

NEPALI Times

#544

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BILASH RAI

YES MAOSTER

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On a treasure hunt with Nepal's top bankers

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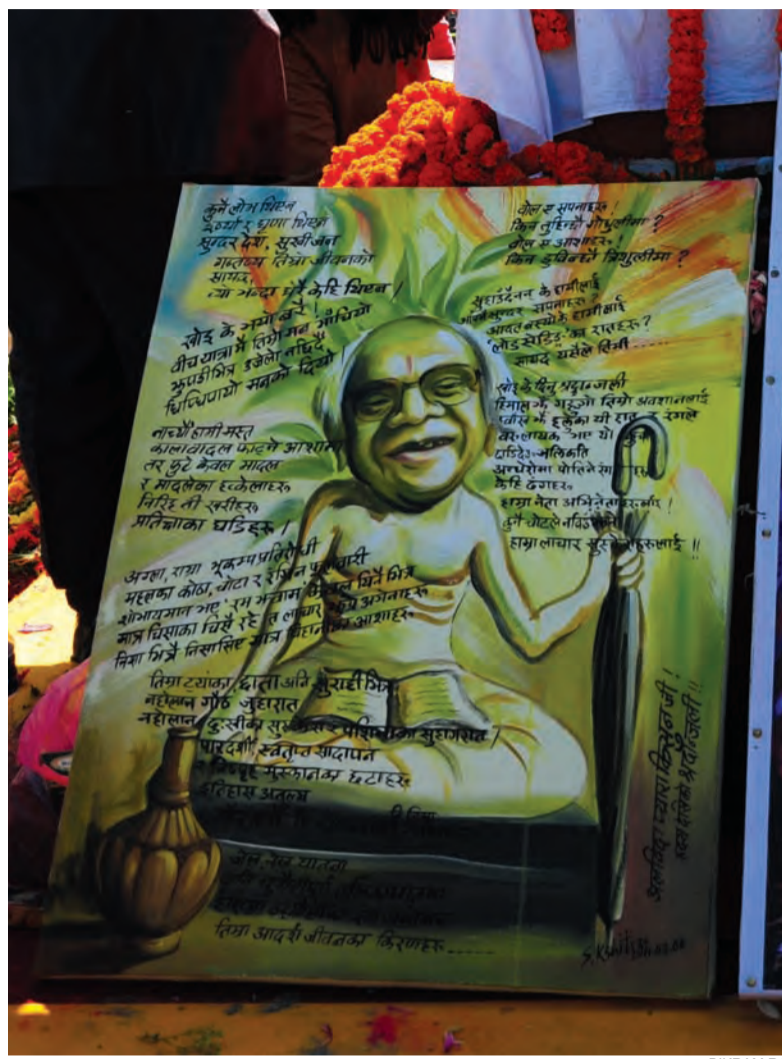
DEATH OF A STATESMAN

The lives of widely admired statesmen often don't get much attention in their lifetimes. The media tends to focus on the more insalubrious characters in the political firmament. This is particularly the case in developing countries such as Nepal, where political corruption is taken for granted.

When politicians are praised, it is often only when they pass away, and flaws are graciously overlooked and virtues extolled to the heavens. Inevitably, assessments depend as much on the milieu in which said politician existed as in their inherent qualities.

When Girija Prasad Koirala died, his many critics stood back for the most part. Others scrambled to praise him, if only for his political longevity. With Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the tipsy 'saint' of years gone by, the accolades would have flowed easier, not least because he had expired as a political force some time ago.

But of course Bhattarai, in his Gandhian guise, was an uncommon politician. He furnished a fairly unsullied link to the heady days of the first revolutions of Nepal. Whatever his shortcomings, he is remembered as the prime minister who brought together Nepal's interim constitution at a time when a quick transition to true democracy still seemed possible. In his spartan tastes



BIKRAM RAI

(notwithstanding certain indulgences) he provided a stark counterpoint to every avaricious politician we have been forced to endure since.

So what have we learnt from the death of a statesman? Not, despite our struggles to complete the post-conflict transition, that Bhattarai's pronouncements on the necessity of a constitutional monarchy are valid in our present context. If they were once, they are not now; for this we should have been lucky enough to have a monarchy that was prepared to abide by the constitution, a decade back.

Rather, the public show of grief and the commentary surrounding Bhattarai's passing should serve to remind us what many in this nation still hold dear. The first is the attachment to revolutionary change, of which Bhattarai was a democratic embodiment. The second is the yearning for a statesman who will rise above party politics and self-enrichment for the good of the country. To what extent Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was a saint is open to debate. But Nepal's surviving politicians would do well to understand this: that it is in contrast to their shameful, unprincipled behaviour, and not some universal standard of corruption, that Bhattarai was held up as a saint.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

WHAT REVOLUTION?

O joy, we are going to have another one of those charades playing on the streets, are we ('The next Nepali revolt', Sagar Onta, #543)?

I am all with you in spirit about some elements of your article, but the rest of the body is a bit of a mish-mash and your assumption about the possibility of another one of these shams is unfounded. Nothing is going to happen and that's a good thing.

Tell me now, why didn't you utilise your energy in advocating for an election at the earliest possible time? That is the only course of action available to get us out of this rut. Have periodic elections and wait for the time when the right set of people will do the right thing.

I will explain why I say that. If we were growing at six per cent in 1996, which I think we were, the size of Nepal's economy would have been double in 2008 to what it was in 1996. There is compounding for you.

The prevalence of peace and timely elections would also ensure the another miracle. Despite repeated annoyance from the contemporary political leadership, timely elections would have ensured that people would sort out their priorities and would have voted in the right set of characters, largely.

Another factor would have been to change the quality of the economy. If India and China can evolve into sophisticated economies over a 12-year period, then Nepal was small

enough to see acceleration in the pace of expansion as well as a transformation in the nature of economic activities.

What I do agree with you on is the advocacy of taking students out of politics, at least till the graduate level.

Slarti

- There has been no revolution or people's movement since 1950 without instruction from Delhi. So unless Delhi instructs, there is not going to be another revolution or people's movement. Our leaders have been those anointed by Delhi. Ethical leaders are unfit to be quislings. We get leaders as desired by Delhi, and what's more our intellectuals will hail and follow such leaders only. So stop dreaming.

K. K. Sharma

Nepal has had its shares of 'revolutions and counter-revolutions.' One more and we will not have enough tyres to run tempos and micros.

I do not believe we will see a drastic change in Nepal over the next two, three or five years. Long term however, if we want to see our Nepal change, each citizen will have to make personal sacrifices - more is to be expected from those who have more. As many other commentators have already said, we need to stop with the blame game. Accept that Nepal is probably a hundred years behind developed nations, see the problems, pick some you can tackle and keep on moving forward.

elina p

BLAME GAME

The human intellect is such that we need to have a clear object of understanding for

everything. Where there is a problem, we seek not a solution but a culprit ('Cholera cholera', Sameer Dixit, #543). For it is much easier to point a finger than imagine an alternative.

In the case of cholera in Haiti, the fact that we still haven't found the cause of such an outbreak is demonstrative. A French scientist, who may or may not have been in Nepal, knowing that cholera was present there, simply said, "Look, there is a Nepali camp of Gurkhas near the river, they might have been the cause of it."

Let me say that if the Gurkhas are Nepalis, along with the UN's regulations on hygiene, it is foolishness in its most unreasonable form to insinuate such a thing. If the culprit hasn't been scientifically identified and proven by means of a step-by-step demonstration, then why are we still talking about this? Why are we still pointing fingers at the Nepal Army?

Does the hate generated lead to any solution to the problem in hand? No. All it does is lead the minds and spirits of men further and further away from the problem. And ultimately, when the problem is resolved, all that will be left is the hate that Haitians feel for both the UN and the Nepalis.

Thinley, France

NO PANACEAS

"For far too long, they've been exposed to narrow, ideological thinking. If only there were a way to scale up Arthala's reach, Nepal's economy might finally be allowed to prosper."

('Economy 101', Ashutosh Tiwari, #543).

Politics is far too central to the life of an average Nepali student. But that is not a problem, it is the result of the fact that a vast multitude of Nepali youth (even elders) do not appreciate the value of critical thinking. They do not appear to appreciate the idea that reaching a conclusion is a process, not an event.

Whether a believer in the free market, or a believer in a socialist economy, what is most important for people to understand is that there is no quick and easy way to achieve economic prosperity.

It is fine to believe in free market economy as long as you are not extrapolating that belief into an all-encompassing philosophy of the answer to life, the universe and everything.

Soni

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 544

Q. Should marijuana be legal for those above 18?

Total votes: 2,482

Yes: 39.4%
No: 41.9%
Only for medical use: 18.7%

Weekly Internet Poll # 545. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What does Nepal need most now?

Re-engagement

It looks like it's the Indians who are now willing to correct course vis-à-vis the Maoists



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

NEW DELHI. The Indian establishment is confused about what to do next in Nepal.

After May 2009, there was a certain coherence among the different actors who shape Delhi's Nepal policy. The key tenet was to maintain the 'democratic alliance' within Nepal to pose a political challenge to the Maoists. But the formation of the current government, the shift in power equations within the Indian bureaucracy, and a review about what India has gained and lost in this period has led to divisions.

For all its democratic orientation, foreign policy – especially when it comes to neighbours, where security interests are involved – is a fairly closed affair in India. Less than a dozen people in the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) call the shots.

On Nepal, some people had been arguing that it was necessary to engage with the Maoists and get them back on board. But there was strategic

determination not to do so until the Maoists underwent a 'course correction'. The consensus that the Maoist strategic calculus could only be changed by mounting a united political offensive against them is now broken and two distinct lines, with elements that overlap, are discernible.

The first is the line that has been pushed for the past few years by the Indian embassy leadership here, key MEA and RAW officials who handle Nepal, and the National Security Advisor.

This school was convinced that the Maoists were aiming to establish a one-party communist state; if left unchallenged, they had the capacity to do so; and the Maoists were hostile to Indian security interests and could not be trusted with power. So the priority was to keep the Maoists out, raise costs for them for backtracking on promises, frustrate their designs, and eventually let the CA dissolve without the constitution being drafted in order to dry out a major source of legitimate strength for the Maoists and shift power away from them.

The former rebels would be left without a stake in the government; there would be no legislature; and there



were clear limits to street action, thus foiling Maoist plans to consolidate power through 'sadak, sadan ra sarkar' (street, parliament, and government).

But the collapse of the 'democratic alliance'; the perception that China has gained political space and introspection about whether Indian rigidity has allowed that; recognition that the CA may get extended again; the limited appetite within Nepal for an all-out confrontation; and the growing difficulties in keeping Maoist Chairman Dahal out of power have all led to the emergence of a second line.

Key people in MEA, who are not directly on the Nepal desk but have influence, have been arguing for a fresh approach that does not



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

expose India so starkly and allows events to take their natural course. Questions are being raised about whether a direct deal with the Maoists was possible, and preferable to the arrangement that has now taken shape. There has also been a change in the top leadership of the intelligence agencies, and it is willing to review the existing approach. Make no mistake, this school does not trust the Maoists, neither does it intend to give them a blank cheque. They too will insist on progress on integration and rehabilitation, and will not compromise on certain democratic precepts. But they dismiss suggestions that dissolving the CA is either possible or desirable; believe that even if Dahal comes to power, Indian security interests will not be

affected; and see no reason why they should invest so much in backing domestic players with a weak mass base who themselves are not serious about fighting the Maoists.

There is also lack of clarity on how to deal with the Jhala Nath Khanal government. Some have suggested that since the left alliance may well consolidate, it is perhaps best to do business with them and use the opportunity to push the Maoists to deliver on commitments. But the general sense is that this government has its roots in anti-Indianism. They feel that a strong opposition is essential to keep the government in check, as its consolidation will mean the long-term marginalisation of the Nepali Congress and Madhesi forces that India is close to. For now though, officials are happy to see Khanal and Dahal get bogged down in internal challenges, and are waiting for the government's roadmap on the peace process.

While there is a danger that Nepali politics will be held hostage to inter-agency battles in Delhi, the breakdown of the earlier 'keep the Maoists out' compact is a positive thing. The debates could potentially force policymakers to re-examine their assumptions and attune themselves better to the political realities on the ground. The Maoists would do well to seize the opportunity, reach out, and take steps that would allay Indian apprehensions on the peace process and its own security interests. ■

काम सानो ठुलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ्ग र जात पनि हुँदैन ।

काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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In a crunch

Where's the money?

If there is one thing everyone agrees on, it is that the Nepali economy has major structural problems that, if not fixed urgently, will lead to a larger crisis. At a Himalmedia interaction on Monday with Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Yubaraj Khatiwada, top bankers blamed the liquidity shortage in the market on political uncertainty undermining confidence in the formal banking sector.

"It is not yet a crisis, but the liquidity crunch has gone on for too long," warned Himalayan Bank's Ashok Rana, also the newly elected chairman of the Nepal Bankers' Association. "There are worrying signs that market sentiment is eroding because of inconsistent policies and

be in compliance with international financial norms. We are in a transition to transparency. This is pushing cash away from core banking."

Because of the indiscriminate licensing of new banks in the past, Khatiwada is under pressure from the IMF and others to rein in the banking sector. Analysts say it has been tempting for the new governor to take some populist and hasty decisions which haven't exactly boosted the confidence of depositors and investors.

"The problem creators are not being singled out," complained one banker. "Rastra Bank is punishing everyone. The central bank's role is to be a regulator, not to micro-manage banks with directives on interest rate

has been brought down from Rs 20 billion last year to Rs 4 billion this year.

Governor Khatiwada was the architect of the plan to mop up all old notes featuring likenesses of the kings. Although this was couched as a political decision, the central bank was in fact trying to pump black money or hoarded cash into the formal banking sector.

"Let's not lay all the blame on Rastra Bank," said Jhapat Rawal, President of the Development Bank Association. "The guiltiest are the political parties, who can't get their act together. This is affecting the entire economy, including banking."

Pointing to the links between

net. Any attempt to regularise this meets with individual and political resistance. The increasing scrutiny of depositors has had the unintended effect of reducing cash inflow into banks and the remittance of cash through official channels.

"Funding is getting tighter due to regulatory requirements," says Siddhant Pandey of Ace Development Bank. "Once development banks and finance companies start following Basel 2 norms next year the liquidity situation will get even worse."

The consensus was that without political stability, continuity and clarity in financial policymaking, the banking industry will continue to flounder. Government spending needs



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

political uncertainty."

Government moves to tighten regulations are seen to be affecting domestic deposits as well as remittances, with people preferring to stash cash at home. The delayed budget froze state expenditure, contributing to the cash shortage.

Ironically, one of the main causes of the cash crunch appears to be that Rastra Bank and the Ministry of Finance are trying to implement rules that conform to Nepal's international obligations under the Basel 2 agreement, rules designed to curb anti-money laundering and terrorism as well as corruption.

Explained Khatiwada: "A lot of this has to do with Nepal trying to

spreads or CEO salary caps."

Khatiwada appears to be aware of the criticism and adopted a conciliatory tone during Monday's discussions, clearly trying to calm a growing sense of foreboding among senior bankers.

He said he has been trying to send a "psychological message" that the banking sector must be protected from the real estate bubble. However, he suggested that housing was going through self-correction. He also declared that state spending was picking up and that new rules to allow government to open accounts in private banks were being mullied. The economy, according to the governor, is growing at a "reasonable" rate of five per cent and the balance of payments

banking, real estate, remittances, economic growth, investor confidence and job creation, Kumari Bank's Radhesh Pant argued for an expert group to formulate strategic direction, instead of tackling problems in isolation as they crop up. Said Pant: "The financial sector has had one of its toughest times over the last year and a half, and we are still fire-fighting. If things remain as they are, where will the banking sector be in two years time? We need structural solutions to pave the way forward."

The liquidity problem with Nepal's banking sector is caused by the opaqueness of most transactions, VAT evasion, under-invoicing, and the fact that many Nepalis are not in the tax

to go up immediately, and the central bank must boost market confidence. The media, too, came in for criticism on this last point. Some bankers felt that the Nepali media's piecemeal and sensationalist reporting style on banking and finance was spreading unnecessary alarm, contributing to the lack of market confidence.

Ashok Rana summed it up: "The politicians must decide what it is they can say that will restore confidence in the market, and assure the public that their deposits will be safe." ■

Kunda Dixit

For the full transcript of the Himalmedia Banking Interaction, see: www.himalkhabar.com



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(Don't) keep the change



MY TWO PAISA
Paavan Mathema

The board at the health check-up counter at the transportation department clearly states its charge as Rs 8.90. But the officer at the counter will demand Rs 10, and most will readily pay. Where does the Rs 1.10 go?

Our service providers have a persistent tendency to round off what's owed when we pay, but this hardly ever works out in the consumer's favour. Domestic airport tax is Rs 169.50 but passengers are charged Rs 170. Electricity bill of Rs 874.45? Accounting principles be damned, you are most likely to pay Rs 875, not Rs 874. At the petrol station, the attendant might ease off on the dispenser when the meter reaches Rs 874.43 and demand Rs 875, even though he could easily have gotten closer to giving you what you paid for.

To some, this might



seem inevitable. Where are the coins for such small change anyway? But it's not just about getting back your *mohars* and *sukas*, we rarely get change of two or three rupees back, and when we do it might be in the form of a toffee you don't want (or at least not in that flavour). Often it's not even that; a pre-paid mobile recharge card may have an MRP of Rs 102, but the seller won't hand it over unless you pay Rs 105. We don't even question it because it seems petty. But if returning the correct change

is such a hassle, why not charge a round figure in the first place? These odd figures allow vendors to openly cheat consumers.

What all these people are doing is 'penny-shaving', which is the fraudulent practice of stealing money over and over again in very small quantities. This is usually done by rounding off. But it doesn't take a genius to recognise that a rupee here and a rupee there can add up to very many rupees indeed. With 2.4 million customers for NCell, you can imagine

Being shortchanged is part of the Nepali everyday

how many rupees are being filched every day.

So what do we do? In principle, we have the right to get our money's worth, even the paisas. The nominal value of a rupee or a paisa should not be lost. It might be impossible give back the paisas in cash transactions but a rupee can certainly be returned. Perhaps a slow switch to plastic money, e-banking or mobile money is an option, through which you can pay the exact amount for your consumption.

As consumers, we have

the basic right to be safe, to choose freely, to be heard and to be informed. The level of consumer awareness in Nepal is still low and the protection we have from the state is limited. The Consumer Protection Act 1997 needs to be updated to deal with modern-day consumer concerns. There isn't a specific platform where consumer complaints are heard, and we do not have a consumer court yet that can give quick judgments. Two years ago, the government instructed all stores to display a price list of all essential commodities because of variations among stores. But most retailers have simply ignored this directive.

As we celebrate World Consumer Rights Day this 15 March, let us move towards becoming aware and informed consumers. Don't quietly accept that candy unless you actually purchased it. Let's not pay for what we do not consume and if we do, demand to know where it goes. Unless you want them to, don't let them keep that change. 🇳🇵

Banking for the poor

Bank of Kathmandu has introduced BOK Kissan Banking Sewa, aimed at farmers in rural areas. The product is based on a self-help group model where people form groups to participate in the program. The members become eligible for loans once they have deposited a certain amount. No collateral is required. The service is currently available at BOK's Jawalakhel and Sankhu branches.



Shop away

A new Saleways supermarket has opened in Maharajganj, offering a range of over 20,000 products. A Dr Saathi pharmacy outlet is also

located within the premises. Saleways has branches in Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, and Pokhara.

New cells

Onida has released a new range of six cellular phones with the slogan 'Better than sought, cheaper than thought'. Onida phones come with a free 2GB memory card and are equipped with a camera, bluetooth, and an audio and video player, among other features.

Award winner

Vini K Gupta, General Manager of Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu, has been awarded the Best Embodiment of The IHG Winning Ways Award in the Asia Australia Region of the Inter-Continental Hotels Group (IHG). The award is based on a hotel's performance and improvement.

Dealer's meet

Over 150 Whirlpool Dealers attended the Company's Annual Nepal Dealers Conference. Top performers were rewarded with certificates and prizes. Navin Distributors recorded the most outstanding performance of 2010 with an annual growth rate of 30 per cent.



Treasure hunt

Ford will announce the Ford City Chase version 2.0, a treasure hunt for private car owners, this Saturday. The event is

being organised by JA Forum, a club under the Student Council of Kathmandu College of Management. Registration forms are available at Ford Showroom (Thapathali), Ford Service Station (Swayambhu) and VLCC (Charkhal).

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The Big Three's hostage



MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

The extended deadline to draft the new constitution – 28 May – is drawing closer. The signals coming out of the Constituent Assembly remain mixed at best. It is being held hostage by the three big political parties, roiled as they are by internal feuds and their fear of the future.

A beleaguered Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal is struggling to give shape to his cabinet a month after he took oath of office. Two of his party rivals, Madhav Kumar Nepal and KP Oli, are acting on vendetta rather than principle over the secret seven-point deal between Khanal and Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

But if Nepal and Oli get their own men into the other plum ministries, you won't hear them utter the words 'Home ministry'. UML has played true to its character over the seven-point agreement; did they reject it in the end or accept it? No one really knows. The brouhaha over the Home Ministry is deliberate, allowing both the Maoists and UML to divert attention from the appalling secret deal.

Certain sections of the media and its commentators have abetted them in this exercise. They have glossed over the deal, besides conveniently ignoring the fact that Khanal has already named two 'losers' to his cabinet from his own party (an insult these commentators often applied to Madhav Kumar Nepal and his cabinet). Such brazen partisanship suits party cadre; not those who claim to be non-partisan.

The Maoists look like acquiring all the trappings of a normal parliamentary party. This could be good or bad, depending on who you are. For the romantics and the Robin Hooders, the feud within the party knocks it off its pedestal. For the realists, this is business as usual.



BIKRAM RAI

Political activity is still limited to wrangling as the Constituent Assembly's time runs out

Open feuds and personality clashes are a given in any political party. So those wishing to see the Maoists as a transformed party, take heart.

Nepali Congress, in the meantime, has gone back to reacting rather than leading the way. As academic Krishna Khanal has noted, this is what it has done for most of the post-2006 period. Since making the mistake of ignoring Dahal's overtures on the peace process and power-sharing, the party has been trying to figure out how to reclaim pole position in the affairs of the country.

These intra- and inter-feuds mean that the Constituent Assembly will continue to remain hostage to the whims of the Maoists, Nepali Congress, and UML.

With the extended deadline to complete constitution writing less

than three months away, and no reliable evidence to suggest that the constitution will materialise by then, what comes next is uppermost.

How will the unspoken part of the Dahal-Khanal deal, to extend the Constituent Assembly by a year again, fare? The much debated Supreme Court interpretation of its order on the last extension of the assembly could be used as an excuse by the two main communist parties. With Upendra Yadav's Forum and other small parties, they could muster a two-thirds majority to amend the Interim Constitution to give the assembly yet another extension.

But as I have argued before in this space, another extension for the assembly, which was elected in May 2008 for a two-year term to draft the constitution, will be justified only if the political parties 1) move decisively towards finding a solution to integration/rehabilitation of Maoist combatants, and 2) show some tangible signs of narrowing their differences on certain constitutional issues.

We are waiting. damakanta@gmail.com

THIS WEEK

Bhattarai deceased

Nepali Congress's only surviving founder leader and former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai passed away Friday night at the age of 87. Bhattarai was admitted to hospital after complaints of cardiac, blood pressure and urinary ailments. His body was taken to Dasrath Stadium so the public could pay their last tributes, and he was cremated at Aryaghat with state honours Sunday.

Ministers appointed

PM Jhala Nath Khanal appointed UML's Bishnu Poudel as Minister for Defense and Gangaram Tuladhar as Minister for Education on Monday. Khanal will retain the Home Ministry for the time being, and other UML ministers will be nominated at the next Standing Committee meeting.

Meanwhile, UCPN (Maoist) has finalised the name of four candidates for the coalition government. The party has nominated Krishna Bahadur Mahara to lead the Maoist team and serve as Deputy PM and Minister for Information and Communication; Top Bahadur Rayamajhi as Minister for Physical Planning and Works; Barshaman Pun as Minister for Peace and Reconstruction; and Khadga Bahadur Biswokarma as Minister for Tourism. Seven more leaders to join the government will soon be named.

More aid

The World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday agreed to provide a total of Rs 9.86 billion of development aid to Nepal. WB will provide Rs 5.43 billion (US\$75 million), including loans of US\$41.26 million and grants of US\$33.74 million for the Road Sector Development Project. ADB will provide Rs 3.56 billion (US\$49 million), including loans of US\$24.5 million and grants of US\$24.5 million for the Sub-regional Transport Enhancement Project. ADB will also provide additional grants of Rs 870 million (US\$12 million) for the Transport Project Preparatory Facility Project.

The UK government has committed to spend £331 million for development over the next four years (2011-2015). Visiting UK Minister of State for International Development Alan Duncan unveiled the four-year plan for the Department for International Development (DFID) for Nepal on Wednesday.



THE WORLD BANK

Senior Health Specialist

The World Bank Nepal Office in Kathmandu seeks to recruit a dynamic professional as an Extended Term Consultant. The incumbent will work as a Senior Health Specialist for the World Bank's support to Nepal's health sector. The position will be filled by a Nepali national, based in Kathmandu and would be for one year, extendable for another year depending on business needs and candidate's performance.

As a minimum the candidate should have an advanced degree in Public Health, Health Economics or related discipline. A good understanding of health issues related to the Millennium Development Goals and health system strengthening is desirable. A minimum of eight years of relevant professional experience is required.

This is a country office position in Nepal subject to local recruitment under the Nepal compensation plan. The World Bank offers a locally competitive package.

Details (vacancy# 110335) are available in the World Bank Careers website: www.worldbank.org/careers. All applications must be submitted through this website.

The World Bank Group is committed to achieving diversity in terms of gender, nationality, culture and educational background. Individuals with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply.

Closing date is 29 March, 2011.

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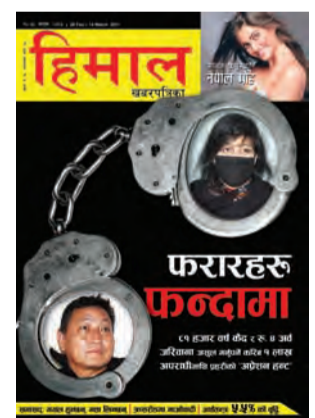
28 February – 14 March

Cover

Crackdown on Organised Crime

The Police's 'Operation Hunt' has snared noted crooks
"We won't let the guilty go free" Ramkrishna Timsina, Supreme Court
"This is the just the beginning," CIB chief Rajendra Singh Bhandari

Jailed criminals direct operations from behind bars
Tracking criminals by GPS
Getting tough in the Tarai against criminals
Hired guns in the Madhes



Report

Marijuana farmers adopt alternative crops
Boom in rice harvest will raise GDP growth to 5%
Maoists at the crossroads

Opinion

No to loans for climate:
Jagadish Chandra Baral
Why Nepali Congress has dried up: Purshottam Dahal



KUNDA DIXIT

Whose heritage is it anyway?

and temples, partly as a display of power but also to invite respect and esteem from ordinary people. The construction and use of temples and religious objects were integrated with everyday life, supported by local guthis.

But then, for about 100 years, the Ranas neglected traditional temples and monuments. The government that came to power in 1951 was faced with an immense task of restoration. Who would take the responsibility to preserve Nepal's cultural heritage, and did anyone feel that it was even necessary?

UNESCO archives in Paris document how international professionals (architects, anthropologists, conservationists) became involved in cultural heritage preservation in Nepal after 1951. They also show that, apart from requesting UNESCO for economic support, Nepali government agencies were reluctant to be actively involved in the actual work until the 1960s. A strained economy is part of the explanation, but the documents also indicate that politicians and public administration staff were not really interested.

American anthropologist Mark Liechty, who has studied Nepal since the 1990s, argues that this neglect stemmed in part from the

Rana tendency to value foreign items as symbols of distinction, prestige, and power (that only they could display). Even with the end of the Rana regime, therefore, there was an elite reluctance to accept the advice of foreigners who planned to put indigenous Nepali culture in the spotlight.

During the 1960s, restoration was linked to cultural tourism, which itself could promote economic development, and government agencies became more active in collaborating with UNESCO, and other foreign governments and organisations. Monuments, buildings, and sites were studied, restoration costs were calculated, and professional people who could train local craftsmen were invited to Nepal. In 1979, seven sites of universal importance were put on the World Heritage list, among them Sagarmatha National Park, Lumbini, Bhaktapur, and Patan.

However, by designating a specific site or monument as part of universal cultural heritage, preservation has become very expensive, giving rise to two difficult questions. What happens to the indigenous culture when it is defined as being part of our universal heritage? Who has the economic responsibility for

preserving monuments and sites, so they can be presented to an international audience, most of whom are foreign tourists?

For centuries, the construction and use of temples and religious objects in Nepal were integrated with people's everyday lives, very much supported by the guthis. Today, the financial basis for both private and state guthis is crumbling, making national as well as international organisations even more important for restoration work. Nepal is increasingly dependent upon foreign support in the cultural sector in the same way that development aid in general has created a system of dependency. Thus, most restoration projects in Nepal have aimed at establishing open-air 'museums', such as the Bhaktapur Darbar Square, and excellent museums such as the one in Patan.

Being a foreigner, I appreciate that Nepal's rich cultural heritage is being taken care of through work such as that of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. At the same time, I cannot help but be concerned about indigenous culture becoming part of the tourist sector, separated from the everyday life of Nepalis, from whom it took root. 🇳🇵

MARIT BAKKE

Preservation of Nepali culture risks becoming something done by foreigners for foreigners

Not long ago, I took some Norwegian friends for a walk through Thamel to Kathmandu Darbar Square. Though usually a 15-minute walk, this time it took us over an hour. My friends, amazed and intrigued, had to stop to look at small temples adorned with rice and flowers, monks in a monastery in a small square, wood carvings on house facades, shops so small they barely had room for goods and, finally, the big temples in Darbar Square.

Most foreigners coming to Nepal for the first time usually react in the same way – with awe. The kings of yore built numerous palaces

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www.npi-nepal.com

EVENTS



Mithila Cosmos: New Narratives, an exhibition of Mithila paintings by SC Suman. 13 March to 5 April, starts 5.30pm on opening day, Siddhartha Art gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048

Future of History, an exhibition of paintings and alternative art works presented by Sattakon and a theatrical piece on Rato Machhendranath by Sarwanam Theater. 13 March, 4.50pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, Sunday-Friday, 10.30 to 6pm, Saturdays closed, 5522307


Maobadi, photo exhibition and slide presentation by Kevin Bubriski. Indigo Gallery, inside Mike's Breakfast, till 13 March, Narayanchaur, Kathmandu, Nepal indigo@wlink.com.np

Retrospective, 1970 to 2011, selected works by Birendra Pratap Singh. Till 24 March, Chai Chai Gallery and Cafe, Pulchok, 9808580436, 5528258

Art of war, exhibition of drawings by Bardiya's conflict hit children. Till 12 March, 11am to 4pm, except Tuesdays, Shanti Sangralaya, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, 5521393

Social Science Baha's Lecture Series XLVI, Pratyoush Onta on 'The Structural Landscape of Social Science Journals Published from Nepal'. 14 March, 5pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

ICIMOD's open house, guided tours of ICIMOD's programs and activities, documentary film shows, photo exhibition and more.



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12 March, 10am to 4pm, ICIMOD office, Khumaltar, shuttle services to the venue available every half hour from Jawalakhel roundabout from 9.30am

Clean Energy Nepal's Quiz Night for charity, proceeds of the event will be channelled to the 'Adopt a Community Project'. 18 March, 7pm onwards, Royal Alina's Pub and Cafe, Lazimpat, 9841289791



Second Toronto Nepali Film Festival, nine acclaimed films from Nepal including Kesang Tseten's 'In search of the Riyal', Deepak Rauniyar's 'Pooja' and many more. 12 March, 11.30am to 10.15pm, Innis Town Hall, University of Toronto, 2 Sussex Ave, St. George Street, 4168781526, curator@tnff.ca

MUSIC

Yala Maya Classic, classical music at Yala Maya Kendra. 16 March, 5.30pm Baggikhana, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, free entrance

Ke-sang on acoustic guitar and vocals. Every Saturday, 7pm onwards, New Orleans Coffee Shop Garden, 5522708 for reservations

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

DINING

Kilroy's of Kathmandu, celebrate St. Patricks Day on Thursday, March 17 with Two for One deals, Irish music and menu, and lots of Green Beer. Thamel, 4250440, 4250041



Splash Bar and Grill, continental and Mongolian BBQ. Till March end, every Wednesday and Friday, 5.30pm to 9.30pm, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818, Rs 1,500 nett per person, includes BBQ platter, snacks and a bottle of San Miguel,

Milk Coffee n Cocktail Cafe, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yarchagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous

Starbucks. Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg

Saturday @ Hyatt, enjoy a day out with your family, on-site fun and games for children and a kid-friendly menu. Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Jawalakhel

Kakori at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, kebabs, curries and more, enjoy Indian food at its best. Everyday 7pm to 10.45pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, call 4273999 for reservations

Station BBQ, don the chef's hat, make your own BBQ. Jhamsikhel, 5522083

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



The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams and a glass of wine or beer. Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1,300 per person, 4425341, operated by The Dwarika's Group of Hotels & Resorts

GETAWAYS



Weekends Treks Out Package, for expat and locals, 3 Days Kathmandu Valley Cultural Trek (Kathmandu/Lankuri/Balthali/Namobuddha/Kathmandu), includes 2 overnight stays in Lankuri and Balthali with meals, guide and drop & pick-up services. Hima Nepal Tours and Treks, Lazimpat, info@himanepaladventures.com, 9841766561, 012081099

Charikot Panorama Resort, enjoy mountain views and local culture at the historic town of Charikot. Special packages on offer. Charikot, Dolakha, 5529463, thapamaag@gmail.com

Overnight Package at The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, for local residents, package includes accommodation in Himalayan room, dinner and breakfast. Dhulikhel, Rs 4,000 (Single), Rs 5,700 (Double). The package rates are subject to a 10% Service charge. For more information/reservations call 4479488, Dwarika's Hotel, Sales & Marketing Department.

Shooting Maobadis

The Maoist PLA is the 400-pound gorilla in any room where Nepal's peace process is debated. Close to 20,000 ex-combatants remain in 28 cantonments across the country, over four years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord, and their future is still uncertain. But it is astonishing just how easily both politicians and the public have forgotten the physical reality of this extended, listless stay in sub-tropical camps.

There is also a tendency to lump the ex-combatants together with little regard to their individuality. They may all be 'Maobadi', but each cantonment, composed as it is of young men and women from different ethnicities and localities, is a microcosm of Nepal. Beyond this, they are individuals with their own histories and aspirations.

Kevin Bubriski's new collection of cantonment portraits, *Maobadi*, is an attempt to remind Nepalis that 'along with the collective identities of ethnic, economic, geographical and political affiliation are individual lives in the balance'. Indeed, as an introductory essay by Toby Alice Volkman notes, the portraits of the ex-combatants, often staring directly into the camera, are truly empathetic. Caught in the act of gardening, eating, woodworking, playing football, exercising – Bubriski's subjects appear no more radical than anybody else. Their extreme youth may also contribute to this impression, of course; one can't but conclude that many of those featured should have been disqualified as child soldiers or late recruits.



Maobadi
Kevin Bubriski
Himal Books
93 pages

Despite the helpful background information provided by Deepak Thapa and General Sam Cowan, however, the portraits themselves (taken in two of the cantonments) could have done with more support in the form of captions. Somehow, it's not enough simply to know that Dinesh Kaphle of Makwanpur is 21, or that Asta Bam of Kalikot is 23. Given the fairly predictable camp setting, lengthier captions would have enriched the visual detail. Who is Dinesh? What does Asta want?

Maobadi is a timely, humanising memoir of cantonment life from a veteran of Nepal. If limited in scope, it will nonetheless form a part of the corpus of documentation of the Maoist war. For only when the nation as a whole understands what brought about the insurgency can it really begin to move on.

Rabi Thapa

There will be a photo exhibition on *Maobadi* from 10-13 March at Indigo Gallery (Mike's Breakfast), Naxal, 4413580



SOMEPLACE ELSE

Café Cheeno



Café Cheeno announced itself to Patan Dhoka a couple of years back, and despite the attractive brick façade emergent on the corner with Krishnagalli, the first thought that passed through my mind in those Sisdolean days was, "Trust a Nepali restaurant to spring up next to a festering pile of garbage." Garbage isn't so much an issue now as is the construction of Lalitpur's own Bhatbhateni next door, but one imagines Cheeno will welcome the human traffic to ensue.

For now, Cheeno is all yours. You enter through a small indoor café that feels more like the souvenir

shop it doubles as, and out into a large space littered with tables not particularly sheltered from the sun and the wind. We took refuge on a dais-table, and admired the swings and benches set into the garden fronting the proprietors' residence.

Cheeno sports a fairly standard mix of salads, pastas and continental mains, the more alluring of which I imagine would be rather beyond the budgets of most locals. Armed with a fresh and cool Organic Mint Soda, I therefore ordered the straightforward and cheapish Chicken Burger. I was pleasantly surprised; for once, a chicken burger that wasn't

a token fill 'er up, thanks to juicy meat seasoned with herbs and onions.

On another day, a Strawberry Smoothie proved somewhat rich before a main course, but it was predictably tasty, and one appreciated crunching the very real seeds therein. It was just as well service took a while to reappear, for when it did, I was ready to go where no self-respecting carnivore would go – to the Stuffed Tomatoes (left).

But I insured myself with a Corn and Bacon Chowder soup (below). The sweetness of the corn was perfectly complemented by the crunchy fattiness of the chunks of bacon, and I didn't mind the breadsticks and wholewheat mini-buns either. The stuffed tomatoes, when they arrived, looked attractive and healthy – three red spheres in a sea of brown lentils, with a supporting act of buttered rice and green salad. The spinach, cheese and potato stuffing was perfectly acceptable (though I couldn't but wish for more variety, inside and outside. How about bell peppers?)

The first hint of competition in the neighbourhood of the longstanding Dhokaima Café; regulars at the latter would do well to branch out before the Bhat Bhateni invasion. Nepali Kukur

Head west from Patan Dhoka and stop at the corner with Krishnagalli.



Space	★★★★
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GUFFADI

Gaddafi the Guffadi

Libya is burning...but our so-called civilised nations are only worried about them 'oil' prices kyaaruh! Now, Gaddafi and his 'chamchas' are busy attacking their own people with all they got... tanks skanks, plane slane...and this is not Egypt so if the 'Western' world don't act now...then them Libyans will be butchered by 'Brotherly Leader and Guide of the First of September Great Revolution of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya' aka Gaddafi!

Gaddafi has been ruling Libya like his 'khet-baari' for the last 41 years! They have some oil soil... and if you thought Saddam was worse...Gaddafi not only speaks and acts like a hobo but dresses like one as well!

Gaddafi is a crazy wacko...we all know that...but them kuireys will make deals left and right as long as they make some money out of it! For years, Gaddafi supported all anti-West radicals and terrorists... and then a few years ago he was like 'okay...I have had it...let's be friends' and the West welcomed him like he was their 'man'...but Gaddafi should have learned a few things from Saddam and Mubarak

pani...the West will love you as long as you make money for them... or you support their foreign policy natakas but if the tide begins to turn then you better grab your 'billions' and run for the hills kya!

And when it comes to them fashion sashion...Prabal Gurung can step aside...hahah! Gaddafi will give our 'Rauteys' a run for their towels and bedsheets!

Gaddafi must be smoking crack...because if he sees some nice 'curtains'... then the next day it will be his dress sress kyaaruh!

So...hope they get rid of Gaddafi soon or maybe we should send John Galliano (fired by Dior) there and help the Libyan leader with his outfit!

Baroo...why not ship him to Italy (since he has them investments there!)...he has all the money soney to buy Christian Dior and maybe John can design 'funny curtains' once again...hahah!

Meantym, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai aka Kishunji aka 'The Umbrella Man' aka 'Lover-Boy' aka 'Paan-wallah' is no more! We don't know much about BP and we know GM as the 'one who didn't want to be the Prime-Monster'....and now with KP gone...the 'Congress' chapter is closed forever!

Today's Congressis are nothing but bunch of jackasses! BP wrote

stories, GM could still kick arse when he was 80 and our beloved Kishunji could still come up with funny one-liners till a week ago! Our netas should learn a thing or two from KP. First, never get married! If you don't get married, then you probably won't have kids...then you don't have to make your son 'computer operator' like our Prachandey dai!

Second, if you chew 'paan' then you won't be spitting 'venom' every tyam you are invited to some function!

Third, don't worry if your friends backstab you and you lose them election selection and what not! Life goes on ni...KP was played by our great GP but he never carried a grudge and even though them 'Rajas' never treated him well...he was still a 'Yes, we do need a King, myan' kind of guy!

I think we need to add this new clause in our so-called 'new' constitution as well! Only 'Bachelors' will be allowed to be our mantris and pradhan-mantris! Well, let's see...I only see Rajesh Hamal...haha! There we go...Rajesh Hamal...we need a real Hero kya! Please save us...if you can bitch-slap them goondas then you can do it in real-life as well! 🇳🇵



BIKRAM RAI

HARMONIOUS SOCIETY? Armed Police Force on guard in front of the Boudhanath Stupa, in anticipation of protests on the 51st anniversary of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Thursday.



BIKRAM RAI

COME HOME: A child petitions the government to repatriate Nepali workers in Libya, Baluwatar, Friday

Meningitis again?



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

For Pokche Prasad, the crowded emergency room of Patan Hospital was a familiar one, for he had often been rushed there in the past with the same symptoms – fever, severe headaches, and a bad pain in the neck. The doctors quickly treated him with intravenous antibiotics and Pokche walked away, 'cured' once more.

The doctors had diagnosed him long ago as suffering from meningitis – a life-threatening illness involving the inflammation of the thin tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. But why Pokche was predisposed to suffer recurrent attacks could not be determined.

Until one day in the summer of 2009, when Pokche rushed into Dr Buddhi Poudyal's examining room and announced that he had a cold, but just in one nostril! Puzzled, Dr Poudyal examined him and saw

that a thin clear fluid was indeed running out of one of the patient's nostrils. But Pokche exhibited no signs of a cold or respiratory infection.

Curious, the doctor had the discharge examined, only to discover that it was cerebrospinal fluid. This meant that there was a leak in the skull. Radiological scans of the head revealed a minor skull-base fracture. On questioning Pokche further, the doctor ascertained that the patient had sustained a slight head injury as a six-year-old boy, 22 years before his first episode of meningitis.

Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) surrounds the brain and spinal cord. It acts like a liquid cushion, allowing the organs to be buoyant, and protects them from physical trauma. A skull fracture may create an opening between the nasal sinuses and the cranial cavity through which bacteria can travel and infect the meninges. In Pokche's case, CSF passed down into the nasal cavity and virulent bacteria from the nose sneaked up, triggering multiple meningitis. This time, he was successfully operated on and Pokche's visits to the hospital became a thing of the past.

A commonly held view in Nepal is that only children get meningitis and adults are immune to it. Not true. It is also believed that there is only one type of meningitis. Again, not true. Meningitis can be either bacterial or viral. These myths need to be debunked and those suffering from fever, headaches, stiff necks, vomiting, sleeplessness and light sensitivity should contact their doctors and have themselves also checked for meningitis; the symptoms are so similar to a multitude of other illnesses, it is often misdiagnosed. 🇳🇵



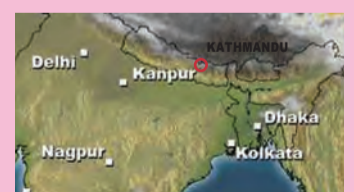
MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

EASY RIDER: Ba 24 Pa exercises his right to park wherever he pleases, next to Bir Hospital, Kathmandu, Tuesday.



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

If the warm southerly wind had not pushed the westerly wind stream to the Himalaya last Wednesday, we would have had substantial rainfall this week. Satellite pictures of Thursday show the westerly fronts being driven by Siberian High Pressure and heading towards the Tibetan Plateau. The brief shower of Wednesday afternoon was due to breakaway clouds of the stream that lacked enough moisture to produce good rainfall. Expect sunny intervals with breezy afternoons and clear nights over the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
27-8	25-9	28-10

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In 2003, Liberia was a nation shattered by the civil war between the government of Charles Taylor and a number of warlords. And like in all wars, it was the people who suffered. Everyone seemed to have a heartbreaking story of loss to tell. Towns and villages were destroyed and the people suffered violence, rape and unimaginable atrocities.

It was then that a group of women stood up and said, "We want peace, no more war!" *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, directed by Gini Reticker, is a gripping documentary that follows this group of more than 2,000 brave women who demanded peace for Liberia, and succeeded. Leymah Gbowee led the peaceful campaign of mothers, sisters and daughters, armed only with white t-shirts and placards. Incredibly, the women managed to force the president to hear their voices and engage in peace talks with the warlords. They continued their struggle as the conflict got worse, and eventually compelled the warring sides to sign a peace agreement.

Reticker lets Gbowee narrate the story, along with others who were key in the movement. Their testimony is backed by photos and footage of the conflict, which illustrate all too clearly the devastation wrought by the civil war in Liberia. By the end, you are overwhelmed by the power of these ordinary women, who helped achieve the extraordinary. ■

Paavan Mathema

Pray the Devil Back to Hell (2008)

Run time: 92 mins

Dir: Gini Reticker

Playing at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 17 March, 7pm. The film is part of the Nepal International Human Rights Film Festival. Call Bev Hoffman at 9813443841 to host screenings.

Listen to your Mama!



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*शर्तहरू लागू हुनेछ

The road to



CASH FOR WORK: Local women in Bhojpur on a section of the new road to Dingla being built under the Rural Access Programme. Many, like Laxmi Shrestha (below), invested the money they earned in vegetable farming so they can send children to school.

PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

KUNDA DIXIT in BHOJPUR

More roads have been built in Nepal in the past five years than in the past 50. Excavators and bulldozers tear through the mountains in a highway frenzy not seen before in this country.

Much of this destructive, mechanised road-building doesn't create jobs, it opens up the hinterland to exploitation, and most roads are washed away in the first monsoon.

Yet there are working examples of road construction in Nepal that generate rural employment during construction and after, benefit local farmers, and are sensitive to the environment. Several of Nepal's donors are now supporting projects

that seek to reduce poverty through this road-building model.

"This is not a road project, the road is only the means to raise living standards, it is not the end," explains Guru Dhakal of the Rural Access Programme (RAP), a British aid project which will have built nearly 1,000km of district roads in six of Nepal's poorest districts when it winds down next year.

The philosophy is to go beyond just the highway to generate income through labour-intensive road-building, improving livelihoods by providing access to rural produce, and organising local road-builders into savings cooperatives. RAP has done with roads what user groups did to conserve Nepal's community forests.

Here in Bhojpur, which

Building roads in rural Nepal that are much more than roads

in many ways used to be as remote as western Nepal, the impact of the road is direct and tangible. Subsistence farmers who worked on the road now have disposable income, teachers and health workers stay in the village, school enrolment has



doubled, and the price of basic foods has come down by half.

RAP employs villagers within a 90-minute walk for sections of the road, and an average road builder can earn up to Rs 100,000 a year. This has reduced the number of

people migrating to India or the Gulf for work (*see box*).

Laxmi Shrestha from Taksar village worked for two years on the Leguwa-Bhojpur section of the road, and ploughed her savings into a vegetable farm from which she now earns Rs 300,000 yearly selling tomatoes, cabbages and onions. She can afford to send her daughter to an engineering college in Kathmandu. "Working on the road gave us income and taught us skills, and once the road was built we could sell our vegetables in Dhankuta. I did it all for my children's education," Laxmi tells us.

RAP was started in 2000 with the Hile-Bhojpur road, but work stalled during the war. Restarting in 2006, it has provided employment to 25,000 farmers building roads in Bhojpur, Khotang, Sankhuwasabha and



To go or not to go

One of these days, Lakpa Sherpa has to make a momentous decision: whether or not to pay Rs 90,000 to a middleman who has promised him a job in Qatar. Lakpa's wife, Amrita, is encouraging him to go. "He'll never earn enough here to take care of us," she says, holding on to her baby, Anusha.

Lakpa is not so sure. He shows us his calculations on the back of a cigarette pack. He earned Rs 100,000 in the past year digging the road, and now he is enrolled in carpentry training so he can start a small furniture shop.

He has decided not to migrate for work. "I will never go," says Lakpa, "I will toil and sweat in my own country."

prosperity

“Water, water”

In the 1950s, when Swiss geologist Toni Hagen travelled the length and breadth of Nepal, he used to ask Nepalis what they needed the most. Many told him they wanted a bridge. The rivers were barriers, and bridges provided accessibility. In the 1980s, most Nepalis told him they wanted a road. Today, roads reach nearly every VDC in the country, and there are suspension footbridges across most rivers.

Here in Bhojpur, Nepalis have a new wish: irrigation. The road has brought income and access to market but farmers suffer a serious shortage of water in the dry season. This has been exacerbated by successive years of winter drought.

Till five years ago, Matrika Adhikari of Syauli village couldn't even grow enough to feed the family. Today, he is sending Rs 150,000 worth of Akbare chillies by road to the Druk pickle factory in Sunsari. Says Adhikari, “We could grow anything if we had irrigation.”

Terathum, and helped organise farmers into cooperatives. The road-building model has been extended to Dailekh, Accham and Doti in western Nepal.

In Bhojpur alone, wages for road workers injected Rs 1 billion of cash into the economy over the years, and the effect can be seen in the bustling Saturday market where farmers like Laxmi Shrestha come to sell their produce. Orange farmers can now sell a kilogram of oranges for five times more in Dhankuta.

None of this would have happened if the road had been built by excavators. “The bulldozer only

benefits its dozer-owner and harms the slopes,” explains Bhojpur's Local Development Officer, Lok Nath Poudel, “but it is difficult to convince the DDC and local politicians that this is a better way to build roads than getting an excavator to tear down a mountain.”

At the Bhojpur market, businessmen say the road has benefited every sector of the economy. Villagers now have cash to buy goods, and the cost of bringing consumer items from Dhankuta by truck is ten times cheaper than through porters.

“I thought I would have to close down my shop after

the road came to Bhojpur, but business is actually much better,” says trader Dhruva Shrestha. Indeed, with 24-hour electricity, plentiful water and clean air the quality of life in Bhojpur is much better than in Kathmandu. Almost everyone has a mobile phone, and the quality of education and health services have improved.

On an inspection visit to Bhojpur, British consultant Bharat Patel admits that it costs more to build a RAP road manually than with mechanised diggers. “But we leave behind much more than just a road,” he adds. “The community is empowered and more self-sufficient.”

At Bhamran on a new section of a RAP road to Dingla, Bibas Rai points out the fallow fields. Most young men have emigrated. “People think that if you are educated you shouldn't farm,” says Rai, “but I am staying back, I will never leave. Someone has to grow the food.”

nepalitimes.com
Jumla's road to the future, #220
The great green road, #254
Road ahead for Nepal, #312

Every drop counts

Less than half of Nepal's arable land is irrigated, the rest depends on erratic rains. Lack of investment in irrigation and the shortage of water in the dry season have hindered the spread of irrigation schemes in districts like Bhojpur and the arid areas of western Nepal. But a solution to this may be at hand.

For years, German farmer Hartmut Bauder tried without success to grow olives in Chitlang's dry and rocky terrain. Then he met Gideon Peleg, an Israeli olive expert who had greened the desert in Rajasthan. Peleg installed a drip irrigation system in Bauder's olive groves and a year later, Bauder's company had its first profitable harvest of 17 tons, enough to produce 1,300 litres of extra virgin olive oil.

Drip irrigation provides water drop by drop directly to the roots of plants through small pipes, allowing large tracts to be irrigated uniformly even with limited water. The drip lines carry water from a tank to individual plants, creating a capillary effect that enables water flow even at low pressure. The



RUBEENA MAHATO

slower but localised infiltration in the plant helps it develop wider roots. The technique also supports better absorption of fertilisers and does not require fields to be leveled for irrigation, saving on labour costs.

“We had tried everything, spending a lot of time and money before we discovered drip irrigation,” Bauder explains. “It is a simple gravity operated technique. You don't have to flood an entire field, which saves tremendous amounts of water, and the yield also improves as water is ‘spoonfed’ to the roots of the plants. This is perfect for Nepali farmers.”

Bauder is now working to get neighbouring farmers in Makwanpur to adopt the technique. Madan Gopali invested Rs 25,000 to get the drip system in his field and is waiting for the next harvest to see the results. Says Gopali: “Water is scarce here. With this system I can irrigate the field year round. If I get three yields a year, I will recover my investment in two years.”

Rubeena Mahato in Makwanpur



DFID

“Peace, governance, development...”

On his second visit to Nepal, British Minister of State for International Development, Alan Duncan (above, visiting Bhojpur last year), spoke to Nepali Times about the new Operational Plan that will nearly double support to Nepal. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: What are the highlights of the new ODA plan you just announced, and how will it affect Nepal?

Alan Duncan: The Operational Plan I announced today spells out what we plan to accomplish in Nepal over the next four years. This includes: supporting the peace process; helping strengthen governance and improving security and access to justice; helping poor and excluded people benefit from economic growth; helping deliver better health and education services; helping Nepal adapt to climate change; reducing the risk from disasters, including earthquakes; and improving the lives of women and girls.

We recognise that to reduce poverty and vulnerability we need to promote political agreement and stability. Equally, unless our programs help poor, vulnerable and excluded citizens on the ground, a return to conflict is more likely. Over the next four years, we will make available a total of £331 million. By the fourth year, our support to Nepal will be £107 million, an increase of over 90 per cent on our funding this year.

The new plan also includes some new areas of work for us in Nepal, like our support to reduce risk from disasters, and we are going big on climate change. We expect to reduce the climate vulnerability of three million poor people, and lift 570,000 people out of poverty through the forestry program alone.

What is your assessment of the post-conflict development scenario here?

Since the CPA was signed in 2006, Nepal has made tremendous strides politically. For example, the most inclusive Constituent Assembly was put in place with encouraging representation from historically socially excluded groups – women, Janajatis, Madhesis and Dalits. However, development has not reached many people, largely due to continuing political conflict. Sorting out political problems is still at the top of the agenda and that includes the drafting of the Constitution. While I understand the complications, in a post-conflict country with the diversity of Nepal, the UK encourages politicians to grapple with the challenges of development before it is too late. We must not forget that one of key drivers of the conflict in Nepal was poverty and if this remains unaddressed the country could slide back into conflict.

Where does governance fit into all this?

We are keen to promote greater accountability of government to its citizens and support accountability and transparency of civil society and our development partners. We are working to strengthen the public financial management systems of the government. We are also helping communities demand greater transparency and accountability through our Enabling State Programme.

You visited Bhojpur last year and saw the Rural Access Programme. Do you think it is a cost-effective project, and are there plans to scale up?

Our Rural Access Programme has had tremendous impact on poor rural communities. Not only does it build new roads, it also provides employment, additional infrastructure like irrigation canals and school buildings, training, income and savings for the poor. Since 2009 it has created 2.9 million days of employment for 16,600 poor people. It is undoubtedly cost-effective and will continue in our new operational plan.

Where we go after the current phase we need to see. We will be working with government to better maintain rural roads, generate employment and reduce poverty in the poorest areas of Nepal. We are considering whether we should have a more clearly defined geographical emphasis to our work, concentrating in the poorest areas of Nepal, the mid and far west.

You have allocated sizeable resources to upgrade Nepal's disaster preparedness. Is money the problem, or is it something else?

Nepal is highly vulnerable to a catastrophic earthquake, and I have been extremely focused on this issue since my first visit to Nepal last year. The UK and the international community are committed to doing whatever they can to avert a crisis here like that in Haiti. Earthquake preparedness is central to DFID's new four-year operational plan in Nepal. I applaud the UN's efforts in creating the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium as a means to coordinate preparedness efforts. This Consortium aims to fund programmes worth Rs 9 billion rupees to reduce Nepal's vulnerability to disasters. The UK will join this Consortium, and will commit some Rs 2.3 billion rupees to increasing Nepal's resilience to earthquakes. So I don't think that money is the issue. But we all need to work together. I am urging the Government of Nepal to prioritise the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for approval in the Constituent Assembly. The UN, donors and NGOs need to coordinate their disaster preparedness and response efforts. I am looking forward to the results of the joint Government of Nepal and US Military's assessment mission to Nepal when I attend a high-level conference on Nepal in the US next month. And, of course, India's role will be crucial in any response. The UK government will be encouraging India to play an active role in response planning.

Longer version of interview: www.nepalitimes.com

Add-minister

Balaram Baniya in *Kantipur*, 4 March

कान्तिपुर

Government officials have called for the integration of ministries that were split up during Madhav Nepal's tenure to accommodate more ministers. They have suggested the government do so as the new cabinet is being formed.

Former PM Nepal split the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, increasing the number of ministries to 26. A hundred new posts,

bi-national meetings now. The energy secretary participates in the secretary level meetings and the joint secretary of irrigation attends the technical committee meetings now," an official has said. The splitting of the ministry into energy and irrigation contradicts the country's commitment to an integrated approach to water resources management.

The division of the Science and Technology Ministry has also led to confusion. Now that the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology and the



BIKRAM RAI

including two secretaries and five joint secretaries, were added for the new portfolios, increasing the administrative costs of a government already short of funds.

Officials complain that the division of the water resources ministry created difficulties when it came to negotiating with India on hydropower, irrigation and flooding. There are more than a dozen committees responsible for these issues and splitting the ministry created confusion as to work allocation. "There is a real confusion among officials as to who should attend the

Alternative Energy Promotion Centre have been moved to the Environment Ministry, the Science and Technology Ministry has found itself without work. Officials allege that the ministry was split by Madhav Nepal only to please the Nepal Communist Party (Sanyukta), which demanded a portfolio like the Nepal Janashakti Party (which had less MPs than it in parliament). Janashakti's Indra Prasad Dhungel was named Minister of Science and Technology, and Thakur Sharma of Sanyukta was named Minister of Environment, subsequently.

Childless poverty

Khilanath Dhakal in *Nagarik*, 9 March

नागरिक

Morang, Bardanga-7: Marang Maiya Tudu of Solti Tole has given birth to 12 children but none have survived. Either they were born premature or died after some weeks. She gave birth to a baby boy in December last year but he died within a week.

"I gave birth to so many children but could not save any of them," she laments. "My wish for children remains unfulfilled."

Doctors attribute premature deliveries to the lack of care for pregnant women, through providing proper nutrition and regular health check-ups. Gynaecologist Yogendra Mishra of Kosi Zonal Hospital says a loose cervix could also be a factor behind premature births. "She should see a doctor, as this condition can be treated," he says.

Marang was married to Sanju Tudu 15 years ago. At the age of 18, she gave birth to her first child prematurely. The Tudu couple went to the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan. The hospital advised them to keep the infant in the Neonatal ICU, but as daily wage workers, they could not afford the service. Neither could they follow the advice of the Jhurkiya Health Post to have a doctor supervise future pregnancies. Jhurkiya Health Post chief Dinesh Kumar Karna says poverty is to blame for the couple's childlessness.

"I've often gone to see witch doctors when I've had complications," says Marang, "But I've only seen a doctor three times."

Golden wheat

Prabhat Bhattarai in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 28 February-14 March

हिमाल

The nation suffers from a trade deficit, a liquidity crisis and the people have to endure 14 hours of load shedding, but even in these times there is hope for the economy. The Central Bureau of Statistics has estimated that the economy will grow at 5.5 per cent this fiscal year, overtaking the target of 4.5 per cent.

This growth, coming after three years, is attributed to agriculture. The production of wheat grew by 11 per cent this year, rising from 4,023,000 tons to 4,500,000 tons. Though statistics are not available for maize and barley production, reports have been encouraging.

Finance secretary Rameshwar Khanal says that even if the urban economy is sluggish, the rural, agriculture-based economy will keep the economy afloat. Khanal says, "The liquidity crisis in the banking sector is a problem, but you have to remember that 70 per cent of the population still doesn't have access to financial services."

Agriculture makes the highest contribution to the country's GDP, with 67 per cent of the population engaged in agriculture. Yet the development of agricultural infrastructure has not been given much importance since the first five year plan. Irrigation facilities are limited and 45 per cent of land used for wheat cultivation still depends on rainwater. Many farmers still don't have access to roads and markets and are unaware of modern agricultural methods.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ATMs for IC

Narayan Sapkota in *Nagarik*, 3 March

नागरिक

In the first five months of the current fiscal year, Nepali ATM users have withdrawn 19.2 billion Indian Rupees in India. Only IRs 3.46 billion was withdrawn last year.

Compared to the first five months of last year, ATM withdrawals have gone up by 448 per cent. This has been largely attributed to traders who have been using ATMs in India to withdraw Indian currency for illegal transactions. Legal traders can withdraw Indian currency from Nepal Rastra Bank here if they furnish details of their past transactions, so illegal traders resort to ATMs across the border.

Such traders make deposits in Nepali banks first, then withdraw Indian currency through ATMs in India. According to a study by Nepal Rastra Bank, 82 per cent of withdrawals are done through SBI Bank, Kumari Bank, Nepal Investment Bank and Everest Bank. Meanwhile, the use of bank drafts to obtain Indian currency has decreased by 42 per cent.

Although Nepal Rastra Bank makes Indian currency available to the Nepali market, the difficulties in withdrawing it from local banks has resulted in a black market. While Nepal Rastra Bank has a fixed selling price of Rs 160 for IRs 100, the black market offers Rs 165.

Radhesh Pant, former president of the Nepal Bankers Association, says, "Even the banks are not getting enough Indian currency. To maintain the normal flow of Indian currency we should first crack down on black marketeers." Last year, Nepal Rastra Bank exchanged US\$2.19 billion for Indian currency.



"My old lady stays at home, too, she doesn't do any work."

नागरिक Yubak in *Nagarik*, 5 March

Real leaders

While our politics flounders, dragging the economy in its wake, Nepalis are busy getting on with business the best they can. Few exemplify this positive drive as literally as Ashutosh Tiwari, who has just been named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Born in Kathmandu and educated as an economist at Harvard, Tiwari has worked as a grassroots activist, a newspaper columnist at Nepali Times since 2003, and the CEO of Himalmedia Pvt. Ltd. He now heads the international NGO WaterAid Nepal.

In 2000, working at Backward Society Education (BASE), Tiwari assisted activist Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary

with the launch of the *kamaiya andolan* that ended up freeing 200,000 bonded farm labourers in Dang, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Banke districts. "Ashutosh was involved in every aspect of our work, from visiting the villages to taking the movement to Kathmandu," recalls Chaudhary. Convinced that for-

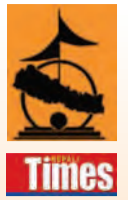
profit businesses enable the poor to take charge of their lives, Tiwari then became a small business advisor. He worked from 2001 to 2007 with a range of small firms in Nepal and Bangladesh as an employee of GTZ and the World Bank's IFC.

From 2007 to 2010, he was the CEO of Himalmedia. Publisher Kunda Dixit notes that "as CEO Ashutosh Tiwari was instrumental in turning Himalmedia around at a time of crisis in 2008-9. He pinpointed the problems, and went about finding solutions to them no matter how unpleasant or physically dangerous for himself the consequences were." At present, Tiwari is WaterAid's country head. He is also a co-founder of Entrepreneurs for Nepal, which brings together entrepreneurs for discussions, networking activities, bootcamps, and investments.

With this honour, awarded following rigorous selection procedures to extraordinary achievers 40 or younger, Tiwari joins an exclusive group of individuals from all walks of life, across the world. In the words of Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, "the Forum of Young Global Leaders is the voice of an optimistic future, an energetic catalyst for change".



BIKRAM RAI



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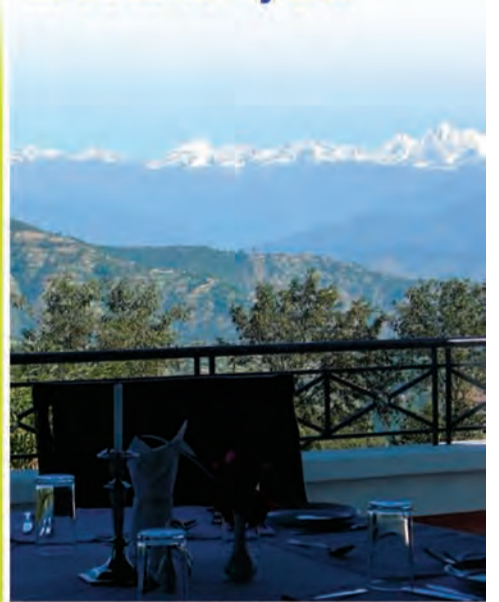
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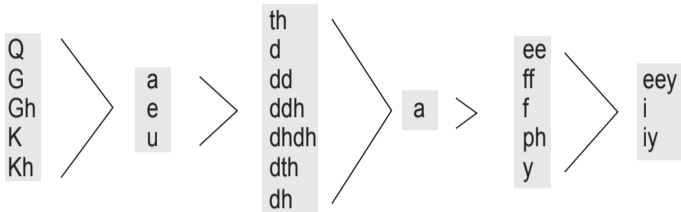
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Federal Kleptocratic Republic of Nepal

Keeping count of the number of ways to spell Muammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi's name is tough. I must say the guy should be in the Guinness Book as the head of state with most variations to his good name: Gaddafi, Gadaffi, Qaddafi, El-Qadafi, Gathafi, Katafi, Khaddafi, etc. Actually, doing the permutations and combinations from the following chart adapted from Wiki, there must be at least 26,000 different ways to spell the guy's name:



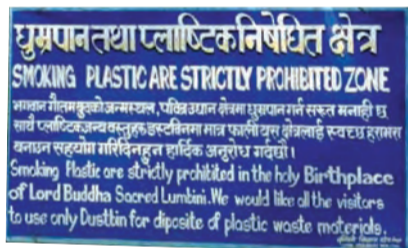
But my favourite spelling is **Gaddha-fee** since it is so close to the Nepali word, 'gadha'.



Confronted with urgent challenges like saving the peace process, writing the constitution in time and completing the cabinet line-up, the new Communistic Coalition, in its wisdom, has given urgent national priority to eradicating computerised license plates. If our state security forces showed as much zeal in maintaining law and order as they are doing to book motorcycles with shiny license plates, Nepal's crime rate would be at par with Switzerland by now for sure.



The Ass felt like a Jackass for trying to move with the times and install a fancy machine-engraved license plate on the Scooty, but guess what: although we are supposed to have machine-readable passports, we are not supposed to have machine-written license plates. The painters in the neighbourhood



are booked solid till the new year churning out handwritten plates. And wonder what is going to happen to all those half-yellow and half-green plates that Maobaddie officialdom was allowed to keep on the stolen vehicles they drove

around in? Let me get this straight: legitimising stolen vehicles is ok. But having your license plates engraved by the computer guy in Kalanki isn't?



The Federal Kleptocratic Republic of Nepal is probably the only country in the world that has four national holidays just to celebrate the multiple times we have struggled to restore democracy. Prajatantra Dibas, of course, marked the overthrow of the Ranas in Sat Sal. Then there is the Old Sambidhan Dibas to mark the First People Power in Chayalis Sal. We also celebrate Loktantra Dibas to mark Gyancha's departure with an annual holiday. And finally, we have Ganatantrick Dibas to mark the day we officially metamorphosed into a republic by staying home and playing cards. At the rate we are going on constitution drafting, we will probably have to fight for democracy all over again. But look on the bright side: it's going to add another holiday to our list of democracy days. We were brainstorming the other evening at the neighbourhood watering hole about what this new national holiday should be called. And the best entry was: **Janaganamana Dibas**.



As expected, the fight over the home ministry is not Oli vs Oily but Deb vs Pun, Kaji Narayan vs The Doc, Rainy vs Cloudy, and Gurung vs Magar. All hell broke loose at the Baddie CentCom the other day when all 155 members of the Politburo staked their claim to be minister, with Gopal ('Shoe Thrower') Kirati heading the pack. Chairman Supernatural tried to defuse the crisis by elevating his trusted aides to ministership, including close namesake Comrade Prakanda as Tourism Minister. The big surprise was the Chairman suddenly giving up the foreign ministry and allocating Mahara Kamred as Misinformation Minister. Is there another mobile scam in the works that involves Sumargi & Son as well as the **Man with the Chinese Accent Who Offered 500 Million Rupees?** Maybe Com Mahara wants to find out exactly how his phone was tapped?

Best headlines of the week:

- 'Bahuns Are also Janajatis'
- 'Crows To Convene at CA'

Top contender for next week's best headline: 'Dongol Declared Miss Mongol'



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