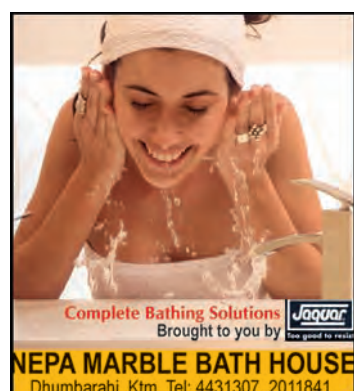
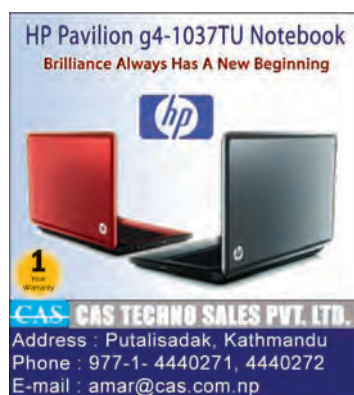




MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal faces the media following a program organised on the 56th anniversary of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Wednesday

That tingling feeling

Two months since UML Chairman Jhala Nath Khanal managed to manoeuvre himself to power with a little help from his friends in the Maoist party, his government has not even achieved the bare minimum of settling on a full complement of ministers for his cabinet. One of the ministers he has nominated, Bharat Mohan Adhikari, has already rocked the boat by prompting the resignation of the widely admired Finance Secretary Rameshwor Khanal.

At the rate the prime minister is going, the process of forming a government may not even be completed by 28 May, when the Constituent Assembly is due to expire. With his enemies within and outside of UML quite happy to see him fail, and the party from which his government derives its chief legitimacy distracted by the much-hyped prospect of a vertical split, Khanal will have to conduct some serious outreach if his tenure is to be seen as more than the lucky aftermath of a slap in the face. 🇳🇵

p11

The hold of the past. War lingers in villages like Simigaun, even in peace
Matthew Bleiman

p13

Power to the people. Nepal's successful rural electrification scheme is in danger of slipping into darkness.
Rubeena Mahato



UNTIED WORKERS

What does the dissolution of the three parallel Maoist trade unions mean? It means that the situation had become untenable in the eyes of the public, even if the absurdity of three separate unions belonging to the one mother party was simply a reflection of the seemingly irreconcilable three-way split in the highest echelons of the not quite United Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist.

Whoever is now chosen to lead a reformed, united trade union, it will not settle the larger question of whether the largest party in the country can keep itself from falling apart. Whatever the driving forces – external and internal manipulation, ideological schisms, egoism, media sensationalism – even the most diehard Maoist supporter is compelled to concede that the Maoist party has a serious internal problem on its hands. Indeed, most such diehard supporters, the cadre, have already chosen sides. Those whose maintain that every communist party's revolutionary spirit derives from the ferment of debate, and that UCPN (Maoist) is no different, is either lying or blinkered to the realities of revolutionary communism. It is as much wishful thinking as that indulged in by of those who do wish to see the Maoists split.



It's hardly a surprise either. After all, parties from the full range of Nepal's political spectrum have and will continue to endure splits based purely on a lust for power and paisa. The Maoists have the added complication of ideology to deal with. You can't sit on the sharp fence of revolution for very long without being accused of being an extremist or a reactionary. But we should worry about the consequences. Many will

In the short term, the aforementioned stakeholders will probably fancy their chances with a Maoist split, in as much as the Maoist party will be weakened. In the medium term, a split would do nothing for the peace process and the constitution. In the long term, a split, and the inevitable exclusion of the radicals, could fuel the basis for yet another damaging conflict. Be careful what you wish for.

rub their hands in glee at the prospect of a Maoists split even if they only continue to stumble along in strife, for there is no doubt that they are not doing themselves or their support base a favour. The rest of the political establishment and India are obvious candidates for schadenfreude, but a fair section of the media, the business community, and the rest of the Kathmandu elite would like no better than to see the fragmentation of the Maoist party fragmented.

But is Nepal better off with a monolithic Maoist party that is reluctant to reform, but which at least makes some effort to engage with the rest of the establishment, and which still represents one half of a peace process that it has not quite abandoned? Or do we want a split that, let no one be in any doubt, would be far more significant than previous splinters, and which could leave us with two or three still large and powerful parties? At least one of these parties will then resort to unbridled radicalism to claim the revolutionary mantle.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

CUNNING PLAN

"With public consultations an impossibility under the current timeline for constitution writing, by now it is probably not a good idea for the politicians to rush through a makeshift constitution, even if they were able to." ('Make haste slowly', Editorial, #546)

I absolutely support this position. What has happened has happened. If you rush into the constitution-making process, it will lead to additional complications. But this being Nepal, they may be planning to rush through to keep the record of having last-minute solutions appear out of thin air.

However, the sensible thing for the government to do is to make a clear statement of facts, and clear all doubts. They must admit that given compulsions that they are too embarrassed to talk about, they could not complete the entire process and, therefore, they have a cunning plan which would help them sort out the situation.

The cunning plan would involve the following with the first point most preferred:

a) Conduct fresh elections for the CA, or b) Do what this editorial suggests and provide a pre-set timeline that must be followed. If any of the deadlines are missed the PM or (someone) would immediately resign or undergo some other sort of penalty. Raising the stakes in this manner will ensure everybody that the government is serious about what they are saying.

A fascinating element about the change in Nepal is that most people

don't really understand what change is likely to happen in this country. Nobody has answered the question, what after the constitution? Variously upset and jubilant about the disruptive changes in the form of the abolition of the constitutional monarchy and the establishment of secularism, as well as the threats and opportunities likely to emerge from federalism, Nepal's elites have failed to inform the ordinary citizens that these are not really the changes, but structural adjustment required for the *real* changes.

Soni

LOSING MY HEAD

I have, in a safety locker in my old house in Dadeldhura, some 2 lakh Nepali rupee notes. All crisp. All with the grumpy face of Gyanendra ('Off with the heads...nah!', Paavan Mathema, #546).

I live in Timbuktu, Africa. And I have the only keys to the locker with me. Obviously, I'm too paranoid to trust my relatives with the keys. If the intelligent people at Rastra Bank again decide to declare those currency notes illegal, should I buy a plane ticket to Nepal to turn them in?

Thurpunsich

WHOSE SECURITY?

"...address Madhesi issues, and not act against India's security interests" ('All's not lost', Prashant Jha, #546) Madhesi issue?? I am sorry, what issue is that, One madhesh one pradesh? So that Indians can cash in on our resources for dirt-cheap prices through puppets in the Madhes like Gachchadar, who was advocating an economic blockade in Nepal to topple this

government? Otherwise, most of the genuine demands have already been addressed or can be resolved from the CA.

And I am not getting this 'India's security interests' from quite a long time now. Was it its interest in killing Nepali Jamim Shahs and other Shahs in broad daylight through contract killers sponsored directly by the Indian embassy? Or is that about allowing Tibetans to come to Nepal, so that India can get at least something worth speaking about against China and show it to their masters in the West? With the issues of the Bhutanese refugees, the Meghalaya issue, SSB forces terrorising Nepali nationals at the border, with the involvement of Indians in most of the cases of vandalism, terror and drug-related issues in Nepal, I see the security problem to Nepal from India and not the other way round!

Mahesh

GO WEST

The beautiful Api, Mahakali, Seti River, the forests, and the beautiful cities: Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Doti, Chainpur, Martadi, Kalikot, Sanphe and many others have long been there ('Fabulous far west', Dambar Krishna Shrestha, #546). So have the wildlife sanctuaries. The climate allows all kinds of crops, vegetables, fruits and herbs from the northernmost Himals to the flat Tarai, which also has great fishery production potential. Educated far western folks and their political leaders live in KTM. The rest? We all go to India and bring back HIVAIDS. The donors and I/NGOs and government regional offices run their projects through Nepalganj Unit offices with AC, vehicles and easier flights to KTM or trips to Lucknow or Delhi or Haridwar. As a result, Indians of all skill levels come to work

and do business, make money and take it back to India; many villages have women with HIVAIDS; the potential remains unused; and Karnali blues and plays are only to read or see in KTM for fun and sympathy amongst selected groups of fans including writers and the media.

In the early 80s, in a response to a question by a group of donor agency staff on what I believed the development trend should be for the far western region, my response to them was just help build roads, roads and roads. Nepali people will do the rest. I still believe it. Don't you?

S. Upadhyay

TIGER, TIGER

Stories like these make my day ('Cross-country tiger', Min Ratna Bajracharya, #546). Well done to all the staff involved. Raghu

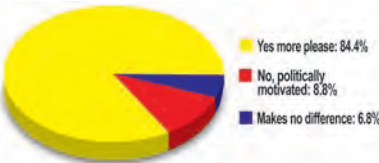
Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 547

Q. Is the CIAA on the right track with former minister Wagle's corruption conviction?

Total votes: 1,958



Weekly Internet Poll # 548. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think UCPN (Maoist) will split?

Devendra Raj Panday's example



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

As finance secretary Rameshwor Khanal resigns after standing up to political pressure, it is an appropriate moment to look back more than three decades ago, when another secretary preferred to defend his principles and walked out of government service.

Devendra Raj Panday's decision then, as a mark of opposition to the Panchayat system, was an even bolder one since the regime then did not take too kindly to dissent. Few have done as much since to push the boundaries of social democracy, ignite debates on meaningful development, champion human rights, and argue for integrity in public life as Panday. What makes his life and work even more striking is that a man who was born to a privileged and traditional Bahun family, and had close links with the palace, went beyond his class and caste interests and sought to understand Nepal in all its complexity and diversity.

After quitting government service, Panday slowly become involved in the struggle for democracy. He publicly criticised Panchayat development strategies; built close links with NC leaders who often asked him for assistance; expanded links with professionals yearning for an open society; and built networks with the emerging community of human rights activists. All this was to play an important role in 1990, when Panday became the de facto civil society leader for the movement for democracy.

In recognition of his role, and the respect in which he was held by all the political forces, interim PM Krishna Prasad Bhattarai appointed him finance minister. Panday was frustrated by his limited brief to 'keep the economy on track'. He often recounts how he could not push welfare measures as the PM wanted the focus to remain on constitution writing and holding the elections, and sought to avoid any complications.

As the 1990s progressed, Panday became increasingly disillusioned. He felt there was little attempt to reconceptualise development from a democratic perspective, and the new governments had adopted core elements of the Panchayat development strategy. Except for the new rulers and the rank and file of the newly legalised political parties, democracy did not bring about a transformation in the lives of Nepalis. There was no distributive justice, leading to increased inequality. State structure remained exclusionary; inter and intra-party rifts had distorted democracy; politicisation of civil services became entrenched; the armed conflict was taking its toll on people.

History does repeat itself, even for civil servants

Incorporating many of these concerns, Panday produced 'Failed Development'. He also mounted a stringent criticism of the international aid industry in Nepal, highlighting its failure to aid productive sectors that could generate lasting economic growth and allow a sustainable welfare state. He pointed out that while foreign aid had led to awareness among marginalised groups and enabled them to articulate their demands, it also helped sustain traditional power structures, protecting them from having to adapt to the new consciousness.

Panday flirted for a short while with direct politics in the 1990s, setting up his own party. But his primary role was in civil society, battling corruption and fighting for human rights, including at the regional level. As the conflict deepened, he felt he had a responsibility to find a solution. He was the first civil society leader to meet Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the early years of the last decade, and he had a simple message for the Maoist supremo – "Give up violence, and enter open politics. The entire left and social democratic space is vacant, and you will be successful."

As the palace began actively intervening in politics, Panday made the transition from a constitutional monarchist to a republican. The Citizens Movement for Democracy and Peace (CMDP) in 2005-06, which he led, was the game changer in the fight against the royal autocracy by mobilising the masses and urging them to have faith in the political parties, which had made such a mess of the 1990s. He was also an active behind-the-scenes player in preparing the ground for the broader Maoist-parties accord.

Since 2006, even as other civil society stalwarts have gone around lobbying to become MPs or obtain certain posts, Panday has rejected all that has come his way, including CA membership. Instead of personal gain, he has kept his focus on the bigger picture. At the cost of being called a Maoist, a ludicrous label for a committed democrat and human rights activist, Panday has consistently argued for continued collaboration between the parties and the Maoists in the spirit of the 12-point agreement; stood for inclusion, federalism, a new political culture and radical social welfare measures; spoken out against violence; and opposed all constitutional violations.

Thirty years after Panday left government service, it is beyond doubt that the establishment's loss was a tremendous gain for Nepali democracy. 🇳🇵



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“Qatar values Nepal”



BIKRAM RAI

“When a destination is important, an airline does at least a flight a day,” says Ramdas Shivram, Qatar Airway’s country manager for Nepal. “We operate three flights daily from Kathmandu, so you can tell how Qatar Airways values Nepal.”

Shivram recently joined the Nepal team and is positive about the airline’s future here. With Doha growing as a transit hub for travellers across the globe, the airline has been able to expand its Kathmandu

flights to 21 a week, despite competition from other Middle Eastern airlines. The airline was ranked the third best in the world in the annual 2010 Skytrax passenger survey.

“Migrant labourers form part of our clientele but the airline has a good proportion of business and leisure travellers as well,” says Shivram. This fiscal year, Qatar Airways serviced about 80,000 passengers, and a majority of them had two-way tickets.

Qatar Airways intends

to contribute actively to Nepal Tourism Year 2011, and has set a target of 100,000 passengers. It has been working with Nepal Tourism Board to promote Nepal abroad and is also a sponsor for the Board’s activities. Qatar, with other airlines, has been pushing for a 24-hour Tribhuvan International Airport. “There have been improvements in the airport, but a lot can be still done,” says Shivram. He suggests upgrading the technology used in the airport and speeding up response.

In April, Qatar Airways celebrates its 100th destination, Aleppo. In a span of 13 years, its fleet has grown to 96 aircraft, up from just 4. Shivram says: “Qatar has been expanding internationally, and we continue to explore ways to grow in Nepal as well. We will soon fly four flights daily from Kathmandu.”

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A civil servant



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

In 1979, then Finance Secretary Devendra Raj Panday resigned from his post after a dispute with Prime Minister and Finance Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa. Last Tuesday, Rameswor Khanal, Finance Secretary, allegedly tendered his resignation following a major disagreement with Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari. Between the two incidents lies a short history of Nepal's administrative service.

Nepal first drafted a Civil Service Act in 1957. By 1990, the act had gone through 29 revisions. Revisions were not meant to institutionalise the civil service, but to expand the discretionary power of top-level bureaucrats, ministers and the masters of them all, the Palace mandarins. During the Panchayat years frequent changes in the Act helped the Palace decide who was in and who was out among the ministers and, sometimes, among the bureaucrats. It was with the Palace's blessing that Thapa decided that Panday should be out, and out went Panday. Administrative procedure be damned!

Upon donors' advice, GP Koirala's government started the process of streamlining the bureaucracy in 1992. But as so often happens with technocratic advice applied without an understanding of the local context and capacity, the streamlining work soon mutated into an ill-thought out exercise. Laid-off civil servants sued the government, won their cases, and eventually returned to their jobs. Besides, the idea of creating a lean bureaucracy did not go well with political parties, who saw government as a painless source of many low to mid-level jobs for their cadres at the expense of taxpayers and donors.

Rameswor Khanal's resignation is a protest against the pernicious influence of politics on the civil service, but don't expect anything to change

With the stage set thus, the following 15 years saw party-political influence penetrating deep into the fibre of the civil service. Secretaries who agreed to help siphon funds to party headquarters or the pockets of politicians were tolerated and promoted. Those who did not cooperate were sidelined. Career paths for bureaucrats became unstable and unpredictable. For patronage, they started becoming fixtures at party headquarters and at politicians' homes. Trade unions with overt political affiliations started signing up civil servants as members, treating them as though they were wage labourers.

By the time of Jana Andolan II in 2006, the mood at government offices had become politically electric and polarised. In some way, that helped contribute to the protest movement against the king.

But the cost was that the virus of partisan politics became firmly entrenched in the fabric of the civil service. In the last two years, with stories of ministers assaulting civil servants and locking them up in bathrooms, Nepal's 'civil service' has become neither civil nor service-oriented. Years of political interference by democratically elected netas who outdid the Panchayat mandarins in weakening all potentially strong and independent institutions have meant that the civil service is now an 'anything goes' institution. As such, even if one were to start civil service reforms tomorrow, pushing the reforms through the system to make it independent and strong is not an easy task.

By most accounts, Khanal disagreed that the files on alleged tax cheats should be closed. The Finance Minister, apparently with the Prime Minister's backing, thought otherwise. Khanal therefore walked away from his job. And the optics surrounding a straightforward civil servant standing up to powerful vested interests make the government beholden to thugs who pass themselves off as businessmen who wear bespoke suits. In the absence of a sustained public outcry, Adhikari is likely to keep his head low for a few days and let the issue die out.

Something similar happened in 1979. Thapa stayed powerful. Panday went on to become a democracy activist. On Wednesday, Khanal's comment on his Facebook page was: "There is a wider civil society in which we can work together . . . for the change that our country needs." 🇳🇵

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Chance for redemption

MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

In the Bollywood movie Hyderabad Blues, two pairs of brides and grooms are about to tie the knot. At the last moment, one of the brides ditches her groom to be with her true love, who himself is on the verge of marrying another woman. Nepal's situation is not so different. The Maoists and UML have been in a relationship since the seven-point deal between their party chairmen, which paved the way for UML's Jhala Nath Khanal to become PM. Nepali Congress, for all its recent bungling, still has at least two aces up its sleeve. For a truly effective coalition would be one between the Maoists and Nepali Congress, with UML and the Madhesi parties playing a supporting role. Ego, pigheadedness and the personal ambitions of their leaders, along with a heavy dose of suspicion about each other's intentions, have however pushed the Maoists

and Nepali Congress further apart. Neither the peace process nor the constitution will see the light unless these two come together. The reasons, if they needed any reinforcement, are obvious. It has taken less than two months for the parties to realise – they are loath to admit it in public, though – what a mess they have created. Khanal's is already a non-functioning government, and not just for his failure to give full shape to his cabinet even two months since he took over as the top executive of the country. This is an unnatural coalition, even though it is heavily communist in character, with the country's two leading communist parties and an ex-communist led Madhesi party being part of it. President Yadav has pointed out that decisions by the coalition (which as a two-thirds majority in the CA) will have no meaning if such decisions don't have the political backing of all the major political forces. More than the numerical two-thirds, President Yadav



Without Nepali Congress, the Khanal-Dahal government isn't going anywhere

said, a political two-thirds majority is the need of the hour. One may accuse him of overstepping his constitutional brief, but beneath the planted news of a PM said to be 'unhappy' about the president's statement, there is a much-needed nudge to reverse the slide downhill. The whole idea about acting as per the mandate of the people expressed through their ballots, and embracing the reality of post-conflict transition, was always pointing to one direction – a government led by the Maoist

party and to be more specific, Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The chairman can say all he wants, shout himself hoarse over India's meddling in internal politics (not unjustified, as recent events corroborate his allegations), and issue threats. But he and his party cannot afford to ignore Nepali Congress. He needs to speak to those in the party with whom he first got in touch to effect the 12-point agreement, agree to implement the agreements on integration/rehabilitation of Maoist combatants, and agree on constitution-drafting. In return, Nepali Congress

must unequivocally say it is the Maoist party that should lead the government. Nepali Congress' sidelining in national politics notwithstanding, the Maoists would do well to take its threat seriously: that Nepali Congress will not allow the promulgation of the constitution unless the Maoists honour their commitment on ex-combatants. It is right in asserting that there cannot, and should not, be another election with the Maoist party still effectively commanding the reins of a private army. If Dahal-Khanal refuse to listen and try to go ahead as per their seven-point deal, it will lead to what no democrat in the country wants to see happen: the dismissal of the Khanal government by President Yadav around 28 May with the covert backing of Nepali Congress and other political parties, including a powerful faction of UML. The Nepali Congress threat is not an empty one. They know that the president is ready to act out his role as protector of the constitution with the army standing firmly behind him. May better sense prevail. damakant@gmail.com

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THIS WEEK

CIAA officials charged

The Supreme Court has recommended action against former acting chief commissioner of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), Lalit Bahadur Limbu, and commissioner Bed Prakash Siwakoti. The court has accused them of abusing their authority to register public land used by the UN Park in Thapathali in an individual's name. This is the first incident in which action is being taken against officials of an anti-graft body. The court has also ordered former minister and NC leader Khum Bahadur Khadka to appear within 15 days to defend himself against charges of corruption. He has been accused of embezzling Rs 23.6 million and abusing his powers as a minister at different ministries post-1990. Khadka was cleared by the Special Court in 2006.

Finance secretary resigns



Finance Secretary Rameswor Khanal tendered his resignation citing differences with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari on Tuesday. Khanal had been pushing for action against fake VAT receipt racketeers recently. He had also been strongly pushing for corrective measures to control the asset bubble and reinvigorate the economy. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) summoned Adhikari and Chief Secretary Madhav Prasad Ghimire for clarification, but the minister failed to be present for the meeting on Thursday.

USAID

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched its Nepal Economic, Agriculture and Trade (NEAT) Project in Nepal on Tuesday. A US\$30 million project will help engage the private sector to improve the country's foundations for rapid, sustained, and inclusive private-sector led economic growth. "This program is an important new endeavour that seeks to improve the business environment, work with the government of Nepal to strengthen fiscal and trade policies, encourage competitiveness and exports, enhance food security, and increase the access to financial services," US ambassador Scott H. DeLisi has said.



THE CHAUKHUTE POST

TEXT & PHOTOS: RUPA JOSHI

Visiting Achham last month, it was heartening to see that the airport in Saphebagar, which was blown up during a Maoist attack in February 2002, is finally being rebuilt. A new terminal building with a blue tin roof is already up, and all that remains now is the construction of the control tower. The runway may have fallen into disuse for aviation purposes, but hasn't gone to waste: this year the Saphe Mahotsav was celebrated at one end! Hopefully once flights resume, events such as these will find other venues.

Back in 2002, the Maoists laid siege to Saphebagar and the headquarters of Achham, Mangalsen, on the same night. In Mangalsen, progress in rebuilding the old palace that went up in smoke that night seems to have slowed. Construction is yet to move beyond the windows on the ground floor.

Nevertheless, it feels good to see Nepal inching back to some sense of normalcy following the violent conflict. But just so we don't forget what the war was like for our fellow Nepalis, particularly in the countryside, the government should preserve at least some of the destroyed structures in the condition that they are in now. These 'monuments' would serve as a reminder of how bad things were and how it could be just as bad in the future if we are not careful.

One such building is the police post in Chaukhute village, Achham. This post, strategically located on a mound to the right of the highway just as one drives into Achham from Doti, is a striking sight. The concrete roof and walls have caved in, in the most dramatic fashion. Fortunately for the wary policemen once posted there, they were spending the night in the jungle when the blast brought the post down.

A replacement police post can easily be built elsewhere in the vicinity. Chaukhute could be part of a series of 'war and peace' exhibits around the country, included in educational and other historical tours. It can then take its place alongside other reminders of the recent conflict, as well as the forts of yore. 🇳🇵



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote cooperative approaches to security. It works with a broad range of stakeholders to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others. Saferworld focuses on security and justice, arms control, aid and conflict, and governance and peace building. Established in 1989, we work in Africa, Asia and Europe. The Asia programme covers Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yemen.

Saferworld Nepal Country Office announces vacancy for:

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Length of Contract: Maternity leave cover – maximum of 12 months

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Detailed Job Description of the position and person specification can be accessed to: <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/about/jobs>.

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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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EVENTS



Brick by Brick, a multimedia event to promote clean and green bricks, with photo exhibition by Achinto, Nepal's first Flashmob. This The "Domino Effect", with live music and a contemporary art performance by Karl Knapp will also take place 9 April, 4pm, Jawalakhel Football Ground, free entry, www.brickclean.net

Lives and Faces, pictures from the Maoist insurgency in India by Mustafa Quraishi. 17 March to 17 April, 11am to 4pm, closed on Tuesdays, Shanti Sangrahalaya, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka, 5549948

Nature through Lens 6, exhibition of photographs for nature conservation. 3 to 6 April, 10am onwards, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal



Mithila Cosmos: New Narratives, an exhibition of Mithila paintings by SC Suman. Till 5 April, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048

Watercolour paintings of unique and exquisite orchids, by Hemlata Pradhan. Till 1 May, Serindia Gallery, O.P. Garden, Soi Charoenkrung 36, Charoenkrung Road, Bangkok, 022386410, serindiagallery@gmail.com

KJC Spring Camp for Kids 2011, a 10-day camp for 6 to 13-year-old children. Starts 4 April, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

Teen Art Competition, organized by AmarJyoti Foundation. 16 April, Trikuti Colony, Battisputali, 4482868, 9851023958

Call for entries for Film Southasia, a festival of South Asian documentaries. 29 September to 2 October, early submission deadline: 31 May 2011, final submission deadline (for films made after April 2010): 31 June 2011, Film Southasia Secretariat, Patan Dhoka, 5552141, www.filmsouthasia.org, fsa@filmsouthasia.org

MUSIC

Freedom in the Groove, the Acoustic Bass in Case, KJC's master class by Ian Eustis, 4 April, 5pm, KJC, Jhamsikhel, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

KJC's choir classes, by Australian bassist Marcus Dengate, jazz, gospel and popular music. Every Friday, 5 to 6pm, Jhamsikhel, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

DINING



Momotarou, serves Japanese food that is top value for money. Extravagant taste yet humble in presentation. *Thamel and Sanepa*

OR2K, one of the few vegetarian restaurants in the town, their Middle Eastern platter is delicious and their cocktails robust. *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4422097*



Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. *Pulchowk*

Newa de Café, won't be surprised if there is a Newari mama in the kitchen churning out chhoila, sukuti, kachila and bara at this restaurant right amidst the bright lights of Thamel. Try Newari delicacies like deep-fried buffalo tongue, brain and intestines. You will be blown away. *Next to Kathmandu Guest House, open everyday*



Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area invokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. While they serve a plethora of dishes, it is the Indian food they pride themselves on. *Thamel, 4701170*



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



Koto Restaurant, the first Japanese restaurant in Kathmandu, serves up 25 years of history. Whether it's the fresh sashimi, sushi, sukiyaki or tempura, their experienced Japanese and Nepali chefs are sure to impress. *Darbar Marg*

GETAWAYS



Fulbari's domestic tourism promotion package, includes 2 Nights/ 3 Days deluxe accommodation, bed and breakfast, one special dinner, welcome drinks and free tennis, gym and swimming pool facilities at Rs 6,500 nett per person. *The Fulbari Resort & Spa, Pokhara, 4461918, 4462248*

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

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



ARJUN KARKI

The storytellers

Twenty emerging Nepali photographers recently concluded a four-week photography course titled *Introduction to Visual Storytelling*. The course, organised by photo.circle and tutored by a mix of Nepali and Bangladeshi experts, aimed to introduce participating photographers to a wide range of visual styles and aesthetics. It focused on building narratives, which the participants duly attempted with stories set in the city around them. The result is a delightful, thoughtful mix of photos that remind us just how variegated life in the Kathmandu Valley is. Over three dozen photos by the participants will be on display at Nepal Art Council next week in the exhibition *Kathmandu, Kathmandu*.

7-13 April, 12-7pm,
Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal



PRASIT STHAPIT



SOMEPLACE ELSE

It's worth remembering that Jhamel traces its roots to Thamel, the first neighbourhood to attract young Nepalis seeking a little more than home dalbhat and Nepal Television for an evening's entertainment. Despite the proliferation of sleaze and poverty, there are still establishments here that are more about food than the happy hour cocktails, leaden rock classics, and popcorn baskets so beloved


of backpackers. Dechenling Garden, right before you enter the maw of Thamel, is one of these. The pleasant, spacious garden seating under canvas tops somewhat negated by the rattle of the generator and fluorescent lighting, we ventured further in to discover warmly lit indoor seating. But my attempt to recall the memory of a honeyed cocktail of a winter's eve didn't work too well. The Dechenling Special with vodka, gin, soda and honey, completely flat and unappealing in a wine glass with a straw, was only redeemed by lemon juice on demand. Beer please! And on to the Tibetan and Bhutanese

DECHENLING



specials the place is known for. The Shapta and Shabhalay – the waiters are happy to explain this is sliced and fried buff or chicken, and meat in a pastry – were both scrumptious enough for us to save some for home. It was harder to choose between the mains, since there were so many intriguingly unknown quantities. But how could we resist the Bhutanese Erma Dhatsi, a chilli, cheese and mushroom curry? You'd

not think it would work when you saw the creamy concoction but it does, though there could be more vegetables in the mix. The Tibetan Shabrel was as solid as only meatballs can be, but its compatriot, the Sha Tema

Chentse, was wonderful, if only for the novelty of the celery with meat. Dechenling has a fair bit more to offer, including Phing (rice noodle) combinations, more conventional Tibetan stews, and the ubiquitous momos. It could make more of a lovely setting by working harder on the presentation of its fare, and some might quibble with the size of some portions. But if you want a change from the usual continental mishmash, and be in Thamel without feeling like you're in the heart of the misshapen beast, then Dechenling's a charmer, and ideal for couples and big gatherings alike.  Nepali Kukur

Entering Thamel, cut right just below Himalayan Java and walk some way down the street to the entrance on your left.



Space	★★★★
Bread 'n water	★★★★
Service	★★★★
Deal-icious	★★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★★



GUFFADI

Nepal's phinest

Here we go again...our great police-wallahs have once again done us proud! Central jail must be a fun place to be hola! You can plan them extortion, murder surder...get shot at...play marriage and 99% of them inmates feel safe rey except Yunus Dai...haha!

Did you know that Charles Sobhraj gets them 'wine swine' and them cheese stuff from some guy from the French embassy? How come Charles hasn't escaped yet...either he is really enjoying his stay or just getting old hola ni!

Yunus Ansari is probably having a Hyderbaadi biryaani and thanking the heavens above for being alive. And the only place them cell phones have better reception is at them jail sail kya...khoi hamro tuh tower nai tip-dai naw!

Milan Chakre dai is probably gorging on Choco-Fun while doing a one-hand push up because his other hand is all mangled up kyaaruh! And now...a Pakistani inmate has escaped...thanks to our 'drunk' policemen!

Well, he didn't escape from them jail sail...he fainted, got checked up by them doctors and was transferred to the 'Heart' hospital...ani raati 11 bajey aspaw-



taal ko bathroom baatuh bhagyo rey...haha!

And where were them cops? They were drunk sleeping kya! I think it's about tyam...our Home ministry bans them cell phones and whisky bottles during duty hours kya!

Few weeks ago, there was some bandh sandh in Maharajgunj...why? A liquor store right next to a police beat was burglarised and the tole-baasis were mad at them cops rey! Hahah... abuh raat bhari tyehi raksi pasal ko twat chor-dai, piu-dai...geet seet soonyo holan tuh mora haroo lay!

Hello...US Embassy... timro government ko aid said is not working kya! Instead of giving our Police them communication equipments and what not...just open a 'Dunkin Donuts' kya... and maybe 'free coffee & donuts' will help our cops stay wide awake and also bulk up as well...hahah!

If we look at our Nepal police...all them officers are moto-ghaato and them constables are all looreys...khana naw-kha jasto! And instead of better training, bhatta and ration...they just carry their bamboo sticks, chew Pan Parag and get drunk on duty! Ye...and not to forget...we don't have a Navy but our police-wallahs can curse more

than them sailors kya!

Well...we can't blame the laathi-chargers...for they still act like they did during them Panchey days and our NA still acts like it's 1931...heheh...Rana Sashun ko bela jastai! While the police-wallahs talk like they never went to school...our NA folks still use the 'Rana' bhasa...haha!

Them police-wallahs will say...'Sir, Yo R@#! ko C@\$# lai muh thok-dim?'...ani Nepal Army ma chahi 'Shaap, Hajur lay marij hos, muh yeslai thoki haalchoo...' hahah!

My Uncle was in the NA once... hahah...he went from talking like this...'Ye.. Bhat khanoos' to ...'Hajur Jew Narayan gari-see-eos ki boxy-see-wos'...or something like that... BS!

And a friend of mine married some general ko chori and whenever he calls his mother-in-law...he goes...'Hajur Maha-raani... something baksi something gari-see-wos...'

The Ranas left the building 60 years ago...the Shahs are leaving as well...but we really can't blame our LMG (Limbu-Magar-Gurung) army generals and other 'khandaani' folks for acting like them RST (Rana-Shah-Thakuris)... because...at the end of the day...we all want to be 'Shree Tin' Maharaja kya! 🇳🇵

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Nepal received about half its quota of rainfall last month. The Kathmandu Valley, for example, received 17mm of its 30mm monthly quota. Weather wise, there are no significant changes on the horizon this week, due to the stable position of two gigantic low pressure zones at the eastern and western edges of Asia. A narrow low-pressure 'trough' is acting as a bridge connecting the two zones on the northern side of the greater Himalaya. Fresh satellite pictures indicate that dusty skies will continue to predominate over Nepal and northern India and the possibility of a good cleansing storm is almost nil. Expect sunny intervals, turbulent winds and fluctuating mercury levels over the weekend.

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ON DUTY: A sniffer dog makes the final security checks at a program in the Academy Hall, Kamaladi, before the arrival of Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal on Wednesday. The program was organised to celebrate the Federation of Nepali Journalists' 56th anniversary.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

DODGE!: The Juddha Fire Brigade team gives Ajima temple in Ason, Kathmandu, a much needed spring clean, Friday. The cleaning took place on the initiation of the local Machhindra Club.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BEYOND THE HOUR: The Lumbini Garden, Lumbini, lit up on Saturday to mark Earth Hour, a global initiative in partnership with WWF. The Lumbini Development Trust has taken several eco-friendly decisions, including the proposed plantation of 108,000 saplings in the garden.

Deadly Hepatitis E

DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

Hepatitis E is the commonest cause of adult jaundice in Nepal. The infectious diseases hospital in Teku will soon witness the annual rise in Hepatitis E patients. This viral disease is transmitted (to put it crudely) through the consumption of faeces. In Kathmandu, this act is not difficult to envision. Vegetables washed in the Bishnumati River are brought to party palaces and restaurants and served as fresh green salad. If they were properly cooked or soaked in adequately iodinated water for at least 20 minutes, there would be less of a problem; but eating these vegetables uncooked increases the risk of acquiring Hepatitis E and other interesting organisms. Most people that are afflicted by this disease eventually recover, but if you are pregnant, things could easily

take a turn for the worse. Twenty to thirty per cent of pregnant women with Hepatitis E die of liver failure.

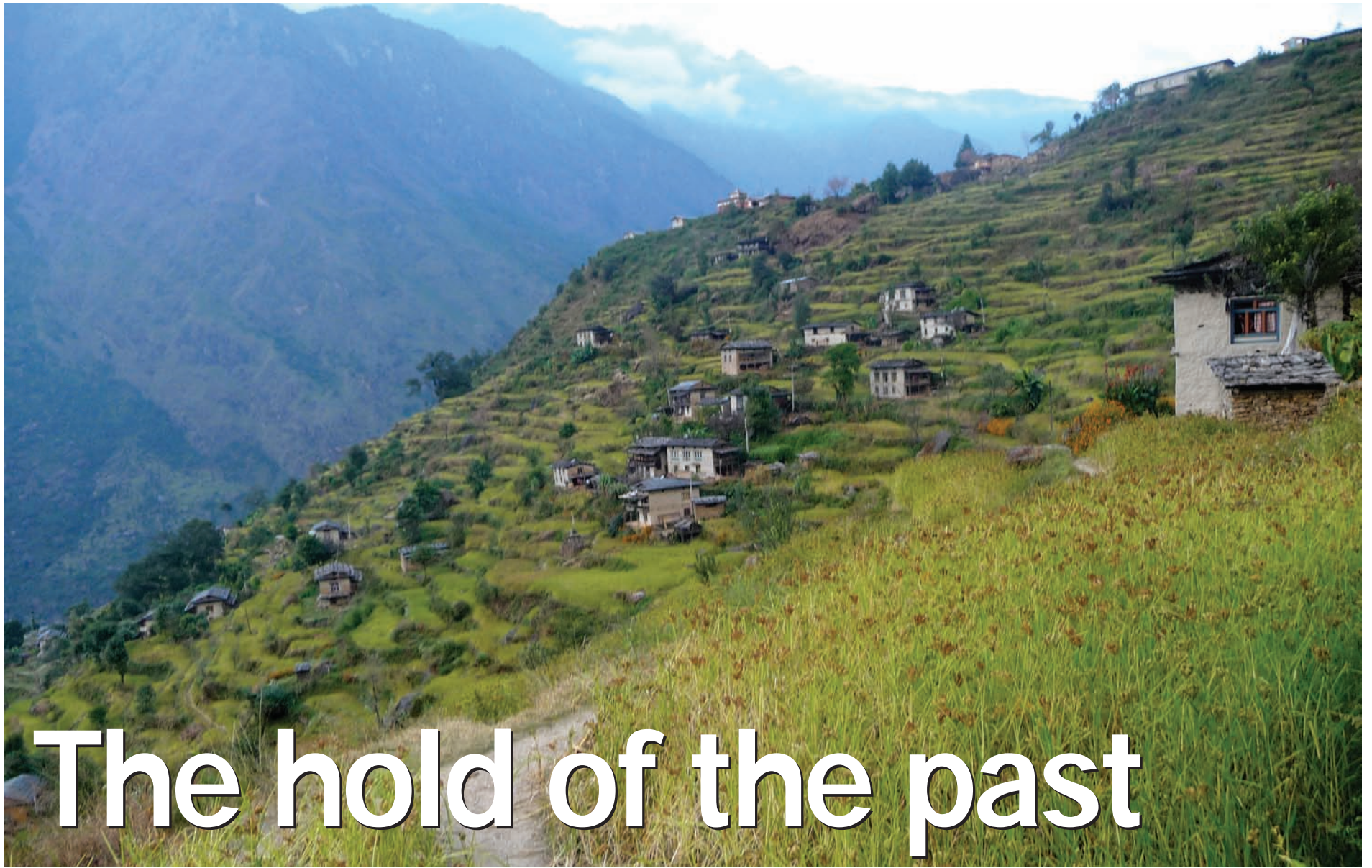
Twenty-one-year old Gyanu Thapa, an affluent housewife in Kathmandu, always drank boiled water at home. But when she was pregnant she craved the momos from a little restaurant on the street. She thought it was OK to drink the tap water served there, only to come down with jaundice and eventually Hepatitis E. Within weeks she died of fulminant liver failure despite the best efforts of her physicians. A vaccine could have prevented her tragic death.

An effective Hepatitis E vaccine was developed five years ago with the collaboration of the Nepal Army, Glaxo Smith Kline, and the US Army. But Glaxo lost interest in its commercial development when it realised that this product would not rake in the money. The good news is that the Chinese have recently developed an effective Hepatitis E vaccine (HEV 239) and appear to be determined to make sure it does not

WHO 2008

go the Glaxo way.

A dependable supply of clean drinking water would eliminate this problem. But that, of course, is easier said than done in Nepal. 🇳🇵



The hold of the past

TEXT & PICS by MATTHEW BLEIMAN

Walking through this serene village nestled in the rolling hills of Dolakha district, it is difficult to imagine things were ever any different here. Between 200 and 400 people reside in Simigaon today, the majority of who are Sherpa or Tamang, and most men leave the village for seasonal trekking work. A small hydroelectric generator powers households and a single phone connects the villagers to the outside world.

Yet Simigaon, while never the site of a battle between the Maoists and state forces, was right on the fault lines of the civil war. By 2001, the Maoists frequented the hills surrounding the village. Initially, plainclothes fighters established bases of operation but as the war progressed, uniformed Maoist soldiers began to appear in the area. The Nepal Army too entered the region and although it had no formal presence in Simigaon, it operated bases nearby and engaged the Maoists in skirmishes around the village.

It is only when one speaks to the

Simigaon is a typical Nepali hill village - idyllic on the surface, but beset by the lingering effects of the conflict

villagers that the full extent of the civil war's impact becomes apparent. The emotional baggage of their wartime experiences weighs heavily on the disposition of many Simigaon residents today. When working in the fields, women prefer gossip to talk of politics. But almost every aspect of their everyday lives has been coloured by the shadow of the war.

As a result of the war, the VDC positions are still vacant. There was once a police station, but a Maoist bomb threat scared the police away. All for the better, thought the villagers, who often feuded with the police in any case. Last year though, after a violent fight at a festival, the villagers had to walk the assailant for hours to the nearest police station.

The village farms grow millet, potatoes, corn, and wheat. Villagers



must trek a day to the nearest trading post where they can buy or exchange their produce for rice, peppers, and other commodities. A road was to be built that would have made the exchange of goods much easier, but the war diverted resources and the project remains incomplete today. The trouble does not end with the long walk, either. Once at the trade post, villagers find that goods are much more expensive than they used to be, a result of inflation during the war.

Education is another source of persistent frustration. Kochhiri, a student during the war, explained that during the war the Maoists would often come to the school in Simigaon and interrupt the usual curriculum to teach Maoist ideology. Such intrusions sapped the effectiveness of the already mediocre education system in Simigaon. The effects linger today, both because students fell behind during such interruptions and because without a local VDC, the local school lacks direction and structural support.

And of course, the spectre of violence that haunted the village then has never quite gone away. Leaving

the village during the war, while often necessary, was particularly dangerous. Ambushes occurred frequently along the roads and paranoid soldiers could not always distinguish between Maoist fighters and villagers. As Anglakpa, a village leader, explained, explosives were strewn all around the village. The poster in the health centre warning residents speaks of the enduring threat. Maoists often came to the houses in Simigaon demanding food and shelter, and villagers such as Tendi Ama (*see box*) had no choice but to acquiesce, even though they would be threatened by the Army subsequently.

Coverage of the war has usually focused either on the overarching political aspects of the struggle or on areas where heavy conflict or atrocities took place. Yet there were many more villages like Simigaon that were equally if more indirectly traumatised by the presence of the Maoists and the Army. The residents of Simigaon, like villagers throughout the hills of Nepal, became the pawns of a political struggle far removed from their own lives, and it is stories like theirs that often fall into the cracks of history. 🇳🇵



Tendi Ama

An opinionated and passionate woman, Tendi Ama remains haunted by her experiences during the war. She bitterly recalls the time when Maoist fighters occupied her home forcibly and a bolt-action rifle went off indoors. In the confusion that ensued, she feared for her life. She had to spend several nights away from her house, only to return to find her food supplies exhausted and livestock slaughtered. Ever defiant, Tendi Ama has not forgiven the intruders and claims that if they ever return, she will face them with a *khukuri*.

Rocking out in Afghanistan

The three members of Kabul Dreams are from different parts of Afghanistan and speak different languages, so many of the songs on their first album are in English. However, 20-year-old lead singer Sulaiman Qardash says

"To keep the band going is not an easy task. The first challenge that we are facing and we have faced since the beginning is financial. Not a lot of people are interested in sponsoring us and there are not many venues or facilities for recording," he says. However, he adds, there's no doubt it's the start of something great. 🇵🇭



अब हुन्छन् सबै दंग



प्रथम बम्पर उपहार

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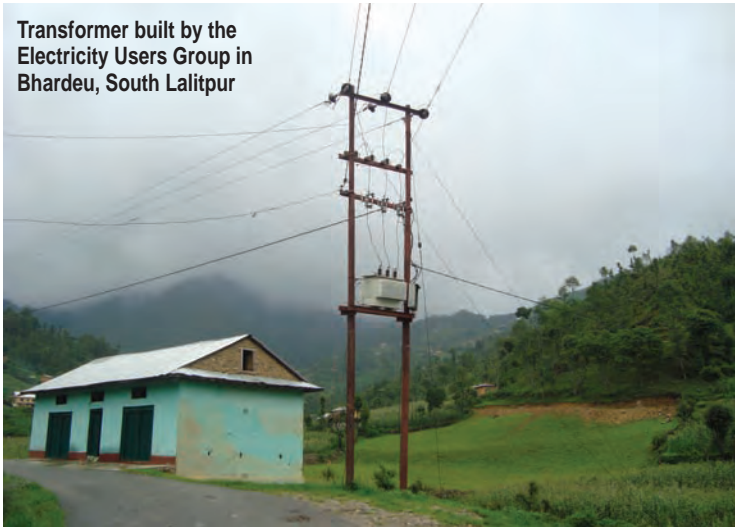
Power to the people

RUBEENA MAHATO

Nepal's successful experiment with community electrification, which has connected 135,000 households to the grid in just seven years, is facing a major setback with the dissolution of the Community Rural Electrification Department. On 13 October, just before the start of the Dasain holidays, a meeting of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) abruptly dissolved the department. It was justified as part of a restructuring drive in NEA. But the move has not just created an institutional vacuum, pushing the work of about 300 electrification user groups across the country into limbo. More pertinently for NEA, it has allowed for its greater control over the consumer-led program, sparking fears that NEA's endemic corruption will now seep into the movement.

Under the community-led model, user groups partnered with the government to bring electricity to villages that were off the grid. Communities took charge of distribution, maintenance, and even shared 20 per cent of construction costs, with government providing the rest. These community-managed systems are so well administered that pilferage is non-existent and most are making decent profits. This is in stark contrast to the badly managed and nearly insolvent NEA. Following electrification under this model, schools have introduced

Transformer built by the Electricity Users Group in Bhardeu, South Lalitpur



RUBEENA MAHATO

computers, health posts have started refrigerating vaccines, and small-scale industries are being set up.

The dissolution of the department, however, has put the future of the program in jeopardy. "Consumers have invested more than Rs 750 million so far, and 93,000 households are awaiting connection. We have managed to keep the program alive but there is a great deal of uncertainty about the road ahead," says Dilli Ghimire, Chairperson of National Association of Community Electrification Users in Nepal (NACEUN).

The cracks are already beginning to show. Tanka Kafle, along with over a dozen others, has travelled all the way from Tandi in Morang and has been making

the rounds of NEA and the Energy Ministry for a month now to get back money belonging to his community. The Aangdim Sewa Users Group that he belongs to collected Rs 4.1 million five years ago and deposited it into the 20-80 fund along with the government's contribution. But instead of paying the contractor responsible for construction, NEA used the money to pay its own staff. Now the contractor has refused to continue work and the villagers are angry and tired of waiting. "I have been held captive three times by the villagers. I can't go back before I get the money back and the contractors agree to work," Kafle says.

Ultimately Kafle may be one of the luckier ones. Finance Minister

With the dismantling of the department responsible for rural electrification, the government seems determined to undermine another Nepali success


Bharat Mohan Adhikari, who is also from Morang, has apparently promised to find him Rs 5 million. Never mind the unknown provenance of said Rs 5 million, what about other user groups who may have already invested their communities' savings?

Dilli Ghimire is indignant. "We have never faced such problems before. With the department, we could at least be sure that the consumers' money would be used where it was meant to be. NEA is so unmanageably corrupt that any program it handles is bound to fail," he says. Narayan Gyawali, General Secretary of NACEUN, is equally clear in his condemnation. "There are no two ways about it. The department was dissolved suddenly

so that those in power can use the 20-80 fund for their interests. Why else would a successfully running program be interrupted?"

There may be good reason to believe this is already happening. This year, consumers deposited Rs 160 million into the 20-80 fund, which should have attracted Rs 640 million in government funding for community electrification. Since the department's dissolution, however, just Rs 310 million has been allocated. "The remaining amount will now be spent according to the whims of the ministers and officials," Ghimire says.

When asked about the allegations, joint spokesperson at the Ministry of Energy Purusottam Acharya conceded that he had no idea what transpired in the fateful meeting that terminated the department of community electrification. Secretary at the Ministry of Energy, Shital Babu Regmi, declined to comment.

Faced with crippling power cuts in the capital, it is easy to forget about the 55 per cent of rural Nepal that isn't connected to the grid. But community electrification is one of Nepal's few success stories, and high-level visits from Bhutan and Laos indicated international interest in the model. By forcibly incorporating a community-driven program into the centralised and ineffective institution that is NEA, the government is guaranteeing that its success will be short-lived. 

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Power sharing, Nepali style,
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No, minister

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 30 March

नागरिक

Finance Secretary Rameshwor Khanal’s resignation came at a time when he was investigating the fake VAT bill scam. Since Khanal was already under pressure from a certain group of businessmen, he decided to quit once he learned that the political leadership was not willing to support him.

Known for his honesty and integrity, Khanal had already said he would rather resign than compromise. The resignation of one of most capable and untainted secretaries in the country is a stain on the record of Jhala Nath Khanal’s government. The ouster of the secretary, who was admired for his financial reforms, has made it more difficult to achieve the good governance needed to save the country’s failing economy. This is an issue of national dignity.

The VAT scam was not the only reason for Khanal’s resignation. The new government could not digest the practical suggestion of a supplementary budget either. As the political parties routinely milk the ministries to fund their parties, the coalition did not want Khanal to be heading the finance ministry.

To approve Khanal’s resignation would be to ridicule the administrative professionalism, capability and impartiality of the Finance Ministry, not to mention demoralise ministry staff. The bureaucracy will be further politicised and corrupted, and it will set a wrong precedent.



A true employee can resist pressure from any sector but the political leadership. In this respect, either he has to obey his orders, or quit. Khanal’s resignation has elevated his own stature, but has truncated that of the government. The coalition government is guilty of insulting honest and dedicated employees like Khanal, and the prime minister should take firm action to fix the image of his government and steer the economy back on track.

Asking for the resignation of Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari is the first thing PM Khanal should do. Adhikari is guilty of failing to protect his secretary, allowing unnecessary pressure to be heaped on him, and imposing his political interests on him. It was the result of Adhikari’s inept leadership that Khanal was forced out. Adhikari should thus take moral responsibility and resign from his post. If he does not, the PM should

dismiss Adhikari, paving the way for Khanal to return to his ministry.

Khanal’s return is necessary to keep financial administration efficient, competent and fair in the country, as well as to elevate the spirit of other government employees. By undermining a civil servant, the political leadership has precipitated its own moral downfall. PM Khanal has not done anything in the two months since he entered Singha Darbar. If he accepts Rameshwor Khanal’s resignation, the first thing he will have done is to promote political anarchy in the administration. The finance secretary may be an individual, but the issue is a larger one.

Energy crisis

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 24 March

नयाँ पत्रिका

The government has declared an energy emergency. Deputy PM Bharat Mohan Adhikari proclaimed an energy crisis over the next four years, and announced the government’s action plan.

Earlier, the Dahal-led government had also declared an energy emergency, following which there was extensive debate on energy alternatives. The pros and cons of diesel plants were discussed. But politics pushed the energy debate onto the backburner. The lesson is that no plan really works until the country’s politics is settled. The present government may have declared an energy emergency, but with a half-formed cabinet, its goals are unlikely to be realised.



BIKRAM RAI

The declaration of an energy emergency implies that national economic policy will be focused on tiding over the energy shortage in the next four years. But we should be focused on developing a comprehensive energy plan and implementing it. We should find an alternative to petroleum, keeping in mind that the hydropower regime is rife with corruption and power politics. Political will is central to addressing the energy crisis.

To split or not to split?

Analysis in *Dristi*, 29 March

दृष्टि

Given the language used by the Maoist leaders and the dirty games they are playing, one can’t help but wonder how long the party will survive. Shalikram Jamarkattel, the chairperson of the All Nepal Trade Union (Maoist) said in a meeting at Khanna Garment that Baburam Bhattarai should be smeared with soot for trying to split the party, and that Netra Bikram Chand should be boycotted. He even ordered physical action against Bhattarai and his supporters at a program organised at Everest Hotel, saying that he would be ready to face the consequences.

YCL Newa Committee-in charge Chandra Bahadur Thapa has gone so far as to say that the Baidya and Bhattarai factions should be buried alive. Recently, even Maoist Chairman Prachanda indicated party action could be taken against Bhattarai.

UML’s example is enough to show how internal struggles within a party can weaken it and push it to disintegration. The recent

activities of Maoist leaders show that they are headed in the same direction. Prachanda is in a dilemma about whether to take action against Bhattarai before he actually splits from the party or to wait for him to make a move. Party insiders say Prachanda wants Bhattarai to declare the split so that he can blame all the failures of the ten-year war on him and clear himself of any wrongdoing. He also wants to woo the Baidya faction so that he can project the image of an undivided party under him. But the Bhattarai faction has got wind of Prachanda’s intentions. Their plan is to stay put in spite of all the pressure until Prachanda initiates party action against them. Once that happens they will portray themselves as martyrs and then form a new party. Bhattarai is busy soliciting the support of CA members, and there are around five dozen MPs supporting Bhattarai at the moment. The Prachanda-Baidya faction is trying hard to stop other MPs from going to Bhattarai’s side, and to win back those who have already declared their allegiance.



Shopkeeper: Take the firewood, brother. Those who declared the energy crisis took all the cooking gas away.

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 26 March



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

ECHO CHAMBER: Kabindra Rai, Narmaya Tamang and Lakpa Tenzing of the Khumjung School's Eco Club at Syangboche last week, raising awareness about Nepal's failure to ratify treaties to phase out the use of chemicals that are melting Himalayan glaciers and affecting the climate.

GREEN SCENE

Get moving

Political uncertainty has delayed Nepal's ratification not just of the amendments to the Montreal Protocol, but also four other international treaties on money laundering, enforced dissapearances, migratory workers, and the International Criminal Court. Officials say this has seriously undermined the country's reputation at international fora. Marco Gonzales, Executive Secretary of the Nairobi-based United Nations Environment Programme's Ozone Secretariat, was in Kathmandu last week to meet government ministers and lawmakers to convince them to expedite ratification. "Nepal has a great track record in compliance to phase-out schedules of ozone-depleting chemicals under the Montreal protocol," Gonzales told *Nepali Times*, "and there is now an opportunity to send a positive message and effective signal to the outside world by ratifying all five treaties in a single package."

Cooling without heating

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA
in SYANGBOCHE

Narmaya Tamang is a Grade 8 student at the Khumjung School and says she sees signs of climate change all around her. The snowline is receding on Ama Dablam, which she sees from her classroom window. It is getting warmer year by year, and there is less winter snow. Narmaya, with classmates Kabindra Rai and Lakpa Tenzing, are members of the Eco Club at the Khumjung School, and they thought they knew what caused this: emissions from fossil fuel burning that led to global warming. What they didn't know is that there is another, even more dangerous greenhouse gas: hydro-cholorofluorocarbon (HCFC),

used in refrigeration and air-conditioning. HCFCs replaced the CFCs that were the main cause of the depletion of the earth's ozone layer that protects the planet's surface from harmful ultraviolet rays. The Montreal Protocol phased out all CFCs by 2010, and the ozone hole over Antarctica has

that the chemical that saves the ozone layer is causing the earth to warm even more," Narmaya says. Narmaya, Kabindra and Lakpa took part in an interaction last week at Syangboche organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to draw the attention of Nepal's legislators to the twin

"The draft laws were approved by the previous government, but because of the delays in the formation of the new cabinet and parliamentary sittings the treaty has not been ratified yet," explains Sitaram Joshi, head of the Department of Standards and Metrology. Ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere has increased the incidence of skin cancer and cataracts, affecting even livestock and plants. Because CFCs remove the earth's ozone sun block, people living in Nepal's high altitude areas are also more susceptible. The other danger is that the continued emission of harmful refrigerants and air-conditioning gases, especially by industries in India and China, exacerbate climate change. The head of UNEP's Paris-based Ozone Action Program, Rajendra Shende,

Nepal is the only country in Asia that hasn't ratified an international treaty to phase out coolants that warm the earth

stopped growing. But while solving one problem (ozone depletion) another was created. HCFC is 2,000 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. "We knew that the depletion of the ozone layer was causing cancers and cataracts, but now we know

dangers of ozone depletion and climate change. Although Nepal ratified the Monteral Protocol and phased out CFC imports last year, it is now the only country in Asia not to have ratified amendments to the Montreal Protocol to replace HCFCs.

said in Syangboche that early ratification by Nepal of the Copenhagen and Beijing Amendments to the Montreal Protocol would unlock up to US\$2 million in technical assistance for a phase-out. "Nepal has an excellent past record in compliance, but the need to address both ozone depletion and climate change has given ratification an added urgency," Shende added. Official sources say the draft law and documentation a now awaiting a slot in the parliamentary schedule. ■



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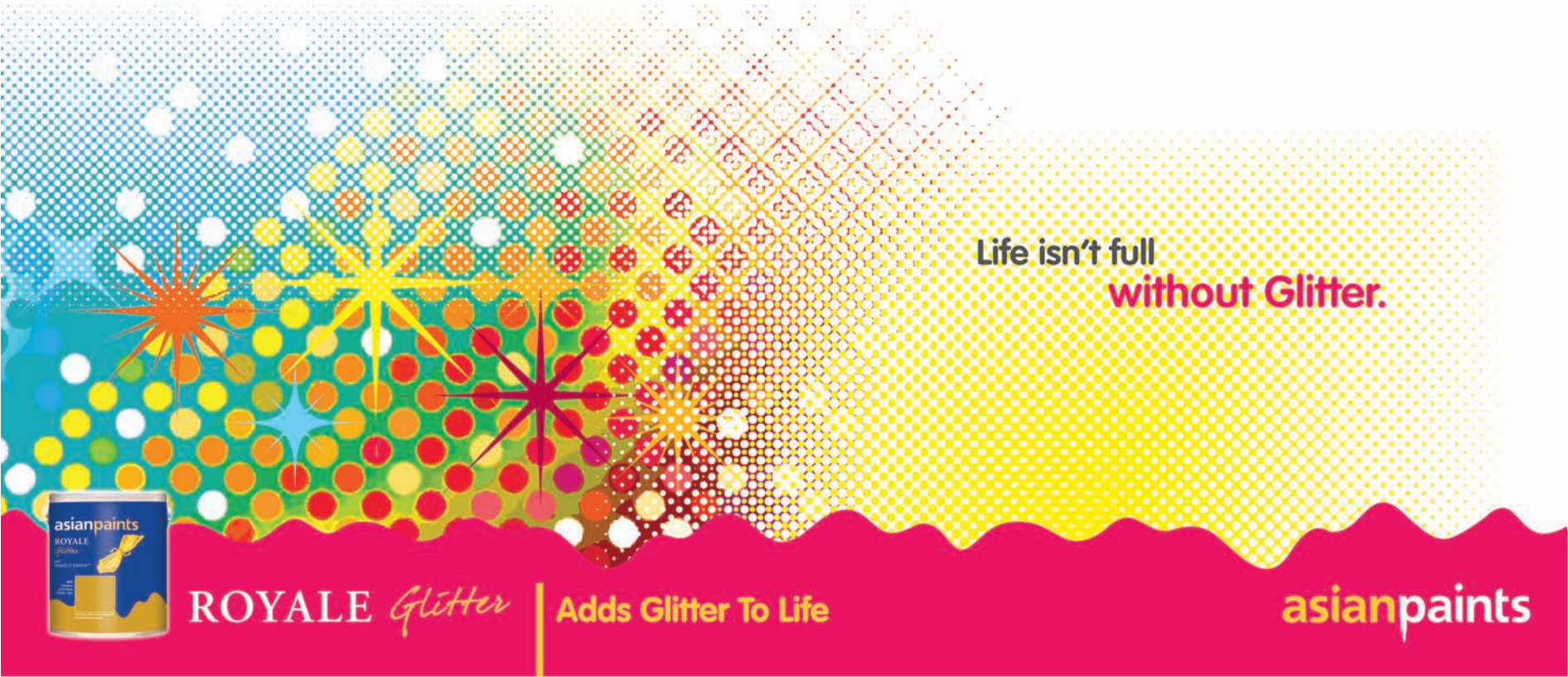
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Liquidity crisis in blood bank

My favourite headline till Tuesday was the above, and I thought nothing could beat that till it was dislodged by this one (pictured). An abir jatra and nagar parikrama coming right up for the sub in question.



Comrade Rain Man is still the commander of the People's Liberation Army and now also Piece Minister so it was

only fitting that he should attend the annual jamboree of the Nepal Scouts in Lainchour the other day. He wore a khaki uniform (not shorts, thankfully) a kerchief, and gave the host a smart three-finger salute. And then, lo and behold, Rain Man raised his hand and took the Boy Scout oath, repeating in lip sync: "On my honour, I will do my best to do my duty to God, and my Country and to obey the Scout Law, to keep myself mentally strong and morally straight..." He should have just publicly renounced violence as long as he was at it, since it looks like the PLA is turning into a Cub Scout Pack anyway.



For those who are still asking "Have we turned into a nation of crooks?" let me once and for all put the uncertainty to rest with a firm "Yes." And proof of that is the rampant 'chit'-ing in the ongoing SLC exams, which has surpassed all previous records. Chits have gone digital, with students now

getting answers via SMS and taking dictation through mobiles. A CA member got her daughter to sit for exams and when she was found out, came to give her exams herself the next day with bodyguards who apparently helped her with the test. A DEO was caught writing the answers on the blackboard, while another DEO who prevented cheating was beaten to a pulp in Palpa. Journalists who got access to exam rooms to take pictures for the papers were caught in flagrante helping relatives with answers. The Ministry of Re-education says it is deliberately allowing cheating because, as one official put it, "How else are these students going to fit into a society of thugs?" Never thought of it that way: cheating in exams is an integral part of vocational education in this kleptocratic republic.



And now we know why. Past officials of the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority it seems themselves had their hands in goo with illicit land deals, selling off the Bagmati floodplains to the highest

bidder. To which I can only say: it is like letting the donkey guard the haystack.



It was only a matter of time before the All-Nepal Intellectual Federation (Revolutionary) was also going to split into the ANIF (Revisionist), the ANIF (Not-so-revolutionary-anymore) and the ANIF (Ass Lickers). Which must be why the Jam Cuttle faction has been distributing pistols to casino bouncers in case the Budge Gain Gang decides to get bowtick.



As part of our effort to gauge the public's awareness of political issues, Backside is conducting a poll. Please fill out this questionnaire by ticking one answer and send to ass@nepalitimes.com. The first all correct answer will receive a gift hamper of oatmeal. Women are encouraged to apply and cheating is allowed:

- 1. Two months later, why hasn't the prime minister still not been able to complete the cabinet?**

a. Carpenters have all gone to the Gulf
- b. Forum wallahs want phoren

c. Baddies want home

d. Oli's boys want in

- 2. Why does Chairman Awesome keep going to Singapore?**

a. Stop by at StanChart at Suntec tower

b. Meet uncooked handlers

c. Meet wok operatives

d. All of the above
- 3. What is the real reason the Baddies are at each others' throats?**

a. They are doing to themselves what they did to others

b. Jam Cuttle is keeping the casino cash all to himself

c. BRB and PKD are bitter rivals in Stalin Look-alike Contest

d. They're hoodwinking us all by pretending to fight

- 4. Why can't the Kangresis get off their asses?**

a. Because they possess big bottoms

b. Hey, watch who you're calling an ass

c. As a donkey I take umbrage at all this

d. As a donkey you shouldn't be using the 'a' word



GPK bust erection comes a cropper

Himalayan News Service
Kathmandu, March 21

"I would much rather have men ask why I have no statue than why I have one," Marcus Porcius Cato, a Roman statesman had said aeons ago. Locals of Shankhaphar in Chakrapath area, who obstructed the function to lay the foundation stone of late Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala's statue today, will like to agree with him.

The function to erect the statue was postponed due to the obstruction. Constituent Assembly Chairman Subas Nembang was to lay the foundation stone at the function organised by Ganesh Man Singh and People's Movement Martyrs Academy.

After the locals buried the pit, dug for laying the foundation stone, the two sides had an altercation. The Academy's Chairman and President of Nepali Congress, Kathmandu district, Bhimsen Das Pradhan accused the local Maoist cadres of impeding the programme. After putting off the function, a condolence meeting was organised.

Shrestha and Nepal Student Union Chairman Pradip Paudel were among those who addressed the programme and portrayed late Koirala as the hero of Nepal's democracy. "Our obstruction doesn't mean we are protesting against late GP Koirala. We do not want the park to be named after leaders of political parties and other personalities as there are shrines of gods and goddesses inside the park," said Ram Bahadur Luitel, a local advocate. He reminded that the locals had also blocked the statue erection of veteran singer Narayan Gopal a few years ago.

Locals, with the signature of 57 people including Parashu Ram Dahal and Prakash Koirala, filed an appeal at the office of Kathmandu Metropolitan City Ward No 4, demanding to stop the act of erecting statues of leaders or persons in the public park.

Prakash Koirala, son of founding leader of Nepali Congress, BP Koirala, was among those spearheading the obstruction.





उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

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