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BIKRAM RAI

Taking power into our own hands

Out of reach of national transmission lines, rural Nepalis have stopped waiting for the government to come to them. They are harnessing small streams and generating their own electricity from micro-hydro plants managed by local cooperatives. More than 2,500 micro-hydro plants are in operation throughout the country supplying 40 MW of electricity to local grids. This winter when the capital suffers 14 hours of power cuts daily, many parts of rural Nepal will be lit up at night. Shyam Nakarmi (above) makes turbines to power small hydropower plants at his workshop in Banepa.

BY SUNIR PANDEY

Thinking small

Improving the efficiency of the estimated 35,000 traditional water mills across the country could empower rural Nepal.

BY KUNDA DIXIT IN KAVRE

PAGE 16-17



RED PANDA ALERT

Nepal is home to one-tenth of the 10,000 endangered red pandas left in the wild in Asia. A successful conservation effort in eastern Nepal shows how local communities can help protect a species that is threatened by habitat loss and hunting. September 20 is Red Panda Day, and will be marked with the slogan, 'Conserve Locally, Educate Globally'.

BY SONAM TASHI LAMA IN TAPLEJUNG

PAGE 10-11

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POLITICS IN A VACUUME

The sight of the country's prime minister on a mobile phone publicly beseeching the leader of an outcast political party to come for negotiations sums up the current state of affairs in Nepal. Prime Minister Koirala and top political leaders waited in vain on Tuesday morning for Mohan Baidya of the CPN-M to join an all-party roundtable meeting on the constitution that the renegade comrade himself had requested.

Perhaps it was never Baidya's intention to attend, he may have just been seeking attention by ridiculing the rest of the state apparatus. Perhaps it was just tokenism on the government's part. But speculation is rife that the wily UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal had a hand in convincing his erstwhile party colleague to keep away to maintain the pressure on the ruling NC-UML combine to agree to his version of new constitution.

It's a bit rich for someone who suffered such ignominious defeat in last year's elections to be so choosy. But Dahal is a sore loser and wants to remain germane, he may also need Baidya to counter the Baburam faction of his own party.

But what is more ludicrous than Dahal's shenanigans is that the ruling parties and the opposition have to bend over backwards to accommodate someone who led a boycott of elections and tried to sabotage it with terrorist attacks last November. Baidya's band of Dash Maoists is not even registered with the Election Commission, it has no presence in the Constituent Assembly, and they still have the blood of the children maimed in the 18 November 2013 bomb attacks on their hands.

The only reason Comrade Baidya is being given such importance is that he has blackmailed everyone with his capacity to repeat the mayhem. The man is fighting a rearguard action to disprove his increasing irrelevance. If he continues on this course he will not even be judged harshly by history, he will be just a footnote as Chairman



DIMAKAR CHETTRI

When identity, respect, recognition of injustices past are mixed with politics, it is best to tread carefully

Dahal's sidekick.

With such waffling, the constitution-writing process is once more struggling with deadlines. Forthcoming Dasain-Tihar-Chhat-SAARC Summit are looming distractions. There is the Dialogue Committee deadline, which has been extended by a month for its convener Baburam Bhattarai to smoothen the differences over federalism. We are still debating whether a coalition with a clear two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly should push through with its version of federalism, or whether there should be consensus.

An all-party consensus would be ideal, of course, but failing that the NC-UML should show that they have what it takes to push it to a vote. Otherwise, what are elections for? What is the CA for if you are going to decide on the constitution behind closed doors, or in hastily-organised roundtables that are boycotted?

Sensing that matters are coming to a head on federalism, some Madhesi radicals have seen an opening to up the ante by openly talking about separatism. One of them was arrested this week (see page 18) in Biratnagar and booked under the Public Offence Act. Demand for secession has resonance in a week of the Scottish referendum, and separatists are trying to cash in the vacuume left by a conservative Kathmandu establishment that is reluctant to devolve power, by Madhesi leaders who have badly let down their constituents, and even by the Indian establishment which once championed a single Madhes province in the Tarai. By detaining CK Raut for organising a rally in support of a separate state, Kathmandu has turned a splittist few knew into a celebrity. Human rights activists rightly called for his immediate release, but exposed their own selective double-standards because they had remained conspicuously silent on other recent cases of abuses.

Raut's separatism through violence doesn't have much support in the Tarai, and it is counterproductive for Madhesi aspirations for genuine autonomy through federalism. His abusive language has already hardened positions in the hills by tarring all Madhesis as separatists at a critical time in constitution-writing. The Madhesi people and leaders know that they themselves will be the biggest losers if the region is forced to fend for itself. The Madhes needs autonomy, not amputation.

When identity, respect, recognition of injustices past are mixed with politics, it is best to tread carefully, and address root causes of grievances.

WHAT'S TRENDING



COMRADE MANJU'S EVEREST CAFÉ by DEEPAK ADHIKARI

In 2006, Bikas Rauniyar took a photograph of a Maoist guerilla, which was included in the picture book of the conflict, *A People War*. Eight years later, the woman in the picture, Sapana Maya Baju (above) is tending tables at her Everest Café in Lainchaur.

WATCH VIDEO: The story of the hope, sacrifice and struggle of an ex-guerilla.

[nepalitimes.com](#) #723



MYSTICAL DOLPA by HUM GURUNG

While the rest of Nepal suffered massive landslides and floods, in the trans-Himalayan rain shadow the country's largest and most remote district remained high and dry, and in splendid isolation. Dolpa is one of the last two among Nepal's 75 districts that doesn't yet have a road connection.

PHOTO GALLERY: Phoksundo lake

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THE POOREST HIT HARDEST by NARESH NEWAR AND AYESHA SHAKYA

Villagers who lost all in the floods in Phattepur of Banke district last month.

WATCH VIDEO: Testimonies of flood victims in Banke

[nepalitimes.com](#) #723



INTERACTIVE MAP

Interactive map of floods and landslides June-August 2014 in Nepal.

[nepalitimes.com](#) #722



WHOSE ART IS IT ANYWAY? by RABI THAPA

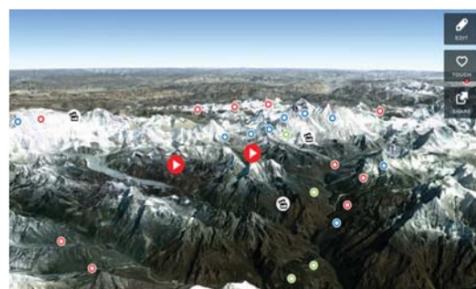
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LIVING THROUGH THE HIMALAYAN THAW

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Times THIS WEEK



BIKRAM RAI

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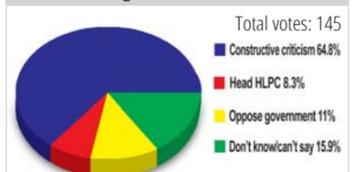
Most popular on Twitter
Pokhara tries to save its famous paddy by Merlin Pipuu

Most visited online page
For god's sake by Trishna Rana

Most commented
For god's sake by Trishna Rana

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #725

Q. What should Pushpa Kamal Dahal do during constitution writing?



Weekly Internet Poll #726
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](#)

Q. What will happen to the CPN-M?

YOUR SAY
www.nepalitimes.com

The fate of faith

Trishna Rana's *Here We Go* column last week (#724) 'Intolerant tolerance' about the secularism debate in the new constitution generated a lot of comments. Here is a selection.

■ Anju Panta is doing exactly what her religion teaches her to do: denounce and vilify other major faiths. In Christianity or any other Abrahamic religion, acceptance of the existence of other religions is prohibited. I have attended their sermons and know firsthand how utterly ridiculous they can be. I am not surprised at all that as a born-again Christian she said these things to prove her loyalty.

Luv Nepal

■ Unless she is fomenting a religious riot, Anju Panta can talk or walk in any way she wants. She can even say she hates Hinduism, we shouldn't have a problem. However, it would have been good if someone of her stature would have encouraged everyone to sing a non-denominational song with names of all major religious figures. That her spiritual advancement has reached its limit is her loss, not ours.

Namah

■ As an atheist, I personally don't care what Anju Panta said about religion. However, Ms Panta as an entertainer and singer who most likely gets commissioned by patrons of religions different than hers, and is required to sing songs that refer to or are devoted to different gods than the one she believes in, it is bad business sense to turn those commissions down solely on the basis of her belief. What is the point of trying to prove that you are more Christian than others at that congregation by jeopardising your livelihood?

Jyaure

■ Anju Panta owes nobody any apology for standing up for what she believes in. Ignore the haters, my dear.

Miki Lassen

■ Anju Panta is a Christian. No problem with that.



From her video statements in which she makes fun of other non-Christian faiths, it can be deduced that she is neither a Catholic nor a Quaker. What is she then? The answer to this question will help us understand why she said what she said.

Baalim

■ Online trolls all over the world are ignorant, coward beings who use the anonymity of the internet to force their ideologies or religious beliefs down the throats of others.

Humanism

■ If Anju Panta has the right to talk bad about Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam then why shouldn't her audience who have been offended by her intolerant remarks about their religions, protest to show that she should be mindful of such things in future? Just as she exercised her free speech, the commentators are exercising theirs. Her audience didn't agree with her statement and are letting her know through online fora.

Nepali Hero

■ This is the perfect example of yet another majority with a massive minority complex, so much paranoia among Nepali Hindus. Take a chill pill, people.

Sunny

■ Excellent article. Maybe, it would have been better without the paragraph repeating the slurs.

Satish Pandey

■ You should not contest and challenge the faith of other religions. That is what tolerance means. Such a statement in public is not a challenge to the 'ascendancy' of Hinduism. It's a slur.

4Khal

■ Another one of these Christian clubs working under the shadow of INGOs. There is reason to believe that Christian converts in this country been fed promises of money and travels to the west.

KC

■ A fine piece on the cyber-bullying of a popular singer in a secular Nepal.

Deepak Adhikari

■ Here is advice from a suffering Indian to Nepali brothers: Secularism has converted India to undeclared Islamistan, beware.

Santosh Acharya

■ I don't think Hinduism is a tolerant religion especially in northern India and Nepal. Hinduism as it is practiced today is the faith of hypocrites.

Akash

■ The problem is not religion. It is exploitation of people's poverty, ignorance and illiteracy to spread

a religion. Missionaries fool illiterate and poor villagers.

Hurray

■ Only three constitutions in the world use the word 'secular': India, Albania, and Turkey. The translation of 'secular' into '*dharma niripekshya*' has a negative connotation. Does secular mean religious pluralism or atheism? Do we really need a secular tag to be tolerant of other religions?

Tapan Das

■ Religion is a way to exercise mass control over stupid people.

Mahesh

■ Institutionalised religion is not just the opium of the masses, it is the cyanide.

Menon

■ It is not bigotry to oppose a bigot. Yes, the words used by some of the commentators were inappropriate, but the feelings expressed are understandable. Anju Panta is exactly the reason Nepalis will always look down on new converts.

BNS

■ Weren't there any Christians or Muslims in Nepal before 2008? Weren't they given similar freedom as to what they are enjoying now? What was the need for a 'secular' tag in the first place? Secularism is needed in places like Saudi Arabia where religious tolerance is nil or minimum. Not in a Hindu state where people view different religions as different paths to reach the same almighty.

Swarooha Pandith

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Read column and all feedback

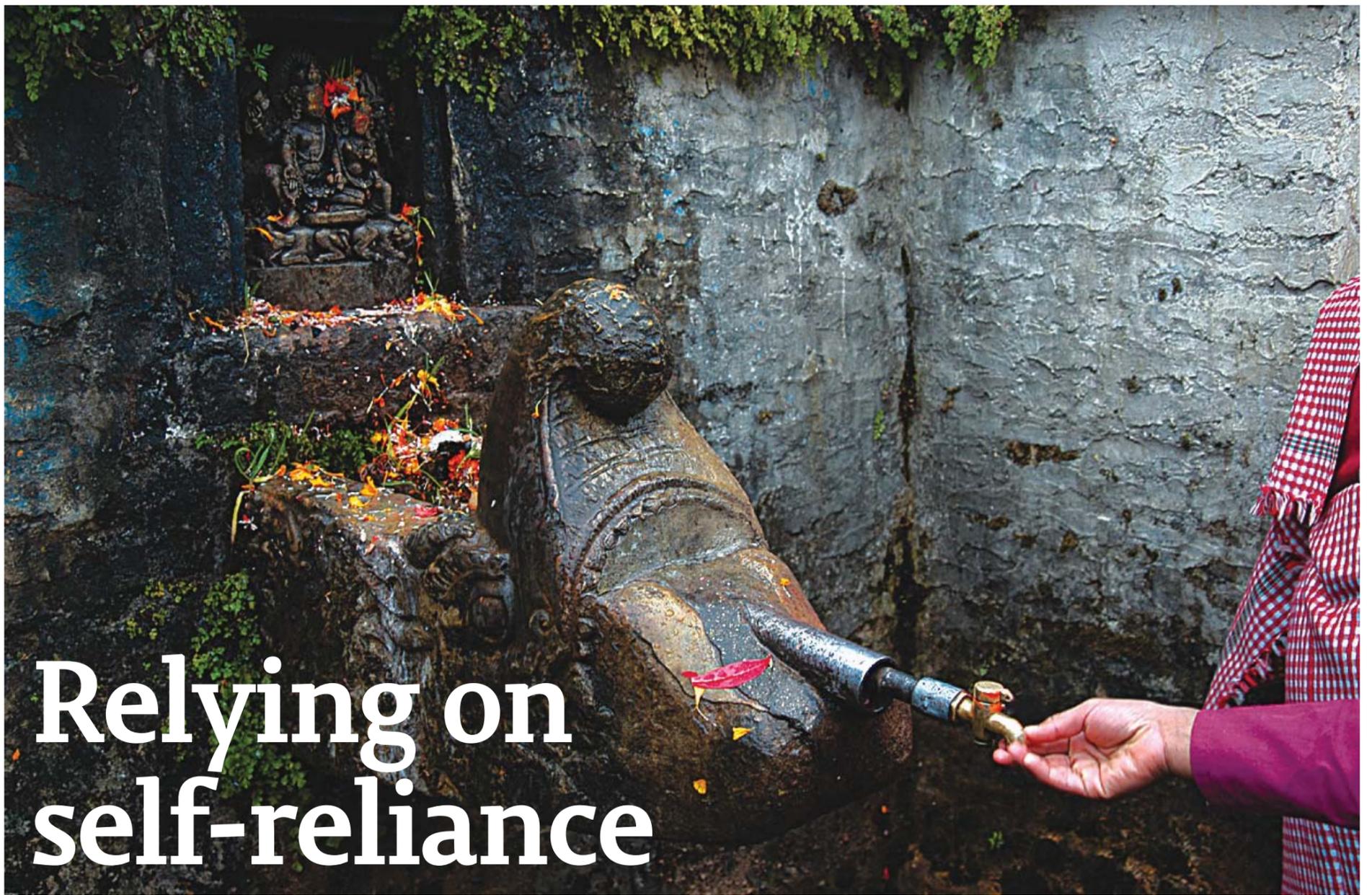
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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Relying on self-reliance

Repeating that the Nepali people are resilient can't be an excuse not to do anything to help them

It is a shared experience all over Nepal: you visit the hills and the plains or take a rest while hiking or trekking, and you come across drinking water taps that are dysfunctional or dry.

You ask, and it is the same story. Some NGO built those taps. Water flowed for a few months. Because of daily wear and tear, the tap required minor repairs. No one was sure who was responsible, and from where the money for the repairs would come. Eventually, this led to major breakdowns, and the water stopped coming. Meantime, the NGO has moved on to do similar water projects in other districts. And the villagers? They have gone back to fetching

water from the ponds and the streams.

Three years ago, confronted with data that 82 per cent of Nepal's population lives near water projects that needed minor repairs or major reconstruction, Nepal's community drinking water sector accepted that there was a limit to the 'build and the drinking water will flow forever' approach. It realised that in planning, it had to account for likely shocks that could affect the longevity of projects. It saw the importance of equipping local people with access to know-how, funds and networks.

Since then, those involved have variously scaled up the work of training interested females as plumbers (men plumbers are more likely to migrate to the Gulf), establishing savings and credit institutions locally, customising designs to suit the disaster vulnerability of project areas, looking into ways to provide micro-insurance schemes as a protection against the loss of water assets, and urging donors to set aside funds for repair and rehabilitation.

To be sure, these built-in mechanisms will not eliminate the shocks altogether, but they will certainly help the people prepare for, cope with and survive their impact. In development parlance, these examples are of agencies and community members working together to consciously embed resilience into the design and the implementation of their projects. In times of inevitable shocks, such in-built resilience would help people withstand them, while protecting investments.

It's arguable that these examples could also be conflated to think about national-level issues. Zoom out and this is repeated on a national scale with large donor-funded projects like ropeways, trolley buses, leather and brick factories. In the aftermath of the Sunkosi landslide and western Nepal floods, embedding such resilience into all aspects of our development work has become all the more urgent.

Nearly two months after the landslide and floods, no one knows the full names of the citizens buried and killed. This makes you wonder about the sort of record-keeping that goes on in local government offices. We do not know whether the children can go back to schools. We do not know whether those who lost their assets have access to temporary shelters, adequate public funds in the form of grants and low-interest loans, tax-supported hospitals, temporary jobs and other such provisions which could help them cope with the multiple shocks they faced.

By all accounts, the affected people have had to fend for themselves or depend on sporadic charity, which is unfortunate when the government has the convening power to bring together community groups, private sector, civil society, and national and international agencies to address the difficulties of the affected people, and devise a template for how to prepare for such shocks in future.

In the Paleti Utsav last week, Kunti Moktan sang a song — *Dali Dali Ma* — a line of which goes, "As a Nepali, I can even live through my worries." Some Nepalis certainly can. But as examples from the water sector and the recent disasters have shown, most need external support to be resilient enough to dial down their worries. 🇳🇵



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Ashutosh Tiwari



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	Takes time in making ice	Nepal's fastest in 110 min only (without extra load on compressor)	118-185 min
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Extreme at both ends

Kathmandu's neglect of the Madhes is being exploited by radicals in the plains

On Tuesday, the Mohan Baidya-led Maoist coalition used a petty excuse to boycott the national conference that was supposed to thresh out contentious issues of the constitution drafting. It wasn't a surprise: how can a party outside the Constituent Assembly be expected to help extricate it?



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Indeed, not everyone waiting at the Lothse Hall in New Baneswor on Tuesday morning was surprised he didn't show up. UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal had been in touch with Mohan Baidya earlier that morning.

After leading a decade long insurgency that set the stage for the end of monarchy and drafting of the republican constitution, Dahal would have certainly felt that he needed greater say in the process -- if only he had done better in November elections.

There is every reason to doubt Mohan Baidya's demand for the revival of High Level Political Mechanism which he opposed only until a year back. After all, the present CA is not a level playing field for Dahal, and Mohan Baidya has only been watching from the sidelines.

But there are more serious tensions brewing elsewhere that could jeopardise the statute drafting exercise in Kathmandu. The electoral victory of NC and UML in districts of the Madhes last year had more to do

with their regained popularity and incompetency of Madhes based parties. It wasn't a mandate against the demand for recognition of Madhesi identity and self-governance.

The demand for a Madhes Pradesh, including the populist 'one-Madhes' demand we have discussed in this space, are just an expression of those aspirations.

Unfortunately, the NC and UML leadership have said or done little in the last ten months to reassure their constituencies of these. The electoral defeat of the Madhes based parties and the neglect of those who have won has now created a political vacuum in the eastern Tarai, where extremists like CK Raut feed on local discontent.

Raut was arrested by Morang police on Saturday, three days before a scheduled national conference. Although the Morang administration earlier claimed to have arrested him for his 'anti-national' activities, police only charged him for disturbing public order and peace.

"Until last week, he was just a guy who talked nonsense

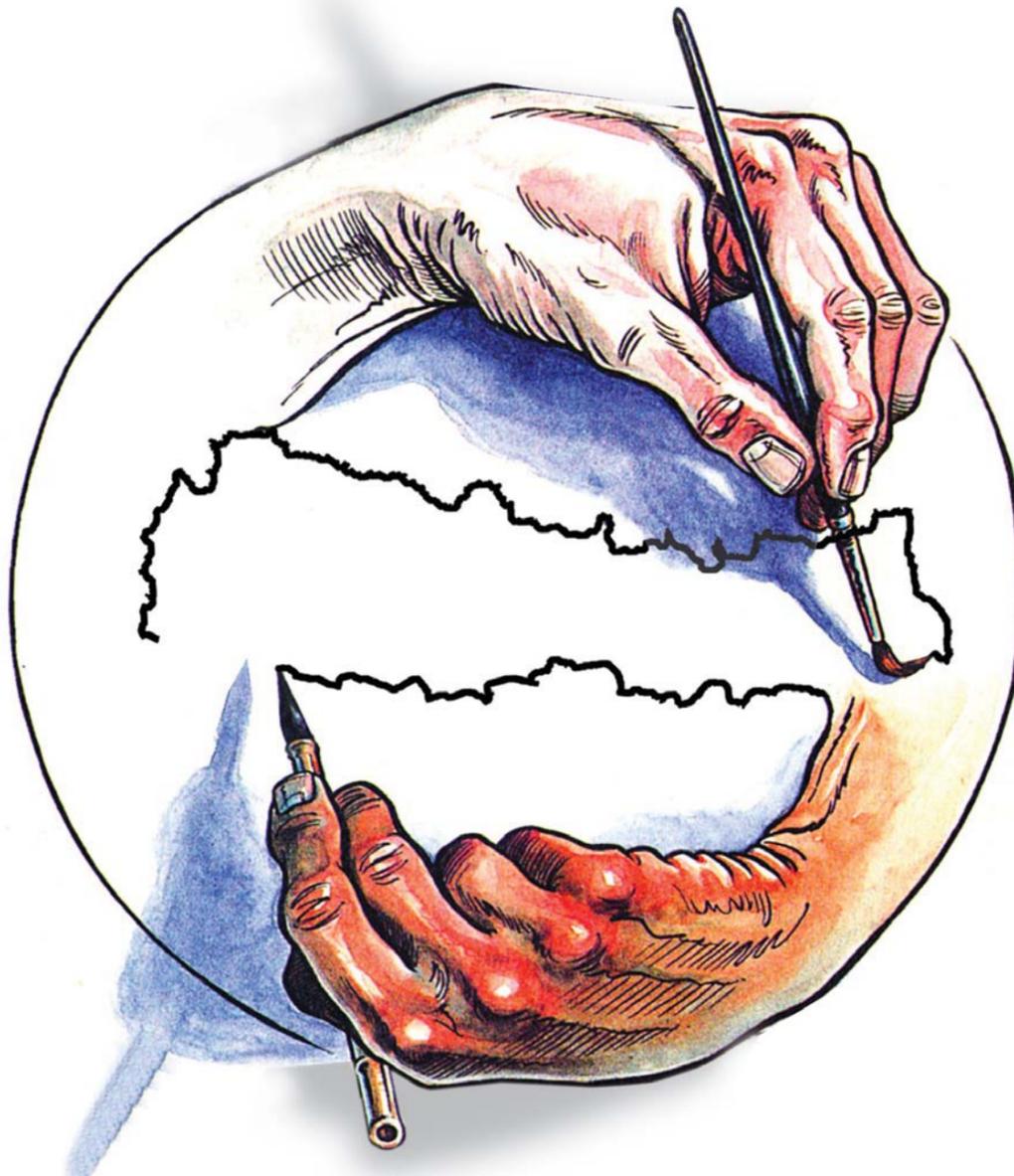
with little public support. They have just made him a hero," a Madhes-watcher told me earlier this week. The Supreme Court has ordered the Morang district administration to present Raut on Friday. If the apex court holds him for treason, it will only make things worse.

In an interview with the *BBC Nepali Service*, constitutional expert and one of the architects of Nepal's Interim Constitution, Daman Nath Dhungana said, "I don't believe Nepal's sovereignty is so weak that it cannot withstand comments from an individual."

Those angered by Raut's separatist comments should take note that Article 4 of the Interim Constitution declares Nepal an 'indivisible' and 'secular' state. But despite this historic declaration made by the first CA, there are political parties and individuals who have fought elections against it and are now lobbying for it to be scrapped in the present CA. Is it just coincidence that we have been tolerating one kind of extreme voice while being intolerant of another?

Raut and his ilk are not yet a dominant voice in Madhes. With time, as people of Madhes enjoy greater say in their political destiny, such elements will be marginalised. But their growing presence should also be a warning to Kathmandu.

After 300 years in the United Kingdom, Scotland had a referendum on independence on Thursday. Kathmandu should be thankful that even after being treated like outsiders for generations in their own land, all a Madhesi is asking for is dignity and recognition. @Anurag_Acharya



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After that late-season monsoonal pulse that dumped rain right across Nepal for five days, the total precipitation this year is now approaching more normal levels. However, the rain came too late for many farmers. The monsoon is now in full retreat as it is nudged eastwards by reviving westerly winds. Still, there is enough moisture around to trigger afternoon build-up and some storms over the mountains in Central Nepal. Days will be sunny, hot and humid, with nights and mornings getting cooler.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27°	25°	25°
17°	16°	15°

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MOBILES FOR EARLY WARNING



From Syangja to Sendai, a Nepal engineer looks to connect people and save lives

TOKYO - When he was 18 in his home district of Syangja, Chandi Subedi used to be amazed by Japanese calculators and radios, and was full of admiration of the country that manufactured such cool gadgets.



ON THE ROAD
Guna Raj Luitel

So, when he had a chance to go for higher studies in 1992, Japan was his first choice. He switched from medical school to engineering and after graduation got a job at the Information Systems Division at SoftBank Telecom.

When the East Japan earthquake struck in 2011, unleashing a catastrophic tsunami, communications links broke down. Subedi developed a USB dongle

that could be stuck into home computers and allow them to run on minimal software by making use of a cloud of network servers. The innovation earned Chandi Subedi the company's SoftBank Award, the first time it was given to an engineer.

"The device allows users to access the company's network through the cloud when they are at home or travelling," Chandi explained to me as simply as possible during a recent visit, "during the earthquake and tsunami we distributed 13,000 devices and helped people keep in touch."

Subedi graduated from Jyoti English School Boarding in Syangja and went to Amrit Science College in Kathmandu. In Japan he didn't want to waste three years working on a PhD, and was impatient to find applications for telecom software that would help people.

The number of Nepalis in Japan is growing steadily and has crossed 40,000, the highest

number from any South Asian country. Most of them work in restaurants, in semi-skilled jobs, or are students. "The challenge for Nepalis is to live a dignified life in Japan, and we residents must guide them to do better," says Subedi.

The telecom sector is expanding rapidly in Japan, and Subedi's little USB stick has transformed the lives of many people by, for instance, allowing young mothers to work from home. There have been misgivings lately about storing programs and files on clouds, but Subedi says it is perfectly safe and secure.

But even while working in Japan, Subedi's heart is still in Nepal. He gets together with fellow-Syangjalis on weekends, and updates himself through online news from back home. He feels there are quite a few ways information technology could help Nepalis.

For instance, after reading about the devastating landslides

and flash floods in Nepal in August, he discussed with fellow engineers in his company about how telecommunications could be used for early warning.

The Japan chapter of the Nepal Engineers Association is trying to see how the technology can be tweaked for use through the mobile network in Nepal. "If people can be warned about floods or landslides through mobile phones, it can save lives," he says.

Japan is already using an earthquake alert system that goes directly to every mobile phone user, and gives people precious seconds to move to safer places. Subedi is not just looking at disasters, he thinks information technology can be used to make elections back home cheaper, faster and cleaner by making ballot boxes, ballot papers and rubber stamps obsolete.

"We can use tablets, and the votes go directly into a central server in the cloud, you can save

billions of rupees," he says.

Every time Subedi sees tv images of long passport queues at Narayanhiti or Nepali migrant workers lining up for jobs abroad, he shakes his head. The long waits could be a thing of the past with telecom applications.

"The government could easily offer smart services to everyone, removing the long waits, why are we punishing our own citizens?" he asks.

Every bit of news from Nepal makes Subedi's mind race to find telecommunications solutions. And because of his interest in health issues, he thinks telemedicine has enormous potential in Nepal, and could save many lives in remote areas.

Asked what makes him happiest, Subedi stares out of the window of his high rise at the Pacific Ocean with a faraway look: "I want to develop softwares that saves lives by connecting people, I want to make fellow-Nepalis a little happier." 🇳🇵

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EVENTS

Letters from home

Prominent Nepali and international writers will take part in discussions on contemporary issues, literary dialogues, and poetry recitals at the fourth edition of Nepal Literature Festival.



19 SEPTEMBER

1 to 3pm, How will Nepal be made? CK Lal, Swarnim Wagle

20 SEPTEMBER

12 to 1pm, Telling it like it isn't, Ajay Bhadra Khanal and Carlo Pizzati
2 to 3pm, Chronicles of Bush bazaar, Aunohita Mojumdar and Matthieu Aikins
4 to 5pm, Has South Asian writing in English emerged from India's shadow? Farah Ghuznavi, Peter J Karthak, Samrat Kharel
5 to 6pm, They say men don't cry: Interrogating Gender, Rajesh Hamal

21 SEPTEMBER

12 to 1pm, Long-form journalism in the age of short attention spans, Kanak Mani Dixit, Hartosh Singh Bal, Matthieu Aikins and Rabi Thapa
2 to 3pm, Politician as writer, Hari Sharma and Shashi Tharoor

22 SEPTEMBER

11am to 12pm, An Indian writer in English interrogates his craft, Shashi Tharoor
3 to 4pm, Battles for representation with Yukta Bajracharya, Ujjwala Maharjan, Samip Dhungel and other Word Warriors

Free entry, 19 to 22 September, Nepal Academy, Kamaladi

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, Tripureshwor, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com

Marathon,

Join hundreds of runners to race around Kathmandu.
Register: www.kathmandumarathon.com, 20 September, 5am, Dasrath Stadium

Nude at the museum,

Artist Kapil Mani Dixit's solo exhibition on body of nudes. *Until 25 September, 10am to 7pm, The City Museum Kathmandu*

Clean-up,

A nationwide clean-up campaign that aims to unite stakeholders to work towards a cleaner and greener Nepal.
20 September, 7 to 11am, www.cleanupnepal.org.np

Festive night,

An evening with live music, scrumptious dinner and exciting games.
Rs 1500, 26 September, Greenwich Hotel, Sanepa, 98010082092, solvensolution@gmail.com



Changa Fiesta,

Bring out your spool, join the kite-flying competition and enjoy barbeques, bingo and music.
Entry: Rs 500, 27 September, 2 pm onwards, Hotel Snowman, Nagarkot

Let's write,

A writing workshop by editors of *La.Lit.*
26 September, Quixote's Cove, Ekantakuna, Register: editor@lalitmag.com, www.facebook.com/lalitmag

Script to Screen,

Screening of two short movies, result of a two-week workshop with directors Andrew Rajan and Nepali, Subarna Thapa organised by the British Council.
24 September, 7pm, Theatre Village



Ktm runs,

Run, walk or cycle to support vulnerable, disadvantaged and abused children by entering the marathon. Proceeds will go towards the children.
Rs 200, 27 September, 7am onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square, www.kidasha.org

Once upon a time

Underground Talkies is back with its third edition of Ekadeshma Film Festival. Sixty nine contemporary shorts will be screened at this year's event.
19 to 21 September, QFX Kumari Hall, Rs 65 per session, (01)4442220, 9841239505

Some of the Nepali films that will be screened:

Butte Jama, dir.Kaala Sangroula, 15'
Set in a remote village in eastern Terai of Nepal in the 90s, the film centers around a nine-year-old girl, Baisakhi, who desires to wear a Butte Jama (embroidered skirt).

Kaphal Pakyo, dir.Niranjan Raj Bhetwal 15'
Sushmadevi, a mother of two, directs her children to take their cow for mating. The boys start their journey through the war-ravaged hillside where they go on to explore the aftermaths of the war.



Kyar Kyar Pankha, dir. Pasang Dawa Sherpa, 12' 36"
Sampat, a mechanic feels remorseful for not being able to fulfill his daughter Sangeeta's dreams. When he brings home a fan to repair, he is bewildered to see that she starts to find happiness through the fan.

Maachako Sapana, dir. Sanjay Chaulagain, 20' 45"
They came. They saw. They left. The city never knew.

DINING

Lhakpa's Chulo,
Nepali dal-bhat, Newari khaja, Swiss Rösti, Italian risotto, or Thai green curry - take your pick. *Jhamsikhel*

Saigon Pho,
Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. *Lajimpat*

Embers,

A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. *Krishna Gali, Pulchowk*



Chez Caroline,
Exquisite food, glorious sunshine and more. *9am to 10pm, BabarMahal Revisited, (01)4263070/4187*

Vesper Café,
Fine Italian, continental cuisine and wine in a relaxed environment. *Jhamsikhel*

Himalayan Joe,
With 20 per cent off on daily specials, enjoy coffee, pastries, cocktails, desserts and more. *Ratna Mandir, Lakeside, Pokhara*

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MUSIC



Live concert,
Deepak Bajracharya & the Rhythm Band will be playing to support the global charity trust and flood survivors of Nepal.
Rs 1,500, 20 September, 6 to 11pm, Reef Restaurant and Lounge, Thamel

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

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

Bands galore,
Live music by Eastern Fusion Music, Unplugged by KJC, Army Big Band, Live Remix Project and What The Funk, accompanied with Burmese and Italian

food stalls.
20 September, 3.30pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

For change,
An event to create positive social change through music and arts education, with performances by Joint Family Internationale, Like a Beast and Albertina Barceló.
Rs 250, 20 September, 7pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel, (01)4411523

Kutumba live,
A charity show by Kutumba for Nepali children.
Rs 600, 26 September, 6pm onwards, Alliance française, Tripureswor

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RED PANDA ON THE RED LIST

SONAM TASHI LAMA
in TAPLEJUNG

Despite being regarded as sign of good luck and having a cuddly appearance, the red panda is facing an existential threat. Worried about their dwindling numbers, an international effort has been successful in mobilising local communities in eastern Nepal to save the species.

Known as *habre* in Nepali and *punde kundo* in the local dialect here in the mountains near Kangchenjunga, this is a carnivore-turned-herbivore that, like its distant cousin the giant panda, survives mainly on a diet of bamboo.

The shy animal lives on the canopy of broadleaf and mixed temperate forests from central Nepal right up to Sichuan, and is an excellent tree-climber. Habitat destruction and hunting has reduced its numbers to 10,000

individuals in the wild, and in Nepal there may be only up to 1,000 red pandas spread across 36 mountain districts. There is said to be another 800 in zoos around the world.

The red panda is listed under Appendix I of CITES, the Vulnerable Category in the IUCN Red List and categorised as a

A community effort is saving the endangered species by protecting its habitat

protected mammal by the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973 of Nepal which prohibits its killing or capture dead or alive. Yet, last year alone 11 red panda hides were confiscated in Nepal.

While red panda inside national parks are protected, now communities in Nepal's eastern districts of Panchthar, Ilam and Taplejung which are not part of



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RED ALL OVER: This red panda in Ilam district is part of a clan protected by a local community forestry group. Red panda (right) at its defecation site. The animals are very hygienic and use the same neighbourhood toilet.



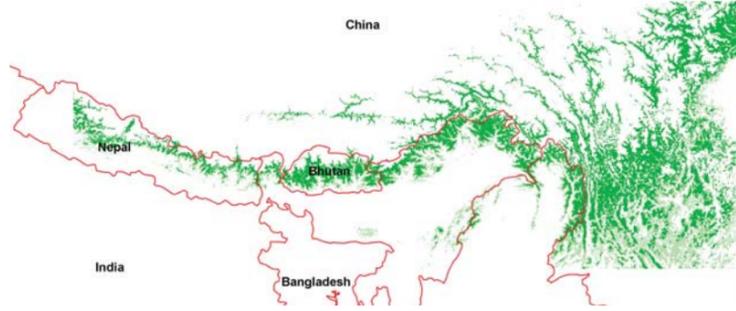
animal's habitat, but Yonzon died tragically in 2011 when a truck hit his bicycle in Kathmandu.

Local people trained as Forest Guardians act as conservation ambassadors in their community, and protecting the red panda habitat means saving other species as well. This unique community based initiative is being institutionalised within Nepal's successful Community Forest User Groups.

In Jamuna VDC of northern Ilam, local women are at the forefront of conserving the red panda in the Choyatar Forest which had been decimated by grazing and logging. Their work has already yielded results: the number of tourists visiting the area has increased in direct proportion to the rebound in the population of panda. Red panda watching has now become a major source of tourism revenue, and homestays have taken off.

Besides Ilam, the red panda is also found in conservation areas and national parks in Langtang, Sagarmatha, Annapurna and Rara. This year, Nepal celebrates Red Panda Day on 20 September with the slogan Conserving Locally, Educating Globally. www.redpandanetwork.org

WHERE THEY LIVE



The red panda range stretches across from Nepal to Sichuan in southern China.

any nature reserves, and home to one-fourth of the total red panda population in Nepal, are working to protect the species from poachers and habitat loss.

The Community Based Red Panda Monitoring and Conservation under the Red Panda Network (RPN) has been working since 2007 to mobilise local awareness and action to protect

the endangered animals through habitat management, awareness building and sustainable livelihoods.

A lot of the credit for red panda research goes to pioneer conservationist Pralad Yonzon, who did his PhD on the red panda in Langtang National Park. His organisation, Resource Himalaya, worked on the conservation of the

nepalitimes.com

Watch video, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom: Red panda mating season



Sonam Tashi Lama is Conservation Coordinator at the Red Panda Network

PICS: SONAM TASHI LAMA/RPN

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FINDING FANNY

Homi Adajania's debut film *Being Cyrus*, released in 2006, was a dark comedy about a young painter who walks into rotten relationships and murder. Six years later, Adajania abandoned the macabre in favour of *Cocktail*, a high-earning but ultimately vapid Bollywood movie about romance in Generation Y. In terms of style and content, the two films were like chalk and cheese. Adajania's latest movie *Finding Fanny* is a mixture of both: a large ensemble cast, eccentric characters, photogenic heroines, bumbling heroes, and a happy ending.

In the fictional Goan town of Pocolim lives old postman, choir-boy and all round eccentric Ferdie (Naseeruddin Shah) who, after receiving an unopened love letter he once sent to a girlfriend 46 years ago, breaks down and is unable to function. Young widow

Angie (Deepika Padukone) comes to his rescue and the two plan a road trip to visit Fanny. Their problem: the only car in town belongs to painter Don Pedro (Pankaj Kapur), who lusts after Angie's mother-in-law Rosie (Dimple Kapadia), who hates Ferdie, and the only one who can get the car to start is Savio (Arjun Kapoor) who has the hots for Angie but is too proud to say it. You still with me?

Like in *Being Cyrus*, it is the supporting cast in *Finding Fanny* that out-charms the film's narrator (and neutral moral arbiter) and keep this film moving. From the moment Ferdie receives the letter to when his mission comes to an end, Naseeruddin Shah is the saving grace of this film. Kapadia and Kapur are well-cast, while Kapoor and Padukone play characteristic characters.

Where the film falters is when

the absurd journey made by five small-town characters turns into the usual baloney about people discovering themselves and finding meaning in their otherwise monotonous lives. Granted that's usually what happens in movies like this where supposedly-dysfunctional characters spend a long time close to each other. But perhaps what this movie needed, in addition to humour, was a more bittersweet tone so that it wouldn't seem sloppy when all the characters have their individual epiphanies.

To his credit, Adajania has shot his film well and has peppered it with a quasi-Mediterranean score to make it feel Goan. Its ludicrous characters and colourful tone reminds you of *Amelie*, another absurd film that takes weirdoes and traps them in a universe of choking coincidences. Unlike *Amelie*, which is a sensory overload of imagination and wackiness, *Finding Fanny* is too laidback and lacks conviction.

Quite a few friends said this was a film they wouldn't go see in theatres but get a DVD to watch at home. Is it because films like this never make it to the theatres and we are so used to watching them on our laptops that we expect blockbusters at the cinema, or is it because *Finding Fanny* never actually goes all out? Answer: never actually goes all out. **Sunir Pandey**

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Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



DEVAKI BISTA

BIDDING GOODBYE: UCPN(M) Chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal and senior leader Baburam Bhattarai pay their respect to late UCPN(M) Vice Chair Post Bahadur Bogati at Khula Manch on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

DIPLOMATIC TIES: Vice President Parmanand Jha with Brazilian Ambassador Marcos Borges Duprat Ribeiro during the Brazilian National Day celebrations at the Hyatt Regency on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

DAILY BIZ: Street vendors sell fruits and vegetables in Old Baneswor on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

BOOKWORM: A visitors scans for books at a book fair in Rastriya Sabha Griha on Wednesday.

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Nurse's book wins Madan Prize

As a young girl in Chitwan, whenever Radha Paudel complained about not having new shoes or pencils, she remembers her father telling her that children in Jumla didn't even have enough to eat. When she grew up, Radha became an anesthesiologist at Bharatpur Hospital and applied for a more senior position. There were only two openings: a relatively easy job in Rupandehi, or the hardships of Jumla. Without hesitation, she chose to go to Jumla.

Her father, who had worked in Jumla previously, tried to change her mind. It is dangerous, he said, there is a war going on and life is hard in the remote mountains. But Radha reminded her father that it was he who had inspired her to go to Jumla in the first place, and do something for the people there.

When she got to Jumla in 2001, Radha could not sleep at nights seeing how mothers died at child-birth, children toiled as porters to earn a living. It was fluke she wasn't born there, she thought, and she was troubled by the low esteem with which the rest of Nepal looked at Jumlis.

Radha got a job with a safe motherhood project supported by DFID and immediately set out to the remoter parts of the district



to care for women even though it was a war zone. The security forces and the Maoists both looked at Radha with suspicion and thought she was an enemy spy.

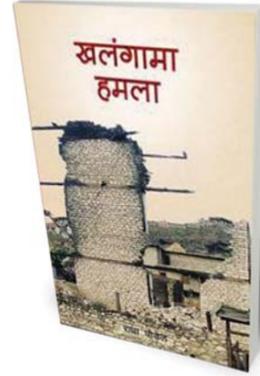
The Madan Puraskar Guthi announced on 14 September to award this year's Madan Literature Prize to *Khalanga Ma Hamala* (The Attack on Khalanga). In the book, Radha Paudel relives minute details of the battle of Jumla and how that close brush with death motivated her to continue to work for the

upliftment of the people of this remote part of Nepal. But, as Radha Paudel, reminds us, "The end of the war has not meant peace. The roots of the conflict are still there. As long as people are hungry, there will be war."

Radha Paudel persevered because she thought it was important to tell the story so people understand the true meaning of peace, and valued it. She teared up during a recent interview and said in a choking voice: "I had to go back to Jumla and help the people I went there to help."

After the battle of Jumla, Radha started writing down everything she remembered about the 13 terrifying hours of the fierce Maoist attack on Jumla on the night of 14 November 2002. The CDO, DSP and dozens of army and police were killed, and no one knows how many Maoists died.

Radha first just hid under her quilt, thinking it would protect her. Bullets whizzed all around, hitting the ceiling and walls. The army's helicopters hovered overhead, dropping mortar bombs, while



Khalanga ma Hamala
(The Attack on Khalanga)

Radha Paudel with some members of the community she worked with in Jumla in 2002

the Maoists and the army exchanged fierce gunfire in the street below. She peeped out of the window to see captured policemen being beheaded like goats.

She went to hide in her landlady's room, but a neighboring house caught fire and they were trapped between the smoke and the gunfire outside. Radha thought this was the end, but somehow survived the night. Radha

kept working in Jumla, and got the Women Peacemaker Award last year for her selfless work in rural Nepal during the conflict. Radha's first manuscript was lost, and she wrote it all over again from memory.

Radha says she will plough the royalty from *Khalanga ma Hamala* to her group, Action Works Nepal, which works in Jumla, Kalikot and Achham to help Karnali's people stand on their own feet.  **Kunda Dixit**



Café Soma

The 'Du may have very cosmopolitan eateries for dinners and lunches, but when it comes to breakfast, it has a lot of catching up to do. Kathmandu's restaurateurs do not seem to give much importance to the most important meal of the day. Usually, menus will carry not more than four options. Sad as it is, the only variety comes in the form of choice of eggs (any style) and a selection between bacon and

sausage, no other cut meats.

So, when Café Soma opened and this paper carried a wonderful review of the place by Marco Polo two years ago, some of us who live to eat paid it a visit. The description of Soma's Eggs Benedict (then Rs 280, now Rs 390) was so delicious in itself that even a non-lover of poached eggs couldn't refrain from placing an order for this

American classic.

A friend who is a 'farkeko Nepali' remarked how her search for good pancakes in the capital ended at Soma. Soft, fluffy and light, Soma's pancakes are without doubt one of Ktm's bests. And this is why pancake with fresh fruits and yogurt (Rs 350) is one dish that has always made an appearance on the table during all our visits.

Another thing that Soma does well is croissants. Random bakeries around town try to do croissants, but they are pretty dismal -- just crescent-shaped paurotis. But at Soma they are so good, and prepared with utmost perfection that having just one of these little moon breads is an insult to both your tummy and the baker. With each layer of the pastry adequately buttered, it is moist and flaky only in the way the baker inventors



PICS: TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

of croissants in Vienna intended them to be. Choose between bacon and eggs with crossaint (Rs 400) or crossaint with ham and cheese (Rs 300), or just eggs (Rs 250) to satiate your morning hunger and there will be no regrets.

Soma's full English breakfast (Rs 600), which the waiter described as a heavy dish and the more exotic sounding smoked salmon benedict (Rs650) and a couple of yet-to-try dishes show the many options of breakfast on offer. The beverage menu is also equally varied: besides the house special the Browniccino (Rs 190), the Hazelnut Iced Latte (Rs 180) is one of the best coffee beverages brewed in town.

If you have a penchant for sweets, walk up to the counter where the day's baked goodies sit behind a glass case. The banana and chocolate muffin (Rs 100) is sweet and decadent, and leave no trace of baking powder in the throat that store bought muffins are guilty of.

Café Soma also makes excellent burgers and sandwiches, in case you decide to pay a visit during non-breakfast hours. 

Tsering Dolker Gurung

How to get there: Walk past Sun Café in Jhamsikhel, opposite to a bike store on the street housing Hermann Bakery.



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a 

Lung check

In some parts of the world, 2 October is marked as the World Spirometry Day. Spirometry is a simple lung function study which assesses the health of lungs just like a blood pressure monitor measures cardiovascular health.



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Many western hospitals have a separate section for spirometry. The technician in this department can often be heard asking the patient to "blow hard, hard" into the spirometer. Since the test result is dependent on good effort, it is important for the technician

to give clear instruction to the patient during the test.

Unfortunately, this simple and useful test is not performed in most of our hospitals or clinics even though lung diseases are rampant here. South Asia has the worst lungs in the world. Even where the tests are performed, the technician only half-heartedly instructs the patient to blow into the machine, thus compromising results. It is imperative that the lung function studies in pulmonary patients be carried out properly in order to guide therapy. The World Spirometry Day therefore helps increase awareness of this important test.

A recent study published by the McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, had some frightening data. A total of 38,517 healthy nonsmokers took part

in the pulmonary (lung) function study. This group consisted of people from 17 countries including India who were matched by height, age and gender. The results revealed that the "healthy" Indians had the poorest lung functions. These findings about Indians can be extrapolated to reflect the lung functions in Nepalis.

Abnormal lung functions in healthy people were once linked to bad genes. However a 2010 study challenged this notion. Children of Indian immigrants who were born and raised in the United States had far better lung functions than those born and raised in India. What could be an important factor



to account for this difference if genes are not blameworthy? Air Pollution, which is prevalent both indoors and outdoors in South Asia, is the answer. A recent astounding finding revealed the air pollution level in New Delhi was higher than that in Beijing. (Unfortunately many of the cities and towns in Nepal are not far behind New Delhi in air pollution). Scientists measure particulate matter (PM) in the atmosphere to check how harmful

the state of pollution is. PMs less than 2.5 microns are the true troublemakers because they are able to penetrate deep into the lungs, and due to their diminutive size bypass the defense mechanism of the lungs to cause abnormal lung functions and diseases. There have been lots of reports on the alarming rate of pesticides in our food. Perhaps more anxiety-provoking should be widespread air pollution which in all likelihood kills many more people over a period of time than pesticide exposure. The World Health data has revealed that deaths due to chronic lung disease are the highest in our part of the world. It is vital that we deal successfully with air pollution prevention measures to curb not only lung diseases but a host of other diseases now scientifically linked to air pollution such as heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer, all of which are on the rise in Nepal. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Ever been in a busy café with your shiny new headphones on, wanting to listen to that latest Boyce Avenue upload while working on your blog? Was it impossible to enjoy both work and music because of all the noise? I've been frustrated by cruddy headphones forever, so a noise cancelling headphones had been on my wish-list for a long time. After a quick trial of Bose's QuietComfort 25 (QC25), I now know what I will be spending my Dasain bonus on.

The latest from Bose is a successor to its hit product - the QC15, and boasts of features that justify this upgrade. Designed beautifully, the QC25 doesn't feel cheap even though it is made of plastic. At 200 grams, this lightweight is meant for putting on for hours. The soft ear-cups and a padded band on top provide the right amount of pressure to keep the



QUIET COMFORT

headphones in place.

The QC25 sports a folding design that allows the headphone to fit in a smaller case (size of a paperback novel) for times when you tire of lugging it around your neck. The noise-cancelling feature is powered by an AAA battery (included), and should last about 35 hours of use. You will have to put on a set to believe its incredible noise cancellation feature. As a huge upgrade from the QC15, the QC25 continues to function even when the battery runs out (without the noise cancelling feature), so cheers to Bose for that.

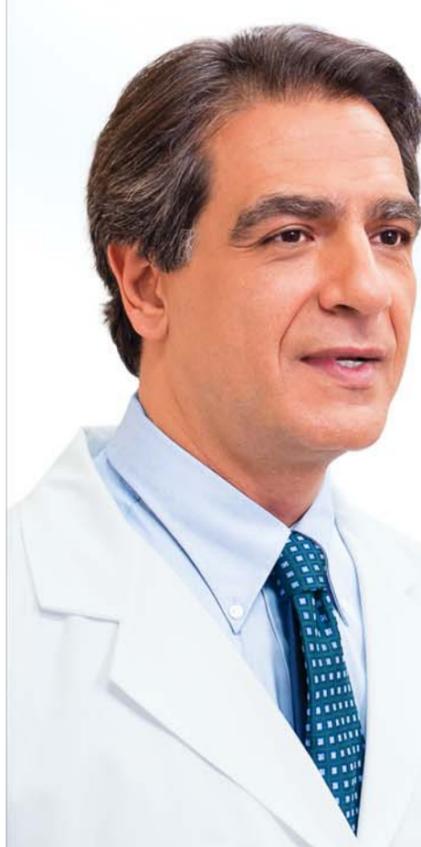
Although the QC25 is designed specifically for use with Apple products, features such as the inline microphone and remote which puts music and call controls at your fingertips is also compatible with the more popular Android phones.

Sound-wise, the QC25 boasts Bose's legendary audio experience, that too in isolation. The QC25 lets you focus on what matters: your music, movies and videos; it expertly reduces what you do not want to hear: the buzz in a café, classroom, office, or cabin noise inside an airplane.

The crisp sound, the deep bass and the overwhelmingly clear sound quality powered by Bose's Active EQ and TriPort technologies deliver performance so compelling, you will not want to remove these for days.

The QC25 is retailing at around Rs 40,000 and is available in gadget shops around Kathmandu. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's verdict: Despite the heavy price tag, the QC25 is Bose turning off the world's cacophony for you.

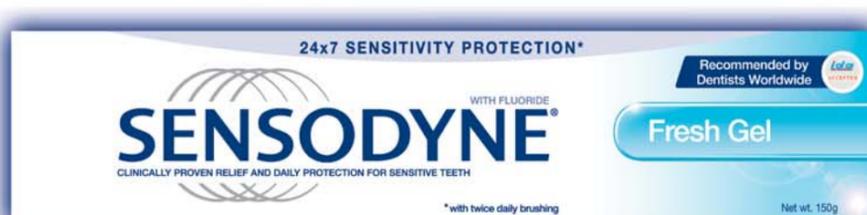


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Showing a red flag

Jagannath Adhikari's personalised account of living and surviving the Nepal conflict

DAVID SEDDON

As the author explains in the preface, *Under the Shadow of the Red Flag* (which he describes as 'a travelogue') is an outcome of his journeys through Nepal as a researcher and consultant during 2003-2005 at the time of the Maoist insurgency, and the armed conflict to which it gave rise.

His 'accidental writings' (Che Guevara called a similar account of his travels through Latin America *The Motorcycle Diaries*) provide the basis for an engaging and highly personal account of his experiences and encounters with local village people, Maoist cadres and party workers, government officials, development workers and security forces.

The Introduction provides a broader political context for the more personal diaries, and takes the reader from the launching of the People's War in 1996 up to 2013 and the election of a second



Constituent Assembly. In the first of the 11 chapters ('Living on a Tightrope') we return to late December 2003, when Adhikari visited development workers in east Nepal. The central theme of this chapter, as with most of the ten others, is how development workers and the local villagers lived in fear of both the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army, but evolved strategies for coping on a daily basis with their fears and with the two opposing forces which in different ways threatened their lives and livelihoods.

Much the same general theme permeates another recent collection edited by Prabin Manandhar and myself, *In Hope and In Fear*. In Jagannath Adhikari's accounts there is also a subtle thread of analysis, revealed by the title, which suggests that the image of locals and others being 'caught in the middle of a conflict between two opposing forces' is somewhat misleading. The book is after all about living and surviving 'under the shadow of the Red Flag'.

The book implicitly demonstrates how unavoidably interwoven were the lives of local villagers both with those

whom the author refers to as 'the Maoists' and also (albeit to a lesser extent) with the local government officials who remained in the areas he visited, and even members of the government armed forces. In part, they had known each other and in some cases had previously lived and worked together, before the conflict materialised.

The Maoists were not therefore, by and large, an alien force from 'outside' as much as a distinct section of the local population, separated from other villages by virtue of their commitment as cadres in the Party or in the armed struggle. Less obviously, local people had links to the government armed forces, most of whom were of course villagers before they joined up – although it was generally the case that whereas the Maoists were often known as individuals, the RNA rarely were.

Unavoidably, given his own status as a Brahmin, Adhikari himself often felt vulnerable to those Maoists who 'rallied against "Brahmanbad" and its power over the state'. There is an additional thread of unease as regards the Maoists that runs through descriptions of his experiences

and encounters, which is perhaps as much personal as it is a reflection of the feelings of all those with whom he talked. This becomes more evident in the Epilogue, where Adhikari effectively criticises the Maoists for having 'deviated from its fight for greater goals such as social justice, equality and economic development'.

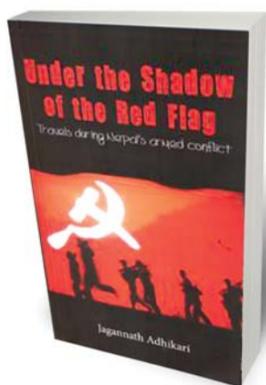
He suggests that 'the party and most of its cadres have shown a tendency to accumulate money and assets for personal gains and to vie for positions of power'. But this is a charge that should be leveled against the old Party leadership, not the Maoists as a whole, for there remain many Maoists -- most of them now in the CPN-M – who make this same complaint against the leadership of the UCPN(M).

Indeed, Adhikari cites the memoir of Tara Rai who wrote in her memoir of the solidarity (*vargiya maya*) once felt among Maoist cadres, and the suspicion now felt towards the old leadership.

Finally, Adhikari is convinced that 'ultimately, the Maoist movement achieved none of its goals through the armed conflict ... rather, the war helped only to hold Nepal back by repressing and delaying economic opportunities, leaving further social divisions in its wake'. This conclusion is highly debatable, and the merit of the book lies less in



David Seddon is co-author (with Arjun Karki) of *The Peoples' War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*, and co-editor (with Prabin Manandhar) of *In Hope and In Fear: Living through the Maoist Insurgency*, both published by Adroit Press.



Under the Shadow of the Red Flag: Travels During Nepal's Armed Conflict by Jagannath Adhikari
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Taking power into their

The future of Nepal's micro-hydro is affected by the spread of the national grid

SUNIR PANDEY

According to recent figures released by the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC), the total installed capacity of small-scale hydroelectric projects in Nepal topped 48 MW this year. If this was a powerplant, it would be the fourth largest in the country.

Out of reach of national transmission lines, rural Nepalis stopped waiting for the government to come to them. They made their own small hydropower plants and managed them through local community groups and cooperatives. A government subsidy of Rs 255,000 per kW produced also spurred communities to take power into their own hands.

As a result, around 2,500 micro-hydro plants of between 5-100kW were installed all over

the country in the last 30 years, electrifying 200,000 households in the last 30 years (see chart).

At first, the small capacity plants produced just enough electricity to light up homes. But now, communities have realised the benefits of linking nearby power stations into local grids. In eastern Baglung, for example, seven micro-hydro plants ranging from 9 to 26 kW on the Kalung river are hooked up into a network called Urja Upatyaka (Energy Valley). When the capital of the country suffers 14 hours of power cuts this winter, Baglung will be all lit up.

If there is equipment failure at one station, the others chip in. And more power means local communities now use electricity not just for lighting, but for small businesses like carpentry, mills, poultry farms, computer centres, irrigation pumps.

"You are only consuming power if you use it for lighting.



But when you make money out of it, that is value added, comes closer to exploiting potential," says Sanjay Sharma, program manager at Regional Centre for Excellence in Micro-hydro which

works with the AEPCC and USAID to promote local initiatives like in Baglung.

There are said to be at least 14 more sites across the country where micro-hydros can be

networked and hooked up to the national grid to provide another additional 4MW of power.

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) was nervous about hooking small producers



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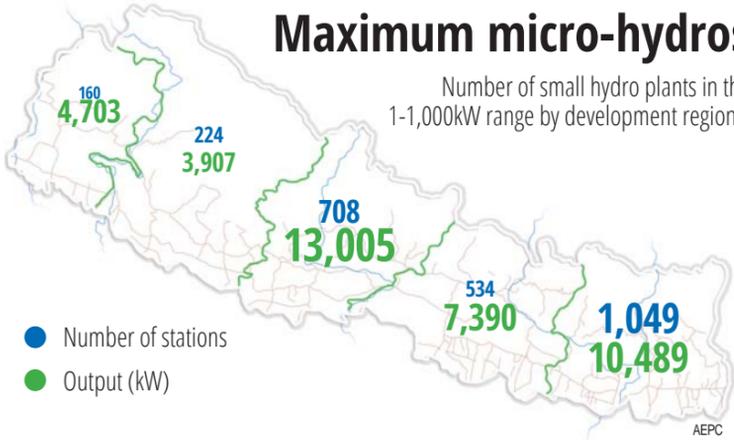
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own hands

Maximum micro-hydros

Number of small hydro plants in the 1-1,000kW range by development regions.



to the national grid, saying the administrative and logistical costs just weren't worth the trouble.

The state-run utility has realised that the long-term benefits of rural electrification can't be counted in just profit and loss, and has now finalised rates for Power Purchase Agreement for dry and wet seasons which would make it attractive for local investors.

The real threat to micro-hydro producers, ironically, is not financial, it is the spread of national transmission lines. In Baglung, for example, locals want to be hooked up to the grid instead of their Urja Upatyaka network. In Dhankuta, the Leguwa Khola micro-hydro station and the Syaure Bhumi micro powerplant were running well until the NEA's transmission lines arrived. Locals now want to

switch to the national system.

There are at least 40 other micro-hydro products in the 25kW plus range that are in danger of being shut down because of the arrival of the national grid. Together they produce 4MW of power, and if they were networked and the NEA bought power from them, they would survive and billions in subsidy would not go waste.

Paradoxically, the reason some rural areas are happy with their local micro-hydro is that connecting to the national grid would mean suffering power cuts.

nepalitimes.com

- People and power, #631
- Transforming power, #512
- Do it yourself, #385
- See video

Thinking small



FATHER TO SON: Karna Thapaliya and his youngest son upgraded the traditional water mill of their ancestors to generate 5kW of electricity to sell to 26 households in the neighbourhood.

"We are trying to upscale this program by getting private banks involved, and adding a productive end-use component to make it viable," explains Ram Prasad Dhital of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEP). "It is an appropriate renewable alternative, the only challenge is local management."

But in a country which has successful models of community-managed forests, women-led cooperatives and biogas programs, Nepal has experience in local mobilisation.

"We believe improved water mills can be a viable business that builds on a traditional vocation even though earnings for the bank are not attractive," says Barsha Shrestha of Clean Energy Bank, which wants to support up to 23 new projects.

In the Rosi River, households pay Rs 150 a month for six CFL lights and a tv, and the income pays for an operator. The savings are used for repairs and upkeep.

"We have the hardware, technology and a working model from the biogas program, all we need is to focus on financing and getting the community to work together," says Saroj Rai of SNV.

Nearly 10,000 water mills across Nepal have been improved in the past 12 years, and here in Kavre 250 mills have been upgraded by the Centre for Renewable Technology Nepal (CRT/N) to provide electricity to 200 households.

A water mill can be made more efficient to double the rate of grain grinding for Rs 40,000. To generate electricity and install an oil expeller can cost up to Rs 300,000, for which subsidised loans are available.

KUNDA DIXIT in KAVRE

Nepal's chronic electricity shortage is a result of its inability to harness its big rivers, but how about small streams? There are tens of thousands of water mills across the country, and improving their efficiency by replacing crude wooden paddles with turbines is lighting up villages and providing power for micro-enterprises.

Karna Thapaliya's ancestors set up a water mill by the banks of the Rosi River. Three years ago he upgraded it to generate 5kW of electricity that he sells to 26 households in the neighbourhood. The power is used for lighting at night, and by day Thapaliya sells his power to a furniture shop across the river.

"My grandfather and father raised the family with the flour they earned from grinding grain, now I sell electricity," says Thapaliya, 71, whose sons work in Kathmandu and Qatar.

The improved water mill was made possible through a government subsidy scheme which is part of a nationwide campaign supported by the German agency, GIZ, and the Dutch SNV. The technology is perfect for remote areas, and is more sustainable than subsidies for solar installations.

KUNDA DIXIT

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- Wheels of change, #354
- Flour power, #699

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CK who?

pahilopost.com, 14 September



Born in Saptari district, Chandra Kant Raut is an electronic engineer and winner of national awards like the Young Engineer Award, Mahendra Bidya Bhusan and Kul Ratna Gold Medal. He studied electronic engineering at Institute of Engineering, Pulchok, and also worked there before leaving because of an internal feud. Raut then went to Japan for further studies under the Monbusho Scholarship.

When he visited Nepal in 2004, Raut left home dressed like an ascetic, wandering to Calcutta, Chennai, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Bangalore, Rameswaram, Puttapparti in India, and claimed to have found enlightenment during the journey. A month later he returned to Japan and fell sick towards the end of his studies, but successfully defended his thesis from a wheelchair. Next, he went to Cambridge for a PhD.

Raut first came to Kathmandu during the 'Hrithik Roshan' scandal when anti-India sentiments had erupted with targeted violence against 'Indian-looking' people. As Raut left for Japan,

13 Nepali workers were killed by terrorists in Iraq and there were palace-sponsored riots in Kathmandu. Raut took both incidents as proof of the suppression of Madhesis.

In 2006, when Raut was back in Nepal, the Madhes uprising had just begun. He and his friends quickly established the Alliance for Rights and Independence of Madhes, an NGO that had secessionist ideals.

ARIM's aim was 'ending Nepali colonialism and racism to establish an independent republican Madhes for the rights of Madhesis'. It had come up with a new flag, new boundaries, and a new national anthem for the proposed country. Mainstream Madhesi politicians also partnered with ARIM for mutual benefit.

Raut then began to write articles under the pseudonyms of Biwashwan Kumar, Azad, and Injod. His expertise in computer engineering gave him the knowhow to hack into Nepal-related networks and collect hundreds and thousands of emails, which he would then spam with postings.

In 2009, Raut went to work for BBN Technologies in the USA, where he also established and chaired a Madhes diaspora group. From America he returned to Nepal to travel from Mechi to Mahakali with friends from the ARIM. He wrote of his experience,

"Pahadis are more desperate than ever to colonise the Madhes, discriminate against its residents, and indulge in crimes against humanity."

After this journey he developed secessionist ambitions. His autobiography is contemptuous of the Nepali state: 'They preach to us about Mother Nepal and how we have to protect its purity and innocence. But I say Nepal is not our mother, it is a witch that sucks our blood and grabs our land and rights and keeps us enslaved, in poverty, and injustice. The Madhes is our mother, it gives us land and food, and will take care of our remains when we die. People say the Madhes will be a very small country, but there are more than a hundred countries whose area and population is smaller. In every way, the Madhes has a glorious future.'

Raut also mentions armed revolt in his autobiography, saying peace didn't work to convince the Nepali establishment of the ambitions of Madhesis.

"If taking an eye for an eye makes everyone blind, it is better that the evil are blinded. At least this will mean everyone is equal. If they remain powerful, they will strangle you as you turn the other cheek. Aggression has to be beaten out of them."

In his book *Madhes Swaraj* (Madhes Self-rule), Raut writes in Hindi why the Madhes has to be separate from Nepal. He rejects courts, protests, government and constitution writing and wants a homegrown army.

"We need our own army to end our slavery. Rules, laws, management, constitution have no meaning until there are guns to enforce them," he writes, 'the constitution belongs to those who have soldiers, because it can be changed any time with the help of the army. Nepal's constitution changes every 10-15 years. How long do you think such laws will favour Madhesis?'

In this book, Raut first talks of preparing for self-rule through peaceful means – awareness, youth wings, and voluntary police. If this doesn't work, he wants to block roads and use paramilitary force. There is also talk of registering the country in the UN to guarantee international support. All this, he says, may take more than 10 years.



PAHILOPOST.COM

No separation

Editorial, *Nagarik*, 18 September

नागरिक

India could play a vital role in Nepal's stability, prosperity, and territorial integrity. We know India used its influence to push the peace process in 2005, and it could help tackle this new Madhesi separatism. If any part of Nepal secedes, the flames will spread to India where there are plenty of separatist groups. Nepal must get the international community, which has been handing out money in the name of human rights and inclusiveness, to agree not to support these fissiparous forces. All Nepalis must be aware of the intentions of misguided separatists in order to remove this threat.



PAHILOPOST.COM

Ulterior motives

Ratopati.com, 14 September

रातोपाटी

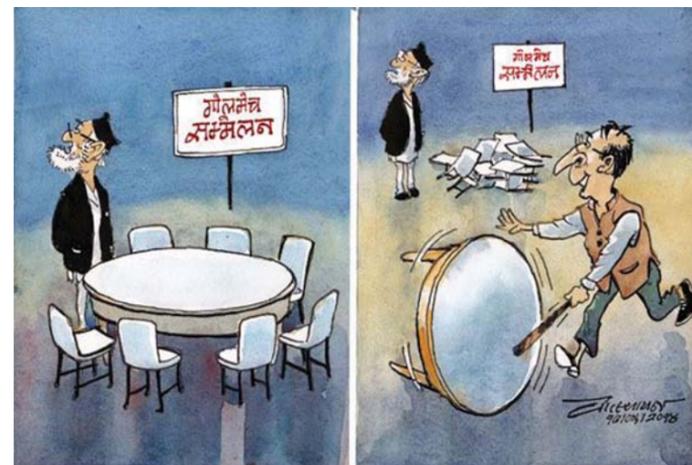
BIRATNAGAR: Security sources claim CK Raut was readying for secession under the 'Independent Madhes Alliance' organisation. After he was arrested on Saturday in Morang while speaking to Santhals about a separate country, it has been revealed that Raut had a network of activists across eastern Nepal planning a separatist revolt.

According to the source, Raut had planned to create 10 units per VDC and 15 leaders per unit who would then campaign for a separate country. Documents confiscated from Raut, including a book called *Madhes Swaraj* (Madhes Self-rule),

reveal he was working to 'free the Madhes from Nepali occupation'. There is a detailed explanation of what they would have to do for separation and how the proposed new country would function.

Security sources claim Raut also received help from Jwala Singh and Goit, and that Madhesi leaders who campaigned for 'Ek Madhes, Ek Pradesh' (Single Madhes state) also support him indirectly.

Some local leaders have already tried to pressure the district administration and police into releasing Raut. In Biratnagar, some youngsters protested on the street on their behalf. Morang CDO Ganesh Raj Karki ordered the police keep him in custody for six more days while investigations were ongoing.



Sign: All-Party Roundtable

कान्तिपुर

Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 18 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Before an all-party meet is organised, there has to be a written agreement on the alternatives to issues we can't agree on during the meet.”

CPC-M Chairman Mohan Baidya's official press statement on why his party and alliance did not attend talks, 17 September

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Just this week, passengers in Karachi prevented an ex-minister from boarding a plane he kept waiting for two hours. Good thing the jet wasn't air borne yet, otherwise the minister would have been defenestrated from 35,000ft. Then, in the US there was the third Knee Defender incident in as many days.

Operators are fully aware that fidgety passengers may get bored, drink too much and become unruly. The trick is to pack them in with so little leg, elbow and head room that they are immobilised for the duration of the flight. If one of them does manage to wriggle out, flight attendants have cattle prods in cattle class to zap rowdy passengers.

No-frill operators have democratised air travel even in non-democratic countries. They have dispensed with food, drinks, pillows, blankets and air hostages. Everything is charged, including luggage, inflight entertainment, lavatories and pressurisation. If, god forbid, the pleasure in the cabin falls during a fright, oxygen masks will drop automatically on a first-come-first-served basis. Clobber your nose and mouth and bleed normally, you will be charged \$12 per puff.

Thank heavens that in Nepal domestic carriers haven't stooped as low as international budget airlines to slash fares and cut inflight service. Here, we have opted to keep fares high and slash services instead. Nepal's no-budget airlines would rather make passengers pay through their noses than provide them an utterly



unnecessary luxury like a barf bag. However, with the holiday season approaching, and in the spirit of the season, they have allowed goats on board as carry-ons provided they do not exceed the dimensions of the overhead racks.

The Ass is old enough to remember a time when hot meals were served even on Royal Uneconomic Class on Air Thrombosis. As time went on, they got rid of the omelets, then the pakoras, the next to go were the buns, then they even stopped passing out pre-flight cotton wool and candy ("The cotton goes into your ear canal and the toffee goes into your alimentary canal, sir. Not the other way around.")

After many years of observing fellow-asses on board, I have drawn up a list of the categories of people who sit next to you on planes:

■ **Weight Lifters.** These passengers have more carry-on luggage than checked-in luggage and will occupy the over-head lockers (known in some Asian airlines as "oval-head rockers") all the way from seats 31-38 so that there is absolutely no room for your orchids (known in some airlines as "all kids"). The thing to remember if you happen to sit next to a Weight Lifter is make

sure your helmet is fastened at all times while seated so a stowed item doesn't accidentally fracture your skull.

■ **Recliners.** This is a passenger sitting in the seat in front of you who will insist on reclining his seat so that his head lies on your lap for the duration of the flight. Knee Defenders are no use, but my antidote is to make a paper funnel and carefully pour some Campari soda into his ear canal.

■ **Movers and Shakers.** You are on the aisle and the mover and shaker next to you begins to display symptoms of acute dropsy. Always one to make the best of every situation, I usually lean into these guys and get a free in-flight foot to shoulder massage.

■ **Alcoholics Synonymous.** Always have a pack of melatonin handy and plop five tablets into his G&T while he is looking the other way. He won't bother you after that.

■ **Babes.** No such luck. They have replaced flight attendants with Grandmas. The only babes I have sat next to on recent flights are about five months old and wail non-stop while we traverse the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

■ **Stinkos.** One of the single most hazardous aspect of modern air travel is body odour, and it is my misfortune that I am always assigned a seat next to a guy whose armpit can be detected from the cockpit. Some passengers take their shoes off, wafting into the cabin the full aroma of socks in an advanced stage of fermentation. This poses a risk to sensitive on board avionics. "Ladies and gentlemen, in a few moments inshallah we will be landing. In the interest of safety, please stow your tray table, be upright and put your shoes back on. Thank you for choosing Fly-by-Night Airways."

■ **Yaketyyakkers.** That's me. Never sit next to me on a flight. I'll talk to you nonstop until you ask the flight attendant to give you another seat. Which was the idea, anyway.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

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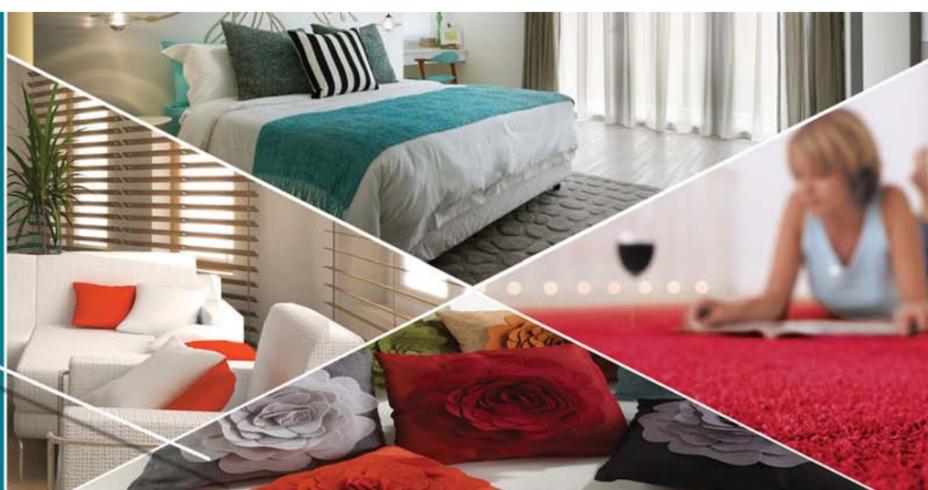


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