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Living off the land



DEVAKI BIST

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THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING

If someone somewhere wanted to sneak in a new constitution that would serve their narrow interest without anyone noticing, what would they do?

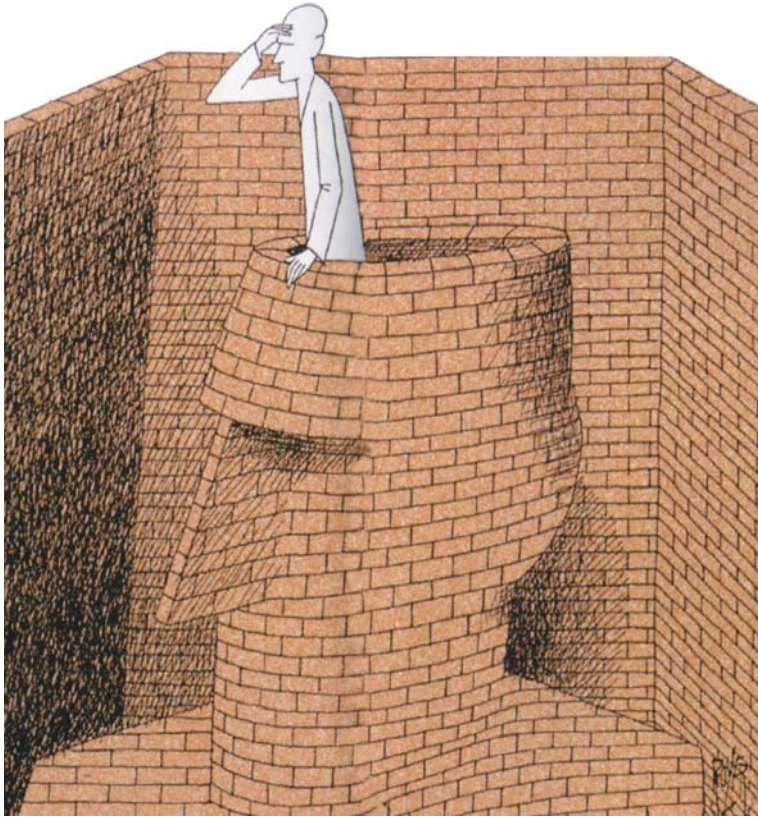
They would populate key committees of the Constituent Assembly, tasked with drafting the most important bits of the new constitution like federalism, form of governance, judiciary, secularism and electoral system, with their own henchmen. And while these committees meet behind close doors, they would throw out juicy morsels to distract the media from time to time.

You do not have to be a conspiracy theorist to deduce that this is probably what is happening today. Reporters on the CA beat are not covering the constitution-writing process. They are too busy ridiculing the CA members' demand for Rs 50 million in personal war chests and duty-free cars, and writing about members taking cat naps, or being bitten by bed bugs. Every week there is a new story from the CA floor, but you can bet it is not about what is being decided in the new constitution.

Without the distraction of public hearings, and out of the media glare, it is quite likely that a new constitution will be rushed through the CA by January. The question is: what kind of constitution, and whose interest will it serve? It certainly doesn't look like it will be a people's constitution since most of the representatives of the people elected to write it are not a part of the discussions at all.

In the November elections, the only substantive issue dividing the parties was that of federalism based on ethnicity. The Madhesi-Maoist alliance that stood for it was soundly defeated. The people, as has happened many times before in this country, displayed more collective wisdom than their rulers. Politics has once more become an end in itself: a mechanism to forward personal ambition and greed, the country be damned.

Why carve up the country into supposedly autonomous states, when there is no economic base for that autonomy?



While in the 1990s the damage bad politics could do was limited, this time bad politics will set the country's future on a wrong trajectory.

In the CA's echo chamber, it is the politics of everything: politics of identity, politics of inclusion, politics of reservation, politics of prior rights. It has become politically incorrect to question federalism, especially one that is based on single-ethnic identity.

And in their obsession with the distribution of power in the new constitution, committee members have forgotten to question the political sustainability and economic viability of future provinces. We are putting the cart before the horse by carving up the country into supposedly autonomous states, when there is no economic base for that autonomy.

Economists have raised valid concerns about how federalism as it is envisaged will mean wasteful duplication, potentially dangerous competition for scarce natural resources and perpetual discord over the fairness of the allocation of federal tax revenue most of which will be confined to two future provinces.

Nepal's future governance should be decentralised, there is no debate about that. The new constitution should be first and foremost about ensuring stability, raising living standards, promoting equity. Unfortunately, the kind of federalism they are foisting on us will lead us to chronic instability, and make us all poorer and less equal.

Let's face it, outsiders who prescribed federalism as a medicine for our ills got it wrong. Instead of steady-state politics, Nepal will turn into a volatile tinderbox. We haven't thought federalism through, and are rushing headlong into it only because it was a slogan to restore peace in 2006. We are not prepared for its political consequences, and we have totally ignored the economic price we will all pay for it.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

CONTEMPT OF FREEDOM

As per the Contempt of Court Bill, a bench, which has suffered the alleged contempt, has the right to pass judgment in the contempt case ('Contempt of freedom', Editorial #714). Both the offended party and the adjudicator being the same person or body is something that infringes the separation of powers principle. In such a case, contempt of court only ends up becoming a ruse for judges to settle personal vendettas.

Contempt of court is aimed at safeguarding the independence of the judiciary. But care needs to be taken that it doesn't arrive with a heavy price for media and individual freedom. If the government's motive behind introducing this law is, in fact, to curb legitimate criticism, the effect on society will be severe.

Anil Karkie

CHILD PREDATORS

We should avoid trial by media, and not treat these guys as guilty until proven innocent ('Child predators', Sunir Pandey, #714). Evidence from the adopting mother, the autistic girls should be supplemented by interviews with Bal Mandir staff, although they may be too intimidated to speak out. But given all the evidence that has been amassed this certainly seems like a case of paedophilia.

Kumar

■ Laws on cases that are sub judice that prohibit media from discussing cases in the courts may be fine and dandy in countries where the court system is clean,

and society abides by the rule of law. But in a country where judges can be bought, the Supreme Court itself is made up of crooks and the corruption watchdog is headed by the corrupt, it is the media's responsibility to keep the pressure on the courts. The fourth estate then becomes the institution of last resort to provide the check and balance when the legislative, executive and judicial branches are weak and discredited. Great investigative story, don't take your eyes off these criminals as they try to manipulate the media and the courts. They have powerful friends in high places.

Goma

■ I am really worried about the lack of due process in this case. The man may very well be a paedophile, but it hasn't been proven yet. It means anyone can be framed in social media, and he is guilty even if he is proven innocent in a court of law.

Jib

■ I hope the guilty receive maximum sentence if they are proven guilty. But right now I think the accused should also receive a certain degree of privacy like not having their names released in public. Sarah and Hope gets a pass, so why shouldn't they at least until a court decision is finalised.

Krishna

WOMEN POWER

At a time when most journalists hardly venture outside Kathmandu valley for their forages, thank you Rubeena Mahato for bringing this story from the far-flung ('A New Nepal also rises', Rubeena Mahato, #714).

When I visited my village last January, I found that most men had left to work in the Middle East and Malaysia. In the absence of these men, women have been left to take care of their entire households. Besides performing their traditional duties, I saw that women were also doing work that was earlier thought to be of male domain. The participation of women in every sector has seen a growth and the women literacy rate and percentage of girls attending schools and colleges are at an all time high. I believe our women will be the ones to change our society, in fact they have already started.

Rjackson33

■ Education (not necessarily academic), economic stability and freedom, and social emancipation: these are the three intertwined pillars for women (and men) to extract themselves out of misery. While elected women representatives may or may not be the exemplars we might expect of them, true social justice will be realised through education and economic independence. Only then will all of us - men and women - be truly liberated.

Namah

■ Women are and have always been the ones who sustain society. Only they do not get their due in public (media) or in politics because they are women. It is a very backward aligned male high caste chauvinistic suppressive society that we live in.

Sarku Subba

PROGRESS ON HOLD

The problem seems to be about valuation and rent seeking, but also

more than that it has to do with the government's inability to calculate, and the citizen's inability to remain within the bound of reason to suggest an alternative value ('Progress on hold,' Bhrikuti Rai, #714).

The concerns of infrastructure projects should not be just about private property and valuation. The subject of landscape level changes, brought about by the infrastructure projects, remains largely ignored by the citizens and the government.

The communication challenge can be overcome and trust building can occur only through pre-project negotiations. In that sense, I am very much for negotiations to occur before the project's start.

One thing great about limitations is that they tend to make valuation easier. We are so used to looking at infrastructure projects along the lines of unlimited returns and unlimited source of energy, we forget that these projects have finite dimensions to them. For some reason, the locals connect to this through their finite level experiences with the landscape. I think there is a need to bridge these different perceptions of realities between both parties. Thanks for spurring a healthy debate on this issue.

Prabhat Gautam

SAARCASM

That is a great summary of politics, Ass. ('Shark attack', Backside #714) You left out #9: the role of Indian "intelligence" in making it all happen!

Jaya

Nice Ass as always.

Basanta Raj Onta

Times WHAT'S TRENDING



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Rain clouds hang over Kathmandu valley as seen from a hill atop Chalnakhel on Saturday evening. Photo: Basil Edward Teo

Most shared on Facebook
Child predators: Sunir Pandey

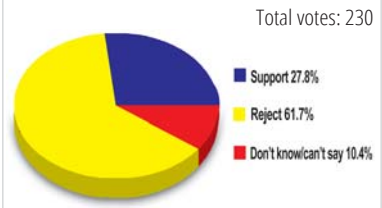
Most retweeted and favoured on Twitter
Contempt of freedom: Editorial

Most visited online page
A New Nepal also rises: Rubeena Mahato



nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #715

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



Weekly Internet Poll #716
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think an Asian team will win the WorldCup in the next fifty years?



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Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Associate Editor: Tsering Dolker Gurung | Online Editor: Bhrikuti Rai | Design: Kiran Maharjan
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com | Advertisers: Ram Krishna Banjara | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosha@himalmedia.com
Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapress.com



While the hoopla surrounding the UML's ninth general convention gradually subsides and traffic along the Putali Sadak-Exhibition Road stretch returns to normal, the fight for the top post between Madhav Kumar Nepal and KP Oli intensifies as the two factions get ready for elections on Friday.



HERE WE GO
Trishna Rana

The week-long convention had to be extended by two days because Nepal and Oli could not reach an agreement on the statute amendment proposal. This was a high-tech affair with drones inside the big tent dropping flower petals on dignitaries, a robot-controlled auspicious lamp lighting, and laser-readers at the gate scanning barcodes on IDs.

Despite the delay, the second largest party in the Constituent Assembly did manage to undertake some impressive decisions. By setting aside 22 seats reserved for women and around 45 seats for Madhesis, Dailts, Muslims, and other disadvantaged communities, the UML took baby steps towards building a more inclusive, albeit slightly bloated, central committee.

Also the proposal to retire leaders once they reach 70 is a propitious sign for the younger cadre and will help them rise up the ranks quicker. Whether these new regulations remain token gestures or are able to bring about real transformation within a party beleaguered with infighting depends on how serious the soon-to-be elected chairman is about modernising the party to meet the needs of an increasingly young and diverse populace.



DRONES: High-tech gizmos such as flower-dropping drones (upper left corner) at the UML General Convention last Thursday did not make its leadership look any younger.

DEVAKI BISTA

The generation gap

Nepal's aging political leadership is running out of time in more ways than one

The retirements of 78-year-old Bharat Mohan Adhikari, former minister and politburo member of the UML, along with senior leaders Siddhi Lal Singh and Kamal Koirala after the general convention provides a much needed nudge to ageing politicians of other parties and some introspection is in order.

One-third of Nepal's population is between 15-39 years. While former student leaders and current parliamentarians like NC's Gagan Thapa (37) and Udaya Rana (42), UML's Rabindra Prasad Adhikari (35) and Ganesh Man Pun (40) of the UCPN (Maoist) give us hope, their numbers are too small to make a big difference. The breakdown by age of the 240 CA members who were elected through the first past the post ballot in the 2013 elections shows that only eight per cent are between 31 to 40. More than half

the parliamentarians are 51 to 65 year-old.

Today, there are nearly 4 million Nepalis on Facebook and their numbers on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Google+ are growing rapidly. This is a generation which gets its news and forms its opinions almost exclusively on the Internet. They like to feel a sense of connection and want to communicate openly with their leaders as last year's election campaigning demonstrated.

While a handful of senior leaders like Baburam Bhattarai, Kamal Thapa, and Ram Sharan Mahat have proved their tech savviness over the years and their willingness to engage with followers, most have never ventured into cyberspace. Just look at the outdated and clunky websites of the three main parties -- that is proof enough of how the

leadership has failed to remain relevant in changing times.

But it's not just through their lack of online presence that the elderly statesmen have failed the youth of this country. Far more worrying is their failure to provide the basics: quality education and respectable job opportunities. More than half the students who appeared for their SLC exams did not pass this year. And then there are the thousands upon thousands of young men and women who are toiling in foreign countries so they can feed their families back home. It is a travesty that we are allowing the futures of millions of our children and youth to go to waste.

The recent experiences of our southern neighbor, however, should provide some hope for senior leaders in Nepal. Sixty-five per cent of India's 1.2 billion population

is 35 or under and yet the country picked 63-year-old Narendra Modi over 44-year-old Rahul Gandhi to chart its future. In Modi, the youth of India chose a man with a proven track record of delivering on his promises and bringing economic growth and prosperity.

They were so enamoured by his performance in Gujarat that many simply chose to overlook his nefarious past.

If the top crop of Nepali leaders is successful in drafting a new constitution by the end of this year, Nepalis too will forgive them for their past blunders. Given that most of them are in their early to mid-60s, today's politicians have at least a decade to set things right, groom a new generation of leaders, and leave a lasting political legacy. @TrishnaRana1

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87 DAYS LATER: Americans (l-r) Seth Wolpin, Kathleen Egan, and John Fiddler celebrate completing the higher route of the Great Himalyan Trail at the Tibetan border.



The great Himalayan traverse

Adventure tourists give trekking in Nepal a whole new meaning by doing wilder, longer routes

MATT MILLER

Treks in Nepal used to be one week to three weeks, and most itineraries still stick to that timetable. But with roads going where there used to be hiking trails, trekkers are venturing into wilder, and longer treks.

The most gruelling endurance test is the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT) which could be the backbone of future trekking in Nepal. The Trail stretches along the full range of the Nepal Himalaya from Taplejung to Humla, and even beyond into

Sikkim, Bhutan and up to Kashmir.

Most trekkers would do it in sections, but there are extreme trekkers who have done the whole Nepal part of the GHT in one go. There is a higher route and a lower route of the Great Himalayan Trail, and the higher route needs climbing experience to go over five high altitude passes.

Only 30 people have completed a combination of high and low routes at one go, and no one has done an exclusively high route until Americans John Fiddler, Kathleen Egan and Seth Wolpin completed it this week.

The three were brought together after Fiddler came across an Internet post about the great trek. “This is the hardest thing I’ve ever done, physically and mentally,” said Wolpin, who in addition to climbing Mt Everest, has run right across the continental United States. “I live by adventures, but honestly, it’s tough to top this.”

After starting out on the trail it took 41 days for the group to come across another road. “Before this I’d never hiked in the wilderness for more than a month,” said Fiddler. For Wolpin, the most memorable part of the journey was being pelted by rock

falls for 24 hours while crossing Tashi Lapsa. “It was like being under shellfire for 24 hours, it was like war,” he recalled.

The group had maps from 2013, but trails listed on it had been swept away by landslides, and new trails had been made in their place. “The Himalaya is literally moving,” said Egan.

Each had their bouts with sickness, but they couldn’t stop since they were racing the monsoon. As it turned out, the monsoon was late and very weak, and it finally caught up with them when they arrived back in Kathmandu on the fourth of July.

Besides the elements, the extreme distance, altitude, and their health, at least as big an obstacle was the bureaucracy. Every checkpoint asked for their guide and group number. They travelled with neither. Officials were worried for their safety, but mostly they were looking for permits.

“There needs to be one universal permit to cross the whole GHT,” said Fiddler who recalls that in Dolpo, they weren’t allowed to proceed without a guide.

The trio completed the traverse to raise money for Wolpin’s non-profit, Wide Open Vistas which helps porters by supporting their children’s schooling.

“The Great Himalayan Trail is the most difficult in the world,” said Kathleen, “and it will grow as long as the government helps it to grow and nurtures it.”

Two years ago, a four-member group led by 21-time Everest summiteer Apa Sherpa traversed the lower GHT to raise awareness about climate change and the Himalaya. They took 100 days to complete the trek, taking time to appear at schools and giving talks along the way.

Australian trekker Robin Bousted who has tirelessly promoted the GHT is optimistic it will help lift living standards in remote Himalayan valleys. He says: “It could develop micro-tourism projects in communities too remote for major infrastructure development, creating value in regions that previously had little to offer.”

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Outside Valley Center: Orchid Diagnostic, Bharatpur (Opposite Chitwan Medical College) • Mother Teresa, Alakhya, Birgunj Ranisati Healthcare Service, Paropakar Medical Hall (Behind NTC building) Mahendra Pool, Pokhara • Aryan Health Services, Rani Sati Mandir Birgunj • Alpine Diagnostics, Chitwan (Infront of BPKMCH)

Outside Valley West: Marchawar Poly Clinic, Siddhartha Nagarpalika, Bhalrahawa • Himal Pathology, Hospital Road (Infront of Banke District Court), Nepalgunj • Kanchan Pathology Service, Kohalpur, Banke • Kanchan Pathology, Kailali (Infront of Seti Zonal Hospital), Dhangadi Rakshit Diagnostics, P. Bir Hospital Complex, Hospital Line, Kapilvastu • LB Medical Services, Banke Lumbini Health Services, Butwal (Near Lumbini Hospital) • Kalika Pathology, Main Bazar, Dang

Outside Valley East: Subh Laxmi Enterprise, Jaleshwar, Janakpur • Unique, Jaycess Chowk, Damak (Opposite to Damak Pharmacy) • Advance Pathology Lab, Janakpur • Jalan Pharma Distributors, Station Road, Janakpurdham • Chetna Medical Hall, Mahendra Path, Dharan Super Health Care Centre, Rangeli Road, Biratnagar • Pardhan Diagnostic, Birtamode (Opp NBL) Suryodaya Health Care, Damak, Jhapa • Purwanchal Milan Laboratory Clinic, Biratnagar

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The long march, #541
The Great Himalayan Trail, #474
Map of Seth's route

The battle of single mothers

AMANTHA PERERA
in COLOMBO

The village of Valipunam, 322 km north of Sri Lanka’s capital Colombo, occupies one of the remotest corners of the country’s former war zone. The dirt roads are impossible to navigate, there are no street lights, telephone connections are patchy and the nearest police post is miles away.

Here, even able-bodied men fear being alone in their homes. But 35-year-old Sumathi Rajan (*pic, below*) knows that if she leaves her small shop unattended at night, there is a good chance there’ll be nothing left in it the next morning.

Determined to preserve her sole income source, she sleeps on

Vavuniya district.

When the family finally returned to Valipunam in late 2011, Rajan was faced with the seemingly impossible task of building her life from scratch.

She was no stranger to hard decisions. Even before the war forced them to flee Rajan had to toughen up, since her occupation as a moneylender meant she had to be firm with her clients about repayment and interest rates.

Her shop received a boost earlier this year when she was chosen as the recipient of a one-off 50,000-rupee (\$380) grant from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

“It helped me to expand the shop,” Rajan said, looking proudly around at the shelves that carry everything from dhal to single-use packages of shampoo. But

who run their own households are some of the most resilient in the former conflict zone.

“These women have a lot of fortitude,” said M S M Kamil, head of the economic security department at ICRC.

“I think what they have gone through in the past three decades – as individuals, as families, and as an entire community – has made them resilient. They feel that they can survive [and] take care of their families whatever the circumstances are,” he added.

Subashini Mellampasi, a 34-year-old single mother of three children aged between five and 14 years, is living proof of the truth behind Kamil’s statement.

Her eldest boy is disabled, and cannot hear or speak. To make matters worse, her husband left her and the three children following the war’s end.

In early 2014, the ICRC gave her the funds to start up a small business. Mellampasi chose to raise goats and purchased a small herd of about 10 animals. Six months on she has a herd of 40.

She has sold ten animals at roughly 100,000 rupees (about \$700) and is using the money to construct a small house.


Because the sale of male goats does not provide a steady income, she has found employment as a cleaner in the nearby village school, for a daily pay of about 600 rupees (roughly \$4.50).

She says she needs at least 10,000 rupees (about \$80) a month in order to survive, but other families say they need at least twice that amount.

While women like Mellampasi scratch out a barebones existence, thousands of others have fallen through the cracks altogether, according to Saroja Sivachandran, head of the Centre for Women and Development in Jaffna, capital of the Northern Province.

“There are thousands of women who are not receiving any kind of assistance,” she told IPS. “There are limited on-going programmes that target this extremely vulnerable group. What we need is a large programme encompassing the full province and all the single female-headed families,” she added.

But financial aid to the country has dwindled steadily since the war’s end.

With the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also winding down its work in Sri Lanka, a substantial programme for single mothers remains, for now, only a promise on paper.  www.ipsnews.net



the shop floor every night, along with her 12-year-old son, despite the very real threats of theft, and even rape.

“I know what I have to do, I know how to take care of my son, and myself,” the feisty single mother tells *IPS*.

Rajan’s life has been one of upheaval and turmoil in the last five years.

In early 2009, when Sri Lanka’s three-decade-old civil conflict showed signs of reaching a bloody finale, Rajan and her family prepared to face a drawn out period of violent uncertainty.

By April of that year Rajan and her son, only seven years old at the time, were among tens of thousands of Tamil civilians trapped in a narrow swath of land on the island’s north-east coast as the Tigers fought a final bloody battle against government forces.

The two escaped the fighting alive, but with no possessions except the clothes they were wearing. For the next two-and-a-half years, ‘home’ was a massive displacement camp known as Menik Farm in the northern

new supplies mean fresh fears of theft and little peace for Rajan, who deposits her meagre monthly savings of 25 dollars in her son’s account for safe keeping.

Stories like Rajan’s are not rare in Sri Lanka’s war-ravaged Northern Province, where between 40,000 and 55,000 female-headed households struggle to eke out a living.

An assessment by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in June 2013 found that 40 per cent of all 467,000 women returnees displaced during the last stages of the war still felt unsafe in their own homes, while 25 per cent felt similarly vulnerable venturing outside their villages by themselves.

The situation is worse for families headed by single mothers.

“From field assessments, there is a clear indication that children of the estimated 40,000 female-headed households are the most vulnerable to sexual abuse,” stated a protection update by the Durable Solutions Promotion Group.

Despite such odds, women

EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS



Bonus offer

Dish Home has announced a recharge bonus scheme. Customers can now get bonus on recharge of Rs 1000 onwards. Bonus amount ranges from Rs 100 to Rs 1400 depending on the amount of recharge.

Helping hand

As part of its CSR, Himalayan Bank on 2 July made donations to the Boudha-based Om Old Age Home. The bank gave away blankets, clothes and food to the 11 elderly at the home.



Slashed down



Qatar Airways is offering customers up to 30 per cent off on Business Class fares to London from Kathmandu on select flights. The offer is valid until 23 July.

TV Boom

The new 39” LED TV brought by LG especially targeting the ongoing FIFA World Cup is witnessing a huge demand in the market says the company. LG has been offering a heavy discount and a free DVD player and a two-year warranty during the World Cup period on purchase.



Grand win

Khusu Limbu of Kathmandu was announced as the winner of IME’s ‘Maile Banaaeko Ho No.1 Facebook contest’. Limbu who received the maximum likes on her photo for the contest received a brand new Samsung Grand 2.

Numero uno

Toshiba was ranked the no. 1 Television brand by India Today in its issue of 12 May. The ranking was based on MRDA Survey carried by the magazine.



Tour guide

Natraj Tours & Travels has been appointed as an authorised agent of Star Cruises in Nepal. With the appointment Natraj now offers special customised vacation packages for Nepalis and other travellers for travel/cruise to popular destinations in the Asia Pacific.

Monsoon discount

Springwood has announced its “Monsoon Bonanza 40% OFF” offer. The offer is valid for a limited period and available at the brand’s outlet in Bluebird Mall, Bhatbhateni Super Market (Chain), and Bluebird in Biratnagar.



One more

Sunrise Bank opened its 61st ATM counter in Thamel on 8 July. “This is especially targeted for tourists and businesses in the area,” said bank CEO Surendraman Pradhan at the inauguration.

E-secure

Nabil Bank has introduced “Mobitoken”, an additional security in internet banking platform for NabilNet users. NabilNet customers can register for Mobitoken service by logging in into their NabilNet account to get One Time Password for each transaction.



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When the hammer comes down

It is no longer enough to condemn the wrong-doers, they must be named and shamed

Press freedom pundits have passionately debated the contradiction between freedom of expression and judicial contempt, within and outside the court. But there seems to be a general agreement among scholars that 'Contempt of Court' is a loosely defined concept in law - the Proteus that can take any shape and form.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

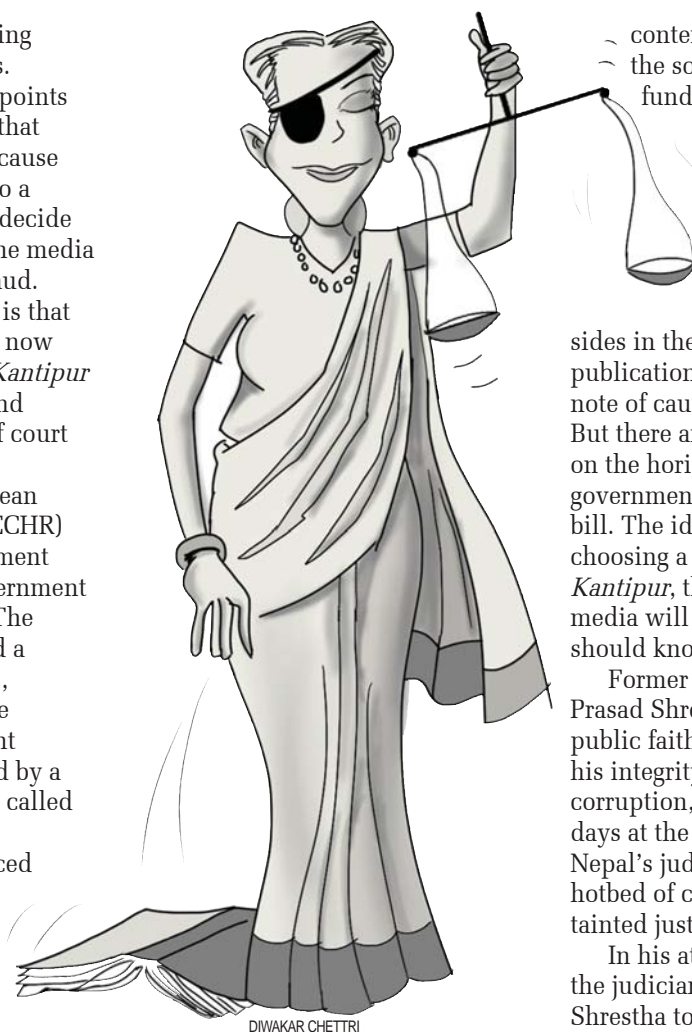
The Supreme Court of Nepal would do well to take note of this legal scope and limitation when it decides to harass Nepali journalists for criticising its verdict and questioning personal conduct of presiding judges, as was evident in the contempt case against *Kantipur*. The honourables sitting on the highest bench should know, public faith and respect are not constitutionally guaranteed unlike their own positions.

Kantipur and other papers (including this publication) criticised the most recent appointments of justices

at the Supreme Court, citing their tainted backgrounds. When the government appoints an individual who ruled that gambling is not illegal because it is "a mental exercise" to a position where he has to decide between life and death, the media cannot sit back and applaud. What is worrying though is that one of those appointed is now hearing the case against *Kantipur* editor Sudheer Sharma and others on the contempt of court case.

In March 1979, European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) passed a landmark judgement involving the British government and *The Sunday Times*. The newspaper had published a report in September 1972, criticising a verdict by the British court on settlement claims of families affected by a pharmaceutical company called Distillers.

The Sunday Times faced contempt charges and was banned from publishing further reports on the matter. The publishers filed a case against their government in the European Court citing breach of Article 19 of ICCPR which guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom. After five years of intense deliberation, the European Court ruled in favour of the publication holding that



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

the right to freedom of expression guaranteed not only freedom of the press to inform the public but also the right of the public to be properly informed. The Court concluded that the risk of prejudicing an ongoing case or

contempt did not outweigh the social need to protect fundamental human freedom within its broader meaning. Back in Nepal, in the coming weeks the court will hear arguments of both sides in the *Kantipur* case and the publication may be let off with a note of caution and a modest fine. But there are more worrying signs on the horizon in the form of the government's Contempt of Court bill. The idea seems to be that by choosing a high profile target like *Kantipur*, the rest of the Nepali media will cow down. They should know better.

Former Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha, who earned public faith and respect through his integrity and crusade against corruption, lamented in his final days at the Supreme Court that Nepal's judiciary had become a hotbed of corruption because of tainted justices.

In his attempt to rid the judiciary of corruption, Shrestha took action against several incompetent judges and recommended impeachment of a sitting judge to the parliament, unprecedented in the history of Nepal's judiciary. Before leaving office Shrestha wrote: "Only if there are honest people heading public institutions

and constitutional bodies, can corruption be effectively checked." It is indeed sad that, barring our spartan Prime Minister, few heading constitutional bodies or state institutions today are uncompromised.

The dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly and the hopelessness surrounding the second have convinced not just common people, but also the generation of younger leaders about the incompetence and fecklessness of their party bosses, young leaders who are now increasingly finding their voice within the party and holding the top brass accountable.

The resolute stance taken by UML Minister Lal Babu Pandit against allowing a corrupt bureaucrat to be transferred to the Finance Ministry, despite being bullied by Finance Minister and Home Minister from his own party is an example worth emulating.

For far too long, the honest and upright within political parties and Nepal's bureaucracy have been silent witnesses to corruption and abuse of power of their bosses. It is time they found their voices. 🇳🇵

Anurag Acharya is program manager at the Centre for Investigative Journalism.
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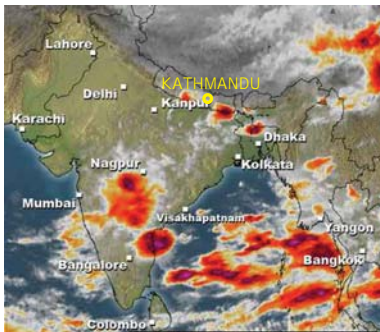
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MEAL TIME:
A Tibetan Muslim family prays
before breaking fast during
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BASIL EDWARD TEO

A minority within a minority

Nepal's Tibetan Muslims mark Ramadan with fasts and feasts

CLARE HENNIG

Abdul Rehman, a 63 year-old jewellery boutique owner in Thamel, leaned across a counter overflowing with colourful beads and bangles to explain why he hadn't had anything to eat or drink all day.

"We are keeping control over ourselves," said Rehman, "and if we do it for one month we can do it in the remaining eleven months."

Ramadan began last week with the appearance of the new crescent moon, and as in other parts of the world, Nepal's Muslims fast during the day for a month of self-control, prayer and spiritual reflection.

Although only 4.2 per cent of Nepalis are Muslim, it is the country's third most practiced religion after Hinduism and Buddhism. Tibetan Muslims like Rehman, however, are a minority within this minority and number only between 300-400.

The Tibetan Muslim community is close-knit because of its shared history of migration and hardships. Most of them fled to Nepal after China's occupation of Tibet in 1959.

"The migration was purely on the basis of religion during the Cultural Revolution," Rehman said. "The elders thought, 'Ok for us we would stay - but what about the future of the children?' So therefore they migrated."

Kashmiri Muslims used to trade with Tibet, and in the 16th century the Fifth Dalai Lama asked some of them to stay, granting them religious freedom and rights. They married into the local community and gained converts.

Abdul Rehman's nephew, Enayat Tako said that both Muslim and Tibetan are equally important elements of his identity. "We want to save our culture, that's why we mostly marry within our community,"

he said.

Like many others, Rehman and Tako's families first fled to Kashmir and Darjeeling because of their ancestral links to India, later moving on to Nepal for economic opportunities.

Despite cultural and language differences, Tibetan Muslims have integrated well with the other Islamic communities in Nepal. Kashmiri, Indian and Tibetan Muslims all pray together at the same mosques, and celebrate Ramadan together.

"A Muslim is a Muslim, we don't differentiate," said Rehman.

The combination of the Islamic faith with Tibetan culture is being passed down to the younger generation as a joint effort between the family and the community. Tako's 17 year-old daughter and 14 year-old son attend a secular school in Kathmandu. But they read the Quran at home and worship at Jame

Masjid on Fridays. On the streets, they speak Nepali but at home, it is Tibetan.

The shared history of migration and the efforts to preserve their heritage have forged strong bonds within Nepal's Tibetan Muslim community. And the mutual experience of Ramadan each year keeps it strong.

Amina Banu, the Tibetan Muslim founder of Banu's Total Fitness gym, described how the community comes together each night for iftar, the breaking of the fast, and how the holy month provides the time to grow closer to God and to one another.

Said Banu: "Iftar is always done in my sister's house. Everybody comes together and we pray ... we cook and it is like a festival. We stay together overnight." 🇳🇵

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Ramzan Kareem, #618

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DJ Zumba,

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27 June, 5 to 11pm, Hotel Radisson, Lajimpat

Reload yourself,

opening of the Entrance cafe, live music by Kramasha Nepal, the Fusion House and Saddle Billed Stork.
12 July, 2pm until midnight, The Entrance Cafe, Hariharbhawan, Lalitpur, (01)5555617, 9841595814



Sushi making,

learn how to make sushi the right way from chefs at Tamura restaurant.
12 July, 2 to 4pm, Hotel Kido House and Tamura Japanese Restaurant, Thapathali, Rs. 1500, 9803226840

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

Learning about success,

listen to one of Nepal's youngest scientists, Kshitij Raj Lohani, talk about how he went from being a dropout to a scholar.
11 July, 4.30 to 6pm, Trade Tower Business Centre, Thapathali, Rs 300, 9843324333

Muna Madan,

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



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.
19 July, facebook.com/kathmandu.kora

I have an idea,

get creative and jump into the melting pot of ideas to foster positive change in Nepal
13 July, 3 to 6pm, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi, Kathmandu



Amalgam,

A series of talks around the ongoing exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery

13 July, Performance art, looking at the performances of Sunil Sigdel, Jupiter Pradhan, Prithvi Shrestha, Saurganga 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

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brush up on your delegation skills with this five-day (two hours a day) workshop. Reduce your work burden as a manager and increase your team's effectiveness.
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Chaksibari Marg, Kathmandu, (01)4266979

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Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818

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Ball in the Mall

Dish Home Nepal's World Cup targeted
event 'Ball in the Mall' began last week.
Along with being surprised by celebrities
at different venues around town,
customers also got the opportunity to
win gift hampers at the program. The
customer engagement program is on
until 13 July.

11 July, Sherpa Mall, 4.30 to 6.30PM,
former Miss Nepal Sadikchhya Shrestha
12 July, KL Tower 2.30 to 6.30PM,
Shristi Kafle and singer Sanjaya Shrestha
13 July, Civil Mall, 2.30 to 6.30PM,
former Miss Nepal Usha Khadgi



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DANGER

MEN AT WORK



On the 14th floor of a new high rise apartment coming up on the outskirts of Kathmandu, an Indian construction worker sits right at the edge, using pieces of wire to tie steel rods into bundles for reinforced concrete beams.

At that dizzying height, he works without a helmet or harness, and has no time to enjoy the view of the valley spread out below him. The building is on the flight path toward Tribhuvan International Airport, and an Air Asia jet carrying Nepali workers to and from Malaysia roars by overhead. Because most young Nepalis have migrated to Malaysia or the Gulf, the workers here are from Uttar Pradesh or Bihar, and some from the Tarai.

“Why worry about ropes and helmets if the pay is so low,” says the worker, not bothering to look up when asked why he is not using a harness.

Other workers are perched precariously on flimsy bamboo scaffolding high up on Mero City, a new apartment complex coming up in Dhapakhel. The apartments here will sell for up to Rs 40 million when completed. The 130 construction workers earn Rs 800 for a 14-hour work day.

They live in the lower flats of the building they are working on to save on rent. Many of the workers from the Tarai say they haven’t gone abroad either because they couldn’t afford the hefty fees demanded by labour

recruiters, or are not familiar with the procedures to get a passport. A Nepali worker from Bardia says he is taking a few days of unpaid leave to go home for rice-planting.

The outcry over bonded workers in the Gulf in the international media masks the exploitation of Nepali workers within Nepal by Nepali contractors. Kathmandu’s construction boom depends on cheap labour, and until laws are enforced to protect their rights, they will continue to be vulnerable.

The truth is, Nepali construction workers don’t have

to go to Qatar or the UAE to be ill-treated.

As we started down the long staircase, a construction supervisor came up and rudely asked us what we were doing at the site. After finding out we were photographing and interviewing the workers, he threatened us and warned us not to come back. 🇳🇵

PICTURES: MILAN POUDEL
TEXT: PRASHANT GNAWALI

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See gallery 



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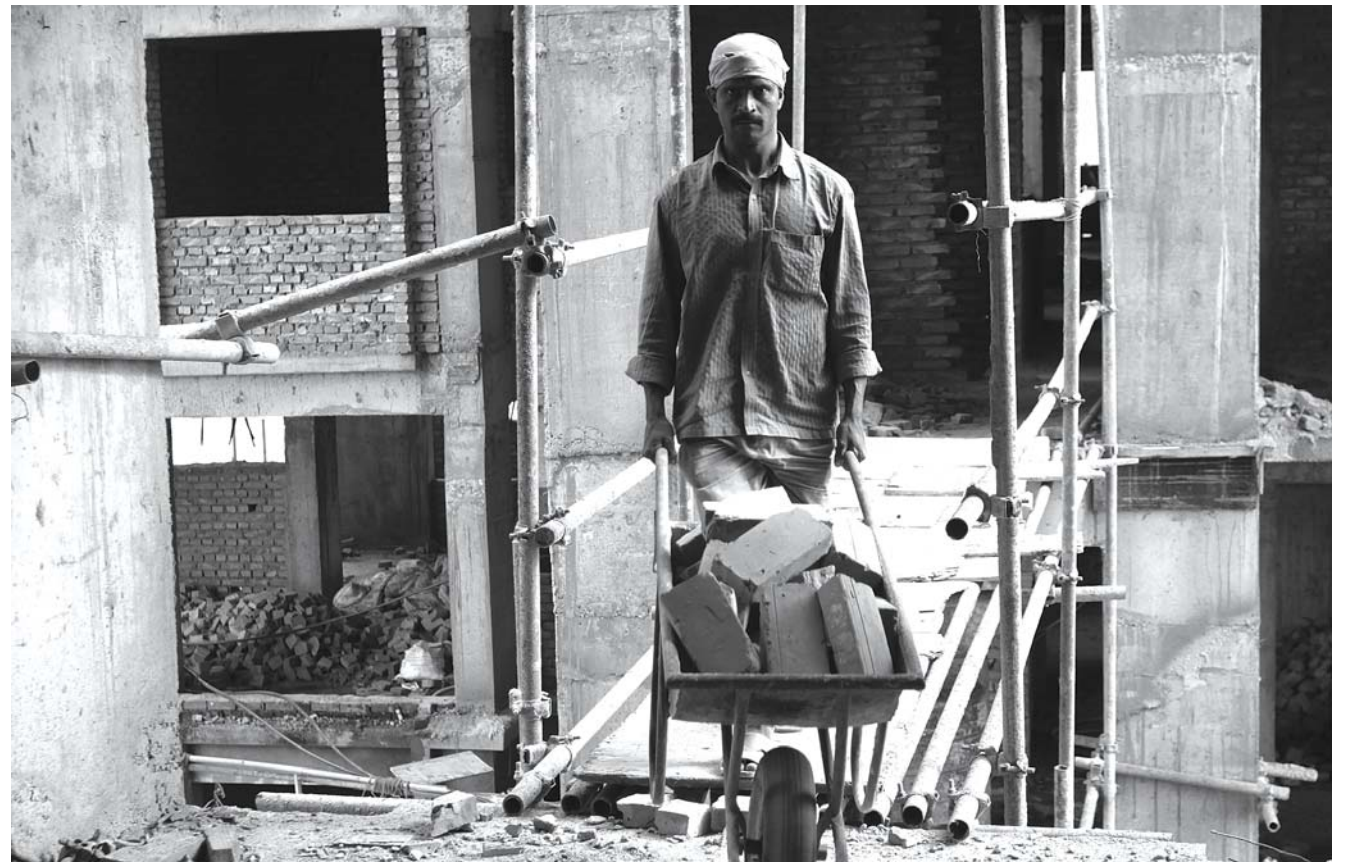
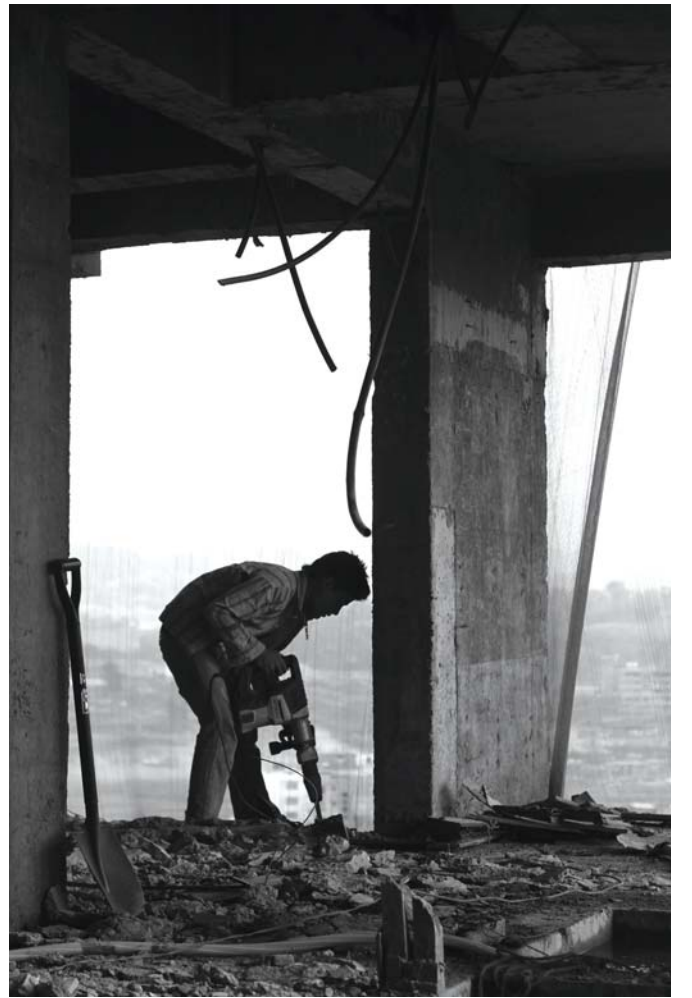
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THE LEGO MOVIE

Believe it or not, *The Lego Movie* is more or less the *The Matrix* – but with millions of Legos. Once again, Hollywood, seemingly having run out of all original intellectual property, has turned a beloved toy into an animated film. Fortunately for us *The Lego Movie*, while culling



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

heavily from *The Matrix*, actually has a rather wild sense of humour. While played by the robotic Keanu Reeves saying “I know Kung-Fu” in the nineties film, the Lego version of Neo, is played here with verve and tongue in cheek hilarity

by Chris Pratt and is thankfully named just plain old Emmet. Emmet is a cog in the wheel of a seemingly utopian Lego land where “Everything is AWESOME”. That is until it turns out that he is the unsuspecting, clueless “one” who is destined to find the “piece of resistance” and save all Lego Land from being...wait for it...glued down by Krazy glue. If you think all of this is very silly, you are right, it *really* is. But if you choose to embrace the silliness, you and your children might be delighted by the clever post-modern hodgepodge that is

skillfully stitched together to make this ultimately delightful film. I will not say that this film will actually edify Lego lovers. While it tips its hat to all the intrepid, young, creative builders, this film is really just Warner Bros. attempt to tap into the highly lucrative children’s market. Fortunately the writers of the film, Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, have maintained a keen sense of humour at the banal task they were given – going all out by poking fun at themselves and pretty much every single other franchise including Batman, Superman, and of course, *The Matrix*.

The Lego Movie is also a testament to the ongoing phenomena that even highly trained actors will jump on a bandwagon if it’s well written enough, and made for children. The film boasts a cast including Will Ferrell, Elizabeth Banks, Liam Neeson, Morgan Freeman, Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill. Despite my persuasions, if you continue to feel that this film might still be too painful, go to hear the snappy jokes that will catch you unaware and make you laugh out loud. Then of course, since I must do my all to keep the adult’s attention, ladies and gentlemen, there is a cameo by Hans Solo and Chewbacca. Yes, yes, they are Lego figures, but honestly, who cares, right? The sequel to *The Lego Movie* will be out in 2017. 🇳🇵

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Trailer



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HAPPENINGS



MONEY MATTERS: Depositors of Oriental Cooperative demand compensation and action against Chairman Sudhir Basnet who embezzled millions of rupees from the cooperative at a rally near Singhadarbar on Tuesday.



STILL WAITING: Farmers irrigate paddy field with water pumped out from Bagmati R-iver in Kathmandu on Monday. Delay in the onset of monsoon has affected plantation across the country.



LITTLE CHAMPS: Nepali participants pose with their medals at World Taekwondo Culture Expo in South Korea on Monday.



GUARDED CELEBRATIONS: A Tibetan woman walks past a group of policemen at the refugee camp in Jawlakhel, where hundreds of Tibetans gathered to celebrate their spiritual leader Dalai Lama's 79th birthday on Sunday.

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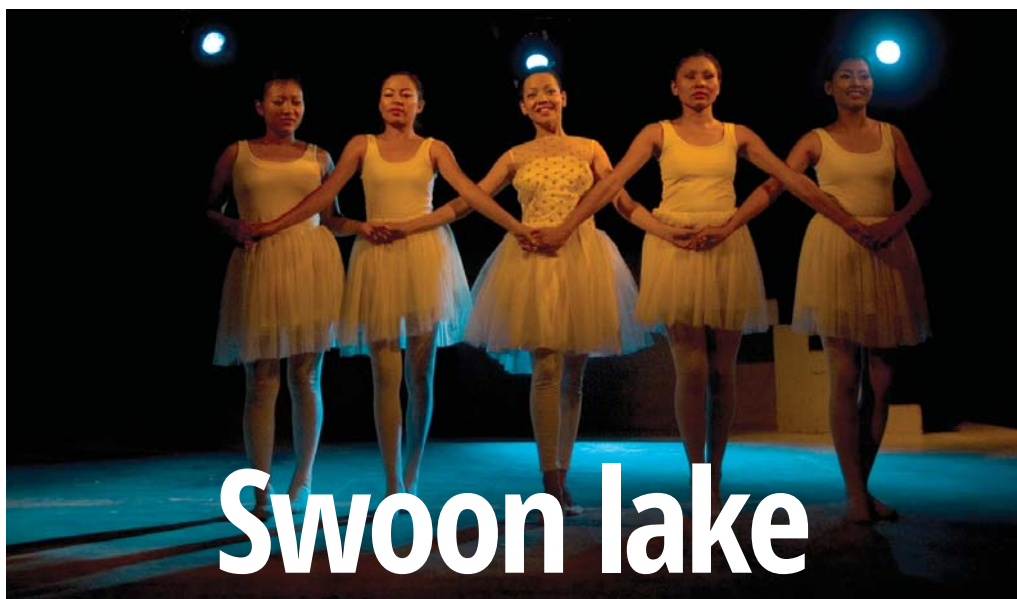
MAKEMANS ▶ 2013

There is waltz, lots of contemporary dance forms, but very little ballet in Kathmandu based dance group Anzel Crew's rendition of the Russian classic, *Swan Lake*, which opened this week at Mandala Theatre.

The result is a goulash of gyrations that distract from the performance, as do the technical glitches and the excess of acts in this 50 minute show. First premiered in Moscow in 1877, *Swan Lake* has taken 140 years to arrive in Kathmandu, and keeps to the original theme of extreme contrasts: black and white, good and evil, the idea of faithful love with a twist of a love triangle.

This production, directed by Nandita Kc and choreographed by Anzel crew casts Odette as the innocent and dainty swan queen who is torn between her feelings for two prince brothers--the Black Swan and the White Swan. As characterised by their colours, the black swan, the younger of the two, is ambitious and arrogant while his elder brother's gentle and kind nature makes him the more beloved one. The queen tiptoes between them as she tries to figure out exactly who she truly loves. Since this is the world's most famous ballet, you already know the tragic ending.

At the press conference before the play's premiere, co-director Mohammad Nazir Hussain, who also plays the Black Swan, said he attempted to show the intimate



BIKRAM RAI

Kathmandu based dance group Anzel crew's rendition of the Russian classic has rough edges

relationship between dance and drama. Unfortunately, the team falls short largely because of poorly choreographed routines -- the strong point of the original.

From the opening act, where the narrator performs a monologue of love proses, surrounded by the corps de ballet (only called that because they are in tutus)

the dance routines are clumsy, uncoordinated and lack finesse. These ballerinas don't even stand on their toes, and attempts at a pirouette were almost comical. One could argue that *Swan Lake* performed in a Himalayan hinterland will never match the original, but if the dancers can't do ballet why choose to stage a ballet?

REVIEW

As is the case with our films and television, it seems even Nepali theatre like to turn on the decibel level. Yes, theatre calls for theatrics but you don't have to bust ear drums. When a director undermines an audience's intelligence, and feels the need to spell out everything, such as the use of a narrator in this performance, the audience is left with little to do. The narrator, who erupts onto the stage almost every five minutes, dramatically elocutes paragraphs of prose and ends up irritating the viewer. The scene where she breaks down into an almost psychotic rant is perhaps when the play hits its nadir. You can't inject Bollywood theatrics into a *Swan Lake* production in Kathmandu.

But all is not lost. In between the cringeworthy moments, the scene when the queen meets the Black Swan for the first passionate time is well executed. The Black Swan's aggression and his desire to be with the lovely princess comes through with his stern stances and emotive eyes. The waltz between the White Swan and the queen is another beautiful moment. As the two glide across the stage, for a brief moment, the audience gets a fleeting glimpse of their characters. 🇳🇵

Tsering Dolker Gurung

Runs until 16 July, show starts at 5.15pm

(closed on Mondays)

Rs 200, Rs 100 (students)

Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar

PICS: WALTER SCHWEIGER



Kathmandu is spreading.

The edges of the city creep further and further outside the ring road like pizza dough, turning this large city into an extra large meal. It won't be long before other restaurants, not just households, follow suit of Walter's Mitho Mitho.

Formerly in Jhamsikhel, half of Walter's kitchen was a casualty of Kathmandu's road widening project. This problem's forward thinking solution was a spacious re-imagining, now in Bhaisepati, of the former small backyard restaurant.

After a soft opening in December 2013, eight months later Walter's busy hours are unpredictable since it's off the beaten path of habitual eateries. But its expansive culinary tastes and relaxing beer garden could make the lulls temporary.

There's lots of room at Walter's. There's a small street-side stall serving goodies from their own Vienna Bakery still in Jhamsikhel. Inside the walls the tranquil beer garden is lined with benches and pleasantly features a traditional Austrian bowling alley, while further in the confines is lounge seating spread across the grass, a small bar tucked still further in the back, as well as monsoon-proof indoor seating.

Try to knock down all nine pins while drinking a Gorkha beer (Rs 370). That's just one example of the Nepali-German/Austrian fusion

Walter's Mitho Mitho

integrated at Walter's.

I wanted to order curry wurst (Rs 390), to check as many boxes as possible of the multicultural offerings, however the server shook his head with disapproval. That wasn't to say it isn't good, but something about my countenance that evening said about the Nepali-German fusion mission. Diplomatically he suggested the German bratwurst. But there are plenty of Nepali, German, Italian, Mexican, and even Middle Eastern dishes too for a multicultural clientele.

The pozazo balls (Rs 210) were touted as the chef's special. This appetiser seemed bland at first,

but offered a great deal of nuanced flavour. What could be the favorite meal of nine year-olds everywhere, the perfectly round fried balls filled with potatoes and cheese bend to the will of your biting teeth, but don't break initially, as if to make sure you are determined to eat it, before finally giving way to its warm dairy interior. The hot garlic sauce wasn't spicy, but a tangy take on traditional marinara sauce, which went well with the pozazo balls' mozzarella filling.

German bratwurst (Rs 380) was too obvious a decision not to be a good one. Visually charred, the casing was not too tough to inhibit enjoying the chewy sausage.

The potato salad also bucked the norms, since the large wedges in a vinegar-based dressing was a delightful departure from typical heavy mayonnaise-based potato salads mashed together.

Three Americans came in on a mission for Viennese chocolate crepes (Rs 280), which did not go unnoticed. After the first bite I was glad their choice became mine. The sweet crepes were not oozing out of the thin pancake despite how forcefully I pressed on the soft top to ooze it out. But the delicate serving of chocolate left me wanting more, rather than sick from a sugar overload.

It's only a matter of years,

months or maybe even a week before many more cultural and culinary destinations like Walter's envelop the rapidly expanding area outside the ring road. 🇳🇵

Matt Miller

How to get there: From the ring road take the Sainbu/Bhaisepati road uphill, past the big tree and road dividers. Walter's is on your left 500m past Bhaisepati chowk.



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a **Carlsberg**

Gosainkunda Festival



On 9 August, 2014, the eve of Janai Purnima, Gosainkunda Lake (4300m) will be the venue for the climactic enactment of the greatest Vedic story. In their quest for amrit (the elixir for spiritual immortality), the titans and the gods collaborated in churning the ocean. Mount Mandara was



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

selected as the churning stick, the king of serpents Vasuki would be the churning rope, and Vishnu himself in the form of a tortoise dove into the ocean to support the base of the mountain with his back. Vasuki wrapped around the mountain, the titans laid hold of one end of the rope and the gods the other. They churned for a thousand years. Unfortunately from the murky depths of the ocean, the first thing to rise was Kalakut, a deadly poison. The operation could not proceed until someone drank this concoction. Lord Shiva, who was in the neighbourhood, shook himself from his deep meditation,

surveyed the scene, and swallowed the poison in one gulp. His throat promptly turned blue (Nilakhanta, aka Blue Throat, is another name for Shiva). He needed to cool off the immense heat generated by Kalakut; so he dove into Gosainkunda Lake. In the memory of this selfless act by Lord Shiva, pilgrims annually take a holy dip in the lake and wash away their sins. But just as in the case of the great Shiva, this pilgrimage is not risk free. Many pilgrims to Gosainkunda suffer from acute mountain sickness (AMS) due to very rapid ascents to 4300m. Many pilgrims despite strong advice, make the trip in two days instead of the recommended four or five days. In light of this, The Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal (MMSN) and the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) carried out a double blind, randomised controlled trial to see if the most commonly used drug for the prevention of AMS, Diamox, would be helpful in these rapid ascents. Although there are proper studies of high dose Diamox (750 mg) which show the effectiveness of this drug in preventing AMS, there are no studies of low dose Diamox (125 mg, two times a day) in rapid ascents. Imagine the dismay when the

study revealed results which were very confusing and almost uninterpretable. What went wrong? Apparently, pilgrims were not following simple directions regarding the study, and some were even exchanging study pills with their fellow pilgrims. Clearly the researchers had not spent enough time counselling the pilgrims about the importance of following directions in a medical study. This sort of problem is rarely encountered when studying western trekkers in randomised controlled trials in the Himalaya. Hence the finding of the Gosainkunda Diamox trial became more of a study in cultural mores than an actual scientific trial as MMSN and HRA had planned. Starting from Dunche in Rasuwa district to Gosainkunda Lake, it is best to take four to five nights to reach the lake to properly acclimatise. Listen to your body and do not push ahead disregarding symptoms of AMS, which are chiefly headache and nausea. Volunteers with accurate knowledge of altitude sickness from the HRA and MMSN will also be at hand during Janai Purnima to help. Taking Diamox, if you don't have a sulpha allergy, will help prevent and treat AMS. Drinking two litres of clean water (boiled or treated with chlorine/iodine tablets) per day will help avoid dehydration. Proper rain gear and carrying table salt to deal with leech bites will also come in handy. The lake area is completely packed during Janai Purnima so being psychologically prepared for some of the problems will help. But pilgrims find the experience rewarding despite all the hardship.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Picture This

Fed up with the sub-par picture quality on your mobile device, and thinking about stepping up to a DSLR camera? A major sticking point, when it comes to DSLR cameras, is their cost, which deters most of us from investing in one. However, in recent times cheaper, entry-level DSLR cameras from reputed companies have been doing the rounds. Samsung's NX1100 is one such offering; a compact, perfectly capable and feature-packed shooter at an extremely attractive price. Although it's plastic-bodied, the NX1100 does not feel like any old plastic camera. The plastic is thick, and the camera feels robust. When you actually hold it, the NX1100 feels perfectly sized, with the grips on the front and the back keeping the camera secure. A traditional mode dial on the NX1100's top plate is a nice touch and offers a fast, simple way to switch between modes. Also on the top plate is a Smart Link button that connects to your preferred Wi-Fi network. You can then select files to share with your smartphone, social networking site or simply back up your files by transferring them to a PC. The Samsung NX1100's 3-inch LCD screen is also bright and easily viewable in sunlight. The NX1100 comes bundled with a 20-50mm lens, and is compatible with 11 other lenses, if you so desire. For its class, the Samsung NX1100's boasts a rather impressive spec sheet, with a 20.3 million pixel APS-C CMOS sensor, an ISO range stretching from 100 to 12,800, full HD movie recording and a maximum of 1/4000 second shutter speed especially standing out. The NX1100 incorporates Samsung's iFunction lens technology, which enables you to make adjustments to manual settings such as aperture, shutter speed, ISO, white balance and exposure compensation simply by pressing a button on the lens. Other key features include 8fps continuous shooting, Sweep Panorama functionality, Smart Filters that apply a range of creative effects to your photos and an iScene mode, which enables photographers to select scene modes via the lens. Although there is no built-in flash on the Samsung NX1100, there is a hotshoe, and the camera ships with a small flash unit that slides into the hotshoe. As a bonus, Samsung has teamed up with Adobe to provide Lightroom 4 with the NX1100 for free, which allows users to simply and quickly enhance their images with a plethora of creative techniques. At the end of the day, image quality is the ultimate test for any DSLR camera, and the Samsung NX1100's vibrant, realistic colours and sharp detail make it a great option for someone looking to take their photography beyond cell phones at a great price.



Yantrick's Verdict: Retailing at approx. Rs 35,000 in New Road, the Samsung NX1100 offers photographers making the jump to interchangeable lens cameras a lot of flexibility and creative potential.

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-Dr. Spiro Condos, dentist practicing in the US

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Schnitzel or Asado?

World cup finalists benefit from new recipe for success

Picking the World Cup winner is like picking your favourite cultural dish: Germany's famous breaded Schnitzel or Argentina's all day Asado BBQ? Whichever your fancy however, both teams have styled themselves with different flavours to great success.

During the group stages, many touted the 2014 World Cup as the best ever, but the knockout rounds were much more measured, save for one dramatic exception. Still there have been 167 goals scored in the tournament, four short of the modern record.

Germany, the historically stout defensive side, and Argentina, the flash attacking side of Maradona and now Lionel Messi, have switched roles, with delicious results.

When Germany scored their second, third and fourth goals in a span of 176 seconds, approximately 176 million tvs were switched off before the remainder of the 7-1 humiliation. Statistics are the spice of football, and rather tellingly, Germany cleared the ball 20 times throughout the match, while Brazil only cleared the ball four times. Clearly, every time Thomas Mueller and crew were in on goal, the ball didn't come out.

It could be argued that Brazil's futility determined the outcome of two games, with both the Netherlands and Argentina playing a textbook foil to the wide open thrashing Brazil suffered. Writer and Nigerian Super Eagles



LUCKY NUMBER 11

- 11 penalties scored in the World Cup Finals
- 11 combined goals by stars Neymar, Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Luis Suarez
- 11 goals by tournament's top 2 scorers, James Rodriguez and Thomas Mueller
- 11 goals scored by Brazil
- 11 goals allowed by Brazil, the most by any team this World Cup

supporter Teju Cole tweeted that the second semifinal's "Opening exchanges are cagier than a prison inside of a zoo", and neither team escaped. Only three other

matches had fewer completed crosses, this in 120 minutes no less. And the semifinal featured the most total passes of any match in the tournament (1457) and passes completed (1146), further evidence of a pedestrian outing that both teams were determined not to win.

But you don't need statistics to tell the story. First, anyone who watched either of the semifinal matches in the early hours of the morning was floored by the first and bored by the

second—no statistics needed. Secondly, statistics on FIFA's website labelled Brazil as the best attacking side with 100 attempts at goal, and labelled the best defending side also as Brazil.

Metrics aren't the best way to describe a football match anyway. Football is about passion. It is a religion. And even when Argentina is playing Germany in the final, they feel like they are taking on Brazil in the Maracana Stadium for one big Asado. Matt Miller

#WorldCup

- Baburam Bhattarai (@brb_bhattarai) Following

What an exciting World Cup Final between CHE GUEVARA & KARL MARX !!
- Akhilesh Upadhyay (@akhileshu) Following

Still in a state of shock! WILL NEED UNTIL NEXT WORLD CUP TO RECOVER!!
#BRA 1 #GER 7
- Ameet Dhakal (@ameetdhakal) Following

So now it's clear that there were only two players in the Brazilian squad: Silva to defend and Neymar to score!
- been_gr (@been_gr) Follow

Who's going to be BRAILLED today?
#Arg vs #Ned
- Tsering Dolker (@Chenreyang) Follow

Wondering how many TV sets got smashed tonight in #Brazil. #BrazilvsGermany #WorldCup2014
- Anup Kapile (@AnupKapile) Following

1986. 2014. This has been the longest wait of my life. #ARGvsNED #worldcup
- Damakant Jayshi (@damakant) Follow

Counting on #Brazil fans who'll be in the Maracana to cheer on their traditional rival, #ARG, against #GER, giving them a 'home' advantage.
- Manjushree Thapa (@manjushreethapa) Following

I asked a Nepali friend in Toronto why Nepalis are such ardent Argentina fans. He said bcs TV came to Nepal during Maradona's heyday. True?
- पिपेक पौडेल (@pipakpoudel) Follow

Congratulations #ARG and supporters. See you in the final on Sunday. But be prepared for a heartbreak :) #GER

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The number of Nepali women filing for divorce is rising

BHRIKUTI RAI

It is the monsoon wedding season in Nepal, and yet another marriage procession accompanied by a loud band makes its way down the narrow alleys of Kathmandu.

While many newlyweds have left for their honeymoons in Pokhara or Chitwan, other young couples are making the rounds in Kathmandu's crowded court rooms seeking to divorce.

Usha and Bibek are among them. They filed for a divorce in Kathmandu District Court earlier this year and it was finally approved last month. Their marriage did not even last a year.

The number of divorces has doubled in the last five years to 1,824 in 2013, most of them filed by women. One in ten family-related cases filed in the courts are divorces, and have overtaken cases relating to land, money lending, and inheritance. "The rigid boundaries governing traditional Nepali life are starting to crumble and so is the notion of marriage. People are embracing divorce as an option if they cannot get along," says advocate Sapana Pradhan Malla. "However, only a small section of the urban population is socially and economically empowered to exercise these choices."

Women can directly file a case for divorce in Nepal's courts, whereas men have to appeal through the local Village Development Committee or Municipality. But women's rights activists caution that more women filing for divorce doesn't always mean empowerment.

Malla explains: "Many women who file for divorce may not be making free choices because most of them get nothing or very little from their husband's property share after divorce."

Polygamy is illegal, and in most cases men force their wives to file for divorce in order to let them remarry. According to Nepali law, if a wife takes her share of property, her husband is allowed to remarry without divorcing his first wife.

Women's rights activists say that such provisions encourage and abet polygamy. Although the 11th amendment to the Muluki Ain, which entitles daughters to inherit property at birth, might have improved the chances of social and financial safety for women after divorce, not all women have the upper hand in such negotiations.

While 28 year-old Usha did file for a divorce in a court, she had to agree on an out of court settlement. She was unable to afford legal fees to fight for a part of Bibek's property. "It could have taken me years to get my share of the small plot of land that I was entitled to after divorce, so I decided to settle," she says.

Usha says she would have

NOT SO HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Shotgun marriages

The conflict ended eight years ago, but the Maoist-affiliated Revolutionary Women's Organisation (RWO) continues to receive complaints from Maoist women of mistreatment by their former guerrilla husbands. Most of the cases are from inter-ethnic marriages encouraged by the party during the war to seek partners beyond one's caste and ethnicity. "Our comrades couldn't be the change they fought for after returning from the jungle," says Sita Pokhrel, coordinator of the RWO. "It is usually the men who leave their families after the war for someone from their own ethnic group," Pokhrel says. "The women almost never complain."

PLA Company Commander, Comrade Badala, says Maoist men who have abandoned their wives and families took their cue from Chairman Prachanda and his famous "fusion" speech justifying his son's second marriage. Badala, whose name means 'revenge' and is a Dalit, was married to guerilla fighter Ram Chandra Paudel by the party in a 'people's marriage' in Lamjung. Says Badala: "When I found out he had married someone else, I called my husband but he simply said that he had returned to his own caste."

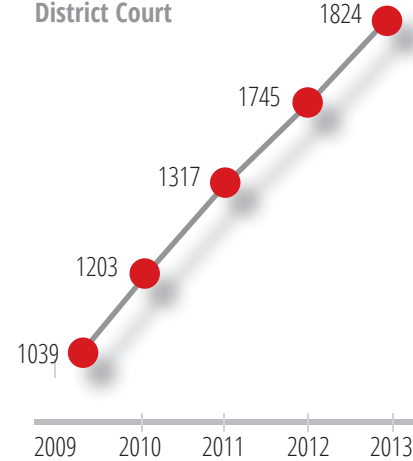
not filed for divorce if she didn't have a supportive family and a stable job. "I may have committed suicide if I had to endure the mental torture from my in-laws," says Usha, who admits she made the wrong decision to marry in a hurry due to family pressure.

Psychologist Karuna Kunwar, who counsels young married couples, says that societal pressures to get married against one's will is a major factor in failed marriages. "Young people's aspirations are radically different from that of their parents and grandparents and when they are forced into marriage, it falls apart quickly," she says.


Although there are no national statistics on divorce, sociologists say that changing livelihoods coupled with urbanisation are leading to new dynamics of married couples in both urban and rural areas.

"With the high rate of foreign employment and migration, the connection to family and wider kin has become brittle," says

Number of Divorce cases in Kathmandu District Court



sociologist Chaitanya Mishra. "Without these agents of stability, it is difficult to save marriages from falling apart."

There are no statistics to prove it, but women's rights activists say the increased female literacy and the number of love marriages (as opposed to family arranged one) has also contributed to the rise in the divorce rate. 



DEVAKI BISTA

Grounds for divorce

The procedure to obtain a divorce for women is easier than for men, but alimony or any other form of maintenance expenditure will be paid to the divorced wife only if the cause of the divorce is established to be the husband. The husband will then provide maintenance to the wife only for five years or until she remarries. However, the provision of maintenance is at the court’s discretion and is awarded only in cases where the wife does not have a source of income.



FOR MEN

- If the wife lives separately from the husband for more than three years
- If the wife attempts to take the life of, or causes disability, or any serious physical damage to the husband
- If the wife has a sexual relationship outside marriage
- If the wife elopes

FOR WOMEN

- If the husband remarries
- If the wife is thrown out of the family house
- If the husband lives separately from the wife for more than three years
- If the husband attempts to take the life of, causes disability, or serious physical injury to the wife
- If the husband is impotent
- If the husband attempts rape

Living together

Women in live-in relationships are even more vulnerable when things go sour

MINA SHARMA

Rashika came to Kathmandu to attend college a few years ago. She began dating her classmate Bishal who convinced her to move in with him, promising to marry her after graduation. It was a convenient option: to live with the man she loved, as well as cut down on living expenses in Kathmandu.

But her partner started becoming very possessive, telling her what she should wear, who she should talk to, and began keeping tabs on her accounts on social networking sites. “He won’t even let me leave, threatening to tell my parents about our past and ruining my future,” says Rashika, who is still living with Bishal.

The increasing trend of live-in relationships among young people in Kathmandu has brought with it a whole set of problems in a society that is still culturally conservative. It is usually women like Rashika who suffer when relationships fail. Some men turn violent, and the young women have nowhere to report it.

Anu, a technician at a media house, was a victim of domestic violence after she moved in with her boyfriend for almost two years. He beat her and also took money from her. “When I found out about his other affairs, I was sad, but I still asked him to marry me,” she says, “but after that the physical assaults got more severe.” She decided to leave him despite his threats. She couldn’t complain to anyone since live-in relationships are not legally recognised.

Many women from such relationships take shelter

at women’s organisations and try to start a new life. Women activists say live-in relationship needs to be recognised by law so victims can seek legal recourse in case of domestic violence or disputes related to children who may be born out of marriage.

“It is becoming urgent to address the legal issues related to non-marriage partnerships,” says Menuka Thapa of Raksha Nepal which works with trafficked women and shelters women from broken live-in relationships.

India’s Supreme Court determined guidelines for live-in relationship last year while adjudicating dispute between a live-in couple where the woman had sought maintenance from the man after the relationship ended. Shared household expenses and pooling of resources are some of the guidelines the Court framed within the expression ‘relationship in the nature of marriage’ for protection of women under Domestic Violence Act. In Nepal, there is no such legal recourse.

It is even more difficult for women who give birth to children during the relationship and are abandoned later. Rima (*pic, below*), 21, from Makwanpur has nowhere to go after her partner of eight years refused to marry after she gave birth to a baby girl who now can’t get a birth certificate.

“He says that she isn’t his daughter and now I am worried about her future,” she says. Rima now works at a restaurant to pay for her daughter’s education. 🇳🇵





Yam Birahi in *Annapurna Post*, 7 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Supreme Court justices, members of the Judicial Commission, and the Minister of Law and Justice, after a two-day retreat in Dhulikhel over the weekend, have concluded that they need to address weaknesses within the judiciary to restore the public’s trust.

Justices retreat

Taking part were Chief Justice Damodar Sharma who is also the Chair of the Judicial Commission, Law Minister Narhari Acharya and 11 justices of the Supreme Court. The self-reflection was organised in response to public exposure through the media of the behaviour and past record of some of the justices. A Supreme Court source said participants all agreed that judges needed to correct their own mistakes and themselves adhere to principles of judicial ethics.

In a paper presented at the conclave, Upendra Keshari Neupane of the Judicial Commission said the justice system needed to be more transparent, accountable, accessible and affordable, and non-discriminatory. He said the incidence of contempts of court were increasing because of the erosion of public faith in the judicial system. But he defended the bill on the contempt of court, saying it was an internationally accepted method to address the respect and trust in the justice system.

At the meeting, Justice Gopal Parajuli and others justices blamed

“organised trial by media” for the difficulties in the administration of justice. The press was giving “views” rather than “news” in a coordinated attack on the Supreme Court, a source quoted one judge as telling the meeting. However, Neupane said that if judges reformed their behaviour, displayed integrity, and used their conscience, they would not have to resort to contempt of court directives.

“The press is deliberately interfering with the justice system, journalists are pronouncing verdicts, this is making it difficult for justice to be administered, such direct and blatant intervention needs to be stopped,” Parajuli was quoted as saying. However, another working paper blamed contradictory interim rulings on similar cases for the confusion and drift in the judicial system.

Minister Acharya said a concrete recommendation was needed on how stakeholders, including the media, could help restore the public’s trust in the judiciary.



3 Idiots Part II

नागरिक

Rajesh KC in *Nagarik*, 6 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“It’s time to play the peace tune.”

Former king Gyanendra, *Annapurna Post*, 8 July

Stuck in transit

Sadhbhab, Nepalganj, 8 July



सद्भाव

Two Nepali children of Banke and Rupandehi are still stuck at a transit home in Ganjipur, Uttar Pradesh, India two months after being rescued. Although the government has been planning to bring the children back to Nepal, no action has yet been taken.

Indian activists rescued the children in May and left them in the transit home in Ganjipur. The activists then came to Nepal and informed officials about the situation.

“We have no money right now. As soon as the funds arrive we will depart for Ganjipur,” says Bindu Kunwar of the Women and Children Welfare Committee (WCWC) of Banke district.

It costs up to Rs 20,000 to travel to Ganjipur and back. Kunwar says her office has appealed to NGOs for help because they don’t see government support materialising any time soon.

The WCWC has also yet to get papers approved before it travels to India. Two weeks ago it wrote to NGOs for help and got a positive response, which officials believe could help the documents pass through the bureaucracy.

Locals of Nepalganj have repeatedly petitioned the district administration to set up a fund to rescue trafficked children but the WCWC is yet to do so officially. Because of the porous border with India, police cannot monitor who travels back and forth, and locals complain that child trafficking is rampant.

No discrimination

Interview with Man Bahadur Nepali, the newly appointed Chairman of the National Dalit Commission, *Himalkhabar Patrika*, 6 July

हिमाल

Himal: How do you feel after being appointed the chairman of the National Dalit Commission?
Man Bahadur Nepali: I take it as an opportunity to prepare future plans to uplift the Dalit community.

What are your main priorities?
The Dalit Commission does not yet have a legal standing. So we need to have a fully empowered commission. We need short-term and long-term plans by bringing together the government, non-government and all stakeholders in one platform.

What steps has the commission taken to address Dalits’ issues since it was formed 12 years ago?
The Caste-based Discrimination



and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011 is the commission’s biggest achievement. However, it hasn’t been properly enforced. The efforts of the commission to guarantee the economic, social and political rights of the Dalit community are commendable.

Why do the minorities and marginalised communities among the Dalits feel left out?
Nine castes in the hilly region and seventeen castes in the Terai region fall within the marginalised Dalit category and the nature of suffering differs from place to place. Majority of the people below the poverty line are Dalits and even among them, most are the marginalised Dalits. We need to increase their access to education and health by improving their economic and social status.

What are the main challenges of the commission?
Racial discrimination and untouchability is an embarrassment for a modern and civilised society. Although racial discrimination has been eradicated legally, this is not the case in practice. The main challenge now is to have a state without racial discrimination.



After that the MPs pushed to raise their constituency grants to Rs 1 million. The money was supposed to be spent on development, to help their constituents, but there was widespread misuse. It allowed national-level corruption to trickle down to the grassroots. That destroyed what little trust the people had on democracy, and the scandal was serious enough for the facilities to be later discontinued.

But this time, CA members individually and in groups are shamelessly demanding again for tax-payer’s money to buy them duty-free cars and Rs 50 million worth of development projects that they can control. This time, too, there is a coalition government that doesn’t have

the strength to stand up to the pressure of legislators.

The Nepali Congress party however is aware that it cannot allow some corrupt, greedy, ambitious MPs to use the weakness of the government to give democracy a bad name and provoke a backlash from angry citizens. The party has decided not to give its CA members control over the Rs 50 million they have demanded, but to earmark it for the development budget of their constituencies equally. The NC’s caretaker chair Ram Chandra Poudel has formally taken the initiative to take the decision so the CA members will be forced to follow suit.

That is the party’s viewpoint, but it is doubtful if leaders in government will go along. Given the character of CA members, you can never be sure. Even six months later, they haven’t taken a single decision to provide relief to people, they haven’t made progress on the constitution, they haven’t gone back to their constituencies, but want to award themselves Rs 50 million each. To take such a step knowing the public’s disgust with the lack of progress is not just cynical, but a stab in the back of voters. Government ministers are looking out for themselves and their cronies and relatives.

To be so blatantly selfish, and obsessed with increasing their personal allowances and facilities, is the height of shamelessness.

TAYLOR CALDWELL

In 2002, Rabina (*pic, right*) and her family were travelling home for Tihar when Maoists firebombed the bus along the East-West Highway near Malangwa. Rabina and her younger brother, Rabin, both suffered severe burns and their mother, Anju, died in the hospital in Raxaul after two agonising weeks.

Rabina, now 17, is one of Nepal's more well-known "post-conflict" children. There has been overwhelming support for the family since their story was first reported 12 years ago. The siblings have received free treatment at Sushma Koirala Memorial Burns Hospital in Sankhu and had fees waived at the Bright Horizons Children's Home at Matatirtha.

Rabina does well in class and looks forward to joining her father in Patlaiya to start a business after graduation this year.

Rabina and Rabin still have some plastic surgery procedures to undergo at the hospital, which they visit once a year. But there is no institutional support to help address their mental trauma, since neither the school nor the hospital offer psychological care. Both children have nightmares and are haunted by the memory of what happened 12 years ago.

For many years, Rabin refused to ride a bus, recalls his father Bhakta Bahadur Regmi, who is a forest ranger in



Patlaiya. "Whatever support we got came from private individuals, charities, the hospital and school after reading our story in the media," says Regmi. "There has been no help at all from the state."

But Rabina looks at the positive side, and says the insurgency changed her life by allowing her the opportunity to have a good education. There are thousands of children like Rabin and Rabina across Nepal who were orphaned by the war, and carry psychological scars.

Srijana Pakhrin was 12 when her father was taken away by soldiers. The army later told the family he was shot while trying to escape. Srijana was so traumatised she retreated into a shell and went into depression (*see box*).

Both Rabina and Srijana were profiled in Kesang Tseten and Prem BK's documentary, *Frames of War*, along with other widows and mothers who lived

Post-conflict stress syndrome

Psychological scars of conflict on young survivors take longer to heal

through years of brutal violence.

Throughout the insurgency, both the Nepal Army and the Maoists involved children in political violence. The Maoists systematically recruited children as young as eight as "whole timers". Most were disqualified by UNMIN from being allowed into cantonments, and many are now adults without jobs and prospects.

The escalation of the conflict in 2004 saw an increase in the murder, torture and detention of children by both the Nepal Army and Maoist militia. Data about the fate of children affected by the conflict varies wildly, but it had a disproportionate impact on children. Up to 700 children have been killed or wounded by IEDs

and mines since the end of the conflict in 2006. While donors have poured money into clearing landmines, not much has been done to help victims of psychological trauma.

"The main obstacle to our work is the idea that mental health is a lesser priority," explains Pitambar Koirala at the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) which helps former child soldiers with post-traumatic stress.

TPO's studies have shown a high incidence of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among child soldiers as they grow up. But help reaches only a tiny fraction of those who need it.

For every young person like

Rabina who shows great resilience and manages to move on and leave the past behind, there is another survivor like Srijana whose mental scars have not healed.

"Issues related to children's physical and mental well-being need to be given priority in the peace process," says Parbati Shrestha at TPO, "The government should take full responsibility, and our role is only to support this task."

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A burning desire to help, Kunda Dixit's blog
Why the children? #121
Rabin and Rabina, #140
New life, #324

Time doesn't heal

Srijana Pakhrin was 12 when her father was taken away by soldiers in Makwanpur. The army later told the family he was shot while trying to escape. Srijana was so traumatised she retreated into a shell and went into depression.

She started doing well at school after few years, until the Maoists took her in their cultural troupe. "She came back depressed again and started falling back in her studies," recalls her mother, Nani Maya Pakhrin.

Srijana, now 24, had an inter-ethnic marriage and is nursing a year old son in a village in Makwanpur. "There are times when I still get anxious and depressed thinking about my father and my lost childhood," says Srijana who is still on medication.

Srijana's elder brother dropped out of college and went to Bahrain to work as a security guard. He returned to Kathmandu few months ago to get married. Although

the family has picked itself up financially after losing their father, Srijana's brother is still angry at everything that they had to go through.

"We begged for the state's support after my father's death, but there no one came forward with help," he said with bitterness.

After we spoke to Srijana in Kathmandu recently, her brother told us to delete all her photos. "We don't want the world to feel sorry for us," he said, "thousands of people saw my family's grief in film and photos, pitied on our sad lives which only made me more angry and humiliated."

Bhrikuti Rai

nepalitimes.com

Watch clip from Kesang Tseten and Prem BK's documentary Frames of War



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Moving the goalposts

After staying awake two nights in a row watching the World Cup semis, the Ass is writing this week's column while fast asleep. So I would appreciate it if you didn't draw open the curtains, or make any loud noises and sudden movements. Just go away, and wake me up in time for the finals.

At risk of being called a spoilsport let me play the devil's advocate here, and for argument's sake, put it to you that football is actually a pretty boring game. Football is said to be directly derived from an ancient Aztec tournament in which two teams kicked around decapitated heads of members of the other team in a blood-soaked arena. And it has been downhill ever since.

Watching football is now so excruciatingly dull that it makes even die-hard fans like me doze off ten minutes into the first half, especially if the match is taking place in the wee hours, so called I have been told because that is when most boys in boarding school wet their beds.

In stark contrast, ice hockey is absolutely riveting because it is a vicious combination of kick-boxing and a sword fight involving a high speed chase on skates around a rink. American football is another modern contact sport that is scintillating because it combines the physical attributes of trench warfare with the Pamplona bull run.

In comparison, football is a really good cure for insomnia. Essentially, football (or "soccer" to the Moms out there) entails having 22 men in mohawks and tattoos running amok kicking each other in their gonads for 90 minutes without scoring, at the end of which they continue to play pointlessly on for another 30 minutes, after which each side gets five target practice shots. Then they strip in full view of 3 billion people and exchange jerseys.

How to make football more exciting? That question has bedeviled mankind ever since the collapse of the Aztec empire. The Ass has a few humble suggestions for Sepp, FIFA's boss-for-life:

1. **Move the goalposts.** Increase goal post width from 9m at present to 25m so there are more chances of goals being scored. What we want to see are scores in the finals like Argentina 73 - Germany 9.

2. **Allow offsides.** Strikers will be allowed to loiter around the enemy goal post waiting for a long pass.

3. **Don't level the playing field.** In fact, incline it at 15

- degrees to give the stronger side the advantage of running downhill and scoring more goals.

4. **God gave us hands.** But hands are allowed only for throw-ins and goalies. What a waste. Let's grab the ball and hit the ground running.

5. **Allow fouls.** Players should be allowed to tackle using Muay Thai and Ninjutsu techniques to bring down enemy players, and the referee as well if he doesn't behave himself. Hooliganism in the D area will also be allowed.

6. **Allow diving.** Players who feign falls should not be given yellow cards, they should be given an Oscar in the Best Supporting Role Category.

7. **No hands on crotches.** Defenders setting up a wall to face a free kick near the penalty area will no longer be allowed to protect their crown jewels with their hands. It's a disgusting habit.



8. **Sack referees and linesmen.** We don't need them, they just slow the game down by stopping play at the slightest excuse. And let's replace the vanishing spray with pepper spray and let players settle scores on their own.

9. **Change shape of balls.** Look at the Americans, they took a dreary game, changed the shape of the ball from a round object into something resembling a near-earth asteroid so it would bounce much more crazily. And they have so much more fun.

10. **Increase the number of players.** Populating the field with more players will liven up the game. Up number of players on each side from 11 to 56. Mix teams with men and women players, and get them to take off their jerseys.

In this manner, football will be much more exciting. More goals will also mean more commercial breaks, and that means more sponsors, and that means we can have the World Cup every year instead of every four years.

FIFA is under tremendous pressure to move the 2022 World Cup from Qatar because of 50 Celsius heat and labour rights issues. Solution: move the games to Kathmandu. So, no need to import Nepali workers to build air-conditioned stadiums. It's a win-win, and we can rename it the FIFA Third World Cup.



The Ass

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