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BIKRAM RAI

At large

German Parliamentary State Secretary for Development Cooperation, Gundrun Kopp, came to Nepal to inspect health and energy projects. But when she found out that war criminals from both sides are still at large and the parliament was about to give them general amnesty, she changed the focus of her trip.

Kopp invited Purnimaya Lama (left) to the head table at her press conference in Kathmandu on Wednesday. Purnimaya's husband, Arjun Lama, was abducted and murdered in Kavre in 2005, and the current State Minister for Energy, Surya Man Dong and former Information Minister Agni Sapkota, have been charged with involvement. Kopp also invited Suman Adhikari, whose father Muktinath Adhikari was executed by the Maoists in 2002.

In an emotional appeal, Purnimaya Lama said, "My husband was not involved in the war, his murderers, instead of being punished are now ministers. If there is no justice, our children can kill too."

Kopp said future German development assistance could be affected if the proposed new commissions on truth and disappearances include provisions for general amnesty.

nepalimes.com

Interview with Gundrun Kopp

Circus champs

page 8

Three children who were rescued from an Indian circus are gymnastic champions in this year's National Games.

Editorial page 2

The only future for the Maoists is to come out as a demonstrably democratic party that is transparent and honest, does not have to rely on threats and violence anymore, a party that means what it says and doesn't protect criminals.

YES TO PENSION NO TO TENSION

Presentation on PrimeLife Pension Plan

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WANTED: REVISIONISTS AND REFORMISTS

Tucked away in the inside pages of one of the Nepali dailies this week was a photograph (right) that encapsulates the reality of Nepal today, and how the rot starts at the top.

The picture showed CA member from Okhaldhunga, Balkrishna Dhungel, stepping off a plane in Salleri this week together with Energy Minister, Post Bahadur Bogati. Both are profusely garlanded with khadas, and on hand to receive them is the CDO of Solukhumbu and other top cops.

There is only one thing wrong with that picture: Dhungel was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Ujjan Shrestha in Okhaldhunga in 1998. The sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court on appeal in 2010 even though Dhungel had already been elected to the CA by then, and has since been moving around freely enjoying the close protection of the prime minister himself.

Current State Minister for Energy, Surya Man Dong, and former Information Minister Agni Sapkota (both CA members) are charged with the abduction and murder in 2005 of Arjun Lama. Those implicated in the execution of Lamjung teacher and human rights campaigner, Muktinath Adhikari, are walking around freely.

Baburam Bhattarai has a reputation for being honest and upright, but by coddling criminal cronies he has sullied what little respect he had. It is quite clear that Dhungel is too hot a potato to handle even for the second man in the Maoist party, who also happens to be the prime minister.

Acts like these destroy the little trust Nepal's other political parties and the international community have in the Maoist party. The erstwhile revolutionaries have now amply proven that the war was not about the liberation of the downtrodden, it wasn't about ending feudalism, and it had nothing to do with winning Nepal's ethnic



BHANUBHAKTA NIRAULA

There is only one thing wrong with that picture: Balkrishna Dhungel was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Ujjan Shrestha in Okhaldhunga in 1998.

minorities their rights. It has now all boiled down to amassing wealth and power while the going is good. And anyone who points out the venal and corrupt actions of the Maoist party is immediately accused of being "the people's enemy", a deadly euphemism the Maoists use to justify physical elimination.

Besides threats of violence and a return to war, the other reason for the lack of trust is that one can never

rely on their words because what they say is so self-contradictory and outrageous. Far from showing that they are committed to peaceful multi-party politics, their public statements and speeches reek of intimidation, blackmail and threats of violence. The latest was Prime Minister Bhattarai's statement at the anniversary of the death of lifelong champion of democracy, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, last weekend. There he once more blackmailed the nation with "50,000 more deaths" if the other parties, civil society and the media oppose his draft of a totalitarian constitution.

Words like that and deeds like the conspiratorial way the Maoists recently tried to get the chief of the Nepal Army to put forth a "flexible" proposal that would directly benefit his in-laws in the ranks, have shattered what little trust existed between the Maoists and the other parties. It was a matter of national pride that we at last had a Janjati army chief, that has now been squandered. The chief's only line of defence is that the Rana-Shah generals also favoured their own kind. The Maoist-inspired proposal would have essentially established a parallel army of ex-guerrillas within the Nepal Army, defeating the purpose of the whole integration exercise.

The end result is that things are now even more badly deadlocked on the peace and constitution project, and one wonders if that has been the Maoist intention all along. 'Revisionism' and 'reformism' are bad words in the Maoist lexicon, but what we need now is a re-visioned and reform-minded Maoist party.

The only future for the Maoists is to come out as a demonstrably democratic party that is transparent and honest, does not have to rely on threats and violence anymore, a party that means what it says and doesn't protect criminals. The sooner Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai see that, the better it will be for them. And for us.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

THREE MORE MONTHS

31 May 2012 - what does this date mean to Nepal and Nepalis ('Three more months', Editorial, #594)? If there is no constitution by this time, then the game must stop. The rotten CA should be dissolved and Bhattarai's jumbo and corrupted cabinet, must be dismantled. I would rather live under military rule which can ensure peace and security, than suffer under this filthy democracy.

Shiwani Shrestha

- We need to introduce a clause in the new constitution which limits the terms for heads of state. The presidents of China and the US have two four-year terms. And politicians in other countries come and go, no one cares about them. We should do the same in Nepal: end our obsession with politics and politicians and start focusing on the country's economy. We should talk about jobs and investments and make these the driving forces in our lives. If we are busy with our jobs and making honest money, none of us will have time for politics.

Surendra Hamal

- Nepali politicians only know how to talk the talk and nothing more. Regardless of who is in power, nothing new is going to happen in our country, unless a dictator who can walk the talk is born.

GN

- This is what happens when we let criminals and murderers rule our country. But we must learn from people in other parts of the world

who are rising up against corrupt and unjust leaders. The Russians are tired of being lied to and cheated by Putin and his party and want to prosecute him. The Nepali people also have two options: either overthrow Bhattarai, Dahal and their cronies, or continue suffering.

Urmila Pant

- Bhattarai is a learned man with a Phd degree, but his education and training are of no use to the nation. What we really need in Nepal is an honest leader who is strong, who has fresh ideas and has the vision to carry the country forward. Persisting with the current crop of leaders is going to do us no good.

Binita Pandey

- Filthy communist gangsters parading as leaders need to be thrown out. Watch out Baburam and Prachanda, your own people will take their sweet revenge. This is called the cycle of politics.

Rajesh Shrestha

UNCOUNTED

Thank you Anurag Acharya for highlighting this very important issue which we don't get to read more often in the Nepali media ('They don't count and are uncounted', #594). Nepalis have been migrating abroad for work and education for a very long time and today we have large Nepali diasporas all around the world. They have been keeping our economy and the nation afloat, but our politicians and bureaucrats in foreign embassies have done very little to support them or make their lives easier.

BJ

- What's the point of counting Nepalis who work and live in India anyway? Yes they send money back home, but do they even consider themselves Nepalis? In fact many Nepali speakers in India don't want to identify themselves as Nepalis. So Anurag's efforts to get the government to keep records of the migrant population might help demographers and academics, but will be of no use to planners and policy makers.

Tej Adhikari



DOWN IN UP

Most Nepali politicians and intellectuals, both the old and young generation were educated and trained in India ('Down in UP', Jyoti Malhotra, #594). But they have failed to bring back lessons from the south to Nepal and have ignored the culture of democracy, the models for economic prosperity, the morality, self-

discipline, and self-determination of Gandhi's 'swaraj'.

Anonymous

- I don't understand why Narendra Modi is being invited to Nepal. He is not a good role model. He personifies the urban middle class' disdain for the democratic process and the perverse self-victimisation of the majority. If a Modi-like figure is elected to office in Nepal, then our ethnic communities are doomed. Whoever thought it was a great idea to invite Modi should go to Gujarat for a few days and live in the Muslim colonies.

Nepali

UPS AND DOWNS

Thank you *Nepali Times* for a refreshing piece ('Ups and downs in Nepal', Rubeena Mahato, #594). The German ambassador is absolutely correct when she says nation building is a long process and we need to be patient, but I am not sure how long Nepalis will tolerate the delayed constitution process. It's shameful that foreigners see potential and a bright future for Nepal, but our politicians don't. Forget hiking for a cause, they won't leave their white plated cars just to travel a few blocks.

Maiya

- Thank you ambassador von Roeder for your heartfelt words, which are in sharp contrast to the condescending and patronising attitude of other donors and INGOs

in Nepal. I wish our own leaders cared as much about the country as a foreigner ambassador.

Kiran L

ASS

The first three paragraphs of Ass ('The dumbest smartphones in the world, #594) are priceless. I'm laughing like a donkey.

Nepali

- The bottom line is that the Ass is the only thing worth reading in *Nepali Times*.

Rajak

- Your column is the only reason why I, as a foreigner, ever read this online newspaper. The Ass tells things as they are with guts and humor.

Singkong Duling

- Very funny.

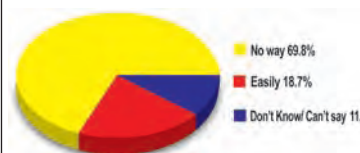
Sumit Kunwar



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Weekly Internet Poll #595

Q. Will the 13 cantonments be dismantled in 10 days?

Total votes: 1267



Weekly Internet Poll # 596. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Tourism Minister Bista's arrest in Abu Dhabi Airport for travelling without a travel document is :



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GUEST COLUMN

Bihari K Shrestha

The federalisation debate in Nepal remains the most contentious, and paradoxically, also the most superficial. And from last week, it has also been accompanied by violence and terrorism.

The demand to turn Nepal into a federal state first surfaced in 1996 just before the start of the war when the Maoists demanded ‘autonomous governments where ethnic communities are in the majority’.

In a country which is a dense mosaic of ethnic groups, the demand was clearly a war tactic to drive a wedge in the body politic, and to help boost recruitment. Ten years later, when the war ended and the Maoists made their triumphant return from India, the NC and the UML were in tatters. Discredited for fecklessness and corruption, they had to meekly give in to the Maoist demand for ethnicity-based federalism.

The CA itself never implemented the provision in the interim constitution to set up a State Restructuring Commission, preferring to pretend that it was working on it. Its frivolous and irresponsible attitude was on full public display at the 127th meeting of the CA’s State Restructuring and Power Redistribution Committee when the Maoists quickly undid the consensus of earlier meetings in just 30 minutes. They won over the seven UML members by agreeing to Sherpa and Mithila provinces, and outvoted what otherwise would have been a parallel proposal from the NC.

The State Restructuring Commission was formed hastily on deadline, filled mostly with party activists, and came up with ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ reports



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

Lose-lose situation

Dividing Nepal into feuding feudal fiefdoms is not the solution, devolving power is

without ever once talking to the people. The majority report itself included an absurd ‘non-territorial’ Dalit province, and excluded the earlier one for the Sherpa, possibly because the Commission was led by a Dalit and did not include a Sherpa.

The biggest shortcoming, however, has been that these reports never looked into the fundamental issue of federalisation: how would it improve the lives of the people economically, socially and politically?

The neo-feudal politicians in the CA must acknowledge that in this intermixed ethnic country, few are asking for a federation, let alone one with specific ethnic groups

as the new ruling class. Most people in Nepal suffer from acute food shortages and underemployment, and they have to migrate to earn enough to feed their families. This requires unrestricted freedom of movement, which ethnic territories will restrict.

There are signs of things to come. Last Monday’s blast in Kathmandu was one. Two years ago, seven men from Gorkha were butchered in Manang for trespassing during yarsa harvesting. There have been attempts at ethnic cleansing in the Tarai. Federalisation, if anything, is only going to raise communal friction among the communities. No one wins, everyone loses.

Neo-feudalism and a blatant lack of transparency and accountability on part of the politicians at all levels have kept Nepal the poorest and the most misgoverned in the world. Despite this, we have some things to be proud of: the widely-applauded world class success of community forestry due to our demonstrated ability to restore severely depleted forests in just a decade or so is an exemplary example (See: *Nepali Times*, # 593).

More recently, Nepal is ranked at the top among a handful of countries projected to meet the Millennium Development Goals in child survival and maternal mortality rate reduction. These dramatic

success stories were the result of devolution of authority to organisations who are beneficiaries themselves: forest user groups in the case of community forestry and the mothers groups in health.

The secret ingredient in both cases is that all members of these user groups (rich, poor, men, women, castes and ethnicities) effectively participate in decision-making, ensuring good governance, transparency and accountability.

What Nepal needs is extensive devolution of authority to local communities, not breaking up the country into what is most likely going to be feuding feudal fiefdoms. 🇳🇵

Bihari Krishna Shrestha is an anthropologist and was a senior official in the government.

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We know what works, #525
Ethnic autonomy, #319

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About time

Stalled for 15 years by Maoist opposition, West Seti will now be built under a Maoist government by Chinese investors

DEWAN RAI

For 15 years, Australia's Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC) tried to build the huge West Seti project to export power to India, but was stalled by complicated negotiations with India, lack of financing, corrupt officialdom in Nepal and the Maoist war.

Now, the Maoists who tried their best to stop the project are in government and have brought in China's Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) to take over the huge 195m high dam in western Nepal that will create a reservoir 70km long and generate 750MW of power for domestic consumption.

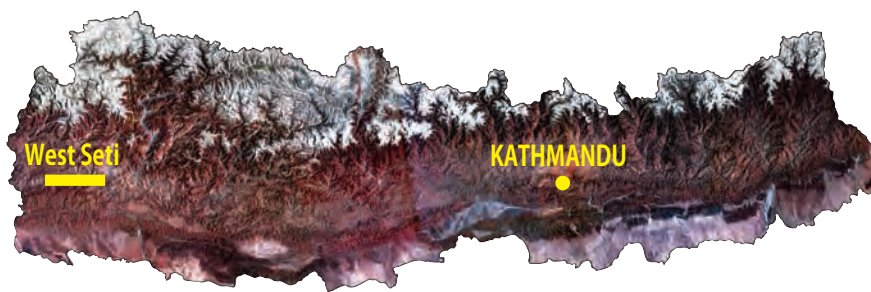
Under the terms of the deal, it will be a build, operate, own and transfer mode for 35 years and construction is set to start in mid 2014 to be completed in five years. CTGC will invest 75 per cent of the shares, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) will put up 25 per cent and local communities will be entitled to 2-5 per cent of the shares. It is not clear how SMEC will be compensated for its preparatory work.

SMEC stuck to Nepal despite tremendous odds. It had marathon negotiations to fix a feasible price for export to India's Power Trading Corporation, then there were complications over Nepal's demands for compensation for downstream benefits in flood control and irrigation. The project was targeted by the Maoists during the war, SMEC also found it difficult to get financing for the \$1.2 billion project, and finally gave up last year.

Even though it is not clear if the Indians are



RATAN BHANDARI



happy with the Chinese building a hydro project 100km upstream from their border, this time the project seems to stand a better chance because of the involvement of a Chinese company with deep pockets and also because it is now a project for domestic power consumption.

There are questions about how the deal was hurriedly pushed through without a proper bidding process. Energy Minister Post Bahadur Bogati clarified that the country was facing a power emergency, and the project would have been delayed if the government opened it up for bidding.

Arjun Bahadur Karki, Joint Secretary of the Energy Ministry, says finding bidders who would

be interested in doing business in Nepal would be difficult. "There is no difference between signing a deal first and then adjusting the conditions in the power purchase agreement," Karki told *Nepali Times*.

Under the terms negotiated with CTGC, the government has agreed to sign the power purchase agreement only after the Detail Project Report is completed. "It will be fixed in both currencies to tackle the fluctuation in foreign exchange rates," Karki says. NEA will have to take a loan for its share of the \$1.2 billion project from China's Exim Bank.

The government has agreed to shoulder the

burden of constructing transmission lines, but the project document is silent on payback for water regulation, flood control and irrigation. The reservoir can irrigate up to 270,000 hectares of land downstream in Doti, Achham, Bardiya and Banke districts in the dry season and partially mitigate floods in the monsoon.

"We always forget multi-usage of water and focus only on electricity while planning projects, which is unfortunate," says hydropower expert, Ratna Sansar Shrestha, who emphasises that there should be a dollars and cents value to regulated water.

The reservoir will submerge dozens of villages, affecting some 18,000 people. But the man who led earlier protests against West Seti, Ratan Bhandari, now sees huge advantages. "If local people get their share of benefits and the issue of compensation, relocation and rehabilitation is sorted out, we will all support the project," he told us.

Most experts agree that the project will benefit a hitherto neglected part of Nepal which suffers chronic food deficit and a massive out-migration of young people. The construction phase itself will create jobs, and once the project is completed irrigation will improve food supply.

The biggest impact of the project will be in alleviating Nepal's crippling energy crisis. The country's installed capacity is now above 700MW of which only Kulekhani is a reservoir project. This means generation capacity dips in winter when demand is the highest. Shortfall this year was 550MW, and there is a deficit of 270MW even in the monsoon.

Besides West Seti, there are five big projects (including Upper Tamakosi and Chilime) totalling 840MW that will be completed by 2017. Even if all the projects are done on time, total installed capacity by 2020 will be over 2,300MW which will barely keep up with increase in demand.

nepalitimes.com

No light at the end of the tunnel, #541



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China's growing growth



ONE WORLD
Yao Yang

BEIJING – If everything goes right for China, it will surpass the United States as the world's largest economy, in current dollar terms (and more quickly in real terms), by 2021. Its per capita income will reach that of today's lower tier of high-income countries.

But despite its forward momentum, the Chinese economy faces looming risks in the coming decade. The immediate risk is the continuing recession in Europe. In the last decade, export growth has accounted for roughly one-third of China's overall economic growth, and about one-third of Chinese exports went to the EU. If the situation in Europe continues to deteriorate, China's growth will be dragged down.

Over-tightening of domestic macroeconomic policies, especially those aimed at the real-estate market, could heighten the risk of a slowdown, with house prices currently falling across China, owing to stringent government measures.

Today, as China looks to the medium term, the government



As the National People's Congress debated China's future economic strategy this week, there is nervousness about slowing growth

must face the problems created by its pervasive role in the economy. A new World Bank report singles out the lack of reform in state-owned enterprises as the most important impediment to the country's economic growth. But that is only a symptom of a deeper problem: the government's dominant role in economic affairs.

In addition to controlling 25 to 30 per cent of the GDP directly, the government also

takes a lion's share of financial resources. In recent years, more than one-third of total bank lending has gone to infrastructure, most of which has been built by government entities. Indeed, recognising its over-investment in infrastructure, the government recently abandoned several high-speed rail projects that were already under construction. But government over-investment is also evident in numerous industrial parks

and high-tech zones.

Infrastructure investment will inevitably run up against the law of diminishing marginal returns, but consumption growth does not have a limit. Suppressing consumption thus suffocates future growth, and the share of household consumption in GDP has declined from 67 per cent in the mid 1990's to below 50 per cent in recent years, with most of the decline reflecting the distortions created by government policies.

China's government is production-oriented by nature. The upside is that this has helped to maintain high GDP growth rates. But the downside is equally pronounced. One negative consequence is the persistent deepening of income inequality. The Gini coefficient of per capita income has surpassed 50 (with 100 representing maximal inequality), putting China in the upper quartile of inequality worldwide.

The problem may not be inequality per se, but its consequences, one of which is the bifurcation of human capital. The return on education is increasing in China, but access to education is becoming increasingly divided socially and geographically. While education is improving in urban areas, children in the

countryside are facing a decline in educational quality, because better teachers find their way to the cities.

As a result, a majority of rural kids will enter the workforce without a university diploma. Among China's 140 million migrant workers, 80 per cent have only nine years or less of formal education – far short of what high-income countries require.

But there are also promising signs of an economic uptick. The government has just announced new rules for household registration, known as hukou. Except in large cities, people can now freely choose their hukou after three years of residency. This will greatly help migrants by ensuring equal access to education for their children.

The hukou reform is a good start, as it will strengthen migrants' political rights in local communities. Given their large numbers, their political participation may force local governments to become more responsive to ordinary people's needs. And government responsiveness at lower levels, one may hope, might eventually trickle up to the top. 🇨🇳

Yao Yang is the Director of the China Center for Economic Research at Peking University.

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FLYING HIGH: The Madhav Nepal government held a cabinet meeting near Mt Everest Base Camp in 2010 to draw international attention to the effects of climate change in the Himalaya ahead of the Copenhagen Summit.

A Ecureuil AS350 rescuing a sick trekker at Pheriche near Mt Everest.

Helicopters provide logistics to hydropower projects and also conduct sightseeing charter flights.



Rescue in the Himalaya



Helicopter rescue pilots gear up for another busy spring trekking season. Anusha Udas is one of Nepal’s first helicopter captains and is flying rescue missions with Fishtail Air.

ANUSHA UDAS

Nepal’s aviation sector has grown by leaps and bounds in the past two decades, and one of the most dramatic progress has been in the spread of helicopter services.

In a country of high mountains and lack of roads, their vertical takeoff and landing capability make helicopters ideally suited for Nepal’s terrain. More recently, helicopters have turned from a luxury to a necessity. Hiring a chopper is no longer just for high-class tourists and VIPs anymore.

There are five chopper companies with 13 helicopters in Nepal today, and this is expected to grow as tourism booms. Sightseeing, cargo flights, transportation for hydropower projects, rescues and even pilgrimages are now possible with competition bringing down prices.

Today, Nepal’s mountains and valleys

are alive with the sound of Russian-built MI-17s, Japanese BK-117s, and the French Ecureuil AS350s. Of these, the MI-17 has been nicknamed the “flying truck” because it can carry four tons of cargo to remote areas.

As a helicopter pilot specialising in rescue, no matter how often I fly I am still amazed by Nepal’s scenery. There is truthfully no other place like this in the world. The vertical topography with its deep gorges, lofty mountains and tricky weather make Nepal a challenging place to fly. Added to the exhilaration is the sense of achievement one gets after completing a successful rescue mission.

As we approach the busy spring season, the aircrafts are now on high alert and standby to fly out to remote corners of the country. There are tens of thousands of trekkers and mountaineers all over Nepal, and there are medical

emergencies almost every day. Accidental falls on the trekking trails, altitude sickness, frost bite are the most common calls for helicopters.

Once on a rescue flight, there isn’t much time to admire the scenery. Navigating to the rescue site is challenging, and often there aren’t even proper helipads where we land. After picking up the patient, speed is of the essence and we need to take the most direct route to Kathmandu weather permitting. In major emergencies, we even get a clearance to take the passenger straight to the helipad at the Teaching Hospital.

Not all rescue flights involve trekkers. In fact, Nepalis are increasingly calling in helicopters for rescues. Recently, we rescued a woman from Humla who was having a complicated delivery. She moaned in pain all the way. When we

landed in Surkhet, I looked back to see that she had given birth to a beautiful baby boy, the second in-flight birth we have seen so far. There is nothing to compare with the joy of that sight.

I believe the time has come to start an air ambulance service in Nepal. Many road accident victims and other seriously ill people won’t survive a bumpy car ride to the nearest hospital, but helicopters are still very expensive even though Nepalis usually pay half the rack rate for an one hour rental. If the government can waive taxes on rescue flights, it would be more affordable. For a real air ambulance, just like a vehicle ambulance, you need life-saving equipment on board and a health attendant to go along. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Here come the flying trucks, #25



Mountain SOS

Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) was established 40 years ago, and since then has saved thousands of lives, mainly of trekkers suffering from altitude sickness. The non-profit operates two high altitude aid-posts at Manang (3500m) in the Annapurna region and Pheriche (4200m) in the Everest region with qualified volunteers. The centres are gearing up for rescues as the spring trekking season gets underway in what looks like is going to be a busy season. Foreign patients are requested to pay a service charge or leave a donation. Nepalis are treated free of cost, though those who can afford, can pay a Rs 50 consultation charge. The centres treat nearly 5,000 patients per year, and there are more than 150 helicopter evacuations of serious cases.



HRA coordinates helicopter rescue once informed of a case requiring evacuation. For foreign trekkers, the agency will usually have insurance information or an agreement in the event of an emergency evacuation. The HRA coordinates with the agency, insurance company and the relevant embassy ensuring a guarantee prior to dispatching the helicopter. The HRA is on 24-hour radio call with helicopter companies. Cost for helicopter rental is \$ 2,440 per hour, and all companies charge minimum three hours for a roundtrip from Kathmandu to Annapurna or the Everest Area for rescues.

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Record rescue

The morning of 28 April 2010, the clouds were moving in at the Base Camp of Annapurna I. High on the mountain above, a Spanish expedition was stuck at camp at 6,400m on the south face of Annapurna, one of the greatest rock faces on earth. The six-member team had climbed the 8,091m peak the day before, but were trapped by a strong blizzard on the way down. One Spanish climber was dead, the rest needed to be rescued, including Carlos Pauner, Juanito Oirazabal, Horia Colibasanu and Dawa Sherpa. Fishtail Air's AS 350B3, specially fitted for high-altitude rescue was going to try to get them out.

Richard Lehner and Captain Daniel Aufdenblatten of Air Zermatt, a Swiss mountain rescue company had been training Fishtail Air in the Mt Everest region by picking stranded climbers using long ropes. The world's most famous mountain rescuers just happened to be in Nepal, and were pressed into service by Fishtail's Captain Sabin Basnyat who was killed later that year on Ama Dablam while trying to rescue Japanese climbers.

It was like nothing Lehner and Aufdenblatten had seen in the Alps. Annapurna South Face is a vertical wall of ice and rock 4,000m high. "It was really steep," Aufdenblatten recalled later, "flying at 45 m from the rock face, I could look straight down 3,000 metres."

After several attempts, racing against advancing clouds, four climbers were plucked out of the mountain and the two Sherpas made it down on their own. Aufdenblatten was awarded the Heroism Award by Aviation Week in 2011 for the highest-ever rescue in mountaineering history.

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EVENTS



MOMO MANIA, bringing together momo lovers at the biggest momo party of the year. 10 March, 3 pm onwards Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap

6th International Folk Festival 2012, performances by cultural groups from thirteen countries in Kathmandu, Dang, Pokhara and Butwal. 9 March to 18 March



CHARITY MOVIE SHOW FOR ANIMALS, watch the highly anticipated Bollywood movie Kahaani for a good cause. 11 March, 4 pm onwards, Kumari Cinema, Kamalpokhari

Placid nuances, 7th solo exhibition of acrylic and water colour paintings by Neera Joshi Pradhan. Till 16 March, Park Gallery, Pulchowk

MUSIC

Metal Suffocation II, bringing together all the metal heads of Kathmandu featuring bands like And we came, Infected, Deadwishes, Shadow in shade and many more. 10 March, 1:00 pm onwards, Neon pub, Thamel. Call Suman Shrestha at 9841558087

Live music by SIGN band every week except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 7:30 pm onwards, Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Call 4411818



NEPFEST III, new bands will battle it out for the coveted title. 10 March, 12 pm onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap

Kutumba Playing for Heritage II, Kutumba will be travelling across Nepal to generate awareness on preservation and protection of local heritage. Till 15 April.

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

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

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

HIM THAI RESTAURANT AND BAR, for authentic Thai cuisines in town. Lazimpat, 4418683

Café Du Temple, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and the beautiful roof top view. Patan Durbar Square, 5527127. Boudha, 2143256

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



VESPER CAFÉ, has quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps. Jhamsikhel

Milk Coffee and Cocktail Café, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yarchagumba and molecular cocktails

along with the famous Starbucks. Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city, Kantipath, 4215068

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

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Jawalakhel



COMFORT ZONE, expansive restobar with a decent range of cocktails and barbeque meats. Thamel



AALISHAN, serves authentic Indian delicacies. Try the special chicken biryani and chicken reshami kabab. Jawalakhel, 5550039



NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on their Penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, 44432957



THE FACTORY, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Mandala Street, Thamel



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

Nepal's circus champs

Children rescued from circus bag gold medals at the National Games

Aman Tamang was six, and Bijay Limbu was eight when they were rescued from the Great Bombay Circus in Delhi in 2002. The boys had been trafficked to India and sold to circuses when they were babies to be trained for daring aerial acrobatics, juggling and spinning tricks.

Last week, at the National Games in Dhangadi, Aman (now 16) won four gold, one silver and two bronze medals in gymnastics. Bijay (now 18) won a

group gold medal for the Madhyamanchal team along with Meena Lama who was rescued from a Gorakhpur circus six years ago. After returning from Dhangadi, they were welcomed with garlands and vermilion at the Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation (EBMF) shelter near Kathmandu, a place they call home and where they have been living since being rescued.

At that time, none of them could read or write, they were psychologically

traumatised and hadn't spoken to their families since they had been taken away. Today, Aman and Bijay are in their final year at Kitni Secondary School in Lalitpur, take daily lessons on gymnastics in Dasrath Stadium and are star performers in the EBMF's famous troupe for circus-rescued children, Sapana.

"We did not want the skills these kids had learned with so much pain and hard-work to go in vain," explained Shailaja CM of EBMF. The boys were reluctant at first to relive what they went through at the circus, but once they saw how these trainings were different, they were enthusiastic and made fast progress.

There are 120 other children like Aman, Bijay and Meena at the EBMF shelter in Taukhel where they go to school and train on a range of vocational activities. Others perform for Sapana, the country's first domestic circus company. "We will support these children till the time they stand on their own feet," says Shailaja.

Bijay says he and Aman were treated like prisoners in the circus, forced to jump without safety nets and locked away after performances. He adds: "But today, doing the same things that used to cause so much pain brings us joy."

Rubeena Mahato
<http://www.ebtrust.org.uk/>



PICS: EBMF



CHAMPIONS ALL: Bijay (l-r) Meena Lama and Aman pose with their gold medals (above). Aman (wearing yellow) and Bijay (wearing blue) just after their rescue in 2002. (right, top) Aman performing at the National Games in Dhangadi last week.

nepalitimes.com

A far-away rescue, # 571
Company of dreams, #540
Juggling with young lives, #405

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



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



GHANGRI CAFÉ, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely

courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. *Pulchok*

Bhojan Griha, traditional Nepali restaurant that serves great local food with folk music and dance. *Dillibajar*

Cafe Hessed, for those with a sweet tooth, offers a delicious range of cupcakes and doughnuts. *Jhamsikhel*

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



DHABA, for an excellent range of North Indian delicacies, try their unbeatable Kashmiri Gosht. *Thapathali*



Chitwan Safari Tour, enjoy three days of exciting wildlife safari in the Chitwan National Park at Rs 49990. *Call Ace travels at 4411830 for more information*

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

FULBARI RESORT, enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days. *Call 4461918, 4462248*

Football fever

Nepal is hosting the fourth Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Challenge Cup that will take place in Kathmandu from 8 to 19 March. In addition to Nepal, football teams from Turkmenistan, Philippines, Palestine, Maldives, Democratic People's Republic (DPR) of Korea, India and Tajikistan are participating in the tournament. The winner of this edition will qualify for the 2015 AFC Asian Cup finals in Australia, making this edition of the biannual tournament an important one for all teams. The three previous tournaments were hosted by Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka in 2006, 2008 and 2010 respectively. Joseph Sepp Blatter, the president of football's governing body, FIFA, arrived in Kathmandu on Thursday to inaugurate the AFC Challenge Cup.



SCHEDULE			
Date	Match	Time	Venue
8 March 2012	NEPAL - PALESTINE TURKMENISTAN - MALDIVES	17:00 15:00	Dashrath Stadium Halchowk Stadium
9 March 2012	DPR KOREA - PHILIPPINES INDIA - TAJIKISTAN	15:00 17:00	Halchowk Stadium Dashrath Stadium
10 March 2012	PALESTINE - TURKMENISTAN MALDIVES - NEPAL	15:00 17:00	Halchowk Stadium Dashrath Stadium
11 March 2012	PHILIPPINES - INDIA TAJIKISTAN - DPR KOREA	17:00 15:00	Dashrath Stadium Halchowk Stadium
12 March 2012	NEPAL - TURKMENISTAN MALDIVES - PALESTINE	17:00 15:00	Dashrath Stadium Halchowk Stadium
13 March 2012	DPR KOREA - INDIA TAJIKISTAN - PHILIPPINES	17:00 15:00	Dashrath Stadium Halchowk Stadium

SOMEPLACE ELSE

The 'G' in G Cafe may as well stand for 'gizmo' or 'gadgetry'. Vishwa Maskey's two-year-old eatery in Boudhanath features a prototype touchscreen kiosk, signaling its plans for tech enhancements geared towards better, faster service.

Already, the kitchen staff operates an automated inventory that encourages efficiency and uniformity in food prep and used cooking oil is funneled to fuel the cafe's van and ovens. But how does the tech translate onto the palate? Not bad.

Maskey, a Kathmandu native, boasts "fast food not junk food." Quality isn't compromised for streamlined service. For instance, the mayo among other sauces is homemade and buns are baked fresh on the premises.

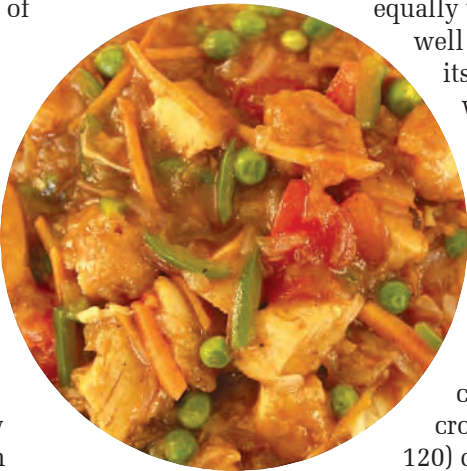
Popular with residents in the Buddhist quarters, particularly with saffron robes, G Cafe's menu is affordable



PICS: MARCO POLLO

and tenders feed typical of a local joint (Chinese, Continental, Indian, Nepali). On one end there are dependables like momos and American Chop Suey and on the other delectable cakes and good ole coffee.

Surprisingly, the American Chop Suey (Rs 150) dishes a satisfying bowl of crispy egg noodles topped with generous pieces of chicken breast. The chicken momos (Rs 140) were



equally tasty. The stuffing was well cooked due in part to its almost transparent wrap, perhaps, the thinnest I have encountered in the valley.

Sandwiches at G Cafe are made with its own freshly baked whole wheat or multigrain loaves or croissants. The cheese croissant sandwich (Rs 120) decks greens, onions, tomatoes, and real cheese in a toasted mitt.

G Cafe

According to Maskey, fries should not be limited to the 'French'. He gave us a sampling of his new menu that features what he calls 'China Fry' and 'India Fry'. The 'China Fry' (Rs 110) is sliced tofu battered and fried, a great alternative to the potato classic.

From an adjacent bakery counter, chiffon cakes iced with real whipped cream are made daily and limited, ensuring high quality. Trans-fat free, the silky slices of tiered creations (Rs 90 for a single slice) like choco-chips or pineapple pastry partner well with a perfectly brewed cup of Joe.

The wide-open cafeteria with swivel chairs and outside seating mirrors Western fast food joints but does not deter customers from lounging about. Self-service, good cheap eats, free WiFi and natural lighting set up a reliable, casual hangout that could easily compete with an international franchise. 🇳🇵

Marco Pollo

Get to Boudhanath, ditch the stupa entrance, cross the street and peer into an alley just after G Mart



My Week With Marilyn



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Marilyn Monroe, born Norma Jeane Baker, died at the age of 36 in 1962 having achieved both critical and commercial success. Today she remains one of the biggest movie stars and an indisputable symbol of blonde bombshell beauty. Yet, essentially she is still enigmatic. How exactly did little old Norma Jeane transform herself into the definitive Marilyn, and who was she really?

Simon Curtis's adaptation of Colin Clark's memoir (of the same name) is a fascinating portrait of the erratic behaviour of Ms. Monroe during the shooting of *The Prince and I*, a feature directed by and starring Lawrence Olivier and Marilyn Monroe and intended as a star vehicle for both.

A newly married Marilyn Monroe (Michelle Williams) arrives in England with her husband, the famous playwright, Arthur Miller (Dougray Scott) to start filming *The Prince and I*. She is cosseted and tip-toed around by everyone including Sir Lawrence Olivier (Kenneth Branagh) who, of course, wants to both sleep with her and make an amazing film. Colin Clark (Eddie Redmayne), an earnest young gentleman determined to join show business, is deployed by a team of anxious producers to make sure that everything is as it ought to be. Clark proves himself to be both intrepid, and attractive enough to catch Marilyn's eye and hence our glimpse into some very private and protected moments in the life of this troubled star.

Marilyn's behaviour is both fascinating and infuriating during the production. Determined to make her mark as a serious actor, she employs Paula Strasberg to coach her in the Strasberg method of acting. Strasberg both coddles and coaches Monroe, never leaving her side and invariably makes the star a few hours late for every scene. As Olivier becomes more and more exasperated with her, Monroe begins to withdraw, flubbing her lines and becoming increasingly agitated on the sets. It is when Arthur Miller leaves to return to America and his children citing "She's eating me alive," that Marilyn starts to really decline.



It is clear from the film that all those around the star, bodyguard, acting coach, producer/former lover etc. are complicit with her pill and alcohol habit. They medicate and facilitate her whenever they feel she is becoming unmanageable and they spy on her whenever they can. It is no wonder that an already emotionally vulnerable Monroe (she had an incredibly unstable childhood, moved from foster home to foster home) turns to Clark, the ready, eager, infatuated, young third assistant director, to make herself feel better. He is the one person who is available and adoring enough to assuage her extraordinary neediness, and for one blissful week, the pair play hooky from the production, driven in a chauffeur driven limousine all over a luminous, pastoral England.

What is truly extraordinary about this film is that it conveys

the incredible power a real star can have over us ordinary people. Yes, Marilyn is famous, but she is also, when she wants to be, a truly glorious, charismatic, bright star. One can't take one's eyes off of her, and one does feel a little sorry for the competent Michelle Williams who plays her fairly well. Everytime Williams is on screen, one is seeing the real Marilyn in the mind's eye: her hourglass figure, her pouty mouth, her breathy "Oh gee, I'm so sorry" - and one is spell-bound. Boy, did she know how to work it - and in the end, perhaps that was her down-fall. A telling line in the film goes "They want Marilyn all the time" and, indeed, it does seem that people were willing to lay themselves at her feet. She loved that, and she hated that.

In the end, no one knows what really killed Marilyn Monroe, drugs, or her extraordinary vulnerability that was also her greatest charm. 🇳🇵

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

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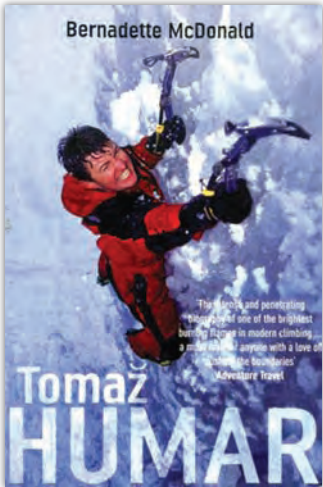
Watch trailer

Wing and a prayer



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

When talking about helicopter rescues in the mountains, the tragic story of the Slovenian climber Tomaz Humar is unforgettable. In 2005 Tomaz was plucked from an icy ledge on Nanga Parbat in Pakistan by a daring rescue mission using Lama helicopters. Tomaz was climbing the dangerous Rupal face of this formidable, ninth-highest mountain when he was stuck on a ledge unable to maneuver. As Nazir Sabir, Pakistan's most famous mountaineer recalls, "The rescue was a precarious mission at 6000 m, which was literally carried out on a wing and a prayer." Tomaz boasted that it was the "hand of God" that rescued him.



But the Slovenian was not done tempting fate.

Waiting for rescue at very high altitudes is surely not fun. The human body has to simultaneously deal with hypothermia (cold temperatures), hypoglycemia (lack of food), hypoxia (lack of oxygen) and (de) hydration (lack of water) which can all independently kill the climber. Clearly, climbers like Tomaz have tremendous motivation

and that obviously helps them deal with these physical deficiencies. But if there is an added injury like a broken leg, this may literally be the last straw on the camel's back.

Indeed, in November 2009 Tomaz Humar was attempting another solo climb on the 7,000 m

high Langtang Lirung when he broke his leg and was stuck on a slippery ledge. Unfortunately this time even though Gerald Biner and his crack team from the Swiss Air Zermatt mountain rescue company attempted the

rescue with better helicopters, it was too late for the Slovenian.

Daredevil climbers like Tomaz, powerful satellite phones for rescue at high altitude, and new high-performance helicopters that can fly at 7000m for rescue missions all combine to make medical rescues more common in the mountains. Many traditional climbers feel that man is using technology to whittle away the risks of climbing a mountain. And that the fun is gone. However, there will be intense media coverage as few things sell better than stories of spine-chilling rescues against the backdrop of magnificent, snow-covered mountains.

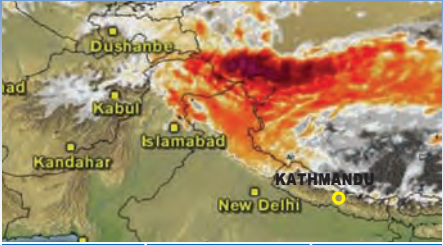
With their wealth of experience in the Alps, the Swiss are helping Nepali helicopter pilots and mountain guides perform rescue missions carefully and competently. However, the rescues in the Himalaya can be at an altitude thousands of meters higher than the rescue in the Alps.

So there may indeed be a steep learning curve, and the potential for disaster in the early days. 🇳🇵

See 'Himalayan rescues' page 6-7

WEEKEND WEATHER

The high pressure area over northern India and western Tibet continues to hold sway, deflecting moisture infusion from the west. With very little transpiration and a dip in the normal temperature for this time of year, the valleys and plains do not get warm enough to push convection systems for localised storms. What all this means is that we will see continued dry and windy weather, with very little afternoon buildup, even in the high mountains. Exception will be far-north western Nepal where there will be passing showers in to the weekend. Kathmandu Valley will continue to warm up, but still stay within the mid-20s.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
24-08	24-09	25-10



KUNDA DIXIT

CLEAN START: Vice chairman of the National Planning Commission Deependra B Kshetry washing his hands with soap to launch the *State of the World's Children Report 2012* on Monday in Kathmandu, while UNICEF's Nepal representative Hanaa Singer looks on. See page 12-13.



MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

SNIFF SNIFF: Traffic police check a motorcycle rider for alcohol consumption on Wednesday afternoon to curb accidents caused by drunk driving during Holi. Over 50 motorcyclists were caught in Kathmandu.



PRABIN MAHARJAN

ALL FOR ONE: Fire fighters from Nepal Army try to control fire in the premises of Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market, Kathmandu. The fire left six dead and damaged property worth over Rs 80 million.



WAR BOOK: India's National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon at the release of the book *Armed Conflicts in South Asia-2011* (Routledge) in New Delhi on 2 March. The Nepal chapter is authored by Nishchal N Pandey (second from left), director of the Centre for South Asian Studies.

Whose Madhes?

The corrosive politics of hate gets all the headlines, but ordinary Madhesis just want jobs



THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

DHANUSA — This week, BBC Nepali ran a report about how Pahadi families who were displaced from the plains after the Madhes uprising were starting to come back. They had left their homes, neighbours and livelihoods to take refuge in the predominantly Pahadi town of Hetuada. Some had moved to Kathmandu, but could not adjust to the new life and longed for home.

I was immediately reminded of the Tamang and Chettri families I met in Bara four years ago. They spoke to each other in Bhojpuri, and their Nepali had a defined Madhesi accent. Their families had lived in the Tarai for generations and had grown up together. They had no home in the hills to go back to, had little idea of their ancestral roots and had decided to stay despite daily threats and intimidation by armed Madhesi groups.

I lost touch, and have often wondered what became of them. Did they leave, did they stay? But travelling to my own ancestral village in the eastern Tarai last month, I could see there is more holding Nepalis together than is setting us apart.

Here in the heart of the eastern Tarai, Pahadis and Madhesis have been



BIKRAM RAI

living cheek to jowl for over a hundred years now. The Giris and Bharatis who came from the hills established a new settlement together with locals from nearby villages. A new village was formed, and over the years the two communities are so well integrated that unless one asks, they wouldn't know who is a Pahadi or who is Madhesi.

Of course, these stories don't count when leaders who claim to represent the Madhes spew hatred, threaten secession and blockades. They suggest the only way to right the wrongs committed

against the Madhes is to scare away all the Pahadis from Tarai. It is this corrosive politics of hate and revenge that gets all the headlines in Kathmandu.

But here on the ground ask farmers and traders what concerns them the most, it is almost never politics or 'identity'. They are worried about the lack of roads and bridges, and where they exist, the terrible state they are in. They are worried about the rainy season, floods, the lack of irrigation and falling harvests and prices of their produce. They are worried about their sons toiling in the

deserts of the Gulf, and the fields they will have to sell to pay the middleman to send their second son to Qatar.

When politics does touch them, it takes the shape of prolonged strikes that cripple life for weeks on end. They worry about federalism and what it will mean. Op-eds in Kathmandu's national media carry dire warnings from pundits about the coming Madhesi conflagration of anger, or a violent backlash if federalism is rejected. There is almost no sign of it here.

The people of the Madhes gave up hope long ago of their Madhesi leaders doing anything for them. There is disillusionment and a realisation that Madhesi leaders do not speak for the Madhesi people. Madhesis are now in the government with powerful portfolios, the deputy prime minister and home minister are Madhesis. But what have these leaders done except split countless times, make short-lived alliances to blackmail their way into government and issue empty threats just so that they can remain politically relevant?

The Madhes is how it has always been: left to itself. And the people of the Tarai have come to terms with it. No one wants another uprising, they just want development and jobs. Madhesi leaders would want us to believe that all the problems of the plains, the inequality, injustice and state neglect will be resolved once they have a Madhesi federal state. But few here hold out much hope.

Madhesi people want better leaders, not this discredited bunch who defected from the NC and rode the wave of the Madhes Movement in 2007. Madhesis want to be respected, and treated like Nepalis. They want an end to the criminalisation of politics. Anyone who thinks otherwise, like a village elder here told me, hasn't lived here long enough. 🇳🇵





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POLITICS KILLS

A nationwide strike by teachers interrupts the country’s biggest ever vaccination campaign

BHRIKUTI RAI in BARDIYA

Nepal launched its biggest ever vaccination campaign to immunise 1 million children between 9 months and 15 years against measles and rubella on 26 February and is conducting over three phases across the country.

The government had organised support from WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International and the Lions Club to immunise children against measles, one of the world’s deadliest and most contagious vaccine-preventable disease, which kills thousands of Nepali children under five every year. All the logistics required to get the vaccinations and volunteers to remote areas had been arranged. Minister of Health and Population, Rajendra Mahato, proclaimed: “Immunisation is a weapon of mass protection.”

However, on the day the campaign was set to kick off here in western Nepal on 26 February, two teacher’s unions affiliated to two political parties declared a nationwide closure of schools because their demands for benefits and salaries were not met by the

government.

Even though some of the schools agreed to let their premises be used as vaccination centres, the two day shutdown resulted in a much lower turnout. Instead of administering the shots, district public health officials in the far and mid western regions were busy rearranging new dates and venues.

“Although we went ahead with the vaccination, due to the banda we could not reach all the children and 100 per cent coverage was impossible,” said public health officer, Achyut Lamichane. The children who missed their shots are now in serious danger of being infected with measles.

Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) who had worked tirelessly to prepare for the day, spread awareness about measles-rubella and remind families of dates and centres were disheartened by the poor attendance. Raj Kumari Tharu, a volunteer at the Somnath Janata Primary School in Vakhari VDC said, “We could not vaccinate a lot of children and we are worried whether they will show up on the rescheduled date.”

In 2011 the government declared schools as ‘zones of peace’ and



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Women volunteers to the rescue

On the third day of Nepal's vaccination campaign, Dilsara BK, 48 arrived at Shiva Higher Secondary School in Stakhani near Surkhet with her five grandchildren. But before the children were given their shots, she found out about the possible side effects of vaccinating her epileptic grandson.

"The programs done by the female volunteers in our village have made me more aware about my family's health. I ask questions and try to keep myself well informed," she explained.

Over the past 10 years, Satakhani has made dramatic progress in early childhood development, thanks to female health volunteers. Indeed, Nepal's dramatic decline in maternal mortality and infant mortality has been credited to the work of the nearly 65,000 female community health volunteers across the country.

Kamala Khatiwada, a teacher at Shiva Higher Secondary School says: "The volunteers work very hard alongside mothers groups to keep the women informed about sanitation, safe delivery practices, and pre-natal care."

Each ward in the VDC also has a child care centre where parents who are busy working in the fields or outside their homes can drop off their children. Moreover, the enrolment rates in primary schools have increased significantly due to the efforts of the dedicated mothers groups.

The involvement of local communities in places like Satakhani has not only led to greater awareness and better access to health services but is also helping the country meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the MDGs Progress Report for 2010, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education has experienced such incredible growth in the past 20 years that we have already met the 2015 target.

Similarly, the maternal mortality rate which was 415 in 2000 declined to 229 in 2010 and the under-five mortality rate dropped from 84 in 2000 to 50 in 2010. Nepal is likely to fulfil most of the UN's requirements in the next three years, if we continue to progress at the same speed.

named 2012 as the 'Year of Intensification of Routine Immunisation Program'. However, politics has not just undermined the government's efforts, but also violated children's right to health and education.

"This just proves once again how irresponsible our politicians are," said Tara Sharma, a primary teacher at Shiva Higher Secondary School in Satakhani, Surkhet. Health experts compare this to Sri Lanka where even during the separatist war, there would be

ceasefires on vaccination days. Health officials are now trying to salvage as much of the vaccination as possible in western Nepal and moving on to the next phases in the central and eastern regions. But even there, there are strikes and bandas, and officials are keeping the dates open so as not to have the same disruption as in the west.

The last anti-measles and rubella vaccination campaign was carried out in 2005 at a time when there was a war going on. Yet,

despite the conflict and lack of resources, Nepal's anti-measles vaccination campaign has been credited with reducing the burden of the disease by 95 per cent. If this year's anti-measles campaign is successful, health officials say, it can be the last. Nepal can deal with this major childhood killer with booster shots and routine immunisation.

[nepalitimes.com](#)

Vaccination camp in Bardiya

Making cities child-friendly

On the launch of *The State of the World's Children* report this week, UNICEF's Nepal representative, Hanaa Singer, spoke to the *Nepali Times* on the needs of the children of the urban poor in the country.

Nepali Times: One in every five Nepalis live in cities, what sort of challenges does this throw up for children of the urban poor?

Hanaa Singer: The latest *State of the World's Children* report has been a wakeup call to all of us. In Nepal the number of people living in urban areas will definitely go up from the present 19 per cent. Unfortunately urban infrastructure and services have not been able to keep pace, leading to deprivations that affect children the most, especially those vulnerable children living or working on the streets or living in the slums. Children living in urban poverty are often more undernourished than those living in rural areas. And those living in urban slums are among the least likely to be registered at birth, immunised or attending school. Child death rates are very high too among the poorest versus the richest populations in the cities.

Is it that urgent? After all, children in cities are closer to basic services than rural children?

Too often, the poorest and most marginalised children in cities lack access to the basic services on their doorstep, and are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, exploitation, injuries, illness and death. When children living in slums or dark inner alleys of the city grow up surrounded by wealth and opportunities from which they are excluded, it can give rise to frustrations and ill will. A study of 24 of the world's wealthiest countries has confirmed that the more 'unequal' a society is, the higher the rate of crime, violence and imprisonment. Investing in children and adolescents always makes sense, even economically.

In Nepal, how does UNICEF propose to address this inequality?



During the ceremony to launch *The State of the World's Children* report this week, Neeraj Malla, a 12-year-old working child from Biratnagar, told the guests: "If a city can be made friendly enough for little ones like me, it can surely be fit for adults like you." He was so right. When a city becomes 'child-friendly' and we address the needs of the most marginalised children, everyone else also benefits. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Local Development to promote 'Child Friendly Local Governance' which ensures the participation of children in the planning phases, and allocation of some financial resources dedicated to children programs to be decided upon by the young people of the village, district or municipality.

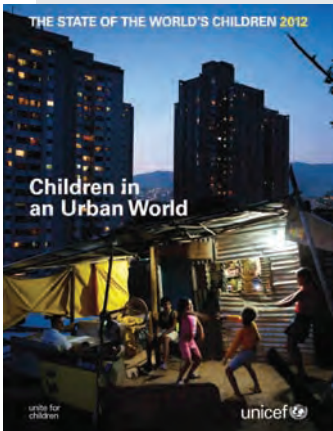
UNICEF works with its partners in eight municipalities considered as hubs of child labour to provide children with access to formal and non-formal education or vocational training by providing them with life skills, psychosocial counseling, or medical care, legal aid, or reunification with their families.

We also need to work vigorously towards building a comprehensive child protection system in Nepal to strengthen this system from the central level to the ward and community levels. At the moment, since the

Cities are worse off

While most people assume that children living in poor rural communities face greater hardships, findings from UNICEF's annual report show that children in cities from poor families are the most vulnerable to disease and exploitation and are denied clean water, education and healthcare.

The State of World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World which was launched in Kathmandu on 5 March, highlights the effects of rapid urbanisation on the billion plus children who now live in urban areas. While cities provide better health and education facilities and offer greater economic opportunities, growing population and the wide gap between the urban rich and urban poor means that access to services is increasingly difficult.



Despite their proximity to maternity and obstetric emergency services, the report says, the poor in cities are deprived of such services which in turn leads to high urban child mortality rates.

The situation is worse in slum areas where one-third of children are unregistered at birth. Low levels of hygiene and sanitation in overcrowded slums put children at higher risk of disease and disasters. Most slum dwellers fare worse than their rural counterparts in health, sanitation and nutrition indicators.

Similarly, children of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people who make up a large part of the urban poor are at a huge disadvantage because they don't have birth certificates. Without papers, children and their families are virtually non-existent in official accounts, are unable to access government support and live in constant fear of eviction.

Even when education is provided free of charge, many children are not able to attend schools because of soaring costs of uniforms, books and supplies. But when children stay out of schools, they are in danger of being trafficked or exploited by their employees in dangerous jobs.

UNICEF recommends urgent changes in urban planning, and infrastructure development, so that the needs and priorities of urban children are fulfilled.

systems are not in place, it is like having laws without teeth. It is only when systems are established that we can properly and systematically address cases of child abuse, exploitation and neglect.

The government is trying to evict slum dwellers along the rivers in Kathmandu. What do you think will be the consequences for the children living there?

This is a very sensitive issue and needs to be treated with care. The starting point is to identify the bottlenecks and barriers and to review how they can be overcome. Ensuring that all children are registered and documented is one priority step giving them dignity and security as opposed to bitterness and frustration. All people, adults as well as children, need to have official documentation showing who they are and where they live. Then there must be a longer term planning which provide options and alternatives for housing.

Many families from rural areas have migrated to cities for better opportunities, and most children from such families usually choose working over education. How can we make sure they go to school?

You are right, education normally gets sacrificed if the push for earning a livelihood is overwhelming. Yet I am impressed by the love and the commitment of parents and children towards education and they are usually very eager to join education programs if given an option that will accommodate the realistic needs of those working children and yet give them an opportunity to learn. The Urban Out Of School Program is one such option, as is the Girls Access to Education (GATE) providing a 9-month package particularly for girls from disadvantaged groups.

These programs include life skills together with literacy and numeracy and is immensely popular, they allow children to enjoy two hours of childhood in their young lives and the results are so heartwarming, and gives one so much hope for a brighter future.

[nepalitimes.com](#)

Excerpts from the interview

Jungle to mansion

Ganga BC in *Kantipur*, 3 March

Contrary to communist ideology, the chairman of the 'proletariat' party Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' seems to believe in high living rather than high thinking. While his mentor Kiran Baidya lives in a rented room in Gongabu, Dahal recently moved from Nayabajar to a grand mansion with three living rooms, a library and a swimming pool in Lazimpat. Dahal who has no known sources of income, pays Rs 1,03,000 per month to house owner Shishu Bhandari who lives in Canada.



PRABHA BOGATI

Prachanda has made an easy transition from the jungle to the mansion. When Prachanda and Baburam first appeared publicly in Baluwatar during the ceasefire they wore khaki shirts and trousers and it automatically became the 'proletariat' dress. But the khaki soon disappeared and Prachanda has not been seen in the dress since then.

When Dahal entered Baluwatar as the prime minister, people were shocked by his appearance. He was clean shaven, his hair was jelled and he looked as stylish as Girija Prasad Koirala or Jhalanath Khanal. He has danced with famous Nepali actress Rekha Thapa, likes to stay in fancy resorts for an extended period of time during party meetings, political negotiations and personal holidays and is also known to enjoy liquor. In fact Prachanda is deemed responsible for introducing the culture of drinking within the Maoist circle who were once vehemently opposed to alcohol.

Baidya supporters are angered by the chairman's extravagant lifestyle, and say he has betrayed his cadres by selfishly climbing the social ladder. However, as long as he is powerful and influential, Prachanda seems least bothered about what others think of him.

कान्तिपुर



Balloon box: Commitment
Baburam: Blow harder. Don't worry about bursting them, we have plenty more.

नेपाल Rabindra Manandhar in *Nepal*, 11 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Baburam Bhattarai quoted in *Kantipur*, 4 March

“ The country has come to this state because of the sacrifice of 11-12,000 people. If we can't institutionalise our gains, the country could face a disaster that could claim 50,000 deaths. So journalists and writers should not write comments that say it's no big deal if the constitution isn't written by 31 May. ”

Rethinking privatisation

Editorial in *Karobar*, 7 March

कारोबार

The privatisation drive which began in the 1990s led to the transfer of 18 public enterprises to private holdings while others were shut down. It was expected that privatisation of these enterprises would end corruption and improve their financial condition. But even after 20 years, evidence suggests that the privatisation policy has failed and these companies have gone from bad to worse. Many of these industries have lost their assets and lands while equipment were sold off or used for other purposes. A report by the Finance Ministry states that the private companies that took over from the state have not paid their royalties yet.

The ineffectiveness of privatisation is now forcing the government to rethink its policy and explore new alternatives like management contract. The government is also considering a policy change which will prohibit the private companies from completely shutting down operations of the privatised entities. This may motivate the owning companies to improve the economic status of their enterprises rather than looking for easy escape routes by completely shutting down operation. However, such a move will be detrimental for companies that cannot maintain their operation costs. Perhaps the government should think about taking back ownership or outsourcing management.



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“Ethnic states not possible”

Interview with Upendra Yadav, chairman of MJF (Nepal) in *Nepal*, 11 March

नेपाल

What happened to the slogan of One Madhes?

Federalism is an achievement of the Madhes movement. All seven parties agreed to an autonomous Madhes and the 8 and 22 point agreements clearly mention this clause. There are three reasons why we are going for federalism: high economic growth, good governance and end to the discrimination. If these concerns are addressed, the federal structure should not be an issue.

You have said that three to four Madhesi states can be agreed upon.

Firstly states will be made on the basis of identity and capacity, not ethnicity. Secondly, ethnic states are not possible in Nepal. Let's say we form a Newa state in Kathmandu because Newars have a majority here. But they can't have more rights than other people who live in Kathmandu. Likewise, everyone living in the Madhes, regardless of whether they are Pahadis or Madhesi will have equal rights. No group will have special rights over the other.

How can a pro-Madhes party like yours embrace Pahadi people as its own?

Our party is active in 30 districts, out of which eight are in the hilly region. We have two central committee members who are of hill origin. We won't repeat the discrimination that we ourselves had to endure. Our fight is not against any community. We just want the state to stop its discriminatory practices.

Will we have the new constitution within the deadline?

Not at the pace we are going. Now we hear there is a conspiracy to bring out a constitution without federalism. This is unacceptable. If this happens it will be a betrayal to the Madhes movement and the people's uprising of 2006.

MINIRATI BALACHANDRA

Light on the other side

Editorial, *Annapurna Post*, March 2

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

The MoU signed between China's Three Gorges International and the government this week has reinvigorated hopes for the energy anemic Nepali economy. The 750 MW installed capacity project, in which 25 per cent will be invested by the Nepali government, will help bring an end to Nepal's energy crisis.

The representatives of Three Gorges also promised to help Nepal obtain soft loans from China's Axim bank. The project, although ambitious considering Nepal's past history with big projects, offers hope specially with the international reputation Three Gorges commands after it successfully completed the world's largest hydro project in China's Yangtze river during which it relocated 1.3 million people.

The other important factor that makes this project useful for the country is, the generated power will entirely be for Nepal's internal consumption.

This guarantees Nepal's future energy security. However, there are other issues related to the projects like revisiting the DPR to include changes, negotiating the power purchase agreement and ensuring that the project has minimum environmental impact.

The legacy of bad energy politics, which affected projects like Arun III and Upper Karnali in the past must not be continued. An estimated fifteen thousand people will have to be relocated during the construction of the project, which should not be politicised and everybody concerned must facilitate their successful rehabilitation.

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Ass-trological outlook for Nepal

No weekly column this week will be complete without listing the various theories about why **Tour Minister** Loktantra Bista forgot to get a Schengen visa before flying off to Berlin this week, and had to spend two days at the transit hotel in Abu Dhabi with his wife. This is the same gunslinging comrade who once pulled out a pistol inside parliament and threatened fellow legislators with grievous bodily harm. Here are some theories that are floating around about why the Honourable Minister didn't bother to get a visa:

- He was doing Germany a favour by testing for loopholes in the Schengen Treaty
- He didn't want to get a Schengen visa in case someone wanted to send him to the ICC in The Hague someday
- He thought Communists with 'red' passports are respected in Germany, the birthplace of Karl Marx
- Tourister Minister wanted to experience first-hand the harrassments thousands of ordinary Nepalis go through every day at airports



- This was the Uncivil Minister's symbolic protest to push for freedom of movement and a bordeless, visa-free world
- He was going to apply for political asylum on arrival, fearing persecution from a rival Maoist faction
- As a minister, he thought he could just wing it like ministers can wing anything in Nepal
- He was planning to pull out his gun and shoot his way into Germany
- Worse comes to worst, he thought he could always bribe German immigration police at Flughafen Tegel
- He thought going to Berlin was like going to Patna

Some of you star-struck readers out there will have noticed that **Jupiter and Venus** are getting up close and personal in the heavens these days. And for the first time in ten years, all five visible planets are in the evening sky, that is if you can see through Kathmandu's smog. To make sense of this phenomenon we consulted the ex-royal astrologer who says the conjunction of the planets doesn't bode well for Nepal till May. In fact, the soothsayer advises all Nepalis to stay indoors, bolt the windows and wear ear plugs to avoid any untoward mishaps. As long as I had him on the line, I asked the ass-trologer whether the constitution would be written



on time. He measured the distance between Jupiter and Venus, did some calculations and said: "In some parallel universe, maybe, but not in this one."



Which should be very worrying to all and sundry, but the way our pols are going about their business it looks like they don't have a care in the world. In his war anniversary speech at Khula Munch last month, Chairman Maximum poured scorn over the Supreme Court ruling that there will be no more extensions of the CA after May. And while in public he tells everyone not to worry about the constitution

not being written in time, confidentially he has been telling colleagues not to worry because there will be another extension. It is clear the Maobaddie strategy is to drag this thing out as long as possible until the time is ripe to go for state capture. Which is why Ram Sharan is coming out with his axe swinging these days calling the Baddies all a bunch of liars and hypocrites. Umm, but that is what the Mau-Mau cadre themselves call their leaders, no?



This headline was bound to happen sooner or later: **'Maoist Leaders Stranded Because of**

Maoist Bandh'. So it came to pass that the top Baddie brass had trooped off to Pyuthan to hear themselves give fiery speeches when they found out they couldn't get out of there because of a strike called by local comrades. They got the Army to dispatch Gyanu's Romeo Alfa Juliet to rescue them. As the Super Puma took off in a cloud of dust, local reporters overheard people in Pyuthan who had been stranded all day due to the bund hurling choice epithets at the former revolutionaries that are unprintable even in the backside page, but one sounded like **"Ma-Cheese"**.



Who says there hasn't been progress in the peace process? During the war, the Baddies used choppers to cut people into little pieces, now they fly choppers. Which is what convicted murderer and CA member, Ball Krishna Dhungel, did the other day in Salleri in the company of the Energetic Minister, Mr Post Man. No wonder the cops are going around arresting jay walkers and those driving under the influence, because they can't seem to get around to arresting **serial killers-turned-politicians**.



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