

# NEPALI Times

#581

2 - 8 December 2011

16 pages

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# AWESOME CHANCE

When the history of the wasted years after the May 2008 elections is written, it will not be kind on Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The heavily-garlanded man who stood up on the steps of the Convention Centre and declared that his party’s victory was “a triumph of the Nepali people, and a triumph for peace” could have seized the future. He could have been a statesman to steer this country’s destiny, but instead of being a leader of all Nepalis he just behaved like a party boss.

Prachanda’s slide started the day he reached that peak four years ago, with vacillation and ambivalence on the peace process, manipulation behind enemy lines of the fickle and venal leaders of the NC and UML, back-stabbing of Girija Koirala to prevent him from becoming Nepal’s first president, his personal ambition, the fork tongue and constant lying, and his corrosive envy of Baburam Bhattarai. He squandered his party’s mandate, wasted his charisma so that the leadership qualities and oratorical skills that had stood him in good stead during the conflict lost their edge.

If he had only been able to rise above it all, used his popularity to prioritise the national interest to show domestic and international players that he could be trusted as a guarantor of stability, perhaps the history of the past four years would have turned out

differently. When he found his path blocked by the determination of the Indian establishment to prevent him from getting anywhere near power, he sold his soul to be anointed again. It didn’t work. Within his own party, he is now reviled by the hardliners, and distrusted by the establishment faction. His clout among the NC, UML and Madhesi parties has diminished after he showed himself to be willing to align himself with even monarchists to retain a foothold.

But such is the force of the man’s personality,

and the fear that the word ‘Prachanda’ still evokes, that he can still make or break the peace and constitution project. The party which he has headed for 25 years still carries the swing vote to block, delay or finally bring closure to the political transition so this country can move ahead.

The Constituent Assembly this week unanimously voted itself another, and last, extension. If the constitution is still not written by 30 May 2012, we are in deep trouble. And the responsibility for that failure will lie with the Maoist party, and particularly Chairman Dahal. After all, he has shown half-hearted commitment to concluding the process because of a combination of internal party pressure, a desire to keep his army in the camps as a bargaining chip, and a hardly-concealed obsession to be in the driving seat so he can take the credit for ending the peace process.

A lot of what happens in the next six months will depend on how much leeway the Baidya faction gives Dahal, how much they will be tempted to brandish the ethnic card to counter Dahal.

Despite past mistakes, Pushpa Kamal Dahal is still the lynchpin for the constitution, here is his chance to belatedly show statesmanship and to rise above personal and partisan ambition to steer the country towards democracy and stability.



BIKRAM RAI

## ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

### DIVIDED WE STAND

‘At negotiations with other parties the Maoists have exploited the hardline pressure for concessions they would perhaps not get.’ says Anurag Acharya in ‘Divided we stand’ (#580). For the past year people have been pointing out that there are no real intra-party conflicts or differences within the Maoists, yet you choose to believe such rubbish. How long will it take for you to realise that this is all just a drama? Clearly, the Maoists have succeeded in fooling most people most of the time.

Soni

- More than an analysis of the current situation, I find that Anurag Acharya’s article defends the Khas ruling group. He is scared that after the downfall of the Shah dynasty, it is now time for the exit of Khas rulers and their one nation, one language policy.

Dravin Bahadur Shrestha

- Remind us exactly where you don’t want to go? After all, Nepal’s Interim Constitution 2007 explicitly calls for a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, federal republic of Nepal. Nepali society is rigidly divided along caste lines and upper-caste men have occupied positions of power for a very long time. In reality, very few Madhesi and Janajati leaders occupy upper echelons of power (especially if you separate Newars from others). High- caste elites would lose their powers if discriminatory structures such as the caste system and ‘one language, one religion, one culture’ policy are dissolved. No wonder they are afraid of state restructuring.

However, for ordinary Nepalis there is hope and opportunity in the future. The creation of federal states should be seen as an effort to re-distribute centralised power so that people have direct control

over governance. Nepalis can build a more successful country when everyone feels a part of it, which isn’t true at present.

Benjamin Franklin

### THE CONSTITUTION

The Nepali Times is one of the most widely-read newspapers English among the international community which is why it is unfortunate that its editorials continue to create such unnecessary fears about the future of



federalism in Nepal (‘Now, the constitution’, #580). Rather than urging various parties and ethnic communities to find a common ground, the NT chooses to undermine the potential for a reasonable compromise on state restructuring. Blaming unnamed, extremist NGOs or ‘militant ethno-separatists’ for the emphasis on identity as a factor in the future federalism, rather than acknowledging the cross-party efforts in the IC to create a new multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious nation, is not responsible journalism. There is a debate worth continuing on the right course and balance for the creation of new provinces

in Nepal, but sadly not on the pages of the Nepali Times.

Tom Paine

- Well argued editorial that echoes my feelings and cautions all about the uncharted and treacherous waters that the political parties are taking this country towards. Nepal had a working democracy in the mid-1990s when the impatient Maobadi started their armed rebellion. Now, they want to pull back because they realise they have unleashed a monster. As a former Gurkha officer, I acknowledge that Nepal’s minorities need to be included in state structure, but ethnic federalism is not the way to do it. Unfortunately Kathmandu-based donors have been dangerously naive in funding groups that used exclusion as an excuse to destroy the very fragile fabric that holds Nepali society together.

Peter S

### ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

Nepal’s progress in meeting the MDG has been anything but encouraging (‘Encouraging progress’, #580). Progress, as Nepali Times points out in one of the questions to Helen Clark, is a relative term. While relative to which country and on what measures is important, what is equally important is how far we’ve come from where we were 15-20 years ago. Look at maternal mortality: outside of sub-Saharan Africa, Nepal ranks third after Afghanistan and Laos. The annual change in maternal mortality rate is only -4.6 per cent, which is not worthy to be labeled ‘encouraging’ if the goal is to meet the MDGs. This is just one indicator. More importantly, we don’t even have good or complete data for assessment. The estimates, given this reality, are poor and unreliable to draw any strong conclusions. It’s good to be optimistic but the reality is that we have a long way to go, perhaps we need to reflect on this issue with critical lenses before celebrating our ‘progress’.

Jigyasa Sharma

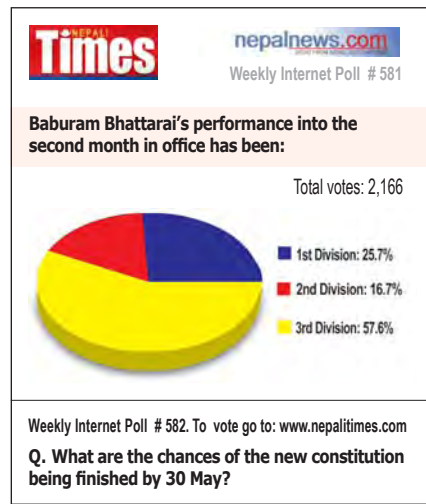
### THE SUPERSTAR

Chiri Bhai is truly a superstar. (‘Chhiri Bhai, superstar’, #580). Kathmandu used to have abundant fertile land farmed by people such as Chiri Bhai who grew the tastiest vegetables. However, in its drive to earn money overnight, today’s generation does not see the need to toil the soil and instead prefers to sell lands to housing developers. We can now look forward to massive apartment complexes built on 1-4 anna land and skyrocketing food prices.

Bbhatt

- I salute Chiri Bhai and many other local farmers like him for their honesty and passion. These simple folks talk less, and are not even aware of “imported cliches” or high sounding phrases such as ‘organic farming’. Yet they are true champions of the cause: they spend their precious time producing what is best for the local community through the use of age-old farming practices. In the process, they also preserve the golden soil of the valley. Can we, the so-called educated, often frustrated and alienated denizens of Kathmandu learn from Chhiri Bhai?

Anonymous





2 - 8 DECEMBER 2011 #581

# Corrupt at the roots

The all-party mechanism grabs headlines for all the wrong reasons



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

In a nationwide public opinion poll conducted earlier this year by Himalmedia, the publisher of this newspaper, respondents overwhelmingly said they wanted local elections. A recent Carter Center report reaches the same conclusion.

The opening of political space in the last few months has contributed to healing the wounds of conflict and kick-started development work stalled for the last decade, but the report concludes that there are serious challenges to transparency and accountability.

Local governance these days is carried out by what are euphemistically called all-party mechanisms, and they have grabbed the headlines for all the wrong reasons. From small scuffles over the appointment of user committees to fighting over kickbacks in lucrative road and irrigation projects, the mechanisms have a notorious reputation for corruption.

The same Himalmedia poll showed most people hadn't heard of the mechanisms, and those that had didn't think much of them. It is not hard to imagine why people do not trust them, and prefer to go to council members they elected back in 1999—the last time local elections were held. This is an indication, in spite of being denied the right to elect local leaders for over a decade, the public faith in democracy is still deep rooted. They know that only through accountable local leadership will they get service delivery.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

The 'all-party mechanism' was set up earlier this year to fill the vacuum created after local bodies were dissolved 10 years ago. But the body has become a fertile ground for corruption with the appointees from various parties 'cooperating' to divide up allocated budgets.

Politically powerful local members have hijacked influential positions and even supposedly non-partisan bodies like school management committees and user groups overseeing local projects have become grossly politicised. Appointment and dismissal of teachers in school committees and elections to key positions on the committees of the user groups have turned local bodies into battlegrounds.

A journalist in Rukum notes that school management elections frequently lead to turf wars between political parties. Ordinary citizens in the local committees are either excluded or pressured and threatened to fall into line. The report cites examples where positions were even distributed to outsiders under the influence of the political parties.

Road committees were among the most corrupt simply because that is where most money is. In one road committee, the report says, nine of the 15 members were from the village all-party mechanism, with three key positions going to NC, UML and the Maoists in clear violation of the government regulations.

In places where the Big Three don't agree on their share of the spoils, projects are indefinitely delayed or even suspended. An irrigation project in Sunsari was suspended because the parties did not agree on positions in the committee and a road project in another VDC is in limbo for years.


At one level, people believe party involvement has helped to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and push through local development. But the lack of elected leaders has made local bodies less transparent.

The Local Development Ministry is making adjustments to policies, and a decision to restrict the tenure of the committee members and make them legally accountable is a welcome one.

The Carter Center's Sarah Levit-Shore says, "Corruption at the local level is linked with larger problem of impunity. For laws and regulations to be effective, they need to be fully enforced. Once it is clear that people will be held accountable for their actions regardless of their political affiliation, the deterrence effect will increase."

The parent parties are silent on the issue, probably because they benefit so much. Senior leaders often use influence at the local level for their own interests, showing that the rot starts right at the top. There is deep disquiet about the conduct of the parties, but most people don't speak for fear of their own safety.

Most people prefer to overlook what goes on in local bodies, and try to get on with their lives the best they can. But it is clear that the democratic deficit at the grassroots is setting back the people's welfare.




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# Assurance of insurance

Don't wait for a disaster to be reminded about insurance

PAAVAN MATHEMA

When the Unity Life International scandal was uncovered last year, the trust on the financial sector was severely dampened. Insurance companies in particular had a difficult time proving their credibility to their clients again. However, in the last fiscal year 768,241 life policies were sold, up by seven per cent from 718,613 policies in the previous year. The market is slowly catching up, and the players are positive about the future of the industry.

“In comparison to South Asian countries, other than India, our life insurance sector has shown growth,” explains Prakash Khanal deputy director at the Insurance Board. “The stakeholders are moving in the right direction for the progress of this sector”.

Life insurance began in Nepal with the state-owned National Insurance Corporation of Nepal in the early 1970s and private players entered the market only about a decade ago. There are now nine life insurance companies, with presence in 68 districts. The biggest players are National Life Insurance Company, Prime Life Insurance and Life Insurance Company (Nepal). A total premium of Rs 10.44 billion was collected by insurance companies in the last fiscal year. However, only eight per cent of the country's population is insured.

“The industry is in its nascent stage, which means there is a lot of opportunity,” says P R Mishra, CEO



SAFE AND SURE: An insurance agent books a client at an insurance company in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

BIKRAM RAI

of Life Insurance Corporation (Nepal). “We are still in the first stage of communicating and raising awareness about insurance.”

Insurance companies say, there is still a lack of awareness about the importance of insurance and many are focusing on advertisement campaigns. “In a country where there is no system of social security from the state, life insurance should not be just an option,” Denesh Amatya, Senior Manager at Surya Life Insurance. “And with more families becoming nuclear, life insurance has become a must.”

In addition to providing financial security to the family in case of accidents and loss of life, insurance is a compulsory form of saving. It also benefits the insurer in terms of tax benefits. At present there is a tax benefit of Rs 20,000, and insurance companies have been lobbying with the government to increase it to Rs 50,000.

Resta Jha, CEO of Prime Life Insurance says that life insurance is still largely a push market but people are slowing becoming more positive about it. “We seem to need reminders that life is not very certain. For example, our policies sales rose

after the September earthquake.” The industry also received a boost after the government decided to make insurance mandatory for migrant workers.

Insurance companies are now trying to motivate customers through product diversification, offering customised schemes for working men and women and housewives. Insurers now have a larger basket of policies to choose from and can pick those that are most suited to their needs and pockets.

In order to tap into rural market, insurance companies are now designing micro-insurance products. “We have recently completed the groundwork for micro-insurance,” says deputy director Prakash Khanal. “This will help extend the reach of insurance to the sector of the population that needs it most. We expect it to replicate the success of micro-finance projects.”

A sector of the urban population, however, prefers to insure in companies across the border. Every year, agents from Indian insurance companies fly down to collect premiums, and this has been responsible for capital flight.

There is an asset-liability mismatch in the life insurance industry, trade sources say. With the average period of a policy at 13.75 years, the liabilities of the companies are long-term. However, the investment options open to insurance companies are mostly short-term.

Says Jha of Prime Life: “There needs to be a regulatory change that will allow us to invest in real sectors such as health and education and diversify our investment avenues. This will increase our returns and in the end our clients will benefit.”



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MY TWO PAISA  
Paavan Mathema

The Nepali rupee has plummeted to an all-time low against the US dollar, with the exchange rate at the time of writing on Thursday set at Rs 83.91. The previous low was Rs 83.40 in March 2009. Over a month, the Nepali rupee has lost over seven per cent against the dollar.

What is lost in much of the analysis here is that the fall of the NPR is related directly and solely to the fall of the INR since the two currencies are pegged. The Indian currency has been falling sharply due to persistent capital outflow from India, and investors opting to purchase dollars rather than the euro as a safer currency. The surge in demand for dollars in India has lowered the INR value, and this has impacted

directly on the NPR. The obvious effect of the appreciation of the dollar is that our exports will benefit because our products (pashmina, tea) become cheaper. By the same token, dollar-denominated imports (cars, international credit) will be more expensive. Theoretically, this should boost our exports. But since the basket of goods we export is relatively much smaller than our import volume, the balance is unlikely to shift in our benefit.

On the other hand, the expensive imports will have a lasting effect on the market: even cheap Chinese goods will become more expensive. That many of our manufacturers depend on imported raw materials means that local products will also become more expensive. During the last fiscal year, Nepal's import from India stood at Rs 261.63 billion and at Rs 133.27 billion from third countries, and the pressure from the strong dollar is bound to push these numbers even

# The almighty dollar

## The fall and fall of the Nepali rupee

higher this year. Nepal Rastra Bank has expanded the list of products that can be imported from India by paying US dollars to dampen the rising demand for INR, increasing the import with dollars significantly.

The only saving grace is that our INR peg is still at the golden NPR 160 and two-third of our imports from India is still done in INR. But this import also includes petroleum and because India imports about 75 per cent of its own petroleum requirement, the increased price will be transferred to Nepal.

The most worrying

effect will be for hydropower developers as their costs will multiply with the rising dollar, adding to high cost of financing. The Nepal Electricity Authority has signed power purchase agreements with Khimti and Bhotekesi hydropower projects in dollar terms, this means the NEA's losses are bound to grow.

Nepal's cost for debt servicing will also go up, although most of our credit is long-term in nature and the payments will be made at the exchange rate of the payment date.

The only bright side is perhaps the increased value of remittance caused by the

appreciation of the dollar. Banks already admit that they have experienced a surge in the inflow of remittance from workers abroad with the weakening of the domestic currency. Nepal sells dollars to pay for its balance of trade deficit with India, so it may actually ease our burden vis-à-vis India.

Given that our exchange rate with the dollar is determined by our pegged rate with India, there is little Nepal Rastra Bank or the market can do to sway the rate. Our response should be focused on managing the likely increase in inflation, which has stood in double digits for three consecutive years.

### BIZ BRIEFS

#### Sherpa in Europe

Sherpa Adventure Gear (SAG), one of Nepal's best-known international sports brands, has signed an important partnership with Bradshaw Taylor of UK to distribute its trek and mountaineering wear across Europe. SAG's Tashi Sherpa told *Nepali Times*: "This is one of the most exciting developments to have taken place for a young brand like ours. Needless to say, it brings tremendous momentum for Sherpa Adventure Gear's global expansion drive." Leading European adventure stores will now start stocking the Sherpa brand.



#### Education first



Nepal and since 2002 it has provided scholarships to fifteen students.

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal gave away scholarships to students of Shree Mahendra High School, Bhaktapur. The bank has been working with VISCOSS Nepal to reach out to schools in the villages of

#### Winner rider

Ram Udahar Mahato from Janakpur won the bumper prize of 250 cc Demak motorbike in the Max Dashain, Max Shopping scheme. Agni Incorporated, the authorised distributor of MUV/Tractor had launched the Max Dashain, Max Shopping scheme which offered Maxi buyers shopping vouchers and cash discounts.

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# The kingdom within

Not everyone is happy with Mustang turning into Thamel

**CAILIN KEARNS** in MUSTANG

The kingdom of Mustang has historically been a vital trade conduit between India and Tibet. The links carry on to this day. Tsering is a monk from Lo Manthang who received his education in India. He returned to his home after 20 years to serve as a monastery keeper, and what he saw shocked him. His home town had seen a dramatic transformation.

“The conditions here are improving. They are building a road. It’ll be completed in three years,” he says. The pony trail carved over the ages is now being replaced with a motorable road connecting Nepal to China. Soon, the porters and pony handlers will be out of jobs. Lo Manthang is already connected to China by road, and will soon have an all-weather road south to







# the republic

Jomsom. While most locals are happy with greater accessibility, some are worried that it will affect income from trekking tourism.

“We are worried that trekkers will no longer have the desire to come here,” says Lo Manthang lodge-owner Tserwang.

The arid and rugged landscape of Mustang has shaped the people, and the people have shaped the landscape. This has defined the trans-Himalayan Mustangi way of life, which is the region’s unique attraction for tourists.

The road will transform daily life in Mustang, for better or for worse. One youth group leader is ambivalent,

“We like the road, it will make life easier but it will also bring bad influences.”

Already locals are worried about plastic litter from cheap Chinese products, and people are switching from healthy local produce to imported processed foods. Most Nepali products are more expensive than Chinese ones. On the other hand, those who made a living from tourism, like porters, will not have an income.

The noise and pollution from trucks and jeeps will not only eliminate jobs but also soil the purity of Mustang’s environment. Three-fourths of people here migrate down to Pokhara and Kathmandu in the harsh

winter months.

The youth club leader makes the migration every year, and every year he returns. “I grew up here, I don’t miss the noise and pollution in Kathmandu,” he says, “now the noise and pollution have come here and they endanger Mustang’s soul. We will become a Thamel.”

Upper Mustang has a cap on tourists it allows beyond its borders to the region from turning into an over-commercialised destination. A maximum of 2,000 tourists permits are distributed per year. It is unclear how this will work when the road becomes fully operational. 🇳🇵

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## NOTICE

### Meeting of FFIN

Foundation for Foreign Investment in Nepal (FFIN)

### Foreign Investors Welcome

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
Time: 5 pm to 7 pm  
Place: Imago dei cafe gallery, Nagpokhari

Ph. No: 4442464



EVENTS



**3rd Annual Mandala Street Festival**, live music, food stalls, grand sale, trade fair, bikram yoga sessions, street theatre and many more. *2 December and 3 December, Sagarmatha Complex, Thamel*

**ICC's Himalayan Package**, the three day bonanza will feature photo exhibition, cultural performances and seminars. *2 December to 4 December, Nepal Academy of Fine Arts and Durabr Hall, bal Mandir. Call 9851141617*

**IT Meet 2011**, Kathmandu University Computer Club's annual event to bring IT enthusiasts together. *4 and 5 December, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel*

**Hamro Shorts**, celebrate this December with short Indie films. *1 December to 29 December, Street side food court, Times Square mall, Durbarmarg*

**AWON Christmas Bazaar**, one stop solution to gift shopping before Christmas with game stalls, live music and good food. *3 December, 10am to 4:30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha*

**Finale for Nepal**, promoting Nepal as an extreme sports destination, with live performances by 1974 AD, Supersonic featuring Subani Moktana and choreographic artist Antoine Le Menesirel showcasing his talents. David Mamet's Oleanna directed by Deborah Merola will also be staged. *3 December, noon onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel. Call 9841486967*

**3-On-3 B-Ball Tournament**, watch teams battle it out in Fr. Donnelly Open Men's and Women's 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament. *4 December to 9 December, Godavari Alumni Association, Thamel.*



**Photography workshop**, introductory course on using camera beyond the automatic mode. *3 December and 4 December, 11am to 3 pm, Sattya Media Arts*

**Blood Donation**, join the blood donation drive to help those in need. *3 December, 10am to 2pm, Kamal Mart, Dhumbarahi. Call 98497999949*

**Burns Violence Survivor**, join the activism for gender based violence now. *25 November to 10 December, musical program on 4 December, 1905 restaurant, Kantipath*



**2nd International Dance Festival**, dance workshops by international instructors, shows, hip hop battles and parties. *8 December to 11 December, Shangri-la Hotel. Call 9803192370*

**Kathmandu International Mountain Festival (KIMFF) 2011**, attend the screening of 52 films representing 22 countries or participate in one of the many exciting workshops and discussions. *8 to 12 December, Rastriya Sabha Griha and Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road*

**KJC winter camp 2012**, ten days winter camp for children of age 6-13 years organised by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. *2 January to 13 January. Contact 5013554*



**Nabis and the Anarchies**, liven up your Saturday with a host of musical bands. *3 December, 4pm onwards, The Tantra, Chettrapati, 9841596971*

**Baja Gaja**, playing live every Tuesday 7: 30pm onwards at *Mosksh, Pulchowk. Call 5526212*

**Live music at Jazzabella Café**. Every Wednesday and Friday 6pm onwards, *Jazzabella café, Jhamsikhel, Patan. Call 2114075*

DINING



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



**Bench Burger**, be it a fish or a steak burger, Bench Burger offers many types and tastes for your palate. *Krishnagalli, Patan*



**Cinnamon Grill and Lounge**, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. *Jhamsikhel, 5521339*



Oleanna in town

David Mamet's Oleanna ready to stir up Nepali audiences

One World Theatre- the recently formed theatre company in Kathmandu – is set to perform its inaugural production of Oleanna starting December 2. Composed by renowned US stage and film writer David Mamet, the play depicts the story of John, a college professor, and Carol, a student failing his course, and the unforeseen consequences of their private meetings in his office. The group chose to perform Oleanna, because the play fits well with its objective to present contemporary English dramas with social justice themes relevant to South- Asian societies.

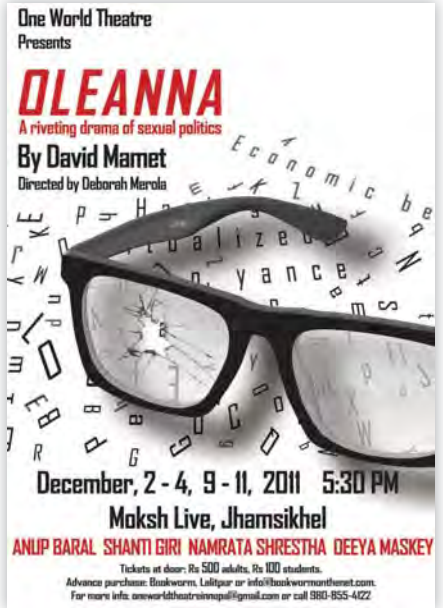
Mamet's Oleanna, which offers a bold commentary on gender politics, sexual harassment and the problems plaguing the educational system, managed to create a stir in the US and opinions were hugely divided when it was first staged in the 1990s. While the story is based on western society, the play also has universal appeal because it explores topics such as the power dynamics in a teacher-student relationship, disconnect between education and daily life and failure of human

communication. For Nepali audiences the play is particularly relevant as students in the country begin to question the educational system and demand drastic changes.

Directed by Deborah Merola, the cast includes Anup Baral who plays John, and Shanti Giri, Diya Maskey and Namrata Shrestha who are enacting the role of Carol in three different acts. Merola who along with her friends Sajak Rana and Anita Dhungel formed One World Theatre says she felt privileged working with seasoned theatre and film actors of Nepal. "All four actors are talented, they have been thoroughly professional, and are a complete joy to work with", says Merola.

Director Merola, a senior Fulbright scholar, has been working at Gurukul since 2010 and has also taught the play to Nepali college students. Says Deborah: "I have taught the play twice at IACER and my students were very excited about who would play John and Carol. In the coming week we will perform the play at IACER and Tribhuvan University and I am looking forward to our interactive sessions with the faculty and students."

So far Deborah Merola has collaborated with artists from Argentina, Columbia, France and various cities in the USA. She is happy with the partnerships that has been forged so far and believes that such intercultural exchanges and the friendliness between artists around the world will boost the theater scene in Nepal. 🇳🇵



**Oleanna**  
Moksh, Jhamsikhel  
2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 December  
5:30pm





**The Factory**, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on their cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*



**Dhokaima Cafe**, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. *Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113*



**Irish Pub**, for the simple reason that the place actually feels like a bar. Don't miss out on their Irish coffee. *Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, 4416027*

**The Ghangri Café**, A quiet and relaxing place with delicious food. Although known for their open

momos, their Chef Salad is equally scrumptious. *Pulchowk, 5528703*

**Him Thai Restaurant and Bar**, for the most authentic Thai cuisines in town. *Lazimpat, 4418683*

**Just Baked**, a cozy café with amazing pastries and friendly ambience. *Old Baneshwor*



**Buddha Bar**, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. *Thamel, 9851053235*



**New Orleans**, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. *Jhamsikhel, 5522708*

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

GETAWAYS

**Holiday at Grand Norling Hotel, Gokarna**. One night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000. *Call 447948*

**The Last Resort**, be a part of the Bungy or Swing Jump Event over the Bhote Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border. Fees: Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until December, the Last Resort Sales Office, *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700525*



**SOMEPLACE ELSE**



# Grill Me

After I relished in Sol's fanciful imports at the wine and cheese at Café Mitra last weekend, it seemed like things couldn't taste any better. Then again, extending Kathmandu's fork reach into artisan idylls like Parma and Brie requires only a cultivated palate and seed money or the superhuman dexterity of Mr. Fantastic; but how one dishes out these exquisite delicacies is a feat matched by no other than only a master chef like Grill Me's Mohit Rana. The latest in Rana's repertoire, the newly opened Grill Me in Jhamel is promisingly his best.

Grill Me isn't about breaking new ground. Although some pairings maintain the oohs and aahs like the Norwegian Salmon Steak with coffee barbecue sauce or the Jamaican Jerk Burger with orange, pimento mayo, Rana leaves behind most of his experimenting at

Mitra and keeps Grill Me all about quality and execution. As its name evokes, Grill Me is a carnivore's den. Vegetarians are limited to the fresh mozzarella tomato confit and the tofu burger. The hunks of mozzarella stacked between sweet sun-dried tomatoes, tamarillos and basil demonstrate the richness in simplicity. A glance of its forthcoming menu reveals a mushroom crepe in the works apart from a grilled duck with guava barbecue sauce, shrimp bisque, and a North Carolina pulled pork sandwich—all fit for a second review.

Finally... Kathmandu becomes a worthy contender on the international burger

tour. Grill Me's tenderloin burger is, pardon my patois, phat ('with a ph') and is still cheaper than a six-dollar burger. Cooked medium, as ground beef should, the juicy mound is wedged in a buttery sesame bun and topped with bacon that cuts no corners, evenly melted cheese and crisp, fresh trimmings. The hefty sandwich, by far the largest in the valley, demands a two-hand-to-mouth maneuver that fails to tire.

But the tailgate doesn't end there. Fat-in and coddled by a sweet potato mash with a trace of mesquite (unlike no other), its pork chops are exceptional to the bone.

For dessert Rana outdoes himself with the Coconut



PICS: MARCO POLLO

Panna Cotta casing the tropical fruit in a delectably creamy concoction heightened by a mango, orange coulis.

A more comprehensive critique would speak about the restaurant's blue accents and aged wood and the grey-washed setting but it's all icing. Grill Me is about food. 🇳🇵

*Marco Pollo*

*Proceed towards the Moksh complex, skip the driveway and visit its newest neighbour instead*

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Bread 'n water	★★★★★
Space	★★★★
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Rep-eat?	★★★★★

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# Sleep apnea



DHANVANTARI  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

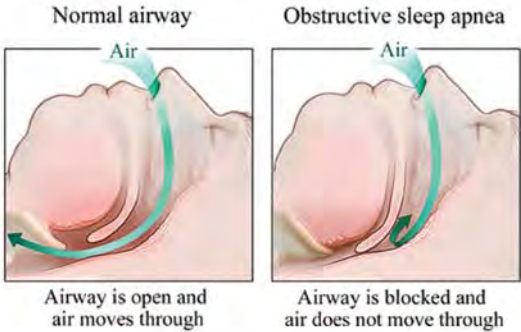
Forty-six-year old Prasad came into the clinic accompanied by his wife who complained that he snored excessively and disturbed her sleep. The children had even threatened to record how vigorously the father snored and play it back to him.

Prasad, a spice vendor from Indra Chok, was reluctant to admit to any health problems but his wife was adamant that something must be done of her husband's relentless snoring. She also said that the snoring was much worse when he went to a bhoj in the evening and had a couple of drinks. At times she felt he was going to die when he snored very loudly and then suddenly stopped breathing for a few seconds and woke up trying to catch his breath.

Prasad did admit to being sleepy at work. His

blood pressure was on the higher side and although his lungs were clear, he had a protuberant, obese belly. The rest of the examination was completely normal.

In all likelihood Prasad is suffering from a common ailment called obstructive sleep apnea. In this condition, when the patient



draws his breath in while sleeping, there is excessive narrowing of his windpipe. The sudden narrowing of the airway causes snoring.

When this sleeping pattern continues for a large portion of the night, the patient wakes up unrefreshed and affects his quality of life including suffering from mood swings and daytime sleepiness. Increased blood pressure is also common.

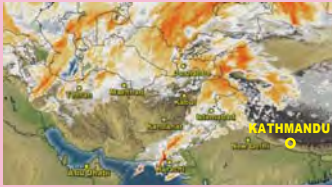
Sophisticated sleep studies (polysomnogram) which would help diagnose the problem, are generally unavailable in Nepal. So in most instances a typical clinical history as in Prasad's case may be all that is available to arrive at the diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea.

Treatment for sleep apnea consists of losing weight for obese people. In order to decrease calorie intake only one rice meal a day with chapattis at night and cutting down on sugary drinks and mithais may help. Avoiding alcohol is beneficial both for weight loss and unhampered breathing during sleep. Sleeping on the side rather than on the back is also useful to decrease snoring. There is no drug therapy for sleep apnea. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine or a simple dental appliance which gently pulls the lower jaw forward (if you can believe that) while sleeping are other commonly prescribed therapies which actually work well. But these are expensive devices and require some testing before use, and sadly not readily available here for this common problem.



WEEKEND WEATHER  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The remnants of the cyclone in the Arabian Sea have been blown off towards the Pamirs by the jet stream, but some moisture has moved eastwards along the Himalaya and brought partly cloudy skies over the central Himalaya. The water vapour plus plunging temperatures will bring this winter's first fog cover along the transverse river valleys and Kathmandu into the weekend. Combined with smog, this will likely delay flights. By Sunday, the main body of the front should arrive over Kathmandu and bring some drizzles in the higher reaches.

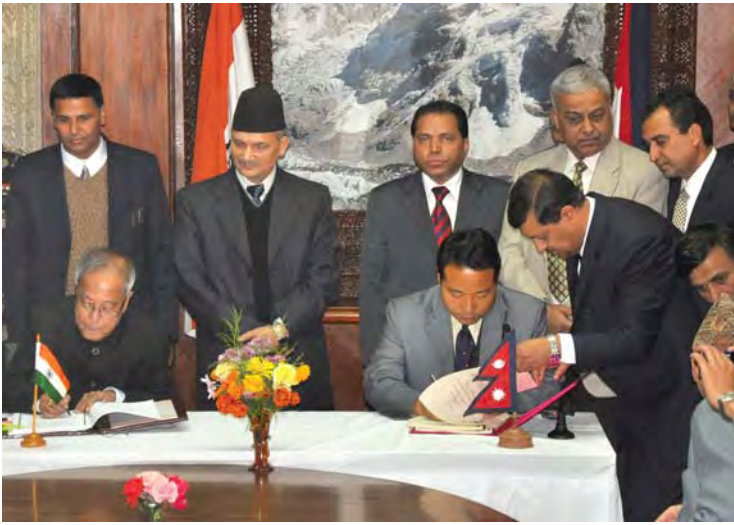


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NO दाग  
NO धब्बा

RANGOLI EASY CLEAN

No Daag - No Dhabba, Only Beautiful Walls



KRISHNA SINJALI

**DOUBLE SIGN:** PM Baburam Bhattarai looks on as the Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukharjee and Finance Minister Barsa Man Pun sign the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) at the PM's office, Singha Durbar on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**BALLET MAGIC:** A ballet dancer from Theatre Gzhel, a Russian dance group, performs at the Russian Cultural Centre, Kathmandu, on Wednesday.



**DIRECT CONNECTION:** CEO of Ncell Pasi Koistinen and Ncell customer Sitaram Sharma jointly inaugurate the company's 15th centre in Chabahil, Kathmandu, on Monday.

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NEPAL TOURISM YEAR 2011



# Seeing red

The almighty pen of the bureaucrat needs to be cut down to size



“Bureaucracy is a giant mechanism operated by pygmies,” declared Honoré de Balzac. Going by the evidence, our civil servants would feel perfectly at home in 19th-century France. The Nepali public has no choice but to put up with its archaic bureaucracy, even as we move forward with such 21st-century staples as machine-readable passports.

Optimistically, I imagined the tourism sector would be better in this regard. After all, it is still Nepal Tourism Year 2011, and what tourist in possession of all his faculties would risk scrambling them on the altar of an impenetrable bureaucracy? This optimism remained intact as I received some trekking buddies at the airport last month; I waved away their complaints that they would have to wait an hour for their visas – that Nepal grants visas on arrival was clear evidence of a desire to facilitate hassle-free tourism, was it not?

I was quickly disillusioned once I began the paperwork for Manaslu circuit permits, even with the base camp support provided by a friend’s travel agency in the form of a voluminous folder containing insurance guarantees for a porter, itinerary printouts, fake inventories of camping



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

equipment (though we were tea-housing), and many other documents I didn’t even bother looking at. With porter Mohan off to the Nepal Tourism Board to pay the two conservation area fees, I volunteered to manage the permits myself as the unofficial ‘guide’.

My heart sank when the process was explained to me. One office was bad enough, but three? Fortunately they were all located off the linear stretch from Putalisadak to Thapathali. First on the list was the insurance firm, challengingly tucked away in an alcove on the top floor of a mall yet to commence operations. Second was the Rastra Bank, to pay out dollars for permits. This,

too, was more amusing than anything else, from the slapdash conversion via plywood partitions and Podrej filing cabinets of what looked like the banquet hall of an old Rana palace to the insistence on copying out (twice) the serial numbers of the dollars dispensed.

But the Department of Immigration gave no quarter. As I shuttled along seemingly random trajectories over the next few hours, I noted down my movements, hoping to detect evidence of the blind watchmaker behind the Great Nepali Bureaucracy:

“I trek to the third floor and stand in a scrum in Room 301. Man 1 takes my file, leafs through it, and sends me to Accounts Section, Room

103, first floor. I get a receipt from Woman 1 and head back to the third floor to find Man 1 has disappeared. We wait. When Man 1 returns after 15 minutes he checks my file again and sends me to Room 302 on the other side of a glass partition through which staff shout at each other. Man 2 takes file, signs, and sends me to Room 105, first floor. I enter Room 105 and wait. A guide comes in and jumps the queue. Man 3 looks through my folder, talks politics on the phone for 5 minutes, then starts on my folder again before pausing to ask, ‘Have I looked at this already?’ He signs, and sends me to the third floor where Man 1 gives me a permit form. I fill

it out and am sent to Man 2, who has now disappeared. We wait. And wait. Until Man 1 suggests we accost Room 105, first floor, where all the directors (Man 3 included) have retreated. We wait, as Man 4 and Woman 2 half-heartedly pass on the message (that we are waiting). Finally Man 3 exits Room 105 and we all troop back to the third floor, then wait while he resolves some other issue. Man 3 then signs our papers and sends us back to Man 1, who stamps the permits.”

If reading such an account is tedious, imagine how much worse it is to act it out? All our administrative processes are bonafide Rube Goldberg machines, the circular loops of which are oftentimes bypassed via connections or well-placed bribes. In the tourism sector, foreigners are mostly shielded from this madness by travel agencies, whose services they pay for through the nose. It is Nepalis who bear the brunt of the state’s inefficiency. This deliberate inefficiency, in creating uncertainty (and the impression of work being done), shifts the balance of power towards civil servants. Thus is born the civil potentate, to whom we must present ourselves as supplicants.

The civil servants who summited Everest this spring at the taxpayer’s cost said the junket meant to prove they are not ‘adventure-adverse idlers’. Adventurous they may well be, but they have a mountain to climb to prove to us that they are anything but idle. 🇳🇵



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PICS: SAM KANG LI


# A burning problem

Care for burn victims is available, but prevention would be better



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## Lending a hand

For the past 12 years, Wendy Marston has dedicated her life to helping burn victims in Nepal. She started out by collecting funds on her own and assisting Keshab Das Joshi, the plastic surgeon at Bir Hospital's Burns Unit. Today, she is at the forefront of fund-raising and conducting awareness campaigns for Burns Violence Survivors (BVS) Nepal.

Born in Scotland, Marston came to Nepal in 1978 with her husband, an ex- Gurkha officer, and since then has dedicated her life to help burn survivors, many of whom are women and children. "Helping burn victims here has given me a chance to give back to Nepal," she says, eyes brimming with emotion.

After working closely with burn victims, Martson realised that this was one of the most neglected health problems in Nepal. She then began fund-raising to support nutrition, medical support, counseling and physiotherapy for survivors through partner hospitals. Marston also helped launch the Nutrition Support Program at Bir Hospital in 2008 which provides protein-rich supplementary diet to burn patients.

In the past few years many corporate houses have pledged to support BVS-Nepal. But Wendy feels that in addition to providing monetary assistance, corporate houses have a larger role to play: "Besides donations, everyone needs to be involved in raising awareness about burns."





#### BHRIKUTI RAI

Sunita and her family were celebrating Dasain this year with the usual revelry when a leaking cooking gas suddenly exploded in their kitchen and left 25-year-old Sunita and five other family members, including three children, severely burned.

Burn-related accidents are on the rise in Kathmandu not just during the festive season, but also because of kitchen accidents, domestic violence and suicides. The burn units at Bir Hospital and Kanti Children's Hospital find themselves overwhelmed with patients, most of them women.

Young children also suffer disproportionately from burn accidents. This past Dasain, Kanti Children's Hospital, which has the only pediatric burn unit in the country, registered a total of twelve burn cases. Children aged 10-14 are the main victims of burns due to electrocution and firecrackers.

Paediatric surgeon Ramanandan Chowdhary says, "Lack of awareness and negligence on the part of parents put children at risk, dressing children in synthetic materials increase the chances of severe burns."

Treating burn patients takes time, it is expensive and hospitals sometimes lack the necessary financial and technical support. Nevertheless Bir Hospital and Kanti Children's Hospital have been working relentlessly to treat burn victims.

Since most patients come from working-class families, occasionally the staff even arranges meals for the caretakers. "We try to give our patients the best service with available resources at a nominal cost," says Nara Devi Bariya, the head nurse at Bir Hospital's Burns Unit. "Most patients are referred to Bir from private hospitals, because they can't afford the services there," she adds.

However, hospitals have failed to make prevention of burns a priority. Nara Devi of Bir Hospital says, "We need to create mass awareness on how to prevent burn accidents. We could start by making burn awareness a part of the school syllabus."

Recently, Bir Hospital and Kanti Children's Hospital made an encouraging move by partnering with Burns Violence Survivors (BVS) to educate Nepalis about prevention. Wendy Marston, an adviser at BVS (see box) says it is important to raise awareness amongst young children who are most vulnerable.

BVS has been going to schools, training students about prevention methods and getting them involved in helping burn survivors with first aid. Many students have presented burn victims at Kanti Children's Hospital with toys and games and a few students have even raised funds to support patients. Says Marston: "If people start becoming aware right from the school level, many burn related accidents could be prevented." 🇳🇵

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#### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Department for International Development (DFID) is a part of UK Government. DFID is providing £331 million over the four years from April 2011 to March 2015. DFID Nepal's Operational Plan is divided into four main areas: inclusive wealth creation, governance and security, human development (basic services, including education and health) and climate change/disaster risk reduction. It includes a strong focus on supporting girls and women. We predict that the results will include 230,000 additional jobs created; 1.8 million more people brought within four hours' walk to the nearest road; reduced vulnerability to climate change of 3 million poor and excluded people; and 110,000 more people benefiting from safe latrines.

DFID Nepal is seeking to fill the following position inviting applications from interested and experienced Nepalese candidates.

**Position:** Programme Officer (B1), Donor Support to Peace Process – 1 (Fixed Term- 2 Year Contract)

#### Required qualifications/ skills:

- A Bachelor's degree in a relevant subject area, e.g. governance, political science, social policy/planning.
- At least 5 years experience working for a development organisation, preferably in Nepal.
- Understanding of financial management and should possess strong administrative skills
- Understanding and experience in policies related to peace building is desirable.
- Experience of working with the Government of Nepal, international Govt partners or donor agencies will be an advantage.
- Good communication and inter-personal skills
- Excellent spoken and written Nepali and English.

**Closing date for application is 23 December, 2011.**

This position will be based in Kathmandu. There will be an attractive and competitive local salary and benefit package. DFID Nepal is an Equal Opportunities employer and appoints on merit basis through open competition. We take a proactive approach to diversity in order to support positive social change in Nepal and are seeking to recruit more staff from excluded groups. Applications are welcome from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from Women, Dalits, Disadvantaged Janajatis, Madhesi and those with a disability.

You can download the application form, diversity questionnaire and job description from <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/recruitment/> and send the completed forms to [recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk). Only completed applications made on the prescribed application form and diversity questionnaire will be considered. If you are unable to access the forms, please contact [recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk). Telephone enquiries after the deadline of the application will not be considered.

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# For a few dollars more

Interview with economist Keshav Acharya and Nepal Rastra Bank officer Lila Sitaula, *BBC Nepali Service*, 26 November



**BBC Nepali Service: What will be the consequences of appreciation of the dollar to the Nepali economy?**

**Lila Sitaula:** It has both advantages and disadvantages. Exporters will profit from it, the country's balance of payment will go down and foreign currency reserves will increase. But those who make payments in dollars will suffer and imports will be costly.

**Won't that cost us dearly since we import almost everything?**

**Keshav Acharya:** Nepal's export is close to Rs 70 billion while imports stand at Rs 400 billion annually. We have a foreign debt of Rs 260 billion and are supposed to make a payment of Rs 17.5 billion in the next fiscal year. But the depreciation of Nepali currency by 13 per cent has added an additional liability of Rs 3.5 billion. This means we will have to pay Rs 21 billion more at the current rate of exchange.

**What will be the impact on national economy?**

**Sitaula:** It will have a mixed result. We should increase exports to keep the economy afloat. There will be an increase

in remittance, which will increase our foreign currency reserves. The national economy can benefit depending on how productively the foreign currency reserve is spent. Currently, we have been spending all our reserve to import a single product: petroleum.

**Acharya:** At present, there are no possibilities of increasing exports. The government announcement of 4 per cent grant assistance for exports hasn't worked out. Besides, NEA has been purchasing

power from private hydropower companies in dollars. Nepal will ultimately lose.

**Is India worried that depreciation of Indian currency against the dollar value could disrupt its economy?**

**Sitaula:** Indian economy is not an import-based economy. India's worry is that they won't be able to achieve the projected eight percent GDP growth.

**We have a fixed foreign exchange**

**rate with India. Is it good or bad?**

**Acharya:** Fixed foreign exchange rate with India helped stabilise country's economy during the conflict. But it is not a good idea to maintain the same rate during the transitional period.

**Sitaula:** The exchange rate alone does not guarantee anything. Given geopolitics and nature of investments, a fixed foreign exchange rate with India is still a good idea.



# Pragmatism vs righteousness



Interview with former ambassador to India, Lokraj Baral, *Kantipur*, 27 November



**Kantipur: Are we maintaining an equidistance between China and India?**

**Lok Raj Baral:** No, I don't think that is the case. We have a friendly diplomatic relationship with China. But our ties with India run deeper and politically, socially, geographically and culturally we are much closer to India. Therefore, our leaders must

take these into account before making any statement.

**Do you see the recent treaty with India as an indication of PM Bhattarai's 'pro-India' leaning?**

Every Prime Minister in Nepal has been charged as being 'pro-India'. But in reality, BIPPA is just a treaty to assure foreign investment. We have done it with India, if possible we should have a similar treaty with China as well.

**Does that mean that Nepal should become a commercial transit between China and India?**

It is not a bad idea. Earlier, due to India's paranoia over its security we could not build Kodari highway. But things have changed now and growing trade between China and India has provided an opportunity for Nepal to cash in on its geo-political location. There is no point playing one against the other when we can get benefit out of both.

**But can Nepal come out of 'big brother's' shadow to assert its pragmatic foreign policy?**

Let us not keep blaming others for our own weakness. Nepali leaders must get over this cold war hangover and stop worrying about upsetting China or India. Yes, open interference by Indian diplomats in Nepali politics must be condemned. But in the present context, I feel India has come to terms with the fact that it cannot isolate the biggest political group in Nepali politics if it wants a healthy relationship with Nepal. Similarly, even the Maoists seem to have realised that good relationship with India is in their interest.

**What about the difficult position Nepal finds itself in regarding the Tibetan refugees?**

We are not a powerful nation. US can afford to defy the Chinese and meet the Dalai Lama. We have other things to worry about. Having a righteous stand is fine, but first we need to be strong enough to take a stand and say we are doing the right thing.

# The third gender

Tulsi Ram Subedi, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 26 November



Two per cent of Nepali population is third gender, yet they face social and legal discrimination. The support and compassion for third gender is generally low and many people frown upon them. Some are disowned by their families while others have a hard time finding jobs. Everyday tasks such as standing in queue, choosing toilets, attending schools and health check-ups are challenging for the third gender due to heterosexual matrix through which society looks at them.

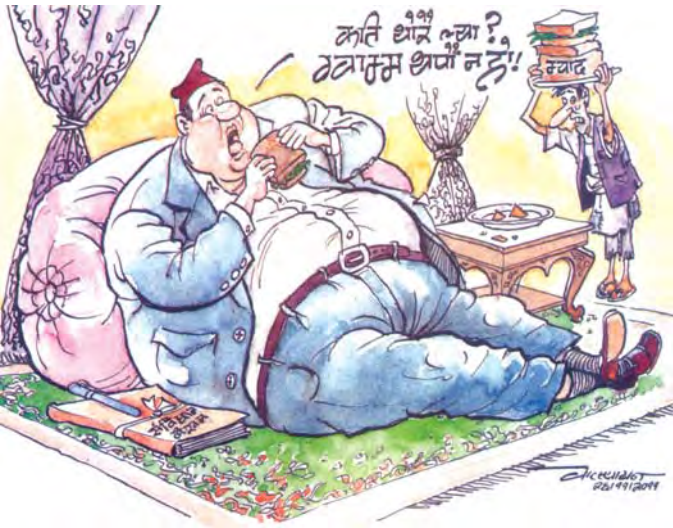
Although organizations such as Blue Diamond Society and Naulo Bihani have helped sexual minorities gain more visibility and acceptance, the situation is still not favorable. As a result, sexual minorities are forced to conceal their identities in an attempt to lead 'normal' lives. Some are even forced into marriages which have resulted in tragedy due to

emotional and psychological dissatisfaction.

One of the greatest difficulties for third gendered people has been gaining citizenship. Complications arise when the sex specified on a third gendered person's birth certificate does not match with her/his outward appearance and behaviors. In 2064 the Supreme Court ordered third gender to be recognized as a new category and to grant citizenship to third gendered people on this basis. 3 people gained citizenship under this provision. However, soon afterwards the Home Ministry, under

Krishna Bahadur Mahar, issued a circular that ended this practice.

Sunil Babu Pant, acting director of Blue Diamond Society, who was also a member of the Constituent Assembly, says that they are in the process of filing a case against the government. After being put under pressure from various rights groups, the government has set up a committee which will study issues related to third gender and homosexuals and make recommendations.



This is too less. Can't you bring some more?

Sandwich: CA term

Book: Draft constitution

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in Kantipur, 27 November

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ For the last one year, I have tried for party's unity but have been humiliated (by Deuba). If you don't want me as your president, vote me out. ”

NC President Sushil Koirala talking to members at the party meeting.





# Unfinished business

The problems of a nation are too complex and entrenched to be corrected by fait accompli decision-making



**THIS IS IT**  
**Rubeena Mahato**

With the super jumbo cabinet in place, the formation of the State Restructuring Commission (SRC), and the extension of the Constituent Assembly, we can finally get on with the real business of constitution making.

The eight member commission has a heavy responsibility in its hands: advising the government on the restructuring of the country that reflects the aspirations of the public. But how exactly do the people want their country to be structured?

Five years ago, in the euphoria of change, we got rid of the old: including the 'royal' prefix on everything from the national airline to our embassies abroad. An ancient Hindu kingdom turned into the world's youngest secular federal republic, and an elected assembly couldn't wait to turn the country into a federation, convinced that this was what the Nepali people wanted. Most likely, the new constitution will also be written along the same lines. But time and again public surveys conducted by this newspaper among others showed a majority opposed ethnicity-based federalism. Even among various ethnic groups, three-fourths were against ethnic federalism and opposed to secularism. (See: Nepali Times, # 553)

These numbers are, however, drowned out in the din of political slogans that dominates the debate on state restructuring in the constitution. A cross party caucus has made ethnic federalism its main plank, and the political parties meekly follow. The discourse on federalism is so polarised that to even remotely suggest that ethnic states may not be the most desirable thing for Nepal at the present time can earn one a label of being a regressive, status quoist right winger. Few mainstream writers or civil society stalwarts want to endanger their 'liberal' image by even seeming to suggest this. Or perhaps it is just futile to expect anything from consultant intellectuals who get support from aid agencies openly involved in pushing their agenda.



MIN RATNA BAIRACHARYA

There is no doubt that the ethnic minorities in this country have been historically excluded, that the state for many years favoured policies that obstructed their development, in many cases effectively prevented it, and that they should be given equal rights and opportunities. But what is the solution we are being offered in the name of ethnic states will bring new exclusivities, another kind of supremacy and an irreversible damage to an integrated Nepali society.

Two wrongs do not make a right. Pitting one group against another in a resource poor society is a sure fire way to ignite a multi-ethnic conflict from which there will be no going back. The leaders unfortunately have been so trapped under the weight of their own rhetoric in trying to sound more revolutionary than the rest that now they can't go back.

In private, most leaders confess that they have bitten off more than they can chew. They fear that they have opened a Pandora's Box of caste-based politics, a fear which was confirmed when 75 members of an ethnic caucus voted across party lines on the amendment bill for state restructuring, disobeying the party whips. There is no assurance that the SRC will not succumb to similar pressures.

Where does this disconnect come from? The answer lies in the way change was introduced in Nepali society. No one is saying Nepal should remain a Hindu kingdom or continue with centralised governance, but you cannot expect people who have not really changed attitude-wise to wake up one fine morning hearing their country is now secular and federal and not be suspicious. That declaration should have been backed by wide public discussion and awareness-raising. The problems of a nation are too complex, too diverse and too entrenched to be corrected by a few weeks of street uprising and fait accompli decision-making. A revolution may end a monarchy or dictatorship but emboldening values of democracy, freedom and pluralism are altogether a different issue.

What we need now is a nationwide discussion on how the governance of this country should be like, and what should be the basis of restructuring. Let the people debate and decide instead of being thrown off the deep end. There will be dissenting voices, extreme opinions, run-down ideologies, but that is the marketplace of ideas called a democracy. 🇺🇸



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Royale Play adds colour to a rather dry life.

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# The mystic masseuse

It's all Toni Hagen's fault. Ever since the Swiss geologist came to Nepal in the 1950s and tried to turn Nepal into Switzerland by training us to make cheese, every decade or so a Nepali leader pops up to say that he will turn Nepal into Switzerland by such-and-such a date.

What these leaders don't know is that Nepal is already Switzerland. Just look at all the similarities:

1. We are both landlocked.
2. Neither was colonised.
3. Both will soon be ethnic confederations
4. Our mercenaries guard the British Queen, theirs guard the Pope. Ours use khukuris, theirs use Swiss Army Knives.
5. Like Helvetics, we are going to have rotation leadership in our State Restructuring Commission.
6. If the RPP has its way we may have a referendum for everything.
7. They export **Ferrero Rochers**, and we export **Pustakaris**.
8. They have cantons we have cantonments.



While the 3 Idiots scratch their asses over what to do with the constitution, kingji was



spotted shaking it all over a party thrown by an ex-crown princess for a trust named after her good self at the aptly named Crown Plaza. Although the commoners were exclusively not invited, the Donkey managed to gate crash and sneak a peak at kingG giving Buhari a few tips on how to **Moonwalk**.



Comes a belated eye-witness account from Thimphu that our Environ-Mental Minister was reading his speech from a sheaf of papers to an international conference on climate change last week when he kept on reading even after coming to the end of his speech right into a confidential memo containing talking points given to him by his aides. Looks like our top state secrets for the Durban summit have been prematurely leaked

to all and sundry by the Honourable Minister.



Ever since Lion Brave has been challenging the supremacy of Alfa Male Sushil Duh, the poor old man is feeling forlorn. The infighting among kangresis has now got so bad Jhusil Koirala is not even invited to weekly grind at Naranthan anymore, not even for the regular weekend boozeups where The Lion King was seen recently dancing to the tune of "...tauba tera jalwa, tauba tera pyaar, tera emotional atyachar". Following the grand tradition laid down by the likes of Ganesh Man Dai and Comrade Awe-inspiring himself, **Sushil the Malsapro**, as he is known in party circles, apparently broke down and cried at the humiliation.

The mule's mole over at the Pistachio Palace reports that PKD is seething at India again and muttering: "Ke ho yo, je gareni hundaina." This time, steam is coming out of his ears because even after kowtowing to the Dilli Darbar he hasn't managed to meet Man Mohanji, although his nemesis, PM BRB, has seen him thrice in three months. While Awesome has to be content meeting not-well-done operatives in shady rendezvous in Siliguri or Kuala Lumpur, Laldhoj is going to be hosting high profile visits by Pranab Bhai, the Chinese premier, and Man Mohan again early next year.



Tongues are wagging at the **Firangi Ministry** over the lissome lass who accompanied Kazi Naran Kamred in his visits to the SAARC Summit in Male and to China last week. When eye brows were raised about the cost implications in the mantra-laya, the minister explained that he needed a masseuse to accompany him "for health reasons". Nothing strange, his boss took his son along everywhere as his "body guard-cum-computer operator".



Chairman Awful summoned all commanders to Naya Bazar

the other day and ordered them and the rank and file to chose integration in the new Nepal Army directorate. Although there was a lot of grumbling about being humiliated to be turned into "forest rangers", the number will probably reach the stipulated 6,500. However, true to the Orwellian dictum that comrade leaders are always "more equal than others", the offspring of senior Maoists have all chosen to opt for voluntary retirement instead. Topping the list is UNMIN-certified guerrilla, Dear Leader Prakash. The lure of lucre seems to be too tempting to ignore for **Comrade Atom**, the fruit of the loins of Com Mahara. PKD's own ex-dotted-in-law and the daughter of Comrade Postman has decided to take the Rs 7 lakhs and become a tv anchor. PLA Commander General Pasang is hedging his bets and has sent one son into the Nepal Army and the other to take the cash. The Baidya-Prachanda feud seems to be complicating matters in the integration process, with the hardliners lobbying strongly that the guerrillas should take the money to fund "the continuation of the revolution".



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