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SHUDDER TO THINK

Many of us surveying Nepal's deadlocked politics may think it is a disaster, but it will pale in comparison to the apocalyptic aftermath of the next big earthquake that could strike Kathmandu any day now.

Yes, it's that time of year again as we prepare to mark Earthquake Day on 15 January to commemorate the magnitude 8.0 earthquake in 1934 that killed about 10,000 people in Kathmandu Valley.

We have had three governments since the last Earthquake Day, and the good news is that the Prime Minister's Office has begun to review the regulatory mechanism for school and hospital construction. The government has set aside money in the budget for school retrofitting. The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium has raised \$55 million out of the targeted \$140 million for its risk reduction plan.

This will be enough to retrofit 250 schools in the next two years, 275 of the targeted 1,000 VDCs are already working on a community preparedness plan. A US Army team is in Kathmandu this week to do a geological assessment of the survivability of the only runway in the country's only international airport.

Now, the bad news. Ever since the cabinet in 2009 passed a preparedness strategy to set up a Disaster Management Authority, the legislation has been languishing in parliament. Four years later, there has been almost no movement in ratifying this crucial legislation, signifying apathy that borders on criminal negligence on the part of our political leadership and law-makers.

One could argue that the CA has other pressing matters in its hands, but the peace and constitution process is deadlocked, too. all this shows a fatalistic head-in-the-sand approach to dealing with a disaster that is one day sure to come.

At 6:25 PM on Sunday, 18 September, 2011 a 6.9 magnitude earthquake under Mt Kangchenjunga shook Nepal and large parts of India. Nearly 120 people were killed, three of them in Kathmandu which was 300 km away from the epicenter. The Haiti quake this week two years ago showed what even a 7.0 magnitude quake can do: more than 200,000 people were killed.

In September, the National Emergency Operation Centre built two

For a glimpse of what Kathmandu will look like after a big quake, just look at the buildings torn down for road-widening and multiply that by 10,000.



MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

years ago with Australian assistance was put to the test as a clearing house for information, and to coordinate response. But official response was slow and woefully inadequate. The Prime Minister flew off to New York later that night without even bothering to find out the extent of the damage. There was no aerial reconnaissance the next morning to gauge casualties and spot potentially disastrous river blockages. It was a miracle the death toll wasn't higher.

Nature gave us a wake-up call, but we slept right through it. A coalition government that has earned a disagreeable reputation for greed and graft seems least bothered about 'natural' calamities in the future.

So, as often happens in Nepal, we have to depend on individuals, families and local communities to do their bit. Groups like the National Society of Earthquake Technology (NSET) are working with schools and wards to bolster preparedness. Nepali earthquake experts, ironically, are more in demand outside Nepal than here, and foreigners seem more worried about what is in store for us than we are.

A 1998 study of nearly 400 government schools in Kathmandu Valley showed that a 1934 type earthquake would kill nearly 30,000 students and teachers outright and injure another 43,000. Since that survey, the number of schools has more than doubled.

A quarter of them need to be torn down, half can be retrofitted. After a quake, the injured can't be rushed to hospitals because roads will be blocked and hospitals will have also collapsed. All but two of Kathmandu's hospitals are equipped to withstand strong shaking, and even if they survive the diesel for generators and medicines will soon run out.

A 8.0 magnitude earthquake epicentred near Kathmandu would kill 100,000-200,000 people depending on the time of day and 700,000 will be injured and up to 1.5 million will be homeless. Such a quake is long overdue.

It's no wonder that international seismic experts have slotted Kathmandu Valley as the number one among top ten cities around the world vulnerable to a catastrophic earthquake. The government seems to be finally waking up to the task ahead, but time is of the essence.

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

POWERLESS STATE

Saddam is gone, Gaddafi is gone, Mubarak is gone, Saleh is gone, and Assad is on his way out ('The power to change', Editorial, #586). It's time for another revolt in Nepal where we finally overthrow Dahal, Bhattarai, Deuba, Koirala et al. We need to teach our political elites that the needs of ordinary citizens are greater than theirs.

Rajesh Rajbhandari

- Nepalis are tired of talking about politics and democracy. We are deprived of electricity, gas, diesel, petrol, jobs, education, health, food, clothing. And democracy cannot feed us. Let's talk about access to education or jobs or personal security instead. Wake up politicians and see the writings on the wall.

Mahesh Kunwar

- There are some fascinating similarities between politics in Nepal and the US. The US government is also big and wasteful and the Republicans and Democrats are famous for their partisan politics. The Congress spends billions to bail out dishonest Wall Street CEOs, bankers and stock traders, while ordinary citizens cannot afford basic health-care. We might be one of the richest countries in the world, but just like in Nepal, many Americans are disgusted with the way their country is being run.

Michael Peterson

SLUM MILLIONAIRES

In a country where masu-bhat, a plot of land, 1,000 rupees, or a promise of a job can buy votes, can any election be called fair ('Slum Millionaires', Dewan Rai, #586)?



BIKRAM RAI

My choice of government will never come to power simply because I am part of a minority which wants good governance, law and order, peace and prosperity and equity. But I guess this is too much to ask from our 'democratic' leaders!

Mr Reader

FINAL SHOWDOWN

The same NC leaders who have spent their entire lives clutching on to the most powerful positions within the party, the government and the opposition, are now claiming that a directly-elected president could invite dictatorship ('Final Showdown' by Anurag Acharya, #586)? What a joke. It's high time the NC is punished for the current political decay and for allowing a party which still believes in violence to hijack the whole political agenda.

Nirmal

- The Maoists are capable of focusing only on the superficial aspects of governance. In the past they were too occupied with our flag, name of the country, name of the states and now instead of discussing how much power to vest in future heads of government,

they are concerned about trivial matters.

Who Cares

DEAR LEADER

I have always liked Ahsutosh Tiwari's Strictly Business columns but I will have to disagree with him on this one ('Dear Leader' #586). Yes, the Maoist-led government has many legitimate problems, but they deserve full credit for finally widening the roads. There was just no other solution. The slums too will have to be eventually dismantled; we cannot live in filth and stench anymore. Please support the good work of any government instead of being critical for the sake of criticism.

J Thapa

OLIVE OIL

Hats off to Hartmut Bauder for his perseverance and dedication ('Nepali olive makes the grade' #586). However, the Nepal government has failed to promote and protect new business initiatives. I remember in the early 1960s, there used to be a small-scale carpet and handicraft industry in Kathmandu started by Tibetans refugees. The carpet was very popular among tourists and was

helping Nepal earn foreign revenue as well as providing employment to many locals. Then the 'revolutionary' Maoists interfered: they brainwashed workers, politicised the labour unions, and created rifts between employers and employees. Unable to withstand the intimidation, more than half the carpet factories shut down and the entrepreneurs shifted to India and Tibet. Such narrow-minded politics has harmed Nepal's business fraternity for too long and needs to stop.

Tashi Lama

LIVE AND DIE

It is preposterous for Rookmangud Katuwal to be talking about common Nepalis and using terms like "Nepali first" ('I will live and die in Nepal', #586). During his tenure as C-in-C, his army was entirely loyal towards the monarchy. Where was his 'Nepali first' principle at that time? Also when ordinary Nepalis are footing the bills for the army, why isn't it more responsible towards the people? The discriminatory policies and practices have continued for too long and radical reforms are needed in the top-heavy and caste-based Nepali army.

Shamser

BIGGER
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TIMES

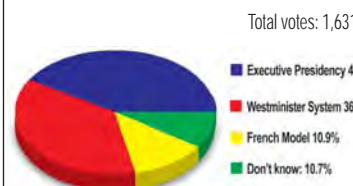
From this issue, *Nepali Times* reverts to its original size when it started 12 years ago. The 'Berliner' format is used in continental Europe by *Le Monde*, *La Repubblica*, *Le Temps*, and in India by *Mint*. Broadsheet newspapers like *The Guardian* and *The Wall Street Journal* have also in recent years moved to this size keeping the convenience of the reading public in mind. This move gives *Nepali Times* a 15 per cent greater print area, and we have used the opportunity to also change the headline and intro fonts to Kozuka, National and Franklin Gothic while retaining Melior for body text. Hope it's easier on your eyes.

Editor



Weekly Internet Poll # 586

Q. What form of governance is best suited for Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll # 587. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the most viable way to carve out federal states in Nepal?



SUBHAS RAI

New Nepal's old school

Kathmandu's powerful are reluctant to step out of coterie politics



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

The parties have once again locked horns and the peace process is stuck. The debate about executive president vs parliament has spilled out into the op-eds with politicians writing opinion themselves or through proxies. Kathmandu's powerful prefers coterie politics and has chosen to disengage from the masses and their needs. A majority of bemused Nepalis don't care either way as long as their lives get better, and their hard-won freedoms are protected.

This week, the NC and UML

coagulated with 16 other parties to pressure the Maoists, who themselves are going through the throes of internal turmoil. The utter disregard shown by both sides for cooperation and compromise goes against the spirit of 2006 people's movement and the mandate of the 2008 interim constitution. The NC fears that an executive head directly elected by the people will lead to a totalitarian president, especially if the person is Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The NC's Ram Sharan Mahat and his cohort in the media and civil society feel the Nepali people are incapable of choosing the right leader and must therefore leave the task to the traditional parliamentary parties. This sums up the up arrogance of the political elites who consider majority of the population as 'cattle-class' with

no aspiration or understanding of democratic norms and culture, not to mention the party that has been in power for most of the period after 1990 has repeatedly let the people down. There is growing anxiety in Kathmandu's power centres about losing their kingmaker role and stepping into the unknown domain of mass politics. Their long writeups in the Nepali media reflect this uncertainty over treading in uncharted territory. This is not so much about whether or not Pushpa Kamal Dahal becomes Nepal's executive head, but who gets to call the shots, the reluctance of kingmakers to let go of what they passionately enjoyed doing for so long. The people no longer want to be told what they should or should not

want. If the people don't want Dahal as leader (either as MP, Prime Minister or executive president) they will not vote for him. If they want him, that is their democratic choice. And if he turns out to be a dictator, the same people will also throw him out. The cynics would do well to look to last year's Arab Spring which uprooted military dictators after decades. In the last two months, after the signing of the seven point agreement, the parties made a remarkable progress on both peace and constitution. There were 200 contentious issues resolved by the dispute resolving sub-committee, and there are only two main ones left on state structure and form of governance. There were many give and takes, compromises along the way

that made it possible for parties to get this far. This is not the time to let anyone's personal or partisan agenda to dominate the discussions. There is no alternative to give-and-take with an intent to come up with a workable model that is acceptable to all and reflects the public good. When the history of New Nepal is written it will feature those who thought outside the box to take Nepal out of the paralysis of the past decades. The absolute monarchy didn't work, the parliamentary system floundered, we now need to devise a stable system with sufficient checks and balances, details are besides the point. It is up to Ram Sharan Mahat and his likes to decide whether they want to be a part of this change or watch history pass them by. ■

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LINEZ/12

Where the quake will hit



RUBEENA MAHATO

The casualties in the 18 September earthquake last year were surprisingly low, but it should have sent shock waves through parts of the government machinery supposed to prepare for the next Big One in Kathmandu

The numbers are chilling:

an 8.0 magnitude quake like the one in 1934 will kill between 100,000 to 200,000 outright, 700,000 will be injured, and 1.5 million made homeless. The airport will suffer damage, half the bridges will collapse, 95 per cent of water mains will be destroyed, there will be no electricity and phones won't work. Nearly all the hospitals will suffer damage, and half

of all schools will collapse. And that is just in Kathmandu Valley.

Most earthquake experts have given up on the government getting its act together quickly enough on enforcing building codes to prevent future earthquakes from killing people. They are focusing on the aftermath: planning for rescue and relief,

but even that will be a daunting challenge.

Even if private homes, offices and apartments can't be refitted to be earthquake resistant, the government and Nepal's international partners are working together to at least strengthen schools and hospitals.

"Retrofitting of schools and hospitals can save thousands

of lives, and that is our focus," explains Surya Prasad Acharya of National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) which is working with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to retrofit Kathmandu Valley schools.

One such is Shri Balkumari School on the outskirts of the city (*pictured above*). On Tuesday, children were all excited at the inauguration of their new building that is supposed to withstand quakes of up to 9.0 intensity. The classroom walls have safety instructions and an evacuation plan.

Kathmandu is woefully unprepared for the next Big One



"We are at least confident that are our students will be safe," says a beaming Nawaraj Kunwar of the Balkumari School Management Committee.

Although the plan is to retrofit 900 schools in Kathmandu Valley in the next five years, NSET estimates there are 60,000 schools around the country with flimsy construction. About 60 per cent of them can be refitted, but 15 per cent need to be demolished and rebuilt from scratch.

The reason for the sense of urgency is that if an

The primary school in Pholey of Taplejung damaged in last September's earthquake (*left*)

Students of Janodaya School in Sainbu taking part in earthquake preparedness drill (*right, overleaf*)

ANURAG ACHARYA

hardest

8.0 magnitude earthquake were to strike during school hours, as many as 100,000 students could be killed and many more injured. More than 17,000 school children were killed in the Pakistan earthquake six years ago, and thousands of children were trapped under shoddily built schools in the 8.0 magnitude earthquake in Sichuan in 2008.

Around the world, schools are used as temporary shelters during natural disasters, but in Nepal it will be schools that will collapse first. Half of all structures that were damaged in East Nepal in September were schools, and the only reason no children died was because the earthquake hit after

school hours. Hospitals will not fare much better. Apart from the Japanese-built TU Teaching Hospital and Patan Hospital, most health facilities will collapse killing thousands of patients and medical workers. Many hospitals don't have a disaster plan, there are no stockpiles of emergency medicines or diesel. The National Blood Bank at Bhrikuti Mandap is so badly built it may be the first to go.

If the earthquake is terrible, the aftermath may be even worse. Survivors will have to deal with dead phones, no emergency services, contaminated water, lack of food, shelter and a poorly prepared government. "If an earthquake were to strike today, there will be no hospitals for the injured to go to," says Pradeep Vaidya, a doctor who is coordinating Hospital Preparedness for Emergency (HOPE).

The government is showing signs of waking up to the danger. It is now working with the international community's National Risk Reduction Consortium for the seismic strengthening of schools and hospitals.

TUTH, Birendra Military, Civil and Patan hospitals are being equipped to deal with an earthquake emergency. The government, the World Health Organisation (WHO), OXFAM, ICRC and others are working to retrofit hospitals, mitigate non-structural risks and stock emergency supplies.

Says Vaidya: "The aim is to have enough water, medicines, and fuel to last us at least for the first few days. We have no choice, we have to be prepared."

nepalitimes.com
A shaken nation, #573
Not if, but when, #536

Peace Corps returns

US officials formally announced in Washington on Wednesday the return of the Peace Corps to Nepal after they were pulled out following an explosion set off at the UAS Information Centre in Gyaneswor in September 2004.

Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator for Asia Nisha Biswal signed an inter-agency agreement to re-establish a Peace Corps program in Nepal. "We are pleased that the government of Nepal has invited Peace Corps volunteers to return and work with local Nepali communities, in collaboration with USAID, once again," said Peace Corps Director Williams.



Since 1962, more than 4,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal, working on projects in the sectors of education, environment and natural resource conservation, health, and community and youth development. The first group of approximately 20 Peace Corps volunteers is scheduled to arrive in Nepal later this year and will largely work in the nutrition sector.

US Ambassador Scott DeLisi said: "We are so very pleased that the Government of Nepal so eagerly worked with us to make this happen. We will have a program with PM Bhattarai and others next week to re-launch the Peace Corps program in Nepal."

nepalitimes.com
Peace Corps pull out, #214
Barry aka Bir Bahadur, #584
Nepali le maya maryo, #584



Time is running out

Retrofitting is expensive and most government schools do not have the resources to do it on their own. But what is more worrying is that there isn't enough time to prepare for the next Big One. Kathmandu has a big earthquake every 75 years, the last in 1934, so the next one is already overdue.

Simple measures like widening exits and stairwells in schools, training teachers and students on first aid safety, search and rescue can save many lives. "The least the government can do is make sure that all the new schools and hospitals follow building codes," Surya Prasad Acharya of NSET says.

The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium has developed a three-year \$120 million strategy for school and hospital retrofitting, emergency preparedness and response, and community activation and has raised half that amount. "Today, the problem is not money, but implementation capacity. And the need for a greater sense of urgency," says the UN's Resident Coordinator, Robert Piper, "time is not on our side."

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

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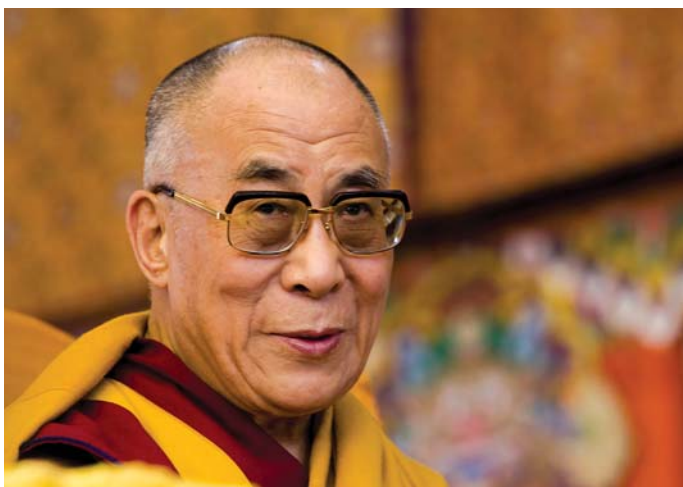
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Mass prayer for world peace

Bodhgaya hosts the latest and possibly largest Buddhist Kalachakra initiation

LINDA KENTRO in BODHGAYA



At least 400,000 people gathered this week in Bodhgaya to participate in the latest and possibly largest Tibetan Buddhist Kalachakra initiation, a ceremony dedicated to world peace.

The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, who won the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize has given the Kalachakra 32 times in nine different countries since 1954.

This year was marked by the attendance of many Chinese Buddhists as well as Tibetans who were granted visas for the event.

Presented in words, painting, sand drawings, and dance forms, the six-colour Kalachakra mandala is a meditational guide. It encompasses the Buddhist ground truth that the self has no inherent and independent existence, realisation of which

can unlock immense creative power.

It also guides the development of bodhicitta, the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. The Dalai Lama lightly suggested that bodhicitta also makes practical sense, as giving up Rs 100 for oneself to gain at least Rs1,000 rupees for self and others would make great business sense as well.

Times
EcoFair
11-12 FEBRUARY 2012

Children's home is also a model for green architecture

BRITTANY SEARLE

Nestled amidst terrace farms in Godavari on the outskirts of Kathmandu is the Ama Ghar, a shelter that doesn't just provide underprivileged children a place to grow but also showcases practical ways to conserve water and energy.

Ama Ghar was founded in 2001 by Sharwan Nepali, who grew up in an orphanage in Kathmandu and was inspired by

his guardian there to set up a shelter for Nepali children like him.

Last November, Ama Ghar moved into its new home which was designed by Bonnie Ellison, who herself grew up in Nepal in the 1960s. She wanted it to be a bright and comfortable home for children but also energy efficient and easy on the utility bills.

"Using our resources wisely first means to be eco friendly but the other good reason is to save money on utilities, which in turn frees up money for other necessities like food and educational expenses," says Ellison, who is affectionately called "Bonnie Aunty" by the children and staff. Ama Ghar doesn't just conserve

resources but is also designed out of necessity because of the shortage of water and power.

The building has a rainwater harvesting system that collects monsoon runoff from its roof, filters and stores it in a 30,000 litre underground cistern. Excess water is used to recharge ground water through a well, or redirected into an irrigation canal so neighborhood farmers can put it to good use.

The shelter has a 2.2 KW photo-voltaic array on the roof that keeps Ama Ghar brightly lit at night while the surrounding settlement is in darkness during power cuts.

"A relay switch flicks the circuit to solar when the power goes off, so we don't have a lights-out problem," Ellison explains. The shelter often uses solar power even when there is electricity from the mains supply to



SMALL FOOTPRINT: Bonnie Ellison (left) who grew up in Nepal as a child is now helping Nepali children grow up in Ama Ghar's new building (right) which is designed to conserve energy and water.





ALL PICS: JAMES GIAMBRONE

The event re-assembled the Tibetan diaspora, Buddhists from across greater Asia, and thousands of others under the blue and white ceilings of a huge tent. At each day's close most devotees struggled to straighten legs that had been crossed for four to five hours, while children ran about in excited release from their struggle to stay still, and elders snoozed against bamboo corral rails.

Tech savvy monks captured and broadcast the live event on mammoth LCD screens. Twice daily, volunteers delivered hot tea and flat breads across an appreciative crowd. Outside the tent more pilgrims sat in orderly rows along the streets working prayer beads.

Tibetan activists disseminated information on disappearances and the state of the environment. Brilliant ethnic costumes were in abundance, including the fine hand-stitched jackets of the Tawang community from Arunachal Pradesh, prime donors for this year's event.

Nearby, high lamas led prayers at the holy Mahabodhi Temple, a World Heritage Site, commemorating the place of Prince Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment into Buddhahood.

At his nearby monastery, the Karmapa, a young Kagyu sect leader with a powerful presence, gave early morning talks with a Zen-like ring, on aligning right intention, firm concentration, and strategic aim for better navigation through a busy and distracting world. 🇳🇵

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सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

the future

save on the utility bill. Ama Ghar also has a decentralised water treatment system that treats waste water through a filtration system. A planted gravel filter treats excess water before it is discharged into the stream flowing nearby. "I used to swim in the Bagmati as a child, it had fish in it," remembers Ellison, "the condition of the Bagmati today

hurts my heart, I don't want our waste to pollute the river."

Water that leaves Ama Ghar is tested regularly by the Environmental and Public Health Organisation that run a government accredited laboratory for testing and environmental analysis. The most recent tests have found that the water is more than suitable to travel back to the river.

Solid waste at Ama Ghar is either composted into fertiliser, or piped into an underground digester which generates methane that can be used for cooking, thus reducing dependence on expensive LPG.

Ellison hopes that the Ama Ghar house can act as a showcase for the valley, encouraging people to take responsibility for their waste. "They can see how simple it is," she says. "We've had a lot of visitors, but we haven't quite figured out how to get the attention of the locals." But, even more importantly, Ama Ghar wants its children to be raised with a value system that emphasizes sustainable living.

Ellison plans on using the building as an educational tool for the children: "The other purpose of our eco systems is to educate our children, who are the future of Nepal as well as our neighbors. Hopefully we can work together as a community and keep our beautiful valley clean." 🇳🇵

www.ama-foundation.org



EVENTS



Beach Volleyball, don't miss the sixth Riverside Springs Beach Volleyball Tournament. *13 to 15 January, Riverside Springs Resort, Kurintar, for more information call Januka at 5544263, 9803789617*



Pranayama Power Yoga, Pranayama brings a month-long yoga session for a healthy start to the new year. *Rs 350 per class, starting from 2 January, 7am to 8pm, 1905, Kantipath, info@pranayama-yoga.com*

Cycle 7: Identity, three photography installations: Navarasa, Ink'd and The Tales of Dirty Feet by talented photographers. *9.30 am to 8pm, 6 January to 15 February, Galleria CUC, Deetya Complex, Maharajgunj*

New Expressions on the Block, an exhibition of paintings by eleven artists. *21 December to 17 January, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4218048, 4438979, www.siddharthaartgallery.com*

Ultimate Digital Photography Workshop, learn everything about photography. *Fees Rs 3000, 7am to 9.30 am, 15 to 24 January, The Image Park (Opposite of Peanuts), New Road, 9841240341, 9841497639*



Australian Musical, don't miss out 'sPlat, a musical production by the Australian company The Style Group. *12 to 13 January, 1pm to 5pm, Russian Cultural Centre, Kamal Pokhari*

Winter Party, warm up your weekend with a great party by Shadow Gurlz and SANK Events. *Tickets Rs 300 (advanced) and Rs 999 (door sales), 14 January, 1pm to 6pm, iClub, Durbar Marg*

New York Underground, a solo performance by Indian actor Murad Ali. *Tickets: Rs 325 (available at Dhokaima Cafe, Chez Caroline, Sol Delicatessen, Nina and Hager), 13 January, 6pm onwards, Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, Shaligram Complex, Jawalakhel, 5536919*

MUSIC

Live Night, groove to the live performance of the band Night. *Tickets Rs 200, 21 January, 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm, Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat*

Classical Music Night, enjoy and appreciate classical music every second day of the Nepali calender. *16 January, 5pm onwards, Baggikhana, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka*

Hope Concert, Bethel Fellowship Trust Nepal and Bishram Ministries Nepal present live performances by Divine Connection and Kutumba. *21 January, 3pm to 6.30 pm, St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel, 9841721736, 9808982171*

DINING

Cafe Kaldi, this famous restaurant serves a great variety of coffee and offers free internet access. *Thamel*



Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. *Thamel, 10am to 10pm, 4701510*



Hankook Sarang, from Bibimbab to Samgyeopsal, Hankook offers a wide range of Korean delicacies at affordable prices. *Thamel (opposite Roadhouse Café)*



Cibo, a sandwich bar at heart, this cafe serves up one of the best sandwiches in town. *Lazimpat*

Cha Cha Café, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. *Thamel*

Pumpnickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread and sandwiches. Experiment with its goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. *Thamel, 7.30am to 7pm, 4259185*



Chikusa, enjoy a cup of freshly ground coffee with syrupy pancakes, waffles and crepes. *Thamel*

Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfast offerings and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals. *Naxal, 4424303*



Flavor's Cafe and Restaurant, whether it is stuffed eggplants or chocolate mousse cake, Flavor's promises a delicious meal. *Bouddhanath*

Imago Dei, be it casual hangouts or business meetings, Imago Dei is the place for you. *Nag Pokhari*

Sol Delicatessen, a range of gourmet food that will satiate the most refined palates. *10am to 6pm (closed on Mondays), Babar Mahal Revisited, 4216433, Soldelicatessen@gmail.com*



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HIMAL

KHABARPATRIKA

15-30 January

From this issue Himal Khabarpatrika comes out regularly in bigger size and full glossy paper.

COVER STORY
Unity in Kathmandu's diversity

EDITORIAL
Unaddressed differences

REPORTS
Bulldozed by the state
Unwell UML
Terai's others

PHOTO ESSAY
Taking a holy dip
Football foot-brawl



Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, scrumptious panini, sandwiches and more lunch delicacies starting at Rs 199. Manny's also offers a satisfying assembly of a unique continental cuisine. Open for lunch and dinner and a Tapas Bar for you to unwind and relax. *Jawalakhel Shaligram Complex, 5536919*



Cafe Mitra, serving new creative dishes with old classics which leave you wanting more. *Thamel*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Bar, superb pizza and free wi-fi with a perfect view of the Boudhanath stupa. *Boudha, 2130681*

Cafe U, a homely ambiance with a fusion of Japanese and Filipino delights. *Closed on Tuesdays, Sanepa*

Lazy Gringo, one of the best places in town to sample Mexican cuisine. Free refills of refreshing lemonades won our hearts, but the food is mighty fine too. *Jawalakhel*

OR2K, one of the few vegetarian restaurants in the Valley, its Middle Eastern platter is delicious and the cocktails are to die for. *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4422097*

Magic Beans, coffee, cakes and sandwiches with a magical touch and taste. *Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, 4230914*

GETAWAYS

Fulbari Resort, enjoy the scenic view as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. *Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days, Pokhara, 4461918, 4462248, resv@fulbari.com.np, sales@fulbari.com.np*

Amtrip Adventures, be a part of the Amtrip Bungy or Swing Jump Event. *Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until the end of January, Amtrip, Naxal, 4444690, 4444820, www.amtrip.com.np*

Nepathya on the road

Nepathya is all set to embark on the second leg of their 'Shantiko lagi Shichya' concert tour. The tour which started on 3 January has garnered positive reviews so far and has been performing to packed auditoriums. Through their concerts, Nepathya aim on raising awareness about education as a foundation for long-term peace in the country.

All proceeds will be donated to local schools in each respective area and used to build recreational and educational facilities. Like earlier years, Nepathya has been collaborating with nepa-laya and local organisations to put up its shows.

Tickets are priced at Rs 300, Rs 500 and Rs 1000, 3 to 20 January, 3pm onwards (Gates open at 2pm)



13 January	Butwal,Rupendehi	Milan Chalchitra Mandir
15 January	Waling, Syangja	Subhas Chalchitra Mandir
17 January	Baglung	Puja Chalchitra Mandir
19 January	Pokhara, Kaski	Pokhara Sabhagriha
21 January	Gorkha	Himali Chalchitra Mandir

Chongqing Fast Food



Chinatown has a new address and at its heart is a hole in the wall that is easy to miss. If you're lucky to chance upon Chongqing Fast Food in Thamel (hint: the sign above it refers to a different city due east), don't be discouraged by the failing plastic swivel chairs, the saccharine posters of Caucasian toddlers or the Chinese-only-speaking service. Take a seat if you can find one and if Mandarin isn't your forte, point for the picture book and poke fun all you can at curious translations of Chinese dishes like 'Spicy The Fish',



'Meat to Cook Lunch' or 'And Pulled a Red Leather' because before you know it you'll be coming back week after week for the most authentic and by far the tastiest north of the border cuisine in Kathmandu. Kuàizi! (chopsticks) For set meals the Double Fried Pork Slices, fried bacon, or the Kung Pao Chicken, diced chicken, vegetables and peanuts, served with bottomless rice are reliable lunch values at Rs 140 each (don't be offended, plated sets are meant to come with a spoon). Fúwùyuan! (waiter) Better



PICS: MARCO POLLO

yet, schmooze with a stranger and go à la carte or family-style dining. Favored sharing dishes include the sweet and sour pork slices (Rs 380) or the pork with sautéed agarics, a wobbly 'wood-ear' fungus that holds a slight crunch (Rs 320). Málà! (lit. 'numbing and spicy') The pairing of huàjiāo, or Sichuan pepper similar to the Nepali timur, and chili pepper is a cold-cock combination and a key ingredient in the traditional Sichuan má là hot pot. Try the beef or pork variety at Rs 300. But fools beware! Hot pot is not a soup to be sipped, but a fishing bowl for eager kuàizi.

Mápó dòufu! (spicy tofu) For not so meat, not so veg, try the mapo tofu, the popular Sichuan dish of beancurd set in a bean-based sauce and bright red suspension and finely minced pork. Chī sù! (lit. 'eat non-meat food') For vegetarians Chongqing Fast Food is a savory den. Go with my personal favourite, the stir-fried green beans ganbian siji dou (Rs 140), long green beans married with that same tingling pearls of huàjiāo. Other Chinese vegetables are available perfect with a bowl of steamed short-grain

rice like bok choy and water morning glory (misspelled as 'quick fried mater convolvulus', if in season). Mífàn! (rice) Rice is calculated by person at Rs 30. So thapnus to your belly's desire; regulars usually refill themselves. Mǎidān! (bill) The year-old Chongqing Fast Food makes a mockery of highbrow establishments in Thamel. Its frill-free setting doesn't deter its generous servings of Sichuan and Chongqing specialties at an affordable bill. 

Marco Pollo

A few shops north of Chikusa, look for red and blue columns, opposite the Utse Hotel in Thamel



Elephantiasis



DHANYANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Lymphatic Filariasis, endemic in Nepal, is in the news this week. It is a mosquito-borne illness like malaria, Japanese encephalitis and dengue fever.

The parasite (*Wucheria bancrofti*) which the mosquito injects into humans is elusive, and Dracula-like appears only at night in the human host's blood circulation. Clinically, the presentation of lymphatic filariasis can range from being asymptomatic to the full-blown elephantiasis, (Hatipaile in Nepali).

In Nepal the disease also presents itself as a hydrocele (water- filled scrotum) and keeps surgeons busy. But this is one of the more common, easier operations that senior doctors will delegate to the lowly interns. Although lymphatic filariasis is not usually a life-threatening disease, clearly it is a nuisance at the very least.

The good news is that there is very effective medicine (diethylcarbamazine, DEC) for the prevention and control of

this condition. In addition, all the precautions against mosquito bites (using mosquito nets to insect repellents) also apply to this disease.

In Nepal and other countries of endemicity, community-based intervention is the current approach to eliminating lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem. The rationale behind this approach is that



mass annual distribution of the drug, given once every year for about five years will profoundly suppress the bug in human hosts. If the suppression is sustained then transmission (spread of the disease) by mosquitos is interrupted.

This community intervention

campaign was helped with a pledge in 2000 by two pharmaceutical companies (Glaxo SmithKline and Merck) to donate the drug to eliminate the disease coordinated by WHO. It is reported that over 700 million people in over 50 countries have participated and the disease has been eliminated in certain defined areas. Eliminating the disease

is clearly an important reason for the present mass drug administration drive in Nepal. DEC has been available for decades and its side-effects (mild fever, chills, nausea, headache) in some patients are well known but short-lived. The community-wide mass treatment program is being implemented to treat the entire at-risk population.

So for people in many parts of Nepal including Kathmandu, if you are 2 years, not pregnant, and have no chronic illnesses and other contraindications, it may be a good idea to consider taking the drug. In a smart move, albendazole which cures worm infestations in the intestine (a widespread problem in Nepal) is also being given by the government at the same time with DEC.

Melancholia, Another Earth

The infinite possibility of science fiction



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

With this issue, Sophia Pande starts a new weekly DVD review column, Must See, in Nepali Times.

Two beautiful tragic blonde women, hitherto unknown planets that suddenly and eerily veer into view of the Earth, alarmingly dysfunctional family dynamics. These are the uncanny similarities between Lars Von Trier's Melancholia, and Mike Cahill's Another Earth both of which were, oddly enough, released within months of each other in 2011.

Kirsten Dunst as Justine, in a heart-wrenching performance, is a luminous but slightly unstable bride who behaves more and more erratically during her wedding reception just after she sights a malevolent star that later becomes the planet Melancholia. Justine's behaviour



devolves as Melancholia gets closer and closer to Earth, and the film chronicles her struggles with her family and with the inevitable existential crisis that arises as she contemplates the imminent end of our planet and every living creature on it.

Another Earth starring the newcomer Brit Marling, who also co-wrote the screenplay, starts initially with a slightly more mundane catastrophe. Marling's character, Rhoda Williams, has a sparkling future. She is beautiful, bright, and has just been accepted into MIT. Driving home at night after

celebrating her acceptance, she is looking out of the window at the 'other' Earth that has just been glimpsed orbiting the sun when she slams head-on into a car with horrific results. She kills a toddler and his mother, leaving the father injured, but alive. Three years later, after serving time for manslaughter, she emerges, silent and solipsistic.

The other Earth has now been confirmed as a mirror image of ours, hidden previously by its slightly different orbit of the sun. Rhoda slowly awakens to the possibility that there might be 'another', better, luckier version of herself on this mirror planet. Just as she starts to obsess with getting herself there, she also starts to stalk, and even more disturbingly, fall in love with the survivor of the car accident.

Neither film has much real science in it. The other Earth, and Melancholia are devices, albeit visually gorgeous ones, used by Von Trier, and the Cahill-Marling duo to examine the behaviour of ordinary people trying to deal with their very human miseries when suddenly they are faced with cosmic events that alter the very fabric of what we believe is possible. This is the potential genius that lies behind the



construct of science fiction. In the hands of master film-makers like Andrei Tarkovsky, films like "Solaris" using extraordinary "scientific" events to frame the human condition, are able to subtly pose deep philosophical questions about our understanding of

fundamental things like family, humanity, love, death – all the big questions. Science fiction at its pinnacle (think Avatar) succeeds by maximising the visual potential of cinema. Its sole responsibility is to open up our imaginations. I wonder if any one, anywhere, Kathmandu or elsewhere, after watching the planets rise into the night sky in these two brave new films wouldn't wonder at the existence of another earth, another planet, other life, and endless possibilities.

Both films are available in Thamel or at Suwal on dvd.



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



FRI	SAT	SUN
16-01	16-01	17-02



ANA

AIR HEAD: After a 20 year gap, Nepal Airlines landed a Twin Otter for a test flight at Baglung airport last week and plans to start regular flights to the central Nepal town.



BIKRAM RAI

FIRE FIRE: A young boy looks on as locals and students try to put out fire at a house in Dallu before the arrival of a fire brigade.



BIKRAM RAI

ROCK ON: 1974 AD performs at the 15th Hits FM Music Awards on Friday at the Army Officer's Club.

मानवीर हत्याले उठाएको प्रश्न



Truths, half-truths and damn lies

How easily an entire nation can be fooled by a few unexamined facts



THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

As the country lurches from one scandal-of-the-week to the next, there is a sense that this is a government that only reacts to the media. There is always a controversy brewing up in national politics, and reporters feel safe in the knowledge that they don't have to go after the news, the news will come to them.

The politicians have figured this out, and know just how to spin a story so their pronouncements at the Reporters' Club get prominent placement in tomorrow morning's paper or the evening news bulletin. Not happy with that, top politicians are now all regularly writing lengthy opinion pieces in the op-eds: mostly faulting others, but never themselves.

Last month, Dalit lawmakers across party lines obstructed the House over the murder of Manvira Sunar in a remote village of remote Kalikot district. They demanded the government to punish the killers, a Dalit group closed down Dang to demand the dead man be declared a martyr and his family awarded the

mandatory Rs 1 million compensation.

The Prime Minister, perhaps the most hapless in history, has been giving in to everyone's demand to save his coalition. He was quick to agree to this one too. Editorials and articles were written shaming the government and 'elite' groups for discrimination. Sunar's case fit nicely with the discourse of continued marginalisation of those at the bottom of the caste ladder. It had all the makings of a good story: a member of a historically ostracized community was 'lynched' in one of the most neglected parts of the country at a time when a new constitution was being drafted to stop precisely this kind of thing from happening. Some went even further to blame the state for deliberately hushing up Sunar's murder because it took place in a Bahun-Chhettri dominated area.

All very normal, except that the truth was slightly more complicated than that. A human rights investigation showed Sunar and his murderers were both Maoists, they were good pals, often ate and drank together, caste was no bar in their past. On the day of the murder, both were drunk and got into a fight.

But none of this fit the accepted narrative, so the media, activists, parliament and government all fell hook, line and sinker. But the biggest failing was of the media, the role of which is

always to exert skepticism, play the devil's advocate and an adversarial role especially in stories that just sound too pat. 'Everyone loves a good famine' is the title of a media book by Indian journalist P Sainath. One can say the same thing, it seems, about murder.

A credible INSEC investigation concluded that Sunar wasn't killed for touching the fireplace, and although derogatory casteist remarks were made during the drunken brawl, it was not the main reason for the murder. The case, tragic as it is, goes on to show again how easily an entire nation can be fooled by a few unexamined facts.

The mainstream media failed in its duty of cross-checking facts, and this is not an isolated case. A lazy media parrots the loudest voice, the hottest quarrel, the most controversial headline-grabbing incident. Over time such untruths hurt the media's own credibility, the culture of healthy skepticism and undermine democracy.

When facts are bent to suit one's argument, real issues are left to languish while public debate is distracted by issues that are not just misinformed, but plain wrong. The media then becomes a part of the problem, instead of offering solutions and showing the way forward.

Justice for Ani

Sankhuwasabha District Court has sentenced four rapists of a Buddhist nun to 12 years in prison. Raj Kumar Limbu, Bhuwan Korangi, Shobhit Magar and Abhishek Magar were held guilty and another accomplice was handed a six-year jail term.

The 21-year-old apprentice at the Laligurans Rimthen Chholing Boudha Gumba in Sankhuasabha was travelling from Khandbari to Dharan on 24 June, 2011 when the bus had to make an unscheduled night stop at Sabha Khola because of a flooded river. As most of the lodges were occupied, the driver and his crew convinced the nun to spend the night in the bus, where they repeatedly raped her.



BY HER SIDE: Krishna Tamang tends to his daughter at the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu after her rape in June.

They also stole the Rs 130,000 she was carrying that her sister Kabita Tamang, had sent home for constructing a new house in the village. When she gained consciousness the next morning, the nun found herself tied up inside the bus. Members of the Limbuwan Volunteers were alerted and caught the culprits who were handed over to Chainpur police.

Seven months after the incident, the nun is still recovering from physical and psychological trauma at a hospital in Kathmandu, while her family struggles to keep up with bills. Having lost his house during September's earthquake, Krishna Tamang has no money to support his daughter and the nun's aunt, Chandra Maya Tamang, is relying on loans to cover hospital costs.

In Nepal, the maximum sentence for rape is 10 years. However, Kabita believes the minimum punishment for rapists should be life-imprisonment. "Nepal's law is not strong enough to deter people from committing such heinous crimes," she told Nepali Times, "until there is stricter punishment more innocent lives will be ruined."

Dewan Rai

nepalitimes.com

'I wanted to murder whoever did this to my daughter', #563

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Development without government

ANURAG ACHARYA
in RAMECHHAP



Ramechhap district may be only 100 km to the east of Kathmandu, but it was till recently as remote as far-western Nepal.

Villagers had to travel three days on foot to reach Manthali, the district capital. The nearest roadhead was 70 km north in Charikot of Dolakha. Soon, after the bridge over the Sunkosi is built, Ramechhap will be connected to the Sindhuli Highway and Kathmandu will be only four hours away. And all 55 VDCs of Ramechhap are now connected by roads.

However, despite the improvement in connectivity, Ramechhap is still lagging behind many neighbouring districts in education, nutrition and child survival. Things were much worse in 1984,

The Ramechhap model offers valuable lessons in community empowerment

CONGRATULATIONS

BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE Om Bikram Bista Gahro Paryo	BEST ROCK COMPOSITION Albatross Chaina	BEST MALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE Narendra Pyasi Maya O Maya
BEST PERFORMANCE BY A GROUP OR DUO WITH VOCAL Albatross Chaina	BEST ARRANGEMENT Amul Karki Dhali Haasi Haasi	POP / ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR 1974 AD Aath Aathaara
FOLK RECORD OF THE YEAR Tulsi Parajuli Patanko Paatalo Chiura	BEST COMPOSITION Ashish Abiral Maya O Maya	ALBUM OF THE YEAR Rajesh Payal Rai Rai is King
BEST NEW ARTIST Seema Sangraula K Nai Runuchha	BEST VOCAL COLLABORATION Anju Panta / Narendra Pyasi Jaam Kyare	FOLK ALBUM OF THE YEAR Rup Kumar Rai Ram Sailli
BEST SONG ORIGINALLY RECORDED FOR A MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK Suresh Adhikari Kasle Choryo Mero Maan	BEST FEMALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE Puspha Gurung Rog Ho Ki Yo Dosh Ho	BEST ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE Albatross Chaina
	BEST POP COMPOSITION Jems Pradhan Gahro Paryo	SONG OF THE YEAR Kali Prasad Rijal Nadi Tarera
	BEST FEMALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE Sangeeta Rana Pradhan Haasi Haasi	RECORD OF THE YEAR Narendra Pyasi Maya O Maya

Only Mustangs in Mustang

The prime minister has chosen to drive around in a Mustang, but in Mustang passengers have no choice but to ride on syndicate-operated Mustangs. Ever since the Beni-Jomsom track was opened four years ago, tourists and locals are at the mercy of a transportation cartel.

In October, green-plated tourist jeeps were forced to stop on the road and terrified tourists and pilgrims were forced to walk. Other vehicles had their tyres deflated by locals affiliated with the Muktinath Bus and Jeep Transportation Committee which has a monopoly on the route. Like other bus syndicates in various parts of the country, this one has also earned notoriety for its intimidation tactics and has forced other operators from carrying passengers to Muktinath, Kagbeni and Upper Mustang.

The cartel operates 20 mainly Mustang jeeps daily from Pokhara to Mustang and has arbitrary pricing with drivers often charging as much as they wish. The syndicate has been defiant despite opposition from local passengers and tour agencies.



NO GREEN LIGHT FOR GREEN PLATE: Tourist vehicles like this one in Jomsom have to pay a hefty fee to local syndicates for the privilege of plying on the Pokhara-Jomsom route.

The syndicate's secretary Raju Lalchan admits he has to intimidate other operators and stop them. "How else am I going to run my business? My workers will be out of jobs," Lalchan's argument is that since the army built the road, there has been no maintenance by the Road Department, and the syndicate has to spend money to keep the highway operational. "We maintain the road, so why should others benefit from it?" he asks.

But the violent tactics and threats have affected the inflow of Indian pilgrims to Muktinath as well as tourists on their way to Upper Mustang. Says local tourism entrepreneur Chandra Bastakoti: "There used to be hundreds of tourists, now it has gone down to a trickle, and local passengers are put off by the high ticket price."

Despite a Supreme Court ban, syndicates are prevalent throughout the country. Mustang's CDO Yogendra Pandey admits that the bus cartel is not conducive to business, but says he also needs to keep the peace in his district, which probably means the syndicate owners have powerful political connections and are untouchable. Whatever the case, the national government and local administration are not fulfilling their regulatory role in the transportation sector.

Hari Devi Rokaya in Jomsom



BIKRAM RAI

My way or no way

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 8 January

नागरिक

The people have been let down once more in their desire to see closure of the constitution and peace process. The Maoists have again allowed their internal power struggle to spill into the national arena even while the PLA camps were starting to be decommissioned.

The Maoists have gone back on their previous agreement and set forth the condition that they will not move on the integration and rehabilitation of their fighters unless the other parties agree to their proposal for a new state structure (under a directly-elected executive president). This is a clear indication that they haven't given up on their goal of state capture and the setting up of a totalitarian state. The Nepali Congress has concluded that the Maoists are trying to write a new constitution with a gun pointed

at everyone's head. Even Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who has shown flexibility in the recent past is now towing a hard line, and the opposition has reason to be worried.

The Maoists could be trying to delay the process and haggle over the future form of governance. Some even reason that if the Maoists are able to delay the process beyond the 31 May deadline, the constitution itself will be void and it will be easier for them to establish a totalitarian regime.

Whenever there is an agreement on the constitution or the peace process, Maoist leaders suddenly start having a public disagreement about it. They have endless meetings and leak their positions to the press and then they start dismantling the agreement point by point.

All this could be because, the reasoning goes, even if the constitution is written

and fresh elections are held the Maoists will be unable to win a majority without guns or violent behaviour. Furthermore, there may be investigations into war crimes and human rights abuses.

Whatever the cause, the Maoists and other parties must work towards ending the current stalemate over the forms of governance. On one hand, a directly elected presidential system neither ensures political stability nor will it necessarily lead to an authoritarian regime. On the other hand, a parliamentary system has provided stability in many countries. The real reason why some systems fail and others succeed has to do with the style of governance and whether or not the political parties show a democratic culture. Political leaders now need to weigh all the available options and resolve this matter sensibly.

Comrades no more?

Netra Panthi in *Nayapatrika*, 7 January

नयाँ पत्रिका

Three decades of camaraderie between Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Ram Bahadur Thapa, has spiralled into bitter political rivalry. Dahal and Thapa who have been friends since their days at Rampur Agriculture Campus, were seen ignoring each other at a recent central committee meeting, where Dahal communicated with Thapa through his brother.

Enmity between the two has existed since the early years of the Maoist insurgency and Thapa's disapproval of Dahal's influence within the party and his leadership role during the war is no secret. However, Dahal's decision to hand over the keys of weapons containers in

September 2011 without consulting Thapa, the party's military chief, worsened their relationship.

The following conversation between Dahal and Thapa during the rebellion gives an insight into the duo's volatile bond. "We grew up together, worked together but you seem to have forgotten the past," Thapa said, to which Dahal responded sternly,

"You are talking of 20 years back. At present, I am the party chairman and you are a central committee member."

Despite the rifts, Thapa never took any sides and remained loyal to the party to prevent a split. "I am not a peak, I don't want to be. I am the foundation that supports the

peak," Thapa once said at the Chunwang meeting in 2005. But Dahal's indifference and Bhattarai and Baidya's constant criticism seem to have pushed Thapa to finally join the hardliners.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



Trophy: Power
Football: Constitution, Peace, Consensus, Cooperation, Reconciliation

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in *Rajdhani*, 7 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Prachanda is a traitor of communist revolution.”

Maoist leader CP Gajurel at a press meeting in Nuwakot.

Prez or premier?

Interview with Kantipur editor, Sudheer Sharma, and Nagarik editor, Narayan Wagle, on *BBC Nepali Service*, 7 January



BBC Nepali: Why do you think Nepal needs a directly-elected executive president?

Sudheer Sharma: The parliamentary system after the 1990 movement was the main reason for political instability in the country. A directly-elected executive head of state, whether a president or prime minister, will provide much needed stability and kick start the stalled development process. There is no guarantee that the new system will succeed, but given the ineffectiveness of the past system, it makes sense for us to adopt one where an elected government can at least complete its full tenure.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

Narayan Wagle: Before calling the parliamentary system in Nepal a failure, we should remember that it was never allowed to function properly in the first place. People argue that the parliamentary system has bred corruption, but there are legal provisions within it to punish the guilty. On the one hand, leaders talk about decentralising governance and making it more inclusive, and on the other they advocate for a centralised system with a directly elected executive head.

SS: Although corruption is a serious concern, the inherently destabilising nature of the parliamentary systems is its greatest drawback. Before the royal takeover in 2005, we had 10 governments in 12 years, and given our deep-rooted coalition culture, the trend is likely continue unless we have a better system. And there is no reason why decentralisation of power at the local level cannot take place alongside effective governance at the centre. Regardless of whether the executive is directly elected or elected through parliament, its functions must be well-defined and it should be able to carry out its responsibilities without the political bickering that we see today.



NW: At a time when the general consensus seems to favor a federal system with a mixed electorate, it is wrong to assume that supporters of a Westminster system want to maintain the status quo. Besides, if we adopt a parliamentary system it will certainly be different than the previous one, because fundamental changes will be introduced. If we look at the experience of other countries, many of them have prospered irrespective of their form of governance.

SS: Once we finish writing the constitution, we will have a new state structure in place and to ensure that changes are institutionalised, we need an effective enforcement mechanism. However, we also need sufficient checks and balances to avoid the concentration of power in one office.

NW: The last two decades of instability were not due to the failure of the system, but rather the failure of political parties. If our biggest concern is stability in politics, then let us not allow the opposition to bring 'no confidence' motions against the government for a certain period.

SS: The culture of politics in a parliamentary system is preoccupied with numbers and anybody can manipulate this system to gain an indirect majority in the parliament.

NW: Parliament is a place for numbers, and those who can convince the representatives with their arguments will have majority support. I see nothing wrong with that. At least such an executive is accountable to a parliament, unlike a directly-elected executive who is only accountable to people on the streets.

SS: It is wrong to assume that a directly-elected executive will necessarily lead to an authoritarian regime. There is a vibrant opposition in the legislature and an impeachment provision to ensure accountability. It's only a question of how that executive is elected.

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All for one, one for all

So Comrade Wen is coming after all. Maybe we need to update our wish list for all the goodies we want from China besides a new Pokhara Airport, trans-Himalayan railway to Lumbini and an Outer Ring Road. Since the Nepal Police is getting new surveillance equipment, the Ass has drawn up a list of items we want the Chinese to give us for to apprehend perpetrators who are using ever-innovative techniques to smuggle cocaine in mackerel cans, heroin in body cavities, sandalwood in ambulances and dollar bills inside underwears:

1. Endoscopy machine, 3
2. Can openers, 150
3. Full body scanners, 15
4. Breathalyser sets, 250
5. A new set of office furniture for the Bhaktapur District Court



Rumour is going around that Kaji Naran Kamred once again risks having Wen Jiabao cancel his visit because he deliberately

leaked a new date for the rescheduled visit. Apparently he wanted to buy time for his govt as Madhesi parties get ready to jump ship in droves. It'll probably work, since no one is going to dare overthrow the government just before the Chinese PM arrives. That would be really embarrassing.



The political promiscuity these days has broken all national and world records. Everyone is jumping into bed with everyone else. We thought the Maobuddies and the Madhesi made an odd couple, but look at what is happening to the love triangle within the Baddies. First, BRB got RBT and MBK for a secret rendezvous at the Siddharth Cottage in Dhobikhola to bad mouth PKD. This led to RBT refusing to date PKD, and PKD had to send his younger brother as emissary to try to placate Comrade Cloud. Now, Lotus Flower has turned the tables against Red Flag

and is holding hands with Comrade Kiran again.

Chairman Awestruck proves the old adage: 'there are no permanent enemies and no permanent jilted lovers' in politics. Have to admire the man's single-minded tenacity to achieve his goal of Executioner President. He has no qualms about holding the peace process hostage to get the prize, and



seeing PM BRB as an obstacle, he has now decided to go back to the hardline fold. Apparently Comrade Overwhelming has denied he wants to be a new "Raja", but he said he didn't mind being a "Raja-pakse".



The Baddies are in government, and they are threatening to revolt. Against whom? Even Comrade Dina seems to be confused which side he is on anymore. At a Baddie meeting the other day the Re-education Minister got a bit carried away and called for the Prime Minister to step down.

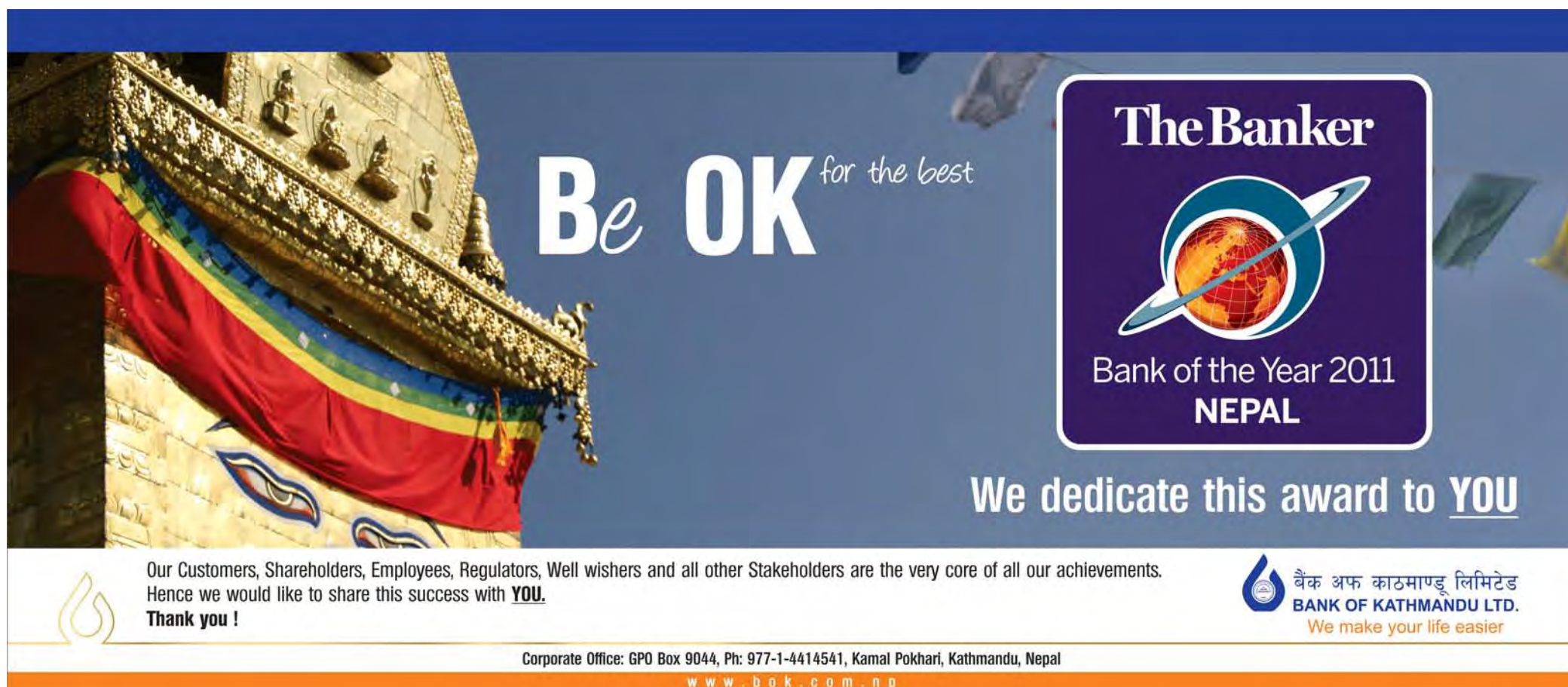


Chairman Shock and Awe now seems to be past caring whether he ticks off the Injuns anymore, at a party meeting last week he got so carried away he equated himself with BP Koirala because, he said, "we were both removed by the Southern Power". He probably thought this would endear him to the Muzungu.

Since the Kangresis have refused to come around on directly-elected executive, the Baddies have instructed their gorillaz to stay put on integration. With the freezing cold and acute power shortage, PM Baburo is feeling a bit under the weather, and is finding it hard to fight back a clamour for his resignation. But what's with our PM? He gets sick everytime he goes to his home district of Gorkha. Although this week it was apparently because he attended a photo-op for Elephantitis, and took the tablets as a symbolic gesture. He shouldn't have swallowed them.



No Oil Corporation(NOC) celebrated its 42nd birthday this week but there was no party. Apparently, the invited guests demanded jerry cans full of petrol instead of cake.

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