

An advertisement for a sale. At the top, there are two horizontal bars: a dark blue one on the left with the word 'trèsmode' in white lowercase letters, and a teal one on the right with the word 'Catwalk' in white lowercase letters. Below these bars, the words 'End of Season' are written in small white capital letters. Underneath that, the word 'sale' is written in large, white, lowercase letters. Below 'sale', the text 'UPTO 60% OFF' is written in white capital letters. At the bottom, there is a dark grey horizontal bar with the words 'SHOE · A · HOLICS' in large, bold, orange capital letters. Below this bar, the text 'Pulchowk Redefined, Below Laxmi Bank, Pulchowk 5524812' is written in black text.

TWO LEGS GOOD

For committed revolutionaries who joined the Maoist party in the early 1990s, there must be a profound sense of disillusionment as they watched their leaders on the stage on 1 February as the party marked the anniversary of the war.

Many of them became Maoists because they were convinced that parliamentary democracy was not bringing about the transformational change in state structure to dismantle a feudal monarchy. They had seen structural violence at election time in the mid-western hills, and were convinced that democracy was just a way for the feudal elites to shuffle the cards every four years through elections. Inspired by Mao Zedong's teachings, they concluded that an armed struggle to overthrow the state was the only way to liberate the country.

Many of us often ask ourselves whether the 16,000 Nepali lives lost, and the cost in delayed development were worth it. The Maoist comrades argue that without the war, the monarchy could never have been removed, and the country would never have been turned into a federal democratic republic.

May be. But it is also true that what the war could not

Prolonging this volatile transition any longer will open the possibility of an implosion within the Maoist party, and unleash an Orwellian dystopia.

achieve in ten years was attained in 19 days of largely peaceful street protests. The 2006 people's movement represents a moral victory for non-violent political struggle. Those gains are being frittered away.

It is what followed 2006 that must be making some committed Maoists, including those who were willing to kill and be killed in the frontlines, wonder how things went so badly wrong. The state decided to compensate the ex-guerrillas for their re-assimilation into society by giving them some pocket money, but their own party is taking it away from them.

We all knew that the battle-hardened fighters were never in the 'cantonments', they became the dreaded YCL. Now, the YCL wants its pound of flesh too, and there is a strong possibility the estimated Rs 2 billion compensation for them is going to be diverted from state coffers as well.

But what must be the most disheartening for those driven by a genuine desire to liberate the people is the sight of their party bosses being corrupted by money and power. Luxurious mansions, liquor parties, kickbacks and corruption, cheating one's own cadre: it is almost an exact real-life reenactment of *Animal Farm*.

Senior leaders of a party that launched a revolution to overthrow a feudal centralised Khas state and replace it with autonomous federated provinces for ethnic

minorities, it turns out, were just using it as a slogan to recruit cannon fodder for the war. Some of the most vociferous opponents of ethnic federalism are now the Maoists themselves.

Reckless political brinkmanship has pushed this country closer to a communal conflagration, while competing territorial claims are leading to violence and factional confrontation. It is now looking like the interim constitution may even have to be the new constitution. Ethnic federalism has become just too hot to handle, and there is no way a directly-elected presidential system is going to go through the CA.

The root of the problem lies in the lack of trust between the Maoists and the rest, and the main reason for which is the party's continued adherence to goals like violent state capture. If the Maoists can convince the other parties that they have once and for all turned a new leaf, demonstrate that they now swear by democracy, pluralism and free elections, there will be closure.

Failure to do so will prolong this volatile transition, open the possibility of an implosion within the Maoist party itself and unleash an Orwellian dystopia.



BIKRAM RAI

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

OPPORTUNITY COST

I thought chronic load shedding will last until 2015 plus a year or two ('Opportunity cost', Editorial, #591). But now two *Nepali Times* articles are saying the new optimistic hurdle is 2020. Do we hold our collective breath until then?

Here and there

- Anyone who expects good governance will be disappointed in a new Nepal. We have many things in Nepal from load-shedding to loot-sharing because we have an inclusive assembly. Inclusive in Nepal means including kidnapers, murderers, and the power hungry.

Anonymous

STORM

Columns like this (A gathering storm', #591) by Anurag Acharya will only widen the gap between the 'pahadis' and 'madhesis'. I think someone needs to remind the writer that hundreds of villages in the hills and mountains also lack roads, schools, electricity, drinking water and sanitation just like the Madhes. Should the hill and mountain people also severe ties with the state? These are national issues not regional. Also how does Anurag propose we convince the Madeshis that they are not second-class citizens? Aren't they getting equal privileges (if not more) in Nepal these days anyway?

Sandmand

- Experience proves that empowering the Madhesi politicians

has not empowered the Madhesi people, and this is true for other communities as well. The politicians want to hide all their failures and corruption behind slogans for ethnic autonomy. And by inciting people to focus solely on ethnic issues, they are taking away attention from other important concerns like the lack of jobs, security, water, electricity etc. It is understandable that Nepal is all over the country, not just the Madhes, are getting angrier at the political leadership's inability to focus on the real problems. So if there is going to be a storm it will happen not for ethnic reasons, but because even the basic needs of the people are not being addressed. And it will be a much bigger storm than the one envisioned by this writer.

Dev

- Some selfish Madhesi leaders are playing with the sentiments of innocent Madhesis to grab their votes. It's not a crisis of identity, it's a greed for power and money. In Nepal, poverty is everywhere, so why are we only talking about the Madhes?

Vikash Lama

- Whenever there are discussions about the Madhes, we first accuse all Madhesis of being Indians and then we go on to blame India for all our troubles and our inability to get out of this rut. Yes, our southern neighbour has meddled with our internal politics and made decisions that have



harmd Nepal. But this is also our own fault. Since we have zero political and economic stability, we are absolutely voiceless on the international front. So let's stop spewing hatred against our own people (Madhesis) or our bigger neighbours (India).

Icare

- I mostly agree with Anurag Acharya. The Madhes justifiably feels estranged from the country, and we need to work hard to make them feel Nepali too. The Pahadis need to get rid of this "they came from south and got citizenship" mentality. We are talking about people who are dying of cold and who have been trapped in poverty since generations. However, Madhesi leaders themselves need to respect their own heterogeneity. The struggle is not so much for identity but for equity and more share in national decision making.

Bahun friend of Madhesis

ENERGY EMERGENCY

Looks like our government has no plans to get us out of this energy crisis ('Energy emergency', Dewan Rai, #591). If the state can provide subsidies for fossil fuel, why not on alternative energy sources like solar power and wind power? Should ordinary Nepalis expect to live in complete darkness and with no gas for the next decade?

Indra Giri

- The best option to get out of the present mess is to deploy two medium-size atomic plants for around 10 years. We should build as many hydroelectric plants as possible and then decommission the nuclear project. A medium-sized atomic plant would take about two years to start production and we can outsource surplus electricity to US or French companies.

Dhruva Lal Karna

- Solar is the stopgap measure for Nepal. It will take 10 years to build enough hydro-capacity for the country under best circumstances. Most households in the country can generate enough power for home use via solar. The panels, batteries and equipment aren't cheap: up to one lakh for a rural home, and as much as ten times that for a modern house in the city. A 50 per cent government subsidy for solar installations would pay off in 10 years in savings on diesel, better industrial productivity, and would help keep the lights on everywhere.

John

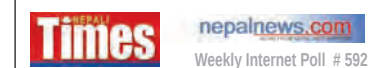
SQUARE ONE

Both the UN and International IDEA elites now blame Nepali elites for the mess they created with their complete ignorance of Nepali ground reality, history and culture ('Back to square one?', Interview with Yash Ghai and Jill Cottrell, #591). They seem to think that constitutions are like a value-free and history-free piece of capitalist merchandise that can be marketed globally with MBA marketing skills.

Party Peedit

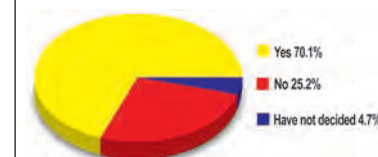
- Why is the *Nepali Times* glorifying this conjugal consultancy? They brought disaster not just to Nepal but to all the other countries they have "advised". Donors like Idea should not be allowed to experiment with Nepal.

Kiran L



Q. If given the chance, will you emigrate from Nepal?

Total votes: 2005



Weekly Internet Poll # 593. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. Should Baburam Bhattarai step down?

The Tarai is tinder dry

Don't push the Madhes to another violent movement



PICS: KAMLESH MANDAL



COMMENT
Navin Jha

A politicised dispute over the supposed relocation of a tax office in Mahottari has widened the rift between Madhesi and Pahadi people and threatens to re-ignite hills vs plains tension in the eastern Tarai.

The Internal Revenue Department says it had no intention of relocating the tax office from Janakpur to Bardibas, it was just trying to open a sub-office along the East-West Highway. However, Madhesi political parties enforced a shutdown in Janakpur last month in protest.

The government backtracked, and this led to a counter-shutdown of the East-West Highway in Bardibas by people of hill origin, many of whom were forced out of areas further south during the Madhes movement in 2007.

The agitation shows no sign of subsiding and the Madhesi parties have closed down Jaleswor for nearly three weeks now. It says much about the Kathmandu media that the Jaleswor shutdown has got almost no coverage in the national newspapers.

"Instead of trying to bring the hills and plains people together, the political parties are trying to widen the divide between them and spread fear and suspicion," says Birganj-based intellectual, Binod Gupta.

Five years after the Madhes movement, people from the plains have got increased representation in the Constituent Assembly, the president and vice-president are Madhesi and the current coalition has senior Madhesi figures as ministers. However, the lack of development and the continued marginalisation of the eastern Tarai has fed

frustration here.

On top of that, there is growing animosity among people of hill origin who were forced to sell their property and homes for a pittance and pressurised to move out.

Madhesi dissatisfaction has also been fuelled by both contesting proposals submitted by the State Restructuring Commission that divided the Madhes into two provinces. While the CA mulls the issue of federalism, the hardening rhetoric of Madhesi leaders in the last few weeks indicates which way the wind is blowing.

At a function organised to observe the fifth anniversary of Madhes uprising in Kathmandu last week, the Madhesi leaders and intellectuals made a grim assessment of the last five years. While political access to the power centres of Kathmandu has increased, the lives of common Madhesis have actually become worse.

There is speculation that prominent leaders of the Madhesi parties who are facing corruption charges, or have been jailed for kidnapping, are using the race card to put pressure on the state.

Madhesi leaders know they can use hardline rhetoric to mobilise anger in the Tarai over issues like the inclusion bill which is in limbo. Madhesis still do not feel Kathmandu gives them enough respect and their fight is for acceptance and inclusion, not for isolation and an exclusive identity.

JP Gupta's statement that Madhesis will sever their ties with the state in the near future got him a sharp reprimand from none other than President Ram Baran Yadav, himself a Madhesi. Sarat Singh Bhandari had to resign when he suggested secession, and Education Minister Rajendra Mahato was greeted with howls of protests in Kathmandu when he threatened to blockade the capital.

The credibility of Madhesi leaders holding influential position in the government for most of the last five years has taken a battering. They were busy forging passports, extorting businessmen and looting state coffers while the condition of the people in Madhes went from bad to worse.

The 'anti-Madhes' posture of the mainstream media and political elites put off many moderate Madhesis and their

TALE OF TWO CITIES: Protests in Janakpur last month over the relocation of a tax office (left) and a counter protest (right) in Bardibas after the government cancelled the relocation. As it turned out the office was not being relocated after all, and a sub-office was being opened.

voice is now sorely missed. As a result, the field is wide open for anyone spewing hate. Feeding all this is growing unemployment and the lack of opportunities for Madhesi youth. Criminalisation of politics has added further fuel to

the fire. Unless the discontent on the streets gets a political voice and attention of the state, the Madhes is only waiting for a spark. The Tarai is tinder dry. ❏

Navin Jha is a reporter with Himal Khabarpatrika.

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Regime change in paradise



CHALO DILLI
Jyoti Malhotra

As he walks about Male in his flip-flops, no longer a president but still not a fully free man, Mohamed Nasheed doesn't look like a man who is going to give up without a fight.

Watch the crowds as they call out to him in support. They will grow, certainly, and Nasheed (the president of the Maldives who was ousted last week) will use his charisma for another struggle for democracy.

Nasheed himself ousted the dictator and former president, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in 2008, when free and fair elections were held after 25 years. But 'Anni' as he is popularly known in the Maldives, is already a 'former' president.

New Delhi dispatched a senior diplomat from the ministry of external affairs, M Ganapathi, to Male this week and he has met all sides, Nasheed and the new president Mohamed Waheed Hassan included, delegations from the United States, the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom.

India believes that Nasheed's ouster has paved the way for a "legitimately formed government" under the new president, and that after the restoration of calm and stability in some months, fresh elections should be held in the Indian Ocean archipelago.

Still, it's the fragile situation on



KUNDA DIXIT

Ousted President Mohamed Nasheed doesn't look like a man who is going to give up without a fight

the ground that continues to cause concern. Reports of violence against Nasheed's Maldives Democratic party (MDP) especially in the southernmost Addu Atoll say demonstrators have been stripped, chained and beaten up, although Male itself is relatively quiet.

New Delhi, government sources say, will insist that Waheed abides by his promise to keep Nasheed and his family safe. It's not clear, however, whether India has insisted that Waheed should also prevent the Maldivian police and the security forces from cracking down on

MDP supporters.

If India has accepted that Waheed should take charge, one could come to the indelicate conclusion that it has dumped Nasheed for a variety of reasons. The first is that Mr Nasheed did not "seek assistance" from India, even though India's high commissioner to the Maldives, D Mulay, was in close touch with him in the hours preceding the resignation, as well as afterwards.

Second, it is clear that Nasheed's apparent volte face, saying that he was forced to resign "almost at gunpoint", has

IN HAPPIER TIMES: Waheed Hassan (left) with the president he replaced, Mohamed Nasheed, in Male in 2010 when he was vice-president.

embarrassed India. Several observers are now asking why India acted in such "unseemly haste" by issuing not only a press release offering unstinted cooperation to the new government but also following that up by a phone call to Waheed from none other than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Third, India believes that a power vacuum in the Maldives is certainly not in its interest. There are the Islamists whom Nasheed fought vigorously during his three-year tenure, waiting on the sidelines to infiltrate the power structure.

And then there is China, whose maritime presence in the Indian Ocean has been increasing. It has sought to woo Nasheed and the MDP by offering to build houses, to a history museum, and expanding its naval interests.

Nasheed is a former prisoner of conscience who was in jail during the Gayoom regime for seven years, including two in solitary confinement. He brought his tiny country of 320,000 people across 1,200 islands into the news, whether it was by staging and underwater cabinet meeting to highlight the effect of sea level rise caused by climate change, or disagreeing with India on its Burma policy.

The Maldives is certain to spring a surprise and Anni will be at the centre of it. The question is: how is India going to deal with that moment when it comes? 



Thank You

Himalmedia thanks all exhibitors, visitors, sponsors and supporters for making Nepali Times EcoFair 2012 a big green event.

See you all again at the next Nepali Times EcoFair.





Invest in what?

Why should anyone put money into a country where no one listens to the prime minister, not even his own cadre?



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

The Bhattarai government committed last year to declare 2012-13 Nepal Investment Year. It formed a National Investment Board, chose the CEO, and appointed representatives from the private sector as members. But getting the logistics right is only half the story, the other half is about getting the signals right.

Four missed deadlines: The fact that the Constituent Assembly has missed four deadlines (28 May, 2010, 28 May 2011, 31 August, 2011 and 30 November, 2011) to come up with an acceptable constitution does not give out a signal that we have our internal housekeeping in order. The fifth deadline to get the constitution in shape is on 30 May. By most accounts, that's going to be missed too.

In that case, as per a Supreme Court decision, the present CA would be dissolved and fresh elections would be held, and further uncertainties would grip our political future. All these actions would push back the task of writing the constitution by a few more years. As a result, we are going to lose several years trying to do basic housekeeping while our elected representatives refuse to grow up and understand the costs of time and uncertainty they have imposed on the rest of Nepal.

When even after several extensions, our elected leaders remain unable to engage in the give-and-take of democratic politics to put together the rules of governance, that's a signal to investors that our ways of working are unpredictable.

Uncompromising labour unions: Early this week, the management of Unilever Nepal asked the government for permission to go for a 'lock out'. It said it had no choice. The agitating workers (goaded, it turns out, by union leaders who are close to the PM's party) had put up a list of demands which the company said were 'ambitious, irrelevant and illegal', especially when the company claimed that it had

followed all the applicable labour laws and paid the workers well.

Only last year, under similar circumstances, a Maoist trade union succeeded in shutting down Surya Nepal's garment factory that was employing about 600 women. In the meantime, though the PM has issued a directive to open the Unilever factory, it remains shut, losing Rs 4 million a day, and grinding work to a halt at several feeder factories too.

What's an investor to make of this? You can follow all the laws that you want. But that's no insurance against Nepal's politically-affiliated labour unions, who do not even listen to the prime minister.

Confiscated land: The recent quarrel between the Maoists and other parties over the former's plans to allow land grabbers to turn pieces of occupied land into private property should alarm investors. When a major political party does not appear to believe in respecting the right to private property, and instead, tries to threaten and intimidate the opposition to get its way, most investors would want to spend neither time nor money hoping that the party would see the light and change. The signal that comes out of the mere act of trying to make illegal land

legal is that there is no respect for contracts, land titles, and private ownership.

Given that other countries in Asia and Africa have geared up their Investment Boards and pro-private sector policies, attracting investments to Nepal is already a difficult task. This is evidenced by the sorry state of our basic infrastructure (electricity, water, roads). The least that the Bhattarai government could do is give out consistently positive signals to investors instead of saying one thing in public and then acting the other way. 🇳🇵

BIZ BRIEFS

Upgraded

Sanima Bank started operating as a Commercial Bank from February 15 onwards. It was allowed to upgrade into "A" class commercial bank after Nepal Rastra Bank handed over its 'Letter of Intent' in November 2011. Promoted by Non-Resident Nepalese (NRNs), Sanima opened in 2004 as a national level development bank and has 21 branches across Nepal.

Delightful shopping

John Players, a premium men's clothing line is offering a winter sale with discounts up to 50 percent on selected items. John Players range encompasses. At John Players, customers can choose from a wide selection of shirts, trousers, sweaters and sweat shirts. The offer is valid at exclusive outlets and select stores across the country.

Expanding services

Nepal Credit and Commerce Bank has commenced ATM services in Dipayal in Doti district. The bank has been providing ATM services through its 23 counters across Nepal and plans on expanding in other districts as well.

Class apart

Cathay Pacific Airways is offering a new 'Premium Economy Class' which features a quieter and more spacious cabin with better entertainment systems than the traditional economy class along with a host of other upgrades. Tickets for the new class will be on sale starting from 1 April onwards.

Far west bound

Janata Bank has opened its 20th branch in Khalanga in Darchula district. This is Janata's third branch in the far west region. The bank plans to start three more branches in Kathmandu and Rolpa.

And the winners are ...

Kantipur City College was declared the winner of the Springwood inter-college advertisement competition with 906 votes. The competition was held from 18 till 31 December 2011 where 7 teams from different management colleges participated. The contestants were judged on the basis of the number of likes on their videos on Springwood's facebook page.

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The State of the Himalaya



Apa Sherpa and his team have just completed the first month of their epic 1,700 km journey on foot across Nepal's Great Himalayan Trail to draw attention to the threats of global climate

change and the opportunities of eco-tourism. This week, *Nepali Times* spoke to Apa Sherpa as he sat besides Tso Rolpa lake in Rolwaling, the glacial lake that is dangerously swollen by global warming. Apa's team has just traversed the Tesi Lapsa Pass, and will now be heading towards Langtang.

APA SHERPA

What most people know about me is only that I have climbed Mt Everest 21 times. What they don't know is that I am also a victim of climate change. In 1985, when the Dig Tso glacial lake burst because it was swollen with melted ice, the flash flood of muddy water and boulders washed away my potato farm and homestead near Thame. Most of my property and belongings were destroyed, and I could no longer remain a farmer. I was forced to become an expedition porter in the Everest region, carrying loads to higher camps. I climbed to the top of Chomolungma for the first

time in 1990. I have never looked back since. I just kept climbing the world's highest mountain over and over again. With god's grace I was successful in climbing the mountain 21 times in 21 years. I never intended it, but I became a world record holder. I was happy and content.



But it was only in recent years that I started to ask myself why I was doing this, putting my life on the line in one of the most dangerous places on earth. In 2008, I met Prashant Singh of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) who was a friend of Dawa Steven Sherpa, my long time associate, and someone I love

like my younger brother. Prashant pointed out something that I had not noticed. He said: "Apa Dai, you are famous for climbing Everest multiple times, but you lost everything to climate change and you earned everything back because of mountain tourism." I had never thought of it like that. Prashant was right. After thinking about it for a bit, I found my goal in life. I decided to dedicate myself to saving the fragile mountains of my motherland from the impact of global warming by building awareness about it in my community and the world. Dawa promised he would help in any way he could. That is when Prashant, Dawa and I planned to do the

GREAT COUNTRY: (clockwise from above) Camping under the constellations in the Tamor Valley. Local fisherman prepares to throw in a line on a river. Child helps mother hoe the field at Lelep. Portrait of an elderly porter at Salpa Phedi. The Climate Smart Celebrity Trek at the Nepal-Sikkim border in eastern Nepal at the start of their journey last month.

Great Himalayan Trail. On my 19th climb on Chomolungma I had unfurled the WWF banner with the message 'Stop Climate Change. Let the Himalaya Live'. It had brought world attention on the effects of climate change on the Himalaya. I picked some rocks from the summit and handed it over to our prime minister, President Barack



Obama and several other world leaders. I had been building awareness by going vertical, now it was time to make a horizontal journey across Nepal from east to west to see the impact of climate change on remote mountain communities. This is why Dawa, me and the team are now on the Great Himalayan Trail. I have come to realise that Nepal is not a small country, it is huge and is facing an immense problem from global warming.

We are just one month into our four-month journey on foot. We are talking to people along the way, sheperds, traders and farmers and hearing local experiences about erratic rains, unseasonal blizzards, receding glaciers and flashfloods. We have in our team photographers, journalists and bloggers who are spreading the word around the world.

We are also advocating pro-poor sustainable tourism so that local communities can build resilience against the effects of climate change. The establishment of the Great Himalayan Trail is a part of that plan. My argument is simple, and is based on my own example: climate change will create problems for us in the mountains, we must be prepared for that.

If villagers and communities can promote eco-tourism by linking to the Great Himalayan Trail this will bring the trekkers who will provide employment and help raise living standards. To fight climate change we have to help lift the quality of life so Himalayan communities can cope. Climate change may damage us, but tourism will heal us. Just like it did with me.

On the trip across eastern Nepal I have been greeted by large numbers of local people who have wished us well on our journey. I know I have the blessings of my fellow Nepalis, and I will do my best to return their kindness. 🇳🇵

Climate Smart Trek is being organised by Himalayan Climate Initiative with active support of the Government of Nepal and its development partners.

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EDITORIAL
The perilous road ahead for the Maoists

REPORTS
Brooding communalism in the Tarai
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KHABARPATRIKA
13 – 27 February, 2012

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 ।

नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

EVENTS

Contemporary Forms, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre presents 'The Prakriti Project Eternal Visions - Contemporary Forms' by Rabindra Shakya and Maureen Drdak. *Till 26 February, 5.30 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited*

Tavern Tales: Untold Histories. Researcher and journalist, Bhola Paswan, in conversation with one of Nepal's leading documentary film makers, Tsering Rhitar Sherpa. *February 19, 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm, Ramlaya, Lazimpat.*

Ladies Night every Wednesday at Casablanca, enjoy the music, drinks, karaoke and happy hour. *Casablanca Lounge, Babar Mahal Revisited.*

Ultimate Photography Workshop, Artudio presents the 12th session of digital photography workshop. Rs 3000, *Starting from mid-February, 7am to 9am, Artudio, Lazimpat, 9841498425, 9841379780*

Doc at Sattya, watch special documentary screenings centered around African American history. Free entrance, *6pm to 9pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel*

MUSIC

Cobweb playing at Tranzit, enjoy rock songs from the legendary Nepali rock band Cobweb. *17 February, 7:00 pm onwards. Tranzit Woodfire Pizza Restaurant and Bar, Thamel*

KUTUMBA PLAYING FOR HERITAGE II, Kutmba will be travelling across Nepal. to generate awareness



on preservation and protection of local heritage *18 Feb till 15 April. First performance 18 February, 5:00 pm onwards, Asan*

Hip Hop at House, enjoy Lyrics Indy and his hip hop moves as part of the Black History Month celebrations. Rs 200, *7.30 pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel*

Sounds of the Season. Bands from different genres of music will come together for an unforgettable musical evening. *18 February, 1:00 pm onwards, Neon Pub Thamel.*

LET THERE BE LIGHTS, get out of your seats and unite against loadshedding with 1974 AD, Albatross and Abhaya and the Steam Injuns. *Free entrance, 18 February, 4pm to 7pm, Lainchaur Ground*



Ides of March, be a part of the epic concert with bands like Antim Graham, Jindabaad, Severe Dementia and Laakhey performing for a good cause. *Nepal Hemophilia Society. 31 March, 1pm to 8pm*

DINING

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza, homemade pastas and the one and only tibetan gyakok. *Boudha, 012130681, 9841484408.*

Peri Peri, home of legendary Portugese flamed grilled chicken, enjoy the dishes served with the trademark Piri Piri sauce. *Jhamsikhel, 9808563803*



STATION BBQ, try the table top grills for self-cooked barbeque or order mutton skewers and pork chops. *Jhamsikhel*

Chongqing Fast Food, gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. *Thamel*



TAMA, enjoy delicious khaja and taas set, and host of other Indian and Nepali snacks at a reasonable price. *Gairidhara.*



JAPANESE CREPE STATION, try the uniquely Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. *Kichapaokhari and Basantapur. Call 4256655*

Latin Nights, dance the night away with Latin tunes while enjoying special discounts on great food and drinks. *Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, Shaligram Hotel Complex, 5536919*



CINNAMON GRILL AND LOUNGE, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. *Jhamsikhel, 5521339*



PUMPERNICKEL BAKERY, grab an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread and sandwiches. Experiment with its goat



SALE

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JOHN PLAYERS

Premium men's wear from SURYA NEPAL PRIVATE LIMITED

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• Offer available in Select Outlets from 24th Magh 2068 (7th February 2012).

cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. *Thamel, 7.30am to 7pm, 4259185*

Summit Hotel, posh dining area offers a romantic night view of the city. Get busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*



LHASA BAR, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

Casa de Cass, offers continental delicacies, baked goodies, brewed coffee and everything in between. *Jawalakhel*

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



THE FACTORY, a trendy restobar with great food, drinks and zesty music. Try the cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*

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

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

Casablanca, enjoy the food and sing your hearts out at the karaoke station. *Babar Mahal Revisited*

Chopstix, savory Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. *Kumaripati, 5551118*

Singma Food Court, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. *Pulchok, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np*

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*

Ace Travels Winter Package, enjoy a luxurious yet affordable holiday package with Ace Travels to countries like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. Offers start from Rs 48,800 per person for a 4 nights and 5 days tour package to Thailand, *call its toll free number 16600100600*



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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Flower power

Neera Joshi Pradhan will be showcasing water colour and acrylic paintings in her solo exhibition entitled 'Placid Nuances' starting from 25 February at the Park Gallery, Pulchowk. Neera, the daughter of late artist Ramananda Joshi, is a botanical artist and illustrator who has been involved in botanical art since 1999. Beyond the accurate portrayal of the botanical subjects, Neera expresses the soul of flowers on the canvases using her distinct personal style. She derives her passion for art and flora from nature and is fascinated by the rich texture and hues of flower petals.

Placid Nuances
24 February-16 March at Park Gallery,Pulchowk



SOMEPLACE ELSE

The anodyne to almost any ailment—be it writer's block before a pressing deadline, a dogged hangover from a night on the town or plain old heartbreak that reaffirms the folly of a holiday deriding singlehood and reveling the grand illusions of courtly love (humph!)—Café Soma hits a spot that no paramour or inamorato can dare arouse.

The quaint nook in Jhamel is more than just a coffee shop vending decent coffee, filling sandwiches and good reads; it's a neighborhood den whose homely charm readily invites a morning or midday routine.

At Soma's core is a breakfast menu that kindly accommodates to white nights and sleeping in on weekends (available 7:30 AM to 11:00 AM weekdays; 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM weekends). The mother of all panaceas is Soma's version of Eggs Benedict (Rs 280; all prices are inclusive



PICS: MARCO POLLO

of VAT): Two perfectly poached eggs over smoked ham stacked on toast in lieu of the traditional English muffin and smothered with a tart, creamy Hollandaise sauce. The decadent emulsion of egg yolk, butter and lemon juice is a literal injection of the old adage, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

But the Lucullan feast does not end there. A house special on the list of coffee beverages is the Brownicchio (Rs 190), a delectable portmanteau that blends brownie bits and espresso into a frappe that could have only been the brainchild of an American franchise.

To risk prattling on about portmanteaux, Soma does brunch.

The sandwich selection is comprehensive of all appetites, catering to latecomers, high teas and lunchboxes. The All-day Breakfast (Rs 295) is a warm



breakfast mitt of eggs and sausages, while the Eggs, Mayonnaise and Capers (Rs 270) is just that and divine. The Mozzarella Cheese Steak (Rs 350) packs tender prime beefsteak and slithers of mozzarella in a toasted white loaf with grilled onions. Sandwiches and burgers like the healthy Grilled Chicken & Rosemary (Rs 295) are dished with a scant serving of slaw and a bowl of hearty potato wedges, a rare and welcomed fashion in the valley.

For sweets indulge in desserts like Crêpes with Sugar and Lemon (Rs 120) or take on to the counter where in-house

Café Soma

baked goods wait behind a glass case. The Carrot Walnut muffin (Rs 75) is fluffy and heated to order. Ask for a knife and a slice of cold butter. Other favourites include the brittle Almond Cookie (Rs 55) and the twisted Almond Danish (Rs 80), but I can go on.

A non-deafening soundtrack of crooners like Louis and Billie on play, free WiFi, accessible outlets (though subject to load shedding), clean comfy couches, good lighting and bookshelves selling the everyman's library of contemporary and classic tomes create the closest thing to an ideal coffee shop in Kathmandu.

Service at Soma is a tad too lax and can be more attentive. Should we queue up or sit and wait for a menu? However, regulars on their portables attuned to long hours in a 'coffice' (yet another portmanteau) seem to appreciate Soma's laidback atmosphere and the cure-all comforts it feeds.

Marco Pollo

Across from a bicycle shop down the street from Herman's Bakery in Jhamel



TOOT





MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

To make a good film, many disparate entities must come together and gel perfectly. A decent film emerges from the morass of production which involves people running around setting up lights, laying down heavy cables, scrambling to iron clothes for costume changes, and providing food for the cast and crew: all in a 12-hour day. Additionally, the assistant director who is in charge of making things happen on time almost always loses her mind, the producers are constantly fussing about how their money is being spent, and, of course, there is the poor director to whom everyone turns when things go wrong, and who must be prepared to fix all problems from hissy actors to disgruntled crew members. It is always difficult, therefore, to eviscerate bad films once one knows how much blood, sweat and tears have gone into even the most mediocre of productions.

Loot, a gangstery heist film, set in our now very urban Kathmandu could certainly have been a better film if only it had been slightly shorter. An editor with an unsentimental eye would have sliced away all the unnecessary, repetitive dialogues and the interminable action sequences garnished with the slightly too loud flesh-meets-flesh noises. The main problem with Nischal Basnet's film is its script, which he also wrote. Not entirely original and more than a little derivative, it starts off with a very prescribed, almost pedantic, introduction into its five main characters, all of whom are in desperate need of money. This is a film written for an ensemble cast, and no particular character

comes across as the preferred hero. The actor Saugat Malla as 'Haku Kale' is theatrical and exaggerates his scripted heavy Newari accent unnecessarily, Karma as 'Nare' is good enough with the obligatory red eyes that go with his character as a nocturnal gambler, Prateek Raj Neupane plays 'Khatri' a small time drug/arms dealer with shaggy hair, Dayahang Rai is genuinely hilarious as the unemployed side-kick and loyal friend of 'Pandey' (Sushil Raj Pandey) the star-crossed and slightly too soulful lover of 'Ayesha' played by a charming Reecha Sharma. The plot of the film is simple enough. We see Haku Kale recruiting the other four characters in order to plan and execute the robbery of a bank. The cinematography is excellent, innovative and slick. However, when the camera moves so much in a film it's usually because the director is worried the story is not strong enough. Not even the best actors can salvage a flawed script. A good script, on the other hand, can be ruined by bad actors. Good writing is the base of good film, and good casting is key. In order to make good films in Nepal we can no longer rely on gimmicky scripts and innovative camera angles. We must concentrate on writing stories that truly matter, and develop characters with more moral and psychological complexity. Action movies are fun enough, and *Loot* has its moments, but for truly edifying cinema, we all need to work a little bit harder. Nepal is full of stories, one just has to find the ones worth making for the cost, and the hard-work that goes into any and every film.

DVDs reviewed in this column are available at Music and Expression, Thamel, 01-4700092

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Bird flu scare



DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

The news from sunsari about culling poultry (pictured) because of bird flu is alarming. There are also reports that crows are dying in Kathmandu in large numbers. This has caused anxiety and raised questions about whether humans are at risk. The first outbreak of bird flu was in May 1997 when a child in Hong Kong died of this illness, perhaps the first known human infection with influenza A (H5N1), or avian influenza (bird flu).

After 18 cases and six deaths in Hong Kong, the virus appeared to be under control and possibly eradicated by the end of 1997. But it returned in 2003, and it has subsequently continued to evolve and spread. The good news is that the Achilles heel of the virus is its inability to

cause efficient human to human transmission. The spread is limited to birds, and humans are occasional victims when they come in contact with infected birds. Among the 564 confirmed human cases reported worldwide through August 2011, nearly all were acquired by direct contact with poultry,



NARENDRA SHRESTHA

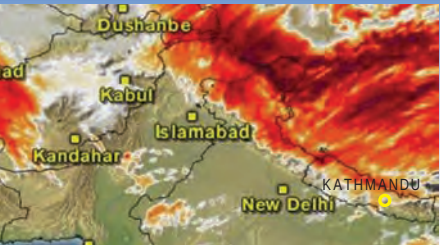
with person to person spread being almost non-existent. Bird flu is often compared to another avian strain, the agent of the Spanish flu of 1918-1919, which traversed the world in three months and caused an estimated 50 million deaths. When it infects people, the

virus is lethal. Aside from culling the birds, the other means for controlling spread are vaccines and antiviral agents. If oseltamivir is started within the first 48 hours of symptoms, the benefit is significant. But the problem is the cost and the availability of the drug when you need it. The vaccine against this virus is stockpiled in rich countries, and it is unlikely that this vaccine will be available in adequate amounts for Nepal. So for now how do we deal with an outbreak? Poultry farmers, butchers, and cooks who deal directly with poultry and raw meat are the most vulnerable. In Kathmandu people should avoid contact with dead crows.

Washing hands thoroughly with soap and water every time we go to the toilet or any time we handle live birds, raw poultry or uncooked eggs is protective. Proper cooking kills the virus, so eating steaming chicken momos will not cause bird flu.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The westerlies are coming at us in waves. The remnants of the storms that battered eastern Europe are finally reaching us. Most of their oomph and moisture are spent, but expect partly cloudy skies with snow in the mountains of western Nepal. Kathmandu Valley will continue to be plagued by smoggy mornings and minimum temperatures in the low single digits.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		
19-04	19-05	21-06



BIKRAM RAI

CLEAN BRICKS: Two brick kiln owners were awarded “orange” certifications by Laxmi Bank CEO Suman Joshi on behalf of BrickClean Network on Sunday at the *Nepali Times* EcoFair. No brick kiln has yet won the “green” certificate.



BIKRAM RAI

LET THERE BE LIGHT: An exhibitor at the *Nepali Times* EcoFair showcases solar photo-voltaic panels as an alternative to power cuts for households.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

EMPTY JAR: A student helps his friend carry an empty cylinder to a gas depot in Kathmandu on Wednesday morning. The government says the LPG shortage will last another week.



BIKRAM RAI

HOLY SMOKE: Sadhus and holy men have started arriving for the Shivaratri festival at Pashupati which falls on Monday, 20 February.



RABI THAPA

YAK ATTACK IN FLIGHT: Robyn Hemming, John Martin, Ganga Thapa, Allan Shrestha, Shubha Giri

“If a desert tribe from Mali can come to London and mesmerise crowds of people with its music, why can’t Nepali musicians do the same?”

Shubha Giri, founder of London-based ensemble Yak Attack, has a point to make. It’s one he keeps coming back to. Nepalis need to recognise the depth and range of their own musical heritage, he says, and join the conversation taking place across cultures within the loosely defined genre known as ‘world music’. Working together collectively, he wants to reach out to mainstream audiences in Nepal and abroad, promoting ‘peace and harmony’. As anyone who has seen the Tuareg-Berger band Tinariwen perform, this is not as fanciful as it sounds.

Appropriately, the best advocate of Shubha Giri’s mission is Yak Attack’s music itself, now available on their debut EP Taal Sutra. With the circular guitar lines that chime through the opening bars of the band’s rousing rendition of Nepali folk classic ‘Hariyo Dadha Mathi’, Yak Attack invites us to that conversation. It’s one that reaches beyond the tired tropes of rock, easing us into the seamless blend of the familiar and unfamiliar achieved by the very best fusion.

Shubha acknowledges we have a long way to go. “There’s this attitude Nepalis have – we think foreigners won’t listen to our music because they don’t understand it and won’t be interested. So we don’t

Building bridges

Yak Attack unearths musical synapses between Nepali folk and rest of the world

listen to other music either, beyond MTV-derived American rock. We need to dig deeper – rock came from blues, and blues came from Africa, after all.”

It’s clear Yak Attack has been digging deep, and has built both musical and personal bridges across cultures. The self-declared “shape-shifting musical outfit built around a core of Afro-Asian rhythms” currently includes three Nepalis – Shubha and Gagan Thapa on guitar, and Allan Shrestha on drums – as well as other talents unearthed in the rich cross-fertilisation that is the London music scene, such as John Martin (saxophones) and Robyn Hemming (bass). Add world music veteran Dubulah to the mix, and you have a potent meld

of Nepali folk rhythms and Afro-jazz sensibilities that practices just what Shubha preaches.

‘Hariyo Dadha Mathi’, with melodious guest vocals from Mongolian Heart’s Raju Lama, is the obvious candidate to lead Yak Attack’s EP. But one can’t help but be uplifted by the unexpected Tamang solo that riffs through the track ‘Tibet’, interlaced with jazzy keyboard and guitar solos, and the unabashed funk blow-up of ‘Be Free’ makes one yearn for a live show in Kathmandu.

For now, Yak Attack is hoping Taal Sutra will generate demand for a full album to be released later this year. Following the EP’s London launch on 25 February, Shubha will visit Nepal to

catch up on musical developments and work on music videos. He is tireless in his collaboration with like-minded Nepali musicians, such as Cadenza and Lumbini groove’s Pravin Chhetri, and hopes to record with pop star Nima Rumba. Far from feeling disadvantaged by his distance from Nepal, Shubha feels London offers him the opportunities – as a musician, producer and promoter – to bolster the reputation of Nepali music in novel ways.

“One way to start would be to get Nepalis living abroad into it,” he says. “There’s such a huge community of Nepali youth in London, and they have massive parties. But the promoters only think of club nights. So there they are, 2000 Nepali kids, listening to Rihanna all night long.” He laughs. “I tell the promoters: Guys, we gotta mix it up a little!”

Shubha’s energy is infectious, and Yak Attack provides ample evidence of his talent for collaboration. And his desire to see his compatriots get their act together: “People come to Nepal from all over the world to see our culture. But many Nepalis abroad are just doing their own thing, and don’t see the need to come together. If we’re talking of New Nepal and all that,” he concludes, “we just need to snap out of this culture of bullshit.”

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AIDS 2.0

It's time for a second generation response



GUEST COLUMN

Rajiv Kafle

When we speak about AIDS in public or with our friends and families we still lower our voices to a gossipy tone, as if we are discussing something as secret as a high school crush. We don't want others to hear, because we are fearful of being associated with the outcasts of society.

Since AIDS is linked to taboos like sex, alcohol, drugs and crime, even medical doctors, professionals and political leaders hesitate to publicly talk about it. Campaigns which aim to sensitise people on AIDS automatically refer to sexual intercourse as unethical. None of us would exist without sex, yet we unnecessarily stigmatise sex, drugs and HIV/AIDS.

A few years ago when politician Gagan Thapa posed alongside an HIV positive person for a poster aimed at reducing the stigma attached to AIDS, he was inundated with questions and rather unpleasant comments by curious reporters and colleagues. What relation did he have with those living with AIDS? Why was he sympathetic towards them?

All Gagan wanted to do was to promote greater acceptance and hoped people living with AIDS would not be ostracised any longer. But after being hounded by the media for months and after giving hundreds of clarifications, he told me in a rather tired and defeated voice that he would do anything to fight AIDS related stigma in the future, but under one condition: I would not ask him to pose for another poster.

I respected Gagan's feelings and have not asked him to be on another campaign poster. But his experience confirms how far we in Nepal still are from normalising AIDS in our discourse.

HIV in Nepal is technically a 'concentrated' epidemic. More than four out of every five HIV infections are transmitted through heterosexual transmission. People who inject drugs, men who have sex with other men and female sex workers are the key high-risk groups driving the epidemic.

Male labour migrants (particularly from India where they visit female sex workers) and clients of female sex workers in Nepal serve as the bridging population groups transferring infections from high risk groups to a low risk general population. As the epidemic matures 23 years after the first reported case of HIV in 1988, more and more infections are being recorded among the general populations.

Officially, 55,626 Nepalis were HIV positive in 2010 out of which slightly more than half (58 per cent) were men and 28 per cent women of reproductive age group. Children under 15 made up eight per cent of infections.



In the past year, Nepal has made progress in reducing HIV prevalence among injecting drug users and sex workers. We have also succeeded in dramatically reducing AIDS related deaths through the use of life prolonging antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. More than 6,000 HIV positive Nepalis are now living healthier and longer lives. The transmission of HIV among those undergoing ARV treatment was reduced by 96 per cent, and ARV might help prevent the spread of new infections in the future.

As Nepal gears up for a new National AIDS Strategy for the next five years, donors have pledged over \$100 million to achieve its goals. We have gained valuable experience in managing programs for hard-to-reach populations in the past 20 years, and we must put this to good use for efficient and effective AIDS response.

We also have young Nepali scientists and researchers, expert clinicians, health care providers and most importantly groups of people living with AIDS who have dared to overcome the stigma and are living openly with HIV in almost 65 out of 75 districts. They are the second generation leaders who will power the future of our AIDS response.

This means those of us who have been the pioneers of the AIDS movement in Nepal need to back up and make space for the next generation. It's time we proudly pass on the baton to the bigger, better and stronger wave of activists and troopers. 🇳🇵

Facebook.com/rajiv.kafle



An epidemic of stigma and discrimination

Fewer Nepalis are being infected with HIV/AIDS, but ostracisation within families, in schools and workplaces is still a major barrier

BHRIKUTI RAI

Nepal has made dramatic strides in reducing new HIV infections in recent years, but progress is threatened by the spread of injecting drug use and migrant workers coming home with the AIDS virus.

In addition, ongoing negotiations between Europe and India on free trade are going to make anti-retroviral drugs much more expensive, putting it beyond the reach of the poorest infected people in Nepal. An average patient today has to spend Rs 2,600 per month for the drugs, and this amount will increase four-fold if the agreement goes through.

"The head of the EU mission in Nepal told us during our demonstration on 3 February that the agreement will have no impact on India's capacity to produce cheap generic medicines, but we don't believe it. If Europe succeeds, the health of millions across the developing world will be at risk," says Rajiv Kafle, a HIV positive activist who runs Navakiran Plus, a hospice for HIV patients.

In two weeks, the pharmaceutical giant Novartis is set to challenge

a part of India's patent laws which allows Indian companies to produce cheap versions of generic anti-retroviral drugs. The Novartis vs India case heads to the Indian Supreme Court on 28 February.

Even though fewer people are being infected in Nepal, the number of people with HIV is expected to grow five-fold to 200,000 by 2020. At present most infected people are in the 15-49 age group, male migrant workers make up nearly one-third of all infected people, and 25 per cent are women.

"The decline in the HIV prevalence rate is a fantastic achievement and Nepal is likely to meet the HIV-related Millennium Development Goals," says Nafisa Binte Shafique UNICEF's HIV/AIDS chief.

Over the years, new prevention programs and treatment and care facilities have been set up and the biggest achievement has been in setting up anti-retroviral treatment (ART) centres. More than 6,000 HIV positive people currently get treatment in 36 centres around the country.

"The ART program has been very successful in stabilising the infection and the prevalence rate has dropped in high risk groups," explains Ramesh Kharel, director of the National Centre for Aids and

STD Control (NCASC).

However, money for ART is underutilised or wasted, and ART centres in rural areas still do not provide quality service. "At a time when basic healthcare services are missing in many parts of the country, ART centres have a mixed record," explains Madhav Bhandari of SPARSHA Nepal, which works with HIV infected people.

Despite improved government spending in the





PICS: BIKRAM RAI

health sector, allocation for HIV related projects is still low. Overcoming red tape in budget allocation is a huge obstacle. “The budget is first passed around from one ministry to another and by the time it reaches the patients there is not much time left,” says Bishnu Sharma of Richmond Fellowship, which works in drug and alcohol awareness and rehab.

Growing drug use among Nepalis threatens to derail the progress made so far in HIV prevention. In 1996, the National Coordinating Committee for Drug Control estimated a total of 50,000 drug users, which is now 150,000. A problem that used to be confined to Kathmandu and Pokhara has now spread to districts like Dang and Doti. Although more money is being funneled into harm reduction programs to prevent HIV infection among injection drug users, the shortage of drop-in centres has hampered accessibility. Recent funding loss for organisations like Sparsha and Richmond has also set back prevention and care.

“There is still much work to be done to protect the rights of people infected and affected by HIV, and individuals at risk,” says

Shoko Noda, Nepal country director for UNDP. The other challenge has been cultural stigma and discrimination within families, in schools and workplaces against those living with AIDS. Even in high-risk groups like sex workers, awareness about HIV transmission does not always lead to behaviour change in use of safe sex practices.

Injecting drug users are reusing syringes even if they know about the dangers. “Unsafe sex is one of the most common ways of transmitting the virus,” says Sunila Baniya at Punarbal Plus, “but there is so much stigma attached to sex, especially outside of marriage or outside of heterosexual relationships that it becomes very hard for people to open up about high-risk behaviour.”

The condition is worse for children of HIV positive parents who are also infected (see box). Says Baniya: “we take care of children who can’t go to school because they or their families are infected.”

<http://www.ncasc.gov.np/>
<http://www.un.org.np/un aids>

nepalitimes.com

Patients or patents? #576
 “They don’t get rich, they get HIV” # 353

Positive education

In a society where people with HIV/AIDS are ostracised even by family members, refused treatment by doctors and stigmatised in the classroom, Punarbal Shikshya Sadan is a unique school where infected children are treated like everyone else.

Started five years ago, the school in Sitapaila gives priority to children of HIV positive parents and children with HIV/AIDS and they can study without worrying about bullying or discrimination.

Sunila Baniya (pictured, left) and Apsara Khadka started Punarbal Plus (‘renewed strength’ in Nepali) after working as counselors for HIV positive people. “We found that schools turn away children just because of their or their family’s HIV status,” explains Baniya, “since no one else wanted them, we decided to open a school for such children.”

Punarbal started with 35 students of which more than half were HIV positive and in the beginning struggled to gain acceptance in the local community as teachers, staff and students faced constant harassment. Today, the school runs from nursery to third grade for 65 students.

The school is now so popular parents want to enroll even non-infected children. Baniya, Khadka and the staff are trying to place Punarbal students into ‘regular’ schools as well. “We do not want to expand classes beyond grade five, because we want to eventually integrate our students into mainstream schools,” explains Baniya.

But so far only one student has been admitted and Khadka is distressed at the way schools are refusing to cooperate because other parents threaten to take their children out if they admit HIV students. Punarbal also has a hostel for 27 children orphaned by AIDS from western Nepal.

Punarbal relies on donations, but money is always short. For now, Khadka and her colleagues have decided to cut costs by removing free lunch. She says: “People praise us for our good work but very few are willing to support us financially.”

Bhrikuti Rai



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Mind your tongue

Editorial, *Nagarik*, 15 February

नागरिक

The objectionable views expressed by incumbent ministers about national sovereignty are unfortunate. It is highly irresponsible of members of the cabinet to make such public statements. Therefore it was not surprising when President Rambaran Yadav reprimanded the various ministers for speaking against national unity, and harmony. Members of the opposition parties have been demanding for the resignation of the minister of Information and Communication Jaya Prakash Gupta who had threatened to break off Madhes's ties with the state. Similarly, minister of Health and Population, Rajendra Mahato had threatened to seal off Kathmandu.

Of late incumbent ministers,



especially from the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum- Republic, have expressed anti-Nepal views. When the parliament raised concerns over the statements, Members of the Madhesi Morcha announced that a 'civil war' had begun.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, on the other hand,

has remained silent over the reckless behaviour of his ministers. If Bhattarai was sensitive about national integrity, he would have spoken publicly about his issue and asked the ministers for justifications. The PM's inaction has raised serious doubts over the present government's stance on territorial integrity. However, it could also be that the ministers made those statements simply to raise controversy and draw people's attention away from constitution writing.

If the views against national sovereignty were made intentionally, such ministers have no rights to remain in office. Therefore, the prime minister should immediately demand clarifications from them so as to silence the critics and console the Nepali people.

Armed PM

Naya Patrika, 16 February

नयाँ पत्रिका

Government staff: Mr Prime Minister, you need to stop the illegal transfer of bureaucrats.

Prime minister: Some transfers can be withdrawn.

Government staff: All transfers should be withdrawn.

Prime minister: You are employees of the government. You are not supposed to play political games. If you want to be involved in politics, resign from your posts first and come join the rest of us. How dare you argue with the Prime Minister?

Government staff: Mr Prime Minister, if you have the courage, go ahead and punish us.

Prime minister: I got here by raising arms. I am not afraid of you.

Government staff: It was ordinary Nepalis who raised arms, not you.



10 Years Ago

Himal Khabarpatrika, 1 February 2012

हिमाल

It was 2:30PM when Harka Bahadur Rai, the principal of the Chisapani High School in southern Khotang district was preparing a roasting corn for a snack. Armed members of the Maoist affiliated Kirat Rastriya Mukti Morcha dragged him out and took him away. After about an hour, villagers heard a gunshot. Rai had been consistently opposed to an ethnic state. The person who was involved in this incident 10 years ago is Gopal Khambu (pictured, above), and he is a minister in the current Maoist-led government. And in eastern Nepal the flames of ethnic intolerance have since spread.

Radical republic

Pampha Bhusal on *BBC Nepali Service*, 13 February

BBC
नेपाली



BBC Nepal: What did the nation gain from the so called 'people's war'?

Pampha Bhusal: Since the start of the people's war, Nepali society has experienced radical transformation. We overthrew the monarchy and established a Federal Republic where the oppressed and backward castes, class, ethnic minorities, and women have greater representation in the state apparatus. People are more aware of their rights.

But these are all theoretical achievements. The creation of a Republic is a very real achievement.

What has the Republic done so far for the people of Karnali?

Once we conclude the peace process, a new constitution will be in place, and issues related to women, Madhesis, Dalits, and backward communities will take centre stage. We can then take forward the process of economic transformation alongside social reforms.

But people say only the leaders have reaped the benefits of 'new' Nepal. For instance, Prachanda's journey from the jungle to a luxurious mansion, is this a part of the Prachandapath?

That's not entirely true, because a few people were already rich. I don't agree with everything that has happened so far or the way certain leaders have behaved. Once the transition period is over, these transgressions should be investigated.

You waged a war and introduced a culture of violence. But it looks like the past is coming back to haunt you.

We launched our war under very different circumstances. People were poor and had serious grievances. But if this culture of violence continues, it could turn nasty. Nepalis might lose trust in us if we don't make an effort to curb such practices.



Sign board: Constitution writing

Man: Political parties

Papers: Not enough time

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 16 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Ministers are in prison. IGPs are going to jail over corruption. MPs kidnap businessmen for ransom and a police officer murders his wife. Things have gone so bad for this country, no one can be trusted. ”

Baburam Bhattarai in Bara quoted in *Nagarik*, 14 February

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Absurd classification

Lok Bahadur Khadka on Facebook

I am of mixed heritage and extremely proud of my family. I was born to a Sherpa mother and a Chhetri father in Upallo Kirant. I moved to Lalbandi, Sarlahi to help my mother run a hotel. I married a Rai from Itahari, Sunsari whom I had met while working for a night bus. I am told my mother's ancestors had migrated from Tibet and my father's family migrated to eastern Nepal from the Karnali

and a Rai wife. Does this mean my father and I are also aadibasis? If food culture is an indication, nothing is forbidden in my home. If appearance is the determinant, everyone who knows my mother says I look like her. Our daughter resembles her mother and our son and his maternal uncle are mirror images. If economic background is considered, we live in poverty and have been struggling to make a living for generations. During the Madhes movement, my parents had to close their hotel and take refuge



region around 600 years ago. From Sarlahi my wife and I moved to Kathmandu in search of better opportunities. My wife, who runs a vegetable shop in a small rented room and I manage to earn a meager income. We read in newspapers about writing of the new constitution and restructuring of the state. However, I am baffled by the absurd classification of the ethnic minorities and indigenous population. On what basis are states being created and people being granted special rights? If language is the criteria for new states, Sherpa is my mother tongue, I also speak the Bantawa Rai language after marriage and my children study at an inexpensive English-medium school and are fluent in Nepali and English. If ancestry is a factor, I have a Sherpa mother

at my mother's parental house in the hills. And if the white sahebs are responsible for state allocation, who should I contact and where should I apply? Under this ridiculous system, my brother-in-law has an autonomous state, my cousins are eligible for quota-based employment, my Jha landlord from Lalbandi has reservations in the Nepal Army and the son of my house owner, a Tuladhar from Budhhanagar who is a gold trader by profession, is entitled to government scholarships. Even though I am the son of a poor father, I am left empty handed because of my surname. No one bothers about the contribution of impoverished Nepalis to the nation and families like mine already feel unwanted in this new Nepal.

Hounded by hawkers

Kantipur, 10 February

कान्तिपुर

The minute tourists get off their buses and vans, they are surrounded by street peddlers who pull their hands, and haggle them until they give in and buy the goods out of sheer desperation. The harassment is worse around protected world heritage sites like the durbar squares, where visitors say they neither feel safe nor comfortable despite paying exorbitant fees (sometimes as high as Rs 1,100) to the municipality. The officials and police officers never intervene, but rather watch on as the tourists are picked apart. Mark Hurbon from Germany was roaming through Bhaktapur when he was hounded by three street vendors. "I came to Nepal to see its beautiful architecture and geography and take photographs. But the hawkers constantly nagged me and didn't even let me take photos. That incident dampened my whole experience," Hurbon recalls. Although the information department of Bhaktapur Municipality claims that hawkers are banned from the site, there are at least a 100 of them in the durbar square area alone. Tourism entrepreneurs say the municipality has failed to provide security and vital services for the visitors so far. Unless there is stricter enforcement of rules and until services are upgraded, tourists will continue to suffer.





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And that is the end of the news

Some followers of the donkey have written in to ask if the headline last week ‘Minister Goes Mad’ was made up. Let me, once and for all, set the record straight here and clarify unequivocally that NOTHING on the backside page is made up. Exaggerated maybe, the truth bent perhaps, sometimes embellished, but everything here is as real as it gets. And so it was with the minister (will remain unnamed until his next of kin are notified) who while driving to work last week suddenly tried to get out of the moving vehicle and asked his driver and bodyguard to let him travel on the roof of the SUV. The quick-thinking driver drove him straight to Norvic hospital where the minister was promptly straitjacketed.



Kangresis and mainstream Eh-Maleys have decided that this is not the time to bring down the BRB coalition, and have given him till mid-March. But the main threat to the prime minister’s longevity comes from within his own party. Awesome is working overtime behind the scenes and got the Politburo to vote on Sunday to get the PM to resign within a week. Comrade Babu got so spooked he dashed off in his Mustang to Makunay’s home under the cover of darkness during loadshedding hours.



But Comrade Tremendousness has redeployed his YCL into an espionage network led by none other than **Moon Brave Thapa**, also known by his nom de guerre, Special Agent Sagar. PKD’s spies have got Balu Water under such close surveillance that every evening he is debriefed in Lazimpat about whom the prime minister met, for how long, and sometimes even a transcript of what was discussed.

And this just in, the reason Awe-inspiring was in such a hurry to move house was because Comrade Uma told him a couple of months ago that he was going to be bumped off one of these days. PKD was overheard telling a confidante soon after: “Good thing I kept the cantonments otherwise Ram Bahadur would have finished me.”



The Maoists may have stopped killing people, but they haven’t



stopped making a killing. The latest estimate is that the party has awarded itself Rs 15 billion worth of moolah since 2006 as cantonment allowances, retirement packages, compensation for victims’ families, allocated Rs 40 million for **Comrade Son-Also-Rises** to climb Mt Everest, etc. How much of that went to the party coffers and how much into the deep pockets of various comrades is not yet clear. This must be why Comrade God has been so adamant in not allowing the House to ratify international agreements to curb money laundering, extradition of organised criminals and terrorism funding. Paris Danda hardliners must have plenty to hide if they are so fixated on filibustering the Paris meeting on FATF this week?



The High-Level Committee that was formed to probe the



fire alongside the runway at TIA last week is apparently investigating if resident monkeys at the airport were experimenting with matches on the dry grass. As part of the recommendations, the Task Force is mulling allowing cows back into Gauchar to graze as they used to in the days of Dakotas because the civil aviation authoritarians seem to have no inclination to mow the grass.



Voters in Sarlahi and Sunsari, fed up with the lack of progress in writing the constitution, have threatened members of the Constituent Assembly that they will be taken around town in a donkey if they lay foot in their districts. It was meant as an insult to the assembly members, but as far as this columnist is concerned they couldn’t have bestowed a greater honour on our ilk.



PICS: BIKRAM RAI



The number of ex-expats returning to Nepal to have tooth jobs done by Dr Neil has grown exponentially in recent years. Latest arrivals have been ex-plenipotentiaries and ex-UNMIN chiefs. NTB take note: the country could cash in on the huge potential for **orthodontic tourism**.



If like me, you can’t make head or tail of what’s going on from reading the daily papers these days, here is a simplified synopsis of what is going on:

PKD wants **RCP** to be PM
BKG wants **PKD** to be PM
JNK wants **KPO** to be PM
RCP wants **BRB** to continue
BRB wants **BRB** to continue

And that is the end of the news.





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