At a time when the issue of citizenship in the name of the mother, domestic violence and rise of sex-selective abortion is being intensely debated, Feby Boediarto explores the relationship between Nepali fathers and their daughters through striking black-and-white images. She asks the fathers, “Why are you proud of your daughter?”
The take-home message from the Himalma Public Opinion Survey 2015 is that you can’t fool all the people all the time.

Nearly half the respondents still believe that as long as it is a constitution that adequately addresses the grievances of excluded castes, ethnicities, etc. they are prepared to wait longer. They just want a mechanism other than ethnic federalism in the constitution to make it genuinely inclusive.

If elections were to be held today, a full one-third of the people would still choose the NC despite its fickleness and weak leadership. For lack of anyone better, they trust Sushil Koirala the most even though they don’t think much of his performance in the past year as prime minister. The UML is second with 16%, the Maoists at 9.2% and RPP-N at 5.6%. The Madhesi parties are nowhere in the picture even though people of Madhesi origin were proportionally represented in the poll sample.

Most respondents reject outright the threat by the 31-party Maoist, Madheshi and Janajati combine to take to the streets if their constitution is not written, which shows the lack of popular support for the series of nationwide strikes this week.

The take-home message from the Himalma Public Opinion Survey 2015 is that you can’t fool all the people all the time more than half the respondents said they didn’t believe disagreement over federalism was the real reason for the delay in the constitution, they were convinced it was because of a power-sharing dispute.

The people also give the politicians a way out if you need more time on the constitution. go ahead, but announce local elections right away. Nearly 60% of the respondents said we should not wait any longer to elect VDC, DDC and municipal councils.

Most top politicians in Nepal give little credence to public opinion surveys. For them, the people don’t matter because they know they can exert pressure with hired goons on the streets to get what they want. But we still live in a democracy in which the people matter, and their message is: you will pay for ignoring us.

THE PEOPLE MATTER

Water

We have known all along that Nepal has been increasingly disappointed, disillusioned and disenchanted with the failure of the top political leaders to agree on a new constitution. Two elections and six years later, it looks like we are headed towards another dead-end.

To gauge just how much people feel let-down by their leaders and elected representatives, Himalma carried out a public opinion survey in Kathmandu last week. Although the 1,019 respondents were all living in the Valley, their selection reflected their place of origin, caste and ethnicities, and all socio-economic strata of Nepali society.

The public’s perception of politicians seems to be even more negative than we thought it would be, and they are pessimistic about the top parties being able to pass a new constitution by 22 January: eight out of every 10 people polled said there was no way the leaders would meet the deadline.

In previous Himalma Public Opinion Surveys conducted annually for the past 12 years, respondents used to be politically alert, opinionated and hopeful about the future. This time, let down once more, we found them to be uncharacteristically apathetic and dispendent. (See pages 15-17)

Asked whom they blame for the failure to write a new constitution, more than a quarter of the respondents said the political parties were collectively responsible. But nearly 19% put the snus squarely on the UPCPNM for the lack of progress. This is also reflected in the low-standing of the main Maoists and their leaders in the popularity ratings.

Except for Baburam Bhattarai, Maoist leaders are all in the single digits, with Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal at 3.5% the main Maoists and their leaders in the popularity ratings. Nearly 40% of the respondents said they blame the former prime minister for the failure to write a new constitution.

But Nepal has demonstrated their legendary patience and tolerance by telling us: we have wasted so much time it won’t matter if you extend the CA to get the job done.

Altogether it - why would anyone build it, live in it? Have we really lost it? Allowed it - why would anyone build it, don’t expect relief aid to be there. An onus for the NC to get a proper road built.

Nearly 85% of the respondents were convinced that the current delay is a mistake. Of those who agreed with the delay, three quarters said it was because of the_Main Nepali political parties’__

In a scathing comment, the 1990 Act pronoun (‘Unnatural disaster’, Editorial, #740) let there be a restructuring of the 5 districts, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, and Saptari. As the bone of contention is the various ‘disaster funds’ set up at all levels - national, regional, local and household.

Agreements need to be made with various ‘disaster funds’ set up at all levels - national, regional, local and household. Nepal badly needs to ensure that the large sums of money are channelled in a coherent and effective strategy, with appropriate resources available and preparedness at local level in particular. Also, much greater transparency is needed as regards the vast amounts pledged to the various ‘disaster funds’ set up at national and local level in response to last year’s floods and landslides.

Constitution

As the cornerstone of the constitution, the 6 districts, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Kanchanpur, Kathal (‘Sparsely populated’ in the works, Om Prakash Rai, #470) let there be a referendum and let the people decide their fate themselves.

Who voted these people into power? There’s a lesson there somewhere.

This is just a chronology of events with very little analysis.

Maoist

In fact, more than 40% of the people couldn’t care less what politicians say they want and what the people are interested in.

Royalist Kamal Thapa (4.9%).

Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal at 3.5%

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Beyond the deadline

People won’t be coming on to the streets even if parties miss the 22 January cutoff

BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

has allowed people to develop deeper understanding of contentious positions taken by political parties which has kept the process deadlock-proof for the last six years.

For those of us who have cared to follow these debates taking place at the very highest level, as well as at the grassroots, the semantics are quite revealing. Everybody’s favourite seems to be whether the nation should adopt an identity-based federalism or not – the single most contentious issue that the entire country is passionately debating. So, we know what the parties or their comrades in media (including yours truly) and civil society mean when they argue for and against either.

Having poured millions since April 2008 and another few millions more since November 2013, the international community is understandably frantic about the approaching deadline. But Nepalis watching from the sidelines have grown smarter. They realise gains made post 2006 cannot be reversed, regardless of what the 601 agree or disagree to on 22 January and beyond.

The egalitarian spirit of the social movements including Madhes uprising and Janajati assertion has instilled something more magical in the hearts of the subaltern mass, something few juridical and constitutional provisions can either give nor take away.

Min Kumari Parjw from Rautahat has been running her business on the sidewalks of New Baneshwor for the last six years, ever since the first CA elections. She is a single mother of two daughters who has no time to waste cursing her stars or the leader whom she voted.

“They don’t do their jobs in there [points across the street at the CA building], but I still have mouths to feed,” she says. On Tuesday, while the political clashes of those who had called a general strike and those against it were scuffling, Min Kumari was trying to earn enough to take care of her family.

Whenever there was a challenge to democracy and freedom was at stake, common people like Min Kumari have shut down their businesses and come out in large numbers on the streets. Today things have changed — there is more indifference.

But despite that, the nation’s aspirations for secularism, federalism and republicanism are irreversible. Whatever threats or challenges remain, are perpetuated by our own democratic institutions: the self-centred political parties, the corrupt and exclusive bureaucracy, overtly biased media and civil society, and the security agencies. No matter how good a constitution, it will still take a generation before their characters change.

As the statute deadline approaches, both sides will mobilise on the streets blaming each other for rigid positions. On the surface, these disagreements over the demarcation and number of federal provinces seem to be driven by call for ethnic identity. But beneath it all, we know there is a larger battle being waged for long-term electoral gains.

Having exhausted all attempts at consensus with the opposition, the ruling NC-UML coalition have decided to enter the CA procedure of declaring the statute by vote. This may have excited some, but it all amounts to little more than tactical posturing.

The only way of delivering a constitution at this point, even if the parties decide to go for a majority voting, is to shorten the entire procedure of taking the draft to public. Both the NC and UML know there is little legitimacy to be gained by declaring a statute in that fashion, especially after the anger that boiled over in the Madhes earlier this week. This means, at the most, the ruling parties will attempt to come up with a draft and a self-declared extension. And once past the deadline, chances are tables will be laid once again for negotiations. Snubbed by the ruling parties, the opposition will remain in the streets, at least for a week, but they will also have their feet inside the CA.

The only person under moral pressure will be Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, who could neither give nor take as he has been repeating in every speech lately. KP Oli and Sher Bahadur Deuba may try to pressure Koirala to abdicate, but under less favourable international climate neither will want to create an unnecessary scene, at least not just yet. Koirala has an option of conceding and retiring peacefully but the old man may still find the juice to win his final political race.

Whether or not Koirala hands the baton on 22 January any deadline from here on is redundant. The only certainty at this point is that we will have a new constitution soon. We just need to make sure, whenever that is, it does not get torched on the streets.
Old Nepal hand critiques Canadian aided projects in Nepal

Blurred reflections

Relations between sovereign nations are not always optimal, but what is important is to learn and improve from weaknesses to enhance the future of the relationship. Nepal-Canada relations ought to allow mutual learning, exchange, cooperation and influence. While outwardly so, there have been inequities which strayed into ambiguous moral and ethical territory.

Over the years since 1976, I have evaluated projects in Nepal funded wholly or in part by the Canadian government. One of them in 1994 was intended to reduce deforestation consumption, enable women to spend more time at home and reduce eye and lung irritation from indoor smoke.

The Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO) had already written it off the successful completion of the Tangbe Micro Hydro and Chhosyaar Micro Hydro in the Mustang District, lauding attainment of its social and health benefits. But nobody from the CCO had actually visited the locations, all information for ascertaining results was compiled from either letters from the related officials in Mustang or in-person discussions in Kathmandu.

On my unannounced arrival in Mustang I was astounded to find a dozen electrical poles in the ground, but no wires nor light bulbs anywhere within the project area. I did finally find rolls of wire and insulators at the Pradhan Panch’s house.

On the Nepali side, a coterie of highly influential, local project applicants and implementers deceitfully breached their contract with a well-intentioned friendly country. However, the Canadian government itself did not follow minimal standard management protocol to verify progress or, at the very least, proper and successful completion of the project.

More fundamentally, even after acknowledging the serious oversight, the CCO refused to take the implementer to task because of fear of political repercussions which could ultimately result in the Canadian Embassy, to Nepal in New Delhi reprimanding the Consul General in Kathmandu, from weaknesses to enhance the future of the relationship.

Over the years since 1976, I have worked with all Canadian Consuls in Kathmandu, starting with the foresightful and culturally sensitive William Young in the 80s. All were well-intentioned, though some not as effective. It is one thing to have a diplomatic relationship in the usual trade, commercial, political and cultural interactions. But there is a fine crossed when the relationship includes considerable development functions.

Assistance with true development (one that is locally relevant, participatorily planned and executed, implemented within realistic timeframes and plausible sustainability) requires an appreciation of local culture above that of the average, tempo- rarily-posted bureaucrat anxious to show success before transferring elsewhere.

Canada closed the CCO in 2013, sending an ambiguous signal about the focus of our ensuing relationship. However, collaboration with or without resident representatives must be undertaken with increased sensitivity. Higher bilateral political levels may be oblivious to ground-level operational shortcomings. Conversely, field-experienced administrators are often remotely managed in incomprehensible ways from either the Embassy or direct from Ottawa.

Such imbalances must be acknowledged, analysed and corrected, both within a consular mission as well as between the two countries. Orientation to local culture must be regarded more seriously, beyond random encounters at social gatherings. A greater level of understanding, leading to mutual shift in behaviour, is required to gain genuine ‘social licence’ for development projects.

Officials require more empathy with each other’s environments, especially consular officials’ understanding of intended beneficiaries and project implementers with their respective encompassing political and social realities. Canada and Nepal must set higher standards of ethical propriety, professional conduct and good management to enhance diplomatic, trade and cultural interactions. An abdication of responsibilities willfully misspent Canadian taxpayers’ money and refrained from censuring the wrongdoers. A greater level of understanding, leading to mutual shift in behaviour, is required to gain genuine ‘social licence’ for development projects.

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Ivan G. Somlai has worked in Nepal since 1976 and visited all 75 districts. He lectures at McGill University’s Disaster and Humanitarian Response Training Program.
Mind, society behaviour

Most development policies fail to take into account those at whom the interventions are aimed zero. Still, when financial literacy providers in South Africa took thinking socially into account to develop and air TV programs with characters that viewers could identify with and learn from, the intended audience was found more likely to practice prudent financial behaviours.

Likewise, most poor people do not have cash to pay for mosquito nets, which prevent malaria. Asking them to set aside funds for such products is not helpful when, for instance, most people do not think cash competes to pay for food and shelter. When researchers in Kenya provided poor households with metal boxes, in which money could be saved regularly, the rates of savings and investment in preventive health products went up. The simple metal boxes became an instrument for most to automatically put aside some money for future medical needs.

To be sure, successful private companies have long learnt that it pays to ask themselves what and how their customers think. In contrast, development organisations, filled as they are with theory-heavy professionals, tend to push for interventions — such as financial literacy classes — that make sense from the providers’ perspective, but fail to take into account how the intended recipients (with whom the professionals have little in common) think and act.

Injecting these three principles of human decision making into the design of development programs could be one way to make aspirational development policies more attuned to human realities.
How not to make a documentary

DAVID N GELLNER

Anthropologist and film-maker Stephanie Spray has been working in Nepal since 1999, particularly on the Gandharva or Gaine minstrel caste. When the credits to her two-hour film Manakamana finally roll, it turns out that most of the people in the film are Gandharvas (as the on-line film pack, but not the film, makes clear).

The temple of the goddess Mankamana is one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Nepal. Nepal’s first cable car was built in 1998. Running from the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway to the temple, it has led to a huge increase in the number of pilgrims going to the temple. The film, co-produced by film-maker and cameraman Pacho Velez, consists of 11 segments of about 10 minutes each, the first six shot in ascending cars or gondolas, the last five coming down. There are different sets of passengers each time, the only continuous sequence being a couple who go up with a rooster and come down with its corpse.

The gimmick of the film is that we experience each ascent and descent in real time. We never see the temple, the ascent and descent in real time. It is that we experience each ascent, the last five coming down. There are different sets of passengers each time, the only continuous sequence being a couple who go up with a rooster and come down with its corpse.

The gimmick of the film is that we experience each ascent and descent in real time. We never see the temple, the ascent and descent in real time.

As an art film eschewing explanation, context, history, and narrative, the audience is effectively invited to project onto it whatever Orientalist fantasies they wish. This may, of course, be the point: deliberately to interrupt the viewers’ expectations of stories, to torture them with nothing to go on for 20 minutes, so that even the smallest piece of evidence sparks interpretive leaps. Some may find that brilliant.

For me – and in the end, as the Latin saying has it, there can be no arguing about taste – because of its lack of curiosity, its insensitivity, its dishonesty (it is not ethnography, the players are not pilgrims), and its pretentiousness, Manakamana seems insulting both to the viewers and to the performers.

David N Gellner is a professor at the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford.

Manakamana
by Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez, 2013
118 minutes
Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab

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As a part of our corporate social responsibility, Yeti Airlines donates Rs. 1 per flight ticket to each of the following four social organisations, involved in various social welfare activities.

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For any service suggestions, call 317-1-446984 (Ext. 621) or email us at feedback@yetiall.com
The Kathmandu winter is finally living up to its reputation for the January chill. With the shift in wind direction to northwesterly we are getting colder, drier air entering central Nepal, sending the maxima to the mid-teens and the minima to just above zero. Smoggy mornings will give way to bright afternoon sunshine, so you can enjoy a book or sunbathing on the roof terrace on the weekend. Chilly late afternoon breeze, frost on the outskirts of city. Bundle up.

KATHMANDU

MAYA WATSON

A SOUND HUNTING FOR A HOME

STÉPHANE HUËT

When a mystical sound of bansuri is heard on the streets of Thamel, it’s very likely to be from an album of the Nepali flutist, Manose. Although the musician has been away from Nepal for a long time, his music still resonates in his motherland just as Nepal is a constant inspiration to his career abroad.

“From Russia to Brazil, passing through Israel, many places have become close to my heart,” he says. “But wherever I go, I always keep the energy of the beautiful high Himalaya in my heart.”

That same energy initially inspired Manose to become an artist. “When I was eight, a mysterious sound came through the night to haunt my soul,” he remembers. He searched for that sound, and only the sound of air being blown through a hole in a bamboo pipe came close to what he heard that night. “I found that sound in the notes of the bansuri,” he recalls.

Manose has been travelling the world in search of this sound, playing in 25 countries since starting his musical career. He is currently in California returning from a tour of South America. He found Peru to be the closest to Nepal in terms of landscape, culture, folk music and instruments, especially the sound of the Inca pan flute.

Manose first left Nepal in 1998 when he was 20 for a tour with the Nepali tabla player, Homnath Upadhayaya. Like many youngsters of his generation, he went to the West excited to be at the source of a pop culture he idolised growing up.

There he found that many artists like The Doors’ John Densmore or Sting, have instead been inspired by the musical and spiritual culture from the East. “Sharing with them has opened my mind towards conscious music as well as it’s a kind of homecoming,” tells Manose. Another much awaited encounter will be with the Slovenian pianist, Zoran Škrinjar.

For now, Manose is currently working on a solo project incorporating nature sounds. “I usually record ambient sounds with a Roland field recorder during my travels,” he says, and has recorded thunderstorms in Greece, a brook in Shivapuri National Park, rainforest sounds in Costa Rica, birds singing in Australia.

Manose still hasn’t managed to capture the exact sound he heard that night as a child. This quest remains symbolic for his personal journey and creative impulse. Says Manose: “I guess my inspiration is drawn from the same boy, still haunted by that mystical sound wherever he is.”
**Yoga weekend**, Calm the mind and filter your thought process with instructor Sati at the scenic Namo Buddha resort. Rs 13,500, 31 January to 1 February, Namo Buddha, www.pranamaya-yoga.com

**Journeying for art**, Painting exhibition by a promising young artist Chhewang Gurung. 31 January to 13 April, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, www.parkgallery.com.np

**Mountain Mystique**, A solo painting exhibition by Brind Pradhan. 15 to 25 January, 10am to 6pm, The City Museum, Darbar Marg

**Southasia Abroad**, Launch of Himal Southasian’s latest quarterly Diaspora Southasia Abroad, featuring a reading by Rabi Thapa of his short story from the issue. 16 January, 5pm, The City Museum, Darbar Marg

**Open house**, An exhibition featuring the works of artists Binaya Humagain, Elisa Fajgen and Sabita Dangol. 17 to 24 January, Gallery MVU, Chekhupet, Lalitpur

**Film making**, Learn basic tools and techniques of documentary film making from creative director Raul Tidor. Rs 3,000, 20 January to 3 February (except Saturdays), 1st floor, American Corner, Pokhara, Pokhara Public Library, Maharaja Pol, 9806559166, www.photocircle.com

**The story begins**, Exclusive workshops on jewellery making, corn husk dolls, felt product design from Nepali social entrepreneurs to mark the opening of the shop with a story, a collective store. 24 January, 10am to 6pm, Babar Motel Restaurant

**Garbage to garden**, Want to learn how to turn household wastes into compost for your garden? Sign up. Rs 108, 25 January, 10, 20, 26 to 4pm, Kathmandu Metropolitan (KMC) Office, RSVP info@cleanupnepal.org.np

**Bricks Café**, A cozy and warm dining experience in a restored Rana building. Kapan, (01)5521756

**Alfresco**, For homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Sooster Crown Plaza, (01)4273999

**Newa Lahana**, Authentic Newari flavours with killer views of surrounding Macchegaun and towering Chandragiri hill. Kirtipur

**Dan Ran**, One of the best Japanese joints this part of town. Jhamsikhel

**Southasia Abroad**, Select your special dinner from set Ala-carte menu or regular menu while enjoying classical fusion, folk music, and typical instrument music by Mul band. Babar Motel Restaurant, (01)4263070

**Manny’s**, Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don’t forget their signature Manny’s Spicy Wings. All served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Jawalakhel, (01) 5536919

**Yeok Teck**, Tuck into mouth-watering Chinese-Malay vegetarian cuisine. Bhanimandal, (01)5548930

**Lao Beijing**, Offers authentic northern Chinese food, their soya bean paste noodles and Chinese cabbage and pork dumplings are a must try. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Fire&Ice**, Serves the best pizzas in town. Thamel, (01)4250210

**Chez Caroline**, Authentic ambiance, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more. Babar Motel Restaurant, (01)4263070

**Street fest**, Head over to Boudha for a street festival to celebrate Losar with local food, games, music show and music. 21 January, 10am onwards, Boudha

**Mulchowk**, Select your special dinner from set Ala-carte menu or regular menu while enjoying classical fusion, folk music, and typical instrument music by Mul band. Babar Motel Restaurant, (01)4263070

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MUSIC

Women in concert,
Twenty one renowned female artists from Nepal come together for one epic concert to mark the International Women’s Day.
Free, 8 January, 7 to 9pm, Lokneshwor Grand, Kathmandu

GETAWAYS

Milla Guesthouse,
A perfect amalgamation of the old and the new, flee the dust and congestion of Kathmandu and take cover in this beautifully renovated house in Bhaktapur.
Bhaktapur, 01 4712413

The Old Inn,
Watch the world go by or view the mighty Himalayas from the balcony of ancient Newari townhouse that takes you back in time.
Bandipur, (65) 520110

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,
Add value to your travels in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area.
Lumbini, (71) 580220, 9801031310, info@ktmgh.com

Nepal Underground,
The rock website celebrates its fiftieth anniversary with a gig featuring some of the most acclaimed names in the metal scene.
7 February, 1 to 6pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9803719781

Live Music,
Subani Moktan belts out popular hits.
Every Friday, 6pm onwards, The Société Lounge Bar, Hattisar, 9813286869

Gypsy Jazz,
Get ready for a jazzy eargasm with Hari Maharjan.
16 January, 7pm onwards, Nepal Golf Zone (Main Road), Bhaktapur, (01) 4412378

The Famous Farm,
A farm on a terraced hilside of an ancient fortress with its old converted buildings, resident animals and a birds eye view of Nuwakot Darbar.
Nuwakot, (01) 4422617

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room.
Bandipur, www.neydohotel.com

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Pharping, Kathmandu www.neydohotel.com

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The Famous Farm,
A farm on a terraced hilside of an ancient fortress with its old converted buildings, resident animals and a birds eye view of Nuwakot Darbar.
Nuwakot, (01) 4422617

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Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room.
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Women in concert,
Twenty one renowned female artists from Nepal come together for one epic concert to mark the International Women’s Day.
Free, 8 January, 7 to 9pm, Lokneshwor Grand, Kathmandu

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Ensuring equity requires changes in masculine interests, desires, and actions, and it has to begin with socialisation.

What if all these years of frenetic development programming had also resulted in self-aware, self-critical men in Nepal public and private life? Would Nepal’s long-awaited peace dividend have had a better chance? Would the morally bankrupt and politically hypocritical non-issue of citizenship by now be resolved? Would Nepal’s long-awaited peace dividend have had a better chance? Would the morally bankrupt and politically hypocritical non-issue of citizenship by now be resolved? Would we have elected representatives who were more accountable and concerned with public interest instead of populist interest? Would we have a constitution for, by, and of the people of Nepal?

Despite the gains in gender-sensitive approaches to every aid program, advancement of women in public life is still slow. Poverty alleviation programs that push for a specific percentage of involvement of women in different programs do not address the structural cause of feminisation of poverty, which has more to do with differential access to food, education, money between men and women.

Similarly, the numeric representation of women through reservation in elected bodies does not address the issue of structural barriers to accessing and using power. Thus, many gender proponents are pacified, some remain frustrated by the lack of durable progress, and a few have begun to wonder if men now need special attention.

Masculinity is now becoming part of the vocabulary of development chatterati, the number of programs that focus on educating men about women’s rights is increasing.

What constitutes masculine and feminine are socially constructed, porous categories that are dependent on other factors such as class, caste, ethnic origin, age and so on. The advantages men enjoy over women because of the roles, stereotypes, and attitudes foisted upon both through the process of socialisation has created a human order between men and women over millennia, and impacts every decision at individual, community, and nation-state levels. Confessing this and accepting that we need to change is an initial small step in the direction of seeking the elusive goal of equity and justice for women.

From femininity

Equity and justice for women should not be held captive to narrowly-defined interests of development

Photographs by FEBY BOEDIARTO
to masculinity

question their complicity in the creation and perpetuation of a male-dominated world. For far too long men have enjoyed advantages over women that are rarely acknowledged by them in education systems, workplaces, media, politics, religious discourse, and so on. The taken-for-granted privileges that have allowed men to subordinate women are inculcated at a very early age in the family, at school, and in almost every dimension of daily life. However, these deeply instilled values and instinctive actions cannot be dismantled by merely raising the awareness of men concerning gender issues. Gender sensitivity training, readings in feminist theory, or the pursuit of equity and inclusion goals are necessary but insufficient for bringing about the kind of institutional and personal transformation required for men to change. Such change will have to be not just in awareness and knowledge or rhetoric but also manifested in attitudinal and behavioral shifts. Men have to confront their privilege head-on rather than succumb to defensiveness, guilt, or silence.

Men’s voices are critical; but what about men’s choices or actions? The burden for change needs to be placed on men as well. This could begin with something as simple as consideration of feminine needs when constructing places of stay, study, work, and worship, and committing to send daughters to school. Or it could be about surrendering to the desire to control women or adjudicate on what constitutes a family’s and community’s sense of honour.

Ultimately, men, because they are born into and raised in a world ruled by men, are not cognizant of the privileges they enjoy or the shortcomings they suffer from: they become even more lost as they progress. The advantages they enjoy over women render men even less able to express emotion and vulnerability, so-called feminine traits. The current construct of gender roles do not provide the opportunity for men to look beyond their pre-defined roles as ‘providers’, to address growing aspirations amongst many men to lead more creative and nurturing lives.

Clearly, we need fresh thinking on what strategies might trigger useful interventions that strengthen men’s will to change and to reconnect with themselves. This change would not be to cater to the demands of political correctness or even because we need our fellow humans to be our equals. Rather, we need this change to understand how male privilege prevents us from being whole human beings, and to then begin the long journey back to a meaningful, shared existence. Until we do, we will remain captive to narrowly-defined interests of development and social well-being.

Bernardo Michael is Professor of History at Messiah College and author of the recently released book Statemaking and Territory in South Asia.

George Varanwane is Nepal Country Representative for The Asia Foundation.
I wish I hadn’t known as much about Alan Turing as I did when I started watching The Imitation Game, mainly because while the film is marketed as a historical thriller, it really is just a very good biopic that tells the story of a remarkable man who was instrumental in deciphering the “Enigma” machine during the second World War, an accomplishment that possibly shortened the war by two years and helped save up to 14 million lives.

Turing was an extraordinary character clearly, a brilliant theorist and mathematician who was already a fellow at Cambridge at the age of 27 when he started to work at Bletchley Park, the real life top secret hub of code breakers during the war.

During this terrible war, Britain was being pummeled to death by Hitler’s submarines and aircraft. London was in shambles, and people in the know had realised that the only way to get a lead on the Germans was to be able to interpret the messages sent by the Germans through the Enigma machine, a highly complex code generator whose setting can be changed whenever necessary to create an unbreakable cipher; unbreakable at least by the human mind no matter how brilliant.

Turing is played by Benedict Cumberbatch (of Sherlock Holmes fame) who brings his genius to sparkling life in a film that is as strong as it gets for the subject matter it deals with. Personally, I think biopics are a major risk for filmmakers in terms of the artistic liberties necessary to create drama where some times it may not exist.

In this case, clearly some liberties have been taken if you compare Turing’s biography (written by Graham Moore) with some key aspects of the film, which I will leave to you to suss out for yourself in case I ruin the narrative.

Regardless though, as Turing rushes to try and create a machine (something close to a computer) that can help break the Enigma code, he is aided by an excellent group of cryptographers and spies played by the likes of Matthew Goode, Mark Strong, Allen Leech, and Keira Knightley, all at their very British best in a script that was written with a strong ensemble cast in mind.

I have deliberately circled around the plot of the film for those viewers who prefer to be surprised and saddened by the various outcomes of this man’s story, for it is indeed one that deserves to be told and memorialised.

As a parting note, just remember, if things had gone wrong (as often it does in the film world), the part of Alan Turing might have gone to Leonardo DiCaprio - think of that what you may. nepalitimes.com

According to Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, the U.S. always supports democracy and human rights, and is proud of the progress Nepal has made in these areas since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006.

On Tuesday, the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations (UN) in Nepal hosted a brief meeting with Feltman, who met with representatives of the Nepal government and the United Nations to discuss progress on the peace process and other developments.

Feltman is currently on a three-day visit to Nepal, during which he will also meet with the Nepalese political leadership, including Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, to discuss the ongoing peace process and other issues.

The meeting with Feltman comes at a time when the peace process in Nepal is facing challenges, including the possibility of a new round of fighting between the government and the Maoists, who have been demanding a greater say in the country’s future.

Feltman expressed concern about the growing violence and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. He said the United States is committed to supporting Nepal’s democratic institutions and respect for human rights.

Feltman also discussed the importance of the rule of law and the role of the judiciary in maintaining stability and promoting reconciliation. He said the United States is committed to supporting the country’s legal system and encouraging the rule of law.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of the role of civil society in promoting peace and reconciliation. Feltman said the United States is committed to supporting civil society and promoting democratic values and institutions.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of the commitment to the peace process in Nepal and the importance of working together to achieve lasting peace and prosperity for all Nepalese people.
The launch of his photo book Nepal: 1975-2011 last week, photographer Kevin Bubriski moved around the room quietly, at one moment speaking to acquaintances in a corner, then chatting with friends the next. Once he was seated, he barely flinched, staring blankly into space as his work was praised in front of a crammed room full of fans and aspiring photographers.

It was only when he started describing the stories behind his photos of villagers living in extreme poverty in rural Nepal that we saw him truly come alive.

Kevin’s passion for documenting the lives of Nepalis is not unknown. It is the reason long time friend Michael Gill describes him as a “real humanist”.

“He’s photos are full of the happiness, sadness, joys and challenges that Nepalis face,” said Gill.

Kevin, 61, first came to Nepal as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1975 and was based in Kattrahi. His stay there inspired him to begin telling Nepal’s story through his lens.

“I was among the first few outsiders to arrive in the village,” he said.

The best viewfinder for Kevin was living with friends the next. Once he was seated, room quietly, at one moment speaking to a barefoot porter carrying a sick man in a doko. “Do I take a photograph or help the porter?” Kevin asks, rhetorically.

He ultimately decided to take the photograph because it was vital to shed light on the arduous lives of rural Nepal.

Despite spending almost four decades documenting lives in Nepal, Kevin still does not think his book is “the whole Nepal story”.

“I think one American photographer’s impressions of Nepal,” said Kevin.

Kevin confesses that he is still very much an outsider in Nepal in many ways. “I don’t really fit in,” he said. Fortunately, being unassuming and unencumbered by cultural stereotypes meant that he could chronicle the country without any prejudice.

Once on a cold winter day, Kevin invited a Dalit into his tent, only to be stopped and dissuaded by his Nepali porter who said he was “untouchable”. Dissatisfied that he couldn’t bring him in, Kevin helped start a fire outside for the Dalit.

Though he wishes to continue photographing Nepal for as long as possible, he conceded that his work is merely one person’s perspective of what happens in Nepal at one point in time.

Kevin Bubriski
Nepal: 1975-2011
by Kevin Bubriski
Radius Books/Poalbodh Museum Press
224 pages
Rs 6500

Hannah’s Cafe

Tucked behind a little-known guesthouse and beautiful garden, Hannah’s cafe can be easily overlooked by tourists and locals. That is the intention behind the location of the cafe, according to eponymous owner Hannah, who prides on the cafe being a “low-profile” and “quiet” place for divers. Walking through the beautiful Parisian front yard with flowers in full bloom, al fresco dining seemed to be the obvious choice. However, I would soon find out that having breakfast inside the cafe would promise an equally unforgettable experience.

Dining inside was akin to eating comfortably at home. The interior of the cafe was reminiscent of a typical living room, with dishes stacked away in drawers, window ledges lined with photo frames, a fireplace framed with potted plants, complete with two long sofas perfect for a lazy afternoon with books and a cuppa.

The food tasted and looked similar to a homemade breakfast, served without pretentious and unnecessary garnishes like coleslaw or parsley.

I went for the classic Big Breakfast (Rs 475) and it did not disappoint. The sunny side-up eggs, served on multi-grain toast were seasoned perfectly with sea salt and crushed pepper. With the usual works like fried bacon, sausages and grilled tomatoes, the breakfast was filling and surprisingly not very oily at all.

The loaded sandwich (Rs 395) stayed true to its name as it had ham, omelet and cheese packed in every bite. My only gripe was that the toast had lost its crunch by the time I dug into the second half of the sandwich. The star of the sandwich dish was the side salad. It was none of that usual half-hearted side of wispy lettuce with acerbic lemon juice as dressing — Hannah uses only fresh hydroponic salad greens like rocket leaves, arugula and red leaf lettuce with sweet vinaigrette.

Choosing to use quality ingredients — even for “supporting” dishes like the salad — clearly paid off. I distinctly remember myself pondering the menu another time to check if they served that salad as a main dish. I was glad to find out that they do.

For Rs 225, you can have a breakfast salad with your choice of bacon, ham or egg. It was too bad that we were too full for another dish, but now I have another reason to take a trip back to Hannah’s.

The coffee, however, failed to pick up where the dishes left off. The cappuccino (Rs 160) had a slightly acidic aftertaste and the mocha latte (Rs 160) erred on the sweet side, so much that it could pass off as hot chocolate. When served, the coffee was barely aromatic, and did not suffice as a morning “pick me up.”

Displeasure did not brew despite the lacklustre coffee because ultimately, eating at Hannah’s was such an enjoyable experience. The waiter did not rush us, and would keep busy with other duties while we ate heartily.

Hannah would pop out of the kitchen occasionally to ask if we enjoyed our meal, leading to conversations about how she taught herself to cook through Jamie Oliver’s recipe books. That “Oliver” influence is obvious in Hannah’s cooking and is perhaps what sets Hannah’s cafe apart in the burgeoning cafe scene in Kathmandu — her insistence on using only fresh, quality ingredients, fuss free plating, and keeping the cafe a quaint eatery that serves good, honest food.

Cynthia Choo

How to get there: Hannah’s cafe is in Dheghat, right below Bethel Guesthouse.

Chris Lee/Pics

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W e are often reminded of the January 5, 1934 earthquake that shook Kathmandu violently killing thousands and injuring many more. Take a look around the city and it is quite clear we have not learnt our lesson.

The 2010 Haiti earthquake that killed almost 160,000 people and destroyed 250,000 houses should have been a wakeup call for Nepal. Experts agree if a similar powerful earthquake strikes here, the damage will be even worse.

Another common aftermath of an earthquake is crush injury that could lead to gangrene of the limbs, which may require amputation to save the person’s life. In addition to proper wound care and fracture repair, the patients will also need sufficient amount of crucial medical supplies. Another common health issue after a disaster is mental health issue and post-traumatic stress that can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts.

It is vital to increase awareness about earthquake preparedness to avoid deaths of people and damage of property. For instance, during an earthquake take cover under a safe sturdy place and protect your head and neck. Do not try to run outside during an earthquake as the likelihood of being injured by falling debris will be very high.

If you are outside, move away from buildings, steep slopes and utility wires. It is difficult to question our commitment to safety as we continue to build tall buildings in an earthquake prone region. They say ‘live and learn’ but unfortunately in our case we may not live to learn.

The draft Disaster Risk Management Act that facilitates the coordination of earthquake response and preparedness hasn’t been ratified by the parliament even after five years of tabling it.

Nepal as a nation does not seem to believe in Murphy’s Law which states that anything that can go wrong will go wrong, which in this case is the high probability of an earthquake. Rather than taking concrete action to avoid the catastrophe, we believe that a little help from astrology and the usual ‘Re Garna’ attitude will be sufficient.

With only few hospitals having adopted retrofit measures, many will be destroyed in the earthquake creating a huge gap in the medical services. It is thus important for hospitals to retrofit as it is to set up triage teams to determine appropriate type and level of care for admitted patients.

Another important concern is whether the hospitals (those who survive the quake) will have the necessary amenities and resources for a large number of complex surgical and medical needs. Rhabdomyolysis, a condition where the breakdown of muscles due to crush injuries releases myoglobin into the bloodstream, damaging kidney, was one of the most common injuries after the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Depending on how promptly fluid therapy is started, dialysis may be necessary to treat a patient with rhabdomyolysis. Although dialysis is now commonly performed in Nepal, the system may be greatly overwhelmed due to vast number of patients that may require the treatment due to crush injuries.

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Who cares about the constitution?

Nepalis are more concerned about inflation, unemployment, corruption, lack of water and electricity than the constitution

Less than one-third of the respondents to the Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2015 consider ‘delay in constitution writing’ as one of the top three pressing problems facing the country. Inflation tops that list for more than 64%, followed by unemployment (42%) and lack of water, electricity and roads (38%). Corruption (36%) is another issue that people are concerned about. Only 28% of the respondents are bothered by the delay in constitution writing.

Himalmedia conducts annual nationwide public opinion surveys, and this year’s poll was conducted in three districts of Kathmandu Valley with Nepal’s caste-ethnic composition, geographic regions, gender and socio-economic status proportionally represented among the 1,019 respondents. Disaggregating the data shows that women (70%) are more worried about inflation than men (58%). And men (33%) worry more about corruption than women (24%). Literate and educated people are more concerned about corruption than illiterate ones. Likewise, Hill Dalits and Muslims care more about the constitution than Hill ‘upper’ castes. However, across caste, ethnic and gender lines, the constitution is not deemed as important as the prize, jobs and shortages of daily commodities.

In Ilharkot that lags behind Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts in terms of physical infrastructure and literacy, only 10.3 % people consider the delay in constitution writing as one of their three major problems. Relatively more people seem concerned about constitution in Kathmandu (32%) and Lalitpur (28%).

What an elderly Dalit tailor in Anamagare of Kathmandu told one of the poll enumerators sums up the public pulse. Dhan Bahadur Nepali, 71, said: “What I care about is to work freely during the day and sleep well at night.”

That most Nepalis worry more about their daily problems than the constitution is not a new revelation, and reaffirms the growing sense of indifference about the constitution. Nearly half the respondents feel that the country’s general condition is worsening, and more than 40% say they don’t really care about the new constitution.

Through this year’s Himalmedia opinion poll, Nepalis have once more voiced their rejection of violence and intimidation. At a time when the UCPN(M), Madheshi and other fringe parties are calling general strikes to stop the NC, and the UML from passing the new constitution by using their combined two-thirds strength, most Nepalis say “no” to the shutdowns. Nearly 84% of respondents said the UCPN (M)-led alliance of opposition parties should call off the street protests. Fewer than 10% supported the current street agitation.

The survey also shows that Nepalis do not believe a new constitution is possible. As many as 73% of respondents said Netra Bikram Chanda ‘Biplav’, who recently split from the Mohan Baidya-led CPN-UML, is incapable of waging a new war. They know that the country is no more ripe for revolution as in 1996 when Chandra’s original party, the then CPN (Maoist), took the country into a 10-year insurgency in which 17,000 people were killed. When asked if Biplav could do what the CPN (Maoist) did nearly two decades ago, Sharan Baburad Rai from Bhojpur who has been living in Kathmandu for the last few years, told a Himalmedia poll interviewer: “The road to the jungle is closed.”

For a more complete analysis of poll results in Nepali see Himal Khaharpatrika on Sunday.
Most Nepalis think a constitution by 22 January is a lost cause — they mostly blame the UCPN(M) for this — but they are willing to give the CA some more time if they can pass a genuinely inclusive constitution.

That is the message of the Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2015 conducted last week as we approach another deadline to pass a new constitution.

This year’s annual survey was conducted in Kathmandu Valley among 1,019 respondents representing proportionally Nepal’s geographic regions, castes, ethnicities, gender and socio-economic status.

Although some political leaders say consensus on the contentious issues of the new constitution is still possible, an overwhelming majority of people think otherwise. As many as 82.2% of people have given up hope in seeing the new constitution before next Thursday’s deadline. The national mood of pessimism pervades all age groups no matter which gender, caste and ethnicity, class or whether they are literate or not.

Only 12.6% of people say they are still hopeful about the CA coming up with a constitution. But the people were slightly more optimistic when asked if the parties could somehow reach a broad understanding on federalism, form of governance, model of judiciary and electoral system even if they couldn’t finish a constitution by 22 January.

More than 27% of the respondents thought it was possible for the political parties to come up with a rough draft of the new constitution by the deadline. Even so, 42% were skeptical of even that happening.

Who to blame for this dismal failure? Nearly 27% of the respondents spread the blame equally among all the parties, but they single out the UCPN(M) for most of the responsibility (19%). Surprisingly, and despite the fact that the NC and the UML are in the governing coalition, the two parties are largely absolved of blame. Only 9% and 3% of the people respectively named them specifically as the guilty party.

Only 2.4% said the Madhesi parties, which are currently waging crippling strikes across the Tarai, were to blame if the CA fails again.

Even though chance of consensus on the issues of federalism and state restructuring looks slim, 61% of respondents insist that political parties should try harder to write a new constitution on the basis of consensus. Still, a full one-third of the people say the new constitution must be promulgated on the basis of two-thirds majority in case political parties fail to forge a consensus.

The poll results suggest that people are losing their patience and are not willing to wait any longer. More than 41% of the respondents do not care what the new constitution is like, they just want it over and done with.

However, a slightly higher percentage of people (44.5%) say they can wait ‘a little longer’ but the CA must promulgate a constitution that addresses grievances of all castes, communities and ethnic groups. On the other hand, there are some respondents (10%) who are convinced there will never be a constitution that will satisfy everyone.

Top political leaders often say the reason behind their failure to write the new constitution is their differences over federalism and state restructuring. But, nearly half (48%) of the people don’t believe them, and are convinced that the real reason is that the political leaders are haggling over...
The terrain shifts, #604

An extended CA and a Maoist-led government, #500

A more complete rundown of the public opinion survey results will be published on Sunday's edition of Himal Khaborpatra.

POLARITY RATINGS

The UCPN (Maoist) is losing its pulling power among the people, while the NC is maintaining its lead as the most trustworthy political party. Altogether 34% of respondents say they would choose the NC to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic country, followed by 16% for the UML. The UCPN (Maoist) is down to 9%, only slightly ahead of the royalist-Hindu PPP-Nepal (5.6%). All major Madhesi parties have scored less than 1%. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala is often criticized for his indecisiveness, but 24% of the respondents still thought he was the best of the lot. Baburam Bhattarai scores second (13.5%) on trust. Everyone else is in the single digits: including firebrand UML Chair KP Oli (7%), the UML's Madhav Kumar Nepal (3%), PPP-Nepal Chair Kamal Thapa (5%), UCPN (Maoist) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal (3.5%); the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba (3%); Madhesi leaders like Bijaya Gachchhakuder, Upendra Yadav and anti-federalism Leader Chitra Bahadur KC all scored less than 7%

a power-sharing deal.

Nearly half the public, therefore, seem to have understood that political leaders care more about what ministries they get after the constitution is promulgated. Almost one-fourth of the respondents believe that the political leaders do not want to write the new constitution at all.

Even more surprisingly, public opinion looks sharply divided over whether Nepal should be a federal country at all. While 41% think federalism is necessary, more than 49% say it is not, and 10% don’t know. An overwhelming majority of people (81%) reject the idea of ethnicity-based federalism, and this is consistent with surveys in previous years where more than three-fourths of respondents thought ethnicity-based federalism was a bad idea.

As for system of governance, most people seem to have lost their faith in the existing Westminster parliamentary system and want it changed to a directly-elected prime minister (27%) and 19% want the president and prime minister elected by parliament and sharing executive powers. Only 17% want the present parliamentary system to continue.

Whatever the new constitution contains, and whenever it is passed by the GA, most respondents thought the country should not wait for local elections. Nearly 59% of the people want elections to local councils right away to allow accountability and spur development. However, 27% still think local elections should be announced only after the next general elections.

More than half the respondents think Nepal’s democracy is now in danger, and all blame persistent wrangling among major political parties as the major threat. The UCPN(M) is seen as an enemy of democracy by 22%, while only 2% of the respondents feel former king Gyanendra is undermining democracy. The percentage of people believing that foreign interference has grown in Nepal is higher than 70%

Even though most people see the NC president Koirala as the man who could play a role to break the deadlock, not many people are impressed with his performance as prime minister. Only 15% think he was better than the previous prime minister and 60% feel he is just ‘ok’. The UCPN (M), Madhesi and other fringe parties have taken to the streets with strikes to prevent the NC and the UML gearing up to announce the new constitution by using their combined two-thirds majority. A decisive 84% of respondents think this is wrong.

When asked about the chances of the breakaway faction of the Maoists under Bhatta Bikram Chandula ‘Biplav’ to take up arms, most respondents thought it was highly unlikely.

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nepalitimes.com
Raipur-based businessman and president of Non Resident Nepali Associations (NRNA) Shish Ghale on Thursday announced a charity trust worth Rs 1 billion. Ghale’s MIT Group Holdings has also invested Rs 8 billion for construction of Sheraton Hotel in Kathmandu.

An excerpt from Ghale’s speech during the press meet:

Today is the happiest day of our lives. My wife, Jumna and I feel glad to be giving back to society a small portion of what society has given us. We care what we have and who we are to Nepal. Although we have been involved in various philanthropic activities through different organisations in the past, we felt we needed to coordinate and consolidate it for greater impact. MIT Group Foundation is the result of years of preparation under which my wife and I will invest a portion of our earnings for the development of health and education sectors in Nepal.

Both my wife and I know what it’s like to go through life without resources. We were both born in rural Lamjung to poor families. Even though our parents were uneducated, they understood the importance of education and enrolled us in schools. I remember the hard work my father had to put in to send me to school. And, it was only because of the available scholarships that we got a chance to study further. I studied engineering on a scholarship and moved to Australia in search of better opportunities. If it wasn’t for a fair system of rewarding those with merit we wouldn’t be where we are today.

We plan to invest in education so students in remote parts of the country do not have to drop out of school or turn for their family. We will provide financial aid to students from economically weak families as well as help schools with infrastructure and resources. People in remote areas of the country still don’t have access to basic health care services. I know how it feels to lose a family due to lack of health services.

Rs 1 billion is not enough, but we will add more resources as we go along and in partnership with other organisations. We will be fully transparent and the selection and impact of the project will be done as per international standards.
Sky won’t fall but there may be surprises
Short of a miracle, the constitution will not be finished by next week.

Will the Nepali Congress and the UML muster enough courage and stand up to the politics of blackmail by the UCPN (Maoist) and the Madhes-based parties? Hard to say, but we would be fortunate if we get some kind of draft by 22 January, which would then be sent to public for its opinion and comments.

With the ruling parties fast-tracking the CA regulations schedule and the opposition parties’ cries for shutdown raising the heat, something will have to give in the week ahead. The parties have a track-record of doing nothing despite extending deadlines repeatedly, but they also have a habit of springing surprises at the eleventh hour, so there is still some hope.

Some politicians, like Baburam Bhattarai, have of late started sounding optimistic that some sort of a document can be passed by the deadline. But even if it isn’t ready, he has said: “The sky won’t fall.”

No, it won’t. After all, we have been waiting for the constitution since 2008 when the first CA was elected. So the wait for the statute is nearing seven years, not just 12 months. Some more of the waiting period would not be unusual, but can the parties justify another extension of the deadline?

The behaviour of the political party leaders so far does not elicit much hope. The differences on federal structure, model of governance and electoral system have remained wide, masking the real jockeying for power inside closed doors. Telling the media that something will be reached in three days” has been the norm. We have seen countless such “three days” pass by.

Part of the delay rests on Bhattarai’s shoulder for not calling a meeting of the committee after ruling party members in the PDCC collected signature against his functioning. He also did not allow the committee to prepare the mandatory questionnaire with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ section for voting. This is what the regulations specify and the larger CA instructed PDCC, twice, to do so. Both times the instructions were ignored.

Bhattarai, naturally, was criticised for his dubious role in all this, which is why he is now trying to back-pedal furiously and show that there is still hope. He is a politician who is convinced he can do no wrong, and seethes at criticism, but he is also conscious about which way the public mood is swinging and is resorting to another gimmick.

The stance of UCPN (M) is dubious since it already agreed in its manifesto before the November 2013 election that there would be voting to decide on the constitution if consensus fails. The onus, thus, is on the NC and the UML leaders on meeting the deadline in some way – be it an agreed draft, or even a preamble to the new constitution. This is not impossible because on fundamental values like democracy, republicanism, secularism, and federalism, the people if the CA does not have anything to show. For some NC and the UML factions, it would mean a failure of their party rivals and they can take advantage of it.

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It is not just the NC and the UML which should worry about the consequences of repeating the failure of CA 1. The Nepali people have demonstrated ample patience and forgiveness. The parties need to remember the promises they made to the people. If not that, at least the risks of failure in drafting the statute in time should goad them into action. There are forces that will get active if the major political parties fail. Who will take responsibility if some nasty surprises are foisted on us?

On two occasions in this space in past issues, I have written that the parties need to accept and acknowledge that they cannot have a win-win consensus on disputed issues. They will stick to their own ideas, at least in public. That will not change. The NC and the UML should at least get a draft passed by the CA and continue the negotiations. That way the sky won’t fall.

@damakant
Dog’s own country

So, let’s say for the purpose of argument, that a dog bites man. That is not news unless the canine in question is a female perpetrator in which case the headline would read: ‘Bitch bites man’. On the other hand, as has been known to happen in the heat of the moment, if some people of the male persuasion end up biting dogs, then the story deserves a breaking news treatment.

Man Bit Me, Alleges Mongrel

BY OUR MEDIA WATCHDOG

LALITPUR - Police took a Cash Baddie into custody Friday night after a Dash Doggie lodged an FIR that he (the man) had chewed off part of his (the dog’s) ear lobe during a street fracas.

“I wasn’t trying to grab headlines,” the man said in an exclusive interview from his jail cell, “I was peacefully setting fire to a motorcycle to enforce the bund and this mongrel said today is his bund, and my bund is tomorrow. So I bit his ear off.” The dog, which was reportedly in critical but stable condition, did not return calls and could not be reached for comments.

But his lawyer told journalists at the Reporter’s Club (chaired by Rishi Dhamala) that the dog was only trying to liven things up on a slow news day. “If my client had bitten the man, it wouldn’t be news would it?” he asked rhetorically.

When whining on and on about our current post-conflict and pre-constitutional political scenario we often say that the ‘country is going to the dogs’. We don’t realise that we may be hurting the feelings of some poor mutt when we say that. It is a serious insult to all pooches out there to compare them to the human hyenas currently taking this country on a great leap forward to a bright and glorious revolution. And it is also an affront to the Ass when you unthinkingly use speciest language like that. Actually the country is going to the donkeys.

As a fellow animal, I do not begrudge dogs the right to be declared man’s best friends. They’re cuter. And they have also attained that distinction by sheer dint of hard work, obedience and ass-licking. Dogs are anthropomorphic and have taught their human counterparts an ability that they nurtured over millions of years of evolution to call an unpopular rival the offspring of a bitch.

But maybe I have gone a bit too far with all this dog-bashing. Let me assure you mongrels out there that it is nothing personal, it is something professional. I offer profuse apologies to canines of both the Dash, Cash and Bash persuasions who felt alluded to. There is nothing to do but beg for forgiveness in lieu of the affronts real or imagined that were knowingly or unknowingly perpetrated against Dogdom. You guys are all right, just a tad sycophantic.

When we all know, Nepal would not be the same without its diverse human fauna. Without naming names, there are also quite a few reptiles and rodents loose on the streets this past week who give this country its unique characteristics and aroma. As they say, every dog in this country has his day. And as a Sitting Member of the Standing Committee of the CA reminded us the other day: “We were forced to take to the streets because the other side has a two-thirds majority. Our bandh is totally non-violent, we set fire to a couple of taxis and beat up the drivers who dared to defy our peaceful threat to keep off the roads.”

In conclusion, I would like to once more thank the canine sector of the Feral Zoological Republic of Nepal for trying its best to write a new constitution with the motto: keep on trying until the cows come home.

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