



## The CA is 'bugged'

The second Constituent Assembly is consistently in the news, but not for the reason it was elected: to write the country's new constitution.

The latest negative news is that when CA members started getting itches and rashes, it was discovered that the chairs in the main hall and the committee rooms were infested with bed bugs. "At least this will keep them awake," quipped a cartoon character in a Nepali newspaper. That was a reference to pictures published in newspapers showing a near-empty CA with even the members present all snoring away.

CA members have come under blistering attack in the media for pressuring Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat to dole out Rs 50 million in pork barrel funds in the new budget

for their constituencies, up from Rs 1 million currently. Even though the CA is still missing 26 nominated members, the total outlay would be a whopping Rs 9.1 billion. Oblivious to the public mood, 223 CA members on Wednesday presented another list of demands: tax-free vehicles imported, increases in house allowance and body guards.

Cumulatively, the demands

have tarnished the image of the CA members, spreading the public perception that they are not serious about meeting the deadline for writing the constitution by January 2015. This has added to the general sense of drift in government and the bureaucracy, with many urgent appointments and decisions pending.

### CONTEMPT OF FREEDOM

EDITORIAL

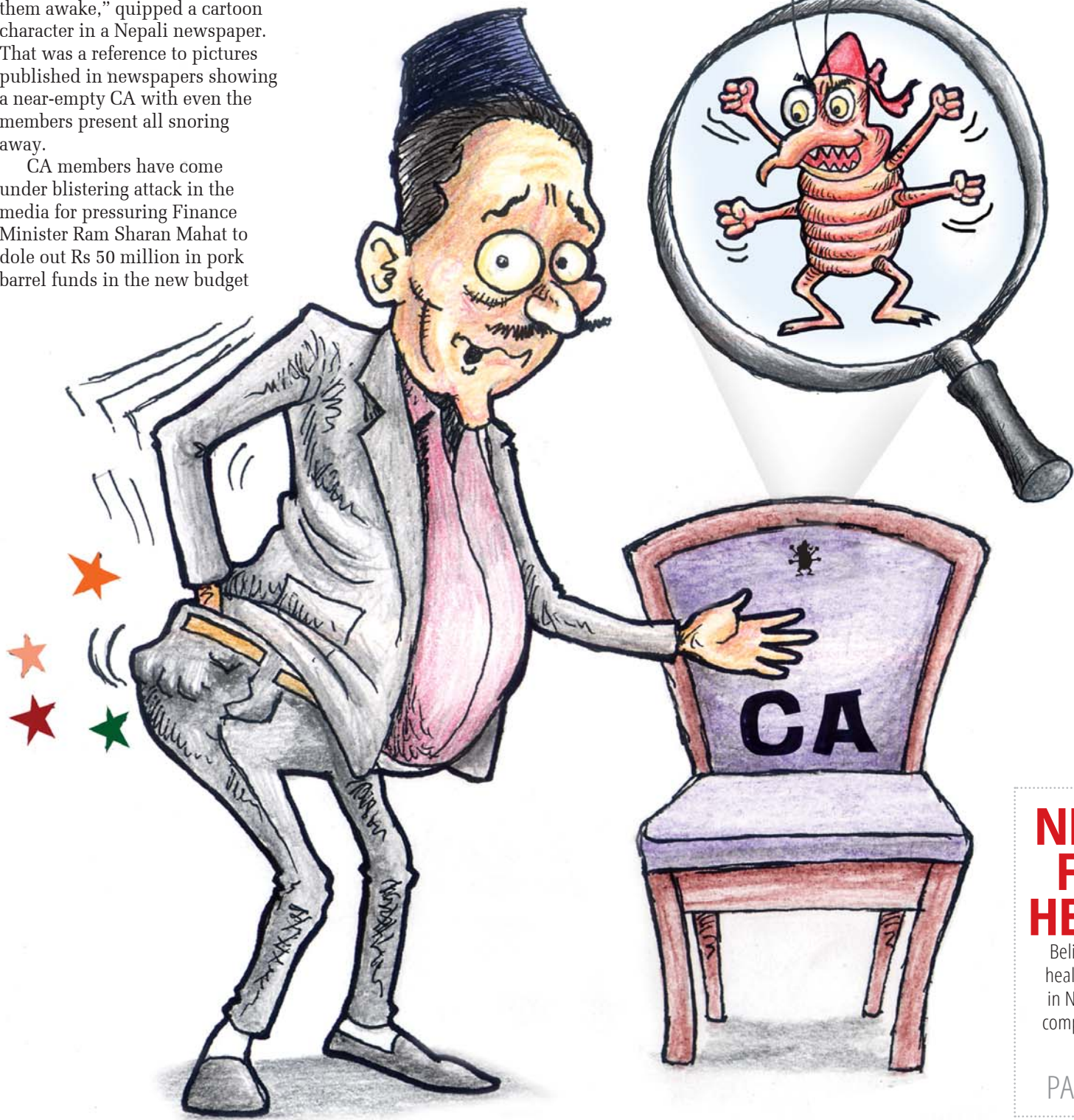
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### A NEW NEPAL RISES

THIS IS IT

BY RUBEENA MAHATO

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BILASH RAI

### NEPAL'S FAITH HEALERS

Belief in traditional healers is still strong in Nepal, and could complement modern healthcare.

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# CONTEMPT OF FREEDOM

If dictators and demagogues jail journalists and detain democracy activists, it doesn't surprise anyone. In Nepal's history, we saw the feudal Rana regime ruling with an iron fist, we experienced the intolerance of three decades of absolute Panchayat monarchy, and the authoritarian streak of King Gyanendra who tried to turn the clock back after 2001.

And when they were elected to power in 2008, the Maoists showed their true colour by physically attacking media outlets critical of them. The extreme left and the extreme right are both hardwired to suppress the press, so they were just acting accordingly.

But it is when a political party which swears by core values of democracy starts trying to muzzle the media, however, that we have to start being worried. Whatever you may say about the feckless NC and UML governments of the 1990s, they at least believed in an open society.

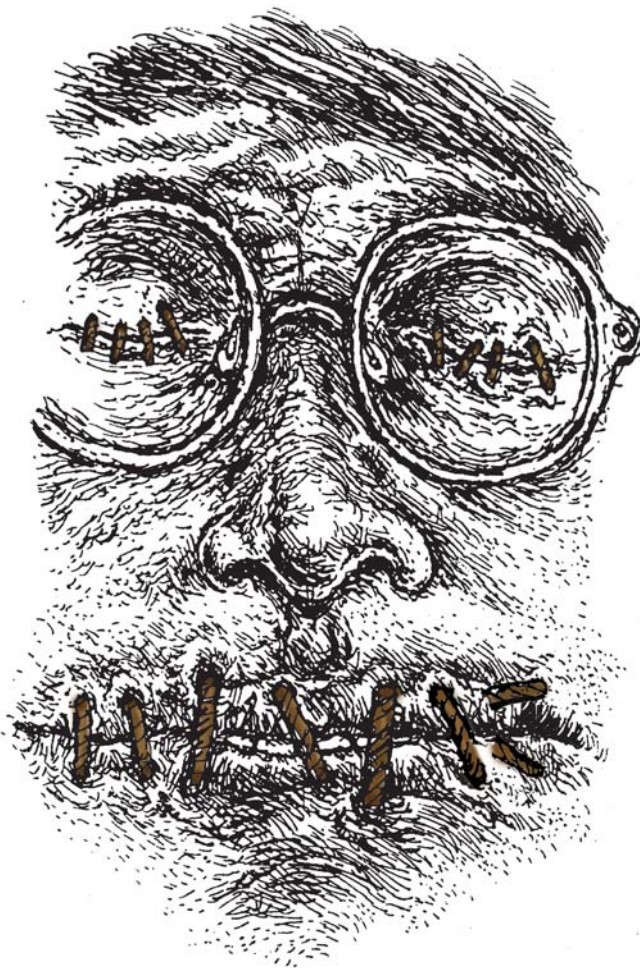
The NC's Narhari Acharya, who has a rather sweeping portfolio as the Minister of Law, Justice, Constituent Assembly and Parliamentary Affairs, has taken a personal interest in pushing through a Contempt of Court Bill in parliament. Under Clause 4, the proposed bill seeks to define contempt of court as any report or expression that casts aspersion, defames, undermines the public's trust, or spreads lies about the court or judges.

Minister Acharya's haste and timing in trying to ram this bill through parliament, when there are so many other more urgent matters to attend to, is telling. It follows the controversy and uproar over the appointment of eight new justices to the Supreme Court in April which he vigorously backed.

As it turned out, six of those eight had skeletons rattling loudly in their closets. Some were self-confessed polygamists, others had a record of protecting drug smugglers and criminals.

In the past, the Supreme Court has ruled against the Nepal Medical Council's decision to restrict the quota for MBBS admissions to a private medical college. Last week, a newly-appointed justice has freed on bail the chairman

You don't need a dictator to roll back democracy and shackle the media, elected demagogues are doing just fine.



of Nepal Share Markets and Finance who swindled hundreds, while keeping a smaller fish in detention.

If the bill is passed, the media would not be able to investigate and publish or broadcast similar miscarriages of justice, or question corrupt and immoral appointments to the Supreme Court. The bill is oppressive and isn't just an attack on press freedom, but on the citizen's right to know.

Minister Acharya has said he is just trying to "define and clarify what represents contempt". But in one fell swoop, he squandered the respect earned during his political career as a champion of democracy. By trying to pass a bill to exact revenge on the media which opposed his appointment of justices to the Supreme Court, he has exposed a dangerous draconian streak.

He is not alone. Powerful Home Minister and caretaker Prime Minister Bam Dev Gautam has come to Acharya's rescue to puzzlingly label all those opposed to the contempt bill "authoritarians". In fact, it is Gautam who has been showing just how thin skinned he is about criticism by ordering his police to crackdown on those who comment on social networking sites.

Abed El Rahman, a businessman from Saptari, found out the hard way that in the New Nepal, posting an innocent comment on Facebook can get you into serious trouble. He was jailed for 20 days after saying that he had to pay Rs 50,000 to retrieve his stolen motorcycle. The district's corrupt police force felt alluded to and decided to teach him a lesson. Far from reining in his police, Gautam egged them on.

We live in interesting times: six months after 80 per cent of us turned out to vote a new government to power, rulers we elected are turning Nepal into a police state. It just proves that you don't need a dictator to roll back democracy and shackle the media, elected demagogues are doing just fine.

With friends like these, Nepal's democracy doesn't need an enemy.

## YOUR SAY

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### MEASURING DEVELOPMENT

Nepal's poverty reduction is indeed excellent news and we need to celebrate this success ('Where is the peace dividend?', Editorial, #713). Yes, more needs to be done especially in education, youth employment and growth.

Now that we seem to have reached a stage where 25 per cent of the population earns below \$1.25 a day, we need to work harder. With lessons from the past in mind and the support of national actors and international partners, we must develop a road map to get zero absolute poverty.

**Ranjan Paudyal**

■ Developmental changes are occurring but their pace is really slow. Fast track method is required.

**@aguragain1**

### GRAFT INFECTED

This is what journalists should do—expose corrupt politicians for what they are ('When graft is a given', Anurag Acharya, #713). All of the parties are filled with corrupt men. Yet the people of Nepal continue to bear their behaviour. Why is that? Why are we so patient when it comes to our leaders that abuse us and loot us? A word of caution to the writer: In Nepal journalists are killed for speaking the truth, so be careful, watch your back.

**Narayana Prasad**

■ Corruption is a serious problem across the world, though developing countries have more to lose from it. There's no dearth of institutions formed to combat corruption in Nepal.

According to records, there are about 16 state level anti-graft agencies. The fact that these agencies have failed to tackle graft suggests corruption is deep rooted, and that these agencies may be complicit. It's time to look into the conduct of these anti-graft bodies themselves.

**Anil Karki**

■ Corruption is not the main issue, neither is the number of anti-corruption agencies. It's the institutionalisation of corruption, the fact that it has ingrained itself so deeply in our national psyche.

I have been told that 10 per cent of all aid is currently siphoned off and distributed as 'bonus' to government employees. No one even talks about this as corruption. It's considered a 'business fee' for aid agencies, donors, etc. to work here.

When judges with questionable reputations are being appointed to the SC, no less, then how can we ask anyone else to be honest? When we are not willing to protest for a fair, honest, transparent government, then let us not expect anything better.

**Namah**

### BYE ELECTIONS

You know what is worse than our electoral system ('Bye-bye elections', Trishna Rana, #713)? The so called

'consensus' politics which has become the biggest bane to Nepali democracy. Before you know it the *netas* of the Big 3 will get together and allow each other to contest from five or even more constituencies.

**Kale**

■ Standing in two seats is undemocratic - and yes, local elections are more crucial than these bye-elections.

**David Seddon**

### VOLUNTOURISTS

I volunteered as a teacher in Bangladesh for a year ('Volunteering to be a tourist', Basil Edward Teo, #713). When I look back at my experience, I realise how much my placement helped me more than it did the local community. I know not all volunteers feel this way, but I have met plenty who come to this part of the world with the 'I am here to save/enlighten/uplift these poor people' mindset. If you want to genuinely help, you need to lose that attitude. Also a bit of introspection on volunteers' behalf on why they want to help out and what they hope to achieve, will go a long way in preventing dangerous and unpleasant situations in the host country.

**Arpana**

■ Here is my two cents for all the do-gooder *bideshis*. If you are coming on a tourist visa, enjoy your two week holiday here, there is no need to feel guilty. If you want to help out

during your stay, then donate money to a reliable charity. because your two weeks (or even two months) of teaching English/taking care of orphans is going to do more harm than good to the locals and promotes this voluntourism industry. But if you really want to volunteer, take a year or two off, research on good organisations for placements, learn the local language (Nepali doesn't always work), get to know the people, learn, and grow, let it be a two way process.

**GVR**

■ I fell for this scam. I took all the precautions to ensure that the organisation was honest, but was still charged \$1,000 for the privilege of volunteering in a farm in Chitwan. Nowhere in the website was this fee mentioned, and I was asked to pay this in advance as soon as I landed in Kathmandu.

**Sallie**

■ The government makes it very difficult, near impossible to volunteer here. When I first visited Nepal, I paid \$500 to volunteer, only later did I realise that the family I was living with received only \$160 of it.

**@redheadlefthand**

■ Last year, a few friends and I went backpacking in Cambodia. Yes we contributed as tourists, but other than that we never felt that burning urge to 'do good', 'to help out' during our three

week stay. Is it because we are so used to seeing hardship and poverty suffered by our own people or do we simply lack the altruistic genes?

**Sangita Joshi**

### TYRANNICAL INDICES

I had a good laugh ('Beer Belly Barometer', Ass, 713). I applaud the Ass for lampooning both our national politics as well as the international politics of indices. The Freedom Index is a joke when a country like Singapore, which does not have freedom of speech nor assembly in its constitution, is ranked more free than Nepal. An apologist will say that the Freedom Index also accounts from the economic well being of the citizens. However, being rich is not the same as being free. A bird in a gilded cage is not free. We need to be above this tyranny of indices.

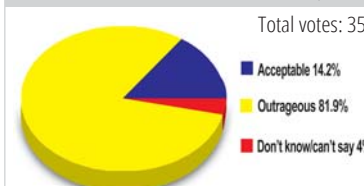
**Jyaure**

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #714

Q. What do you think about CA-members' demands for a Rs 50 million development for each constituency?



Weekly Internet Poll #715  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think about the contempt of court bill?





AGRICULTURE FOR FOOD CAMPAIGN

In Kathmandu's stagnant air, things stay predictable and banal. It is hard to stay motivated in a job which brings you face to face everyday with everything that is wrong in the country.

Politicians say the same things, reporters regurgitate them, and editors have run out of ways to say the same thing in different words. My big fear is that I will still be writing about CA III two years from now.



**THIS IS IT**  
Rubeena Mahato

When the cynicism gets infectious, I pack my bags and head out of the capital, and almost always my faith in this country and its incredibly resilient people is restored.

In the small towns and hamlets of the hills and Tarai, Nepali women are at the frontlines of change, increasingly assuming more decision-making roles in their families and communities.

Partly it is because the men are missing – away in the Gulf or India for work. Women-headed households are the norm, and while this has increased their workload, it is transforming traditional gender dynamics.

The Agriculture for Food campaign honoured 22 women farmers in Kathmandu recently. They came from all over the country and had overcome

great odds to become model farmers and leaders in their communities. Their husbands are away in Dubai, Punjab or Saudi Arabia and most were raising their children alone, and doing well.

Tankamaya Magar from Morang ploughed her own fields even though it is not socially acceptable. Rajkumari Sada (pic, above) from Mahottari broke social conventions and overcame discrimination for being from the Musahar community.

Surja BK from Dadeldhura used her success as a vegetable farmer to abolish the *chaupadi* system that consigned women to the cowshed every month. The superstitious believe that bad luck will befall the family if the women are not banished: cows will die and harvests will fail.

"I demolished the *chau goth*, used the income from selling vegetables to buy a cow, and consumed its milk when I was menstruating just to prove that the cow couldn't die. I forced my neighbours to believe me," Surja BK said.

Rajkumari was ecstatic that she could afford to send two children to school, build a *bhakari* and a new latrine. Kashikala Tamata from Mugu recounted how she was the first Dalit in the village to grow vegetables and how life is now much different from when her family had to forage for food.

Women now do much more of the work in the farms than men, but only a tenth of Nepali women own land. National agricultural policies are not

made with women farmers or their priorities in mind.

These women farmers and many more like them have turned their lives around with little or no help from the government. Most of Nepal's progress has happened not because of, but despite the government. How much further ahead would we have been if politicians

# A New Nepal also rises

Nepal's rural women are holding up more than half the sky

displayed more integrity, if we had better governance and the central government didn't interfere and sabotage community-led initiatives.

There is a tendency in over-indulged Kathmandu to dismiss the work of non-profits and rural cooperatives. While they could be more transparent and inclusive, local NGOs, women's groups, and community forestry user groups have been central in bringing about the small changes we see across rural Nepal today.

There is also sweeping criticism of foreign aid for being wasteful and encouraging dependency; but outside help in education, health, skill-development and empowerment of women has paid off.


Granted, we don't have roads and airports and high-rises and other trappings of growth, granted the economy is stagnant, and we continue to be one of the poorest countries in the world. But there is a great social awakening unfolding across Nepal right now.

Six years ago, as a young

reporter, I travelled across the eastern Tarai districts of Bara and Rautahat talking to Madhesi women who were the first in their families to venture out of their homes. They were learning to read and write, had enrolled their girls in schools, had obtained land ownership and were contributing to family income.


The 22 women farmers honoured recently spoke of similar struggles, and broke down when they shared tales of the hardships they overcame. They are all proud of their achievements: having the money to send their children to school, becoming the primary breadwinner, owning a piece of land and earning social acceptance and respect.

The women of this country have quietly taken charge. If only there was elected and accountable local government, a more responsive and caring political centre, and elected MPs who are not preoccupied with doling out Rs 50 million to each other, this country would finally rise. 🇳🇵







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Alice is a quintessential family restaurant because of the fact that one can spend quality time in a peaceful environment and well facilitated dining destination. Secluded from the hustle and bustle of busy streets, the location was cautiously thought of considering the fact that the restaurant was set up not too long ago.

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## Acquiring land for large infrastructure projects is deterring investors

Last month, construction began on the much-awaited Mechi-Mahakali Electric Railway that will be the backbone of mass transportation in Nepal in the future.

The Minister for Physical Planning and Transport Bimalendra Nidhi laid the foundation stone for the project's 108-km Simara-Bardibas section of the tracks, and devoted a large part of his speech beseeching local people not to delay the project.

But the very next day, locals from Ranigunj obstructed construction of a 5km bed track citing inadequate compensation offered by the government for their land. Since then, construction has ground to a halt.

The railway is also plagued by controversy between government departments. For example, the Department of Wildlife and Nature Conservation and the Chitwan National Park have opposed a proposed railway

alignment that would bisect the park.

"The state is ready to compensate the locals to acquire their land as per the law, but how will it be possible if they start demanding unreasonably high compensation and obstruct major projects like this one," says Ananta Acharya, director general of the Railway Department.

The construction of urgent hydropower projects, the new Pokhara airport, Sikta Irrigation Project, strategic transmission lines, have either been delayed or suspended because of high compensation demands that border on extortion. This does not bode well for mega-projects in the future like the Chisapani storage dam on the Karnali.

Land prices shoot up as soon as large infrastructure projects are announced, making the projects unfeasible. In 2013-2014, not a single km of transmission lines were added to Nepal's electricity grid despite the Rs 6 billion earmarked for it. This year Rs 13.5 billion was set aside for cross-border transmission lines



to import power from India, but there has been no progress.

A 220kV transmission line that stretches 75km from Sahare of Dolakha to Dhalkebar on the East-West Highway was started a decade ago. But the power lines that will feed electricity from several new hydropower projects in the Tama Kosi Valley to the national grid have been stuck for

over two years because locals have demanded \$1 million in compensation for three pylons in Sindhuli.

Similarly, Nepal Electricity Authority's (NEA) 132 kV Thankot-Chapagaun-Bhaktapur transmission line has been stuck for nine years due to unrealistic compensation demands from Kathmandu Valley residents.

“We have had several rounds of discussion but the locals in Thaiba and Khokana are demanding 100 per cent compensation which we simply cannot accept,” says NEA’s Pushparaj Khadka. “Even if we generate sufficient electricity, we can’t feed the growing demand of Kathmandu unless we complete this transmission line.”



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**THE WIRELESS:**  
NEA's Thankot-Bhaktapur 132kV transmission line has been stuck for nine years because of compensation demands. This pylon is in Chobar.

The NEA is now looking for alternatives including underground cabling if the local opposition persists.

According to the Electricity Act of 1993, people have to yield 15m of property on either side of the wires and are paid 10 per cent of the prevailing rate, and compensation for land used for pylon pads. The arrangement has worked everywhere except in Kamalamai and Bhimeswor VDC of Sindhuli and in Thaiba and Khokana in Lalitpur.

“Local communities are often led by a few vocal oppositionists to demand hefty compensation,” says former finance secretary Rameshwor Khanal. “Unless everyone, including the political parties realise that it is the taxpayers’ money that the government pays to compensate local demands, the trend of extorting money from state treasury won’t stop.”

Such extortion will make future large reservoir projects impossible to implement without a strict resettlement policy, development experts say. Because a lot is left to local discretion and high public expectation from foreign funded projects, compensation demands border on extortion.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is helping the National Planning Commission to draft an umbrella framework for resettlement. “Establishing scientific land valuation guidelines is critical, as undisciplined valuation is causing a lot of confusion and tensions locally,” Kenichi Kokoyama, the ADB’s representative in Nepal said (*see interview*).

But other experts admit that as long as the state is perceived as unstable and corrupt, any new policy will be a challenge to apply on the ground. 🇳🇵

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High tension in Sindhuli, #703  
Center against periphery, #703  
Trespassing into nature, #691  
Powerless future, #665

# “Indisciplined valuation causing confusion”



**The Nepal Country Representative of the Asian Development Bank, Kenichi Yokoyama, spoke to *Nepali Times* about how to minimise obstruction to infrastructure projects due to compensation demands.**

***Nepali Times:* How have some major infrastructure development projects including Melamchi been affected by local obstruction over compensation or land acquisition?**

**Kenichi Yokoyama:** Compensation to affected people is usually dealt with before project implementation starts, by providing sufficient compensation and livelihood support. In our project portfolio, less than 10 per cent of projects have problems on this issue at present. In the past Melamchi Water Supply Project faced particular challenges. As water has to be diverted from one basin to another in this large-scale project, local people felt that they were deprived. It took years to come to agreements with the affected communities. The project is now providing due compensation for acquired land, and various infrastructure and livelihood programs in the Melamchi valley. Among other projects, transmission line projects sometimes face problems, as the government’s regulations can provide only 10 per cent of the land price for the strips below the electric lines as usufruct, while people often demand acquiring the land.

**So, would you say this is a major deterrent to foreign investment in Nepal?**

Investor confidence seems to be gradually improving, but is still affected by political stability concerns under the ongoing transition. There are also a range of governance-related and labor union problems. Bottlenecks in infrastructure are severe, particularly power and transport. Human capital is also constrained, lacking skilled or educated laborers. Investor confidence can still be secured if the government wholeheartedly invites and welcomes private investors of important industries, and protects them by proactively helping them resolve any impediments, be it labor disputes, power supply, problems on governance, etc. Given that crippling power shortage is likely to be resolved in the next few years and political transition is also progressing, initiating such genuine investor promotion and protection could really heighten confidence. Consensus among political parties on key economic development agenda will also help.

**What are some important steps the government or parliament should take to remove obstacles for urgent infrastructure projects?**

I agree that land acquisition and compensation will be increasingly challenging, in view of the need to accelerate infrastructure development, rapidly rising land prices due to urbanisation, people’s sentiments with their lands, and limited experienced personnel to handle the process. The present Land Acquisition Act 1977 is also outdated, lacking pertinent provisions such as for informal settlers and indigenous peoples. Presently, ADB is facilitating the government to draft a national resettlement policy to provide an umbrella framework to set out key principles and procedures. Establishing scientific land valuation guidelines is also pursued as critical, as indisciplined valuation is causing confusion and tension locally. Meaningful and early consultation, information disclosure, sufficient compensation with clear disciplines, and capacity development of personnel involved are some of the key requirements.

**Do you foresee similar problems with the Tanahu hydropower project that ADB is supporting jointly with JICA?**

The Tanahu Hydropower Ltd has prepared the resettlement and indigenous peoples plan, which identified all the project affected people, and set out compensation and livelihood restoration plan in consultation with them. There are 758 affected households, among whom 86 need to be displaced by reservoir, hydropower station, and associated facilities. Under the plan, all households will be fully compensated for loss of agriculture and residential lands and structures following the ADB policies. On top of this, livelihood restoration support is also provided to restore income bases and building viable communities. The project has initiated implementation of the plan, and there has been no serious discontent by the affected communities. There are also project information centers and a grievance redress mechanism involving third party facilitators.

## EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS

### Furniture savvy

Parth International, which runs a franchise of several international brands in the country, has now added one more to its list. The company has brought Featherlite, an Indian furniture company to the Nepali market and inaugurated its showroom last week.



### Fly Miami

Qatar Airways has announced ‘Book and win a trip for two to Miami’ contest for all travellers from

Nepal. Customers who book a ticket to any of the airline’s 140 destinations between 20 June and 1 August will automatically enter a special draw to win one of five luxurious trips to Miami. Travel period for tickets bought during the said duration is valid until 30 September.

### Smart boxes

CG Electronics has introduced a new series of smart TVs which includes Curved OLED TV, 4K Ultra HDTV, Smart+ TV and normal LED TVs. The price of these televisions starts from Rs 21,990.



### Hole-in-one

The second series of Carlsberg Golf Series tournament held at Gokarna forest resort was won by Norbu Sherpa. Prabhat Singh finished runner-up and Hridesh Singh took the gross winner’s trophy. Rekha Ghimire won in the women’s category and Yeshe Tsering won the best senior golfer.

### Goal mania

Real Juice has announced the second monthly prize winner of its ‘Score the Real Goal’ campaign. Binod Dhakal from Chitwan has won an all-expense paid trip to Dubai for two. The winner was chosen through a lucky draw of all the correct entries received in the 2nd month (mid May to June) via live television.



### Top notch

Peter Schreyer, President and Chief Design Officer of Kia Motors Corporation and Hyundai Motor Group, has received the Lifetime Design Achievement Award from EyesOn Design. Schreyer was recognised at the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology’s Vision Honored award ceremony for his work overseeing the global design strategy of Kia Motors.

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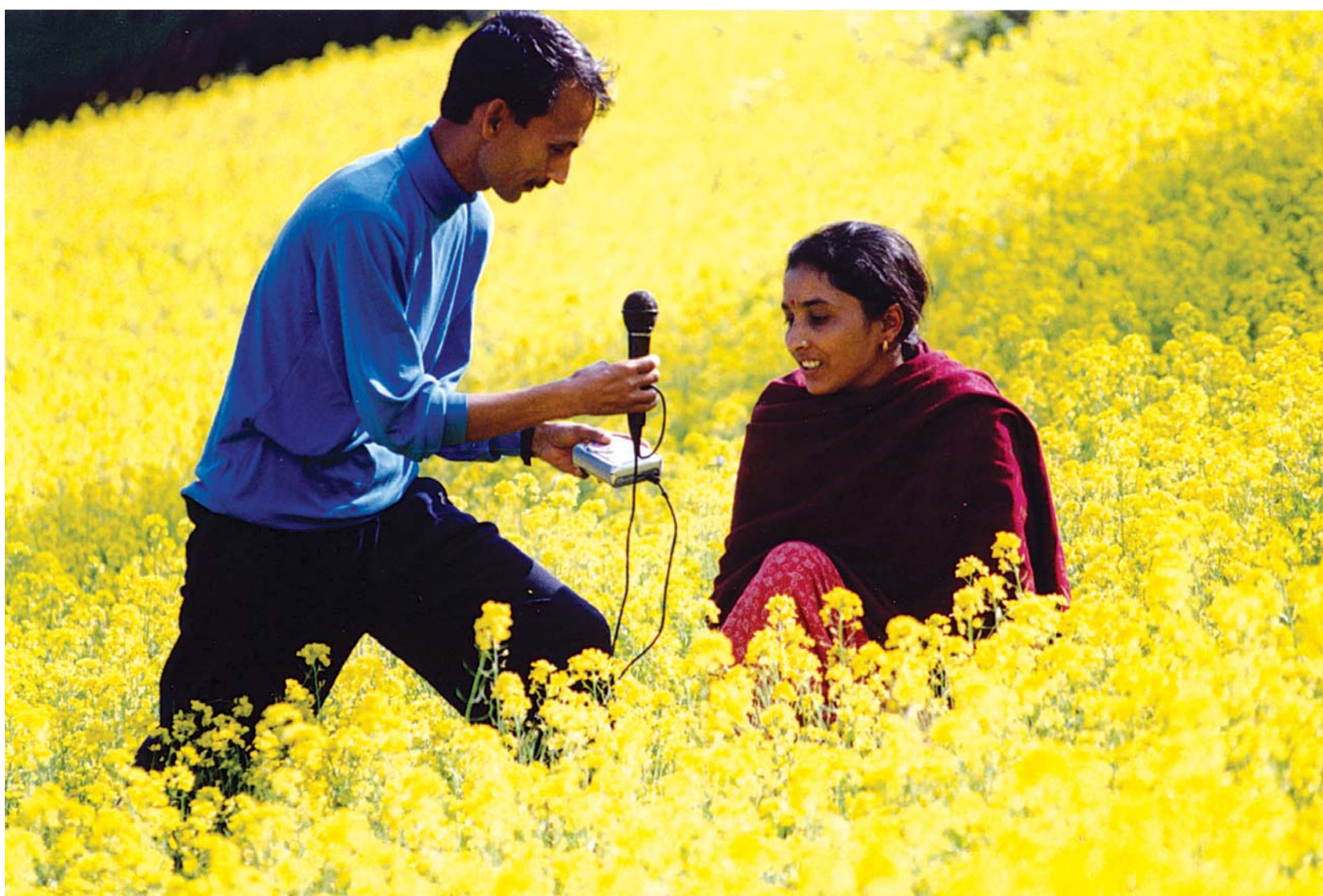
The United Nations member states are now participating in the post-2015 development agenda dialogue. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are to be achieved by 2030 are set to supersede the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2015.



**THE DEADLINE**  
Damakant Jayshi

Some MDGs have fared better than others, and results have differed from country to country. In Nepal's case, we have registered dramatic progress in reducing maternal and child mortality rates and have been hailed as a role model among least-developed countries. This is the result of joint efforts of the local communities, the government, UN agencies, I/NGOs and donors. The media's role was no less important.

When the media points out weaknesses in a program or reports on bungled-up or incompetent implementation



MIKUNDA BOGATI

# Media matters for development

An independent watchdog is needed to monitor progress on post-2015 goals

of development projects, it actually helps in improvement. A number of organisations and government officials see the value in independent media's work and support it. In the absence of this watchdog role, it would be difficult to get a holistic picture of a country's interlinked challenges. A general or investigative piece about how projects, goals and initiatives are faring is necessary to keep stakeholders on their toes.

Transparency, accountability, access to justice and good governance are not just noble abstracts but are rights of citizens. They get frequent mentions in manifestos of political parties before the elections and in annual government programs. That they do not just remain on paper is one of the responsibilities of a free media.

Developing countries should therefore take SDG # 16, which speaks about freedom of the media, no less seriously than others. Rather, they should go beyond currently proposed measures.

The Global Forum for Media Development (Full disclosure: I am a Steering Committee member of this network) has welcomed inclusion of targets for capable institutions, media freedom, and access to information by governments. GFMD believes the inclusion of targets on freedom of expression and access to information would help build stronger media and civil society institutions to closely and independently monitor all post-2015 development commitments.

The Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly proposed last month that SDG #16 ('Achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions') should include sub-goals to 'improve public access to information and government data and promote freedom of media, association and speech'.

Public access to information

and government data is a vital element of a functioning democracy. The world over, we have seen that if there is an attempt to deny access to information, people try to find ingenious ways to get it. At times, it could lead to dangerous misinformation which is counter-productive, especially in today's digital age.

The same is true for freedom of media, freedom of association and freedom of speech. Independent media and freedom of speech are under increasing attack in many countries. Some South Asian countries, which even a decade ago could claim to have fiercely critical, credible and free media, can no longer do so.

One way to redeem themselves is to support efforts to ensure inclusion of free media, freedom of speech and access to information in the SDGs. Nepal should join those nations that are working towards this end.

There's a very broad consensus among the UN member states on goal number one of the SDGs: Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality. It aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. With inequality rising, for example in India and China, an independent watchdog is needed to monitor progress. That watchdog is the media.

Implementation of the new goals would hinge on independent media monitoring globally and within countries. As the agency mandated to promote free, independent, and pluralistic media, UNESCO could take a lead role in monitoring progress toward the achievement of these goals. Its work with press freedom and access to information makes it the right agency.

We know that media matters not just to ensure a robust democracy, but also to foster the peoples' participation necessary for development.  @damakant

## LET'S SCOOT OFF



Himalmedia is looking for Marketing Executives to augment the current sales team of its trend-setting products: *Nepali Times*, *Himal Khabarpatrika* and their online editions.

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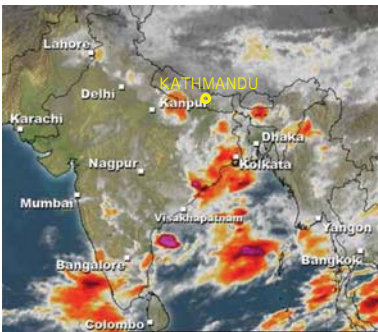
**SEND APPLICATIONS TO:**

HR Department Himalmedia, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal  
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Deadline: 15 July, 2014

Shortlisted candidates will be notified and called for interview.





The rainfall deficit for June was nearly 40%, which will have serious consequences because it was right at the start of the paddy planting season. The monsoon is picking up speed, albeit belatedly. Expect light night rain over the weekend with bright mornings and getting overcast towards afternoon. This is the usual daily weather pattern during the monsoon, but for now the precipitation is expected to be lighter than normal.

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# THEY CLIMBED ANOTHER MOUNTAIN

## Mountaineering is only part of the journey for Nepal's inspiring Seven Summits Women's Team

MATT MILLER

What does the top of North America look like? It's no longer surprising that seven Nepali women can tell you.

But for the record: "The weather is foggy but it's great being here." That is how Asha Kumari Singh described the view from the 6,194m summit of Mt Denali on 24 June at 1:45pm.

Thirteen days after arriving at base camp on Kahiltna Glacier, five members of the Seven Summits Womens Team from Nepal reached the top: Chunu Shrestha, Nimdoma Sherpa, Asha Kumari Singh, Pema Diki Sherpa, and cameraperson Ang Tshering Lama.

The successful climb of Mt Denali in Alaska (also known as Mt McKinley) was their sixth climb of the highest peaks on six continents since they climbed Mt Everest in 2008. The team is scheduled to climb Mt Vinson in Antarctica in December.

Fog was just one of the elements that made for a difficult climb. The team waited, bags packed, for five days at Camp 14 at

4300m for the weather to clear. The final summit push started at 7.50am on 24 June and it took them six hours to get to the top. During their descent, the women waited out a blizzard still high up on the mountain.

"To protect from wind, the climbers need to build an ice wall which we hadn't done in other climbs," expedition coordinator Shailee Basnet explained via email. "So weather was certainly a much bigger factor than other mountains."

This was also the women's first self-supported climb which presented its own challenges. Including backpacks and sleds full of supplies, they were pulling over 50 kgs each on the glacier. In contrast to Mt Everest which is only 3,000m from Base Camp to top, Denali's base is at nearly sea level, making it a 6,000m ascent.

Not all of the seven women reached the summit. Maya Gurung was diagnosed with

pneumonia before the climb, Pujan Acharya was affected by a shoulder problem that hampered her last climb and Shailee Basnet had to stay back at camp to take care of logistical issues.

"Along the way we've met numerous people who have shown implausible belief and trust in what we are doing. That's the fuel that keeps us going," Basnet said. "Also, our strength is certainly being a team. We motivate, support and correct each other all the time."

Their reception in North America has been overwhelmingly positive. They have been noticed, and come across people absolutely in love with Nepal.

The women will be speaking at the Lions International Club at the Air Canada Center in Toronto. The US State Department has also organised a week-long tour of meetings and media interaction in Los Angeles and



Washington DC.

The cycle of receiving support, and sharing it again in return as positive ambassadors for Nepal and for women, truly exemplifies their slogan: "Together we reach higher."

nepalitimes.com

Seven women, seven summits, #613 Women on top, #647

**ARE WE THERE YET?:** Four of seven team members (*pic, l-r*) Pema Diki Sherpa, Chunu Shrestha, Asha Kumari Singh, and Nimdoma Sherpa conquered the summit of Mt Denali in Alaska on 24 June, their sixth summit on seven continents.



PICS: ANG TSHERING LAMA

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EVENTS



**A night with Mao,**  
fancy a date with a dead dictator?  
4 to 6 July, 5.30pm, Theatre Village,  
Uttar Dhoka

**DJ Zumba,**  
dance and stay fit as 25 zumba instructors  
from Kathmandu collaborate with a DJ.  
27 June, 5 to 11pm Hotel Radisson

**Cha cha cha,**  
learn one month's worth of Salsa in  
four days. Rs 1,000 for singles, Rs 1,500  
for couples, Monday to Thursday, 7.30 to  
8.30am/5 to 6pm/6 to 7pm, Salsa Dance  
Academy, Bhatbhateni



**Kathmandu kora,**  
join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and  
ride for 50, 75, or 100 km to raise funds  
for a birthing centre in Pyutar, Lalitpur. 18  
to 19 July, facebook.com/kathmandu.kora

**Epic love,**  
catch the screening of Indian classic  
*Umrao Jaan*. 4 July, 2pm.  
Indian Cultural Centre, Naxal, (01)4412715

**Retrospective,**  
a look back at the oeuvre of senior artist  
and cubism enthusiast Surendra Pradhan.  
*Runs till 18 July, Park Gallery, Pulchok,*  
*parkgallery.com.np*

**Open house,**  
featuring the work of artists Arpita  
Shakya, Ashuram Khaiju, and Palpasa  
Manandhar. *Runs till 7 July, 11am to 6pm,*  
*Gallery Mcube, Chakupat*



**BFF,**  
adopt a dog from Animal Nepal's shelter  
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and better adjusted to local conditions  
than pedigrees. Rs 150, animalnepal.org,  
(01)5538068, 9841334537

**Muna Madan,**  
Nepal's favourite epic on stage again.  
*Runs till 16 July, Rs 100/200/300/500,*  
*Rastriya Nachghar, Jamal*

**Ropain,**  
go to the fields and celebrate the rice-  
planting season. 6 July



**Amalgam**  
A series of talks around the ongoing  
exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery.  
**6 July, Printmaking,** a review of  
the works of Sauranga Darshandhari,  
Sushma Maharjan, Surendra Maharjan,  
and Kabiraj Lama, 3pm  
**13 July, Performance art,** looking at  
the performances of Sunil Sigdel, Jupiter  
Pradhan, Prithvi Shrestha, Sauranga  
Darshandhari, and Rithika Shrestha, 3pm  
**20 July, Socio-political perspective  
in art,** questioning the role of the artist  
as an informed citizen, 3pm  
**27 July, Street art,** spreading socio-  
political messages through art in the local  
community, 3pm  
*Siddhartha Art Gallery,*  
*Babar Mahal Revisited*

**Jersey fest,**  
wear your team's jersey and jump in the  
pool if you're not kept busy by the bubble  
machine and the trampoline.  
*Rs 499, 5 July, 1pm onwards, International  
Club, Sanepa*

**The written word,**  
chance for young writers to hone their  
skills at this one-day workshop. 5 July,  
*Thames International College, Old Baneshwor,*  
*Call 9851077430 to register*

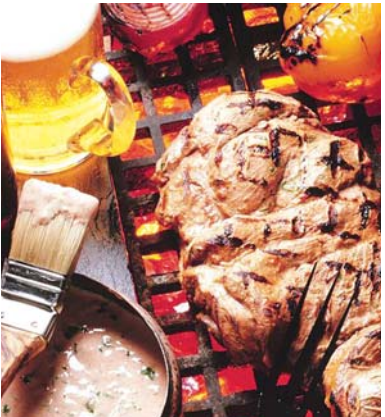
**Cinemandu,**  
one more chance to watch the popular  
film *Kabaddi* and another acclaimed short  
*Baansuli*. 4 July, 4 to 6.30pm,  
*Nepal Bharat Library, free entrance*

DINING

**Busy Bee,**  
head over for live rock and pop  
performances in English, Nepali and  
Hindi, indulge in their beer and pizzas  
to waste the night away in good fashion.  
*Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)462640*

**Mezze by Roadhouse,** spot a  
superstar at Kathmandu's most happening  
restaurant. *Darbar Marg*

**Lal Durbar Restaurant,**  
authentic Nepali dinner with cultural  
shows. *Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg,*  
*(01)4248999, reservation@laldurbar.com*



**Hole in the wall,**  
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*(01)4415236*



**In Bruges,**  
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*Grill Me, Jhamsikhel*

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**Backyard,**  
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## MUSIC

**Starry Night BBQ,**

catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1499, 7pm onwards, Fridays, Shambala Garden Café. *Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999*

**Reggae night,**

get a load of jah music from Chari Amilo Kala Samuha every weekend. 4 July, 6pm onwards, *Base Camp, Jhamsikhel*

**Shastriya sangeet,**

the best of Hindustani classical every new moon night. 27 July, 4pm onwards, *Battisputali*

**Music at Manny's,**

live Hindi and Nepali pop music with Shabnam Gurung and Dinesh Quartet. *Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, Jawalakhel*

**Kripa Unplugged,**

young Nepali musicians and seasoned veterans give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. [www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged](http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged) Music Jams, enjoy great live music every Tuesday. *Moksh, Jhamsikhel*

## GETAWAYS

**Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,**

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**Temple Tree Resort and Spa,**

a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you go in. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61)465819*

**Balthali Village Resort,**

a small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. *Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818*

**Shivapuri Cottage,**

escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and enjoy peace, tranquility, good food, and fresh air. Rs 3,500 per person per night inclusive of dinner and breakfast. *Budhanilkantha, 9841371927*

**Waterfront Resort,**

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**Himalayan wellness centre,**

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**Famous Farm,**

wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the aankhijhyal. *Nuwakot, (01)4700426, [info@rural-heritage.com](mailto:info@rural-heritage.com)*

**Shangri-La Village Resort,**

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**Aadi Paap:** Original sin inspired by the apple, Marpha brandy infused with aromatic spices.

**Nepa Libre:** Nepali version of famous Cuban drink with Khukuri rum and Coke to celebrate our democracy.

**Aila Mary:** Bloody Mary but with aila instead of vodka.

*Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka*

Patan's favourite watering hole has unveiled a new range of cocktails featuring Nepali spirits incorporated into new versions of internationally famous cocktails. They include:

**Nepatini:** Classic martini glass filled with aila and Triple Sec, mingled with mango and lime juice.



## KNOCK-OUT

With only eight teams remaining in the World Cup, you can't miss a moment. Here are the fixtures for the quarterfinals:

Date	Nepal Time	Fixture	Location
4 July	9.45 pm	France vs Germany	Rio de Janeiro
5 July	1.45 am 9.45 pm	Brazil vs Colombia Argentina vs Belgium	Fortaleza Brasilia
6 July	1.45 am	Netherlands vs Costa Rica	Salvador



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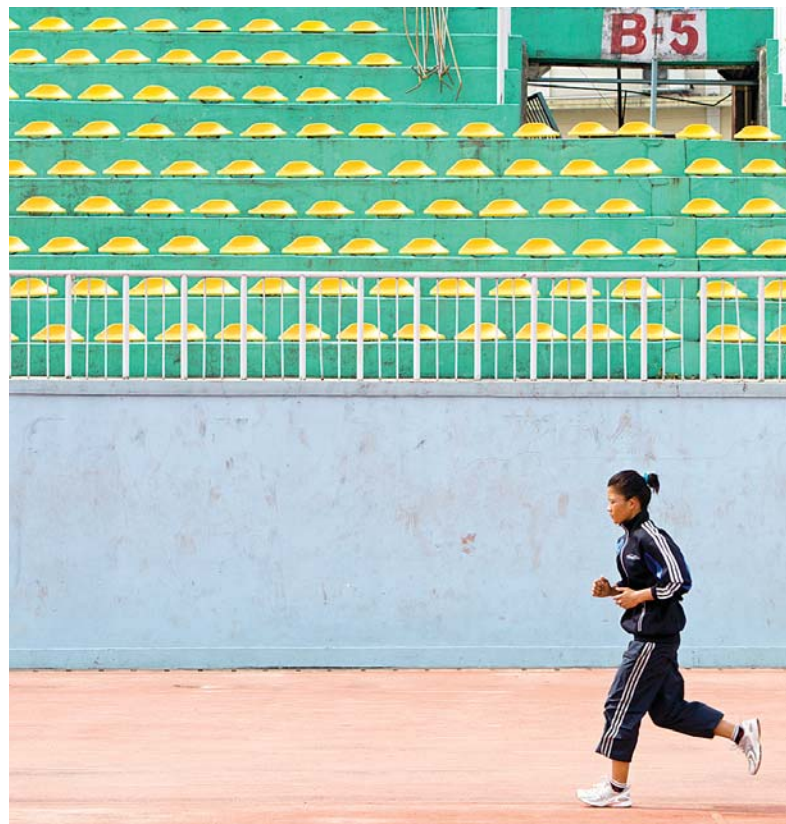




# “BLOCK! POWER! BOX!”

Nepal's boxing team trains for the Asian Games in September in Korea

**BASIL EDWARD TEO**







2



3

**M**inu Gurung (*pic, left*) listened carefully and followed her boxing coach as she trained at the Dasrath Stadium this week. Two months before the 2014 Asian Games in Korea, Nepal's boxing team is intensifying its training.

Whistle in one hand and timer in the other, Gurung's coach Om Kumar Maskey locks his sights on her as she bobs and weaves away from her sparring partner. He shouts out instructions: "Block! Power! Box!"

Gurung, 24, is here six days a week, two times per day, with the team of ten boxers who go through a mix of strength and conditioning, technical training and sparring sessions.

"In the last Asian Games, boxing was the only sport to bring Nepal a bronze medal," says Maskey, who has high hopes for Gurung, the youngest boxer in the team.

Minu joined the army five years ago just so she could join the National Boxing Team. "I hope to win a gold medal in September in Korea," she says simply, but with determination.

The Nepal boxing team has eight men and two women. Most are from the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force. Only one is a civilian. While the selection process is open to all, security personnel have an edge due to their discipline, physical fitness and budget for training they receive.

Coming from a family of athletes, Gurung was imbued with a fighting spirit since she was young. Her mother was a competitive hockey and football player, and her elder brother is also a boxer in the Indian Army.

"My mother and brother were always supportive of me," she says, "but initially my father disapproved of my boxing since he thinks it is a brutal sport. But he approves now, since I began winning competitions."

In the selection tournament in June she won Gold, securing a selection for the games. The male team plans to select five members.

In the ring, Gurung gets no special treatment just because she is a woman. She trains with the guys, and sparring with bigger and stronger opponents is no problem as she relies on technique and speed.

"I may not be a hard puncher with knockout power, but I have good defence and I am also a good counter fighter," says Gurung.

Purna Bahadur Lama (*pic, top left*), a boxer from the Armed Police Force, is the oldest member on the team. Although the veteran first laced up his gloves at 16, this is the first time he was selected to be on the team for the Asian Games.

"This will be my first Asian Games, but it might also be my last," he admits, "my body is not what it used to be."

After Korea, Gurung plans to compete in the Asian Boxing Championship in December, and hopes to represent Nepal in the 2016 Olympics.

She says: "I have big dreams but I also have the willpower to make them come true." 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
More pics A fighting chance



4



5



6

ALL PICS: BASIL EDWARD TEO



8



9

1 At 33, Purna Bahadur Lama is the oldest boxer on the team. The 2014 Asian Games he says might be his last competition.

2 Coach Om Kumar Maskey demonstrates a defensive boxing move to Minu Gurung during a training session.

3 Minu Gurung prides herself as a speedy counter puncher rather than a knockout artist.

4 Lama lands a straight left on a teammate who fights at a weight class 10kg heavier.

5 Lama and 2010 Asian Games bronze medallist Deepak Maharjan (*right most*) looks on as Gurung spars in the ring. Due to a right knee injury, Maharjan is still unable to train at full strength.

6 Boxers wrap their hands before sparring and bag work to protect their knuckles and wrists.

7 A strong lower body is a must, as proper boxing technique utilises power from the thighs and hips to thrust a punch and evade punches.

8 Ultimately, boxing is an individual sport despite the help and instruction.

9 Shadowboxing helps make boxing techniques second-nature to the players.



# TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION



Why do we watch bad action movies? Not all of us do, but personally I feel compelled to watch the summer blockbuster extravaganza of the year because of the faint hope in my heart that it will dodge the usual pitfalls of one dimensional



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

characters, dreadful jokes, wildly outlandish end of the world scenarios, and redeem itself by somehow developing new ground-breaking action scenes.  
The fourth installment of Michael Bay's *Transformers*

franchise is quite frankly rather bad. It is too long, generally banal, and the Transformers are mostly annoying and unappealingly characters (except for the endearing, heroic Bumblebee and the always magnificent Optimus Prime).  
Mark Wahlberg as the lead character Cade Yeager manages to retain a little gravitas as he runs, jumps, wields an alien saber, and tries to rescue Tessa (Nicola Peltz) his blonde, long-legged, daughter (thankfully she appears to have brains, just enough to not infuriate the viewer). Stanley Tucci almost saves the film in his role as Joshua Joyce, a brilliant inventor who has strayed a little from the righteous path - but in general this film is exactly the kind of pulp the Hollywood mill churns out year after year shamelessly raking in hundreds millions in the process.

Bay admits to making his films for teenage boys. Indeed, why not, the world is full of teenage boys needing to be entertained. Unfortunately, in addition to being self-indulgent the hapless Bay is "stunningly, almost viciously, untalented" to quote David Denby, the veteran film critic at the hallowed *New Yorker*. While this is pretty scathing I couldn't agree more.  
It is absolutely fine to defend the films you make - however that doesn't make you a better filmmaker. Bay's ability to intersperse his interminably boring films with bursts of action packed frenzy almost make his films worth watching. But more often than not the sequences leave the viewers, especially in these days of 3D, feeling outright nauseous and even more spatially confused.

So why write about such a film in the 'Must See' column? It's altruistic, to help those poor souls (myself included) who feel irresistibly drawn to the theater despite their instinctive hesitation. We know the film is going to be awful and yet we go.  
Readers beware, this is a bad and overly long film. The villains are annoying, the plot preposterous, the characters border on the verge of repellant, and the action is not good enough to withstand the general mediocrity. Filmmakers targeting teenage boys take note; you can do better, so much better. 🇳🇵

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Trailer



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**HAPPENINGS**



UMA BISTA/ ANNAPURNA POST

**BUDGET PLAN** : President Ram Baran Yadav addresses the Parliament regarding the government's policy and program for the next fiscal year on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**PITCH BLACK**: Workers blacktop the road near Singha Durbar on Wednesday. Authorities are in a rush to complete development projects as the fiscal year comes to an end.



BASIL EDWARD TEO

**HOLY MEAL**: Devotees break their fast on the first day of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan at the Kashmiri Mosque near Ratna Park on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

**RAIN FEST**: Participants at a paddy harvest festival program celebrate it with a race in the muddy fields at Banepa on Sunday.

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BASIL EDWARD TEO

# ART AMALGAMATION

Oscar Wilde once famously quoted “art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known.” The exhibition Amalgam-2014, which opened on 27 June at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, stands to be another testimony to that statement. Featuring 42 unique pieces by 26 contemporary artists, the exhibition showcases a diverse assortment of art expressed through a range of mediums.

Spread across all three floors of the gallery, each art piece is distinctive of the artist who created it. While no two pieces are alike, most take inspiration from Nepal’s current state, be it cultural or socio-economical, and are presented as paintings, etchings, sculptures and mixed media installations.

One of the most extensive presentations within the exhibition is the painting series *The Blank Frame* by Hitman Gurung.

Consisting of five different sets of paintings, the central piece (*see pic*) depicts a faceless hospital patient sitting in a wheel chair, his face replaced by an empty frame. The four smaller paintings of a CT scan, hospital equipment and blood depict the process of surgery. Similar to his previous exhibition *I Have to Feed My Country and My Family*, that was shown in February at the same gallery, Gurung says he was inspired by the true story of a Nepali migrant worker in Malaysia who suffered a brain hemorrhage and had to return back to his village in Dhankuta.

In placing the lone figure against a backdrop made up of a collage of pictures of Nepali migrant workers, the artist highlights

the collective struggles they have to go through.

“My work is a metaphor for the countless victims of labour that return from working abroad,” said Gurung.

Another series of paintings by Rajan Pant called *Sundarpur* demand attention. While some artists refrain from experimenting with too much color, Pant uses an extensive range of contrasting colors to depict daily life in the village. Apart from catching your eye, the exaggerated use of color breathes life into the paintings.

As an annual program hosted by the gallery, it gives space to established artists as well as up and coming artists.

The exhibition runs until July 28. The artists featured are Aditya Aryal, Prabin Shrestha, Arjun Bhandari, Prithivi Shrestha, Arjun Khaling, Ram Maharjan, Hitman Gurung, Sagar Manandhar, Jasmine Rajbhandari, Sanjeev Maharjan, Rajan Pant, Saurganga Darshandhari, Kailash Shrestha, Sheelasha Rajbhandari, Lavkant Chaudhary, Shraddha Shrestha, Manish Harijan, Sudeep Balla, Mekh Limbu, Sunil Sigdel, Mukesh Shrestha, Surendra Maharjan, Muna Badel, Sushma Sakya, Narayan Bohaju and Suvas Tamang.  *Ayesha Shakya*

*Amalgam-2014*  
*27 June to 28 July 2014*  
*Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited*



Long before Lalitpur became hip and Jhamsikhel turned into a restaurant lane, there was one establishment that diligently fed many hungry souls of the district on this side of the bridge. With competition springing out left, right and in-front, Downtown Restaurant continues to attract plenty of patrons who keep coming back for more of their tasty, reliable Indian cuisine.

Lunch is their busiest hour as most office-goers in the area come here. The atmosphere was the same when this reviewer went in this past Tuesday to sample more than their naans. It is fairly easy to find a seat as the restaurant is spacious. The brightly lit restaurant lets in all the natural light of the bustling street, but leaves out the noise.

But if you are in a hurry, it is best to visit the food stalls at Bhat Bhateni across the street because orders here can take up to 30 minutes to arrive.

Serving a mix of Indian, Chinese and Continental dishes, Downtown offers a wide selection from each cuisine. In an attempt to try something new and refrain from ordering old favourites, we asked our waiter for recommendations.

We settled for Mutton Biryani (Rs 350) from a handful of choices. This rice dish was definitely the best dish of the day. Topped with



PICS: LOUISE EVANGELINE



egg and tomato, the rice that could have visually passed for Spanish rice was fragrant and flavourful, with just the right amount of spice. The mutton was tough, and if you weren’t in the mood to attack its

## Downtown Restaurant

meaty defenses, it served more as an expensive garnish.


Similarly, the Chicken Tikka Masala (Rs 230) did not disappoint, and its tender chicken chunks were delightful when wrapped with the garlic naan (Rs 80). Especially when disguised in a dark, thick curry like the tikka masala, chicken too often still has bones hidden like land mines. But the Chicken Tikka Masala was pure meat, which facilitated the enjoyment.

Another curry dish Chicken Mughlai (Rs 210) was equally good. My companion, an Indian food lover was in the mood for some rumali roti that day. However, because this thin flat bread usually folded like a handkerchief didn’t feature on the menu, we had to make do with the Peshawari naan (Rs 80). The dry fruits filling made the sweet naan sweeter. A dish in itself, it was easy to forget about the curry and just go on nibbling

this sweet, sweet bread.

Not wanting to leave the other cuisines out, we quickly spotted an interestingly named Asspolo Pizza on the continental menu. In homage to the back page, we ordered the eight-sliced pizza.

Unfortunately, the only thing interesting about the Asspolo Pizza (Rs 255) is its name. Despite already having a Chicken Pizza on the menu, this is essentially a chicken pizza. Unsurprisingly the cheese was yak, not mozzarella. Its crust was thick and a little dry, and while edible, it definitely cannot hold a candle to many better places out there.

Downtown has been a favourite for sometime now. Barring its continental menu, orders usually result in a satisfied tummy.  *Louise Evangeline*

*How to get there: Downtown is located in Harihar bhawan, right next to Saraswati book store.*



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a 





# Dengue in Town

Since 2010, the Tarai region has seen a dengue outbreak every monsoon. It seems the outbreak could be on the move from the Tarai region and into the city. This month alone, three cases of dengue have been reported in the valley. This spread is not surprising because of two reasons: a migrant population with



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

the disease, and the abundant supply of the particular vector (carrier) mosquitoes. Dengue is pronounced “dengi” with the u being silent. Dengue is the most widely distributed mosquito-borne viral illness, affecting an estimated 100 million people worldwide each year. Forty per cent (2.5 billion) of the world’s population is estimated to be at risk for infection. After biting an infected person, vector

mosquitos transmit the disease to a healthy person with another bite. Because of the open border with India, many migrant Nepali and Indian labourers with the disease enter parts of Nepal, including Kathmandu, where it was hardly known to be present. Dengue fever originated from Africa during the slave trade in the 15th through 19th centuries. It spread into Asia through commercial exchanges in the 18th and 19th centuries. Importantly, different species of mosquitoes transmit different diseases. So, the mosquito that transmits malaria will not transmit dengue. Mosquitoes that transmit dengue are called aedes aegypti, while the female anopheles transmits malaria. But the dengue mosquito is generally a city dweller, unlike the malaria mosquito which is usually rural based. The aedes aegypti is also an efficient vector for Chikungunya and yellow fever viruses. Any patient sufferomg from a fever, particularly if there is a rash, should be considered for the diagnosis of dengue.

For most people, the fever, headache, eye pain and joint aches associated with dengue subsides in a week’s time. Severe pain on eye movement can be a key symptom for diagnosis as well. But doctors can treat only the symptoms in dengue because there is no specific antidote. Most people with dengue will recover, but for some severe cases it causes leaky capillaries that lead to shock. It is impossible to predict who will become critically ill and who will have an uneventful recovery from dengue. The World Health Organisation however has listed some warning signs of severe dengue, such as persistent vomiting, abdominal pain, fluid accumulation, excessive lethargy or restlessness and increase in haemoglobin (which carries iron and oxygen ) in the face of decreasing platelets, which help to clot blood. Unfortunately, there is no commercially available dengue vaccine although there are candidate vaccines in initial stages. For prevention, use mosquito repellents (like odomas or DEET) and wear full length clothing even during the day because the dengue mosquito is a day-time mosquito. The malaria mosquito is active at night. In addition, turn over watering cans and pails after use so that the dengue mosquito does not breed in them. It is hard to predict how severely the population will be affected this summer. Indeed the ability to predict epidemics and to put in place the public health and clinical needs to deal with large outbreaks would be a major advance. However, it is clearly a good idea to take precautions and avoid mosquito bites.

**GIZMO by YANTRICK**

## Surround good

You’ve set up your 55 inch HDTV, and it takes up half the wall in your living room. The picture quality is crisp, vibrant, and incredibly detailed, yet there is something missing. An audio experience to complete your home entertainment setup of course. Samsung’s HT-F5550K is one such home theater system. A 5.1 channel system that has it all: good looks, a host of features, and most importantly, awesome sound, at an affordable price. Unboxing a new gadget always tickles Yantrick’s fancy, and right out of the box, the piano-black finish of the HT-F5550K exudes class. Although the four tower speakers, the front channel speaker, the woofer, and the Bluray console might seem like a lot to setup, initial assembly is quite straightforward, especially with the simple speaker setup mode. Once the home theater setup is hooked up to your display, your average-sounding television days are effectively over, barring loadshedding hours. A dual core processor powers the HT-F5550K’s Samsung Smart Hub user interface, which is simple and intuitive. Its easy learning curve will have you whizzing around the selection of Samsung Apps, web browsing and more, in no time. The real magic begins when you insert your first Bluray disc. Boasting 1000 Watts of thundering sound, the HT-F5550K is a perfect companion especially for your 3D HDTV. The system’s Full HD 3D capability results in a spectacularly immersive 3D home entertainment experience.



Expect to increase your 3D-Bluray disc expenses. Normal Bluray content looks absolutely stunning, and now it sounds stunning too, with crystal clear monologues, eardrum-shattering explosions, and a bass-heavy soundtrack in the latest in Dolby and DTS surround sound technologies. Your connectivity needs are also expertly taken care of by the HT-5550K, with the USB mode especially handy, capable of playing media formats such as AVCHD, DivX and DivX HD, AAC, MP3, MKV, WMA, WMV, FLAC, RMVB, and JPEG, straight from your USB drive. The audio input and the optical input allow for connectivity with traditional audio sources (like your iPod) and digital audio sources (like your Playstation) respectively. The HT-5550K is also capable of wirelessly streaming your media via DLNA, All Share, and Bluetooth technologies, thereby further indulging the couch potato in you. The HT-5550K also packs in ARC (Audio Return Channel) technology, which makes it possible for you to connect to your TV’s audio signal, and the dedicated ‘Football Mode’ should have you dancing to the surround sound tunes of Brazil 2014.

**Yantrick’s Verdict: The dearth of features and audio technology should make the Samsung HT-F5550K feature highly in your list of home entertainment systems. Availble at HIM Electronics, Durbar marg for around Rs 60,000.**

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# World Cup ads that make you sick

LONDON – One billion people watched the opening match of the FIFA World Cup in São Paulo last month and hundreds of thousands will throng Brazil's stadiums during the month-long tournament. For FIFA's six major partners and the event's eight official sponsors, this audience is nothing short of a gold mine. For viewers, however, that is probably not a good thing.

One of FIFA's partners, Budweiser, was accused of compelling Brazil's government to overturn a national law banning the sale of alcohol inside football stadiums. After an uproar, FIFA said in a statement: 'Alcoholic drinks are part of the FIFA World Cup, so we're going to have them.'

Sponsorship by companies like Budweiser, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and the convenience food giant Moy Park brings millions of dollars to the game. Promoting alcohol, sugary drinks, and fast food may mean massive profits for corporations, but it undermines the health of individuals and adds a costly burden on countries' health-care systems.

Instead of focusing exclusively on alcohol's potential to fuel violence inside stadiums, the media should be emphasising the damage that alcohol and processed foods are causing to the world's population every day. Over the last decade, global soft-drink sales have doubled; per capita alcohol consumption has risen, and tobacco use has increased.



Most of this growth is occurring in low- and middle-income countries, those least equipped to handle the health crisis.

Health experts have traditionally lumped diseases into two categories: communicable diseases, which are caused predominantly by infection, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – that is, everything else. Among the NCDs, four conditions contribute most to



early death or disability: cardiovascular disease, chronic lung conditions, cancer, and diabetes. In 2010, these four conditions caused 47 per cent of all deaths, including nine million deaths in people under 60 years.

The over-consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and energy-rich processed foods are often framed as lifestyle choices. But the determinants of such choices are often removed from people's immediate control.

The current system does not empower the United Nations and other technical agencies concerned with health governance to confront the determinants of poor health effectively. Large corporations have resources, lobbying power, advertising budgets, networks, and supply chains of which the UN can only dream. While the WHO skimps by on \$2 billion a year, the tobacco industry rakes in \$35 billion in annual profits.

What steps can be taken to level the playing field? Consumers must be better informed about the

long-term impact of sponsors' products. When people raise their voices – say, to ban advertising for breast-milk substitutes or to demand access to life-saving drugs – big corporations often listen. Beyond being a key aspect of corporate social responsibility, curbing alcohol and junk food is in the long-term interest of corporations. Voluntary codes to limit sugar in soft drinks and reduce salt levels in processed foods are a positive step, but they are far from adequate.

Finally, every successful team needs a strong manager. International and national regulatory authorities must fill this role, setting and enforcing the rules of the game to protect the health of people worldwide.

The World Cup has a profound social impact, including on global health. FIFA has a responsibility to ensure that the tournament's viewers are not receiving a message that could make them sick. Kent Buse and Sarah Hawkes

Kent Buse is Chief of Political Affairs and Strategy, UNAIDS. Sarah Hawkes is Reader in Global Health at the Institute for Global Health, University College London.

[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)

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

Watch John Oliver's monologue on FIFA

www.dishhome.com.np

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# IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

Belief in traditional faith healers is still strong in Nepal, and could complement modern medicine

**MATT MILLER**

You step into the doctor's office. You have an unknown illness that needs diagnosing. The doctor lights incense, beats a drum and starts trembling all over to diagnose which spirit is the cause of the ailment.

One would expect the spread of modern medical care in Nepal in the last 60 years to eliminate the people's belief in traditional medicine. However, *dharmi jhankris* are still in business, and not just in rural areas.

"*Jhankris* know the psychology of their patients, they don't just treat them medically but also mentally," says Dinesh Lamsal at the Civil Service Hospital in Kathmandu. "People still visit them because they are part of their community, they trust them, and they are cheaper than clinics."

Casper Miller, who published *Faith Healers in the Himalaya* in 1978 after research

in Dolakha, describes *jhankris* using controlled shaking, chants and drum-beating to show patients that they are in close contact with the spiritual forces causing illness.

Doctors, too, shake a pill bottle of placebos to make patients feel better. Educated Nepalis are skeptical about healers who perform a dance around the fireplace to cure patients, and despite the cost, have more faith in modern medicine.

In 1990 researchers estimated there are 100 faith healers in Nepal for every health worker, and today the 15,000 medical doctors are primarily in the capital or abroad. This does not meet the demand for medical treatment

Health experts say the staying power of faith healers should be incorporated into the national health system. Modern medicine now teaches students that it's all in the mind, and the patient's faith in treatment is almost as important as the medication itself.

Robin Basnet, a surgeon at Bir

**THE POWER OF FAITH:** Mohan Rai teaches faith healing at the Shamanistic Studies and Research Centre in Kathmandu, showing that traditional healing is not just practiced in remote parts of Nepal, but also in the capital. The fact that many of Rai's students are from the West also indicates a disenchantment with the limitations of modern medicine.

Hospital, says traditional healers also benefit from the body's ability to heal itself. "The best doctors can keep patients alive until nature heals itself," he says, "it just takes time, and they take advantage of that."

Many families in rural Nepal still trust local shamans, even when there is a hospital nearby. Basnet recalls that he would see four to five patients a day while working in SoluKhumbu, while the traditional healer would have 50.

Whether there really is



a bad spirit causing pain or illness is not as important as the relief exorcising it can provide. Traditional healers' dominion over both the physical body and the mind of the patient, as well

as their ties to the community means they occupy the space between physical wellbeing and religious beliefs.

American researcher Steven Folmar, who is studying the

# Child predators

Even compared to recent scandals in children's homes, allegations of abuse at Bal Mandir are shocking

**SUNIR PANDEY**

When Sarah Robinson first came to Nepal with her son and niece in 2009, she took time out from sightseeing to visit Bal Mandir in Naxal. At the squalid state-run orphanage, Sarah's niece happened to pick up a five-year-old blind girl. Sarah, a special-needs teacher back in the UK, decided to adopt the child.

Two years later, Sarah was back in Kathmandu to begin the lengthy and difficult adoption process. Whenever she visited Bal Mandir, the girl's caretakers would warn her saying the child had "bad karma", but Sarah was determined to adopt the girl, whom she



PICS: BIKRAM RAI





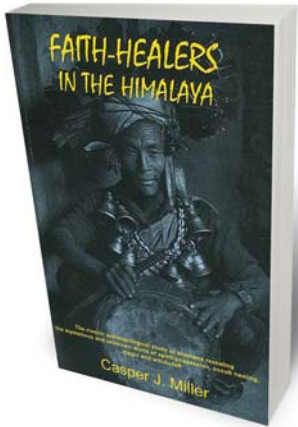
relationship between mental health and traditional sacred beliefs in Lamjung district, says that with increasing societal stress, this emotional and mental space will become more

important, not less. Traditional healers should be retained as a valuable resource to address mental health because of the trust they command in the community. Mental health

carries stigma in Nepali culture, and it is still not mentioned in the Ministry of Health’s updated actions for Essential Health Care Services. Modern medicine has often

## Excerpts from *Faith Healers in the Himalaya*

“Ordinary Nepalis look on the *jhankri* as ‘our doctor’ and turn to him when a family member is ill because he is easily consulted, without great expense and without disruption of one’s daily pursuits. He is familiar, indigenous to the place and culture, sharing with the local people the same ideas on the probable causes of sickness and the methods of successfully treating it, thus engendering in clients expectations for an improvement or a cure.



Casper J Miller, 1978  
Pilgrims Publishing  
Rs 1,000  
Available Pilgrims Book House

The services he provides to the sick through his skill at relieving tensions and contributing to the cure of psychosomatic illness are to be encouraged as his contributing to the health of the nation, health which is not just one of the goals of development but an essential basis for improving the quality of life. In achieving the goal of bringing more modern methods of health care to the hills, already functioning indigenous methods should not be uprooted or even interfered with by attempts to train *jhankris* along lines unfamiliar to them.”

As regards the doctor trained in Western methods of diagnosis and treatment, though he may at first view the *jhankri* as his rival, I believe that a closer look would reveal to him that, at least according to the world-view of his villager patients, he the doctor is treating symptoms while the *jhankri* is getting at causes. There is room, and need, for both. The doctor will certainly realise that a shared world-view between patient and physician can be a powerful factor leading to a cure.”

fallen short where behavioural, emotional or spiritual factors are a primary cause of an ailment. But modern medicine can dovetail successfully with traditional healing practices, as Japanese researchers found 70 per cent of patients in a sample village in Nepal still visiting a traditional healer before going to a health post.

Basnet says he deployed local *jhankris* and lamas to deliver rehydration solutions to patients with diarrhoea, and found them to be highly effective. Faith healers could be at the frontlines of medical diagnosis and treatment, and potentially effective.

However, both Folmar and Miller warn of training traditional healers in modern methods. *Jhankris* “should not be uprooted or even interfered with in attempts to train them in ways that are unfamiliar to them,” Miller says because that could undermine their status in the community.

Dinesh Lamsal thinks *jhankris* should adjust to modern medicine, and not the other way around, and community leaders could convince faith healers to be part of the national health system.

Modern medicine is the one laying down the rules that keep traditional healers out, and this attitude does not engender cooperation, reinforcing the divide. Patients therefore waste time and money reverting back to community faith healers when treatment doesn’t work.

Since families often visit traditional healers first, a clearly defined training program for *jhankris* would save lives. And integrating traditional healers with modern treatment may actually strengthen the status of faith healers in the community. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](#)

You got to have faith, #589

Watch video

now called Hope.

One day Hope’s caretaker told Sarah she had spotted blood in the child’s underwear. Both assumed it was diarrhoea. But after examination, doctors at the TU Teaching Hospital said Hope had been raped. When they questioned her, Hope told them she and “Rabin uncle” loved each other.

Rabin Shrestha was in charge of adoptions when Sarah applied for papers for Hope. “I tried to adopt her, but Shrestha

told me I couldn’t do that. He wanted me to sponsor her instead and told me I would get a decision after she turned 16,” Sarah told *Nepali Times*.

It had already crossed the 35-day statute of limitation on rape when Sarah finally filed a case against Shrestha (she was afraid he could deny her Hope if she accused him) so only filed an FIR with police on grounds of sexual abuse. Shrestha was issued a warning in 2012, but not arrested.

On 16 June, Rabin Shrestha, now an ex-employee since a year and a half, and Rabin Chalise, an ex-student who ran a youth club at the shelter, were arrested by the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) again after child rights activists presented new evidence of repeated rape and abuse of other girls and boys at the orphanage.

According to the testimony of three autistic girls, the men would introduce themselves to the children as Bollywood film stars Amitabh and Abhisek Bachchan and would lure them into drinking alcohol and watching pornography before abusing them, the latest incident occurred three days before their arrest.

They would organise ‘wedding ceremonies’ every Saturday and dress the girls in red saris and have them dance to brass-band wedding music. One of them would spray water on the girls, who would then be forced to take off their wet clothes. This occurred during the afternoons, when Shrestha got a free pass at the orphanage. In the evenings, Shrestha used to take the children to a bar in Thamel where they were groomed to be prostitutes, according to children’s accounts.

These detailed testimonies were presented to the CIB by child rights activists from ACR-Int (Action for Child Rights International). The evidence was cross-checked for veracity, and was so compelling that Shrestha and Chalise were arrested right away, while a third man was questioned but couldn’t be detained because of lack of evidence.

Lawyer Sapana Pradhan Malla, who is

fighting Sarah’s case, says this new evidence might help them get the Supreme Court to order the police to register and file a rape case against Shrestha. They have also listed five other pleas: amendment to the 35-day limit, a mandamus order to not dismiss the case, to teach children about sexual abuse, to set up a child-abuse monitoring system at Bal Mandir and for the Central Children’s Welfare Board to come up with a manual for regulation. A hearing scheduled for 3 July at the SC was again postponed.

Shrestha and Chalise, both right now in police custody, have denied the allegations against them. We asked Subash Kumar Pokharel, General Secretary of Bal Mandir, how an ex-employee could go in and out of Bal Mandir, but he was evasive.

Instead, he accused ACR-International of using Bal Mandir’s children against the institution that protected them. Some Bal Mandir alumni also protested outside the office of ACR-I in Kuleswor on Wednesday accusing activists of using the case for fund-raising.

“Since the police are investigating this case, I don’t want to say anything and influence their decisions. But we have written to them that we will fully cooperate with the investigation,” Pokharel told us.

The CIB refused to comment because it said investigations were ongoing. It has until 10 July to file a case, after which Shrestha and Chalise will have to be released. 🇳🇵

*Names of Sarah and Hope have been changed for safety and privacy reasons.*

# Sacred to profane

Established in 1964 to take care of orphans and abandoned children, Bal Mandir was a powerful institution with royal patronage. With Queen Ratna at the helm, it put together buildings and 50 ropanis of property which are now prime real estate.

Administered by the quasi-NGO, Nepal Children’s Organisation (NCO), Bal Mandirs across the country today take care of over 600 children in 11 homes. Since the loss of its royal backing, the NCO has been plagued by political interference and corruption. Its buildings and property have been leased out to private individuals, amidst allegations of huge kickbacks to political appointees in the NCO.

In 2011, the Public Accounts Committee of the legislature parliament ordered the NCO to systematise its lease process. Seeing the conditions at Bal Mandir, the Australian charity Mitrataa Foundation agreed to manage the orphanages for five years in 2009, but pulled out within 12 months because of widespread corruption and mismanagement at the NCO.

“We had to cancel the project as we were not

confident that we would be able to deliver on the objectives without risking Mitrataa’s reputation as an organisation that refuses to pay bribes,” the charity says in an online post. One former Bal Mandir employee says the shelter has been involved in “selling babies” in the guise of adoptions, with its managers taking a cut.

When allegations of child trafficking made international headlines, the government suspended inter-country adoptions in 2007 before lifting the self-imposed ban in 2009. In February 2010, the Hague Conference on Private International Law, released a report saying Nepal’s adoption system had gross irregularities and fell short of Hague Convention standards. Among other recommendations, the report advised better regulations of children’s homes and elimination of ‘financial gain from inter-country adoption’. Eleven countries including the US and UK then banned adoptions from Nepal.

The NCO’s Subash Kumar Pokharel denies all allegations of corruption and abuse. He says: “There is no other orphanage in Nepal better run than Bal Mandir. If any one finds proof of corruption or abuse, I will resign.”



# Students transferring from private to govt schools



Kalendra Sejuwal in *Nagarik*, 3 July

नागरिक

An increasing number of students are abandoning private schools after the government introduced higher education and technical scholarships for students from government schools.

Apekshya Devkota's father runs a private school in Surkhet, and she studied there till Grade 8. But she has transferred to a government-run high school even though she comes from a well-to-do family. What attracted her were the scholarships and incentives that students who graduate from state-run schools are entitled to.

"I have heard that going to a government school has many advantages," says Apekshya, "besides, I like the teaching and atmosphere here better than the private school."

Janak Shahi, whose parents had sent him to a private school in Surkhet has completed Grade

8, and also decided to return to a government school in Kalikot. His family had migrated to Surkhet during the conflict, but he now sees a better future in a state-run school in his own home district.

"If I get good marks in SLC from a remote district of Karnali Zone, I will be assured of a scholarship anywhere," Janak says, "that is why I came back."

The government's new policy sets aside scholarships and a quota for high school graduates from remote areas in government-run technical and higher secondary schools. The Surkhet District Education Office has reported a reverse exodus of students to government schools.

Sabina Dahal graduated with distinction in SLC from the state-run Jana Secondary School in Surkhet, and was immediately accepted in the MBBS program of the Patan Health Science Institute. She is following her senior Kuber Khadka who received the same scholarship last year.

School Principle Yam Bahadur Shrestha explains: "The fact that they both got good marks from a government school helped to get scholarships. And it is an outcome of the government's decision to prioritise state schools."

As the word spreads, more students have been attracted to government schools. The three big government schools in Surkhet town has about 500 students who quit private schools. The government schools also teach in English from Grades 6-10, which has added to the draw for students.

"The main pull of private schools was that they offered English instruction, but when that became available also in government schools, it convinced more students to leave," says Gehendra Dahal of a high school in Itam.

This has reversed the trend among parents, who used to shun state schools because of lower standards and lack of English. Says Janak Shahi: "Getting a distinction in SLC from a private school in the city carries the same weight as getting a first division from a government school in the Karnali. That is why I came back to Kalikot."

The SLC Exam Centre's new software also disallows students from filling out exam applications from two centres, thus stopping the trend of students studying in private schools and giving exams from government schools. This is the other reason students are changing schools.



Newspaper: Suarez  
White Jersey: Contempt of Court bill

नेपाल

Rabin Manadhar in *Nepal*, 29 June

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“We need to be ready to fight again and if necessary we should be prepared to kill and be killed.”

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, *Jana Aastha*, 2 July

# Optimistic future

Setopati.com, 1 July

सेतोपाटी

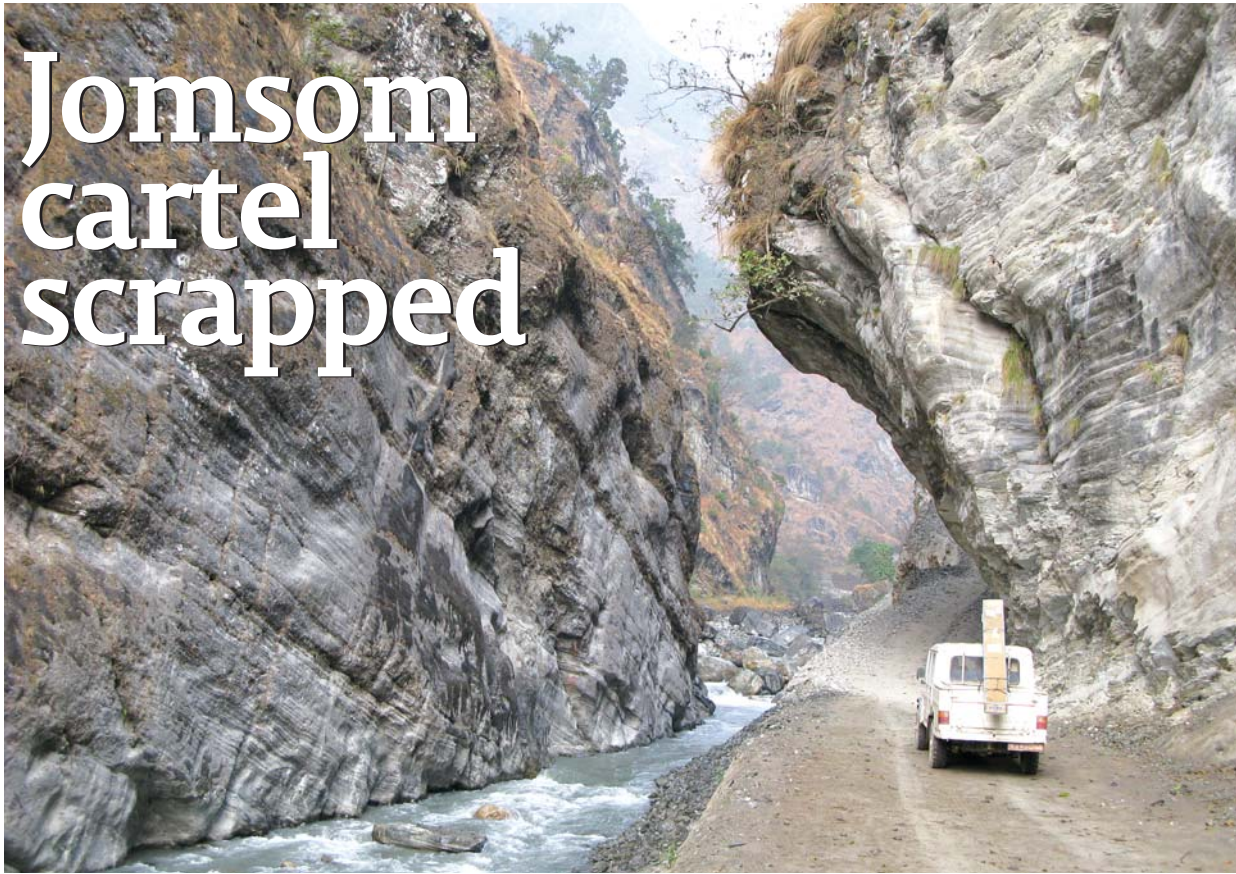
Nepalis have become more hopeful about the second Constituent Assembly delivering a constitution, according to the most recent survey. The poll shows that the percentage of people who think the second CA will deliver the constitution has shot up from 23 per cent last September to 40.8 per cent in February. After the CA election last year, the overall outlook has become positive on a number of issues from constitution writing to development and economic opportunities. The results are based on a multiple choice survey.

### What do you expect from the Constituent Assembly?

- New Constitution: **52%**
- Development: **42%**
- More employment: **21%**
- Peace: **21%**
- Inflation under control: **17%**

### Do you expect the CA to draft the constitution this time?

- A lot: **33%**
- Not much: **25%**
- Extremely less: **11%**
- Very much: **8%**
- No hope: **8%**



Nagarik, 3 July

नागरिक

The Western Region administration has ended cartelling by local transport companies on the Beni-Jomsom route that had been causing hardships to pilgrims and tourists going by road to Mustang. Now vehicles from outside the area can use the 75 km stretch which was being monopolised by bus syndicates.

"There won't be any discussion this time, if there is any obstruction we will arrest and take immediate action," says Arjun Kumar Karki, of the Western

Region administration. "This is a public road where we will not allow monopoly of certain groups."

Despite a Supreme Court ban, bus cartels are prevalent throughout the country. Like other bus syndicates in various parts of the country, the one in Beni-Jomsom earned notoriety for its intimidation tactics and forced other operators from carrying passengers to Muktinath, Kagbeni and Upper Mustang. The cartel uses local musclemen to force private vehicles to pay huge fees to let them travel in the Beni-Jomsom route.

The cartel operates jeeps and mini

buses on this route and has arbitrary pricing, with drivers often charging as much as they wish. The syndicate has been defiant despite opposition from local passengers and tour agencies. Now, the administration has set the rate at Rs 800 per passenger.

Due to the strong hold of the local transportation cartel, there wasn't a single direct route bus from Beni-Jomsom, and passengers were forced to change several buses during the journey. Local transport companies are hopeful that they will get more business, and there will be an increase in tourist traffic.



ANNAPURNA POST

# DERAILED

Annapurna Post, 1 July

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट

The construction of the first phase of Mechi-Mahakali Electric Railway has been halted for two weeks because of local obstruction over compensation. Locals of Raniganj of Sarlahi district have halted construction saying they want more money for the land that is being acquired for the tracks.

They have been protesting at the same spot where the Minister for Physical Planning and Transport Bimalendra Nidhi laid the foundation stone for the project's 108-km Simara-Bardibas section two weeks ago.

The locals have also formed a struggle committee and put forward their demands to the Home Ministry and other concerned government bodies.

"Unless the government revises the compensation for our land, the construction will be halted," stated Bishwamitra Rijal. Depending on the area, the government is paying between Rs 30,000 to Rs 2.2 million. Locals' opposition has caused the construction company Gajarmukhi daily losses worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. "Construction materials worth millions of rupees have already reached the site but the work cannot resume unless the compensation issue is resolved," says site in-charge Mukunda Kandel. The issue is being addressed at the ministry level.





PICS: DIPAK GYAWALI



# HEAVY DUTY WOMEN

Dipak Gyawali in  
*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 June

हिमाल

They used to say it was a man's job, but now women in Butwal are becoming equally adept at handling heavy duty machinery. From 2006 to 2013, more than 41,500 women across 65 districts have been trained for technical skills in a scheme run by the Swiss group, Helvetas. More than 65 per cent of them are self-employed now.

Women are learning to do jobs like cutting aluminium, repairing bikes, cars, televisions, cell phones and computers. They are also making furniture, shoes and glass, and working as drivers and security guards and at construction sites fitting houses with plumbing, electric wires, and marble floors.

“Earlier, when we told them we were training women, they used to ignore us and tell us to get their brothers and husbands instead,” recalls Balam Poudel at Helvetas which supports technical schools in Kapilbastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi.

At Peace Technical Centre, 32-year-old Sharmila Kumari Sharma and Dhan Kumari Khanal, 31, were dressed in helmets, aprons, gloves, and protective eye wear, learning how to cut aluminum sheets.

"We'll open a shop to sell aluminum products and take jobs to fit sites and homes," says Khanal, now determined to become an aluminum fabricator.

At the Butwal Technical Institute in Butwal, Krishna Kumari Thapa is learning to operate a mechanical feeder. With each hit of her hammer, others around her are affected by her enthusiasm. She is here not because she wants a tough

job but thinks she can earn more with the new skills.

"People told us women weren't cut out for this job but we showed them otherwise," says Mina BK. Her classmates Mina Aryal, 20, Rita Kumal, 19, and Anita Subedi, 20, are among scores of young women who have signed up at Butwal Technical Institute.

Some graduates have become trainers themselves. Basanti Tharu is training 22 people how to fit electric wiring. Sangita Tharu is the only woman in Basanti's class, but she says there is no discrimination. "Basanti leads by example and we now see that women can do the same work as men and also earn as much," says Sangita.

Locals are also happy that their women can now solve household problems that were normally delegated to men. Jyoti Chaudhari, 19, Ram Krishni Tharu, 21, and Mina Kumari Tharu, 31, who were three women in a class of 20 learning plumbing in Gajheda of Kapilbastu, want to go back after training and bring piped water to their homes.

In Nawalparasi, Khushbu Mahato wants to learn how to farm mushrooms. She is among five other women who are learning agricultural skills. All of them now want to open up a cooperative after training finishes and share profits.

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# Shark attack

For those of you who have lost track of what is happening in Nepal's political sphere, here is a brief recap of the story so far:

1. **PM Jhusil Da** is in America indefinitely, and definitely no one admits to having ambitions on the succession question.
2. **Caretaker Leftist God** thinks he is taking care, but so do about a dozen Kangresi cronies who are hand-in-glove with crooks.
3. **FM Ram Sharan** has been told by his own party's MPs they will sabotage his budget if they don't get their 5 Corrodes each. FM did the math and doesn't know where he can come up with 14 Arabs. (Bright Idea: The Kuwait Fund?) This is one scam that is not going to be debated in the Public Accounts Committee, that's for sure.
4. **Minister of Trees** has found out it is a jungle out there in the Cabinet. His Chure Conservation Plan is opposed tooth-and-nail by colleagues who are bankrolled by timber tuskers and crushers.
5. We now know why **Mahesh** was banished to Forest and replaced overnight by **Minendra** at the MOIC. Plans afoot to sneak in a telecom tycoon thru the backdoor?
6. Five of Nepal's 35 communist parties have decided to establish a "working unity". So far, they had a non-working disunity. **BRB** is heading a constitution committee, while **PKD** is in cahoots with those opposed to the constitution. **Lal Dhoj** has wrested control of [ratopati.com](http://ratopati.com) from **Lotus Flower** and its first expose was a dollar laundering scam implicating **Comrade Awful**.
7. Dept of Roadblocks has decided to finish off its unspent moolah before this fiscal year runs out. So it is repaving perfectly good streets overnight, and lubricating palms along the way. Too much of an effort to actually repair roads and plug craters in Sanepa, no?
8. Don't waste time reading about the duel in the Eh-maleys between **Makuney** and **Oily**. Who gets to be party chairman is not going to make an iota of a difference to the rest of us.



contractors and their cronies already salivating at the prospect of making a killing. Predictably, Pokhara was shot down in the Cabinet citing security and a shortage of casinos. Imagine all the beautification, resurfacing roads, installing street lights, and airport upgrading that has to happen on a civil war footing in Kathmandu from now till then. Imagine the cash that is going to be doled out, just the trickle down from kickbacks alone will improve the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of Nepal by four percentage points.

The vexing question now is where to hold the SAARC Summit Plenary? The previous venue at the BICC has been taken over by the Constituent Assembly, and although the Honourable Members have gladly offered to take a weeklong holiday and give up the Great Hall of the People for the noble cause of South Asian amity, we have reliable information that the floor of the august house is infested with bed bugs that are so hardy that fumigation by the Pest Control Authority has not been able to dislodge the blood suckers. Which means the BICC is out of the question because we don't want a national faux pas (not to mention an international flagrante delicto) when the bugs sink their teeth into the Butts of South Asian Heads of State (and Government) – especially The Excellencies who wear sarongs, saris, and gos.

That only leaves the Academy Hall or City Hall. The Ass inspected these venues in a personal capacity this week, and I am constrained to reject both out on account of their euphemistically called "Rest Rooms". These are toilets with such high concentrations of hydrogen sulphide and ammonium hydroxide that they have very similar chemical characteristics to the atmosphere of the Jupiter moon, Ganymede. No human being, not even a SAARC HOG (Head of Government), would be able to survive exposure to such toxic fumes. You go to these rest rooms, and you rest forever. Which means there are only two options: to hold the plenary at the Dasrat Stadium, or under a large circus tent on Tundikhel. Because both are outdoors, we minimise the chances of any HOGs dying on us due to asphyxiation.



The Ass

## PAST PRESENT FUTURE

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One thing that is getting sharks in the government all excited is the SAARC Summit in November. The Prime Minister got it into his silly head to hold the Summit in Pokhara, which would have been a disaster for all the capital's

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