Vanishing Act: Stories

Prawin Adhikari's debut set of nine short stories comprise of an array: there is *The Boy from Banauti* and *Fortune* set in and around the author's home village of Abu Khairani, others like *The Game* and *Stamp and Signature* depict the reality of life in the heart of Kathmandu, and some like *The Case of Carolyn Flint* and the titular *The Vanishing Act* relay the experience of a young Nepali man, inclined towards writing and observing, living abroad fresh out of college, susceptible to romance in every form.

As with most collections and with the short story form (which is a particular art on its own to perfect), some stories are weaker than others. That being said, most stories are really quite compelling, closely observed, and showing a genuine understanding of human nature and people's motivations, a capacity essential to every writer. Even the weaker stories such as *Mayapuri* which tells the tale of a

little boy's yearning for a young bride has something particular to offer in its detailed description of childhood voyeurism and lust even as it deteriorates due to a slight self-indulgence on Adhikari's part in the latter half.

The best stories are *The Boy from Banauti* with its descriptions of an errant school boy's day tripping after bunking school, making his way to the banks of the Daraundi River. His ambling walk there, the scenic rural and river setting, boyhood mischief, and group shenanigans are all charmingly described, crystallising the story in our imaginations. *Fortune* too is similarly strong due to Adhikari's adeptness in portraying the evolution of a modest, quiet village that becomes a bustling concrete town due to the inflow of people to build a dam.


In both *The Game* and *Stamp and Signature*, we come across young couples in Kathmandu struggling to make ends meet - dealing with the minutiae of



The Vanishing Act: Stories
By Prawin Adhikari
Rupa Publications 2014
Price Rs 400
240 pages

married life in the big city. The changing fabric of society in and outside of the Valley in this past decade is subtly enfolded into these narratives, the characters drawn in the stories becoming real and in some cases quite dear to us.

With a slight but welcome departure in style, *The Case of Carolyn Flint* and *The Vanishing Act* both deal with elements of the surreal and slightly magical, showing Adhikari's range and the potential he has to use his words to portray not just the life of Nepalis and the diaspora, but to create riveting stories which have the ability to transcend a particular genre and capture a wider readership.

The compassion and intense observation with which these stories have been written, the fluidity of the writing, which is all the more astonishing for its occasional lapses, all go to show that Prawin Adhikari is at the threshold of a writing career with clear promise. 

Sophia Pande

NATSSUL



ALL PICS: TO HEE MIN

As the most popular tourist destination in Nepal, Pokhara is a melting pot of food from across the globe. Walking along Lakeside leaves one spoilt for options and sometimes choosing what to eat can be quite exasperating.

When my friends and I decided to eat Korean food one evening, we took our chances and went into the first place we saw after stepping out of our guesthouse. We ended up in the dimly-lit Natssul Restaurant and Bar, which we later discovered is owned by a Korean couple.

The interior of Natssul is reminiscent of the establishments in Seoul's Hongdae district. Soft music plays in the background, amidst black walls lined with photographs and art pieces - giving the whole place a very cool vibe. We felt like we were in Korea again and we were hopeful the food would be as authentic as the ambience.

In true Korean fashion, the restaurant generously provides customers free side dishes and tea, which are meant to complement the mains. The amount of free hors d'oeuvre is quite overwhelming though and one must be careful not to eat too much of the kimchi or fried bean sprouts before the food arrives.

A Korean staple is fried chicken (Rs 700), so we obviously had to try Natssul's version. The dish, however, did not taste authentic at all. It was regrettable that the measly chicken pieces seemed hastily cut and navigating the bones was an unnecessary hassle. This would have been forgivable if the batter that the chicken was coated in was nice, which it was unfortunately not. Sadly nothing special about the bird.

Thankfully the other dishes were much better and Natssul's rendition of bibimbap (Rs 480) could do no wrong. The great portion of rice, chunks of buff,




vegetables, and egg that sizzles in the stone bowl looked almost too good to ruin by mixing - but that was what had to be done. The textures and taste of all the ingredients blended together and tasted great. The rice, however, tends to get crispy if the bibimbap is not mixed well so make sure you stir everything properly if you don't like it that way.

Similarly, the bulgogi (Rs 500) at Natssul is equally satisfying. Served with fluffy white rice, the beef broth was the perfect dish to have on that cold rainy day at Lakeside. There was so much beef in the bulgogi, we had to all share

to finish it. Eating the dish with rice alone seemed quite plain though, but thankfully there were many side dishes to go around the table.

We also ordered japchae (Rs 450), a dish of glass noodles cooked together with black sauce and a myriad of other ingredients. Although it looked quite unappetising at first, the tangy taste of the black sauce was quite delicious, especially when paired with the noodles.

Korean food has managed to carve quite an identity in Nepal and there is no shortage of Korean restaurants around. While the authenticity fluctuates

a lot, Natssul is - thanks in large part to its owners - a place that is committed to be as true to Korea as possible. Not bad for an accidental find. 

Hariz Baharudin

How to get there: walk west along the Phewa Lake until you get near Basundara Park. Natssul is located on the right side of the road, with a big sign that is hard to miss.

Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a 





Father of tropical medicine

We now know that various species of mosquitoes transmit many parasitic and viral diseases. But Scottish physician Patrick Manson (1844-1920) was the first scientist to prove the link between mosquitoes and illnesses. In the 1800s, the English were believed that the overpowering odour of sewage from the River Thames (similar to the stench from Bagmati River today), led to



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

diseases like cholera, typhoid, and plague. Even scientists thought diseases were caused by miasma (bad smell). Manson's discovery that mosquitoes transmitted the organism that caused filariasis (which may lead to elephantiasis or hatipaila in Nepali) was, therefore, nothing less than revolutionary. He was also the

first person to hypothesise that malaria was caused by mosquitoes and not miasma. Manson, who is considered the father of tropical medicine, started his career in Formosa, Taiwan where he studied filariasis. His seminal book, *Tropical Diseases*, is the bible in the field. Even after returning to the UK, Manson continued to pursue the discipline. He gave regular talks on the diseases encountered in the East. British medical personnel on leave in the 19th and early 20th century were made to attend his lectures. These were probably the first continuing medical lectures (CME) that doctors now have to participate in order to keep their medical certification up-to-date. The idea was that learning about Manson's experiences would help in the prevention and management of diseases in the 'servants of the empire'. Diseases that are common in Nepal even today formed

the basis of many of Manson's lectures. They ranged from malaria, amebic live abscess, elephantiasis, typhoid fever to a whole host of other common problems such as worm infestations and other bacterial infections. Regular trade, efficient administration, and agricultural production were severely hampered by tropical diseases. And the bureaucracy in the UK felt that tropical medicine was an essential component of British economic development in the tropics. Cynics called this 'colonial science'. Many of the tropical diseases of today were also present in Europe at the time of Manson. In fact, even William Shakespeare (1628-1688) was well aware of malaria in England. "He is so shak'd by the burning quotidian tertian that it is most lamentable to behold," writes Shakespeare in *The Life of King Henry V*. Fevers especially malaria are described in terms of how intermittently they appear (tertian fever is a kind of fever in malaria denoting the fevers appearance every 48 hours). But even if these tropical diseases were present in Europe at that time, the sheer scale of the problem in Asia and Africa was far greater. So even to protect British citizens serving the empire in faraway places, the bureaucracy decided to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and teaching skills of Manson. In 1897 Manson was appointed the medical officer to the Colonial Office. A school of tropical medicine in London was established. With the Scotsman at the helm, tropical diseases were now properly studied and this enhancement of knowledge also helped people in the regions where the disease emanated in the first place. Clearly, Manson so revolutionised the understanding and teaching of tropical diseases that its positive impact is felt even today.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

From A to O

Every year on 8 March, old men in stuffy suits cut ribbons, light lamps, present glossy reports on gender equality, and then enjoy a few pegs of Black Label for good measure. Even on the one day set aside to recognise women's achievements and uniqueness, it's the boys who have all the fun. Now Yantrick has had enough of this dull, drab state of affairs and wants to propose a rather racy celebration. Women spend a significant amount of our waking hours in self-loathing: we are too plump, too scrawny, our thighs too big, our arms too small, and our pimples too many. So this Saturday let's love ourselves, appreciate our bodies, and




"Once they're inside me I can't really feel them- but then again I know they're there."
"How does that feel," he asks?
"Strange good," I confess, blushing.

Anastasia Steele (*50 Shades of Grey*, pg 363)




explore. And as your trusted guide to everything techie, Yantrick has found perfect mate to keep you company over the weekend. Although not many will openly admit to it, but EL James' bestselling erotic trilogy was no doubt a guilty pleasure for millions of women (and men) around the globe. *50 Shades* was single-handedly responsible for climaxing the sales of the mysterious silver balls that Anastasia so titillatingly describes in the scene above. This neat arousal device - also known as Ben Wa balls, Kegel balls, Burmese balls, Venus balls, Orgasm balls - has been used by women for centuries. 1.5 inches in diameter, the insertable hollow balls are usually attached by a string and come in metal and rubber. Meant to be worn for several hours, they create subtle stimulation prolonging the tease leading to tantalising orgasms. The balls are also used for exercise to strengthen pelvic floor muscles. Some models come with a controller which allows you to set vibration speed. Clean the precious balls before and after each use and you are ready for long hours of incognito pleasure. Yantrick's verdict: both models (with or without controller) - Love Ball (Rs 2,100) and Secret Ball (Rs 3,300) - are available at Sweet Secret, the sex shop in New Road. So make a trip downtown soon.



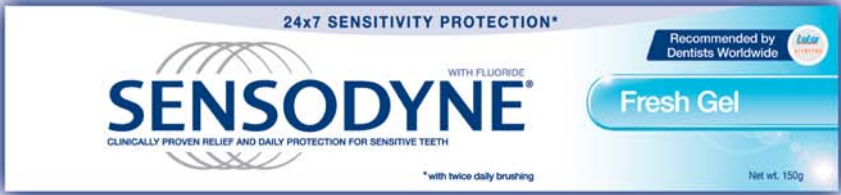
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LOCKING HORNS WITH THE BJP

From the Indian capital through the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, rural India, and decrepit towns Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal is on a campaign roadshow. This is his first foray into the Hindi heartland ahead of next month's general elections in India.

The AAP's UP convenor Sanjay Singh declared war on the menace of three Cs – corruption, communalism, corporate. Then he made the



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

surprise announcement that should BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi contest from Varanasi, as is being speculated, Kejriwal should fight the Lok Sabha election from there as well. Instantaneously, a deafening roar swept over the ground. Those sitting were on their feet,

fades. Yet, among its legion of supporters there are many who say their voting decision will ultimately depend on the candidates whom political parties will field.

Despite having been projected as a middle class party, AAP's appeal appears strongest among the urban lower classes/castes, the members of which still retain their rural roots. No wonder, the rhetoric of big business appropriating land, or the inflationary pressure on the economy arising from the government's decision to pay a higher price to the Ambanis for extracting gas have special resonance for this category. But beyond these economic ideas, they are pulled to the AAP to provide corruption-free governance and smashing of the network of privileges. It won't be surprising to find on the AAP's list of candidates in UP a fair sprinkling of lower class/caste people.

The most astonishing aspect of AAP's foray into



PTI

their arms held aloft, bursting out into that incomprehensible scream which unambiguously signifies approval and excitement. Late night, an eatery-owner, a self-avowed BJP voter for decades, thought it was audacious of Kejriwal to dare Modi and predicted it might alter the election scenario in UP in unforeseen ways.


Such predictions are based on the giant-slayer reputation that Kejriwal has acquired, having stumped a complacent Sheila Dikshit in her constituency. But then, Modi is no Dikshit. He looms over UP, dominating street-corner discussions and the public arena alike. There isn't a corner from where Modi doesn't stare at you, testifying to the lavish expenditure incurred on building him as the BJP's mascot.

The AAP is trying to target social categories in the UP. It has won support of some of the urban middle class, but this has limited appeal in the Hindi heartland, which is still in thrall to primordial identities. In urban UP, a substantial section of the middle class has been demonstrating an inclination towards the BJP, buying as much into Modi's development plank as into his Hindu persona, the memory of which never

UP is its appeal to Muslims, which is delighted by its attack on Modi. A team of AAP volunteers at a roadside kiosk outside Bareilly town claimed nearly 70 per cent of those who participate in the camps they hold belong to the Muslim community. There were other indicators as well – the reception accorded to Kejriwal was arguably the warmest in the Muslim-dominated Moradabad and the induction of Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Rushaid and members of the Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys' Association into the party.


Inclination, however, doesn't necessarily translate into votes. In particular, Muslims rarely vote a party in large numbers which doesn't have the support of one or two dominant Hindu castes in rural India or doesn't stand a chance to vanquish the BJP.

It is to overcome the paucity of time, not to say of resources, AAP plans to risk fielding Kejriwal against Modi, believing the move could turn its admirers into voters. Yes, it could eat into the expanding BJP support base, but it could also fracture the anti-BJP vote to Modi's advantage. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com




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THEIR LADY EXCELLENCIES



There is so much hypocrisy in our society. Families want educated brides, but they can't be too educated. Just the right amount to be smart housekeepers.

MASHFEE BINTE SHAMS
BANGLADESH



Being a woman is an asset in the diplomatic community. It allows for more 'humanity' and more direct communications. The path to success depends very much on one's ambition, personality, and level of commitment.

MARTINE BASSEREAU
FRANCE



Most of the colleagues we meet are men and we tend to overlook the aspect of male bonding. Of course, we as women tend to make parallel networks among ourselves, but it's still a challenge to be taken seriously.

RENSJE TEERINK
EU

AYESHA SHAKYA

The new Nepal government has been heavily criticised for the lack of diversity in the cabinet, especially the fact that only two out of 21 ministers are women. But it is not just a problem in Nepal, the issue resonates globally.

Most countries have not attained 50 per cent female representation in government, legislature, or bureaucracy and there

many countries which are much worse than us. Even so, the representation of women in Nepal's diplomatic service reflects gross general gender imbalance at all levels of government.

In contrast, there are more women ambassadors in Nepal today than ever before. Five countries are represented in Kathmandu by female ambassadors: Denmark, Bangladesh, the European Union, France, and Thailand. In addition, the Nepal representatives of UNICEF and UNDP are also women. Yet, despite their influence and seniority, the women

envoys admit to facing gender stereotyping in their careers.

"People are diplomatic and there are ways of expressing discrimination without saying it in words. If a woman is successful, it's regarded as an accident and not because you are qualified for it," explains Mashfee Binte Shams, the new Bangladesh ambassador to Nepal.

Leadership is seemingly associated with masculine expectations so when a woman is seen to take charge, there are more than a few eyebrows raised. France's ambassador, Martine Bassereau, says that even in Europe it is a challenge

for career women to prove that they are equal.

"Women are expected to prove themselves permanently without losing their feminine touch, their humanity, their elegance as well as entertain with panache," Bassereau told us. "Some people still believe that men are able to do the job better even if the women may have the same diploma and the same experience."

While there is proof that women in the workforce tend to be more productive, the movement to increase more gender diversity has flat-lined. Even in industrialised countries, women may enter

the workforce in similar proportions to men, but the numbers decrease substantially as they move up the career ladder. Only 25 per cent of the EU's ambassadorial positions abroad are filled by women.

Says Rensje Teerink, Head of the European Union delegation to Nepal: "The big challenge is still senior management positions. Women are very much under-represented in the European external service as far as managerial positions as well as head of positions are concerned."

Still, a quarter of European ambassadors being female is



march
International Women's Day

Running the house

MINA SHARMA

From 12 women in the 1999 parliament to 197 after the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, Nepal had taken a great leap forward in achieving gender parity at the highest levels of governance. Six years later, things have regressed. Out of over 6,000 candidates from 130 parties who registered for the First Past the Post race in November elections, about 600 were women. Only 10 won. A further 162 women made it to the assembly floor through the Proportional Representation system, giving them less than 30 per cent of seats.

While the number of women lawmakers has slumped, those elected remain just as passionate as their predecessors about making their collective voice heard and drafting a gender-friendly constitution.



SATISH POKHREL

ONSARI GHARTI MAGAR, UCPN (MAOIST), ROLPA-2
Former Maoist guerrilla
Onsari Gharti Magar was seven months pregnant when she fought in the battle of Pakhapani in Rolpa in 1999. Eleven days later, she gave birth to her daughter, while still recovering from injuries. With an infant on her back, Magar went back to the field four months later and took part in the attack on Ghartigau police station.

Magar is among the 10 women who secured seats in the parliament through direct polls. Last month, as the 36-year-old took the oath of secrecy as the vice chair of the CA, her journey from being a shy teenager to a fierce woman commander flashed before her eyes. She credits her success to her education, which was an immense struggle for her poor family.

"Education gave me the confidence to face the world

and break the shackles placed on me as a woman from a marginalised community," admits Magar. She believes that unless women have the same access to education as men, they will not be able to compete with them.

The war is long over, but Magar says she needs to hold onto her fighting spirit more than ever in a parliament where men outnumber women by a huge margin. Says Magar: "Nepali society is steeped in patriarchy, but we are ready to fight for equality and ensure that the new constitution guarantees our rights."

SUSHILA CHAUDHARY, NEPALI CONGRESS, DANG-2
Sushila Chaudhary has been active in local politics since 1997, slowly working her way to the top. Years of fighting for the rights of women and marginalised communities finally paid off when she won the CA elections last year.

Although small in number, women CA members are determined to make their voices heard and ensure that they draft a gender-friendly constitution

Seven female foreign envoys in Kathmandu are in stark contrast to the under-representation of women in Nepal's diplomatic service



In the past, women had to be 'more man than a man' to succeed. Things are definitely changing. Gender equality is an interesting discussion, but it has not stopped me in my tracks.

KIRSTEN GEELAN
DENMARK

I don't want to look like a man, I don't want to behave like a man. I want to behave like a strong woman. It's important to love your femininity and cherish it, doing so doesn't make you weak.

HANAA SINGER
UNICEF

Women's leadership style is different from men's, so we don't have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

SHOKO NODA
UNDP



KANTHONG UNAKUL
THAILAND

much better than Nepal which doesn't have a single woman ambassador at the moment. The deplorable representation of women in Nepal's diplomatic service can be linked to cultural and structural barriers.

On the other hand, Nordic countries fare far better than their counterparts mostly due to the implementation of social welfare policies, including one of the most generous and flexible parental leave system in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

"In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no

salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance," says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

To promote more women into leadership roles, organisations such as UNICEF and the EU in Nepal practice affirmative action in hiring women instead of men in cases when they are on par. The positive discrimination is seen as unfair by some, but the priority is to balance out the numbers first.

"Much more needs to be

done in Nepal, specifically in leadership positions. There has to be a supportive environment for their development and promotion especially during motherhood," says Hanaa Singer, UNICEF representative in Nepal.

Furthermore, organisations such as the UNDP have started a mentoring program for mid-career female staff.

"Our headquarters also monitors the gender parity of each office on a regular basis. To recruit qualified women is important, but to retain them is equally challenging. This requires efforts of the entire office to create an enabling

working environment," says Shoko Noda, country director of the UNDP in Nepal.

When Thai ambassador, Kanthong Unakul, first arrived in Nepal in 2012, the only other female ambassador was the Australian envoy, Susan Grace. She says she is glad there are now seven women ambassadors and heads of missions. However, the host country is falling way behind. Unless mechanisms for gender parity are put into place, Nepal's female representation in the international arena will continue to be skewed. 🇳🇵



DEVIKA GHARTI MAGAR

Although she now has to spend a lot of time in Kathmandu, the 45-year-old president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative, remains deeply committed to her hometown.

While party and government leadership has changed numerous times over the years, Chaudhary feels that women's involvement and status in national politics is still appalling. "Party workers don't attend our rallies because women are usually cash

strapped and the cadre feel they won't be well fed," she says. "Women haven't fared well in this country because we have been too tolerant of abuse and discrimination. Nobody is going to hand us our rights. We need to fight for it."



RISHIHEERAM KATTEL

SITA GIRI OLI,
UML, KASKI-4

When UML leader Sita Oli Giri won CA elections from Kaski-4, there were many people within

and outside the party who questioned her success. But the 46-year-old from Rivan VDC has remained unfazed by all the criticism and resentment that has come her way. "Ever since joining politics in the late 1980s, I have faced a lot of hostility specially from men," admits Giri.

She is encouraged by the provision of 33 per cent female representation in all the state apparatus, but feels that more can be done to make sure that there are greater number of women at decision-making levels. "Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked," says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan. 🇳🇵

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NO FLY ZONE

Kedar Dahal, *Karobar*, 4 March

कारोबार

Air ticket reservations for the spring trekking season in Nepal have taken a severe blow after the European Union blacklisted Nepal-based airlines in December 2013. A delegation from the EU audited local airline operators and Civil Aviation Authority Nepal (CAAN) last year after raising concerns over the country’s abysmal safety record for the first time in 2012. Following the directive, all 28 countries have warned their citizens to avoid flying Nepali airlines.

According to tour operators, reservations for trekking and city tours have decreased by 20 per cent. “Bookings for the Everest circuit have witnessed the biggest fall,” says Ramesh Dhamala, President of Trekking Agencies’ Association of Nepal.

Hotel reservations were close to 90 per cent during mid-March to May last year, but they are now down to a mere 35 per cent. “Tourism prospects were looking better after the November elections, but the EU ban will harm us in the long-term,” admits Prakash Shrestha, former president of Hotel Association Nepal, who also runs Machan Wildlife Resort in Chitwan. Shrestha feels that last month’s Nepal Airlines twin otter crash in Arghakhanchi (*pic, above*) might have further aggravated the situation. He hopes the government and concerned authorities will take immediate action to address the present aviation crisis and prevent the further decline of tourism in Nepal.

So long, Narayan

Salokya, *mysansar.com*, 5 March

मैजरो संसार

While his contemporaries are known to either grill interviewees or bore the audience by talking endlessly, BBC Media Action’s *Sajha Sawal*/host Narayan Shrestha made a name for himself as the smiling, polite interviewer who got the most out of his guests. Having travelled to 65 districts in the country, he reached out to Nepalis who have been regularly neglected by mainstream media and made sure their stories were heard in Kathmandu.

But Shrestha is now bidding farewell to his brain-child and will be recording the last episode at the end of March. “I have worked for seven years straight and sometimes I felt like things would never change. I want to take a break to study abroad and further my career,” he explains.



Shrestha was born in Ghyalchok, Gorkha where he attended a local government school. After SLC, he wanted to study science in college, but his family could not afford the fees, so he joined journalism instead. In hindsight, this proved to be a wise decision. He topped his college and won the Kantipur Journalism Prize. He then went on to work at Radio Sagarmatha and later became the host of *Aankhijhyal*, a TV show about sustainable development. But it was *Sajha Sawal* that made

him a household face among Nepalis.

Says Shrestha: “Over the years, I have met all sorts of people - at the market, in the bus, while lining up for petrol - who recognised me and gave a lot of affection, feedback, and suggestions.”

From a young age, Shrestha was curious about the world around him. He wanted to understand administration, politics, development, policy-making and was keen to meet people, government officials, even prime ministers to learn more about his country. “While working for *Sajha Sawal*, I found out how Nepal is truly run with Pashupatinath’s blessings,” he admits. “Streams are flowing downhill, but there is no one digging canals to irrigate.”

Although Shrestha isn’t quite sure how long he will remain out of the country, he still wants to maintain a connection back home through writing. But he isn’t the only one to take a break from *Sajha Sawal*. Recently, editor Dhruba Hari Adhikari also left because of ‘professional differences’ and his position is still vacant. Shrestha, however, maintains that the timing of the resignations is a mere coincidence and there is no dispute on his part.

Besides *Sajha Sawal*, BBC Media Action also ran two other projects called *Katha mitho sarangi ko* and *Sarangi ko bhalakusari*. These will be discontinued from July because of budget constraints.



अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 1 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“It’s not that people don’t like us. They wanted to teach us a lesson because we had lost our way.”

UCPN (Maoist) leader Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, *Naya Patrika*, 5 March

End VIP culture

Chandra Shekhar Adhikari, *Annapurna Post*, 3 March

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala has expressed grave dissatisfaction over the ‘VIP culture’ of bringing the city’s traffic to a standstill for politicians, ministers, dignitaries, and their security entourage. PM Koirala called on Chief Secretary Leela Mani Poudel after security forces stopped all vehicles while he was on his way to the airport on Sunday. “People always come first and their day-to-day-life should not be interrupted just because I am passing by



MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

that road,” Koirala told Poudel. The Chief Secretary informed him that it was the decision of the cabinet to control traffic in such a manner.

The prime minister was flying to Myanmar as the leader of the Nepali delegation to the third BIMSTEC Summit (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

BIMSTEC is an international organisation comprising of seven countries from South Asia and South East Asia that includes Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal. Sushil Koirala is also scheduled to meet with his counterparts from member countries and the opposition leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The meeting will deliberate on various issues relating to 14 priority areas identified under BIMSTEC cooperation, including trade and investment, energy, poverty alleviation, transport and infrastructure, agriculture etc and will take some key decisions to improve regional cooperation and make collaboration more effective and productive. Nepal will assume the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC following the summit.



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Lessons from Kiev

Jhalak Subedi, Nepal, 2 March

नेपाल

Four months after demonstrators first protested against President Viktor Yanukovich and his paramilitary forces for refusing to sign on to EU policies, Ukraine's capital Kiev finally looks peaceful. But the conflict is hardly over: half the country is celebrating Yanukovich's ousting, while the other half is seething in discontent. And amidst all this, foreign forces are happily playing a geopolitical tug-of-war at Ukraine's expense.

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union fell apart. It was geographically the largest country in Europe with fertile agricultural land, untapped coal mines, industries, as well as the centre of a medieval Slavic civilisation. Despite



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these opportunities, independence has been more of a burden. To its east is titanic Russia, whose rulers long for the Soviet Union. From the west, furthering its borders and influence, is the EU, more concerned about Vladimir Putin than about the financial crises among its members. Kiev, under direct influence from international powers, now looks like a war zone. Ukrainians are more than willing to tear their country along the Dnieper River and the only thing remaining for the power players is to provide impetus through bloodshed.

Nepal is no different from Ukraine because we too are caught between two equally proud and shrewd powers. And the recent violence is reminiscent of our own 10-year conflict and post-1990 upheaval. We know from our past experience that a country will never find peace as long as its leaders kowtow to foreign influence. Instead we can learn from Ukraine's other mistake: whenever a directly elected president tried to centralise power, the citizens handed back control to the parliament. This disproves the notion that a 'strong' president is needed in an unstable country.

Ukraine has continuously experimented with constitution writing and amendments, but it still isn't anywhere close to a prosperous nation. The lesson for us is that a constitution will not guarantee anything as long as the political elites are influenced by foreign powers and interpret the document to fit their purposes. Let's hope Nepal doesn't have to suffer like Ukraine. But for that to happen, our politicians need to look beyond the rat race for portfolios and lucrative posts.



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The more asinine sex

Although us male asses are supposed to be from Mars and those of the female persuasion are supposed to be from Venus, space robots that have been looking under rocks on the surface of the Red Planet these past weeks have found no traces of primitive masculine life forms there. Perhaps if NASA’s quest for intelligent life in our current solar system had concentrated on Venus it would have met with more success. Anyway, the good news is that space scientists have now found proof of water on Mars, although no traces of it have yet been discovered in the Sanepa area.



Back here on Planet Earth we are getting ready to mark another Intergalactic Women’s Day and it is time to pay tribute to the longstanding struggle of women from all walks of life for equal rights with their not-so-better halves. If men can make complete asses of themselves, it is argued, then women should also have the right to make she-asses of their good selves. This is what gender equality is all about. Over the ages, in the arena of behaving like idiots, it was us men who enjoyed an unfair, but well-deserved, monopoly. But it was never pre-ordained by the Creator which sex should have more morons (although the Almighty seems to have a say on which morons should have more sex). So, if women too want to be as idiomatic as us men, then where is the harm?

Having had a headstart, members of the male species have an unjust advantage in the race to be the more asinine sex. Women have a

lot of catching up to do, but given perseverance, commitment, and determinism they can be as idiosyncratic as us, if not more. Some mama’s boys may have their egos slightly dented when they see women overtaking them in the long march towards mediocrity, but they should take solace in the fact that imitation is the best form of flattery.



What would be more delightful than to see women civil servants mimicking men as they also squeeze zits in public while sunning themselves on the balcony of the Department of Women and Labour?



Ever since cave men dragged cave women by the hair and chewed mastodon entrails with their mouths open, right down to the modern industrial age where men still haven’t learnt to stow their toilet seats in an upright position during takeoff and landing, us he-men have been rightly called the ‘stronger’ sex. Speaking of which, a recent survey has found that men, on average, think about sex 23

hours a day and the remaining one hour they spend in extracurricular activities such as squeezing aforementioned zits in the Department of Manpower during which time they don’t think about anything in particular.



So, if wimmin want to play catch-up with us chaps, they will have to take up some manlike hobbies, such as:

- Not just complain that you have a headache, but become headaches yourselves
- Learn how to not communicate and give the spouse The Silent Treatment
- Let your eyes rove all over the member of the opposite sex, taking time to closely inspect the front fender and the boot
- Use the Holi holiday to go on an all-out offensive against the other sex and blame it on the alcohol
- Treat anyone who has the nerve to overtake you on the Lajimpat uphill as a collective challenge to your gender
- When lost in a strange city, never ask for directions to prove that you’d rather be lost than found

These simple behaviour changes will allow even the most feminine woman to be as macho as the hairiest of us testosterone-filled numbskulls who are proud to call ourselves he men.

The Ass



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