

# NEPALI Times

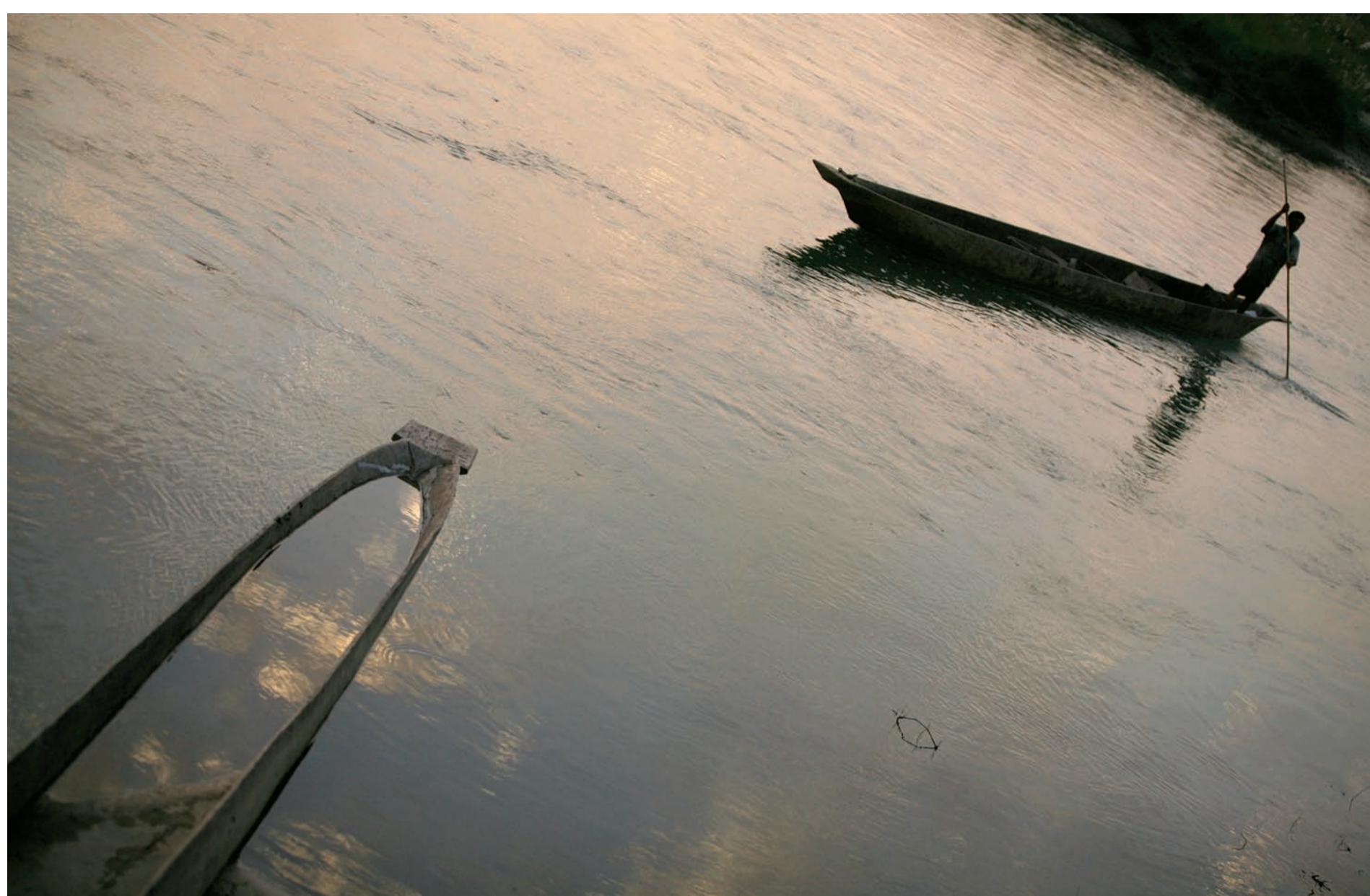
#527

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KIRAN PANDAY

## Sinking ship

There's a hole in our bucket, as I'm sure you'll agree. Quite a few, actually. There's the politicians, of course, who manage on a day to day basis to drain out this country's hopes and vital juices. They are also knocking holes in our economy with their muddleheaded sparring. But worst of all, perhaps, is the gaping hole in our social fabric when it comes to the way we

treat our women. While men just about manage to stay afloat on the uncertain surface calm of the everyday, women are sinking. This issue, **Anuradha Koirala** of Maiti Nepal, recognised as one of CNN's Heroes for 2010, laments the fact that trafficking of women still goes on. **Pamela Sciantarelli** and **Eugenia Gabelia** lay bare the truth behind Mumbai's Kamathipura, where enslaved

Nepali women are crushed by the weight of the government's, and society's, indifference. You'd think things were bad enough. But the regressive decisions on citizenship made by the self-appointed High-level Task Force on 4 November are beyond belief, as **Damakant Jayshi** finds out. There's a hole in our bucket, let's fix it.

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# LAST RESORT

The 'resort series' of political talks on power sharing and the peace process have yielded nothing beyond a pointless four-point press release on agreeing to disagree, with the dubious promise of more of the same come 15 November. The mainstream media, at least to begin with, did attempt to encourage everyone watching (and participating) by positing the talks as important in reducing the trust deficit. But this was of little comfort in the end.

The four options tabled by the Maoists seem to be non-options meant for the consumption of those who would like to believe the ex-rebels are actually being constructive and flexible. The first two, that of forming governments led either by the Maoists or some NC/UML/Rest-of-Nepal configuration, were redundant propositions to make in the absence of any change in the positions of the negotiating parties. The impracticality of a rotating government was laughable, and the idea of a Presidium has no place in a democracy, stuck as we may be. The Maoists will not entertain the possibility of moving on the

peace process without being allowed to lead the government, the NC will not let the Maoists lead the government without some movement on the peace process, and the UML, as ever, is thrashing about in the middle.

So it does seem that we are stuck. Coming into the last week of the special budget, however, the exigencies created by the imminent lack of salaries (rather than national economic crisis) may actually force the Maoists to give ground. It's only logical for the government to hold back payments to cantonments to start with, then stop paying the salaries of CA members (most of whom are, of course, Maoists). So in effect the parties have less than a week to hammer out an agreement on what form of budget to announce, and how.

For now, it seems unlikely that the CA session will be prorogued to introduce the budget through a special ordinance. The business community will seek to pressure the government, but until the public feels the heat, May rallies may be a while away (notwithstanding the debacle

surrounding tickets for athletes travelling to the Asian Games in China, due to a lack of funds and ethics). It's in the interest of the Maoists as much as anyone else to allow the budget to go through, so to retain their credibility in the run-up to their Gorkha plenum by not allowing a caretaker government to present a full budget, they will have to push for a real government.

At which point it makes sense to look at the possibility of a Maoist-led government once more. Given their record in not fulfilling promises made vis-à-vis the peace process, in or out of power, it won't be enough for Ram Chandra Poudel to withdraw his candidacy to allow for government formation, just as Madhav Nepal's resignation wasn't. The onus remains on the UCPN(Maoist) to come up with a credible time-bound program to delink itself from its military wings definitively. This program has to be good enough to convince the NC and the UML, who should then be willing to support the formation of a Maoist-led government. Easier said than done, but for now there are no other viable options.



PICS: PRADEEP SHRESTHA



## TALKING ABOUT PORN

I remember when I lived in Nepal in the mid-1980s seeing men going up steep stairs to crowd into small rooms where they could, for a fee, watch porn ('Let's talk about porn', Indu Nepal, #526). I didn't know what they were doing at first, assumed it was a brothel, but soon learned the truth from my brother who, on a visit from the USA decided to go check it out! I also remember a Nepali friend of mine, a police officer who was stationed in Biratnagar, tell me how he and his friends would cross the border into Bihar to watch porn films. He feigned shock at this, but clearly he was enjoying it! This was, by the way, in 1985. Porn is nothing new, prostitution is nothing new. I am disturbed at how much of it seems to glorify violence towards women, however, and I did all I could to keep my son (now 21) away from it as a teenager. But he is an adult now and free to do what he wants. Banning porn won't make it go away. I say, get over it.

**kirsten**

- Speaking of violence against women, look at the Islamic world where even showing an ankle is considered pornographic – forget about websites, sensual posters, and movies. Without any of these western 'sins' in these Islamic nations, they are the most oppressive society when it comes to treatment of women. I am not sparing Hindu societies either, or Christians, go read the Bible to find out how to

treat women. All of this way before the time of the internet...and Playboy magazines.

**rita**

- Thanks Indu for writing this. I too was surprised when nobody in the media said a word about the ridiculousness of the whole affair. But guess I didn't realise how deep our collective sanctimony runs.

**Mamata Pokharel**

- If an adult with a sound mind wants to enjoy watching legally produced porn I have no objection or worry about it. However, I am strongly against children and adolescents accessing porn, and adults accessing illegal porn. If we cannot regulate it, it is far better to ban it (no one would be seriously harmed). I am surprised a woman writer is advocating porn. Even legal porn mostly demeans and misportrays women. Many encourage violence and maltreatment of women.

**R RAI**

- Aside from being a futile effort, the blockage of porn sites seems to miss the real problem. Nepali girls are still sold into brothels in Nepal, India and elsewhere – literal slavery. There has been a proliferation of massage parlours and dance bars where women are exploited either by force or because they have no other options. Efforts would be better spent targeting the trafficking of women and children and creating legitimate employment opportunities for women.

**Brad**

- Who is this Anna Purna that's in all the mags at the airport stall? Some famous porn star, apparently...

**touristo**

## ILAM LEADS

Congratulations to the people of Ilam! Let's hope that others will follow their radical example ('Plastic-free Ilam', Prabhat Bhattacharai, #526). I would love this to happen in Pokhara where I live, as we're literally sick of being poisoned by plastic burned on fires. Recently black plastic bags were reportedly banned here, but they've only been replaced by white ones! Where's the sense in that?

**bhauju**

- There is no need to ban plastic bags. Just procure some **d2w additive** and pour it into the polymer before the manufacture of bags kickstarts at the factory, and they will self-destruct at the end of their usual life, leaving no harmful residues. There is very little extra cost. This British technology is available if you log on to: www.d2w.net and www.biodeg.org. The plastic bags change into a material with a completely different fragmented molecular structure, and these fragments are bio-assimilated in the free and open environment even faster than straw and twigs.

**Sargam**

## FREEDOM TO UGLIFY

"Technically we cannot object to people putting up hoarding boards on their private property even if it makes the city look ugly." Hari Bahadur Kunwar, Kathmandu Metropolitan office. ('Billing boards', Rubeena Mahato, #526)

This is a BOGUS version of freedom. A city has to have its rules to keep it tidy and nice. If everyone is free, why does the government need to build roads and supply water and electricity? There should be rules and regulations and they have to be enforced. WE CANNOT BE SO FREE AS TO DO ANYTHING!!!

**NL**

## MOVING ON

This article shows the positives brought into people's lives, moving from refugee camps to places where they have a chance to re-build upon their hopes, dream big and actually have a chance to achieve it ('A new life', Kashish Das Shrestha, #526).

Whatever politics run in whichever countries, I for one have to thank Kashish/Gopal and the photo.circle team for their effort. Good luck to the remaining refugees.

**KTM**

**NEPALI Times**

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Weekly Internet Poll # 526

Q. Should Nepali be the official state language?

Total votes: 2,236



Weekly Internet Poll # 527. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Which of the options would you choose?

# Medieval mindsets



**MY TAKE**  
Damakant Jayshi

**H**as the high-level task force of the seven political parties, formed to settle disputes on the new constitution, erred in its decision of 4 November on citizenship?

I would like to believe that it was an uninformed error. For if it was deliberate, then none of the seven individuals on the high-profile panel deserve to hold public posts of any kind.

The panel has six communists (ok, one of them is an ex-communist) who fiercely project themselves as 'progressive'; the seventh member belongs to a centrist party. The panel had the opportunity to right the existing wrong in our laws, which do not treat a Nepali woman as equal to her male counterpart. But all it ended up doing was reinforcing age-old male chauvinist beliefs on treating women as inferior (and less nationalist).

Worse, they have even overturned far more progressive provisions in the Citizenship Act of 2006 and the Interim Constitution of 2007.

## THIS WEEK

### No end

The second round of closed door negotiations on power sharing and the peace process ended inconclusively on Wednesday. Top leaders of the three parties met at Gokarna Forest Resort to discuss the protracted political deadlock, the delayed budget, the peace process and constitution writing. But they were unable to agree on anything except on continuing dialogue in the days to come.

Maoist leaders insisted on the formation of a government first while the NC reiterated its stance on first finalising issues related to the peace process. The UML proposed that the current government be allowed to introduce the budget. The next round of talks has been scheduled for 15 November.

### End impasse

A division bench comprising justices Kalyan Shrestha and Girish Chandra Lal of the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed CA chair Subas Nembang to take the necessary steps to make the PM election fruitful. The court said the CA chair has the authority to find a way out of the current deadlock. CA regulations currently state that elections have to be repeated until a candidate wins the required majority or withdraws his candidacy. Ram Chandra Poudel, the lone candidate in the prime ministerial race, has lost the elections 16 times in a row. The next round of voting is slated for 15 November.

### Rescue chopper crashes

A Fishtail Air rescue helicopter crashed near Ama Dablam on Saturday, killing two crew members. The Eurocopter AS 350 had flown to the 6,812m high mountain near Mt Everest to rescue a team of Japanese climbers. The helicopter rescued two climbers and brought them down to Lukla and had returned to the mountain when it appeared to "fall out of the sky", according to eye-witnesses. The aircraft was piloted by Capt Sabin Basnyat, an experienced helicopter pilot with over 4,500 hours of helicopter flight experience. Also on board was Purna Awale, an aircraft engineer.

### Another extension

The high-level task force formed to resolve disputed issues of constitution drafting has been granted an extension for the second time until 11 December. The term was to expire last Thursday. A meeting of the 27 parties represented in the CA reached the decision as it has yet to settle important issues, including the governance structure to be outlined in the new constitution.

Take a closer look. The Citizenship Act says, "Any person born at the time of when his father or mother is a citizen of Nepal, shall be a citizen of Nepal by descent" (emphasis mine). Ditto the Interim Constitution, which says that a person is deemed to be a citizen of Nepal by descent "whose father or mother was a citizen of Nepal at his or her birth" (emphasis mine).

Now compare this with what the task force came up with on 4 November. To acquire citizenship by descent, "both (a person's) father and mother have to be citizens of Nepal" (emphasis mine).

The nonsense doesn't end here. In an attempt, ostensibly, to provide naturalised citizenship to foreigners marrying Nepalis, the task force has given continuity to what is clearly discrimination against Nepali women.

A foreign man marrying a Nepali national has to stay in Nepal for at least 15 years on a regular basis if he wants Nepali citizenship, the panel proposed. However, a foreign woman marrying a Nepali citizen can acquire Nepali citizenship as soon as she produces evidence that she has started the process of relinquishing her existing



citizenship.

Love for foreign women? Doubtful. Based on the notion that a Nepali woman is inferior? Certainly.

"This has challenged a woman's right to marriage, to marry the person of her choice, her right to family, her right to choose her place of residence, and more importantly, the rights of her children and their right to choose citizenship," says Sapana Pradhan Malla, a Constituent Assembly member and women's rights activist.

The reintroduction of the discarded discriminatory provisions for Nepali women will have a direct bearing on her children, who will be deemed naturalised citizens as opposed to

being citizens by descent.

Should this differentiation matter? Yes, because of another decision on the subject by the task force.

Naturalised citizens will not be entitled to occupy certain top posts in the federal or provincial governments. The head of state, deputy head of state, prime minister, chiefs of the federal legislature (speaker) and judiciary (chief justice), chiefs of security agencies, and governors and deputy governors must be citizens by descent.

There's still more. The task force has differentiated between Nepalis living in foreign lands as well.

Non-resident Nepalis who have acquired foreign citizenship

**The high level task force has stooped low in its treatment of Nepali women and citizenship**

after relinquishing their Nepali nationality can get citizenship provided they live outside South Asia. What is the problem with non-resident Nepalis with foreign citizenship in South Asia? Less affluent and wealthy? Lacking clout? Narrow meaning of 'non-resident Nepali'? The task force hasn't given any reasons.

It will be a real shame if these provisions are allowed to be incorporated into the new constitution. The task force has squandered an excellent opportunity. But what about the rest of us?

I wonder what the Caucus of Women MPs, women's rights organisations, and civil society will be doing about this. damakant@gmail.com



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PICS: SURESH RAJ NEUPANE

# Sweet smell of success

**SURESH RAJ NEUPANE**  
and **NABIN JHA**

**B**edami Devi of Bara almost lost all of her land to a loan of Rs 90,000 she had taken to pay her husband's medical bills. But she is paying off her loans as a transformed businesswoman by selling bamboo sticks, used to make stick incense. "I have been taking care of my household expenses and will pay off all my loans by the end of the year," says Bedami.

In Birganj, Lalpari Devi makes stick incense and sells them to a wholesaler at the rate of Rs 18 per kilogram. The mother of two daughters and five sons, Lalpari's earnings have remained constant for the last three years but together with her husband, she has been able to send her children to school, and is now even contemplating

building a house with bank loans. A decade ago, the villages of Parsa district were ranked lower than Humla and Jumla on the Human Development Index. But the trend of adopting micro-businesses has transformed these villages. More than 5,000 individuals have found employment in small enterprises. Neighbouring Bara, Rautahat and Sarlahi are also following suit.

More than 50 Muslim women of Murali village in Birganj have been economically empowered by the incense business. They are no longer dependent on their husband's incomes. Because the women of the village are more financially independent, other aspects of village life have improved. The number of students in the village school has risen and the village has become cleaner.

The fishing communities in Marwaliya and Nakatowa have also



taken up the incense-making business. More than 150 locals from 25 houses are involved in the trade. Paramshila Devi can make about 35kg of incense a day, worth Rs 500. "We can earn up to Rs 200 through day labour but here we can earn Rs 500-600 a day just by working from home," says Raghu Nath Mukhiya, whose family also makes stick incense.

sticks and incense and manage the market for themselves. Incense industrialist Rabi Giri says, "Earlier, we imported the raw materials from Assam, now 90 per cent is available here. Birganj has become like Bangalore in terms of incense manufacturing." This industry has also proved a boon for bamboo farmers. Bamboo poles now cost Rs 120-150, up from Rs 40-50 a few years back.

Puja, Narayani, Shalimar, and Rose are some of the better known incense brands. Narayani alone is worth yearly transactions worth Rs 40 million. Export figures show that Nepali incense finds a good market in China, India and other countries. In the last fiscal year Rs 94.5 million worth of incense was exported. "If the government encourages us and protects our industry we will be able to do even better," says Giri.   
with Bhushan Yadav, Nepalganj

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# Whose festival is it anyway?



ECONOMIC SENSE  
Artha Beed

A Nepali calendar is cluttered with a number of holidays, and the 'red' marked days have risen since we acquired the status of a secular federal state. On top of that, different communities are celebrating the same festival on different days. More days off are being added to our already dwindling list of productive days.

For some reason, the accepted science of astrology does not decide early in the year which lunar day is the right day for the right festival but leaves it to the last minute. Threatening announcements are made by different communities and then we have another holiday. If this trend continues, soon we will have different calendars with the same festivals on different dates,



NARESH SHRESTHA

till we completely run out of working days. This beed is still wondering why banda-less periods make us so restless that we try to find ways to impose state-sanctioned bandas.

Talking about Tihar, especially Laxmi Puja, it's always interesting to receive 'happy Tihar' messages from pro-socialist, anti-capitalist proponents of collective wealth.

Detecting individual wealth but celebrating and worshipping the goddess of wealth (to further individual wealth and prosperity) is hypocrisy. If the idea of furthering individual

wealth is so widely accepted within our culture, then why do those who rail against it (at a safe distance from Laxmi Puja, naturally) not accept the right to individual wealth, the right to property and the right to enterprise as fundamental rights that need to be guaranteed by the constitution? If all the socialist and left parties of the country can outdo each other in celebrating this festival, then why do they not get together in shunning their empty rhetoric and allowing the new constitution to have provisions for the acceptability of individual wealth, as long as it has been acquired by legitimate means? It's all very well to have principles, but it's the practice that counts. The state, for its part, would do well to shift its attention towards protecting legitimate individual wealth, rather than supporting the creation of illegitimate wealth. 📷

## Brave new e-world

We often complain that nothing interesting happens in Kathmandu but most often it is because we don't know what's actually going on and what's available except by word of mouth. A new e-commerce site, merodeal.com, is making an attempt to change the way we approach leisure. It will not only inform people about events in Kathmandu but also sell vouchers that can be used in stores, restaurants, spas and other service outlets.

"I wanted to start a platform that would let people know what Kathmandu has to offer," says Raunak Agarwal, CEO of MeroDeal. "MeroDeal is an online portal that will feature discounted deals for various events, products as well as service outlets." A buyer can scan the options available on the website,

then make a payment online or in person at MeroDeal's outlets. MeroDeal will then provide the buyer with a unique code and a voucher that will be honoured at the chosen service centre.

MeroDeal is seeking partnerships with various businesses around the city so customers have more choices online, and it will also work with banks to open up online payments. "We want our customers to be assured about the products and services our site endorses," adds Agarwal.

The idea of pre-purchasing services online is new in Kathmandu, and it will possibly take time for people to be comfortable with it. MeroDeal will be working to improve delivery and payment processes. And once the system takes off, we might even see Agarwal organising events. No more quiet nights wondering what on earth to do in Kathmandu.

Paavan Mathema

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Rajesh Hamal

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# A return to reason



**COMMENT**  
**Bjørn Lomborg**

COPENHAGEN – Common sense was an early loser in the scorching battle over the reality of man-made global warming. For nearly 20 years, one group of activists argued – in the face of ever-mounting evidence – that global warming was a fabrication. Their opponents, meanwhile, exaggerated the phenomenon's likely impact – and, as a consequence, dogmatically fixated on drastic, short-term carbon cuts as the only solution, despite overwhelming evidence that such cuts would be cripplingly expensive and woefully ineffective.

This scientific pie fight, characterised by juvenile name-calling, ignoble tactics, and intellectual intransigence on both sides, not only left the public confused and scared; it undermined the efforts of the most important organisations working on advancing the science of climate change. Almost inevitably, at international summits from Kyoto to Copenhagen, governments failed to take any meaningful action on global warming.

Fortunately, there finally seems to be a growing number of influential scientists, economists, and politicians who represent a more sensible approach to the issue.

As I argued in my 2007 book *Cool It*, the most rational response to global warming is to make alternative energy

technologies so cheap that the whole world can afford them. In broad strokes, this requires a deliberate and significant boost to research and development spending. Based on recent work by Isabel Galiana and Chris Green of McGill University, I advocate expenditure totaling around 0.2 per cent of global GDP – roughly US\$100 billion a year.

Of course, no fix to global warming will work overnight. So we need to focus more on adapting to the effects of global warming – for example, by

being attacked from both sides. For so-called 'alarmists', pointing out what's wrong with drastic carbon cuts is somehow tantamount to denying the reality of climate change, while so-called 'deniers' lambast anyone who accepts the scientific evidence supporting this 'mythical' problem.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs that the minority of sensible voices in this debate are beginning to get the attention they deserve. In mid-2009, as part of a project by

effective, and expanding energy-related infrastructure such as smart grids. As Green and Galiana bluntly noted, "No approach to climate stabilisation will work without an energy technology revolution."

Another academic who has advocated a smarter response to global warming is Roger Pielke, Jr. of the University of Colorado, the author of this year's must-read global-warming book *The Climate Fix*. Along with Green, Pielke was one of 14 noted academics who co-wrote February's 'Hartwell

American Enterprise Institute, the liberal Brookings Institution, and the centrist Breakthrough Institute teamed up to publish a report that called for revamping America's energy system with the aim of making clean energy cheap.

Entitled 'Post-Partisan Power', the report comprehensively and convincingly argues that the US government should invest roughly US\$25 billion per year (about 0.2 per cent of America's GDP) in low-carbon military procurement, R&D, and a new network of university-private sector innovation hubs to create an 'energy revolution'.

This sensible proposal predictably drew fire from committed 'alarmists' and 'deniers'. But, promisingly – and surprisingly, given the somewhat toxic state of US politics – it attracted broad support and intelligent commentary from many mainstream pundits.

Adding to the swell of voices, November will see the documentary film based on my book *Cool It* released in the US.

It is too early to suggest that politicians might make real progress toward implementing genuinely effective policies on climate change. But, given the dearth of common sense in recent years, the mere fact that a growing chorus of reasonable voices can now be heard is nothing short of miraculous.

*Bjørn Lomborg is the author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* and *Cool It*, director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, and adjunct professor at Copenhagen Business School.*

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stepping up efforts to cope with inland flooding and the urban 'heat island' effect. At the same time, we should explore the practicality of climate engineering, which we may need to buy more time for a smooth transition away from fossil fuels.

Acknowledging that man-made climate change is real, but arguing that carbon cuts are not the answer, amounts to staking out a middle ground in the global warming debate – which means

the Copenhagen Consensus Center to assess different responses to global warming, Green and Galiana performed a cost-benefit analysis of R&D spending on green technologies. Green, a long-time proponent of a technology-led response to global warming, demonstrated the effectiveness of a policy of government investment in R&D aimed at developing new low-carbon technologies, making current technologies cheaper and more

Paper', commissioned by the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford. The paper made the case for developing alternatives to fossil fuels, ensuring that economic development doesn't wreak environmental havoc, and recognising the importance of adaptation to climate change.

In the US, we witnessed an equally promising development in the climate debate just last month, when the conservative



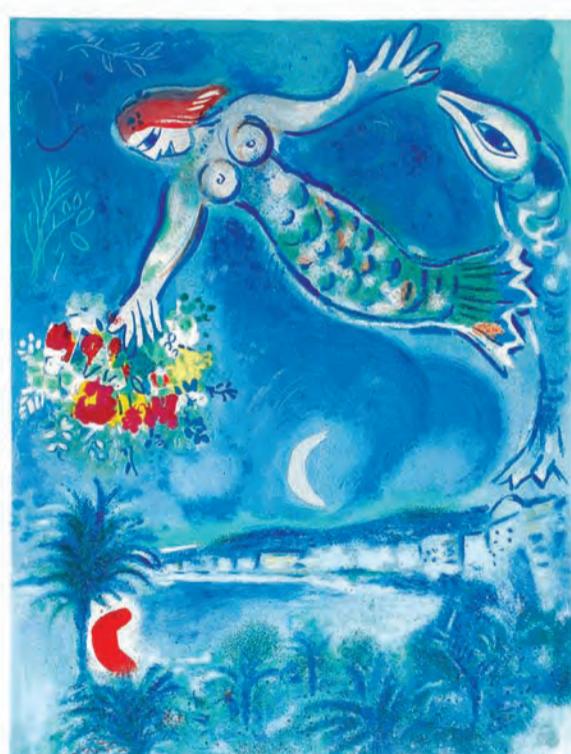
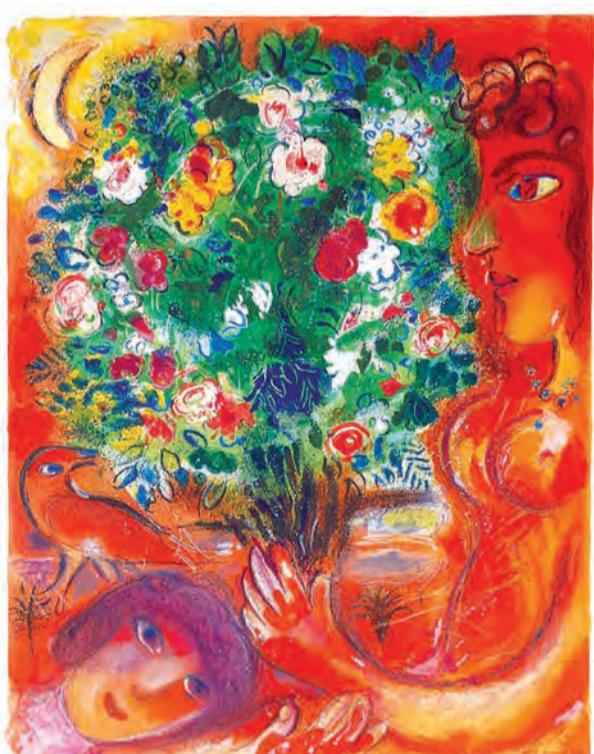
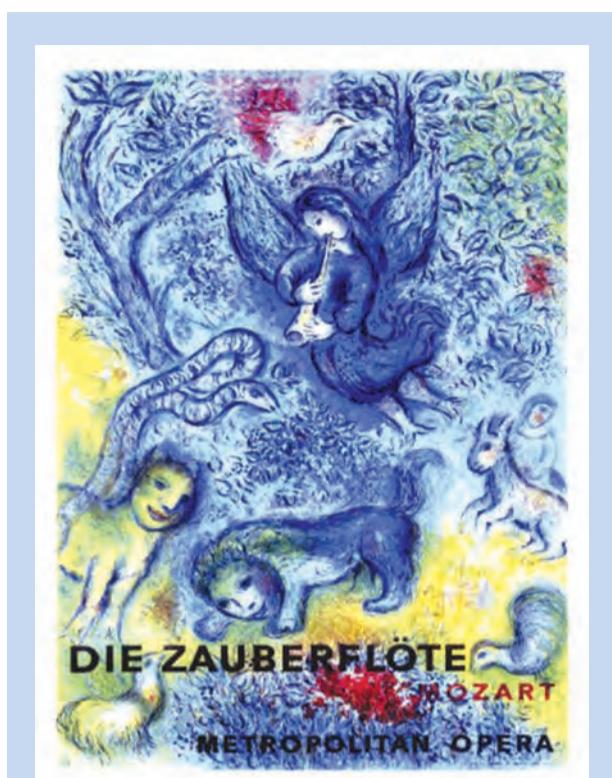
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## The colours of Chagall

Mark Chagall in Nepal? The idea seems almost as incredible as the works of the Belarusian-French genius. Though it may be a while before original paintings of the European masters make their way to Nepal, there's no doubt the opportunity to see a brace of Chagall lithographs and original posters from his exhibitions will be savoured by those who make their way to Yala Maya Kendra at Patan Dhoka from 13-21 November.

It's certain the patients at the Spinal Rehabilitation Injury Centre (SIRC) in Sangha, where these works will be on permanent display once this exhibition is over, will appreciate the exuberant bursts of colour and figures in flight that are Chagall's trademark. The yearning for freedom of movement and expression, in every sense, is pervasive in his paintings. And it was this very yearning, as expressed

by a painting of a flying man by a patient at SIRC, that inspired the visiting Meret Meyer to bring a Chagall exhibition to Nepal. He was, after all, her grandfather.

*The Magic of Colour*, as curators Meyer and Jürg Kunz explain, will convey the message of love and tolerance through a "vocabulary of colour". Looking at Chagall's works, it's not hard to see what they mean. He was born into the Jewish community in Belarus in 1887, then part of the Russian Empire, and barely managed to escape to America from France as Nazism overwhelmed the continent. Meyer and Kunz feel Chagall's cultural openness and religious tolerance will speak to a Nepali audience, "independently of space and time, as well as of the allegiances and boundaries of the eyes looking at them."

I wonder how Chagall would have felt had he known that someday he would have an exhibition of his works in the Kathmandu Valley. He would have been overjoyed, I am sure, because we have in us what he presents in his works. Chagall is all about the joy of colours, about myth and mystery, a sense of exoticness and yet a beautiful simplicity. When we look at Chagall's works, we re-realise how beautiful our dreams can be even if they never metamorphose into reality.

The artist and his wife Bella Rosenfeld flew on his coloured canvases. As Bella happily explained, "Through the window a cloud and a patch of sky called to us. The brightly hung walls whirled around us. We flew over fields of flowers, shuttered houses, roofs, yards, churches." With this exhibition, I see Chagall and Bella flying in Nepali skies and scapes. They float around our stupas and our yellow mustard fields. This is what an artist can do to you – 25 years after his demise, he can still make you feel the thrill of wonderful things happening.

I love the fact that though Chagall was a pioneer of modernism and one of the greatest figurative artists of the twentieth century, he was deeply rooted to his elements. He loved Fauvism and symbolism as well as the boldness of masses of cubic compositions, yet he created a beautiful, surreal genre of his own.

In 1952, Pablo Picasso was quoted thus: "After Matisse dies, Chagall will be the only painter left who understands what colour really is." With this exhibition, the great artist not only presents to us his motifs, but all the colours he loved so much. His palette has always been vibrant, and the happiness that his art exudes is contagious.

Chagall would have loved our villages and our fields. It is the post-monsoon harvest season, the light is strong and the colours bright in the hills and plains of Nepal. With his spiritual inclinations, he would certainly have visited the temples, stupas and bihars of the Kathmandu Valley towns. Perhaps he would have been inspired to design a carved wooden window or two! He would have loved the symbolic content of our spiritual and religious arts just as he would have appreciated the innocence, as well as the lightly carried wisdom, of our folk arts.

Chagall has now come to Nepal with this exhibition. His jubilant colours and motifs invite us to celebrate life and love. He certainly would have known that this is exactly what we need, at this time and place.

Chirag Bangdel  
Artist and writer

## EVENTS



**The Blue Tone**, charcoal sketches on handmade paper and textile by artist Annika Heed. 14 November, 4pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, 5522307, parkgallery@wlink.com.np

**Free Workshop on B-boying**, organised by the famous B-boying team from The Everest All Star A. 13 November, 3pm, Moksh Auditorium, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np



**The Seven Henry Series: In Search of an Ideal Landscape**, an exhibition of supracollages by the acclaimed Indic-British artist Syyed Iqbal Geoffrey. Till 17 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, Gallery hours: 11am to 6pm, 12pm to 4pm on Saturdays, 4218048

**Chagall in Nepal: The Magic of Colour**, an exhibition of lithographs and original posters by Marc Chagall. 13 to 21 November, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5552141

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



**Dreaming of Player Flags: Mantra on the Wind**, an exhibition of impressionistic photography by Sandy Shum. 16 November to 6 December, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120

**Festive Mood**, an exhibition of etching prints by young Nepali artists. 31 October to 14 November, 10.30pm to 5.30pm, Park Gallery, Lazimpat, 4419353, parkgallery@wlink.com.np, Saturdays closed



**Moksh**, live performances by Humble Bee. Every Tuesday, 7.30pm onwards, Moksh, Pulchok, 5526212

**The Corner Bar**, live music by Sign Band. Every day except Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 7.30pm onwards, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818

## DINING

**Singma Food Court**, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. Pulchok, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np, www.singma.foodcourt.com

**Ramalaya Tea Room**, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider-brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese, also 10% discount on evening dinners to all Nepali Times readers when they mention this ad. Pani Pokhari, near Japanese Embassy, for bookings call 4006589, 4006589, www.rde.com.np/index.php/tearoom

**Waffles promotion** at The Lounge from 12.30pm to 4.00pm every day, **Vegetarian Buffet** at The Cafe every Tuesday from 6.30pm, and **Arabian Nights** at The Cafe every Friday from 6.30pm at Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362

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

**Aqua Java Zing**, soar high on a low budget, buy one cocktail, get one free, buy two hookahs, get one free, only during happy hours from 2pm to 6pm. Ganesh Man Singh Road, Thamel



**Casa de Cass**, out-of-Kathmandu dining in cosy surrounds with attentive service. Hariharbhawan, Patan, 5010100

**Lhakpa Chulo**, try their tender steaks and Thai-style salads. Jhamsikhel



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



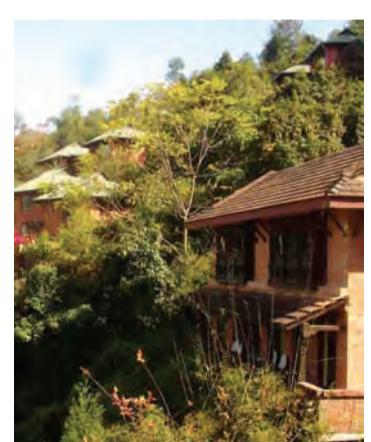
## GETAWAYS

**Club Himalaya**, for amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend escapades, special package available for Nepalis and expatriates. Nagarkot, 4410432



**Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**, Palanchok Bhagwati Darshan Package with one night's accommodation in the mountain rooms and transport to and from the temple. Dhulikhel, 4420774

**Grand Norling Hotel**, country-side weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. Gokarna, 4910193



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

**Walter's Restaurant & Bar**, offers finest gourmet cuisine in the regal setting of Babar Mahal Revisited. Babar Mahal, 4253337

**Comfort Zone**, serves a decent range of cocktails and barbecued meats. Thamel

**Momotarou**, nestled inconspicuously amongst the street shops of Thamel, this restaurant serves Japanese food that is top value for money. Extravagant taste yet humble in presentation. Thamel, Bhagawatishan (near Bhagawati Temple), 4417670.

**The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort**, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Dhulikhel, Rs 3500 (single), Rs 5000 (double), 10 per cent service charge extra, call 4479488 for reservations

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**NEW WAVE**



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**Hans Theessink (Austria)**

Bo Diddley called him "one helluva guitar player". 'Nuff said.

**Jose Luis Pardo (Argentina)**

If Argentinians get the blues, they go listen to some melancholy tango. Not this one (top left).

**Magnus Rosén (Sweden)**

He likes Kiss, he likes classical, he was in a heavy metal band. As an electric bassist, he's the bottom line.

**Oliver Mally and Martin Gasselsberger (Austria)**

We didn't know that many Austrians played the blues. Here's two, together.

**Robert Owen Campbell (Australia)**

"Born and raised on salted oats and tales of the savage past" (left).

**Tere Estrada (Mexico)**

Lady's got the blues. This guitarist knows what she's talking about, too, she's a sociologist (middle left).

**Brad Cava (USA)**

What's a blues fest without a harmonica man?



You weren't the only annoyed music-lover last autumn, when the Himalayan Blues Festival clashed with Jazzmandu. Thankfully, we didn't have a reprise this year. But you'll still be scratching your head wondering where to head, because there is just so much blues packed into the five days of the fourth edition of the blues fest, which has actually expanded into India this year. Assuming you'll wait for the international roster of bluesmen (and women) to crawl up from India to the Valley, careful planning is required to get just the right mix of soul-warming blues into your system as the November nights begin to chill your bones.

The organisers have done an excellent job once again: we can look forward to a mix of acoustic and electric blues dished out by virtuosos on guitar, harmonica, electric bass and yes, sitar and tabla. We've got artistes from Europe, North and South America, Australia, and of course, our very own local boys. A global music for an increasingly global town? You better believe it.

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# Dengue ke ho?



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Because of the porous border with India, many migrant labourers (both Nepali and Indian) with the disease enter Nepal. All that's needed is for the vector mosquito to feed on one such infected person for it to transmit the disease to a healthy person.

For starters, most newscasters in Nepal pronounce 'dengue' incorrectly. Forget the 'oo', extend the 'ey', and at least we know what we're talking about.

Dengue fever is a newly emerging viral illness in Nepal. This year in the Tarai, dengue was documented in the summer in large numbers for the first time. This wasn't altogether surprising, for two reasons: we had a migrant population with the disease and an abundant supply of the vector (carrier), mosquitoes.

Importantly, different species of mosquitoes transmit different diseases. It's the aedes species of mosquito that's responsible for transmitting dengue. The mosquito species that transmit malaria (anopheles) and Japanese encephalitis (culex) will not transmit dengue. These three illnesses, all common in the Tarai, may often cause just fever and headache without any localising signs. Add typhoid,

typhus, and leptospirosis to this potpourri, which may all cause only fever and headache and it is obvious why Nepal (and indeed South Asia) is rich in undifferentiated febrile illnesses. These diseases are often difficult to distinguish from one another and make specific diagnosis difficult.

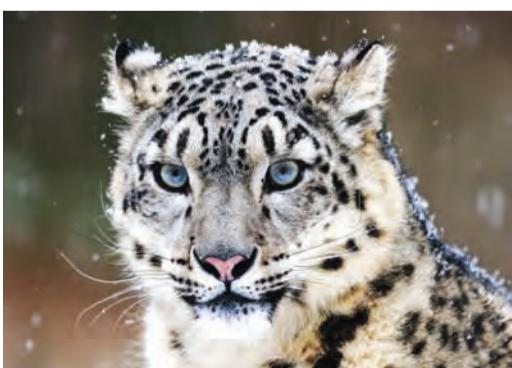
The incubation period (the amount of time it takes to manifest the disease) is usually not more than 10 days after leaving a dengue-infested area, which helps tremendously in diagnosis in a visitor. For most people who do not reside in areas where dengue is endemic, dengue illness means fever, headaches, eye pain, and joint aches that subside in a week's time. Doctors will treat only the symptoms as there is no specific antidote to dengue. Those living in areas where dengue is endemic are repeatedly exposed to it, and could be subject to a more life-threatening variant of the disease: dengue haemorrhagic illness.

For prevention, use mosquito repellents (like odemos or DEET) and wear full-length clothing even in the daytime as the dengue mosquito is active during the day, unlike the malarial mosquito. A dengue vaccine is in the works and could soon be commercially available. ☺

## GREEN SCENE

# Scat!

Snow leopards are among the most magnificent creatures to grace the Himalayan landscapes, but their survival has long been under threat. They come into conflict with locals because of livestock depredation, which sometimes results in retaliatory killings. Their habitat is continually being encroached on, with a corresponding decline in prey numbers. The illegal trade in animal parts is flourishing between Nepal and Tibet, encouraging poaching.



It is estimated that there are close to 400 snow leopards left in Nepal (and between 4,500 and 7,300 in the mountains of Central Asia and the Himalaya). But the exact number of this species in Nepal is yet to be determined, because of its elusive, solitary nature and the remote, rugged terrain in which it lives. If we are to design and implement a successful conservation strategy, we need solid data on the existing abundance and distribution of the snow leopard.

The majority of studies have consisted of surveys that rely on signs (eg pugmarks, scrapes and scat), interviews with local inhabitants, and camera trapping. But these require extended time in the field (>40–50 days), are expensive, and setting camera traps in snow leopard habitat (between 3000–5500m) is difficult. Supplementary methods are crucial for effective monitoring of snow leopards.

Enter genetic analysis for wildlife research. The Center for Molecular Dynamics Nepal, in collaboration with various conservation organisations, is working to introduce DNA identification for snow leopards.

Since portions of the genome of every individual are unique, the use of genetic tools can yield highly specific information that can be crucial to conservation. DNA extracted from fecal matter, for instance, can be subjected to a species and sex identification molecular assay and a DNA fingerprinting assay to identify individuals. We can thus establish whether the DNA belongs to a snow leopard, and if so, which one. Phylogenetics can be used to research the evolutionary relations among populations found in different areas. By drawing a 'genetic movement map', we can determine whether there is any gene flow between separate populations. Molecular wildlife forensics carried out on unknown tissues or animal parts can also be a very effective tool against poaching.

DNA techniques are particularly suited to snow leopard conservation because of the difficulty and risks involved in applying more conventional, invasive methods to such a low density, wide-ranging, and elusive species. We hope our policymakers, academics and conservation enthusiasts will be on board to review our efforts in the field of conservation, and support the use of new technologies to gather information for more effective strategies. ☺

Dibesh Karmacharya is the International Director of the Center for Molecular Dynamics Nepal ([www.cmdn.org](http://www.cmdn.org)). [dibesh@cmdn.org](mailto:dibesh@cmdn.org)



KIRAN PANDAY

**WELCOME TO THE PARTY:** Caretaker PM Madhav Kumar Nepal hosted a tea party for the festive season on Tuesday at his residence. Nearly 6,000 invitees attended the party.



NARESH SHRESTHA

**HAPPY NEW YEAR:** The Newar community in Kathmandu participated in a rally to celebrate Nepal Sambat 1130 on Sunday. The rally concluded at Basantapur Darbar Square.



**SAVING LIVES:** Two army officials donate blood at a drive organised by Press Chautari Nepal, Bara, on Monday to commemorate the third Memorial Day for murdered journalist Birendra Sah.

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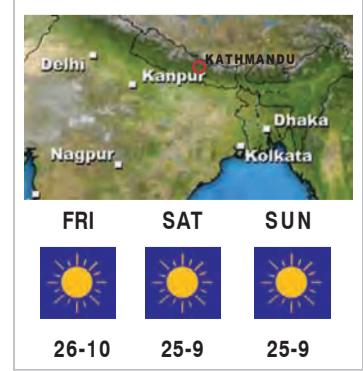
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## WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Cloud-free skies continue to dominate this week's weather. Fresh satellite images show no sign of westerly fronts heading towards the Himalaya nor are there any prominent cyclones in the Bay. This means the days ahead are sunny and open night skies will continue to push the mercury down by about 1 degree a week, widening the difference between maximum and minimum temperatures. From this week onwards, Valley residents can expect morning temperatures to drop into single digits.





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**KALAM**  
**Rabi Thapa**

Nepalis are known for being nice to tourists. Or so says the Lonely Planet, which assures travellers they will be 'bewitched by the friendliness and openness of the Nepali people'. Indeed, tourist time is generally more chilled out than in the bellows of northern India, and Nepalis (children in particular, even when they are begging for one rupee one sweet one pen) are fairly well disposed towards those *kuires* who wander eagerly through their country. This sounds like good news in the run-up to Nepal Tourism Year 2011.

But to be honest, most Nepalis have little to do with tourists. Standard issue tourists, backpackers or five-starers, will interact largely with formal and informal representatives of the tourist industry, hardly penetrating into the fabric of the Nepali societies they brush against during their time here.

This tourist industry can be predatory despite the genuineness of the smiles traded, and certainly labour issues have rubbed raw some of these interactions lately.

Every time I've travelled within Nepal with foreign friends, for instance, something unpleasant impinges on the euphoria of tramping through this land of mountains and jungles, temples and festivals. The worst was the time the Russian jeep carrying our group of five Thais, two Mexicans, and one Frenchwoman from Birendranagar to Pokhara was blocked by taxi drivers insisting they had a monopoly on the route. They wanted us to get off and into one of their cabs (never mind we'd have to pay again), and we only advanced a quarter of an hour later when our driver forced the jeep through a throng of shouting, gesticulating cabbies. At that point I looked back at my friends to reassure them; their incomprehension and fear roused a deep shame in me.

Nepali tourist reps need to understand that Everest notwithstanding, tourists can

and will go somewhere else if they feel they are unwelcome or unsafe here. Nepal may be spectacular – but there are any number of spectacular places in the world, and we don't even have a monopoly on the Himalaya. Those taxi drivers at

## Kathmandu may be cooler than Colombo, but Sri Lankans are warmer to visitors

Naya Pul may have felt entitled to demand we use their services, but did they ever stop to think what my friends might say to their friends in Thailand, Mexico and France in years to come?

Making foreigners feel welcome is not about inviting them to spend their money. It means making them feel they are

welcome here as visitors. This demands a shift in perceptions on our part, wherein tourists are not just walking ATMs, they are individuals. Tourist reps need to treat tourists with respect, and the rest of us could probably shed some of our indifference, too.

We could learn something from the Sri Lankans. I don't like to make sweeping generalisations about smiles through broken times on the basis of a week-long stay in the southwestern half of the 'resplendent land', but certainly the people we came across, within and without the tourist industry, made us feel welcome. Everyone had a smile and a word for us, even if it was just to say 'Hello!' It wasn't just conversations with those employed at guesthouses, cafes, galleries, restaurants, all of whom were curious ("From Nepal? Lumbini!") and disappointed ("Just one week? Too short!") in equal measure. The man who shooed us away from the tempo drivers at Galle station with a "No need, you can just walk!" was charming enough, but I couldn't help

laughing when the heavily armed soldiers at the security checkpoint to the airport greeted us with "Hi! You are going?"

Now, Sri Lanka's no island paradise. Every monolithic cutout of President Rajapaksa leering over us threatened to cut into the charm of the everyday, and I have no illusions about how things are for the 15 per cent of Sri Lankans who live below the poverty line. But just as visitors get the distinct feeling that they're getting the cold shoulder in parts of Vietnam, we felt many Sri Lankans were genuinely pleased to have us visit their country. Where do Nepalis stand as we prepare to welcome more tourists than ever in 2011?

In Surkhet last month, local shop-owner Mitra Chapai accompanied us on a forty-minute walk to the medieval ruins of Kakrebihi for no other reason than to help us out. As we strolled along a forest path, he asked me, "If I went to Europe, would they care as much as we do about tourists who come here?" I was at a loss to answer him. But I'd like to believe we actually do care. 



# उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

## आर्थिक खबर

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# Nepal's Hero

Anuradha Koirala started Maiti Nepal with two rooms in 1993. Seventeen years later, Maiti Nepal has outreach in 29 districts, and a global network of supporters. The institution is at the forefront in rescuing and rehabilitating victims of trafficking and has rescued over 12,000 girls so far, including 12 girls from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia recently. CNN has recognised Koirala's contribution to combating trafficking by choosing her as one of its top 10 CNN Heroes 2010. CNN Heroes is an effort to honour people who have made a commendable contribution to 'change the world' and this year received over 10,000 submissions from over 100 countries. Koirala talked to *Nepali Times* on her receiving the award and on what has been achieved in the fight against trafficking in Nepal.

**HI-FIVE:** Anuradha Koirala with rescued women and children living at the Maiti Nepal shelter



KIRAN PANDAY

## How did Maiti Nepal come into existence?

The problem of trafficking is not a modern problem in Nepal. After democracy was established in 1990, people did start talking about trafficking and domestic violence. But the talks were not translated into actions, and this frustrated me. With my own

income as a school teacher, I helped eight women open small shops. These women were victims of domestic violence and were forced to beg because no one would give them work. Eventually the network grew and UNICEF decided to support us. Then with a group of 210, comprising students, journalists,

lawyers, nurses and policemen, we started an awareness campaign in seven villages that were most vulnerable to trafficking. That's how Maiti Nepal started.

## Having worked in this area for 17 years, have you noticed changes?

First of all, trafficking exists as an

issue in the public eye. The attitude towards trafficking and its victims has changed; the police are more sensitive during interrogations. Policymakers consider this a crucial issue and even though there is much to do on the implementation part, political parties have at least included combating trafficking as

# Mumbai's shame

PAMELA SCIANTARELLI and EUGENIA GABELIA



**There was good reason to bar Michelle Obama from visiting Kamathipura, but it wasn't just security concerns**

MUMBAI – If you say the word 'Kamathipura' in public here, you will immediately get a wide-eyed stare from your Indian friends, followed by a desperate "shhh!" as they look around to see who heard you utter the dirty word. It is a dirty word – and also the name of the city's most shameful place – and it remains so because nobody wants to talk about it and nobody wants to think about it.

Kamathipura is a compact grid of lanes and alleys filled with buildings containing brothels on top of brothels. During British rule, the area was an upper class red-light district. It has since devolved into a den of overcrowded shanties and unmaintained buildings full of girls from nearly every South Asian country. A few specific

lanes house the highly desired but relatively cheap fair-skinned girls from Nepal.

International filmmakers, journalists, and photographers flock to Mumbai to write stories or make documentaries on Kamathipura. But though the city is the country's largest hub for media and film, foreigners who seek to cover sex slavery rarely have the support of local professionals. Far from it. Many Mumbaikars view foreign interest in the thriving sex trade as a conspiracy to perpetuate a false image of India as an undeveloped Third World country. But they fail to understand that global media interest in Kamathipura does not stem from a desire to prove India's lack of development, but rather from wanting to shed light on one of the world's largest human rights violations – the kidnapping and daily rapes of tens of thousands of girls.

Michelle Obama wanted to visit Kamathipura on her recent

**FAR FROM HOME:** A daylight view of Mumbai's notorious red-light district, Kamathipura

part of their agenda. The government has endorsed 5 September as anti-trafficking day. Another important change is that now, traffickers are convicted; Maiti Nepal alone has helped convict 496 traffickers. The judiciary hands down verdicts quicker now, which has made conviction an easier task. The source areas for trafficking have also changed because the level of awareness has risen.

#### Does society accept returnees more easily now?

The parents of the girls have always been happy to welcome their daughters back home. When it comes to society, it has nothing to say if the girl is economically empowered. Which is why we value the training we give to these girls so that they can earn a living.

#### Have there been changes policy-wise? What changes are necessary?

There haven't been significant policy changes, partly because we haven't had a stable government in years. Trafficking takes place because of lack of education and employment opportunities, and gender disparity. Education is still not free in the villages and as a parent one sees more value in educating the son rather than the daughter. The government has to make education free and compulsory, fining those who don't educate their children. Then the government can develop life

skill training to address the problem of unemployment. The government also needs to open shelter homes. As an organisation we can do little, but the government has a wide reach and capacity.

#### How did you feel when you were recognised internationally by CNN for your work?

This recognition reflects Nepal's unity in fighting trafficking. I felt like my responsibilities have increased, and that there is still a lot I need to do.

#### Will this award make a difference?

Maiti Nepal's work is to rescue and rehabilitate victims of trafficking. This award is a global recognition of efforts in Nepal to combat trafficking. International help like this will pressurise people here to further work in this field.

#### What is Maiti Nepal's ultimate aim?

My wish is to close Maiti Nepal as soon as possible because it will mean that trafficking has been completely eradicated in Nepal. It is shameful that Nepal is party to one of the top three crimes in the world. The day I can close down Maiti Nepal will be my happiest day.

[heroes.cnn.com/vote](http://heroes.cnn.com/vote)  
Vote to make Anuradha Koirala the CNN Hero of the Year

trip to Mumbai, but the government of Maharashtra refused to grant permission. It would have been impossible to secure the area to ensure her safety, it's true. But more than that Mumbai, boasting the bulk of India's wealth and development, did not want to expose the First Lady of the United States to the sad reality that the city has failed to intervene to uphold the basic rights of young girls.

Many people say the root cause of trafficking is poverty. While poverty is certainly a factor, it is not the root cause; if it were, then tens of thousands of boys would be locked up in slavery. The root cause of trafficking is that even today, in 2010, women and girls are perceived as disposable commodities.

In Nepal, girls who are sent away are described as "girls who have gone to Mumbai to work", whereas in Mumbai, they are merely prostitutes. The failure to identify these girls as what they are – victims of kidnapping, rape, and slavery – allows both sides to get away with not acknowledging the urgency of the cause and from taking responsibility for the crime. The root cause of trafficking is that nobody fights fiercely for a girl's life.

Experts estimate that each girl in Kamathipura is worth around US\$250,000 to her owner. The sex

trade is not only about poverty; it is also about power and money. The underworld is intricately connected to the above-ground world; politics, building, business, and Bollywood have financial ties that can be traced to the black money made from the plight of Nepali girls in bondage. This makes the stakes too high and the trade-offs too low for most people to truly become involved in fighting trafficking.

The only possible protection for Nepali girls at risk of kidnapping, daily rape, incarceration, and ultimately death from AIDS, is Nepal, the Nepali government and the Nepali people. The 1751-km border between India and Nepal needs to be secured, villagers need to be informed about the reality of 'jobs' abroad, equal numbers of boys and girls need to be educated, and men and women need to recognise the value of a woman to her family, village and country. The number of girls sold into sex slavery is increasing every year, and given the current political and economic instability of the country, it is critical to build up a healthy, sustainable Nepali society, rather than eroding future potential in the pursuit of instant gratification.

Experts estimate that each girl in Kamathipura is worth around US\$250,000 to her owner. The sex

# No Prime Minister



NEPALI PAN  
Ranjan Adiga

A few years ago, I watched an episode of the British political satire *Yes Prime Minister* on Nepal TV. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon and Nepal TV decided to throw in a random episode of the series, but it never carried another installment to my knowledge. But that was okay; I still enjoyed the dry humour it offered for an hour. *Yes Prime Minister* followed the travails of the British PM, who muddled through his job, his incompetence covered up time and again by the guile and political astuteness of his advisors. The PM was endearingly confused, and at times, a complete fool. But he was there. He had a position that looked stable – at least on the surface.

A tragicomedy of bigger proportions has been unfolding in our country's politics. Far from having a confused and befuddled prime minister, we don't even have a legitimate PM. We've been carrying a national episode of *No Prime Minister* for months. What's worse, none of us seem to mind. Life goes on as usual. Our politicians are luxuriating in our general apathy. We don't hold them accountable and they're taking their time setting up meetings where they drink a few cups of *chiya* and pass time for an hour or so. Worse than not having a PM is not missing having a PM. But even when we did have a PM, he was as good as absent. I envy Mr Madhav Nepal. In his



current position he can conveniently shirk major responsibilities while enjoying all the benefits. But maybe he always did that anyhow.

Going back to that lazy Sunday afternoon, I remember some wonderful moments. My mother made a plate of *bhogate saadheko* for me, which I enjoyed while savouring the show on TV. In the evening, I went for a stroll with some friends and we stopped at Everest Momo. We talked about work and had a good laugh over our colleagues and bosses. But when I tried to share some humour from *Yes Prime Minister*, my friends didn't see what was so funny about an incompetent prime minister. Didn't we have to deal with one in our day-to-day life? I didn't have to turn to a foreign program on TV for a reality check, did I? The mood turned a bit sour. One of my friends discarded half a plate of *momo*. How could I even find humour in such a situation anymore, he said.

I thought they were being a bit too sensitive back then. Today, I'm forced to concede they were probably right. It was no laughing matter. And those were the good old days. These days we don't even have a PM to laugh about.

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# Casino life

Dambar Krishna Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-16 November

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Sixty-year-old Maulidhan Moktan of Solukhumbu is one of many gamblers bankrupted by the casinos. He lost a total of Rs 45 million in 15 years. He makes a living now by running a cheap tavern outside the international airport in Kathmandu.

Back in the day, his high-season earnings from the Everest Plaza Hotel in Lukla and the Kathmandu Everest Base Camp Cargo Service used to exceed Rs 70,000 a day. He squandered all his properties, including land in Kathmandu, in indulging his addiction to gambling. "All I have now is this *bhatti*," he says.

Tourist entrepreneur Sagar Kiranti (name changed) of Thamel lost Rs 15 million in 10 years. He would go to the casino whenever he came into any money. He gambled away as much as Rs 700,000 at a time. "Even after losing so much money, I have been able to get back onto my feet," he says.

Although Nepali citizens are legally barred from visiting casinos, Nepali customers outnumber foreigners in these places, and constitute the main source of their business. Real estate brokers, contractors, manpower operators and tourist entrepreneurs are frequently seen in casinos.



But it's not only rich people who haunt the casinos of Nepal. Taxi driver Bidur Karki of Baneswor developed an addiction to gambling in casinos, and gambled away the money his wife used to send him from Israel. He lost Rs 600,000 in six months. He borrowed money and sold his property to continue gambling so that he could get back the money he had lost.

His wife came to know about his addiction to gambling and stopped sending him money. With no one else willing to lend to him, Bidur was unable to visit casinos. His wife believed he had overcome his addiction and sent him another Rs 700,000 to start a business. He lost all the money in a single night. "I felt like I would have a fit. I went home, closed the doors and slept. I did not come out of my room for two days," he recalls.

Under SP Ramesh Kharel's tenure as chief of police in Kathmandu district, 90 Nepalis have been arrested from casinos and action has been taken against 500 people for running gambling dens.

The Gambling Act 2020 (1963) specifies six days of detention and a fine of Rs 200 for gambling, which amounts to nothing, says Kharel, as it doesn't deter anyone from visiting casinos. Instead, casinos have spurred a rise in the crime rate. In 2009, college student Khyati Shrestha was abducted and murdered by Biren Pradhan for ransom to pay back the money he had lost in casinos. Casinos have also become the favourite hangouts of kidnappers, conmen and thieves. They splurge their money on gambling and when they lose, they resort to any measure to get more money.

The first casino in Nepal was opened 42 years ago in Hotel Soaltee. After 1990, casino licenses became available, and now there are eight casinos in Kathmandu and two in Pokhara.

*Note: Since this article was published in Himal Khabarpatrika, Nepal Police has issued arrest warrants against the operators of five casinos, charging them with allowing Nepali citizens to gamble on their premises.*

# Investigate

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 11 November

कान्तिपुर

It has been a long time since the Indian ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood sent a formal letter to the foreign ministry alleging Nepali Maoists' involvement in providing military training to Indian Maoists. The truth of this has not been uncovered so far. Government indifference to the issue has resulted in speculation and accusations being traded. If the country's largest party is involved in training rebels of a neighbouring country, it is a serious issue. The government's silence will ultimately lead to diplomatic difficulties that could jeopardise Nepal's relation with India. If the government has concrete evidence against the Maoists, it should make it public. Otherwise it should ask for a formal clarification from the party and investigate the issue so the public knows what the truth is.

After giving up their weapons and joining the peace process, the Maoists were elected as the largest party. But if the recent accusations are indeed true, we would have to conclude that the Maoists are not honest to the peace process, and that they are still at war.

The Maoist leaders have refuted Sood's allegations time and again. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal called it fake publicity while Vice Chairman Baburam Bhattarai said his party would not be involved in such a foolish act. PLA chief Barsaman Pun claimed that it was a part of a larger conspiracy worked out by the government, army and India in unison and challenged Sood to prove his allegations.

Naturally, an accuser is required to present evidence against the accused to prove his allegations, but the Nepali Maoists too need to clarify their relationship with Indian Maoists, with whom they shared a close relationship during Nepal's insurgency. It was only after Nepali Maoists joined the peace process and laid down their arms that an ideological distance was created between them and the Indian Maoists. But there has been little clarification as to where their relationship stands these days.

Earlier, Sood wrote to the foreign ministry demanding action against those involved in



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

hurling shoes at him in Solukhumbu. The government failed to bring the culprit to book. Against this backdrop, another letter with serious allegations has been sent to the ministry. If Sood's allegation is baseless, or driven by an ulterior motive, the government should draw the attention of the Indian government to it. For now, neither side's claims have been proven. Additional information from India and the Maoists is crucial, and this will only be achieved through government investigations.



We are close to a consensus now  
Wheel: Budget

नागरिक Yubak in *Nagarik*, 31 October

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*,  
10 November

राजनीतिकारण

The country is in a state of uncertainty due to the failure of political parties to reach a consensus. Failure to elect a prime minister despite numerous attempts has made people question the competence of the political parties and pushed the nation towards becoming a failed state. The parties, instead of working for the people and the country, are busy soliciting their own interests. They have neither budged from their stance nor sought any alternatives to unlock the deadlock. People are frustrated to see their elected representatives engrossed in power play rather than working towards drafting the constitution on time. Five months have gone by since the term extension of the Constituent Assembly and nothing substantive has been

# People power



KIRAN PANDAY

achieved so far. It is very unlikely that the constitution will be ready in the stipulated time.

The biggest challenge for now is the budget. It's not only the day-to-day work of governance that has been hampered due to the delay in its presentation, businessmen and economists are predicting an economic disaster.

We, the people, always complain about how leaders are incompetent but never actually do anything to force them into fulfilling their obligations towards the country and the people. Until we remain silent in the face of their wrongdoing, the leaders will continue cheating us. That's why it has become necessary for civil society to take charge. It is now up to the people to make the leaders understand their duty towards the country. It is now the people's responsibility to exert pressure on their elected representatives to draft the constitution on time.



DAMODAR NEUPANE

# Lifeline

Damodar Neupane in Kantipur, 9 November

कान्तिपुर

Vehicles reached Nepaltar, Ilam in 1958 but the 12-km road between Nepaltar and Mangalbare is yet to be surfaced. The two kilometres of the road that were surfaced two years ago are damaged. The road is wide, but the vehicles run on a single lane because of its condition. If a vehicle breaks down in the middle, the road is blocked until the vehicle is fixed.

"Even though 52 years have passed, the condition hasn't improved," says Netra Khanal of the Association of Ex-Indian Army Officials. "As soon as the monsoon starts, the road becomes muddy and it becomes difficult to travel." When the road was an agricultural road, it was maintained by the consumer committee. The road was then categorised as a division road so that

it would get surfaced. But all initiatives to get it surfaced have failed because of corruption.

The road is crucial to earnings in the district, bringing in more than Rs 400 million. Ginger, cardamom, peas and other agricultural products are exported to India via this road. But its condition has limited the development of the district. The Indian government has donated an ambulance, but it cannot run on the road, the local health centre exists but doctors refuse to come. "We are building infrastructures of education and economic development," says Moti Gautam, a local. "But the face of this area would be transformed if we had a surfaced road."

# Coming in last

Chetan Pandey in Naya Patrika,  
10 and 11 November

नया पत्रिका

The National Sports Council has finally managed tickets for the athletes participating in the Asian Games set to begin in Guangzhou in China this Friday.

The participation of the Nepali team was in question after the Council failed to provide tickets to the athletes till Tuesday night.

Staff at the Council allege that officials were scheming for commissions till the very last minute, which led to the delay in purchasing tickets. After running

around for the tickets all night on Tuesday, the Council succeeded in booking Thursday's tickets, much to the relief of the anguished athletes. But now the athletes will have to travel via a longer route. They will have to spend eight hours in transit in Kolkata and two hours in another town. If the

officials of the Sports Council had acted on time, the athletes would have reached Guangzhou in four hours.

The Council will also have to pay an additional Rs 1.5 million to Gorkha Travels for the airfares. If the tickets had been bought two months ago, each would have cost only Rs 35,000, for which the officials are now paying close to Rs 70,000. The out-of-cash Council took a loan of Rs 7 million from the National Cricket Association at the last minute to

send the athletes on time for the opening ceremony on Friday.

Almost everyone had refused to give the Council a loan earlier. The Cricket Association consented to a loan only after the Finance Ministry agreed to act as a guarantor. A staff member at the Council said, "No one trusts the officials of the Sports Council even for a sum involving a few million rupees because of their corrupt image." Sources from the Council also claim that officials amassed millions in commissions in a single night arranging the air tickets.

Meanwhile, UML leader Yogesh Bhattarai secretly left for Guangzhou with his wife on Tuesday while the athletes were still waiting for their tickets. Bhattarai has not even informed his party about the visit, Yubraj Gyawali, secretary of the UML said. Member of the National Sports Council entrusted with managing the tickets, Samim Miya Ansari 'Bablu', also flew to Guangzhou on Monday, leaving the athletes in confusion.



DEEPESH SHRESTHA

# Bye baby bunting, Daddy's gone a-hunting

**S**orry to keep harping on and on about the **Great Gateway** of Nepal but it sticks out like such a sore thumb that anyone arriving or leaving Nepal ignores it at their peril. On the positive side, this erection is sure to win an international prize, if ever one is given for a phallic symbol with the most complete non-functionality. The moola spent on the Arc de Triumph could have been invested instead in upgrading the loos at Tribhuvan Internecine Airport, where the red and yellow tiles in question would have actually served a purpose.



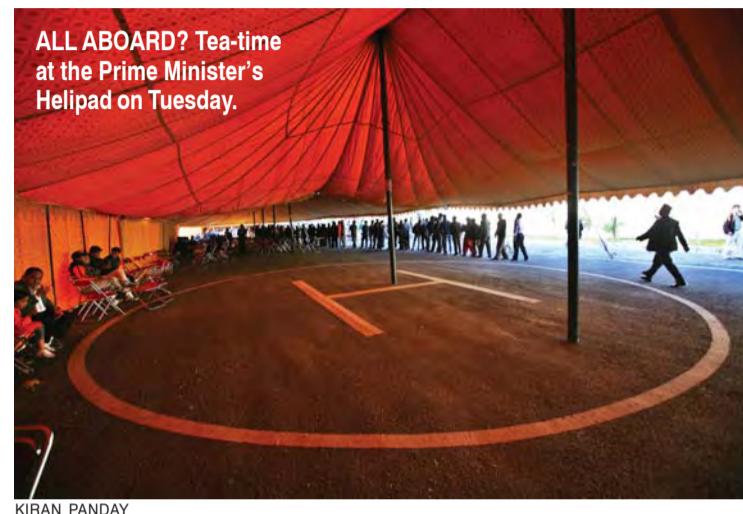
We Nepalis have a great gate fetish, let's admit it. Bill Gates would feel totally at home here. During the war, the Baddies bombed roads and bridges but built gates all over the hinterland. They are erecting gates every few kilometres from Abu Khaireni to Palungtar for the **Communist Utopia Shareholder's Conference**, with party sources confirming that Rs 10 million has been set aside for welcome arches and buntings alone. During the absolute monarchy days, they began with the Shahid Gate and never stopped. The Nepali Kangres built gates all over the capital during its Annual General Meeting, and two months later they are still causing traffic jams. One Kangresi told the Ass: "We had a budget to build them, but no budget to dismantle them." No wonder the country is in the state it is in. The only thing that comes close to rivalling our craze for gates is our obsession with clock towers. But more about that some other time.



Just about the only guys who benefited from the **Tihar Summit** seem to have been the owners of Hattiban Resort, who not only raked in more than two laks in room charges, food and booze but karods worth of publicity for NTY 2011 that money couldn't buy. All the three parties in our three-party dictatorship had their own reasons for going, but there was one reason common to all: to show a jaded public that now that the fun and games of the festivals are over they are getting down to brass tacks.

The reason Awesome was so keen on going up to Hattiban was, as he put it, "for mind fresh". But the hidden agenda was to stonewall on everything from demobilisation to state restructuring so that he can tell his comrades in Gorkha that he stood firm and didn't give in to India. The fact that the meeting

ALL ABOARD? Tea-time at the Prime Minister's Helipad on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

was shifted from Chitwan to Gorkha because of dengue means that PKD now faces a much bigger threat than the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito: BRB supporters in his home district.



If the **Homely Ministry** could exhibit the same meticulous forward planning it showed in arranging the Hattiban

Expedition to improve the country's law and order situation, ordinary Nepalis would all breathe a lot easier. Lord Bhim planned the details himself: complete with decoy convoys, fake bookings for Lukla hotels, red herrings about chartering choppers, while they all sneaked off through the backdoor of Singha Darbar to Elephant Forest in Jumbo Hi Aces. A phalanx of cops in Pharping told journoes to bugger off, but no media sleuth took the trouble to get a scoop by hiking up through the forest. In the end, it turned out to be such a

slow news day that tv channels decided to be their own talking heads and headlined media being 'manhandled' by rude cops.



As it turned out, the three parties and their five senior leaders (Total: 15) held marathon meetings, arguing all over again about the same points and then agreeing to disagree. It was all supposed to be TOP SECRET, which is why they all started spilling the beans on the record as soon as they came back down to terra firma. Some said president rule, others presidium rule, some wanted a revolving prime ministership, others wanted a council of ministers with two chairmen. Wait a minute, isn't that what kingji had?



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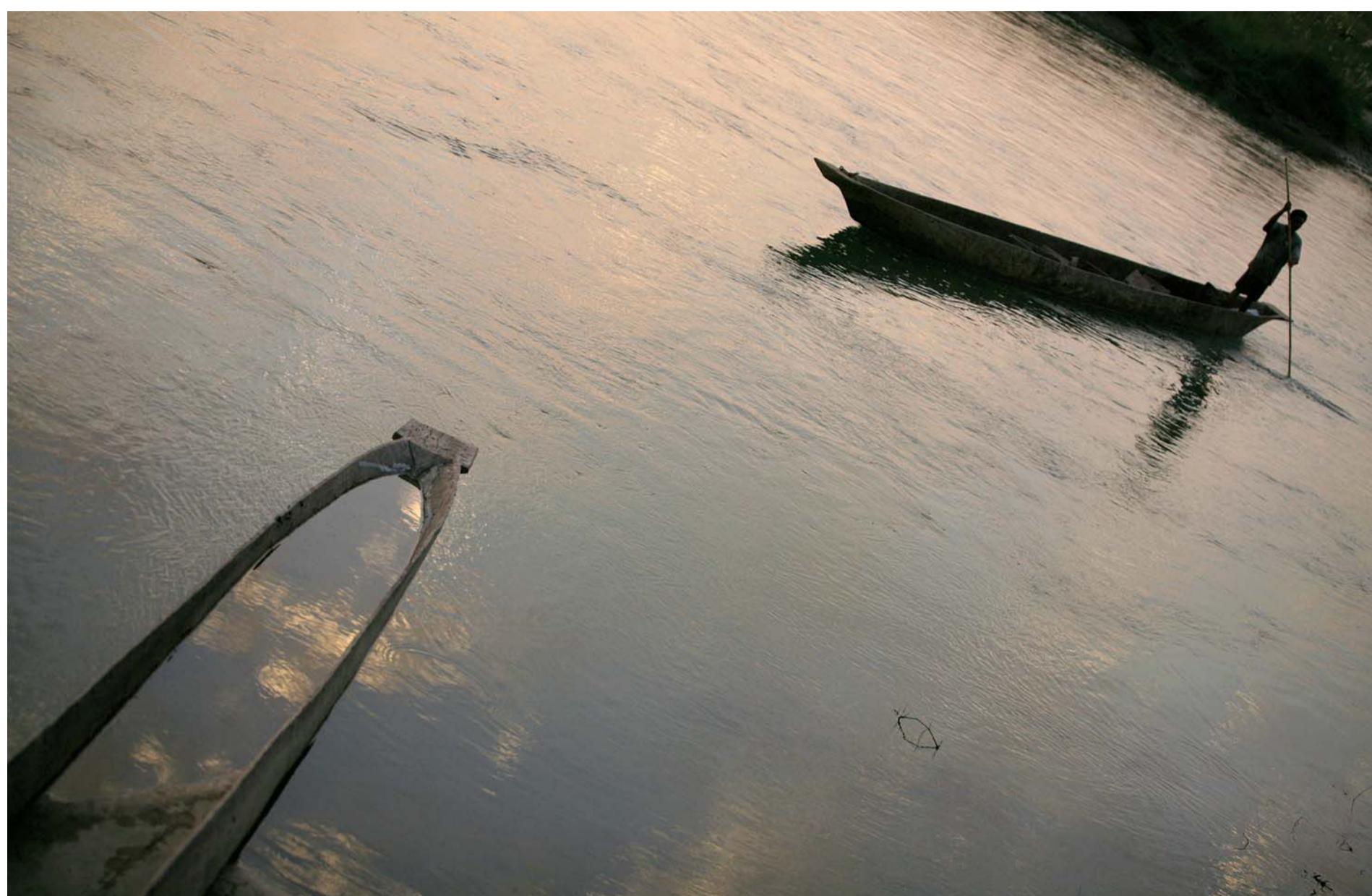
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## Sinking ship

There's a hole in our bucket, as I'm sure you'll agree. Quite a few, actually. There's the politicians, of course, who manage on a day to day basis to drain out this country's hopes and vital juices. They are also knocking holes in our economy with their muddleheaded sparring. But worst of all, perhaps, is the gaping hole in our social fabric when it comes to the way we

treat our women. While men just about manage to stay afloat on the uncertain surface calm of the everyday, women are sinking.

This issue, **Anuradha Koirala** of Maiti Nepal, recognised as one of CNN's Heroes for 2010, laments the fact that trafficking of women still goes on. **Pamela Sciantarelli** and **Eugenia Gabelia** lay bare the truth behind Mumbai's Kamathipura, where enslaved

Nepali women are crushed by the weight of the government's, and society's, indifference. You'd think things were bad enough. But the regressive decisions on citizenship made by the self-appointed High-level Task Force on 4 November are beyond belief, as **Damakant Jayshi** finds out. There's a hole in our bucket, let's fix it.

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