FLAGGED OFF

With local polls, the first in 20 years, less than two months away, the Nepali public sphere is abuzz with talk of candidates for mayoral or village council chief.

Even in the Tarai, where Madhesi parties have threatened to disrupt the polls if the Constitution is not amended first, the election fever is rising with the summer temperature. Rajendra Alam, former Vice-President of Rastriya PPP, is confident local elections will be held on 14 May and people will cast their votes.

“If not now, it may not happen soon,” said Alam. “People in the Tarai are as desperate for local elections as in the hills.”

Not everyone, especially among Madhesi leaders, agree. As the former President of the Mahottari DDC, Tej Narayan Yadav agrees people are “desperate” for polls, but not exactly “excited”. Yadav would say that because he quit the UML to be a Central Committee member of the Federal Socialist Forum (FPS) – the first Madhes-centric party to pull out of the Maoist-NC coalition. On Thursday, other Madhesi parties followed suit.

Yadav says people in the Tarai want elections, but not at the cost of being under-represented in state organs. “We must first amend the Constitution only then elect local councils,” he said.

However, the constitution amendment bill looks unlikely to be endorsed even after the Hindu-royalist RPP joined the government last week. If the MFP-D also joins, the ruling coalition will have more MP’s but it still won’t be enough. The RPP and the MFP-D say they will support the amendment only if federal boundaries are left untouched. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal floated this proposal to Madhesi leaders on Wednesday, and most were positive, but Upen Prakash Yadav of the FPS persuaded them to announce a ‘non-cooperative civil disobedience’ movement.

Sources say some Madhesi leaders were ready to accept Dahal’s proposal if he promised to amend constitutional provisions on mother tongue, citizenship and proportional representation. But Yadav held firm.

Even if Yadav comes around, it will still not be easy for the government to pass the amendment. The UML’s Pradip Gyawali says his party will object to the amendment even if federal boundaries are left untouched.

This week, Prime Minister Dahal announced 744 new municipal and village councils, and allocated Rs 7 billion to set up four metropolitan, 13 sub-metropolitan, 246 municipal and 481 village councils. But Gyawali thinks the government is still vacillating: “We are still doubtful about polls, but the people want it so much the government can’t call it off.”

Om Astha Rai
HUNGER FOR CHANGE

Nepal's poverty rate may have gone down, the Human Development Index may have improved, but five years from the centre of the nation’s capital, two-year-old Buddhi Maya Biewakarma is dying of hunger in her mother’s lap. She is severely wasted, weighing half of babies her age. Her story is page 14-15. Her parents migrated to work in a Kathmandu brick kiln from Dang to pay off a loan from the Poverty Alleviation Fund for the purchase of two goats. A scheme designed to reduce poverty has pushed the family to starvation. The plight of Nepal’s ever-increasing migrant workers gets a lot of attention, but what of hundreds of thousands of workers migrating internally like the Biewakarmas family? Desperate and destitute, they move to the cities to earn enough to feed their families and repay debts, but instead get caught in a vicious cycle of poverty. Then there is the story (also in this edition) of Shambhu Kumar Ram in Saptari, whose death last year got much media attention. The 14-year-old probably died of a combination of medical problems and opportunistic infections exacerbated by malnutrition, but it exposed a whole raft of issues that all tracked back to poor governance, deficient service delivery and the gross negligence of the state in protecting its citizens. Both deaths were probably preventable. Starving has been nearly halved in Nepal in the last 13 years, but at the same time the proportion of stunted children has stayed almost constant at 15%. The direct cause of preventable child deaths may be hunger, but it is a result of an unaccounting state, a dysfunctional health service and the lack of a social safety net. The buck stops at the desks of public officials who don’t give a damn, and those trying to remove a competent Health Minister to make way for bhagbanda politics.

To change this, we need the three elections envisaged in the constitution. The first is local elections which haven’t been held for 20 years and are now slated for 14 May, and will install elected members of village, district and municipal councils. This will re-establish accountability in those who hold public office.

Unfortunately, the fate of local elections still hangs in the balance because of obstructions by Tani-based parties which want amendments to the constitution be passed. Local elections are held even in totalitarian states and there should be no connection between a future federal setup and voting for village and district councils. The amendments could be more important for the other two provincial and federal elections, and can be sorted in the weeks ahead. For now, our strong recommendation is that we go ahead with local elections and cross the other bridges when we get to them.

GUEST EDITORIAL
RISHIRAJ LUMSALI

Back to the Golden age

The foundation of Nepal’s progress in health and education was laid between 1992 and 2002. During that decade, 17,500 km of roads were built, 40,000 classrooms were added. That was when female Community Health Volunteers (FCVHs) and mothers’ groups were strengthened, vaccination campaigns scaled up, Nepal development parameters improved dramatically.

It was all possible because local government councils were run by the people’s elected representatives. After the dissolution of elected bodies in 2002, unrelated clubs have been plundering local resources. They have the authority to spend local budgets without having to be accountable to the people. Subject ‘party-politicians’, they function as ‘all-party councils’.

Nearly 20 years after the last local elections, the people have an opportunity to elect their representatives again. Across the country, there is an election fever. Voters are already thinking about whom to vote for as mayor or village head and not just because we have a date for elections (14 May) but because the people were always eager to exercise governance.

It’s just a handful of leaders of the Madhesi Front who do not want local elections. That is because they are against true decentralization. The constitution has given much more autonomy to mayors elected by electorates.

Rishiraj Lumsali is the President of Association of District Development Committees of Nepal (ADDON)

ONLINE VIDEOS

Times.com

WHATS TRENDING

Melanchol not a mirage anymore by Souk Rahe

"Go to Nepal Times online for a big Melanchol and down JK's 5.0's triumphant thriller that will be seen by 1 million times on a day ofpretty cool global interaction from Langtang National Park to Kathmandu. Find out how engineers came in with a clever plan to expedite the much-delayed project.

Most read on Facebook (21,116 people reached)

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Most popular on Twitter (44,605 tweets, 156K likes)

Most visited online page (1,157,587 views)

Stateless daughters by Deepak Sapkota

"When we promised citizenship through母亲", the politicians pretended they hadn't a inklition to help.

Most commented

QUOTE & TWEETS

"I really believed we would have the right to become a Nepali Citizen. Apart from Trump..." - Alex Ferguson.

"We’re going to have two votes..." - K Gautham.

"I believe this can help with..." - Anupam.

"We really need to improve..." - Robert Vomert.

"It sounds like the authorities don’t want the people empowered with knowledge..." - GN.

"It’s going to take time, but..." - GN.
DISCOVER ATLANTA WITH TURKISH AIRLINES
Trump, or no Trump

Why should environmentalists in Nepal suffer angst because Donald Trump got elected? How much worse can it get?

The former chief executive of a multinational petroleum company becomes the top US diplomat, and a lawyer who has repeatedly sued the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) becomes the head of that same agency. These developments in Trumpian America are about as close to ecological apocalypses as any environmentalist can imagine.

So where do I perceive a silver lining in the gloom that surrounds the US election (and the United Kingdom’s Brexit vote)? In the possibility that Trump’s presidency will instigate environmental activism in the Global North. This, in turn, might improve foreign aid-based endeavours to promote environment-friendly development in the Global South, specifically Nepal.

Solutions to climate change in Nepal will have to involve significant foreign aid and international development agencies. Over the last couple of decades, however, these agencies have often lost their way in procedural fetishism, and have become increasingly irrelevant to realities on the ground. My colleague Sudhindra Sharma has analysed six decades of foreign aid in Nepal and shown that every decade saw a major shift in aid philosophy.

Import substitution was first emphasised, then an export-led growth, structural adjustments came next, meeting basic needs, then poverty alleviation. The latest fad is climate change. Almost every development activity today is forced to justify itself in terms of climate change adaptation; even protecting drinking water in remote villages, where the link to global warming is tenuous or nonexistent.

A recent study investigated why springs across the Himalaya were drying up and fouling outmigration in city slums. The knee-jerk supposition was that climate change was to blame, but the study found otherwise. The areas showed no significant downward trend in rainfall. Rather, livestock numbers had declined, and buffalo waters were contributing less to groundwater recharge. Farmers were shifting from dryland maize to water-intensive crops such as tomatoes. Most significantly, water was being overpumped with electric motors and PVC pipes instead of traditional hand-carried water pots and buckets.

If these issues are not addressed, the time the effects of climate change do become more severe three or four decades from now, problems with village water supply will become more pronounced, and if not catastrophic. Unfortunately, little or no climate money is available now for concrete tasks such as safeguarding village water supply.

The bulk of climate funding is directed towards seminars, nebulous ‘policy impacts’, and reports in English that are not read by anyone who matters. Contractors and sub-contractors working for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) are practically forbidden to spend money on real grassroots mitigation measures. They have to work exclusively on adaptation and policy impacts. Even with all the time, money, and expert resources that development agencies have directed toward climate change adaptation, fossil fuel consumption in Nepal has more than doubled in the past six years. Clean energy is in decline: more than half of the electricity Nepal consumes is supplied by dirty coal-fired plants in Bihar.

In previous decades, Nepal was a major success story in hydropower, having installed over 200,000 of them across the country. In the last few years, that success has stalled and may even be going in reverse. Electric vehicles present a similarly sad story. It is the same with roadways, a climate-friendly and mountain-friendly means of fording goods.

If this is the result of two decades of climate adaptation funding in Nepal, why would any environmentalist here suffer angst because Donald Trump got elected president of the United States? How much worse can things get?

A few weeks ago, senior Nepali climate officials and activists, meeting under the aegis of Climate Action Network, concluded that both the 2016 Paris Agreement on climate change and Agenda 2030 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals were ‘unhinged mandates’—which, given Nepal’s experience with the erratically Millennium Development Goals, promised no meaningful funding in the future, Trump or no Trump.

The climate journey from Kyoto in 1997 to Paris in 2015 has primarily achieved the undermining of the idea that national responsibilities are ‘common but differentiated’. So how could developing countries bargain for better, more meaningful climate funding even if Hillary Clinton had been elected president?

Northern non-governmental organisations (with a few exceptions, such as Oxfam and Greenpeace) are of no help either. Most are more preoccupied with raising funds to operate their own large outfits than with campaigning meaningfully for environmental sanity. Essentially, they have been tamed.

If environmental activists in the North wake up from their domesticated, activism-free, procedural slumber, Trump will have been just what the doctor ordered for climate change, no matter how bitter the medicine might be. If activists don’t wake up, it makes no difference to us in Nepal who is in the White House.
Many transitions

We have come a long way. Politics has metamorphosed many times over. But in a society, we still carry the continent of stories that have shaped our worldview, and every new event or trend is assimilated into that continuity. The three-level federal structure imagined by the constitution is also seen in the context of the historical narrative by the people.

Here in the Hills of central Nepal people are cautiously buffeted by local elections. In the beginning, even small things like the change of the ward number in one's home address may be difficult to adjust to. Speculation and conspiracy theories take over and the environment is polarized. Still, there is amanuensis of Nepal’s remarkable and sometimes bewildering political journey. “The Mayor is so more powerful than the minister, how will we manage this transition? Where will we get the skills and expertise? Can the change be sustained or will it collapse? Will there be either tension? What of geopolitical issues? Will the local nation be head?” Those are some of the worries of Nepal in the new mayor.

I am still optimistic. As a Nepali living in the 21st century, I know that my life is not filled with hardship as my grandfather’s was. But I also don’t feel comfortable being a passive observer. There are thousands of battles yet to be fought and won, and many more transitions to adjust to.

Dinkar Nepal is the name of plume of Sinim Tailor who is Executive Director of the Himalayan Initiative for Policy Studies.

Qatar Qsuite

Qatar Airways has unveiled Qsuite, a new business class feature on the opening day of the International Tourism Trade Fair (ITIF), the world’s largest travel trade show. A double bed has been introduced in business class with an option of reconfiguring four seats for four people who allow that transform their space into private suite.

Hyundai Open Golf

Luschei International Pvt. Ltd., the sole authorized distributor of Hyundai cars in Nepal, is organizing its 7th installment of the annual HYUNDAI Open Golf Tournament on 18th March at Pokhara Golf Resort. The event will feature 100 Nepali golfers and the winner will receive Hyundai Grand i10 golf.

Best food on air

Turkish Airlines has been awarded “Best Airline – Best Inflight Catering” by the International Council of Pacific Area Towel Writers Association in a ceremony held at ITIF Berlin 2017. The airline has previously received several awards for its onboard food and beverages after it started joint venture partnership with TURKISH KODRO.

New Year scheme

Bajaj Finance Limited has announced a New Year Campaign – Sundar Ramras Nepal. Under the scheme customers buying Bajaj bikes will get a discount of Rs. 7,500. And daily lucky draw winner will receive Rs. 70,000 to travel to their favourite destination in Nepal.

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Remembering the legendary Boris Lisanevich, founder of the Royal Hotel

W e recline on trekking mattresses on the scent-smelling grass, bees and insects busy in the overgrown garden. Nursing a tin cup of Boris’ signature bullshot, a mix of local vodka, tomato juice and home-made beef bouillon, I take a break from the lunchtime picnic chat and gaze over the brick wall. Across the Valley stand the white peaks, crisp and clear in the luminance of 1970’s Nepal light. I turn back and see Boris slumped precariously in a plastic chair, his bulk overflowing under the arm rests and a flowered shirt stretched tight across his stomach. He gesticulates with delight, laughing at one of Jim Edward’s more outrageous stories. Boris leans forward with difficulty and I hear him declare in his Slavic lilt: “I swear by vodka – it is part of life. I even have my head massaged with vodka!”

Other guests lounge on the ground, enjoying the wit, the lunch always delicious pork schnitzel and rich potato salad and strolling through “the land”, as Boris and Jager’s un-built plot in the south of Kathmandu Valley was known. As in: “Please join us midday Sunday on the land.” Regulars include painter and writer Desmond Deig, journalist Dubby Bhagat and Bernadette Vassou of the French Embassy.

Boris Nikolayevich Lisanevich is a legend. One of the first non-official foreigners to live in Nepal, he was invited by King Tribhuvan in 1961 to open the Royal Hotel in Kathmandu. An ebullient, While Russian ballet dancer and hunter born in Odessa Ukraine, Boris’ exotic background included fleeing Bolshevik persecution, performing with Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes and Massine throughout Europe, and founding the 300 Club in Calcutta, the first to accept Indian members. With him in Nepal were his long-suffering Danish wife Inger, three small sons and a mother-in-law with a taste for collecting antiques.

By the time I knew Boris, the famous Royal Hotel had already closed, stories of its chaotic hospitality lost in the building’s lofty arches but immortalised in Michel Piaf’s book Tiger for Breakfast. One of my favourites is how Boris had to be extracted from a spell in prison to manage Queen Elizabeth’s 1993 visit. Today, the hotel building in Kantipath houses the Election Commission, but its corridors echo with the former footsteps of Boris’ guests – Joan Paul Guerin and seeking ingredients for his perfumes, Jean Paul Belmondo making a film that was never made, and Queen Sofia of Spain on her honeymoon.

Jim greatly admires Boris and has helped him through many lean times as he struggled with a series of restaurants in Kathmandu, always strong on entertaining but light on business acumen. Boris had restaurants in Dilli Bazaar and Darbar Marg, but the first and most memorable for me was his Tik & Yei in Lal Darbar. Late J erard, the bistro, intense climber who summited Everest with the Americans in 1963, took me there for my 22nd birthday in 1974, and Tenzin and I had our first date penned in the uncomfortable window alcoves around the circular hammerd-brass fireplace. I was mortised by Prince Raschaubharg, slightly the worse for wear, and the sophisticated choice of flavoured

vodkas, borsch, quail and beet fish.

Boris was always kind, enveloping me in a generous bear hug and whispering tonight’s specialties. A highlight for me was being asked to arrange his surprise 75th birthday party, where ditter-jacketed and bow-welled Nepalis mingled with guests from many countries, wine flowed and Desmond designed the layered chocolate cake.

Boris is long gone (he died at age 80 in 1985) inconveniently during Dassian so Jim and I had to mobilise a team of Mountain Travel Sherpas to dig his grave. Buried in the British cemetery, the funeral service was dramatic with Russian wailing, sobbing and embracing the coffin – followed by the final Boris’ party.

Outside today’s Chimney Restaurant, where the decor and the menu are little changed, a plaque in the Tik & Yei Hotel garden reminds Boris as the father of Nepal tourism. At its unveiling a couple of years ago amidst in-laws, grandchildren and Kathmandu’s travel industry, I was astounded to find myself the only person who had actually met him.
The show goes on

The TV documentary series Aankhijhyal, which has done much to make Nepalis aware of environmental issues, airs its 1000th episode.

SMRITI BASNET

It was 1994, Nepal had a new democratic constitution, the media had just been freed and there was hope that the country would take a great leap forward in development. The newly-formed Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) aired its first episode of Aankhijhyal on Nepal TV on Kathmandu’s highbush garlic collection and waste management system. The show immediately created waves. By breaking through the cluster of political news and light entertainment shows, Aankhijhyal looked beyond social and environmental problems to the governance and political issues that lay at the core.

Over the next 23 years, in episode after episode, the video magazine showcased community forestry, sand mining on river beds, Kathmandu’s garbage problem, the proliferation of plastic, and wildlife conservation. It spotlighted government negligence, but also found solutions.

A lot has happened in Nepal in that time: there have been nearly 23 governments in 23 years, the country went from monarchy to republic, suffered a traumatic war, and an uneasy peace. The weekly show recently marked its 1,000th episode and is going strong. “Aankhijhyal is not just a show, it is a mission,” said Laxman Upadhyay, the current chief of NEFEJ. “We have brought issues of national importance to the notice of Kathmandu, we took viewers to remote parts of Nepal and showed their daily struggles.”

Along the way, Aankhijhyal also launched the film careers of numerous Nepali film makers, cinematographers and journalists. One of them is noted documentary maker Mohan Malika. “The foundation of my documentary making was laid here in Aankhijhyal. My techniques and skills are an extension of the medium like video, shows that this is a Nepali success story.”

The Audiovisual Department at the NEFEJ office has put together a proof of how video technology has changed in the past two decades. Cabinets and cupboards are stocked with analog VHS cassettes and digital CD-ROMs and DVDs. In the early days, shooting an episode in the field involved a seven-person team carrying heavy tin trunks of cameras, kerosene, generator and lugging hefty cameras. Today, it is a two person job; editing is on a laptop.

Rabindra Pantely is the director of the Audio-Visual Department and says he has seen not just the technology evolve, but also his knowledge of environment and development. “When I joined, I was confident about my camera and editing skills, but not so much about green issues. I have learnt a lot about the environment and development.”

There are challenges ahead. NEFEJ is working to digitise its analog cassettes, and there is the chronic funding crunch even though equipment and production is now much cheaper than before. Paying for airtime on Nepal TV adds to the financial burden. But Aankhijhyal is now turning to social media networks for dissemination and archiving past shows.

Aankhijhyal is aired at 7 pm on Nepal Television Plus and 6.30 pm on Annapurna Television every Thursday.

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Nepal’s largest national park needs urgent attention to curb logging, poaching and raise incomes of residents

DAWA PALDEN
in DOLPO

In 1973, the writer Peter Matthiessen, George Schaller and a small team of Sherpas trekked through parts of Dolpo. Over 40 years later, Schaller returned to Dolpo last year to retrace their route to Ringmo, Shey Gompa, Namjag, Siddong, Narha. The trip’s purpose was to note cultural and environmental changes in Dolpo over the past decades, and most of what they found was negative even though Kathmandu declared the 3,355 sq km Shey Phoksundo National Park in 1984 and later created a 1,349 sq km of buffer zone around its edges. The team found that Shey Phoksundo does not fit international criteria for a national park, given the extensive, permanent human activities throughout the park ranging from agriculture to livestock herding. It would be more accurate to call it a ‘conservation area’ like the Annapurna Conservation Area.

Park headquarters and staff are located in the far southern edge of the sanctuary, many days of trekking from the northern plateau. The six park rangers rotate every two years, and seldom leave headquarters, so there is little awareness of what is happening in most of the Park. A common complaint of residents is: “The Park does not listen.”

There are, in addition, 200 Nepal Army personnel posted in the Park who mostly remain at their base at Suligai even though their logical duty would be to monitor the yarsa harvest season in May and June when thousands of outsiders invade the Park, and poachers and robbers are active. As the road network reaches Dural and more tourists, yarsa collectors and other outsiders come to Dolpo there has to be better regulation, improved garbage collection, and an effort to stop ugly construction.

A Lake Conservation Committee responsible for keeping the Phoksundo Lake clean was formed four years ago, but hasn’t done much. The Phoksundo Buffer Zone User Committee has no staff. The Park collects entry fees from tourists and yarsa collectors, all timber licenses have a price tag, tip to half the fees are supposed to be spent for maintaining trails and bridges, but they are not even repaired near the Park headquarters.

Although wildlife numbers are said to be up, the team found that there is poaching. Neither the Park nor the army does much to prevent it, and most blue sheep are killed during the yarsa season for meat. There are many traps, with snared marmots and musk deer. Wolves are usually not seen in small packs, suggesting that the pups had been killed in their den.

The trafficking of endangered wild elephants, rhinoceros and tigers to China gets all the media attention, but lesser-known animals like the Himalayan black bear, pangolins and musk deer are being smuggled across the border in ever-larger numbers.

Nepal marked the second year in a row with zero poaching of rhinos in its national parks in 2016. Greater awareness and stricter controls have also made Nepal a less favored transportation point for tigers and rhinos from India to China.

However, some 650 pangolins are said to have been seized in Nepal en route to China since 2010, but conservationists say it may just be the tip of the iceberg. There are no figures for musk deer killed for their prized gland considered in China to have aphrodisiac properties. Even though the musk gland can be harvested without killing the animal, many other die in traps in Nepal – even females which do not have the gland (see above).

The smuggling of various body parts of the Himalayan black bear also fetch high prices in China, and they are trapped and killed in northern Nepal by poachers. A bait lures a bear into a trap which crushes the animal under branches weighted with rocks (picture, right).

Conservationist Sonam Tashi recalls being asked about wildlife parts during one of his monitoring trips from Olangchunggola to Tibet in 2010.

“I was asked if I had bear bile and paws including other wildlife parts to sell,” says Tashi, adding: “Locals in eastern Nepal trap the bears in summer as soon as they come out of hibernation since the medicinal values of bile are high in China whereas meat is consumed locally.”

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) confiscated 17 sets of bear bile and one paw in 11 different seizures in the last six years.

“There wasn’t much of a focus on pangolins because they were small, and

Protecting

Poaching of rhinos and tigers drops, but there is an alarming rise in smuggling of pangolins, musk deer and bears
by villagers in retaliation for lost livestock. The Park needs dedicated teams in the field and prosecution in the courts, as well as sincere dialogue with communities.

By far the most serious problem is logging. Permits are often given for construction of non-existent schools and health posts. Recently, near Shy Gompa there were over 150 yaks and horses heavily laden with timber (pictured, above), most of it to be smuggled across into China. The other big threat is the yarsa trade. Half the annual household income for most families is from the rare and expensive caterpillar fungus. The Park charges Rs 600 for residents and Rs 3,500 for outsiders harvesting yarsa. One good yarsa can fetch up to Rs 10 in China, so the Park’s fees are too low and do not compensate for the environmental impact.

The Park does not limit the number of yarsa licenses and as many as 20,000 people invade the highlands every summer. Over-harvesting of yarsa has led to a steep decline in production. With so many outsiders, there are often conflicts as happened in 2014 when two locals were killed in Dho Tarap by police during a dispute over harvesting. The Park should reduce the harvest season to two weeks in June, giving time for the larvae to grow. It should close the season entirely in certain years to allow the species to recover. Harvesting in the Park should be restricted to resident communities to curb over-exploitation, increase local income and help in conservation - which is what the National Park is supposed to do after all.

Pangolin Specialist Group in 2012 and all eight species of pangolins were moved from Appendix II to I of CITES during an international conference last year.

Pangolins are found in 45 districts of Nepal, and it is estimated that there are only 5,000 of them left in the wild. It is the only mammal to be completely covered with scales, and contributes to the ecological balance by eating up to 20,000 ants and termites a day. "Rhinos and tigers are relatively well protected because they live inside national parks and are guarded by soldiers," explains Nimu Pasdel of the group, Greenhood Nepal. "But pangolins have no such protection."

Alerted by the rise in poaching of Pangolins, the CIB is raising its vigilance at checkpoints along the northern border. But much more effective would be a public awareness drive for conserving the species, they say. CIB’s Prabhu Prasharh says: "We will soon launch a special operation to break the powerful network involved in poaching pangolins which have high market demands."

Shreejana Shrestha

less known species
**EVENTS**

**Portfolio reviews,** A 20-minute one-on-one portfolio review session with artists participating in this year's Kuthmandu Triennale, an international art festival, until 15 March. For more information: (01) 446930, info@kudmonda.org

**Kathmandu Triennale,** familiarize yourself with the city through artwork of local and international artists and learn about Nepal's art history in this year's edition of the Kathmandu International Art Festival. 24 March to 6 April. Multiple venues. For more information: kudmonda.org

**Mobile Monday,** A networking event to discuss mobile technology with a panel discussion featuring Kunida Raj Bhakta, Bhawas Dhalak, Anish Shrestha and Siti Shabata. 27 March, 3.30 to 7 pm, Meiktil, Phansikhet. For more information: mobilemonday.as

**Heritage music,** Mark your calendars for “Echoes in the Valley,” a community music festival showcasing local music and art, performances of every day Villas. 25 March. For more information: echoesthevalley.com

**Music festival,** Be a part of this month-long festival and experience music in its entirety. Tiga Jam, sringar, ragas and many more genres. Until 31 March, Bose Camp, Phansikhet. For more information: 9841726919, panwislekha@gmail.com

**St Patrick’s with reggae,** Swash to the rhythms of some reggae tunes. St. Patrick’s Day with Joint Family International. 27 March, 11 to 1 pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9810757172, 9800

**Outdoor fun,** A three-day outdoor festival filled with adventure sports and music. Choose from a host of activities: ride, run or rock climb. 17 to 19 March, Nabin International Training Centre, Kakani. For more information: niswizardsoutdoorfestival.com

**Midnight Riders live,** Spend a musical evening with Nepali rock band The Midnight Riders on this Irish holiday. 17 March, 7 pm onwards, Irish Pub, Lomgos, Artemis. (01) 4416162

**Jazz and salsa,** An unique event combining gypsy jazz and salsa dances. Groove to the beats of both art forms with gypsy jazz maestro Haru Mahajan and salsita maestro Himayat Das Shrestha. 17 March, 7 to 10 pm, 25 hours, Tongelwood, Near, 9801577609, Rs 999. Experience to Rs 1999 (dinner)

**Gout de Good France,** Enjoy this unique opportunity to savour French cuisine at its best with soothing French wine in the background. 21 March, 6:30 to 11 pm onwards, the Cloisters’ Kyes Chang, Itham & Kat set. Sunday-Mon (01) 4548880, Rs 500 to 650

**Solid Rock,** Enjoy a relaxing stay in the traditional Nepali Farmhouse away from the hustle and bustle of Kuthmandu city. Solid Rock Lodge & Restaurant, Dolak near Phaphing, 9851253092

**Kasara Resort,** A luxurious resort located in the lyn setting of the Chitwan National Park. For those who value their privacy and prefer a more seduced stay, Kasara offers two private villas with private pools. Chitwan (01449787, 9869353737, kasarakom.com

**Heli to ABC,** Take a picturesque helicopter ride from Pokhara to Annapurna Base Camp. Pokhara Helicopter Services, contact: Pokhara; www.pokharaheli.com, (01) 461247, 9819149555

**Club Himalaya,** For amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend escapades. Kagedan, (01) 5600590

**Rupakot Resort,** Get pampered in the lap of luxury and stunning views of the Annapurna, Mundlo & Rupakot, Kaski (01) 426602 / 01449067, 9806308664, www.rupakotr.com

**Miss Moti-vation**

**Kripa Joshi**

"Families are like branches on a tree. We grow in different directions yet our roots remain as one."

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**Dining**

**Getaway**

**Films on rights,** Watch more than 90 films and documentaries from 38 countries to be screened in this human rights international film festival. Panel discussions will be held as part of the festival as well. Until 15 March. For more information: www.tofib.org, (01) 4297325

**Special art market,** Attend a special edition of the Art Market in collaboration with Kuthmandu Triennale – 2017. Don’t miss out on the art events, live music, and participation by both local and international artists. 18 March, 4 to 6 pm, RC Mega, Gokarneshwor, Pokhara, ag@nag-ark.org, nagark@tiscali.co.uk, for more information: www.nag-ark.org

**Maha Jodi,** Don’t miss out on the performance of comic duo Madan Kishor Shrestha and Hari Bambha Kharuna. All presents go to Asia Deep Nepal, 15 March, 6 pm onwards, Radisson Hotel, Lomgos, 9811050906, Rs 999 (including dinner)

**Canvas and cocktails,** Spend the evening painting about gender issues at this event organized by Kyadga Foundation and WOW. 18 March 5.30 to 7 pm, Shomdoala, Rs 1500
The price of growing rice


SAHINA SHRESTHA

Eighy per cent of Nepal’s live off the farm. Agriculture accounts for one-third of Nepal’s GDP, but the country has turned from a net exporter to importer of rice.

Investment in irrigation, high-yield seeds, mechanisation, and pricing incentives can easily boost rice production and create jobs on the farm for Nepalis. All it needs is for agriculture to have more government priority than it currently receives.

The food balance sheet for 2015-16 shows a deficit of 1,100,000 tns in rice as production plummeted to 4.3 million tons. Things are looking better this year as harvests are up by 21 per cent to 5.23 million tons because of a good monsoon. The Prime Minister Agriculture Modernisation Project, if properly implemented, could decrease dependency on food imports, especially rice from India.

Since most farms are rainfed, the single most important contribution to boosting productivity would be irrigation. Only 1.3 hectares of farms in Nepal get year-round irrigation – 18 per cent of the total arable land. Monsoon rice is planted in 2,400,000 hectares, while only 112,000 hectares grow spring rice because of the lack of irrigation.

Says Mukund Bir Shrestha, Crop Production Officer at Department of Agriculture: “Rice imports will go down if we can increase the production of spring rice, but that needs irrigation.”

However, Nepal is moving away from the land and migrating overseas for work as soon as they leave school. Booming real estate prices and urban expansion have reduced total cultivated area. And cheap rice from India does not make it worthwhile for Nepali farmers to grow paddy.

“The other way is to change the food habits of Nepalis and replace rice with other grains,” says Shrestha. But that may be easier said than done in a country where “Have you eaten rice today?” is a form of greeting, and people in the mountains are turning to rice from traditional millet and buckwheat.

The trend is most visible in Morang, once Nepal’s grain basket. Outmigration of young men and the economics of agriculture has meant that it does not make sense to invest labour in paddy farming.

“In Morang alone, 10,000 hectares of land has gone fallow in the past decade,” says Rajendra Upregy of the Regional Directorate of Agriculture in Biratnagar. “Land that was previously farmed is now used for non-agricultural purposes.”

Along the border, Indian businessmen often come to Nepal to buy harvested paddy in bulk, deshuck it in their mills and sell the rice back to Nepal. Farmers are also forced to sell paddy at a lower rate to rice mills when there is a surplus in India and the exchange rate is depressed in Nepal.

Government apathy, lack of support and subsidies mean that there is little cushion for farmers if the crops don’t do well, or don’t sell. There is no minimum price for food grain, although the Department of Agriculture has asked the Nepal Food Corporation to buy paddy, spring paddy and wheat at a minimum cost if sales are down. Economist Rajendra Pradesh of the Department of Agriculture says there is little Nepal can do to stop cheap imports from across the open border. But boosting productivity would enhance food security so that with the spreading road network domestic supply can meet demand in remote areas.

Pradhan explains: “For national food security, production is not enough. People should have access to food and there should be opportunities of employment in agriculture as well.”

Leaving or staying?

Nepal are selling their fertile farms and leaving to work in the desert for a pittance, while farmhands from India come to Nepal in the harvest season to earn up to Rs 50,000 a month.

RAJ UPRETY

Nepal’s agriculture is caught in this paradoxical situation as more and more young men from the eastern Tarai join the exodus. Poor pressure and stigma means a young Nepali man is considered lazy and good for nothing if he stays behind to work on the farm.

“He was running hillside here, at least in Qatar he will earn a living for his family,” says Sitadevi Chaudhary of the youngest of her four sons. The other three are already working abroad.

Migrants are not new to Nepal. What is different is that young men are moving out in unprecedented numbers at a time when they could easily make a decent income in Tarai farms and post-earthquake reconstruction.

There is a severe shortage of agriculture labour here in the Tarai, and this has driven up wages. A Nepali in the Gulf actually earns less than a migrant worker from Bihar in a paddy farm in Nepal, and that is not counting the hefty commissiion to agents, cost of air ticket, visa and other fees that a Nepali migrant worker pays.

Nanjiba Binswag sells 100 roast corn a day in a street-side market in Biratnagar. She has calculated a profit margin of Rs 6 per cob, which gives her an average monthly income of Rs 20,000. Binsaw says it doesn’t make sense to grow rice in her 1 hectare farm anymore, she earns more selling corn.

Rajendra Mahato sells icecream in Fularat of Morang, and earns Rs 70,000 on an average month. This is more than a bank manager in the city, so he doesn’t farm anymore.

There are many young men and women across the Tarai for whom driving an electric rickshaw, selling ice cream, or setting up a pani-puri stall is less risky and more lucrative than growing rice.

Growth in agriculture is said to be twice as effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors, and despite the youth abandoning the land there are examples of Nepalis who have returned to set up job-creating agri-businesses.

Kopilidev Singh returned from Malaysia convinced he could earn more back in Nepal. He set up a vegetable farm to grow tomatoes and cauliflower, and was recently awarded the President’s Prize for outstanding performance.

“I left in Malaysia I would be a mere worker with no savings,” says Singh, who now earns Rs 80,000 a month and employs five helpers.

Uday Shrestha is known as the mushroom tycoon of Morang. In 2004, his passport was destroyed when a recruitment agency in Kathmandu was set on fire following the killing of 12 Nepali workers in Iraq. That is the best thing that happened to him. He stayed back in Nepal and is now the main mushroom supplier in eastern Nepal.
Paul Verhoeven, the director of Basic Instinct (1992) and Starship Troopers (1997) has always pushed the boundaries of what is acceptable in cinema, in terms of how women are portrayed and how violence is subverted. With his newest film, Elle, nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category this year at the Academy, and starring the famous French actress Isabelle Huppert, he has gone too far.

While scholars of film and feminist theory will doubtless endlessly debate the morality, or a morality, rather, of Elle’s central characters like they discuss Hitchcock, the unsuspecting viewer will emerge shell-shocked and bewildered, and not just a little disturbed, by the highly perverse drama that they have been forced to endure in the hope that something will change to justify the time and emotional investment they have been manipulated into putting into a film that poses a series of tricks that left me in a state of unanchored confusion which eventually gave way to something close to dismay and then fury.

Huppert plays Michèle Leblanc - an egotistical, affluent, poised Parisian woman in her early sixties who finds herself the victim of a vicious assault in her own home, leaving her violated, physically and emotionally. Over the course of the 130 minute long film, there are more twists and turns than I could count as we try to understand Michèle’s motivations. feelings, and actions - not just regarding the assault but also her very peculiar relationships with her mother, son, former husband, lovers, employees, attackers, friends, and her deeply dark past.

Transgression after transgression is committed by every single character against almost every single other character in the film, leaving everyone slightly giddy but also wondering if the screenplay, based on a novel, is actually really about character, or just plot points that exploited the reader and now the viewer, forcing them to hang on in the hope of a somewhat intelligible outcome. There is none.

The people in this film are awful, barrelling the character of Anne Consigny, who plays the role of Anna, the beautiful, funny, warm-hearted friend and business partner of Michèle, a role that is barely mentioned in the buzz of this film - a great lapse. Huppert’s performance is talked about in hushed tones by critics, but her stone-faced cipher of a character seems more under-written to me, certainly not the fascinating study of a woman as the film’s title not so subtly suggests.

The word “naive” is not my own when it comes to describing the film. A friend who is French described it as such, adding, memorably, that it was also a perplexing and bizarre way of trying to depict French women. Verhoeven got it wrong – sometimes it is funny to confound expectations, other times, it indicates a sociopathic tendency that thinks it is clever but instead is just plain creepy.
From Tikapur to Maleth

Rumenwar Bohar in Hinal Khabarpatrika, 12-18 March

In August 2015, after four people were killed in violent clashes, police constables were allowed to carry only batons and tear gas. Guns were given to junior officers, but with a clear instruction not to use them unless as a last resort.

Five days later, eight policemen including SOP Laxman Neupane were lynched in Tikapur of Kailali (in the far-western plains). One child was shot dead by protesters.

After the Tikapur tragedy, policemen were so terrified that they began opening fire whenever they felt threatened, often shooting people in the chest and head. Over 50 people were killed in the ensuing violence of the Madhes movement that lasted five months.

The deaths last week of five people in police firing in Maleth of Saptari showed that police are still scared of being lynched and panic when there is a mob throwing stones. Lack of training in crowd control and firearms resources were among the major reasons for the deaths.

Human Rights Commissioner Prakash Wasti, who has observed and analysed recent killings in the Tarai, says policemen lack the confidence and morale to control riots, and feel threatened by protesters. “This is why police open fire even when the use of gun is not needed,” he says.

After the Tikapur lynchings of its personnel, Nepal Police sought non-lethal weapons worth Rs 3 billion: 22 water cannons, 22 riot control vehicles, 1,000 electric shock guns, 1,000 multi gas guns, 5,000 pepper sprays and Rs 20,000 bamboo batons.

“The government did not give us anything,” a senior police officer says. “If we had enough non-lethal equipment, we could have controlled the crowd without killing anyone in Saptari.”

The officer adds: “People blame us for not using non-lethal weapons to control riots. But the only non-lethal weapons we have enough of are tear gas and batons. Policemen on the ground either have to kill or be killed.”

Armed Police Force (APF) personnel are also deployed to control protests, sometimes as a back-up and sometimes on the frontline. Set up to fight the Maoists during the insurgency, the APF is used to fighting wars. It does not use rubber bullets, but they are first trained to fire in the air and then shoot below the knee.

Former AIG Nawaraj Dhakal says: “If policemen are not trained enough, they cannot control riots even if they have all necessary equipment.”

In Melath of Saptari, nearly 1,000 policemen were deployed to keep protesters off the venue of the UML program. And 300 of them were fresh recruits who were yet to complete basic training.

The Saptari killings also exposed the lack of a strong police command in the field. Protesters in Maleth were trying to attack UML leaders from all sides by breaching the police cordon.

Police and APF personnel were also in various groups under different commands, and there was a lack of coordination between them. When protesters snatched away communication sets and tried to deter weapons, police and APF opened fire. It was not known which unit first started shooting.

Human rights commissioner Wasti says policemen deployed on the field are often exhausted, have not eaten or rested well, and often retaliate when they see their colleagues hurt by protesters.

“There is also a lack of discipline, which sometimes results in defiance of the police command,” he says. “This has to stop.”

Conratulations

It gives us great pleasure to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Sunil KC on his appointment as the CEO of NMB Bank.

To an extraordinary banker and a great personality with excellent management skills, we are certain that you will inspire and lead NMB Bank to even greater heights of success.

We wish you all the very best.
THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Despite dramatic progress in nutrition, half of Nepal’s child deaths are still due to hunger

MARTY LOGAN in SAPTARI

When Shambhu Kumar Ram died in November last year, aged 17, he looked as emaciated as a drought victim (pictures, far right). While severe malnutrition appears to have been the immediate cause of death, there were underlying factors. The boy’s parents say they knew only that he appeared malnourished, and kept losing weight until he died at home.

How could his family, which had accessed the health system numerous times in the years before Shambhu died, know so little about what killed their son? Their experience illustrates some of the ways that the health system in Nepal can fail.

Sitting on a wooden bench outside of their bamboo and mud hut in the Dalti village of Danda, his parents describe a fruitless years-long quest to uncover the reason their healthy baby showed signs of malnutrition as a toddler and never seemed to recover. When he was four he spent a month at the Sagarmatha Zonal Hospital but there was no diagnosis.

Shambhu was healthy enough to go to a local school until he was 12, when he started to lose more weight. “I knew he wasn’t going to survive so I did my duty and took him to Biratnagar,” says his mother Shanti Devi Ram. But after 10 days they ran out of money and returned, no wiser about the cause of their son’s weight loss.

During this period the family sold nearly half of its land to finance treatment. They borrowed from neighbours, to whom they still owe Rs 45,000. A month later, they travelled to KBC Hospital in Kathmandu but after 15 days they ran out of money again and returned home.

“I had to beg to feed my child in Kathmandu, but no one helped us,” says his mother. Shambhu remained at home till he died. The death made headlines in the media, with most indicating it was a death from starvation. But here in Dalti there is a different story. Shambhu being found on the streets of Saptari’s district capital by a nurse in July 2014 and taken to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Home (NRH), which is usually reserved for under-5 children with severe acute malnutrition. The boy was 13, says NRH Project Manager

Buddhi Maya turned two this March. But she cannot sit upright, lies inert and limp on a hammock in the family hut. Her emaciated body weighs half of what it should at her age.

Her 60-year-old father, Nawarjan Biluwakrama, moulds clay outside. The Dalit family moved from Dang to work a brick kiln in Lalitpur this winter. Nawarjan’s wife Chuna Devi had four daughters one after another, and the couple was still trying for a son when Buddhi Maya was born.

At 43 Chuna Devi looks much older, her skin is aemic and was too frail to give birth to a healthy daughter. Buddhi Maya was underweight when born, and Nawarjan admits he was disappointed it wasn’t a son.

One does not have to go far from the capital to see the face of hunger in Nepal today. Just 5 km from the city centre here in Butikhet, there are children literally starving and families who do not have enough to eat.

Nawarjan used to work seasonally in India before Buddhi Maya was born. He had taken a loan of Rs 18,000 from the Poverty Alleviation Fund to buy two goats. He paid back Rs 7,000 last year but needs to pay the next installment next month and clear the remaining amount by November. He came to Kathmandu to earn enough to finish paying back the loan.

“I thought I would be able to feed my children well after buying the goats,” he says. “But things get worse.”

He earns Rs 10 for each brick he moulds, but he has no savings after working for four months in Kathmandu. “Whatever I earn goes to feeding the children, I cannot sleep at night out of worry,” he says.

If he cannot pay back the loan,
Stunted and wasted

Wasting affected 11.3% of Nepali children (under five), according to the Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey three years ago. Of them, more than a third had moderate malnutrition, or wasting (low height for age). Another survey in Saptari showed that 15% of children showed signs of wasting.

Nepal’s malnutrition rate is among the world’s highest, with more than half of preschoolers under 5 deaths each year attributed to insufficient food. But the country took remarkable strides in reducing stunting during and immediately after the conflict, the figure coming down from 51% in 2001 to 37.4% in 2014. Nutrition Rehabilitation Homes (NRH) and a program called Community/Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) contributed.

But nearing the halfway point, Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan (MSNP), the blueprint for Nepal’s fight against malnutrition is being reviewed. Experts agree it hasn’t delivered as promised. Inspired by the global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, the plan takes a multi-pronged approach to tackling malnutrition.

Seven ministries are included in the MSNP which is coordinated by the National Planning Commission. It has been scaled up to 28 districts but is supposed to be effective in all 73 districts by year’s end and also addressing acute malnutrition, or wasting (low weight for age).

A 2014 review of CMAM found that in the preceding four years 21,782 cases of severely malnourished children had been treated, and 86.5% of them cured. Of the 785 children treated at the NRH in Rajbiraj only two had died.

Yet, CMAM has only reached 32 of the 35 districts, and NRHs are operating in 18 instead of 35 planned districts. Nepal will probably not meet the MSNP target to cut wasting to below 5% by 2017.

“MSNP hasn’t been implemented as expected,” admits Raj Kumar Pockharel, Chief of the Nutrition Section in the Department of Health. “It should be reaching the household level but other sectors are not taking it seriously...there is no culture of coordination.” At UNICEF, the head of nutrition Stanley Chitokee agrees. “The architecture is there, but the implementation has issues. We need to ensure that each ministry makes malnutrition a core part of its business. We’ve realised that this hasn’t happened enough.”

Nutritionist Aruna Upadhyay was named to one of two committees created by the National Planning Commission to address the problem, but says: “The plans have failed, implementation doesn’t exist. The problem is that programs are created without knowing the reality on the ground.”

Asked why stunting rates have declined but wasting rates persist, Chitokee points to “inconsistencies in the way that malnutrition manifests itself” including the effects of geography, wealth, ethnicity and caste. Pockharel says it is difficult to address these factors using a health approach only, good governance is also essential. The Rs120,000,000 earmarked to reduce malnutrition in Saptari was recently returned unspent to the treasury.

Alive so far: Chhun Devi Swastikarma, a brick kiln worker on the outskirts of Kathmandu, tries to console her crying daughter suffering from severe malnutrition. Left: She told her daughter’s palm, wrinkled with malnutrition (above).

Nawaraj says he will be evicted from his dwelling in Dang, and he is not allowed to sell the goats. “They are government goats. If I sell them, or feed my children, I go to jail.”

An outreach worker of an NGO running a tuition class for the children of brick kiln workers spotted Buddhi Maya recently and sent her to a Nutrition Rehabilitation Home in Lalitpur. In two months Buddhi Maya gained some weight but not enough, indicating that she has other medical issues as well.

Says Sunila Rimal at the Home: “Her parents are too poor to buy more nutritious food, let alone getting a proper medical checkup.”

Chhun Devi was advised to keep her baby at the Home but she returned recently to her family at the brick kiln.

Buddhi Maya now weighs just 4.3 kg instead of the 8.1 kg for someone her age. She is severely wasted and stunted, the skin on her face and limbs are wrinkled, ribs protrude from her emaciated body.

On a cloudy afternoon after rains this week, Chhun Devi was feeding her baby milk with a spoon. “I know she will die. She is here on Earth only for a short time,” says Om Astha Rai.

Stunting

Wasting

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level of Wasting (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>37</td>
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100 years old American company with experience in comfort and durability, Spring Air has products for your home and hotels with 10 years guarantee.
Skeletions in the Cabinet

We agree with critics of GOMe who have serious misgivings about the size of the current Cabinet. They are absolutely right, it is just not big enough. How can the spoons be divided (and multiply fed) with only 33 ministers, 12 ministers of state, and a handful of others, lying in state?

For a country with so much potential and slender energy, it is a shame that we deliberately hold ourselves back by being inefficient and lethargic. How does the frontline Minister Awarena think he is going to go about solving all the problems we have in this country if his cabinet is so seriously understretched?

For natural construction and reconstruction to go on a war footing, we need an army of ministers, not just the pathetic platoon we have now in Singh Barjatiya. To make Nepal great again, we need to think big. It is a skeleton Cabinet with skeletons in its cabinet. Need to add meat to it.

There is a lot of uncertainty about an array of ministers. About 15 minutes ago it was certain, now it’s suddenly become fluffy. But not to worry, we are sure that within the next hour or so polls will be a sure thing again. An election needs to be conducted in a fair and timely manner, and the best way to guarantee that is to have all parties inculcated into a national government so that any cheating cannot be foolproof.

This is the perfect opportunity to expand the cabinet and create new jobs. Every minister has a multiplier effect on the economy and the labour market.

The jumbo cabinet as a jumbo job creation opportunity that will bring down our national unemployment rate by several percentage points, reduce the number of nepali’s migrating abroad to work, and have downstream benefits. Every minister hires bodyguards, cooks, drivers, maids, personal assistants, hangers-on, function, middlemen, goons, entertainers and a couple of pet donkeys. The Prenual Minister should groom critics, and just go ahead and enlarge his cabinet some more. But there just aren’t enough ministers to fill a jumbo cabinet of national arms. So, in the national interest, we present a few new portfolios:

Ministry of Cheque and Balance: Will work in close coordination with the FNM to manage fiscal policy especially for undertaxed deal.

Ministry of Distortion and Extortion: Will counter anti-government propaganda and be a new window office for party fund-raising.

Ministry of Illegitimate Affairs: In the spirit of transparency and accountability all covert pujas’ crossings to be referred to this new ministry.

Ministry of Adultery: Will monitor all commodities to ensure that kibbles have been paid to n-kerosine in these, oil, underweight LPG cylinders, allow a thriving blackmarket in electricity.

Ministry of Tourism and Maism: So as not to sour the sacrifices of revolution, trekking will be promoted in former war zones.

Ministry of Physical Therapy and No Works: Will prolong road-digging and widening so it is never finished in the national interest.

Ministry of Home: This is the most coveted ministry because the minister can work out of home.

Ministry of Jankets and Aukation: This minister is never home, but amusing air miles

Ministry of Ministerial Administration: The new 15-member cabinet will need a separate ministry to take the roll call during cabinet meetings and ensure enough paper to go around.

Ministries without Portfolio: These are currently left vacant to accommodate more disgruntled elements so they don’t disrupt elections.