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A top-down view of a white ceramic coffee cup filled with a latte. The coffee has a smooth, light brown foam on top, and a smiley face is drawn into the foam using dark coffee powder. The eyes are two solid black circles, and the mouth is a thick, curved black line. The cup sits on a white saucer, which is placed on a dark wooden surface.

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# No longer peripheral

Being a farmer in Nepal meant living in isolation and loneliness, not any more. Road, media and mobile connectivity has removed the gap between the centre and periphery. Sita Devi Bastola (*above*) of Majthana of Kaski district watches National Geographic channel on her satellite tv, her husband listens to agriculture programs on FM radio, and both talk to their son in Qatar regularly on their mobile. Meanwhile, urban sprawl and outmigration has reduced the production of Pokhara's rare rice varieties. Reports by Merilin Piipuu in Pokhara.

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## MUDDLE-THROUGH ECONOMICS

Our politicians ignore the economy, and especially price rises, at their own peril

EDITORIAL  
PAGE **2**

## PLANNING TO PLAN

## The National Planning Commission needs to reinvent itself

BY **BIHARI KRISHNA SHRESTHA**

PAGE 4



## WHEEL POWER

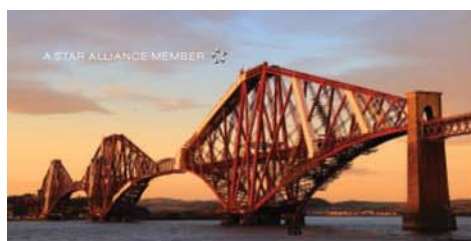
Three young Nepali sportstars and their journey to international arena

PAGE **10-11**

# BLOOD and MUD

International production of *In the Brown Water* has resonance in Kathmandu despite its Afro-American context

PAGE 7



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# MUDDLE-THROUGH ECONOMICS

It is one of the fatalistic traits of Nepali culture: we presume that what we do not see does not exist. We don't really care what happens to our household sewage or plastic waste as long as it is no longer visible. Out of sight is out of mind. Pedestrians deliberately don't look when they cross the road, hoping that if they don't see the truck, it is not there.

It's the same stoic attitude we see in a government about the economy, and the looming inflation crisis. Our leaders seem asleep half the time, and the other half they are trying to strangle each other. Political leaders are lucky; Nepalis are such a tolerant lot. Since we don't expect much from our elected government, we aren't surprised or disappointed when it doesn't deliver.

There are predictable signs that we are stuck again on the constitution. But what is more worrying is that no one seems unduly worried about our deepening fiscal crisis. At first glance the macro-economy doesn't look so bad. Buoyed by a healthy monsoon last year, the GDP grew at 5.2 per cent—the sharpest increase in five years. Revenue grew to 18.5 per cent of the GDP, and tax revenue rose to 16.2 per cent. The balance of payments surplus hit \$1.3 billion, exports nearly touched \$1 billion, and foreign exchange reserves topped \$6.8 billion, enough to cover 10 months of imports.

Nepal's migrant workers sent home \$5.5 billion in the past year through official channels, and this figure does not include hundi transfers or remittances from the estimated 2.5 million Nepalis in India. Nearly 530,000 Nepali workers migrated to work in Malaysia and the Gulf in 2013, a 16 per cent growth over the previous year.

The NEPSE briefly broke an all time high by going over 1,000. The cash reserve requirement is at 5 per cent of total bank deposits, and the loan-deposit ratio is at 80 per cent. The recent budget has promised fiscal stimuli in the economy including tax cuts, spending on infrastructure and



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## Our politicians ignore the economy, and especially price rises, at their own peril

a raise in minimum wage. The Narendra Modi visit and the hope for a boost in investment from India has lifted spirits in the business community.

Looking at all this, Nepal's real problem seems to be too much cash, and too little investment in job-generating productive sectors. The banking sector is reeling under excess liquidity, and lenders don't know what to do with their money because no one is borrowing. There are alarming signs of hyperinflation. If market conditions remain the same this year, the effects of delayed and deficient monsoon accompanied by devastation floods in the west, and the fiscal stimulus will raise inflation into double digit from 9 per cent last year.

One would expect the monetary policy to be restrictive given the market sentiment, but if the Nepal Rastra Bank encourages lending by cutting interest rates and increasing liquidity in the market, it could be a recipe for disaster.

No doubt, Nepal's economy still needs a push to register further growth and some economists would even say that income disparity and inflation are necessary evils and a price we need to pay for growth. But inflation is a boulder on a slope, and is very difficult to control once it tips over the edge.

The elephant in the room is India. Nepal's currency is pegged to the INR, and the open border, growing trade deficit, and our overwhelming economic dependence means that Nepal's economy will only perform as well as India's. Inflation across the border is 8 per cent, and this will add further inflationary pressure. The Indian central bank chaired by Raghuram Rajan, a former chief economist at the IMF and one of the very few people who questioned real estate values and the possibility of a housing bubble in 2006/2007, is applying a restrictive policy. India does have some real hope of getting inflation under 5 per cent, which is good news for us. But the not-so-good news is that our economy will do better not because of something we do proactively, but what India does.

High inflation will hit the middle class and the underclass the most, and will surely have political repercussions. Our politicians ignore the economy, and especially prices rises, at their own peril. We seem to have too many doves and too few hawks at the policy making levels of government.

It is for the Nepal Rastra Bank to get serious about addressing inflation before it gains more momentum. The governor seems to be busy with banking regulation, but inflation is where his attention is needed more urgently.

### YOUR SAY

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

#### AMONG BELIEVERS

The shift to the right in policies of Nepal is hardly surprising ('Among believers', Editorial, #723). Most of the mainstream party leaders are highly conservative in their outlook. Until a fresh batch of leaders is elected, we can expect very little progressive change.

Stoking atavistic fears of religious conversion is just one of the many tricks peddled by the political elite to justify their conservative and outdated mindsets, along with other favorites, including the infamous 'hoards of Indians wanting Nepali citizenship' (to justify medieval citizenship laws), or 'foreign funding of ethnic separatism etc' (to justify greater xenophobic monitoring of the aid sector and foreigners in general).

MJS

■ This editorial misses one critical point. Freedom of religion has been and is misused by Christian groups, especially evangelicals from Korea and Malaysia to convert Nepalis to their sect. If I was a Nepali Catholic or Lutheran, I would be more worried about this than about the Nepal government's moves to redefine freedom of religion in the new constitution.

Born Hindu

■ How about we write a constitution that conforms to our hearts and minds, rather than some 'international covenant' that the vast majority of us have never heard of and which was probably signed by some idiot minister with little thought whatsoever to what it meant for Nepal, and was happy enough just to be on a foreign jaunt.

Hinduism in Nepal was never an intolerant religion. By our very nature, we are an accepting, welcoming and friendly people. I do not think those who want to practice their religion in peace will have any problems doing so regardless of whether Nepal is deemed a Hindu state or a secular one.

Satya Nepali

■ This issue should never be guided by the consensus of majority of people. If a referendum is held, let's say in the United States, with some persuasion and money, the majority would happily vote to turn America into a Christian state. Most would be ecstatic if India is declared a Hindu State. This is the true test of our lawmakers and society at large. Have we really grown out of the medieval mind set or even Pre-Socratic polytheistic one for that matter?

Krishna S

#### EVEREST CAFÉ

The party didn't abandon ex-combatants like Sapana Maya Bajju because it never truly adopted them in the first place ('Comrade Manju's Everest Café,' Deepak Adhikari, #723). These gullible Nepalis just never knew or faced real politicians who have/are and will use common citizens to promote themselves. It's great that Sapana was able to make something of her life, a story which is rare for ex-Maoist fighters, especially the foot soldiers.

Namah

■ Good for Sapana that she made something out of her life. But do I want to buy a cup of tea in a café run by an ex combatant who might have murdered civilians? No, thanks

Hurray

■ Like Sapana, there are many thousands of young Nepalis who were brain washed to join the "people's war", with false hopes and promises. These innocent young men and women trusted Maoism and sacrificed their life with much hope for better future. Sadly, nothing has changed for them. The only change that the war brought was on the lives of Maoist leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahala who succumbed to their greed for personal wellness and forgot about those who helped them get in power.

Tashi Lama

#### SUNKOSI FLOOD

It is because of the incompetency of corrupt lawmakers of Nepal that the citizens who became victims of natural disasters are facing all kinds of problems and not receiving help in due time ('One month after the mountain fell', Kanak Dixit, #723).

Yam Gurung

■ I am wondering if having permanent Early Warning System Cameras might have helped the locals in Sindupalchok. How about starting a website for the Sunkosi tragedy? People can view the ground reality and also make donations. Also it will bring about some accountability and transparency to the aid money that is flowing in.

N

■ As funds pour in to the Central Disaster Relief Fund, what do we know about when and how that money will be used?

David Seddon

■ Experts estimate that \$1 invested in risk reduction today can save up to \$7

in relief and recovery costs tomorrow ('A flood of images', Guna Raj Luitel, #723).

Anil Karki

#### NEPAL'S AUTONOMY

What we need is a solid public transport system, not more private cars ('Nepal's autonomy', Elvin Shrestha, #723). If two-wheelers and small public vehicles are the problem, why not advocate for replacing them with more large and reliable buses, like the ones at Sajha Yatayat? If there was a Sajha bus running through my route every 10 minutes, I would gladly sell my motorcycle.

Pulinkath

■ Yes, let's lower the taxes so that we can import more petroleum products and our current account deficit can go even higher than it is right now. Also let's put more vehicles on the road and further choke our non-existent infrastructure.

Abhishek Sharma

■ We should reduce taxes, improve public transport, and introduce greener vehicles. But what about efficient traffic and road planning, does anyone care?

Asdf

#### NEWA LAHANA

This place is definitely one of my favourites in the valley ('Newa Lahana', Food Review, #723). The food is great, the service is excellent and the price, my god, the price is super reasonable, makes me wonder why I spent thousands on a meal in those 'fancy' restaurants.

Abhishek

### Times WHAT'S TRENDING



BIKRAM RAI

**Most liked on Facebook**  
A devotee carries the living goddess locally known as Kumari to a chariot during the week-long Indra Jatra festival in Kathmandu on Monday.

**Most shared on Facebook**  
One month after the mountain fell by Kanak Mani Dixit

**Most popular on Twitter**  
Newa Lahana by Tsering Dolker Gurung

**Most visited online page**  
Comrade Manju's Everest Café by Deepak Adhikari

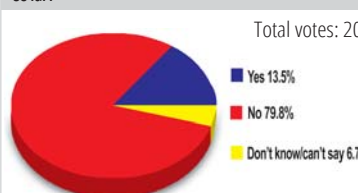
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Weekly Internet Poll #724

Q. Are you satisfied with the CA member nomination so far?



Total votes: 208

Weekly Internet Poll #725  
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Q. What should Pushpa Kamal Dahal do during constitution writing?



# Intolerant tolerance

Religious tolerance in Nepal only extends as long as followers of other faiths do not challenge the ascendancy of Hinduism

Over the weekend, singer Anju Panta issued an apology to fans and viewers after rumours of her refusal to sing a Dasain hymn because it contained references to the Hindu goddess Durga, sparked a furor on social media.

In the interview given to DC Nepal on Saturday, the visibly distraught and teary eyed singer (=) steers clear of questions about religion, and says she turned



**HERE WE GO**  
Trishna Rana

down the offer because of poor health, that certain people had manipulated her words, and her aim was never to insult or slander anyone.

Panta who converted to Christianity later in life, admits her new religion has helped her find inner peace after a messy divorce and gotten her through a tumultuous phase in life. But for cyber vigilantes, none of this seems to matter and Panta's plea for forgiveness has fallen on mostly deaf ears as they continue to hound and harass her online.

From calling her a whore/ prostitute and other choice Nepali expletives, to asking for her 'daily rate', to thinly veiled threats of how Anju Panta would have been beheaded by now if she was in Pakistan or Afghanistan instead of Nepal, the comment sections are a cesspool of misogyny.

Religious bigotry - questions about Nepali Christians' loyalty to the motherland and claims that only traitors, criminals, alcoholics, drug users etc turn to Christianity - is also rampant. While a few level headed commentators are arguing that in a democratic and secular country like ours, every citizen has the right to express her views openly without fear of retribution even on sensitive issues such as religion, their voice is far outnumbered by an angry online mob too eager to sacrifice a well-known face in the name of protecting their culture and religion.

In an older video that surfaced on YouTube this week, Panta speaks at a gathering in a church and recalls a similar incident where she was initially promised a song about Jesus Christ, but later discovered the lyrics



contained references to 'Shiva, Sai, Allah, Maullah'. She says she agreed to sing only after the producer changed the wordings to reflect her religious values. Yes, her tone in the video is condescending. Yes, she tells the producer that he is yet to find out the meaning of god and that not all religions are equal. Does she need to learn to respect others' beliefs equally and refrain from ridiculing other religions while putting her own on a pedestal? Yes. But by no stretch of the imagination does Panta's speech justify the vicious attack on her personhood or the vilification of the entire Christian community in Nepal.

The message for Anju as well as other Christian converts in the country seems to be: how dare you abandon Hindu religion or speak out against it when Nepal has given you so much? In the minds of cyber patriots and many others, to be Nepali is to be distinctly Hindu, anything else and you are a traitor. Panta as a Christian felt this pressure to prove her loyalty to Nepal and made it a point to mention in her apology how she returned home even when six of her colleagues, who she had travelled with to the US for a program, decided to stay behind.

We like to project ourselves as a tolerant and accepting

country to the world and we have managed to coexist peacefully for the most part. But our religious tolerance only extends as long as followers of other faiths do not challenge the ascendancy of Hinduism. So as we sit down for a second time to write a new constitution, there are larger lessons to be learnt.

The Interim Constitution of 2063 hastily took away the tag of 'Hindu Kingdom' and replaced it with secularism, a fact that still rankles right wing parties in Nepal and many Hindus themselves. Debates on what it means to be secular needed to happen in 2008 as they need to happen now.

Secularism in its purest sense does not mean godlessness, but the separation of state and temple, so as to make the playing field more equitable. But six years after being declared a secular republic, our state machinery is still largely Hindu in its outlook and behaviour. In the commotion over state restructuring and forms of governance, we are yet again neglecting a vital issue that could potentially give a voice to the silent religious minorities of Nepal. @TrishnaRana1

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# Planning to plan

Why even good plans continue to fail in Nepal

The old adage about how when it rains in Delhi, people in Kathmandu unfurl their umbrellas, has come to pass again. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hinted in his Independence Day speech last month that he would replace the Indian Planning Commission with a different, more responsive mechanism, the National Planning Commission (NPC) in Kathmandu got the sense its days were also numbered.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
Bihari K Shrestha

In its first meeting recently after Sushil Koirala became prime minister and ex-officio Chair, the NPC decided to 'restructure and streamline its role'. For all practical purposes, the Commission has been a non-performer for the past 50 years. Proof of this is that a country with an elevated commission of planners enjoying the ranks of state and assistant ministers without any interruption for more than half a century has steadily slid downhill.

Despite some progress, Nepal remains chronically rural with around 70 per cent of its labour force in agriculture that contributes about a third of the GDP. Manufacturing and industrial development, generally job generators, have always been sluggish. This has led to an unprecedented exodus of the labour force, further suppressing economic activity in the country. Paradoxically,

though, while Nepal has failed to grow and develop, it has reduced its poverty level down to 25 per cent. Nepal is like a patient surviving on direct transfusion of cash in the form of remittances and foreign dole. The NPC has been a helpless bystander to all this, affected by both internal and external problems.

During the Panchayat and thereafter, the commission was filled with people who were usually selected not for their academic or professional distinction but for their proximity to partisan power centres, which lately also require hefty down payments to lubricate the process of appointment. The aspirants themselves make those investments in the hope of recouping them through

more impressive CVs.

The NPC secretariat is also treated as a dumping ground for government employees who failed to ingratiate themselves with politicians in power, and are waiting for their first opportunity to move on. Morale, innovation and commitment is low.

While the NPC is officially designated as an advisory body, it enjoys and exercises enormous executive powers since it is tasked with formulating periodic and annual plans, fixing ceilings to the budget, and approves every single project before it can be funded and executed by the government. Every periodic plan contains hundreds of policies which are generally so excellent that if just one on them were

to be successfully implemented, Nepal would have made a quantum leap in development. But the policies don't stand a chance when governance is so rotten.

This is exactly where the planners have let the country down because they hold such enormous sway and can take innovative legislation and policies to nationwide implementation. A lowly NPC joint secretary, for example, authored the Decentralisation Act of 1982 that provided the basis for the formation of local committees and user groups to manage natural resources. The NPC doggedly pursued the recalcitrant Ministry of Forests forcing it to capitulate and finally introduce forest user groups in 1988. Nepal's forests, which had been decimated since nationalisation in 1957, rebounded immediately. At least this one example proves that the NPC has the power and potential to achieve policy reform.

But as things stand, given the personal limitations of the planners themselves, their close family ties to those in power, or the backroom deals that secured their appointments, it is difficult to hope that the NPC will be proactive. This then makes the Commission the scapegoat for the economic, social, political and moral deterioration of the country.

So, the reform task that the NPC has lately taken upon itself requires members to address just one issue honestly: how to help the NPC save itself so it can save the country. ■

*Bihari K Shrestha is an anthropologist who served with the National Planning Commission in the 1980s.*





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STEPHANE HUËT

# False start

Locals oppose an addition to the Changu Narayan museum gallery



The inauguration of an important new gallery addition to the Living Traditions Museum (*pic, above*) of Changu Narayan was disrupted on 6 September by disgruntled locals who said they were not consulted.

The gallery, called 'Now and Then since 464 AD' would have complemented the UNESCO World Heritage site which has relics of some of the oldest settlements in Kathmandu Valley. James Gambrione and Judith

Chase, who curated the section on the repoussé, were explaining how the gallery came about when they was interrupted by slogan-shouting locals. American Ambassador Peter Bode, who was supposed to inaugurate the gallery, returned back from Bhaktapur.

Jim Danisch, the artist who designed the museum said it all started when about 20 "very hot tempered" men disturbed the preparations earlier in the morning. Having come from the nearby villages of Shagdaha, Halchap and Narayantar, they asked the organisers to postpone the inauguration.

"They were confused about their claims," Danisch told *Nepali Times*, "but I understood they were complaining that they had not been included in the conception of the museum."

The situation is now calmer

**MY TAKE:** Artist Jim Danisch (*left*) tries to calm disgruntled locals who disrupted the inauguration of a new gallery of the Living Traditions Museum in Changu Narayan last week.

as the lawyers of the Living Traditions Museum negotiated with the locals to have the inauguration on 13 September. It is not clear what the exact demands of the locals are. One complaint was that the Living Traditions Museum didn't have the proper permissions, but Danisch said the museum had proper permits from the Department of Archaeology and UNESCO.

Jay, 29, who owns a souvenir shop near the temple said he understands the anger of the villagers around: "They feel neglected and don't see the museum adding an advantage to the villages."

But Ashim Bhatta, 32, who has a gallery of thangka paintings near the entrance of Changu Narayan Temple was really disappointed by the incident.

"I have known Judith Chase for a long time and I know she has invited all the community around to get involved in the project from the beginning," says Bhatta, "sometimes, people just want to show the little power they have."

The Living Traditions Museum holds dozens of pieces that were collected by Chase, while she was trekking all over Nepal between 1975 and 1985. "It's sad, because the museum is a real touristic opportunity for the people of the community," says Danisch. "We'll wait for the discussion of next Saturday to see how things evolve."

Stéphane Huët

## EVEREST बैंक BIZ BRIEFS



### New dealership

Laxmi Intercontinental, the sole distributor of Hyundai vehicles for Nepal, launched its new Hyundai Dealership in Dang and appointed New Rider Auto World as its dealer for the district. Spread over an area of 1200sq ft, the showroom was constructed in accordance to the global Hyundai motor's standard.

### Scratch luck

EOL, the sole authorised distributor of Godrej appliances in Nepal has introduced a special Dasain offer. Customers can win cash prizes and a trip to Bangkok on purchase of Godrej refrigerators.

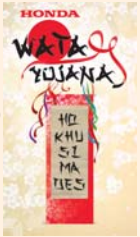


### Study abroad

A senior delegation team from La Trobe University that visited Nepal recently announced scholarships worth over quarter a million dollars for International students for 2015. Leigh Drake, executive dean for faculty of business, economics and law, spoke about creating new and improved opportunities for the students of both countries through various study and exchange programs during the visit.

### Offers galore

Sykar Trading, the sole distributor of Honda motorcycles and cars for Nepal has launched its Dasain scheme 'Wata Yojana (Ho Khusima Des)'. Cash prizes, discount offers, free coupons and a trip to Muktinath and Japan are on offer for customers buying Honda motorcycle and car during the offer period.



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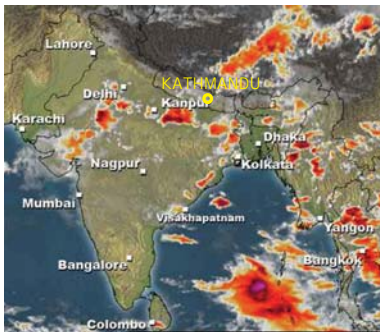
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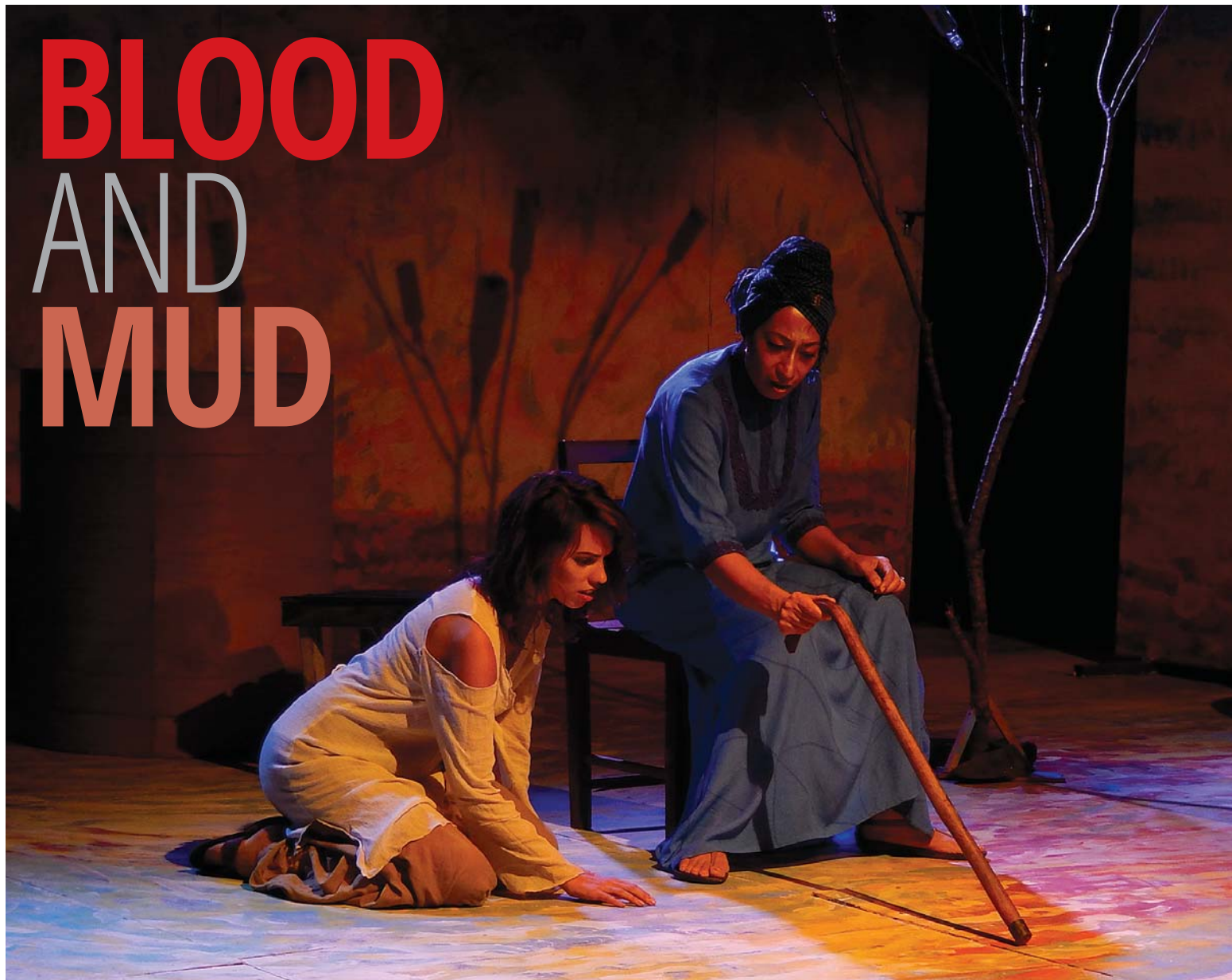


Early this week the skies gave an indication it was already autumn, only for the rain to come pouring down again. It means the westerlies are increasing in influence and will try to blow away the moist wind from the Bay. But even though the monsoon is retreating it still has some steam left. The mornings will feel colder, but the afternoons will still be hot and humid, and rainfall will occur later in the day. This weekend too we will see clouds come and go, bringing short but intense localised showers.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27° 17°	26° 17°	26° 16°

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# BLOOD AND MUD



PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT

STÉPHANE HUËT

Tarell Alvin McCraney's *In the Red and Brown Water* is a lyrical tragedy set in the 'distant present' of the fictional town of San Pere, Louisiana, and relates the story of Oya, a young woman who 'runs like the wind'.

She refuses a track scholarship in a state university to stay with her suffering mother. When Mama Moja dies, Oya desperately runs after another target: getting pregnant. She then hesitates between passion with Shango and security with Ogun.

The plot is set in an Afro-American context, which has nothing to do with Nepal. "I would have never directed this play in the US with non-Black actors," admits director, Deborah Merola. Still, the themes covered are universal and surely struck resonance last week with every Nepali and expat in the audience at the Theatre Village: social pressure, accomplishment, motherhood, dream and reality. The production and the performance of The One World Theatre make the story remarkably translucent and easy to watch.

Alize Biannic from France succeeds in turning Oya's radiant smile progressively

into dramatic expressions. Divya Dev is sensitive as the stuttering Ogun, who recovers the ability to talk when Oya falls in his arms. Rojita Buddhacharya and Binita Baral have minor roles in Act 1, but brilliantly portray characters Nia and Shu, who gain in importance as the play goes on. The amazing Loonibha Tuladhar steps out, as she flawlessly interprets the Afro-American aunt Elegua (see box).

The play could do with some tiny technical adjustments. While the light should have put emphasis on the 'gift' Oya gives to Shango at the end, the stage gets darker and the action loses intensity. In the meantime, the two musicians in the corner of the stage add nothing much to the play, except when it comes to moving the rain stick that gives the needed aquatic atmosphere.

Still, the setting deserves praise. The minimalist decor serves McCraney's powerful text well, and the patchwork of colours painted by Kurchi Dasgupta helps

## One World Theatre unveils a fascinating production of *In the Red and Brown Water* in Kathmandu

blur the boundary between dream and reality. The display adds vividness to the characters' gestures and also reveals some of their inner emotions. The play also involves some bad language without falling into vulgarity, whereas the sexuality is made beautifully suggestive through dancing - an alternative added by Merola who rightfully takes advantage of the talents of Alize Biannic, a former dancer of the Royal Ballet of London.

Deborah Merola's adaptations are often considered to be too long. But her creative direction and the talented actors of the One World Theatre make this *In the Red and Brown Water* a fascinating piece of theatre. 🍷

*In the Red and Brown Water*  
Rs 500  
5 to 14 September, 5.30pm  
6 and 13 September, 1.30pm  
The Village Theatre, Lajimpat  
(01)4001089  
[theatreteevillage.npl@gmail.com](mailto:theatreteevillage.npl@gmail.com)



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## EVENTS

### Creole Passion,

*In the Red and Brown Water*, an exuberant black drama filled with gospel and pop music, African drumming and dances that reveal a powerful spirituality.  
Rs 500, 12 & 14 September, 5.30 pm,  
13 September, 1.30 pm, *The Village Theatre, Lajimpat, (01)4001089, theatrevillage.npl@gmail.com*



### Face to Face,

A workshop with Rajesh Kumar Yadav on working with paper mache and mask making.  
Rs 2000, 15 to 17 September, 4 to 7pm,  
*Sattya, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486*

## Jumping Frog,

A mask, puppet and musical play about the love story of a frog.  
*Until 21 September, 5.15pm, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar, (01)4249761*



### Thursdays of Cinema,

An eclectic programme of eight French movies for children and adults.  
*Every Thursday, 4 to 25 September, 8.30am & 7 pm, Alliance française, Tripureswor, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com*

### Bollywood night,

A fundraiser where everything from the setting to the music to the dress-code is Bollywood-style.  
Rs 2500, 13 September, 7pm,

*Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)5555689*

### Young entrepreneurs,

A platform for young women entrepreneurs to learn, share and expand networks.  
*20 September, 9am to 5pm, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg*

### Shadkon,

An art expression of six artists.  
*15 to 19 September, 10am to 5pm, Patan Museum, Patan Darbar Square*

### Inked,

A tattoo and lifestyle convention complete with tattoo seminars, food stalls, automobile shows and metal music.  
*17 to 19 October, Bhrikuti Mandap, inkme@nepalinked.com, www.nepalinked.com*

### Art conversation,

Visual artist Sujan Chitrakar will be talking about Mural Arts.  
*12 September, 4.30pm, Taragaon Museum, Boudha, (01)4481786*

## DINING



### Falcha,

Give yourself away to the twin pleasures of lemon jeera chicken and mutton handi kabab. *Jhamsikhel*



### Alfresco,

for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999*

## Dragon Chinese Restaurant,

Try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



### Sadya,

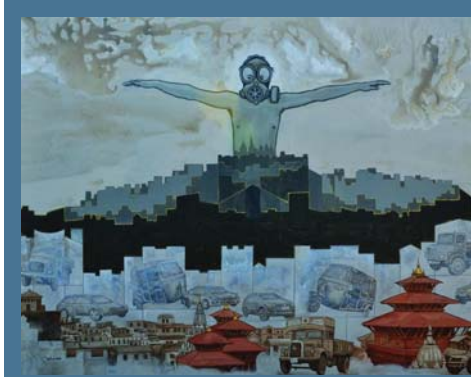
A lavish Kerala lunch featuring various cultural programs to celebrate Kerala's national festival, Onam. *20 September, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg, 9801045811*

### Yellow Chilli,

Enjoy renowned Indian chef Sanjeev Kapoor's signature Indian delicacies and a variety of other mouthwatering dishes. *Thapathali*

### Moksh,

It may be well known for its cultural events but the food in Moksh is mighty fine. *Jhamsikhel*



## 20-year retrospective,

Asha Dangol's works on urbanisation, consumerism and ecological concerns on display.  
*Until 15 September, City Museum Kathmandu, Darbar Marg, events@citymuseum.org*



# CONGRATULATIONS

#### BEST NEW ARTIST



Nattu  
*Maya ko Bato*

#### BEST VOCAL COLLABORATION



Ritu Lama,  
Bhugol Dahal  
*Timi Bina*

#### BEST SONG ORIGINALLY RECORDED FOR A MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK



Gopal Yonjan  
*Thiena Kohi*

#### BEST FEMALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE



Astha Raut  
*Chaubandima Patuki*

#### BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE



Dharmendra  
Sewan  
*Herda Ramro*

#### BEST PERFORMANCE BY A GROUP OR DUO WITH VOCAL



Albatross  
*Ma Ra Malai*

#### FOLK RECORD OF THE YEAR



Anjaan Babu  
*Chari Laijaa Samachar*

#### BEST POP/ROCK COMPOSITION



Navin Chettri,  
Pravin Chettri  
*Namaste*

#### BEST ARRANGEMENT



Sumit  
Biswokarma  
*Malai Soddhai*

#### BEST COMPOSITION



Ashish Abiral  
*Timle Kati Sajilai*

#### BEST ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE



Albatross  
*Afnai Sansar Ma Kina*

#### BEST FEMALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE



Sangeeta  
Rana Pradhan  
*Timle Kati Sajilai*

#### BEST MALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE



Robin Sharma  
*Malai Soddhai*

#### POP / ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR



Cadenza  
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*Back to the Roots*

#### ALBUM OF THE YEAR



Sangeeta  
Rana Pradhan  
*Anupam*

#### SONG OF THE YEAR



Kali Prasad  
Rijal  
*Timle Kati Sajilai*

#### RECORD OF THE YEAR



Sangeeta  
Rana Pradhan  
*Timle Kati Sajilai*

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## MUSIC



## Reggae,

Joint Family Internationale will be playing their prominent reggae music.  
13 September, 8pm,  
House of Music, Thamel

## Roots night,

Step up to the futuristic tunes and yet, go ol' school Jamaican style.  
19 September, 7pm onwards,  
Places Restaurant & Bar,  
Thamel

## House of Music,

Rejoice in live performances by Australian band, The Cairns, and local band, Voodoo Melon Groove.  
12 September, 7.30pm,  
House of Music, Thamel



## Live musical night,

Enjoy live performances by Indian Idol 4 winner, Sourabhee Debbarma, and Samrat Thapa.  
19 September, 7pm, The Societe Lounge Bar, Hattisar

## Lights out,

A musical event with live performances by Electro-Funk/ Nu Disco duo, Madboy/Mink, and international guest artists Heather Andrews and Jonathan J. Paul.  
Rs 1000, 13 September, 7pm, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg, (01)4422214



## ART



## Playtime

When Gurukul was disbanded three years ago, everyone thought Nepali theatre was done for. But now with so many acting collectives being set up across town, you can see at least one new play every month. The latest entry to the ever-growing list of theatres is Pathshala Theatre, who have organised a college-level theatre festival this month.

**12 September** *Let me tell you a story*  
KUSOM

**13 September** *The goodwill hunting*  
Rato Bangala

**14 September** *The honest thief*  
NCM

**15 September** *Patthar ko katha*  
TU

**16 September** *The mysterious thief*  
RR Campus

**17 September** *The witch of Portobello*  
LACM

**18 September** *Asta Bestam*  
DAV

**19 September** *Catherine the great*  
KCM

11am and 5pm  
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# THE RECORD BREAKER

Pyuthan native Sanjay Pandit is on a mission to break as many world records as possible

He made it to the top of Mt Kilimanjaro in six hours, 13 minutes, spent six minutes, three seconds without a shirt on top of Mt Elbrus in Russia, and climbed Island Peak in less than two days. Ultra marathon runner Sanjay Pandit is on a mission to set and break as many records as possible as soon as he can.

"In Kathmandu I saw the winners of the South Asian Games being paraded on carriages and immediately wanted to be one of them," says Sanjay who moved to the capital in 2004 after completing his SLC from his home district Pyuthan.

At first Sanjay chose to play volleyball and even signed up for training. When he heard how much it cost every month, he had to drop out.

"Then I began to look for a sport that I knew about, training for which would cost me nothing," explains Sanjay. Having run throughout his childhood from home to school 60km away, he chose to pursue it as a sport.

Training included going around the entire Ring Road, and sometimes he ran as far as Dakshinkali, Godavari, and Nagarkot. In 2007, Sanjay participated in the first Kathmandu Open Marathon where he met acclaimed athlete Baikuntha Manandhar. Manandhar was so impressed by the 25-year-old that he challenged him to break a record set by the athlete in 1988 of running from Kathmandu to Khasa in 14 hours.

A year later, Sanjay broke Manandhar's record by two hours, 40 minutes. This was his first record and he convinced Manandhar to become his coach.

Climbing Everest was another of his life-long dream. Fellow Pyuthanis raised Rs 2.7 million for his Everest expedition, but his first attempt didn't turn out as expected and Sanjay had to return without reaching the summit.

"I was embarrassed to face my villagers who had done everything they could to pay for my expedition," he says. After successfully summiting Everest in May 2013, he feels more at peace.

On his list of goals now is to climb all the seven highest summits of the seven continents, three of which he has already

summitted. He wants to climb the remaining four in the next eight months, and set another world record.

"Once that record is set, I want to climb all the 8000m mountains in the world," says Sanjay, who besides tackling icefalls and overhangs for fun is also doing his MBA. 🇳🇵

Dambar Krishna Shrestha

**23 JANUARY 2009**

Ran the 390km Kathmandu - Khasa marathon in 11 hours, 20 minutes breaking a previous record set by Baikuntha Manadhar

**13 DECEMBER 2011**

Made it to the top of Island Peak in one and half days. On average it takes climbers nine days to reach the summit

**20 MAY 2012**

Failed Everest attempt

**29 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Summitted Mt Manaslu

**31 MARCH 2014**

Climbed Mt Kilimanjaro in 6 hours, 13 minutes

**20 JULY 2014**

Spent 6 minutes, 3 seconds shirtless on top of Mt Elbrus in minus 60 degrees C (pic, below)



BIKRAM RAI



## Meet Nepal's first professional bike racer

# Master of two wheels



**THE BIKER:** Bibek Thapa with Japanese racers at the Twin Ring racing circuit in Motegi, Japan.

When Bikram heard about the Motegi championship at this year's Racemandu, he knew he had to participate. Immediately, he sent an email to the organisers and applied for a visa. After landing, however, he found out that he had missed the deadline for entry submission. Fortunately, the organisers who thought he was a professional racer had saved a copy of his email. That was just the first of many speed bumps on Bikram's way to the racetrack.

To prove he was a professional racer, Bikram was asked to show a licence, his experience in track racing, race suit, air bag, and other biking essentials. Bikram only had his driving licence. After providing the organisers with his participation certificates in bike races in Nepal and India, Bikram was given an eight-hour training and finally permitted to take part in the event.

"Representing Nepal in a sport that is not very popular in the country is very difficult," explains Bikram who had to pay for everything out of his pocket. He spent Rs 800,000 to participate in the championship and wishes the sports authority at home were more helpful. "Even having a single race track in Kathmandu would go a long way in boosting our confidence and morale." 🇳🇵

Tufan Neupane

When Bikram Thapa first got his motorcycle licence at 18, the lifelong biking enthusiast was elated. By August this year, Bikram found himself at the Twin Ring racing circuit in Motegi, Japan competing alongside the best bikers in the world at the Asian Championship. The 20-year-old is the first Nepali to take part in an international racing tournament.

Although he didn't qualify for the second round, Bikram says the exposure he got in Japan has given him the self-belief to go after his dreams of becoming a professional racer. "I frequently fell down from my bike because I lacked the

experience of racing on an actual track," says the native of Lalitpur. "Despite the falls, I came 20th out of 24 racers. With more practice and resources, there is no reason why I cannot improve my timings."

Bikram first started off his career just practicing bike stunts. With the arrival of Racemandu, an annual biking championship organised by Nepal Automobile Association in 2012, he began racing professionally. Bikram won the first and second editions of Racemandu but had to settle for the fifth position after colliding with another biker in the third edition. The top five got to compete in a championship in Chennai. "Wearing a biking suit and racing on a track was unforgettable," he recalls.





# Top gear

One of the few Nepali athletes to bring home international trophies

At 26, weighing less than 50 kg and barely 5 ft tall, Ajay Pandit Chhetri doesn't even look like a cyclist, yet he has achieved incredible wins. Unlike many Nepali sportspersons for whom mere participation in international arena is considered success, Ajay brings home trophy after trophy.

Just last week Ajay became the first foreigner to win Bhutan's acclaimed Tour of the Dragon, a 268-kilometer mountain bike race - his winning time of 10 hours and 42 minutes broke the course record by over 30 minutes.

Ajay started biking only nine years ago while working as a mechanic in a mountain bike shop in Jyatha. During weekends Ajay would ride for as long as ten hours on his rudimentary bike, travelling to places like Trisuli and Melamchi with friends Narayan Gopal, Raj Kumar, and Padam.



**VICTORIOUS:** Ajay Pandit Chhetri lifts his trophy after winning Tour of the Dragon last week in Bhutan.



Today, he is a well-travelled four-time National Champion, four-time Yak Attack winner, and victor of several races in the UK, where he spent two summers racing as a guest rider for the Torq Professional Mountain Bike team.

Ajay has competed in mountain bike events in Europe, North America, and South, completing some of the hardest and most famous races in the world. He has multiple wins in the UK to his credit and recently was 53rd in the UCI Marathon World Championships out of nearly 100 entrants, defeating many professional racers.

He had his share of challenges too. In 2012 his Europe trip was cut short by a knee injury that saw his dominance back home suffer. He lost his Yak Attack title to Narayan Gopal in 2013. However, after a successful summer in the UK, he came back stronger the following year, and reclaimed the crown in 2014 leaving behind both Narayan and Yuki Ikeda, a professional from Japan.

Ajay doesn't have the prototypical mountain biker build, but a combination of a dedicated training routine, a meticulous approach to race preparation, and knowledge obtained from 10 years of racing has allowed him to achieve great heights. Still young by cycling standards where the best racers are between the age of 29 and 35, sometimes even 40, Ajay has a great future ahead of him.

Ajay has also started a performance tour and coaching company, MTB Nepal, to coach local cycling enthusiasts and up-and-coming racers, and also establish Nepal as a training destination for elite cyclists. 🇳🇵

Tyler McMahon





# MARY KOM

When Sanjay Leela Bhansali announced he would have Priyanka Chopra play Manipuri boxer Mary Kom, everyone wondered how the Punjabi actress could ever fit into the frame of a lightweight boxer who was as far removed from your average ‘desi’ as possible. Bhansali persisted with Chopra, and the film they’ve eventually made is a curious mix of blood, sweat, and Bollywood cheese.

Born as Mangte Chungneijang to poor farmers, young Mary quits school and takes up boxing behind her parents’ back. Against considerable odds, she becomes Women’s World Amateur Boxing Champion five times before bagging bronze for India in the 2012 Olympics. In the backdrop of all this is Manipur’s cultural and political isolation from ‘mainland’ India and Mary’s own struggles with boxing after motherhood.

One would think this was material enough, when in the right hands, for a fascinating story.

But sports biopics, like any other genre, are problematic for filmmakers. The best ones, which are more than a cinematic summary of an athlete’s life, have a deftness of touch that makes them understated masterpieces (it’s lonely at the top, remember); while the clumsiest are nothing but a rehash of overdone formulas: childhood obsession, disapproving parent, early setback, discipline, inspiring speech by coach... medal! Despite its potential, *Mary Kom*, falls into the second category.

First, for a movie about punching one’s way out of poverty, the physical process of transforming a raw talent into an Olympic boxer and the consequent ringside sequences are rather limp. Second, in spite of adopting

an accent and building up those boxer arms, Priyanka Chopra looks as out of place as Gulliver. And third: in the most critical moments of Mary’s life, the film launches into melodrama and fantasy to save the day. Which begs the question, what did they spend Rs 150 million on?

The positives are nominal: it is refreshing to see a film not centred around malls and fast food outlets. Chopra’s acting, directed terribly and scripted worse, is still above accepted industry par. Sunil Thapa, as her coach, succeeds in looking hard as nails, while the actors who play Mary’s husband and father are not bad, even though their characters are banal.

More bizarre are the blatant product placements, token mention of identity-crisis in northeast India, and the pathetic and contrived ending. The husband, an anomaly who sacrifices himself for his wife’s career, was worthy of more development but is left with no more depth than bubblegum.

It is not often that Bollywood stops circling around its own navel to risk better approaches to filmmaking. That mainstream players like Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Priyanka Chopra were even interested in making this movie is an encouraging sign. But although they took *Mary Kom* out of Bollywood, they forgot to take Bollywood out of it.

Sunir Pandey

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## HAPPENINGS



BIKASH DWARE

**THE BIG 3:** Leaders of the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and UCPN(M) sit for a meeting to discuss issues of Constitution writing at Singha Durbar on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**IN ATTENDANCE:** President Ram Baran Yadav, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and other dignitaries attend the Indra Jatra celebrations at Basantapur Darbar Square on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

**DAINT DEITY:** A devotee carries Kumari, the living goddess during the week-long Indra Jatra festival in Kathmandu on Monday.



RSS

**YOUNG ACHIEVER:** Minister for Sports Purushottam Paudel presents a certificate of appreciation and a cash prize to 13-year-old Anil Kharel, the youngest member of the Nepal Under 16 Cricket team. The team was felicitated for their victory the ACC U-16 Premier League held in Malaysia last month.

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# First class treatment

Laser treatment often has negative connotations. The recently opened Swasti Laser and Skin Care that specialises in cosmetic and aesthetic laser surgeries, hopes to debunk these myths. The clinic located in Four Square Complex at Naxal has a calming atmosphere.

Swasti has brought together US FDA approved Lumenis equipments and an experienced team of medical specialists to provide services related to skin, hair and nails.

"There is no need for people to go to India or America to remove cysts or to get a botox injection because we are very reliable," says Padma Malla Prajapati, dermatologist and cosmetic/laser surgeon at Swasti.

The newly opened clinic provides a variety of treatments like facial enhancement, revitalising skin, contouring body form, and removing scars, tattoos, moles, skin tags or warts. Swasti has three Out-Patient Departments (OPDs), three



laser rooms, two operation theatres and a pathological laboratory.

According to Prajapati, hair removal is one of the most sought-after procedures at Swasti. The clinic claims to be the first in the country to use Light Sheer Diode laser. Removal of moles and warts are other

popular services.

Swasti also offers non-laser treatments for conditions like excessive sweating (by iontophoresis) and acne scars (by microdermabrasion). Patients will also be able to make skin allergy tests that don't require drawing out blood, chemical peels



for pigmentations, and facials for specific skin types.

In today's world where people want to look flawless on pictures to post on Instagram and hide every single wrinkle, such a business is likely to boom. "Things as small as pimples bother children and even their parents," say Prajapati, "So a dependable place that treats skin conditions is important in Nepal."

After the festival season Swasti aims to extend their services and introduce procedures like hair transplantation and breast enlargement/reduction. Elvin Shrestha

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PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

Café Nina equals excellent food. Food that diners flock towards in an unlikely spot - a little getaway that its eponymous owner Nina created in a corner of Saleways Departmental Store's parking lot in Maharajgunj, opposite the American Embassy.

Quirky, smart, friendly and relaxed not only describe the place and its owner but also the fare. Burgers, fries, pastas, grilled meat aren't dishes exclusive to Nina's but, like it's said, love is in the details. At Nina's each dish brought forward from the kitchen is oozing with care.

Top notch meat, the best cuts, fresh vegetables and an almost nitpicky attention to detail and quality have all played their part in making this tiny place such a favourite for discerning eaters. Friends from Patan tell me it is the sole reason they confront Kathmandu's chaos and traffic.

On this visit I skipped appetisers and tried the Ginger Prawn Curry (Rs 650). The crustaceans are cooked magnificently - tender and juicy, plump with delicious succulence in a sauce that is creamy - and the paper thin strips of caramelised



## Café Nina

onions impart a sweetness that provides a beautiful foil to the sharp tanginess of the spices. It comes with a serving of brown rice that is nutty and flavourful and fiberiffic. (Yup, I think adding 'riffic' to describe everything excellent is definitely going to be the next 'epic' catch phrase).

The burgers at Nina are a firm favourite of my dining partner and for the sake of this review, he decided to forgo his much beloved

Big Daddy and Blue Cheese burgers and venture into new burger territory. His choice - the meltdown burger (Rs 450) - is a veritable treat with thinly sliced beef, bacon, grilled onions and mushrooms topped with melted cheese. The bread is fresh, soft and doesn't crumble (a welcome change from other burger places in Kathmandu) and ensures each bite richer than the pervious one.

The desserts range from chocolate cake and apple crumble to whatever Nina is in the mood to make that particular day. But for me no meal here is complete without her strawberry and lemon tarts. The short bread crust pastry which is delicious just by itself

encases a lemon curd that is firm yet light, punctuated by the citrus that contributes just the right amount of acidity. Indulge in a slice with a hot cup of Americano and feel the stresses of the world slip away... for a while.

Nina is probably the friendliest restaurateur in town. She knows most patrons by name and stops by each table, taking orders, recommending dishes, and apologising if something is unavailable that day.

Nina has no plans to branch out anytime soon. For that to happen, she says, "it is only possible if my mom produces a clone of me". And that is why Cafe Nina is as popular as it is singular. Ruby Tuesday

*How to get there: Café Nina is located inside the Saleways Department Store premises in Maharajgunj.*



# Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a Carlsberg



# The oldest old

People all over the world are living longer. In 1900, the life expectancy in the United States was 49 years. Today, the country has a life expectancy of 79 years. In Nepal too, the life expectancy has grown from 50 years in 1980 to 67 years.



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

A well-known US television programme *60 Minutes* recently did a fascinating story on people who are above 90 years, the fastest growing group of the US population.

Called the 'oldest old', the programme focused on a

questionnaire based study that analysed factors such as diet, exercise, vitamins, alcohol intake that may have influenced the longevity of this age group. 14,000 people participated in the study.

While some of the findings proved contrary to our present belief and understanding regarding old age, most were dead on target. For example, if you are a smoker, the finding showed that your chance of reaching 90 was severely compromised. But if you drank moderately (two drinks a day), you were more likely to reach that pinnacle of old age. And what kind of liquor you drank did not matter. The people who sell red wine have clearly convinced consumers about its good health effects, but living longer does not seem to be one of its exclusive benefits. Also, taking



supplemental vitamins did not impact on longevity in this group.

Regarding exercise, the report said people who exercised definitely lived longer than those who did not. As little as 15 minutes of work out a day made a difference. The best results however came with regular 45 minutes of exercise. Surprisingly, more was not better here. Three hours of exercise, the finding showed, was not more effective than the ideal 45 minutes. Whether this was just a quirk in the data or an actual finding needs to be

examined further.

Another interesting finding the *60 Minutes* programme reported was that people in their eighties and nineties, were better off being a bit overweight. This may be because of some reserve of

nutrition that helps boost immunity and body defense mechanism to fight off infections. This did not mean that you had to be obese, but being underweight, clearly did not help matters.

Dementia was an important focus of the report because people "lose" their minds more quickly as they age. An incredible finding was that if you were in your nineties, it was better to have a slightly higher blood pressure to protect you from suffering from dementia such as Alzheimer's disease than if you had low blood pressure. The bad news

about suffering from dementia was that the risk of developing dementia doubled every five years after the age of 65 and kept doubling right along so that even after the age of 90, participants continued to develop dementia. Unlike what the scientists expected, there was no "cut off" age for dementia.

Many of the people in the study were selfless and donated their brain to science after death so that more studies could be done to figure out the cause of dementia. Preliminary findings from these brain autopsies showed that it may not just be the plaques in the brain that cause dementia as is widely believed, but micro infarcts (small strokes) may play a bigger role in causing this disease.

This was a simple questionnaire-based study, but the findings will inform further research in helping scientists understand old age more comprehensively so that those privileged to live long may be able to live more fruitful and enjoyable lives. 🇳🇵

## GIZMO by YANTRICK

# A SOUND AFFAIR

While laptop, tablet and mobile phone speakers do serve their purpose, the sound output they produce is functional, at best. A superb sound quality and thumping bass is unfortunately not what mobile device speakers are known for. So, if you are as finicky about good audio as I am, but haven't yet invested in a wireless speaker, this review is for you.

At first glance, the Harman Kardon Aura looks more like a kitchen appliance than a speaker. Its futuristic design however gives it its distinct appeal and fans of *The Jetsons* will clearly not need a reason to purchase this work of art.

A clear and curved glass dome surrounds the base in either its black or white avatar. Standing 10.8 inches tall, and measuring 8.2 inches in diameter, the Aura weighs 2.3 kgs. Roughly the size of a basketball, it fits easily on any empty spot in the house: table, counter, shelf, et al.



The dome encases the Aura's six small speakers and a subwoofer, which enables a full range of sound. There is no text display on the Aura; instead, touch-sensitive buttons coupled with illuminating, colour-changing LED lights and beeps of recognition show the way.

The Aura's design is something that can be described for pages, but ultimately, a wireless speaker is judged on its sound, and it is fair to say Aura truly delivers in that department as well. Designed to deliver omni-directional sound because of its cylindrical shape, the Aura is still fundamentally a 2.1-channel audio system capable of producing a room-filling 60 watts wall of sound. For a relatively small, one-piece speaker system, the Aura puts out some impressive power and sound quality to complement every sound source, from thumping bass for hip-hop/electronic tracks, to clear acoustic guitar tracks, to crystal clear movie

monologues, among others.

Harman Kardon has not skimped on the connectivity options either. You can connect your mobile device to the Aura in a variety of ways. It works as an AirPlay speaker for iOS users and as a Bluetooth speaker for all users. It also supports DLNA if you store your media on your Wi-Fi network, and can accept 3.5mm and optical wired connections from your mobile device, computer, or television, while a USB port allows for Wi-Fi setup and firmware updates.

Priced at Rs 45,000, the Aura is available at gadget shops in the valley, and can also be ordered on hamrobazaar.com. 🇳🇵

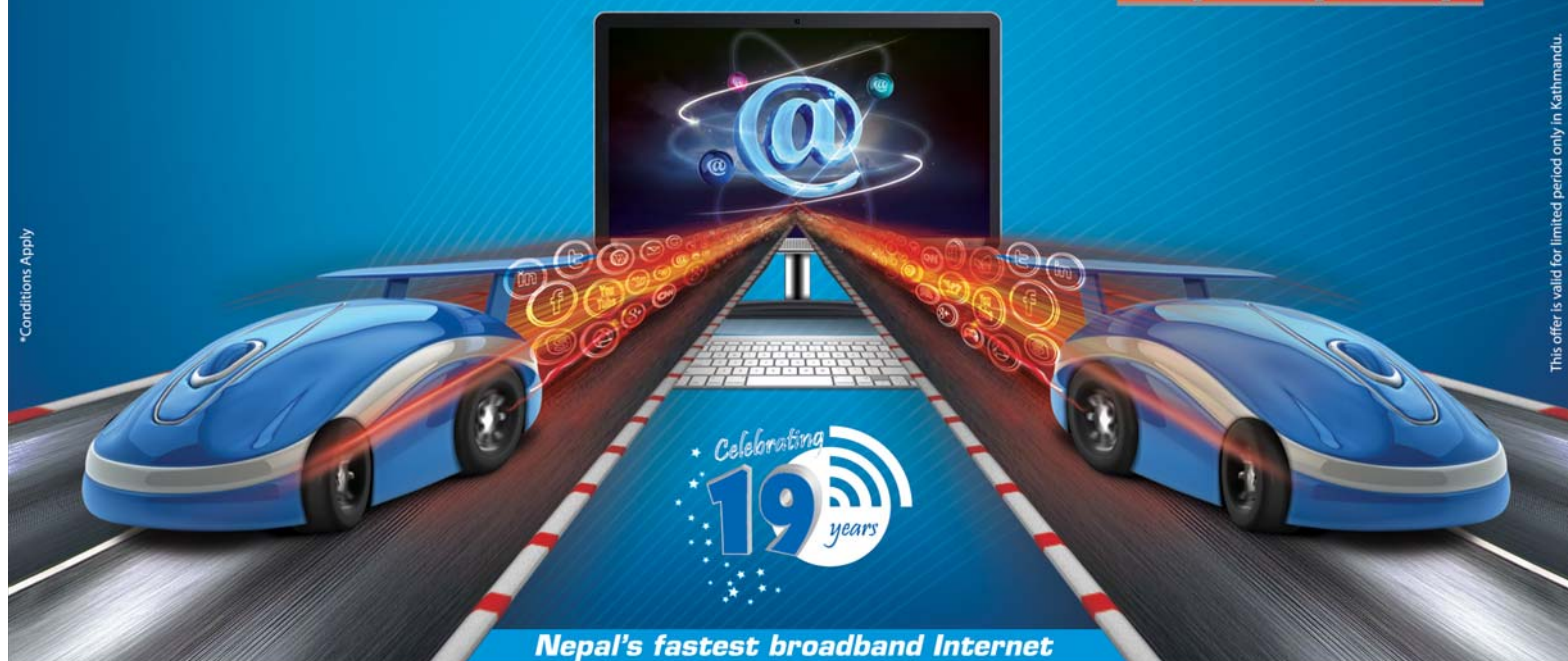
**Yantrick's Verdict: The Aura is the perfect combination of looks, performance and connectivity options. When not in use, it also serves as a centre-piece in your living room.**

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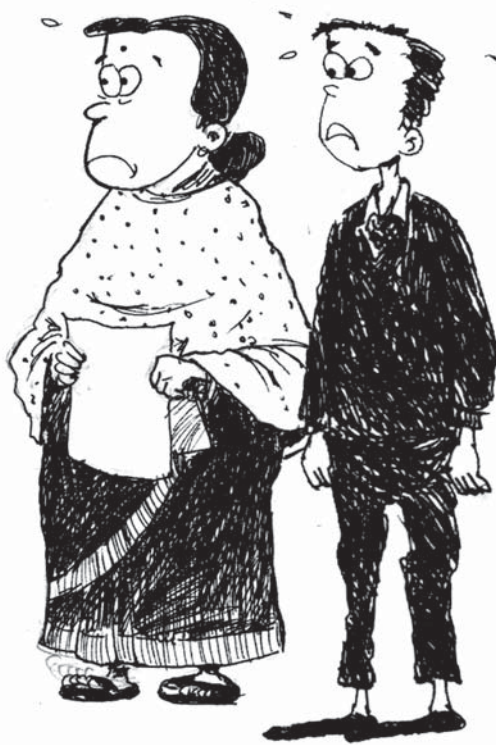


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# Some citizens more equal than others

Citizenship rights in Nepal still heavily favours men and keeps large number of citizens stateless



Speaking at a program on citizenship in the new constitution, Deputy Chairperson Onsari Gharti Magar expressed surprise over the replacement of the word “or” with “and” in the draft on citizenship right by descent which was sent to CA’s Constitution Drafting Committee.

Forum for Women, Law, and Development. “We were surprised to see the changed text at the Constitution Drafting Committee.” For the record, the draft was prepared by the Constitutional Records Study and Determination Committee headed by the UML’s Bishnu Paudel.

The Interim Constitution of 2007 and the Citizenship Act are clearly more progressive than the members of the Constitutional Records Study and Determination Committee. The Citizenship Act says, “Any person born at the time of when his father or mother is a citizen of Nepal, shall be a citizen of Nepal by descent.” The Interim Constitution has a similar provision on citizenship by descent.

The attempt to discriminate against women of Nepal, however, is not new. A seven-member subcommittee in the first CA, headed by UCPN (Maoist) Chief, Pushpa Kamal

Dahal, recommended making it compulsory to issue citizenship in the name of both father and mother. Six of the members were either communists or ‘progressives’ as they like to call themselves.

While on paper this curtails the rights of both father and mother, a visit to citizenship section inside any district administration office demonstrates that women are more discriminated against. Cases have been filed and won to force stubborn DAO officials to issue citizenship in the name of mother, but mothers are still frequently turned down. If a man applies for citizenship for his children, the papers are passed on more easily.

In an earlier piece from November 2010, I had touched upon this subcommittee’s regressive recommendation. Sadly, not much has changed in the last four years.

According to several CA members, women of Nepal do not qualify to be treated on par

with their male citizens, when it comes to marriage and citizenship rights. Even ‘progressive’ parliamentarians toe the line of the party bigwigs.

Unfounded paranoia that men from the bordering Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh will marry our women and inundate our southern districts is the biggest reason why leaders of this country don’t want to give women equal citizenship rights. This is clearly an instance of discrimination. But even Madhes-based parties who do not tire of speaking about the need to mainstream the voice of Tarai residents prefer to keep mum on issues of citizenship.

The “father and mother” provision would not only deny citizenship to children of separated parents, but also to children of single women. If a woman wants to adopt, the path to even naturalised citizenship for the adopted child is not clear. The same discrimination applies if a non-Nepali man marries a Nepali woman. Until the man becomes a Nepali citizen, the woman cannot ensure citizenship to their children. There are other consequences as well even if naturalised citizenship is granted to those Nepali children who, at least by their birthright, should have been citizens by descent.

Some of the top public positions in the country are only reserved for citizens by descent. I am not

suggesting that this should be changed; that is a matter for another debate. There can be no space for antiquated citizenship laws in a constitution that is forward looking. @damakant



**THE DEADLINE**  
Damakant Jayshi

The change may look like a minor one but the affected phrase now becomes “mother and father” instead of mother or father”.

“We don’t know who inserted the word ‘and’ in the draft,” Gharti Magar said during the interaction organised by Sancharika Samuha and



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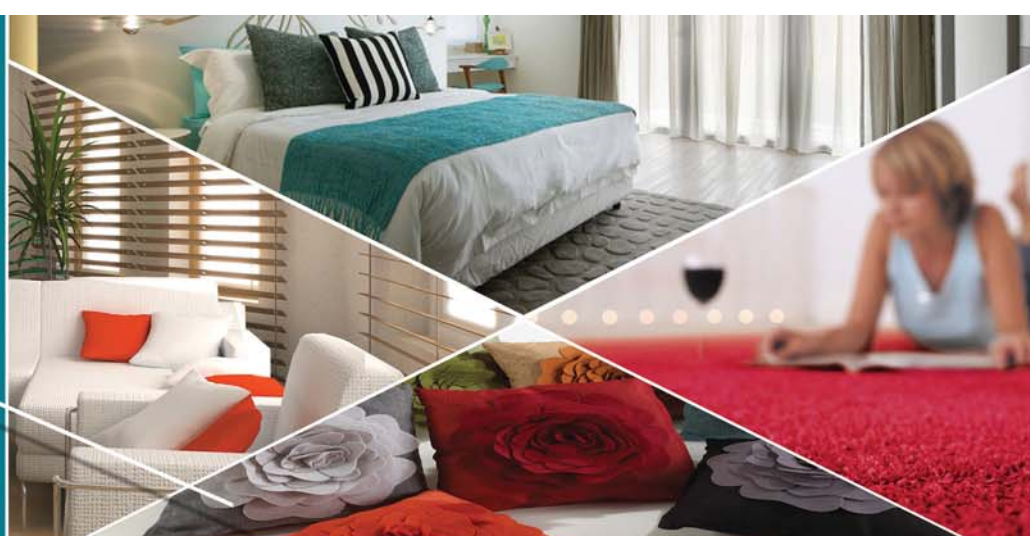
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# Pokhara tries to save its

Urban sprawl and out-migration has reduced the production of Pokhara's rare rice

**MERILIN PIIPUU**  
in POKHARA

Pokhara once used to be renowned for its indigenous rice variety called Pokhareli Jethobudo, which is also the first traditional seed variety for which Nepali farmers were given intellectual property rights. Pokhareli is an aromatic rice that is in very high demand all over Nepal and abroad. The rice is soft and tasty, but its market price is twice that of the other rice varieties, giving farmers a hefty income. But Pokhareli is becoming more difficult to find in the market because the paddy fields where it used to be grown is being devoured by urban sprawl, which in turn is driving prices up further. Although the city is not expanding as fast as Kathmandu






PICS: MERILIN PIIPUU

Valley, Pokhara land prices have soared as people settle in what is considered Nepal's most scenic city. Migrant workers coming back to central Nepal districts have also driven the property market by investing in land. Pokhara's people are not


only losing their soft and tasty rice, but also the whole paddy-based civilisation that used to go with it. For instance, Pokhareli Jethobudo used to be mandatory during festivals and other important occasions, and as it gets harder to find, people are

opting for alternative varieties. Pokhara Valley has the highest rainfall in Nepal, and the moisture has given ecological pockets here microclimates and soil types that have resulted in a wide variety of rice. Along with Pokhareli, there used to be

Jhinuwa, Biramphul, Mansara, Thulo Gurdi, Sano Gurdi, Gudura, Anadi, Ekle and Anga rices – every one of them with a distinctive texture, aroma and taste. But loss of arable land and farmers switching to modern high-yield hybrids



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# famous paddy

have endangered some of these varieties.

Pokhara's farmers are now getting together to treat seeds and grow them in nurseries. For example, the Fewa Seed Producers Group in Pame grows Pokhreli Jethobudo seeds and makes them available to farmers who want to use them. But the government is promoting modern non culture seeds, and this discourages the use of indigenous varieties.

"There is no control whatsoever over the varieties grown," says Kamal Khadka, 32, an agricultural scientist in Li-BIRD, a Pokhara-based group that works with farmers all over Nepal. Farmers are attracted by high prices for land, and are selling them, and with their sons migrating to work abroad, elderly parents also find there is no one to farm the fields.

With new residential houses now mushrooming all over what used to be Pokhara's famous emerald paddy fields, there is a race to save what is left of its rare rice. But who will take the responsibility before it is too late? Is it going to be farmers who are simply interested to improve living standards, the government, or the private sector?

Whoever does it, the price of development is being felt by everyone who would like soft and tasty rice on their dinner plate. 🇳🇵



Being a farmer in Nepal once meant living in isolation and loneliness, faraway from the world. Not any more.

With the road network now reaching nearly every VDC of every district in the country, far-flung hamlets are only hours away from cities. But even more importantly, satellite tv, mobile phones and the internet have connected the hinterland to the centre.

Majhthana is a small village near Begnas Lake, 30 km east of Pokhara. The only way to get there in the past was to walk the whole day from the Prithvi Highway. Now there is a rough road that winds up the mountains to reach the settlement. It may still seem like you are in the middle of nowhere when you get to Majhthana, but farmers are using their new income to buy tvs hooked up to satellite dishes, checking Facebook on their smart phones and plugging dongles into their laptops.

"My favourite channels are National Geographic, Discovery Channel and Animal Planet," says 49-year-old farmer Surya Mohan Bastola (*pic, right*). When there is no electricity, he listens to the radio, and is mostly tuned into to the agriculture programs like *LI-BIRDko Chautari* and *Krishi Karyakram*.

Bastola has received little agricultural training, but he is learning new words like 'organic farming' and 'permaculture'. He now knows how important it is to make farming sustainable, and to use alternatives to pesticides and chemical fertilisers. "We have not thought about migrating to the city," says Surya's wife, Sita Devi (*pic, left*). "Our children are working abroad,

but we talk to them every day on our mobiles so it doesn't feel like they are far away." Sita Devi carries her mobile wrapped up in her patuka, even when she is working in the fields.

The mobile phone and the tv are gifts from the Bastolas' youngest son who works in Qatar. The parents believe that one day he will come back and take over the farm.

"You have to make your son Lahure so he doesn't forget home," explains Surya. Indeed, their youngest son loves working in the farm and is planning to return. His decision has been made easier because Majhthana is not remote anymore and the quality of life is even better than in the city. Paradoxically, this is exactly what tourists come to look for in Nepal. The remote village life with no distractions except for a few books has become one of the ideals of Western world. This has led many farmers to establish home-stay eco-villages to augment income. Tourists often fall in love with Nepal's countryside, and are willing to support local schools or households in buying communication technology. This in return makes people stay in the countryside.

Says Surya Bastola: "Being in the middle of nature is like meditation, it brings peace to your mind, body and soul, and maybe make us live longer. But now we are connected to the whole world from here."

*Merilin Piipuu in Kaski*

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# Moonlighting medical staff

Kantipur, 4 September

MORANG: Most doctors at Biratnagar’s regional-level Kosi Hospital leave their work stations after signing attendance and head off to their own private clinics. When patients arrive at the hospital’s gate, middlemen on the payroll of these doctors hustle them to the private clinics nearby.

A dozen small hospitals and up to 36 private clinics and pathology labs have mushroomed in the neighbourhood of the government hospital. Medical tests at Kosi Hospital cost around Rs 1,000 but the bills at private clinics are so inflated most patients are forced to mortgage their possessions. When we visited Kosi Hospital, we found nurses and health assistants in charge. The doctors are absent, and patients are eventually forced to seek treatment elsewhere.

“Everyone knows doctors employed at government hospitals do their real treatment at their private clinics outside,” says Uttam Dhungel of a public consumer group in Biratnagar. “But we can’t complain, there is no one listening to us.”



Senior physician Dipak Sigdel arrives at the Kosi Hospital at 10am and is off by 1pm to go over to Green Cross, a clinic in which he and NC Morang treasurer Nagesh Koirala have invested. Another physician Shital Prasad Yadav leaves before his afternoon shift is over for his own City Hospital, as do surgeon Narayan Basnet and gynaecologist Yogendra Mishra for Saptakosi Nursing Home. Sunil Chandra Adhikari, a surgeon, and orthopaedists Mukunda Dahal head to Kanchanbari. Other orthopaedists Nabin Subedi and Ramesh Basnet go to Green Cross, and paediatrician Bimal Agrawal works at Surakshya and Golden hospitals.

“They come in at 10am, take a walk around, visit some patients at the OPD, and leave as soon as they can,” a medical officer said on condition of anonymity. “Some even travel up to three hours to reach their own hospitals.”

When nurses complain there are patients waiting at Kosi Hospital, doctors want them referred to their private clinics. Doctors themselves frighten patients, telling them they won’t get proper treatment at Kosi. Although there is enough equipment in the surgery room, complicated cases are no longer treated here. Official records show up to 200 cases are referred outside every week.

“The Health Ministry allows doctors to run their own clinics as long as this doesn’t affect official duty,” says Tapeswor Lal Karna, Kosi’s medical superintendent who says he stopped going to private clinics after being appointed to his post.

The commercialisation has affected patients from surrounding districts who have to come in ambulances. Ambulance drivers who get a commission from the private hospitals take them straight to private hospitals. Guards are instructed to note down the names of all the drivers who arrive with patients. Depending upon how serious the case is, they are paid between Rs 500 and Rs 2,000. A private hospital owner said this is now standard operating procedure, if they don’t pay drivers, patients stop coming.

Rickshaw drivers, too, get kickbacks on patients they ferry from bus-stops or the Indian border to private clinics. In the last three months, police took action against rickshaw drivers, but Morang DSP Prabhu Prasad Dhakal says although patients complain they were cheated, it is hard to find proof.

# Dahal’s dilemma

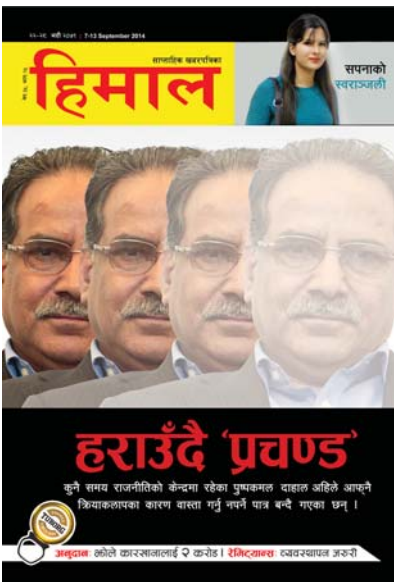
Editorial, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 7 September

While the second CA is on track to write the constitution by January 2015 deadline, it looks like UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is determined to disrupt proceedings.

On one hand, Dahal is in political consultation with other parties inside the CA, but at the same time he is instructing parliamentarians from his party to disrupt the house because he wants to chair a new high level political committee. The UCPN (M)’s new alliances with Madhesi and other ethno-centric parties and its leaders’ renewed rhetoric for single-identity-based federalism are also equally alarming.

Some political players have understood this as Dahal’s growing frustration and fear at not getting credit for concluding the peace process. They say he is desperate for recognition, so he wants to chair a new HLPC. But the NC and UML are wary of giving him an active role because of his past betrayals.

They haven’t forgotten how the UCPN (M) first agreed to hand



over control of cantonments to Madhav Nepal’s government and then, in a show of power, brought out cadres in large numbers to enforce an infinite strike in the capital. Dahal’s double-speak with politicians, diplomats, donors, and spies during presidential elections and government changes, and his tendency of forcing his own way around every agreement in place have made them suspicious of his motives.

Dahal’s unwillingness to accept his shrinking role in national

politics is proving to be his biggest folly. Because of his party’s heavy defeat in the second CA elections, Dahal does not and will not enjoy the same privilege as he did after 2008’s polls. Also, the internal power struggles within the UCPN (M) have made the chairman a laughing stock among cadre. But the NC and UML still don’t want to bypass him while writing the constitution.

Dahal’s main problem today is he doesn’t trust his rivals’ generosity. He needs to understand his power inside and outside the party will diminish if he continues looking for opportunities to mask his weakness.

Dahal’s single-identity agenda was thoroughly rejected by Nepalis in the second CA elections, and parties, including the UCPN (M), who advocated for ethnic states were soundly defeated. The new constitution will reflect this new political reality.

The UCPN (M) still has a political future and people still might vote Dahal into power one day. But in the short term, he needs to contribute positively towards a democratic and diverse Nepal.



## On the rocks

Netra Panthi, *Naya Patrika*, 11 September

**Opposition accuses NC and UML of:**

- Stepping back from identity-based federalism
- Ignoring achievements of Jana Andolan II, CPA, interim constitution and Madhes uprising during constitution writing
- Focusing on party instead of peace process

**NC and UML say:**

- Opposition not committed to writing constitution by January 2015
- UCPN(M) are double dealing with everyone
- Two Maoist parties taking disruptive line on all-party meet and constitution writing

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**CIAA Official:** “I can only see the smaller letters clearly.”

**अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट**  
Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 7 September

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

 **“If you don’t treat us as equals we might have to think again about working together.”**

Home Minister and Deputy PM Bamdev Gautam accusing NC of nepotism, *Jana Aastha*, 10 September





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# Lamjung's ghost village

More than eight years after the war ended, the displaced still haven't returned to their village

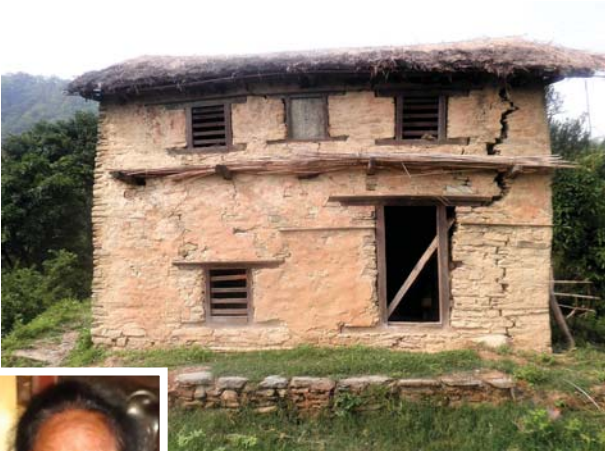
YUBARAJ SHRESTHA  
in LAMJUNG

The army came in the daytime and the guerrillas came by night to taunt and threaten the villagers of the tiny village of Maling. Finally, they couldn't bear it any longer, and more than 100 families left their crops and livestock in the care of neighbours and abandoned their homes. They haven't come back.

Such was the fear that they haven't returned even after the ceasefire in 2006. Their houses are falling apart, the terrace fields are overgrown with weeds, the school building is dilapidated, and Maling is a ghost town.

It all started after the Maoists came in one night in 2002 and left a dozen bags and one of their fighters, Ramchandra Tiwari, in the home of Som Maya Tamang. The army had always suspected that the village located 10 hours straight uphill from the district capital of Besi Sahar was a Maoist stronghold. A few days later, they surrounded the village and went house-to-house, they caught and shot dead Tiwari even though the villagers tried to save him.

A few nights later, the Maoists returned and took away Ward Chairperson, Niru Maya Tamang and Som Maya and tortured them in a nearby primary school,



**HOMELESS:** The home of Som Maya Tamang (*inset*) in Maling village of Lamjung (*left*) is falling apart, while she lives in a rented room in Besi Sahar working as a cook. Parbati Tamang (*inset*), is also displaced from her home in Maling (*right*), but never got any compensation, and lives off earnings sent by a brother who works abroad.



accusing them of being spies. But the rebels let them go after they couldn't find evidence that they were spying. "We were so afraid that we couldn't stay there any longer, we left," recalls Niru Maya.

All 127 families abandoned their homesteads in Maling. Some settled down in Besi Sahar or Pokhara, others went to Kathmandu and beyond to India and the Gulf to find work. None have returned.

Som Maya today lives with her family in a rented room in Besi Sahar, and works as a cook to feed her two sons and two daughters. Her elder son dropped out in Grade 8 and went off to India to work,

his younger brother followed him. Both are now in Saudi Arabia.

At the Lamjung office of the Peace Committee, there are only names of six individuals out of the 127 displaced families from Maling who have been given Rs 5,000 compensation. The current coordinator of the committee, Maoist member Mohan Hari Poudel, denies there are any displaced people in Maling, and maintains that no one can claim to be displaced by war anymore.

Former coordinator and ex-DDC chair Krishna Prasad Koirala,



however, says it's a shame that the displaced of Maling never got compensation from the state. In fact, the Peace Committee doesn't even have a record of how much aid it distributed and to whom. For example, there is a record of the local Peace Committee receiving Rs 2.7 billion in 2007, but the cash books show that only Rs 7.85 million was disbursed.

After the ceasefire, the interim government decided to give compensation to families of those killed, tortured and displaced. Under this, the family of teacher

Muktinath Adhikari who was executed by the Maoists in 2002, collected compensation for both his death and their displacement. Mohan Singh Ghimire, also from Lamjung, who was killed by the Maoists also got Rs 300,000 as death compensation and Rs 50,400 for being displaced.

Aside from high profile victims like these, or survivors with political connections, ordinary poor farmers who also suffered loss have never got any compensation.

Maya Nath Ghimire of Sribhanjyang was detained by the army and tortured, but he has no idea where to get the compensation he is entitled to. Bishnu Ghimire of Bhalayakharka put in an application at the District Administration in Besi Sahar, but he never heard back. Bishnu Pandey was abducted by the Maoists while in Grade 10 in his school in Bhalayakharka, then he was detained by the Army for being a suspected Maoist and beaten almost to death. He never got any money. Torture victim Chandrakant Poudel who was detained by the Army, filed his application for compensation, but has got nothing.

Government records show only 15 people who claimed to be detained and tortured got Rs 25,000 each from the state. But while real torture victims have got nothing, there are questions about who these 15 are and whether some of them are genuine victims. (*Centre for Investigative Journalism*)

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# My 18-point demand

The most fabulous thing about living in a democracy is that we all have the right to be as demanding as we want. Anyone, including you and me, can come up with a list of demands and launch an escalating protest for the government to fulfill at its earliest convenience.

Therefore, crushers and tippers rightfully bring city to a standstill because they are prevented from exercising their democratic right to ravage the Chure and mine sensitive riverbeds. Doctors close down hospitals to protect their right to close down hospitals.

It is the sacred duty of every citizen in a democracy to have his/her list of demands. So, on behalf of 28 million fellow-Nepalis and in the interest of upholding our demographic way of life, I humbly submit below my own 18-point list of demands which the powers that be will ignore at their own peril. If these demands are not met by next Friday, I will personally begin a phase-wise program of civil disobedience which will culminate in a violent pen-down strike over the Dasain holidays:

1. The government should, right this minute, regain territory ceded to the East India Company in the Sugauli Treaty, restore the country's pre-1814 boundaries and make Nepal greater again.

2. Ok, ok, let's at least get back Kalapani.

3. Never mind, for now we just demand that Nepali farmers be allowed to grow corn on no-man's land.

4. I demand that the government immediately scrap all international treaties that Nepal is signatory to which infringe on our sovereign rights, including the Geneva Conventions and its Additional



Protocols, the Hague Convention, the Rome Statute, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Convention on Holding the Nation Hostage.

5. Having said that, come to think of it, why not also opt out of the Kyoto Protocol? All together now: "Kyoto Protocol Murdabad! Chief of Protocol Jindabad!"

6. Our sixth demand is that all our previous demands, including the 137-point ultimatum delivered to the Ministry of Re-education, Self-criticism and Aquaculture, be fulfilled without further ado.

7. Otherwise we may be forced to list all those 137 demands right here point-by-point, and that may take till midnight, or until the cows come home, whichever happens later.

8. Since this is taking longer than I expected, can I have a coffee, please? Black without sugar.

9. Make available Journalist Discounts and Free Upgrades on all international and domesticated flights with immediate effect, otherwise we will create nuisances on board that may endanger the safety of fellow passengers and ourselves, for which the air crew will have to bear full responsibility.

10. We're only up to 10? When are we ever going to get to 18?

11. So, moving right along to the next point in the agenda: we demand that these demands be taken with the seriousness they deserve. If not we will ... um ... go on a relay hungry strike and skip afternoon snacks until the country is great again.

12. We are against all current drafts of the constitution, especially to the provisions regarding forms of government, state structure, election procedures, the judiciary. But we want all the democratic right of political parties to recruit mafia dons and goons at their convenience to be upheld in the interest of pluralism and inclusiveness, otherwise we will get all our fraternal and maternal organisations to launch decisive street protests and court arrest, which can be carried out as per three modus operandi:  
☐ Prison Arrest  
☐ House Arrest  
☐ Cardiac Arrest

13. Everything in Nepal should be free of cost, and all noodle packs must have coupons for gold bar lotteries.

14. This agitation will be temporarily suspended on weekends, during Dasain and for "technical reasons" without prior notice. Management is not responsible for the consequences.

15. The next three demands (viz: #s 16, 17, 18) are non-negotiable. They can never be met, but will not be disclosed at the present time because we reserve the right to bring them to public notice at a later date. Look at it from our point of view: if you meet all of our demands now, how can we exercise our democratic right to present more demands in future?



The Ass

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