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SUBHAS RAI

JATRA

There's not much room to hope for a solution, given the record of major political parties on agreeing to what is needed but not acting on it. Developments since last week point to a coalition government of the Maoists, UML and Upendra Yadav faction of the Madhesi. While a Maoist-UML combine (with 347 members in 601-strong

parliament) alone is enough for a government of simple majority, the Forum's support would add 25 members.

However, even with the backing of smaller parties that have pledged their support to the Maoists, the coalition will still be short of a two-thirds majority,

a requirement to endorse the new constitution as well as to amend the interim one, if needed. The Maoists, the UML and the Forum disagree very sharply on crucial aspects of the new constitution and we won't be surprised if the coalition, if at all, will hold for long.

The sparring between UML and the Maoists even before the ink had dried on their 3-point agreement last Friday shows how fragile these deals are.

This points to the need of

taking the Nepali Congress on board. The onus is on the two communist parties to reach out to the NC, which has not taken too kindly to the Maoist-UML pact, and for the NC's own Ram Chandra Poudel to withdraw from the race on Sunday in return for a credible Maoist promise to honour past commitments.

See also: PUBLISHER'S NOTE
Peace and the prime ministership

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



KIRAN PANDAY

PEACE AND THE PM

Seven rounds of voting in parliament have failed to elect a new prime minister, and if things stay as they are the eighth round will be deadlocked on Sunday as well. The people's faith in the political parties will fall further.

We need a new prime minister, but cannot overlook certain basics. Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned on 30 June after intense (and it now looks shortsighted) clamour for his resignation. Those agitating for his ouster had refused to consider the consequences of having the government reduced to caretaker status without a workable agreement on contentious aspects of the peace process and the constitution.

We are repeating that folly now. In the desperation of having a new prime minister by ignoring the demobilisation of Maoist combatants and dismantling the YCL's militant structure, we are once more putting the cart before the horse.

Political parties here have the habit of reverting to their existing positions soon after signing an agreement to move forward. Worse, they interpret agreements differently soon after signing it. A day after the Maoists and the UML

signed yet another 3-point deal, they have given contrasting interpretations of the pact. While the Maoists are saying that the move has paved the way for Maoist-UML majority government, the UML says it only agreed to a consensus government.

The onus is on the UML to ensure that the Maoists honour their part of the bargain, and if they do, the UML should not hesitate to be part of a coalition with the Maoists. Together they have the numbers (347) in the 601-member House. If the Maoists do not agree, the UML should revive the alliance with the NC and seek the Madhes-based parties' support for their government.

But for the future stability of this country, the rejuvenated centrist NC must be brought into the formula. The most desirable scenario has always been a government that includes the Big Three and the Madhesi parties held together by the common goal of completing the peace process.

KQ

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

BIG BROTHERHOOD

The Indians should know that there is no way that the Nepalis can turn against India (Interview with Indian Ambassador, Rakesh sood, #520). Even if it happens on the surface, and some out of greed, but overall, from the heart, Nepalis love the Bharatiya way. The Chinese know this too. It is also a geopolitical compulsion in addition to cultural and religious linkages. Nepal may display symptoms of a small country syndrome at times and react sharply to India's bullying, or big brotherhood game.

Harka Raj

- The reports of India-China rivalry are greatly exaggerated in Nepal. Yes, there is global geopolitical competition for influence and resources and India feels it doesn't get the respect it deserves, but that doesn't translate into a proxy war over Nepal. Nepalis would like to think they are so important that the regional powers are vying for a handle on things in Kathmandu, but both New Delhi and Beijing have a convergence of interest in Nepal: they both want stability. And both are completely exasperated by the way things are falling apart in Kathmandu because of the shortsighted ambitions of the political leadership there.

Johann

- "India would like to see stability return in Nepal" says Ambassador Sood. Oh really? Nepal would like to see India stop being an ignorant bully. India was colonised by the West, so it is bitter and just plain angry. But Nepal would like to see India stop annoying us with its attitude problem that's mainly got to do with its inferiority complex with China.

Sarath G

- I agree with Prashant Jha ('Indian insecurities', #520). Anything that

happens in Nepal, India gets blamed for it. It may be useful to see it from India's perspective also. India's security concerns are genuine. We can't give them an extradition treaty, we can't give them air marshals, we can't sign border maps (which I have heard are ready for signature and would avoid all this border encroachment nonsense after it is signed),



we won't take initiatives to revise the 1950 treaty and we can't even give them the MRP project. We attack their companies, even arm-twist them if they do not give enough advertisement, and then want them to invest more. We believe the allegation of a parliamentarian against an Indian diplomat knowing fully well the credibility of the said person.

Saral Manandhar

- People get the government they deserve. It is very easy to blame all what is wrong in Nepal on India. Every one looks after their own self-interest. India will do what it needs to do to take care of its sensitivities and China will do the same. People who blame all their ills on others are just plain stupid and lazy. I just hope Nepal can work its differences with India

and live peacefully. If not just close the border with India and invite China to help out. I am sure a new generation Indians don't mind Nepal bad mouthing India to gain some goodies from China.

Satya

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Historically, the separation of politics and economy never worked (Publisher's Note, 'Delinking the economy from politics', #520). The unbearable living conditions in czarist Russia gave rise to the October Revolution and the subsequent takeover by the communists. The collapse of the European economy after World War I eventually gave rise to Hitler and Nazi Germany.

In Poland and Czechoslovakia, it was the attempt to bring in reforms into a near-collapsing economy which changed the course of the countries. It was the economic reforms of Perestroika which brought down the Soviet Union.

Had Nepal been a prosperous country, the Maoists would have never had a chance as there wouldn't have been any reason for their existence. A failing economy is capable of causing a collapse of a political system, politics and economy are inseparably interlocked. Economy drives the politics and politics drives the economy. The greatest danger arises when greed enters the picture.

Luba Svcina

PLANTING SLANTS

C K Lal claims that Mahara did not disown the tape 'Fourth Estate', 'Plants and slants', #520). But Mahara certainly did disown the tape. If Lal does not believe the strong denial by Mahara that is up to him. But by pretending that Mahara admitted the conversation is genuine Lal is behaving at least as badly as any of the media that he criticises.

Arthur

- Mr Mahara has no other choice but to say that he has been framed, although he has not denied that the voice in the tape

is his. This may have been a sting operation, but what were Mahara and the Maoists thinking when asking for money from a representative of a foreign nation? Did they seriously think that the money would come without any strings attached?

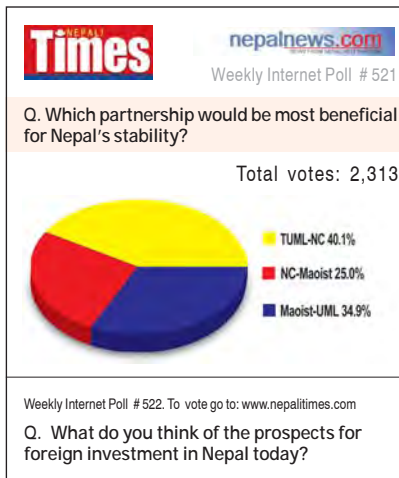
Anil

- The fact that a foreign country was tapping phone conversations of a Nepali politician is very troubling. This just shows how our politicians are controlled by foreigners and can be bought with money. Maoists trying to get money from outside is no surprise knowing how neck deep they are in corruption, extortion, smuggling and mafia-like business operations.

Concerned Citizen

- If Mahara wants to defend himself and prove his innocence he should go to court and prove that he is innocent because he is a public personality and it is his duty to bring the truth before people. What he and his party should not pretend is that the criticism is onesided blame coming from reactionaries. How can you run away so easily? This is a serious matter of sedition and corruption and I don't want a the party that deceives the nation goes to government at the expense of our national integrity.

Nirmal



Round and round in circles

It would be naïve to see recent developments as a breakthrough



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha



KIRAN PANDAY

In January, there appeared to be a breakthrough in the political process. After a three-day strike, Maoists pulled back from planned protests, the High Level Political Mechanism was finally set up. The process of discharging disqualified combatants began, and the Maoists allowed the parliament to function. A bit later, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai appeared to patch up, and the party decided to pursue the 'peace and constitution' line. Observers saw the developments as a remarkable breakthrough, but nine months later, the stalemate persists.

But there is a similar flutter now. The Maoists have agreed to place their combatants under the Special Committee. A secretariat is being formed, and Maoist commanders are planning to branch out to the cantonments to prepare their lot. The PM has told security chiefs to be ready for integration. Maoists have agreed to be 'sensitive' to the army's operational issues.

And Prachanda is all ready to withdraw his candidature (though latest reports suggest he will not do so if Ram Chandra Poudel does not reciprocate).

The threat of UNMIN leaving has worried the Maoists. There is a broad international consensus (with India, USA and UK on the same side) that the onus rests largely on the Maoists to move on the peace process. Maoists know that if they want a constitution, they will have to make fundamental compromises on their party structure. And besides the tactical victory of breaking the 'democratic alliance', Prachanda has little to show for the past few months.

But the fundamental factors that led to the stalemate in the first place have not changed, which is why it would once again be naïve to see recent developments as a breakthrough. The Maoists are in the throes of one of their deepest ideological crises ever, compounded by personality clashes.

What is the kind of political system the Maoists aim to build in Nepal? What can it settle for in the interim, and what are the non-negotiables in the new constitution? Would it help or be a great betrayal to give up the PLA at a time when the revolution remains incomplete, the reactionaries have consolidated, and prospect of political power for the party remains distant? Who is the main enemy? What is the purpose of integration if the original intent of using it to make NA a friendly force is no longer possible? And how does it see India? Without clarity, cohesion and flexibility on at these issues, the Maoists will not make any substantive movement and others will not give them space.

And what is the nature of compromises the other side is willing to make? It is easy to blame the Maoists for not having moved on integration when they were in power. But just go back to Sushil Koirala's statements during the period, when he

insisted that "not a single combatant" can be integrated, or Bidya Bhandari's approach of the past year.

To be fair, there is greater flexibility among them now but all non-Maoist parties echo the NA's redlines: no unit level entry, no space in the command structure, the minimum possible in the army while the rest can go to other forces. Additionally, if the NC believes a parliamentary system is the only option, wants the weakest form of federalism possible, and is reluctant to even discuss reforming the 1990s state institutions, where is the meeting point? Where is the incentive for the Maoists who are being told to give up their army, compromise on their political issues in the statute, and wait before getting space in the power structure?

Inter-related is the India-Maoist bitterness. Both have genuine grudges, have invested a lot in countering the other and Delhi, till now, has come out far more successful in the game. India will not budge till it feels that Maoists have turned 'democratic' and will be 'sensitive' to its concerns. For his part, Prachanda feels India wants to destroy him politically, and irrespective of the compromises he makes, Delhi will not give him space. Insecurities and belligerence on both sides has led to a vicious cycle.

Don't fall for it when politicians say they will finish all the remaining tasks of the peace process in four months. This is logistically impossible, and there is neither the intention nor the capacity to do so among the forces which matter. 🇳🇵

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Himalayan Bajar



 **ECONOMIC SENSE**
Artha Beed

GANGTOK—Raman Shrestha decided to convert his old bookstore into a vibrant place where writers, filmmakers, and art enthusiasts can meet.

He has hosted many events to connect with people who saw Gangtok (*above*) as more than just a backwater. The café culture that first began in Kathmandu has spread to the other Himalayan towns and cities today, perhaps announcing the beginning of a vibrant new Himalayan cultural cross-pollination.

In Kathmandu, the state has decided to celebrate Indra Jatra by showcasing festivals identified with the Newas and the Kathmandu Valley only. But Sikkim is more inclined to promote diversity, as it is now going to have a Newa Center, established to begin serious work on learning the culture of the ethnic group from Kathmandu. While Nepalis are trying to see

what differentiates them, the people of Sikkim are focusing on what unites them.

The Indian state is in a hurry to lift its population from poverty, and by all accounts is doing a good job. Plans are on to ensure that there are no people below the poverty line by the year 2013. Some, who have received state-sponsored protection through reservations since the annexation of Sikkim, want to use the poverty status to receive subsidies similar to the Schedule Tribe reservations.

The challenge would be for Sikkim to ensure that the perceived development is sustainable. Every toilet the government builds for its citizens should have the capacity for maintenance too. Like the donor does in Nepal, it is the federal government's grants that allows the state government to build new roads, schools and health centers. Making these activities sustainable will be one of the biggest challenges for Sikkim.

Regular readers will have noticed that The Beed never tires from talking about the rent-

seeking mentality in Nepal. There are parallels in Sikkim, too. Subjects of the earlier Sikkim kingdom enjoy preferential treatment in terms of ownership of land as well as other benefits, like not having to follow the federal tax laws. Apart from some enterprising people, many make the most out of the legal status rather than taking advantage and fostering entrepreneurship. The preferential status, however, will never be permanent, so it will be interesting to see how the people will adapt to Sikkim nationals being treated at par with nationals of other Indian states.

Leveraging privileged status means people tend to focus too much on their own confined territory and not care about the larger economic system. Next door, the Nepali-speaking state of Darjeeling continues to reel in its battle for identity and state intervention for economic development. Therefore, the challenge for Sikkim will be to see how it starts helping stabilise the economic vicinity it is located in.

There is talk in Gangtok of a Himalayan Bajar, which could be a common market like the EU. Surely, for the future of the Himalayan economies, it will be important to start re-exploring this concept of a pan-Himalayan economic zone. In the future of economic growth, political boundaries will start losing relevance. The sooner the Himalayan states realise this and look at working together, the better will the interest of the Himalayan people be served.  www.arthabeed.com

 | nepalitimes.com
Why Sikkim works, #126

Key partnership

Hester Biosciences, an Indian company, has joined hands with Him Electronics of Golchha group to set up Nepal's first animal vaccine manufacturing unit in Panchkhal, Kabhre. The factory which will export 20 types of livestock and poultry vaccines to India, Africa, South America, and Europe.

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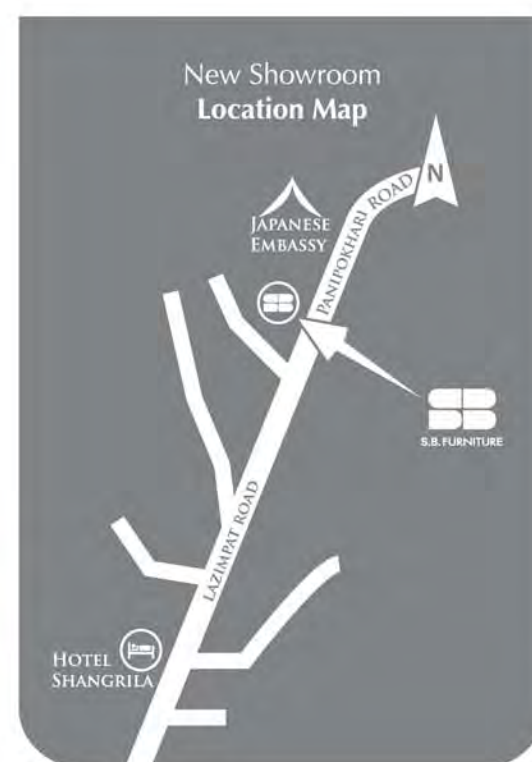
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COMMENT
David Sogge

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are today’s global foreign aid agenda. Yet if we look at who’s aiding whom, there is a net transfer of funds from poor countries to rich countries. Through many decades, declarations and mega-conferences, the United Nations and aid industry leaders have worked tirelessly to get governments and the media to sing from the same hymn book, to use the same discourse, and tell the same story. Better than any previous proclamation of intentions, the MDGs have met needs for a single narrative. It’s a liturgy for a broad church, encompassing a range of matters, from school attendance to clean water, to the health of mothers and children. Bundled together, these problems attract a diverse spectrum of issue-specific groups. The MDGs get them out of their silos and into a big policy coalition rallying under a single banner. The approach matches mainstream media’s standard story line: Someone is in distress.

Help arrives. Distress is relieved. All’s well that ends well. Proclaimed at a major United Nations summit in 2000 and subsequently expanded in 2005, the MDGs’ neat packages of aims, sub-aims, indicators and timelines thus harness no-nonsense ‘results-based management’ of the neo-liberals to the impalpable ‘human development’ goals of the social democrats. For pulling together policy coalitions, this has proven a good match. Both approaches focus on descriptors of poverty, see practical problem-solving as the way to tackle poverty, and largely avoid crucial matters like inequality. They keep troublesome political issues firmly off the table. They are worthy and bland, a plain vanilla

acceptable to everyone. The MDGs draw attention to important facts about poverty and the stunting of human capabilities. They imply – and this is also one of their merits – that those afflictions are preventable and can be radically reduced. Yet the MDGs fail to say anything meaningful about why they persist. The MDGs focus on measuring things that people lack to the detriment of understanding why they lack them. One reason for that silence may be the embarrassing fact that, as countries such as Vietnam have shown, success in reducing poverty stands a better chance where governments pursue disciplined development policies wholly at odds with the market fundamentalist kind required by donors in the past thirty years. Do donors take the MDGs seriously? Certainly they all sing hallelujah about them, and often use them to justify their aid budgets. But they have yet to put more money where their mouths are. Donor spend in four aid priority sectors in MDG number eight (basic education, basic health, nutrition and water/sanitation). But then again, donors have been careful never to make any ironclad commitments. Everything is voluntary and at their discretion. Nothing they promise, or refuse to do is

politically or juridically enforceable. By contrast, most aid recipients have to toe the donor line, or face unpleasant consequences. But just who is aiding whom? Especially since the late 1990s, most global flows, after netting out foreign aid, foreign direct investment and remittances, have gone from poor to rich (see table). In 2002 a team of World Bank economists calculated that up to \$60 billion in extra aid outlays would be needed, alongside other measures, in order to achieve the MDGs equivalent to about one-tenth of those recorded as flowing from the poor to the rich. The prevailing relationship, therefore, is essentially predatory. Despite their new talk about ‘poverty reduction and growth’, the citadels of the aid system continue pushing the same formulas that frustrate equitable development in poor countries and facilitate the haemorrhage of resources and funds from them. Under these conditions, trying to achieve the MDGs is like trying to walk up an escalator going down.

David Sogge is a board member of the Transnational Institute.

 [tni.org](#)
Millennium Development Goals for the Rich?



Nepal award

NEW YORK—Nepal received the Millennium Development Goal Award for its “outstanding national leadership, commitment and progress” in dramatically reducing maternal mortality rate. Nepal’s representative at the UN, Gyan Chandra Acharya, received the award at a ceremony on 20 September and was cited for meeting MDG Goal Five. Nepal’s maternal mortality rate has been reduced from 415 deaths per 100,000 live births to 229 deaths in the past ten years. Nepal’s Home Minister Bhim Rawal, who replaced the prime minister at the last moment, addressed the MDG Summit in New York this week. Speaking to the General Assembly, he highlighted Nepal’s successes in meeting most MDG targets, and said efforts were being made to address MDG 2 and 3 (universal primary education and gender equality) Nepal still lags behind. “These targets will not be met without enhanced and additional support measures from the international community,” Rawal told the assembly, “we call for the fulfillment of all ODA commitments by the developed countries in a predictable, transparent and accountable manner.” While national leadership and ownership of the development process was important, Rawal said, a “stronger global partnership” was equally crucial.



POOR GIVE TO RICH: Average annual transfers 2002-2008		
Africa	(negative)	- \$50 billion
East and South Asia	(negative)	- \$239 billion
Western Asia	(negative)	- \$105 billion
Latin America & Caribbean	(negative)	- \$65 billion
East Bloc Economies	(negative)	- \$75 billion
Total	(negative)	- \$534 billion

Source: UN-DESA, 2010, World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010, New York



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members
from Nepal

It is not suprising to meet Nepalis these days on land. But workers from landlocked Nepal can now be seen on luxury ocean liners and casino ships on the high seas.

There are now more than 1,000 Nepalis working in cruise ships in the South China Sea, the Malacca Straits, the Caribbean and even Alaska and Japan. On the Star Aquarius docked at Hong Kong harbour recently, there were 55 Nepalis among the crew: waiters, barmen, casino staff, security guards, housekeeping and cooks.

After serving 17 years with the Nepal Army, Pushparaj Upreti has been on the Aquarius now for seven years, in-charge of security. "It's really much better out at sea than on land," he says.

Nepali employees of Star Cruise earn

anywhere between \$400-,\$1,700. Gobin Pudasaini used to earn Rs 25,000 a month in Qatar, but now takes home double that as a steward. "It's a good life, I get to sail around the region, see new places and I am able to save much more," says Gobin.

Work on the 13-storey liner with 2,600 passengers while at sea is not easy. But the crew gets two months of vacation with roundtrip tickets to Nepal paid for. And they get to see exotic destinations in Vietnam, China, Thailand and other parts of East Asia. Many of the Nepalis got to literally go "overseas" after working for a few years in hotels and in security agencies in Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Malaysia.

Anil Shrestha from Kathmandu is having the time of his life, he says: "There is never a dull moment." 🇳🇵



AT SEA: Star Aquarius docks at Hong Kong harbour. Dinesh Pandey (top) of Kathmandu works hard and plays hard. Pushpa Raj Upreti (far left) left his military job to handle security on board the ship.



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Rhino bank



SHAHANI SINGH

Ace brands itself with a conservation message

When it comes to marketing products in Nepal, there are examples of a company's logo or symbol effectively combining a social agenda with strong branding. Ace Development Bank's adoption of the endangered Asiatic one-horned rhinoceros last year as its mascot is now regarded as a successful case study in marketing with a conscience.

Ace decided on the rhino because the animal's body armour and size gives it the image of power, strength and stability. However, the fact that it is being poached nearly into extinction also gave the bank a "green" image. Ace used 'Innovation and Integrity' as its tagline and used the rhino logo to brand its new Ace Rhino Deposit account designed to influence children as and adults to develop a saving habit.

More than a year into the campaign, Ace Development Bank CEO Siddhant Pandey (pictured, above) admits the ad may have been a little ahead of its time because the concept of mascots has not really caught on in Nepal yet.

"We are still very product-driven in our ads, whereas in the west people identify with mascots and symbols more," Pandey told Nepali Times, "there were actually people who asked why our rhino was standing on two legs."

Ace has gone beyond just using the rhino in its logos, and has actually adopted two rhinos at the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel. It has renovated the enclosure for the rhinos and created a "honeymoon suite" for the pair to mate. When we visited them this week, Kanchha (pictured, below) and his mate looked reasonably blissful.



The ad campaign in the print and electronic media included a state-of-the-art animation by Incessant Rain in which the cute anthropomorphism of the rhino was a hit, especially with children. "The kids absolutely love our advertisement, and we've heard they don't let their parents change the channel when it is being broadcast," says Pandey. Interestingly, the animation of a squirrel storing nuts did seem to go over the heads of other, older, Nepali viewers.

The honeymoon suite concept has caught the attention of the international media and the story has travelled worldwide. This could translate also into added funding for rhino conservation.

There is, however, more muted response within Nepal where mascot branding is a new concept. Says Pandey: "The function of the mascot is to create awareness of conservation issues while at the same time helping the bank brand, and I think we have communicated that message."

Shahani Singh

EVENTS

Screening of *The Desert Eats Us*, directed by prize winning documentary maker Kesang Tseten. *Friday 1 October, 4.45pm. Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap*

Rivers of Pilgrimage, The Indian Cultural Centre and Siddhartha Art Gallery present photographs from India and Nepal. *17 to 30 September, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

Colours of Silence: Glimpses of Mustang, exhibition of Photos by Italian Restorer Luigi Fieni. *26 September to 24 October, 5.30pm, Sidhartha Art Gallery 4218048*

Gurukul, the theater group presents *Seto Kapal*, a play directed by Bijaya Bisnot. *Till 25 September, 5.30pm, Gurukul, Purano Baneswor, 4466956*



Alchemy, an exhibition of paintings and bamboo silk rugs by artist Peter Delahaye. *Saturday 25 September, 6.30pm, Pipalbot, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4267657, pipalbot108@yahoo.com*

Thailand Today, an exhibition on Thai culture, education and tourism. *Saturday 25 September, 10am, Regal Ballroom, Yak & Yeti Hotel, 4371410*

A People War Exhibition, Nepal's conflict history in pictures. *Except Tuesdays, 11am-4pm, Patan Dhoka. For school visits, call 5549948, www.apeoplewar.com*

Vulture Conservation Festival 2010, vulture nest watching, jungle hiking, camping and other activities, organized by Roots and Shoots Nepal. *From 24 to 26 September, Basabasahi, Nawalparasi, call 4107599 for registration*

Tavern Tales Special, The Nepal Bharat Library presents *Namita Gokhale in Tour on Kathmandu*, the author and founder of Jaipur Literary Festival will be hosting lectures, readings and talks. *28-30 September, Nepal Bharat Library (28 and 30 September) and DAV school (29 and 30 September), www.qcbookshop.com*

Bandipur Festival 2010, holiday packages to Bandipur, food stalls and dance and cultural shows. *23 to 25 September, Tundikhel, Kathmandu, 10am to 7pm*

13th ASA Annual Architectural Exhibition, exhibition by students of Architecture at Pulchok Campus, students works, designs and many more, also art competition on 25 September, 10am. *1 to 3 October, Institute of Engineering, Pulchok*

Cycle 4: Selfie, photo exhibition by 17 young amateur photographers. *Till 23 October, Galleria CUC, Momo Magic, Pulchowk*

MUSIC

Bourbon Room, live performances by Cine Gurung. *Every Wednesday, Bourbon Room, Durbar Marg, 4441703*

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency with barbeque and live jazz music by Inner Groove. *Every Sunday from 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362*



Nepathya Live in Concert, Nepathya hits the stage after four years. *28 September, 6pm, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi, Tickets: Rs 1000/Rs 500, call 9751083433*

DINING

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest Resort. *Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, info@gokarna.net ,Rs. 1500 + Taxes*

Arabian Nights in The Cafe, taste the culinary delights from the Middle-East. *Every Friday from 6:30 pm onwards, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362*

Vesper Café, has quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps but at a hefty price. *Jhamel, open daily 11:00AM – 10PM*

Attic, newly transformed lounge/bar ideal for Friday night drinking before hitting the dance spots. Popular among local celebrities. *Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat, 984161476*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. A sanctuary for meat. *Thamel, 4260471*

Jazoo, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special barbeque set for a mix of everything, *Jawalakhel (near the zoo), 5538321*

Hadock, big compound with ample parking space, their Western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. *Jhamel, 5546431*

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

Dhokaima Cafe has a new menu, try the Blackened Norwegian Salmon and Grilled Shrimp Ajillo. *Patan Dhoka, 5522113*

Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool and sample the delicious barbeque in open air. *Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm at the poolside, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*



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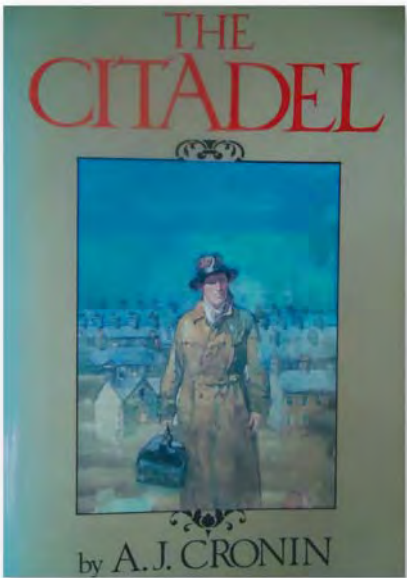
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A J Cronin

DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the physician turned novelist A J Cronin inspired many of us older doctors in Nepal to join the medical profession. His description of patients with tuberculosis which is still rampant in our part of the world is fascinating to read. He cleverly spun a story around these characters in ‘The Stars Look Down’ where his opening paragraphs describe a cough in a character which has profound implications as the story unfolds. His timeless stories about coal miners with TB in Wales in the early 20 th century (‘The Citadel’, for example) has echoes of stories of patients in present day Kathmandu, Karachi to Kerala.

After graduating from medical college from the University of Glasgow in 1914, he visited India as a ship’s surgeon. This trip probably had a profound effect on him as he witnessed how humanity in distant lands eked



out an existence. It was fortunate for his readers that later due to an illness, he serendipitously found his calling in writing with his first book, ‘Hatter’s Castle’.

The oral medical exams for his MRCP that he describes in his autobiography ‘Adventures in Two Worlds’ is very reminiscent of exactly what goes on in many medical colleges throughout Nepal (indeed South Asia) even to this day.

Many factors are dependent on the whim of the examiner. When one realises Cronin is not a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge but rather from a Scottish University, the disdain on the part of the examiner is apparent. Cronin suddenly feels ill at ease in his inexpensive suit. What follows is some of the finest and most relevant writing that many Nepali doctors can easily identify with and will love to read.

In the seventies no Western book store would be complete without a collection of Cronin’s books. Many of us that were fortunate to read his books fervently discussed the various characters as they continued to hold us spellbound.

Many of his stories also dealt with social injustices where the protagonist is a lone fighter for the rights of the disenfranchised. In Nepal where there are too many examples of social inequities and selective application of the law, the selfless character of Francis Chisholm in ‘The Keys of the Kingdom’ will continue to inspire long after you have finished reading the book.



CELEBRATIONS, LATER: Newly elected president of the Nepali Congress, Sushil Koirala, was admitted to Teaching Hospital, Maharajgunj on Wednesday morning. Doctors say that Koirala has lung infection and will need to stay at the hospital for few days.



GOD KING: Ex-king Gyanendra's garlanded picture on a throne at the Kumari Temple in Kathmandu. The government advised the king not to attend the traditional blessing ceremony on Tuesday for "security reasons" two hours before the scheduled event.

GREEN SCENE

Mind your carbon footprint

Order water at any restaurant in Kathmandu, and chances are that you will be served water in a plastic bottle. At Kantipur Temple House the waiter will graciously hand you a metal flask. No plastic, no non-degradable waste. “Our aim, among other things, is to minimise plastic usage in the hotel,” says Subechhya Basnet of Kantipur Temple House. The guests are discouraged to use mineral water bottles and plastic bags.



Instead, the hotel lends them reusable water bottles and cloth shopping bags free of cost. Basnet says her hotel has saved 8,000 mineral water bottles from ending up in landfill sites last year alone. Built in the Newari architectural style, Kantipur Temple House has been committed to heritage and environment conservation since it opened in 1998. Even though it is a four-storied building, the owners

decided against installing an elevator. And as most guests are trekkers, they don’t complain about it. Kantipur Temple House doesn’t have power-hungry ACs either. The greenery of the hotel’s garden is a rare sight in the built-up Thamel area. The hotel uses compost it makes from kitchen waste in the garden. “We incubate the waste for about a week to 10 days to turn it into compost,” explain Sri Krishna

Gajurel, the hotel’s chef who works with his staff to inculcate eco-friendly values. All items in the menu have organic ingredients. Like other hotels, Kantipur doesn’t change guest bed sheets and towels every day unless requested. Buckets are placed in all bathrooms to save cold water that flows before the water turns warm. This water is then used for cleaning. The hotel uses solar thermal for heating water and will soon be installing photovoltaic power wired through the rooms. The hotel tries to cultivate eco-friendly behavior among its guests by placing placards with tips in the lobby and in rooms. Its guest book reflects appreciation for its commitment to the environment. Basnet says, “We are trying to promote responsible tourism and our guests have come back because they value what we do.” Paavan Mathema



REALLY DIVINE: The Bhairab sips a pack of Real juice while looking down from the window of her official residence at Basantapur on Wednesday during Indra Jatra.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

Normally, the monsoon would have made its departure early this week, but this satellite-radar composite from Thursday at noon shows it may linger a while longer. The low pressure circulation has dragged in cold air from the northeast, bringing down temperatures by 3 degrees, and this is combining with the moisture in the system to dump precipitation over central Nepal. We can expect the continuation of this trend through the weekend with light rain as the low pressure trough plays a tug-o-war with advancing westerlies.

FRI	SAT	SUN
25-19	24-20	24-19

Fuming about fumes

Is your car's green sticker a greenwash?



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Right now, forget the wild, careering micro that almost knocked you off your bike and the steaming traffic jams that make a mockery of the idea of being in an 'automobile' (yes, you're 'on the road', and that's just where you'll stay). Let's just tease out one strand from the snarl of issues that bedevil the simple act of moving from one part of the Kathmandu Valley to another.

Namely, the traffic here sickens me. Literally. In the weeks since I stopped wearing a mask while riding my bicycle, the frequency of my sniffles and sneezes has increased to the extent that it's occurred to me – could the billowing clouds of black smoke I breathe in every morning and evening possibly be clogging up my respiratory system?

My unscientific hunch is yes, hell yes. Scientifically speaking, a 2010 report from the Health Effects Institute concludes that there is a 'causal relationship between exposure to traffic-related air pollution and exacerbation of asthma' and 'suggestive evidence of a causal relationship with onset of childhood asthma, nonasthma respiratory symptoms, impaired lung function, total and cardiovascular mortality, and cardiovascular morbidity'. Traffic pollution has been blamed for tens of thousands of deaths every year across Europe, with The Lancet estimating that six per cent of deaths a year in Austria, France and Switzerland are due to air pollution. Half these deaths – some 20,000 – were linked to traffic fumes.

But you know all this already, dear readers. If some of you are deprived of the pleasure of walking, cycling or biking through the streets, and are lucky enough to be sealed into air-conditioned compartments as you traverse the city, at least you can see what's going on here when exhaust obscures your view. And at this point I'd request you to answer this question: does your steel chariot make the grade? In other words, are you one of those villains contributing to my slow, agonising, inevitably premature demise?

Perhaps you smile, thinking of the cute green sticker on the left of the windscreen that indicates the vehicle has passed an emissions test. But think again. How did you get hold of it? If you don't know, ask your driver. Can you say for sure that your vehicle passed the test, and, upon payment of a token fee of Rs 35, was awarded its ticket to



KIRAN PANDAY

the highway? Or, as is quite possible, did your vehicle fail the test, but still came away with a green sticker courtesy of a bribe of Rs 500-1000, thus avoiding the hassle of a visit to the mechanic's? If Madhav Nepal and his ministers can go around without stickers, can you really take the trouble?

Yes you can. If the traffic policeman who gives your smoking hot ride the green light

can be a criminal, if the civil servant who issues you the sticker can be a criminal, so can you. Judging by the exhaust fumes of not just trucks and micros but schoolbuses, army jeeps, private sedans and donor SUVs, there's a whole lotta shaking down going on. Consider it a minor absurdity that my publisher's electric Reva got stopped by a copper demanding to see its green emission sticker last year.

So please, please, if only to avoid the curses of an entire ward of emphysema patients in the not too distant future, could you confirm you really deserve the sticker you bear? And the next time you get it renewed, can you actually get your car tested for an actually deserved sticker? You may be saving time and losing money to grease the palms of a few pathetic government employees, but the health costs to

you and everyone you know may be a little higher than you realise.

PS: The standard issue masks (Rs 100) barely do any good, Saleway's plastic masks (Rs 400) are better, but with no replacement filters, too expensive. Holding my breath through the worst of the fumebursts can't be sustained – so I'll thank any recommendations (except staying at home) from the bottom of my beleaguered lungs. 🇳🇵

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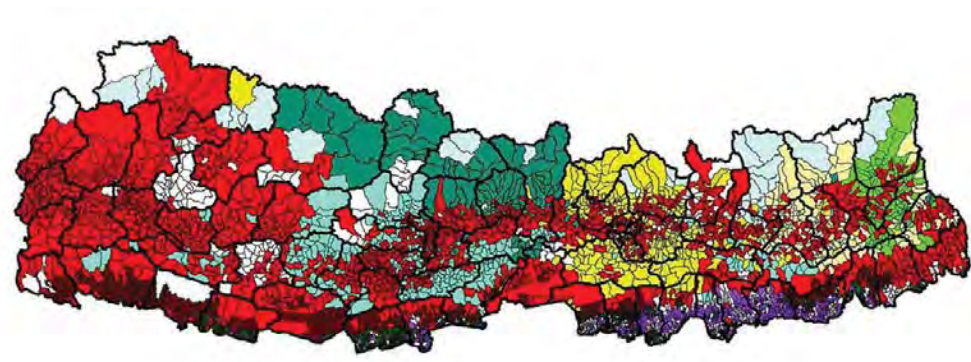


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Nepal, an emerging rainbow



The trend towards inter-ethnic marriages is helping knit together Nepal's social fabric

RUBEENA MAHATO

Bahun are marrying Newars, Rais are marrying Chhetris, Pahadis are marrying Madhesis like never before. With greater mobility, education and rising living standards, Nepali families are becoming a mongrel nation in the best possible sense.

Divisive ethnic politics may have forced us to be cynical about integration, but multicultural families prove that coexistence is not just possible, but necessary, in a country like Nepal with its rich ethnic diversity.

Yuki Poudyal, daughter of a Newar mother and a Bahun father, has got used to being questioned about her Brahmin surname and strikingly Newari facial features. "I have the best of both worlds," she

says, "it doesn't bother me anymore when people ask me if I am Newar because that is also very much a part of my heritage."

Explains Yuki's brother Ananta: "Maybe because in the family we get to interact with people from both communities we get to see how similar we are, and not how different."

Yuki's father, Shambhu, says the family has managed to break through ethnic stereotypes. "Our family was built around values other than caste or ethnicity, so it was natural for the children to be less hung up about them," he says.

At 14, Niharika Kharel Shrestha is clearer about her identity than most students her age. She makes it a point to mention both her surnames when asked about her caste. "I am a Bahun who is also a

Newar," Niharika replies when asked about which ethnicity she feels closer to.

The best part of having a multicultural background for Pravat J. Gurung is celebrating festivals of both sides of his family. "I am both a Gurung and a Rana," says Pravat.

Keeping a balance between two cultures is sometimes difficult, but Niharika's mother Sandhya has managed it for over two decades now. She has kept her maiden name, follows Newari and Brahmin traditions with equal zest and celebrates festivals of both sides.

"People fear their language and culture would die if they marry into another caste, it does not have to be that way," she explains.

Inter-ethnic marriages are now

becoming so common that some extended families now look like Nepal in a microcosm. Malvika Subba, former Miss Nepal and daughter of a Bahun mother and a Limbu father, knows this well. Her brother has married a Newar who is a half-Newar, half-Thakuri. Another brother has married a Chettri. Malvika has Tamang, Tibetan, Gurung and even Singaporean Chinese to count among her relatives.

Says Malvika: "I love my rainbow family. If such diverse people can live under one roof, there is no reason why communities can't live in peace."



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nation



MOSAIC: Village-wise ethnic distribution of Nepal (far, left) and the Poudyal-Dali family at their home in Putali Sadak.

KIRAN PANDAY

Across generations

When it comes to living with multiple identities, few people know it better than Rashmi Shah Prajapati. Her father is a Thakuri, mother a Rai, and is herself married to a Newar. Rashmi's mother was born from an inter-ethnic union as well, from a Chettri mother and a Rai father, both of whom spoke fluent Maithili, having spent their lifetime in Janakpur. When asked what her roots are, Rashmi replies without hesitation: "Nepali."



Who am I?

When tensions flared between Madhesi and Pahadis, Kalpana Singh must have asked herself: "Who am I?" Her mother is a Pahadi Bahun and father a Madhesi, and her village in the Tarai is home to many Tamang families. She speaks with her Tamang friends in Maithili and converses with her Newar aunt in Nepali. Her Madhesi grandfather teaches Nepali in the village school.

Sangita Singh who married Kalpana's uncle is a Newar from Butwal, which falls under a proposed federal province of the Magars. She now lives in Kathmandu, which is claimed by both Newars and Tamangs. Asks Sangita: "If Nepal becomes an ethnic federation, where do we belong?"

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“We urgently need the budget”

Interview with Rastra Bank governor, Yubaraj Khatiwada *Rajdhani*, 21 September

राजधानी

Rajdhani: Is Nepal’s economy in complete disarray?

Yubaraj Khatiwada: Given the country’s transition and political turmoil, current economic indicators are actually not so disappointing, but we are losing the base for economic development. We have an economic growth rate of 3.5 per cent, which is not bad. The inflation has reduced to 10 per cent from 13 per cent, which is normal in South Asia. There is fiscal depletion, which has hampered development activities. There is a problem with exports, which has contracted by 10 per cent this fiscal year, but imports have increased 33 per cent. If remittance fails to balance the difference between imports and exports, then it will be problematic.

How is the delayed budget affecting the economy?

Development activities have stagnated. The government has not been able to bring in new policies and programs. It has not reviewed revenue policies either. It has done nothing for trade balance and policies to stabilise domestic financial activities. Because of this, the financial sector is affected. The private sector prefers to wait out this impasse. As a whole, the delayed budget has affected the economic growth rate and development entirely. There should not



be any further delay in presenting the budget.

Why does the banking sector look slack?

We capped the credit flow in specific sectors when banks had already invested 95 per cent of their deposits. However, there has been a significant improvement in credit flow and deposit. Now that things have improved, banks can start lending again.

What of the balance of payment situation?

The balance of payment is still negative. Foreign currency reserves in July/August this year is the same as it was last year. We were expecting growth, but it did not happen.

Is the liquidity crunch over?

There is enough liquidity in banks right now. Some banks are in a better position to sell their debentures for returns. Since July, they have not used repo for cash. But the banks should be careful while revising interest rates so that depositors are not hurt.

Has Nepal failed in implementing provisions against laundering black money?

Nepal is in a political transition. There are underground political actors and armed groups due to instability. illegal trade, open border and a fixed peg with the Indian rupee are some of the other factors contributing to a slack in provisions.



Rights

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 21 Septeber

कान्तिपुर

Sexual and gender minorities of Nepal have been forced to advocate once again for their right to citizenship. Going against the directive of the Supreme Court, the home ministry has stopped administration offices in all 75 districts from giving citizenships to sexual minorities. It argues that such a process would require wide changes in the existing laws. Five people, however, have already received citizenship with the identity of third gender after the Supreme Court’s ruling.

Every individual has the right to citizenship and the sexual and gender minorities should be no exception. The Blue Diamond Society, which works for the right of these people, reports that about 400,000 transgender individuals are in touch with them. Being a transgender or a homosexual is not a fault. It is not a disease either.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has asked for a few days’ time to hold legal consultations in the matter after meeting with CA member Sunil Babu Pant. The third gender community has been waiting for the prime minister’s answer and has also been preparing for an agitation. The government should immediately make provisions to give citizenship to the transgender and other sexual minorities either by issuing a circular or by amending the law if necessary.

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UPSTAIRS JAZZ

“This isn’t a popularity contest”

Interview with CA Speaker Subash Chandra Nembang *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17 September-10 October

Are you aware that a CA member has asked a Chinese national Rs 500 million to purchase CA members in a telephone conversation?

This issue has formally entered the parliament after a lot of effort. It is linked to our national pride. I will address other questions after this issue is resolved.

There are CA members who have been convicted by the court and even given life terms in jail.

The government is responsible for implementing the Supreme Court's orders. The parliament does not have a role in it. The concerned bodies need to turn their attention towards it.

The constitution has not been written, the government is delayed.

CA members are being charged for criminal activities. What will the people think?

There is no alternative to writing the constitution and taking the peace process to its logical conclusion. The irregularities that are being raised have to be investigated. And then the truth has to be presented before the people.

हिमाल



Seven rounds of elections have taken place to elect a prime minister. How long do you think this will drag on?

I wanted the prime minister to be elected on July 21 so that he could immediately form the state restructuring commission. But that did not happen. There is a sense of disappointment among the people. I request the political parties again to end this deadlock.

Do you agree that the people’s trust on the CA, its members and the speaker has decreased?

A feeling of confusion and disappointment has increased among the people. All parties should work to build the people's trust.

They say you haven’t been able to gain the goodwill of the parties?

These are comments made when I have tried to work according to the parliament's rules. When the president said that the prime

minister can be elected with signatures from 301 CA members, I disagreed. Some said that 301 CA members could submit their signatures to the speaker and then the prime minister could be announced in a press conference. But this would have been against the constitution. It won't earn me praise, but I am not in a popularity contest.



Red tomatoes

Janadisha, 20 September

जानिदिशा

Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) cadre have painted the town red—with tomatoes. Ripe tomatoes have turned the terraces of Gagalphedi VDC in Kathmandu district red. Thirteen YCL cadres are busy weeding, collecting and transporting tomatoes here under the leadership of Raju Ghale (Comrade Tej), chairperson of Constituency 6. Cultivated in seven ropanis of land three months ago, the tomatoes have earned the YCL office here Rs 150,000 already. The land is on a three-year lease, and has plastic greenhouses. Ghale says the cash crop could earn at least Rs 120,000 from one ropani per season. The YCL say commercial cultivation of tomatoes and its supply has eased the financial burden placed on the party, and there are plans to diversify commercial vegetable farming.



Prime ministerial election
You playing?
We are not.

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in Kantipur, 19 September

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Maneater eats woman

Going by the headlines in this country, monkeys are always a menace and the monsoon is always wreaking havoc among other priceless gems like:

- >3 Drowned to Death
- >UML Whets Penal Knife
- >Simian Power Rules
- >Maneater Eats Woman

One more deserving than the next for distinction of winning the Ass' Headline on Deadline Sheild.

Now that the Great Congress Boozep is over, it is time to take stock of the achievements of the party's general convention. All the bars along Dilli Bajar and Sundhara have run out of alcohol. The main reason Brave Lion won was because the election committee banned the use of mobile phones in the voting booth. What do cell phones have to do with the voting for the Congress president poll? Good question. It seems the Sher's panel was offering one lak each to everyone who voted for them, but to collect the 100 grand from the Bag Man you had to take a picture of the ballot paper with



ANIL POKHREL

your tick mark as proof. With phones banned, the plan fell thru, giving Jhusil the edge. The election exposed the great discrepancy in the cost of buying a vote in the CA, where the going rate according to CPji is 5 karod. The upshot is that whatever was the strategy behind getting Khum Dai to back Lionheart, it **backfired badly**.

The Kangres Konvention was also an organisational feat that rivalled the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. Sponsors erected welcome arches across major city thoroughfares that were so narrow that they blocked half the road, causing huge traffic jams throughout the week.

The Ahm Saba at the Khula Munch was something to behold: the party exhibited its superior management skills in which several VIPs got swallowed up by their sofas in a **multiple furniture malfunction**. The event culminated in a grande finale when the two candidates for party president delivered their speeches in heavy rain and total darkness.

Miffed that most Miss Nepal contests are won by janjati wimmin, the upper crust has set up its own beauty contest that is called **Miss Aryan** (only female Caucasians will vie for Miss Crème de la crème) and in the illustrious all-Khas judges panel

is our very own Sishi Gamala.

At the rate new schools and colleges are springing up every day, we are soon going to run out of names for them. In fact, there is already a crippling scarcity given the fact that the most sought-after names are already taken: Glacier, Caribbean, Caspian, Pacific, Kathford. Schools have been forced to venture further afield for names, even into outer space: Uranus, Neptune, Jupiter, Titan, Galaxy. And there seems to be a particular fascination for institutions, buildings and even persons linked in one way or another to the US federal government: Pentagon, White House, NASA, Clinton,

Empire State. As a pro-bono service to the education sector, the Ass would like to offer the following perfectly appropriate names on a first come first served basis:
Vampire Institute
Guadacanal Academy
Playboy Vocational School
Bacteria Polytechnic
Albatross College
Nazi Swastika Vidyalaya

Ass fan Shyamal Shrestha writes in to say that the nation's future is guaranteed as long as we have the following superhero netas:

- Bat Man Bijukchhe**
- Iron Man Tuladhar**
- Hit Man Shakya**
- Spider Man Singh**
- Super Man Sainju**

This week's **Foot in Mouth Award** goes to Kamred Lila Money for announcing the stoppage of 14 hydroelectric projects that together would generate 5,000 megawatts in the next six years. Perfect timing, cuz we've just heard from the grapevine that power cuts this winter will total 18 hrs a day. Way to go, Comrades!

Send nominations for the prestigious Foot in the Mouth Award to [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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