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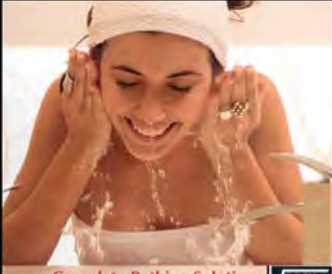
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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

## Make or break

The expansion of the new cabinet is taking longer than expected. No one expected this to be easy for Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, given that this was a marriage of convenience between two ideologically polarised groupings.

But Bhattarai's bigger problem seems to be not so much accommodating the demands of the Madhesi alliance, but to satisfy factions within his own Maoist party. And then he has to also ensure caste, ethnicity and gender diversity within the cabinet.

"We have lot of senior leaders

in the party who deserve to be in the cabinet," explained Bhattarai's adviser, Devendra Paudel, "We want to make sure they all feel involved in the process. Hence, the slight delay."

Analysts say that in their hurry to get into government, the Maoists may have given too much away to win over the Madhesi. For their part, Madhesi leaders deny this is about getting to power. MJF-Republican leader Rajkishor Yadav acknowledges the Maoists have been generous in power sharing, but adds: "This coalition is based on issues, not on power, whatever the

cynics may say."

The Maoist decision to postpone handing over the keys of their weapons containers to the special committee for now is a missed opportunity. It could have been a breakthrough in the peace process and cemented public perception that Bhattarai is a do-er.

But he can still send positive signal by taking the opposition into confidence while moving ahead on the peace process and constitution drafting. Even a majority government needs consensus.

Anurag Acharya

More on p12

### Life after living goddess




Former Kumari Rashmila Shakya is working in a software company and pursuing a masters in information technology.

p6-7




AUTO SPECIAL

p15-19



A FUSION SO EXQUISITE  
IT'S ENJOYED BY BOTH BLENDERS  
AND CONNOISSEURS.





# KEEP THE FLAME OF TRUTH BURNING

Devisara Oli's husband, Suresh, was last seen in the district police office in Bardiya nine years ago after being taken in for questioning. Nearly a decade on, Devisara still keeps her husband's clothes in the hope that he may one day return, she hurriedly picks up the phone every time there is a call from an unknown number.

At about the same time, in a nearby village, Laxmi Khadka was home eating dinner with her husband, Dil Bahadur. Maoists came into the house and dragged Dil Bahadur away into the darkness outside. She never saw him again. Laxmi still runs out of the house when the dogs bark at night, thinking her husband has come back.

Dil Bahadur and Suresh are among at least 180 people listed as disappeared by both sides during the conflict in Bardiya alone, the district with the highest number of disappeareds. Nationwide, the number of reported forced disappearances is more than 1,350 but the actual total is probably closer to 2,000.

This week, families of over 40 of those missing in the war gathered in Kathmandu, and another 200 in Bardiya. They used the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared on 30 August to draw the new coalition's attention to the inattention paid by successive governments to their plight since the war ended in 2006. Devisara (pictured) was among those who lit lamps of remembrance at Basantapur on Tuesday night.

Nepal's post-conflict scenario is unique because unlike most other wars, neither side lost and neither side won. Since most of the dead were non-combatants, though, the Nepali people lost. As far as the Maoist militia and state security forces are concerned, it's over. They want to sweep the past under the carpet and get on with sharing the spoils.

On the question of atoning for wartime atrocities, leaders from both the Maoists and the other parties have an identical response: "Digging up the past now will endanger the peace process." In fact, the peace process is endangered precisely because there is no closure for the relatives of those who were summarily executed, or were disappeared during the war--even in cases when the perpetrators are known by name.

commission on disappearances.

To add insult to injury, the second clause in the four-point agreement between the Maoists and the Madhesi Alliance that propelled Baburam Bhattarai to prime ministerhood this week actually allows a general amnesty for wartime atrocities. The exact wording (our translation) reads: 'In government, we will immediately dissolve all court cases against Maoist leaders and cadre and declare a general amnesty in cases where the courts have passed sentences.'

In the general relief over the formation of a new government, and the euphoria over a prime minister who rides Mustangs, this and other conditions in the agreement have gone almost unnoticed by human rights activities, other political leaders and some Kathmandu-based members of the international community.

But for the relatives of the disappeared, this is a slap in the face. On Wednesday, Devisara Oli wept as she told us: "The killers of our husbands are walking freely and threatening to kill us if we raise this issue. It's not up to the government to pardon anyone. Only we the victims can pardon those who tore our hearts out."

To shame the government and to show what pardoning and healing really mean, Devisara, whose husband was disappeared by the police, and Laxmi, whose husband was disappeared by the Maoists, are working side-by-side for a victims support group in Bardiya called the Committee for Conflict Affected People.

Shame on a state that doesn't have the heart to follow the example set by Devisara and Laxmi.



ERIK B WILSON

All the families of the disappeared are asking for is truth and justice: information on whether their loved ones are dead or alive, the circumstances of their deaths and for the guilty to answer for their crimes. The two former warring sides have stone-walled on information, there is a common conspiracy of silence about war crimes, and elected rulers have tried their best to water down the terms of reference for a future

nepalitimes.com

Same road, #517

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### CYBER PATRIOTS

Re: Rubeena Mahato's column, 'The age of cyber patriots', #568. Taslima sure knows how to whip up controversy. Just look at her tweet about a likely fatwa and her books being burnt. I mean seriously? There must be at most 10-15 hate tweets which she might have got, out of which one was profane, but she got dozens and dozens of tweets defending her by Nepalis. What about those? She proclaims herself to be an empowered woman, a feminist and now she is playing victim here? She is not stupid. To the contrary, she is so smart that she spun a careless remark and a stupid response generated a media uproar. Helps a lot when you haven't published in the last couple of years.

Downtoearth

- Awesome piece, Rubeena Mahato. It's like you read my mind. Taslima was stupid but we acted even more foolishly. I'm sick of these fake patriots, people creating facebook groups and events against 'dho\*\*\*\*' who we are suppose to hate for the most absurd reasons. There are sociopaths who enjoy chaos.

Loki

- This kind of nationalism is actually ethno-centrism. We youth have forgotten our own traditions and cultures and act like we are westoxicated. If we have problem with what others say, we should improve ourselves first. Nice work, Rubeena.

AP

- 'Despite being from a country that lags behind in every development index

ever devised...' says Rubeena Mahato. Do you mean to suggest that citizens of poor countries are not expected to feel outraged about their nation? I see absolutely no reason to feeling ashamed about people recognized the world over for their valour and unlike any other nationality in the world are trusted with the defense of a foreign land by its government.

Soni

### FORGOTTEN FUTURES

In Ram Kumar Bhandari's 'Forgotten futures', #568 I agree that Nepal's transitional agenda has been hijacked by political leaders, donors and NGOs. Victims are forgotten, and it has never become a national agenda. NGOs are big players and playing with victims for their projects. Victims in Nepal suffer through top level leaders, perpetrators and NGO business. Keep the agenda alive, Ram ji.

Biraj

- The disappeared people will not come back to their families and community, its a life-time suffering for the families of missing. Few big NGOs in Nepal have been manipulating whole transitional justice issue, producing victims, destroying the victims' agenda and safeguarding their businesses. Who controls them? The Maoists always tried to control them politically, and never consulted on families daily problems. NGOs and political parties do not support victims' groups either. I am still waiting to know the answer: where is my brother? I want to take revenge and frustrated with the human rights business. We will fight to the last.

Anjoo

### MISTAKEN PEACE

I found Anurag Acharya's column 'Mistaken peace', #568, very well written. Its nice to know that there are still some honest and unapologetic columnist left. Devi Khadka and Shanti Pakhrin were both victims to this unjust system, and the writer is sensitive to both their causes.

Som BK

### SRI LANKA MODEL

- I agree private medical colleges are not the solution, and also agree with Buddha Basnyat's view point that primary and secondary health care has to be emphasised ('Sri Lanka model', #568). But I am not sure why is he is lumping these two together? New medical colleges are a private investment, and of course they mean business like any other private funded investment. Primary and secondary health care are the government's responsibility and are thus a separate part. Is he suggesting that private investors go for primary and secondary health care instead of medical colleges?

Ramesh Bikal

- One way to complement the Sri Lanka model would be to integrate the mission and objectives of the Nick Simon Institute (www.nsi.edu.np) by the Ministry of Health. Nepal is well on its way to meeting MDG targets on maternal and child health. Continuing and investing aggressively in this front will be useful. By promoting model developed by Nick Simon Institute for rural health care, the government could close the gap even in curative medicine which is glaringly deficient at the moment. People do have acute sickness, fall from trees, meet road accident and they need urgent and long term care for their wellbeing.

Focusing only on preventive care does not address the immediate needs of patients in the hinterland. I think a model which addresses both preventive and curative health care is possible and Nepalis should not be deprived of these essential services at the cost of one over the other.

Gaury S Adhikary

### LHAKPA SHERPA

Nepal needs more Nepalis like Lhakpa Sherpa to create opportunities for fellow Nepalis through social entrepreneurship ('Making paper while the sun shines', #568). Thanks to Nepali Times for starting the new Making a Difference section, bringing this and other uplifting stories about ordinary Nepalis who are making a difference despite overwhelming odds, and not just sitting around complaining. Let me shake your hand, Lhakpa!

Kiran L

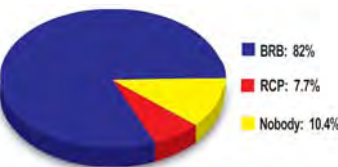
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Weekly Internet Poll # 569

Q. Who will win in Sunday's election?

Total votes: 888



Weekly Internet Poll # 570. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Rate Baburam's chances to succeed





BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

# Peace or ceasefire?

Time to move beyond symbolism to real progress on integration and rehabilitation of ex-guerrillas

In the end, when nothing else worked, the Maoists came up with a proposal for a one-and-half month work schedule on integration in an effort to win support for its prime ministerial candidate. That proposal and a four-point list of populist promises to the Madhesi alliance brought them back into government leadership after 27 months.

Winning the 2008 election was the easy part for the Maoists. The party had to struggle so hard, give so much away, to get into a coalition that it doesn't seem to matter that they lead it. The fun and games are just beginning for Dr Baburam Bhattarai.

One week before the Maoists declared their proposal to complete the integration and rehabilitation of the ex-combatants within a month-and-half, the International Crisis Group (ICG) released its latest report 'Nepal: From Two Armies to One' which discusses the present status of the Nepal Army and the 'PLA' with regard to the commitments made by the state and the ex-rebels about the future of each.

'It is tempting to see integration and rehabilitation as a technical issue, but it is deeply political,' the ICG notes. It stresses the need to ensure a dignified management of the ex-combatants, not necessarily as an acknowledgement of the 'PLA' role in the epochal change, an idea which other parties are against, but as a calculated political gesture for greater aim of transforming the parent party.

Without specifically entering into sensitive issues like the need for social reconciliation and psycho-social support for those



BIKRAM RAI

opting for retirement and rehabilitation, the report recommends flexibility in response with multiple options in order to reduce risks of derailment. It is unfortunate that there is no open debate about the issue and everybody wants the cantonments to be empty as soon as possible at any cost.

However, the ICG's concern about the potential infusion of large compensation amount into the Maoist coffers is well-founded. It calls on donors and the government to design an incentive-based payment in small installments. And although the idea of providing skills development training is a welcome one, the mass exodus of combatants to employment abroad opens a Pandora's box of corruption. It also sends the message that the state can absolve itself from responsibility of ensuring their rehabilitation into society.

The ICG is concerned that commitments about democratization of the Nepal Army to make it more

inclusive and bring it under civilian control are not being discussed enough. It makes a critical observation that the unofficial move by the Nepal Army to come up with an integration modality runs counter to the principle of civilian control.

The report states: 'The NA needs to be made more affordable and

accountable. It is too large and too independent for a democratic state.' It wants Nepal's military and security framework to be reviewed, engaging more civilian expertise.

However, the most interesting bits in the report deal with the decline in political utility of the 'PLA' for the mother party. At a

time when the political parties as well as the international community are worked up about the 19,000 in the cantonments, the report notes: 'Its military importance has diminished steadily since 2006, and the party is not going back to war.'

The ICG's Anagha Neelakantan, says that people who throw up their hands in despair at the peace process fail to see how much progress has been made. "Who would have thought a deal on integration would be so close, differences on constitutional issues narrowed so much, and people from across the political spectrum so welcoming of an ex-guerrilla Prime Minister," she told me this week.

After months of stalemate, there is renewed hope for meaningful engagement among the major stakeholders to bring the peace process on track. The integration and rehabilitation process may very soon enter a decisive phase, which would have a huge symbolic impact on the peace process. But if the bloodiest chapter in the nation's history is reduced to just symbolism, it could well be the prelude to another conflict. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Full text of the ICG report

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*Excerpt from an address last week to the Society of Economic Journalists of Nepal (SEJON). For full transcript of speech: <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/sp-08-24-2011.html>*



SUNIL BAJRACHARYA





# Duty on duties

The hefty taxes we pay for automobiles should be reflected in better roads and highways



MY TWO PAISA  
Paavan Mathema

When the world's cheapest car made its entry in Nepal, custom duties increased its price by seven fold than in India. The premium price vehicle owners pay in Nepal, however, doesn't translate into improved road conditions or traffic management. Motorbike riders find that the crisscrossing skills required for the license trial exam actually come handy in dodging pot holes and weaving past other cars on the road. Even those who can afford the luxury of a luxury sedan can't savour it.

At 238 per cent, Nepal has one of the highest tax rates on automobiles. If this high tax rate intends to discourage automobile import, then it hasn't worked very well. Car sales dipped a bit with the banking crisis, but there is still demand. Car dealers argue that in absence of an effective public transport system, private vehicles are no longer a luxury and the high tax rate cannot be justified if it gives no additional returns.

Last year alone, the government collected over Rs 7 billion from the import duty on automobiles, making up nearly a quarter of the total revenue from taxing imports. In addition, over Rs 3 billion was collected on vehicular taxes and Rs 800 million from driving license fees. Besides these regular charges, the government also earns



BIKRAM RAI

everyday through highway fees, road improvement taxes and fines for traffic rule violations.

However, this year's budget allocated only Rs 2.52 billion in infrastructure development, periodic repair and maintenance of roads. The taxes we pay for our vehicles is bundled together into the national revenue, instead of being channeled towards improving road conditions and traffic management. The allocation is not enough to address the sorry state of the roads, and even the little money that does get spent leaks out in corruption and shoddy construction. So, as vehicle density continues to rise (there are almost 600,000 vehicles in the Valley alone) the roads booby-trapped with holes are choked with traffic. Few new link roads have been added, and the maintenance of existing roads has not been prioritised.

The government needs to direct

its attention towards systematic and scientific traffic management, using the tax collected from the automobile industry. Other line ministries need to work in coordination, so the electricity department doesn't dig up a road that has just been paved by the road department. Better roads and improved traffic management means less traffic jams and monumental savings on fuel and time. It also means less expenditure for vehicle maintenance. If the Japanese could do it on the 9.14 km stretch from Tinkune to Surya Binayak, there is no reason we can't do it elsewhere.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has shown refreshing symbolism by adopting a Mustang as his official vehicle. But what good is that if the roads he is going to drive on will reduce the lifespan of his axles? Bhattarai should direct his next infrastructure minister to show results on the ground. 🇳🇵

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Royale Teflon

Asian Paints has launched Royale with TEFLON™ – a surface protector and an upgraded version of the existing Royale Luxury Emulsion for interior walls. Asian Paints has collaborated with Dupont USA to obtain the license to use Teflon branding in Royale Luxury Emulsion. Says Asian Paints Nepal manager, Budhadiya Mukherjee: "Consumers in Nepal are future oriented and always look for a superior product in the market. With this tieup we have added additional strength to our Royale to make its quality at par with international standard at no extra cost."



### Ericsson in Nepal

Ericsson, tprovider of telecommunications equipment and related services for mobile and fixed network operators, has opened its office in Nepal.

### Mega Awards

Mega Bank has launched the Mega Excellence Awards, starting with the Mega Excellence Award – Sports. The Mega Excellence Awards will be a series of awards given in recognition of exceptional performances in an array of fields from education, sports and social work.

### New Canons

Canon, the world's largest camera maker, has released IXUS 1100 HS, IXUS 230 HS and PowerShot SX 150 IS with new technologies that match the quality of the user's experience. The new products which are now available in the market, have enhanced features such as intelligent IS and greater optical zoom.

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# Life after the living goddess

Two former Kumaris find their space in modern Kathmandu

CAI YUN

Rashmila Shakya is probably one of the best known ex-Kumaris of all time. This is mainly due to the success of her autographical book, *From Goddess to Mortal*, co-authored with Scott Berry in 2005. Walking through her house looking at walls decorated with her own childhood photos, visitors are astounded by the life of a small girl who has gone on to become a goddess, and then to grow up to be a young woman.

“Scott found me through a local photo printing shop where he happened to see a picture of me,” recalls Rashmila. Berry, an anthropologist, remembers photographing her a decade previously when Rashmila was still a Kumari.

“After hearing that I wished to publish my experiences, he volunteered to do the interviews, that is how the book came about,”

Rashmila recalls with a fond smile.

Six years later, Rashmila is the first ex-Kumari with a bachelor’s degree despite being nearly illiterate when she stepped down as Kumari at age 12. “It was difficult,” she confides, “and even after graduation it has been difficult to find a job.” After working for a support group which shelters the urban poor, Lumanti, she is now working on banking software in a computer company.

Rashmila is also continuing with her masters degree in information technology. Asked about whether she is stressed by juggling work and studying at the same time, she easily shrugs it off with a smile: “I still have some personal time, and the knowledge from the masters degree is helping me in my current job.”

Rashmila’s predecessor, Anita Shakya, on the other hand, is a more traditional

ex-Kumari, hardly venturing outside the house. Slightly shy, she says she enjoys cooking and doing household chores for her tightly knit extended family. She has passed Grade 10 and watches tv dramas during her spare time, and is supported by her loving relatives.

“I miss being a Kumari,” Anita’s cheerful niece translates on her aunt’s behalf. “I was treated like a princess and I have fond memories of a carefree childhood and my loving Kumari caretaker family.” Another niece, who now lives in the US, says she thinks Anita may have been slightly more outgoing if she had more childhood friends.

Berry himself remembers Anita in the early 1980s as always stone-faced, as required by tradition. Rashmila, on the other hand, told him that as soon as she donned her naga necklace she felt like she was in “a different world”. Today, the current Kumari smiles all the time.

The traditional belief is that Kumaris should not get married, and Anita’s parents say she is likely to respect that. But, Anita’s elder sister pipes in from across the room: “Or maybe she just hasn’t met her Mr Right.” Everyone bursts into laughter.

Rashmila and Anita know each other well and as former Kumaris are required to visit incumbent living goddesses. The criticism from child rights groups doesn’t seem to bother these two ex-Kumaris who say they treasure the unique opportunity that tradition bestowed upon them and their society.

Says Rashmila: “Being a Kumari allowed me to experience a double life and possess a double identity. I will always cherish that.”

**CYBER KUMARI:** Rashmila Shakya (above) thoroughly enjoyed her reign as the living goddess, but now has more mundane things to attend to as she designs banking software in an IT firm in Kathmandu.

**THEN AND NOW:** Anita Shakya says she was treated like a princess when she was a Kumari, and thinks she is not going to get married.

nepalitimes.com

Rashmila demystifies Kumari myths, by Mallika Aryal # 265

The prime minister and the Kumari, by Scott Berry # 368



# The Kumari



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

She is always dressed in festive red, glittering jewel accessories, long and heavy eye makeup and a striking third eye on her brow. This image appears in guide books on Nepal, postcards, NTB brochures and websites.

As the live representation of the Hindu goddess Durga, the Kumari is by far the most important tourist attraction in Nepal after the mountains. But she is more than just a tourist icon: she is a living embodiment of the Kathmandu Valley Newar culture and its harmonious mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism. It is also an important part of Nepali history because it was on Indra Jatra day more than 250 years ago that the Gorkha conquest arrived in Kathmandu Valley.

This year, Indra Jatra is on 11 September the day the Kumari Chariot procession will be pulled past dignitaries, including the president, at Hanuman Dhoka as it has for centuries. Till then, the faithful of Kathmandu and curious foreigners will throng the Kumari Ghar every day, hoping to get a glimpse of the goddess as she looks down from her ornate window.



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#### COVER

One (or more) Madhes? Madhesi politicians are making their constituency poorer by being their single-minded focus on the power play in Kathmandu

#### ANALYSIS

Bhattarai is Dahal's Ladder Pushpa Kamal Dahal is intent on climbing on his deputy Baburam Bhattarai's shoulders to ensure his own political future

#### EDITORIAL

The Challenges for Dr Bhattarai

#### EYE WITNESS

With the UML's Parsuram Basnet underground, Biratnagar's organized crime world is leaderless

#### REPORT

Village of the Bachelors A village in Dhading has no women for the men to marry because of trafficking





EVENTS



**Mélange Evening**, Manjushree Pradhan and Rock Sitar performing. *2 September, 7pm onwards, Alliance Française, Tripureshwor, 4241163*

**Sri Ganesh**, an exhibition of arts on Ganesh. *Till 7 September, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 5546705*

**Aftermath**, DJ K-World performing. *2 September, Casablanca, Babar Mahal, 4422089*

**Saving Dolma**, monthly lectures. *2 September, 9.30 am, Shanker Hotel, Lazimpat*

**Let's Get Crazy**, live life today and enjoy. *2 September, 7pm onwards, The Rave Lounge, Putalisadak*

**Miss Teen 2011**, Brace yourself for a new beauty queen. *2 September, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi, 4246299*



**Anbug Drive 2011**, Volkswagen Beetle Drive from Kathmandu to Gyantok in Sikkim. *6 September to 13 September, 4222636*

**Eye camp**, eye camp which will focus on curing cataract patients. *3 September, 9am to 2pm, Buddha School, Badegaun, Lalitpur*

**Coping with Grief**, talk session by Swami Avadhutananda. *3 September, 11am, Battisputali, 4471957*



**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Wine Festival**, taste 15 wines from six countries. *Till 15 September, Kilroy's, Thamel, 4250440-41*

**Cycle 6: Life**, nature and wildlife photography by Om Yadav. *Till 30 September, 10am to 5pm, Galleria CUC, Maharajung*

**Vintage Vehicles**, classic display of the oldest cars and bikes in Nepal. *3 September, 10am to 6pm, St. Xavier's School ground, Jawalakhel, 9851043398*

**Click Click Party**, be a celebrity for a day with paparazzi all around you. *3 September, 2pm to 10pm, Entry Rs 500 (with complimentary drink), Casablanca, Babar Mahal Revisited*

**Lyrics from the Junkyard**, junkyard sculptures by Meena Kayastha. *19 August to 9 September, 11am to 6pm, The Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited.*

**Staging of Bukhyacha**, a Nepali adaptation of the Italian play About Face. *Till 3 September, every day except Mondays, 5.30 pm, Arohan Theatre, Gurukul, Old Baneshwor*

**Organic Farming Training**, training on bio intensive farming. *14 August to 4 September, 10am to 4pm, EON farm at Mahankal, Fee: Rs. 4000, 9849685808*

**Opinionated**, a workshop on editorial and opinion writing. *3 to 4 September, 11am to 3pm, Rs 1000/-, apply before 1 September, 9813485716, satya.org*

MUSIC

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**An Evening with Kutumba**, fundraiser for the Namche community health clinic. *3 September, 5.30 pm onwards, Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat*

**Nepfest II**, fledging bands showcase their musical talents. *9 September, 12.30 pm onwards, Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap, 9841721736, 9841277757*

**Funkyfresh**, Live Kathmandu jam with artists like Manas, Lyrics Indy. *3 September, 2pm to 11.30 pm, House of Music*

**Space Cake Break**, performance by new 'space rock' band Space Cake Break. *2 September, 8pm to 11pm, House of Music, Thamel*

DINING



**The Factory**, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover, great food and

drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on their cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*



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



**BBQ Station**, a place for those of you who simply can't do without meat. BBQ Station offers a chance to make your own Barbeque on coal. *Jhamsikhel*

**Tukuche**, if it is authentic Thakali cuisine that you crave. The restaurant offers both indoor and

outdoor sittings. *Tukuche, Uttar Dhoka*

**Jazz Upstairs**, the perfect place to chill down with your friends, listen to good music and have a plate of the best momos ever. *Lazimpat*

**Cinnamon Grill Lounge**, offers delicious food and good music, added bonus- live performance by Ciney Gurung every Saturday. *Jhamsikhel*

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

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

**Upstairs Cafe**, a delicious range of Vietnamese cuisine to sample. *Maharajgunj, near the US embassy*

**Ghangri Café**, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. *Pulchok*

**Chopstix**, savory Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken; it is one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118*

# The Blacksmith

Agora Creations, the film company behind last year's *Trophy Hunting* is set to release its latest production, *The Blacksmith*.

A preview hosted at the Russian Cultural Centre on Friday confirmed Director Gorakh Bista's penchant for not only exploring unconventional storylines, but literally digging out unexpected treasures from remote corners of the country. *The Blacksmith* delves into the recent history of a community of Dalit blacksmiths in Phalamkhani, Parbat, by following them into the iron mines they last worked 70 years ago.



"They are the poorest of the poor now, as you might expect," says Bista of the octogenarian miners he interviewed for the documentary. "The surprising thing is how much better off their community was back then, being the centre of the iron trade before it collapsed." The

question *The Blacksmith* asks of old-timers such as Bhawe Kami as they recreate a day of mining and smelting is: could mining be a viable prospect for the community once more?

Whatever happens to Phalamkhani's mines, *The Blacksmith* is a timely reminder of the pioneering role the blacksmiths of this village and others like it played in modernising the state of Nepal. In *The Blacksmith*, viewers will be transported back to these early days.

*The Blacksmith (30 minutes)*

*Director: Gorakh Bista*

*Producer: Birendra Malla*

*Script: Rabi Thapa & Prem Sharma*

*Narration: Rabin Sharma*



SOMEPLACE ELSE

Stepping into Chikusa Coffee Shop in Thamel is like stopping by a neighborly den in the boroughs, where regulars read the morning rag and kvetch about life, while sipping on large cups of hot, local drip.

The former Japanese café, established in 1998, specialises in 'real coffee', breakfast items and pressed sandwiches—all made to order behind a narrow, diner-like bar straight out of an Edward Hopper painting. Bottles of American maple syrup and extra-large 'Super Dad' mugs line the shelves that yield a homespun charm,



# Chikusa

where all that's missing is a white-topied carver yelling out orders at full bass.

Every plate, prepared in plain sight, is just plain good. No green eggs and ham, the ham and eggs (as you like it) are a savory side that compliments any of the sweet, back-menu treats,

including crepes, waffles and real flapjack pancakes topped with sliced bananas and syrup. The only drawback is that substitutes can't be made for items in the fixed breakfast sets (Chikusa and English), and sides like baked beans and sausages can't be ordered separately.

The sandwiches are pockets of bliss served on thick toast sliced right on the spot. Whether you opt for tuna and ham, tomato and cheese or the egg salad—the variations are endless and made either hot in a cast-iron press, cold or on a half-open sandwich.

"Tired of Nescafe?" The sign hanging outside Chikusa recalls days where the only fix in town came in individual-sized, instant

packs. Thankfully, those dry, dreary days are gone. Chikusa drips local, Nepali beans, freshly ground by the cup, mug or pot. And even its ice cubes are chilled from a batch of brew to prevent a watered-down cold coffee beverage.

In the last decade, an evident coffee culture has emerged in Kathmandu, dominated by franchised pleather seats; whipped, sugared frappes and soundtracks on repeat. Luckily, Chikusa's sign, however dated, reassures us that the real essence of the 'coffee shop' isn't dead. Marco Pollo

*Jog south from the Moroccan Consulate and look for "Real Coffee!" under the Lhasa Guesthouse*

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





# Face recognition



DHANVANTARI  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Apparently the same area of the brain that deals with the memory of directions is also linked with face recognition. Some people cannot remember faces. Obviously, there are degrees of this problem depending on how our brains are wired with face recognition software.

Some of us are completely unable to recognise someone we had dinner with a few evenings ago? But once we are filled in on the conversation we had we are able to recognise the person.

My wife, who is very observant has been disappointed with me several times on these Kathmandu streets when I have driven past her (with my mind somewhere else) without any signs of recognition. Clearly I have come to realize that together with my poor memory of directions and perhaps a compromised face recognition ability, I suffer from a mild prosopagnosia,



which is also defined as facial blindness.

Prosopagnosia may also explain the situation when a Nepali baby brought up in his own Nepali environment has a hard time recognizing individual Caucasian faces because they may all, relatively speaking, “look the same” and vice versa. While studying medicine in Patiala in India, for me all Sardarjis with their beards and turbans initially looked alike.

In these days of MRI scanners, people with overt prosopagnosia clearly show lesions on the underside of the temporal cortex of

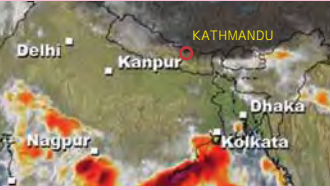
the brain when scanned. They say that the difference between the best face recognizers and the worst amongst the prosopagnosics is so pronounced that it is comparable to that between people with an IQ of 150 and those with an IQ of 50. But as with any bell curve, the vast majority are in the middle.

Severe, debilitating prosopagnosia is estimated to affect two percent of the population in the US. But relatively little thought is given to this problem compared to say dyslexia (remember Taree Zameen Par?). Teachers and others are increasingly aware of the special difficulties (and often the special gifts) that dyslexic children may have. But for people with severe face blindness, for now, there is not much else to do but share this problem with others who may suffer from this and rely on your ingenuity to get by in daily living. The famous British anthropologist Jane Goodall who suffers from this problem says she would be better able to recognise her individual chimpanzees if she did not have mild prosopagnosia.



WEEKEND WEATHER  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

First signs over Afghanistan of the southward drift of the stratospheric jetstream which is of more than academic interest to us because this is what pushes back the monsoon. However, there is an enormous low pressure circulation building up over Orissa as seen in this colour-enhanced satellite radar composite. This system is moving rapidly northwestwards, and could bring thunderstorms and heavy precipitation to central and eastern Nepal into the weekend. It will come down in short sharp bursts with thunder and lightning. This could be the last big rain before the monsoon retreats by late next week.



FRI	SAT	SUN
28-16	28-16	29-17



BIKRAM RAI

**NEW QUEEN:** Miss Nepal Malina Joshi with runner ups Anupama Aura Gurung and Sarina Maskey at the crowning on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**RIDE TO SCHOOL:** Children being ferried to school on a tricycle in Lahan Bajar, Sunday



BIKRAM RAI

**DREAM HOUSE:** Children admire a model of a housing community at the Real Estate Expo in Bhrikuti Mandap, Saturday.

14

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# From JNU to Kathmandu

Baburam Bhattarai: “We were too ambitious...while India underestimated our strength.”



CHALO DILLI  
Jyoti Malhotra

NEW DELHI -- At the Poorvanchal Hostel in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in the late-1970s, Baburam Bhattarai was a quiet student, working on his PhD. Older JNU-ites remember Poorvanchal as being a far-flung residence on the enormous campus, built to people the place, like an outpost of sorts. It soon coloured itself red, with the Students's Federation of India, the student wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), staking claim.

Remember this was the post-Emergency period in India's history, when the Janata Party was slowly destroying the dream, before Indira Gandhi made her comeback in 1980. All this much, much before Manmohan Singh tempted India's radical elite into forgetting that a certain revolution, both with or without the barrel of the gun, could transform India into a more egalitarian country, besides cushioning its own nest.

For the most part, Poorvanchal's radicals have abandoned the dream. Which is why Baburam Bhattarai must be complimented for staying with it, as must Sitaram Yechury and top CPM leader, Prakash Karat. What did it mean for these educated, intelligent men and women to refuse the attractions of a

multi-national corporation or even a UN-style job, we will never know.

So here's yet another whimsical twist in the sub-continent's history: Bhattarai has become Nepal's fifth prime minister in four years and the first to send him greeting was a former teacher, Manmohan Singh. A free market reformer sends a dyed-in-red revolutionary warmest greetings, and a greater irony considering how Singh leads a government that is taking a hard line on India's own Maoists.

But even in Nepal, the enthusiasm for revolution has waned. Kathmandu, in fact, will always be one up on Delhi because it dared to push for a non-violent people's movement in 2006. Delhi can only rescue itself by hoping history will remember the consequential role it played in November 2005 when it brokered the 12-point agreement between the Maoists and an alliance of seven democratic parties, thereby allowing comrades like Bhattarai to come above ground and go for a ceasefire.

But what of the future? Bhattarai became prime minister the same week as another JNU alumni, Jayant Prasad, arrived in Kathmandu to be India's new ambassador to Nepal. He feels the pulse, not only because his father, Bimal Prasad, was India's first ambassador to Nepal after a previous people's movement of 1990. Back in Delhi, the joint secretary dealing with Nepal affairs



RAJESH GURUNG

FELLOW JNUites: PM Baburam Bhattarai shakes hands with New Indian envoy to Nepal Jayant Prasad

at the External Affairs Ministry, always a crucial man in the way the Indian system functions, is Akhilesh Mishra. He also knows Nepal well because he served in Kathmandu in the late 1990s, during what is sometimes called the “golden period” under I K Gujral's prime ministership.

Meanwhile, check out Bhattarai's interview to some Indian journalists in late May, to give us a glimpse of what he thinks about the India-Nepal relationship. Asked by

the Business Standard where things went wrong in India-Nepal relations, Bhattarai replied: “The problem lies with both of us...we were too ambitious, we thought we could do things on our own, while India underestimated our strength.”

There's another gem that could have been written by the Indian prime minister, considering it echoes a favourite thought about how we can choose our friends and enemies, but not our neighbours. Asked what he thought of the

Indian establishment, Bhattarai answered: “We can't change our neighbour. We have to depend on India, both economically and geographically. There is now some tacit understanding within our party in this regard.”

Prophetic words, or simply lip-syncing in front of Indian journalists, hoping they are naïve enough to believe him? I would bet on the former. Bhattarai knows that too much water has flowed down the Koshi and that in many ways, his prime ministership constitutes the last chance to improve living conditions at home. After all, isn't that the promise on which the Maoists came to power?

He also knows that he can't do this without India's help, especially since India is the roaring economic engine in the neighbourhood (Beijing is too far). Meanwhile, Jayant Prasad will likely keep his head down and volunteer India's help in doing whatever Nepal wants: whether in writing the constitution, in the integration of Maoist fighters into the Nepal army, in rehabilitating those who cannot be integrated, helping build multi-purpose projects on Nepal's many rivers.

It's a special relationship, and this is a fragile moment. Delhi seems to understand that, and will work with both the Maoists as well as a “constructive” NC-UML opposition in Nepal. The feeling here is that it is up to Nepalis to write Nepal's destiny, and for the moment Baburam Bhattarai seems very much a part of it. 🇳🇵

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# Getting down to business



## Prime Minister Bhattarai may soon have a lot less to smile about

DEWAN RAI

In its desperation to get to power, the Maoists made huge compromises in the last week’s parliament election for a new prime minister. It offered half the ministries to the Madhesi alliance to ensure the victory of its candidate, Baburam Bhattarai. He won comfortably with a margin of 105 votes.

The popular move to ride on a Mustang was a perfect score, and confirmed to a public largely positive about the new prime minister’s intellect and honesty. However, any prolonged delay in giving shape to the cabinet will invite criticism at a time when people are desperate to see immediate changes.

The 4-point deal, signed at the eleventh hour with the Madhesi alliance, once again exposes the fact that leaders enter into agreements without adequate homework, or perhaps with the deliberate intention of never keeping their promises.

Adviser to Baburam Bhattarai and politburo member, Devendra Poudel, says the media should not have a knee-jerk reaction to compromises in coalition agreements. “there is a lot of give and take, and there are many factors that come into play,” Poudel told us on Wednesday.

Maoist lawmaker Jaypuri Gharti had refused to join the last government demanding 33 percent representation for the women, sparking off a debate in the party which ultimately led different factions to unite against party chairman’s unilateral decision. Bhattarai seems to have learn a lesson from that, and is striving to balance gender, ethnicity, geographic regions as well as the political leanings of cabinet members.

But there are other

problems for Bhattarai. The Maoist ministers who joined the last government at the later stage could stay in their post for only 13 days, and some of them have expressed their desire to stay on. However, having doled out half the cabinet posts (many of them “powerful” ones) to his Madhesi partners there aren’t too many left for his own party aspirants.

And then there are the member of what has come to be known as the “Dhobighat Cluster”, the hardliners from the Kiran faction that met in Patan last month to clip party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s wings. For Bhattarai, it’s payback time to them too, especially senior leaders who have not been in power before.

The Madhesi alliance is also engaged in finalising the list of those that will join the government. “We have differences within the alliance on issues, not over the portfolios,” explains Raj Kishor Yadav, co-chairperson of Madhesi People’s Rights

Forum (Republican), adding optimistically that the cabinet will take final shape very soon.

Bhattarai met NC president Sushil Koirala on Tuesday in a bid to bring the NC onboard. Koirala is reported to have advised the PM to make a significant progress in the peace process and implement the past agreement within the promised 45 days before NC could consider joining the government.

“Personally, we don’t have any doubts about Bhattarai’s capability to deliver, but we are not sure if his party will cooperate,” says Upadhya. But Maoist leader Paudel told Nepali Times Bhattarai has the full support of his party. “This time, the party unanimously passed two things: Bhattarai’s candidacy and the issue of integration,” he says. “We are very serious about the peace process.”

The only differences the Maoists and NC have is about integration, he added, it is not about numbers but of

modality. The Maoists argue for a “dignified integration” which means recruiting their fighters as full soldiers, while NC says they can not be taken as regular NA soldiers.

“Dignified integration means recruiting our fighters as full-fledged NA soldiers,” Poudel says. NA has already recruited as many number of soldiers in five years of peace process as the numbers the Maoists have been demanding to be integrated.

The NC also has severe reservations about the four-point agreement, particularly the provision for mass amnesty to those accused of excesses during the conflict and the Madhes movement.

But, Upadhay adds: “Politics is full of possibilities, if significant progress is made in the peace process in 45 days, it will create an environment for the NC to join the government.”

He says NC will be supportive to the government even if it is in the opposition and will evaluate its work on the basis of merit. 🇳🇵

### THE DOCTOR'S CHECKLIST

Prime Minister Bhattarai has his work cut out. Here is his check list in order of priority:

1. Complete the cabinet
2. Complete peace process in 45 days as promised
3. Keep NC and UML happy so they don't throw spanner in works
4. Hand over keys as a symbolic step. But regrouping and compromises on integration will be more difficult to push through
5. Keep one eye on Chairman Dahal, so he doesn't wreck things
6. Back track on amnesty provision on 4-point deal, this will be a major stumbling block with opposition and international community
7. Constitution, take the bull by the horns on ethnic federalism and state structure
8. Show the presence of the state, tackle law and order
9. Improve investment climate, tame unions
10. Hunker down for 18-hour power cuts this winter



ALL PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA





# Vacancy Announcement

WWF Nepal, the global conservation organization leading international efforts *for a living planet* seeks applications from qualified Nepali candidates for the following **full-time positions for a five-year USAID-funded project**. If you are an achiever and willing to work with a diverse team in a multicultural environment with commitment and passion for what you believe in, you are highly encouraged to apply.

## 1. COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

**Major Responsibilities:** The Communications Officer will be responsible for communicating success stories, managing brand image and overseeing the qualitative aspects of all outreach materials including media management.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree, preferably in mass communications or a related field. IT knowledge especially the use of Photoshop and other designing/web designing tools required. Candidate must have at least three years of relevant experience in a similar position or journalism/publications/communication works.

## 2. GRANTS & COMPLIANCE OFFICER

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Program Administrator, s/he will be responsible for the overseeing overall grants, consultancy and contracts. S/he will also be responsible for assisting the Program Administrator in carrying out financial functions.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Commerce or a related field with at least three years of relevant experience in a similar position.

## 3. MONITORING & EVALUATION ASSISTANT - 3 (Based in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan)

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, s/he will be primarily responsible for maintaining and updating the database system and will assist in implementation of monitoring framework and activities of the project.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Environment Management or a related field with at least three years of work experience in monitoring and database management. Knowledge and use of statistical tools is required.

## 4. F&A Officer (Based in Pokhara)

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Project Manager, the F&A Officer will carry out all project accounting and administration duties including day to day office management, financial reporting and monthly bank reconciliation.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's Degree in Management and knowledge on financial accounting and administration with at least three years of relevant experience. Experience in using TALLY software will be an added advantage.

## 5. DRIVERS - 2 (Based in Kathmandu and Pokhara)

**Major Responsibilities:** The Driver will manage the daily maintenance and servicing of office vehicles and assist with designated administrative duties in the office.

**Qualifications:** Middle school or higher education or SLC with at least three years of relevant experience in an International Organization including field experience. Must be competent in safe driving techniques with high manual dexterity, combined with auto maintenance skills. Knowledge of English language will be an added advantage.

## 6. MESSENGERS - 2 (Based in Kathmandu and Pokhara)

**Major Responsibilities:** The messenger will ensure good maintenance of the office at all times. S/he will ensure the timely delivery and collection of mail documents and banking transactions. S/he will also be responsible for submitting visa applications of staff to embassies and collection of passports.

**Qualifications:** Middle school or higher education or SLC with at least three years of relevant experience in an International Organization. Willingness to tackle a wide variety of tasks. Helpful, respectful, honest and a polite attitude are essential. Some technical skills on minor repair works will be an advantage. Knowledge of English language will be an added advantage.

## RE-ADVERTISEMENT

WWF Nepal also seeks applications from qualified Nepali candidates for the following **full-time positions**.

## 1. LANDSCAPE COORDINATOR - MOUNTAINS

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Conservation Program Director, s/he will be responsible for overall planning, implementation, administering, monitoring and reporting on programs and projects. As an overall lead for the landscape program, s/he will provide visioning and leadership with strategic inputs for effective program delivery and outcomes. S/he will actively assist the Conservation Program Director in developing and increasing partnerships and fundraising.

**Qualifications:** Master's Degree in Natural Resources Management, Environmental Science or a related field. Technically proficient and qualified in the field of conservation and natural resources management including a readiness to travel frequently to the project areas. At least eight years of relevant professional experience in program management and leading implementation of programs and projects. Work experience in mountain programs will be an added advantage.

## 2. PROGRAM OFFICER – CLIMATE CHANGE & FRESHWATER

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Program Manager–Climate Change, Energy & Freshwater, s/he will be primarily responsible for the planning and implementation of projects and activities of the Climate Change and Freshwater program. S/he will also be responsible for developing new concepts and ideas on Climate Change and Freshwater issues to facilitate fundraising activities.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Environment Management or a related field with at least three years of field experience in implementing and managing programs/projects with extensive knowledge and work experience on climate change and freshwater. Experience in wetland, river basin management and climate change issues is preferred.

## 3. PROGRAM OFFICER

**Major Responsibilities:** The Program Officer will be responsible for managing and administering WWF Nepal's projects and will be involved in planning, implementation, coordination and communication with partners, stakeholders and donors. This position will require frequent field visits to interact with project staff and communities to get firsthand information and will also involve developing concept and proposals.

**Qualifications:** Bachelors in NRM, Environmental Science or a related field is required with at least three years of experience in development of concepts and proposals and some fundraising experience. Excellent communication skills that include technical writing skills is a requirement for this position.

## 4. ACCOUNTS OFFICER

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Financial Controller, s/he will implement day-to-day accounting and financial functions in accordance with WWF policies and procedures.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Commerce or an MBA with at least three years of experience in a similar position. This position requires attention to detail, the ability to keep accurate financial records and the ability to effectively prioritize and work accurately under time constraints.

## 5. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Program Administrator, s/he will assist in all program administration duties and support the implementation of day-to-day financial and administrative functions including management of grants and agreements.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Commerce or a related field with at least three years of experience in a similar position.

## 6. COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING ASSOCIATE

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of Communications & Marketing Manager, s/he will be responsible for writing, editing and overseeing the design of print and online materials such as case studies, publications and website as well as maintaining the photo library. S/he will be actively involved in WWF's business and industry engagement program and also provide support in organizing events and awareness campaigns.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelors degree, preferably in mass communications or a related field. Good photography skills will be an added advantage. Candidate must have at least three years of outstanding experience in journalism/communications/marketing.

## 7. FRONT OFFICE ASSISTANT/RECEPTIONIST

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Administrative Officer, s/he will perform all secretarial services including handling the reception, telephone inquiries, correspondence management and assisting in other administrative services.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's degree in Business Studies or a relevant field with at least three years of experience in a similar position.

## 8. PROJECT CO- MANAGER (Based in Terai)

**Major Responsibilities:** The Project Co-Manager will be responsible for the implementation of overall project activities including coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring. S/he will work in close coordination with all major partners and other stakeholders from local to central levels to ensure maximum project output. S/he will keep abreast of changing socio-political environment and respond strategically.

**Qualifications:** Master's degree in NRM, Environmental Science or a related field is required with at least six years of experience in experience in implementation of integrated conservation and development projects.

## 9. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION OFFICER (Based in Terai)

**Major Responsibilities:** Under the direct supervision of the Project Co-Manager, the F&A Officer will carry out all project accounting and administration duties including day to day office management, financial reporting and monthly bank reconciliation.

**Qualifications:** A Bachelor's Degree in Commerce or Accounts or a related field and knowledge on financial accounting and administration with at least three years of relevant experience. Working with TALLY software will be an added advantage.

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# Anti-amnesty



BIKRAM RAI

Nagarik, 31 August

नागरिक

The International Day of the Disappeared was marked in the capital with some 40 relatives of people disappeared during the armed conflict

coming together to demand truth and justice. Debisara Oli from Bardiya fainted while watching a clip at the National Human Rights Commission of the exhumation of a body. Her husband is among at least 1,400 relatives of people who

are still listed as missing five years after the war ended. National Network of Families of the Disappeared & Missing Nepal (NEFAD) was established by the relatives of those who were disappeared by either sides during the armed conflict. It organised

a series of interactions and briefings for three days in the capital for people like Debisara so that their plight is heard by the government. Many relatives expressed their dissatisfaction over the lack of progress on cases of their disappeared relatives. They raised a collective voice against collective amnesty provision in the agreement between the Maoists and the Madhesi alliance as well as the watered down content of the bill on disappearances. They were also critical of a Maoist lawmaker who publicly spoke out against relatives of victims raising their voices for justice, and for making a distinction between those disappeared by the state and those disappeared by their party. “If collective amnesty is granted then it will be our turn to revolt,” said Ratna Bahadur Ghimire from Jhapa whose 19-year-old son was disappeared by the police in Biratnagar eight years

ago. “All the relatives of the disappeared people will come together to oppose any pardon for those responsible for war crimes.” The co-ordinator of NEFAD, Ram Kumar Bhandari also had his father disappeared by the army. “It is only the victims who can forgive, or decide whom to forgive,” he said, “it is not up to the victimisers to decide on pardon.” Bhandari said if left unaddressed, the grief of the relatives of the disappeared could turn to revenge. At one interaction on Tuesday Amnesty Nepal’s director Rameshwor Nepal accused the Maoists were not doing enough for the victims. He said, “They are telling victims’ families, we got rid of the king, that is your sacrifice, that is your justice. This is just irresponsible and unacceptable.”

# Tourism for education

Manoj Adhikari in Nagarik, 29 August

नागरिक

POKHARA--Colleges and schools in Pokhara have benefited from the fees tourists pay to visit scenic spots. In what could be a model for nationwide budgeting, visitors’ fees earn schools millions a year. This fund is used to provide scholarships to needy students and pay for part of their operational cost. Chhorepatan High School has been managing Devi’s Falls for 30 years. Fifteen hundred students from nursery to grade 10 are studying free of cost. Students in grade 11 and 12 have to pay minimal fee. Principal Laxman Thapa says all this is paid with the

Rs 5 million that the school earned from entrance fee to the Devi’s falls. It also pays salaries of 62 teachers. Rs 2 million is set aside for the upkeep of the falls area itself. The management committee also rents out shops to curio vendors and earns another Rs 1.8 million a year. Learning from this model at Devi’s Falls, Gupteshwor Mahdev Campus earns Rs 10 million a year from entrance fees to Gupteshwor cave. Pokhara’s other tourist attractions, Mahendra and Chamere caves, have helped Bindhyavasini High School build infrastructure and provide free education.

# Mobile crime

Nepal Samacharpatra, 28 August

समाचारपत्र

POKHARA--With the spread in mobile services throughout the country, there has been a surge in crime as well. Police blame the rise in criminal activities on the careless distribution of SIM cards, especially in the incidence of abductions and kidnappings. Tul Bahadur Karki AIG in Kaski said, “With half a dozen SIM card carrying different names and different locations, it is very easy for criminals to threaten or harm people and still escape.” He says the ease with which customers can register for SIM cards from various companies under different identities is primarily to blame. A simple student ID suffices to register for SIM cards, which means that with fake names and contact numbers, criminals can easily cover their tracks. Karki is planning to step up vigilance against illegal SIM card registrations.

# Mustang symbolism

Editorial in Naya Patrika, 31 August

नयाँ पत्रिका

There have been many reactions following the newly appointed Prime Minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai’s decision to travel in Mustang, the only four wheel drive vehicle assembled in Nepal. People thronged the streets from the president’s office to Singha Darbar to see the new prime minister in Mustang. Some called it cheap publicity and some took it as a gesture encouraging local products. Despite the criticism, Prime Minister Bhattarai’s decision signals towards taking the country’s economy on a self reliant path. Bhattarai, during his tenure as the finance minister in 2008-9 was also strongly focussed on making the Nepali economy self-reliant through economic programs inclined towards socialism. Even though those programs were discontinued by successive governments, his efforts left a mark. Although the car used by the prime minister is assembled in Nepal,



all its parts are made abroad. His decision to travel in a locally made vehicle like the Mustang is praise worthy. But the environment to manufacture vehicles locally in Nepal cannot be created easily. It requires a long term commitment to economic independence. For this, Dr. Bhattarai needs to take concrete steps that will be given continuity even in the future. The question however remains whether or not the vehicle used by the PM will be the ‘state car’. It is yet to be gauged if the safety features of Mustang are adequate for the head of government’s security.



Letters:Public Expectation

कान्तिपुर

Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 31 August

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ NC is in a wait and watch mode. If the Maoist led government is able to complete the integration and rehabilitation process in 45 days, we will join their government. ”

NC leader Deep Kumar Upadhyay





# JOYRIDE

The Prime Minister has set an example by going local, but will he now invest some of the money collected from auto taxes into infrastructure?

The roads in Kathmandu may have reached saturation point, there may be periodic fuel shortages, but all that doesn't seem to deter people from investing in cars.

Nepal's roads and highways have vehicles from all over the world, even Nepali made Mustangs and Safa Tempos, jostling for space with motorcycles, bicycles, rickshaws, push carts, cattle, dogs and monkeys.

## NADA Auto Show 2011

"The fact that so many automobile brands have been able to establish themselves here says a lot about the market," says Deepak Agrawal of Morang Auto Works, which distributes Skoda. "Owning a vehicle used to be a luxury, but now

it has become a necessity."

Indeed, the customer profile for cars is no longer limited to the rich and newly rich. Customers are as diverse as the models available.

The positive sales graph for entry-level cars indicates that many motorcycle owners are moving up the market. And those who already own a car are looking for new models. Competition is fierce, so it's a buyer's market in terms of choice of quality,

features, style, and price. Car dealers are looking to sweeten deals by providing good after-sale service, including through warranties, bank loans, free servicing and exchange facilities.

It fact, it was easy loans from banks and finance companies that created the boom in the auto market five years ago. However, the banking crisis and the general

slowdown in the economy has affected sales.

"But the last few months have been a bit slow," admits Bardan Basnet of Agni Incorporated that distributes Mahindra. "The liquidity crunch hit not just the financial market but other industries like us who are dependent on it."

But with Dasain around the corner, dealers are hoping that the market will pick up. "Sales has been slow," says Rupesh Sharma Bhatta of Laxmi Intercontinental that sells Hyundai. "But we can expect the market to expand."

An indication of this faith in the market is an eagerness to bring in new models. "We recognise the potential of the market," says Alok Joshi of Batas Brothers Motos, which recently relaunched Fiat in Nepal. "We are not short-term players and understand that as soon as the political and financial environments improve, the market will pick up."

The automobile industry contributes 25 per cent of Nepal's import duty revenues to the state's coffers because of the staggering 238 per cent tax on vehicles which is comparable to Singapore. Considering the demand for automobiles, the expansion of Nepal's road network, this is not likely to go down.

Says Honda's distributor for Nepal and the head of NADA, Saurabh Jyoti: "What we want is for these duties to translate into infrastructure development, people will buy but the roads have to be expanded and improved to sustain the growth in the number of vehicles." (See interview, p19)

Paavan Mathema



BIKRAM RAI



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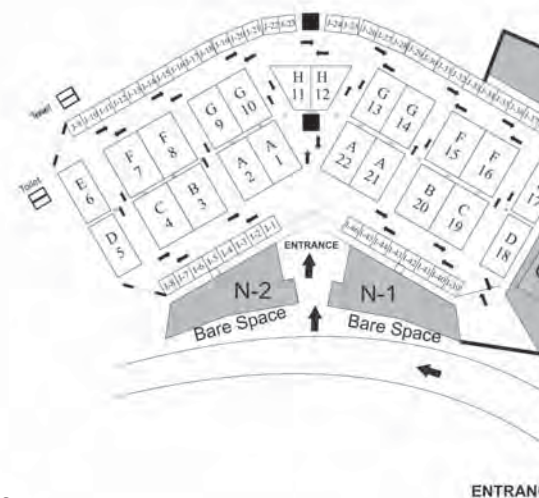
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## AUTO SPECIAL

**D**IG Ganesh Raj Rai has just taken over as the capital's traffic police, and realises that he is damned if he does and damned if he doesn't.

The number of vehicles on the roads has increased 20 fold in the past 15 years, but the road network has remained more or less the same. Whatever Rai does, there is no way he can improve things dramatically unless some crucial link roads are added.

"Whatever we do will be piecemeal," Rai admitted



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# ...and what about the roads?

to *Nepali Times* in his office at the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division. "How long can we try to cope just by

blowing a whistle?"

Rai also blames a lack of investment in advanced traffic management, poor

traffic discipline on the part of drivers and pedestrians and lack of traffic police. "It's a miracle traffic isn't much

worse than it already is," he adds.

Rai says it all boils down to resources. "Adding manpower needs money, new traffic lights need money, adding roads and widening arteries need money."

The capital's roads are managed by, among others, the Department of Roads for repairs, the Department of Transport Management to register and regulate vehicles, the Traffic Police to supervise and enforce traffic regulations, the Ministry of Environment for monitoring air quality and the Metropolitan City has major stake in all this.

"There is lack of coordination and they

## NADA Auto Show 2011

don't cooperate in traffic management," Rai says, pinpointing the real issue. The number of motorcycles registered in the valley has reached 500,000. To manage the traffic of about 1 million vehicles manually, his department has only 1,000 traffic police. "We need to at least the double the number," he explains.

The general sense of impunity also affects road users, who are not afraid to break the rules. Existing regulations need to be tightened and enforced. "Our rules we made decades ago, they are all obsolete," he adds.

A proposed new traffic bill is languishing in parliament because of other priorities. "I don't know why the government is so indifferent to the traffic problem," Rai says with visible anguish. "it affects everyone from the pedestrian to the president, they should all be trying to help out."

Dewan Rai

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# “Re-invest auto tax on improving infrastructure”

## AUTO SPECIAL

Saurabh Jyoti, Chairman of The Nepal Automobile Dealer's Association and director of Syakar Company, talks to *Nepali Times* about the automobile market scenario, ahead of the NADA Auto Show next week.



**Nepali Times:** After the downturn earlier this year, are automobile sales picking up again?

**Saurabh Jyoti:** The market is in recession and is at the lowest it has been in perhaps a decade. Car sales have drastically dipped by 30 per cent. The pre-Dasain excitement is yet to pick up.

**What are the main reasons for this slowdown?**

The foremost reason is negligence on the part of the government towards the auto industry. Road transportation

is difficult, with interest rates going as high as 18 per cent. The high price and lack of finance have made consumers cautious and skeptical.

**So what role is NADA playing to jumpstart sales?**

NADA has been working with government officials on the new transport policy and emission law. We have been pushing for 15 per cent reduction in the excise duty. People say that there are already too many cars on the road, but the problem is that the contribution of these vehicles to the national revenue is not being invested to expand and maintain the road network.

**Now that we see the prime minister riding a Nepal-assembled vehicle, are we ready to move from solely retail to a manufacturing auto market as well?**

An auto plant requires huge investment. If the government provides a conducive and secure environment, then people will be willing to put in their money. More immediately, the sales volume of motorcycles we have can justify opening a local assembly plant.

## NADA Auto Show 2011

is the engine of this country's growth, it is the only option. Yet, the tax rates for vehicles in this country are among the highest in the world. Car dealers need to pay the road tax even before they sell the vehicle. But we see scant proof that all these taxes are being re-invested in infrastructure. In fact the opposite the true, the existing roads are falling apart. Secondly, the availability of auto loans has become



# pulsar

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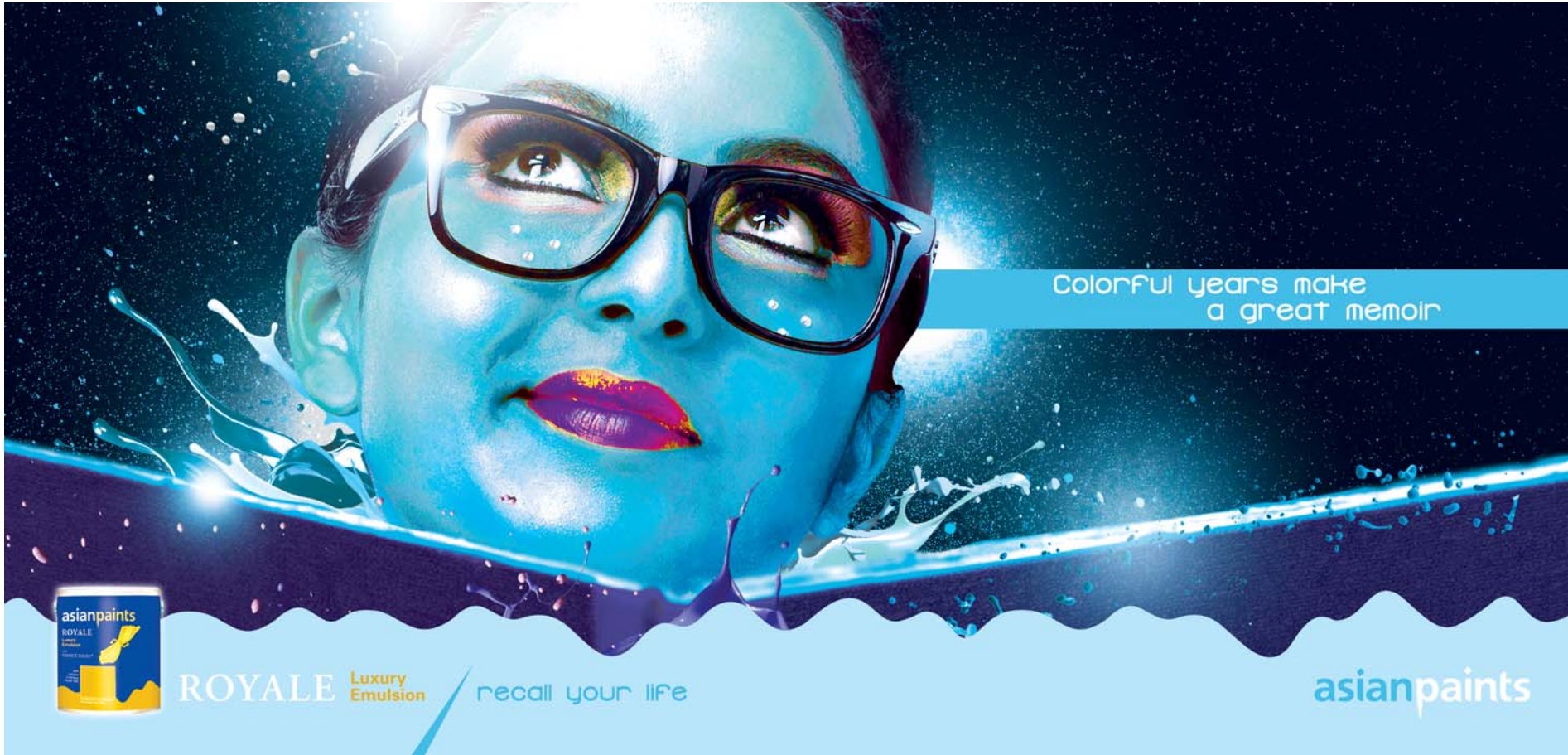
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# Get on with it, Tonga

Don't believe for a moment that a consensus government is not possible. After all, there are districts where the Kangresis, Baddies, Eh-maleys and Madhesis are all working together in total harmony. In Biratnagar, the YCL, YF and Tarai militants all work together in extortion and protection rackets and divide up the spoils. Why can't this be replicated in the national govt?

ॐ

The prime minister's decision to induct a Made in Nepal jeep as his official bahn has put other ministers, former prime ministers, and bureau-cats under the scanner. Ministers for whom carnapping SUVs has been SOP are in the horns of a dilemma. The list of ex-prime ministers and ministers who have purloined NEA vehicles after they left office is so long that you begin to understand why the state electricity utility is running up a loss of 30 billion rupees. SBD gave himself a Pajero when he stepped down in 2004, which is fitting because he was the guy who used to distribute Pajeros to buy off MPs in the 1990s. But not only did he never return that car he got his wife one too in a take-one-and-get-another-one-free deal. Not to be outdone, Great

Leader Chairman Awesome also took home his official Landcruiser, and then when it got too embarrassing had the Makunay Sarkar buy it for him for two karods. JNK got so attached to the 4WD he appropriated from the Chamelia Hydroelectric Project that he rode while in office and has decided to keep. NEA says there are now more than 70 Prados, Nissan Trails, Pajeros in the custody of former govt officials. Other offenders include successive home ministers, including Bhim Royal, Leftist God Bum Dev, Comrade KP and even minister-at-large-without-portfolio-whichever-govt-is-in-power, Amresh Bhaiya.

After Gokarna Bista went home in a cab and Babuji started going around in a Mustang, there is strong moral pressure on some ministerial aspirants wanting govt posts. After all, they agreed to back the Com Laldhoj for the perks of office. "If there is no Prado, what's the point? I'd rather ride a mule," Com Deb is said to have muttered as he withdrew from the race to be finance minister. Comrades in the Tamalopa have also decided that if they have to go around in a Mustang, they'd rather stay out of govt for now. Just to reduce

the attraction of being in the cabinet and to make it easier for himself to cobble together a smaller cabinet, BRB should announce the following official vehicles for new ministers:

- Hridesh Tripathi:** Bullock Cart
- Rajendra Mahato:** Buffalo Cart
- Upadro Yadav:** Donkey Cart
- Jayaprakash Prasad Gupta:** Tanga
- Narayan Kaji Shrestha:** Rickshaw
- CP Gajurel:** Raleigh Bicycle
- Post Budder Bogati:** Safa Tempo
- Horrible Gajurel:** Bullet

ॐ

It is becoming clearer by the day why the Madhesis and the Dhobighaut Cluster decided to back the govt. The main bone of contention is not really about portfolios, it's more about who gets to be Deputy Prime Minister. For example, CP doesn't want JP to be a more senior deputy prime minister than him, Kaji Naran Kamred doesn't want to be junior to Hridesh, and none of the above want Upadro Comrade in. There are so many aspirants for the post that it looks set to be a cabinet with more deputy prime ministers than ministers. To break the deadlock, the Ass would like to make a humble

suggestion, designate different categories of deputy prime ministers:

- Deputy Prime Minister-in-Chief
- Assistant Chief Deputy Prime Minister
- Associate Deputy Prime Minister
- Senior Assistant Deputy Prime Minister
- Joint Deputy Prime Minister
- Senior Assistant Joint Deputy Chief Prime Minister

This way everyone gets a share of the pie.

ॐ

The mule's mole in the PMO says so far Dr Battery has received congratulatory emails with docx attachments from India, US, China, Japan and France (in that order). What's keeping the rest? Nepal has diplo relations with 178 countries in the world, and there are still 173 countries that haven't yet bothered to felicitate our new doctor prime minister. Get on with it, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, and St Kitts and Nevis.

ॐ

The government has banned all official cocktail and cutlet parties in five-star hotels with immediate effect. Guess official functions with booze will now have to be held in four-star hotels.





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